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DUAL IMPRESSIONS IN

CORIOLANUS

by

Nicholas F. Politi

A THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Faculty

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in English

Lehigh University

1968

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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May 9, 1968

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 1

CHAPTER I 3

CHAPTER II. 26

CHAPTER III 53

Notes 76

List of Works Consulted. 91

Vita 106

ABSTRACT

The moral tone of Shakespeare's Coriolanus is disturbingly ambivalent. At one and the same time in numerous scenes and incidents Shakespeare presents dual opposing impressions of the protagonist and his society. On one level Rome, Coriolanus, and the mother-son relationship are portrayed honorifically, while on a second level these elements are pictured pejoratively. Shakespeare's simultaneous presentation of the predominant impression and the less apparent contradictory impression can be traced from the very first scene through to the play's closing lines.

The predominant impression of Rome is that of a splendid and renowned city. But the city, which at first appears grand, is shown through relentlessly pursued subtle impressions to be a sick society, corrupted by self-interest among its parties and given to deceit and dishonesty.

The first impression of Coriolanus is that he dominates the plebeians, leads the nobility, and conquers Rome's foreign enemies. But Shakespeare makes it evident through hints that Coriolanus is not the master of the people, that he does not have the unquestioning allegiance of the aristocracy, and that his victory over his country's foes is only temporary.

The predominant impression of the mother-son relationship suggests that Volumnia is the proud widowed mother

who raised her noble and valiant son to be a credit to Rome and to her, and that she taught him to value the station to which he was born and to put honor and integrity first. But the less apparent impression of the relationship implies that an abnormal bond exists between the pair. Shakespeare indicates that Volumnia has taught her son to glory in violence and to despise the commoners. By the end of the drama the audience has gathered the impression that Coriolanus is not the independent man he thinks himself to be, but a boy unnaturally dependent on his mother.

There emerges, then, the subtle impression that Coriolanus and Rome are victims. Volumnia and her peers, the tribunes, and Aufidius work their selfish wills upon the protagonist and his country. The warrior, who at first appears as a doer and mover, is seen to be a weakling, intimidated and manipulated. Rome, which at first seems the foremost city of the world, inhabited by distinguished citizens, is seen to be a deeply flawed society. Thus, Coriolanus and Rome appear ambivalently noble and base, exalted and belittled.

CHAPTER I

One unique feature of Shakespeare's Coriolanus is the support the text gives to widely differing viewpoints. Indeed, the play has a disturbing ambivalent quality. The reason for this is, I believe, the two types of impressions running through the play which derive from the varying moral tone and atmosphere in numerous scenes and incidents. There is the predominant, honorific moral tone, and there is a less apparent, but none the less real, clashing pejorative tone. Throughout Shakespeare succeeds in maintaining simultaneously two impressions of the Roman world, Coriolanus, and the relationship between Volumnia and her son. On one level the dramatist presents positive impressions of these major elements. However, on a second level he conveys negative impressions of Rome, the hero, and the mother-son bond.

The predominant impression of Rome is that of a splendid and renowned city. Rome appears to be the foremost capital of the world. Its well-being and destiny are the undisguised main issue of the action. A concern for the state's defense from foreign enemies and its domestic tranquility is inherent in all that happens. Its citizens, from the apparently princely Coriolanus through the imperious Volumnia to the audacious tribunes, strike the audience as distinguished characters. However, under-

cutting this grand image is the subtle impression that Rome is a sick society, corrupted by self-interest among its parties and given to deceit and dishonesty. Coriolanus, who at first seems to be a superman on the battlefield and a stalwart aristocrat at home, upon closer examination turns out to be an insentient butcher and a compulsive antagonist of the plebeians. What at first seems to be respect and esteem by Marcius for Volumnia is subtly shown to be unnatural dependence by the son on the mother.

When the fate of the protagonist at the hands of his mother, his society, and his enemy Aufidius is understood, it becomes evident that he is the victim of these three forces. The first impression that Coriolanus dominates the people, leads the nobility, and frustrates the foe is reversed by the less apparent impression that Rome, Volumnia with the consent of her peers, and Aufidius use Coriolanus and sacrifice him.

With consummate skill Shakespeare develops these dual impressions within the framework of the plot, as a study of the playwright's ambivalent description of Roman life demonstrates. The play presents two diametrically opposed views of the Roman world and this dichotomy is reflected in the criticism of _Coriolanus_. One group of critics contends that Shakespeare presents an honorific picture of Rome. Another group argues that Rome is presented

pejoratively. Representative of the first view is M. W. MacCallum, who says that the Roman world in the play has "the majesty and omnipotence of the Eternal City."[1] Robert B. Heilman, representative of the second idea, writes, "the play verges oddly toward a cynical picture of a tricky world."[2] These two points of view come together in the criticism of Una Ellis-Fermor. She maintains that the two images of Rome--the base and the noble--operate in the play at the same time.[3] While I disagree with many of the opinions of Miss Ellis-Fermor on Coriolanus, I applaud her efforts to balance the contradictory impressions arising from the text.

To begin to interpret the play it is important to understand Shakespeare's juxtaposing the two images of Rome, because against this background the story of the protagonist unfolds. It is necessary to see him in his dramatic environment.

The predominant impression of Rome is positive. G. Wilson Knight says "spiritual values" are "housed in the words 'Rome' and 'Roman'; and in Latin place-names."[4] Donald A. Stauffer and James E. Phillips claim that Rome is the hero of the play.[5] L. C. Knights calls Rome, not Caius Marcius, the protagonist.[6] These critics are reporting the apparent impression of the Roman image in the play.

A brief review of the drama verifies this reading.

The idea of Rome is constantly in the foreground, on everyone's lips, and assumed in all the action. The word "Rome" is spoken a total of eighty-four times, and the word "Roman" is uttered an additional twenty-two times. Besides, phrases like "the state," "my country," "our country," and "our good city" appear at least another eighty-four times.

Menenius, speaking to the rebellious citizens at the outset, invests Rome with a great and unavoidable destiny:

> you may as well
> Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them
> Against the Roman state, whose course will on
> The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs
> Of more strong link asunder than can ever
> Appear in your impediment. (I.i.69-74)[7]

At the very beginning the audience is impressed with this exalted idea of Rome. This idea is continued in Menenius' fable of the belly, where Rome is likened to a perfectly functioning organism.

On the other hand there is the cumulative effect of short phrases and hardly noticed allusions which contribute significantly to this image of the city. For instance, Volumnia and Valeria add small talk which makes being a Roman appear something special. Volumnia speaks as if Romans by nature of their birth are to know no fear (I.iii.36-37). Valeria assumes that with "our Roman power" there is no doubt of prevailing over the Volscians (I.iii. 109-112). Menenius uses approbatory adjectives when he

mentions the city. He calls it "great Rome" (III.i.315) and "our renowned Rome" (III.i.291). Cominius declares that the paltering between Coriolanus and the tribunes does not become Rome (III.i.58).

To Cominius there is an ideal Roman military procedure to live up to:

> well fought; we are come off
> Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,
> Nor cowardly in retire. (I.vi.1-3)

The military glory of the state has in its tradition the defeat of the tyrant Tarquin, and with the overwhelming victory against the Volscians even greater glory accrues to the Roman state. And Coriolanus offers a noble prayer for the continued peace and prosperity of the city:

> the honour'd gods
> Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
> Supplied with worthy men! plant love among's!
> Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,
> And not our streets with war! (III.iii.33-37).

There is also in the play the mystique of the Roman consulship--the chair from which the ruling nation is ruled. The play centers around the question of who is worthy to command this position. It is the dream of ambitious Volumnia that her son attain this eminence; it is the goal to which she drives him. After she has seen Coriolanus earn the greatest of military honors, she knows there is only one greater achievement their world has to offer--the consulship:

> I have lived
> To see inherited my very wishes
> And the building of my fancy: only
> There's one thing wanting, which I doubt not but
> Our Rome will cast on thee (II.i.215-219)

The image of the greatness of Rome is further enhanced by the threatened destruction of the city and the horror the possibility evokes. The play pictures this impending catastrophe as the greatest of evils. So great is Rome that its destruction would not gain Coriolanus fame as a conqueror, but infamy as a barbarian (V.iii.142-148). When Rome is spared, its image is magnified by the very fact that it endures.

Thus, across the text of _Coriolanus_ runs the glorification of Rome.

Counterpoised to the honorific images of the state is a negative image. Critics have long sensed this pejorative image. T. J. B. Spencer writes, "There are here a good many indications of Shakespeare's not entirely sharing that enthusiastic admiration for the antique Romans which was characteristic of some Renaissance literature."[8] F. N. Lees labels Rome a "sick society," while R. F. Hill calls it "a deeply flawed society."[9] This defamatory impression can be traced in large measure to the incidents of political intrigue and dishonesty among the self-interested factions in Rome. These incidents accumulate as the plot develops, reversing the audience's impression of the glories of Rome. Subtly and slowly at first

Shakespeare presents a picture of hate, selfishness, and distrust which by the end of the play becomes a serious indictment of political society in Rome and, by extension of the same pattern in the Volscian world, a serious indictment of politics universally.

In the opening scene the citizens appear on stage in a rebellion ostensibly for food. But before many lines are spoken it becomes plain that malice and hate motivate the mob. It appears that much more than simply wanting food, the plebeians are pursuing a course of revenge against the patricians generally and Caius Marcius in particular. The First Citizen, spokesman for the rebels, may say, "You are all resolved rather to die than famish" (I.i.4) and, "for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge" (I.i.23), but the rebel's subsequent speeches give evidence contrary to the purport of these protests. Much of what the First Citizen says is an attack on Coriolanus (which will be answered in kind when the protagonist first appears on stage). And although the Second Citizen is a moderating influence, he serves to emphasize the malice of the mob. The people charge that Marcius is "a very dog to the commonalty" (I.i.28), and the First Citizen adds that for his service to Rome "he pays himself with being proud" (I.i.33). Then the Second Citizen tries to check this attack: "Nay, but speak not maliciously" (I.i.35); however, the rebel leader bolts on,

not in an appeal for food, but with an attack on Marcius:

> I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother; and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue. (I.i.37-41)

and

> I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition. (I.i.44-46)

What the First Citizen says may be true, but it is the ill will that impresses the audience. And Menenius, just entering the stage at this moment, like the Second Citizen, points to the venom of these words: "Confess yourselves wondrous malicious" (I.i.91) and "you malign our senators" (I.i.116). Later, Sicinius counts on the "ancient malice" (II.iii.196) that the people bear Marcius to be his undoing in the consulship bid.

Thus at the very outset the audience sees Rome seething with hate. Plutarch in his <u>Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans</u>--Shakespeare's source for <u>Coriolanus</u>--indicates in more than one passage that the people bore malice toward Marcius.[10] But Plutarch shows more interest in the people's political grievances than he does in their malice. Shakespeare, on the other hand, ignores much of the politics and emphasizes the malevolence among the parties. This, of course, can be interpreted as good dramatic sense since conflict is the basis of drama. But there is more

to his source change than that. Thematically the hate becomes a symptom of a sick society.

Menenius' cynical manipulation of the citizens' faith is another sign of corruption in Rome. The Second Citizen believes that Menenius is "one that hath always loved the people" (I.i.52-53). But Menenius does not love the people, although he banters with them and listens to their complaints. He knows that they are a force to be properly manipulated--that is the extent of his love. To their faces he calls the people rats. He retorts spitefully to the First Citizen, who boldly challenges the patricians' authority. At the same time Menenius infers that the nobility will not compromise and that the dispute must lead to injury for one of the factions:

> For that, being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest,
> Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:
> Thou rascal, that art worst in blood to run,
> Lead'st first to win some vantage.
> But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:
> Rome and her rats are at the point of battle;
> The one side must have bale. (I.i.161-167)

It is eye-opening to learn that Menenius so lightly disfranchises the plebeians and demotes them to the status of rats. He continues in his face-to-face harassment by telling the people that they lack discretion and are cowardly (I.i.206-207). In private conversation they receive the same treatment. To the tribunes he refers to them as "beastly" (II.i.105) and "garlic-eaters" (IV.vi. 99). To the senators he talks about the herd (III.ii.3).

While these obnoxious names are conventional, they do demonstrate that Menenius looks with typically unloving aristocratic haughtiness on his inferiors. Cominius comes much closer to "one that hath always love the people" than Menenius. He treats his soldiers decently in battle and calls them "my friends" (I.vi.1), generously promises to divide the spoils of war with them (I.vi.87-88), and seldom speaks rudely of them.[11] Cominius not only serves as a foil to Coriolanus as a type of general on the battlefield;[12] he also serves as a foil to Menenius as a type of patrician in social matters.

In Plutarch Shakespeare found the clue that the plebeians considered Menenius a friend among the patricians (_Variorum_ 624). But when Shakespeare expanded the portrait of the old man he had a reason to give him an aristocratic haughtiness not suggested in Plutarch, while in Cominius he drew the picture of what Menenius could have been had he lived up to his word. Thus, the audience is invited to see Menenius as a manipulator. This becomes part of the design showing double-dealing in Rome.

To pacify the mutineers Menenius offers a fable to illustrate that each group in a society has a function to perform in order that the state work properly. Yet, the fable gives the audience more insight into the nature of Roman relationships than the speaker with his deceptively simple message intends. Commentators on the play such as

W. I. Carr and D. A. Traversi have not been content to accept the surface impression of the fable. They have opened their criticism to accept the full and intricate meaning of the patrician's argument. Traversi notes, "the wording of the parable tends to the transformation of a political common-place, a theoretical vindication of natural 'degree', into a criticism . . . of Roman society." He adds, "there is a sense in which the figure he [Menenius] uses to illustrate his point turns the argument against his own thesis." Menenius propagandizes that the senators--the good belly--supply the plebeians with all that is good. But as Traversi has interpreted, "the parable also reveals a patrician caste unreasonably contemptuous of the rest of society . . . who have forfeited much of their claim to superiority by their attitude towards those upon whose existence and effort their own well-being, in the last analysis depends." Traversi charges that the patricians exercise "ruthless repression" and do not have real contact with the community."[13] Menenius' fable, then, exposes the shortcomings of the patricians as well as those of the people. It is simply not true what Menenius tells the people: "most charitable care / Have the patricians of you" (I.i.67-68). What Carr writes is to the point: "The whole scene is a masterly presentation of the calculated agility of movement which politics requires: Menenius offering himself out as the plain blunt man, yet

coldly aware of how to manipulate his audience how to get their shallow responses on his side."[14]

But Menenius and the patricians encounter an opposing Machiavellian force equally adept at manipulation and power politics--the tribunes. From their first appearance on stage Brutus and Sicinius let the audience know that they can interpret events dishonestly for their own advantage. The tribunes speculate that Marcius remains second in command of the army for ignoble reasons. They say that in second position he can use Cominius as scapegoat in case of defeat or steal the honors in case of victory (I.i.264-279). While future developments prove the charges false, the tribunes reveal here that they are incapable of comprehending motives which are sincere and unselfish. These remarks disclose more about the vicious natures of the tribune than about the intentions of Coriolanus.[15]

After the battle scenes of Act One when the political action resumes in Rome, the audience is given further evidence of the disease in the state, first by the tribunes and then by the patricians. The tribunes do not want Coriolanus elected consul under any circumstances: "Then our office may / During his power, go sleep" (II.i.238-239). Brutus is not being honest when he tells the Senate that the tribunes "shall be blest" to honor Coriolanus with the consulship

if he remember
A kinder value of the people than
He hath hereto prized them at. (II.ii.62-64)

Just prior to this statement, he and Sicinius have determined that for their own good Coriolanus must be destroyed (II.i.258-259). Their first move to block Coriolanus' bid for the consulship is to incite the people against him:

We must suggest the people in what hatred
He still hath held them; that to's power he would
Have made them mules, silenced their pleaders and
Dispropertied their freedoms, holding them,
In human action and capacity,
Of no more soul nor fitness for the world
Than camels in the war, who have their provand
Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows
For sinking under them. (II.i.261-268)

Thus, Brutus and Sicinius plan to remind the people that Coriolanus hates them at a moment when he is treating them insolently. The tribunes reckon that the friction that they will cause between Marcius and the people "shall darken him for ever" (II.i.275). Yet, before the Senate, convened to honor Coriolanus in the next scene, after the audience has been informed of the tribunes' plan, Sicinius deceives the patricians by saying the tribunes

have hearts
Inclinable to honour and advance
The theme of our assembly. (II.ii.59-61)

The function of the tribunes is to represent the people in the government. In their machinations to thwart Coriolanus, Brutus and Sicinius are primarily looking out for their own personal interests. What benefit the people receive from the tribunes' action--the doing away with

their adversary Coriolanus--is a by-product. And it is a by-product of dubious worth since Coriolanus is Rome's defender.

The tribunes continue this policy of dishonesty to advance their personal interests a short time later in the story. After the people have given their votes to Coriolanus and then have been prevailed upon by the tribunes to rescind those votes, Brutus instructs the pliant populace in lying. The people are to tell the Senate that they never wanted to give Coriolanus their voices in the first place, but were forced to do so at the tribunes' bidding. Of course this is opposite of the truth. The tribunes instructed the people to reject Coriolanus (II.ii.159-164). But the people are to tell the Senate now that they realize that approving Coriolanus was not what they wanted (II.iii.235-238). The tribunes gain immeasurably through this falsehood. It makes them look like heroes in the eyes of the plebeians and the patricians at the same time. But most important for Shakespeare's purpose, in the eyes of the audience the tribunes are seen for what they are and show up Roman politics for what it is.[16]

As we have seen, the patricians, represented by Menenius, share the blame for a sick society with the tribunes. Now Shakespeare repeats the motif to include Volumnia in the same deceit that corrupts the Roman world. Coriolanus' mother endorses a policy of dishonesty

identical to that of the tribunes. She censures her son for not deceiving the people about his true feelings until which time they would have been powerless to take steps against him:

> lesser had been
> The thwartings of your dispositions, if
> You had not show'd them how ye were disposed
> Ere they lack'd power to cross you. (III.ii.20-23)

Volumnia proceeds to teach Coriolanus what a lie is and how to deceive the plebeians. She counsels dishonesty:

> now it lies you on to speak
> To the people; not by your own instruction,
> Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
> But with such words that are but roted in
> Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
> Of no allowance to your bosom's truth. (III.ii.53-58)

And Volumnia implicates the entire upper-class in this subterfuge. She says, "I am in this, / Your wife, your son, these senators, and the nobles" (III.ii.64-65). Ironically, the purpose of this duplicity is to accomplish the "inheritance" of the people's "loves" and to "safe-guard" what the absence of that love would "ruin" (namely, the consulship for Coriolanus). It is a sign of the moral distortion in Roman politics that Volumnia believes love can be based on falseheartedness.

To this advice by Volumnia to Coriolanus, Menenius gives his unqualified approval. "Noble lady!" he cries out at the end of her speech. Then he also admonishes Marcius to "speak fair" to the plebeians (III.ii.69-70). Shakespeare's juxtaposing Volumnia's instruction with

Menenius' response, "Noble lady," equates nobility with hypocrisy. In this play the word noble has an unusual and tarnished definition as we shall see when we examine Coriolanus. Coriolanus recognizes what is being asked of him and names the recommended course for what it is: "Must I with base tongue give my noble heart / A lie that it must bear?" (III.ii.100-101).

With the conflict between the mother and son set, Shakespeare depicts the ultimate social perversion. Volumnia brings the unethical moral principles that operate in the state affairs into the family relationship. She dissembles with her son for political purposes. Coriolanus' valiance and pride have their origins in his mother. This fact is abundantly clear to the audience after the parlour scene of Act One. But Volumnia manipulates her son by denying her part in his pride. She does not hesitate to dissociate herself from her son's pride to bend him to her will:

> To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
> Than thou of them. Come all to ruin; let
> Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
> Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
> With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.
> Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
> But owe thy pride thyself. (III.ii.123-129)[17]

In this speech Volumnia the Machiavellian is seen performing at her best.

Coriolanus obeys his mother and promises to "mountebank" the people's "loves" and "Cog their hearts from them"

(III.ii.131-133). But the tribunes are prepared to match deceit with deceit. They have a catalogue of false charges for the confrontation:

> In this point charge him home, that he affects
> Tyrannical power: if he evade us there,
> Enforce him with his envy to the people,
> And that the spoil got on the Antiates
> Was ne'er distributed. (III.iii.1-5)

It is important to note that Plutarch records that Coriolanus was able to defend himself successfully against the charge of affecting tyrannical power (Variorum 629) and that he did distribute the spoils to the soldiers who participated in the battle with the Antiates (Variorum 634). Shakespeare was well aware that these charges were devices by the cunning tribunes to work out selfish ends.

Brutus and Sicinius triumph in the struggle for the people's support. Coriolanus is banished "As an enemy to the people and his country" (III.iii.117). The truth is that both the tribunes and the patricians are the enemies of the people and the country, and both parties have contributed to making Coriolanus an enemy of Rome. At one point Sicinius asks the rhetorical question, "What is the city but the people?" And the citizens reply, "The people are the city" (III.i.199-200). More is meant in these words than the surface impression indicates. True, the city is the people, but the term "people" includes the tribunes and the patricians as well as the plebeians. All three groups prove themselves unworthy of the ideal

image of Rome, the people by their fickleness and the patricians and tribunes by their political dishonesty and selfishness.

Shakespeare continues to develop the theme of political dishonesty even when the action shifts from Rome to Antium. Thus the malignancy gains universal proportions. Aufidius, like Brutus, Sicinius, Menenius, and Volumnia, is a master at duplicity. Some critics have been mistaken about Aufidius' stratagems and have accused Shakespeare of inconsistency in his character portrayal.[18] Aufidius is not inconsistent and his behavior can be accounted for within the framework of the theme of political intrigue.

Why, some critics ask, does Aufidius receive Coriolanus with such enthusiasm in Act Four when he and the Roman outcast are sworn enemies? The answer to that question is given early in the play, long before the pair became apparent allies against Rome. In battle the Volscian leader is Coriolanus' inferior, but in treachery Aufidius is unequalled. By force of arms Aufidius cannot vanquish Coriolanus, nor while Coriolanus is Rome's defender, can he conquer that state. However, by craft he can accomplish both goals. Aufidius, after being repulsed by Coriolanus in the first stage battle, vowed to defeat Coriolanus with means other than the sword:

By the elements,
If e'er again I meet him [Coriolanus] beard to beard,

> He's mine, or I am his: mine emulation
> Hath not that honour in 't it had; for where
> I thought to crush him in an equal force,
> True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way
> Or wrath or craft may get him. (I.x.12-16)

Aufidius' revenge has two parts: not only to defeat Coriolanus, but to defeat Rome also. If he kills Coriolanus in Antium when they first meet again beard to beard, then he accomplishes only half his purpose. But if he allows Coriolanus to serve him, then he stands to carry all. Aufidius thinks like Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra: when the enemy deserts to your side put him in the front ranks so that in the remainder of the conflict your opponent will be fighting himself, not you:

> Put those that have revolted in the van,
> That Antony may seem to spend his fury
> Upon himself. (Antony IV.vi.8-11)

Aufidius will use a Roman to conquer Rome. He knows that Coriolanus will prove an invaluable aid in revenging earlier Volscian setbacks:

> take
> The one half of my commission; and set down--
> As best thou art experienced, since thou know'st
> Thy country's strength and weakness,--thine own ways;
> Whether to knock against the gates of Rome,
> Or rudely visit them in parts remote,
> To fright them, ere destroy. (IV.v.143-149)

Without Coriolanus, Aufidius was prepared to attack only the Roman "territories," though not "Rome itself" (IV.v. 140-141). With Coriolanus, he can attack the city.

Further, hindsight tells the audience that Aufidius was insincere in his elaborate welcome address. (Indeed,

its exaggerated quality is a sign of its falsity.) While Aufidius is embracing Coriolanus, he is considering what the risk will be in exploiting his enemy. When he divides his forces with Coriolanus, he is prepared to be humbled somewhat by his former rival's stature. But to carry out the design of defeating Rome Aufidius chances sparing Coriolanus temporarily. However, a later confession shows that Coriolanus is even prouder than Aufidius originally calculated. In a conversation with a lieutenant Aufidius reveals that he is for the time hindered from dealing with the proud Coriolanus because of the plan to conquer Rome:

> I cannot help it [Coriolanus' popularity] now,
> Unless, by using means, I lame the foot
> Of our design. He bears himself more proudlier,
> Even to my person, than I thought he would
> When first I did embrace him. (IV.vii.6-10)

Aufidius is waiting for the most advantageous moment to spring the trap on Coriolanus. Meanwhile he is content to let it appear to Coriolanus and to others that there is harmony between the two:

> When he [Coriolanus] shall come to his account, he
> knows not
> What I can urge against him. Although it seems,
> And so he thinks, and is no less apparent
> To the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly,
> And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,
> Fights dragon-like, and does achieve as soon
> As draws his sword; yet he hath left undone
> That which shall break his neck or hazard mine,
> Whene'er we come to our account. (IV.vii.18-26)

Aufidius' plan of using Coriolanus to capture Rome fails just when success appeared imminent because Volumnia

overrules her son. Though he fails to level Rome, Aufidius still gains a good measure of revenge on his enemy (V.vi. 76-79). He can now turn his attention to regaining his former reputation by exploiting Coriolanus' weakness (V.v. 199-202). In Antium Aufidius continues his policy of intrigue. He composes a letter containing false charges against Coriolanus and dispatches it to the Senate:

> Go tell the lords o' the city I am here:
> Deliver them this paper: having read it,
> Bid them repair to the market-place; where I,
> Even in theirs and in the commons' ears,
> Will vouch the truth of it. (V.vi.1-5)

Aufidius employs the same technique that the tribunes used against Coriolanus: make false charges and win the support of the people.

The Volscian general proceeds to compliment himself on the plausibility of the lie he has contrived against Coriolanus: "And my pretext to strike at him admits / A good construction" (V.vi.19-20). Aufidius will accuse Coriolanus of seducing his friends, of treating him like a mercenary, and of selling the blood and labour of the Volscians (V.vi.20-49). But certainly the Volscian populace do not view Coriolanus as a traitor or criminal. They cheer him for carrying the Volscian standard as far as he did:

> he returns,
> Splitting the air with noise.
> And patient fools,
> Whose children he hath slain, their base throats tear
> With giving him glory. (V.vi.51-55)

But Aufidius knows that once Coriolanus is silenced, he can manipulate the people: "the fall of either / Makes the survivor heir to all" (V.vi.16-17). And Aufidius will have no trouble making Coriolanus' death seem proper:

> When lies along,
> After your way his tale pronounced shall bury
> His reasons with his body. (V.vi.56-58)

Aufidius puts his scheme into action. He enrages Coriolanus and, against the will of the Volscian lords (V.vi.124-128), kills the Roman. His last two speeches in the play are an attempt to justify his ignominious deed. When he says, "My rage is gone; / And I am struck with sorrow," surely he is not to be believed.[19] His humility parallels the cunning humility of the tribunes who, after the banishment of Coriolanus, say,

> Now we have shown our power,
> Let us seem humbler after it is done
> Than when it was a-doing. (IV.ii.4-6)

Thus, from the first scene to the very last words of the play there cuts across the predominant impression of great deeds, heroic conflict, and noble action a counter-impression of dishonest motives and corrupt practices. Numerous commentators have failed to see the working out of this political theme and have failed consequently to see the striking appropriateness of the play's final lines. B. H. Kemble-Cook writes, "No one is going to bother his head, at this tremendous, final moment, about the thoughts or the fate of Aufidius. As

the principal character present, he . . . pronounces the eulogy and gets the body removed."[20] This statement is evidence that Kemble-Cook has completely missed the irony upon which the play closes. In the end the Machiavellian endures. The negative image of politics goes unredeemed. Hope for peace and understanding among political factions is in no way suggested. In Rome the tribunes and the patricians will continue to wrest power from one another, using deceit to control the people. In Antium plans for war with Rome will go on. The base image of Rome eclipses the ideal image of Rome.

In addition to the negative political impression which detracts from the predominant positive impression of the state, there is the impression that Romans encourage violence and savagery. We shall examine this side of Roman life as we turn to a study of Coriolanus.

CHAPTER II

Shakespeare uses a pattern of dual impressions in the portrayal of Coriolanus similar in function to the two descriptions of the Roman world. There is the predominant positive impression of Coriolanus as a great soldier and noble aristocrat contrasted with the subtle negative impression of the protagonist as a mechanism of blind destruction and perverse authority. At first Coriolanus appears a colossus in a superstate. But just as the early predominantly honorific impression of Rome fades and the pejorative impression builds in force so does the initial predominant impression of the protagonist wane before the emerging subtle impression. Thus, there is a parallel movement in the image of the state and the hero so that by the end of the play both reach a nadir.

Because of these two levels of characterization critics have divided generally into pro- and anti-Coriolanus schools. By dealing exclusively with only one side of the hero's character while ignoring the other side[21] or by attempting to minimize its importance, many critics only work against the ultimate aim of criticism--understanding the whole of a work of art. The far better approach to this problem in Coriolanus, pioneered as I said by Miss Ellis-Fermor, is to consider the effects of both impressions and then, placing this understanding in perspective

with the other elements which make up the play, decide upon the drama's principal design. Robert Roth also has recognized the need for this approach to the study of the protagonist. Roth perceives that Coriolanus is the most paradoxical of Shakespeare's heroes, that the dramatist maintains an "ambivalent state of opinion" toward Coriolanus by portraying side by side the "single quality of noble and aristocratic pride" and the "destructiveness of his fury."[22] Occasionally, too, others have commented on one or another aspect of the dual impressions arising out of the protagonist's dramatic portrait. William Rosen, for instance, has noticed that "virtue and vice are so intermingled in Coriolanus that both are at different times judged to be noble."[23] Indeed, virtue and vice are subtly intermingled in Coriolanus, and clearly separating these features of the protagonist's personality is the key to the play's design.

A simple formula to bear in mind when studying the play is to distinguish what Coriolanus does from how and why he does it. Critics who emphasize the "what" of his actions usually are pro-Coriolanus. Critics who stress the "how" and "why" of his behavior are generally anti-Coriolanus. The what of Coriolanus' conduct produces the predominant impression of his character; the how and why produce the opposite impression. What Coriolanus does as a soldier--fights fearlessly--is heroic; why and how

he fights--like a death machine for self-interest--is horrifying. What Coriolanus stands for politically--the aristocratic ideal--has merit; how and why he stands for the aristocratic ideal--with blind disregard for the well-being of the state, to perform obediently as he has been taught--has little merit in it. What Coriolanus' reaction to praise is--he rejects it--suggests humility; how and why he rejects praise--with irrational repugnance and for an inexplicable but doubtfully meritorious reason--suggests perverted modesty. In this chapter I shall examine the "what" of the protagonist's action--his honorific image; then I shall examine the "how" of his action--the pejorative image. In the next chapter I shall look into the "why" of his behavior--the mother-son relationship.

Even before Marcius appears on stage the audience learns that there is something notable about this Roman from the dialogue among the mutinous citizens at the play's opening. Not only is he the citizens' chief opponent, he also "hath done famously" in his service for his country (I.i.30-31,37-38). Then, when he appears on stage the audience sees by his stature (certainly the actor playing Marcius must be large and well-built) and his straightforward opposition to the plebeians that he is different from other men. He is greeted first by Menenius and later by Cominius as "Noble Marcius!" (I.i.166,252), and the First Senator addresses him as "worthy Marcius" (I.i.240).

The rebellious citizens, who at the outset flooded the stage carrying "staves, clubs, and other weapons," after encountering Marcius, "steal away," chastened by the protagonist.[24] Marcius is a man of power, and power awes.

Numerous commentators applaud Coriolanus' defense of the prerogatives of the nobility. To them Coriolanus represents the aristocratic ideal. Coriolanus contends that the aristocracy must remain uncontradicted in all its policies. He is against granting the plebeians the slightest concession. Allowing the discontented people tribunes, he protests, will lead to greater trouble for the patricians:

> it will in time
> Win upon power and throw greater themes
> For insurrection's arguing. (I.i.223-225)

When the tribunes engineer the recantation of the people's voices, Coriolanus cries out against the threat to his class and warns against the loss of power the nobility will experience if the tribunes are permitted to persist:

> It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot,
> To curb the will of the nobility:
> Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule
> Nor ever will be ruled. (III.i.36-41)[25]

His objections to any compromise with the lower-class are eloquent and persuasive:

> I say again,
> In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
> The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
> Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd, and
> scatter'd
> By mingling them with us, the honour'd number,

Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars. (III.i.68-74)

His promise for keeping the power of government in the hands of the aristocracy is simple and seemingly irrefutable:

my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither surpeme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by the other. (III.i.108-112)[26]

In Coriolanus' mind the nobles are the source of wisdom and the people are the source of ignorance. If the rule of the wise nobles be encumbered by the fickle will of the plebeians, then nothing in the state will be done to purpose:

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! This double worship,
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom,
Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance,--it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd, it follows
Nothing is done to purpose. (III.i.141-149)

These impassioned speeches lead critics like Irving Ribner to write that Coriolanus is "an embodiment of the aristocratic ideal."[27] H. J. Oliver labels Coriolanus a "pure aristocrat."[28] Hardin Craig appeals to sources outside the play to support his argument that the Elizabethan audience would have approved of the protagonist's aristocratic attitude. Craig cites sixteenth-century religious and philosophical ideas and Tudor theories of government to

prove his case. He says that Coriolanus rightfully treats the people in accord with the "doctrine of graduation in the philosophy of Plentitude." This doctrine, explained in Arthur Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being and E. M. M. Tillyard's The Elizabethan World Picture, assigns a place to every being and object in creation.[29] Craig contends that Coriolanus is treating the plebeians in accord with their divinely appointed station in the hierarchy of creation. He writes that Coriolanus "is an aristocrat who believes in aristocracy as a divine feature of society."[30]

Critics also attempt to soften the appearance of Coriolanus' aristocratic vehemence by inventing an artificial distinction between the people and their traits and by saying that Coriolanus likes the people but hates their traits. F. N. Rounda proposes such an idea: Coriolanus is not an enemy of the plebs, "he is enemy to their cowardice and inconstancy. . . . It is with the zeal of the reformer that he harasses them, not from pride of class."[31] Later in this chapter we shall find that these arguments do not tell the whole truth, that balancing this predominant impression of Coriolanus' aristocracy is a subtle impression which suggests an opposite idea.

Perhaps it is as a soldier that Coriolanus dazzles the audience most. His life is one long succession of military triumphs. His home is the battlefield, his wife the sword. As a young man he was sent to war and he

returned, "his brows bound with oak." Cominius, by no means given to hyperbole, narrates the brilliant history of Coriolanus' military career in a rather long but important speech:

> I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus
> Should not be utter'd feebly. It is held
> That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
> Most dignifies the haver: if it be,
> The man I speak of cannot in the world
> Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,
> When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought
> Beyond the mark of others: our then dictator,
> Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,
> When with his Amazonian chin he drove
> The bristled lips before him: he bestrid
> An o'er-press'd Roman and i' the consul's view
> Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,
> And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,
> When he might act the woman in the scene,
> He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed
> Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
> Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea,
> And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
> He lurch'd all swords of the garland. (II.ii.91-105)

Coriolanus' present heroics far better illuminate his military skill than past ones, even though the past deeds were spectacular. The audience is witness to three feats: the capture of Corioli singlehandedly, the assault on the Volscian's main force, and the warding off of Aufidius and a group of his men in single combat. Then they see him lead the Volscians to the very gates of Rome.

It is only by the incredible bravery of Marcius that the Roman forces capture Corioli. After the Roman soldiers are beaten to their trenches, Marcius spearheads a counter-attack. As they reach the gates of the city, the men fall

back and Marcius is shut within the city's walls alone. When Titus Lartius rushes upon the scene and learns what has befallen, he offers over his presumably slain comrade a eulogy, which in itself is an index of the valiance of Coriolanus:

> Thou wast a soldier
> Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
> Only in strokes; but, with thy grim looks and
> The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds,
> Thou madest thine enemies shake, as if the world
> Were feverous and did tremble. (I.iv.56-61)

But the seemingly impossible happens. Marcius emerges from Corioli, bleeding but alive. The Roman soldiers rush from their trenches outside the walls of the city and join Marcius at the gate. Marcius re-enters Corioli with his soldiers, and the city falls.

While the common soldiers are looting, he hastens to the aid of Cominius on the other side of the field. Cominius greets him with the most commendatory of phrases, "Flower of warriors" (I.vi.33). No other Shakespearean hero is graced with a similar welcome. Marcius asks to be pitted against the enemy's "men of trust," and Cominius grants his request (I.vi.52). He fights through the best the opponent has to offer (off stage) until he engages Aufidius, his counterpart among the Volscians. In addition to stalemating the Volscian general, he drives off "certain" confederates who come to Aufidius' defense. The Romans, behind Marcius, are the undisputed victors.

For his invaluable part in the victory Caius Marcius is awarded the garland and the surname Coriolanus (I.ix. 58f). Because of his gallantry, the rank and file soldiers, ordinarily his foe, cheer him in the field twice. The Roman citizens, who earlier in the play were plotting to kill him, hail him through the streets of Rome: "All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights / Are spectacled to see him" (II.i.221-222).

Coriolanus is also a strategist off the battlefield. Twice he predicts the enemy's intent to war on Rome, once when Cominius is blind to the Volscian threat (I.i.231-232,III.i.4-6).

Coriolanus succeeds as notably for the Volscians after his banishment as he did for Rome. His military enterprises are complete and overwhelming. Aufidius reports, "All places yield to him ere he sets down" (IV.vii.28). A Roman messenger informs his leaders and the audience that Coriolanus leads a "fearful army" which

> rages
> Upon our territories; and have already
> O'erborne their way, consumed with fire, and took
> What lay before them. (IV.vi.75-78)

The audience can measure Coriolanus' excellence as a man-at-arms by the report of a Volscian lieutenant who explains that men formerly loyal to Aufidius now idolize their new general:

> I do not know what witchcraft's in him, but
> Your soldiers use him as the grace 'fore meat,

> Their talk at table, and their thanks at end;
> And you are darken'd in this action. . . . (IV.vii. 2-5)

A comparison of the play with its source indicates that Shakespeare went out of his way to make Coriolanus an even greater soldier than Plutarch describes him. M. W. MacCallum notices that in Shakespeare's version Coriolanus slays three opponents in the battle against Tarquin, whereas in Plutarch's account he kills only one. Further, in Shakespeare's story Coriolanus strikes and wounds Tarquin himself, while in Plutarch there is no mention of such an encounter.[32] In Plutarch Marcius enters Corioli with "fewe men to helpe him" (Variorum 626), whereas in Shakespeare he enters alone (I.iv.51). Eugene Waith, commenting on this change, says: "Shakespeare's alteration of history, making Coriolanus 'alone', is one of the touches which reveals most unequivocally his heroic conception of the character. In Coriolanus the opposition of the individual might of the hero to the superior forces of nature and fate is pushed to the uttermost."[33]

Even critics who otherwise censure Coriolanus for one reason or another concede that the Roman is a remarkable warrior. E. K. Chambers confesses, "The First Act shows us Coriolanus, on the whole, great; a great warrior, undaunted in danger, removed high above the greed and poltroonery of common men."[34] Millar MacLure terms Coriolanus' exploits against Corioli brilliant,[35] while G. B. Harrison

calls him "a fearless soldier, a superb fighter."[36]

But for all his magnificence on the field of battle there are aspects of Coriolanus' militarism which are dreadful and abhorrent. This image we shall consider shortly.

Another superficial impression the play tenders is that of a humble hero. Critics laud Coriolanus because he rebuffs praise. To some critics this is a sign of greatness. Praise is a small enough reward for his efforts in behalf of the Romans against the Volscians. But Coriolanus rejects the tribute of his fellow generals, Cominius, and Lartius. He also refuses the special but deserved portion of the spoils proffered by Cominius:

> Of all the horses,
> Whereof we have ta'en good and good store, of all
> The treasure in this field achieved and city,
> We render you the tenth, to be ta'en forth,
> Before the common distribution, at
> Your only choice. (I.ix.31-36)

But Coriolanus will not accept this honor either:

> I thank you general;
> But cannot make my heart consent to take
> A bribe to pay my sword: I do refuse it;
> And stand upon my common part with those
> That have beheld the doing. (I.ix.36-40)

When the foot soldiers give a resounding cheer to this seemingly noble gesture, Coriolanus rebukes them also. Later, before the Senate assembled to honor him, Coriolanus again brushes off the praise of his peers. And he leaves the Senate rather than remain to hear Cominius recount his

heroic deeds.

So astute a critic as A. C. Bradley writes, "there is a greatness in all this that makes us exult."[37] Harold Goddard passes similar judgment. Goddard says that Coriolanus' "hatred of boasting or of hearing his own bravery lauded is . . . the native modesty of a man who on instinct feels that 'whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise'."[38]

Coriolanus refuses to say or do anything that might suggest that he is flattering others, just as steadfastly as he refuses to accept praise which might suggest that he is allowing himself to be flattered. To so much as "give good words" to a commoner, Coriolanus declares, would be to "flatter beneath abhorring" (I.i.171). He invites the plebeians to regard him as one that does "not flatter" (III.i.68). Coriolanus believes that appearing before the citizens in the gown of humility is a form of flattery. Although he once swore never to stand before the people in the gown, he relents and performs the ceremony. But Williard Farnham argues that Coriolanus is not compromising his standards by making this concession. He contends that, by his insolence and manner during the rite, Coriolanus makes it clear to the people that his opinion of them is unchanged: "Though he acts the part of a flatterer of the people, he does so in a supercilious way and thus serves notice as he performs his role that he really is not a

flatterer. He makes no attempt to deceive the citizens. On the contrary, by insulting them he takes pains to keep them from being deceived."[39] And in a second instance, where Coriolanus promises his mother to confront the plebeians and "mountebank their loves," he does not in fact carry out his promise. Farnham says that Shakespeare was tempting Coriolanus to practice flattery in the "evil way of a Machiavellian 'politician'," but that Coriolanus overcomes this temptation without violating Renaissance standards of honor.[40] Thus seen against a corrupt political situation in Rome, where tribunes and patricians lie, flatter, and deceive one another for personal gain, Coriolanus, who refuses to employ these deceptions, appears all the more admirable. Thus, when Coriolanus is denied the consulship and banished, he appears to be the victim of ingratitude.[41] His resolve to be revenged on Rome seems to be justified. He is a man without a country and owes no ethical allegiance to a state from which he was "Whoop'd out."[42] His decision to spare his former country when its destruction is in his power to command and his subsequent death at the hands of the scheming Aufidius makes him look like the noblest of martyrs.

A comparison of the play with its source seems to substantiate the argument that Shakespeare was glorifying Coriolanus. Scholars and critics are virtually unanimous in their assessment of how Shakesepare adapted Plutarch

in his portrait of Coriolanus. Kenneth Muir,[43] Kumar Sailendra Sen,[44] Northrop Frye,[45] and others agree that Shakespeare's Coriolanus is a nobler and more sympathetic character than Plutarch's. Shakespeare makes his hero simpler and less cunning than Plutarch, while at the same time the dramatist minimizes the grievances of the people.[46]

Taking all these factors into account--Coriolanus' aristocratic stance, his military valor, his apparent honesty and humility, and Shakespeare's treatment of his source--critics have searched for an archetype upon which Shakespeare could have based his portrait of Coriolanus. Two prototypes stand out: Hercules and Aristotle's "magnanimous man." Eugene Waith contends that in Coriolanus Shakespeare was reviving the myth of Hercules.[47] Rodney Poisson maintains that Coriolanus was modeled on Aristotle's description of the magnanimous man found in his Ethics.[48]

These various arguments demonstrate the point that the predominant impression of Coriolanus is honorific. But the moral tone and atmosphere surrounding the action which projects the predominant impression suggests an opposite reading of the character of the protagonist. Behind what he does, the action of the play, lies how and why he does it, the image of the action and the motive of the action.

Something of this pejorative image is caught in the

words of the fractious First Citizen in the play's first scene. Coriolanus, he says, is "a very dog" to the people (I.i.28). For the good he has done Rome "he pays himself with being proud" (I.i.33). Further, the citizen claims that Coriolanus' service to his country is carried out for base motives: "he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud" (I.i.39-40). Nor are the accusations of the First Citizen unfounded. When Marcius enters the stage he shows that he is a dog to the plebeians. He bares his teeth and verbally tears viciously at them:

> What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,
> That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
> Make yourselves scabs? (I.i.167-169)

The citizen retorts to this snarling welcome with a conscious irony which underscores the particularly offensive nature of Coriolanus' aristocratic attitude: "We have ever your good word" (I.i.170). Coriolanus reacts with near rage to this remark. He reviles the plebeians in a manner that suggests a pathological disorder in the speaker:

> What would you have, you 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: you are no surer, no,
> Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
> Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
> To make him worthy whose offense subdues him
> And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness
> Deserves your hate; and your affections are
> A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
> Which would increase his evil. He that depends
> Upon your favours swims with fins of lead
> And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! (I.i.172-185)

This speech reveals the most fanatical kind of aristocratic outlook. In it Coriolanus exaggerates the defects of the populace. It is true that the people are fickle and are not especially gallant. But it is not true that they do not like peace. Neither is it the people's character to choose a man leader whose naturally unworthy nature disqualifies him as a leader. The people were wise enough to choose Cominius consul. And certainly, the judgments, or tastes, of the multitude are not like a sick man's appetite which causes vile things to seem desirable to him. The tribunes find the plebeians dependable enough to bring about Coriolanus' banishment. Cominius and even Coriolanus (I.vi.66f) find the common soldiers trustworthy enough to assist in the defeat of the Volscians. And if Lartius had not been able to rally the plebeian warriors to go to the aid of Coriolanus (I.iv.64), his singlehanded combat inside Corioli would have been in vain.[49] Thus, the audience from the very first speech of Coriolanus receives the impression that behind the exterior there is something out of order. As the play progresses this impression will become more salient and acquire distinguishable characteristics.

A few lines later Shakespeare reveals to the audience the basis of Coriolanus' valor--his violent nature. Coriolanus delights in blood. War for Coriolanus, either against the enemy or members of his own state, is an end

in itself. He has a passion for slaughtering:

> Would the nobility lay aside their ruth,
> And let me use my sword, I'ld make a quarry
> With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high
> As I could pick my lance. (I.i.201-204)

Human life has no value for Coriolanus. Death and suffering are abstractions to him. The impending war with the Volscians, he says, will be a way of exterminating the musty citizenry (I.i.230).

Shakespeare provides Virgilia to point out the callousness of her husband's vision of life. To her, blood and wounds are real, not ideas or words without meaning. They are things which cause pain and affect happiness. Volumnia, her mother-in-law, would gladly sacrifice eleven sons to the sword (I.iii.23f), while Virgilia shrinks in terror at the mere thought of her husband bleeding (I.iii.41). Volumnia rejoices in each wound her son sustains, but Virgilia shudders to think of her husband scarred in battle (II.i.130f).[50] More than a century ago William Hazlitt accurately described the fundamental difference in outlook between Volumnia and Virgilia. Hazlitt wrote, "One of the most natural traits in this play is the difference of the interest taken in the success of Coriolanus by his wife and mother. The one is only anxious for his honor; the other is fearful for his life."[51]

Also in the first scene Shakespeare reveals through two speeches by Coriolanus that the Roman hero's main

interest in fighting the enemy is not to protect his country but to satisfy his thirst for personal glory. Coriolanus avows that his personal rivalry with Aufidius is more important than the defense of Rome. A host of commentators have been quick to note that Coriolanus' motives for serving Rome are selfish,[52] an accusation already made by the First Citizen. It is Rome's good fortune in the first half of the play that its best interests are served by Coriolanus' belligerance. His patriotism is illusory. He fights not for Rome, but for personal pleasure. He looks forward to the Volscian attack, not with concern for the state's safety, but with enthusiasm over the prospect of battling his rival Aufidius:

> They have a leader,
> Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.
> I sin in envying his nobility,
> And were I any thing but what I am,
> I would wish me only he. (I.i.233-236)

And he continues:

> Were half to half the world by the ears and he
> Upon my party, I'ld revolt, to make
> Only my wars with him: he is a lion
> That I am proud to hunt. (I.i.237-240)

Thus, in the first scene Shakespeare introduces subtle innuendoes about Coriolanus' aristocratic nature and contradictions concerning his patriotism which becloud the predominantly bright impression of the protagonist. As the plot develops, these innuendoes and contradictions grow into serious indictments and eclipse the positive

impression.

Ever since G. Wilson Knight first defined the image of Coriolanus in battle as that of "an automaton in fight, a slaying machine of mechanic excellence"[53] other critics also have recognized the appropriateness of this description. Knight's descriptive phrase captures with remarkable accuracy the unfavorable side of Coriolanus' militarism. D. A. Traversi, using the same approach, calls Coriolanus "nothing less than a somber engine of destruction," an "engine of doom,"[54] and D. J. Enright says that in Coriolanus there is the "suggestion of a mechanical Juggernaut."[55] These readings are based on an assortment of passages, some given by Coriolanus and some given by others about Coriolanus, where the acts of war are depicted in the most ruthless, impersonal terms. Before going into battle Coriolanus prays to Mars for "smoking swords" (I.iv.11) during the engagement. The image is that of an instrument hacking and thrusting with such rapidity and intensity it literally burns from the friction.

Not only the imagery of the verse portraying Coriolanus' insensate disposition but also the rhythm and movement of the speeches that Coriolanus spews out contribute to the impression of his heartless impulse for destruction. Notice the violence and explosive sound of his address to the Roman soldiers during the fighting:

All the contagion of the south light on you,

> You shames of Rome! you herd of--Boils and plagues
> Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd
> Further than seen and one infect another
> Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,
> That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
> From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!
> All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale
> With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,
> Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
> And make my wars on you. . . . (I.iv.30-40)[56]

The impression of Coriolanus' basically savage nature is conveyed to the audience by visual effects as well as the spoken word. In the course of the battle Coriolanus appears bathed in blood from his gory rampage through the enemy lines (I.vi.22f.,ix.93). This stage effect symbolizes the protagonist's bloodthirstiness. Lee Kirschbaum has commented, "When Shakespeare has Coriolanus enter visibly and shockingly smeared with his own and others' blood, the dramatist is emphasizing a quality of his protagonist . . . the brutality of the military hero which is basically a denial of charity, of identification, of Christian brotherhood and mercy."[57]

While Volumnia waits for her son to make his triumphal entry into Rome after his Volscian victory, she envisions the arm in which he wields his sword as a thing that operates with a mechanical precision bringing annihilation to all men within its swath:

> before him
> He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears:
> Death, that dark spirit, in's nervy arm doth lie;
> Which, being advanced, declines, and then men die.
> (II.i.173-176)

This same image is tied up in the recitation Cominius presents to the Senate when he recounts for the patricians Coriolanus' heroism. He uses the same bloodchilling, awesome images that inform the audience that there is an inhuman, cosmic, compelling, horrifying, mechanical destructiveness in the protagonist:

> in Corioli, let me say,
> I cannot speak him home: he stopp'd the fliers;
> And by his rare example made the coward
> Turn terror into sport: as weeds before
> A vessel under sail, so men obey'd
> And fell below his stem: his sword, death's stamp,
> Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
> He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
> Was timed with dying cries: alone he enter'd
> The mortal gate of the city, which he painted
> With shunless destiny; aidless came off,
> And with a sudden re-inforcement struck
> Corioli like a planet: now all's his:
> When, by and by, the din of war gan pierce
> His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit
> Re-quicken'd what in flesh was fatigate,
> And to the battle came he; where he did
> Run reeking o'er the lives of men, as if
> 'Twere a perpetual spoil: and till we call'd
> Both field and city ours, he never stood
> To ease his breast with panting. (II.ii.106-126)

Again in this instance Shakespeare has combined image with sound. The rhythm of the lines helps to communicate the sense of the deadly engine that Coriolanus is on the battlefield. "The brutally abrupt, piston-like movement of the verse marvellously conveys the sense of Coriolanus as a destructive mechanism, as proceeding with machine-like inevitability."[58]

Coriolanus' deadly, inhuman aggressiveness intensifies after he becomes a mercenary for Aufidius. His power for

savagery and his inclination for impersonality increase as his action and attitude become less those of a mortal and more those of a deity. Menenius reports to Rome what Coriolanus has become:

> The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes: when he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading: he is able to pierce a corslet with his eye; talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. He sits in his state, as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.
> (V.iv.15-26)

The image of Coriolanus as a soldier reaches a climax in this speech by Menenius. Coriolanus' feats in battle have made him an object of awe, but his victories are achieved with a brutality that alienates the other characters and the audience.

In addition to Coriolanus' perversion of military values, Shakespeare indicates that Coriolanus' aristocratic attitude is marred by serious shortcomings. Coriolanus seems to be defending conventional Renaissance standards for social order when he speaks out against the nobility conceding power to the plebeians. But Shakespeare suggests that Coriolanus works against social order. A good aristocrat is interested in seeing each group in the state perform its proper role. Coriolanus, because he hates the people, hinders social harmony. This flaw of the protagonist is pinpointed by two Roman officers in a

conversation while laying cushions in the Capitol. The Second Officer explains that for Coriolanus to be noble he must not care whether the people love or hate him:

> Faith, there have been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore: so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better a ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition; and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see't. (II.ii.8-16)

However, the First Officer reveals that Coriolanus does not measure up to this disinterested ideal. The officer discloses that Coriolanus hates the people and goes out of his way to offend the citizens:

> If he did not care whether he had their love or no, he waved indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm: but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him; and leaves nothing undone that may fully discover him their opposite. Now, to seem to affect the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, to flatter them for their love. (II.ii.17-26)[59]

Coriolanus confirms the First Officer's judgment by his actions. In the gown of humility scene, a Shakespearean invention which has no parallel in Plutarch, the people impress the audience as ingenuous and kindhearted, while Coriolanus appears churlish and spiteful. A true aristocrat, like Cominius and the consuls before him, would respect the people's right to this traditional ceremony and conduct himself so that the functions of the government could be carried on without interruption. But

because Coriolanus hates the people and personally dislikes wearing the toga, he blithely advocates doing away with this ritual (II.iii.148-150). The tribunes block his attempt to rob the plebeians of their right, and though he appears in the forum, his ill-humor makes his performance a fiasco. Coriolanus comes to the forum expecting to buy the people's voices with false flattery, but the citizens hope to give their consent merely for a little kindness:

> Cor. Well then, I pray, your price o' the consulship?
> First Cit. The price is to ask it kindly.[60] (II.iii.78-79)

Civility is not too much to require of Coriolanus for the peace of the state.

A minor but important climax is reached in the relationship between the people and Coriolanus when the sentence of banishment is pronounced. At this point the full enmity that Coriolanus bears toward the plebeians erupts. Shakespeare wrote one of his greatest theatrical curses for the occasion and gave it to Coriolanus:

> You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
> As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
> As the dead carcasses of unburied men
> That do corrupt my air, I banish you;
> And here remain with your uncertainty!
> Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!
> Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
> Fan you into despair! (III.iii.120-127)

This speech is another piece of evidence that Coriolanus' attitude toward the people is unbecoming an aristocrat.

Finally, there is the subtle impression of Coriolanus' reaction to accolades that reverses the predominant impression. The manner in which Coriolanus refuses the praise of his fellows for his indisputably heroic acts largely nullifies the merit which might otherwise accrue from such a gesture of humility. Humility is not a form; it is an attitude, and Coriolanus' persistent and sometimes violent rejection of praise indicates that his humility is specious. He imagines that he is being praised even when he is not. It is as if he expects to be lauded and looks forward to rejecting praise. In the course of battle Lartius casually remarks that Coriolanus is bleeding and should not fight any more:

> Worthy sir, thou bleed'st:
> Thy exercise hath been too violent
> For a second course of fight. (I.v.15-17)

Coriolanus, because of his peculiar and abnormal sensitivity to applause, assumes that Lartius is commending him. Lartius' comment hardly appears to be praise. But that Coriolanus should take it as such is revealing:

> Sir, praise me not:
> My work hath yet not warm'd me: fare you well:
> The blood I drop is rather physical
> Than dangerous to me. (I.v.17-19)

Later in camp after the victory, Cominius and Lartius rejoice in Coriolanus' deeds. However, Coriolanus cuts them short in a speech that suggests his modesty is very close to pride:

> Pray now, no more: my mother,
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
> As you have done; that's what I can; induced
> As you have been; that's for my country;
> He that has but effected his good will
> Hath overta'en mine act. (I.ix.13-19)[61]

Cominius checks Coriolanus' extreme self-effacement and declares that the greatest praise would be too little for what Coriolanus has done (I.ix.19-27). His rebuke temporarily restrains Coriolanus' excessive modesty. But when he refuses a special portion of the spoils and the soldiers cheer him, he lashes out at them with a violence that is unnatural:

> May these same instruments, which you profane,
> Never sound more! when drums and trumpets shall
> I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be
> Made all of false-faced soothing!
> When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,
> Let him be made an overture for the wars!
> No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
> My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch,--
> Which, without note, here's many else have done,--
> You shout me forth
> In acclamations hyperbolical;
> As if I loved my little should be dieted
> In praises sauced with lies. (I.ix.41-53)[62]

Considering Coriolanus' use of rhetoric and abundant use of exclamations, it is as if he enjoys hearing himself rail at the men. Cominius again speaks as a standard for the norm and by his rebuke informs the audience that Coriolanus' modesty is false:

> Too modest are you;
> More cruel to your good report than grateful
> To us that give you truly: by your patience,
> If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you,

> Like one that means his proper harm, in manacles,
> Then reason safely with you. (I.ix.53-58)

Back in Rome Coriolanus continues the pattern of apparent modesty. To a herald who introduces him with his newly acquired name and to the crowd which welcomes him with enthusiasm, he replies, "No more of this; it does offend my heart: / Pray now, no more" (II.i.185-186). In the Capitol Coriolanus fights against hearing his deeds remembered. This time a senator reproves him for his inappropriate modesty: "never shame to hear / What you have nobly done" (II.ii.71-72). The hero of Corioli professes that he would rather have his wounds to heal again than to be reminded of how he received them (II.ii.72-74). And he persists in the evasion of his just reward by saying,

> I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun
> When the alarum were struck than idly sit
> To hear my nothings monster'd. (II.ii.79-81)[63]

Thus, the first impression of a modest man cannot be accepted by the audience which witnesses the irrational repugnance with which the protagonist rebuffs merited praise.[64]

The play, then, does not sustain an unrelentingly singular impression of the protagonist as a great warrior and noble aristocrat. Below this predominant impression is the subtly hidden impression of Coriolanus as a warped soldier and imprudent patrician.

CHAPTER III

It has long been acknowledged that the relationship between Coriolanus and Volumnia stands at the center of the play.[65] The influence of Volumnia on her son underlies many of the reasons for his actions. When Shakespeare adapted the story from Plutarch, he altered and considerably enlarged the role of Volumnia, making her a much greater power in Coriolanus' life.[66] She appears early in the play and reappears at every critical juncture in the development of the plot. Shakespeare, of course, was not equipped with the vocabulary or the background of the modern psychologist, but the relationship he dramatizes between the mother and the son bears all the signs of the complex association that can exist between parent and child. While Shakespeare does not explain in detail all the factors in the relationship or account explicitly for all the traits of Coriolanus arising out of the mother-son bond, he leaves no doubt that in the influence of Volumnia lies the secret of her son's peculiar behavior. However, critics must be careful not to attempt to provide involved and intricate explanations for Coriolanus' actions where Shakespeare was wise enough to leave undefined but none the less clear the dependency of the son on the mother.[67] Indeed, much of the success of Coriolanus' characterization comes from the hints Shakespeare drops

throughout the play about Coriolanus' submissiveness to Volumnia. These impressions are not made so concrete that the predominant impression of the protagonist's heroic stature is destroyed. The critic's task in regard to the psychological element is to identify the hints Shakespeare furnishes, being careful not to be so carried away by sophisticated modern theory as to see in the relationship more than the text warrants.

Shakespeare extends the pattern of dual impressions, that he used to portray Rome and Coriolanus, into the mother-son theme. The predominant impression suggests that Volumnia is the proud widowed mother who raised her noble and valiant son to be a credit to Rome and to her, and that she taught him to value the station to which he was born and to put honor and integrity first. It appears that Coriolanus shows Volumnia the deference due to a mother. When he returns in triumph from the Volscian war, he kneels first in respect to his mother, even before greeting his wife or visiting the Senate. When he sees his family approaching his camp during the siege of Rome, he calls his mother "the honour'd mould / Wherein this trunk was framed" (V.iii.22-23). On other occasions he calls her "good mother" (II.i.218) and "the most noble mother of the world" (V.iii.49). Volumnia calls him "my good soldier . . . / My gentle Marcius" (II.i.188-189), "my sweet son" (III.ii.107), and "great son" (V.iii.140).

When she appeals for a favor, be it so great a favor as sparing Rome, he complies. In fact, Coriolanus appears more involved with his mother than he is with his wife. He and Volumnia seem to be united in affection and mutual respect and admiration.[68] Stopford Brooke writes, "The love that is between them glorifies them. . . . We retire, from time to time, from the noise of Rome and Volscian wars into an island of domestic peace and affection of which Volumnia and Coriolanus are the source."[69]

But the less apparent impression of the relationship implies that an abnormal bond exists between the pair. The play unmistakably reveals that two of the flaws which contribute to making Rome a base society are instilled in Coriolanus through his mother's tutelage.[70] Romans, with the exception of Virgilia, admire violence,[71] and the patricians, with the exception of Cominius, are inconsiderate toward the plebeians. Volumnia taught Coriolanus to take pride in savagery[72] and to despise the people. He represents the apotheosis of these two seamy aspects of Rome. It is Volumnia who is mainly responsible for contaminating Coriolanus with the diseases which infect him. Further, Shakespeare shows that Volumnia continues to dominate her son to the degree that, in his subservience to her, he conducts himself more like a child than a man. Coriolanus appears to be playing a role his mother has foisted off on him. But Shakespeare shows in

a few rare instances what Coriolanus could have been like without his dictatorial parent.

The parlor scene in Marcius' house with Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria, placed conspicuously at the beginning of Act One, attests to the importance that Shakespeare put on the family relations in the formulation of Coriolanus' character.[73] In this scene Volumnia indirectly tells the audience much about herself while supplying significant background about Coriolanus' childhood. The audience learns that Volumnia values reputation more than she does family affection. It was she who made a soldier out of Marcius, because a son means less to her as a person than he does as an agent for making a good name. Ever since infancy Volumnia has been planning her son's future:

> if my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb . . . I, considering how honour would become such a person . . . was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. (I.iii.2-20)

Tyrone Guthrie perspicaciously writes, "Her very first speech . . . lets us understand that the fatherless, only son of such a widow had no alternative but to try to be

the kind of man his mother had determined to make him."[74]

Volumnia prizes the rigors of war more than the pleasures of peace, and would gladly sacrifice as many sons as she would have for her concept of honor:

> Hear me
> profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action. (I.iii.23-27)

Shakespeare never lets the audience forget that Volumnia is the force behind Coriolanus' militarism.[75] In addition to the instance quoted above, on three other occasions Volumnia states this fact: "My praises made thee [Marcius] first a soldier" (III.ii.180), "Thou art my warrior; / I holp to frame thee" (V.iii.62-63), and

> Thou hast never in thy life
> Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
> When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
> Has cluck'd thee to the wars and safely home,
> Loaden with honour. (V.iii.160-164)

Volumnia is thoroughly familiar with Coriolanus' behavior on the battlefield. She can picture accurately in her mind while sitting at home how her son is performing in the fray:

> Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,
> See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair,
> As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:
> Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:
> 'Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
> Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow
> With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,
> Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
> Or all or lose his hire. (I.iii.32-40)

In the very next scene Shakespeare shows Coriolanus fighting exactly as she predicted he would (I.iv.30f). Shakespeare uses this technique to stress that Coriolanus is indebted to Volumnia for his values.

Volumnia is obsessed with her son's blood and wounds. She believes a man bloodstained in battle is beautiful:

> [blood] more becomes a man
> Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,
> When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier
> Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
> At Grecian sword, contemning. (I.iii.42-46)

She is enraptured when she learns that her son has felt the edge of the enemy's sword: "O, he is wounded; I thank the gods for 't" (II.i.133). Menenius shares this bloodthirstiness: "So do I too . . . the wounds become him" (II.i.134-135). Volumnia and Menenius grotesquely take delight in tabulating the cicatrices on Coriolanus' body. They are exuberant that he has suffered as many as twenty-seven sword slashes. And Menenius adds proudly that "every gash was an enemy's grave" (II.i.159-170). When Menenius wants to defend Coriolanus to the tribunes, he speaks of the blood Marcius has shed for the country (III.i.299). Volumnia is also quick to remind the tribunes of the wounds that her son has received serving Rome (IV.ii.28).

This highly developed appetite for blood burns in Coriolanus' veins. For this reason when blood is mentioned in connection with him he takes it as praise (I.v.15-20). He appeals to "the blood we have shed together" (I.vi.57)

to inspire his troops in combat. He believes it is a sin to think that his men do not love the blood in which he is smeared (I.vi.67-69). And he refers to the blood he has shed to justify his censure of the plebeians (III.i.77-80). When he meets Aufidius in Antium, he speaks of the blood that he lost for his thankless country (IV.v.75-76). Little wonder that Coriolanus is preoccupied in thoughts of blood and turns into a mechanism of destruction with the emphasis Volumnia and Rome put on the spilling of blood.

Strangely, however, when others comment on the blood he has lost, Coriolanus becomes defensive and makes light of his sacrifice (I.ix.13-19,47-48,II.ii.73-74). He displays the same reticence to show his wounds or to hear them talked of (I.ix.28-29,II.ii.140-143,151-154,II.iii.83-84,115-117,III.iii.49-52). Critics most commonly call Coriolanus' excessive modesty inverted pride.[76] But I do not think that this is a satisfactory answer. There seems to be a deeper, more irrational cause in his dissatisfaction at hearing his wounds or blood remembered. Cominius implies there is a madness in Coriolanus when it comes to rejecting praise. The general says that Coriolanus will have to be manacled because of his violent modesty (I.ix.56-58). I think Miss Ellis-Fermor is getting close to the reason when she says that Coriolanus is rebelling against standards which disgust him.[77] Coriolanus appears to be

reacting against his mother who values her son only so far as he can gain honor through wounds and blood. The praise of others is an extension of her praise which grieves him:

> my mother
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me grieves me. (I.ix.13-15)

In an episode not found in his source, Shakespeare provides in Coriolanus' son an analogue of the training the father must have received as a child. Volumnia reports that the young Marcius "had rather see the sword and hear the drum, than look upon his schoolmaster" (I.iii.60-61). The boy spends part of an afternoon catching and releasing a butterfly. This pleasant game comes to a fierce conclusion when the boy, presumably in a rage over having stumbled, tears the butterfly to shreds. Volumnia identifies the ferocity of the father in the child: "One on's father's moods" (I.iii.72). Valeria quickly adds that such cruelty is a mark of nobility: "Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child" (I.iii.73). To make sure the audience does not miss the point, later, when Coriolanus is attacking Rome, Shakespeare uses this same image in connection with the father. Cominius says of Marcius,

> they follow him,
> Against us brats, with no less confidence
> Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
> Or butchers killing flies. (IV.vi.92-95)

Of the young Marcius and the butterfly episode, G. Wilson Knight says, "This little incident reflects well Coriolanus' merciless power, his unpitying condemnation of the weak, his violent self-will: above all, his quality of strength misused."[78] Further, the context in which the story is told leads the audience to believe that Valeria and Volumnia approve and foster the boy's viciousness.

Not only has Volumnia taught her son to be brutal, she cultivated in him a hate toward the plebeians. Shakespeare discloses this fact in a speech by Coriolanus after the first altercation with the citizens. Marcius is at home and is astounded to find that his mother is not happy with the verbal beating that he gave the people. He ponders Volumnia's displeasure in the light of what she told him previously about the insignificance of the people:

> I muse my mother
> Does not approve me further, who was wont
> To call them [people] woollen vassals, things created
> To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
> In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder,
> When one but of my ordinance stood up
> To speak of peace or war. (III.ii.7-13)

It is clear that Coriolanus thinks of the people only in the terms his mother has taught him to. For political purposes Volumnia would have Coriolanus hide his arrogant aristocratic temper. She has not changed her opinion of the lower-class. The people are still the "general

louts" (III.i.66) to her, and she still has a curse for them: "Now the red pestilence strike all the trades in Rome, / And occupations perish!" (IV.ii.13-14).

Critics who use the psychological approach go beyond attributing Coriolanus' hostility toward the plebeians to Volumnia's tutoring. They say that Coriolanus actually hates his mother, but since he cannot vent his hate on her he transfers it to the people. Rufus Putney writes, "Ostensibly his anger is directed against the plebeians and the foes of Rome, but . . . his rage is displaced from its real object, his mother."[79] This idea is one of the more plausible to be advanced by the psychological critics, but the text supports it only circumstantially, not explicitly. Shakespeare puts nothing directly in the words or actions of Coriolanus to prove that he hates his mother. This reading must be inferred from the fact that Coriolanus resents his mother's praise and from the fact that his reverence for Volumnia is belied by its exaggerated quality. Coriolanus attempts to please Volumnia at every turn. He speaks in exaggerated images that suggest that he considers himself greatly inferior to his mother. When Volumnia bows to him in greeting, he compares himself to a molehill and her to Olympus:

> My other bows:
> As if Olympus to a molehill should
> In supplication nod. (V.iii.29-31)

When he genuflects before her, he wants to show "deep duty"

beyond the measure of "common sons" (V.iii.5-52). Although Volumnia admits that the duty her son has shown her has been improper and that she has neglected her duty to him

> I kneel before thee; and unproperly
> Show duty, as mistaken all this while
> Between the child and parent. (V.iii.54-56)

Coriolanus cannot comprehend the meaning of his mother's confession. He cannot psychologically free himself from his inferior position. He considers himself her "corrected son" (V.iii.57). As Volumnia declares, Coriolanus is yoked closer to her than any man in the world is tied to his mother: "There's no man in the world / More bound to's mother" (V.iii.158-159).

When a comparison is made between the small place in the story that Plutarch gives Volumnia and the larger and more influential role Shakespeare provides for her, the dramatist's intentions become evident. O. J. Campbell, Bradley, MacCallum, and Bullough all agree that Plutarch ascribes Coriolanus' bent for war to an irresistible impulse of his own nature. But Shakespeare makes Volumnia the source of his violence.[80] Plutarch says that Coriolanus lacked education and consequently became choleric (Variorum 622). But as Herman Heuer writes, "Shakespeare shows him /Coriolanus/ repeatedly as being by no means inaccessible to educational influences, particularly those of his mother and his friends."[81] In Shakespeare's story,

Coriolanus receives the wrong education. And what Volumnia cannot teach him to do, she commands him to do against his will.

There are three occasions in the play where Volumnia pushes Coriolanus into situations against his will. In this manner Shakespeare shows that Volumnia continues into the present her domineering way with her son. Her influence perverted his character as a child, and now that he is a man her authoritarian personality ruins his life and leads him to his death.

If Coriolanus had not made himself available for the consulship, the crisis which precipitated his banishment never would have occurred. And Volumnia is to blame for his candidacy.[82] She is happy that he is wounded in the war because it will make him a more attractive nominee for the consulship: "there will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place" (II.i. 163-164). In lines already quoted in Chapter I, she tells her son that she has long dreamed of his gaining the chief post in the state. However, Coriolanus would rather not become involved in politics:

> Know, good mother,
> I had rather be their servant in my way
> Than sway with them in theirs. (II.i.218-220)

But he relents and begins the election process. The result is an unsatisfactory encounter with the plebeians in the gown ceremony, which makes it possible for the tribunes to

persuade the citizens to reverse their affirmative vote.

The second instance where Volumnia pushes Coriolanus into a situation against his will ends more disastrously. Coriolanus has exploded in front of the people and is rushed from the street before more harm can be done. Cominius outlines three alternatives for Coriolanus: he can mobilize his friends and take the consulship by force, he can reappear before the people and appease them, or he can hide from the public until the crisis passes (III.ii.93-95). Coriolanus does not want to face the people again, but Volumnia, backed by Menenius, insists that her son attempt diplomacy. Coriolanus then wavers between agreeing to pacify the plebeians and giving up the idea of his candidacy. Finally, Volumnia whips him into submission:

> To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
> Than thou of them. Come all to ruin; let
> Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
> Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
> With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.
> Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
> But owe thy pride thyself. (III.ii.124-130)

The expression Coriolanus uses when he replies to his mother demonstrates that his reaction is that of a child and not of a man. He is painfully aware that his mother is chiding him as if he were still her little boy:

> Pray, be content:
> Mother, I am going to the market-place;
> Chide me no more. (III.ii.130-132)

Wyndham Lewis says, "The confrontation of Coriolanus and

his mother, Volumnia, in Act III, scene 2, is the most characteristic of the piece, and gives the true interpretation of Coriolanus. He is shown there as a child, drilled into a second nature which he goes on mechanically obeying. . . . This scene between Coriolanus and his mother is the key to the play: it shows Coriolanus as the rigid and hypnotized schoolboy influenced in his most susceptible years by a snobbish and violent parent, and urged into a course of destruction. . . ."[83]

The seemingly weak, certainly feminine Virgilia again proves an effective contrast with her husband in the matter of strength of will. Volumnia tries to run Virgilia's life as she runs Coriolanus' life. But Virgilia, unlike her husband, resists her mother-in-law. This I take to be the meaning of the forty-eight line episode where Virgilia, against the coercion of Valeria and Volumnia, is faithful to her convictions. The two older Roman matrons demand that Virgilia shall go visiting with them while Coriolanus is at war. Valeria coaxes and Volumnia commands, but Virgilia is adamant (I.iii.76-124). Finally, through perserverance Virgilia prevails. Coriolanus' pusillanimity before his mother is all the more reprehensible in the light of his wife's resistance.

The scene between Volumnia and Coriolanus before the gates of Rome is virtually a duplicate of their meeting in Act Three and represents the third occasion where

Coriolanus gives in to his mother. When polemics fail to convince Coriolanus not to burn the city, Volumnia again chides him into obedience. Shakespeare faithfully follows Plutarch for Volumnia's speech, but the playwright makes one fundamental addition. To the conclusion of Volumnia's oration Shakespeare appends six lines not found in or suggested by Plutarch.[84] These lines express anger, indignation, and defiance:

> Come, let us go:
> This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
> His wife is in Corioli and his child
> Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch:
> I am hush'd until our city be afire,
> And then I'll speak a little. (V.iii.177-182)

This short speech added to Plutarch's account breaks whatever resistance that remained in Coriolanus. His mother's threat to disown him as a son cows him.

This climactic scene is often misinterpreted, D. A. Traversi is one who has failed to see the same principle working here as in Act Three. He contends that in the first instance Coriolanus' submission to his mother is unnatural. Then he says that Coriolanus' obedience in the final act is a return to nature.[85] There is essentially no difference between the two incidents. Both are unnatural. Shakespeare ironically puts this truth in Coriolanus' words:

> O mother, mother!
> What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
> The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
> They laugh at. (V.iii.182-185)

Many critics fail to interpret the second act of submission as unnatural, evidently in an attempt to read a happy ending into the play, something Shakespeare never intended. Bradley says that Coriolanus is giving in to "simple human feeling."[86] G. Wilson Knight believes that Volumnia convinces her son through a "mysterious pride-love,"[87] while John M. Murry says that it is "domestic love."[88] Hardin Craig contends that Coriolanus' mind is changed by "patriotism as a force of nature,"[89] and Irving Ribner says that humanity conquers the protagonist.[90] These and other positive forces suggested by critics do not describe what is happening. Volumnia defeats her son in a battle of wills, and he yields to her anger.[91]

Shakespeare uses an acting metaphor to describe Coriolanus' subservience to Volumnia. Shakespeare pictures Coriolanus as an actor playing the role his mother has cast him in.[92] His violence and his haughtiness are a grim act, performed with such diligence that he is in danger of actually becoming what he plays at being. But Shakespeare allows him a few moments where he impresses the audience as being himself.

Coriolanus pictures himself as an actor by means of a figure of speech. When he learns that he must face the people in a gown, he says, "It is a part / That I shall blush in acting" (II.ii.148-149). His statement implies

that there are some roles he does not blush in acting. Coriolanus is ignorant of himself and mistakes the part he plays as his real self. He thinks that his violence and haughtiness are natural to him. Shakespeare indicates that Coriolanus is playing at being the man that he thinks he is:

> Why do you wish me milder? would you have me
> False to my nature? Rather say I play
> The man I am. (III.ii.13-16)

Coriolanus is striving to be the man that his mother wants him to be. Volumnia says, "You might have been enough the man you are, / With striving less to be so" (III.ii.19-20). When Volumnia tells Coriolanus to flatter the rabble, she is asking him to play a new part: "To have my praise for this, perform a part / Thou hast not done before" (III.ii. 109-110). But Coriolanus does not believe that he can switch from his former role: "You have put me now to such a part which never / I shall discharge to life" (III.ii. 104-105). Cominius offers to "prompt" him in the new part. After dismissing the emissary Menenius during the beleaguerment of Rome, Coriolanus promises himself and Aufidius that he will play the role of the hardened soldier and hear no more pleas for the city (V.iii.17-19). But when he sees his family, he finds that he cannot go through with the act:

> Like a dull actor now,
> I have forgot my part, and I am out,
> Even to a full disgrace. (V.iii.40-43)

There are, however, a few occasions where Coriolanus relaxes and shows his natural side, the man he could have been had he been free from his mother. Shakespeare provides the first glimpse of the natural man just prior to the Volscian conflict. Marcius enters lightheartedly into a wager with Lartius, and shows that he can be a pleasant and amicable comrade. Each bets his horse, Marcius that the fighting has begun, Lartius that it has not. When a messenger discloses that Marcius is the loser, he offers to buy his steed back. Lartius' reply indicates the congeniality between them: "No, I'll nor sell nor give him: lend you him I will / For half a hundred years" (I.iv. 1-7). Later, after the engagement, Lartius gives Marcius the horse as a reward.

The second example of Coriolanus' basic good nature comes when he begs Cominius for the release of an enemy captive who treated him kindly in Corioli:

> I sometimes lay here in Corioli
> At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:
> He cried to me; I saw him prisoner. . . .
> I request you
> To give my poor host freedom. (I.ix.82-84,86-87)

After strenuous combat and after refusing praise and spoils, it is significant that Shakespeare should have Coriolanus make this compassionate appeal. But what is even more striking is how Shakespeare changed his source to make Coriolanus' petition even more noble-minded and selfless. In Plutarch the man for whom the protagonist

begs release is a wealthy, old friend of Coriolanus. In that account Coriolanus tells Cominius that he does not want his friend to be sold into slavery (Variorum 627). Shakespeare makes the prisoner a poor man who was not a friend of Coriolanus, but a stranger who had befriended the hero in his need.[93]

When Coriolanus speaks to his wife, the audience once again sees the natural, unaffected side of his personality come to the fore. His words to Virgilia are tender and sympathetic, almost playful. He greets his wife when he returns from war:

> My gracious silence hail!
> Wouldst thou have laugh'd had I come coffin'd home,
> That weep'st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,
> Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
> And mothers that lack sons. (II.i.192-196)

In Act Five he calls Virgilia "Best of my flesh," and welcomes her with deep emotion:

> O, a kiss
> Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!
> I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip
> Hath virgin'd it e'er since. (V.iii.44-48)

Shakespeare gives Coriolanus an entire scene where the warrior relaxes before the audience's eyes and exposes his soft side. It occurs when he is leaving Rome to go into exile. He confronts his disconsolate mother in a manner that for once raises him above her. He speaks to Menenius with affection. His speeches show the delicacy and simplicity of his momentary naturalness:

What, what, what!
I shall be loved when I am lack'd. Nay, mother
Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules,
Six of his labours you'ld have done, and saved
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius,
Droop not; adieu. Farewell, my wife, my mother:
I'll do well yet. Thou old and true Menenius,
Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,
And venomous to thine eyes. My sometime general,
I have seen thee stern, and thou hast oft beheld
Heart-hardening spectacles; tell these sad women
'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,
As 'tis to laugh at 'em. (IV.i.13-27)

and:

Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and
My friends of noble touch, when I am forth,
Bid me farewell, and smile. (IV.i.48-50)

Finally, the audience hears Coriolanus speak with great fondness about Menenius who came to the Volscian camp pleading for Rome's safety. In his remarks to Aufidius, Coriolanus gives a small indication of the tenderness that he has in him and of the softheartedness a father, such as Menenius, could have drawn out of him:

This last old man,
Whom with crack'd heart I have sent to Rome,
Loved me above the measure of a father;
Nay, godded me, indeed. Their latest refuge
Was to send him; for whose old love I have,
Though I show'd sourly to him, once more offer'd
The first conditions, which they did refuse
And cannot now accept; to grace him only
That thought he could do more. . . . (V.iii.8-16)

Shakespeare, then, describes Coriolanus as a son dominated by his mother. She is responsible for his savagery and haughtiness. Yet, the dramatist does reveal a sympathetic side of the hero, the picture of a man who was capable of comradeship, mercy, affection, and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare makes Coriolanus a triple victim.[95] Volumnia, Rome, and Aufidius manipulate and then sacrifice him. Ignorant of himself and the world around him,[96] he becomes the scapegoat for these three forces. His loyalty is not to a high standard of personal integrity or honesty.[97] His loyalty is to his mother, who betrays him and makes it possible for the patricians, the tribunes, and Aufidius to betray him.[98] He dies unenlightened and unredeemed.

Shakespeare portrays Coriolanus as a character with great abilities. However, Coriolanus never serves himself with these abilities; rather, his talents are put to the service of others. Volumnia makes a puppet out of him. She turns him into a bloodthirsty soldier and moulds him into the scourge of the plebeians. When she tries to make a politician out of him, she fails, not because she has lost her power to control him nor because he is exercising free will, but because he is psychologically unable to discard his old way of thinking his mother has taught him and take up her new way.[99] The patricians abet Volumnia in the exploitation of Coriolanus. They encourage his violence and applaud his arrogance. They also support Volumnia's attempt to involve him in the Roman political chicanery. The tribunes step in and victimize

him when the efforts of his mother and his peers to use him are unsuccessful. Through lies and deceit they run him out of Rome and into the cunning power of Aufidius, who hoodwinks the exile into serving him. Then, after Coriolanus is duped once more by Volumnia into sparing Rome and when he is no longer useful to anyone, he is put to the sword. W. I. Carr shows insight into Coriolanus' condition when he writes that Coriolanus "is the scape-goat for the terrible deficiencies of his training, and his exile and murder have almost the quality of ritual. What we see is a man compelled to suffer the guilty responsibilities of his society; a victim denied even partial understanding of what is happening by those very qualities of behaviour which his class imposed and which gave him the stature he had in Rome."[100]

Out of his sacrificial experience Coriolanus learns nothing.[101] He remains immature and childlike to his death. Aufidius, like Brutus and Sicinius before him (III.i.161f,III.iii.163f), taunts Coriolanus by calling him a traitor (V.vi.84-86). To this jeer Aufidius adds the appropriate epithet, "boy of tears." Coriolanus' reaction is similar to the outburst that the tribunes craftily evoked from him. He responds with virulence and rancor:

> Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
> Too great for what contains it. Boy! O slave! . . .
> Your judgements, my grave lords,

> Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion--
> Who wears my stripes impress'd upon him; that
> Must bear my beating to his grave--shall join
> To thrust the lie unto him. (V.vi.104-110)

and:

> Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads,
> Stain all your edges on me. Boy! false hound!
> If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
> That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
> Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
> Alone I did it. Boy! (V.vi.112-117)

The gibe "boy" especially agitates Coriolanus. He repeats the insult three times. Coriolanus erupts just as Aufidius planned and hoped he would. The Volscian general thus sets the vulnerable Roman up for the kill.

In Plutarch, Coriolanus is not given a chance to answer Aufidius' charges because the conspirators are afraid that he will acquit himself (Variorum 644). But Shakespeare gives Coriolanus an opportunity to reply. It is clear that Shakespeare varies from his source to inform the audience that Coriolanus remains unchanged in the course of the play.[102]

Thus, to the closing speech the spectator or reader is struck by the disturbing ambivalence of the play. Throughout Shakespeare presents dual, opposing impressions or valuations of the protagonist and his society. The predominant impression is an honorific one, but along with it runs a subtly hidden but relentlessly pursued scent of moral corruption. Coriolanus and Rome appear at one and the same time noble and base, exalted and belittled.

NOTES

[1]Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background (London, 1910), p. 547.

[2]"From Mine Own Knowledge: A Theme in the Late Tragedies," Centennial Review, VIII (1964), 35.

[3]Shakespeare the Dramatist, ed. Kenneth Muir (New York, 1956), p. 66.

[4]The Sovereign Flower (London, 1958), p. 166.

[5]Stauffer, Shakespeare's World of Images: The Development of his Moral Ideas (New York, 1949), p. 252; Phillips, The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays (New York, 1940), pp. 172-188.

[6]Some Shakespearean Themes (London, 1958), p. 166.

[7]Throughout I quote from The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Chicago, 1951).

[8]"The Roman Plays: Coriolanus," Shakespeare: The Writer and His Work, ed. Bonamy Dobree (London, 1964), p. 320.

[9]Lees, "Coriolanus, Aristotle, and Bacon," RES, n. s. I (1950), 115, and Hill, "Coriolanus: Violentest Contrariety," Essays and Studies, XVII (1964), 22.

[10]See Horace H. Furness, ed. The New Variorum

Edition of Shakespeare: The Tragedie of Coriolanus (Philadelphia, 1928), pp. 627, 629, 630.

[11]W. I. Carr, "'Gracious Silence'--A Selective Reading of Coriolanus," ES, XLVI (1965), 227-229, suggests this idea.

[12]Paul A. Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," PMLA (1949), 223, makes this point.

[13]Shakespeare: The Roman Plays (Stanford, 1963), pp. 208-209.

[14]"A Selective Reading," p. 225.

[15]A. C. Bradley, A Miscellany (London, 1929), pp. 86-87, makes a similar reading: he says that their accusation "shows only the littleness of their minds." Stauffer, Shakespeare's World of Images, p. 253, writes: "the cunning tribunes are surely wrong in their analysis . . . their motive-hunting reveals only their own foxships." But John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1949), p. 260, defends the tribunes: "Essentially the tribunes are right. . . ."

[16]Palmer, Political Characters, p. 274, admits in this case the tribunes are "dishonest," but argues that the end justifies the means.

[17]Norman T. Carrington, Shakespeare: Coriolanus

(London, 1956), p. 19, suggests this reading: "this is sheer self-delusion." Matthew Proser, The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies (Princeton, 1965), p. 145, says of Volumnia's claim, "Coriolanus' pride may not derive completely from his mother, but she is certainly involved in it."

[18]B. H. Kembell-Cook, ed. The New Clarendon Shakespeare: Coriolanus (Oxford, Eng., 1954), p. 203, writes that Shakespeare "sacrifices psychological consistency to dramatic effect in making Aufidius welcome with romantic chivalry the enemy he has sworn to 'potch at some way'." John Middleton Murry, John Clare and Other Studies (New York, 1950), p. 224, says: "Aufidius is the weak point of the play." Bradley, Miscellany, p. 97, agrees: "The drawing of the character of Aufidius seems to me by far the weakest spot in the drama."

[19]Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, II (Princeton, 1947), p. 276, misses the point. He concludes, "Aufidius adds in all sincerity" this eulogy.

[20]Clarendon Shakespeare, p. 217. A. P. Rossiter, Angel with Horns (London, 1961), p. 238, also fails to see the relevance of the last speeches. He writes, "The conclusion of Coriolanus is . . . flat, hurried, twisted off and depressing." However, Stopford A. Brooke, On Ten Plays of Shakespeare (New York, 1905), p. 244, has interpreted

the conclusion correctly. He says that Aufidius "has sated his hatred and envy, and thinks it politic to seem sorry. . . . It is not true sorrow." Harold S. Wilson, On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy (Toronto, 1957), p. 111, makes the same point: "Coriolanus' murder has been the unexpected coup of a political cabal, of Aufidius' military faction."

[21]Matthew Proser, "Coriolanus: The Constant Warrior and the State," CE, XXIV (1963), 507, takes this one-sided view of Coriolanus: "Coriolanus is a play which maintains more or less one constant image of its hero. . . . Our vision of the protagonist is unrelentingly singular."

[22]"Another World of Shakespeare," MP, XLIX (1951), 59-60.

[23]Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 196.

[24]Scholars are in general agreement that the stage-directions are Shakespeare's. Granville-Barker, Prefaces, p. 295, says that the stage-directions "are among the play's most notable features." J. Dover Wilson, The Tragedy of Coriolanus (Cambridge, Eng., 1960), p. 137, has suggested that there is the "possibility that the prompter or book-holder might jot down supplementary or alternative stage-directions in the margin of the author's foul papers."

Wilson mentions two possibilities of this kind in Coriolanus, neither of which involve the stage-directions referred to here.

[25]Bradley, Miscellany, p. 82, challenges Coriolanus' opinion. Bradley believes that the people can be ruled because they react properly to decent treatment: "to rule them [plebeians], while granting them a place in the constitution, would seem quite feasible."

[26]Granville-Barker, Prefaces, p. 223, says that in these lines Coriolanus sounds "the rare note of selfless intellectual passion."

[27]Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1960), p. 185. Although Ribner makes this statement, he does qualify his criticism with the thought that Coriolanus is a poor ruler because he lacks a sense of responsibility toward the people.

[28]"Coriolanus As A Tragic Hero," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (1959), 55.

[29]The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943), pp. 7-16, 23-34.

[30]"Coriolanus: Interpretation," Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare, ed. Waldo F. McNeir and Thelma N. Greenfield (Eugene, Oregon, 1966), p. 204. Stauffer, Shake-

speare's World, p, 257, and John W. Draper, "Political Themes in Shakespeare's Later Plays," JEGP, XXXV (1936), 61-93.

[31]"Coriolanus--A Tragedy of Youth," Shakespeare Quarterly, XII (1961), 103.

[32]Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 572.

[33]The Herculean Hero (New York, 1962), p. 142.

[34]Shakespeare: A Survey (New York, 1925), p. 265.

[35]"Shakespeare and the Lonely Dragon," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIV (1955), 115.

[36]Shakespeare's Tragedies (London, 1951), p. 251.

[37]Miscellany, p. 89.

[38]The Meaning of Shakespeare (University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 599.

[39]Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier: The World of His Final Tragedies (Los Angeles, 1950), p. 245. Rodney Poisson, "Coriolanus as Aristotle's Magnanimous Man," Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare, ed. Waldo F. McNeir and Thelma N. Greenfield (Eugene, Oregon, 1966), p. 219, also makes this point.

[40]Tragic Frontier, p. 243.

[41]See Peter F. Neumeyer, "Ingratitude is Monstrous: An Approach to Coriolanus," CE, XXVI (1964), 192-198.

[42]Paul N. Siegel, "Shakespeare and the Neo-Chivalric Cult of Honor," Centennial Review, VIII (1964), 39-70, argues that because of Renaissance concepts of honor Coriolanus was expected to revenge his banishment with Rome's destruction.

[43]Shakespeare's Sources, I (London, 1957), p. 219.

[44]"What Happens in Coriolanus," Shakespeare Quarterly, IX (1958), 334.

[45]"The Tragedies of Nature and Fortune," Stratford Papers on Shakespeare (Toronto, 1961), p. 43.

[46]MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 524, uses this argument.

[47]Waith, The Herculean Hero, pp. 121-143.

[48]Poisson, Pacific Coast Studies, pp. 210-224.

[49]See Note 25. MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 528, writes, "If they are handled in the right way, these citizen soldiers can play their part well."

[50]John M. Murry, Countries of the Mind (London, 1922), p. 47, suggests this idea that Virgilia, by contrast, judges Coriolanus' violence.

[51] Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (New York, 1845), p. 51.

[52] See Charles Mitchell, "Coriolanus: Power as Honor," Shakespeare Studies, I (1965), p. 201; Rosen, Craft of Tragedy, p. 226, and Palmer, Political Characters, p. 257.

[53] The Imperial Theme (London, 1931), p. 168.

[54] Shakespeare: The Roman Plays, p. 229.

[55] The Apothecary's Shop (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 39.

[56] Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 36, makes this point.

[57] "Shakespeare's Stage Blood and Its Critical Significance," PMLA, LXIV (1949), 527.

[58] Carr, "A Selective Reading," p. 225.

[59] I agree with Dean Frye, "Commentary in Shakespeare: The Case of Coriolanus," Shakespeare Studies, I (1965), p. 115, and Arthur C. Sprague, Shakespeare and the Audience: A Study in the Technique of Exposition (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), p. 172, that the two officers are choral commentators whose statements are to be taken at face value.

[60] Frye, "Commentary," p. 109, and MacCallum, Shake-

speare's Roman Plays, p. 527, stress the point that the citizens appear more sympathetic in this scene than Coriolanus.

[61]Knight, Imperial Theme, p. 169, comments on this speech: "He jerks out platitudes again. They are not sincere. He does not believe any one has overtaken his acts."

[62]Goeffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, V (New York, 1964), p. 480, comments on these lines: "Marcius' modesty is revealed as an austere pride when he rejects the soldier's applause as 'praises sauc'd with lies'."

[63]Granville-Barker, Prefaces, p. 160, says that Coriolanus' "repeated protests against the praises lavished on him become somewhat less then genuine."

[64]Northrop Frye, Stratford Papers, p. 43, is surely mistaken in his opinion that in Coriolanus' modesty there is no affectation.

[65]Stopford Brooke, Ten Plays, p. 246, writes: "Their relationship is the inmost heart of the drama. . . ." Granville-Barker, Prefaces, p. 164, says: "The relationship between mother and son and the likeness and differences between them are at the core of the play."

[66]See MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 496.

[67]For example, David B. Barron, "Coriolanus: Portrait of the Artist As Infant," American Image, XIX (1962), 171-193, makes this mistake. Barron says that Coriolanus was frustrated in the nursing situation, that Volumnia did not breast feed Coriolanus properly. Robert Stoller, "Shakespearean Tragedy: Coriolanus," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXXV (1966), 263-273, contends that Coriolanus is acting out his mother's phallic fanatasy. Stoller says that Coriolanus is the literal embodiment of Volumnia's phallic wish.

[68]Bradley, Miscellany, p. 92, says that Coriolanus "regards his mother not merely with devoted affection but with something like religious awe."

[69]Ten Plays, p. 246.

[70]Norman Rabkin, "Coriolanus: The Tragedy of Politics," Shakespeare Quarterly, XVII (1966), 209, makes this point.

[71]The love of war and violence is not confined to Rome. The Volscian servants prefer war to peace (IV.v.228f).

[72]Matthew Proser, The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies, p. 148, makes this point.

[73]Glynne Wickham, "'Coriolanus': Shakespeare's Tragedy

in Rehearsal and Performance," Stratford-Upon Avon Studies VIII: Later Shakespeare (London, 1966), p. 172, mentions that this scene is the only one in the Shakespearean canon which is neither introduced nor interrupted by a man.

[74]"Hidden Motives in Five Shakespearean Plays: Coriolanus," In Various Directions: A View of Theatre (New York, 1962), p. 87.

[75]Traversi, "Coriolanus," Scrutiny, VI (1937), 55, proposes this idea.

[76]See Palmer, Political Characters, p. 265, and Farnham, Tragic Frontier, p. 240.

[77]Shakespeare the Dramatist, p. 74.

[78]Imperial Theme, p. 171. On this episode see also Charles K. Hofling, "An Interpretation of Shakespeare's Coriolanus," American Image, XIV (1957), 417; Traversi, Shakespeare: The Roman Plays, p. 220; Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, p. 600, and Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, p. 220.

[79]"Coriolanus and His Mother," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXXI (1962), 365. I. R. Browning, "Coriolanus: Boy of Tears," Essays in Criticism, V (1955), 28, and Barron, "Portrait of the Artist As Infant," 179, make the same point.

[80] Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire (New York, 1943), p. 211, Bradley, Miscellany, p. 99, MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 549, and Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, p. 479.

[81] "From Plutarch to Shakespeare: A Study of Coriolanus," Shakespeare Survey, X (1957), 56.

[82] See Kumar Sailendra Sen, "What Happens in Coriolanus," 333; Poisson, Pacific Coast Studies, p. 214, and Craig, Pacific Coast Studies, p. 207.

[83] The Lion and the Fox (London, 1927), p. 242. Granville-Barker, Prefaces, p. 232, and Palmer, Political Characters, p. 279, make this point.

[84] MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays, p. 496, says: "In Plutarch her words are throughout forcible and impassioned, but they do not burst into the wrathful indignation of the close, which alone is sufficient to break down Coriolanus' resolution."

[85] Shakespeare: The Roman Plays, pp. 254, 281.

[86] Miscellany, p. 93.

[87] Imperial Theme, p. 195.

[88] John Clare and Other Studies, p. 242.

[89] An Interpretation of Shakespeare (New York, 1948), p. 300.

[90] Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 188.

[91] See G. B. Harrison, Shakespeare's Tragedies, p. 249, and Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire, p. 201.

[92] Miss Ellis-Fermor, Shakespeare the Dramatist, p. 69, writes: "He appears rather as a man playing a part or a succession of parts. . . ."

[93] T. J. B. Spencer, ed. Shakespeare's Plutarch (Baltimore, 1946), p. 16, notes that Shakespeare deflates Coriolanus when the dramatist has him forget the poor man's name. G. Wilson Knight, Imperial Theme, p. 170, writes: "Here is a new quality: like a rivulet subterranean, waters of love below the hard crust of his iron pride. . . . This is the deep prompting of love."

[94] Edward Dowden, Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art (New York, 1880), p. 263, says: "For Virgilia, the gentle woman in whom his heart finds rest, Coriolanus has a manly tenderness and constant freshness of adhesion."

[95] John Holloway, The Story of the Night: Studies in Shakespeare's Major Tragedies (Lincoln, Neb., 1961), p. 130, and Kenneth Burke, "Coriolanus--and the Delights of Faction," Hudson Review, XIX (1966), 193, discusses the

victimization of Coriolanus.

[96]John M. Murry, _John Clare and Other Studies_, p. 226, says: "Shakespeare's Coriolanus sees neither before nor after. He is ignorant of his own nature as a savage." For similar comments see Irving Ribner, "The Tragedy of _Coriolanus_," _ES_, XXXIV (1953), 3, and Goddard, _The Meaning of Shakespeare_, p. 602.

[97]Critics like Miss Ellis-Fermor, _Shakespeare the Dramatist_, p. 70, who argue that Coriolanus forfeits his integrity when he agrees to flatter the people, are mistaken. The two officers (II.ii.7f) make it clear that Coriolanus' refusal to flatter the people is motivated by ignoble reasons. Coriolanus will not be civil to the plebeians because Volumnia taught him to hate them. There is nothing noble or virtuous in this.

[98]Farnham, _Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier_, p. 261, has the situation backwards when he says that Coriolanus betrays Rome. Coriolanus narrowly escapes the death sentence at the hands of his countrymen. Driven from his home, Coriolanus is betrayed by his country.

[99]G. Wilson Knight, _Sovereign Flower_, p. 66, is mistaken when he says that Volumnia creates in Coriolanus a force she cannot control. Volumnia is capable of beating her son into submission whenever she chooses to use her anger.

[100] *English Studies*, p. 223.

[101] Robert B. Heilman, "From Mine Own Knowledge," 33; E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London, 1958), p. 21, and Peter F. Neumeyer, "Not Local Habitation Nor a Name: *Coriolanus*," *University Review*, XXXII (1966), 195, make this point.

[102] See Paul A. Jorgensen, "Elizabethan Soldier," 234, and MacCallum, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*, p. 625.

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