

About This Volume

Robert C. Evans

This volume, like all the others in the Critical Insights series, begins with an introductory section featuring a contribution by a major scholar and expert on the topic. In this case, the scholar is Robert S. Miola, author of numerous essays and books on Shakespeare and classical culture in general and on Shakespeare and Rome in particular. It would be hard to find a better person to introduce a volume on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and Professor Miola offers an especially wide-ranging and accessible introduction in the form of a "self-interview." His contribution is then followed by a brief biography of Shakespeare by the volume's editor.

Next comes a "Critical Contexts" section featuring four different *kinds* of essays: one emphasizing historical information; a second offering an overview of criticism dealing with the play; a third employing a particular "critical lens"; and a fourth comparing and contrasting *Julius Caesar* with one or more other works. In this section, the "historical" essay comes from Catherine Godbold, who explores the role of rhetoric in classical Roman society and then examines the kinds of rhetoric available to Roman women. "Because of social norms relegating women to the private sphere," Godbold explains, the women in *Julius Caesar* "cannot take direct action themselves but must rely on rhetoric to motivate male listeners into doing so. Unfortunately, those same social norms devalue female speech, repeatedly putting Shakespeare's female Roman characters into an ethical double bind: social norms demand that these women protect their families and country, but they also make truly persuasive speech unethical." This dilemma, she notes, "raises an important question: can female speech in Shakespeare's Rome be both effective and ethical?"

In the essay devoted to a survey of criticism about *Julius Caesar*, Brandon Schneeberger reviews one of the fullest and most important critical anthologies ever published about this drama: *Julius Caesar: New Critical Essays*, edited by Horst Zander, which Schneeberger describes as “a lengthy and broad-reaching book that ranges over several topics, theoretical approaches, and historical and cultural contexts that provide a good sense of the critical discussion surrounding Shakespeare’s play. The book,” he notes, “is divided into four sections. Zander’s lengthy introduction comprises Part I. Part II focuses on central aspects of the play, while Part III, mostly theoretical, discusses some of the more debatable issues in *Julius Caesar*. The final section then moves into *Julius Caesar*’s stage history.” Schneeberger, while describing this book, makes both the book and criticism of the play more readily accessible.

In an intriguing essay employing an unusual “critical lens,” Edwin Wong continues to develop his key idea that tragedy results from risk-taking and sheer bad luck. In doing so, he challenges Aristotle’s belief that tragedies teach us moral lessons by showing us how tragic errors result from *hamartia*, or pride. “Instead of error,” Wong asserts, “risk is the dramatic fulcrum of the action” in great tragedies. “Instead of straight line runs of predictable and probable events following a tidy cause and effect causality, improbable events abound” in the best tragic plays. Aristotle and his many followers argue that in their final words, tragic characters “offer helpful advice to playgoers by recanting their errors.” Instead, Wong argues the conclusions of great tragic works typically emphasize “the characters’ utter surprise over the complete disproportion of their *improbable* losses in the face of the *probable* risks they took.” Tragic characters, in other words, typically make reasonable bets but lose big.

Finally, in the last of the four contextual essays, Godbold returns with another study of women in Shakespeare’s Rome in general and in *Julius Caesar* in particular. Her first essay focused on Portia, the wife of Brutus; her second essay spotlights Calpurnia, the wife of Caesar. In the process of discussing Calpurnia, however, Godbold also comments on the situations faced by various other women in

How did you become interested in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*?

Like many students, I first encountered the play in high school and found it a bit lofty, austere, and dull. *Julius Caesar* has long been regarded and taught as a “safe” school text—light on bawdy language and sex scenes, heavy on big speeches and classical history. This presentation, however, has obscured its darker energies, its terrifying turns and counterturns, its withering critique of both rhetoric and politics, and its bitter ironies, ambivalences, and truths. Writing *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge, 1983), I began to realize how much I had missed. A decade or so as Variorum editor of the play enabled me to explore its rich editorial, critical, and theatrical histories. And, in these last years as I became a student and teacher of Latin and Greek, I began to see the play as an influential example of classical reception. As much as Caesar's commentaries themselves or any other classical text, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* has bequeathed to later generations enduring images of the man, his assassination, and the world of ancient Rome.

When did Shakespeare write this play? Why a play about Julius Caesar?

To date *Julius Caesar* we have the diary entry of Thomas Platter, a Swiss traveler who remembered seeing it “very pleasingly performed” in a London theater at two o'clock, 21 September 1599.

In the competitive public theater season we can be sure that Shakespeare wrote this play because he thought it would fill seats at the Globe. And, of course, he was right. Grammar schools in Shakespeare's day, we need to remember, did not teach English, per

se, but Latin; Elizabethans looked to ancient Rome to learn about everything from bee-keeping to empire-building. Everyone who went to school parsed Caesar's Latin accounts of the Gallic and Civil Wars. Even those who did not go to school encountered Caesar everywhere as a figure of military excellence as well as a paragon of worldly pride, achievement, and glory. (Remember Hamlet in the Graveyard scene recalling the fate of Caesar's mortal remains: "Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay / Might stop a hole to keep the wind away," 5.1.220–21). This universal popularity for good and for ill insured immediate name-recognition and buy-in: the mythical superman and exemplar of worldly ambition here becomes a flesh-and-blood man, breathing, walking, talking, bleeding, and dying on stage. The play also presents other famous figures and pivotal events in Roman and world history: the conspiracy and assassination, the bloody civil wars, the rise of Mark Antony, the battle of Philippi, the victory of Octavius (soon to be the legendary Augustus Caesar), the suicides of Brutus and Cassius. What more do you want for a few pence?

Probably following his popular *Henry V* and preceding *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, moreover, capitalized on current theatrical interest in both history and tragedy. Like the English history plays it explores civil unrest, rebellion, and the conflict between private affection and public duty. It dramatizes the hottest political and moral questions of the day regarding the rights of subjects, the responsibilities of rule, the nature of civil order, and the ethics of regicide or tyrannicide. Exactly what constitutes a bad ruler, what can one do about him or her, and who gets to decide? These were vital and urgent questions, not merely theoretical debates, as Queen Elizabeth in 1599 lived under constant threat of assassination.

The play is also a tragedy that features the stunning fall of not one but two central figures—Caesar, who claims to be different from "ordinary men," "constant as the northern star" (3.1.38, 61), just before he is brutally stabbed to death on stage; Brutus, who appears to act for the good of Rome but who displays Caesarean pride in the quarrel scene, makes crucial mistakes regarding Antony and the battle of Philippi, and then commits suicide. The marvelous

CRITICAL
CONTEXTS

Women's Rhetoric in Shakespeare's "Roman" Works: An Example from *Julius Caesar*

Catherine Godbold

Near the end of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, Volumnia stands before her son, a war hero who now threatens to destroy the city of Rome. The safety of the city and its citizens relies solely on her ability to dissuade her son from his current course of action, but, before she can even begin, Coriolanus proclaims that she cannot sway him or change his mind. Faced with such a stubborn refusal, Volumnia must try nonetheless:

You have said you will not grant us any thing;
For we have nothing else to ask, but that
Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
That, if you fail in our request, the blame
May hang upon your hardness: therefore hear us.
(5.3.87–91)

Volumnia acts as a supplicant—albeit an extremely aggressive one—whose voice is her only tool to protect home, honor, and family. The actual power to save or destroy lies in her son's hands, and she is clear in acknowledging his power as well as the consequences of its use. This moment exemplifies the separation between women and direct action in Shakespeare's Rome. Because of social norms relegating women to the private sphere, these characters cannot take direct action themselves but must rely on rhetoric to motivate male listeners into doing so. Unfortunately, those same social norms devalue female speech, repeatedly putting Shakespeare's female Roman characters into an ethical double bind: social norms demand that these women protect their families and country, but they also make truly persuasive speech unethical. This raises an important

question: can female speech in Shakespeare's Rome be both effective and ethical?

The Ethics and Effectiveness of Female Speech

By seeking an answer to this question in Shakespeare's Roman works, we can gain a deeper understanding of female characters' struggles with the divided obligations of public and private life, particularly in protecting their husbands and sons. In addition, we can come to appreciate how Shakespeare illuminates the consequences of blind obedience to a restrictive, honor-bound, patriarchal society that forces conflicts between public and private obligations.¹ The women's speeches in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* exemplify these restrictions, as well as the available means of functioning within and resisting them.

What these plays and *The Rape of Lucrece* reveal is that traditional modes of rhetoric are insufficient within the limitations placed upon female speech, and therefore female speakers must adopt alternative modes of persuasion that trouble traditional conceptions of ethical speech. Largely excluded from public and political life and generally considered intellectually and socially inferior, women in Shakespeare's Rome must rely on innovation in deliberative and epideictic rhetoric as well as creative uses of *ethos* (character or authority) and *pathos* (emotion) to overcome the limited agency allowed by cultural and familial order. Paradoxically, however, the use of these techniques leads to questions about whether they are suitable. Given these conflicts, I seek to answer three primary questions. First, what makes a female speaker persuasive in Shakespeare's Rome? Second, under what conditions is female speech ethical? Third, how do the ethics of female speech help us reach new understandings of the plays and Shakespeare's female characters?

Shakespeare's Roman works offer particularly intriguing opportunities to explore such questions of rhetorical ethics. His Rome pulls together Stoic and Christian virtues in a way that reflects the extremes of public and private demands on individuals. Indeed,

many scholars have found the Roman plays provide particular insight into sixteenth-century social concerns and constructions of gender and identity. When M. W. MacCallum separates the Roman plays from the other tragedies and histories in *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background*, he identifies Shakespeare's unique combination of Roman-ness and Englishness as something not only absent in the non-Roman plays, but also absent in the Roman works of other contemporary playwrights (84–85). Indeed, the Roman works are not purely Roman histories, but dramatic works influenced by England's cultural inheritance of Roman ideas. Elizabeth Agnew Cochran synthesizes the work of A. A. Long and Brad Inwood, stating that "Stoicism was an important philosophical influence . . . [and] that sixteenth-century Europeans often combined elements of Stoic thought with ideas from Plato, Aristotle, and Christian doctrine" (Cochran 722). Furthermore, the elements of Stoicism most often absorbed into Christian culture were those relating to "duty and manliness" (Long qtd. in Cochran 723). David N. Beauregard confirms the prevalence of Stoicism—and Cicero in particular—in Shakespeare's education (37, 42), emphasizing "significant Stoic ethical shading" in his work (42).

The Stoicism of Renaissance England—the "duty and manliness" so sought after—is also the primary source of conflict for the men in Shakespeare's Rome and thus an integral factor in considering the effectiveness and ethics of female speech within the Roman works. In the other histories and tragedies, the conflict between religion and desire or obligation perhaps comes closest to the conflicts caused by *romanitas*, which emphasizes the virtues of honor along with civil and martial service; despite superficial similarities, however, Roman virtue and Christian religion function in vastly different ways. As Coppélia Kahn demonstrates, Shakespeare's Roman plays seem determined to make the Roman ethics of public obligation more compatible with the Christian virtues:

Shakespeare is too responsive to his Roman source materials to make politics merely a clash of egos. Yet neither is he so "Roman" as to naturalize the priority of public over private. As Gary Miles

remarks, “It is . . . precisely the public dimension of his Roman’s lives that is most problematic for Shakespeare,” because he also pursues such “a distinctive interest in the interior life of his characters” (1989: 279). It is the coexistence of these two dimensions of existence and the dilemma of their interrelationship, not the priority of one over the other, that drives and animates the action in *Julius Caesar*.

Shakespeare dramatizes the separation of the inner subjective realm from the distinctively public world of *romanitas* in such a way that it is readable as ideologically produced in that world by the ethos of the republic. Even as this private subject is being constituted in and by a social field, it is also being gendered masculine, through the association of the public realm with Roman “firmness” and the private realm with “the melting spirits of women.”

(*Roman Shakespeare* 79)

Thus, even though the Roman plays and *The Rape of Lucrece* attempt to balance Roman and English sensibilities, the ancient values out of which they arise are in some respects fundamentally different. *Romanitas* begins as a public force, but it is so internalized that each character’s interior life is inextricably linked to public obligation. This does not mean that the Roman plays are wholly incompatible with Shakespeare’s other plays: shame, honor, and manliness, for example, are key points in Lady Macbeth’s manipulation of her husband, but those arguments work for her because they are not functioning in a system based in public service and civic duty of *romanitas*. Even in *The Rape of Lucrece*, which comes closest to bridging the gap between the Roman and Renaissance virtues, Stoicism and *romanitas* are the prevailing forces. No other plays or poems in Shakespeare’s corpus deal so explicitly with the specific

problems these philosophies create: the ethics of rhetoric in the Roman plays originates from a different value system.

Moreover, these works treat Ciceronian and Stoic values as integral: *romanitas* is closely bound up with anxieties about ethical speech, especially the dangers of persuasion, the unsettling powers of female sexuality in a patriarchal culture, and Machiavellian uses of power (see Colish 90–91). These issues create conflicts of interest that no character—male or female—can overcome without great cost. Shakespeare’s dramatic and poetic representations of Rome, then, allow for the consideration not only of what it means to be Roman, but what it means to be a female who speaks in a Roman world. The other tragedies and histories often follow the conflict between personal interests and societal or moral demands, but they lack the emphasis on Roman ideals of unwavering constancy and honor. The comedies, for their part, often negate many of the cultural restrictions on their female characters as part of the generic tradition (Bamber 28–31).

Women’s Attempts to Persuade

In the Roman plays and *The Rape of Lucrece*, there is at least one scene in which a woman’s ability to persuade a lone and usually male auditor has massive consequences for herself, her auditor, and her country. Oftentimes, these works also include a secondary, less skillful female orator as a rhetorical foil. The more effective speakers demonstrate a greater ability to manipulate *ethos* and employ shame persuasively, but they do so by potentially crossing into unethical speech. Tamora and Cleopatra act as Others—both culturally and ethically—who demonstrate alternatives in rhetorical technique and ethics, all in reaction to Roman values.

Although the comparable rhetorical activity of women in these works invites reading *The Rape of Lucrece* alongside the plays, *Cymbeline* constitutes a different case. Because *The Rape of Lucrece* is a narrative poem, on the surface it would seem more reasonable to omit it from discussion here and include *Cymbeline*—often categorized as one of Shakespeare’s “Roman” plays—in its place, but *The Rape of Lucrece* is crucial to this discussion because of the

CRITICAL READINGS

The Conversation of Friendship in *Julius Caesar*

Brandon Schneeberger

“Et tu, Brute?” The question haunts the entirety of *Julius Caesar*. But the words following are equally significant: “Then fall Caesar.” The full statement, Caesar’s last, brings to mind Renaissance anxieties concerning the importance of friendship for a stable society. If Caesar’s close friend Brutus is also a part of the conspiracy, who then can be trusted and who then can stand? The extent to which citizens can be true friends in the public sphere becomes a central theme on which the entire play hinges. Though one of Shakespeare’s shorter plays, *Julius Caesar* contains Shakespeare’s most frequent use of the word *friend*, and few words appear more often in the play than *friend* and *love*. Critics have pointed out that Shakespeare intentionally uses the two words in different ways, *friend* often signifying a political ally rather than a true friend in the classical sense of the word (see Styr, 286, 293–94, 299). No doubt the dissociation between friendship (*amititia*) and love (*amor*)—words that etymologically share the same root—causes great instability in the play. I specifically examine here the extent to which this dissociation affects the friendship between Brutus and Cassius. I also will explore how conversation affects such friendships and suggest that despite the highly political atmosphere of the play, the two friends, through conversation, transcend the political climate of the play and grow, to some extent, into a true friendship based on love.

False Conversation: Friendship, Rhetoric, and Flattery

One common thread throughout classical, medieval, and Renaissance views on friendship is the natural tie between friendship and love. The love of true friendship is so unifying that many have even considered a friend a “second self.”¹ This intimate union between

two friends naturally emphasizes the importance of conversation, especially when considering the root of *conversation*, which means to dwell, abide, or “keep company with” (“converse”). In the Renaissance, *conversation* still could mean “the action of living,” “one’s spiritual being” (figuratively), “living together,” “manner of conducting oneself,” and even “sexual intercourse” (“conversation”). Given this, the relationship between one’s conversation and his intimacy with others becomes obvious. Aristotle writes that “Many a friendship has lack of conversation broken” (9.5), and Cicero suggests lessening intercourse as a way to get rid of a friend (113). Tom MacFaul argues that conversation is the best mode for dramatically conveying friendship and that this is the primary way friendship has been represented from Plato’s time to the Renaissance. Conversation is, moreover, a “mode of self-assertion, both within the friendship itself, and to a wider society” (MacFaul 25). Thus, it is that in drama speeches “draw more attention to the speaker . . . than to the addressee or the person spoken about” (MacFaul 26). This sets up what I believe to be a fundamental tension in *Julius Caesar*: characters must determine just how sincere a speaker is. MacFaul points out that in the Renaissance an increasing prevalence of rhetoric in friendship led to wider distrust of one’s friends (15). While in the Middle Ages friendships were relatively secure, based on marriage, family, or regional connections, the fracturing of these communities made affection and choice, not one’s immediate community, the basis for friendship (5). As friendship became more egalitarian it likewise became less stable, and this instability led to increased anxieties about the genuineness of another’s friendship and conversation.

Readers of *Julius Caesar* have noted the general lack of natural conversation in the play (see Van Doren 181). Not only does conversation immediately break down in the opening scene, but in their first conversation in act 1, scene 2, Cassius and Brutus converse using veiled and ambiguous language. The conversation in many ways mirrors the larger political instability in Rome (see Styrt 292). In what Robert C. Evans characterizes as “conspiratorial language,” which is “often doubled-edged and ambiguous” (102), neither friend

fully opens up to the other. Brutus, for instance, claims he is “with himself at war” and for this reason has forgotten “the shows of love to other men” (1.2.46–47). Cassius, therefore, has buried within himself “thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations” (1.2.50). Both men hint that something is bothering them, but neither wish to open up completely to the other. The conversation goes directly against Cicero’s warning that “in friendship you can have nothing that can be trusted, nothing sure, unless . . . you can look into the open heart of your friend and reveal your own; you cannot even be certain of loving or being loved, since you cannot know how much of reality there may be in either [friend]” (139). The highly veiled language between Brutus and Cassius therefore limits their conversation, and when Cassius asks Brutus if he can see his own face (1.2.51), he suggests that Brutus’s lack of openness to his friend has in turn closed off his own self-knowledge. Cassius then suggests that others may see Brutus’s “hidden worthiness” (1.2.57) even when he cannot. Specifically, Cassius will perform the role of mirror and so open up to Brutus his inner thoughts:

Therefore, good Brutus, be prepar’d to hear;
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.
(1.2.66–70)

In these lines Cassius subverts the notion that a friend is one’s “second self.” He does not seek to reveal Brutus to himself so much as to reveal his (i.e., Cassius’s) own personal agenda to Brutus. In other words, “Brutus” becomes a rhetorical ploy or a mask that Cassius puts on to reveal his own inner person. The quote recalls Erasmus’s idea that “the quality of mind is manifest in speech even more than the likeliness of the body is reflected in a mirror” (see Randall 56). Cassius’s following speech *will* reveal the quality of his mind, but only after he has put on the mask of Brutus. In *Julius Caesar*’s Rome, one must never openly speak his mind, and so Cassius uses the language of friendship to undermine qualities

of true friendship. Cassius does not yet actually see Brutus as a “second self” but instead as a political ally useful for his desire to remove Caesar from office.

But Cassius’s reference to a mirror also alludes to a line from Plutarch’s *Moralia* in which Plutarch describes a flatterer as a mirror that only ever reflects back to his friend that friend’s own feelings (*Moralia* 285). Perhaps more damaging than the veiled and ambiguous language is the rampant use of flattery throughout Cassius’s speech in act 1, scene 2 and much of the first half of *Julius Caesar*. Indeed, flattery is the deliberate distortion of language that inhibits true conversation, destroys friendship, and ultimately tears apart society. Cicero, for instance argues that friendship cannot exist if there is feigning or deceit (45). Elsewhere in the *Moralia* Plutarch describes flattery as a “pestilence in great houses and great affairs, [that] oftentimes overturns kingdoms and principalities” (267). Flattery, indeed, was seen as so detrimental to society as a whole in the Middle Ages that Dante places flatterers even below violent murderers (*Inferno* 28.103–36). The flatterers bathe in excrement in the second bolgia of the eighth circle, a circle that includes inner circles as if an inverted cone, functioning much like an inverted city. Considering that seducers, hypocrites, deceivers, sowers of discord, and falsifiers are all found in the eighth circle, Dante clearly believes honest language to be a crucial element for maintaining a stable society. So, too, in the first half of *Julius Caesar* as flattery runs rampant in Rome. Cassius, for instance, tells Brutus he has a “hidden worthiness” that even he does not know about (1.2.57). Cassius knows, too, that Brutus is full of honor (1.2.90–91). Later, he asks, “Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that ‘Caesar’? / Why should that name be sounded more than yours?” (1.2.142–43). Indeed, the name of “Brutus” is just as worthy of praise as “Caesar.” Brutus’s name, indeed, “will start a spirit as soon as ‘Caesar’” (1.2.147). Brutus, however, is not invited into this speech but is meant to participate as a mere listener, even to see himself as an image. Cassius later reveals that he knows Brutus is no flatterer himself, and for this reason Cassius can more easily deceive him (1.2.308–15; cf. Plutarch, *Brutus* 139).

In act 2, scene 1, Cassius immediately begins the conspirators' meeting with flattery: "and everyone doth wish / You [Brutus] had but that opinion of yourself / Which every noble Roman bears of you" (2.1.91–93). Flattery is not unique to Cassius, however. Because Caesar enjoys hearing how men are deceived by flattery, Decius will in turn deceive Caesar: "But when I tell him he hates flatterers / He says he does, being then most flattered" (2.1.207–08). In the crucial assassination scene itself, Caesar rejects Metellus Cimber, who kneels to appeal for his brother. Caesar tells Metellus he cannot be swayed with "sweet words, / Low-crooked curtsies, and base spaniel fawning" (3.1.42–43). Brutus interjects and, in claiming not to flatter, kisses Caesar's hand and appeals for Metellus's brother (3.1.52–54). Cassius soon falls on his knees, yet despite the actions, Caesar remains "constant as the northern star" (3.1.60). Indeed, it is ironically within the context of Caesar's refusal to be swayed by flattery that he is stabbed by flatterers (cf. Plutarch, *Caesar* 575). On the one hand, the stabbing of Caesar may symbolize a physical manifestation of the inward destructiveness of flattery. On the other, it is a chilling demonstration of the perils of such false adulation: when flattery fails to move its audience, it turns violent. In either case, Caesar, at least here, symbolizes a stable and firm society in relative concord literally taken down by flattery and deceit (see Styrt 299).

In the fallout of Caesar's death, the rhetoric of the speeches overwhelms any attempt at conversation. Notably, as the rhetoric intensifies, the references to friendship and love increase dramatically. In act 3 alone there are twenty-two uses of both *friend* and *love*, making up nearly forty-two percent and thirty-eight percent of the play's use of each word. It cannot be mere coincidence that as the dialogue becomes rhetorical the appeal to both intensifies, all surrounding the body of the dead friend that occupies all but forty lines of these scenes (see Candido 133). The frequency of both words throughout the play is interesting to track. In act 1 there are four uses of *friend*, act 2 six, act 3 twenty-two, act 4 nine, and act 5 eleven. The repetition of the term *love* shares a similar trajectory being used ten, eleven, twenty-two, ten, and four in the respective

RESOURCES

Chronology of William Shakespeare's Life_____

1564 William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 1564. He is baptized in the local church on April 26. His date of birth is usually assumed to have been April 23. His parents are John and Mary Shakespeare. John is a successful glovemaking who, in the years preceding and following William's birth, is a respected member of the local government, although later he suffers financial and social reversals. In addition to giving birth to William, Mary bears seven other children. William almost certainly attends the local grammar school.

1582 William marries Anne Hathaway, daughter of a prominent local farmer. Anne is three months pregnant at the time of the wedding and eight years older than William. In 1583, Anne gives birth to a daughter (Susanna). In 1585, the couple has twins (Hamnet and Judith). Hamnet dies in 1596.

1585-92 Details of Shakespeare's life during this period are unclear and have been the subject of much speculation. One legend (now widely doubted) suggests that he had to leave Stratford to escape the law after he allegedly poached deer from the property of a prominent local landowner. Other writers have speculated that during his time in Stratford Shakespeare may have worked for a lawyer and/or may have taught school. Some recent scholars have suggested that during part of this period Shakespeare may have been living, teaching, and (as an amateur) acting while part of the household of a prominent Catholic family in Lancashire. Numerous other theories abound concerning these "lost years." The idea that Shakespeare taught in some capacity seems plausible to many.

Works by William Shakespeare

For an exceptionally detailed discussion of the chronology of Shakespeare's works (including discussion of the many disputes about the chronology) see William *Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Norton, 1997), pp. 69–144. See also the similarly detailed discussion by David Bevington, editor, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Longman, 1997), pp. A1–A21. Bevington helpfully gives the full titles of quarto (small format) printings and also makes their dates of publication quite clear.

Plays were usually first performed not long after they were written. In some cases we have evidence of first (or at least early) performances; in some cases we do not. Whereas dates of first printings are usually very solid, dates of first performances are often conjectural.

Even the best experts often disagree about the dates of probable composition of Shakespeare's works. In the listing below, Bevington's suggestions are cited alongside those of G. Blakemore Evans (in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. Houghton Mifflin, 1997, pp. 77–87) and Wells and Taylor. The frequent variances will give some idea of how often even the best students of these issues can disagree.

Love's Labor's Lost (Bevington: c. 1588–97; G. B. Evans: 1594–95 [“revised 1597 for court performance”]; Wells and Taylor: 1593–95; comedy; first known printing, 1598).

The Henry the Sixth Plays (Bevington: c. 1589–92; G. B. Evans: 1589–90 [revised 1594–95 for Part One; 1590–91 for Part Two; 1590–91 for Part Three]; Wells and Taylor: Part Three, 1590–92; Part Two: 1590–91; Part One: 1591–92 [with other authors]. Three history plays; the second part was first printed in 1594; the third part was first printed in 1595; the first part [perhaps the last written of the three] was first printed in 1623).

Titus Andronicus (Bevington: c. 1589–92; G. B. Evans: 1593–94; Wells and Taylor: 1590–91; tragedy; first known printing, 1594).

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Caesar Slain: Nineteenth-Century Illustrations of the Assassination in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

Editor's Note: Jordan Bailey's essay earlier in this volume illustrates (quite literally) the degree to which Caesar's assassination has always been a popular topic for painters, book illustrators, sculptors, and other visual artists. This appendix reproduces several more illustrations of that famous event. All the illustrations come from the nineteenth century, the great age of illustrated editions of Shakespeare.



Illustration 1. "The Slain Caesar." From *The Leopold Shakespeare. The Poet's Works in Chronological Order, from the text of Professor Delius. With The Two Noble Kinsmen, and Edward III., and an Introduction by F. J. Furnivall. / Illustrated.* This is a rare illustration showing Caesar with a dagger sticking out of his body. Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., n.d. [1883?], p. 642. No artist identified. Editor's personal collection.

About the Editor

Robert C. Evans was I. B. Young Professor of English at Auburn University at Montgomery, where he taught since 1982 and was awarded emeritus status upon his retirement in 2021. In 1984, he received his PhD from Princeton University, where he held Weaver and Whiting fellowships as well as a University fellowship. In later years his research was supported by fellowships from the Newberry Library (twice), the American Council of Learned Societies, the Folger Shakespeare Library (twice), the Mellon Foundation, the Huntington Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, and the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

In 1982, he was awarded Princeton's G. E. Bentley Prize and in 1989 was selected Professor of the Year for Alabama by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. At AUM, he has received the Faculty Excellence Award and has been named Distinguished Research Professor, Distinguished Teaching Professor, and University Alumni Professor. Most recently he was named Professor of the Year by the South Atlantic Association of Departments of English. In 2020, he won the Eugene Current-Garcia Distinguished Scholar Award presented annually by the Alabama College English Teachers Association.

He is a contributing editor to the John Donne *Variorum Edition*, senior editor of the *Ben Jonson Journal*, and is the author or editor of over sixty books (on such topics as Ben Jonson, Martha Moulsworth, Kate Chopin, John Donne, Frank O'Connor, Brian Friel, Ambrose Bierce, Amy Tan, early modern women writers, pluralist literary theory, literary criticism, twentieth-century American writers, American novelists, Shakespeare, and seventeenth-century English literature). He is also the author of roughly four hundred published or forthcoming essays or notes (in print and online) on a variety of topics, especially dealing with Renaissance literature, critical theory, women writers, short fiction, and literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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