

# EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



## Rome and Home: The Cultural Uses of Rome in Early Modern English Literature

### Introduction

Daniel Cadman  
Sheffield Hallam University  
[d.cadman@shu.ac.uk](mailto:d.cadman@shu.ac.uk)

Andrew Duxfield  
University of Liverpool  
[A.Duxfield@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:A.Duxfield@liverpool.ac.uk)

Ben Jonson's comedy, *Poetaster* (1601), begins with an induction scene in which the allegorical figure of Envy appears on stage and expresses her intention to distort the meaning of the play. She outlines to the audience her 'covetous hope' that the forthcoming play will give her the opportunity

To blast your pleasures and destroy your sports  
With wrestings, comments, applications,  
Spy-like suggestions, privy whisperings,  
And thousand such promoting sleights as these (Induction 23-6).<sup>1</sup>

However, upon discovering that the play's setting is Rome, Envy then goes on to express the frustration of her initial hopes that there would be opportunities for such potentially malicious 'comments', 'applications', and 'privy whisperings' about the play by asking the exasperated rhetorical question, 'How might I force this to the present state?' (Induction 34). In other words, a setting as remote, both temporally and geographically, as Rome under the emperor Augustus can offer no scope for such apparently distorting topical application. Such points pre-empt the possible discovery of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson, *Poetaster or, His Arraignment*, ed. by Gabriele Bernhard Jackson in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) II, pp. 1-182. Subsequent references to this play are taken from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

topical analogies and indeed this very play, along with his subsequent Roman tragedy *Sejanus His Fall* (1603), saw Jonson having to answer for the contents before the authorities.<sup>2</sup> *Sejanus*, in fact, is notable for dramatising an episode in which the Roman historian Cordus is forced to answer to charges that his historical accounts of Brutus and Cassius represent covert criticism of Tiberius' regime; one observer also cautions that such events are 'queasy to be touched' in the present political climate. Annabel Patterson is right to point out that these kinds of 'Disclaimers of topical intention are not to be trusted, and are more likely to be entry codes to precisely the kind of reading they protest against'.<sup>3</sup> Although Envy seeks to undermine and foreclose such possible 'applications', her rhetoric implicitly reveals the real potential for Roman history to act as vehicle for commenting upon events affecting the condition of early modern England.

However, the resonances between ancient Rome and the 'present state' were not confined, by any means, to the 'wrestings, comments' and 'applications' mentioned by Envy. In addition to this potential for such topical applications, dramatists made frequent attempts to introduce familiar features into their Roman settings. One notable example of this occurs in Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* (1589), the earliest extant Renaissance drama set in ancient Rome, in which the burgher, Curtall, responds to the news that Sulla has relinquished his titles by berating him for his 'base mind, that being in the Paul's steeple of honor hast cast thyself into the sink of simplicity' (5.5.224-6).<sup>4</sup> In this instance, Sulla's fall from his formerly elevated position is articulated in decidedly 'local' terms; Sulla has fallen into 'the sink of simplicity', after having occupied a level of honour analogous to 'Paul's steeple', an allusion to the peak of St Paul's Cathedral which was the highest point in London before it was struck by lightning in 1561.<sup>5</sup> Douglas Bruster cites this as an example of the ways in which various Renaissance dramas 'frequently owe some debt (often a significant one) to London for their compositional genesis' and as one of numerous instances in which, through 'humanistic parallelism and the exploitation of urban likenesses, London often

---

<sup>2</sup> For comment upon the censorship of *Sejanus*, see Philip Ayres, 'Introduction' to Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall*, ed. by Philip Ayres (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 16-22. Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 10-14 and Janet Clare, 'Art made tongue-tied by authority': *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 111-14.

<sup>3</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of Civil War*, ed. by Joseph W. Houppert (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid*, note to 5.5.225.

became Rome, even as Rome became London'.<sup>6</sup> Some notable examples of this trend also include allusions to the myth that the Tower of London was built by Julius Caesar (the significances of which are considered in the essays by Laurie Johnson, Domenico Lovascio, and Miranda Fay Thomas), as well as more specifically anachronistic elements, most notably the clock in *Julius Caesar*, in Roman settings. These are specific examples of the ways in which writers in early modern England capitalised upon the perceived resonances between Rome and 'home'. Such correspondences also complement the broader sense, highlighted by Warren Chernaik, that 'there are certain values that are characteristically Roman, but not geographically or temporally limited to a particular place'.<sup>7</sup> Similar ideas about the portability of Romanness are the starting points for the articles in this special issue, which explore how ideas of, and relating to, ancient Rome influenced, or were adapted by, early modern authors, as well as the ways in which early modern uses of Roman history continue to be re-appropriated as potential means of commenting upon twenty-first century politics.

The influence of Roman culture upon early modern England arguably manifested itself most conspicuously in the school curricula. During the latter half of the sixteenth century, a typical grammar school curriculum would draw upon a wide variety of classical literary sources, including works by such Roman authors as Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Ovid, Sallust, and Terence. The grounding in the classics, including this multiplicity of Roman sources, provided by such a curriculum has been viewed as one of the major catalysts for that which Richard A. Lanham labelled the 'stylistic explosion' that characterises Renaissance literature.<sup>8</sup> Considerable effort has gone into recovering the contents of the curriculum Shakespeare would have studied at King Edward VI School in Stratford-Upon-Avon, most notably in T.W. Baldwin's monumental study, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944).<sup>9</sup> Colin Burrow has recently raised a number of caveats in relation to Baldwin's study, including the caution that Baldwin tended to 'overstate the rigour and the range of study

---

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944). Further studies of the classics and the early modern curriculum include Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and Andrew Wallace, *Virgil's Schoolboys: The Poetics of Pedagogy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

at Elizabethan grammar schools' and that he offered a potentially reductive view of Shakespeare's classical learning that did not take into account the possibilities that Shakespeare would not necessarily have retained everything he learned at grammar school or that this continued beyond his school years.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the grammar school curriculum undoubtedly placed an emphasis upon classical sources, many originating from ancient Rome, as a means of highlighting good practices in style and rhetoric. Such emphases continued into the university curriculum; the jurist William Gager, in particular, advocated student acting, particularly through the works of Seneca and Plautus, as a means for the undergraduates 'to try their voyces and confirme their memoryes; to frame their speeche; to conforme them to convenient action; to trye what mettell is in every one, and of what disposition thay are of'.<sup>11</sup> The academic tradition therefore extended emphases upon the importance of the classics, as exemplars of both rhetoric and morality, not just through a culture of performance, but also in the exercises in vernacular translation that it encouraged. One of the most conspicuous examples of this is provided by the publication of *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies* in 1581, a compendium of translations of dramas attributed to Seneca, including the apocryphal *Octavia*, completed between 1559 and 1567 and edited by Thomas Newton. These dramas resonated beyond the academic tradition from which they emerged and A.J. Boyle, commenting upon their appearance shortly after the emergence of the English commercial theatres, notes that they 'were both index and product of a theatrical ideology in which Seneca held a primary position'.<sup>12</sup> Seneca exercised a considerable influence upon the development of English tragedy, especially in the hands of such dramatists as Marlowe and Kyd, and, as Burrow notes, became 'the high-status model for drama during the formative years of the English professional stage and playwrights... not only read but showed their audiences they had read Senecan tragedy'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, numerous other Roman sources, including Ovid, Plutarch, Cicero, Virgil, and Tacitus saw their influences extended through the culture of translation.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 22-3.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in H. B. Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921, 1946 reprint), pp. 58-9.

<sup>12</sup> A.J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Burrow, p. 162. For further comment on the influence of Seneca, see Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); and A.J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the culture of translation in early modern England, see Gordon Braden, Robert Cummings, and Stuart Gillespie (eds.), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Studies of the influence of specific Roman sources in early modern

Patrick Cheney has also highlighted the ways in which a number of authors went beyond translation or stylistic imitation of the classical authors and pursued a practice of emulating the progress of the literary careers, a process that plays a key part in the developments of their own authorial identities.<sup>15</sup>

Roman sources also provided numerous exemplary narratives and one of the main reasons early modern writers turned so frequently to Roman history was because of its very usefulness. As a political system that experienced transitions from a monarchy to a republic and then, in turn, to imperial rule, Rome endured considerable turbulence and generated numerous figures who were represented in histories as moral exemplars, both good and bad. One of the most readily available sources of such figures in early modern England was Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, which appeared in a translation by Sir Thomas North in 1579. The utility of Roman sources is further exemplified by the turn, towards the end of the century, away from the more established Roman authorities. As David Norbrook notes,

Throughout Europe, in the later sixteenth century, writers were turning away from the elaborate 'Ciceronian' style, a style associated with public debate and oratory, and turning to 'silver Latin' writers like Seneca and Tacitus. These men were writing at a time when the Senate had lost its real political power and important decisions were taken in private by the emperor and his associates. Thus the 'Tacitist' movement had marked, though ambiguous, political connotations.<sup>16</sup>

With their stark depictions of the worst excesses of the early emperors, Tacitus' *Annals of Imperial Rome* proved to be a source of considerable appeal amongst an elite but increasingly disenfranchised aristocratic political class. Some of the most notable episodes recorded in the *Annals* included Tiberius' reign of terror, the vices of Caligula,

---

England include Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567-1632* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Liz Oakley-Brown, *Ovid and Cultural Poetics of Translation in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010);

<sup>15</sup> See Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), which outlines the Ovidian influence upon the development of Marlowe's career in contrast to the pattern of the Virgilian career followed by Edmund Spenser. For further development of these ideas, see also Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 171-2. Other important readings of the resonance of Senecan and Tacitean thought include J.M.H. Salmon, 'Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50.2 (1989), 199-225 and F. J. Levy, 'Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginning of Politic History in England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50.1 (1987), 1-34.

and the attempts of the stoic philosopher Seneca to curb the tyrannies of Nero. Such episodes provoked mixed responses and gave rise to the two distinct branches of Tacitean thought, identified as ‘red’ and ‘black’ Tacitism, which advocated, respectively, either active resistance or passive endurance of tyrannical excesses. W. David Kay also notes that the *Annals* could potentially be interpreted either as a ‘manual of state intrigue or as a warning against tyranny’, thereby highlighting the ambiguous reception of these histories.<sup>17</sup>

The turn to Tacitism was also related to the emergence of such discourses as stoicism and republicanism, for which Roman authorities proved especially influential. The late sixteenth-century saw the emergence of neo-stoicism, broadly defined as an attempt to reconcile the principles of ancient Roman stoic thought with reformed Christian principles. One of the most notable figures in the development of this current of thought was the Flemish philosopher, Justus Lipsius, who was also one of the most influential proponents of Tacitism in Renaissance Europe. Lipsius’s works placed considerable emphasis upon the virtues of constancy and prudence as crucial constituents for virtuous and pragmatic engagement in political life.<sup>18</sup> The potential applicability of stoic thought outside of the political sphere and within a domestic context is the focus of Erin Weinberg’s essay in this special issue.

Republicanism also provided a ready framework for political analysis in early modern England. Patrick Collinson famously used the term ‘monarchical republic’ as a label for the political culture of early modern England, and identified a number of civic roles and political developments, including the ‘Bond of Association’ which suggested various measures to fill any potential power vacuum in the event of Elizabeth’s death, that could be seen as broadly republican in spirit.<sup>19</sup> However, republicanism was also influential as an intellectual framework, feeding into debates about individual liberty and the power of the monarch.<sup>20</sup> Numerous studies have also explored the ways in which

---

<sup>17</sup> W. David Kay, *Ben Jonson: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 71.

<sup>18</sup> For a useful analysis of the development of the ‘Lipsian paradigm’ in early modern English intellectual culture, see Adriana McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584-1650* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). On the influence of the idea of constancy, see Geoffrey Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> See Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambleton Press, 1994), pp. 31-57. For some useful responses to the implications of Collinson’s ideas, see the essays in John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> For further analysis of the relationship between republicanism and early modern political culture, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern*

republicanism had a specifically literary influence by providing a discourse through which early modern authors could explore questions of political authority and civic liberty. Patrick Cheney has proposed that there was a distinct tradition of ‘republican authorship’ characterised by the ways in which a writer’s ‘literary works vigorously engage classical Roman and early modern European republican writing, both historical and literary’ and numerous studies have explored how these ideas influenced a wide range of authors, including Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe.<sup>21</sup> Such republican ideas were also influenced by the turn to ‘silver’ classical writers identified by Norbrook. This is evidenced particularly by the increasing influence of Lucan’s epic poem, the *Pharsalia*, which outlines the atrocities of the civil conflicts attending Caesar’s seemingly unstoppable rise to power. With its depictions of civil war and the increasing vulnerability of the liberties formerly enjoyed by Roman citizens, Lucan’s epic became a text with marked political resonances during this period.<sup>22</sup> Early modern visions of Rome as a political culture whose civic liberties are doomed to be compromised continues to have striking topical relevancies, as Kate Wilkinson shows in her essay on the effects of the ‘Occupy’ movement upon contemporary performances of *Coriolanus*. Rome’s turbulent political history, then, provoked fundamental questions about civic liberties for early modern dramatists which continue to be explored and debated in contemporary productions.

According to Paul A. Cantor, though, the early modern English view of Roman political history was complicating and ambiguous, ‘since both growing imperial ambitions and nascent republican sentiments became bound up with the way the Elizabethans viewed Roman history’.<sup>23</sup> Whilst a largely aristocratic intelligentsia may have turned to the

---

*Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 188; see also Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998). The links between early modern republicanism, literature, and modern ideas of subjectivity are explored in James Kuzner, *Open Subjects: English Renaissance Republicans, Modern Selfhoods, and the Virtue of Vulnerability* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> The influence of Lucan is considered at length in Edward Paleit, *War, Liberty, and Caesar: Responses to Lucan’s ‘Bellum Ciuile’, ca. 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For Lucan’s influence upon English republicanism, see David Norbrook *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and for comment upon Lucan’s influence on Shakespeare and Marlowe, see, respectively, Hadfield, pp. 103-29 (in particular, the identification of the first tetralogy of history plays as ‘Shakespeare’s *Pharsalia*’). and Cheney, pp. 24-49.

<sup>23</sup> Paul A. Cantor, *Shakespeare’s Rome: Republic and Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 17.

discourses of republicanism and a politically-inflected brand of stoicism, the influence of Rome would also resonate, in different ways, when it came to royal propaganda and constructions of national identity. This is exemplified by Jonathan Goldberg in one of the most notable readings of Jacobean iconography, in which he highlights that, upon his entry into the city of London, ‘James displayed, passing by the triumphal arches... a Roman style, imperial’.<sup>24</sup> Similar representations of James likened him to the Emperor Augustus as a ‘Prince of Peace’ and as ‘England’s Caesar’, provoking comparisons with Julius Caesar.<sup>25</sup> Imperial myths of a different kind also contributed to the much broader promulgation of English national identity. In the construction of a number of national histories, most notably Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the myth of the *translatio imperii* emerged. This myth posited that Brutus of Troy, the great-grandson of Aeneas, founded the kingdom of Britain after having fled from Rome. Although largely discredited by the sixteenth century, the *translatio* myth still bore considerable capital for the purposes of propaganda and national identity; as Lisa Hopkins notes, it still remained a decisive means through which England could lay claim to be ‘the only true inheritor of the cultural authority of Rome’.<sup>26</sup> This idea proved particularly important for constructing a Protestant national identity and as a means for England to distance itself from what were perceived to be the corrupting effects of the Catholicism of which contemporary Rome had now become the locus. Indeed, John Curran Jr. has highlighted how these tensions between anti-Romanism and national myth had a considerable bearing on the historiography on Britain, including the invasion of Julius Caesar. In this way, numerous historical writers capitalised upon the ‘anti-Roman significances of the British History, which with Protestantism gained new purpose and nationalistic meaning’, allowing commentators to use history as a means to ‘express opposition toward Rome and the revulsion at the concept of Roman dominion’.<sup>27</sup> The significance of Rome’s association with Catholicism is also

---

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 32. Leah Marcus, similarly, notes that James’s entry into the city served to delineate him as ‘an overriding “imperial” presence’; see *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 163. For further comment on Jacobean propaganda and iconography, and its broader cultural influences, see Marcus, pp. 109-59; Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> See Goldberg, p. 43. On the resonances of the figure of Julius Caesar in Jacobean iconography, see Paulina Kewes, ‘Julius Caesar in Jacobean England’, *The Seventeenth Century* 17.2 (2002), 155-86.

<sup>26</sup> Lisa Hopkins, *The Cultural Uses of the Caesars on the English Renaissance Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> John E. Curran Jr., *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), p. 16.



considered in Timothy Duffy's essay in this collection; Rome's significance as a site of history, of ancient ruins, and a space of religious authority meant it was a location that 'contained concurrently the ghosts of its past, the powerful draw of its present, and the pull of eternal destiny rooted in its role as the spiritual centre of the Catholic world'.

It has also been noted that the typically Roman values offered a decidedly masculine model of exemplarity. As Coppélia Kahn points out, because of Rome's status as a patriarchal society, 'Romanness *per se* is closely linked to an ideology of masculinity'.<sup>28</sup> This point is also reflected in the fact that other notable emphases of Roman values, including rhetoric and virtuous political engagement, were focused upon participation in spheres from which women were notably excluded. A number of studies have explored the implications of this, including Kahn's *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (1997) which scrutinises the effects of this tendency to equate Romanness with masculinity by arguing that 'Shakespeare's Roman works articulate a critique of the ideology of gender on which the Renaissance understanding of Rome was based'.<sup>29</sup> Such ideas are also considered in Erin Weinberg's essay, which highlights how the traditionally male-centric discourses of stoicism could be adapted and reconfigured to address the domestic suffering of early modern women, thereby overcoming their marginalisation from these discourses.

In these ways, literary criticism and historical commentary has continued to explore the numerous influences of ancient Rome upon the early modern imagination. The essays in this special issue extend these enquires and continue to highlight how Roman principles had clear potential to be applied in a variety of discourses relating to politics, ethics, gender, and national identity. In these ways, early modern writers still continue to provoke comment on the strategies they apply to 'force' these Roman ideas and resonances in relation to 'the present state'.

### **Essays in the Special Issue**

In her essay on *The Comedy of Errors*, Erin Weinberg takes a fresh approach to the play's relationship with one of its long-acknowledged sources, St Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The play's indebtedness to that source, and in particular to its assertions of the household as a microcosm of Christendom and of the husband as master of the household, is here considered alongside both the early modern revival of Roman

---

<sup>28</sup> Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

stoicism and Galenic conceptions, current in the period, of the passions as a fluid force that passed from person to person. Weinberg demonstrates the extent to which the play endorses Paul's message that social order is dependent upon the maintenance of domestic order, but argues that considering its dramatisation of this idea in terms of early modern neo-Stoicism and Galenic theory allows for a new way of understanding the play's gender politics. Paul's advice is distinctly top-down, addressed as it is to Ephesian husbands and masters, and can accordingly be read as advocating male procurement of female submission; as such, modern critics reading the play in these terms have tended to detect an uncomfortable conservatism both in the abbess's preaching of Paul's ideas, and in Adriana's silence at the play's resolution. As Weinberg shows, however, early modern neo-Stoicism tended to look at the same idea from the bottom up. While classical Stoicism had tended to classify passion, the emotion that the philosophy aimed to overcome, as feminine, Weinberg details how emergent English Stoic discourse, exemplified by the work of Mary Sidney and Fulke Greville, had begun to consider the social benefits of stoic virtues being applied by women in a domestic setting, and to accentuate the *active* role women could take in their own lives to overcome passion and thus arrest its transmission, to employ the Galenic concept, throughout and beyond the household. Read in these terms, Weinberg suggests, *The Comedy of Errors* might be said to dramatise Adriana's achievement of Stoic virtue, her silence at the play's close demonstrating not her submission to patriarchal domestic authority but her active and independent defeat of passion.

Timothy Duffy's contribution to the issue discusses the representation of Rome in the poetry of Petrarch, Du Bellay and Spenser in terms of a poetic theory of triangulation. Duffy notes the symbolic, philosophical and theological significance of triangles in both classical and early modern culture; the triangle is the base unit of the construction of the universe in Plato's *Timaeus*, and its cosmological importance takes on an added Trinitarian significance in the Christian world. In the Renaissance the triangle becomes fundamentally important in cartography and navigation, and in the creation of the illusion of depth in the visual arts. This prominence of the triangle, Duffy argues, 'allowed a conceptual triangular aesthetic to become an animating and even guiding force in the temporal and visionary energies' of the poetry of Petrarch, Du Bellay and Spenser (p. 5). Focusing in particular on these poets' treatments of Rome, Duffy notes the ways in which they use this city to perform a kind of religiously-infused spatio-temporal triangulation: as well as provoking an immediate and present response, Rome, with all of its ruins, encourages a consideration of its ancient past, while its position as the 'spiritual centre of the Catholic world' gave it 'the pull of eternal destiny' (p. 6). Duffy begins by examining poems from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, which perform 'a triangulation between the past as buried in the ground ..., the present moment of his

poetry, and the infinite divine beyond' (p. 8) before going on to discuss how this serves as a model for similar triangulations in Joachim du Bellay's *Les Antiquitez de Rome* and *Poemata*, and Spenser's *Complaints*, which along with his 'Daphnaïda' contains translations of both Petrarch and Du Bellay. Reading these poems in this way helps to reveal, Duffy suggests, that Rome is never simply a spatial location and never carries a unilateral signification, but rather evokes a complex nexus of temporal and spiritual associations. In the process, the very specifically located setting of Rome allows these poets to consider more broadly expansive subjects such as 'time, space, and eternity' (p. 25).

In 'Caesar in Elsinore and Elsewhere: Topicality and Roman History', Laurie Johnson explores one specific way in which Shakespeare's drama draws from the classical past a sense of topical immediacy, in this case through a coincidence of naming. Johnson focuses on the prominent legal and administrative career — roughly contemporary with Shakespeare's years as a writer — of Sir Julius Caesar, holder, successively, of the positions of commissioner responsible for controlling piracy, High Judge of the Court of the Admiralty, Master of the Chancery, Master of the Court of Requests, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Master of the Rolls. Discussing a range of plays including the *Henry VI* plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Cymbeline*, Johnson identifies a number of allusions to the historical Caesar that might be considered 'thinly veiled', and in most cases not entirely complimentary, 'references to the prominent lawyer' (p. 1). In doing so, Johnson also establishes a potential set of motives for such references, as well as mapping their nature and frequency onto the various stages of the political career of their purported referent. Firstly, Johnson notes that Sir Julius, while in charge of the regulation of piracy in 1595, was involved in an acrimonious financial dispute with the privateer George Carey, who in the following year became the patron of the Chamberlain's Men; it is around this time that pejorative Caesarian references — several of them involving direct associations with piracy — begin to gain momentum in Shakespeare's drama. Secondly, Johnson observes that references to Caesar are absent from Shakespeare's plays from 1606 to 1610, and attributes this period of silence to Sir Julius's appointment as James's Chancellor of the Exchequer — an appointment which made him sufficiently powerful to be an inadvisable target of satirical dramatic allusion, particularly for a company patronised by a figure with whom he had a fractious history. When Caesarian references reappear in Shakespeare's work, they do so in *Cymbeline* (1610), where Johnson identifies a reversal in their tone; here, against a background of continued success in Sir Julius's career, Shakespeare 'seeks to close the account on the company's past history of mocking mistreatment of [Sir Julius] and his name' (p. 10). In tracing the development of this running theatrical gag, Johnson shows how Shakespeare was able

to ‘interweave ancient Roman history, contemporary politics, and non-monarchical topical subject matter’ in pursuit of an ‘historical-topical approach’ (p. 10).

Taking Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* as her focus, Miranda Fay Thomas considers in her essay the dramatic significance of gesture, aiming to establish its status as ‘embodied social metaphor’ (p. 1). The essay examines the capacity of gesture to connote both sincerity and insincerity, its function as a persuasive rhetorical device, and the relationship between its performance in a political and in a dramatic context. Thomas begins by noting in the work of various classical authorities on rhetoric — including Demosthenes, Quintilian, and Cicero — the repeated assertion of the importance of studied and very deliberately performed gesture, and relates this emphasis on the power of artificial physical gesture in persuasive discourse to the late-Elizabethan puritan anxiety over the potentially corrupting and seductive influence of the public theatres. There is, Thomas suggests, a ‘complex relationship between the apparently distinguished act of rhetoric and the alleged vulgarity of theatrical performance’ (p. 2). In exploring this relationship, the essay examines a series of gestures in *Julius Caesar* that each serve a distinct purpose: the handshake between co-conspirators Caska and Cassius, signifying constancy and mutual agreement; the insincere handshakes between Antony and the conspirators after Caesar’s assassination; the reported account of Caesar’s repeated refusal of the crown, understood by reporter and audience alike as a canny piece of political stagecraft; and Portia’s account of the physical manifestations of Brutus’s anxiety in the time building up to the assassination, apparently depicting an unconscious and truthful expression of the gesturer’s emotional state. While each of these examples carries a distinct, and in some cases apparently oppositional, signification, Thomas argues that they all share a sense of gesture as performance; even Brutus’s unwittingly revealing gestures are mediated on-stage through Portia’s recreation of them, showing that even the most apparently sincere of gestures can be self-consciously reproduced in artificial performance. In the same way, the actor’s gestures help to invest the process of dramatic impersonation with the sincerity that is required for a plausible performance. Through its engagement with gesture the play encourages reflection on the persuasive power of performance in politics and in theatre; ‘with *Julius Caesar*’, Thomas suggests, ‘Shakespeare proves the Puritans right: theatre is dangerous indeed’ (p. 28).

Domenico Lovascio, in his essay ‘Of higher state | Than monarch, king or world’s great potentate’: The Name of Caesar in Early Modern English Drama’, presents the issue’s third Caesar-focused contribution, considering in this instance the distinction on the early modern stage between Caesar the man and ‘Caesar’ the name. Lovascio begins with a discussion of, and survey of critical responses to, Caesar’s habit of self-naming

and self-address in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Building on work in this area by other critics of the play, Lovascio notes that Caesar's persistent self-naming is part of a process of myth-making; through the repeated rhetorical deployment of his own name, Caesar 'creates an alternative identity to his earthly one, a mythical self beyond time, by magnifying his own name and endowing it with almost magical connotations' (p. 9), with the result that the death of the corporeal Caesar cannot end the existence of the *idea* of Caesar. The essay breaks new ground by expanding this line of enquiry to other, less well-known early modern dramatisations of Caesar, demonstrating that Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1594), the anonymous *Caesar's Revenge* (1595), William Alexander's *Julius Caesar* (1607), and John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The False One* (1620) all share with Shakespeare's play a preoccupation with the name of Caesar and with the political power of its mythic construction. Placing this dramatic preoccupation in its cultural context, Lovascio concludes the essay by considering the richness of the range of symbolic associations the name of Caesar carried for an early modern London audience. Firstly, the essay considers the potential significance of dramatising the idea of a name continuing after the death of its 'carrier' in terms of Elizabeth I's persistent refusal to name an heir. Secondly, noting the capacity of the figure of Caesar to 'cross the borders between "Roman" and "Romish"', making it 'expedient for authors to deploy Caesar for manifold cultural and political purposes' (p. 20), Lovascio demonstrates how the name of Caesar facilitates allusion broadly to the perceived Catholic threat to England during the latter years of Elizabeth's reign, and more particularly to enemy figureheads such as Emperor Philip II. Finally, the distinction between 'Caesar' as referring to the historical individual, and as referring to the office he held — which at the time was widely believed to be Emperor — provided useful material for the dramatic consideration of kingship, particularly in the case of *The False One*, which was performed at a time of increasingly Hispanophile foreign policy and perceived ineffectuality in James's reign. All of this shows, Lovascio argues, 'how readily, variedly and effectively the Roman past was regularly integrated in the complex network of cultural negotiations and appropriations which characterized the relations between early modern England and ancient Rome' (p. 22).

In 'The Changing Faces of Virtue: Plutarch, Machiavelli and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*', Patrick Ashby considers the competing historical, political and philosophical frameworks present in the play. The essay focuses particularly on Shakespeare's transformation of Coriolanus from the figure found in his main source; while Plutarch characterises Coriolanus as a cynical political pragmatist, the defining characteristic of Shakespeare's protagonist is a rigid adherence to moral and political principle (however misguided). In reinterpreting its source in this way, Ashby argues, the play establishes an opposition between Coriolanus's idealism, associated with

military virtue, and the Machiavellian *Realpolitik*, associated with political eloquence, of the Rome into which it places him. Shakespeare's Rome, in contradistinction to Coriolanus's steadfastness, is a place where definitions of virtue shift and reform according to the immediate political climate: 'In a society of hypocrites', Ashby writes, Coriolanus 'is an anomaly' (p. 13). Ashby does not, however, contend, as some critics have done, that the play represents a valorisation of the decisiveness and steadfastness of authoritarian rule over the indeterminacy of more discursive, dialectical and participatory forms of government. Nor does he argue, as others have, the converse point that the play dramatises the disastrous results of adherence to outdated values in an age that requires a more nuanced and morally flexible political approach. Rather, his essay suggests that Shakespeare sets up this opposition 'to examine the paradoxical effects of idealistic inflexibility, and to indicate the moral challenges posed by conceptual indeterminacy' (p. 3). Reading the play alongside Machiavelli's *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy* and *The Art of War*, Ashby focuses on moments in the play in which linguistic and moral indeterminacy seem to arise as a result of the performance of Machiavellian policy, ultimately suggesting that the play itself is indeterminate in its depiction of the merits of both democracy and authoritarianism, and ambivalent on the question of 'whether allegiance is owed to the state as an entity or to a particular set of values with which the subject aligns him- or herself' (p. 4).

In the final essay of the collection, Kate Wilkinson considers how early modern English representations of ancient Rome can be made to speak to very specific political concerns being visibly played out in the modern metropolitan spaces of Europe and North America. Focusing upon the representation of the Roman citizenry in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, often dismissed in critical and performance contexts as a 'mob', Wilkinson identifies ways in which recent productions of the play have tapped into a contemporary popular unrest at the monopolising of economic prosperity by financial and political elites while the overwhelming majority — the 99% — endure the effects of stagnant economies and associated austerity measures. This unrest found memorable expression in the protests of the Occupy Movement in 2011 to 2012, which took the form of peaceful camps set up in prominent urban spaces of major financial cities, such as Zuccotti Park, near New York's Wall St, and the forecourt of St Paul's Cathedral in London. Wilkinson considers the resurgence of interest in the play around the time these protests were taking place, and discusses ways in which recent productions of the play both engaged with contemporary discourse regarding tensions between a disadvantaged and under-represented people and privileged, distant elites, and made specific and explicit reference to the Occupy protests as they were still taking place. The essay looks in particular at a 2012 production by The Drilling Company as part of the Shakespeare in the Parking Lot season, staged in a public car park only a

couple of miles from the Zucotti Park protest site, and another production of the same year by the Seattle Shakespeare Company. Drawing upon contemporary press responses and from personal correspondences with the productions' directors, Wilkinson considers the ways in which these productions referred directly to the Occupy protests and were to some extent dependent upon them for their meaning. By way of contrast, Wilkinson goes on to discuss the Donmar Warehouse production, staged in London in late 2013, finding it to be comparatively emptied of radical political content, focussing instead on Coriolanus-as-individual. The difference in focus between the London production and the US productions only a year earlier offer a clear example, Wilkinson argues, of the temporal and spatial specificities inherent in the capacity for Shakespeare to produce meaning; eighteen months after the closure of the St Paul's camp, Occupy's increasing remoteness had rendered it redundant as theatrical source material.