

## Julius Caesar in Jacobean England

We have a fairly good idea of the topical resonance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in 1599 when it was first performed at the Globe. Though not, as some scholars have claimed, a *pièce à clef* allegorizing the threat posed to the Elizabethan regime by the Earl of Essex, the tragedy was broadly topical in its evocation of the nation's political anxieties. It responded to the widespread fear that the queen's government would be overthrown and that the country would be plunged into the sort of civil and religious war that was tearing France and the Netherlands apart. For the late Elizabethan audience the significance of *Julius Caesar* lay in its dramatization of the dangers of a disputed succession and the horrors of civil war. The play enjoyed a lasting popularity on the Jacobean stage. What was its appeal to the Jacobean audience?

In 1603 Elizabeth died. To general surprise the succession of James VI of Scotland went smoothly. Civil war was avoided. At a stroke several anxieties of late Elizabethan politics were removed. James had children; the succession was assured; England's northern frontier was now secure; and in 1604 James made peace with Spain. As the political climate changed, so did the preoccupations of the drama. From the time of James's accession there were far fewer plays about civil war or about the dangers of national disunity. But if old anxieties had gone, new ones had arisen in their place. What people feared now was not the weakness of the monarchy but its strength. There were fears of absolutism and tyranny; there was alarm about the corruption and decadence of the court; there was dismay about the control by upstart royal favourites over the counsels of the king. And those were now the subjects of history plays, whether set in ancient Rome, sixteenth-century France, or near-contemporary Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

We know that Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* remained in active repertory throughout the early decades of the seventeenth century: there are numerous allusions to it in contemporary plays and poems, and since *Julius Caesar* was not printed until the Folio of 1623, those references must be to performance.<sup>2</sup> The continued presence of *Julius Caesar* on the Jacobean stage

attests to its viability as a theatrical vehicle; it may also indicate that the play's representation of Roman politics was felt to be pertinent to the politics of Jacobean England. My aim in this essay is to recreate the cultural, political, and historical contexts of early seventeenth-century performances of *Julius Caesar* and to reflect on the fresh topical resonance that the play might have acquired under the new political dispensation.

I propose to offer a conjectural reconstruction of *Julius Caesar*'s reception in a new political context. Naturally, different members of the audience would have made different things of the play. In the absence of direct evidence about the Jacobean spectators' responses to *Julius Caesar* – Leonard Digges's versified recollection of the universal admiration for the quarrel scene is our only eye-witness account<sup>3</sup> – it makes sense to focus on that section of the audience whose political views and expectations we can most fully document: the king and the court. What might James I have made of *Julius Caesar* when he saw the play at Whitehall in 1611–12? I shall consider how James I and those around him viewed the historical Julius Caesar, and use that knowledge as a basis for thinking about the king's likely reception of Shakespeare's play.

When literary scholars – notably Geoffrey Bullough in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* and, more recently, David Daniell in his edition of *Julius Caesar* for Arden Three (1998) – describe Renaissance attitudes towards Julius Caesar and the fall of the Roman republic, they tend to do so without documenting the changes of those attitudes within the period from the accession of the Tudors in the late fifteenth century to the outbreak of the Civil War in mid-seventeenth. And yet changes there were. The sense of the relevance of Roman history to English politics, and of Julius Caesar's role in it, had been very different during the last decade of Elizabeth's reign from what it became in the years following the accession of James I or during the personal rule of Charles I in the 1630s. In order to historicise the perceptions of Julius Caesar in the early seventeenth century I shall concentrate on two critical moments in the reign of James I: the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the Palatinate débâcle of 1619–20. The former conferred renewed urgency on the assassination of Julius Caesar; the latter provoked interest in Caesar's rise to power and his autocratic government typified by his management of the senate. How those two crises affected the representation of Julius Caesar in imaginative literature and other kinds of writing, and how they may have influenced the reception of Shakespeare's tragedy, will be the twin themes of this essay.

### **'this . . . bleeding business': Regicide or Tyrannicide?**

In the years following the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the assassination of Julius Caesar was seen as the obvious historical precedent for the recent Catholic attempt to blow up the king and his Parliament. In a variety of

contexts the Roman dictator was figured as a king and his murder was roundly condemned as regicide. Philemon Holland, translator of Suetonius's *The Historie of Twelve Caesars Emperors of Rome* (1606), was clearly uncomfortable about his author's endorsement of Caesar's murder. '[H]e might be thought both to have abused his soueraintie', Suetonius writes (and Holland translates), 'and worthily to have beene murdered'.<sup>4</sup> So as to counteract the damage, Holland provides a suggestive marginal gloss keyed to the passage in which Suetonius recounts the fate of Caesar's killers 'not one . . . [of whom] either survived him aboue three yeares, or died of his naturall death'. Construing Caesar's murder as regicide, Holland's gloss guides the reader to interpret the deaths of Brutus and Cassius as a sign of divine retribution: 'A notable iudgement of Almightye God upon the unnatural murderers of their Soueraine' (p. 36). The Christian God is shown punishing pagan regicides.

In one sense, Holland's stance is not new: Caesar's royalty had been asserted, and his murder condemned, by many previous commentators.<sup>5</sup> Yet the appearance of his moralizing gloss in a translation published less than a year after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot suggests that he anticipated a topical application. We note a similar anticipation in Sir William Alexander's closet drama *The Tragedy of Julius Cæsar* which was published in London in 1607. Alexander was a young Scot who sought James I's patronage, and who endeavoured to further his political career by gratifying the king's literary sensibilities. He composed a series of Senecan tragedies about the falls of Darius, Caesar, Croesus, and Alexander the Great, collectively called *Monarchicke Tragedies*, of which the king was the dedicatee.<sup>6</sup>

Brought up and educated in Scotland, Alexander would have been familiar with the resistance theories of Knox and Buchanan. Under Buchanan's tutelage during the Scottish king's minority the instruments of royal propaganda such as coinage implicitly recognized the subjects' right to resist, even depose, an unjust sovereign. For example, the earliest coinage of his reign featured a sword and the following telling inscription: 'pro me si mereor in me'.<sup>7</sup> Having come of age, James rejected the teachings of Buchanan and overhauled the royal tropes, substituting imperial iconography – on his coins and elsewhere – for the austere and admonitory iconography of Calvinism.<sup>8</sup> This shift was not lost on Alexander. An eager aspirant to courtly favour, Alexander early made manifest his abhorrence of Calvinist resistance theories and produced a loyalist pamphlet condemning the Gowrie conspiracy, *A Short Discourse of the Good Ends of the higher providence, in the late attempt against his Maiesties Person* (1600).<sup>9</sup> Following James's accession to the throne of England, Alexander made his own bid for Englishness. He strove assiduously to divest himself of his 'Scotticisms', which, he felt, were indicative of his country's barbarism and roughness, by Anglicising his language and style. Accordingly, he continued to revise his works so as to eliminate vestiges of Scottish grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.

Alexander's *The Tragedy of Julius Cæsar* is based on Plutarch and continental sources, notably Muret's Latin *Julius Cæsar* and Garnier's *Cornélie*.<sup>10</sup> It covers a lot of the material covered by Shakespeare. Though there is no clear evidence of a debt to the earlier play,<sup>11</sup> Alexander may well have seen Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* during a visit to London. Published in London and intended for the English market,<sup>12</sup> Alexander's *Julius Cæsar* belongs in the tradition of English Senecan drama exemplified by Mary Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Kyd, and Samuel Brandon. Sidney's *Antonie*, Daniel's *Cleopatra*, Kyd's *Cornelia*, and Brandon's *Octavia* all embody a largely anti-Cæsarian perspective. So does Alexander's *Julius Cæsar*. Yet there is an important difference between the Roman tragedies by the English Senecans and Alexander's *Cæsar*. Those earlier closet plays do not posit any connection with current politics. By contrast, Alexander was acutely aware of the topicality the Gunpowder Plot had conferred upon the story he chose to dramatize and he attempted to control the interpretation of his play by inserting a passage of political theorizing. Specifically, Alexander sought to prevent the reader from concluding that the assassination of Caesar – which he presents in a favourable light – was a regicide. His Brutus declares:

If *Caesar* had been born, or chus'd our Prince,  
Then those who durst attempt to take his life,  
The world of treason justly might convince.  
Let still the States which flourish for the time,  
By subjects be inviolable thought,  
And those (no doubt) commit a monstrous crime,  
Who lawfull Sovereignty prophane in ought:  
And we must thinke (though now thus brought to bow)  
The Senate King; a subject *Caesar* is;  
The Sovereignty whom violating now,  
The world must damne, as having done amisse. (III.i.1280–90)<sup>13</sup>

Thoroughly well-versed in Renaissance political thought, Alexander's Brutus claims that the murder of Caesar is not regicide because Caesar neither inherited the crown nor was elected king.<sup>14</sup> By placing the argument in the mouth of Brutus, Alexander transforms the champion of the republic into a spokesman for civil obedience in monarchical regimes. Were Brutus the subject of James I, Alexander implies, he would hold his king's sovereignty 'inviolable', and would certainly *not* hearken to the treasonable resistance theories of either the Catholics or the Calvinists.

The insertion of this passage does little to alleviate the anti-monarchical slant of Alexander's play which has been imported wholesale from his chief source, Plutarch. The Argument prefaced to the text proper, although complimentary about Caesar's courage and military success, castigates the illegality of Caesar's proceedings and dwells on the universal loathing which his desire to be proclaimed king inspired among the Romans. Marcus Brutus, Cassius, and Decius Brutus are presented as virtuous men justified in their

action against Caesar; they enjoy the backing and approval of the Roman people. According to the Chorus of the Romans, the killing of Caesar is as honourable and courageous an act as the expulsion of the Tarquins by Marcus Brutus's ancestor, Lucius Junius Brutus. The ending of the play is politically inconclusive: in contrast to Shakespeare, who raises Caesar's ghost that will pursue Brutus and Cassius to their deaths, Alexander stages a debate which leads to a near-universal agreement that civil war better be avoided and that Caesar's assassination should be neither punished nor revenged. This broad consensus unites the leaders of the conspiracy, their ally (though not accomplice) Cicero, and the Roman citizens at large. Antony's is the only dissenting voice. The reader knows that civil war will ensue and that Brutus and Cassius will suffer defeat; yet Alexander does not avail himself of the opportunity to present that defeat as a providential punishment for Caesar's murder. Instead, he closes the play with Calphurnia's thoroughly anticlimactic lament for her husband. The final Chorus reflects on Rome's past forms of government and the present anarchy which it attributes to Caesar's overweening pride, *not* his assassination:

. . . by how many sundry sorts of men,  
 Hath this great State beene rul'd? though now by none,  
 Which first obey'd but one, then two, then ten,  
 Then by degrees return'd to two, and one;  
 Of which three States, their ruine did abide,  
 Two by Two's lusts, and one by Two mens pride. (ll. 3175–80).

Aware that his representation of Roman politics was likely to be read through the lens of recent events at home, Alexander works to preclude the identification between Caesarian Rome and Jacobean England. He is keen to establish a systemic difference between them: legally, Rome is a republic and England a hereditary monarchy. What would be criminal in one system appears lawful in the other. In Rome sovereignty is vested in the senate, in England in the king. This reasoning is undercut by the bibliographical packaging of Alexander's play; it is, after all, one of the 'Monarchicke Tragedies'. The general title page leads the reader to expect accounts of the falls of kings, rendering void any nice distinctions the author might be trying to make between Caesar as subverter of his country's republican constitution and the legitimate monarchies of Darius, Croesus, and Alexander.

The anxiety expressed by both Holland and Alexander about the potentially subversive implications of Caesar's fall has two sources. First, as I have already noted, there is the correspondence between Caesar's actual and James I's attempted assassination. Second – and this is the point to which I shall now turn – there is the broader analogy between James and Caesar which was implicit in James's published writings, and which was made explicit in the writings he sponsored and patronized. Modern scholars have emphasized James's adoption of the iconography of imperial Rome, and have

dwelt on his self-identification as Augustus. They have overlooked the fact that for most of his life James held Julius Caesar in far greater esteem than Augustus; and that his self-image owed as much, if not more, to the former as it did to the latter.

### James VI and I: Two Caesars or One?

Like many of his contemporaries, James was fascinated by Julius Caesar. In James's case this lifelong fascination was exceptionally intense. It doubtless shaped his response to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and to the Roman tragedies by other writers. More important, it affected his conduct as king and framed both content and style of his political writings. James sought to instill a similar regard for Julius Caesar in his son and heir, Henry Prince of Wales. In *Basilikon Doron* (1599), a manual of kingship dedicated to Prince Henry, James counsels his firstborn to immerse himself in classical and contemporary historiography, for 'by reading of authenticke histories and Chronicles, yee shall learne experience by Theoricke, applying the bypast things to the present estate'. Caesar's *Commentaries* head the reading list the king has devised for his successor. 'And among al prophane histories', he writes, 'I must not omit most specially to recommend unto you, the Commentaries of *Caesar*; both for the sweete flowing of the stile, as also for the worthinesse of the matter it selfe: for I have ever beene of that opinion, that of all the Ethnick Emperors, or great Captaines that ever were, he hath farthest excelled, both in his practise, and in his precepts in martiall affaires'.<sup>15</sup> James's admiration for Caesar stems from both Caesar's military exploits and his literary accomplishments. In recommending the *Commentaries* to Prince Henry, he betrays no trace of disapproval, no hint that this 'Ethnick Emperour' and 'great Captain' could be perceived as a tyrant. Earlier in the *Basilikon Doron*, James has sought to establish 'the trew difference betwixt a lawfull good King, and an usurping Tyran' (p. 18). The distinction he draws is well known;<sup>16</sup> of interest for our purposes is James's account of the deaths of good kings and tyrants respectively. Good kings, he says,

may be cut off by the treason of some unnaturall subjects, yet liveth their fame after them, and some notable plague faileth never to overtake the committers in this life, besides their infamie to all posterities hereafter: Where by the contrarie, a Tyrannes miserable and infamous life, armeth in the end his owne Subjects to become his burreaux: and although that rebellion be ever unlawfull on their part, yet is the world so wearied of him, that his fall is little meaned by the rest of his Subjects, and but smiled at by his neighbours. And besides the infamous memorie he leaveth behind him here, and the endlesse paine hee sustaineth hereafter, it oft falleth out, that the committers not onely escape unpunished, but farther, the fact will remaine as allowed by the Law in divers ages thereafter. (p. 19)

Which, in James's view, would have been the more adequate description of Caesar's fall? Caesar's 'committers' certainly came to untimely ends, yet posterity remained hotly divided in its interpretation of their deed. As James's encomium attests, for him Caesar's fame 'liveth' on, yet there were many for whom Caesar's 'memorie' was 'infamous'. However much actual power Caesar had enjoyed, technically speaking he was not a king. But even if we were to assume that to all intents and purposes Caesar was a king, the manner and after-effects of his death would not fit neatly into either of the two categories James establishes. Nonetheless, from James's perspective this apparent inconsistency might not have been an obstacle to rating Julius Caesar as an honorary king, and a good king at that. Indeed, I think we would not be wide of the mark in surmising that, although he did not say so explicitly, James was inclined to view Caesar as a good monarch overthrown by his treacherous subjects rather than as a usurping tyrant whose subjects became his 'burreaux'.

There is evidence to this effect which, however circumstantial, suggests that for most of his life James saw Caesar not only as a great commander and an eminent author, but also as a just, sovereign ruler. His efforts to recover Caesar's reputation and to appropriate it so as to heighten his own royal stature inform his published writings. They can be discerned, too, in his encouragement of a similar viewpoint in the work he sponsored or patronized.

Much has been made lately of James's negative opinion of Neostoicism and its hero Tacitus, the chronicler of the corruption of imperial Rome.<sup>17</sup> What both literary scholars and historians seem to have overlooked is James's equally negative judgement of Plutarch, notably Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*. In November 1610, James communicated this prejudice to a French intellectual temporarily living in England, Isaac Casaubon: 'The king', we are told, 'blamed Plutarch for his partiality against Cæsar'. The date of the conversation with Casaubon is significant: it took place 'on the day on which the king commemorated by a solemn service his delivery at Gowrie house'.<sup>18</sup> That Caesar was on James's mind in November, the month of his delivery from the Gunpowder Plot, is hardly surprising. The November of 1610 was a more fitting time than any to reflect on Julius Caesar and his brutal end since another 'Caesar', Henry IV of France, had been assassinated by a fanatical subject only months earlier.<sup>19</sup>

It is not hard to divine what James meant when he censured Plutarch's 'partiality against Caesar'. The historian's unequivocal representation of Caesar as a tyrant must have been highly objectionable to a monarch who liked to think of himself as – and to be celebrated as – a latter-day Caesar. I referred earlier to the changing iconography of James's Scottish coinage; the romanization of the king's image on the coins issued after his accession to the English throne is emblematic of his self-stylization as a Roman emperor.<sup>20</sup> Which Roman emperor's reign was James hoping to invoke as precedent and model for his own? The answer routinely provided to this question is: Octavius Caesar aka Augustus. In fact, as I hope to demonstrate, the picture is more complex than this.

Modern scholars tend to interpret as straightforwardly Augustan the imagery that might well have been designed to carry allusions to both Julius Caesar and Augustus. They are also inclined to mine contemporary literature for references to James as Augustus while disregarding references to him as Julius Caesar. Both these trends are grounded in a *modern* conviction that for James to foster an image of himself as Julius Caesar would have been inadvisable or, in Jonathan Goldberg's words, 'problematic'.<sup>21</sup> Yet however problematic such identifications may appear to us now (or indeed may have been then), James did promote them himself and did welcome them from others. How and why did he do so?

In chapter one of his *James I and the Politics of Literature*, Goldberg describes the linguistic and visual tropes which framed the verbal content and architectural design of James's entry to London in 1604. The leitmotif Goldberg identifies is James's Augustanism. At the same time, he quickly passes over those instances where James is unambiguously figured as Julius Caesar – for example, by William Hubbocke, Henry Petowe, and John Florio – subsuming them under the rubric of the king's broadly imperial image (pp. 42–3).<sup>22</sup> In this way Goldberg obscures the dual – Caesarian and Augustan – resonance of the portrayals of the new king.<sup>23</sup>

Of Jonson's *Magnificent Entertainment* devised for the royal entry into London on 15 March 1604, Goldberg says that it 'undoes' the reference to Julius Caesar (p. 46). Yet rather than undoing the reference, Jonson draws attention to it in a way that sets him apart from his contemporaries. The timing of James's entry is bound to have reminded those classically attuned of Julius Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March. Jonson confronts the uncomfortable memory of that event in an exchange he stages between the Roman Flamen and the native Genius Urbis. The Genius dismisses the Flamen's identification of the Ides of March as the feast of Anna Perenna which he dubs an 'Ethnick rite' that has no place 'in this translated temple'.<sup>24</sup> The old Roman feast, he proclaims, has now been superseded by James's official arrival in the capital on 15 March which will inaugurate a new – felicitous – era in Britain's history:

. . . that no age may leese  
 The memorie of this so rich a day;  
 But rather, that it henceforth yeerely may  
 Begin our spring, and with our spring the prime,  
 And first accompt of yeeres, of months, of time:  
 And may these *Ides* as fortunate appeare  
 To thee, as they to CAESAR<sup>h</sup> fatall were. <sup>h</sup>In which he was slaine in the *Senate*.  
 (ll. 624–30)

Yet it quickly becomes apparent that it is not the feast of Anna Perenna, but the memory of Julius Caesar's murder that the Genius's speech seeks to exorcise. In this attempt, it is only partially successful. First, the speech is cast in

the form of a prayer and as such there is no guarantee that it will be heard or granted; secondly, the tonal and verbal parallels between the *Magnificent Entertainment* and the roughly contemporaneous *Sejanus*, with its powerfully anti-Caesarian perspective, subtly qualify the Genius's pledge of London's allegiance to the new Caesar.<sup>25</sup> Jonson is cautiously – indeed warily – optimistic about the Stuart reign, not unequivocally enthusiastic.

Ostensibly, the comparison between Caesar and James is predicated on a contrast: the Ides of March which, as Jonson's marginal gloss reminds the reader, saw the end of the former's reign (and life) will mark the auspicious beginning of the latter's rule over the united Britain. Even so, the fact that James entered London on the anniversary of Caesar's murder in the senate could – and did – make for awkward associations. Moreover, the new king could not but have been aware that his death had been prophesied and compared – albeit at one remove – to that of Julius Caesar in the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), the most substantial historiographical project undertaken in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, and one with which the English literary and political elites are certain to have been familiar. Judging James VI's prospects by the example of his namesakes and predecessors, the chroniclers surmised that, like them, he would be assassinated by his Scottish subjects:

For if a man tosse ouer the Scottish historie, and cast an eie vpon the succession of their kings; not medling with anie of anie name, sauing such as were of the same with him now in a state of principallitie; he shall see Fatale quoddam malum nomini innatum. For certeine conspirators forceable breaking vp the first kings chamber doore, hauing before died their hands with the bloud of the kings fauorers, did now also with like countinually bloudthirstinesse murder their souereigne, inflicting vpon his bodie manie cruel and deadlie wounds at eight and twentie seuerall blowes. . . . Now when such things come to passe, let none be ignorant of this, that destruction is at hand, neither can anie man iustlie conceiue hope of safetie.<sup>26</sup>

The marginal note accompanying the description of how 'James the first [was] slaine' directed the reader to 'Compare this murther with that of Brutus and Cassius vpon Iulius Cesar'; and there followed successive accounts of the untimely ends of James II, James III, James IV, and James V. Contrary to the chroniclers' predictions, this vicious circle of regicide was broken; and James VI not only survived the various assassination attempts, but lived to accede to the English throne. Understandably, he had grown sensitive to allusions to Caesar's death. So although Jonson concludes the *Magnificent Entertainment* by likening James to Augustus (l. 763), his evocation of Julius Caesar's assassination earlier in the text makes the Roman analogies distinctly double-edged.

This ambiguity is largely absent from other contemporary figurations of James as Caesar. John Florio's tribute to James as 'Cesare' whose literary accomplishments the king is said to have rivalled echoes James's praise of

Caesar's *Commentaries* in the *Basilikon Doron*.<sup>27</sup> That James wished to foster this kind of parallel is evidenced by the care he took to make his writings available to his new subjects first by issuing reprints of the *Basilikon Doron* and *A Trew Law*, complete with Latin glosses and marginal annotations, in the spring of 1603; and, second, by publishing a collected edition of his *Workes* in 1616.<sup>28</sup> The latter was an especially emphatic statement of James's classicized royalty and his authorial status. Signed by James Bishop of Winton and Dean of Chapel Royal, the dedication of the *Workes* to Prince Charles cites several examples, both ancient and modern, of rulers addressing tracts of advice to their sons as a model for James's earlier gift of the *Basilikon Doron* to Prince Henry.<sup>29</sup> In terms of scale, substance, and dignity, Julius Caesar's output provided the obvious precedent from classical antiquity for the newly collected *Workes*. Caesar was not only a revered author; his life and exploits supplied subject-matter for other authors. James, too, saw himself as a near-classic author and his life and reign as a worthy subject for the writings of others. In his refutation of Cardinal du Perron, *A Premonition to All Most Mightie Monarches, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendome* (1609), he writes: 'Nay, if the dayly Commentaries of my life and actions in Scotland, were written (as *Julius Caesar* were) there would scarcely a moneth passe in all my life, since my entring into the 13. yeere of my aage [sic], wherein some accident or other would not convince the Cardinall of a Lye in this point'.<sup>30</sup> In a not uncharacteristic moment of self-aggrandizement, James compares his royal apprenticeship in Scotland to Caesar's campaigns in Gaul. A monarch addressing fellow-monarchs, he casts himself in the role of arbiter on issues of political theory and practice, Julius Caesar's example and *auctoritas* firmly behind him.

We may discern little of Julius Caesar in King James but in his lifetime the analogy had been current from his teens well into his middle age, different circumstances being adduced to support it and gaining or losing prominence over time. Sixteenth-century kings were routinely figured as Caesars, the analogy being part of the mental landscape of early modern Europe. Tremendously famous and tremendously controversial, Julius Caesar was the obvious figure to invoke when one wished to praise (and occasionally to castigate or warn) one's sovereign. Not all references to James VI and I as Julius Caesar were hackneyed tropes. What, then, was distinctive, unconventional, angled specifically towards James? In 1584, when he was only eighteen, the young Scottish king published *The Essayes of a Prentise*, a volume of his translations, poems, and prose, to which was prefaced a series of commendatory verses.<sup>31</sup> In one of them, a 'Sonnet' by 'T. H.', James is likened, quite conventionally, to both Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great (Plutarch's original pair). 'If Battels bold, and Bookes of learned men / Have magnified the mightie *Romain* name', writes T. H., 'Then placfe this Prince, who well deserves the fame'.<sup>32</sup> Another 'Sonnet', this one signed by R. H., invokes Alexander the Great and Augustus as analogues for the Scottish

James, but concludes with a pointed reference to Julius Caesar and his writings: ‘*Cæsars* works, shall iustly *Cæsar* crowne’ (sig. \*ijr). The encomiasts’ figuration of James as Julius Caesar is reinforced by the royal author himself. The ‘Paraphrasticall Translation’ of a passage from Lucan’s *Pharsalia* which he included in the book is a striking assertion of both Caesar’s royalty and James’s self-identification as Julius Caesar, a point to which I shall return.

It was one thing to liken James to Julius Caesar in the 1580s on account of his burgeoning literary endeavours and in anticipation of his martial deeds; it was quite another to invoke the analogy in the 1600s when the likelihood of James exerting himself on the battlefield rather than the literary field had all but evaporated.<sup>33</sup> The analogy with Caesar was drawn as often after James’s arrival in England as it had been before. It was now predicated on the royalty and political wisdom that the Roman and the British Caesars held in common. Another factor was James’s project for Great Britain.<sup>34</sup>

Let me take up this last point first. James’s plan for the union with Scotland and his investment in ‘Britishness’ provided the link with Caesar that replaced the earlier expectations of military triumphs. (The rebirth of Britain is nicely illustrated by the appearance, in 1604, of the *Basilikon Doron* in Welsh, the title page proclaiming the book to have been ‘*Translated into the true British tongue*’.)<sup>35</sup> What Julius Caesar had striven to accomplish by the sword, James had already partly achieved by peacefully uniting the crowns of England and Scotland under one sceptre. As William Harbert poetized in his tribute to the new king, *A Prophecie of Cadwallader, last king of the Britaines: Containing a Comparison of the English Kings, with many worthy Romanes* (1604),

To whom shall I this northerne starre compare?  
To Cæsar, which first did subdue the State?

...

Cæsar was twice repulst ere he could see,  
This litle world, from all the world remote:  
Before we sawe thy face we sent to thee,  
As to a pilot for to guide our boate:  
Which did in seas of suddaine sorrow floate.

He lost his sword before he conquest wan,  
Wee yeeld thee all our hearts, and all we can.<sup>36</sup>

James hoped to complete his peaceful conquest of Britain and effect union by royal word (and parliamentary decree). The metaphor of conquest further allied James and Julius Caesar. When an expanded edition of the great Elizabethan bestseller, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, was published in 1587, it featured a narrative self-portrait of Julius Caesar. The Elizabethan Julius Caesar feels singularly insecure about his alien status and proceeds to justify his right to make an appearance in the story of British kings: ‘Why I a *Romayne* Prince, no *Britayne*, here / Amongst these *Britayne* Princes now appeere, / As if amongst the rest a *Britayne* Prince I were’. His application for residency

rests on military victory: 'By conquest sith I wanne this Ile before I fell'.<sup>37</sup> Following James I's accession, Julius Caesar's status changes from alien invader to that of native king. When John Speed brought out his *History of Great Britaine* (1611), he advertised the book as containing 'ye Successions, Lives, acts and Issues of the English Monarchs from JULIUS CAESAR, to our most gracious Sovereigne King JAMES'.<sup>38</sup> Goldberg cites Speed's comparison of James to Octavius Caesar and Constantine in the body of the text,<sup>39</sup> but what could be more emphatic than linking the names of Julius Caesar and James, both set off in capitals, on the title page of Speed's *magnum opus*?

It could be objected, of course, that we should not read too much into isolated gestures such as the phrasing of Speed's title, and that we should not over-interpret such textual minutiae as Philemon Holland's marginal gloss in his translation of Suetonius or Sir William Alexander's mini-disquisition on tyrannicide in his *Julius Cæsar*. Yet there is extensive, and hitherto overlooked, evidence that James himself wanted to rehabilitate Julius Caesar so as to bolster his own image as Caesar in the first decade of his rule as *rex Britanniae*. I shall give two examples: first, the successive printings of Clement Edmonds' translation of Caesar's *Commentaries* in 1600, 1604, and 1609 which was accompanied by Edmonds' observations on Caesar's writings (and in the edition of 1655 by the *Life of Caesar*), and, second, the 1612 expanded edition of Bacon's essays. Since the publication dates of these two works are close in time to the court performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, we shall do well to examine the perspective they adopt on Caesar.

The first edition of Edmonds' translation was published in 1600 with a dedication to Sir Francis Vere, Elizabeth's commander in the Netherlands.<sup>40</sup> Readers – envisaged by the translator to be soldiers – were offered a bare translation. There was no guidance as to how the text should be understood. The second and third expanded editions of 1604 and 1609 respectively were textual events of a very different sort. Dedicated to Prince Henry, the 1604 *Commentaries* betrays Edmonds' close reading of James's *Basilikon Doron* and his keen alertness to the new king's admiration for Caesar. '[W]hen I found in his Maiesties princely pen', he writes, 'how much his Excellent wisdom doth value these Commentaries, for the worthinesse of the matter above al prophane Histories; judging the Author worthie more honour, then any of the Ethnicke Emperours or other great commanders of the world; I was encouraged to adde that which remained, and make the worke perfect with all his parts which being brought to an end, I do in all humblenesse present to the gracious Patronage of your Princely favor'.<sup>41</sup> The reading public's reception of Julius Caesar and his *Commentaries* was now firmly guided by the translator's assertion of royal approval which the engraved frontispiece featuring Prince Henry graphically confirmed; and, in the edition of 1609, by a series of commendatory verses by, among others, William Camden, Samuel Daniel, and Ben Jonson. The revised dedication to the 1609 *Commentaries* indicates that the Prince had commanded Edmonds to fill the gaps

in Caesar's narrative and to produce his own observations upon it. Having fulfilled his brief, Edmonds feels 'emboldened' in his bid for Henry's patronage because his book 'carrieth *Cæsar* and his Fortunes, as they come related from the same Author: which, in the deep Judgement of his most excellent *Majesty*, is preferred above all other profane histories; and so commended, by his sacred Authority, to your reading, as a chief pattern and Master-piece of the Art of war'.<sup>42</sup> The bibliographical environment transformed Julius Caesar into an honorary Stuart.

Edmonds' rehabilitation of Julius Caesar was a *conditio sine qua non* of the parallel between him as the founder of imperial Rome and James as the founder of imperial Britain. The same purpose seems to have guided Sir Francis Bacon in writing his essay 'Of Honour and Reputation' which appeared in print in 1612. Bacon had been a lifelong admirer of Julius Caesar. His 'Of Tribute', which dates from c. 1592, describes Caesar as 'the worthiest man that ever lived, the bravest soldier, a man of the greatest honour, and one that had the most real and effectual eloquence that ever man had'.<sup>43</sup> After 1603, Bacon inflected his representation of Julius Caesar so as to establish clear parallels between Caesar and the new king. Modern scholars typically stress that in the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) Bacon praises James I's 'gift of speech' by quoting Tacitus' praise of Augustus: 'Augusto profluens . . .'.<sup>44</sup> Yet both the *Advancement of Learning* and the slightly later 'Of Honour and Reputation' promote Julius Caesar as the more worthy analogue for King James than Augustus. In Book One of the *Advancement*, Bacon holds up 'the excellency of his learning' which 'doth declare itself in his writings and works' as a way of paying tribute to the similar accomplishments of his royal patron (p. 161). He is even more particular and more fulsome in Book Two. '[G]enerally it were to be wished', he writes, '(as that which would make learning indeed solid and fruitful) that active men would or could become writers'. He exemplifies this claim by citing Julius Caesar and King James. Caesar 'in modesty mixed with greatness, did for his pleasure apply the name of a Commentary to the best history of the world'; James gave the world an 'excellent book touching the duty of a king: a work richly compounded of divinity, morality, and policy, with great aspersion of all other arts; and being in mine opinion one of the most sound and healthful writings that I have read' and a 'book of a free monarchy [in which] you do well give men to understand, that you know the plenitude of the power and right of a King, as well as the circle of his office and duty'. Bacon commends 'this excellent writing of [his] Majesty as a prime or eminent example of tractates concerning special and respective duties; wherein I should have said as much, if it had been written a thousand years since' (pp. 179, 252–3).

In 'Of Honour and Reputation' Bacon shifts the perspective from learning and culture to politics and political theory. His aim is to identify and illustrate the true 'degrees of sovereign honour' of which he lists five in descending order: founders of states and commonwealths, lawgivers, liberators, enlargers

or defenders of empire, and fathers of their country. Strikingly, he places Julius Caesar, *not* Augustus, in his top category: 'In the first place are *conditores imperiorum*, founders of states and commonwealths; such as were Romulus, Cyrus, Caesar, Ottoman, Ishmael'.<sup>45</sup> Augustus finds his niche in 'the third place', among '*liberatores*, or *salvatores*, such as compound the long miseries of civil wars, or deliver their countries from servitude of strangers or tyrants', alongside 'Vespasianus, Aurelianus, Theodoricus, King Henry the Seventh of England, King Henry the Fourth of France' (pp. 445–6). The figuration of Julius Caesar as a state-founder follows logically from Bacon's efforts to set up a parallel between Caesar and King James. Whereas in the *Advancement of Learning* he attributed the correspondence to the intellectual prowess of the two men, now he stresses the affinity between Caesar, founder of imperial Rome, and James, founder of Great Britain.

Not all attempts to link James and Julius Caesar were as serious and earnest as those of Edmonds and Bacon. If their writings formed part of what might be called Jacobean high culture, Thomas Heywood's *Apology For Actors* (1612) belonged, like its author's innumerable other literary exertions, to the popular end of the spectrum. In the *Apology*, Heywood sets out to counter anti-theatrical diatribes of the Puritan enemies of the stage. As his address 'To my good Friends and Fellowes, *the City-Actors*' makes clear, his tactic is, first, to claim historical precedent (the first two parts of the *Apology For Actors* treat of '*Their Antiquity*' and '*Their ancient Dignity*'); and, second, to relate the past to the present by touting Stuart patronage of the theatre:

Out of my busiest houres, I have spared my selfe so much time as to touch some particulars concerning us, to approve our Antiquity, ancient Dignity, and the true use of our quality. That it hath beene ancient, we have derived it from more then two thousand yeeres agoe, successively to this age. That it hath beene esteemed by the best and greatest: to omit all the noble Patrons of the former world, I need alledge no more then the Royall and Princely services, in which we now live. That the use thereof is authentique, I have done my endeavour to instance by History, and approve by authority.<sup>46</sup>

Julius Caesar, 'the greatest Prince of the world . . . [whose] hand grip't the universal Empire of the earth' (sig. D3v), features prominently in Heywood's story. A generous patron of the theatre, Caesar is said consciously – and astutely – to have used the public stage as an instrument of containing and controlling social and political unrest. With London's acting companies recently named after members of the Stuart family – King's Men, Queen's Men, Prince Henry's Men etc. – the parallel with Caesar's Rome would have been inescapable. Even so, Heywood takes care to spell it out. He recounts an exchange between Caesar and Cicero which apparently convinced Caesar of the political utility of the stage.

discoursing with *Marcus Cicero* . . . It pleased the Emperour to aske his opinion of the Historiones, the players of *Rome*, pretending some cavell against them, as men

whose employment in the Common-weale was unnecessary: to whom *Cicero* answered thus: Content thee *Caesar*, there bee many heads busied & bewitched with these pastimes now in *Rome*, which otherwise would be inquisitive after thee and thy greatnesse. Which answeere, how sufficiently the Emperour approved, may bee conjectured by the many guifts bestowed, and priviledges and Charters after granted to men of that quality.

The Roman example is immediately applied to the situation in ‘this land’, where

Doubtlesse there be many men of that temper, who were they not carried away, and weaned from their owne corrupt and bad disposition, and by accidentall meanes removed and altered from their dangerous and sullen intendments, would be found apt and prone to many notorious and trayterous practises. Kings and Monarches are by God placed and inthroaned *supra nos*, above us, & we are to regard them as the Sun from whom we receive the light to live under, whose beauty & brightnesse we may onely admire, not meddle with: *Ne ludamus cum* . . . (sig. D1r)

The concluding sentence sounds like a crude paraphrase of a line from James’s *Basilikon Doron* or *A True Law*, an impression borne out by similar passages elsewhere in the *Apology*.

Having documented the historical Caesar’s role in preserving and cultivating theatre in Rome, Heywood turns to representations of him in the drama. He claims that the image of Julius Caesar is bound to stir the viewer to valour and magnanimity (sigs. F3v, F4v). Interestingly, although he names several ancient rulers who have been depicted by playwrights as examples of tyranny and pride, he does not list Caesar among them. Nothing he says in the *Apology* seems to be aimed at Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, but then Heywood had a knack for twisting the lessons that could be inculcated by specific historical figures and events even – perhaps especially – when it came to his own plays. For instance, he claimed that the chief didactic value of a play about ‘the falles of the *Tarquins*, in the rape of *Lucrece*’ would be as a parable against lust; however, in his *The Rape of Lucrece* (c. 1607), which was based on Shakespeare’s poem, such moral concerns are made subsidiary to political ones.<sup>47</sup> This in itself suggests the instability of topical meaning, and the unreliability of authorial commentary, in early modern drama.

In the absence of any direct testimony about the reception of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* at court, let us enquire in a more hypothetical vein into the sentiments a production of the play might have stirred in the royal spectator.

### James I and *Julius Caesar*

Given what we know about James I’s conception of divine-right kingship, his opinion of the historical Julius Caesar, his account of the events leading to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and his broadly analogical way of

thinking about the past, we can venture an informed guess about the king's response to the performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* c.1611–12. In one sense, what follows is sheer speculation. We have no record of James's impressions of the play. For all we know he may have nodded off or thought about something else entirely, paying little if any attention to the action on stage. But if he did watch the performance attentively, what would he have made of it? Since the assassination of Julius Caesar was widely perceived as a parallel, albeit a fortuitously inexact one, for the Gunpowder Plot, James would probably have approached the evening's entertainment with that correspondence in mind. As we have seen, the ruminations on Caesar which he had shared with Casaubon a year or so earlier, in November 1610, seem to have been fuelled by the memory of both the Gowrie conspiracy and the 'Powder treason' as he called it. The expectation that readers would make the connection between the recent attempt on James's life and the assassination of Julius Caesar appears to have prompted both Holland's moralizing gloss and Alexander's metatextual politicking in *The Tragedy of Julius Cæsar*, a piece which the king – the dedicatee of the *Monarchicke Tragedies* – may well have glanced at.

James, I suggest, ought to have found Shakespeare's play attractive as a statement against rebellion and king-killing. Its representation of the growth of the conspiracy, especially Cassius's seduction of Brutus and his manipulation of the latter's self-image through forged letters urging Brutus to follow the example of his ancestor Lucius Junius Brutus – the nemesis of another tyrant, Tarquin (1.2.314–19; 2.1.46–58) – would have tallied with James's repeated denunciations of the 'Sirene songs' of those who 'praise or excuse the by past rebellions that brake foorth either in this countrey, or in any other'.<sup>48</sup> The ensuing civil war, we may surmise, might have been seen by the king as an effective illustration of the evils that inevitably follow from civil disobedience. And the self-inflicted deaths of Brutus and Cassius might have been taken by James as meet, indeed providential, punishment for those who attempt their sovereign's life. Last but not least, the ascendancy of Octavius Caesar in the closing scenes of the play would have provided a welcome foreshadowing of the rise of monarchical government and the *pax romana*, the necessary preconditions for the birth of Christ.

Perhaps, too, the opening scene of Shakespeare's play would have appealed to a king whose contempt for the tribuneship was deep-seated, and who routinely denounced his political opponents as '*tribuni plebis*', 'popular tribunes', and '*Tribunitiall Orators*'.<sup>49</sup> James whose own images – on coins, portraits, triumphal arches, engraved frontispieces – were decked in symbols of the Roman empire is more than likely to have found Flavius' and Murellus' decision to disrobe Caesar's images distasteful if not sacrilegious. For someone who repeatedly asserted the exalted status of kings and who, on more than one occasion, expressed his admiration for Caesar, the tribunes' conduct would have been indicative of their envy and treachery, even sedition.

How could so extraordinary an individual as Julius Caesar be made to ‘fly an ordinary pitch’ (1.1.74)?

Several passages in which Shakespeare departs from his source in Plutarch, too, might have recommended themselves to James. James knew his Plutarch and would have been alert, for example, to Cassius’s misrepresentation of Caesar’s physical condition in the false reports of his poor performance in the swimming contest and his bout of fever in Spain (1.2.100–31). By claiming that Caesar is infirm and sickly, Cassius traduces him; the lie is part and parcel of his overall strategy of distorting facts so as to gain Brutus’s support. This is, as James never tired of pointing out, how all rebels proceed. The more eloquent they are, the greater effect their ‘Sirene songs’ will have on their audience. Furthermore, Cassius’s contemptuous reference to Caesar’s learning and writings – ‘that tongue of his . . . bade the Romans / Mark him, and write his speeches in their books’ (1.2.125–6) – would have been anathema to his early seventeenth-century royal fan and disciple. And Shakespeare’s Caesar’s identification of Cassius as a dangerous malcontent who ‘loves no plays’ (1.2.202) would have struck a chord with the king who was celebrated (and occasionally condemned) as a great patron of the theatre, and whose love of plays was well known.

Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is broadly in line with the king’s view of conspiracies and rebellions. Yet James might well have perceived more specific correspondences between his own recent ordeal and the play’s figuration of Caesar’s overthrow. Those correspondences emerge out of Shakespeare’s rendition of the events leading to Caesar’s assassination. In Plutarch, as in Shakespeare, Caesar is the recipient of the Soothsayer’s ominous prophecy; he is forewarned by Calphurnia’s bloody dream; and he is presented with a ‘schedule’ containing information about the conspiracy by Artemidorus. Whereas in Plutarch Caesar is unable to read Artemidorus’s schedule because of the crowd of people pressing on him, in Shakespeare he imperiously refuses to look at it because ‘What touches us ourself shall be last served’ (3.1.8). This refusal underlines Caesar’s lack of fear, itself a sign that he is not a tyrant, for, as James has repeatedly noted, only tyrants are afraid of their subjects.<sup>50</sup>

Shakespeare’s Caesar does not credit the Soothsayer; he fails correctly to interpret his wife’s dream, misguidedly accepting the tendentious interpretation foisted on him by one of the conspirators; and he refuses to read the written warning of Artemidorus. The analogy (and contrast) with James’s conduct at the time of the Gunpowder Plot is striking. Contrary to Shakespeare’s Caesar, and contrary to his own custom, James decided to read the letter apprizing him of the plot against his person. What is more, he expertly interpreted the significance of the rather ambiguous letter which in turn enabled the government to foil the scheme and apprehend the traitors. As the king told his Parliament in 1605,

. . . the discovery hereof is not a little wonderfull, which would bee thought the more miraculous by you all, if you were as well acquainted with my naturall disposition, as those are who be neere about me: For as I ever did hold Suspition to be the sicknes of a Tyrant, so I was so farre upon the other extremity, as I rather contemned all advertisements, or apprehensions of practises. And yet now at this time was I so farre contrary to my selfe, as when the Letter was shewed to me by my Secretary, wherein a generall obscure advertisement was given of some dangerous blow at this time, I did upon the instant interpret and apprehend some darke phrases therein, contrary to the ordinary Grammar construction of them, (and in an other sort then I am sure any Divine, or Lawyer in any Universitie would have taken them) to be meant by this horrible forme of blowing us up all by Powder; And thereupon ordered that search to be made, whereby the matter was discovered, and the man apprehended: whereas if I had apprehended or interpreted it to any other sort of danger, no worldly provision or prevention could have made us escape our utter destruction.<sup>51</sup>

The superior wisdom and perspicacity of the British Caesar, and his providential delivery, are thrown into sharp relief.

The title of James VI of Scotland to the mantle of Caesar rested on his literary productions and the promise of martial glory. If that promise did not materialize, his works on a variety of subjects proliferated; accordingly, James VI and I was celebrated as a latter-day Julius Caesar on the strength of his learning, intellect, and creative output as well as his peaceful ‘conquest’ of Britain. As the political situation at home and abroad changed, the analogy with Caesar began to acquire more equivocal, indeed sinister, overtones. The source of those negative associations was Marcus Annaeus Lucan.

### ‘[C]rown’d an honourable rebel’: The Staging of Lucan’s Caesar

We shall never know for sure what James I made of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. We are on firmer ground, however, when it comes to contemporary dramatists who responded to the play with their own appraisals of Caesar. That Ben Jonson’s *Sejanus* – with its centrepiece trial of the historian Cremutius Cordus accused of railing at the present times through his praise for Caesar’s killers, Cassius and Brutus – was one such response has long been acknowledged by modern critics. By contrast, John Fletcher and Philip Massinger’s rejoinder to both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in their collaborative play *The False One* (c. 1619–23) has attracted virtually no scholarly attention. This neglect is surprising given that the Prologue to *The False One* explicitly invites a comparison with Shakespeare:

. . . sure, to tell  
Of Cæsar’s amorous heats, and how he fell  
In the Capitol, can never be the same  
To the judicious: nor will such blame

Those that penn'd this, for barrenness, when they find  
 Young Cleopatra here, and her great mind  
 Express'd to the height, with us a maid, and free,  
 And how he rated her virginity;  
 We treat not of what boldness she did die,  
 Nor of her fatal love to Antony.  
 What we present and offer to your view,  
 Upon their faiths, the stage yet never knew . . . (ll. 7–18)<sup>52</sup>

The Prologue invokes the continuous tradition of drama on Roman themes and Shakespeare's contribution to it. Ostensibly, the aim is to assert the novelty and originality of *The False One* by distancing it from earlier plays about Caesar and Cleopatra, above all Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. *The False One*, the Prologue insists, represents different events in the lives of these historical figures, thereby avoiding overlap with Shakespeare's tragedies. By emphasizing the difference in subject-matter, Fletcher and Massinger encourage the viewers to note the difference between their representation of Caesar's and Cleopatra's rising fortunes and Shakespeare's portrayal of the pair's tragic ends. In other words, *The False One* is advertised as a prequel to *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, which, like all prequels, is bound to affect how we interpret those earlier tragedies.

Fletcher and Massinger's most flagrant departure from the treatment afforded Caesar and Cleopatra by Shakespeare is to depict him as a tyrant in the making and her as a royal prostitute. The ambiguity of their Shakespearean counterparts all but gone, Fletcher and Massinger's protagonists epitomize the effectiveness of ruthless pursuit of power. The re-appraisal and effective debunking of Caesar, and to a lesser extent of Cleopatra, is a direct result of the play's grounding in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Moreover, the Lucanic subtext resonates with the anti-court stance implicit in recent translations of Lucan. That stance solidified in the aftermath of the Palatinate débâcle. As we shall see, the Fletcher-Massinger *The False One* constitutes an important manifestation of this process.

As David Norbrook has demonstrated, the early seventeenth century witnessed the appropriation of Lucan for oppositional purposes.<sup>53</sup> Successive translations of the *Pharsalia*, Norbrook shows, were textual events that possessed political significance. Published amid rising concerns about the king's rapprochement with Catholic Spain, Sir Arthur Gorges' version of 1614 expressed nostalgia for the staunchly Protestant foreign policy of the Elizabethan regime. The appearance of the 'next English Lucan' coincided with the Palatinate crisis of 1619.<sup>54</sup> In that year James I's son-in-law, the Elector Palatine Frederick V, had accepted the election to the crown of Bohemia; his expulsion from both Bohemia and his native Palatinate in 1620 resulted in the most serious crisis of James's reign. Now that his Protestant daughter and son-in-law had been forced into exile by the Catholic Habsburgs, the king's pro-Spanish policy came under heated attack, the major bone of contention

being his plan to match his son and heir, Prince Charles, with the Spanish Infanta. The domestic crisis intensified after the invasion of the Palatinate by the Spanish troops in 1621. In what James saw as a grave incursion of his royal prerogative, the newly summoned House of Commons began discussing foreign policy and the projected Spanish match. Retaliating against the king's attempt to stifle debate of those sensitive issues, the Commons drew up a Protestation asserting their right of free speech. Enraged by their apparent recalcitrance, the king adjourned Parliament and tore the Protestation from the Commons' Journal in December. In January 1622, he dissolved Parliament and went on to set out his version of events in print in *His Maiesties Declaration, Touching his Proceedings in the Late Assemblie and Conuention of Parliament* (1622).

This, then, was the political situation when Fletcher and Massinger's *The False One* reached the stage. In the *Annals of English Drama* the play is assigned to 1620, the range of possible dates extending from 1619 to 1623. Given the polarization of opinion in the aftermath of the Palatinate crisis, and given the oppositional resonance of recent translations of Lucan, Massinger and Fletcher's choice of both historical subject-matter and source must give us pause. To dramatize the fate of the exiled Pompey was surely a deliberate reminder of the fate of another heroic exile, Frederick Elector Palatine. To cast Caesar as the villain of the piece in the manner of Lucan was a means of casting opprobrium on Pompey's (Frederick's) enemies. *The False One* is not a straightforward political allegory; however, its use of the Roman past is resolutely topical. In drawing upon Lucan so as to suggest correspondences between the situation of Pompey the Great and Frederick, Fletcher and Massinger were not alone. A contemporaneous pamphlet, *Violenti Imperii Imago* (1621), 'used extracts from the *Pharsalia* to illustrate the transformation of fortunes by which Frederick began as a militant Caesar and ended as a defeated Pompey, driven with his wife Elizabeth into life-long exile'.<sup>55</sup> The pamphlet and the play handle the analogy differently – for example, *The False One* contains nothing that would link Caesar with the Palatine Prince, yet their co-terminous use of the *Pharsalia* as a frame of reference for current events was certainly more than a coincidence.

What are the extent and significance of Fletcher and Massinger's debt to Lucan? *The False One* included several set pieces translated verbatim from Lucan's Books VII and VIII that would have been instantly recognizable to anyone with grammar school education. Yet the play's deployment of Lucan goes beyond mere translation of a few speeches; and here the contrast with Shakespeare is illuminating. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare drew on Marlowe's translation of Lucan's Book I, alongside the academic tragedy *Caesar's Revenge* and Savile's Tacitus, for his depiction of the various portents foreshadowing Caesar's death.<sup>56</sup> Overall, Shakespeare's use of Lucan is quantitatively negligible and politically innocuous: few if any members of the audience would have noticed that the omens might derive from Lucan or

made much of their discovery if they did. Fletcher and Massinger's debt to Lucan is far more substantial: not only do they translate lengthy passages from Lucan's epic, they also adopt Lucan's perspective and vilify Caesar even as they idealise Pompey.

Pompey is the absent hero: he remains off-stage throughout. Even so, the action of the first half of the play revolves around him; while in the second half, ostensibly dominated by Caesar, the memory of Pompey's nobility and integrity serves to throw into relief Caesar's corruption. In the opening scene, we witness the bid of Pompey's envoy Labienus for assistance at the Egyptian court. Labienus's account of Pompey's defeat at Pharsalia is closely based on Books VII and VIII of Lucan's epic; Labienus dwells on the courage and nobility of Pompey which he contrasts with Caesar's brutality and butchery.<sup>57</sup> We then see Egypt's king Ptolemy accept the Machiavellian counsel of his favourite Photinus to betray and murder Pompey so as to gain favour of the victorious Caesar. (Photinus's speech, too, is heavily indebted to Lucan's Book VIII). The first movement of the play concludes with the news of Pompey's death, his head being presented to the newly arrived Caesar.

To appreciate the sensitivity of Fletcher and Massinger's engagement with Lucan we must consider James I's view of the historical Lucan and analyze the implications of the king's own juvenile translation of a passage from the *Pharsalia*. Erstwhile friend and favourite of Nero, Lucan joined Piso's conspiracy against the emperor and, when the conspiracy was discovered, was forced to commit suicide. James's abhorrence of rebellions and conspiracies is well known as is his tenacious insistence that even the worst tyrant such as Nero should be obeyed by his subjects. Interestingly, Nero (and Lucan) were very much on James's mind roughly at the time when *The False One* was produced, for he was closely involved in another project of historical re-interpretation after the fashion of Edmonds' Caesar, this one involving Nero. The executor of the project was Edmund Bolton, whose translation of Florus, a historian far more favourably disposed towards Caesar than either Livy, Plutarch, or Tacitus, had appeared in 1619 with a fulsome dedication to James's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham. Bolton's *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved. An Historical worke* was published in 1624, but a draft of it must have been in existence at least two years earlier, for prefaced to the printed version is 'The Epistle before the first manuscript of Nero Caesar, delivered in Januarie MDCXXII'.<sup>58</sup> The aim of Bolton's treatise, which was sponsored, supervised, and possibly co-authored by the king himself, was to exemplify that hoary adage of James's that 'a king cannot be imagined to be so unruly and tyrannous, but the commonwealth will be kept in better order, notwithstanding thereof, by him, then it can be by his way-taking'.<sup>59</sup> That James would have viewed Lucan as a traitor to his sovereign is beyond dispute. But what was his attitude to Lucan's epic?

The king's aversion to the republican outlook of the *Pharsalia* is neatly illustrated by his 'PARAPHRASTICALL TRANSLATION OVT OF THE

POETE LVCANE', first printed in *The Essayes of a Prentise* (1584). Taking as his starting point lines from Book V ('*Caesaris an cursus vestræ . . .*'),<sup>60</sup> James launches into an extended meditation on rebellion which radically transforms the sense and impact of the original. The passage in question derives from Caesar's address to his mutinous troops: Lucan's Caesar quells the mutiny, yet his specious rhetoric is roundly condemned by the poet. By extrapolating Caesar's words from their context, and transferring them from wartime (a general confronting mutinous soldiers) to peace time (a king confronting rebellious subjects), James arrives at a ringing denunciation of rebellion:

So even siclike: Though subiects do coniure  
 For to rebell against their Prince and King:  
 By leaving him although they home to smure  
 That grace, wherewith God maks him for to ring,  
 Though by his gifts he shaw him selfe bening,  
 To help their need, and make them thereby gaine:  
 Yet lack of them no harme to him doth bring,  
 When they to rwe their folie shalbe faine. (sig. I4v)

One can hardly imagine a rewriting more antipathetic to the tenor of the original.

In contrast to James whose paraphrase tacitly conscripts Julius Caesar as a divine-right monarch, Fletcher and Massinger preserve, indeed heighten, Lucan's bias against Caesar, figuring him as a traitor and rebel. Caesar, then, is the villain of both the epic and the play, yet the Roman poet and the Jacobean playwrights communicate his villainy in suggestively different ways. Whereas Lucan conveys Caesar's evil through image and metaphor, and, occasionally, through narratorial commentary, Massinger and Fletcher make their Caesar himself acknowledge the criminality of his actions. There is no precedent in the *Pharsalia* for the troubled self-criticism of Fletcher and Massinger's Caesar. Its impact is enhanced, moreover, by its appearance in Caesar's soliloquies. Alone on stage, Caesar reflects guiltily on his responsibility for civil dissension and bloodshed:

I am dull and heavy, yet I cannot sleep.  
 How happy was I, in my lawful wars  
 In Germany, and Gaul, and Britany,  
 When every night with pleasure I set down  
 What the day minister'd! the sleep came sweetly:  
 But since I undertook this home-division,  
 This civil war, and pass'd the Rubicon,  
 What have I done that speaks an ancient Roman,  
 A good, great man? I have enter'd Rome by force,  
 And, on her tender womb that gave me life,  
 Let my insulting soldiers rudely trample:  
 The dear veins of my country I have open'd,  
 And sail'd upon the torrents that flow'd from her,

The bloody streams, that in their confluence  
 Carried before 'em thousand desolations:  
 I robb'd the treasury, and at one gripe  
 Snatch'd all the wealth so many worthy triumphs  
 Plac'd there as sacred to the peace of Rome:  
 I raz'd Massilia in my wanton anger;  
 Petreius and Afranius I defeated;  
 Pompey I overthrew; what did that get me?  
 The slubber'd name of an authoriz'd enemy.

...

What friends have I tied fast by these ambitions?  
 Cato, the lover of his country's freedom,  
 Is pass'd now into Afric to affront me;  
 Juba, that killed my friend, is up in arms too;  
 The sons of Pompey are masters of the sea,  
 And from the relic of their scatter'd faction  
 A new head's sprung: say I defeat all these too?  
 I come home crown'd an honourable rebel. (II.iii.29–50; 52–9)

This is a splendid soliloquy. The oxymorons 'authoriz'd enemy' and 'honourable rebel' effectively describe Caesar's compromised position and prepare the audience for his exchange with the traitor Photinus later in the play. Having fallen out of favour with Ptolemy, Photinus heads a revolt against his king and Caesar. In a face-to-face confrontation with Caesar he coolly points out that his cause is as good (or, rather, as bad) as Caesar's:

*Cæsar.* Presumptuous villain,  
 Upon what grounds hast thou presum'd to raise  
 Thy servile hand against the king, or me  
 That have a greater name?

*Pho.* On those by which  
 Thou didst presume to pass the Rubicon,  
 Against the laws of Rome; and at the name  
 Of traitor smile, as thou didst when Marcellus,  
 The consul, with the senate's full consent  
 Prounounc'd thee for an enemy to thy country;  
 Yet thou went'st on, and thy rebellious cause  
 Was crown'd with fair success: why should we fear, then?  
 Think on that, Cæsar.

*Cæsar.* Oh, the gods! be brav'd thus!  
 And be compell'd to bear this from a slave,  
 That would not brook great Pompey his superior! (V.ii.39–52)

As Caesar's irritable outburst shows, truth hurts, and it hurts doubly from an enemy one thoroughly loathes. Photinus may be despicable, but he certainly has a point. His baiting of Caesar echoes Caesar's own earlier admission that he has violated his country's laws and plunged it into civil war; it also anticipates the arguments that would be used against Caesar by Brutus and Cassius.

Furthermore, Caesar's reference to Pompey inadvertently reveals that though he might not have 'brook[ed] Pompey his superior', and though he defeated him on the battlefield, Pompey's is the ultimate moral victory. In contrast to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* which was highly ambiguous in its representation of the conspiracy against Caesar, inviting the audience to ponder whether Brutus and Cassius were morally justified in what they did, Massinger and Fletcher unambiguously insist on the immorality and illegitimacy of Caesar's own road to power. And in contrast to Shakespeare's infinitely various queen, they depict Cleopatra as a royal prostitute selling her body in return for the crown; though she is impressed by Caesar's conquests, she feels no love or affection for him and is guided solely by cold political calculation. Unlike the endings of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the conclusion of *The False One* is not tragic, but it could hardly be called a happy ending. Once again in control, Caesar assures Cleopatra of his political support as they prepare to head for Rome:

And now, my dearest,  
 Look upon Cæsar, as he still appear'd,  
 A conqueror: and, this unfortunate king  
 Entomb'd with honour, we'll to Rome, where Cæsar  
 Will shew he can give kingdoms; for the senate,  
 Thy brother dead, shall willingly decree  
 The crown of Egypt, that was his, to thee. (V.iv.202–8)

He already foresees exercising unrestrained sway and using the senate to rubberstamp his decrees. Caesar's vision of senate-management would have been highly topical in the context of James's troubled interaction with his Parliament of 1621–22, which proved remarkably resistant to the British Caesar's efforts to manage it.

Lest this reading appear far-fetched, I should point out that Fletcher and Massinger do encourage the spectators to perceive intermittent similarities between the world of the play and their own. One of the most direct allusions to the extra-textual reality occurs in III.iv. Recently reconciled to Caesar, Ptolemy resolves to dazzle the Roman conqueror with a display of Egypt's riches. In Lucan, the idea is Cleopatra's and the display takes the form of a luxurious oriental banquet. In the play, the spectacle of Egypt's stupendous wealth explicitly links Egyptian luxury and consumption with the excesses of the Jacobean court, for Ptolemy's conceit is to stage a 'Masque' in Caesar's honour. The exhibition of Egypt's tangible wealth – '*Treasure brought in*' – is followed by an imaginative evocation of its source, the Nile. With the spectators of the masque – Caesar prominent among them – positioned above, the Goddess Isis and three Labourers enter below and sing, Isis addressing Caesar directly as 'my Royall Guest'. Isis' and the Labourers' songs are in turn followed by a song of Nylus himself and a dance performed by Nylus's seven heads. The masque effects a strange alteration in Caesar: his eyes riveted on

the treasure, he ignores Cleopatra, obsessively and greedily musing on '[t]he wonder of this wealth' (III.iv.102). He is literally not himself. Enacted through the medium of a mini-masque, Caesar's infatuation with material riches he had never imagined existed is a masterly allusion to the conspicuous consumption and search for wealth at the Jacobean court.

His battles won and his ascendancy over the Roman senate guaranteed, Massinger and Fletcher's Caesar is set to implement his foreign policy unopposed. He also looks to reaping the fruits of peace and indulging his newly acquired taste for luxury, a clear sign of his intentions being his return to Rome in the company of the Eastern queen, Cleopatra. Modelled on Lucan's heroic villain, Massinger and Fletcher's Caesar is very much at home in Jacobean England.

Paradoxically, given the oblique criticism levelled at him via allusions to, and appropriations of, Lucan and Lucan's Caesar, and the concomitant proliferation of anti-court plays set in imperial Rome, late in life King James seems to have revised his view of Julius Caesar. Having for years encouraged parallels between himself and Caesar, and having sponsored Caesar's rehabilitation through acts of historiographical re-interpretation, James has come to acknowledge Caesar's bloodiness and tyranny in his *Meditation Upon the 27.28.29. Verses of the XXVII. Chapter of Saint Matthew* (1620). Dedicated to Prince Charles, this short tract is a kind of *Basilikon Doron* for his second son to whom James offers instruction and advice. The *Meditation* is a valediction; it purports to contain the sum of James's experience as monarch. It is therefore the more significant that James now openly deplores the bloodshed that led to Caesar's assumption of power and refrains from inveighing against his assassination. He contrasts the internecine strife that characterized Caesar's times with Augustan peace, a fitting context for the birth of Christ:

. . . though *Iulius Cæsar* was in a manner the first Emperour, yet as he wan it by bloud, so ended hee in bloud: and therefore as *God* would not permit King *David* to build him a materiall temple, because of his shedding of bloud; but made him leave that worke to his sonne *Salomon*, who was a King of peace: so had it not beene fitting that the Saviour of the World, the builder of his Church (whose body was likewise the true Temple represented by that of *Salomon*) should have beene borne but under a King of peace, as was *Augustus*, and in a time of peace, when as the Temple of *Ianus* was shut, and when as all the World did pay him an universall contribution, as is said in the second of Saint *Lukes Gospel*.<sup>61</sup>

His reign drawing to a close, James has come decidedly to prefer the image of himself as *rex pacificus*. The unsurpassed precedent for that image was Augustus.

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‘How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport . . .?’: Epilogue

What have we learnt about Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* from this excursus into royal views of the historical Caesar, and from the investigation of topical resonances of Sir William Alexander’s closet *Tragedy of Julius Cæsar* after the Gunpowder Plot, and of the Fletcher-Massinger *The False One* during the Palatinate crisis? If we wish to recover something of the significance and appeal *Julius Caesar* would have held for its Jacobean audiences, it seems to me important that we seek to reconstruct the imaginative, political, and historical contexts of the play’s performances.

New contexts confer new meanings upon the past. Julius Caesar, the hero of a series of popular, academic, and closet plays of the Elizabethan era, comes in for reassessment in the drama produced under the new political dispensation. Some early seventeenth-century Roman plays feature Caesar centre-stage. For example Chapman’s *Caesar and Pompey* (not published until 1631 but composed significantly earlier) and Fletcher and Massinger’s *The False One* concentrate on his coming to power and conflict with Pompey, the latter also including his love affair with Cleopatra. Others, for instance Alexander’s *The Tragedy of Cæsar*, focus specifically on Caesar’s assassination and its aftermath. Overall, this group comprises plays preoccupied exclusively with Caesar’s rise and fall. Yet we find two more kinds of Roman plays that are suggestive of contemporary perceptions of Caesar. First, even plays in which Caesar’s part is subsidiary provide a telling insight into the dramatist’s view of his role in Roman politics. Thus in Jonson’s *Catiline* (1611), Caesar appears as a shadowy supporter of Catiline’s conspiracy: the intimation of his culpability is unmistakable. Second, we have plays set in imperial Rome which use the conspiracy against and assassination of Caesar as a crucial subtext and point of reference. To illustrate: the bravery and virtue of Brutus and Cassius, the champions of the republic, are contrasted with the lack of heroism of latter-day Romans living in a corrupt and fallen world in Jonson’s *Sejanus* (1603), Fletcher’s *Valentinian* (1610–1614), the anonymous *Nero* (1619), and Thomas May’s *Julia Agrippina* (1628). The protagonists of those plays are acutely aware that liberty and freedom from tyranny can no longer be hoped for, only recollected.

Writers who chose to dramatize Caesar’s exploits for Jacobean audiences and readers either reprise the events depicted in Shakespeare’s play (as did Alexander) or deliberately focus on a different moment in Caesar’s career, even if they explicitly invite a comparison with Shakespeare (as did Fletcher and Massinger). In either case Shakespeare’s ambivalent and ambiguous representation of Caesar gives way to increasingly one-sided portrayals of him as a tyrant. This development in dramatic representation bears a curious relation to the changes in the political arena. From the start of his reign James I adopted the iconography of the Roman empire. This move produced a proliferation of parallels between Jacobean England and imperial Rome, James

being figured as Julius Caesar and/or Augustus Caesar in both imaginative writings and political discourse. In the first decade or so of James's reign the romanization of political vocabulary led poets, prose writers, and translators to offer fairly – often highly – favourable reassessments of Caesar's role in the history of Rome and – especially in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot – to condemn his assassination as a form of regicide. (This pro-Caesar bias of court-sponsored writings comes to be questioned and undermined, from *c.* 1614 onward, by a series of politically inflected translations of Lucan's *Pharsalia*.) By contrast, Jacobean drama – in particular drama written for the public stage – adopts a powerfully anti-Caesarian perspective. When set against such explicitly anti-Caesar plays as Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Catiline* or the Fletcher-Massinger *The False One*, Shakespeare's Caesar emerges as a less equivocal figure than we might suppose after simply reading the play in isolation. Following the Gunpowder Plot, *Julius Caesar* might well have been perceived, not only by the king but also by other members of the audience, as a statement against regicide. Contrariwise, during the Palatinate crisis of 1619–1620, when public opinion became polarized, and when the king's policies attracted a barrage of criticism, Shakespeare's play might well have gained fresh – and very different – topical currency. That currency would have been fostered by the recent writings which deployed Lucan so as to figure Caesar as a despot bent on subverting his country's constitution.<sup>62</sup> The popularity of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the Jacobean stage would have been fuelled by the potential for 'translation' and 'application' of its Roman past to the changing English present.<sup>63</sup>

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#### Notes

- 1 On the implications for the drama of the transition from Elizabeth to James see Rowland Wymer, 'Jacobean Pageant or Elizabethan *Fin-de-Siècle*? The Political Context of Early Seventeenth-Century Tragedy', in Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess, and Rowland Wymer (eds), *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics* (Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 138–51.
- 2 John Ripley, '*Julius Caesar*' on Stage in England and America 1599–1973 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 13–15; Introduction to William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (Arden Shakespeare, 1998), pp. 14–15.
- 3 Ripley, '*Julius Caesar*' on Stage in England and America, pp. 14–15.
- 4 Philemon Holland (trans.), *The Historie of Twelve Caesars Emperors of Rome. Written in Latine By C. Suetonius Tranquillus: and newly translated into English By Philemon Holland Doctor in Phisick. Together with a marginall Glosse and other briefe Anotations thereupon* (London, 1606), p. 30.
- 5 For an overview see Robert Miola, '*Julius Caesar* and the Tyrannicide Debate', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39 (1985), 271–89.

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- 6 For an account of Alexander's playwriting see the Introduction prefixed to volume one of *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander Earl of Stirling*, ed. L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton, 2 vols (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1921). On Alexander's political career see Thomas H. McGrail, *Sir William Alexander, First Earl of Stirling: A Biographical Study* (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1940).
- 7 Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: The Scottish Context and the English Translation', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 36–54, at p. 43.
- 8 James's admiration for Julius Caesar and his readiness to promote the association can be seen as a reaction to the anti-Caesarism of his old tutor who repeatedly denounced Caesar in his poetry and political writings. In the prefatory verses to Muret's Latin tragedy *Julius Caesar* (1552) Buchanan extols Brutus's tyrannicide as an act of piety and virtue; he adopts a similar perspective in his prefatory poem for Grévin's *César* (1561) and 'Concerning Codrus and Caesar'. See George Buchanan, *The Political Poetry*, edited with translation and commentary by Paul J. McGinnis and Arthur H. Williamson (Edinburgh, Lothian Print, 1995), pp. 86–8 and 84–5 respectively. James's subversion of the Scottish church would be later compared with Caesar's subversion of the republic by another Scot and Buchanan's spiritual heir, David Hume of Godscroft. I am grateful to Arthur Williamson for alerting me to Hume's use of the parallel.
- 9 McGrail, *Sir William Alexander*, pp. 21–2.
- 10 Alexander, *Poetical Works*, I, clxxxviii. See also Harry Morgan Ayres, 'Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in the Light of Some Other Versions', *PMLA*, 25 (1910), 183–227, at pp. 218–21.
- 11 Alexander, *Poetical Works*, I, 474.
- 12 Only his first play, *Darius*, was printed in Edinburgh in 1603; all subsequent works were published in London.
- 13 All references to Alexander's *Julius Cæsar* are to the play as printed in his *Poetical Works*.
- 14 Alexander underlines this point by making Caesar say that he would like to die as a king; in the event he is murdered before he can claim the crown.
- 15 *Basilikon Doron. Or His Maiesties Instructions to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* (1599), in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, Mass., 1918), p. 40. All further references are to this edition.
- 16 See, for example, J. P. Sommerville, 'James I and the Divine Right of Kings: English Politics and Continental Theory', in Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, pp. 55–312; Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I: Two Kings or One?', *History*, 68 (1983), 187–209; and 'James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: The Scottish Context and the English Translation'.
- 17 Alan T. Bradford, 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46 (1983), 127–55; J. H. Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England', in Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, pp. 169–88; Malcolm R. Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c. 1590–1630', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1994), pp. 21–43.

- 18 Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon: 1559–1614*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892), pp. 280–1.
- 19 Also in 1610, the Earl of Salisbury, Lord Treasurer, likened James I to Julius Caesar in a speech at Whitehall that was aimed at securing financial assistance for his royal master: ‘Now if Caesar might say to the seafaring men, *non solum Caesarem sed fortunam eius portatis*, the King may say his bark floats in the waves of the sea where your affections must relieve him or must drown him’. See *The Proceedings in Parliament 1610*, ed. Elizabeth Read Foster, 2 vols (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1966), II, 299.
- 20 Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 43 ff.
- 21 *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 250 n. 52.
- 22 For instance, in Petowe’s *ENGLAND’S CÆSAR. His Majestie’s Most Royall Coronation. Together with the manner of the solemne shewes prepared for the honour of his entry into the Cittie of London* (London, 1603) the new British Caesar is to be entertained in the Tower of London that, the reader is reminded, was built by his Roman namesake. Equally telling is the title of Samuel Rowlands’ poem of welcome, *Ave Cæsar. God saue the King. The ioyfull Ecchoes of loyall English hartes, entertayning his Maiesties late ariually in England* (London, 1603).
- 23 In contrast to Goldberg who concentrates almost exclusively on Roman parallels, Graham Parry draws attention to biblical and ancient British themes. See his ‘The Iconography of James I’, in *The Golden Age Restor’d: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–42* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1981), pp. 1–39; and ‘Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts’, in Headlam Wells, Burgess, and Wymer (eds), *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics*, pp. 153–78.
- 24 *B. Jon: His Part of King James his Royall and Magnificent Entertainement through his Honorable Cittie of London, Thursday the 15. of March. 1603 (1604)*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941), VII, ll. 613, 614.
- 25 Blair Worden, ‘Ben Jonson and the Monarchy’, in Headlam Wells, Burgess, and Wymer (eds), *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics*, pp. 71–90. Like Goldberg, Worden believes that the *Entertainment* equates James with Augustus, yet he recognizes that Jonson’s ‘enthusiasm is guarded’ (p. 80).
- 26 *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols (London, 1807), IV, 896–7.
- 27 See Florio’s preface to his 1603 translation of the *Basilikon Doron* into Italian (BL, Royal Ms. 14, A.v), cited by Goldberg, pp. 42–3.
- 28 Wormald, ‘James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*’, pp. 51–2; Jeffrey A. Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 66 ff.
- 29 *The Workes of the Most High and Mighty Prince, Iames By the grace of God Kinge of Great Britaine, France and Ireland* (London, 1616).
- 30 *A Premonition to All Most Mightie Monarches, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendome* appended to the revised edition of James’s *An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, 1609, in McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*, p. 126.

- 31 James's juvenilia earned him a favourable mention in the second edition of Holinshed's chronicle: Francis Thynne concluded his catalogue of Scottish writers with an account of the young king, V, 756.
- 32 *The Essayes of a Prentise* (Edinburgh, 1584), sig. \*11r.
- 33 Even so, as late as 1623 Sir John Stradling urged James to take up arms against the Turk in a poem dedicated to, and vetted by, the king himself. See *Beati Pacifici: A Divine Poem. Written to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie . . . Perused by his Maiesty and printed by Authority* (London, 1623): 'I thinke I doe perswade not much awry, / Nor greatly straying from your Princely minde . . . / Would other Kings and Princes bore like mind, / And were so forward to this holy warre: / The cause should soone a glorious passage finde, / And not be check't by any priuate Iarre' (p. 37).
- 34 For an account of theatrical responses to the new king's project of union and the iconography that accompanied it see Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000).
- 35 *Basilikon Doron: or, His Maiesties Instructions to his deerest Sonne Henrie the Prince . . . Translated into the true British tongue, by the industrie and labour of M. Robert Holland, Minister of the Church of Lhandbyfrwr* (London, 1604).
- 36 See *A Prophetie of Cadwallader, last king of the Brittaines*, in *The Poems of William Harbert*, ed. A. B. Grosart (London, Printed for Private Circulation, 1870), p. 95. Elsewhere in the poem, Harbert praises James for combining the best qualities of the Roman heroes with whom he had been conventionally compared: 'Cæsar's acts, Augustus' peace, good Nerua's kinde, / In thee alone, in none but thee, we finde' (p. 95).
- 37 From *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1587 edition), Caius Julius Cæsar, by John Higgins, quoted in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957–75), V, ll. 30–2, 40.
- 38 John Speed, *The History of Great Britaine Under the Conquests of ye Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans. Their Originals, Manners, Warres, Coines, and Seales: with ye Successions, Lives, acts and Issues of the English Monarchs from JULIUS CAESAR, to our most gracious Sovereigne King JAMES* (London, 1611).
- 39 Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 35; Speed, *The History of Great Britaine*, p. 883.
- 40 *Observations upon the Five First Bookes of Cæsars Commentaries, Setting Forth the Practise of the Art Military, in the Time of the Roman Empire* (London, 1600).
- 41 *Observations Upon Cæsars Commentaries setting forth the practise of y<sup>e</sup> Art militaire in the time of the Romaine Empire for the better direction of your moderne Warrs* (London, 1604), sig. \$3r.
- 42 *Observations upon Cæsars Commentaries* (London, 1609), sig. a3r.
- 43 *Francis Bacon: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 27.
- 44 *Francis Bacon*, p. 121; Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 50.
- 45 Bacon's disagreement with Machiavelli in the *Advancement of Learning* likewise illustrates his conception of Julius Caesar as a sovereign ruler rather than a rebel: 'it pleaseth Machiavel to say, that "if Caesar had been overthrown, he would have been more odious than ever was Catiline"; as if there had been no difference but

- in fortune, between a very fury of lust and blood, and the most excellent spirit (his ambition reserved) of the world?’ (*Francis Bacon*, p. 262).
- 46 Thomas Heywood, *An Apology For Actors Containing three briefe Treatises. 1 Their Antiquity. 2 Their ancient Dignity. 3 The true use of their quality* (London, 1612), sig. A3r. See also the following passage: ‘in no Country they [acting companies] are of that eminence that ours are: so our most royall, and ever renowned souveraigne, hath licenced us in London: so did his predecessor, the thrice vertuous virgin, Queene *Elizabeth*, and before her, her sister, Queene, *Edward* the sixth, and their father, *Henry* the eight: and before these in the tent yeare of the reigne of *Edward* the fourth, Anno 1490’ (sig. G3r).
- 47 See my, ‘Roman History and Early Stuart Drama: Thomas Heywood’s *The Rape of Lucrece*’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 32 (2002), 239–67.
- 48 *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: or The Reciproock and Mutuall Duetie Betwixt a Free King, and His Naturall Subjects* (1598), in McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*, p. 53.
- 49 See, for example, *Basilikon Doron*, in McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*, pp. 23–4; *A Meditation Upon the 27.28.29. Verses of the XXVII. Chapter of Saint Matthew. Or A Paterne for a Kings Inauguration: Written by the Kings Majestie* (1620); and *His Maiesties Declaration, Touching his Proceedings in the Late Assemblie and Conuention of Parliament* (1622), in James’s *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 238 and 255 respectively.
- 50 For instance in the *Basilikon Doron*, in McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Writings of James I*, p. 23.
- 51 McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Writings of James I*, pp. 283–4.
- 52 I am quoting from Morton Luce’s edition of *The False One* in *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher: Variorum Edition*, gen. ed. A. H. Bullen (London, Bell, 1912), vol. IV.
- 53 David Norbrook, ‘Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture’, in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan 1994), pp. 45–66; and *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23 ff.
- 54 Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 41–3.
- 55 *Violenti Imperii Imago Al. Annæo Seneca In Persona Friderici Palatini Bohemiac & Patriae Exulis in scenam producta. Accessit M. Annæus Lucanus Proteus. De Bello Bohemico* (n. p., 1621). See Norbrook, ‘Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture’, pp. 12–16.
- 56 Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, V, 40, 41.
- 57 A similar reference to Caesar’s insensibility, even cruelty, occurs in Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger’s roughly contemporaneous play *The Virgin Martyr* (1619–23). One of the characters describes him as ‘great *Iulius* / That to his successors left the name of *Caesar*, / Whom warre could never tame, that with dry eyes / Beheld the large plaines of *Pharsalia*, cover’d / With the dead Karkasses of Senators / And Citizens of *Rome*’ (see *The Virgin Martyr*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953–61), III, V.ii.10–15).
- 58 Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved. An Historical worke*

- (London, 1624), sig. A2r.
- 59 *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, in McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*, p. 66. For an illuminating account of Bolton's *Nero* see Bradford, 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus'.
- 60 Cf. Loeb edition of *The Civil War*, Book V, ll. 335 ff.
- 61 Meditation, in James's *Political Writings*, ed. Somerville, p. 235.
- 62 In the wake of the Civil War, regicide, and the establishment of the Protectorate, the analogy with the historical Julius Caesar came to be used by politicians and political pamphleteers to compliment and/or to berate the victorious king-killer and would-be king Oliver Cromwell. For example, Cromwell is celebrated as the new Caesar in *Veni; Vidi; Vici. The Triumphs Of The Most Excellent & Illustrious, Oliver Cromwell, & c. Set forth in a Panegyricke. Written Originally in Latine, and faithfully done into English Heroicall Verse, By Thomas Manley Jun. Esq* (London, 1652); by contrast, J. H.'s *An Admonition to My Lord Protector and His Council, Of their present Danger, with The means to secure him and his POSTERITY in their present Greatnesse: With the generall Applause and lasting Tranquility of the Nation* (London, 1654) warns Cromwell that should he attempt to replace the Stuart dynasty with his own usurping line, he might suffer the fate of Julius Caesar and be assassinated by his erstwhile friends and supporters. Concomitantly, Charles I's fate was seen as analogous to that of Caesar's unfortunate adversary, Pompey. See J. Douglas Stewart, 'A Militant, Stoic Monument: the Wren-Cibber-Gibbons Charles I Mausoleum Project: Its Authors, Sources, Meaning, and Influence', in *The Restoration Mind*, ed. W. Gerald Marshall (Newark, University of Delaware Press; London, Associated University Presses, 1997), pp. 21–64, at 52 ff.
- 63 The research for this essay was carried out during my tenure of the Hanson Lee Dulin Senior Fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library. I am grateful to the Folger for its generous support. I also wish to thank Paul Hammond, Robin Headlam-Wells, Rob Hume, Arthur Williamson, and Blair Worden for commenting on earlier versions. The essay is dedicated to the splendid group of undergraduates who took my course on 'Performing Rome: Politics and Power in Early-Modern Drama' at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth in spring 2001.

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