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The Workings of the Life Force in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

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The Workings of the Life Force in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

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Introduction

The powerful characters whom George Bernard Shaw creates in many of his plays portray individuals who are capable of getting in touch with the Life Force. Shaw places an emphasis on the value system practiced by the characters of his plays. The Life Force becomes a critical component of the value systems of some of Shaw's characters and a necessary element for their genius to develop. The Shavian view is that the Life Force exists in all humanity but only a few are able to be in touch with it, and only those few geniuses in tune with the Life Force are capable of becoming Supermen. For example, in Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Julius Caesar is a clear representative of someone in touch with the Life Force. Shaw attempts to create a Caesar who challenges the weaker Shakespearean counterpart by attributing this characteristic of genius to his Caesar. However, Shakespeare's Caesar reveals another type of genius which Shaw fails to acknowledge and is not to be overshadowed by his representation of Caesar. In Shaw's criticism of late-Victorian bardolatry, he intentionally recreated a venerable character to contrast with Shakespeare's apparently unheroic one. In his "Afterward" to *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Shaw writes:

> I cannot cite all the stories about Caesar which seem to me to shew [*sic*] that he was genuinely original; but let me at least point out that I have been careful to attribute nothing but originality to him. Originality gives a man an air of frankness, generosity, and magnanimity. (202-3)

These are characteristics that Shaw does not find in Shakespeare's Caesar. But, Shaw's philosophical concept of the Life Force is exhibited in Shakespeare's character, Julius Caesar, by means of the social and political issues the character confronts.

Shaw's Philosophical Approach

The Life Force, according to Shaw, is the higher will that a person serves but also creates. The will of the Life Force animates and fuels life. Shavian scholar Stuart Baker explains, "The Life Force is not a transcendent deity, an all-controlling Father who envelopes us in His protecting embrace. It is an immanent and imperfect force, a Becoming rather than a Being" (121). Therefore, all human beings embody the Life Force, but many struggle to fulfill the purpose of this force. Those who successfully serve the Life Force become the geniuses that Shaw depicts in his plays.

Since the Life Force, according to Baker, is a "Becoming rather than a Being," then an all-knowing, omnipotent, perfect God is nonexistent because God is evolving in the same way that humanity is evolving. Shaw's philosophy maintains that the workings of the Life Force are driven by the progressive and evolutionary nature of the will that leads to something that Shaw referred to as "Godhead." A major characteristic of Godhead is its imperfection. The aim of the Life Force is the progression of Godhead into a more perfect force. Thus, the problem Shaw struggles to solve is the imperfection that is characteristic of human nature. How can an imperfect race—the human race—create and achieve perfection? The answer lies in Shaw's belief that the progressive force of human nature is capable of such an achievement. Shaw contends that very few individuals use their will to serve the Life Force. Those individuals who attempt to serve a higher will by having faith in their own will contribute to perfecting Godhead.

Shaw depicts some who commit to the service of the Life Force and succeed as supermen. His conception of the superman is influenced by nineteenth century philosophers and writers. A brief history of Shaw's influences is necessary for a better understanding of Shaw's philosophical ideas. His ideas on the Life Force and the creation of a superman contrasts with

Thomas Carlyle's and Friedrich Nietzsche's conceptions of heroism, and Shaw expands on the ideas of Richard Wagner and Henrik Ibsen. Shaw's vision of the superman is usually associated with Nietzsche's conception of a superman. Nietzsche despaired over the conditions of nineteenth century civilization and felt that an elect few—the supermen—offered salvation. Shaw's belief in human progression contrasts to Nietzsche's pessimistic view of society. Nietzsche's ideas about the superman relate more to Carlyle's idea of hero-worship than Shaw's optimism about the superman (Mills 135-136). Both Nietzsche and Shaw disagreed with Darwinism, and a major premise of Shaw's philosophy is the belief in creative evolution as opposed to Darwin's idea of natural selection. That is, Shaw believed that the human race was evolving towards perfection, not evolution based on chance and accidental occurrences. Baker states that "Caesar, Undershaft, Joan, and Lady Cicely are not supermen and superwomen, because the superman does not yet exist. They are only hints as to what might become" (142). Therefore, Shaw's potential supermen are the willful, optimistic, and dynamic characters, like Caesar, who suggest the greatness that mankind has the potential to achieve in the future.

The greatness that Shaw's Caesar portrays is a cause for the loneliness Caesar often expresses. Shaw's supermen are often characterized as geniuses, a condition which results in their isolation. Shaw derived this idea from Arthur Schopenhauer's work *The World as Will and Idea*. In *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Caesar expresses his loneliness when he sees the Sphinx:

> Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Caesar! I have wondered many lands, seeking the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me, and the company of creatures such as I myself. I have found flocks and pastures, men and cities, but no other Caesar, no air native to me, no man kindred to me, none who can do my day's deed, and think my night's thought. (70)

In this opening to Caesar's soliloquy, he creates a comparison between himself and the Sphinx, a comparison which emphasizes the loneliness both creatures endure. The Sphinx is a magnificent, but isolated, image in the midst of the vast desert, while Caesar stands alone despite his dominion over an empire. Carl Mills says that "according to Schopenhauer, a genius has a double intellect, one for himself and the service of his will and the other for the world, of which he becomes the mirror because of his purely objective attitude toward it" (140). Caesar alludes to the idea of a double intellect as he expresses a desire to find a sense of belonging but feels he cannot because of his obligations as ruler of a vast empire. The genius of Shaw's superman also relies on Wagner's concern with social reform. Wagner's hero-savior focuses on improving political and social affairs. The hero-savior and the superman differ in their achievement of these improvements. The hero-savior desires to deny his will, while the superman embraces the commitment to serve his will (Mills 138). Caesar's commitment as ruler to the empire gives him a double existence as an effective ruler and an intellectual who defines his genius.

The concept of genius of Shaw's superman is critical to the vision of creative evolution. In this aspect, Shaw expands on Schopenhauer's idea of genius to include the influence of the Life Force. Mills writes that "Shaw's superman works for human progress and betterment as Schopenhauer's genius does because he has a rather peculiar kind of instinct, which Shaw renamed the life force that drives him to give permanent form to what he sees and feels without being conscious of any further motive" (141). Those few characters whom Shaw feels are directed by their will become inspired to serve the Life Force. In the same soliloquy, Caesar claims:

> In the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert; only I wander, and you sit still; I conquer, and you endure; I work and wonder, you watch and

> wait; I look up and am dazzled, look down and am darkened, look round and am puzzled, whilst your eyes never turn from looking out—out of the world—to the lost region—the home from which we have strayed. (70)

This passage contrasts Caesar's constant action to the stillness of the Sphinx. Caesar acknowledges his contemplative nature as opposed to the conquests which his office demands. In addition to Schopenhauer's ideas, Shaw's conception of the Life Force is also inspired by Ibsen's idea of the world-will. The world-will influences the superman from within himself. Shaw believes that the superman selfishly fulfills his will, but, in doing so, serves the Life Force (Baker 45-46). Although some critics contend that Caesar expresses an arrogance of self-glorification in this speech, Caesar acknowledges his limitations. He admits that he looks up and is dazzled and looks around and is puzzled. These reactions do not characterize arrogance; instead, they recognize the powers that surround him. Caesar's recognition of these forces reveals his will to serve the Life Force even if he is unable to discern them.

The Influence of the Life Force on Shaw's Julius Caesar

The first act of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* introduces Caesar's command of the Life Force. Caesar enters the stage as a wanderer who approaches the Sphinx which Cleopatra rests upon. Caesar addresses the Sphinx and remains unaware of the sixteen year old queen. He laments, "My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god—nothing of man in me at all" (71). His self-glorification represents an awareness of the Life Force. Caesar believes that the mysterious nature of the Sphinx represents his genius. Shaw's introduction of Caesar immediately establishes the heroic and powerful figure which Shaw thought the historical Caesar to be. Gale K. Larson's discussion of Shaw's depiction of Caesar notes that "Caesar, for Shaw, was the symbol of greatness, and with passionate fervor he took the torch from Goethe, who had referred to Caesar's assassination as 'the greatest crime in history' but who did not write a play dramatizing that belief, so the field, says Shaw, was left open to him" (1). Shaw characterizes Caesar's genius as a power that transcends his humanity, for he explains that, like the Sphinx, he is not a man but a combination of other forces.

Shaw attempts to illustrate Caesar's will by means of the relationship he forms with Cleopatra. Caesar becomes a mentor to the inexperienced queen and attempts to convert her into an assertive woman and queen. Before Caesar exposes his identity to Cleopatra, she expresses her fear of the Romans. She tells him, "Oh, they would eat us if they caught us. They are barbarians. Their chief is called Julius Caesar" (74). Once he reveals to her that he is a Roman, he tells Cleopatra he will teach her the way to stop Caesar from eating her. He reveals to her, "Whatever dread may be in your soul—however terrible Caesar may be to you—you must confront him as a brave woman and a great queen; and you must feel no fear" (76). Thus, Caesar

commences to teach the young queen to become an effective ruler. His awareness of her limitations because she is a female ruler emphasizes his recognition of the demands of public office and the limitations that Cleopatra will face as queen. He instantly realizes that her weakness stemming from her fearfulness will prevent her from becoming a great queen.

Once more Cleopatra demonstrates her fearfulness in her relationship with her servants; Caesar criticizes her reluctance to exert her power as queen. Caesar tells her to order her slave to light the lamps:

> CLEOPATRA (*shyly*). Do you think I may?
>
> CAESAR. Of course. You are the Queen. (*She hesitates*.) Go on.
>
> CLEOPATRA (*timidly, to the slave*). Light all the lamps.
>
> FTATATEETA (*suddenly coming from behind the throne*). Stop. (*The slave stops. She turns sternly to* Cleopatra*, who quails like a naughty child.*) Who is this you have with you; and how dare you order the lamps to be lighted without my permission? (Cleopatra *is dumb with apprehension.*) (78)

Clearly, Cleopatra's rule is almost nonexistent in the palace. The queen's nurse, Ftatateeta treats Cleopatra as a child, and the queen resigns herself to such a role. Caesar is astonished by Cleopatra's lack of assertion of power. Although he has not revealed his royal identity to Cleopatra or her court, he shows the queen how to become a ruler by taking control of the situation. Ftatateeta tests Caesar's authority by exerting her own. She tells him, "We shall see who is afraid here" (79). He commands her to kneel before them. When Ftatateeta refuses, Caesar tells the Nubian to cut off her head. Instantly, Ftatateeta submits to his demands and kneels before the queen. In this scene, Shaw juxtaposes the two rulers to illustrate Cleopatra's ineffectiveness as a ruler and Caesar's skill in executing power. Annie Papreck King observes

that "Cleopatra's shortcomings as a queen arise from her lack of *self*-knowledge, of awareness of her own power" (109). Contrary to Cleopatra's lack of self-awareness of power, Caesar's strength as ruler stems from his awareness of the power he holds over others. Caesar is able to brilliantly command Cleopatra's court without having to reveal his identity. His ability to instantly take over the Egyptian court shows his instinctive nature when commanding others. Richard Dietrich observes that Caesar is "unlike Cleopatra whose will is nothing but her own. Cleopatra too often allows the baser parts of her psyche to drive her will, whereas Caesar follows his will towards the realization of his god-like realist potential" (166). The will of the Life Force allows Shaw's Caesar naturally to take command of most, if not all, situations he encounters.

Cleopatra sees the effectiveness of Caesar's authority, and she quickly attempts to emulate her mentor. She becomes excited by Ftatateeta's obedience. Shaw writes, "*Cleopatra watches her submission eagerly*," and Cleopatra exclaims, "Give me something to beat her with" (80). Cleopatra is unable to control her newfound authority, and Caesar wisely holds Cleopatra back, not allowing her to beat the nurse. Caesar's experience in his role as a ruler allows him to control the severity of his punishments for his inferiors, but he recognizes Cleopatra's rashness and haste as soon as she exercises power. In Louis Crompton's comparison of Shakespeare's and Shaw's representations of Cleopatra, he notes that Shaw goes significantly beyond Shakespeare in emphasizing "Cleopatra's murderous and sadistic side" (91). Shaw's Caesar becomes aware of Cleopatra's dark side when she starts attacking another slave after she was unable to beat Ftatateeta. Shaw describes Caesar's response: "Caesar *shakes his head dubiously, the advantage of the change seeming open to question from the point of view of the general welfare of Egypt*" (80). Again, Shaw contrasts Caesar's awareness of others with Cleopatra's selfishness. The Life Force allows Caesar to prudently exercise authority over others, but

Cleopatra expresses a natural desire to harm others because of the pleasure she gains from violence and her newly empowered status.

Caesar's social consciousness is expressed in his relationship with his soldiers. Cleopatra foolishly goes to see Caesar in the midst of his preparation for battle. Her happiness over being closer to Caesar is met with discontent from the soldiers. Caesar expresses his loyalty to his soldiers:

> RUFIO (*to Cleopoatra*). We shall have to go away presently and cut some of your Egyptians' heads off. How will you like being left here with the chance of being captured by that little brother of yours if we are beaten?
>
> CLEOPATRA. But you musnt leave me alone. Caesar, you will not leave me alone, will you?
>
> RUFIO. What! not when the trumpet sounds and all our lives depend on Caesar's being at the barricade before the Egyptians reach it? Eh?
>
> CLEOPATRA. Let them lose their lives: they are only soldiers.
>
> CAESAR (gravely). Cleopatra: when that trumpet sounds, we must take every man his life in his hand, and throw it in the face of Death. And of my soldiers who have trusted me there is not one whose hand I shall not hold more sacred than your head. (Cleopatra *is overwhelmed. Her eyes fill with tears.*) Apollodorus: you must take her back to the palace. (140-41)

Although Caesar has taken responsibility to guide Cleopatra in her role as ruler of Egypt, he refuses to abandon his responsibility to his soldiers. Although Cleopatra foolishly looks down

upon the soldiers, Caesar upholds his loyalty to them. In Pasini's essay "The Gender of War in *Caesar and Cleopatra*," she explains that "the play highlights the difference between a focus on self and a focus on brotherhood, and the self, in this case, is a woman who is excluded from the experience of male bonding and group cohesiveness central to war" (53). Cleopatra's motives for seeing Caesar are, indeed, selfish. She is unable to discern the bond Caesar shares with his soldiers because she shares no such bond with those who surround her. Cleopatra's selfish nature prevents her from forming relationships that extend beyond promoting her selfish desires.

Cleopatra's selfishness contrasts and emphasizes the honor Caesar maintains in his commitment to his responsibilities. Shaw best exemplifies this virtue when Caesar upholds the trust he owes to his soldiers when Cleopatra expresses her indifference to the lives of his men. Cleopatra's indifference in this scene parallels the attitudes of Caesar's advisors in Act II. Britannus and Rufio struggle to understand Caesar's acceptance of his enemies. Lucius Septimius, Pompey's murderer, chooses alliance with Ptolemy's army, and Caesar bids him farewell. Britannus exclaims, "Caesar: this is not good sense. Your duty to Rome demands that her enemies should be prevented from doing further mischief" (101). Rufio adds, "Clemency is very well for you; but what is it for your soldiers, who have to fight to-morrow the men you spared yesterday? You may give what orders you please; but I tell you that your next victory will be a massacre, thanks to your clemency" (101). Caesar's men find his clemency a dishonor to the empire and his soldiers. Unlike Caesar, his men confuse vengeance with justice and consider death a necessary end to enemies that are confronted. Rufio's concern about Caesar's disregard for his soldiers is challenged in the next act when Caesar acknowledges the trust in his relationship with his soldiers that he is unwilling to compromise. Crompton contends that Shaw shows us "his hero facing [human nature] fearlessly without any of the common moral or judicial

sanctions" (91). Caesar deviates from the ideas that govern his society by honoring his reverence for humanity; his determination to carry out his will cultivates a deeper understanding for the people he rules.

Although Caesar gains an understanding of those whom he rules, his ideas, especially on vengeance, are not understood by the Romans and Egyptians. The Egyptians and Lucius expect Caesar's gratitude for the slaying of Pompey. Theodotus claims that they have given Caesar "a full and sweet measure of vengeance" after he describes the horror Pompey's wife and child endured when watching Lucius murder Pompey (98). Lucius justifies the murder; he tells Caesar, "Woe to the vanquished, Caesar! When I served Pompey, I slew as good men as he, only because he conquered them. His turn came at last" (98). As a Roman officer, Lucius makes a strong point about the nature of war. Joshua S. Goldstein's discussion about war states that "what war requires of fighters is not blood-lust or activation of murderous impulses. Rather, war requires men to willingly undergo an extremely painful, unpleasant experience—and hang in there over time despite every instinct to flee" (266). Goldstein offers insight to Caesar's and Lucius's dispute. Lucius's duty as a soldier dictates that he kills men despite their goodness. Lucius has learned to endure the destruction of warfare even when the destruction includes the lives of men he serves. Lucius argues that Caesar is guilty of perpetrating similar acts. He discloses, "You have seen severed heads before, Caesar, and severed right hands too, I think; some thousands of them, in Gaul, after you vanquished Vercingetorix. Did you spare him with all your clemency? Was that vengeance?" (99). For Lucius, honor is carrying out the expectation of killing in his duty as a soldier. Caesar contradicts this view because he claims that killing for the sake of vengeance is dishonorable.

The contrasting views that Lucius and Caesar offer on the act of killing emphasize Caesar being influenced by the Life Force. Caesar deems vengeance as senseless and recognizes his error in slaughtering Vercingetorix and his followers. He responds to Lucius's question about vengeance:

> No, by the gods! would that it had been! Vengeance at least is human. No, I say: those severed right hands, and the brave Vercingetorix basely strangled in a vault beneath the Capitol, were (*with shuddering satire*) a wise severity, a necessary protection to the commonwealth, a duty of statesmanship—follies and fictions ten times bloodier than honest vengeance! What a fool I was then! To think that men's lives should be at the mercy of such fools! (209)

Caesar's response shows his evolving perspective on the act of killing. He denounces the killings but acknowledges that vengeance is instinctive to human nature. Rufio affirms this notion when he tells Caesar that he means no harm by killing: "I do it as a dog kills a cat, by instinct" (177). Caesar's commitment to the Life Force obligates him to recognize his foolishness and repress the instinct to seek vengeance. He claims his experience is worse than vengeance because he acted on the false notion that the murders were necessary for the welfare of the state. Pasini argues that "honorable and dishonorable killing are confused and conflated in this speech" (59). I would argue, however, that Caesar's speech exemplifies the evolutionary nature of the Life Force. Caesar justified the killing, during the time it occurred, as service to the state, but his reflection on the experience causes him to recognize the injustice of his action. Caesar's altered view of the killing has evolved from regarding it as honorable to deeming it as dishonorable action.

Caesar demonstrates honor by upholding his views on vengeance. Britannus triumphantly hands Caesar a bag of letters containing the names of men who plotted against him and supported Pompey. Unmoved, Caesar tells his officer to put the bag in the fire. Caesar explains, "Would you have me waste the next three years of my life in proscribing and condemning men who will be my friends when I have proved that my friendship is worth more than Pompey's was—than Cato's is" (134). Caesar's reaction represents the influence of the Life Force. Caesar exercises his power by recognizing the importance of forming friendships and relationships rather than destroying them. He declares, "I do not make human sacrifices to my honor" (134). This declaration shows the change of his views on morality since the slaying of Vercingetorix. In "Technique, Symbol, and Theme in *Heartbreak House*," McDowell states, Shaw works out certain themes and conveys certain truths. Foremost is the truth that there is no final truth, that truth is tentative, relative, unfolding itself in time, like the Life Force which embodies it" (97). Caesar's views on morality have altered from seeking honor for the benefit of the state to being honorable by eliminating murder altogether. Pasini explains that Caesar has tried to "avoid war's killing for as long as possible through strategy, through release of prisoners, and by not killing for some time" (60). Caesar's morality exemplifies the nature of the Life Force because it has not remained fixed.

Despite Caesar's tutelage, Cleopatra fails to acquire Caesar's virtuous perception of morality. In their first encounter by the Sphinx, Cleopatra says, "When I am old enough I shall do just what I like. I shall be able to poison the slaves and see them wriggle, and pretend to Ftatateeta that she is going to be put into the fiery furnace" (73). Cleopatra reveals her delight in torture and murder. Up to this point, the only people Cleopatra is surrounded by are her servants and her nurse. Her vengeful nature is exposed when she tells Caesar that she will poison and

torture the only people she has ever known. Her character proves to have evolved very little when her vengeance presents itself once more. In Act IV, Cleopatra has Pothinus murdered as an act of revenge for falsely accusing her of plotting to kill Caesar; Daniel Leary notes: "*Caesar and Cleopatra* touches on tragedy at the moment when Caesar stands in the midst of his four followers and finds that none of them can see the wrong done in the murder of Pothinus" (186). Both the Romans and Egyptians justify Cleopatra's vengeance as a necessary action. Caesar's officer, Britannus, explains, "Were treachery, falsehood, and disloyalty left unpunished, society must become like an arena full of wild beasts, tearing one another to pieces" (175). Britannus describes the act of vengeance that comes natural to most people, but Caesar laments the blindness of his followers. Caesar tells them, "And so, to the end of history, murder shall breed murder, always in the name of right and honor and peace, until the gods are tired of blood and create a race that can understand" (176). Caesar expresses the destruction that vengeance produces. John A. Bertonali's "Shaw's Ironic View of Caesar" states, "This powerful speech contains the central idea that vengeance is the greatest evil, and its implicit counterpart the abjuration of vengeance is the greatest good" (339). In this powerful scene, Caesar's view isolates him from the vindictive nature of those who surround him. Caesar's ability to disassociate himself from the natural desire of vengeance characterizes his heroism.

Although Caesar rejects the act of killing for revenge, he cannot escape his political need for killing others during battle. Caesar exemplifies his acceptance of the killings which he deems necessary. Cleopatra seeks justice for Ftatateeta's murder by Rufio. Surprisingly, Caesar justifies the murder:

> Rufio: had you set yourself in the seat of the judge, and with hateful ceremonies and appeals to the gods handed that woman over to some hired executioner to be slain

before the people in the name of justice, never again would I have touched your hand without a shudder. But this was natural slaying: I feel no horror at it. (190)

Caesar's justification of the murder gives realism to his political ambition. Shaw is realistic about Caesar's political and social positions within society, despite the mercy and clemency Caesar encourages throughout the play. Caesar's involvement and success in warfare, which includes the execution of opponents, is critical to the progression of his empire. Cleopatra's murderous act is unacceptable because she premeditated the killing and used Ftatateeta as her assassin. Contrary to Cleopatra's crime, Rufio's act of murder represents the killings that Caesar deems natural and necessary to the security of his power.

The pragmatism Caesar displays when he learns of Ftatateeta's murder is present throughout the play. Rufio tells Caesar that Pothinus, who has been imprisoned after war was declared with Ptolemy's forces, would like to speak to him. Caesar is surprised that the prisoner has not escaped. He states, "You have been guarding this man instead of watching the enemy. Have I not told you always to let prisoners escape unless there are special orders to the contrary? Are there not enough mouths to be fed without him?" (158-159). Caesar's sensibility further illustrates his will to act merciful. Crompton states that Caesar's "ethic is not the creation of any formal ethical system, but of the developed will which has identified its ends with those of the race; Caesar is the libertarian egoist who in doing exactly what he wants to do serves humanity" (88). Thus, Caesar's ethics inspire his pragmatic approach to his prisoners, yet allow him to serve his will and act merciful.

His pragmatism extends to his duties as ruler of the Roman Empire. Shavian scholar J. L. Wisenthal notes, "When [Caesar] is knocked off the pedestal, it is the greatness as well as the limitation of the mortal that is revealed. In his wisdom and in his military ability, he towers over

everyone else in the play, Egyptian and Roman alike" (59). Caesar honors his political duties despite his criticism of them. He describes his military life as a "tedious, brutal life of action" (157). Caesar's admission reminds the audience of his limitations. His pragmatism dictates his strong work ethic, as well. Cleopatra reminds Caesar of his position: "You must remember that you are a king now…Kings don't work" (104). Caesar replies, "I always work…if I do not get to work, Pothinus and the rest of them will cut us off from the harbor; and then the way from Rome will be blocked" (106). Caesar exemplifies a sense of responsibility that has ensured his military success. The pragmatism that Shaw attributes to Caesar reaffirms the sensibility that Shaw attributes to those who have a stronger commitment to the will of the Life Force.

In Caesar, Shaw creates a hero in spite of all the leader's weaknesses. Caesar is constantly being tested by those who surround him, but his commitment to the Life Force allows his heroism to prevail. His ability to understand the role he plays as ruler of the Roman Empire becomes obvious in his relationship with Cleopatra and her brother. His sense of reasoning and his prevailing will overshadow the weaknesses Shaw attributes to the noble ruler. In the first act of *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Caesar admits that he does not fully comprehend the power that influences him, but his insight to the social and political issues he faces throughout the play is clearly influenced by his service to a higher will. The Shavian Caesar, much like the Shakespearean one, is forced to confront social and political issues that assess the capabilities of his leadership.

Shaw's Improvement of Julius Caesar

Shaw challenges the physical weaknesses that Shakespeare attributes to Caesar by creating situations where his character confronts and overcomes similar situations. Like Shakespeare, Shaw adds to his characters' realism by creating protagonists with both strengths and weaknesses. It is a historical fact that Caesar suffered from seizures. Shakespeare includes this physical frailty in his play, and it is further developed when Cassius recounts his experience of saving Caesar from drowning. Shaw plays with Shakespeare's added inventions by incorporating them into his drama. Yet, the will that the Shavian Caesar exerts overshadows any weaknesses the ruler possesses.

Shaw amuses his audience by drawing attention to Caesar's appearance. In their first meeting, Cleopatra comments on Caesar's looks. She tells him that he is "old and rather thin and stringy; but [he has] a nice voice" (73). Caesar does not seem bothered by her observation, but further in the act, he reveals, "Oh, my wrinkles, my wrinkles! And my child's heart" (80-81). Shaw purposefully adds these remarks about Caesar's appearance to remind the audience that his mortal nature adds to his greatness. Shaw expounds the humanity that Caesar shows by having Caesar admit that he feels young at heart. Wisenthal points out that "Caesar is not only the magnificent hero; he is an ageing man at the end of his career" (*Shaw's Sense of History* 59). The focus that Shaw brings to Caesar's appearance emphasizes the limitations that Caesar must accept. However, Caesar does not dwell on his limitations; instead his focus is on teaching Cleopatra to become a better ruler while reinforcing his own views on leadership. The leadership Caesar exemplifies helps him achieve his purpose of fulfilling the will of the Life Force.

Shaw continues to add to the realism of his protagonist by revealing his vanity. Shaw accomplishes this by commenting on Caesar's baldness. Shaw writes in his stage direction:

> Caesar, *plainly dressed, but wearing an oak wreath to conceal his baldness, enters from the loggia, attended by* Britannus*, his secretary, a Briton, about forty, tall, solemn, and already slightly bald, with a heavy, drooping, hazel-colored moustache trained so as to lose its ends in a pair of trim whiskers. He is carefully dressed in blue, with portfolio, inkhorn, and reed pen at his girdle. His serious air and sense of importance of the business in hand is in marked contrast to the kindly interest of Caesar, who looks at the scene, which is new to him, with the frank curiosity of a child*. (87)

It is important to note that Shaw juxtaposes his characterization of Caesar and Britannus right before they meet with King Ptolemy. The attention that is placed on the costumes of these two characters serves as a contrast to their different political views. At first, the reader recognizes Caesar's vanity by the wreath he wears to cover his baldness. But this flaw is quickly overshadowed by Britannus's entrance. The difference in their way of dressing emphasizes the disregard Caesar seems to have for his physical appearance. Despite Caesar's heroic role, he demonstrates his humanistic side when he becomes embarrassed because of his baldness. The people surrounding Caesar expect him to be dressed in a manner that represents his social status, especially when meeting Egyptian royalty. Of course, the argument can be made that Ptolemy is a child who poses no threat to Caesar, but before Caesar meets Ptolemy, he is unaware of Ptolemy's age or the kind of threat he might pose to the Roman Empire. Caesar's modest dress emphasizes his exceptional leadership, especially when he communicates with the young king. That is, Caesar acts like the ruler he knows he should be, instead of concerning himself with appearances and dressing to fit the expectations of others.

Britannus, on the other hand, exemplifies a leader who finds that his appearance must represent his position of authority. He is bald like Caesar, but instead of being plainly dressed like Caesar, he is "carefully dressed in blue." He has chosen the color blue because he later reveals that blue is the color Britons of good standing wear. Matthew H. Wikander discusses Britannus's role in the play and states that Shaw "wants his audience to see in Britannus a representative of a particular class" (205). Shaw represents British imperialism by having Britannus always wear blue and by his constant criticism of the Egyptians.

Later in the play, Cleopatra pokes fun at Caesar for wearing the wreath, and Caesar admits to being troubled by this physical defect. The wreath serves as a symbol representing Caesar's vanity, but his vanity makes him a more realistic character. Cleopatra begins to dress Caesar for battle and takes off his wreath. Caesar questions her: "What are you laughing at." She responds, "Youre [*sic*] bald (*beginning with a big B, and ending with a splutter*)" (113). Then Caesar admits his embarrassment: "Cleopatra: do you like to be reminded that you are very young?" In her childish custom, she pouts and responds with a "no." Caesar discloses that neither does he like to be reminded that he is middle-aged (114). This conversation reveals that Caesar continues to educate Cleopatra; this time he teaches her to be more sympathetic towards others. His lesson also reveals his difficulty with getting older. This sentiment is one that most people struggle to accept, but Caesar is able to expose both his limitations and greatness to those around him. This is an instance where Caesar exercises prudence and, in doing so, reveals his greatness.

Interestingly, this scene mirrors the one where Britannus and Caesar meet with Ptolemy. Cleopatra questions the Briton's custom of wearing blue. She asks, "Is it true that when Caesar caught you on that island, you were painted all over blue?" Britannus explains, "In war we stain

our bodies blue; so that though our enemies may strip us of our clothes and our lives, they cannot strip us of our respectability" (114). For Britannus, the uniform symbolizes more than a traditional way of dressing. Earlier in the act, Caesar apologizes on Britannus's behalf for his intolerance. Caesar says "he is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature" (93). For Britannus, wearing blue and remaining loyal to his beliefs represent his allegiance to the imperialistic system he upholds. Wikander believes that "the action of the play shows Caesar to be in tune with the Life Force and out of sympathy with Britannus's advocacy of business as usual in the empire" (206). The idea that Caesar is guided by the Life Force is reinforced with the physical characteristics of these two characters, in addition to the action that unfolds throughout the play. Caesar recognizes his limitations and, in spite of them, reveals his greatness by remaining loyal to the influence of the Life Force.

In *Caesar and Cleopatra*, the wreath symbolizes a physical weakness that embarrasses Caesar but also humanizes him. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the wreath serves as a reminder of the threat that tyranny poses to the Roman republic. The audience learns of the offering of the crown to Caesar, and his refusal, from Casca. He explains to Cassius and Brutus that Caesar was offered the crown three times and "he put it by thrice, every time gentler than other; and at every putting-by, mine honest neighbors shouted" (1.2.239-241). Caesar understands that the plebians offer their adulation with his refusal of the crown. He humors the crowd even more by "[offering] them his throat to cut" (1.2.276-77). Casca along with some critics agree that this farce would end once Caesar accepted the crown from the Senate the following day. Coppélia Kahn asserts that Caesar "is obviously playing to the gallery in what amounts to a parody of serving 'the general good' (his gesture echoes the breast-baring of Cicero, and of Cassius) in order to milk the crowd's approval and then, perhaps, get himself crowned" (87). The possibility

remains that Caesar hypocritically refused the crown, so he could be crowned under less resistance. If his gesture is interpreted in this way, Shakespeare's Caesar selfishly refuses the crown because of his political ambitions.

Shaw alludes to the prospective coronation that Caesar expects from the senators. Caesar tells the young Egyptian king, "Always take a throne when it is offered to you" (92). Rufio, Caesar's advisor, prophetically tells Caesar, "I hope you will have the good sense to follow your own advice when we return to Rome, Caesar" (92). In his attempt to teach Ptolemy to become a better ruler, Caesar gives him a piece of advice that Rufio senses Caesar will not follow. Of course, Shaw is hinting that the Shakespearean Caesar is not brave enough to follow this advice. In this scene, Shaw is alluding to the cowardliness Caesar reveals in his refusal of the crown in the Shakespearean play. Shaw does so by emphasizing Ptolemy's inexperience as a ruler. In this scene, Shaw creates a connection between Ptolemy's inexperience to Caesar's cowardice in *Julius Caesar*. The point Shaw makes is that both rulers are too hesitant in their roles as leaders. Nicholas Grene describes the role of teacher that Shaw's Caesar assumes: "Just as Caesar taught Cleopatra queenliness, Joan, by a similar mixture of harrying and coaxing, gives the Dauphin a crash-course in kingliness. Both are lessons in the use of the will" (236). The ideas that Caesar reveals through the lessons that he gives to Cleopatra and Ptolemy allow Caesar to demonstrate his superiority in the leadership and virtue he upholds. These are qualities that contribute to strengthening a person's will, and qualities that Shaw found lacking in Shakespeare's leader.

Despite the similarity both playwrights share in characterizing Caesar with human fallibilities to add to his realism, Shakespeare heightens these weaknesses through the stories and descriptions the other senators reveal about Caesar. Cassius uses his knowledge about Caesar's inability to swim to place doubts in Brutus's head. Cassius recounts his experience of saving

Caesar from drowning. According to Cassius, Caesar goaded him to jumping into flood waters to see who could survive the dangerous waters. Eventually, Cassius saves Caesar from drowning, thus revealing Caesar's inability to keep up with him. Disgusted, Cassius admits, "And this man / Is now become a god, and Cassius is / A wretched creature" (1.2.122-24). Cassius is perplexed at the amount of power Caesar has acquired despite all the shortcomings Caesar cannot overcome. In his work *Public and Private Man in Shakespeare*, Gregson states, "Shakespeare plunges us straight into the perennial political issue which dominates the play, that of the great man growing too great" (207). This idea that Gregson explains is the problem that Cassius attempts to solve. Cassius will not tolerate Caesar becoming too powerful. Cassius reveals his envy of Caesar's "undeserving" power and is unable to accept Caesar possessing too much power. In *Shakespeare's Rome*, Robert Miola likens the disdain Cassius holds for Caesar to the contempt that Marullus and Flavius display for him in the opening scene of the play. He points out that "as did the tribunes, he proceeds by disrobing the image of Caesar, by stripping away the legends to reveal the man—flawed, fragile, and human" (81). Shaw is able to use these shortcomings to illuminate Caesar's greatness in spite of his humanity, but the Romans expect Caesar to transcend humanity to become an almost perfect being.

Shaw satirizes the contempt Cassius shows when talking about Caesar's inability to swim by creating a scene where Caesar is forced to swim while carrying Cleopatra on his back. The Egyptian army surrounds the lighthouse where Caesar and his army are stationed. Apollodorus tells Caesar he will swim to the nearest galley and secure a boat for their rescue. Caesar watches Apollodorus "like a schoolboy—wildly excited" (143) and immediately follows him. Rufio rebukes Caesar's foolishness and asks him, "Can an old fool dive and swim like a young one? He is twenty-five and you are fifty" (143). Caesar teases Rufio by telling him, "I will race you to

the galley for a week's pay, father Rufio" (143). His teasing is reminiscent of Cassius claiming to be provoked to a swimming race by Caesar. Bertolini interprets this scene as an indication of Caesar's recklessness. He states that "if the audience is tempted to see heroism in Caesar's magnificent leap into the sea, Shaw has Caesar himself tell us in the next act that what he got out of it was 'a touch of rheumatism'" (337). Indeed, Caesar admits to fishing up a touch of rheumatism in his swimming adventure, but he does so in a humorous context. Bertolini argues that Caesar continually contradicts himself by saying one thing and doing another. I would argue, however, that Shaw is reinforcing Caesar's humanism through these types of witty remarks. Shaw is showing that Caesar does not expect others to constantly focus on his strengths; he also demonstrates the ability Caesar has to add levity to certain situations.

The focus both dramatists give to human fallibility explains the attention they give to the superstitions that surround Caesar. Shakespeare brings up the issue of Caesar's superstitious nature the moment he enters the stage. Caesar commands Calphurina, "Stand you directly in Antonius' way / When he doth run his course" (1.2.5-6). Then, Caesar instructs Antony to "touch Calphurnia, for our elders say / The barren, touched in this holy chase, / Shake off their sterile curse" (1.2.9-11). His request that Antony touch Calphurnia further complicates his superstitiousness with his infertility. John Russell Brown contends that "at once some limitations on Caesar's power are made evident in a stark and economical manner" (111). Caesar is without an heir, and the couple's infertility immediately establishes a limitation that interferes with Caesar both personally and politically.

The focus on superstition in this scene is further explained when the Soothsayer warns Caesar to "Beware the ides of March" (1.2.21). The urgency of the message is emphasized when the warning is repeated. Caesar is not disturbed by the prophecy and dismisses it. He declares,

"He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass" (1.2.29). His response is hard to discern because he seems unconcerned about the warning but, later in the play, his superstitious nature does not allow him to be as dismissive as he is in this first act. Brown concedes that Caesar's abrupt response to the Soothsayer "leave[s] an audience to draw its own conclusions about Caesar's pride, constancy, good sense, or refusal to listen to counsel" (112). His unwillingness to listen to the forebodings he is given or his refusal to observe the strange occurrences surrounding him lead many to believe that Caesar acts out of arrogance. Kahn asserts that "when Caesar sounds most republican, though, he also sounds most egotistical and arrogant…because he is immune to personal appeals" (88). His awareness of the role he must play as leader of the republic forces Caesar to reject any personal concerns. His rejection of personal appeals is his affirmation that the people of the republic are his priority.

Caesar asserts his "apparent" arrogance when Calphurnia insists that he miss the meeting at the Senate. He reveals his superstitions by asking the augurers to give him counsel, and they advise him to avoid leaving his home. Caesar gives his own interpretation of their sacrifice and determines, "Caesar should be a beast without a heart / If he should stay at home today for fear" (77). Caesar seems to be most concerned with his reputation. He is determined not to be perceived as a coward. Vivian Thomas argues that "for all his arrogance he is clearly alarmed that his public image will be damaged, and that is sufficient to dull his critical awareness" (84). For many critics, this scene exemplifies the inconsistencies that characterize Caesar's actions. Cassius knowingly asserts:

> But it is doubtful yet
>
> Whether Caesar will come forth today or no,
>
> For he is superstitious grown of late,

Quite from the main opinion he held once. (2.1.210-214)

Cassius conveys the idea that at one point in his life Caesar was not superstitious, and only recently has Caesar revealed a superstitious nature. Cassius makes a valid point about the probability of Caesar not going to the Capitol, but Caesar's reaction to all the signs that should have kept him from attending the meeting is not what Cassius expects. Shakespearean scholar David Bevington explains that "in *Julius Caesar*, men turn to the heavens for some kind of assistance or guidance, only to be perplexed by an enigmatic silence" (133). Caesar approaches this silence by listening to the prophecies but acting as he deems necessary. For example, throughout the scene with Calphurnia, Caesar remains adamant about attending the meeting. He decides not go to the Capitol once Calphurnia kneels in front of him out of desperation. Caesar senses her anguish and appeases her by agreeing not to go to the Senate. Despite his superstitious nature, he places his public and relational duties above his private ones.

Caesar and Cleopatra uses superstition to elevate Caesar's greatness and emphasize his superiority to those around him. Superstitions serve as a guide for the Egyptians, and the indifference Caesar shows to their beliefs underscores the loyalty Caesar places on his will. Wisenthal, in "Shaw and Ra: Religion and Some History Plays," states:

> If there is any true religion (in Shaw's sense of the word) in the play it must lie with Caesar, and clearly Caesar's humane, enlightened view of the world is set off by contrast with the primitive, dark superstitions and cruelties of the people around him—for example Cleopatra's cat worship and table rapping, and her pronounced taste for flogging and decapitation. (48)

Initially, Caesar's disregard for Egyptian practices can be interpreted as disrespectful. When Caesar goes to meet Ptolmey, he unknowingly sits on a sacrificial stool. The Egyptians murmur

"sacrilege" amongst themselves after Rufio "seizes the tripod; shakes off the incense; blows away the ash and dumps it down behind Caesar" (89). But Caesar's action does not mean he is without virtue. His complete disregard for superstition allows Caesar to focus on maintaining his responsibility to the honor and duty of his role as ruler. Later in the play, Cleopatra turns to the Nile god for guidance. She tells Caesar, "No: the Nile is my ancestor; and he is a god. Oh! I have thought of something. The Nile shall name it himself. Let us call upon him" (168). Caesar finds her custom amusing and refers to it as "hocus-pocus" (168). His playfulness towards Cleopatra's superstitious nature emphasizes her foolishness while elevating Caesar's sensible nature. In *Caesar and Cleopatra* and *Julius Caesar*, superstitious belief is portrayed as a weakness. By having Caesar devoid of any superstition, Shaw is asserting that his protagonist remains dutiful to the will of the Life Force.

Shakespeare complicates Caesar's character by adding deafness, susceptibility to flattery, and epileptic seizures to Caesar's flaws. After Caesar warns Antony about Cassius's dangerous nature, Caesar tells him, "Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf, / And tell me what thou think'st of him" (1.2.223-224). Although Caesar instinctively picks up on Cassius's true character, he immediately undermines himself by revealing his physical shortcoming. This can be interpreted as Caesar symbolically "turning a deaf ear" to his warning to Antony. Thomas explains that "the deafness in one ear brings a rich vein of irony to the moment when a physically declining Caesar is asserting his superhuman invulnerability. Here Shakespeare points up a disjunction between the reality and Caesar's acceptance of his public persona" (41). His public persona elevates him to a superhuman level. As Caesar "turns a deaf ear" in his warning to Antony, he rejects the idea that Cassius can become a threat to him. A cursory interpretation of this scene portrays Caesar as alarmingly arrogant, but by the play's end,

Caesar's spirit is a powerful influence to those he knew. As Thomas explains, Caesar understands the power of his public persona, and this scene foreshadows the power Caesar holds during and after his death. This scene shows that Caesar understands both the threat Cassius is to him and the power of his will. Even though Cassius succeeds in carrying out the assassination, Caesar surrenders himself to the will of the Life Force and never falters from his commitment to his role as ruler.

The realism both dramatists give to Caesar allows for multiple interpretations of the character's true will. Shaw clearly creates a character who is fallible yet powerful. The power which the Shavian Caesar possesses does not allow his weaknesses to undermine his will. The Shavian character appears to maintain a deeper understanding of his duty to the empire if, as many argue, the Shakespearean counterpart is regarded as recklessly ambitious. However, Shakespeare creates a character whose ideas and actions are left open to interpretation. Millicent Bell states that "the Caesar we hear and see in the play is an illustration of the process by which the idea of the essential man is sacrificed to his role as he becomes embodied royal authority" (246). The idea that Caesar sacrifices his private being in order to recreate himself to fulfill the demands of his public being alters the idea that the demise of the Shakespearean Caesar is a result of his weakness.

The Workings of the Life Force in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

Shaw's disgust with Shakespeare's weak depiction of Caesar prompted him to create a much more thoughtful, merciful, and powerful character. Shaw, using Theodor Mommsen's *History of Rome*, was determined to compose a drama that celebrated Caesar's abilities instead of condemning them, as he felt Shakespeare did. In a harsh review of an 1898 production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Shaw criticizes the dreadful character Shakespeare created in Caesar. Shaw explains his problem with Caesar's representation in his review:

> It is when we turn to Julius Caesar [*sic*], the most splendidly written political melodrama we posses, that we realize the apparently immortal author of Hamlet [*sic*] as a man, not for all time, but for an age only, and that, too, in all solidly wise and heroic aspects, the most despicable of all the ages in our history. It is impossible for even the most judicially minded critic to look without a revulsion of indignant contempt at this travestying of a great man as a silly braggart, whilst the pitiful gang of mischief-makers who destroyed him are lauded as statesmen and patriots. (Wilson 110)

Shaw interprets the Shakespearean Caesar as a failed braggadocio whose hollow speeches taint the prominence of the historical leader. However, Shaw fails to recognize the strength that Shakespeare attributes to his representation of Caesar. In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar exerts the leadership, prudence, and kindness that the Shavian Caesar represents, but the complexity with which Shakespeare creates his character allows for multiple interpretations of Caesar's true nature. Therefore, the qualities Shaw glorifies in his representation of Caesar are not always recognized in the Shakespearean representation. The Life Force is present in Shakespeare's Caesar because of the duty he exemplifies in the social and political demands of his role as ruler.

In the play's second act, Caesar meets the prognostications he has been given with

sensibility, and his approach when dealing with the prophecies reveals his understanding of life and mortality. Calphurnia implores Caesar not to step out of the house. Caesar responds, "Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me / Ne'er looked but on my back. When they shall see / The face of Caesar, they are vanishèd" (2.2.10-13). His response to Calphurnia's warnings is usually interpreted as an egotistical view of his immortality. Caesar's arrogance is illustrated by his belief that his greatness gives him immunity from danger. However, as he continues to convince Calphurnia of his decision to go to the Senate, he gives further insight into his ideas about death. He reveals to his wife, "It seems to me most strange that men should fear, / Seeing that death, a necessary end, / Will come when it will come" (2.2.37-39). The initial characterization of Caesar's arrogant nature alters with this recognition of his own immortality. Caesar exposes the complexity of his role as ruler of the Roman Empire. His understanding of the inevitability of death for all proves his sensibility, but his determination to be courageous comes from his will. Baker states, "the will not only determines values but governs, or at least guides, belief" (43). In his conversation with Calphurnia, Caesar's will controls his self-imposed expectations as ruler.

Caesar's will is further emphasized when he learns of the augurers' forebodings. He claims, "Danger knows full well / That Caesar is more dangerous than he" (2.2.47-48). Calphurnia interprets Caesar's response as foolish confidence. Her characterization is logical if she, like others, believes that Caesar's character has been weakened by his own arrogance. Oftentimes, critics interpret Caesar's reference to himself in the third person as arrogance. He resolves to attend the meeting by adamantly stating "Caesar shall forth" (2.2.51). Caesar disassociates himself from his resolve to attend the meeting by using third person. Martin Spevack observes that "the use of third person in reference to oneself serves likewise to

supplement the actual person with another whose being and actions are somehow separate and observable, co-existing, but on another level of action" (22). Caesar's will to attend the meeting reaches the next level of action that Spevack describes. The Life Force creates a realm of consciousness that Caesar obeys but only sometimes understands. His duty, as ruler of the empire, is service to the people of Rome. His willingness to attend the meeting reinforces his public obligations.

The firmness Caesar expresses with Calphurnia contrasts with his indecision about attending the meeting at the capitol once Decius arrives. Caesar is often considered weak for succumbing quickly to Decius's flattery. Decius seems to entice Caesar by revealing that "the Senate have concluded / To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar" (2.2.98-99). He furthers his argument by pointing out the mockery Caesar will endure, for some will surely say, " 'Break up the Senate till another time, / When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams' " (2.2.103-104). These reasons seem to prompt a reversal of Caesar's previous decision, but his insistence on attending the meeting dominates his conversation with Calphurnia. Caesar resolves to attend the meeting even after he learns of the augerers's warnings. Decius's flattery and reasoning is somewhat effective, but Caesar's true motivation to attend the meeting stems from his own will. This scene in Caesar's private role as husband, as opposed to his public office, offers insight to his struggle to act according to his will. The conflict he faces is remaining dutiful to his inner will while being influenced by the ideas of those around him. In this scene with Calphurnia, his duty to his wife almost compromises his duty to his will when he agrees to stay home to appease her desperation.

Caesar's private duty further complicates the idea of the Life Force in his relationship with Calphurnia. Her concerns for his safety almost overpower Caesar's will. Her desperation,

but not her warnings, compels Caesar to acquiesce to her supplications. She begs of him, "Do not go forth today. Call it my fear / That keeps you in the house, and not your own" (2.2.54-55). Clearly, her fears, and not his own, obligate Caesar to remain at home. David Willbern points out that Caesar "explains his absence not in terms of her dream but in terms of his will" (221). This shows Caesar's attempt to rationalize a decision that caused great apprehension for him. Caesar tells Decius, "The cause is in my will. I will not come. / That is enough to satisfy the Senate" (2.2.76-77). Shakespeare's use of the word "will" as both noun and verb reinforces Caesar's resolve to attend the meeting. Directly after this claim, Caesar is compelled to explain his reason for not going to the senate. He is not satisfied with his decision because he is not serving the higher will. His tone becomes more resolute once he reverts to his previous decision to attend the meeting. He exclaims, "Give me my robe, for I will go" (2.2.112). Shaw's philosophy maintains that a powerful will is part of something larger (Baker 45), and Caesar illustrates this point by carrying out the duties of his beliefs. Caesar's social and political positions demand his presence in the senate, and he remains committed to these roles.

The presence of the Life Force is seen with the second-hand accounts of Caesar's public role, and his role as a public servant is often overlooked by the criticism of his stubbornness and arrogance. In her work, *Plato's Republic and Shakespeare's Rome*, Barbara Parker writes, "[Caesar] is as fickle and as credulous as the 'fools' he contemns, his judgment similarly predicated on appearances. It is thus one of the play's greatest ironies that 'the noblest man that ever lived' descends to the brute level of the mob" (77). Parker criticizes the similarities Caesar shares with the mob, but such an association with the people should not be alarming. After all, Caesar is a representative of his subjects. Casca offers his account of Caesar's refusal of the crown to Brutus and Cassius. Although he acknowledges the refusal, he maintains that Caesar

would have gladly accepted the office. Casca claims, "as I told you, he put it by once; but for all that, to my thinking he would fain have had it" (1.2.48-50). Regardless of his true feelings towards accepting the crown, Caesar refuses the crown because he understands the desires of the crowd. Caesar shows that his duty to his people precedes his selfish ambitions by refusing the crown three times. In her essay "From Monarchy to Tyranny," Parker contends that "the mob is the play's real protagonist, for they control not only Caesar and the other characters but virtually the entire course of events" (119). She claims that Caesar's subjugation by the mob is clear with his refusal of the crown despite his desire to have it. Yet, a contrary interpretation of this scene exposes Caesar's commitment to a higher will. Baker explains the role that the will plays in Shaw's pieces: "The drama emerges from the struggle of the will to realize itself, and conflict comes from false notions—ideals—either in others or in the hero's own soul, that stand in the way" (108-109). Shakespeare's Caesar exemplifies a character whose will manifests itself through action. His refusal of the crown and his offering of his own throat for the crowd to cut are not acts of weakness. Instead, Caesar recognizes that a successful leader comprehends the demands and the desires of the people.

His service to the people is reflected by those members of the citizenry who attempt to warn Caesar of the assassination. Artemidorus hopes Caesar will read his letter that discloses the names of those who conspire against him. Artemidorus addresses the audience by stating "My heart laments that virtue cannot live / Out of the teeth of emulation" (2.3.13-14). Artemidorus recognizes that Caesar represents virtue that contrasts to the conspirators' corrupt nature. Shaw writes of the historical Caesar, "Having virtue, he has no need of goodness" (*Caesar and Cleopatra* 203). This idea is truly manifested in the decisions and actions Shakespeare creates for his Caesar. Shakespeare's Caesar represents virtue because his greatness is in his service to

the people.

The tribute Antony pays to Caesar after Caesar's death underscores the determination Caesar had to serve his subjects. Antony asserts, "When the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept; / Ambition should be made of sterner stuff" (3.2.100-101). Antony secures the support of the crowd when he reveals to them the provisions of Caesar's will. He claims that "under Caesar's seal: / To every Roman citizen he gives, / To every several man, seventy-five drachmas" (3.2.254-256). Amid their astonishment, he further discloses:

> Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,
> His private arbors, and new-planted orchards,
> On this side Tiber. He hath left them you,
> And to your heirs forever—common pleasures
> To walk abroad and recreate yourselves. (3.2.261-265)

These gifts illustrate the obligation Caesar feels towards the citizenry. Shakespeare constantly reinforces the closeness of Caesar to his subjects. Throughout the first three acts of the play, Caesar appears in public scenes with the Plebians surrounding him. Caesar is introduced in the first act during the festival of the Lupercal surrounded and celebrated by the Romans. Ironically, this festive scene parallels the Forum scene where Antony delivers his eulogy. Once more, Caesar is surrounded and supported by the Roman citizens. Antony tells the crowd, "make a ring about the corpse of Caesar" (3.2.170). The formation of the ring establishes a sense of unity for the crowd and gives Antony the opportunity to reunite Caesar with the people he willingly served. Joseph Candido describes the scene: "the corpse, the citizenry, Antony, and Rome become united by the common thread of Caesar's martyrdom and his extravagant bequest to the nation" (134). This union reinforces Caesar's will to fulfill his public obligations. Caesar serves

the Life Force by serving the people through compassion and devotion.

Caesar's more compassionate approach to the citizenry contrasts to his forceful nature with the senators. His role in the senate demands that he have a forceful nature because he has a duty to the empire. Some critics attribute Caesar's commanding character with the senators to his egotism. Martin Jehne asserts that Caesar carries a "pronounced arrogance towards his equals" (64). Caesar confides to Antony his distrust of Cassius. He states, "Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look. / He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous" (1.2.204-205). Caesar's criticism of Cassius expresses his sense of awareness. Caesar continues to describe his distrust of Cassius. He claims, "I rather tell thee what is to be feared / Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar" (1.2.221-222). Even though such a warning from Caesar emphasizes the interpretations that suggest his arrogance, more importantly, these lines anticipate the conflict that will arise between Antony and Cassius. They also suggest Cassius's threat to the stability of the Republic. Caesar's awareness of someone who is a threat to the empire is not arrogance but one of his skills as a ruler.

Despite Caesar's resolute tone with the senators at the meeting, his prior interactions with them were friendly and cordial. The trust he has for them is depicted in his conversations with Antony and Decius. He is respectful of Caius Ligarius even when Metellus discloses at the meeting with the conspirators that "Caius Ligarius doth bear Caesar hard, / Who rated him for speaking well of Pompey" (2.1.232-233). Caesar's admonishment seems to have taken place before other senators, making them aware of Ligarius's resentment of him. Caesar tells Caius Ligarius, "Caesar was ne'er so much your enemy / As that same ague which hath made you lean" (2.2.118-119). Caesar casts any ill feelings aside and welcomes the conspirator along with the others. Shakespeare critic David Carnegie notes that "Caesar's friendly acknowledgement of

previous enmity with Ligarius shows us a new side of Caesar, not only trusting, but easy in acknowledging political difference while valuing friendly relations" (43). Shakespeare includes Ligarius's character to characterize Caesar's respect for the senators and reinforce Caesar's duty to his role as ruler. Caesar's politeness maintains the relationships that are necessary for him to have in order to ensure his political success. The possibility that Caesar's nature will change as he becomes more powerful prompts the conspirators to take drastic action.

Caesar's forcefulness with the senators culminates right before his assassination. In his final speech, he reminds the senators of his power. His unwillingness to grant enfranchisement to Publius Cimber seems to confirm the conspirators' fears of Caesar's abuse of power. Caesar remains firm in his decision despite the senators' supplications. He responds, "But I am constant as the northern star, / Of whose true-fixed and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament" (3.1.60-63). He reinforces to the senators through the use of metaphor his firm resolve, but the conspirators seize this opportunity to put an end to Caesar's "perversion" of power. Andreas Mahler contends that this moment proves "what in other circumstances might have appeared as an awkwardly hubristic self-assertion of the commonwealth's most noble brother reads in the present situation as the ultimate proof of his reckless ambitions" (189). Mahler suggests that Caesar's claim of his solace, as well as his consistency like those of the north star, leads the to the conspirators' misunderstanding of his selfish ambition. But an effective leader needs consistency when exercising power. Caesar explains, "Know: Caesar doth not wrong, nor without cause / Will he be satisfied" (3.1.52-53). Caesar acknowledges his obligation to act justly if the senators give substantial reasons for Publius's release. Not one of the senators gives a valid reason on Publius's behalf. Carnegie explains that evidence has been given to suggest that the lines initially were "Know Caesar doth not wrong but with just cause, /

Nor without cause will he be satisfied." Carnegie explains, "That Jonson laughed at a line that does not appear in the Folio suggests the possibility that Shakespeare realized that he had written an absurdity, and changed the line to what we have" (8). The possibility of these original lines suggests that Caesar's verdict can be interpreted as arrogant. However, the original lines can also reinforce Caesar's awareness of his commitment to serve his will. This means that others might regard his actions and decisions as erroneous, but they are unable to understand that these actions, even if they seem wrong, are based on the influence of his will and are justified. Caesar's will to uphold the law is not reckless ambition but the need to maintain righteousness as leader of the empire.

The commitment Caesar upholds in to his public role as ruler of the Roman Empire is used by the assassins to their advantage and gives them the opportunity to murder Caesar. The influence of the Life Force dictates the decisions Caesar carries out in the play. His ambition is not a reckless one but a committed one that endures even after his death. Even though Caesar's mortal character only appears in three scenes out of the play's eighteen, his spirit dominates the play. Shakespearean scholar Horst Zander notes that "the Julius Caesar in the play attains his 'immortal' (1.2.60) greatness as a result of his physical death" (6). After his murder, the thoughts and actions of the conspirators, the tribunes, and the citizenry revolve around Caesar. Both Cassius's and Brutus's last words concern Caesar. Cassius states, "Caesar, thou art revenged / Even with the sword that killed thee" (5.3.50-51); Brutus asserts, "Caesar, now be still. / I killed not thee with half so good a will" (5.5.56-57). Caesar's ceaseless presence torments Brutus and Cassius to the point of suicide. While contemplating the assassination, Brutus expresses a foolish desire for the conspirators to "come by Caesar's spirit / And not dismember Caesar!" (2.1.182-183). The irony becomes that even though Caesar has been killed,

his spirit becomes more powerful in the final three acts of the play. Brutus recognizes the power of Caesar's spirit when Brutus sees the dead bodies of Cassius and Titinius: "Oh Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet; / Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords / In our own proper entrails" (5.3.105-107). Caesar is immortalized through Antony's speech, the civil war that ensues, and by his spiritual presence during the play's resolution.

Conclusion

A comparison of Shakespeare's Caesar with a Shavian philosophy adds further insight to the power and duty Caesar exhibits in Shakespeare's tragedy. Scholars, including Shaw, often criticize the weakness of character in Shakespeare's Caesar. In Mahler's discussion of the role the human will plays for Shakespeare's heroes, he notes, "the 'heroes'…are by no means agents of their own free will; rather, they must be seen as instruments in a divine plan" (182). Shakespeare's Caesar carries out the divine plan through the Life Force. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare creates characters whose thoughts, actions, and motives are influenced by their inner wills. Even though the idea of the Life Force was conceived centuries after Shakespeare's lifetime, most of his protagonists are influenced by forces beyond their understanding or control. Philosopher Collin McGinn explains that "Shakespeare regarded the mind as subject to hidden and mysterious forces. It is not that everything that affects a person is transparent to her awareness, so that she always knows why she is doing what she is or feeling the way she does" (12). In a sense, McGinn is describing the external forces that influence a character's thoughts and actions. He recognizes the idea that Shakespeare was aware of a higher force that influenced people, and Shakespeare created complex characters that reflect this idea. McGinn continues to describe the genius of Shakespeare: "The genius is a visionary, who persuades us to relinquish our old worldview for the fresh one he has constructed" (200). The timelessness of Shakespearean characters comes from their perspectives on life and their way of reacting to the challenges life hands to them. Shakespeare would agree that humanity is influenced by a higher will because of his awareness of the complexity of human nature.

The idea that Shakespeare's Caesar is influenced by forces beyond his understanding or control further complicates this enigmatic figure. Throughout the first three acts of the

Shakespearean play, Caesar remains loyal to the forces that guide him. Many critics interpret this loyalty as foolishness, arrogance, or excessive ambition, but Caesar executes the role he knows he must fulfill. His willingness to serve a higher will makes him an agent of the Life Force, and his commitment to the Life Force makes him the dominating figure in the tragedy. Although the argument has been made that Brutus and even Marc Anthony are the true protagonists of this play, Caesar and his spirit control the thoughts and actions of everyone else in the play. The influence Caesar holds over the other characters is the result of his willingness to be committed to the higher will.

Unlike *Julius Caesar*, the influence of the Life Force for Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra* is candidly exposed. The Shavian Caesar reveals his genius from the opening scene of the play. In his Superman figure, Shaw constructs a clear definition of the power of Caesar's will. Caesar manifests his ideas and values to the characters that surround him. His role as mentor to the young and inexperienced queen exposes the honor and wisdom Caesar upholds in his position as leader of the empire. As Caesar imparts his knowledge to Cleopatra, as well as the other characters of the play, he establishes the greatness of his genius. In comparison to the Shakespearean Caesar, both men hold influence over the other characters of the plays. Unfortunately, the lessons the Shavian Caesar offers to everyone around him are not fully valued, and his efforts to educate his men and Cleopatra seem futile once he departs for Rome. But his submission to the Life Force obligates Caesar to accomplish all things according to his will. In doing so, the Shavian Caesar remains committed to his role as mentor to the characters who are unable to discern the higher will.

Shaw's French translator Augustin Hamon points out that according to the Life Force "man is not free; he is determined inevitably; and whether he wishes it or not, he submits to the

Life Force" (64). Hamon suggests that man is not free because the Life Force obligates man to surrender himself to a higher cause. Shaw believes that this sacrifice is the purpose of life. In both plays, Caesar's submission to the Life Force constrains his free will and obligates him to remain dutiful to his public role as ruler of the Roman Empire. In the Shakespearean tragedy, the duty Caesar maintains towards his political and social obligations leads to his immortalization. Although Caesar proves powerful in life and in spirit in Shakespeare's play, he must sacrifice himself to fulfill the purpose of the Life Force. In examining the will that Caesar presents in both dramas, a much stronger and nobler ruler emerges.

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Curriculum Vita

Amanda E. Cuellar was born in El Paso, TX and is the first daughter of Veronica Cordova and Francisco Cuellar. She is a 1998 Bowie High School graduate. She graduated top three percent of her class and earned a Presidential Scholarship to UTEP in the fall of 1998. She entered the university as biology major but changed majors during her junior year of college to English and American Literature. During this time, she participated in the McNair Scholars program and presented a paper titled "Passive yet Forceful: The Women in Amy Tan's Works" to fellow McNair Scholars in 2002. After receiving her bachelor's degree in the fall of 2003, Amanda worked as a high school English teacher for two years. She entered the graduate school at the University of Texas at El Paso while teaching and decided to become a full-time graduate student in the English program in the fall of 2006. During her career as a graduate student, she earned a teaching assistant position and taught English 1311 for two semesters. Additionally, she presented several papers at various conferences: "The Duel of the Sexes: The Power of Shaw's Women" presented at the 2007 Comparative Drama Conference at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA, "Layers of Villainy in Shaw's *Saint Joan*" presented at the 2007 Shaw Symposium, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada, "Villainous Motives in Shaw's *Saint Joan*" presented at the 2008 Graduate Student Literature Conference at the University of Texas at El Paso, "A Metaphorical View of Colonialism in Shaw's *Saint Joan*" presented at the 2008 Comparative Drama Conference at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, and "The Life Force in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar" presented at the 3rd Annual Shaw Conference at The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.

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