CLARENDON PRESS SERIES. SHAKESPEARE SELECT PLAYS. JULIUS CAESAR

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649620647

Clarendon Press Series. Shakespeare Select Plays. Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare & William Aldis Wright

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT

CLARENDON PRESS SERIES. SHAKESPEARE SELECT PLAYS. JULIUS CAESAR

Trieste

Clarendon Press Series

SHAKESPEARE

SELECT PLAYS

JULIUS CÆSAR

EDITED BY

WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT, M.A.

Bursar of Trinity College, Cambridge

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

M DCCC LXXXV

PREFACE.

THE Tragedy of Julius Cæsar appeared for the first time in the folio edition of Shakespeare's Works which was brought out by Heminge and Condell the players in 1623. If it was printed earlier than this no copies are known to survive. But the play was probably written at least twenty years before. Malone fixed upon 1607 as the date, mainly on the ground that a play called The Tragedie of Iulius Cæsar was in that year published by William Alexander of Menstrie, afterwards Earl of Stirling, who he thinks would have been unlikely to attempt such a subject if it had been already handled by Shakespeare. On the other hand he considers that Julius Cæsar was written before Antony and Cleopatra, which was entered at Stationers' Hall, May 2, 1608. 'Not to insist,' he says, 'on the chronology of the story, which would naturally suggest this subject to our author before the other, in Julius Cæsar Shakespeare does not seem to have been thoroughly possessed of Antony's character. He has indeed marked one or two of the striking features of it, but Antony is not fully delineated till he appears in that play which takes its name from him and Cleopatra. The rough sketch would naturally precede the finished picture.' (Shakespeare, ed. Boswell, 1821; ii. 447, 448.) According to Mr. Collier (Shakespeare, vii. 5) there was an earlier edition of Lord Stirling's tragedy in 1604, but I have only been able to see that of 1607. The fact, however, is of no importance as regards the date of our play, to which Lord Stirling's work has not the smallest resemblance. Mr. Collier maintains that there is good ground for believing

that Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar was acted before 1603. In that year Drayton published his Barons' Wars, a development of an earlier work which, under the title of Mortimeriados, had appeared in 1596. In his description of Mortimer, Book III, the following stanza occurs, which has some points of resemblance to Mark Antony's character of Brutus in the last scene of the play. I quote from the edition of 1605, not having had access to that of the earlier date:

'Such one he was, of him we boldely say,
In whose rich soule all soueraigne powres did sute,
In whome in peace th' elements all lay
So mixt, as none could soueraignty impute;
As all did gouerne, yet all did obey,
His liuely temper was so absolute,
That t' seemde when heauen his modell first began,
In him it shewd perfection in a man.'

Of this there is no trace in the Mortimeriados. Mr. Collier continues, 'Drayton afterwards changed the title from "Mortimeriados" to "The Barons' Wars," and remodelled the whole historical poem, altering the stanza from the English ballad form to the Italian *ottava rima*. This course he took before 1603, when it came out in octavo, with the stanza first quoted, which contains so marked a similarity to the lines from "Julius Cæsar." We apprehend that he did so because he had heard or seen Shakespeare's tragedy before 1603; and we think that strong presumptive proof that he was the borrower, and not Shakespeare, is derived from the fact, that in the subsequent impressions of "The Barons' Wars," in 1605, 1608, 1610, and 1613, the stanza remained precisely as in the edition of 1603; but that in 1619, after Shakespeare's death and before "Julius Cæsar" was printed, Drayton made even a nearer approach to the words of his original, thus:

"He was a man, then boldly dare to say,
In whose rich soul the virtues well did suit;
In whom so *mix'd the elements all lay*,
That none to one could sovereignty impute;

As all did govern, yet did all obey:
He of a temper was so absolute,
As that it seem'd, when *Nature* him began,
She meant to show *all that might be in man.*"

We have been thus particular, because the point is obviously of importance, as regards the date when Julius Cæsar was brought upon the stage. . . . . That Drayton had not remodelled his "Mortimeriados" as late as 1602, we gather from this circumstance, that he reprinted his poems in that year without "The Barons' Wars" in any form or under any title.' (Shakespeare, ed. Collier, 1843, vol. vii. p. 4.) In the note to v. 5. 73–75, reasons are given why too much weight should not be attached to this apparent resemblance between the passages in Shakespeare and Drayton, and I am glad to find myself supported in this view by Mr. Grant White, whose note I had not consulted at the time of writing my own. Speaking of the resemblance between Drayton and Shakespeare in the passages which have been quoted, he remarks, 'But this resemblance implies no imitation on either side. For the notion that man was composed of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, and that the well-balanced mixture of these produced the perfection of humanity, was commonly held during the sixteenth, and the first half, at least, of the seventeenth century, the writers of which period worked it up in all manner of forms.'

The point, however, is of no very great importance, for if Shakespeare, as is not improbable, referred to his own play when he makes Polonius say (Hamlet iii. 2. 108, 109), 'I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me,' this carries us back at least to 1602. But Mr. Halliwell (Phillipps) has quoted a passage from Weever's Mirror of Martyrs, which seems to contain a direct reference to Shakespeare's work, and would thus place it before 1601, when Weever's poem was published. The passage is as follows:

'The many headed multitude were drawne
By Brutus speech, that Cæsar was ambitious,

When eloquent Mark Antonie had showne
His vertues, who but Brutus then was vicious?'

That Julius Cæsar was not brought out before 1600 is rendered probable by a fact to which I have called attention in the note to i. 2. 160, the use of the word 'eternal' for 'infernal.' At the beginning of the seventeenth century it is evident that public attention had been directed by the Puritan party to the licence of the players, and very shortly after the accession of James I an Act was passed to restrain the abuses of the stage. One effect of this act was to expunge what were deemed to be profane expressions, and it was in obedience to it that we find in numberless instances in Shakespeare's plays 'heaven' was substituted in the folios where the earlier quartos have 'God.' But although no actual legislation had taken place so early as 1600, it cannot be doubted that this Act of Parliament was only the culmination of a strong feeling in the minds of a large and influential class against the profanity which was believed to be encouraged by the stage, and consequently against the stage for encouraging it. For some reason or other, whereas in three plays which were all printed in 1600, Shakespeare uses the word 'infernal,' he substitutes 'eternal' for it in Julius Cæsar, Hamlet, and Othello, and my inference is that he did so in obedience to the popular objections which were urged against the profanity of the stage, and that the plays in which 'eternal' occurs as the equivalent of 'infernal' were produced after 1600. If this inference be sound, it follows that Julius Cæsar was brought out subsequently to 1600, and if Weever almost quoted from it in 1601, the date of the play is fixed between very narrow limits.

The subject of Cæsar's career attracted the attention of the dramatists at an early period. In the Collection of divers curious historical pieces (p. 14), printed by Peck at the end of his Memoirs of Cromwell, is the following entry: 'Epilogus Cæsaris interfecti. Qui epilogus a magistro Ricardo Eedes et scriptus et in Proscenio ibidem dictus fuit A.D. 1582.'

We find from Wood's Athenæ that Richard Eedes was a student of Christ Church and known as a writer of tragedies, but it does not appear whether this Latin play on Cæsar's death was composed by him or whether he merely wrote the Epilogue. Malone suggested that the famous 'Et tu, Brute,' may have come from this source. In Stephen Gosson's Playes confuted in five Actions (Roxburghe Library, ed. Hazlitt, p. 188), and not as Malone states in The Schoole of Abuse, a play called 'the history of Cæsar and Pompey' is mentioned. Gosson's pamphlet, though without date, was probably printed not later than 1581 or 1582. In Henslowe's Diary (Shakespeare Society Publications), p. 44, we find the following entry: '8 of novembr 1594 *ne* Rd at Seser and pompie iij^{li} ij^{s};' where '*ne*' indicates that it was a new play. Again, p. 54: '18 of June 1595 *ne* Rd at the 2pte of sesore lv^{s}.' From another entry in the same volume, p. 221, it appears that in 1602 Drayton and others were engaged upon a play on the same subject as Shakespeare's Tragedy: 'Lent unto the companye, the 22 of maij 1602, to give unto Antoney Monday and Mihell Drayton, Webester, Mydelton and the Rest, in earneste of a Boocke called sesers Falle, the some of v^{li}.' Further, Malone mentions an anonymous play, of which the second edition appeared in 1607, called The Tragedy of Cæsar and Pompey, or Cæsar's Revenge. This was acted privately by the students of Trinity College, Oxford. Chapman's play on the same subject and with almost the same title was not printed till 1631. Whether any of these was the play called Cæsar's Tragedy, which is said by Malone, on the authority of Mr. Vertue's MSS., to have been acted at Court on the 10th of April, 1613, it is impossible to decide. Malone himself thinks that it was probably Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar, 'it being much the fashion at that time to alter the titles of his plays.' But for this supposition there appears to be as little foundation as there is for the assertion which accompanies it.

The question of the sources of the play is a very simple

one. Shakespeare's sole authority was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's Lives of the noble Grecians and Romans compared together, of which the first edition appeared in 1579, and the second in 1595. This translation was made from the French of Jaques Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre, of which two editions had appeared, in 1559 and 1565 respectively. North used the earlier. The following extracts are taken from Mr. Skeat's 'Selection from the Lives which illustrate Shakespeare's plays,' published in 1875 under the title 'Shakespeare's Plutarch.' This volume contains all that is necessary for our purpose, and is more accessible than the folio editions. In the Notes it will be observed that I have sometimes quoted from the folio of 1631, but in all cases I have added a reference to Mr. Skeat's volume, in which the lives of Julius Cæsar, Marcus Brutus, and Marcus Antonius, occupy the pages 42–104, 105–152, and 153–229 respectively.

i. 1. 65. *Disrobe the images.* 'After that, there were set up images of Cæsar in the city, with diadems upon their heads like kings. Those the two tribunes, Flavius and Marullus, went and pulled down, and furthermore, meeting with them that first saluted Cæsar as king, they committed them to prison' (p. 96). See also the quotation from the Life of Antonius given in the note to i. 2. 221.

i. 1. 68, i. 2. 'At that time the feast of Lupercalia was celebrated, the which in old time men say was the feast of shepherds or herdmen, and is much like unto the feast of the Lycæans in Arcadia. But howsoever it is, that day there are divers noblemen's sons, young men (and some of them magistrates themselves that govern them), which run naked through the city, striking in sport them they meet in their way with leather thongs, hair and all on, to make them give place' (p. 95).

Then follows the quotation given in the note to i. 2. 7.

The same account is found in the Life of Marcus Antonius: 'The Romans by chance celebrated the feast called Lupercalia, and Cæsar, being apparelled in his triumphing robe, was