

A Shakespeare Dialogue
**ACTING ON
THE STAGE OF
HISTORY**



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Reflections on Shakespeare as a Historian: The Roman Plays

by Gerald Rose

It is entirely lawful that Shakespeare should accomplish in four plays of some hundred pages, what the two most prominent historians of Rome, Edward Gibbon and Theodor Mommsen, could not do in several thousand. For, from its very inception, Classical tragedy took its impulse from the question of statecraft: What kind of government is best to increase the happiness of the population? And so, beginning with Homer, Classical tragedy has always been “political.”

Every serious historian has known this. It was most explicit in the works of Friedrich Schiller, who wrote two brilliant histories, *The Revolt of The Netherlands*, and *The History of the Thirty Years' War*, as the basis for his plays about that era. His dramas are startling, because the com-

plexity with which he develops them derives from his insight into the problem mankind faced at that point in history. In this sense, Schiller's plays are not works of fiction, but, actually, truthful representations of history, from the standpoint of the characters who made it.

Take, for example, *Don Carlos*, *Mary Stuart*, and the *Wallenstein* trilogy. These dramas grew directly out of Schiller's passion to present the historical forces behind the religious wars that tore Europe apart in the 1511-1648 period. And yet, in each play, there is implied for the imagination of the audience, an idea of a higher humanity. This is what makes them true tragedies.

William Shakespeare; the Roman Capitol.

While this has been clearly established for Schiller, as he was explicit concerning his compositional method, the question of Shakespeare as an historian is less obvious, although nonetheless clear also. One need only look at Shakespeare's first plays, on the English kings and the developments that led to the overthrow of Richard III's Plantagenet dynasty, and the initiation of the Tudor Renaissance under Henry VII. In this, Shakespeare identified his relationship to Sir Thomas More, whose own *History of Richard III* was the source of Shakespeare's understanding of how these developments came to shape England.

This is no different from Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Plato, who were Shakespeare's direct predecessors. Classical drama has always focussed on creating a common history and language of a people, as the basis for a national entity. It has also always focussed on the need to lift the population out of disaster. These are the fundamental questions of statecraft.

For Homer, how the Trojan War led Greek civilization into a dark age, and brought disaster to the very king who launched it, was the focus of his composing both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. This subject was, in turn, reintroduced by Aeschylus in his Oresteia Trilogy, recasting the events of King Agamemnon's return from Troy, and how the cycle of revenge that followed in the wake of his murder would be resolved. In Plato, a very different type of drama is introduced, whose subject, Socrates, is sublime. But, such a sublime figure had already been introduced by Aeschylus in his trilogy on Prometheus.

It is the height of illiteracy to think that Shakespeare had any taint of the modernist idea of "art for art's sake." This type of insanity was spread, in the postwar period, by the mouthpieces of the literally fascist Congress for Cultural Freedom. In an earlier period, the domination of literary criticism by Romantics like Coleridge, placed Shakespeare's works outside time and place, to produce an "artsy-fartsy" view of them. This itself followed the pervasive attacks by John Dryden *et al.*, which had resulted in Shakespeare's plays no longer

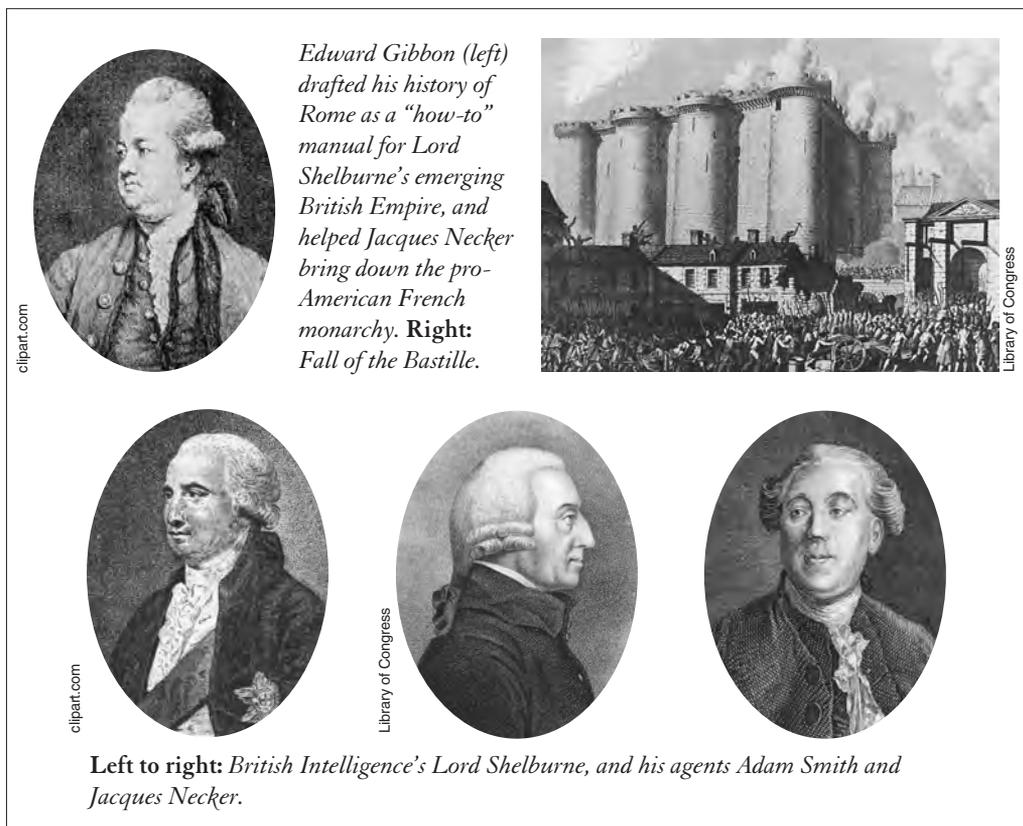
being performed in Eighteenth-century England.

It was only under the influence of the revival of Classical culture in Germany by Gotthold Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn, that the true Shakespeare could again be performed, albeit this time in German. It was Shakespeare who inspired Schiller to reintroduce Classical drama into the cultural life of Europe.

It is with this in mind, that we should look at how it is, that Shakespeare was a greater historian of Rome than the authors of the most famous academic histories. And, of course, Rome is a not-unimportant issue today, since at this moment, the question of an "American Empire" has reared its ugly head. Shakespeare's unique insight into Rome, provides us with the actual basis to understand what a real policy concerning the idea of an "American Empire" ought to be.

History as Ideology

First, take Gibbon and Mommsen. Gibbon, in his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,¹ writes a treatise of some 1,500 pages, beginning with Augustus Caesar and going up to the 1453 fall of Constantinople. Two things hit you about this work: First, that it is written explicitly to teach the lessons of the Roman Empire's strengths and weaknesses, to train the then-current British imperial leaders to avoid the mistakes made by the Romans. It is not some academic work. Gibbon worked for Lord Shelburne at the



Edward Gibbon (left) drafted his history of Rome as a "how-to" manual for Lord Shelburne's emerging British Empire, and helped Jacques Necker bring down the pro-American French monarchy. Right: Fall of the Bastille.

Left to right: British Intelligence's Lord Shelburne, and his agents Adam Smith and Jacques Necker.

moment of the emergence of the British Empire under the direction of the British East India Company, and was part of the salon with Jacques Necker which, together with Shelburne, created the inside/outside operation in France that brought down the pro-American French monarchy. He was one of the many lovers of Necker's daughter, Madame de Stael. It is clear that the intention of writing the *Decline and Fall* was to learn the lessons of Rome, so that the British Empire would last longer than Rome did.

From the book's very first three chapters, Gibbon asserts that, from the time of Augustus Caesar to that of the Antonines, a period of about 160 years, Rome was stable and exerted a humanizing influence over the known world by its moderate running of the Empire. He even develops the argument of Adam Smith, another Shelburne protégé, that the very luxury of the Roman oligarchy stimulated the trades and agriculture. According to Gibbon, even slavery during these 160 years was ameliorated by the possibility of becoming freemen, and by the fact that the courts, not the slave owners, regulated punishment of the slaves. He makes the argument that since Rome was not in an expansion phase, the supply of slaves was dwindling, and the slaves had to be treated better than before, because they couldn't be readily replaced. The fact that this is almost completely untrue relative to what was really happening in Rome, doesn't seem to faze Gibbon. It is astonishing that he bypasses the Emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, in the course of making his argument about the peaceful reign between Augustus and the Antonines. An odd omission, seemingly inconceivable; but since the book is actually about the lessons to be taken from the fall of Rome as they apply to Britain, the underlying truth can not be allowed to emerge, which is *that empires always fail*.

Second, Gibbon focusses on the assertion that Christianity was responsible for bringing down the Empire. It is not to be doubted that this was not a mistake on his part. Remember, this was the Enlightenment, and the very idea of truth was anathema to Gibbon. Sketched simply, his thesis was that Rome was weakened by the Christian questioning of Roman authority. Not just the questioning, but the evangelizing of the truth by the early Christians, made them profoundly revolutionary toward the Roman pantheon. And, in fact, since Gibbon was competent on one level, he had hit upon a certain truth, writing the *Decline and Fall* as

a direct refutation of St. Augustine's *City of God*. Augustine's *City of God*, in fact, is the only extant, fully truthful insight into the disaster that was Rome. Gibbon's point on this is, that as Christianity more and more dominated Rome, intolerance followed in its wake. Not only did intolerance follow, but the idea of a military culture was undermined as the dominant cultural matrix.

At the same time, however, Gibbon also points out that as Rome went beyond citizen-soldiers as the foundation of the military, the Praetorian Guard increasingly became the dominant political force in Rome. He develops how Augustus allowed the military for the first time to be a base of support against both the Roman Senate and the *populus*. After the death of Augustus and the insanity of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, the Praetorian Guard realized that they could wield power in Rome. They literally began to choose emperors and dispose of them at will. At one point, the absurd situation was reached wherein, within a several-day period, two emperors were proclaimed solely on the basis of what they could promise the Praetorians.

Yet, Gibbon focussed solely on the role of Christianity in the fall of Rome. Christianity, he said, introduced intolerance into the Empire, and the ability of the Empire to rule over many cultures and gods was ruined by the Christians' evangelical zeal. In fact, Gibbon's argument



Gibbon's history ignored the murderous Emperor Tiberius (left) and psychotics Caligula (center) and Nero (right). **Below:** Nero fiddles while Rome burns.



Mommsen's Caesar

Mommsen's *History of Rome*² is a work of ideology also. Admittedly, Mommsen writes with force and imagination, but his conclusion is so faulty, it is somewhat startling. He proceeds very systematically through Roman history, from its beginnings to the fall of Julius Caesar. It is a four-volume work, and what is very accessible in it, is the cogent analysis of the problems under the Roman Republic: the relationship between the oligarchy, represented by the Roman Senate, and the unbelievable extent and condition of the slave population, and how this slave system degraded into a rabble the semi-independent farmers who had been the bulwark of Roman society at its inception. The process of the creation of the *Vox Populi* is crucial to understanding the fundamental conflict in Roman society, and Mommsen is very clear in making sense of this development.

Yet, his visceral reaction to the ascendancy of the Roman Senate as the voice of the oligarchical families, led Mommsen to the conclusion that Caesar was the hope of Rome. In this, his violent attack on Cicero led him to defend the tribune Clodius, who plotted the overthrow of the Senate in the Catiline Conspiracy. Clodius was an almost complete degenerate, but Mommsen was willing to overlook this, out of his hatred for the Senate for

being ineffective. So, although he condemned Rome for its slavery—and in this he was both forceful and correct—he saw in Caesar a precursor to the rise of the Holy Roman Empire under a strong ruler who could stand above the oligarchy.

Mommsen's praise of Caesar was so immoderate, that he was known throughout Europe as an exponent of the Prussian model of empire for how Germany should be ruled. He was, in fact, an extreme Hegelian, who thought that history culminated in the strong man, as Hegel had defended Napoleon. Like Hegel, he was a monarchist. Since he wrote in the 1850-1870 period, long after the American Revolution, there was no excuse for his lack of historical prescience in understanding the fundamental political issues of his age. It is not surprising that he was the major opponent of Friedrich List, the foremost American System proponent in Germany; like Karl Marx, Mommsen favored a free-trade system. (It is telling that Mommsen was never able to write the concluding volume on Rome under the Empire—which would have required him to confront the reality of Hegel's "end of history" thesis—although he lectured on it.)



As opposed to Gibbon, St. Augustine (top, right) saw Rome's collapse as a result of its degenerate, oligarchical culture. Above: Gladiatorial combat. Top: Christians thrown to the lions.

means that only an Enlightenment culture can run an Empire. This is not an academic observation: It was Gibbon's assignment from Shelburne, to define the cultural axioms required for the long-term success of a British Empire. Is it otherwise conceivable that you could write a history of the "decline and fall of the Roman Empire," and leave out the fact that right after the Emperor Augustus, you had in rapid succession Tiberius, Caligula, and finally Nero?

The culture of an Empire is self-destructive and conducive to creating madmen. But, if you want to ignore the fact that empires always destroy themselves by their very nature, then, leaving that aside, you can ask, "How are we going to run the place?" And Gibbon says, it's only through a return to the Roman pantheonic religion that Britain can run a world empire. Questions of truth and natural law have to be ruled out. Empiricism and romanticism are the only way to dominate. In fact, the *Decline and Fall* is a paean to the Enlightenment as the axiomatic basis for British, or what is called "Liberal," imperialism. That is Gibbon's lesson to be learned. So, the work is a piece of ideology, and to that extent it is not interested in the reality of Rome.

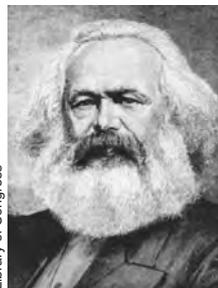
Mommsen was famous for his commitment to the ascendancy of the Hohenzollern monarchy as the power that would unify Germany by force of arms. Thus, the thesis of his *History of Rome* is, that Rome was proof of the dictum dictating “the suppression of nations less capable of, or less advanced in, culture, by nations of a higher standard.” He makes the case that Rome was fundamentally Thrasymachan. Might doesn’t only make right, *might is right*. The surface of history is the only judge, and history is always moving upward to necessity. It is Hegel’s defense of the Beast-Man: the “objective” trajectory of history, which rules over man, and over which man has no control. It is the Nineteenth-century Romanticism that gave us Adolf Hitler, and today’s Dick Cheney.

It is somewhat lurid how such a gifted person as Mommsen could be so overwhelmed by a formal Hegelian system. It is reminiscent of another young Hegelian, Ludwig Feuerbach. In Lyndon LaRouche’s 1973 essay, “The Case of Ludwig Feuerbach,”³ the point is made that Feuerbach, in his most famous work, *The Essence of Christianity*, argues quite brilliantly that there is something in the nature of being human that is captured in the Christian religion. Yet, as he goes on, Feuerbach is taken over by a severe neurosis (ideology), arguing that the true Trinity is the Father, the Son, and, not the Holy Spirit, but the Virgin Mary. Besides being a strict violation of doctrine which loses the Platonist philosophical content implicit in the theological concept, it becomes lurid in its praise of the pagan Gaia principle. Feuerbach’s work served as a transition point from Hegelian “idealism” to the flip-sided “materialism” of British-economist Karl Marx.

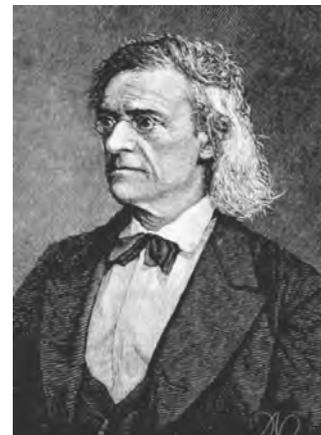
So, in reading Mommsen, you see at times he is brilliant and bold, but as he comes to his conclusion, he is taken over by an obsessive belief in a system, and not the reality of what Rome became. His history, like Gibbon’s, is very lively and pointed, but it is just plain wrong.



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German historian Theodor Mommsen (right) was a Hegelian monarchist who worshipped Julius Caesar as a strong-man, just as Hegel (above, left) had revered the Beast-Man Napoleon Bonaparte (left). Like Hegel disciple Karl Marx (above), Mommsen opposed the leading American System economist, Friedrich List (right).



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A Thousand-Year Dark Age

As demographic studies prepared under the direction of Lyndon LaRouche show, Rome brought on an almost thousand-year dark age, which ended with a collapse of population of the Mediterranean region from 47 million to about 29 million, a collapse of approximately 40 percent. It left Europe with a feudal system that led to another dark age collapse and depopulation of Europe in the Black Death.

Rome embarked on the course of empire in the wake of its defeat of Carthage in the Punic Wars. Up to that point, Rome was the dominant military power on the Italian peninsula. In the course of the Punic Wars, as the Roman historian Polybius points out, Rome became the dominant naval power in the Mediterranean. After its defeat of Carthage, Rome went on to defeat Greece and Macedonia. It subdued all the Carthaginian states and satrapies in North Africa and Spain, and the Celtic tribes in what is now France. So, on both sides of the Mediterranean, Rome dominated Western civilization, including later the eastern regions of Egypt, Asia Minor, and so forth. Rome became a military culture, and Polybius, writing on its constitution, extols it as a Spartan state:

It is clear that we should regard as the *best* constitution one which includes elements of all three species; this has been proved not only in theory but in practice by Lycurgus, who

was the first to construct a constitution, that of Sparta, on this principle. . . .

Now Lycurgus through his powers of reasoning could foresee the direction to which events naturally move and the factors which cause them to do so, and thus constructed his constitution without having to learn the lessons which misfortune teaches. The Romans, on the other hand, although they have arrived at the same result as regards their form of government, did not do so by means of abstract reasoning, but rather through the lessons learned from many struggles and difficulties; and finally, by always choosing the better course in the light of experience acquired from disasters, they have reached the same goal as Lycurgus; that is, the best of all existing constitutions.⁴

As the LaRouche studies of Rome under the direction of Ken Kronberg demonstrate,⁵ the relative potential population-density of the Mediterranean fell from the high-point of Classical Greece, the most populous region in 400 B.C., with 23 persons per square kilometer, to 11 persons per square kilometer in Italy a thousand years later. It was the looting of this region, and the destruction of the productive capacities of Rome itself under a military system based on primitive accumulation, which led Rome to increasingly more looting and degeneracy. Since all empires are based on looting satrapies and client states, they have all ended in disaster. As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly pointed out, the true measure

of a society is its continuing ability to increase the relative potential population-density of the planet, an ability that derives from the introduction of scientific and technological innovations into the process of social reproduction. A society that does this, is in accord with natural law. A society that violates this principle, like Rome, whose slave society brought a halt to scientific progress for almost a millennium, is a society that will inevitably fail.

So, why would the two men who achieved the greatest renown as historians of Rome in modern times, and who laid the basis for all subsequent studies, be so blind? Both held up the study of Rome, because it lasted so long and dominated the known world. Both argued that Rome was a model of government because of this. William Shakespeare proved the opposite.

Historical Specificity and Prescience

Why was Shakespeare, with only limited resources and time, able to produce the most valid history of Rome to date? Of course, it is true that St. Augustine's *City of God* contains a profound insight into Rome and why it failed, but such a long work lacks the dramatic force and historical specificity of Shakespeare's plays. In fact, it could be argued that, in some sense, Shakespeare was informed by St. Augustine, since Sir Thomas More, who was Shakespeare's inspiration, did lecture on the *City of God*, and I



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The Tudor Renaissance and statecraft. *William Shakespeare was the direct heir of the effort fostered by King Henry VII, to create an educated citizenry by importing the New Learning of Renaissance Italy. Inspired by the writings of Erasmus (above), Tudor Platonists included the educators John Colet (above, right) and Thomas Linacre (right), and the statesman Sir Thomas More (above, left). Left: Illustration from More's "Utopia." Above: "Introduction to Grammar" by William Lily (1557).*

do believe that is directly relevant to Shakespeare's understanding of Rome; although, as a factual hypothesis, this does not need to be proven.

Shakespeare, from the very beginning with his *Richard III*, taken directly from More's history of the same name, identifies the political problem he was facing. England was being ripped apart by religious conflict, as was all of Europe from 1511 to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. This warfare led to the beheading of More, the greatest figure of England's Tudor Renaissance. The issue for Shakespeare was, to identify for the king and the nobility those issues of statecraft which would lead to the consolidation of a commonwealth, as the solution to the tragedy of interminable civil strife.

This was not only More's direction in his *Utopia*, but it was the intention of his friend and mentor Erasmus's effort in his writing *The Education of a Christian Prince*. In the victory of Henry VII (Tudor) over Richard III, and the consolidation of peace after the Wars of the Roses, England had a great impulse-tendency toward development in the arts and sciences. These developments sprang directly from the ideas of statecraft of France's Louis XI, in whose court Henry Tudor was raised, and the Italian Renaissance, with the reading of Plato in the original Greek by the English educators Colet, Grocyn, and Linacre, who studied their Greek in Italy's Platonic Academy of Ficino. Thomas More, and later Shakespeare, were steeped in that culture and idea of man.⁶

As identified brilliantly by Schiller in his *Mary Stuart*, Queen Elizabeth was surrounded by religious zealots, as was her cousin Mary Queen of Scots. England was being ripped apart by Venice and its manipulation of European-wide, Protestant *vs.* Catholic religious insanity. As has been documented elsewhere,⁷ Venice ran both sides of the operation, to the benefit of Venetian-controlled finance. A Papal Bull excusing England's Catholics from obeying the laws of Elizabeth led *prime facie* to all Catholics being suspect-

ed of treason. On the other side, Lord Burleigh used this fear to capture Elizabeth's support for the murder of Mary. This was the political and social reality in which Shakespeare wrote his plays. He stood almost alone in this era, concentrating on developing the monarchy and nobility to shape the terms of the real issues facing them, as opposed to the false, insoluble quagmire they found themselves in. He focussed on the question of how to create a commonwealth, based on the *Augustinian* idea of the "city of God" on Earth. So, like Gibbon and Mommsen, Shakespeare had an immediate political purpose; but his purpose was the establishment of a republic, whereas theirs was empire.

It is in this light that Shakespeare wrote three plays on Roman history in rapid succession. His choice was by no means arbitrary. It is well known that any artist picks his subject at a critical point which captures the whole. As Gotthold Lessing develops in his *Laocoön*, poetry and painting require different types of compactness, different approaches to the "critical point." In painting, you capture, in mid-motion, a single moment, which conveys the whole thought. Poetry uses the same principle of compactness, but it is much more flexible in its capability to convey a succession of ideas. Shakespeare chooses as the critical point, the moment of Caesar's assassination, and the transition to the rule of Octavian (Augustus Caesar), for *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the first two of his Roman plays.



Both Elizabeth I and her cousin Mary Stuart (above, left) were surrounded by religious zealots, to the benefit of Venetian finance. Lord Burleigh (left) used an anti-Protestant Papal Bull (above) as evidence of Catholic treason. Right: Elizabeth signs Mary's death warrant.

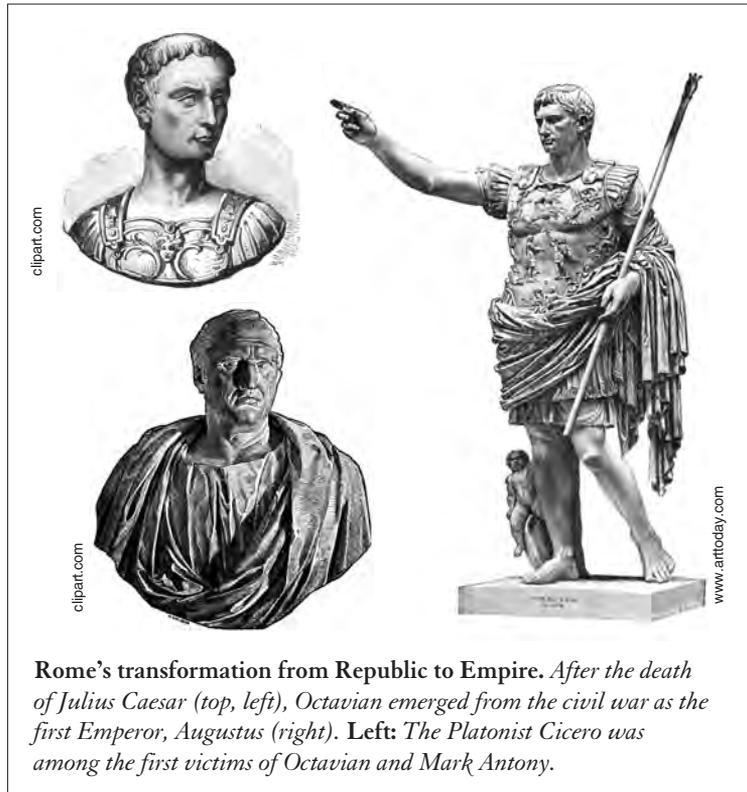
This is the moment when Rome was officially transformed from a “republic” into an empire. What this meant technically, was that the Roman Senate, which was made up of the oligarchical families of Rome, was to now become a rubber stamp for the emperor. Julius Caesar had just defeated the Senatorial party led by Pompey, and while he was not yet officially crowned, it was inevitable that this would happen—at which point Caesar would be the only law in Rome. He would be the Pontifex Maximus, ruling over the pantheon of religions. In effect, he would be a god. This transition set the trajectory for more than a thousand years of Roman rule. In the course of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, every protagonist but Octavian, later known as Augustus, the first Roman emperor, is either killed or commits suicide. Which of course did indeed happen in real life, in the events of the day as they unfolded.

Shakespeare chooses this critical moment, the transition from republic to empire, to unfold the issues of political leadership, the interaction of rulers and ruled. What are the requirements of leadership for statecraft, and what are the qualities required of the populace, the citizens, if they are to be capable of self-government? He is taking up the themes of More’s *Utopia* and Erasmus’s *Christian Prince*.

Shakespeare sets the first scene of *Julius Caesar* in the Forum, where the true nature of Rome is revealed from the very first moment. Two tribunes emerge in the midst of a crowd of workmen, who are making a holiday of the triumphant return of Caesar to Rome after his defeat of Pompey. The tribunes are clearing the streets of the crowds, reminding them

MURELLUS (TRIBUNE): Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?

What tributaries follow him to Rome
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The livelong day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out a holiday?



Rome’s transformation from Republic to Empire. After the death of Julius Caesar (top, left), Octavian emerged from the civil war as the first Emperor, Augustus (right). Left: The Platonist Cicero was among the first victims of Octavian and Mark Antony.

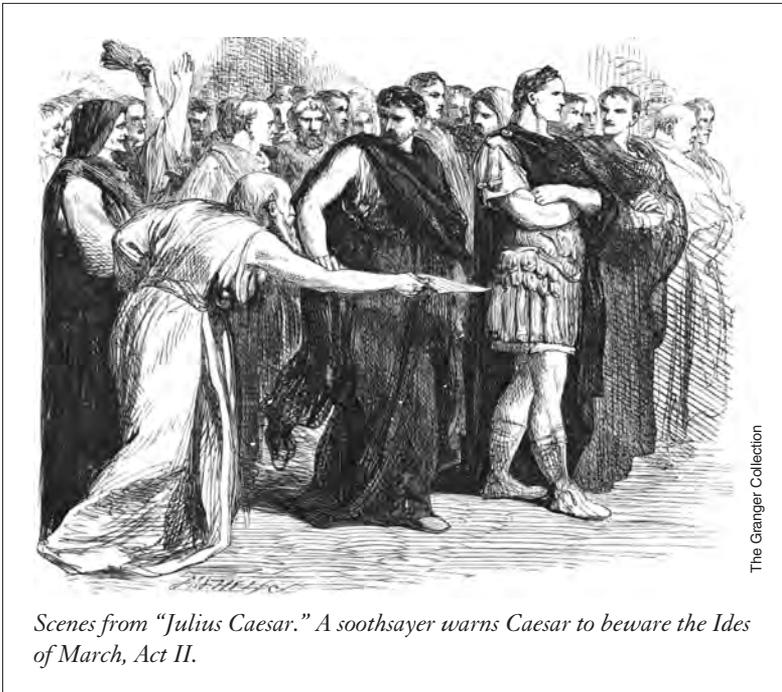
And do you now strew flowers in his way,
That comes in triumph over Pompey’s blood?
Be gone!
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

So the conflict immediately unfolds, in which an adoring populace—the Roman mob—are shown not to know what they do. Just as they cheered for Pompey, so they cheer for the man who destroyed Pompey. Yet, rather than reason with them, the tribunes awe the people with their power.

The next scene introduces Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Brutus, and Cassius, on their way to celebrating the feast of Lupercal. In the first scene, Shakespeare introduced the problem of the “Vox Populi,” the total fickleness and lability of the Roman population fed on “bread and circuses.” Now, in the second scene, by way of juxtaposition, he introduces Caesar and the Roman oligarchy. Shakespeare always introduces his themes and variations in a condensed, musical way at the beginning of a play, just as Schiller identifies that the pregnant moment, the seed crystal of the entire drama, must be introduced in the first moments of the action.

So, the first words of Mark Antony are,

ANTONY. Caesar, my lord



Scenes from "Julius Caesar." A soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March, Act II.

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Platonist, he believes in truth and appeals to truth, not conspiracy. None of the conspirators understood the real issue being fought out, which is faintly reflected in Cicero's adherence to the Platonic legacy of Classical Greece. Rome was a degenerate culture, with none of the creativity of Greece, and this was well understood by Shakespeare. It is on this counterposition—degenerate Rome to creative Greece—that the question of the real tragedy unfolds.

Shakespeare's play is not a soap opera, in which the failure of one or another individual person is the subject, and reality is reduced to a symbolic morality play, set in no particular time and no particular place. The true essence of Classical tragedy such as Shakespeare's is, that it gets at the heart of why a civilization or nation fails. It must first of all be truthful, but it must also be "prescient," in the sense that the problem of a particular society is embedded in a set of failed axioms shared by everyone living

and further on, his next speech is,

ANTONY. . . . When Caesar says,
Do this, it is performed.

Next, Caesar is introduced, and he refers to himself throughout in the third person. He says to the soothsayer,

CAESAR. Speak, Caesar is turned to hear.

Brutus is introduced as bringing the soothsayer to Caesar,

BRUTUS. A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March,
and finally Cassius says to the soothsayer,

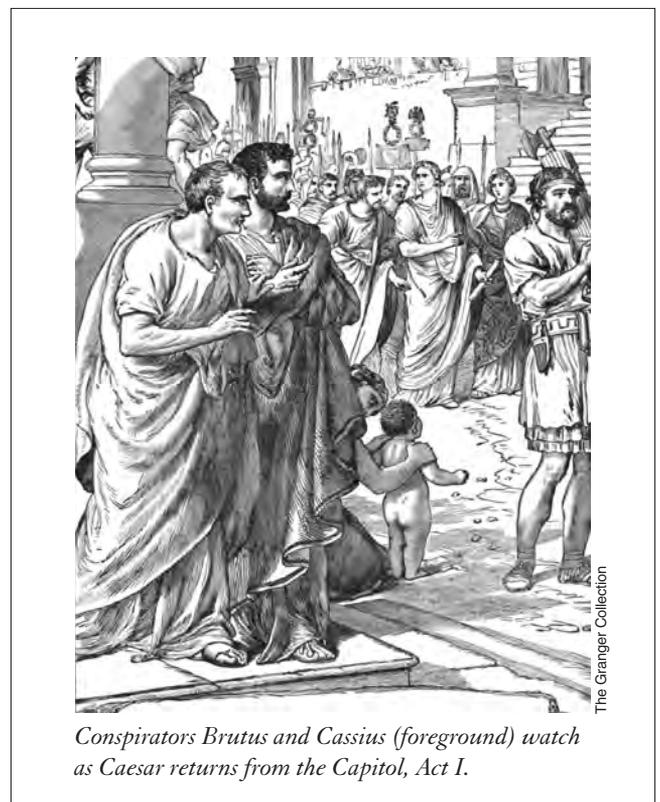
CASSIUS. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

Look at the compactness Shakespeare achieves. Cassius, Brutus, and Casca, all of whom kill Caesar on the Ides of March, are the ones who introduce the soothsayer to Caesar. Meanwhile, Caesar speaks of himself in the third person as if he were a god. Antony acts in total awe of him. Three of the party hate Caesar, and two are already plotting to kill him. Caesar has no idea what is going on, because he believes himself invulnerable. Antony is enamored of Caesar's power; Cassius is envious of it. Only Brutus has a different view, as we shall see.

As Lyndon LaRouche has pointed out, the question of Cicero—the "Greek speaker"—is the point of reflection about the unfolding tragedy.⁸ What is important, is not that Cicero could have saved Rome, but that the reason he could have saved Rome, is the same reason that the conspirators did not choose him to work with them: as a

in it. This is what leads to the tragedy.

The reference to Cicero provides the true nature of what happened with Rome. *It was the failure of Greece, that led to the rise of Rome,* and indeed Polybius in his famous discussion of the Punic Wars cited above indicates that the success of Rome was based on their adher-



Conspirators Brutus and Cassius (foreground) watch as Caesar returns from the Capitol, Act I.

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ence to the laws of Sparta's Lycurgus, and that that is why they triumphed. Ironically, this is why they failed, not why they succeeded: The ideal of the even best Romans was civic virtue, not the Good. As Schiller points out in his essay on "Solon and Lycurgus," the wise ruler relies upon the development of his people, and uses the state as an aid to that purpose. The Spartan case was the exact opposite. There, the citizen was subordinated to the state and the oligarchical interests. Admittedly, under Lycurgus the oligarchy was disciplined (which they hated), but it was an oligarchical state nonetheless. With the so-called success of Rome after the Punic Wars, the discipline of the oligarchy broke down. They became more and more degenerate, as they looted the populations of the Mediterranean to support their increasingly opulent life-style, and destroyed the independent farmers by resorting to slave labor and loot to buy off the *populus* with "bread and circuses."

Look at the motivations of all the lead characters:

1. Cassius's seduction of Brutus to the conspiracy
(Act I, Scene 2):

CASSIUS. I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favor.
Well, honor is the subject of my story.—
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Caesar; so were you:
We both have fed as well; and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me, "Dar'st thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?"—Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in,
And bade him follow: so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd; and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy:
But ere we could arrive the point propos'd,
Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"
I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar: and this man
Is now become a god; and Cassius is
A wretched creature, and must bend his body
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And, when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake:
His coward lips did from their color fly;



Mark Antony's funeral oration for the dead Caesar
whips the Roman mob into a murderous frenzy, Act III.

And that same eye, whose bend doth awe the world,
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
"Alas!" it cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius,"
As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me,
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world,
And bear the palm alone. *[Shout: flourish.]*

BRUTUS. Another general shout!

I do believe that these applauses are
For some new honours that are heap'd on Caesar.

CASSIUS. Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

2. Brutus contemplating the murder of Caesar
(Act II, Scene 1):

BRUTUS. It must be by his death: and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question:
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him? —that—
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins

Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Caesar,
 I have not known when his affections sway'd
 More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
 That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
 Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
 But when he once attains the utmost round,
 He then unto the ladder turns his back,
 Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
 By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
 Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
 Will bear no color for the thing he is,
 Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
 Would run to these and these extremities;
 And, therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
 Which, hatch'd, would as his kind grow mischievous;
 And kill him in his shell.

3. Caesar's seduction by Decius Brutus (Act II, Scene 2):

DECIUS: Caesar, all hail! Good-morrow, worthy Caesar:
 I come to fetch you to the senate-house.

CAESAR. And you are come in very happy time,
 To bear my greeting to the senators,
 And tell them that I will not come to-day:
 Cannot, is false; and that I dare not, falsar:
 I will not come to-day,—tell them so, Decius.

CALPURNIA. Say he is sick.

CAESAR: Shall Caesar send a lie?
 Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far,
 To be afraid to tell graybeards the truth?
 Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

DECIUS. Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,
 Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so.

CAESAR. The cause is in my will,—I will not come;
 That is enough to satisfy the senate.
 But for your private satisfaction,
 Because I love you. I will let you know,—
 Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home:
 She dreamt to-night she saw my statue,
 Which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts,
 Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
 Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it:
 And these does she apply for warnings and portents,
 And evils imminent; and on her knee
 Hath begg'd that I will stay at home to-day.

DECIUS. This dream is all amiss interpreted;
 It was a vision fair and fortunate:
 Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
 In which so many smiling Romans bath'd,
 Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
 Reviving blood; and that great men shall press
 For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.
 This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.

CAESAR. And this way have you well expounded it.

DECIUS. I have, when you have heard what I can say;
 And know it now,—the senate have concluded

To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.
 If you shall send them word you will not come,
 Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock,
 Apt to be render'd, for some one to say,
 "Break up the senate till another time
 When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams."
 If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper,
 "Lo, Caesar is afraid?"
 Pardon me, Caesar; for my dear dear love
 To your proceeding bids me tell you this;
 And reason to my love is liable.

CAESAR. How foolish do your fears seem now,
 Calpurnia!

I am ashamed I did yield to them.—

Give me my robe for I will go . . .

4. Antony's revenge and consolidation of power (Act IV, Scene 1):

The first act of the empire is the murder of Cicero.
 The following scene shows the conference at which
 this murder was concluded. It comes immediately
 after Mark Antony's famous funeral oration, which
 culminates in the arbitrary murder of the innocent
 poet Cinna by the frenzied mob, because he shared a
 name with one of the conspirators.

ANTONY. These many, then shall die; their names are
 prick'd.

OCTAVIAN. Your brother too must die; consent you,
 Lepidus?

LEPIDUS. I do consent.

OCTAVIAN. Prick him down, Antony.

LEPIDUS. Upon condition Publius shall not live,
 Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

ANTONY. He shall not live; look, with a spot I damn him.

But, Lepidus, go you to Caesar's house;
 Fetch the will hither, and we shall determine
 How to cut off some charge in legacies.

LEPIDUS. What, shall I find you here?

OCTAVIAN. Or here or at the Capitol. [*Exit Lepidus.*]

ANTONY. This is a slight unmeritable man,
 Meet to be sent on errands: is it fit,
 The threefold world divided, he should stand
 One of the three to share it?

OCTAVIAN. So you thought him;
 And took his voice who should be prick'd to die,
 In our black sentence and proscription.

ANTONY. Octavian, I have seen more days than you:
 And though we lay these honors on this man,
 To ease ourselves of diverse slanderous loads,
 He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
 To groan and sweat under the business,
 Either led or driven as we point the way;
 And having brought our treasure where we will,
 Then take we down his load, and turn him off,
 Like to the empty ass, to shake his ears



On the battlefield, allies Mark Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus negotiate the murder of their factional opponents in Rome, Act IV.

And graze in commons.

OCTAVIAN. You may do your will:

But he's a tried and valiant soldier.

ANTONY. So is my horse, Octavian; and for that

I do appoint him store of provender:

It is a creature that I teach to fight,

To wind, to stop, to run directly on,—

His corporal motion govern'd by my spirit.

And, in some taste, is Lepidus but so;

He must be taught, and train'd, and bid go forth;—

A barren-spirited fellow; one that feeds

On objects, arts and imitations

Which, out of use and stal'd by other men,

Begin his fashion: do not talk of him

But as a property. And now, Octavian,

Listen great things.—Brutus and Cassius

Are levying powers: we must straight make head:

Therefore let our alliance be combin'd,

Our best friends made, our means stretch'd;

And let us presently go sit in council,

How covert matters may be best disclos'd,

And open perils surest answered.

OCTAVIAN. Let us do so: for we are at the stake,

And bay'd about with many enemies;

And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,

Millions of mischiefs.

While the speakers are in each case eloquent in themselves, the cumulative effect leads to a total disaster for each of the characters, and Rome as a whole. Cassius's speech shows him to be motivated by envy of Caesar. Caesar himself is so vain, he believes himself immortal. Antony is the essence of the demagogue who manipulates the mob, but has only power on his mind; it is he who orders the murder of Cicero. Only Brutus appears different.

What is so extraordinary about Shakespeare is, that this is indeed what each of the characters thought in real life. It is what happened in the transition from the Republic to the Empire, and it was the characteristic that infected all of them, Brutus included. For, Mark Antony, in seeing Brutus dead, says ironically, "There lies Brutus, the noblest Roman of them all." Yet, what kind of society was Brutus protecting? The right of the oligarchy to rule Rome through the Senate. The so-called rule of law: Everything was stolen lawfully. They knew they could not rely upon the people of Rome, as is shown in the opening scene of the play. In fact, the Senate was hated by the people, just as the Senate hated the people. The tragedy was set, and only the Platonist Cicero had even an inkling of what to do, and he was the first actual sacrifice of the Roman Empire.

Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus

Without going through a long excursion: *Antony and Cleopatra* presents the denouement of the civil war launched by the assassination of Julius Caesar, with the consolidation of the Empire by Octavian (Augustus). While the play is clearly about *eros*, passion, and how Mark Antony is destroyed by its power, this is, in fact, what was happening to Rome politically. Shakespeare shows how the consolidation of the Empire leads, first, to the destruction of Pompey's son by treachery; then to the destruction of Lepidus, one of the initial triumvirs along with Octavian and Antony; and finally, to Antony's suicide, brought on by his infantile infatuation with Cleopatra, leaving Cleopatra to commit suicide herself. In the final scene, Octavian stands over the dead Cleopatra, the sole survivor of the revolution called the Roman Empire. This all happened in the actual history. It was one unending tragedy, including the self-slaughter of Cassius, Brutus, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra. After Shakespeare's devastating critique, how could anyone want to copy Rome, as both Gibbon and Mommsen advised?

Shakespeare once again introduces the theme of leadership's responsibility to uplift the people in *Coriolanus*, this time in an even more devastating fashion. He chooses something of a monster in the figure of Coriolanus, a man who shows utter contempt for the people of Rome, while at the same time being the savior of the state in a devastating war. Speaking to the *populus*, he says:



Scene from "Antony and Cleopatra." Octavian's consolidation of the Empire leads to the suicide of Mark Antony, and then his lover Cleopatra, Act V.

CAIUS MARCIUS (CORIOLANUS). . . . What's the matter,
 you dissentious rogues,
 That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
 Make yourselves scabs? . . .

. . . What would you have, ye curs,
 That like nor peace, nor war? The one affrights you,
 The other makes you proud. he that trusts to you,
 Where he should find you lions, finds you hares:
 Where foxes, geese: . . .

. . . Who deserves greatness
 Deserves your hate; . . .

With every minute you do change a mind,
 And call him noble, that was your hate;
 Him vile, that was your garland.

The story, also taken from Plutarch, occurred several hundred years before the time of Julius Caesar, and shows that the Roman Republic was also a disaster, for the same reasons as the Empire. Shakespeare's point can not be missed: Even from its very beginning, Roman society was not intended to provide for the common good.

Shakespeare and the Sublime

One of the most remarkable mysteries in the history of human thought, is the fact that almost nothing is directly known about William Shakespeare. This mystery has allowed several prominent authors to even deny that

William Shakespeare existed, or that he was the author of Shakespeare's plays! How is it that one of the greatest writers who ever lived left no direct record, except an occasional signature on a birth certificate or a title to land? It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore this, but several points are unmistakable.

One point of reference, is that Shakespeare was from the very beginning an adherent of Sir Thomas More. There is significant indirect evidence to believe that Shakespeare may have been a Catholic; but, if so, decidedly in the tradition of St. Augustine, and opposed to the religious conflicts engulfing England and ripping Elizabeth apart. (That's why the effort to portray Shakespeare as a Catholic in a spate of recent studies is an irrelevancy, since the way these books tend to be written, the real point is completely missed: Whatever Shakespeare's confessed faith, his abiding commitment was to his fellow man and the commonwealth.) It was in considering this, that it became apparent to me why so little is known or written down of Shakespeare's day-to-day life, or of his political involvements. Remember, Marlowe's exposé of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in his *Massacre at Paris*, had gotten him killed. The "Essex Conspiracy" had been exposed, and its leaders disemboweled. This was the level of personal danger that Shakespeare faced.

Yet, it is to be remembered that the Globe Theater was a mass education facility, seating 3,000 people a day, six days a week. It was here that Shakespeare did his political organizing, continuing the work of the Tudor Renaissance geniuses More and Erasmus; so, it is to his plays that we must look for his "political" message.

As I indicated at the outset, to really comprehend who Shakespeare was, and why he had such insight, you must first understand the true nature of Classical art. Shakespeare was first and foremost committed to uplifting mankind by a devastating attack on Folly. This is in all his Comedies, Tragedies, and Histories.

From the time of Homer until today, every great Classical writer was driven by the folly of their contemporaries. Homer looked to the degradation of the Greek tribes after the disastrous wars of Troy. Aeschylus in his time again took up the fall of Troy, in his *Oresteia* Trilogy; he also took up the theme of Prometheus. Sophocles takes up the fall of Thebes, showing its lack of *agapē* in the case of Oedipus, and the rise of Athens through its commitment to a universal idea of man. The summation of this development comes in the Dialogues of Plato, a sublime transcendence over tragedy, which lay the basis for Western civilization and the idea of statecraft.

It is the great artists, as Percy Bysshe Shelly wrote in his "Defence of Poetry," who are the "unacknowledged legislators of mankind." It is a rigorously provable thesis that the driving impulse of the great artist is, to locate the

folly of his countrymen, and to rally them, in the words of Schiller, to “dare to be wise”—to transcend what would otherwise seem to be their fate. All human progress is made in this way.

Shakespeare was such a sublime character. It was precisely because of this, that he was able to see what Mommsen and Gibbon could not see about Rome. That may seem like an impossible paradox, but it is nonetheless true. Only if, before you study history, you know man from the standpoint of his uniquely sublime ability to create, can you know history. It is only from this perspective that you can truly know what an abomination Rome was. As Schiller points out in his “Theater as a Moral Institution,” if you don’t know truth, you can not use art; art will use you.

Thus, it would seem that, in order to know history, you must first transcend it. This is where the question of historic specificity comes in. In each historical epoch, there is a set of ruling axioms, some stated, most implicit. You can not know history, unless you examine the precise failings of previous societies, as these are reflected in the axiomatic beliefs of the people inhabiting them. The idea that history repeats itself is an absurdity. There is no way you can understand Venice, for example, unless you understand Rome and the *ultramontanism* that Rome created and Venice manipulated. The problems that must be solved are historically specific, but since human beings are involved, there is a universal characteristic to them. That human characteristic is determined by the capacity to *change* underlying axioms, to discover new principles. That is what is uniquely human. No other species can do that. And yet, if you do not know the nature of the problems, you can not mobilize the answers. So, contrary to Hegel, history really does happen. It is not the playing out of the *Weltgeist* (World Spirit) beyond man’s will.

If you start from an oligarchical standpoint, you will produce ideology, not history.

‘Late Shakespeare’

What is going to be proposed now is new territory.

It is obvious to anyone who has had the privilege of either being a creative genius, intensively working with one, or studying one, that development of a fundamental nature is always taking place. It is in the nature of genius, that this is its characteristic. I have worked with Lyndon LaRouche for over thirty years, and can say with absolute certainty that without doubt we are now witnessing what I would call “late LaRouche,” in the same way others have characterized the late quartets of Beethoven as “late Beethoven.”

There are definitely three Shakespeare plays of such a “late” genre. There may be others, given that the dates of these plays are not certain, but *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s*

Tale, and *The Tempest* are indisputable. They mark a unique departure from the “Tragedies, Comedies, and Histories” of Shakespeare. It is amusing to watch the Lilliputians try to categorize these plays. They are a true anomaly, and true to form, the experts try to explain them away, as inferior, indicative of a Shakespeare gone stale after the enormous exertions of *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and so forth. They are termed “Romances,” and generally buried away as “incoherent.” They are not played very often. Although *The Tempest* is part of the repertoire, both *Cymbeline* and *The Winter’s Tale* are generally swept under the rug, especially *Cymbeline*.

In my view, one may with justice see *Cymbeline* as the fourth of the Roman plays. It is in this play that the truly sublime nature of Shakespeare’s view of Rome is fully revealed.

What characterizes these late plays, is that all three open in terrible tragedy, wrought by kings who have used their powers in arbitrary fashion. I first came to this understanding of late Shakespeare, through a remarkable anomaly in *King Lear*. As Lear, led by his fool, comes off the heath, he comes to a hovel in which lies “Tom O’Bedlam,” the disguised Edgar, who has been banished by the trickery of his bastard brother Edmund. As Lear enters the hovel mad with grief, he becomes for a moment completely lucid, and seeing the condition of the



Scenes from “*Cymbeline*.” Roman tribune Caius Lucius addresses the British king Cymbeline and his Queen, Act III. The conflict leads to a Roman invasion.

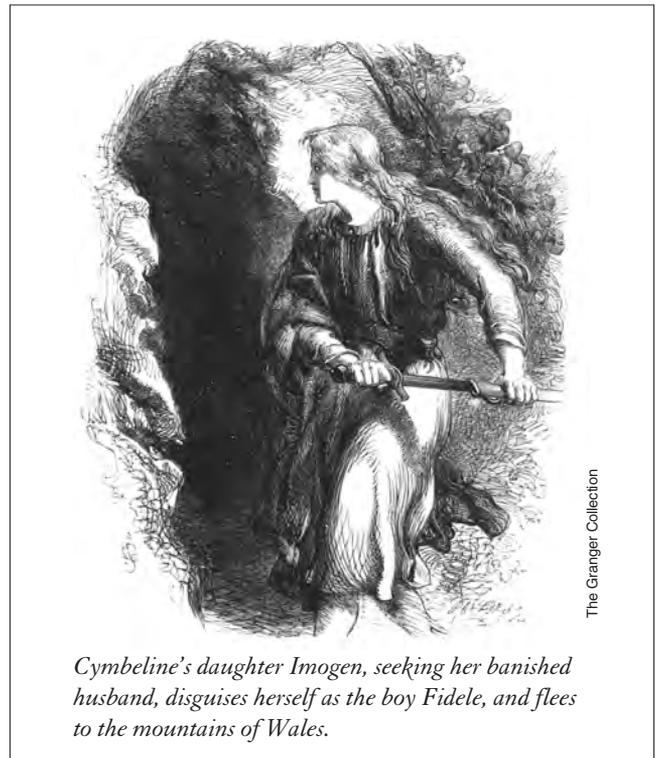
shelter, remarks that he had no idea his people lived this way, and that he should have been a better king when he had the power.

As in all genius, Shakespeare explores this theme in multiply-reflected ways in his late, and I would contend, most brilliant plays. It is here that he finally resolves the problem of tragedy. The solution lies in *agapē* and reconciliation, the theme of all three, and a harbinger of the Peace of Westphalia that would save Europe from destruction. If you wish to find the sublime in an *explicit* form in Shakespeare, then you must look to these last plays.

Cymbeline is remarkable in its poetry and impulse. As in *The Winter's Tale*, the play explodes as a tragedy. The setting is Britain in the time of Augustus. Imogen, daughter of the British king Cymbeline, defies her father's command and marries the man she loves. The king banishes her husband Posthumus. Being the son of a noble Roman soldier who was once a defender of the British king, Posthumus travels to Rome in his banishment. So begins what is acknowledged to be perhaps the most complex and interwoven plot in all Shakespeare, with scores of interrelated incidents and subplots.

In the course of Posthumus's stay in Rome, a knight named Iachimo, incensed by praise of Imogen's virtue, wagers that he can seduce her. The wager is taken, and through guile Iachimo convinces Posthumus that Imogen has indeed been seduced—which is of course not true. In a rage, Posthumus orders his servant Pisanio to murder her. Meanwhile, in Britain, Cymbeline, who has effectively disowned Imogen, is convinced by the Queen, his scheming second wife, to refuse to pay tribute to Augustus. Caesar's tribune entreats Cymbeline to pay, but in the confrontation, Cymbeline listens to the Queen and Cloten, her venal son by a prior marriage, and declares independence from Rome. This has all the makings of total tragedy.

What does Shakespeare do? In a total revolution, he takes the play in a totally different direction. Imogen leaves under a false pretense to find her husband, who has returned to Britain, and has scheduled to meet her in Milford Haven. In fact, she is to be murdered there by Pisanio. But the loyal servant knows she is innocent, and tells her of the plot. Imogen disguises herself as a boy, takes the name Fidele (reminiscent of Beethoven's *Fidelio*), and escapes to the rough hills of Wales. There she meets two young mountain men, brought up by Belarius, a Roman knight who was loyal to Cymbeline but unjustly banished many years earlier. We learn that these youths are the unknowing lost sons of Cymbeline—i.e., Imogen/Fidele's brothers—kidnapped by the knight in revenge. Away from the court, they have been raised to be noble and good. The three unknowing siblings immediately recognize the nobility in one another, and



Cymbeline's daughter Imogen, seeking her banished husband, disguises herself as the boy Fidele, and flees to the mountains of Wales.

The Granger Collection

form an unbreakable bond. Their innocence and nobility stand in stark contrast to the court intrigue swirling around Cymbeline.

In the course of events, Fidele, feeling weak, takes a potion provided by Pisanio but maliciously prepared for murder by the Queen, thinking it will restore her health. She sleeps deeply by its effects. Her brothers find her and, thinking her dead, sing over her one of the most beautiful songs ever composed in the English language, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." Soon, the brothers flee to the mountains to avoid an invading Roman army, arrived to quell Cymbeline's rebellion. As the Roman forces pass, the awakened Imogen/Fidele is taken on as a page by the Roman commander. The body of the dead Cloten, killed in self-defense by one of the mountain youths, is discovered.

In the battle between Roman and British armies, Cymbeline is routed and almost captured, but the two mountain boys and Belarius defeat the Romans and save the King. Posthumus is captured, and mistaken for an invading Roman. He is condemned to die, but is happy to do so, thinking himself responsible for the murder of his wife Imogen. Iachimo, the true author of Posthumus's rage, is also captured, as is the Roman commander. Ironically, a soothsayer has told the commander that Rome will triumph in this conflict.

These are only some of the circumstances of the dizzying plot, and readers familiar with Shakespeare will rec-

ognize their resonances in many other plays. It is as if Shakespeare wanted to place before us the entire sweep of his earlier life's work.

Finally, at the denouement, we have the most startling developments ever in any play. It is revealed to Cymbeline: First, that the Queen on her deathbed has confessed to hating Imogen, and that she had been poisoning the King in hopes of obtaining the kingdom for Cloten. Next, Fidele, having gotten Iachimo to confess his lies in front of Posthumus, reveals herself as Imogen. Both Cymbeline and Posthumus are overwhelmed with joy. Then, it is revealed that one of the mountain youths has killed Cloten. Cymbeline must exact the penalty of death for the murder of a prince of the blood by a commoner. But Belarius, the old Roman knight, risking his own death, reveals their true identities as the sons of Cymbeline, hence royal and not subject to such punishment. So, to the father Cymbeline are restored his two sons and daughter. To Posthumus, his wife and two brothers. To the Roman knight, his dignity and his sovereign. In the

wake of these discoveries, Cymbeline announces he will pay tribute to Rome, rather than go on fighting.

So we have now the final point of it all. The soothsayer pronounces that indeed Rome was victorious:

SOOTHSAYER. The fingers of the powers above do tune
The harmony of this peace. The vision,
Which I made known to Lucius ere the stroke
Of this yet scarce cold battle, at this instant
Is full accomplished; for the Roman eagle,
From south to west on wings soaring aloft,
Lessen'd herself and in the beam o' the sun
So vanish'd; which foreshow'd our princely eagle,
The imperial Caesar, should again unite
His favor with the radiant Cymbeline,
Which shines here in the west. [*Emphasis added.*]

Rome wins not through force of arms, but through redemption and love. It is an unbelievably beautiful resolution of the problem of Rome. That is why it is without doubt that Shakespeare was the greatest historian of Rome who ever lived.

1. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) (New York: Modern Library), 3 vols.
2. Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome (Römische Geschichte, 1856-1885)*, tr. by Rev. William P. Dickson (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1887; London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996).
3. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. (writing as L. Marcus), "The Case of Ludwig Feuerbach," *The Campaigner*, Part I, December 1973 (Vol. 7, No. 2); Part II, January 1974 (Vol. 7, No. 3).
4. Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, trans. by Ian Scott-Kilvert (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), Book VI, "On the Roman Constitution."
5. Kenneth Kronberg, "How the Romans Nearly Destroyed Civilization," reprinted in *EIR Special Report: The Genocidal Roots of Bush's 'New World Order'*, May 1992.
6. See Robert Trout, "Henry VII and the Creation of Shakespeare's England," *Fidelio*, Winter/Spring 2002 (Vol. XI, No. 1-2).
7. See Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "How Bertrand Russell Became an Evil Man: Reflections Upon Tragedy and Hope," *Fidelio*, Fall 1992 (Vol. III, No. 3); Webster Tarpley, "Venice's War Against Western Civilization," *Fidelio*, Summer 1995 (Vol. IV, No. 2); Donald Phau, "Erasmus of Rotterdam: The Educator's Educator," *Fidelio*, Summer 1995 (Vol. IV, No. 2).
8. Casca on Cicero: "It was Greek to me." See Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Shakespeare as a Scholar: U.S. Politics as Tragedy," *Fidelio*, Winter 2003 (Vol. XII, No. 4).

A Note to the Reader

This article is the result of reflecting on the works of the Classical tradition listed below. The ideas of the authors bounce off one another. As you undertake this process for yourself, you will perhaps find new pathways of discovery.

William Shakespeare, *Richard III, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, King Lear, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest.*

Friedrich Schiller, *Don Carlos, Mary Stuart, Wallenstein* Trilogy, "To What End, and Why Do We Study, Universal History?," "The Legislation of Lycurgus and Solon," "Theater Considered as a Moral Institution."

Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides; Prometheus Bound.*

Sophocles, *Theban Plays: Oedipus Rex, Antigone, Oedipus at Colonus.*

Plato, *The Republic.*

St. Augustine, *The City of God.*

Erasmus of Rotterdam, *In Praise of Folly, The Education of a Christian Prince.*

Sir Thomas More, *Utopia, History of Richard III.*

Gotthold Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay Upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting.*

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "In Defence of Poetry."

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Shakespeare as a Scholar: U.S. Politics as Tragedy"; "Those Populist Fools Who Would Seek a Contract Even with God," page 4, this issue of *Fidelio*; "The Uniquely Needed Doctrine for U.S. Economic Survival Today: Why 'Fiscal Austerity' Is Insane," *Executive Intelligence Review*, May 14, 2004 (Vol. 31, No. 19).