How Roman Are Shakespeare's 'Romans'?

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Ever since M. W. MacCallum's book on the subject, interpretation of Shakespeare's Roman plays has relied heavily on analysis of how Shakespeare used his ancient sources. More recent studies, such as Robert Miola's *Shakespeare's Rome*, have demonstrated that Shakespeare drew upon a wider range of sources—and that he used them with a greater sense of their own allusive values—than was hitherto appreciated. Nonetheless, the characteristic emphasis of Shakespeare scholarship has, quite understandably, been on what Shakespeare made of his borrowed material, on analyses of particular situations, characters, passages, even diction that he took from ancient sources or from translations of them; it has focused on how Shakespeare adapted this extracted material to concerns and values characteristic of the Elizabethan age and to the development of coherent and clearly defined themes within or among his own plays. It has not been concerned with the particular significance that Shakespeare's borrowed material had in its own original contexts, nor with the social, cultural, or literary structures within which the ancient texts existed and which they, in turn, modified and created. Shakespeareans have taken for granted the obvious: that Shakespeare's Romans reflect his own values and attitudes and those of his world.
But partly, perhaps, because it has seemed so obvious, partly because it is
not, in a sense, their job, Shakespeareans have rarely addressed directly the
question that regularly occurs to modern audiences of Shakespeare's Roman
plays: Is this what the Romans were really like? Failure to consider the
distinctively Roman contexts and meanings of Shakespeare's source material
has left the question of his Romanness largely unanswered. As a result, there
is not only continued puzzlement for many in Shakespeare's modern audience
but also potential for the confusion that vagueness brings even to specialists:
it is still possible, for example, for a modern scholar who has examined
Shakespeare's use of Plutarch in extensive detail to assert that Shakespeare
"often makes sweeping changes but never any that pervert the spirit of his
source," and for another Shakespearean to assert, "Nor was Plutarch's
Rome as turbulent as Shakespeare's; although in transition from republic to
monarchy, it was competently ruled and not particularly dissonant." The
view that "Goethe to the contrary, Shakespeare's Romans are not English-
men, but real Romans . . ." and that his "Roman plays present us with the
essential Rome" has gone unchallenged.

On one level the question of Shakespeare's historicity is not open to clear
and decisive answers. We cannot say with confidence what Julius Caesar was
"really" like, because, for reasons that I will note below, this is a matter of
substantial disagreement and confusion among the ancient sources them-
selves. Further, even where there was general agreement in antiquity, a
detailed comparison of "the facts" as they appear in Shakespeare and his
sources risks losing sight of the very different systems of meaning and values
in relation to which particular events and circumstances acquire significance.
Other risks attend addressing the question on a more general level. In
Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire Paul Cantor argues that Corio-
lanus, Julius Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra reflect a decline of public life
and values that distinguished the period of the Roman Empire from that of the
Republic. The argument is based on a stereotypical sense of history that is
familiar from the Romans themselves and to that extent is historical. But the
failure to examine that stereotype leads Cantor to generalizations that are
questionable at best. To characterize, as he does, the difference between
Republic and Empire as that between austere virtue and decadent self-
indulgence, between public-spiritedness and private self-interest, is simply
too sweeping. Against his assertions, for example, that "the Empire actually
discourages public spiritedness . . ." and that "the Empire works to replace
public loyalties with private . . ." (p. 45), one can offer the example of the
Younger Pliny. Against his generalization that "the Empire was, figuratively
as well as literally, a gigantic holding action, with the result that many of the
special strengths and virtues that had distinguished the Republican Romans

3 Green, p. 4.
4 Rolf Soellner, Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge (Columbus: Ohio State Univ.
5 Allan Bloom with Harry V. Jaffa, Shakespeare's Politics (1964; rpt. Chicago: Univ. of
6 This, I believe, is the shortcoming of Robert Jones's "Brutus in Cicero and Shakespeare,"
Classical Journal, 38 (1942-43), 449-57, although this article does call attention to a variety of
available information that Shakespeare did not use but that a full biography of Brutus would have
to take into consideration.
disappeared, or at least began to wither, among the Imperial Romans’” (p. 10), one can fairly set Gibbon’s famous judgment:

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.  

Cantor’s easy acceptance of the Romans’ myths about their history is not based on an analysis of ancient texts. When he cites ancient material, it is not for information about Rome but as sources or analogues for specific passages in Shakespeare. He does not analyze ancient sources either to elicit from them the particular terms in which Romans articulated their experience or to reconstruct the significance of those terms in the larger context of Roman institutions and culture. Thus, while Cantor’s work does build faithfully on the Romans’ own mythologizing of their history and on the influential extensions of that myth by later thinkers such as Montesquieu, and while his argument is interesting, provocative, and illuminating, it does not effectively assess the historicity of Shakespeare’s Roman plays. Such an assessment must begin, I believe, with some effort to situate the terms of ancient discourse within the sociopolitical context according to which Romans structured and interpreted their lives. Such will be the goal of this essay.

I

The Romans Shakespeare chose for his subjects were driven by intense pressures to compete for power and distinction. Let me begin a century and a half before Julius Caesar with an epitaph, or more properly, elogium, written for a member of the powerful Scipio clan, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, consul in 298 B.C.:

Lucius Cornelius Scipio, son of Cnaius
Cornelius Lucius Scipio Barbatus
begotten by his father Cnaius, a brave and wise man,
whose attractiveness equalled his manliness,
who was your consul, censor, aedile,
captured Taurasia, Cisauna, Samnium,
subjugated all Lucania and took hostages.  

Elogia of this type were inscribed under the busts of distinguished Roman statesmen. Their descendants displayed these busts with their elogia in the atria, or front entrance halls, of their houses. Every time they or their guests entered or left the house, they were reminded vividly of the family’s distinguished ancestors and of their public achievements. Two typical elements in these elogia deserve special notice. First is the narrow range of achievements acknowledged: high public office, military victories, public

\[\text{Edward Gibbon, } \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, \text{ 3 vols. (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), Vol. 1, 70.}\]

\[\text{See, for example, pp. 216–17, nn. 17, 20, 21; p. 218, nn. 21, 22, 24.}\]

\[\text{Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (1863–), i}^2\text{ 6.7. E 13. This and other } \textit{elogia} \text{ of the Scipio family are collected in the Appendix of L. R. Palmer, } \textit{The Latin Language} \text{ (1954; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 349–50, as examples of archaic Latin. The translations of this and the following } \textit{elogia} \text{ are mine.}\]
benefactions—typically in that order. These were, in fact, the limited terms upon which the members of Rome’s ruling aristocracy competed among themselves for distinction. The second typical element is identification of the person whose deeds are recorded by his father’s name (often repeated) as well as by his own: members of this class were perceived very clearly not simply as individuals but as members of clans. They shared the glory of their ancestors and were obligated both to live up to it and to add to it.

The great pressure to sustain a family tradition of distinguished public service is made poignantly clear in the following *elogium* of a Scipio who died in his youth. Central to this *elogium* is a play on two meanings of the Latin term *honor* that I will discuss more fully later in this article:

Lucius Cornelius Scipio, son of Cnaius, grandson of Cnaius, this rock holds great wisdom, much manliness, although few years.

His life, not his *honor*, fell short of *honor*.

[That is, his record of public offices—his *honor*—was limited not by the esteem in which he was held—his *honor*—but rather by the shortness of his life.]

The man who lies here was never surpassed in manliness.

He was buried here at the age of twenty.

So, do not inquire about his *honor*, since none was given him.\(^\text{11}\)

Within the narrow field of Roman politics, the pressures to compete were clearly powerful and relentless: they dogged members of the ruling aristocracy from their youth and marked them after death.

As Rome became more active in the larger Mediterranean world, competing aristocrats had more opportunities to fight battles, to win glory and booty, and to impress Romans with their largesse. The *elogium* of Gaius Marius, who lived from about 157 to 86 B.C., begins as follows:

Gaius Marius, son of Gaius, consul seven times, praetor, tribune of the plebs, quaestor, augur, tribune of the soldiers. He was specially appointed to wage war with Jugurtha, king of the Numidians, whom he captured and at his triumph in his second consulsip ordered to be led before his chariot. He was elected consul for the third time in his absence. In his fourth consulsip he destroyed the army of the Teutones. In his fifth he routed the Cimbri, and triumphed a second time over them and the Teutones. . . .\(^\text{12}\)

A century later, Augustus, adopted son of the then-deified Julius Caesar, left an inscribed record of his achievements known as the *Res Gestae*. It reported, among other things, cash distributions to the Roman people totalling 2.4 billion sesterces. The entire inscription was long enough to fill a wall.

As the glory and wealth that could be won in the service of a growing empire increased, so did the intensity of competition among aristocrats. They needed an ever-increasing share of that glory and wealth just to stay in the running with their peers. To be a serious political contender in Julius Caesar’s

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\(^{11}\) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, \(^{12}\) II. E 16. The precise identity of its subject is uncertain, possibly the brother of Cn. Scipio Hispanus, a praetor of 139 B.C.

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Youth required a massive political following and a fortune correspondingly large with which to fulfill obligations to clients, to perform favors for political supporters, to bribe voters and jurors. A bon mot attributed to Crassus, the richest man of Caesar's age, proclaimed that no one should even contemplate entering politics unless he had enough money to finance an army. Caesar's chief rival, Pompey the Great, established his place in politics at the age of twenty-three by mustering an army from among his father's personal clients in northeast Italy. This private army was comprised of three legions, about fifteen thousand men. When Caesar set out from Rome for Spain in his first provincial command in 61 B.C., his passage was blocked by creditors. In advancing his still modest political career, he had amassed a debt of 25 million sesterces. Based on evidence suggesting that a day's pay at minimum wage was three to four sesterces and on the assumption that individuals worked 365 days a year (which they surely didn't), this was the equivalent of a year's pay at standard minimum wage for approximately twenty thousand individuals.

Clearly, for those who were determined to be in the first rank of Roman politics the stakes had become enormously high. When Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C., he formally initiated civil war in opposition to the majority of Roman aristocrats, which included the foremost general of the age. He took the extraordinary risk that this entailed because his enemies would otherwise have been in a position to ruin him politically. In his own account of the civil wars, he explained his decision by reference to his dignitas—that is, his public standing and, in particular, the rank in office that both confirmed and conferred public esteem. He said, referring to himself characteristically in the third person, "Always his dignitas had come first for him and had carried more weight than his life."

Needless to say, the leading figures in this new, highly charged, heady atmosphere of political competition did not fit the more restrictive molds of traditional Roman politics. The very existence of leaders who competed on such a scale violated the concept of libertas according to which the rewards of politics were to be shared widely among members of the ruling aristocracy. A new language and vocabulary had to be found by which to communicate the stature of the new breed of aristocratic statesman. The Romans found this new vocabulary in the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean with its long history of royal dynasties—the Antigonids in Macedonia,

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13 Plutarch, Crassus, 2; Dio Cassius, 40, 27, 3; Pliny the Elder, Naturalis Historia, 33, 134.
14 Plutarch, Pompeius, 6.
15 Appian, Bellum Civile, 2, 8.
16 Calculating the practical value of ancient money is an uncertain business at best, since what people bought with their money and how that activity fit into the whole economy of their lives were very different in antiquity than they are today. Equivalency in terms of standard daily or annual wages is generally accepted as the least distorting basis for comparison. Colin Wells (The Roman Empire [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1984], pp. 203–5) offers a brief and clear example of how Roman money and its value may be interpreted.
17 Mary Beard and Michael Crawford (Rome in the Late Republic [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985]) offer a particularly clear and succinct analysis of how the Roman aristocratic tradition of competition and the expanding resources of empire interacted together and with other circumstances to undermine Republican government at Rome.
18 Bellum Civile, 1, 9, 2.
19 On the meaning of libertas, see Ch. Wirszubski, Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome During the Late Republic and Early Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968).
the Attalids in Pergamum, the Seleucids in Syria, the Ptolemies in Egypt. We can see vividly how they appropriated this Greek vocabulary in sculpture portraiture. Sculpture portraits of Hellenistic monarchs typically represent their subjects as youthful, with fleshy faces, full lips, dramatically tousled hair—young, dashing, dynamic (Figure 1). The prototype for this style of portraiture was Alexander the Great, the new Achilles, whose charisma, personal daring in battle, and youthful energy were essential elements in his phenomenal conquests (Figure 2). Besides emphasizing his heroic youthfulness, his portraits typically represented him in a moment of unguarded concentration that communicated his vitality and psychic energy through the intensity of his gaze—a gaze directed up above his viewers and their world to the gods. Gnaeus Pompeius as a young man explicitly invited comparison with Alexander the Great by claiming the title of Pompeius Magnus (thus, ‘‘The Great’’) for himself. Plutarch tells us that Pompey’s contemporaries thought he actually looked like Alexander the Great. To us the resemblance may not seem compelling (Figure 3), but we can identify some common elements in the portraits of the two men: the tilt of the head, the fleshy face, the full head of tousled hair, the youthfulness.

This comparison will seem less far-fetched if we contrast the portrait of Pompey with some Roman portraits more characteristic of the earlier Republican period (Figures 4 and 5). Typically these figures present an appearance that is formal and self-conscious, with lips compressed, gaze straightforward, expression stern. Also typical are wrinkles, receding hairlines, baldness, and other signs of age. This style of representation, Roman verism or realism, has been related to a Roman tradition of making waxen death masks of important public figures—who, of course, would not have looked their best in death. But in many Roman portraits of this period, the attention to imperfections, to marks of age, to scars of battle, and to signs of care seem emphasized, even exaggerated. A plausible explanation for the function of this aggressive verism in its political context is that its subjects chose it deliberately in order to differentiate themselves from the new breed of statesman. These traditionalists make clear their mortality. They represent themselves as careworn, as caretakers of the republic, not as charismatic adventurers set on personal glorification.

20 This style of portrait is twice described by Plutarch (Alexander, 4, 1, and Moralia, Stephanus pp. 335A and B [De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute, 2]) and by a poem in the Anthologia Palatina, XVI, no. 120. An accessible survey of Alexander portraiture in antiquity is Margarete Bieber, Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art (Chicago: Argonaut, 1964).

21 For the influence of Alexander the Great on Pompey and other Romans of his generation, see Dorothea Michel, Alexander als Vorbild für Pompeius, Caesar und Marcus Antonius; archäologisches Untersuchungen, Collection Latomus, 94 (Brussels: Revue D’Études Latines, 1964).

22 Pompeius, 2.


25 Sheldon Nodelman, ‘‘How to Read a Roman Portrait,’’ Art in America, 63 (1975), 27–33.
Like Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar was also supposed to have defined his own ambitions by Alexander’s exalted standard. Plutarch reports the following story:

... when he was in Spayne, reading the history of Alexander’s actes, when he had red it, he was sorowfull a good while after, and then burst out in weeping. His frends seeing that, marveled what should be the cause of his sorow. He aunswered them, Doe ye not thinke sayd he, that I have good cause to be heavie, when king Alexander being no older than my selfe is now, had in old time wonne so many nations and contries: and that I hitherunto have done nothing worthy of my selfe?26

Portraits of Julius Caesar suggest experimentation with the Hellenistic style of portraiture (Figures 6 and 7).27 In contrast, Cicero, who saw Caesar’s progressive acquisition of power as being incompatible with traditional Roman freedom, presented a visual image of himself that matches the spirit of concern and anxiety for the state that he expressed verbally in his letters and orations (Figure 8).

At the instigation of his adopted son, Julius Caesar was deified. This may have outraged some and distressed still more, but it was intelligible to and accepted by the great majority of Romans. Leading statesmen of the next generation had no hesitation in identifying themselves with the gods.28 Octavian erected a temple to Apollo, held athletic contests in honor of him, and made “Apollo” the password at Philippi to advertise the god’s personal guardianship of his destiny;29 his enemies claimed that he provoked popular disapproval in Rome by dressing as Apollo for a banquet known as “The Feast of the Divine Twelve” during a grain shortage.30 Through the Julii, his adoptive family, he traced his descent from Aeneas, the founder of the Roman


27 According to Flemming S. Johansen (“The Portraits in Marble of Caius Julius Caesar: A Review,” Ancient Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1 [Malibu, Cal.: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1987], 17–40), Figures 6 and 7 represent the two basic portrait types (the Tusculum and the Chiaramonti, respectively) from which are derived all extant ancient sculptures that can be identified with certainty as portraits of Julius Caesar.

28 On the propaganda of this era and in particular on claims of divine descent as part of that propaganda, see Kenneth Scott, “The Political Propaganda of 44–30 B.C.,” Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, 11 (1933), 7–49.

29 He dedicated part of his private property on the Palatine Hill for a temple to Palatine Apollo (Suetonius, Divus Augustus, 29, 3; Dio Cassius, 49, 15, 5; Velleius Paterculus, 2, 81, 3); after his victory at Actium, he dedicated an offering of the first fruits of his victory in the sacred grove below the Temple of Actian Apollo, upgraded the games in honor of Actian Apollo (Strabo, 7, C 325; Dio Cassius, 51, 1, 2; Suetonius, Divus Augustus, 18, 2), added them to the four great pan-Hellenic games of antiquity, and dated events by “Actiads,” on the model of dating by “Olympiads” (Josephus, Bellum Judaicum, 1, 398). For “Apollo” as the password at Philippi, see Valerius Maximus, 1, 5, 7.

30 Reported by Suetonius, Divus Augustus, 70, 1, who adds that rioters were prompted to cry, “The gods have gobbled all the grain” and “Caesar is indeed Apollo, Apollo the Tormentor,” naming an aspect of the god worshiped in one district of Rome.
race, and, ultimately, from Venus and Mars.\textsuperscript{31} Antony traced his descent from Hercules. Plutarch reports that

\ldots it had bene a speeche of old time, that the familie of the Antonii were descended from one Anton, the sonne of Hercules, whereof the familie tooke name. This opinion did Antonius seeke to confirme in all his doings: not onely resembling him in the likenes of his bodye, as we have sayd before, but also in the wearing of his garments. For when he would openly shewe him selfe abroad before many people, he would always weare his cassocke gyrt downe lowe upon his hippes, with a great sword hanging by his side, and upon that, some ill favored cloke.\textsuperscript{32}

In the Greek East, Antony (Figure 9) and Cleopatra (Figure 10) presided over festivities as, respectively, Dionysus and Isis (the Egyptian Aphrodite), a way of advertising their roles as bringers of fruitfulness, prosperity, and happiness.\textsuperscript{33} Antony’s political enemies at Rome capitalized on his representation as Dionysus in order to emphasize his fondness for drinking and revelry and to support their portrayal of him as a drunken carouser.\textsuperscript{34} Sextus Pompey, son of the Great, heartened by naval victories over Octavian, claimed that he had been adopted by Neptune and exchanged the normal commander’s cloak of red for one of dark blue in honor of his divine parent.\textsuperscript{35} To some, the assumption of divinity by these individuals was a fitting way to express the real power that they wielded; to others it confirmed intolerable ambition and arrogance. Julius Caesar had been offered the crown of kingship, assassinated as a tyrant, and deified—all within a few months.\textsuperscript{36}

It is through this haze of partisan distortion that the personalities and events of the late Roman Republic were perceived by contemporaries, were interpreted in later Roman literature, and are known to us—which is why modern scholars can still come to no agreement about whether, for example, Julius Caesar had set his sights on kingship or whether he was forced into the civil wars and autocracy by political enemies set upon his destruction,\textsuperscript{37} whether

\textsuperscript{31} Octavian could trace his descent from Mars also through the Octavii, his family of birth. For the close association of his family with the cult of Mars, see Suetonius, \textit{Divus Augustus}, 1, 1.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{The Life of Marcus Antonius} in Bullough, Vol. V, 257; Plutarch, 4.
\textsuperscript{33} In this they both, and especially Antony, were following a practice that was longstanding and widespread among Hellenistic monarchs. The tradition and its significance are summarized in Kenneth Scott, ‘‘Octavian’s Propaganda and Antony’s ‘De Sua Ebrietate,’ ’’ \textit{Classical Philology}, 24 (1929), 133–41. For Antony as Dionysus: Plutarch, \textit{Antonius}, 24 and 60; see also Dio Cassius, 48, 39, 2; Velleius Paterculus, 2, 82, 4. For Cleopatra as Isis: Plutarch, \textit{Antonius}, 54.
\textsuperscript{34} On this aspect of the propaganda war between Antony and Octavian, see Scott, ‘‘Octavian’s Propaganda.’’
\textsuperscript{35} Appian, \textit{Bellum Civile}, 5, 100.
\textsuperscript{36} The crown was offered by Antony at the Lupercalia, Feb. 15, 44 B.C.; the appearance of a comet at games in honor of Caesar, the \textit{Ludi Victoriae Caesaris} of July 20–30, 44 B.C., was proclaimed by Octavian and accepted by the populace as a sign of Caesar’s deification (Suetonius, \textit{Divus Julius}, 88). Caesar was officially deified by an act of the Senate on Jan. 1, 42 B.C. (Appian, \textit{Bellum Civile}, 2, 148; Dio Cassius, 47, 18, 3–19, 3), but that enactment was preceded by a number of other acts whose exact details and chronology are uncertain but that indicate movement towards the deification of Caesar even during the last years of his life. The definitive discussion is by Stefan Weinstock, \textit{Divus Julius} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
\textsuperscript{37} These issues have been put into focus recently by the appearance of Zwi Yavetz’s \textit{Julius Caesar and his Public Image} (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983). See also the review of that book by M. Gwyn Morgan, ‘‘ ‘O Julius Caesar, Thou Art Mighty Yet,’ ’’ \textit{Helios}, n.s. 11 (1984), 151–65.
his deification reflected the posthumous realization of his own policies or whether it expressed rather the ambitions and propaganda of his adopted son, his deification reflected the posthumous realization of his own policies or whether it expressed rather the ambitions and propaganda of his adopted son,38 whether Antony’s flight from Actium was part of a calculated plan to rescue what he could from a desperate situation or whether it represented the impetuous pursuit by an infatuated man of his fickle mistress.39

II

As is well known, Shakespeare’s chief sources for Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra were Thomas North’s English translations of biographies written by Plutarch, a Greek born sometime before A.D. 50 who died sometime after A.D. 120. Plutarch’s Lives reflects the tendencies to stereotype, to polarize, and to exaggerate that are inherent in the propaganda surrounding his subjects, tendencies reinforced by Plutarch’s own habits as a biographer.40 Even though he did as a matter of principle acknowledge minor defects in his subjects, he systematically emphasized their virtues. Further, he tended to characterize each of his leading subjects by one prevailing quality such as ambition, courage, or the like. Shakespeare took these simplified and somewhat overdrawn characterizations as his starting points. His heavy reliance on North’s translation of Jacques Amyot’s French translation of Plutarch’s biographies—written in Greek a century and a half after the events that they record—meant that Shakespeare had little if any access to the original Latin terms in which his Roman subjects would actually have thought and expressed themselves. It is scarcely surprising, then, that his representation of Roman character should reflect the values and perspectives captured in the language of Plutarch’s sixteenth-century translators, and in the process should have unwittingly subordinated what Romans regarded as the most compelling aspects of human behavior and personality. In the world of Plutarch’s translators, measures of individual worth were essentially personal values and intentions—both conscious and unconscious—as they reflected baser or higher elements of man’s animal nature or divine spirit. The ancient world knew no such emphasis on interiority until St. Augustine, whose Confessions elaborated the implications of Christian belief that eternal salvation is contingent ultimately on the individual conscience. For Roman aristocrats the lasting measure of personal success or failure was reputation, epitomized in the elogia that recorded their lives for posterity. The Rome of Julius Caesar, Brutus, and Antony was a society in which political action provided the principal standard for judging personal character and questions of value. One statement of this difference in perspectives between the two worlds has been to say that in a Christian world salvation is individual; in the Roman world it is collective and political. Salvation in Rome, to quote Charles Cochrane, “marks the achievement of

purposes which are to be realized only in the corporate life." According to Earl, it has been observed that the moral terminology and the political terminology of Republican Rome were virtually one and the same: that is, to characterize someone politically was also to judge him morally and vice versa.

This formulation of the difference between the moral perspective of the world in which Shakespeare wrote and that of the Romans is inevitably oversimplified. The difference I am describing is one of emphasis, but it is nonetheless profound. Public action certainly remains a central preoccupation in Shakespeare’s plays; it might often be the arena in which character most fully and most significantly reveals itself, but in his plays politics is not itself the principal standard for judging character. Just as important or even more important than an individual’s political motives and their efficacy are the individual’s feelings, feelings that might not be realized in action but nonetheless help to reveal the full complexity of his personality. Romans, on the other hand, certainly understood that human motivation is complex, but they were concerned primarily with how personal motives bore directly upon public action. An internal struggle of emotions, where such existed, was of importance more for the political values that it expressed than for what it revealed about the spiritual condition of the individual.

Before turning to Shakespeare himself to illustrate my point, let me offer a brief instance from Roman tradition. The Brutus who first expelled kings from Rome, the ancestor of Shakespeare’s hero, was reported to have executed his own sons for attempting to reintroduce monarchy. An account of this episode by the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus treats it as an example of the Romans’ barbaric, almost inhuman callousness: Brutus oversees the execution of his sons coldly, with no sign of emotion. Livy, a Roman contemporary of Dionysius who also reported the event, does not see Brutus as callous. He emphasizes the terrible conflict within Brutus between his love for his sons and his loyalty to the state: the emotions of a father play across his face for all to see as he steadfastly watches his sons being flogged to death and then beheaded. For Livy, it is to Brutus’ credit that he does not execute his sons unfeelingly: he is not the cold monster that the Greeks see. Yet, while Livy’s account offers a more complex appreciation of Brutus than does Dionysius’, it is nonetheless essentially political in its orientation.

43 J. Hellegouarc’h, Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république, 2nd ed. (Paris: Société D’Édition [Les Belles Lettres], 1972), is the standard reference work on Roman political vocabulary.
44 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Antiquitates Romanae, 5, 8, 5–6.
45 Livy, 2, 5, 8. Other historians in antiquity, both Greek and Roman, did not, as Livy did, call attention to Brutus’ paternal suffering, although neither did they call explicit attention to his callousness, as does Dionysius of Halicarnassus. For a brief discussion of other ancient versions of this episode and Livy’s relation to them, see R. M. Ogilvie, A Commentary on Livy: Books I–5 (1965; rpt. with corrections, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 246.
46 Plutarch sometimes shares with Dionysius a general Greek tendency to stereotype Romans as comparatively crude and harsh. See Hermann Heuer’s perceptive remarks on Plutarch’s differing attitudes toward Greeks and Romans in his paired lives of Alcibiades and Coriolanus in “From Plutarch to Shakespeare: A Study of Coriolanus,” Shakespeare Survey, 10 (1957), 50–59. Nonetheless, as my argument below will demonstrate, Plutarch’s essential values and point of view are ones shared generally throughout the Roman Empire.
the intensity of Brutus' political commitment and explains the strength of a Rome that can command such extreme loyalty. But it tells us little about the nature of Brutus' soul, about the purity of his motives. Was there an intermingling of resentment at the sons, who in betraying Roman liberty were betraying his own greatest achievement? Did Brutus hope for understanding and forgiveness from his sons? Was his decision complicated by hope of fame for executing them or by fear of disapproval if he failed to do so? Did he feel guilty for his act? Because their concerns were primarily political rather than spiritual or psychological, the Romans did not raise those questions.

But those are precisely the kinds of questions that Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* raises about Brutus' descendant (Figure 11). The questions, moreover, are framed and worked out in terms that are neither Roman nor Greek. I would like to illustrate this by a discussion of the terms "honorable" and "noble" and their cognates, words that are ubiquitous in Shakespeare's dramas. They play a particularly conspicuous role in *Julius Caesar*. Mark Antony's insistent repetition of "honorable" in his famous speech focuses attention on that term. That Antony delivered a speech to the people on Caesar's death is a matter of historical record. But ancient reports of the speech differ from one another considerably and differ, also, in important details from what Shakespeare gives us (the reading of Caesar's will, for example, seems to have been no part of it). Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar* is Shakespeare's invention. Central to it is the repeated, increasingly ironical, and perhaps even sarcastic assertion, "For Brutus is an honorable man" (3.2.82). This reference to honor constitutes a challenge to Brutus' moral authority and to his personal integrity: "Yet Brutus says he was ambitious, / And sure he is an honorable man" (3.2.98–99). Acknowledging

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46 The identification of this bust as that of Marcus Junius Brutus the Tyrannicide has been argued recently by Sheldon Nodelman, "The Portrait of Brutus the Tyrannicide," *Ancient Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum*, 1 (Malibu, Cal.: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1987), 41–86.


48 In addition to Plutarch, *Brutus*, 20, and *Antonius*, 14, see Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 84, 2, who has Antony read a decree of the Senate and add "a very few words of his own." Appian, *Bellum Civile*, 2, 144–45, attributes to Antony a short, essentially conciliatory speech. Dio Cassius, 44, 35–50, reports a long speech, but nothing like Shakespeare's. See also Cicero, *Oratio Philippica*, 2, 91.

49 Plutarch's *Caesar* mentions the publication of Caesar's will and the display of his wounds as together inflaming the populace but is unclear about their temporal relationship. Both *Brutus*, 20, and *Antonius*, 14, state specifically that Antony inflamed the mob by displaying Caesar's wounds but imply that the public reading of Caesar's will occurred on a separate and earlier occasion; so, too, does Dio Cassius, 44, 35–50, who reports publication of the will and its effects but records no mention of it in the subsequent long speech that he attributes to Antony. Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 83, reports that the will was opened and read in a private home, but he says nothing about its being read or reported in Antony's speech.

50 All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).
Brutus' reputation, the fact that he is respected and held in honor by his countrymen, Antony asks the audience to consider whether Brutus is really honorable, whether, that is, his character is in fact consistent with his reputation. Swayed by Antony's rhetoric, the Roman mob concludes that Brutus, whatever his reputation, is not an honorable man: "I fear I wrong the honorable men / Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it," says Antony, and the mob roars back, "They were traitors; honorable men!" (3.2.151–53).

This kind of play on the meanings of honorable ("honored men" and "men of honor") would not have been possible for Romans. The Latin cognate honorabils exists, but it is very rare and used of things and actions that confer honor: "These things," says Cicero, "are honorabilia: to be greeted by clients, to be sought after, yielded to, to have people rise for you, to be accompanied by clients as you go to and from the forum, to be consulted" (De Senectute, 63). In contrast to the English "honorable," the Latin honorabilis, then, refers exclusively to outward condition and political position, not to inner character.

The next closest cognate in Latin is honestus. This word can sometimes be translated "honorable," and is sometimes used to identify something as morally worthy of respect, but it is so used of things or actions, not of people: Cicero can say, "an honorable death [a mors honesta] often brings distinction to a shameful life" (Pro Quinctio, 49), that is, a shameful life can be redeemed by a death that is not just respected but that is worthy of respect. When used to describe people, however, honestus signifies someone who is "regarded with honor or respect" or is "well-born, of high rank." A vir honestus is a man who is respected or one who holds high office (and in Rome it usually amounted to the same thing). How closely related to public office, how nearly formal these concepts are may be judged from Cicero's definition of honor, as follows:

Since honor is the reward for virtue conferred by the judgment and favor of the citizens in their formal opinions (sententiis) and in their votes (suffragiis) upon someone who has attained it, this man seems to me to be both honestus and honoratus [i.e., both deserving of election to public office and elected to that office].

(Cicero, Brutus, 281)

The emphasis is not on inner character or personal quality but rather on how one is seen from the outside and in a political context. Recall the play on honor in the elogium for the young Scipio quoted above: "His life, not his honor fell short of honor. . . . do not inquire about his honor, since none was given him." Thus for Romans the idea of honor had primarily to do with one's external condition, especially one's political standing, while for Shakespeare and for us it can include reference also to an individual's inner character and to a standard of integrity that may be essentially personal, private.

51 Although he does not specifically discuss the ambiguous meaning of "honor" in this speech, Norman Council regards tension between these two meanings of the word as central to the character of Brutus and to his tragedy ("Julius Caesar: the Honourable Brutus," When Honour's at the Stake: Ideas of honour in Shakespeare's plays [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973], pp. 60–74).

52 See honorabilis in the Oxford Latin Dictionary.
The question of Brutus’ integrity is answered at least in part by the words of Mark Antony at the conclusion of the play. Once Brutus’ staunchest enemy, Antony now says of him:

This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar. . . .
(5.5.68-70)

Except for the word ‘‘noblest,’’ these words essentially repeat an appraisal of Brutus that Plutarch himself likewise attributes to Antony:

For, it was sayd that Antonius spake it openly divers tymes, that he thought, that of all them that had slayne Caesar, there was none but Brutus only that was moved to doe it, as thinking the acte commendable of it selfe: but that all the other conspirators did conspire his death, for some private malice or envy, that they otherwise did beare unto him.53

The word ‘‘noblest,’’ however, is Shakespeare’s own, and it expresses a point of view that is no more Roman than that expressed by his use of the term ‘‘honorable.’’ The Latin cognate of ‘‘noble’’ nobilis would make no sense here. It means, most generally, ‘‘well-known’’; it refers specifically to those members of Rome’s ruling aristocracy whose ancestors had held political office before them, men who were not political newcomers, who were not what the Romans called ‘‘new men.’’ For Antony to have said that Brutus was nobilissimus, would have meant something like ‘‘the man with the most distinguished ancestry’’ or, simply, ‘‘well-known.’’ The Latin nobilis, then, just like the Latin honorabilis and honestus, refers primarily to public standing. But, clearly, it is not Brutus’ public standing to which Antony refers when he describes him as ‘‘the noblest Roman of them all.’’

Shakespeare may have gotten the term ‘‘noble’’ from Plutarch’s introductory sketch of Brutus’ character, as it appeared in North’s translation from the French:

if there were any noble attempt done in all this conspiracie, they referre it whollie unto Brutus, and all the cruel and violent actes unto Cassius, who was Brutus familiar frend, but not so well geven, and condicioned as he. . . .54

The original Greek of this passage, however, corresponds no more closely to Shakespeare’s ‘‘noblest’’ than does the Latin nobilis. North’s ‘‘any noble attempt’’ translates (through Amyot’s aucune chose généreusement faite55) τι γενναίον in Plutarch’s Greek. The principal meaning of γενναίον is ‘‘true to one’s birth’’; the next meaning is ‘‘noble’’ in the sense of ‘‘well-born,’’ and then, more generally, ‘‘good of one’s kind.’’56 What Plutarch is saying

54 The Life of Marcus Brutus in Bullough, Vol. V, 90; Plutarch, 1. See also Julius Caesar, 1.2.196-97, where Antony says to Caesar of Cassius: ‘‘Fear him not, Caesar, he’s not dangerous, / He is a noble Roman, and well given.’’
here is that Brutus did a good thing, perhaps, more specifically, that he did something worthy of his high birth. But he is making a very limited judgment about Brutus’ motivation and character. This is confirmed by the conclusion of the sentence that I have quoted above: “so well gaven and conditioned as he.” More literally, what Plutarch says is that Cassius “was not similarly ἄνελοὺς and καθαρὸς in his character.” The Greek ἄνελος means “single, simple”; it can also mean “simple-minded.” The word καθαρὸς helps to eliminate that potentially embarrassing ambiguity. Its literal meaning is “pure,” specifically in the sense, “free from admixture”: a καθαρὸς animal for sacrifice was one that was unblemished.\(^{57}\) What we are being told about Brutus, then, is that he was single-minded, that his motive was single and straightforward, and, in contrast to Cassius’, that it was not cruel or violent. This is all consistent with the rather narrow focus throughout Plutarch’s biography on Brutus’ public and political significance. For Plutarch selfless opposition to tyranny served adequately both to explain Brutus’ behavior and to distinguish him from the other conspirators in political terms—and those were the terms that mattered most for Plutarch and his audience.

In Shakespeare, Antony’s “noblest” suggests a quite different orientation. This is confirmed by the conclusion of his brief encomium. The speech that begins “This was the noblest Roman of them all” ends with lines that have no equivalent in Plutarch:

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He, only in a general and 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!”
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(5.5.71–75)\(^{58}\)

“General and honest thought,” a “gentle” life, “elements . . . mixed”—all this has no place in Plutarch, not just because he favored relatively simple characterizations but, more fundamentally, because for him and for his audience it was not relevant. If Brutus had been indecisive and erratic in his public behavior and in his political relations to others, then Plutarch and his audience would have wanted to know about the conflict of values and feelings that explained Brutus’ inconsistencies. As it was, Brutus’ uncompromising political idealism explained what was important about him for Romans.

Shakespeare presents Brutus more nearly as an embodiment of mankind’s fallen condition, a condition that even the best of men cannot fully transcend. Precisely because Brutus is so determined an idealist, he demonstrates forcefully the essential weakness of all humanity and thus epitomizes the human condition. And it is this, finally, for which Antony recognizes him: “Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’ ’’ The play combines that explicit affirmation of Brutus’ humanness with a dramatic representation of how precarious, how vulnerable, how potentially double-

\(^{57}\) For the meanings of ἄνελος and καθαρὸς, consult the entries for ἄνελος, η, ον and καθαρ-ος, α, ον in Liddell, et al.

\(^{58}\) Soellner (cited in n. 4, above) observes that these sentiments are conceived in the “terms of Renaissance humor physiology” (p. 151).
edged even the noblest idealism must be. In fact, a great many of the modifications that Shakespeare made in his source material appear to be related directly to that point. They suggest a particular kind of naiveté in Brutus and hint at the possibility of self-deception.

Romans certainly questioned whether Brutus was deceived in his belief that assassination of Julius Caesar was sufficient to effect a restoration of political freedom at Rome. But Shakespeare’s Brutus is potentially deceived about his own nature and the nature of man itself. J. L. Simmons has called attention to the fact that Brutus’ own words warn unconsciously against the danger of self-deception and question whether the sharp separation of action and emotion upon which the purity of his motives depends is possible. Further, Simmons has demonstrated that in the quarrel with Cassius about revenues for their army, Brutus actually becomes like the Caesar whom he fears—overcome by his emotions, distant, and imperious. This implicit convergence of personalities and roles is expressed visually in the apparition that is simultaneously the ghost of Caesar and Brutus’ own “evil spirit”—an apparition that is all the more revealing inasmuch as it externalizes Brutus’ own suppressed self-awareness (4.3.275–82). All this is quite different from what we find in Plutarch, where the apparition that Brutus saw was his personal genius, neither more nor less. As Simmons has noted, Plutarch’s Brutus prudently provided for his army through levies on the citizens of captured towns and by accepting “a share of Cassius’s outrageous extortions.” Plutarch emphasizes Cassius’ anger more than Brutus’, he gives no indication of how the argument between the two is resolved; he suggests nothing about the potential tyranny of Brutus’ idealism, nor does he show us the reassertion of the more generous nature in Brutus that makes him able to apologize to his friend. For Plutarch the exchange between the two men serves only to illustrate the unwavering idealism that explains Brutus’ actual behavior and his relation to the other conspirators.

The foregoing contrast between Plutarch and Shakespeare emphasizes Shakespeare’s distinctive interest in the interior life of his characters. I do not mean by that contrast to suggest that Shakespeare regards their public lives as irrelevant or trivial. Rather, it is in an important sense precisely the public dimension of his Romans’ lives that is most problematic for Shakespeare and

59 Plutarch, Brutus, 20, faults Brutus both for this and for acceding to Antony’s plans for Caesar’s funeral. Cicero criticized the assassination in general terms as “manly in spirit, but childish in conception” (Epistulæ ad Atticum, 14, 21, 3); in particular, he was critical of the conspirators’ inaction after the assassination (Epistulæ ad Atticum, 14, 10, 1; 15, 11, 2), and in several letters he expressed the opinion (circumspectly but unambiguously) that they had made a mistake in not assassinating Antony along with Caesar: for example, the assassination was “a fine act, but half done” (Epistulæ ad Atticum, 14, 12, 1. See also 14, 21, 3; 15, 11, 2).


61 Plutarch, Brutus, 36 and 48, and Caesar, 69; Appian, Bellum Civile, 4, 134, also has the apparition identify itself to Brutus as his “evil genius.”

62 p. 102.

that he can least take for granted or accept at face value.\(^\text{64}\) Virtually every response by Brutus to public opinion, every thought that he gives to his honor in its public sense, raises difficult questions: do Cassius’ secret messages only call Brutus to his sense of duty, for example, or do they evoke a suppressed desire for public recognition?\(^\text{65}\) Does Brutus refuse to be identified as a conspirator because he wants his political message to be clear or because the appearance of conspiracy is too close to a reality that he is loath to acknowledge? Does he mismanage the arrangements for Caesar’s funeral because his total concentration on the principles at stake blind him to the requirements of political expediency or because he is more concerned with merely appearing principled than with actually translating his high ideals into political reality? When he reproves Cassius for accepting bribes,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{. . . shall we now} \\
\text{Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?} \\
\text{And sell the mighty space of our large honors} \\
\text{For so much trash . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

(4.3.23–26)

in what sense are we to interpret ‘‘sell . . . our large honors’’? Does Brutus mean ‘‘betray our high principles’’ or ‘‘compromise our good reputations’’?

These tacit questions and others like them reflect and reinforce an assumed opposition between the two aspects of Brutus’ concern for ‘‘honor.’’ For Shakespeare’s Brutus to value public recognition, to be influenced by it, to make any concessions to it, is potentially subversive, a threat to his integrity. This sense of the ethical incompatibility of appearances and reality has been recognized as central to the play, to Brutus’ character, and to his tragic end.\(^\text{66}\) It creates an impossible dilemma for Brutus: the more he seeks to present an honest and honorable public image of himself, the more he seems to betray himself. After reproving Cassius for accepting bribes, Brutus then demands money from him on the grounds that ‘‘. . . I can raise no money by vile means’’ (4.3.71). This fastidious hair-splitting would seem to express the most contemptible self-righteousness were we not by now disposed to regard it as entangled with a profound and tragic preoccupation with appearances.

As should be clear from the first section of my argument, such distrust of appearances and of the desire to secure one’s reputation was not Roman. During the late Republic, Romans did come to be critical of individuals who pursued personal gloria with disregard for the traditional rules that constrained aristocratic competition.\(^\text{67}\) To override the constitution in order to get

\(^{\text{64}}\) My focus here is Julius Caesar, but my general point is borne out in discussions of Shakespeare’s other Roman plays as well. Gordon demonstrates how concern for honor creates a dilemma for Coriolanus, who feels that to beg popular recognition for deeds that should speak for themselves would be to violate his personal integrity (pp. 213–14); Cantor observes that Antony cannot make an easy choice between Rome and Egypt, private love and public honor, because ‘‘Antony will not accept a humble or obscure position in life. Since he cannot do without a sense of being noble, he must revalue nobility, making it a matter of excellence in love, not politics’’ (p. 186).

\(^{\text{65}}\) As Soellner observes, Cassius’ persuasion of Brutus ‘‘introduces a problematic quality into Shakespeare’s patterns of self-knowledge . . . truth and flattery become now inextricable’’ (p. 158).

\(^{\text{66}}\) Council, p. 73. The formulation ‘‘ethical incompatibility’’ is my own.

\(^{\text{67}}\) On the changing value attached to the pursuit of gloria from the later Republic to the Augustan Age, see Earl (cited in n. 41, above), pp. 32, 35, 52, 66, 68.
military commands in which one could outshine political rivals, to curry popular favor by sponsoring the free distribution of grain to the Roman plebs—such acts were regarded as attempts to gain an unfair advantage over one’s rivals at the expense of political stability. But instinctual distrust of appearances and the association of aggressive self-promotion with unseemly pride are distinctly post-classical attitudes. Thus it is that the seemingly shameless self-advertisement in Cicero’s works, in his personal letters no less than in his public orations, constitutes an obstacle for modern readers. One twentieth-century scholar has gone so far as to argue that the character flaws revealed in Cicero’s letters, including not least his vanity, were so great that the decision to publish them after his death could only have been motivated by a desire to discredit the reputation of that champion of republicanism.68 This view has won little acceptance, but it does reflect clearly the problems that readers, ever since Petrarch was shocked by Cicero’s newly discovered letters, have had with this aspect of the Roman world. Perhaps we may detect this distaste for Ciceronian vanity in Shakespeare’s decision to have Brutus exclude Cicero from the conspiracy on the grounds that “... he will never follow anything / That other men begin” (2.1.151–52). Plutarch, in contrast, explains that the conspirators excluded Cicero because they regarded him as by nature lacking courage and as over-cautious by virtue of his age, so that his participation would dull the edge of their own resolution.69

Be that as it may, the very concern for public opinion that Shakespeare makes problematic for Brutus is taken for granted by Plutarch. Plutarch’s report of the argument between Brutus and Cassius acknowledges that Brutus is concerned with appearances, concerned in particular that the conspirators be seen to act consistently with their actual ideals. Better to have let Caesar’s friends practice corruption, Brutus argues, than to tolerate it among their own followers:

For then sayde he, they could but have sayde they had bene cowards: and nowe they may accuse us of injustice, beside the paynes we take, and the daunger we put our selves into.70

As I observed above, the explanation offered by Shakespeare’s Brutus is ambiguous. It is further undercut soon after by his fastidious demand that Cassius provide him with funds in order that he himself be spared recourse to “vile means.” Plutarch, on the other hand, adds an editorial comment showing that he regards the motive behind Brutus’ words to be a laudable concern that principle, action, and reputation be congruent: “And thus may we see what Brutus intent and purpose was.”71 Nothing could be more self-evident and straightforward.

III

In his book on Brutus and the varied portrayals of him in Western literature, M. L. Clarke contrasts Plutarch and Shakespeare as follows: “Shakespeare’s

69 Brutus, 12.
70 The Life of Marcus Brutus in Bullough, Vol. V, 115; Plutarch, 35. A more accurate translation of this passage would have read: “For then sayde he, they could but have sayde we had bene cowards. ...”
71 The Life of Marcus Brutus in Bullough, Vol. V, 115; Plutarch, 35.
primary interest is in the characters rather than in their political aims, and it is Brutus' character that determines the outcome. This statement could be taken to indicate no more than a different choice of perspectives made by individuals who inhabit the same conceptual world and share the same discourse. I am arguing for a more radical contrast, a contrast not between an emphasis on politics and one on character, but rather between two essentially different conceptions of character itself. For Shakespeare character is the product of an essentially private struggle—even though that struggle may be provoked by public circumstances or may have public consequences. For Plutarch and the Romans, character not only is expressed but is defined by public action.

Shakespeare's emphasis upon the private, interior dilemmas of his characters may be understood as an enrichment of the material that he found in his ancient sources. That is very likely the way in which most modern readers familiar with both Shakespeare and his sources instinctively respond to the contrast between them. It may also be why Shakespeareans seem often to be satisfied, as was Shakespeare, to treat his borrowings from antiquity without regard to their ancient context. But we should not be misled by our own modern predilections or by Shakespeare's undisputed genius to conclude, even tacitly, that the Romans were two-dimensional shadows of men, that they were somehow less complicated than Shakespeare's characters or than we, that their motives were less complex and contradictory. If the ancient sources do not record the kinds of inner conflicts and dilemmas to which we attach so much importance, it is not necessarily because Romans did not experience them but because they were insignificant in relation to the public standards by which their personal worth was ultimately to be measured. Shakespeare's shift of emphasis from the outer to the inner man, then, may rightly be understood as an enrichment of his ancient sources, an elaboration of themes in which they had little interest. It may equally well reflect a failure on his part to understand why his Roman subjects identified public performance and personal worth as persistently and as completely as they did, a failure to appreciate, certainly to communicate, the distinctive interplay between social expectation and political expediency that defined the terms on which Roman aristocrats acted out their lives.

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HOW ROMAN ARE SHAKESPEARE'S "ROMANS"?

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