

SHAKESPEARE: His Infinite Variety

edited by
Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney
and Grzegorz Zinkiewicz



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WYDAWNICTWO
UNIwersytetu
ŁÓDZKIEGO

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Celebrating the 400th Anniversary of His Death

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ŁÓDŹ 2017

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Stämpfli Polska Sp. z o.o.

Cover Image: © Shutterstock.com

The editors warmly thank Prof. dr hab. Radosław Bania, the Dean of the International and Political Studies Faculty, for partly supporting financially this publikation

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Published by Łódź University Press
First Edition. W.07845.16.0.K

ISBN 978-83-8088-797-8
e-ISBN 978-83-8088-798-5

Publisher's sheets 10.8; printing sheets 12.75

Łódź University Press
90-131 Łódź, 8 Lindleya St.
www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
tel. 48 (42) 665 58 63

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety; other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish

Antony and Cleopatra, 2.2. 271-275

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Living Daily with Shakespeare Worldwide



he four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, which was celebrated in 2016, drew attention to his international recognition. Indeed, *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, known as the First Folio (1623), is second in popularity only to the Bible. In other words, as a writer who died four hundred years ago, he still enjoys an exciting career: his works are constantly printed, read, translated, performed, passed on, emulated, assimilated, appropriated, and cited.

Perhaps beginning a book on Shakespeare with the statement that he is the most widely read author in the world does not predict exciting content; however, I trust that this international collection of essays may open new interpretive perspectives on his plays, sonnets, and narrative poems. The essays, written by academics coming from various cultures—Greek, Indian, Japanese, Ukrainian, British, French, Italian, Slovakian, and Polish—deal with diverse cultural, political, and social aspects of Shakespeare. The volume's multiethnic character shows him as a citizen of the world, an artist whose works enjoy an inexpugnable position both at the local and global level of his international renown.

The essays included in this volume attempt to answer, directly or indirectly, the following questions connected with Shakespeare's popularity worldwide. Can we appropriate Enobarbus's fascination with Cleopatra, borrowed for the motto of this volume: "age cannot wither Shakespeare, or custom stale"? What makes it so that his works do not "cloy" their recipients' appetite, but instead constantly whet it for more? Can we still talk about Shakespeare's "infinite variety" and how are we to understand this epithet in the twenty first century? Does this opinion hold in the context of the international reception of his works? Why does he still enjoy such an exciting career—with his works still in active circulation—even though he died in 1616? How is it possible for works written with a quill over four hundred years ago by a man in ruffs and tights to resonate with the hearts and minds of contemporary recipients all over the world?

In his famous monograph, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), Harold Bloom maintains that Shakespeare was the first writer to create genuinely three-dimensional characters who demonstrate inner complexity in their ability to think and feel. Shakespeare's greatness is indeed closely connected with his characters--e.g. Hamlet, Falstaff, Lady Macbeth, Lucrece are treated as eponymous names and they function in cultures all over the world. Their inner lives are very intricate, and though finite on page, they remain infinite in faculty and endless in interpretive mediations. Their qualities of both mind and spirit, and their ability to be self-dramatizing as well witty, ironic, skeptical, and laconic, turn them into real flesh and blood human beings, who are easy to understand and to identify with, as evidenced by responses to Shakespeare all over the world. In her essay "The Price of Difference: Shakespeare's Varieties of Bullying," Xenia Georgopolou demonstrates that, despite being a modern psychological term, bullying as a complex human emotion is experienced by many of his characters.

Some people maintain that the attraction of Shakespeare's works lies in his language. Yet, for the twenty-first century audience, his language, with its old-fashioned and long-forgotten words and phrases, often inhibits a comprehensive understanding of his texts. Dated, by our contemporary standards, Elizabethan syntax, word games and neologisms additionally complicate our response to Shakespeare. The situation is further exacerbated in non-English speaking countries, where his works are accessed through translation. As several of the essays in this volume testify, Shakespeare's use of language is extremely important, though it constitutes a labyrinthine issue for study.

After all, translations of his works are usually interpretations of the originals. They present competent renditions of Shakespeare's thoughts into target languages that are not only different linguistically, but also culturally, aesthetically, and stylistically. This complex aspect of Shakespeare's life in non-English speaking countries is covered by Aleksandra Budrewicz in "The One Gentleman from Poland. Polonius and 19th century Polish Translation," by Mark Sokolyansky in "Another Look Upon Alexander Pushkin's Role in Appropriation of Shakespeare by Russian Culture" and by Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney in "Wojciech Bogusławski's *Hamlet* (1798): Positioning Shakespeare in Polish Culture".

The universal significance of Shakespeare's plays is also expressed in their moral and human dimensions, which are revealed in diverse plots, dramatic structures, themes, and interior monologues. They expand the imagination, and generate an ability to respond to and fully embrace our complex human condition. Mario Domenichelli presents this aspect of Shakespeare's works in

his essay “Shakespeare’s Ideological Conflicts and Rhetorical Battles.” Indeed, Shakespeare’s texts conceptualize life’s existential realities: isolation, love, hate, ambition, hubris, revenge, loss, murder, rebellion, war, meaninglessness, illness, suffering, death, human and inhuman power, the divine, and the tragic possibilities of intimacy. These realities are experienced by people all over the world, which demonstrates the universality of Shakespeare’s works.

The array of metaphors embedded within his texts enriches our understanding of the dilemma of human existence when it is confronted with life experience and knowledge. Readers/spectators encounter the positive role of the loss of innocence: they receive first-hand access to maturity by gaining a positive moral outlook, a tolerance for all races, and a humanistic attitude.

It is this universality or human sameness which usually functions as a bridge for conveying knowledge of cultural diversity. In other words, the local interpretations of Shakespeare’s works demonstrate how different creative minds “disclose” the texts according to the requirements of their time, place, race, age, and gender. In “Meeting the Binaries: Angela Carter’s *Wise Children* as a Shakespearean Appropriation,” Anna Pietrzykowska-Motyka shows that these adaptations, appropriations, parodies, transformations, and re-writings only make sense within the context of universal continuity. This continuity does not only refer to the continuity of Shakespeare’s humanism, but also the continuity of his presence in world cultures.

The responses to his works worldwide demonstrate the existence of universal constants in human life, despite changing philosophical, literary, or theatrical aesthetics and modes. The myriad of truths “discovered” in the plays emerge from a variety of readings. These “discoveries,” I think, are what performers, directors, audiences, and readers particularly value. After all, the dramatic genre requires constant creative appropriation; in their theatrical renditions, Shakespeare’s plays all undergo cultural appropriations that transform and even change the understanding and, consequently, meaning of the original text. After all, dramatic texts are not like the other literary genres: they not only offer, but also invite, urge, and, in a way, impose infinite opportunities for their endless remaking by directors, stage designers, choreographers, performers, and many others often not listed in the theatre programs. In Shakespeare’s case these artists usually take advantage of the universal character of his texts and treat them as inspiration to interpret their own national histories and literatures by suiting, justifying, and frequently exalting their cultures in his name.

Just as one thinks that nothing more can be done to make Shakespeare’s plays exciting for contemporary audiences, new theatrical interpretations appe-

ar. Examples of this flexibility of Shakespeare's plays is demonstrated in: "*Hamlet* (2015), Directed by Yukio Ninagawa: Possessed by the Power of Theatre" by Emi Hamana; "'The Art of Performance': Staging *Hamlet* in the Rusyn Language" by Jana Wild; "Playing the Fools with Time and Space? Digital Remediations in "Azorro Presents: Poland at the Crossroads or Whose Words Are Shakespearean in *Hamlet's* 'words, words, words'" by Monika Sosnowska.

One of the essays in this volume is inspired by the responses of students, who are invariably eager to read his works. His *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, to name a few, are usually included in the syllabi of masterpieces of world literature courses all across the globe. In "Bombarding the Headquarters: Academic Tradaptations of Shakespeare in Twenty-First Century Bengal," Sarbani Chaudhury shows how Kalyani University students used Shakespeare to deal with postcolonial issues, popular culture, and politics. Though no essay in this volume presents high school students' current interest in Shakespeare's plays, I believe it is worth mentioning. In 2017, the International Shakespeare Research Centre at the University of Łódź, organized the contest "Shakespeare. Camera. Action." It revealed that high school students find it inspirational to recite selected fragments from Shakespeare's plays in various unusual public spaces, which they documented in short films.

Recently, experimental stagings, film versions, adaptations, and YouTube interpretations have become standard responses to, and interactions with, the Shakespearean canon. Grace Ioppolo discusses this trend in her essay "Shakespeare and Digital and Social Media."

As all these essays demonstrate, the inspirational possibilities of Shakespeare's works, both as written texts and as theatrical and digital phenomena, still evoke international interest. Interpreted through the prisms of the authors' cultural experiences, which reflect heterogeneous academic methodologies and practices, Shakespeare never "cloys." On the contrary, his characters, language, plots, dramatic structures, themes, subjects, contexts, and many other elements inherent in his works are never "stale." Like Cleopatra on the barge, which Enobarbus describes in his monologue, the power of Shakespeare's works never allow to fully satisfy "the appetites," but they constantly "make hungry" for more cultural, political, and social analyses, interpretations, and appropriations. I hope readers of this collection of essays enjoy our multi-national encounters with Shakespeare as much as their authors enjoyed writing about them and are thereby able to experience the Bard's infinite variety.


Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney

*Revisiting Texts
and Contexts*

MARIO DOMENICHELLI

University of Florence, Italy

SHAKESPEARE'S IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS AND RHETORICAL BATTLES

n 1599, when Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* must have been staged for the first time, no English translation of Machiavelli's *De Principatibus* had been published¹. However, the book's scandalous fame was widespread, and it could either be read in Silvestro Tegli's Latin version (1560), or in Jacques Gohory's French translation (1553)². In any case, in Protestant countries Machiavelli's negative fame was spread by the French, Latin, and English versions of Gentillet's famous Huguenot Anti-Machiavel³. Also an Italian

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¹ Though some translations were circulating in manuscript form in the last decade of the 16th century, Edward Dacres's version, the first to be printed, was published by Bishop in London, only in 1640. See: Alessandra Petrina, *A Florentine Prince in Queen Elizabeth's Court*. Petrina is also the author of *Machiavelli in the British Isles*. On the English Machiavelli see: Giuliano Procacci, *La fortuna inglese del Machiavelli*, in *Studi sulla fortuna del Machiavelli*.

² Paris, Le Mangnier, 1571, based on Guillaume Cappel's 1553 translation (Paris, Charles Estienne).

³ Innocent Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un Royaume ou autre Principauté. Contre Nicholas Machiavel Florentin* (1576), see: Antonio D'Andrea & Patricia Stewart's critical edition (1974). Gentillet's *Discours* was anonymously transl. into Latin the following year: *Commentariorum de regno aut quovis principatu recte & tranquille administrando libri tres... Adversus Nicolaum Machiavellum*,

version of *The Prince* was circulating in London, printed by John Wolfe, with an introduction either by Jacopo Castelvetro, or by Petruccio Ubaldini,⁴ both of them political and religious refugees in England out of the Inquisition's reach. In the introduction to the Wolfe edition, the interpretation of *De Principatibus* was totally different from what one could read in Gentillet's book. Machiavelli was described as a republican, and a cold-blood analyst of the corruption of the late *Quattrocento* Italian political scene. Thus, as we read in the preface to the Wolfe edition of *I discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Machiavelli teaches "a perfect knowledge of the difference between a regime of justice, and one of injustice, between a Prince and a Tyrant, between the rule of many good men, and that of a few wicked ones, between a well ruled common wealth and the licentious and confused rule of the multitude" ("a punto a conoscere qual differenza sia da un principe giusto ad un tiranno, dal governo di molti buoni a quello di pochi malvagi e da un commune ben regolato ad una moltitudine confusa e licenziosa.") (Machiavelli, *I discorsi sulla prima Deca di Tito Livio*).

Machiavelli's books were not the only Italian books printed in England. Bruno had his books published in London⁵, and Wolfe also published Pietro Aretino's *I Ragionamenti, Il Marescalco, La Cortegiana, Talanta, L' Hipocrito*⁶,
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The English version by Simon Paterick was published in 1602—see: Antonio D'Andrea, *Machiavelli, Satan and the Gospel* (156-177), in which the Latin translation is attributed to Lambert Daneau.

⁴ *Il Prencipe...* con alcune altre operette, Palermo, Heredi d'Antoniello degli Antonielli, 1584; see: Paola Ottolenghi, *Giacopo Castelvetro esule modenese nell'Inghilterra di Shakespeare*. On then Wolfe editions see: Gerber *All of the five fictitious Italian editions of Writings of Machiavelli and three of those of Pietro Aretino printed by John Wolfe (1584-1588)* (129-135, 201.208); see also: Idem, *N. Machiavelli. Die Handschriften, Ausgaben und Übersetzungen Seiner Werke im 16 und 17 Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 85, ff.

⁵ On Italian books printed in Renaissance England see: Sellers. In the colophon of *Degli heroici furori* we find "Parigi, appresso Antonio Baio", but the book was printed by John Charlewood in 1585. Charlewood also printed *Lo spaccio della bestia trionfante* (1584), given for printed in Paris (no printer's name), and *De la causa, principio, et uno* (1584), *De l'infinito universo et mondi* (1584), *Cabala del caualllo Pegaseo* (1585) given for printed in Paris or in Venice.

⁶ Peter Whitehorn's translation of *The Arte of Warre* had been printed in 1560-62 by John Kingston for Nicholas England. Wolfe printed it in Italian in 1587 (Heredi d'Antoniello degli Antonielli, Palermo). *Historie fiorentine* was also printed by Wolfe under the name of Heredi di Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari in 1587. *Lasino d'oro di Niccolò Machiavelli con tutte laltre sue operette (Dell'Occasione, Di Fortuna, Dell'Ingratitudine, Dell'ambizione, Belfagor, Compendio, Mandragola, Clitia)*, has in the colophon Rome 1588; *Quattro commedie del divino Pietro Aretino (La Cortigiana, La Talanta, L'Hipocrito, Il Marescalco* were printed by

with anonymous prefaces (Ubal dini, or Castelvetro) conceived as apologies, and defenses. Thus, we read a somewhat libertine assumption in the anonymous Barbagrìgia's preface in the Wolfe edition of *I Ragionamenti d'amore*, published in 1584: "chi non lascia la libertà agli uomini, che ha lor conceduta la benigna Natura, non fa altro che fargli diventare doppi e malvagi" ("Human beings must be let free to enjoy benign Nature's freedom, or else they are doomed to become double-tongued and wicked"), thus "chi non permette a' begli spiriti di palesare con le dotte penne loro al mondo cieco le cattiverie de le femine malvagie e le sporchezze degli ipocriti, niente altro opera che nutrire e coprire il vizio sotto il mantello de l'onestà"⁷. ("where men of wits are not allowed to use their pen to open the eyes of the world and show the wickedness of harlots, and the hypocrites' dirty mind, vice remains secretly hidden under honesty's cloak"). From a certain point of view, here Aretino is indirectly described as a kind of *martyr* of truth, a witness to *παρρησία* (freedom of speech) in a philosophical key of cynicism, even though one might also assume that Aretino's is not really a *parlar franco*, frank speaking, but a *parlar coperto*, covert speaking, in *prudencia*, delivering a secret message on freedom of speech disguised as a harlot's handbook, for the ears of those who could understand.

Be it as it may, all those books had been listed in the *index librorum prohibitorum* since 1559, even though no printing permission for any of them had been released by any authority in Italy since 1549. Wolfe probably meant to smuggle his Machiavelli and Aretino to Italy,⁸ but a number of those books could also be sold in London, where Italian was generally spoken, or read among merchants, people of quality, poets, playwrights, intellectuals, so that it would be wrong to assume that Machiavelli was chiefly known in England through that sort of wicked propaganda caricature one finds in Gentillet's *Antimachiavel*.⁹ A proof of this may be found in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* where the

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Wolfe in 1588. The first part of *I Ragionamenti* was published in Rome by Gio. Andrea del Melograno in 1589.

⁷ *Finisce la seconda parte de ragionamenti di M. Pietro Aretino (...) stampata con buona licenza (toltami) nella nobil città di Bengodi ne l'Italia altre volte più felice, il viggessimo primo d'octobre MDLXXXIV C., A2v, C.A3r*. See: Gerber, "All of the five fictitious Italian Editions of Writings of Machiavelli" (2-6; 129-35; 187-206); SELLERS, "Italian Books printed in England before 1640" (105-28); CRANE, *Italian Social Customs of the Sixteenth Century and Their Influence on The Literatures of Europe*; Gargano, *Scapigliatura Italiana*.

⁸ See: Bertelli and Innocenti.

⁹ See: Orsini. See also: Praz. Innocent Gentillet, *Discours contre Machiavel* has been edited by Antonio D'Andrea & Pamela Stewart (1974). On Innocent Gentillet and the

Machiavellian element is transparent, even though it does neither correspond to Gentillet's caricature, nor to the Machiavelli we find in the anonymous prefaces to the Wolfe editions. Machiavelli, if I am not mistaken, never mentions Julius Caesar, Cassius, Brutus, Marc Antony in *De Principatibus*, although he frequently does in *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca*, of course, and in *The Art of War*. In the republican perspective of *I Discorsi*, Caesar is seen both as the tyrant who brought to an end political freedom in Rome forever, and, at the same time, as the great soldier and statesman who prepared Rome's greatness to come (Chapt. 10, 17, 37 etc.). To my knowledge, no mention is made of Brutus's and Cassius's plot, and of Caesar's assassination, which is odd enough considering that from Machiavelli's perspective it might have been a crucial event of a great power conquered and lost, and an *exemplum* well worth analyzing.

What one finds in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is rather, as I will try to show, a Machiavelli turned to "il buon fine". As a consequence of this, in a very dialectical way, Shakespeare's two tragedies on the Roman civil wars and the creation of the Empire, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, articulate a philosophy of history structured on the necessity of Evil, where Roman history is read as the antecedent of English history between the end of the Sixteenth and the first decade of the Seventeenth century. In Shakespeare's "imperial diptych"—*Julius Caesar* (1599), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606)—a rhetorical battle is fought, whose changing fronts I intend to analyze, also taking into consideration some other variations of the same theme in *Troilus and Cressida* (1601-2), and *Othello* (1603-4)¹⁰.

As the battle front-line is immensely fragmented, one should rather speak of a series of front-lines connected by way of analogy or by way of symmetrical oppositions. In the Imperial Diptych the battle-line is not only the one we find in *Julius Caesar*, opposing Brutus's attic speech-delivering technique to Antony's Asian rhetoric, but the confrontation is also between aristocratic speech, on the one side, and Machiavellian demagogy on the other. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, with a reversal of the perspective, Antony's oriental, Asian rhetoric is on the losing side, beaten by Octavian's laconic Atticism. As a matter of fact the question we are posing is concerned with the power of language, which can also be exemplified by the opposition between Othello's "free and open nature", and "honest Iago's" honesty as the *exemplum* of the Elizabethan Machiavelli-like character.

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anti-Machiavellian tradition, both as a Protestant and Catholic feature in the Reformation/Counter Reformation age, see: Domenichelli, *Cavaliere e gentiluomo*, 86-92.

¹⁰ The Shakespeare edition I shall be using is *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997).

What we shall be looking for in *Othello*, is a gap, a hiatus, some hermeneutic threshold through which the epoch's common-sense axiology, what is given for granted, is simply turned upside-down.

In *Julius Caesar*, there is a passage obviously taken from Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* (62) in which Caesar is twice reported to express his idea of Cassius. Caesar can feel danger in Cassius's pale pensiveness, and, referring to Cassius and Brutus alike, Caesar also says he does not fear fat men, but he rather distrusts the pale and thin whom he considers dangerous people¹¹. Caesar, that is, does not undervalue Cassius, either in Plutarch, or in Shakespeare, as in Cassius's restlessness he perceives a dangerous political intelligence of the world:

Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights.
Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look.
He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous." (1.2: 193-215).

Cassius in the first part of Shakespeare's play shows a political intelligence, a *science du monde*, and an adaptability, which is certainly superior to Brutus's rigidly aristocratic ideological posture and to Antony's boyish inclination to pleasure. It is also superior to Caesar's understanding of what is going on around him, as Caesar seems not only to be half deaf, as he really was, but he also seems to be totally blind. In the first part of the play, Cassius is the one who conceives the form of time, thus shaping events to come, at least up to a point. There is no change whatsoever in Caesar's character, and there is no change in Brutus' either. Caesar and Brutus correspond to, and are the emblems of two different conceptions of power and governance of the *polis*. Cassius and Antony instead are the only ones who undergo a change in the quartet of outstanding jarring voices in the tale of Caesar's death. They change according to an antithetical movement which may seem to be a change in character, but which in fact corresponds far more to a gradual, symmetrically opposed unveiling of Cassius's and Antony's human nature.

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¹¹ Plutarco, *Alessandro e Cesare*, 447. Of course Shakespeare had read Plutarch in Thomas North's translation of Amiot's French version of Plutarch. North's Englished Plutarch was published in 1579, see: *Plutarch's Lives Englished by Sir Thomas North*; the passage in question here is in vol. 7, 202: "Caesar also had Cassius in great jealousy and suspected him much [...]. I like not his pale looks [...]. As for those fat men with sooth combed heads [...] them I never reckoned, but those pale-visaged and carrion lean people, I fear them most".

This movement is important as it shapes Antony's gradual triumph, in parallel with Cassius's hopeless defeat. Antony, no doubt, is the real protagonist of the tragedy of Julius Caesar, while Cassius is the real antagonist, far more so than Brutus, who is no match for such a man as Antony. The fact is that Cassius and Antony are somehow a couple of dramatic twins, as they seem to share the same kind of Machiavellian political wisdom. But Cassius is also a kind of ideological *doppelgänger* of Brutus, in the sense that Cassius is the one who has the political wisdom and readiness Brutus utterly lacks, as Cassius would always know exactly what to do, and when, and how to seize *τύχη*, the occasion, in order to get control of Fortuna, and be in control of his own life as well as of history. But the point is that Cassius is an "underling" with a weakness of character, in the sense that he has *prudentia*, but no courage and no fortitude. On that account, he seems to admit in a perfectly Machiavelli manner: "Men at sometimes were masters of their fate/The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, /But in ourselves that we are underlings" (1.2: 140-142).

When the plot against Caesar is ripe enough, and all the plotters meet so they can plan what they must do in order to assassinate Caesar, and what they should do afterwards in order to ensure their own safety, Cassius very clearly sees that Antony cannot be spared:

I think it is not meet Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar,/ Should outlive Caesar.
We shall find of him/ A shrewd contriver. And you know his means,/ If he improve
them, may well stretch so far/ As to annoy us all; which to prevent,/ Let Antony and
Caesar fall together. (2.1: 155-161)

Brutus does not want to hear about that as he is the *ingenuus*, which means "well-born", from a noble family, hence "honest" (the same root as "honour")—a truly good man, since he is reported to have been not only in Plutarch, but also in Cicero's *De Oratore*, and *Brutus*. Brutus is a patrician. He belongs to the senatorial class whose values and poetics of existence he embodies. Caesar's assassination is a political necessity as Caesar represents a threat and a danger to the superior interests, and to the very freedom of the senatorial class, the *ordo* to which Brutus belongs. There are therefore reasons of mentality and cultural reasons blinding Brutus's eyes to what is otherwise evident to Cassius. Brutus cannot take the right decision, the prudent decision, he cannot do what he should, nor take the cautions he should to ensure his own safety and the success of the cause he is fighting for: