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The Ambivalent Alliance of Caesar and Caesarian Forces in Plutarch's *Lives* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative study that traces the fluctuations of Caesar's alliance with the masses in Plutarch's *Lives* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Plutarch pays a lot of attention to map the nature and the roots of that bond between Caesar and his supporters. Caesar exploits the plebs to gain power against rival patricians. He heeds the whims of the plebs and their interests, but he humiliates and degrades his fellow senators. His ambition is to transcend his peers and gather full power in Rome. His means for achieving this dream is the alignment with the commons that help him thwart any senatorial decisions against him. Plutarch, however, portrays the Roman commons as clear, judgmental, and aware of Caesar's political maneuvers. They re-evaluate their alliance and change in light of their perception of his political activities. Shakespeare starts *Julius Caesar* with the last war Caesar fought in his life, and thus shows no interest in mapping the roots of his alliance with the plebeians of Rome. He rather depicts them as naïve and gullible to the tricks and manipulations of Caesar. The plebeians show a taste of political awareness that is not accentuated in the play. Furthermore, Shakespeare brings to the fore the power of rhetoric and its magical influence in formulating the perceptions and views of the plebeians.

Keywords: Caesar, plebeians, patricians, alliance, republican, monarchy

1. Introduction and Background

Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (hereafter *Lives*) was originally a series of parallel pairs of Greek and Roman heroes, each relating a biography of a Greek and a Roman and a comparison between the two. What connects each pair is the similarity of their influence on the lives of other people. For instance, Caesar is compared with Alexander, Brutus with Dion, Antony with Demetrius, and so on. There are 18 such pairs. Appended to these are twelve individual biographies of main emperors from Augustus to Vitellius (Plutarch, 1864, p. ix). This study draws on the accounts on Caesar, Brutus, and Antony. Interestingly, Cassius' biography is not included in *Lives* and incidents from his life are derived mainly from Brutus' biography, and partially from Caesar's. Plutarch does not focus on the historical accuracy of the incidents reported in the biographies but rather takes interest in the moral dimensions of these characters and the motives of their actions rather than their roles in the change of kingdoms or empires. At the outset of the biography of Alexander, the Greek counterpart to Caesar, Plutarch explains that his intention is not to write history but to analyze characters and behavior. He clarifies:

> It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the Bloodiest battles whatsoever. … so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and while I endeavour by these to portray their lives, may be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated by others.[2]

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Furthermore, *Lives* reflects Plutarch's cheerful and amiable nature which lurks everywhere in the collection of biographies (p. xix). Therefore, the value of these biographies is not in their historical verity, but on the ability to analyze human nature and the drives behind its manifestations and deeds. This feature of *Lives* makes a comparison between Plutarch's and Shakespeare's treatment of a set of Roman characters interesting and appealing. However, they differ in their approach towards the characters: the Greek biographer shows interest in the moral significance of the characters' motives in interaction, whereas the Elizabethan playwright focuses on the sociopsychological motives and drives behind the characters' interaction in an atmosphere of political rivalry and power struggle.

Plutarch wrote his biographies in the early 2nd century and relates the story of Caesar who lived in the 1st century BC (100-44 BC), spanning his life and role in the Roman republic from his early youth till his death after he had been installed as a dictator. Plutarch relates Caesar's story and the alliances he established with special attention to the motives behind his numerous political maneuvers. A number of issues are brought to the fore in Plutarch: (1) the deeply rooted political sympathy of plebeians with Caesar, (2) his overreaching aspiration to soar above the other patricians with the support he gets from manipulating the plebeians, and (3) his ambition to reintroduce monarchy to Rome and be crowned as king. This third issue confuses his populist allies who turn against Caesar and find in Brutus a more appealing national leader. The ambivalence of Caesar's alliance with the plebeians stems from a conflict of interest between the two partners of the alliance. Caesar aspires to ascend above the republican patricians and turn the Roman political system to a monarchy under his rule with the support of republican plebeians.

In contrast, Shakespeare's play covers the last two days of Caesar's life after his triumphant return from the battle with Pompey's sons. Unlike Plutarch, Shakespeare shows no interest in surveying the history of Caesar; neither does he refer to historical moments in his life retrospectively, as does Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex*. However, he retains the three issues Plutarch highlights in *Lives*. Indeed, Shakespeare maintains the ambivalent alliance with the plebeians as a major factor with a paramount impact on the flow of the plot and sociopolitical interaction among the rival patricians.

This study aims to analyze the fluctuations of that alliance of Caesar and his plebeians in *Lives* and *Julius Caesar*. This is not a study of a Shakespearean source and the dramatization of its details, but rather a comparative study of how the subject of Caesar's alliance is related and analyzed in a narration by a moralist and dramatized by a Renaissance Reformist. The comparison and contrast mean to shed light on both the biographic and dramatic achievements of Plutarch and Shakespeare.

2. Review of Literature

The researcher is not aware of any comparative study of the alliance of Caesar and the plebeians in both *Lives* and *Julius Caesar*. Studies of Shakespeare's sources are usually directed to the alterations Shakespeare rendered on the biographies of leading characters, mainly Caesar, Brutus, and Antony. The major focus of such studies is directed to the dramatization of Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and Antony. They also get busy tracing where Shakespeare follows Plutarch and where he departs from him.

In his erudite introduction to the Arden edition of *Julius Caesar*, David Daniell (1998),[3] argues that Shakespeare at times takes incidents as they are in *Lives*, but most frequently, "he adapted, changed, reversed, compressed, expanded and invented" events so that "the play's compelling force is Shakespeare's" (p. 79). Daniell (1998) maintains that neither Plutarch, nor other sources like Suetonius, Appian, the Bible, or Ovid dictated the dramatic form of *Julius Caesar* (p. 79). Some 18th-century critics, such as Richard Farmer denounce Shakespeare for taking much of the material from Plutarch, ignoring Shakespeare's creativity in dramatizing only the last two days of Caesar's life and the subsequent events resulting from his assassination (Daniell, 1998, p. 80).

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[2] Plutarch, (1864), *The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, Dryden et al. Trans. and A. H. Clough Ed. New York: Modern Library. All citations from this text will be taken from this edition and page numbers put in brackets immediately after quotations.

[3] All citations from the play will hereafter be taken from this edition and put in brackets immediately after quotations.

Allan Bloom perceives of Shakespeare's Caesar as a god, whose "appearance ended forever the age of human heroes" (A. Bloom, 1964, p. 75). He admires Caesar's ability to exploit the poor plebeians for soaring above his rival patricians in a society that was divided into two major ranks: the rich patricians and the poor plebeians. Nothing unites these hostile classes, A. Bloom asserts. However, these two social ranks are shown to be interdependent and

each curbs the policies and the targets of the other by mere force. Senators and leaders of war are chosen from the rich class (1964, p. 75). A. Bloom further maintains that Shakespeare is not democratic in his compassion with the patricians and degradation of the plebeians (1964, p. 79). In his account, he holds that Shakespeare presents the rich as the soul of Rome who represent everything noble in that society. From among the rich rise great and notable leaders whose aspiration is to get glory (1964, p. 80). He concludes that "Roman history is not the history of huge, impersonal movements, but that of great individuals" (1964, p. 80). This shows Shakespeare's presentation is not in favor of populist movements.

Shakespeare's treatment of poor people, according to A. Bloom (1964), is limited in scope and concerns; their interests do not go beyond their physical needs and necessity; they are fickle and wanting in grand qualities of the noble patricians and are easy to manipulate and can be moved by fear. He adds that Caesar gains control over the patricians by manipulating the plebeians who do not differentiate between good leadership and flattery (p. 80). He further argues that this deadlock is made clear in the twin funeral orations and response of the plebeians to them. The noble and honest Brutus expects his audience to be able to identify their interest in national welfare. On the contrary, these fickle plebeians fall victim to the appeals of a revengeful flatterer. A. Bloom rightly concludes that Caesar succeeds in manipulating the people and using them against his rivals, thus "ending all faction in the name of Caesarism" (1964, p. 83).

Similarly, N. S. Ginn (2019) points out that the Roman society after the expulsion of the monarchy was divided into two orders: patricians and plebeians, pointing out that the former enjoyed all privileges in a way that consuls, judges, priests came solely from among them, whereas, the plebeians were left to suffer poverty, famines, and lack of political power (p. 3). Livy notes that the plebeians were provoked by the patricians' injustice, arrogance, and abuse of power. They occasionally revolted against that unfairness in what is called the conflict of orders. In reality, they suffered oppressive treatment with two consuls, who, "nothing to curb their licence, directed all the threats and penalties of the laws against the plebeians" (cited in Ginn, 2019, p. 2). Livy further presents the plebeians, even after the tribunate, as "intimidated, fearful, and confused, vulnerable to abuse from above, and tongue-tied – or at least severely hampered in their attempts to engage effectively in the political process" (cited in Kapust, 2004, p. 103). However, Livy argues that the plebeians were unpredictable and could posit a threat to the republic as they were potentially aggressive (cited in Kapust, 2004, p. 103). Ginn (2019) further contends that the patricians needed the plebeians to join the army after the expansion of Rome and the insufficiency of patrician young to cover all fields of war. The secession of the plebeians forced the patricians to yield to some of their demands, most notably the recognition of magistrates who represent them and the right to select their officers by tribe (p. 4). Ginn explains that the plebeians later with the power of the tribunes could also force the upper order to succumb to their demand of a codified law in which decisions were issued in writing so that there would be no whimsical explanations of legislations (2019, p. 4).

In his Roman plays, Shakespeare demonstrates a lot of knowledge about Rome and Roman culture mainly gathered from the massive movement of humanism that led to the translation of major writers like Ovid, Virgil, and Plutarch (Garbero, 2018, p. xiv). Garbero holds that Roman writings provided Shakespeare with numerous political, historical, and dramatic issues to incorporate in his works (2018, p. xiv). Some critics contend that Shakespeare's treatment of his source expresses his bias for the monarchy and upper classes and uncomplimentary view of the lower classes and the poor. Thus, in *Julius Caesar*, he re-evaluates Roman republican history from an Elizabethan vantage.

Harold Bloom (2004) clarifies that the Elizabethans highly regarded Roman law, literature, and education, and identified themselves with Romans. However, they viewed them as lacking monotheism and monarchy. The Elizabethan shift from polytheistic to monotheistic belief was accompanied by a political shift from republicanism to monarchism. Rollins (2017) adds that the English monarch by the time of Shakespeare had acquired divine sanction and representation (p. 165). Furthermore, she finds in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* which echoes the Elizabethan havoc raised by counter-Reformation movements against the divine rights of kings, an intellectual search in classical heritage for parallels to contemporary political upheaval and civil disobedience (p. 166).

Stephen Marche (2011) argues that political struggle over power in Rome and the assassination of Caesar were attractive for the Elizabethans audience, especially to Queen Elizabeth I, who was a target for many conspirators who sought her assassination (p. 82). Marche rightly notices that Caesar's murder in *Julius Caesar* draws on Elizabeth's and the Elizabethans' apprehensions of their time, especially with the two rulers assuming divine-like entities.

Caesar likens himself to the constant northern star (3.1.60) and his enemies charge him of behaving like a colossus (1.2.135). Similarly, Elizabeth I assumed the divine-like entities of Gloriana and the Fairy Queen (Marche, 2011, p. 82).

As an Elizabethan intellectual, Shakespeare sided with the established monarchic norm and denounced civil insurgency that threatened the established order. In the play, he renders changes on the role of Plutarch's plebeians who defy Caesar's imperial interests despite their traditional alliance with him. They turn against Caesar and shift loyalty to Brutus because he was an advocate of the republican system. When Caesar was killed, Plutarch's plebeians were apathetic to Brutus' speech, whereas, Shakespeare's populace is shown to be fickle and gullible.

The people have always been an important factor in the making of political theory on democracy from the classical era up to modern times. And the conflict between populism and republicanism has always lurked behind the evolution of the political theory of democracy (Vatter, 2011, p. 243). In Plutarch, the people in Rome were a part of the social structure and were called "the populace," in that capacity, but as they were not given any political role in society, they were classified as "the plebeians" (Vatter, 2011). Visser (1994) considers Shakespeare's biased presentation of plebeians congruous with the main current of dealing with the plebeians from the classics onward to the 19th century when theories about the people started to take another direction. Visser contends that mainstream thinkers always sided with the aristocracy and heeded their apprehension of the latent force in "mass political movements (1994, p. 23). He argues that the perspective these thinkers viewed the masses is from above. Only George Rude and similar social historians changed the vantage to a "view from below" (Visser, 1994, p. 23), a drastic change that introduced a reconsideration of the mainstream.

Notably, both Plutarch and Shakespeare belong to the mainstream of elitist writers. Plutarch gave a moral evaluation of the actions and behavior of magnanimous Greek and Roman noblemen. Similarly, Shakespeare's tragedies are insightful assessments of the psychological motives and subservient drives of a selection of upper class tragic dignified heroes. In contrast, their presentation of the poor and the lower class majority is uncomplimentary. However, this study analyzes the vital role of this deprived social order as it is manipulated by Machiavellian aristocrats and is used by some to subdue rival patricians. They have no role in political or legislative leadership of society, but their potential insurgency and ability to raise havoc make them a menace to be heeded by magistrates and rulers (A. bloom 1964, p. 83).

Dramatizing the alliance of Caesar and his plebeian supporters, or the so called Caesarians, Shakespeare traverses in a contradictory historical situation from that of his source. In his rivalry with patrician peers, Caesar depends totally on the support of the commons in his persistent and successful efforts to transcend the aristocratic competitors. Mary beard calls him a classic populist, "combining … aspirations for dictatorship with a knack for popular rhetoric and an ability to appeal to the interest of the people… he also had a strong sense of popular justice" (2017, p. 3). Indeed, the multitudes were the source of his power and dominance over others, but, simultaneously, they were an obstinate barrier against his overreaching regal ambitions both in the play as in the source.

Drawing the character of Julius Caesar within the Roman political and social context in the 1st century BC, Shakespeare resorts to the biographies of Caesar and other major characters in Plutarch's *Lives*. Shakespeare knew the book through Thomas North's translation of *Lives* from the French translation of Jacques Amyot which first appeared in 1579 and clearly, it was Shakespeare's major historical source (Homan, 1975, pp.195-209; Coffee, 2011, pp. 402, 408; & Setaioli, 2017, pp. 284-85, 288). Subsequent to that translation appeared numerous others (pp. xxiii-xxiv). This study will draw on a more recent translation by Dryden and others (1683-1686) known as the Dryden translation of *Lives*, later revised and introduced by Arthur Hugh Clough (1864).

This study aims to explain that in Plutarch and Shakespeare, the commoners support Caesar for several reasons: (1) familial and political background, (2) charismatic character (3) martial glory, and (4) generosity. However, he loses their favor on two grounds: (1) regal ambitions, and (2) destruction or humiliation of senators or patricians. The following discussion is meant to analyze these points in *Lives* and *Julius Caesar (*hereafter *JC).*

3. Methodology

The study will approach the alliance of Caesar and the plebeians in two sections. The first covers Plutarch's biography of Caesar from his early years till his assassination. This section includes an analysis of the bond between Caesar and his allies which evolves in four phases: (1) foundation and establishment, (2) reconsideration, and (3)

disconnection, (4) recognition and mutiny. The second section of the study analyzes Shakespeare's treatment of the alliance in the last two days of Caesar's life which evolves in four phases: (1) Retention, (2) reconsideration, (3) disconnection, and (4) retrieval. Plutarch's and Shakespeare's different treatments of that bond are juxtaposed to show the different approaches of the moralist vs. the creative dramatist and the meaning of the difference from a political point of view.

4. Plutarch's treatment of the alliance

4.1 Foundations and establishment of the alliance

Suetonius, the Roman biographer and author of *The Twelve Caesars,* published in the 2nd century around the same period of Plutarch's *Lives,* surveys the biography of Caesar and 11 other Roman emperors after him. He demonstrates how Caesar gained the support of the plebeians very early in his life simply because he belonged to the Julian family that had a long history of supporting the cause of the people rather than the aristocrats (Witkoski, 2004, p. 1). His family traditionally sided with the Populares, the political faction of patricians in Rome that championed the interests of the commoners. That faction was always a political rival to the Optimates faction that was devoted to the interests of the upper classes (Plutarch, 1864, p. 857; and Witkoski, 2004, p. 1). Notably, Caesar's aunt Julia was married to Marius, the leader of the Populares.

Caesar derived the admiration of the commons after a very daring oration on the funeral of his aunt at a time when the followers of that faction were pronounced as the adversaries of the state when Sylla, the leader of the Optimates, was in full control of Rome. In that ceremonial oration at the funeral of his aunt, Caesar traced his family's ancestry not only to ancient kings of the city but also to Aeneas, the founder of Rome and to his mother Venus (Witkoski, 2004, p. 1). He concluded his oration, saying: "Our stock therefore has at once the sanctity of kings, whose power is supreme among mortal men, and the claim to reverence which attaches to the Gods, who hold sway over kings themselves" (Suetonius, 1913, p. 10). However, in their zeal for his speech, they did not pay attention to his ancestral monarchic, even immortal, claims which would be later their reason for conflict with Caesar.

Plutarch affirms that Caesar was born with a passion for honor and great achievements. He was an overreacher who could never sit still, but incessantly kept looking for further splendor; his search for glory had no bounds and knew no limits, and his courage and boldness won him the admiration of the commonality. For instance, he also won the sympathy and favor of the masses when upon the death of his wife Cornelia, he gave an unprecedented funeral oration when the tradition was that eulogies were given in praise of dead patricians only. That speech, reports Plutarch, gained him a favorable image in the minds of people as "a man of great tenderness and kindness of heart" (p. 857).

His charismatic character was another factor that secured him full support of the public. When the Optimates were in full power, and the Populares were powerless and receding, Caesar, an aedile at the time, ordered the images and trophies of victory of Marius to be placed in the capitol during the night. The next morning, the masses reacted with adoration for his valor and devotion to the faction that supported the people's cause. When the senate met to discuss the matter, Caesar defended himself daringly against the charges of the eminent senator Catulus Lutatius that he was planning to topple the state, his admiring supporters among the people advised him not to concede his thoughts to anybody because with the assistance of the masses "he would ere get the better of them all, and be the first man in the commonwealth" (p. 858).

When he was installed a consul, Caesar directed his efforts in taking decisions that maintained his alliance with the commons. Unexpectedly, he came up with a decree that ordered the plantation of the colonies and distribution of the lands among the commoners. Those decisions were meant to please the people. He got the approval of Pompey, the other consul, and both agreed to fight any senator that refused the bills. Plutarch relates so many incidents that demonstrate Caesar's strategy and the constant enhancement he got from the commons in all the positions he assumed. Plutarch reports that Caesar " gained so much upon the people, that everyone was eager to find out new offices and new honours for him in return for his munificence" (p. 857). For example, while in the army in Spain, they voted for him to be tribune. His victory reinforced his growing ambitions and provoked the worries of the senate and the aristocracy that he might manipulate the people to create all sorts of political havoc.

The third reason for that alliance between Caesar and the commons was his military achievements in foreign wars against the Gaul tribes, Spain, Britain, and African countries. These wars ended up with massive numbers of captives that led to huge amounts of money from ransoms.

For instance, when he subdued the Gaul, he sacked eight hundred towns, conquered three hundred states, killed one million soldiers, and took another million captives from the total of three million soldiers he fought during the ten-year war with the Gaul. He won these difficult wars for being superior to all men in being "gifted with the faculty of making the right use of everything in war, and most specially, seizing the right moment" to take a military decision (p. 810).

Notably, he treated the fighters he defeated with forgiveness and humanity, and honored his soldiers and granted them numerous gifts. The ransom money he earned from these wars provided a lot of money to help the people of Rome (pp. 863-64). Furthermore, Caesar's triumphs in Europe and Africa gained Rome huge wealth and provisions. For instance, after his victory on Pompey, Caesar bragged about his magnificent triumphs in Egypt, Pontus, and Africa, promising the Romans to gain an annual supply of two hundred thousand bushels of corn for the populace and three million pounds of oil.

The fourth reason behind the people's loyalty to Caesar was his generosity with them and with his soldiers. Coffee (2011) argues that Caesar presented himself as generous to the people and soldiers at times of war and peace. His generosity (*liberalitas*) does not only include financial and economic bounteousness but also acts of clemency towards those who fought against him at times conflict, such as Brutus and Cassius, who fought on the side of Pompey during the civil war (p. 887). Indeed, this act of clemency lies behind the intimate relationship between him and Brutus that Shakespeare will make a central issue in *JC*.

4.2 The alliance in jeopardy

Despite their allegiance and support to Caesar, the people of Rome developed bitter grudges over the years against some of Caesar's combats and conflicts. The fierce struggle between the armies of Pompey and Caesar across the commonwealth ended up with the victory of Caesar and the defeat and murder of Pompey, leaving Caesar as the strongest man in Rome. Caesar celebrated his victory lavishly with rewards to the soldiers and massive feasts for all the people of Rome at one time (p. 886). But when the revels were ended, people noticed the massive loss of life and damage caused by the civil wars kindled by the dispute between Caesar and Pompey and their followers. Rome alone lost around 170 000 people out of its 320,000 citizens, let alone the losses of the other provinces of Italy and the commonwealth in general (p. 886). These losses and some of Caesar's practices, such as overlooking the wrongdoing of his major followers and the distribution of money and lands on them to keep their loyalty bitterly aggravated the people of Rome (pp. 870-82).

As Caesar was appointed consul for the fourth time, he fought his last war against the children of Pompey in Spain. He killed more than 30,000 of the other army but lost more than one thousand of his best men (p. 886). His combat with the children of Pompey four years after killing their father displeased the Romans because it was a victory not over foreign 'barbarian kings', but against the children of one of the prominent leaders of Rome (p. 887). As Caesar noticed that public irritated attitude, he did not celebrate this unjustified victory and seemed "rather … ashamed of the action than to expect honour from it" (pp. 887). Caesar took reconciliatory steps to absorb the annoyance of the people. For instance, he gave pardon to distinguished persons who were fighting under Pompey's banners like Brutus and Cassius, allowed the statue of Pompey to be erected in the capitol, and raised the images of Pompey in an attempt to placate common disapproval of that war.

People, however, conceded and installed him dictator for life. "This was indeed a tyranny avowed since his power was not only absolute but perpetual" (p. 887). Cicero proposed conferring honors upon him not exceeding the limits of a human being, but others exaggerated the honors to the degree that he turned to be "odious to the most indifferent and moderate sort of men" (p. 887). To improve his public image, he entertained the public with feasts and general distributions of corn. He also tried to please the aristocrats by promising them titles, consulships, and praetorships. He tried to rule with goodwill.

4.3 Severance of the Alliance

Caesar's fatal mistake which incurred the deadly hatred of the populace was his imperial ambition. That desire to be king, thus being against the republican political structure, which was decaying anyway, procured hostility of the people and led to the first conflict with them. Beside his imperial ambitions, Caesar's undermining the senate and not showing due respect to them angered the masses. When Caesar was granted numerous honors from the senate, and aristocrats were in attendance, he remained seated on the rostra and did not show respect to the elitist attendees, telling them with insolent arrogance that his honors needed retrenchment than multiplication.

This humiliating treatment was resented by commons and the patricians alike. Most of the commons were offended and left the scene. Realizing his misconduct, Caesar retired to his home and "laying his throat bare, told his friends that he was ready to offer this to anyone who would give the stroke" (889), as a sign of regret. Later, he explained that it was his epilepsy that prevented him from standing or else would lose balance and fall if he stood up.

According to Plutarch, Caesar gave another reason for confrontation with people by his reprimand against the tribunes Flavius and Marullus. When Antony, a consul then, offered him a diadem wreathed with laurel while Caesar was sitting at the rostra in a triumphant robe in a golden chair during the Lupercal celebrations, few people applauded this, but when he declined the crown, there was universal applause. When Antony offered it again, very few applauded, when he refused, everybody applauded that. When Caesar noticed the adamant stance of the masses against his imperial ambitions, he ordered the crown be sent to the capitol. His statues after that were found with crowns on their heads. The tribunes Marullus and Flavius went and took them off the statues. The tribunes also sent to jail those who addressed Caesar as king. The commons acclaimed their action and called them by the name Brutus, who was the first to end "the succession of kings" in Rome (p. 889) and put the power in the hands of the senate and the people. Resenting the tribunes' hostile conduct, Caesar substituted them and mocked the people frequently after that with the funny names of "Bruti and Cumaei" (890).

Because of these incidents, the commons gave up on Caesar and directed their attention to Brutus as the best possible choice to replace Caesar in leadership, especially he was thought to be a descendent of the ancient Brutus who revolted against ancient monarchs and established the republican political system. People, however, did not approach Brutus because they knew he was loyal and indebted to Caesar for pardoning him after defeating Pompey, and also for Caesar's preferring him to his rival Cassius for the position of consul (p. 890).

5. Shakespeare's treatment of the alliance

5.1 Retention of the alliance

Shakespeare tackles the ambivalent and contradictory alliance of Caesar and the commonality along the lines of Plutarch's *Lives*. However, Shakespeare adjusts and rearranges the historical information to serve his dramatic scheme despite his retention of that information. He begins the tragedy after the last war Caesar fought in his life, in which he defeated the Spanish army of the children of Pompey. Historically, after that civil war, the commons and the patricians were annoyed with the human and economic losses resulting from that battle. Unlike history, however, *JC* starts with the plebeians' show of solidarity with Caesar as they line along the streets to welcome him and celebrate his victory. The commons close their shops and gather along the streets of Rome in their best attire without signs of their professions on a working day to welcome Caesar and throw flowers on his way to attend the Lupercal celebrations of the Ides of March.

Simultaneously, the scene highlights the hostility of the ruling class towards Caesar. The tribunes Flavius and Marullus scold the plebeians for their fickleness and shifting loyalty from Pompey to Caesar, and for celebrating Caesar's victory over "Pompey's blood" (1.1.52). The tribunes zealously endeavor to sever the bond between Caesar and his plebeian allies. Notably, Shakespeare in this scene spreads a sense of equivocation regarding the identity of the cobbler, who speaks for the plebeians in this early skirmish between the Caesarian forces and their opponents. Boulukos (2004) argues that the apparent ambiguity of the whole scene is probably relevant to the nature of the play that is not yet clear to the reader at this stage (p. 1083). Lawrence Danson (2004) also maintains that Scene 1 is a miniature of the whole play. He finds the ambiguity of the cobbler's identity a typical symptom of major issues in the play. It can be added here that it also heralds the ambiguous nature of human relationships among Romans. One such ambivalent relationship is that of the Caesarian forces. The scene ends with the tribunes dispersing the plebeians from the streets. Furthermore, Shakespeare assigns the tribunes another task of "disrob[ing] the images … hung with Caesar's trophies" (1.1.65, 69-70) before the Lupercal events, which, in Plutarch, happens after the celebrations.

5.2 Conditional Alliance

In the second scene of the play, we hear of the Caesarian alliance again in the uncouth account of the blunt Casca addressed to Brutus and Cassius about the celebrations of the Ides of March. Casca's cynical report indicates that Caesar exploits the plebeians with a fake show of geniality. Casca undermines the commons as he dehumanizes them with the animal metaphor of the "common herd." Says Casca:

> Marry, before he fell down, when he perceiv'd the common herd was glad he refus'd the crown, *he pluck'd me ope his doublet and offer'd them his throat to cut*. … And so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said anything amiss, he desir'd *their worships* to think it was his infirmity.
>
> (1.2. 262-70; *italics mine*).

Casca comes down heavily on Caesar's manipulative tactic of addressing the plebeians as "their worships" and the sardonic offer of his throat for them to cut if he has done anything wrong during his fit of epilepsy. Shakespeare highlights the genial pragmatic discourse Caesar employs in addressing his supporters by juxtaposing it to the demeaning epithets of vulgarity Casca heaps on them, such as "the rabblement," (1.2.243) " the common herd," (1.2.263), "hoot[ing]" (1.1.243), "chopt hands," and "stinking breath," among others (1.1.243-245). Caesar's amiable language is also played against the degrading words the tribunes use to scold the commons in scene 1: "Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home," (1.1.1), and "You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! / O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome (1.1. 36-7).

Casca's report demonstrates how sensitive Caesar is to the whims of the common people, whereas he displays a lot of arrogance in responding to the quest of his patrician peers to repeal his decision of banishing Publius Cimber. When Metellus Cimber appeals for the freedom of his brother, Caesar dismisses him in a very humiliating way: "If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him, /I spurn thee like a cur out of my way" (3.1.45- 46). And as Brutus, Cassius, Casca, and other prominent patricians appeal on Cimber's behalf, Caesar boasts about his constancy and relentlessness. He brags that he is distinguished among them all in being constant and unyielding to prayers and petitions. He compares his case among other men to that of the northern star among other stars in the firmament in being truly fixed and unvarying. Indeed, he does not honor the pleas for clemency of his important fellow senators of Rome:

> I could be well moved if I were as you:
> If I could pray to move, prayers would move me.
> But I am constant as the northern star,
> Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament.
>
> (3.1.58-62)

He brags that their appeals to withdraw his decision are like attempting to move Mount Olympus (3.1.74). This Shakespearean portrayal of an arrogant Caesar gives credibility in retrospection to Cassius' earlier charges that Caesar behaves like a god (1.2.116) and strides the world like a colossus (1.2.135). Paradoxically, the braggart Caesar, who does not heed the views of the Roman elites, takes every measure to please the commons. When he feels that the masses are possibly displeased with anything he does, Caesar offers his throat for them to strike, as Casca reports. Shakespeare takes this incident from Plutarch but rearranges its occurrence in a way that it looks artificial, odd, and non-sequential.

However, the plight of Caesar with the plebeians is that their support is conditional, pending his disinterest in the crown. Casca describes their conduct in this regard as thus: "there was a crown offered him: and being offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus; and then the people fell a-shouting" (1.2.220-223). The masses enthusiastically applaud Caesar's rejection of the crown. Underlying this zealous applaud lies their apprehension of Caesar's overreaching ambitions. Their relentless objection to Caesar's monarchic aspirations converges with that of the rivaling patricians.

It is important to highlight here that Caesar does not heed the opinion of the senate and patricians on this issue, but he seriously observes the commons' rejection of it. Here lies the dilemma of Caesar and the equivocation of the Caesarian alliance which Shakespeare retains from Plutarch. The commons are the allies of Caesar in general, but they are the allies of the patricians in countermanding Caesar's imperial dreams. Thus Casca is unjustified in ridiculing the plebeians albeit their identical views with patricians' on Caesar's regal quest. Yet Casca's resentment stems from their solid backing of Caesar, which enables him to rise above his elite rivals. The commons, in Shakespeare and Plutarch, are the pivotal force and the decisive player in Roman politics and the rivalries between Caesar and the patricians. The aristocrats, Caesar included, heed the opinion of the commons before they stride into any venture. The conspirators, for instance, can consider assassinating Caesar only after winning Brutus, who "he sits high in all the people's hearts" (1.3. 157), to their side in the fear that the crime might provoke the anger of the masses.

5.3 Digging under the alliance

Prior to the assassination of Caesar, Cassius, the instigator of the conspiracy, pays a lot of effort to recruit partners to his bloody scheme. Indeed, he succeeds in winning the commitment of Casca, Cinna, Decius, Metellus, and Trebonius. But his most notable effort is paid to convert Brutus, the loyal friend of Caesar, and the only one who can neutralize the mobs (1.2. 28-160). To persuade Brutus, Cassius thrusts an attack against Caesar on two grounds: firstly, that Caesar strides "the narrow world / Like a colossus" (1.2.133-34) and, consequently, he dwarfs his equal patricians to "petty men" who "[w]alk under his huge legs" (1.2. 135-136). He charges Caesar of behaving like a deity. "And this man / Becomes a god" (1.2.114-115), complains Cassius. Secondly, Caesar plans to be a king to gather all power in his hands by ending the republican political system and replacing it with a monarchy. Thus appeals Cassius to Brutus, the devoted advocate of democracy and the republican political system:

> Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
> When went there by an age, since the great flood,
> But it was famed with more than with one man?
> When could they say, till now, that talked of Rome,
> That her wide walls encompassed but one man?
> (1.2.150-54)

This argument moves the noble Brutus and forces him to consider joining the conspiracy. Cassius thrills victoriously at the initial consent of Brutus: "I am glad / That my weak words have struck but thus much show / Of fire from Brutus" (1. 2. 174-76),.

The charges advanced by Cassius against Caesar along with other unethical tactics, including sending letters in varied hand-writing to Brutus' house and his seat in the senate as appeals from the people for Brutus to interfere and save Rome and its political system from the encroaching danger of Caesar, ensure the conversion of Brutus to join the conspirators and thereafter to lead them.

5.4 Severance of the alliance

In the aftermath of the assassination, Brutus and his partners ran to the capitol to justify the murder, according to Plutarch (p. 893). The senators ran away and locked their homes. Brutus addressed a group of citizens trying to justify the crime. They were apathetic to what Brutus told them and showed no response to his speech. Their feeling was a mixture of pity for Caesar and respect for Brutus. The senate later met and took reconciliatory measures to keep the situation quiet and "ordered that Caesar should be worshipped as a divinity" (p. 893) in the hope to appease the possible havoc that could be raised by the multitudes, and "gave Brutus and his followers the command of provinces" and important posts (p. 893). The senate wanted to please all the parties and eliminate any reason for further disputes.

In contrast, in *JC,* the first task of the conspirators is to calm down the mobs and persuade them that the murder is necessary lest they rise and turn the tables against the conspirators. When Antony comes and seeks to understand the reasons, Brutus assures him that he will be satisfied after the people are quieted down: "Only be patient till we have appeased /The multitude, beside themselves with fear, /And then we will deliver you the cause" (3.1.179-81).

Brutus' neutral, detached, emotionless, and highly ornamental speech (Vickers, 1979, p. 243; Gray and Samely, 2019, p. 91), that seems to be an application of classical rhetoric (Yu, 2007, p. 98; Al-Abdullah, 2011, pp. 91-4), is crowded with symmetrical sentences, rhythmical structures, repetitions, and figures of speech (Vickers, 1979, pp. 241-44; Al-Abdullah 2011, pp. 91-4). Lucking holds that Brutus fails to produce one genuine reason that justifies the murder of Caesar, but engages the audience with his decorative language (2010, p. 126). Brutus relies on his respectable image in the minds of the masses and justifies the murder relying on one major argument that Caesar was ambitious, a trait that is repulsive to the people. In response, they acclaim Brutus and his partners and they do not seem to be offended with the crime. Brutus happily wraps up his oration:

> Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy; nor his offences enforced, for which he suffered death.
> (3.2.36-40)

Thus, after the oration, the plebeians endorse the murder of their ally. Therefore, the speech of Brutus breaks the alliance of Caesar and the commoners, and the results the conspirators harvest are reassuring, at least temporarily.

5.5 Retrieval of the alliance

To restore the loyalty of mobs to Caesar and retrieve the severed alliance, the skilful and pragmatic Antony looms a subtle, careful, and efficient counter-argument. Antony succeeds in refuting Brutus' main argument and in swiftly reviving the commons' admirable views of Caesar. However, Shakespeare in the two speeches documents the dual nature of the plebeians' stance, i.e., what they hate and what they admire in the character of Caesar. Brutus focuses on what they hate; Antony, on what they admire. Antony carefully designs and delivers his speech in three stages to achieve three purposes: (1) unweave and refute Brutus' argument that Caesar was ambitious; (2) regain the masses converted by Brutus back to the traditional alliance; and (3) provoke the mobs to mutiny and revenge for Caesar.

To disprove Brutus' idea that Caesar was ambitious, Antony points out four qualities or tributes the commons used to admire in Caesar. First, he highlights the value of constancy in friendship, telling his listeners of his own personal experience with Caesar as a faithful friend: "He was my friend, faithful and just to me" (3.2.86). Caesar has the tribute of constancy in friendship, be it to Antony, as he testifies here, to Brutus, or the commons. Underlying this argument is that Caesar was unvarying in his friendship to the poor people. Antony also tells them that he is there to eulogize Caesar as a true friend. Antony insinuates that the plebeians should also be loyal to their friend and ally. Later in his oration, he thrusts a severe attack against Brutus for not being constant in his friendship to Caesar as Caesar was to his. As he shows the wounds in the mantle of Caesar to the plebeians, he dwells for long on the cut caused by Brutus' dagger:

> Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,
> And as he plucked his cursed steel away,
> Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
> As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
> If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no;
> For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
>
> (3. 2. 174-79)

Antony highlights the infidelity and ingratitude of Brutus, who was the "well-beloved" and "Caesar's angel." Even the blood of Caesar was astonished and followed the dagger to see whether it was Brutus who stabbed his friend. He emphasizes that Caesar did not bother about other traitors, but was shocked by the ungratefulness of Brutus. Shakespeare refers to the historical evidence that Brutus was indebted to Caesar for the pardon he granted him after fighting under the banners of Pompey in the civil war, and for favoring him to Cassius in their competition for the position of the consul, as explained above. It is worthwhile to mention also that Brutus could be an illegitimate son of Caesar, according to Plutarch (p. 1189). He relates that Caesar had an intimate affair with Servilia, Brutus' mother and Cato's sister and that Brutus was born at the time when their amour was at the highest. "So public and notorious was Servilia's love to Caesar," comments Plutarch (p. 1189). And this can give Caesar's last words during the assassination: "*et tu, Brute?*" (3.1.79) a rich meaning loaded with astonishment at Brutus' lack of gratitude.

Ironically, Antony did not witness the assassination of Caesar and did not know which cut was caused by whom. He, however, does not give the mobs time to think or question what he claims. He fabricates all these details to an audience that is captured by his rhetoric and manipulation. With a set of eloquent metaphors, Antony derives the sympathy of the Plebeians with Caesar, motivates their sadness, and provokes their anger against the unfaithful Brutus. Brutus, this way, is disqualified, and the credibility of his speech totally erodes.

Moreover, Antony reminds the multitudes of the huge amounts of money Rome earned from the ransoms of the captives from his foreign wars. Shakespeare draws on Plutarch regarding this issue. Antony refreshes the memory of the masses: "He hath brought many captives home to Rome, / Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill" (3.2; 90-91). Furthermore, he draws the attention of the multitudes of Caesar's affection and care for the poor, an attribute Caesar adopted from the Populares faction in the source. Antony accentuates that: "When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept" (3.2.92). Besides, Antony highlights the incident of Caesar's refusal of the crown he offered him three times: "You all did see, that on the Lupercal / I thrice presented him a kingly crown, /Which he did thrice refuse" (3.2.97-99).

As Antony gets sure that he has carefully unwoven the argument of Brutus and refuted it, he endeavors to regain the mobs to their traditional affiliation to Caesar. He wonders why they have forgotten the reasons that made them love Caesar and why they do not mourn Caesar as he is doing: "You all did love him once, not without cause: / What cause withholds you then to mourn for him" (3.2.104-05)? Antony further draws their attention to these reasons. One reason for their admiration Shakespeare derives from Plutarch is Caesar's charismatic character. Antony reminds them: "But yesterday the word of Caesar might / Have stood against the world. Now lies he there, / And none so poor to do him reverence" (3. 2. 120-22).

Another source of public admiration of Caesar, Antony harps on, is martial glory over foreign nations. Antony underscores the quality of Caesar and reminds them of the glamorous victory over the Nervii (3.2.172-75), who were the fiercest and strongest people he encountered in the Gaul. In a dangerous battle with them, the courage of Caesar led to a decisive victory. There is no other reference to it in *JC*, but there is a detailed account of it in the source. Plutarch reports that only 500 out of 60,000 soldiers and three out of 400 senators of the Nervii survived that battle (p. 867). Antony also capitalizes on Caesar's generosity to the people in his will as he has left each person seventy-five drachmas (3. 2. 44). Furthermore, he surprises them that Caesar in his will has left all his orchards on the Tiber for the people and their children to use for recreation (3. 2. 249-54).

Having reminded the masses of the bright side of Caesar and provoked their pity for him, Antony guides them further to rise to mutiny and revenge for their dear Caesar. Their response is what he prophesies (3.1. 260-276) and plans to achieve. In his speech, he ignites the atrocious civil war he predicts earlier. As the mutiny sets out, Antony expresses schadenfreude (malicious pleasure) at the scene of violence: "Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot: / Take thou what course thou wilt" (3.2. 261-63).

Shakespeare closely follows Plutarch's narration of the events of plucking any lumber available to make a fire to burn the body of Caesar and use the brands for burning the houses of the conspirators (Plutarch, p. 894; & Setaioli, 2017, p. 284). What Shakespeare innovates, however, is sequencing and juxtaposing the rhetorical effects of the two orations on the people in the market place on the same day. In Plutarch, the two speeches were given on different days. Notably, in Plutarch, it was the audience that initiated the contact and encouraged Antony, who was careful and content with the decisions of the senate, to show the stabbed corpse, read the will of Caesar, and get carried away by the shouts and slogans of the multitudes to deliver a speech (p. 1112). In other ancient sources, Antony showed the torn mantle of Caesar but gave no speech (Setaioli, 2017, p. 284).

Interestingly, the issue of the alliance of Caesar and the commonality disappears after Act 3. In Acts 4 and 5, it is replaced by another patrician alliance with Caesar, this time, led by Antony, Augustus Caesar, and Lepidus. Also, the play turns from a war of words into a war of swords. The two Acts are devoted to the military operations between the armies of the pro-Caesarian patricians led by Antony and Augustus Caesar and of the anti-Caesarian patricians led by Brutus and Cassius. The Elizabethan playwright shows that heroism and war is a concern of the elites of Rome. This perception does not stem from Shakespeare's lack of sympathy with or respect for the poor, but from the conviction that martial concerns and leading wars belong to a selected few who have had a long tradition and special training (A. Bloom, 1964, p. 80). Bloom argues that the glory of Rome has always been the achievement of the exceptional class of patricians, who abide by the law in order to leave no chance for anarchy and the rule of one man. They adhere to a strict military discipline from which they harvest honor. This is the social group that can be only trusted with the issues of war and peace (A. Bloom, 1964, p. 80). This is why in the last two Acts of the play, the plebeians recede to the background giving room to the patricians to champion the scene at the time of struggle for glory and power.

Shakespeare and Plutarch show the miseries of the civil war in which all the enemies of Caesar lose their lives, more than 100 senators are killed, and the republican political system collapses and changes not only into a monarchy, but rather into an empire led by a triumvirate of Augustus Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus who engage the action in *Antony and Cleopatra.*

6. Conclusion

Shakespeare and Plutarch tell the story of Caesar's ascendency above his peers through his alliance with the masses. In the play and its source, Caesar conquers the elites of Rome by the empowerment he gets from the bond with the commons. Caesar is shown to maintain solidarity through generosity, bribes, and catering for the interests of the poor. However, he diverges from them on political issues and the perception of other elites.

The commons stand vehemently against his relentless imperial aspirations and premeditated degradation or destruction of Roman eminent leaders. He does not combat his allies, but masquerades his real thoughts and handles the mobs guilefully. Furthermore, he shows clemency towards his rivals as a sign of goodwill.

Plutarch differs from Shakespeare as he traces the foundations of what looks an unfathomable coalition, but later he demonstrates how that coalition erodes under an unbridgeable gap created by Caesar's imperial ambitions. Shakespeare does not include the roots of the bond between Caesar and the masses. He starts his play in the aftermath of the last war Caesar fought. Neither are the masses annoyed with that last war as they do in Plutarch. In *Lives*, Plutarch documents moments when the Caesarian allies could not digest Caesar's maneuvers to transcend above Rome and the Romans. They relinquish him and find allies in other noble leaders who come closer to their vision. In Shakespeare, they remain constant friends till they convert under the spell of Brutus' overhead rhetoric.

After the assassination, the mobs get angry, create havoc, and require an explanation of the murder. Gullible as they are portrayed, they are easily appeased by the embellished oration of Brutus. It is the eloquence and carefully delivered oration of the cunning Antony, the dedicated friend of Caesar, who follows the track and technique of Caesar in gulling the mobs with Caesar's will as evidence of the money and inheritance he has left them that they are restored to the alliance. This way Antony reconstructs the alliance of Caesarians and recharges them with motives to rise against the murderers of Caesar. Their mutiny, however, is highly equivocal. As they rise to revenge for Caesar, they end uprising against their republican political ideology. They prevent Caesar from achieving his dreams while alive, but they enable his patrician allies to accomplish them after his death.

The Roman biographer presents the mobs as sophisticated and judgmental with clear views about politics and politicians, whereas the Elizabethan bard presents them as corrupt, selfish, and fickle. In *JC*, the innovative writer introduces the two sequential orations that show the magical influence of language on the minds of men.

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