

A STUDY OF THE TRAGEDY OF CORIOLANUS

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

by

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Coriolanus is a relatively neglected play. In comparison to King Lear or Macbeth, for example, it has attracted little critical attention. As with most Shakespeare studies, however, this "little" is in itself a formidable body of literature. The present bibliography includes several hundred works which refer directly and at length to the play, but this represents only a fraction of extant criticism. I was unable, nevertheless, to find any long published work which deals exclusively with Coriolanus. The tendency is to study the play as an illustration of some generalised critical idea. It seems almost to justify the attention it receives in longer works only, for example, because it is one of the Roman Plays or concentrates particularly on politics, or provides opportunity to study Shakespeare's handling of source material. The first intention of this thesis is to attempt a necessarily brief but, as far as possible, comprehensive survey of the main aspects of study which Coriolanus provides. Of course dealing with play for its own sake involves extended reference to the kind of idea hinted at above which the play is usually used to exemplify. It was found that this reference was useful in the chapters on the source, the politics, and

the hero. In consequence these three chapters are longer than Chapters Two and Three as they contain large passages of quotation. In these chapters the methodology adopted can be loosely described as historic/generic. This was arrived at after a study of some of the available critical material. Bearing in mind the reputation that Shakespeare enjoys, and the fact that the play is almost universally recognized as a structural tour de force, it seemed safe to work on the hypothesis that modern critical problems connected with the meaning of the action are due to misunderstanding or mis-reading. The logical thing to do in these circumstances seems to be to find out as far as possible how Shakespeare and his audience would understand the play within their own particular frames of reference. Chapters ^{Four} ~~4~~ and ^{Five} ~~5~~ in particular attempt this.

A brief examination of the current editions of Coriolanus proved that the Arden edition deservedly enjoys its good reputation. Comparison with the first Folio in Hinman's facsimile shows that the Arden's editorial liberties with the "original" are minimal and judicious. All references to Shakespeare's plays in this thesis are to the uniform Arden edition.

Wherever possible, footnotes have been restricted to authorship and publication details, and page references.

For this reason, it was considered acceptable to place them at the end of the chapter to which they refer as few of them contain information that needs to be absorbed simultaneously with their respective areas of reference. Only a small fraction of the works listed in the bibliography are mentioned overtly in the text, but the remainder are included as they were all found to be useful in this study. They also combine to form an extended footnote to the whole: it is not always possible to pinpoint credit for an impression gained or the suggestion that sparks off a train of ideas or reveals connections between the thoughts of other critics. It is impossible to extricate and itemise the ideas communicated personally or formulated in conversation with Professor F.G. Butler, so although I am greatly indebted to him, my acknowledgement must remain general.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOURCE

It would be difficult to prove conclusively that Shakespeare was not invited or requested to write a play based on the popular story¹ of Coriolanus. J. M. Robertson² concretises this possibility with an intriguing thesis that the play was in fact rewritten from an original by Chapman. The story, he argues, would have had a far greater appeal to Chapman with his consuming interest in the heroic age of Classical antiquity, than to Shakespeare. Further, it is likely, he says, that Chapman was familiar with Alexandre Hardy's Coriolan which, it is generally accepted, Shakespeare was not, hence the startling similarities in some of the two plays' deviations from their common source. This is hardly a more satisfactory explanation than the kind of airy alternative that disposes of the mystery by saying the source material is such that it would invite any dramatist to make similar changes.³

In view of the insubstantial nature of these surmises, it seems safe to work on the hypothesis that Shakespeare's choice of the story was free and therefore creative. Nor was he limited in choice. The accumulated mental store of a middle-aged man who, it is justifiable to assume, was active, widely-read

and contemplative, would endue him with a rich variety of imaginative resources.

The strongest factor influencing his choice would seem to be the essentially dramatic nature of the story - particularly as it emerges from the vigorous and colourful prose in North's English version of Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus. It offered an obviously irresistible opportunity for re-exploring from a new aspect pre-occupations which had engaged Shakespeare's attention in earlier plays: the soldier in society, the parent-child relationship, the "solitary" man and the exile, the redeeming power of nature.⁴ More specifically, it demanded a fresh look at the Rome of Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra. In many ways, these three plays form a triptych as J. B. Phillips suggests:

One is almost tempted to see a cyclic unity in these (the Roman) plays, a unity which embraces the three principal systems of government recognised in Shakespeare's day. In Coriolanus, democracy is tried and found wanting, for it fails to conform to the principles of political organisation ordained by universal law. In Julius Caesar and in Antony and Cleopatra, aristocracy is in turn rejected, and for the same reason. Thus in the course of the three plays, Rome moves slowly but inevitably toward monarchy, the form of the state which the Renaissance considered divinely authorised.⁵

Shakespeare's choice was also in keeping with the common Elizabethan pre-occupation with classical antiquity, their habit of emulation, and their relish

for using analogies from the past to illuminate current conditions and problems. A great deal of the story would have had pressing relevance for Englishmen in the first years of the Seventeenth Century. Peasant insurrection had been rife for several years. Both a severe frost and dearth had devastated the country in 1607 and 1608.⁶ In Shakespeare's hands, hunger and civil disturbance become the pervasive social conditions of the story of *Coriolanus*. It would be wrong-headed in the extreme to suggest that Shakespeare wrote a play about dearth and a particular kind of political unrest purely to take advantage of contemporary popular emotion. To a poet as profoundly concerned with the human condition as Shakespeare had shown himself to be by the time he wrote *Coriolanus*, the problem of hunger would always be topical, so the contemporary dearth would only serve to set him thinking afresh on the matter. It would also be unrealistic not to accept that a working dramatist's art is in part a response to, and in part a calculated appeal to the contemporary emotional climate. Arthur Miller, talking of his own work in this century, says some things which are relevant here:

...These plays, in one sense, are my response to what was "in the air"...

...A new poem on the stage is a new concept of relationships between the one and the many, and the many and history, and to create it requires greater attention, not less, to the inexorable, common, pervasive conditions in this time and this hour...⁸

Equally undeniable is the fact that events in Shakespeare's private life may have contributed to the appeal of the Coriolanus story for him. His mother died very shortly before the play was probably written. Both Henderson⁹ and Brandes¹⁰ see the towering figure of Volumnia as a memorial to her. It is not impossible to interpret Volumnia's role in the play as that of the villain so to a number of critics this would seem to be a memorial of questionable meaning. Perhaps less valid even than this is the theory that, as a landowner, Shakespeare was personally threatened by the peasant revolts and Coriolanus provided a vehicle for the expression of his anti-popular sentiments.¹¹ An attempt has been made in Chapter 4 of this thesis to show that while the politics of the play may well have been personal, they were also conventional, and almost universally held when the play was written.

The mutual modification of all these possible influences on Shakespeare's choice have the necessary effect of preventing the would-be critic from formulating a distorted interpretation of Shakespeare's intentions.

The Coriolanus story was available to Shakespeare in several forms. It features conspicuously in The Romane Historie of T. Livy translated by Philemon Holland in 1600. It seems probable that Shakespeare was at least acquainted with the work.

Bullough notes similarities with Coriolanus in support of this.¹²

Virgil Whitaker suggests that Shakespeare read Painter's version of the story in The Palace of Pleasure, published between 1566 and 1567.

(Titus Andronicus) has a number of allusions which show clearly that Shakespeare had been reading the first part of Painter's The Palace of Pleasure and which suggest it was giving him suggestions for the future. References to Tarquin and Lucrece (IV.iv. 67-68) and to Virginius' slaying of his deflowered daughter (V.iii. 36-38) point to three of Painter's novels: II The Rape of Lucrece; IV Coriolanus; and V Appius and Virginia. One suspects, therefore, that Shakespeare had just begun to read the Palace of Pleasure and it may have aroused his interest in Lucrece and Coriolanus...¹³

But even a cursory reading makes it clear that these were only supplementary to Shakespeare's main and primary source: North's English translation of Amyot's French version of Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans. First published in 1579, it reappeared in 1595, 1603, 1612, 1631, 1656-1657, and 1676. Evidently it enjoyed great popularity during the early Seventeenth Century. Some controversy still exists as to which of the earlier editions Shakespeare used.¹⁴ C. F. Tucker-Brooke¹⁵ deals with the question in particularly satisfying detail. His conclusions in favour of the edition of 1579 are virtually standard and for purposes of this thesis I have accepted them as correct.¹⁶

Some of Shakespeare's apparently direct borrowings, as well as the changes, the omissions, the condensations, and the amplifications to which he treated Plutarch's details, have been observed by a succession of critics.¹⁷ For, as Whitaker says,

...there is perhaps no better way of acquiring an insight into his dramatic technique than to compare it (Coriolanus) scene by scene and line by line; ~~why incidents~~ *enquiring and scenes not in the source have been introduced.¹⁸

Taking these differences and similarities, it should be possible to draw some primary conclusions which will begin to distill something of Shakespeare's intentions and set up valid signposts for further directions of study. Whitaker himself does not do this, and it seems that no one has conducted a more exhaustive and systematic comparison than MacCallum.¹⁹ The field has not nearly been exhausted.

Plutarch's intention in writing his Lives emerges as primarily moral. Though he has produced a full and engrossing narrative, he never digresses very far from the main direction which, like that of an exemplum, is towards the lessons or moral abstractions which are found in each comparison. I use the plural because Plutarch's "moral" is always a complex weighing up of the pros and cons of the sides of both the linked lives.

What Whitaker says of the Life of Julius Caesar

is also true of that of Coriolanus:

...(the events are) arranged to form an interpretation of character and motives by a writer whose primary interest was ethical analysis rather than factual biography.²⁰

Plutarch himself mentions his intentions at the beginning of the Life of Alexander²¹ which, as T. J. B. Spencer points out,²² Shakespeare may well have read because the parallel to Alexander is, of course, Julius Caesar.

I will...only desire the readers not to blame me though I do not declare all things at large, but briefly touch divers, chiefly in those their noblest acts and most worthy of memory. For they must remember that my intent is not to write histories, but only lives. For, the noblest deedes doe not alwayes shew mens vertues and vices, but oftentimes a light occasion, a word, or some sporte makes mens naturall dispositions and maners appeare more plaine, then the famous battells wonne... For like as painters... which make no account of other parts of the bodie, do take the resemblances of the face and favour of the countenance, in the which consisteth the judgement of their manners and disposition : even so they must geve us leave to seeke out the signs and tokens of the mind only, and thereby shewe the life of either of them, referring you unto others to wryte the warres, battells and other great things they did.

Shakespeare's first intention was to make a verse drama of the prose narrative. An exploration of what he did to the prose narrative to make it a verse drama should raise vital questions about the nature of drama in general and Coriolanus in particular. In the opinion of Geoffrey Bullough

Shakespeare's adaptation of Plutarch's narrative was obviously governed by three

main considerations: first, to make a good play; second, to re-create the characters of the hero and his associates; third, to interpret the situation in Rome in terms suited to early Jacobean England and the conditions of 1607-1608.²³

His second and third points would seem to be implicit in the business of making a good play, but in this context they do not quite fit neatly into a single formulation. Brents Stirling's contention, for example, that "the alterations found in Coriolanus can be explained in dramatic terms"²⁴ approaches over-simplification. In a number of particulars, of course, the statement is valid enough. For example, in the Life Coriolanus goes into banishment with friends. In the play, he goes alone. Obviously this change serves to heighten the dramatic effect. But, in Shakespeare, effect is never meaningless or an end in itself. This one serves importantly to emphasise the hero's solitariness. All the same, Mr. Stirling's statement seems to overlook larger and more general areas of significance in the source/play divergence.

Let us consider, for example, Shakespeare's amplification of the dearth and the corn riots to the almost total exclusion of the usury contention. This cannot be explained on dramatic grounds alone. Plutarch²⁵ and Livy²⁶ both give graphic descriptions of horrifying oppression by usurers. While the people are away at war, they fall into debt.

Cannibal money-lenders at home seize their possessions and finally their persons -- bleeding, crippling and binding the defenders of the state. Even at a brief glance this story seems to be pregnant with dramatic possibilities. As it is, much in the play is seen in mercantile terms. There is the "true purchasing" of the consulship; Coriolanus' almost psychopathically intense revulsion for anything even approaching mercenary reward; and the fact that war (one of the basic activities of both the Life and the play) seems to have been more a national industry than a chivalric enterprise, the spoils won being as important, if not more, than the valour proved.

So it seems that Shakespeare could conceivably have centered the play on the usury contention instead of the dearth. In fact, it was not dramatic necessity, but some intention beyond that which caused the dramatist to cast his action round the corn riots instead of the usury contention.

A second test of Mr. Stirling's suggestion could be conducted using Shakespeare's choice of characters. Coriolanus he chose with the story. Beyond that, he elected to develop Volumnia, Menenius, and Aufidius into full characters. Again, this choice cannot be justified on purely dramatic grounds. Surely a promising drama can be conceived of in terms of the relationships between, for example,

Coriolanus and Virgilia, Coriolanus and a fellow warrior (perhaps Titus Lartius), and Coriolanus and one of the plebeian leaders. In this way a strong argument could be raised against the idea that Plutarch's emphasis more or less chose Shakespeare's main characters for him. In the Life, Menenius, for example, is given no more detailed characterisation than Lartius, or for that matter, a couple of the characters like Titus Latinus and Appius Claudius whom Shakespeare omitted altogether.²⁷

It can be seen that Shakespeare chose the dearth theme rather than the usury, and selected the characters he would develop not under any compulsion from technical or dramatic necessity, but according to another kind of dramatic necessity imposed by ideas he already had in mind. The alterations found in Coriolanus can thus be seen to be governed by the dramatist's creative imagination rather than simple necessity.

The change from narrative action to dramatic action is the most radical of Shakespeare's transformations of the material of the source. Plutarch's Life tells what happened and suggests its ethical implications while the play shows something happening in the dramatic present. Plutarch presents a series of events contingent on one another and occurring in historical progression. He establishes a world of

which Coriolanus is a member. In the play, Coriolanus is at the centre with the world of the drama around him. The question of design in the play will be taken up again in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Here it is only necessary to stress the important re-shaping of the pattern given in the Life.

Plutarch's story can be condensed without excessive distortion. Some distortion is of course inevitable. It would be a grave error to lose sight of the fact that this is not a history dealing purely with events, actions, and consequences. Long passages where Plutarch discusses in intricate particularity personality and psychological traits, as well as the discussions of customs and superstitions, are central to the meaning of his Life. But although a condensed Life is possible, any attempt to précis the play results in grave mutilation of the original. This is evidence of the generic change from a discursive narrative to a drama. Shakespeare's Coriolanus is not a dramatised narrative. The Life has been completely transformed by the dramatist.

Nearly all Shakespeare's structural changes favour dramatic unity. Events are omitted, altered, or replaced in time not only because they are physically cumbersome, but also so that no casual or tangential idea will invite a digression from the main action which centres round Coriolanus and one

coherent ^{movement} ~~action~~ ^{spirit} ~~of the soul~~. 28

The primary effect of Shakespeare's pruning of the Life is to compress and unify the story. The dramatist, unlike the writer of prose, is limited in time and space, so ruthless selectivity would be the first essential for making a play of the material in the Life. All the omissions can be explained by this, but many of even the minor ones have an additional effect on the meaning of the play. A few examples would be apposite here. In dispensing with the people's evacuation of Rome and camp on the Holy Hill, Shakespeare tightens the plot, but he also dispenses with the significance of the incident: the non-violence of the people's despair, as well as the fact that conditions in Rome had become so intolerable that a major part of the population was forced out of the city. Another illuminating example is the omission of explicit reasons for the dearth in the play. This helps to link it more closely with the body imagery, the ideas of the body politic, and the question of basic human needs which permeate the play. It becomes a dramatic and present condition rather than the inevitable result of the effect of protracted war on agricultural economy.

This pruning of the source also does a great deal to throw emphasis on particular aspects of the story. In terms of social conditions, the omission

of the usury contention throws the problem of dearth into very clear focus. The immediate social problem in the play is hunger. The Life's usury contention is given only one line:

... make edicts for usury, to support usurers ... (I.i.80). This means the body fable gains tremendously in relevance. The implications of the body imagery increase to sinister proportions, used as it is about people who are actually physically hungry.

In terms of event, numerous small omissions leave the stage clear for the development of the events surrounding the election campaign into the main action.²⁹

Omissions such as those of Plutarch's discursive digressions into customs and beliefs are obviously made primarily from dramatic necessity. Many others have the effect of suggesting intended emphasis.

Apart from the usury contention, Shakespeare's most studied avoidance is in the area of religious observance. In the world of Plutarch's Life, fate, the gods, superstition, and a general feeling of cosmological and divine interference are pervasive. One of the main objections to the colonisation of Velitres is the fact that the people would then be under the "tuition" of an alien deity. Sights and wonders in the Roman air, Titus Lartius' recurring dream of Jupiter and his divinely inflicted illness,

lead into Plutarch's dissertation on the scrupulousness of Roman religious observances and prepare for a fateful change in Rome's welfare. It was the ~~se~~^uge of the Holy city of Lavinium which frightened the people enough to ask for Coriolanus' repeal. It was the voice of Fortune which inspired Valeria to initiate the successful women's embassy and save Rome. Examples such as these of the religious atmosphere in the Life are numerous.

Shakespeare's avoidance of incidents of this kind is consistent enough to be taken as deliberate. The gods are useful in the play for oaths and exclamations, to fob off the populace (for example I.i.71-73) and as comfort for the "weak" like Virgilia (for example I.iii.38, I.iii.79 etc.). [^] The world of the play is then intentionally secular and therefore also intentionally social and political. The centrality of the election campaign is reinforced again.

So much for the omissions from the source. Having made his primary selection of material, Shakespeare took considerable liberties with the time-scheme of the original. Some of the most startling effects in the play are achieved in this way.

The Life leads into the action with a dissertation on the background of the family of the Martians, and Rome, and then finishes with an account of the

Roman's defeat of the Volsce and Tullus Aufidius' death. At the end of the Plutarch story this introduces the idea of some kind of historical justice and comment on Coriolanus' life in historical terms as well as setting the whole in a historical context.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, begins his Coriolanus after the action is already in motion. The plebeians are already starving and rioting. Relations between them and Coriolanus are already inflamed. The Volsce are already in arms. He ends the play with Coriolanus' death: a drastic termination that heightens the dramatic poetic effect.

Within this fragment of time which Shakespeare has chosen to begin and end so traumatically, almost without exception, he practises compression of the original scheme. Hours (as in the corn riot), days (as in the siege of Corioles), and even years (as in the consular election and climactic Volsce attack on Rome) are saved. This favours classical unity and heightens the dramatic effect to such an extent that suddenness becomes a whole new element in itself. Suddenness, or speed-of-action³⁰, is essential to Coriolanus' particular brand of violence and supports the unhesitating god-like inevitability of his free actions.

As well as satisfying dramatic necessity, these changes once again influence the meaning of the play. Additional significance can be discerned in almost

every example.

Menenius' successful use of the belly fable is brought forward to the corn riot for the obvious reason of keeping it in the drama, as well as to relate it and the idea of the body politic to the theme of physical hunger, by joining it to the corn riot. The battle at Corioles is shifted to take place after the corn riot so that the theme of hunger will open the play and set its foundations.

The naming ceremony in the Life takes place the next day, in the play it comes directly after the battle with staggering dramatic effect. Coriolanus is named still bleeding and "painted" with his own sweat and the blood of the enemy.

More significant perhaps, is the shifting of Coriolanus' request for freedom for his Coriolan host. In the Life it is made in front of the assembled army, following directly on the ~~director's~~^{general's} formal thanks. It could be interpreted as a self-conscious gesture to demonstrate his own nobility and heighten the virtue of his rejection of mercenary recompense. It raises a roar of acclaim from the soldiers and it is only then that Cominius names him Coriolanus. In the play, however, the request comes in private, after the assembly, as Cominius and Coriolanus make their way back to the tent with Lartius. I believe this shift serves to change the request from a conscious public gesture into a genuinely spontaneous

act of human compassion. The fact that Shakespeare changes the host from rich to poor reinforces this feeling.

Within this new time system the shape of events is recast to throw full emphasis on to the consular election campaign. Independent episodes from the Life, like Coriolanus' denunciation of the tribunes, and his trial, become part of the election drama. With the election as the central event, the siege of Corioles and the siege of Rome (both important events in the Life) gain importance in the drama as the two main supporting events.

All the changes in detail³¹ function together to enhance and modify the meaning and heighten dramatic effect. The matter of the Roman embassies to Coriolanus is a particularly effective example of how this happens.

In Plutarch the embassies were composed of unspecified numbers of people: the first of "familiar friends and acquaintance", the second completely anonymous, the third a "goodly rabble of superstition and priests", and the fourth the Roman women led by Valeria, Volumnia and Virgilia. In the play, the first embassy is conducted by Cominius, consul and general, but also a friend and admirer of Coriolanus. The second is conducted by Menenius, who loves Coriolanus as a father, and the third by his mother, wife and child, attended by Valeria^{and} a few other women.

So the embassies grow progressively more personal. As MacCallum says, "The impression of a formal embassy is avoided."³² In the Life, Coriolanus receives the embassies from a chair of state among the Volscæ. As MacCallum points out, the "embassies in Plutarch really sank low compared to their behaviour in Shakespeare."³³ In the play Cominius describes a similar high seat among the Volscæ. Menenius, on the other hand, has Coriolanus come upon him by chance. The women of the third embassy find him in his tent.³⁴ All these changes seem to point to a shift from the official, formal, political, to the direct and personal.

Perhaps the largest single effect of these changes in detail is the subtle shift in the complex group and class relationships of the story. MacCallum³⁵ has conducted a most thorough exploration of this field. Stirling summarises MacCallum conveniently:

MacCallum demonstrates that Shakespeare has converted Plutarch's tribunes into a pair of demagogues (p.501) and has made the populace both cowardly and witless (p.530). Because of this added ingredient of popular ineptitude, MacCallum believes that Shakespeare "has made the most momentous and remarkable change in the story ..."
"The grand characteristic which the Tudor Englishman rejects, or all but rejects, is the intuitive political capacity which Plutarch, perhaps in idealizing retrospect, attributes to all classes of citizens in the young republic." (p.517-518)
 MacCallum also charges that Shakespeare ignores social injustices which in Plutarch

lead to unrest and to establishment of the tribunate. In Plutarch the senate has goaded the populace to desperation by refusing to check the scandalous practice of usurers in seizing not only the property but the persons of debtors, "notwithstanding all the wounds and cuts they showed, which they had received in many battles, fighting for the defense of their country and commonwealth." Many magistrates and senators have sided with the plebs, but Marcius has held out against them, not because he cares that creditors are losing money, but because he thinks lenity is the beginning of disobedience and that "the proud attempt of the commonalty was to abolish law and bring all to confusion." According to Plutarch, the mass action of the "poor common people" by which they gained the tribunate was merely that of walking out of the city, "offering no creature any hurt or violence, or making any show of actual rebellion."

There is, however, another episode in Plutarch in which the tribunes, "busy prattlers," circulate the slander that the nobles had deliberately created a scarcity of corn. And it is this spurious grievance, to the exclusion of the one against usurers, which Shakespeare selects for motivation of his populace. Of the usury episode, "in which the younger contemporary of Nero favors the people," MacCallum observes that "the elder contemporary of Pym summarily dismisses (it), and substitutes for it another far less important, in which (the people) appear in no very creditable light." (p.524)

In MacCallum's words:

... a two-fold tendency to palliate the guilt of Rome, and to stress the violence that provoked it, appears in the more conspicuous of Shakespeare's ... deviations from his authority.⁵⁷

Although Plutarch provides quantities of material for group and class relationships in the Life he has fully created only one character: Coriolanus.

The rest are named, they perform actions related to the hero, and they are personalised at most by a conventional phrase or a passage of direct speech. Titus Lartius, for example, is simply "one of the valliantest men the Romaines had at that time."³⁸ This was the inevitable result of Plutarch's intention: to focus on the history of Coriolanus. So, next to the poetry of the play, it is in this area that Shakespeare is at his most patently inventive.

In his treatment, characters are amplified, and have their roles (and, for Menenius even his life)³⁹ extended so that they can all enter at the beginning and stay with the action until the end. This means that the system of mirrors Shakespeare sets up round the physical person of Coriolanus, and on another level, round the ideas of the action, remains constant. The effect of this on the handling of the source material is inevitable. As MacCallum says, the "recurrent presence of agents involves considerable modification in the conduct of the plot."⁴⁰

Apart from implicit hints, Plutarch provides very little concrete evidence of personal relationships in the Life, so Shakespeare is almost entirely responsible for the relationships between Menenius and Coriolanus, as well as the most telling intricacies of the relationships between Coriolanus and Volumnia,

Virgilia, and Aufidius. It seems as well to consider each character and his position in this network individually.

Although Shakespeare amplified Aufidius's role considerably, he based a number of characteristics on hints from the Life.⁴¹ But, as MacCallum says, "the darker hues are lacking in the earlier picture."⁴² Plutarch mentions that the "quarrel" between Coriolanus and Aufidius was an affair of long standing. Shakespeare dramatises this by several references and by introducing speeches against each other for both Aufidius and Coriolanus (for example in I.i and I.ii). He actually shows them "at the encounter one against another like lustie courageous youthes" (in I.viii). He enlarges the "private hate" they held for each other so that Coriolanus would be satisfied to make his wars only on Aufidius. Plutarch says that Aufidius "sought divers means to make him out of the waye, thinking that if he let slip the present time, he should never recover the like and fit occasion againe." This is the only mention of a machiavellian practicality that becomes a central principle for the play's Aufidius.

Shakespeare's chief inventions then, are the eroticism implicit in the relationship between Aufidius and Coriolanus; and Aufidius' penetrating insight to the essential problems of Coriolanus' ex-

istence.

As in the Life⁴³ Cominius' role in the play is a small one, but with a few extremely subtle touches. Shakespeare manages not only to ~~create~~^{present} him as a distinct character, but also to transform him into something approaching the representative of a norm. He is the reasonably noble, reasonably valiant, reasonably effective example of the Roman ideal. As such, he is the ideal expositor for "the deeds of Coriolanus".⁴⁴ Throughout, he is generous and practical -- witness his moments of independent action. In the field battle outside Corioles, he judiciously retires "to gain advantage".⁴⁵ Then, when Marcius has stirred the soldiers courage in terms of the highest military idealism, Cominius adds that they will receive handsome financial rewards if their efforts are successful.⁴⁶ Similarly, in the fight with the tribunes and people⁴⁷ Cominius lends the middle dimension between the extreme remedies advocated by Coriolanus and Menenius by suggesting that they resolve the matter in an evenly-matched fight.

The role of Lartius, like that of Cominius, remains an essentially supporting one in the play.⁴⁸ At the battle of Corioles, Lartius does not enter with Marcius, but remains outside to lead the soldiers in after him. Apart from this change, Shakespeare has extended his role physically more than personally.

He serves to unite action and bridge discrepancies in awareness by carrying news. Shakespeare has invented the comradeship of his relationship with Coriolanus (seen for example in the wager over a horse and his kind refusal to accept the prize).⁴⁹ His action of shaking off illness in I.i.240-242 is perhaps more significant. Possibly it suggests not only that all infirmity is simply an infirmity of will, but that war is a medicinal remedy. It would be wrong, however, to read too much importance into, or give too much symbolic weight to a character as lightly drawn, even if physically useful, as Lartius.

In the Life, Menenius is described as one of a group or type of old men.⁵⁰ His sole function is to relate the belly fable. Although Shakespeare has created from this brief sketch a full character of massive importance in the play, Menenius' role remains basically the same. In the play, Menenius relates the belly fable, and it seems that he lives out its truth in his actions and reactions as well as illustrating it in his personality. He could be shown to be the "cup-bearer" in structure as well as function, to this very central theme. This would explain Shakespeare's lengthy additions on Menenius' character, reputation and behaviour. If Menenius' "political" importance was in fact hinted at in Plutarch, his relationship with Coriolanus at least is all Shakespeare's own invention. In many ways he is the

foil to the hero. His behaviour often illustrates, by comparison, Coriolanus' own. It has been suggested that Menenius, only a "brief candle" in the Life, is used by Shakespeare to represent the moral norm in the play. This is probably a simplification, though it is fairly obvious that he is the only genial, flexible, vulgar man and, as such, representative of a norm.

In Plutarch the tribunes are not characterised beyond being described as "seditious" and Sicinius as "Stowte" and "cruel".⁵¹ They are revealed as tacticians, not in devious psychological ways as in the play, but rather in practical ways. MacCallum suggests that Plutarch was more concerned with their policy than their characters.⁵² In the play it seems that policy and character are inextricably entwined.

Brutus is only named once in the Life and Sicinius emerges as the prime mover. In the play they share so equally in the action that they become almost a corporate personality. Brutus and Sicinius are more individualised⁵³ in Plutarch, but only because Brutus is hardly mentioned. In Shakespeare, their characters are more clearly defined, even though in many ways they seem to share the same character. It seems that the dramatist wanted the people's representation to be plural, perhaps to reinforce the idea of the monster as opposed to the heroic individual.

It seems that the Life's tribunes, though reprehensible personalities, are primarily official representatives of the people's power. Their conflict with Coriolanus is official and ideological. When they defend their own status it is also the office that they defend. In Shakespeare the emphasis is shifted so the conflict is as much personal as political. The tribunes emerge as self-seekers who represent or manufacture mob opinion just as far as it suits them. Their opposition to Coriolanus is as much personal as ideological. The muddying of political issues by personal subjective emotions and ambitions which is covert in the Life is fully developed in the play.

As MacCallum points out, it is important that in the Life, the tribunes had nothing to do with his rejection when he stood for consul. Though they are cruel and "stowte" in the Life, their actions are legitimate. It is only "when he inveighs against the relief of the people and the removal of the tribunes that they attack."⁵⁴ It is only when the people seem pacified but they still stand up and call for a trial that the tribunes emerge as deliberately leivious inciters. Shakespeare's invention of the tribunes' actions after the banishment and the fact that the people are made to turn on them in rage and despair adds an effective new dimension to the demonstrated characteristics of the mob.

Valeria is introduced "socially" at the beginning of the action of the play and is a positive presence again in the women's embassy. Her role in the Life⁵⁵ as recipient of Fortune's message and initiator of the women's embassy is omitted. Her gracious, formal set-speech to Volumnia and Virgilia is omitted, and she is given a number of lines of light social chatter in I.iii, as well as the boy and butterfly story. This combines with her 'character reference' (retained for Coriolanus' greeting in V.iii.64) to make her a peculiarly portentous character, perhaps symptomatic of what the Roman ideal of womanhood implies in practice.

In the Life⁵⁶, Virgilia is referred to eight times as Coriolanus' wife, three times as Volumnia's daughter-in-law, and once as "Ladie Virgilia". So, the general amplification of her role, as well as her character and function in the story are all Shakespeare's. He deliberately reverses Plutarch's covert hints to the contrary, into strong evidence of a redeeming, loving relationship between Coriolanus and Virgilia. The idea that Volumnia chose Virgilia as Coriolanus' wife is omitted altogether, and Shakespeare alters the order of greeting when the women go to Coriolanus' camp in V.iii. It is Virgilia who is embraced first in the play, so it would seem to be the sight of her that first made Coriolanus "yield to the affection of his blood".

In the Life⁵⁷ it is suggested that Volumnia's only fault in bringing up Martius is neglect. Any injudiciousness is hinted at as part and parcel of the fact that she is a woman. She arouses devotion and obedience in Martius, but apparently more through his obedience to pietas than any positive action on her part. The passion for arms which the play's Volumnia claims she instilled in Marcius, is described as his own inherited trait in the Life.⁵⁸ According to Bullough, Shakespeare's "touches supply the harshness, ambition and prejudice in her character."⁵⁹ Plutarch's Volumnia is made of less stern stuff. She weeps for joy when Martius returns crowned in honour and shrieks in grief when he is banished. Her Juno-like rage comes from Shakespeare. In the Life it is only in the final scene with Coriolanus at the siege of Rome that she reveals, in her speech, the characteristics of the play's matron. She uses anger, pathos and emotional blackmail to coerce him to her will. The suggestions of a perverted motherhood that would sacrifice its progeny for an ideal is implied in her constant references to honour and "good name". It seems that it is in this last speech that Shakespeare has found most of the hints for his Volumnia. Perhaps there is even a slight inconsistency in Plutarch's characterisation : it is difficult to reconcile the martial matron of this scene with the doting mother of earlier scenes.

Not only does Volumnia become a towering figure in Shakespeare's handling, she also becomes an important device for dramatising the past of the play. By observing her existence from minute to minute in the play's present, it is possible to construe what has gone before and what, to a large extent, has made the hero the man he is.

In comparison with that of the other characters, the volume of source material for Coriolanus is overwhelmingly vast.⁶⁰ The similarities between the heroes of Life and the play are obviously too many to note, but it is helpful here to look at a few of the major changes he underwent in Shakespeare's hands.

The more personal nature of his relationships with all the other characters has already been remarked upon. This is one of the major areas of change.

In the Life, Plutarch insists that lack of education was at the root of a great deal of Martius' faults. His lack of self-control and wisdom in judgement, and his under-developed social feeling are the result of an untutored mind. Shakespeare shifts the point slightly, so the play's hero is not uneducated, but rather educated only in the wars. The difference is slight, but nevertheless important. The play is largely concerned with war and its effects on society so Shakespeare's case for Coriolanus' lack

of education has the double function of elucidating some aspects of his personality and reinforcing the war theme. A second important alteration which Shakespeare made is due to his avoidance of all the Life's suggestions that Coriolanus was supported by a group of hot-headed young noblemen. In the play Coriolanus never appears as member of a group. Further, all suggestions that he is capable of plotting and conniving are dropped. In the Life the banished Coriolanus skulks about his country houses with a few friends brooding on his misfortune and considering methods of revenge. In Antium he and Aufidius are described planning methods of achieving their ends against Rome. Both in the Life and the Comparison Plutarch accuses Coriolanus of secretly arranging to have a rumour spread that would cause the Romans to expel all Volscians from Rome before the games in honour of Jupiter. None of this deviousness is even hinted at in the play. Shakespeare's Coriolanus always acts in a clean and direct manner. If this is the case, many critics argue, his action in joining Aufidius in the command of the Volscian army, is out of character. I submit that the matter is far more complicated. Shakespeare took some pains to invent a ferociously condemnatory speech for Coriolanus after his banishment.

' You common cry of curs! ...

.....

.....I banish you

III.iii.120-123 *etc.*

This passage illustrates Coriolanus' conviction that it is not he who is the traitor, but the population. Rome, the body of people, has betrayed Rome, the ideal.

Coriolanus performs no deed even approaching the maliciousness of the Life's plunder of plebeian property only during the raids on Roman territory. The play's hero never contemplates, let alone performs, anything calculated to increase civil dissension. If his rigid adherence to perhaps unreasonably absolute principles of order has the effect of increasing disorder, that is another matter. His intentions at least are always pure. Even his intended sack of Rome, which Plutarch censures as an act of wicked ire, becomes in the play something closer to impersonal god-like retribution.

So much for the characters. Let us now look at the language of the source and the way in which Shakespeare put it to use.

Appendix K⁶¹ attempts to trace all possible hints in the Life of the play's imagery. The main value of this exercise seems to have been to show how little Shakespeare was indebted to North in this area. The ideas of farming and cultivation, disease,

coals and fire, voices as votes, and the body are used metaphorically a few times by North. Mentions of acting and disguise, eroticism at war, and the moon, all occur in the course of the narrative. Similarly, the body fable is introduced as part of the narrative with only two metaphorical echoes to which it is not explicitly related.⁶² There is no hint in the Life of the play's pervasive animal imagery, the imagery of hunting, or the metaphorical use of buildings, stone and cement. This means that nearly all the imagery in Coriolanus is Shakespeare's imaginative creation. This is an inevitable part of his success in changing narrative prose into poetry.

The actual diction of the play is a slightly different matter. There are several fairly long passages in the play which are borrowed almost directly from North's text. These include most notably Coriolanus' speech of self-introduction to Aufidius in Antium⁶³ and Volumnia's long speech to Coriolanus at the siege of Rome, as well as Coriolanus' reply.⁶⁴ Many critics have complained that Shakespeare simply transposed passages like these without taking sufficient trouble to "re-create" them, or (as Sen says of the characters⁶⁵) "Shakespearianise" them. Bush neatly turns this complaint inside out by suggesting that the borrowing of these passages should be interpreted as the greatest possible compliment to North.⁶⁶

This lightly phrased observation touches very seriously on an important aspect of source study. If Shakespeare, working outside the framework of modern romantic notions of "originality", discovered in his source some passages which very closely approached expressing his own intention, why should he have altered them any more than was necessary for their accommodation in his text? Objections to this practise would only be completely valid if it could be proved that the passages in question had not become organically a part of the new whole. After the foregoing examination of Shakespeare's highly sophisticated and creative handling of his source material, these passages are certainly unacceptable as evidence of "waning creativity" or "imaginative laziness" on Shakespeare's part. As MacCallum says:

his textual appropriations from North, long or short, obvious or covert, never clash with his more personal contributions, which in bulk are far more important. They are all subdued to the tone that the dramatist imposes.⁶⁷

MacCallum quotes Delius further on the subject:
 This ... would make it impossible for us, in respect of style, to discover real or suppositious loans from Plutarch in Shakespeare's drama, and definitely identify them as such, if by chance North's translation were inaccessible.⁶⁸

It is not claimed that the present study even approaches an exhaustive comparison of Coriolanus with Shakespeare's source, or that it examines all the implications of such a comparison. Such a task is

far beyond the intended scope of this thesis. It is sufficient for the present to work with the possibilities that have been suggested.

Briefly, Shakespeare handled the Life in this way: he compressed the time, heightened dramatic effects, consistently played down suggestions of cosmic or religious influence, limited the plebeian insurrection to a single cause, amplified the election campaign, extended the roles of the characters he retained, and developed a complicated web of relationships between those characters. The poetry is Shakespeare's own however closely it may sometimes approach in diction to North's prose.

Although Coriolanus seems more indebted to its source than any other of Shakespeare's plays, it is interesting to find that even in structure, an itemisation of what he invented is formidable in comparison with lists of his omissions, rearrangements, or changes in detail.

Footnotes for Chapter One.

- 1
An attempt is made in Chapter Two to prove the popularity of the Coriolanus story in Elizabethan England.
- 2
J.W. Robertson, The Genuine in Shakespeare (London: D. Routledge & sons, 1930) p.131.
- 3
cf Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (vol V; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1964) p.454. (referred to in future as Bullough.
- 4
Bullough investigates this in some detail. p.454-456.
- 5
J.E. Phillips, The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1933) p.206.
- 6
Details are given by E.C. Pettet in "Shakespeare and the Midlands Insurrection of 1607," (ShS, III (1950)) p.34-42; Bullough p.456-458; and R.H. Case, Introduction to the Arden Coriolanus (London: Methuen & co. Ltd., 1922) p.x; etc.
- 7
Arthur Miller, Arthur Miller's Collected Plays with an Introduction (New York: Viking Press, 1957) p.11.
- 8
Ibid., p.53.
- 9
J.W. Henderson, "Coriolanus and the grief of Shakespeare," (Shakespeare in the Southwest: Some New Directions ed T.J. Stafford. el Paso: Texas eastern Press of the Univ. of Texas, 1968) p.71-79.
- 10
George Brandes, William Shakespeare: A Critical Study (London: Wn. Heinemann Ltd., 1902) pp.532-533.
- 11
E.C. Pettet, p.35
- 12
Bullough, pp.460-462.
- 13
Virgil Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning: An Enquiry into the Growth of his mind and Art. (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1953) p.105.

- 14
 etc. See for e.g. Bullough, p.453; R.H. Case, pp.ix-xi
- 15
 C.F. Tucker-Brooke, Shakespeare's Plutarch (vol I; New York: Duffield & co., 1909) pp.xix-xxii.
- 16
 These conclusions are supported tacitly by, among others, Bullough, p.505, and Case, p.xxvii. Both of them quote from the 1579 edition of the Life.
- 17
 e.g. Bullough; MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays (London: Macmillan & co. Ltd., 1910 -- referred to in future as MacCallum); E. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources (vol I; London: Methuen & co., ltd, 1957); E.J. Honigmann, "Shakespeare's Plutarch," (SQ, X (1959)) pp.25-33; Eüttner, "Zu Coriolan und Seiner Quelle," (SJ, XLII (1905)) pp.45-53; H. Heuer, "From Plutarch to Shakespeare: A Study of Coriolanus" (ShS, X (1957)) pp.50-59; C.F. Tucker-Brooke.
- 18
Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p.314.
- 19
 MacCallum, pp.454-627.
- 20
Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p.13.
- 22
 T.J.B. Spencer, Shakespeare's Plutarch (Harmondsworth: The Penguin Shakespeare Library, 1968) p.7
- 23
 Bullough, p.476.
- 24
 Brechts Stirling, The Populace in Shakespeare (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949) p.44.
- 25
The lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes... by...Plutarke..(tr) Thomas North (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1965) p.393.
- 26
 Holland (The Romane Historie of T. Livy, tr. Philemon (1600).
- 27
 see Appendix J., p.169.
- 28
 I owe the expression to Francis Fergusson in his introduction to Aristotle: The Poetics (tr. S.H. Butcher; New York: Hill and Wang, 1969) p.8.

- 29 see Appendix L., p.171.
- 30 Bullough, p.489.
- 31 see Appendix N., p.176.
- 32 MacCallum, p.545.
- 33 MacCallum, p.546.
- 34 V.iii stage direction.
- 35 MacCallum, pp.548-548.
- 36 The Populace in Shakespeare, pp.40-41.
- 37 MacCallum, p.512.
- 38 see Appendix J., p.169.
- 39 Bullough, p. 431.
- 40 MacCallum, p.502.
- 41 Appendix A., p.153.
- 42 MacCallum, p.502.
- 43 Appendix B., p.154.
- 44 II.ii.82-122.
- 45 I.vi.49-50.
- 46 I.vi.86-87.
- 47 II.i.229-230.
- 48 Appendix C., p.154.
- 49 I.iv.1-7.
- 50 Appendix D., p.155.
- 51 Appendix E., p.156.
- 52 MacCallum, p.501.
- 53 see H.C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare
(vol II; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951) p.235.
- 54 MacCallum, p.501.
- 55 Appendix F., p.157.
- 56 Appendix G., p.158.
- 57 Appendix H., p.158.
- 58 Bullough, p.479.
- 59 MacCallum, p.466.

- 60 Appendix I., p.160.
- 61 Appendix K., p.169.
- 62 Life, p. 404 & 418.
- 63 IV.v.67-103.
- 64 V.iii.34-189.
- 65 S.E. Sen, "What Happens in Coriolanus,"
(SQ, IX: (1958)) p. 33a.
- 66 Douglas Eush, Prefaces to Renaissance Literature
(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966) p.80.
- 67 MacCallum, p.493.
- 68 MacCallum, p.493.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DRAMATIZATION

The words and action of a tragedy usually occupy the bulk of literary attention but I would insist that aural and visual effects are often media of as vital importance. G. Wilson Knight's theory that the tragedies of Shakespeare are built primarily of sound and action¹ is particularly unacceptable to the critic of Coriolanus. It is a play remarkable for its frequent and subtle reliance on visual and aural symbolism to reinforce the tightly controlled metaphorical texture of the verse.

It is also a play remarkable for its paucity of the dramatic stage effects which the receptor has become accustomed to expect in drama at the turn of the Seventeenth Century. It has no "monstrous apparition"², no storms or tempests, no "ecstasy"³, no miraculous evidence of cosmic disturbance, no "Music i' the air. / Under the earth..."⁴, or in fact anything of the visionary or supernatural. It lacks completely any of the spectacular and symbolic manifestations popular on the Elizabethan stage. There is hardly even any use of darkness in the play. It is suitably dim and gloomy when Coriolanus makes his way to Aufidius' house in Antium⁵ but this "night-of-the-soul" is not nearly as metaphorically charged as Henry V's "dead mid-

night" and "foul womb of night"⁶ or Macbeth's

...Light thickens, and the crow

Flakes wing to th' rooky wood;

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,

Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

lll. ii. 50-53

But Coriolanus is not without visual and aural spectacle. For this effect it relies on physical displays -- either of tremendous feats of courage and energy or in sheer weight of numbers. It is through this kind of action that a vitally important aspect of the metaphysics of the play ~~is~~^{is} concretised. Action is to Coriolanus, therefore, what the witches and the night are to Macbeth: a histrionic device, non-rationally informative about some condition which cannot be articulated. The problem is, of course, that its importance can only be fully realised in terms of the visual and aural dynamics of the stage.

Marcus' superhuman achievement at Corioles' gate and his extended and legendary combat with Aufidius are probably the two supreme moments when this "metaphor" blazes out. Coriolanus' bloody end is possibly another though not so extreme example. This final atrocity -- Aufidius' standing on Coriolanus' bloody corpse -- relates directly in meaning to the whole of Coriolanus' existence and his relation to the universe of the play. Whatever sort of victory Volucania won at the siege of

Rome (V. iii.) the last victory belongs to Aufidius and it is essentially a bodily victory.

Constantly contrasted with this personal physical virtuosity is the unchannelled energy of the ubiquitous crowd. In Rome it is the populace; on the field it is the Roman soldiers; at the siege of Rome, Volscian soldiers; and then in Antium the populace of that city. In a vast majority of the scenes in this play there are at least onlookers to the central action, if not an actual crowd being directly addressed and forming thus an on-stage audience. And the same construction recurs again and again. The on-stage audience witnesses a "performance" which is directed at them for a specific reason until the emotional identification reaches such a pitch that, willy-nilly, that audience becomes actor and, as happens so frequently in the play, they all cry out together. Examples of this construction vary in nature from Cominius' speech in the senate on the deeds of Coriolanus (II. ii. 82-129) to the tribunes' continued manipulation of the plebeians (II. iii. 170-252). Perhaps it would not be an oversimplification to say that in Coriolanus a great deal of the time the audience proper is watching an on-stage audience watch a character or characters in speech or action. This suggests most patently the idea that we have here not man against the

cosmos, or man in the stranglehold of conscience, or any other such metaphysical crisis, but simply man in his dealings with his fellow social and political animals.

These physical spectacles appeal partly visually and partly emotionally. Let us now consider the more truly visual effects.

Many of Shakespeare's plays have been staged by tight-budgetted touring companies with very limited costume resources. Although this is a legitimate and sometimes highly effective economy, it seems valid to consider the dramatic use of costume in Coriolanus in terms of the Folio's explicit directions. What is more, to consider it here, as a topic germane to the understanding of the action.

At least three major cases illustrate clearly the mutual support of costume and action.

In ^{I.vi}~~Act I.vi~~, Marcius comes to Cominius' aid appearing "as he were flay'd" (line 23). In I. viii, Coriolanus, masked in blood, fights with Aufidius. In I. ix, he spurns the offer of spoils and receives the title Coriolanus still mantled in blood, with drying blood upon his "visage" (line 93). This, then, is Coriolanus' battle attire, his true painting, the mark of his profession.

In II. i, Coriolanus appears crowned with an oaken

garland and, it seems safe to assume, all the other trappings of generalship. On his exit (line 136) he says "the good patricians should be visited" and sixty-three lines later the tribunes are "sent for to the capitol" (line 249) so it seems safe to assume also that at Coriolanus' re-entry about thirty-three lines after the beginning of II, ii, he will be dressed in the same way. As Granville-Barker points out⁷, this is in drastic contrast with his next appearance (II, iii, 38) in the gown of humility in the market-place. The warrior is plated with the trappings of success, but the citizen is hardly covered by swaddling clothes of social and political habit. The costuming makes a most meaningful and yet economic suggestion of the polarity of his two conditions.

My third example is Coriolanus' entry to Antium and Aufidius' house "in mean apparel, disguis'd and muffled". It has been suggested that his appearance was due to and explanatory of his shortage of money in exile. This interpretation is, however, not supported by the text in any way that I can discern. In the earlier scenes, great point is made of Coriolanus' scorn for material wealth and any kind of monetary reward. In the scenes following this, no hint is given of his revising his earlier high-minded disregard

for money. In V. vi. 77-79, he does indeed refer to money.

...Our spoils we have brought home
 Doth more than counterpoise a full third part
 The charges of the action...

But I would argue that this does not relate to a newly-acquired mercenary strain. It is spoken as part of his attempt to placate the Volscian lords, whose minds, as it seems he has divined, are not as high above matters of mere finance as his own. Witness:

...but there to end
 Where he was to begin, and give away
 The benefit of our levies... V.vi.64-66.

So the mean apparel cannot easily be explained away as a signal of a change in finances. I believe that in a production where sufficient control has been exercised over the costuming up to this point, Coriolanus' dress will suggest most clearly here that the hero is no longer himself. The use of disguises metaphorically is a familiar Shakespearian and, in fact, Elizabethan convention, but Coriolanus' disguise here has a peculiar quality -- more akin to that of Pent⁸ than the frequent disguising and transvestisism of the comedies. In the comedies, disguise often provides material (such as mistaken identity) for the plot, whereas in the tragedies disguise is much rarer and more limited in use. Hamlet returns to Denmark incognito

(V. i) but remains so only briefly. Kent maintains his disguise for most of King Lear. Coriolanus appears in his mean apparel for only 175 lines. In all these three cases, the major reason for disguise is that appearing in their normal clothes will bring the disguised men into physical danger.

Disguise in the comedies is resonant of romanticism, the ambiguities of myth and magical rites for the restoration of natural order. The element of grim necessity is much stronger in the tragedies. The implications of being an outcast are central. In the cases of Coriolanus, Kent, and Hamlet alike, at the time of their disguising, the men are intrinsically the same, but exiled by their proper environment from their former status and therefore compelled to anonymity. It is as though they have lost their public identity. Kent says

Thus Kent, o princes, bids you all adieu

He'll shape his old course in a country new.

I. i. 186-187.

This he does; although it is in the "new country" of the fallen Lear.

In the incognito scene of V. i, Hamlet still "shapes his old course" but that it is in "disguise" is affirmed in retrospect by the violent casting off of disguise implicit in line 252: "It is I, Hamlet the Dane".

In Coriolanus' disguise scene, he too is anonymous and his own awareness of the ambiguity of his identity and his new lack of appearance is revealed in

...City,

'Tis I that made thy widows : many an heir
Of these fair edifices 'fore thy wars
Have I heard groan and drop : then know me not,
Lest that thy wives with spits and boys with stones
In puny battle slay me.

IV. iv. 1-6

In tone it is strangely reminiscent of Oberon's "I am invisible", almost as though because banished Coriolanus cannot be seen, he is not. This is amplified by the servant's persistent questioning: "What would you have, friend? Whence are you?...Whence are you?... Are you so brave?...What fellow's this?...What have you to do here, fellow?...What are you?...Where dwell'st thou?" The vain attempt to establish some kind of identity or context in which he can be known is taken up by Aufidius. "Where is this fellow?...Whence com'st thou? What wouldst thou? thy name? why speak'st not?...What's thy name?...What's thy name?...Say, what's thy name?...I know thee not. Thy name?"

Although Coriolanus has stood unmuffled for the space of ten lines, he is not known until he announces directly "My name is Caius Marcius..." His person is

no longer sufficient to establish his identity, for, as the servants say later, "his clothes made a false report of him." (IV. v. 151)¹⁰

After this scene, Coriolanus does not reappear in person on stage until V. ii, by which time Cominius' description has amply raised our expectations. Obviously he will be dressed as a general in these and the subsequent scenes: he does, after all, share total command with Aufidius. The question of whether he is dressed as a Roman or a Volscian general remains tantalisingly open. This raises the further question of how much differentiation there should be between the Roman and Volscian costumes in general. An attempt is made in Chapter ^{FOUR} ~~4~~ to show that there is very little socially or politically to differentiate the two nations. Comparison of the speeches of Coriolanus and Aufidius reveals that though the latter's diction is a trifle more ornate, they converse on equal terms as men who understand the same moral universe. This internal evidence suggests that Volscian and Roman are not so vastly different as to justify an extravagant contrast in costume. One director¹¹ even went so far as to postulate that the true meaning of the battle scenes only emerges if the two armies are costumed so similarly that they can easily be confused. This

would, indeed, as he recommends, underline the idea that war in this play is a chivalric enterprise, a competition, a mutually shared industry rather than the more mythological idea of "good" protagonists defending some system of social order from the anarchic inroads of a "bad" enemy. This remains clearly, yet subtly suggested in the text without the aid of extreme costuming, and although I would maintain the need for costumes similar for the two nations I cannot defend the idea of identical costumes. While Roman and Volscian are dressed alike, but not identically, the meanings outlined above will still emerge, and at the same time slight differentiation will help clarify the action. Furthermore, it will be possible to uniform Coriolanus in a manner slightly more Roman than Volscian but more individual than either so that when he reappears at the siege of Rome, the audience will not be distracted by secondary questions such as how he managed to transport his Roman armour to Antium under the mean apparel, or how the Volscian army, however magnanimous, were able to tolerate the leadership of one still flaunting the colours of their adversaries. Apart from all these considerations, it seems unnecessarily crude to emphasize too blatantly the fact that Coriolanus was not a Volscian but a Roman by having him appear with the Volscian army in a uniform not only radically

different to theirs, but also definitely Roman.

The use of costuming as a symbolic device is restricted almost entirely to Coriolanus himself, with perhaps just one exception. I refer here to the dress of Volunnia and Valeria when they go to plead with Coriolanus for Rome. The dialogue suggests that they are dressed austere - perhaps in a kind of mourning.

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile....

V. iii. 94-96

If this is indeed the case, it will be supremely effective in emphasising two meaningful contrasts and illustrating the link between them. In V. iii the women come to Coriolanus in his ^{tent}~~home~~. He is dressed in the trappings of a Volscian general. The women's sombre clothes will inevitably make them appear as alien and humble suppliants even though they are Coriolanus' closest relatives. The costume lends an ironic twist too to Volunnia's "victory" over her son. Even when she prevails with him her appearance must suggest that she has lost. The women's next appearance is in Rome at the celebration of their success. It is justifiable to assume that this takes place directly after their return as amid all the colourful celebration and noise they appear in mourning.

Even in their native Rome they appear alien. They are not dressed as members of the festival and they say nothing. The costuming here subtly suggests the women are in fact tragic figures attending with tragic irony the celebration of their own loss. It should be stressed, however, that these visual suggestions operate on a level closely approaching the non-rational and any articulation of their effect must seem to approach either a subjective response or an exaggeration.

Perhaps less subtle in inference is the visual symbolism of conventional actions in the play. The prime example is, of course, the moment of crisis when Coriolanus holds Volunna by the hand, silent. With superb accuracy and breathtaking economy this gesture condenses into itself all the glimpses shown before of Coriolanus' pietas and almost childish dependence on his mother as well as reiterating all that the receptor has seen of Coriolanus' nature: immediate and non-analytic and essentially honest. This small gesture and short moment of silence gain tremendously in impact placed as they are after Volunna's long speech. It is a moment, as Ewbank says, that "has been arrived at through a particularly keen interplay between what is seen and what is heard."¹³ The costuming of the women has already been discussed.

The mere presence of Virgilia and the boy is a powerful visual persuader. But stronger still is the successive kneeling of these characters. When the women approach, Coriolanus kneels but his mother raises him, then she kneels to him. To average Elizabethan audiences this would have been recognized as a monstrous occurrence. It certainly is to Coriolanus.

What is this?

Your knees to me! to your corrected son!
 Then let the pibbles on the hungry beach
 Fillop the stars; then let the mutinous winds
 Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun,
 Murd'ring impossibility, to make
 What cannot be, slight work.

V. iii. 57-62

The sight obviously touches a fundamental part of Coriolanus' make-up. This is the same man who urged the good but unwise patricians not to perpetuate chaos by allowing the order of the state to be overset.

A good many of the other symbolic actions gain part of their effect by their recurrence both in conversation and in practise.

In the text there are frequent references to the covering and uncovering of heads. Volumnia advises Coriolanus:

Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand;
 And thus far having stretched it, here be with them.

III. ii. 73

to which he objects, "Must I go shew them my unbarb'd sconce?" (III. ii. 99). Here the removing of a hat symbolises all the devious psychological wiles involved in hypocritical self-abasement to gain power. Coriolanus describes the process earlier with characteristic distaste:

...and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitly...

II. iii. 97-99

"Take my cap, Jupiter!" cries Menenius in a moment of jubilation, reminiscent of the plebeian's joy when they throw up their caps "as they would hang them on the horns o' the moon" (I. i. 212). The feeling here is similar to that in II. ii. 263 when they make "A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts."

The uncovering of the head is also used as a sign of respect. In IV. v. 199 the Volscian senators stand bald before Coriolanus as a sign of respect and recognition. There are also frequent stage directions indicating that the people throw up their caps or "stand bare". This means that although the textual references to the action are not in themselves very highly charged



with meaning, their relationship with actual displays of the action lends symbolic weight to both the action and the imagery. [To a lesser extent, the use of music in the play has very much the same effect. There are about thirty-three stage directions for music in Coriolanus. Cowling maintains that the use of military music at frequent intervals in a play of this kind is extremely displeasing.

What is to be said about their alarums, flourishes, sennets and tuckets? The answer can only be that they are a blot upon drama. This is not the objection of a lover of classic simplicity and restraint. The most bigoted Romanticist must admit that to brag drums and trumpets on the stage on every possible occasion was simply an appeal to the groundlings who were "capable of nothing but noise". It was to turn the theatre into a circus. Trumpet flourishes might have been dignified if they had been used rarely, and only for scenes of great splendour, but they were made too cheap. No one will be prepared to defend stage battles of five supernas and a drum. The only thing that can be said in favour of "alarums" is that if such sorry spectacles had to be introduced in face of the audience, alarums helped the impression of warlike confusion and clash of arms. But this stage direction was another concession to popular taste.¹⁴

In certain circumstances where the quality of the music was poor, Cowling's objections would be justified, but as strictly literary criticisms they are not. He appears to have overlooked the symbolic value of music. In Coriolanus there are several references to music as an essential part of the ritual of warfare. The ideal warrior was not only powerful and fierce in appearance but also in sound. Coriolanus' hum is more terrible than a battery. Loss of integrity for him is closely equivalent to

having his "throat of war...which quired with (his)...
 drum...[turn'd] into a pipe as all as an eunuch." (III. ii. 112-4)
 Drums and trumpets are almost by extension, also the sign
 of integrity in warfare. "When drums and trumpets shall/
 I' the field prove flatterers." (I. ix. 42-43) I submit
 that explicit textual references to the symbolic import-
 ance of music does a great deal to answer the kind of
 objections Cowling raises.

By now it should be apparent that the verbal imagery
 of the poetry is inextricably entwined with the visual
 imagery of the stage in this play. For this reason a
 division between this discussion and that of the poetry
 in Chapter 3 must be artificial to some extent. It was,
 however, considered justifiable for convenience' sake.

Footnotes for Chapter Two.

- 1
G. Wilson Knight, Principles of Shakespearian Production (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1936) p.93.
- 2
Julius Caesar, IV.iii.275.
- 3
Hamlet, III.iv.139.
- 4
Antony and Cleopatra, IV.iii.13.
- 5
IV.iv.
- 6
Henry V, III.Prologue.19 and IV.Prologue.19.
- 7
H. Granville-Barker, Coriolanus: Prefaces to Shakespeare. Fifth Series. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1946.) p.86.
- 8
King Lear, I.iv. Enter Kent, disguised.
- 9
IV.v.52-66.
- 10
of Macbeth, I.iii.109. The use of dress to describe status is common in Shakespeare.
- 11
G. Wickham, "Coriolanus: Shakespeare's Tragedy in Rehearsal and Performance," Stratford-on-Avon Studies, VIII (1966), pp.167-181.
- 13
I.S. Ewbank, "'More Pregnantly than Words': Some Uses and Limitations of Visual Symbolism," ShS, XXIV (1971) p.16.
- 14
G.H. Cowling, Music on the Shakespearian Stage, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press (1913). p.95.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WORDS.

The world of Coriolanus is, as I have tried to show, urban, secular and mercantile. For the most part, it gives the impression of being lit by harsh sunlight. It is a highly political world. A great deal of the action takes place in public and a great deal of what is said is either directed to an on-stage audience, or at least intended to be overheard by them. The fact that there are so many public ^espeeches in the play must obviously have an effect on the general impression of the poetry of the whole. Granville-Barker finds this regrettable:

There is little in subject or characters to carry Shakespeare off his feet and set the verse of Coriolanus soaring. Eguism, reivalry, cunning, and pride (the more generous traits, making by comparison, a poor show) leave the radiant passages few, incidental, and usually as likely as not to illustrate some minor figure.¹

I would argue most strongly with Granville-Barker's reasoning here. If the verse in Coriolanus does not soar, surely it is more reasonable to assume that Shakespeare did not intend it to soar, than that his poetic skill fell victim to the material of the story.

Equally unacceptable is Ifor Evens' attitude:

Coriolanus ... is a tragedy from which the splendour of language has been drained, either... by creative exhaustion or ... from a deliberate attempt to show a political and intellectual argument without the intrusion of other, and possibly more decorative and entertaining matters.²

The play is so much more complicated than a simple political and intellectual argument that I cannot accept this limiting interpretation of Shakespeare's "deliberate attempt". To begin with, it makes no allowance for the attitude to eloquence clearly expressed in the play. As Charney says,

Coriolanus' own attitude to words helps to shape the character of the verbal imagery in the play ... Unlike Hamlet or Richard II or even Othello, Coriolanus has a natural antipathy to eloquence that goes beyond the Elizabethan convention that a soldier should be a plain, if not rude, speaker.³

Anne Barton discusses this use of words at greater length:

Coriolanus ... presents a Roman world of rhetoric and persuasion, in which the hero alone resists the value placed on verbal formulations. To a surprising extent, the tragedy of Coriolanus is worked out in terms of the hero's attitude towards words. A hatred not merely of flattery but even of a just recital of his own exploits is absolutely characteristic of this man. Cominius speaks more truly than he knows when he tells Coriolanus after the surrender of Corioli that 'if I should tell thee o'er this day's work/Thou't not believe thy deeds' (I.ix.1-2). Later, Coriolanus will insist upon leaving the senate until the oration in praise of his valour has ended:

Oft,

When blows have made me stay, I fled from words ...
I had rather have one scratch my head i' th' sun
When the alarm was struck than idly sit
To hear my nothings monster'd.

II.ii.69-75.

This word monster'd means something more than just 'exaggerated'. It suggests distortion, a grotesque and degrading alteration. And here, in truth, lies the heart of the matter. Essentially, Coriolanus

fears and despises words. They are for him, serviceable commodities, but notably inferior to the deeds and actions they describe. The terrible consideration is that, even so, they should be able to violate the integrity of events. You transform facts by speaking of them, and this Coriolanus simply cannot bear. Action is simple while it is taking place, while the sword strikes, while the body of the enemy is still toppling to the earth. It is only afterwards that moments of this kind become complicated and uncertain. That they should do so is the direct result of their subjection to words, the fact that events live only by way of verbal description. In a very real sense, the language assaults the purity of action.⁴

As Cominius says of Coriolanus:

...(he) rewards
His deeds with doing them, and is content
To spend the time to end it.
II.ii.27-29.

An attempt is made in Chapter Five to show that Coriolanus is a hero in the classical tradition of Hercules and Achilles. He is typical of the non-contemplative warrior who operates in terms of virtus rather than virtue, and for whom power is honour.⁵ He lives to perform spectacular feats of physical strength on the battlefield. The performance of these deeds, as Cominius says, is their own reward. In the first half of the play we see this in practice. In the second half -- from about the time of Cominius' speech on the deeds of Coriolanus -- we are presented with the picture of the warrior trying to survive in a world where words rather than swords are the weapons. Words are shown to be everything that swords are not. The sword satisfies the hero's craving for absoluteness, words admit infinite

possibilities for deception, distortion, and manipulation. With words, Menenius persuades the starving plebeians in I.i. that they are sinners rather than sinned against. Time and again the tribunes bend the people to their will -- even going so far as to incite them to murderous rage -- with the skilful use of words. Further, words are shown to be totally flexible to the time. As the machiavellian Aufidius and tribunes know, words can be shifted and altered to suit purpose and situation, while the sword only bends before breaking. On the battlefield, Coriolanus is described as strong enough to stand firm even when his sword bends.⁶ In contrast, he is at a loss almost before he is even confronted with words. The man who alone "struck Corioles like a planet" cannot stay in the senate house in Rome with his fellow patricians to listen to Cominius' speech. Anna Barton continues:

Hence the ghastly appropriateness of the means means by which Coriolanus is destroyed. The consulship of Rome, which his mother and his friends desire for him, is an office which must not only be won by words, it places these words in a relation to actions past which is calculated to outrage Coriolanus' very nature. 'It then remains/That you do speak to the people'(II.ii.133). Then the man who could not bear to hear his friends violate his exploits by speaking of them must now consent to carry out the desecration himself, before a crowd of people he despises. From this point the people of Rome are characterised almost obsessively as 'voices'. 'Sir,' says Sicinius, 'the people must have their voices' (II.ii.137-138). The word comes to hammer through the play: 'If he do require of voices, we ought not to deny him... if he show us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them'(II.iii.1-7). Talkers and not doers like Coriolanus, the people of Rome place their trust in words over deeds. A voice cannot wield a sword, does not fight off invading Volscians. The exile of Coriolanus is made even bitterer by the fact that it constitutes a victory of

language over action. By the 'voice of slaves', the hero is 'whoop'd out of Rome' (IV.v.77-78).

In the end, words destroy this man utterly. Back in Corioli, Aufidius has only to use language to distort what actually happened in the scene between Coriolanus and the women and his purpose is achieved:

... at his nurses' tears
Howlin'd and roar'd away your victory
That eages blush'd at him, and men of heart
Look'd wand'ring each at others.

V.vi.97-100.

It is an extreme example of the violation of action -- here, of that eloquent moment of silence in which Coriolanus had taken Volunius's hand-- by dishonest speech. Reality is monstered by language ... Coriolanus most fears and detests. Predictably, he revolts, and is hacked down by the swords of the conspirators. Afterwards, Aufidius repents. But there is a terrible irony in the words he speaks over the body of his fallen enemy: 'Yet he shall have a noble memory' (V.vi.154). Language in the end, stories, elegies and accounts, are to be the keepers of Coriolanus' fame: indeed of all of Coriolanus that survives. He detested the praises of his friends, the monstering of action by words. He is now given over utterly into the power of language. 8

It is this meta-poetic use of the idea of verbal expression that makes the "medium grow transparent" with the result, as Granville-Barber says, that "little sense of artifice is left to intervene between us and the acted play."⁹

This is not to suggest that the medium is lacking in interest for its own sake. Certainly it is not rich in those "native woodnotes wild" that Ifor Evans seems to lament when he talks of the non-intrusion of "decorative and entertaining matters."¹⁰ But it has a highly sophisticated and functional system of imagery

which bears the main weight of the play's meaning.

Let us now observe the occurrence and nature of the imagery.

There are few references to nature and virtually none that reveal the close and sympathetic observation of natural phenomena to which the reader has become accustomed in the other plays. It is probably this absence that causes most of the critical objections to the poetry. That it is by avoiding this kind of vision that Shakespeare achieves the frighteningly metallic, stone, and concrete world of Coriolanus' Rome.

When any part of natural life is mentioned in the play it is done in a way calculated to rob it of an immediate sense of reality. This point is best explained by examples. Consider, for argument's sake, the recurring references to farming.

(he) shows good husbandry for the Volscian state
IV.vii.82

says Infidius of Coriolanus. Earlier, Volumnia described his action on the battlefield in this way:

... 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.34-37.

In both these examples, the ideas of farming are used in terms of conventional analogy rather than as true metaphors. The word 'husbandry' does not conjure up visions of rural activity, but rather traditional descriptions of the

role of the ruler in the state in terms of the farmer's role on the land. Similarly, the 'harvest-man' is too close to the bloody brow' and 'mail'd hand' to evoke images of wheat-fields and summer afternoons. Instead it hints at apocalyptic visions of death the reaper.

Animal imagery recurs throughout the play, but once again, in a manner more emblematic than naturalistic. A good number of these references occur in Coriolanus' own speeches -- the prime example being the first flood of his invective against the rioting plebeians in I.i.166-187. Charney has some telling comments to make on the subject of Coriolanus' diction:

When Coriolanus does use figures of speech, he inclines to similes rather than metaphors since they provide a simple and more explicit form of expression. Both the vehicle and tenor of the image are very carefully balanced and limited, usually by the connectives 'like' or 'as'... the similes do not suggest new areas of meaning, but give points already stated an added force and vividness. Their function is illustrative rather than expressive. 11

The slightly flattening effect of similes is in keeping with the nature of the animals mentioned. Nearly all of them are familiar characters from animal fables and as such they introduce a meaning over and above their personal characteristics. The geese, foxes, hares, lions and bears of Aesop's Fables have a substantially different emotive value to creatures of the countryside like "The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hum!"¹²

The fables would have been familiar to most of

Shakespeare's audience as they were frequently used in schools as texts for translation exercises. The pervasive tone of the fables would also be familiar. So, by employing these apparently unimaginative animals for illustration Shakespeare was not trying and failing to write richly metaphorical poetry, but, rather, succeeding in introducing the fables' special brand of secular wisdom into the play. The lesson of most of the stories is a worldly one. Moral and spiritual values are seldom stressed unless they are to the distinct material advantage of the protagonist. There is seldom any evidence of sympathy or other humane feelings. Expediency is the key-note. Although the links with stereo-typed animals ^{are} ~~is~~ inviting, there are more explicit links with Aesop's Fables in the play.

The predictable relationship in "The mouse ne'er shunn'd the cat as they..." (I.vi.43) and the emblematic illustration of disorder "...bring in/The crows to peck the eagles" (III.i.137-138) are both highly reminiscent of Aesop's method. Menenius' exchange with the tribunes on the relationship between Marcius and the plebeians is also distinctly fabular:

Sic. Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

An. Pray you, who does the wolf love?

Sic. The lamb.

An. Ay; to devour him; as the hungry plebeians would the noble Marcius. etc.

II.1.5-10

The strongest link of all, of course, is the fable of the body and the dependence of the limbs on the belly. Menenius' version of the story has much of the Aesopian mundane practicality in its reasoning. It does a great deal to keep the ideas of the play earthbound in the little world of men and their affairs, and preventing them from "soaring", to borrow Granville-Barker's expression again.¹³

The body fable is at the core of a system of related imagery that radiates throughout the play. It is so closely interwoven with the political content of the play it is often futile to attempt a distinction between subject and analogy.

The metaphorical use of voices to represent votes probably recurs more frequently than any other reference to a single part or function of the body. This, as Anne Barton has pointed out, is closely related to Marcius' hatred for the power of words and the irony of his predicament in civil life. The god-like warrior is now at the mercy of the voice of the monstrous plebeians. The hero's proper function is to kill the monster, but Marcius has to submit himself to it. From this 'voice' it is a short step to the people's stinking breaths, referred to with vigorous disgust. In another context, a complaint that the people had bad breath and needed to keep their teeth cleaner (II.iii.63) would remain simply a statement, but surrounded as it is here by the metaphorical use of the body and its functions, it gains extra poetic meaning. So, because of their common origin, the voices

inherit a rotteness from the breath and the breath begins to suggest that the people are being described as no more stable or unchangeable than so much bad air.

The body imagery frequently borders on the disgusting, particularly in its use of the mouth. This image seems to be concentrated round areas where political rights are being questioned. The voice is, of course, linked with the ideas of tongues and mouths, but here the emphasis is on actual physical sharing rather than ideas. The insidious suggestion of this use of the mouth is that the people are ruled by appetite, both physical and psychological, rather than by heart and mind.

The noble tribunes are the people's mouths
And we their hands... III.ii.269.

Coriolanus inveighs against their ability to use their voices, rather than their appetite:

... pluck out
The multitudinous tongue...
III.i.155.

He appeals for order even in the case of this most animal of functions:

You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?
II.i.35
But the plebeians understand more of the physical side of their function. They recognise a sort of gross communion in the fact that Coriolanus must show his wounds to them to get their voices.

We are to put our tongues in those wounds and
speak for them. II.iii.6-8

The idea of this repulsively appetitive and carnal mutuality is taken to its logical conclusion in a recurring motif of cannibalism.

If the wars eat us not up, they will...
I.i.84.

The classes are seen as predators on one another, but there is also talk of cannibalism within groups:

... the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another
I.i.186-187.

The plebeians see the belly itself, the very centre of Menenius' theory of state, as the perpetrator of this self-mutilation: it is, in the first citizen's words, "the cormorant belly" (I.i.120).

Harmony has not been maintained so not only does the body politic feed upon itself, it also becomes diseased. Images of sickness and medicine were the conventional way of concretising the idea of a political system that is not functioning properly, so the leader's role, to some extent could be seen as medical. Coriolanus is the blood-letter.

Ritchie Simpson¹⁴ discovers twenty-three instances of this type of imagery. There is obviously something grievous ailing Coriolanus'Rome. The body politic is unhealthy because its members not only damage themselves, but also infect each other. Coriolanus has a predilection for cursing the plebeians with strings of particularly nasty sores, boils, scabs, rashes, and fevers.

~~which to curse the people.~~ Their appetite is unhealthy and abnormal -- like "a sick man's appetite, who desires most that/which would increase his evil." (I.i.177-178). They will, if they are allowed, "lick/The sweet which is their poison" (III.i.155-156). For the Romans who are nobler -- the patricians and illustrious warriors -- the illness is correspondingly less repulsive. Their wounds are clean and they have need of the surgeon rather than the purveyor of horse-drenches. Coriolanus' own wounds have the added significance of being the badges of honour and the graves of his enemies (II.i.152-153) so the blood he loses is in fact medicinal rather than harmful to him. In the same way, the blood that the body politic loses in battle is medicinal to it. Curiously entangled with the imagery of war as a necessary surgical operation, is the idea of war as a feast. Marcius is always ready for "a second course of fight" (I.vi.16). His encounter with Aufidius was just "a morsel of this feast" because he had "fully din'd before" (I.ix.10-11). So it is on the battlefield that men like him can ~~sc~~feit without dishonour. This is their banquet of the senses. It is significant that Aufidius' house welcomed the exiled Coriolanus in with the sound of music and feasting when he came to Antium to plan revenge: their mutual enjoyment of the relationship between them, is now made explicit.

The paradoxical entanglement so often discernable in the imagery is mirrored to some extent by a similar construction in the diction. There seems to be a deliberate intention to convey ambiguity through the meaning.

Marcus is both the fire and the one who is burned:

... his soaring insolence

 ...will be his fire
 To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze
 Shall darken him for ever.

II.i.250-255

He is a "scourge" to Rome's enemies, yet at the same time a "rod to her friends" (II.iii.90-91). Volumnia says

"You might have been enough the man you are/With striving to be less so." (III.ii.19-20). For Coriolanus to strive to be less is the ultimate inversion of what we have seen of him. According to Cominius, the many people deserve as much pity from him as the one wolf deserves of the many shepherds (IV.vi.111-112). The women's dilemma during the siege of Rome is also expressed through this kind of formulation: "...or we must lose/The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,/ Our comfort in the country" (V.iii.109-111). 'Nurse' and 'comfort' are close enough in meaning to make this an extremely paradoxical statement.

Although most of the statements of this kind occur most frequently in connection with Coriolanus, they are not infrequent elsewhere. Volumnia describes her anger with packed terseness: "I'll sup upon myself,/And so shall sterve with feeding" (IV.iii.50-51). Unnaturalness has

has entered her very patterns of speech and there is a chilling reminder implicit, of the unnatural dam, that will eat up her own.

This paradoxical, circular method of expression performs two very important functions in conveying the meaning of the play. First of all, language is shown to be flexible in the extreme. Voices and words can change direction and meaning and then change back again and still convince. The implied contrast with the soldier and his sword is obvious. The absolute is opposed to the equivocal. Secondly, these repeated ambiguities invite the reader to constantly compare and modify opinions and to regard everything that takes place as only relative to the rest. This pervasive feeling lends far greater depth and meaning to the events of the play. Within this framework it is even less possible to judge any of the characters or events and reach a final solution.

Footnotes for Chapter Three.

- 1
Granville-Barker, "Coriolanus", p.171.
- 2
B. Ifor Evans, The Language of Shakespeare's Plays
(London: Methuen & co., Ltd., 1952) p.161
- 3
M. Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays
(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961) p.34.
- 4
A. Barton, "Shakespeare and the Limits of Language,"
ShS, XXIV (1971) pp.27-28.
- 5
cf C.Mitchell, "Coriolanus: Power as Honour,"
ShakS, I (1965), pp.199-226.
- 6
I.iv. 52-53.
- 7
II.ii.114.
- 8
Barton, p.28.
- 9
Granville-Barker, p.169.
- 10
Ifor Evans, p.161.
- 11
Charney, p.31.
- 12
Macbeth, III.ii.51.
- 13
Granville-Barker, p.171.
- 14
R.R. Simpson, Shakespeare and Medicine (London:
E.S. Livingstone, Ltd., 1962).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POLITICS

The story of Coriolanus is set fairly early in history when what was to become the Roman empire was hardly more than a precariously-established city state. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the plebeians left Rome and were pacified by Menenius Agrippa's use of the belly fable in 491 B.C.¹, while Livy's account dates the conquest of Corioles at 493 B.C.¹ In Coriolanus' youth, the monarchy had been finally abolished with the expulsion of Tarquin the Proud.² The consular office was established in its stead.

There is some doubt as to the historical verity of the story of Coriolanus. J. E. Phillips refers to it on several occasions as "the legend of Coriolanus"³ though he does not defend his allegation. MacCallum is more explicit:

(It is) a legend that seems to have the less foundation in fact the more it is examined. The tribunate, with the establishment of which by Marcius is his main offence, and the occupants of which play so important a part in the proceedings, is now generally held to be of much later origin than the supposed date of the story. There is no agreement as to the names of the chief persons; Coriolanus is Cneius or Caius, his mother is Veturia or Volumentia, his wife is Volumentia or Vergilia, the Volscian leader Tullus Aufidius or Attius Tullus or Amfidius. Even the appellation Coriolanus rouses suspicion, for the bestowal of such

titles seems to have been unknown till long afterwards, and, in the view of some, points not to conquest, but to origin; and there are contradictory accounts of the hero's end. It has been conjectured (by Ettore Pais. Storia di Roma. Vol 1) that the whole story arose in connection with religious observances and contains a large mythological admixture; and we remember how at the end it is associated with the erection of the temple to Fortuna Mulierbris.⁴

Legend or not, his story appears in the guise, at least, of history as early as 29B.C. in The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The 'Antiquities' seem to have been the main source for Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus. Livy, a contemporary of Dionysius, incorporated the story of Coriolanus in his Early History of Rome. The story recurs about two hundred years later in Florus' Epitome of Livy. These documents are discussed and described briefly by Geoffrey Bullough⁵. I have not taken the investigation any further as it seems to be of secondary importance to this discussion.

The Elizabethans had access to all these versions of the story, both in the original, and in English. Philemon Holland's translation of the Livy text⁶ first appeared in 1600. Frequent reprintings of Sir Thomas North's English version of Amyot's French translation of Plutarch's Lives attest to its popularity. The story of Coriolanus also appeared in Painter's The Palace of Pleasure (1566-1567), a collec-

tion of short "historical" novels. It is mentioned briefly in Raleigh's History of the World.

There is convincing evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with at least these three versions of the story.⁷ From their popularity, it seems safe also to assume that they were not completely unknown to Shakespeare's audience.

These then, can be regarded as examples of the primary literary background to Coriolanus. For the secondary, it is necessary to look into contemporary political, religious and philosophical documents.

The historical consciousness of the Renaissance in general and Elizabethan thinkers in particular is a complex matter, far beyond the scope of this thesis. Roughly, history was regarded by the Elizabethans as a series of patterns for the conduct of current affairs. Fulbecke states this clearly in the preface to his An Historical Collection of the Continual Factions, Tumults and Massacres of the Romans and Italians during the space of one hundred and twenty years next before the peaceable Empire of Augustus Caesar. (1601)

The use of this historie is threefold; first the revealing of the mischiefes of discord and civill discention... Secondly the opening of the cause hereof, which is nothing else but ambition, for out of this seed groweth a whole harvest of evils. Thirdly the declaring of the remedie, which is by humble estimation of our selves, by living well, not by lurking well: by con-

versing in the light of the common weale
with equals, not by complotting in darke
conventicles against superiors.

Political and religious theorists consistently used the lessons of the past as reinforcement for their debate. Skill in using examples of this kind was regarded as a criterion of effectiveness. See, for example, the way Bacon compliments Machiavelli on his choice of historical examples in his discourse on governments.⁸ Driver describes this habitual use of examples in terms of an attempt to relate "events in time to a controlling purpose" and talks of the Elizabethan approach as an interpretation of history.⁹ This peculiar historical consciousness manifests itself throughout Shakespeare's work.

As Driver says,

In moments of crisis and decision, the Shakespearean hero reminds himself and his audience of his history -- past, present, and anticipated future -- because that is the only way he has of seeing the meaning in his act..... The past in Shakespeare is very important because it aids in the definition of the present... Shakespeare's belief in history is not that of some present day existentialists, to whom the moment of present choice is everything... rather he believes in an ordering purpose above the temporal process, indistinguishable in an ordering from the Christian idea of Providence, which imposes the burden of choice upon man without abandoning history to chaos.¹⁰

This is of course, to a large extent, what Coriolanus does not do.

T. J. B. Spencer¹¹ makes the point that Roman

and to ask what would have happened if they had suddenly found themselves protected from all authority by inviolable sanctuary, and enjoying complete freedom of action, if not full political rights. In such circumstances, unrestrained by the power of the throne, they would, no doubt, have set sail on the stormy sea of democratic politics, swayed by the gusts of popular eloquence and quarrelling for power with the governing class of a city which did not even belong to them, before any real sense of community had had time to grow. That sense - the only true patriotism - comes slowly and springs from the heart: it is founded upon respect for the family and love of the soil. Premature liberty of this kind would have been a disaster: we should have been torn to pieces by petty squabbles before we had ever reached political maturity, which as things were was made possible by the long quiet years under monarchical government; for it was that government which, as it were, nursed our strength and enabled us ultimately to produce sound fruit from liberty, as only a politically adult nation can.¹²

A proclamation following the Essex rising uses terms ~~is~~ closely parallel to Livy's to describe the city's population. It seems worth quoting in order to emphasise the significance his passage will have held for the English public at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century:

...there is at this time dispersed within our city of London and the suburbs thereof a great multitude of base and loose people, such as neither have any certain place of abode, nor any good or lawful cause of business to attend hereabouts, but lie privily in corners and bad houses listening after news and stirs and spreading rumours and tales, being of liklihood ready to lay hold of any occasion to enter into tumult or disorder thereby to seek rapine and pillage. And likewise that further numbers of such sort of vagabond people do continually

flock and gather to our city and the places confining about the same.¹³

While Livy's brief discourse is on what might have been, a number of Sixteenth Century commentators took a much more drastic line. Kenneth Muir's article The Background of Coriolanus¹⁴ contains the fruits of some illuminating research into the subject. I am indebted to him for the following material.

In The Pandectes of the Law of Nations (1602) William Fulbecke uses the banishment of Coriolanus as ammunition in his attack on "the horrors of democracy"

He argues that

the heele can not stand in place of the head, ~~Unlesse~~ the bodie be destroyed and the anatomie monstrous: it is against the nature of the people to beare rule: for they are as vnfit for regiment, as a mad man to giue counsaile.... This beast of many heades hath a threeforked tongue: with the one part it tickleth the eares of them whom they flatter: with the other it licketh their wounds: with the last, and sharpest it pricketh their hearts The way-ward people may be iustly compared to a bundell of thornes, which will beare vp a great man, but will pricke him if he leane or lie vpon it.¹⁵

Forset, in his Comparative Discourse (1606)¹⁶ argues that in "euery ciuill state there must be the ruling and the ruled"; that "there is no government without law",¹⁷ The king is compared to both the head and the heart, and he stresses the mutual-ity of help in the members of the commonwealth.

This similitude was both fitly and fortunately enforced by Menenius Agrippa, who being im-
ployed in the appeasing and persuading of

the seditious reuoulting commons of Rome, did by a very tale of this proportionable respectiuenes of the parts in mans body, and the mutualitie of kinnes and ayd afforded from each to other, so sensibly shew them their errour, that surseasing their malignant enuy wherewith they were inraged against their rulers (whom they accounted as the idle belly that swallowed the labors of their hands) they discerned at the last, that their repining against, and their pining of that belly, whence was distributed vnto them their bloud and nourishment, necessarily tended to their owne destruction; and were thereupon forthwith reaclaymed into their bounds of obedience.

Richard Knolles' translation of Bodin's Six Bookes of a Commonweale (1606) contains a long analysis of the disadvantages of the democratic form of government, which include the fickleness and ingratitude of the people. The Coriolanus story is used to illustrate this analysis.

Gosilicius in The Commonwealth of Good Counsel (translated into English in 1607) comments on Coriolanus' piety in pardoning his country "which through the crueltie of the Tribunes, at that time persecuting the nobilitie, had been to him unthankful." He remarks that it is a thing "most perilous that the magistrates of any state should be chosen by the multitude" and he comments unfavourably on the creation of the tribunes.

In Rome likewise the multitude not induring the dignitie of the Senate, made manie motions, and in the ende created Tribunes, by whose furie and insolency, the authoritie of the Senate was diminished, and by sedition and troubles brought the state to vtter destruction.¹⁸

Three years earlier, in a book called Foure

Paradoxes or Politique Discourses, Dudley Digges

discussed the use of war as a means of curing internal dissensions and his main example of this device is the story of Coriolanus, taken directly from North's Plutarch, though he quotes one phrase from Livy.¹⁹

These enmities haue been instruments in most Countries ouerthrowes, the ouertake vs in our securitie like secret fiers in the night, and are therefore more to be feared, they steale on vs by degrees hidden in the deepnesse of our rest, like the consumption in a body vnpurged, vnexercised, that is indeede lesse painefull yet proues more mortall than most diseases; a perfect remedie to dissipate the other, if wee bee not to out selues defectiue; to wit, forreine warre, a souereigne medicine for domesticall inconueniences.

...The generall daunger will soone withdraw mens mindes from intestine garboiles to resist the generall mischief, both which appeared in that wise proceeding of the Senate of Rome in Coriolanus time that by this means appeased all diuisions, euen then when as Liuie obserues heat of contention betwixt the people and nobilitie had made, Ex una ciuitate duas....For the populousnesse of that Citie, by reason of their peace occasioning a dearth and a famine, and their idlenesse sturing vp lewd felowes to exasperate the desperate need and enuious malice of the meaner sort, against the nobility, whose pride & luxurie grown through sloth intolerable, caused them to contemne and iniurie the poorer people, in the end the fire brake forth here to be quenched, and then the Senate hauing as I may say bought wit by this deare experience, were at length enforced to flie to this medicine, which wisely applied before, had well preuented all those causes, and their vnhappy effectes. Then they resolued on a warre with the Volsces to ease their city of that dearth, by diminishing their number, and appease those tumultuous broyles, by drawing poore with rich, and the meane sort with the Nobilitie,

into one campe, one seruice, and one selfe-
same daunger: sure meanes to procure
sure loue and quietnesse in a contentious
Commonwealth, as that of Rome was at that
time.

Yet euen then there wanted not home tarrying
hous-doues, two peacebred tribunes Sicimus
(sic) and Brutus, hindred that resolution
calling it crueltie, and it may be some
now will condemne this course, as changing
for the worse: some that wil much mislike
a body breaking-out should take receipts
of quicksiluer or mercurie, that may endang-
er life: yet they cannot but knowe euen
those poysons outwardly applied are soue-
reigne medicines to purge and clense, and
therefore hauing a good Physition, I must
professe, I thinke it much better to take
yeerely Physicke...

An additional contemporary reference to
Coriolanus, not listed by Muir, is mentioned by
Bretns Stirling.²⁰ In a Paul's Cross sermon preached
on March 1. 1600-1601. William Barlow compares Essex
to Coriolanus. He says

...that great natures...prove either ex-
cellently good, or dangerously wicked: it
is spoken by Plato, but applied by Plutarch
unto Coriolanus, a gallant young, but dis-
contented Roman, who might make a fit paral-
lel for the late Earle, if you read his
life.²⁰

Of all aspects of the Coriolanus story, the
belly fable was used most frequently in the late
Sixteenth and early Seventeenth centuries, Bullough²¹
notes that it appears in An Apology for Poetrie
by Sir Philip Sidney and William Camden's Remains of
a Greater Work Concerning Britain²² (1605).

Kenneth Muir²³ adds to these, references in John of
Salisbury's Polycraticon, Aesop's Fables, Averell's

A Mervailous Combat of Contrarieties, and Erasmus' Copia. Muir also cites evidence towards proving that Shakespeare was familiar with at least the versions of Avenell, Sidney, and Camden, as well as those in Holland's Livy and North's Plutarch.

Theodore Spencer has paragraph in his Shakespeare and the Nature of Man on the subject:

Shakespeare's Menenius, in Coriolanus, is not alone in drawing parallels between man's bodily structure and the state; the same thing had been done already, not only by Plutarch but, among others, by Ramon Sabunde, Castiglione, Sir Thomas Elyot and King James I - as it was to be done again by Hobbes in the opening pages of his Leviathan.²⁴

The selection of original material discussed in this chapter is far from exhaustive, but it does at least help to establish a few relevant facts. First of all, it establishes that, as Muir²⁵ says, Shakespeare was writing about Coriolanus within a literary tradition. Secondly, it establishes something of the way in which the Elizabethans were talking about Coriolanus. It shows that not only was the story in common currency when Shakespeare wrote his play, but it was also common in political argument. This means that a fairly large percentage of his expected audience would have preconceptions about the political implications and possibilities of the story. On a secondary level, this eradicates the problems which have engaged some critics

as to why Shakespeare should have chosen to write on "an obscure figure in Roman history" or the special problems of dramatising events which were foreign to his audience.²⁶ Further, it cannot be claimed that Shakespeare had seized on the story as a vehicle for his personal political manifesto while it can be shown that he was dramatising a popular contemporary vehicle for current ideas.

On this subject, the critics fall into fairly clearly defined camps. One group of critics finds the plebeians ~~is~~ consistently reviled, and ~~is~~ frequently shown to behave in a despicable fashion, and discover in this a marked bias against the common people. This group includes Tolstoy and Hazlitt.²⁷

The self-evident point here is that it is Coriolanus himself who denounces the populace most frequently and unless it can be established that he is intended as the play's moral norm, it is idle to nominate him the poet's doctrinal mouthpiece. As for the plebeians' behaviour: they are shown, above all, to have an overwhelmingly real grievance that more than justifies their resentment against the patricians and, more especially, Coriolanus. Added to this they are shown to have a most endearing sense of humour, as well as a marked tendency to humane generosity. This evidence against the conclusions of the first group of critics, has lead a

second group to favour the notion that this play in fact embodies a terrible condemnation of tyrannical dictatorship. It seems unnecessary to point out the mutual modification of the evidence these two groups cite in their support. A third group of critics, faced with the apparently irreconcilable inconsistencies in Shakespeare's "doctrine" follow Coleridge, who said the play demonstrates admirable political impartiality.²⁸ Modifying this attitude J. E. Phillips²⁹ suggests that this "impartiality" reveals that Shakespeare's sympathies do not lie with either party but only in the welfare of the whole state.

It seems that this suggestion, qualified by yet another opinion -- that Shakespeare wasn't interested in politics as such, but only in persons -- brings us nearer to a serviceable hypothesis for the exploration of just what is happening politically in this play.

It is an undeniably political play. Physical characteristics of the dramatic structure point to that conclusion. The audience is constantly engaged with the spectacle of man in society trying to find a workable structure within which he can satisfy both his individuality and the demands and limitations of his social/political nature. There are no cosmological, religious, or supernatural

factors. The action takes place in a man-made and therefore narrow universe where things are measured in mercantile rather than moral terms.

Yet, within this patently political framework are cast a most absolute individual, a family relationship of consuming intensity, and a network of non-rational currents of psychological contact between personalities. Even the mob is frequently shown as a group of anonymous but nonetheless individualised persons. I submit that these political and personal elements are far from irreconcilable.

Aristotle clarifies the point with characteristic niceness under the heading:

What is a Citie : and that it consisteth by nature : and that man is naturally a social and ciuill creature.

He says:

A Citie is a perfect and absolute assembly of communion of many towns or streets in one, hauing already attained to the highest pitch of perfection and self-sufficiencie, and being ordained not only to this end to liue, but also to liue well : And seeing that the former simple societies haue their beginning from nature, therefore also a cittie doth subsist by nature...³⁰

When many dwell together, and by mutuall communicating of their seurall labours, workes, and goods, liue sufficiently, and use the same lawes and customes, they are called Citizens, and their place of habitation a Citie : but when they reach not unto that sufficiencie which I haue spoken of, then they violate their societie and loose the title of a Citie and Citizens : which is a most euient argument, that

the verie essence of a City consisteth in that. Plato in his fourth booke De Legib, complaineth of many Common-wealthes that were not Cities, but certaine habitations in villages where the weaker yeelded seruice to the stronger, and the whole gouernment was denominated of the part that ouer-ruled..³¹

Howbeit the Citie is before the house and euery one of us : for of necessitie the whole is before the part : for if the whole perish, there will remaine neither foote nor hand, sauing in name onely : as for example, if one should call that a hand which is made of stone, because a dead hand would be like unto it. All things are defined by their operation and power, insomuch that when they cease to be such, they must no longer be called such in substance, but in name onely. Therefore is it cleere and manifest without all doubt, that a Cittie is by nature and before any one of us : For if euery man seuered and set alone, is not sufficient for himselfe, hee will be so affected toward the whole, namely the Cittie, as other partes that are sundred from their whole.³²

This translation of The Politics appeared in 1598 so it joined rather than initiated a body of political theory discussing the idea of the natural commonwealth where each member has his own ordained function to fulfill and each is so intimately dependent on the whole that to work for the good of the whole was also to work for his own personal benefit. This idea of the commonwealth was a natural product of the correct observance of a divinely and therefore naturally ordered universe. It was a theory which possessed and unified Sixteenth Century thinkers and has been dealt with most comprehensively by a number of modern critics.³³ A fresh investigation of orig-

inal material is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. Some particular aspects need re-emphasis, however, so for convenience' sake I will paraphrase passages from Theodore Spencer's succinct dissertation on the subject.³⁴

It was believed, he explains, that there was an eternal law, a general order -- in the universe, in the ranks of created beings, and in the institution of government -- and it was the business of thoughtful men to discover and describe it so that through knowledge of it they could fulfill their proper end: to know and love God. This knowledge of God was available to the Sixteenth Century Englishman in two forms : the Bible and what Montaigne³⁵ describes as the book "Of the universal order of things or nature." Sir Walter Raleigh³⁶ says that

... by his own word and by this visible world is God perceived of men; which is also the understood language of the Almighty, vouchsafed to all his creatures, whose hieroglyphical characters are the unnumbered stars, the sun and moon, written on the large volumes of the firmament : written also on the earth and seas, by the letters of all those living creatures, and plants, which inhabit and reside therein.

I feel that this is a matter which cannot be stressed too strongly in a discourse on Coriolanus. It throws into meaningful relief the already notable absence from the play of a moral or cosmic firmament, and natural phenomena. The countryside is not a place

of grass and trees, but a bloody battlefield. Wind does not blow, rain does not fall, night does not come. In view of the current beliefs these absences are most sinister in the world of Shakespeare's Coriolanus.

Let us now return to Spencer.³⁷ He explains that, in terms of this world view, man must understand first that he is not something by himself, but "a piece of the order of things"³⁸. And secondly, he must understand the universal order of which he is a essential part, and which makes the structure of the world, of living things, and of society, a single unity created by the hand of God. Nature rules over this unity and order, which falls into three domains (the universe, the ranks of created beings, and the institution of government) each of which is a reflection of the others, since they are all parts of the same ordered unity. She rules³⁹ over the cosmos (the universal world) over the world of created objects on earth, and over the world of human government, or man in society. It was considered only necessary to learn what her rules were in order to lead a wise and rational life. The hierarchy of souls in the second domain⁴⁰ is closely paralleled to the hierarchy of the cosmos, and just as in the cosmos there is a sublunary and a celestial region, so in the psychological hierarchy there is a physical and a spiritual region:

a world of sense and a world of intellect, sense linking man to the animals and intellect linking him to the angels.

At this point I would like, again, to digress briefly from Spencer and introduce a passage from Bacon⁴¹ dealing with intellect and the senses, which he refers to as reason and the affections.

Again, if the affections in themselves were pliant and obedient to reason, it were true there should be no great use of persuasions and insinuations to the will, more than of naked proposition and proofs; but in regard of the continual mutinies and seditions of the affections, ... Video meliora, proboque, /Deteriora sequor, reason would become captive and servile, if eloquence of persuasions did not practise and win the imagination from the affections' part, and contract a confederacy between the reason and imagination against the affections; for the affections carry ever an appetite to good, as reason doth. The difference is, that the affections beholdeth merely the present; reason beholdeth the future and sum of time. And therefore the present filling the imagination more, reason is commonly vanquished; but after that force of eloquence and persuasion hath made things future and remote appear as present, then upon the revolt of the imagination reason prevaieth.

This seems to be a very helpful analogy for explaining something of the peculiar nature of the plebeians position in Coriolanus' Rome. The "affections" are beneath "reason" on the psychological scale in exactly the same terms as the plebeians are beneath the patricians on the social scale. The nature of the displacement of order in each case is as similar as the chaos that ensues.

I return again to Spencer to find his next conclusion⁴² particularly apposite as a qualification of this analogy. According to this world view, man, he says, has to begin with the senses for that is the condition of his being, but he must rise above them to find the truth. In many ways, the plebeians are an essential condition of the state's being, but it cannot function effectively as a state unless it consists in more than plebeians. As Spencer says⁴³ about the third of his 'domains' in the state, as in the universe, and in the world of living creatures, Nature's order is manifested in a hierarchy. Spencer then quotes Sir John Heywood⁴⁴ on the three types of temporal law that exist for the government of men.

God in the creation of man, imprinted certain rules within his soul, to direct him in all the actions of his life; which rules, because we took them when we took our being are commonly called the primary law of Nature: of which sort the canons account these precepts following. To worship God : to obey parents and governors, and thereby to conserve common society : lawful conjunction of man and woman : succession of children : education of children : acquisition of things which pertain to no man : equal liberty of all : to communicate commodities : to repel force : to hurt no man : and generally, to do to another as he would be done unto ... Out of these precepts are formed certain customs, generally observed in all parts of the world; which, because they were not from the beginning, but brought in afterward... are called the secondary law of nature, and by many also the law of nations.

Finally, Spencer points out⁴⁵ that since all

three domains form a single unity and are interdependent, the best way to grasp any one of them was, naturally, to compare it with one or both of the others. Hence the universal use of analogy in the Sixteenth Century. Spencer quotes Aquinas⁴⁶ as follows:

Therefore, let the king recognise that such is the office which he undertakes, namely, that he is to be in the kingdom what the soul is in the body, and what God is in the world.

And, consequently, St. Thomas Aquinas concludes, the state not only becomes subject to the same laws which govern the other two hierarchies, it also becomes responsible to both of them for upholding these laws.

Spencer completes his study with this summary:⁴⁶

Thus the whole universe, which was made for man, found in man its reflection and its epitome; man was the centre of the ideal picture which optimistic theory delighted to portray. Nature's order was shown in the elements, in the stars, in the hierarchy of souls, in the ranks of society. Everything in the world was part of the same unified scheme, and the body and the soul of man, each a reflection of the other, and both an image of the universal plan, were the culmination and the final end of God's design....

As I have said, I have paraphrased a modern critic's account of this pervasive system of Sixteenth Century ideas for convenience's sake. Material for original research, abounds in contemporary documents. Apart from those already mentioned in this chapter,

I would refer the reader most particularly Book 1 of Richard Hooker's Law of Ecclesiastical Polity (1593), and to Sir Thomas Elyot's The Boke Named the Governour (1531) which stresses most strongly the need for civic order and the horrors of civil war. According to Elyot,

A public weal is a body living, compact or made of sundry estates and degrees of men, which is disposed by the order of equity and governed by the rule and moderation of reason.⁴⁷

Another relevant document is John Knox's First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558) where he "reiterates ideas found frequently in his political arguments, when he describes the order of, degrees and vocations which constitute a political society, and draws an illuminating analogy between the body of the state and the body of the individual man."⁴⁸ More material that is useful in this context is to be found in the Book of Homilies, particularly the Homily on Disobedience. Hart paraphrases in this way:⁴⁹

Rebellion is always wrong...(it) is not a good method of obtaining the redress of grievances, as the evils arising from it far exceed the worst evils due to the worst government. It is the greatest sin in the black book of human iniquity, and includes all the worst crimes, especially robbery, perjury, and murder... Miseries of every kind inflict a land in which rebellion breaks out; disease, pestilence, famine, and all the horrors of civil war are inevitable and are followed by destruction of liberty and the captivity, slavery

or slaughter of both rebels and obedient subjects.

This passage is a typical example of the standpoint of the Homilies. As has been remarked, the Homilies teach us that subjects have duties but no rights except the right of paying taxes and of enduring oppression in patience and without a murmur.⁵⁰

There are many more books and documents with passages germane to this discussion but for the purposes of the present study, the above examples are sufficient to illustrate something of the world view which formed the foundations for the political background to Coriolanus.

This world view should be considered in the light of two further factors. Firstly, there were a number of discoveries in both the physical and intellectual worlds which led to a profound questioning of its validity. Secondly, there was widespread social and religious unrest in England at the time when this world view was supposedly at its peak of influence. The first of these two "modifications" is again dealt with particularly effectively by Theodore Spencer in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man. He talks of how the essentially optimistic view of the universe and man's place in it were severely shaken from a cosmological point of view by the theories of Copernicus. Man realized the possibility

that he had been labouring under a massive delusion about the order of the universe and the hitherto assured movements of the 'unnumbered stars'.

The most influential of the intellectual discoveries' can be described most conveniently in terms of the writings of Machiavelli and Montaigne.

Machiavelli⁵¹ as Bacon says⁵² wrote "of men as they are instead of as they should be" -- basically wicked and depraved and therefore most effectively ordered by force and fear. Montaigne has fundamentally the same disillusioned view of man's spiritual nobility. Briefly, he decides that as man in his ignorance and feebleness is no better than the animals, the traditional notion of his vital position in the universe is untenable.⁵³ The work and ideas of these two men and their influence may be regarded as the most obvious symptom of a growing concern with man's ambiguous position in the universe, particularly in terms of the moral hierarchy. While the optimistic view made no allowance for the inherent bestiality in man, the fatal taint of sin dating back to the fall of Adam and Eve was an almost obsessive motif for the more pessimistic philosophers.⁵⁴

This then was the intellectual and philosophical variation from the optimistic, Medieval-based Elizabethan world view. The second 'modification' I mentioned was widespread social unrest. It is the

central theme for Brents Stirling's The Populace in Shakespeare. He presents a strong case in favour of bringing this historical material to bear on an interpretation of Coriolanus. He says

A historical approach, when pardonably oversimplified by students and others, is that if we understand Elizabethan society and Elizabethan attitudes we understand Shakespeare. The historical interpreter, of course, will disavow such a notion; all he means is that we cannot grasp Shakespeare unless we first understand the Elizabethan milieu, and that critical evaluation does not end with such understanding but begins with it.⁵⁵

Quite apart from the merits and demerits of this approach, Stirling's book is most valuable for its wealth of documentary evidence to show that Coriolanus mirrored most accurately the nature of a number of social disturbances of the time. Laying his emphasis on Elizabethan public opinion rather than actual events, Stirling devotes a section to "antipopular propaganda roughly contemporaneous with the Jack Cade scenes⁵⁶" and "the emphasis placed during the same period upon the Anabaptists and related phenomena." He then discusses the same matters for the period from Julius Caesar to Coriolanus (1608)⁵⁷. In this section Stirling says

Coriolanus is an historical as well as a dramatic phenomenon and... it deserves to be set in a perspective of events and of public response to them.⁵⁸

The widespread religious unrest of the time, particularly the levelling aspects of the puritan reforms are obviously relevant background to Coriolanus but more because they drew public attention to the plight and ambitions of the common man, than for their intrinsic matter. The peasant revolts, on the other hand, have a much more direct bearing on the play. The enclosure riots of North-Hampton(1607) are commented on as follows in Robert Wilkinson's Sermon Preached at North-Hampton the 21 June last past...upon Occasion of the Late Rebellion and Riots in those Parts committed.

It is true that we are fallen into tempestuous and troublesome times wherein the excessive covetousness of some hath caused extreme want to other, and that want not well digested hath rioted to the hazard of all; yea and by these storms we are cast among the rocks, even two the most dangerous rocks of estate, oppression of the mighty and rebellion of the many, by mischief whereof many flourishing kingdoms and countries have miscarried, and so had we in this undoubtedly had not God by therefore between these two rocks I sail admonishing in the passage the one sort - that is, the mighty - that man liveth by bread, but the other sort - that is, the many - that man liveth not by bread only, to the intent that they which know the ordinary course of God in preserving nature might make a conscience of impairing the means of man's preservation, and they likewise which know that God hath ways to preserve beyond the means of nature, might learn with Christian wisdom and patience to temper themselves in want. For tyranny indeed is heavy in the hands of a king, but it is intolerable in times of commotion when every vile and base companion is a

king; ... mutineers by civil commotion depopulate whole kingdoms, and that partly by making way to foreign enemies who usually increase their dominions by such advantage, but chiefly by sacking and harrying their own country with their own hands. And let men set what pretence and color they will, yet this hath been from time to time the common proceeding of popular mutinies; first to murmur upon some just cause, as the Israelites did at Moses when he brought them where was neither water to drink nor bread to eat. Ex. 15.24 & Ex. 16.3. Afterward when they had both to eat and to drink, yet (Num. 11) they murmured not for want but for wantonness, viz., for fish and for flesh, for apples and for cucumbers, etc. Even as many of our malcontents do now, who want not to drink but want to make them daily drunk.⁵⁹

As Stirling says

It may be recalled again that Elizabethan contemporary affairs were habitually expressed and commented upon by the drawing of historical analogies, and in the material below there will be apparent a linkage of nonconformists with English and Roman mob rebellion which is quite as constant as the linkage previously observed between nonconformists and Anabaptists. While the nonconformist-anabaptist equation showed that Puritans were conventionally depicted as levelers and hence vulnerable to the antileveling satire of mob scenes in plays, the equation of nonconformity with Cade, Straw, Tyler, and the Roman mobs will show a conventional linkage between Puritans and the very characters who were featured most prominently in mass rebellion as it appeared upon the stage. And again it should be recalled that such an interpretation of Elizabethan drama does not depend upon ingenious allegory, but rather upon a free association of nonconformists and stage rebels which was "in the air" as a result of constant publicity. They have heard it preached and have heard it said unceasingly that the muster of nonconformists is growing steadily, that the inescapable goal of nonconformity is wholesale leveling, and that the true ancestors

and equals of troublemakers in their midst are English peasant rebels and the unstable Roman plebs. They have been told in sermons and have heard it rhymed in season and out that Jack Cade, Jack Straw, the Roman mobs, and the Anabaptists are all one and that together or individually they spell out the Puritan, "Presbyterial," or Brownists disciplines, all of which are to be lumped together.⁶⁰

The consideration of these matters is superficial because I wish only to indicate here that the optimistic world view was not universally effective, and that political issues raised by the action of Coriolanus as well as the responses to them were issues of most immediate and urgent interest to Shakespeare's audience. They are also obviously issues of universal application Stirling says:

I believe that most of the benefits which one enjoys in a democratic society have been looked upon at one time or another as intrusions upon the natural order of things. I further believe that the most common method of resisting democratic reforms has been to associate them with destructive levelling, impiety, fantastic Utopianism, and disregard of cultural values.⁶¹

But it seems that a more particular understanding of their contemporary relevance considerable depth to the interpretation of the politics in the play.

I have attempted earlier in this chapter to outline something of the critical confusion which reigns about this issue. I would like now to look afresh at the text, bearing constantly in mind the background material quoted in the hope that an objective investigation using the tools of this inform-

ation will throw fresh light on the problem.

The first event in the given situation of the play is the recounting of the body fable by Menenius. With deft economy in this opening scene, we are informed of both sides of the political coin: First the beastly disorder arising from civil ills, then the epitome of an ideal state, internally peaceful and functional as a human body and with each section of the population as vitally interdependent as the limbs and organs of a body. The audience watches the on-stage audience of plebeians^e learning the lesson of the fable. This, the fable's position so early in the action, and the recurring body imagery combine to give its ideas authoritative weight throughout the play. It is recognisable that the dramatist intended this as a governing idea -- a measuring-stick for the play's events. It has very much the same function and effect as Canterbury's use of the beehive in Henry V to illustrate the desirability of a well-ordered state.⁶¹

There is adequate evidence in the text that the various persons engaged in the political problem of Coriolanus know and understand the traditional theory of a commonweale that Menenius' fable purports to outline. The plebeians are not slow to acknowledge its validity and its analogy is so familiar to them that the first citizen is even able to amplify it:

The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,
 The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,
 Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter,
 etc

I.i.114-116

Menenius' skilled use of the fable testifies to his familiarity with the commonwealth theory. Coriolanus' impassioned outcry to 'the good, but most unwise patricians' in III.i.90, comes from a simplified but nonetheless convinced notion of the order that should be maintained by men within a civil structure. The tribunes hold the same belief, although their convictions of the rights and order due to their office is complicated by the fact that it is newly-created, not one ordained by nature. Any human innovation becomes illegitimate in terms of a divinely framed order. The tribunes are political activators rather than primary units in an ideological conflict. But they know enough of the ideal theory to use it to good effect. Witness Brutus' speech:

He was your enemy, ever spake against
 Your liberties and the charters that you bear
 I' the body of the weal...

II.iii.177-179 etc

Both the plebeians and patricians then, are aware of the degrees within a social framework and also of the necessity of observing them. Unfortunately for Coriolanus' Rome, it does not follow that any of them practise what they know is necessary for the maintenance of this order, nor that any of them

looks to his own station and the responsibility it carries. Self-examination and conscience are at a minimum in this play: matters of a public nature engage most of the attention. Persons are constantly readier to look to the affairs of others than to their own. Coriolanus is a prime case. See, for example, how frequently he exhorts the senators to remember their position and degree and curses the plebeians for acting beyond the scope of theirs, and how seldom he considers the fatal ambiguities of his own position.

Not only is the theory of ideal state used as a rhetorical device rather than as a scrupulous principle for the conduct of civil affairs, it is also deliberately overset. Both in the immediate historical past dramatised in Coriolanus, and during the course of the play, members of both parties are guilty of violating order and failing to observe the obligations implicit for the occupants of each station.

At this point, it is necessary to examine more closely the members of each of the two social groups in the light of the text.

It is most significant that the plebeians are allowed to present their case in the opening scene before anything other than prior knowledge of the story, has had occasion to bias audience reception.

They are famished. This is a condition to which no member of the body politic is expected to submit and therefore the cause of their indignation is justifiable not only on humane grounds, but also in terms of accepted political theory. For it is true that dogs must eat and meat was made for mouths.⁶²

As soon as the plebeians' complaints range farther afield, however, complications which were intrinsic from the first grow to dominant proportions.

I.i. begins with a starving rabble, prepared to take violent action.⁶³ They decide Marcius is the chief enemy to the people.⁶⁴ By removing the chief enemy, they will remove hunger, the chief ill.⁶⁵ This is tantamount to syllogistic reasoning but at this early stage I believe the audience will accept it as information and the logical flaw is reduced in the light of later revelations. The first citizen⁶⁶ now describes hunger^{as} if it were a class ill. If the plebeians go hungry while the patricians surfeit, the famine can be seen as a political condition as well as a human one. The distinction is clearly made: "Our sufferance is gain to them".⁶⁷ This speech is the introduction to a pervasive theme of civil cannibalism. This supports a large portion of the structure as a dominant idea which recurs in metaphors such as that of a body denying itself vital sustenance (as in the body fable), the sick man's

appetite, and the casting off rather than the cure and conservation of a limb (as in the banishment of Coriolanus).

At I.i.25 the plebeian objection is narrowed down again from one against class to one against Marcius in person. Here the difficulty begins. "He's a very dog to the commonalty"⁶⁸ yet he has done services for his country. Discussing him on a personal psychological level rather than in terms of party policy, they are unable to reach a conclusion about his paradoxical behaviour. Here again, a question which concerns the whole play is raised. The two activities --being a dog to the commonalty, and yet serving one's country nobly --lie uneasily together, particularly in view of the accepted view of a commonwealth as I have tried to outline it above. It should be inconceivable in these terms that good to the state and good to the people could be two different things. A more detailed investigation of this belongs properly with a discussion of Coriolanus' political position. Here, the point to be made is that the plebeians are shown to have a good deal of common sense in their perception of at least the personal side of wider issues at stake, although they lack the ability to penetrate into the deeper implications of what they perceive. But in Elizabethan (as well as in modern) political theory

it was recognised that a high degree of abstraction cannot be expected from men who are engaged in a simple struggle for survival. A rational approach to ethical problems should not be offered as reasonable satisfaction for empty bellies. It is to the plebeians' credit that any of the subtler issues should occur to them in this crisis.

When it comes to action, however, they are less effective. With their pitifully ignoble staves and clubs they are resolved on violence. Their very weapons help to distinguish their wild enterprise from the honourable business of war against a "proper" external enemy. This is essentially a spontaneous disorderly violence rather than one that appears to have a physically attainable goal. Their aim, if they have anything approaching a unanimous aim, seems to be to make a gesture of rebellion that will draw serious attention to their plight.

This first scene thus creates in miniature traits which will characterise the plebeians as a body of individuals from a common social strata, throughout the play. As individuals, they lack fixedness of purpose and direction, as a body they are unable ever to approach unanimity.⁶⁹

The plebeians occupy the stage alone very seldom after this scene. Briefly in I.iv.46-47 the soldiers --who are, after all, uniformed plebeians --speculate on Marcius' fate within Corioles gates. I.v opens

with a couple of stray looters busy about the mercantile business of victory. Then, in II.iii, they set the scene with a preparation for Coriolanus' market-place reception. Their attitude here is very much the same as that in the opening scene of the play. Although their grasp of the methods of debate and of their rights is elementary⁷⁰ they do have a concrete notion of the nature of their own social class and its tendencies, as well as some of the implications of their actions:

Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful were to make a monster of the multitude; of the which we being members, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members... II.iii.9-13

The method of deduction here is reminiscent of that found in the first lines of the play but delivered with a careful thoroughness that lends it the air of a piece learned by rote from a more sophisticated source. Also characteristically, the third citizen's exercise in rhetoric is cut off by the personal interest of a fellow and dissolves into a leg-pulling interlude like Menenius "great toe" quip in I.i.155.⁷¹

These scenes all have a great deal in common. They show that the populace is not politically-orientated by nature. In their private moments, the people are concerned simply with keeping body and soul together (which includes defending a few fundamental human rights) and behaving humanely - making

allowances for human nature, and showing gratitude when it is due from them. It is only at moments of extreme crisis or provocation that they erupt into violence. The instances I refer to here are of the same kind as the off-stage riots in I.i. and the hailing up and down of Brutus in V.iv. It is this tendency to anarchic violence which is the most damning indictment of the plebeians.

It is the same blind fury that drove the mob in Julius Caesar to tear the innocent poet Cinna to pieces.⁷² It is an animal, undirected response on purely emotional terms to outside pressures. This is the most self-destructive form of civil violence and abhorred vociferously as such by contemporary theologians and political theorists. It is in this that the plebeians violate the body politic of which they are members.

So much for the plebeians alone. Let us now observe their behaviour in the presence of authority. It is when they are on the threshold of violence that Menenius first enters.⁷³ His presence seems to silence them⁷⁴ which suggests that his position as a senator as well as his personality arouses an automatic response. With Menenius, after this initial silence, they manage to maintain the semblance at least of independence and dignity. They are desperate -- "undone already"⁷⁵ -- and resolved on the

manly course of showing the senate "in deeds" that "they have strong arms."

Menenius' conservative speech of reprimand is answered with forceful and justifiable conviction

Care for us. True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us yet : suffer us to famish, and their storehouses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us. I.i.78-85

There is nothing fantastic or unreasonable in these accusations, and no hint of envy or political ambition. They are demanding their minimum human rights, not higher status or power. As further proof of their docility, they give Menenius a fair hearing. The first citizen's interruptions show understandable impatience, rather than aggression, as well as demonstrating a fair understanding of the train of narrative in Menenius' fable.

Up to the time of Marcius' arrival, in fact, the plebeians have behaved in an altogether unobjectionable manner. Their cause appears to be just and their resolution to take action understandable, their tendency to violence easily subdued from above. Certainly they show a marked (but hardly despicable) lack of unanimity and group-unity, and perhaps they are too easily put off their course by the undeniably persuasive nature of Menenius' tale.

In terms of contemporary beliefs though, this would not be a sign of weak will : like Bacon's affections, the populace was believed to have an instinct for good, so their quick response to Menenius' reminders of the "proper" course would be a sign of latent virtue.

For this reason, Marcius' greeting

...you dissentious rogues,
That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
Make yourselves scabs... I.i.163-165

reflects inevitably on him as much as on his victims. Part at least of the play's opening syllogism is defined. Marcius does speak here as "chief enemy to the people," but again it is in personal emotional terms rather than those of party policy. The plebeians have not been seen to earn this revulsion from us, the audience, yet they arouse an immediate and violent reaction in Marcius. The only possible conclusion is that the relationship is coloured by something personal and non-rational.

If the people are generally respectful but at ease with Menenius, with Marcius they are taciturn. At line 187 he has to use Menenius as interpreter : a telling symptom of the chasm that has yawned between patricians and plebeians.

It was primarily as a bridge for communication over this chasm that the tribunes were elected, though they are seen to act more as civil authorities

than as ambassadors. On a superficial level, the plebeians respond to the authoritative presence of the tribunes in very much the same way as they do to Menenius'. Their manner of speech is respectful and they are obedient to the point of docility. The combination of tribunes and plebeians, however, is shown to heighten the potentially bad characteristics observed while the people were unguided. They become much more impressionable -- literally clay in the tribunes' hands -- and, above all, their tendency to emotional extremism and violence is not latent now, but straining on a leash the tribunes are not slow to let slip. The tribunes are, in fact, the "horn and noise" of a monster. By allowing their election, both patricians and plebeians were violating natural order, and by following these incarnation of disorder as leaders, the plebeians cannot choose but behave monstrously. Their proper head, in terms of accepted theory, was composed of the senate and patricians of Rome. With the engrafting of this new head, they gain nothing but a new impediment between them and the highest human life, and thus move down on the hierarchical scale nearer to the world of animals.

It is impossible to proceed much further in this investigation without referring to the role of senate and patricians. If the multitude has indeed

become monstrous, no simple explanation is supplied by the play. I would go further and say the play in fact provides consistent evidence for a most complex explanation in which both parties are involved and culpable.

Let us consider the ruling aristocracy. They seldom act on stage as a corporation of personalities in the way that the plebeians do. There is, however, a certain amount of the same anonymity involved: just as we have first and second citizens, the patricians and senators themselves are often only differentiated numerically. The actions of the party emerge mainly in discussion and through the behaviour of their representatives: The noble Menenius, the noble Marcius, and the very noble Volumnia -- arch-aristocrat and patronness of Rome.

The obligations of the ruler or ruling body of the state defined at length in contemporary literature. Fundamentally, the leader's sacred duty was to guide and oversee all with fatherly love. The welfare of the body politic, its unity, and the maintenance and observance of order and degree and vocations were all in his charge. These duties were to be executed with justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence.⁷⁶ Once again the fact of the famine in Rome intrudes. There seems to be no question that there is corn in Rome's storehouses when the play begins. Certainly,

this is stated by the plebeians, but no one ever refutes the fact in so many words. Marcius angrily evades it when he is confronted.⁷⁷ The contention is actually centred on the distribution of the corn. It seems then that the senate is guilty of just the charge defended in Menenius' fable: it is cupboarding the viand, idle and inactive. It is neglectful of its duties as the ruling organ. In these terms, the patricians are partially responsible for the situation which drove the plebeians to despair, though they are not culpable for the anarchic nature of the revolt. In terms of accepted Tudor political theory, however, they are culpable for the neglect and injustice that aroused the popular need and desire for tribunes and then for allowing the election of those authorities. In consequence, Coriolanus' objection that the senate was perpetuating disorder in the persons of the tribunes, is perfectly sound. Here again, though, he is partially blind. He has a fixed notion of an abstract theory of degree and vocation, but he cannot penetrate to the root of the current problem in relation to that theory. His grasp of the principles involved is shown to be powerful in his forum speeches, but he does not appear to even approach a humane understanding of the practise of those principles. He shows no evidence of having any conception of the vital importance of

mutuality operating in both directions on the scale of order. As Knights points out,

It is because for Coriolanus large classes of people are reduced to the category of "it" that, without consciousness of evil in the words, he can speak of "mountebanking" the people's loves, or using deceit where deceit is monstrous.⁷⁸

Knights too, relates this symptom to the general problem:

The condition of health for Rome was, of course, that there should be...mutuality between the different members and classes, as in the fable of the belly...⁷⁸

It seems that the illness is more than simple disorder, to use the body analogy. The complex organism of the state has become polarised into two factions, the stronger preying on the weaker. It is only in terms of this polarity that it is possible for Coriolanus to be a dog to the commonalty and yet still a national hero: the good of the one and the good of the other have become distinct. Thus the need for tribunes to protect the people's rights against the class whose very function is to defend the rights and look to the welfare of all. Once the tribunes have been instituted, then, fatally, "the two authorities are up".

It is under the tribunes' influence that the populace becomes politically inclined. The plebeian living and acting within his own degree is shown as sympathetic, and possessed of an astute though sim-

plified perception of human nature.⁷⁹ But the plebeian spurred by tribunes into political ambitions, attempting to function and act in a way not in keeping with his degree is the butt of ridicule and condemnation. It is when the people interfere in the government of the state that they become the many-headed monster : fickle, irrational, and violent.⁸⁰ It is ironic that they should find a scapegoat such as Marcius for their rage, for he and the mob are each both predator and prey. He is a Mars-like warrior and they quartered slaves, yet he is also a lamb⁸¹ and they will turn on him as soon as dogs on sheep. The roles are almost directly interchangeable: earlier he had acted like a dog to the commonalty and they like sheep. This paradoxical entanglement bears a causal relationship to another facet of Coriolanus' political myopia. I refer to his total unawareness of the responsibilities of the office he seeks and of its relation to the whole state. According to Renaissance standards, he is unqualified by nature and training to rule : he lacks the qualities of wisdom, self-control, and experience prescribed for the position. To do him justice, however, it must be stressed that he is himself the victim of a disordering force in society. His true function in the political and social structure of

Rome is made clear in the course of the play. He is "the arm our soldier." Initially, he was unwilling to step outside this role. "I had rather be their servant in my way," he says, "Than sway with them in theirs." (II.i.199-200). Roman custom, personified by his mother, compels him to it.

It is largely because of this confusion in the two extreme political camps that Menenius emerges as the nearest to a reliable "normal" political agent that the play contains. But he is far from a paragon of civic virtues. He lies when it seems convenient or politic. He manipulates the plebeians and the tribunes themselves just as thoroughly and consciencelessly as the latter do the people. He is vain and short-tempered. Above all, Menenius does not aspire to the metaphysical heights of morality, even in theory, that we have grown accustomed to expect from Shakespeare's naturally-ordained leaders. This quality that Menenius lacks, is found in Coriolanus, to such an extreme degree that it seems grotesque.

Menenius as a character, is almost entirely Shakespeare's invention and, as in Plutarch, he relates the central, governing political parable of the play. Both these seem to be highly suggestive facts. Menenius' role as the nearest approximation to a balanced norm in the body politic is illustrated

by and illustrative of the orientation of the fabular body to the belly. In most of the contemporary instances where the body/state analogy is used, the whole organism is ruled by the head or heart.

Menenius' is ruled by the belly, and, functionally, the belly can be said to govern the body. Without the vital processing and distribution of food, a man cannot survive, let alone function in a mental or spiritual capacity. The belly can thus be said to rule, but only over man the animal.

As Spencer says,

The limitation is clearly illustrated if we compare the speech about the members of the body made by Menenius near the beginning of the play with the speech on order by Ulysses near the beginning of Troilus and Cressida. Both speeches serve the same kind of purpose; in their different ways they describe the proper kind of relationship, the pattern which the action is later to violate. But Menenius' comparison of the senate to the belly and other parts of the state to the members of the body is limited to the physical and practical, whereas Ulysses' speech takes in everything: the cosmos, the elements, the realm of government and the hierarchy of the faculties of man.⁸²

The Renaissance was very conscious that man was partly animal, but also partly a potential angel. Man was the highest achievement of nature and the only one capable of perceiving the sphere of the angels. Contemporary examples seem to illustrate that man seen in this way was ruled by head or heart, and the state, correspondingly, ruled by a

monarch. The fact that Menenius' state is ruled most emphatically by the belly suggests, therefore, that it is a community orientated to functionality rather than any higher spiritual or moral aims. It is a community for man the social animal, rather than man the prime piece of creation. The morality of this state is very much the morality of secular materialism. Ideally, it functions to the common 'weale' but in terms of mercantile and physical prosperity rather than any higher achievements for which, it was speculated, man had been created.

Menenius himself is in many ways the incarnation of the manifesto implicit in his fable. He is demonstrably more familiar with the "buttock of the night than the brow of the morning." He has a most sound working knowledge of the machinery of man the social animal. He understands the functioning of the body politic as well as he understands the functionings of its component men. But his wisdom in this is limited. It does not take account of men whose existence is orientated to moral rather than physical necessity. It is significant that putting this wisdom into practice, he prevails with senators tribunes and plebeians alike. But he does not prevail with Coriolanus. The comparison is invited by his planned approach to Coriolanus outside Rome.

Whether a reconciliation of these extremes is ever possible is a question inevitably raised by the whole political world created in Coriolanus. I have based my study on the assumption that Shakespeare had certain preconceptions about politics which were commonly regarded as conventional at the time. It is not impossible, however, that Shakespeare was in fact questioning these preconceptions themselves as well as questioning the possibilities for "right" and "wrong" behaviour within their framework. One critic at least decides this was the case.

Driven...by the inescapable facts of their time, many thinking men would be prepared to echo Byron's cry:

The world is quite inverted, Virtue overthrown
At Vice's feet...
The rude and terrible age is turned again...
(Byron's Tragedy, I.ii.14-15,17)

All the less would they be inclined to give credence to that hotch-potch of antiquated science, fancy, and folklore dignified by some modern scholars as the Elizabethan World Order. This medieval theory of static hierarchies, each dominated by a supposedly perfect specimen from the stars down to the plants and minerals, had long since declined from a philosophy to a political mystique... Corresponding to nothing in the experience or speculative thought of the age, this creed of absolutism served chiefly to bolster up a precarious monarchy which lacked a standing army or an efficient police force. Asserted by Tudor apologists, preached in the homilies officially prescribed for reading in church, reiterated in popular books of universal knowledge for the tired shopkeeper, the so-called 'chain of being' was in an advanced condition of rust by the end of the sixteenth

century. It may well be that a silent majority still nodded assent to these platitudes. For the critical, questing minds of Raleigh and Fulke Greville, of Jonson and Marston and Chapman and the mature Shakespeare, such arguments by unproved analogy bore no relation to the facts of nature, of history, or contemporary politics.

What truly exercised these writers was the self-evident phenomenon of state. The word "state" carried a range of connotations, most of them challenging the traditional view of a divinely sanctioned order.⁸⁴

Footnotes for Chapter Four.

1.
Bullough, pp.461 & 463.
2.
I.iii.5: according to Shakespeare's *Volumnia*,
Marcius was an adolescent at the time of the last
abortive attempt to restore Tarquin to the throne.
3.
J.E. Phillips, p.147.
4.
MacCallum, p.473.
5.
pp.462-473.
6.
Titus Livius, The Roman Historie: also the
breuiaries of E. Florus. tr. F. Holland (1600).
7.
This evidence is presented, for example, by
Bullough, MacCallum, and R.H. Case.
8.
Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning (ed
W.A. Wright. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1869) vol II,
p.225, para xxiii.
9.
T.F. Driver, The Sense of History in Greek and
Shakespearian Drama (New York: Columbia Univ. Press,
1960)p.202.
10.
Driver p. 204.
11.
T.J.B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan
Romans," ShS, X (1957) pp.27-38.
12.
Titus Livius, The Early History of Rome (tr
A. de Sélincourt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1960)
p. 89.
13.
I owe this quote to Brents Stirling, The Populace
in Shakespeare p.123. He does not connect it with Livy.

- 14
SQ, X (1959)p.137A
- 15
Ibid., p.144.
- 16
The full title is revealing: A Comparative Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique. wherein out of the principles of Nature, is set forth the true forme of a commonwealth, with the dutie of Subjects, and the right of the soueraine.
- 17
 Muir., p.141.
- 18
 STC 12373, pp.32,67,80-81.
- 19
 Muir (p.139) cites possible acquaintance as well as verbal echoes as evidence that Shakespeare may have read the Digges' book.
- 20
The Populace in Shakespeare, p.137.
- 21
 Bullough, p.551.
- 22
 pp.198-199.
- 23
NSQ, CXCVIII (1953) pp.240-242.
- 24
T. Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man. (new York: Macmillan & co., Ltd., 1942) p.18.
- 25
 "The Background of Coriolanus," SQ, X (1959)
 p.145
- 26
 "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," p.34.
- 27
 Stirling discusses these critics briefly but comprehensively in The Populace in Shakespeare, pp. 74-75.
- 29
 J.E. Phillips., p.148.

- 30 Aristotle, Aristotle's politics, or discourses of government (tr out of French (by I.D.?) London:1593)p.11.
- 31 Ibid., p.12.
- 32 Ibid., p.15.
- 33 for e.g. E.H.H. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970.)
- 34 T. Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York: Macmillan & co., 1912, 1912) espec. Chapter 1.
- 35 Spencer's footnote: Preface to his translation (1569) of Ramon Sabunde's Natural Theology (ed A. Arundinger, 1932, p.ix).
- 36 The History of the World (London, 1688).
- 37 p.5.
- 38 Spencer's footnote: Montaigne's tr. of Ramon Sabunde, Chapter 3.
- 39 Spencer, p.7.
- 40 Ibid., p.11.
- 41 Bacon, vol II, p.178, para.xviii.
- 42 Spencer p. 13.
- 43 Ibid., p.15.
- 44 Answer to the First part of a Certain Conference Concerning Succession (1603)
- 45 Spencer, p.17

- 46
Ibid., pp. 18-20.
- 47
Phillips, p. 64.
- 48
Ibid., p. 28.
- 49
A. Hart, Shakespeare and the Homilies ... (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 1934). p. 49.
- 50
Ibid., p. 43.
- 51
see F. Raab, The English Face of Machiavelli... (London: Routledge & Megan Paul, Ltd, 1964)
- 52
Advancement of Learning, Book II p. 225 para xxlii.
- 53
see especially The Apology for Raymond Sebonds.
- 54
Spencer, pp. 23-28.
- 55
The Populace In Shakespeare, p. 5.
- 56
Henry VI pt 2, IV. ii, iii, vi, vii, viii, x.
- 57
The Populace in Shakespeare, p. 101.
- 58
Ibid., p. 125.
- 59:60
Ibid, 127
- 61
Ibid., p. 17
- 62
I. i. 205-206

63
I.i.4.

64
I.i.6.

65
I.i.10.

66
I.i.14-27.

67
I.i.

68
I.i.27.

69
cf. II.iii.153-253.

70
e.g. II.iii.1,2,&3.

71
There are two more scenes which could possibly qualify for inclusion here: IV.iii and IV.v.176-240. Neither have been considered very useful for the purposes of this discussion; the first because no stress is laid on the class of Micanor and Adrian and the fact that this is left open to conjecture suggests that it is not of primary importance; the second because although Aufidius' servants are emphatically plebeian, they are not Roman and therefore not involved in the central political contention, although they are useful in establishing the attitude adopted in general to common people in the play.

72
Julius Caesar III.iii.27-38

73
I.i.50

74
I.i.55.

75
I.i.63.

76
The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays, p.29

77
I.i.190-195

- 78
"Shakespeare and Political Wisdom," SR, LXI (1953) p.52.
- 79
The Populace in Shakespeare, P. 58332.
- 80
Ibid., p.435
- 81
II.i.7-11.
- 82
Spencer p. 178.
- 83
"Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," p.34.
- 84
J.W. Lever, The Tragedy of State, (London:
Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1971) pp.536.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HERO

The nature of dramatic form imposes the necessity for economy on the writer. He is obliged to limit not only the length, but also the scope of the action. For this reason, the main doctrinal and thematic implications are commonly centered in the character and actions of a main person or two.¹

It has been suggested that the action of Coriolanus can be seen as founded on four characters: Coriolanus, Volumnia, Menenius, and Aufidius.² In spite of the regrettable and limiting omission of the tribunes' corporate personality, it is conceivable that in terms of production, these four characters could share the load of the action between them. But, technically convenient as this model may be, it is unsatisfying as an agent for the action in the Aristotelian sense. It tends to undermine the considerable symbolic weight carried by Coriolanus -- a significance which none of the other characters even approach.

I submit that Coriolanus carries a far greater portion of the play than any of the others. He is the only "main character". The political and social issues are most meaningful in their relation-

ship to him, and are worked out most fully in him. In comparison, each of the other characters seems to represent no more than a section of the whole. In many ways they are descriptive appendages to the character of Coriolanus and the themes for which he is agent. The idea of a complex of on-stage mirrors seems apposite here. The roles of most of the other characters nearly all of the time either reflect new material from Coriolanus, or take their significance from his character. In terms of event and situation, Coriolanus is the central fact. The scenes in which he does not appear in person or as the subject for discussion are short and infrequent.³ Further, these scenes have a tendency to be concerned with the abstractions that are concretised in his role. In II.i.40-87 for example, Menenius' justification for his way of life (his conversancy with the buttock of the night, and his partiality for a cup of hot wine without a drop of allaying Tiber) invites comparison with Coriolanus' obsessed asceticism so openly that it amounts to comment. Similarly, Aufidius' servants' philosophising on the advantages of war over peace⁴ relate quite patently to one who appears "as if he were son and heir to Mars".⁵

It is, in fact, provable, were it not self-

evident, that Coriolanus is the central character to a degree that is deliberately exaggerated by the structure. It is imperative therefore to give special attention to both the nature of his role and the peculiarities of its concretisation in the drama.

The hero has been defined as "the man in whom is centred the force with which the receptor sympathises in the struggle...usually opposed to a villain. If both forces contend within the person, he is usually referred to as the protagonist."⁶ My initial quarrel with this kind of definition is that it neglects the question of emphasis and sheer area of the play devoted to a character. Caesar may be the centre for the force with which a receptor sympathises in Julius Caesar, but I submit that the briefness of his stage life interferes with his potential as hero of the play. Coriolanus is forcibly presented to the receptor as protagonist of Coriolanus if only because the action is centred in him and virtually every line in the play is concerned directly or indirectly with that fact. It is safe to assume that this obvious emphasis is intentional.

My second quarrel with the kind of definition quoted above is with its inclusion of sympathy. This element in the basic concept of the hero's role can be found at the root of many of the criti-

cal problems relating to Coriolanus. The fact that he is at least the main character is unavoidable. Structurally all the signs mark him as protagonist. But, for most, sympathy is the critical stopping point.

Whitaker complains "no formal perfection of artistry can atone for Coriolanus' failure to move us emotionally."⁷ Bradley finds that "Marcus is by no means a sympathetic character...There is a sense in which we come to sympathise even with the murderer Macbeth, as we can pity the murderer Othello...but we are left detached observers of Coriolanus."⁸ Campbell puts it more strongly: "instead of enlisting our sympathy for Coriolanus, he (Shakespeare) deliberately alienates it. Indeed, he makes the figure partly an object of scorn."⁹ Chambers describes the characterisation as a study of "the subtle sin of egoism' beneath 'the mask of honour."¹⁰ Goddard explains the play's "relative unpopularity" by the fact that "its hero, who dominates the action...is not a general favourite, is, indeed repellant to not a few readers."¹¹ According to Spencer, "we admire it in cold blood"¹².

Critical comment such as this is counterbalanced by a smaller but nonetheless considerable body of opinions which are as fulsomely complimentary to

the design and structure of the play as they are non-committal about the central problem of Coriolanus.

At this point there seem to be two paths open to the student. Firstly, the two critical poles of judgement could be left unreconciled; we could side with the admirers and overlook large areas that are intractable to interpretation; or we could side with the detractors and decide that as Coriolanus is unsympathetic, he is an incomplete hero and the play is either a tragedy constructed on a faulty foundation, or a tragic satire. Secondly, it seems possible to adopt Northrop Frye's positive optimistic approach¹³ and assume that the play is not flawed, discard the premise upon which dissenting critics appear to be basing their objections, and try to discover a new and more rewarding way of explicating the problem.

I propose to attempt this second approach.

To begin with, it seems possible to re-search the concept of a hero to discover other connotations and perhaps thereby new ways of considering Coriolanus. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word means both "the chief man in [a] poem, play, or story" and a "man of superhuman qualities favoured by the gods, demigod; illustrious warrior ...". Striking resemblances and parallels between the career of Coriolanus and those of classical

"illustrious warriors"¹⁴ combine with a great number of attendant details to suggest that "hero" is only a useful term for explicating the character and his role if the implications of both these lexical definitions are applied. Hero can be used profitably here as a term belonging to both the criticism and the mythology of literature.

The hero as illustrious warrior belongs most properly in the epic and from there it is a short step to the classical tragedy. The heroic was still very much a primary element of tragedy at the time when Shakespeare wrote. Perhaps only in Elizabethan domestic tragedy was it not predominant. But, as Brower points out, within the tradition, there is a marked tendency in, for example, both Chapman and Shakespeare "to replace physical by moral heroism, to make the great battle the inner one of soul or of reason against passion, and to regard the heroic career as humane education or as a tragic failure to achieve it."¹⁵ x

Increasing stress on the "inner battle" has resulted in a corresponding decrease in both the meaning and understanding of pagan mythical heroism. I submit that this is a root cause of a great deal of the critical difficulty attached to Coriolanus. What we might call the "outer battle" is vital to the understanding of this hero and his

"inner battle", for he is both protagonist and a hero: a combination rare, and perhaps impossible in modern drama.

A concrete example may help to clarify this contention. In the theoretical critical sense, Willie Loman is not only the main character, but also the hero of Death of a Salesman. The receptor can conceivably indentify and sympathise with him. Technically, Coriolanus' role is the same, but the element of identification or sympathy implicit in the modern critical idea of a protagonist gives rise to difficulties which the non-critical mythological concept of a hero can possibly supercede. The vast difference between the character and characterisation of the type of "anti-hero" to which Willie Loman belongs, and Coriolanus is glaringly evident. Where Willie is extra ordinary, Coriolanus is extraordinary.

The illuminating difference between these two plays can also be discussed in terms of their respective tragic visions. It has been said that tragedy "reveals...man's total possibilities and his grievous limitations...the stress on one side or the other of the paradox of man differs from one tragedy to another."¹⁶ Death of a Salesman is concerned particularly with limitations. To quote Arthur Miller: "The play...grew from images

of futility..." Waith interprets this as the modern mode.

It is more usual today to think of the portrayal of human limitations as the distinctive feature of tragedy and consequently to feel that the heroic play lacks a dimension essential to tragedy.¹⁷

Miller too, regards this tendency as a symptom of the age.

It goes without saying that in a society where there is basic disagreement as to the right way to live, there can hardly be agreement as to the right way to die, and both life and death must be heavily weighted with meaningless futility.¹⁸

In Coriolanus, on the other hand, though grievous limitations are constantly implied, this occurs concurrently with evidence of a dynamic concern for "total possibilities". The hero strives towards superhumanity and the physical limits of human achievement and endurance.

It seems not irrational, therefore, to propose that just as Coriolanus is intractable to approaches alone through the critical concept of a hero which the salesman is hospitable to, so trying to view Coriolanus without reference to the heroic tradition proves as frustrating as trying to explicate the salesman in terms of that tradition.

So, rather than as tragic protagonist in the modern sense, I propose to test in practise the validity of discussing Coriolanus as a protagonist in the heroic sense.

Before discovering the resemblances and parallels between this hero and the classical models, I would like to stress that there can be no clearly-defined canon of the type. Even Hercules, the prime example, has personal traits that defy systematic definition. Any vision of a complete typical warrior hero must remain to a certain extent hypothetical and to the same extent it would be idle to compare Coriolanus to such a vision. Without limiting the variety that exists within the broad generalities of the type, however, it is possible to isolate a sufficient number of predominant and recurring features to establish just how far Coriolanus conforms to the tradition.

Myers describes the essential nature of this type of character as extremism.¹⁹

The first quality which distinguishes the hero is the will to do or die, the uncompromising spirit which makes him pay any price, even life itself, for his object... unyielding character is the spring from which heroic and dramatic actions flow.²⁰

Myers adds the important rider that this heroic energy is "without moral significance; for the unyielding hero may be either a saint or a sinner in the eyes of the spectator." Waith describes the type as "a warrior of great stature who is guilty of striking departures from the morality of the society in which he lives."²¹ The criterion

is virtue often at the cost of convention & virtue. Absolute commitment to a course of action and god-like independence become transcendental values in themselves so the hero becomes isolated not only in his extremism, but also in his metaphysical terms of reference.

In the light of this, is it rewarding to impose so-called normal ethical standards of judgement on the deeds of Coriolanus? The results of past attempts seem to suggest not. Contrarily, is it possible to take them, *per se*, as manifestations of a non-rational, pagan, and physical equivalent of a system of morality? I suggest that this is not only possible, but also extremely helpful. I do not, however, suggest that this approach alone would do justice to the characterisation. Coriolanus' domestic life is so personalised that he cannot be seen purely and simply as the performer of heroic deeds, but I submit that this latter aspect of the characterisation can only be satisfactorily discussed once the type of the hero has been established.

. It does not necessarily follow that if Coriolanus has little of the accepted Christian/humanist moral sense that he belongs to a different moral universe. One state can often have the effect of recreating its opposite by implication. The chaos in King Lear tells us a great deal about the desirability of achieving personal and political harmony. But what we have in this hero is not the absence of Christian/humanist morals applied with what can be described as common humanity, but in some ways their impossibility. This happens, I submit, because, far from being the negative of one system, the hero is the positive representative of another.

It seems that the generalised social issues so clearly articulated in the play arouse critical political faculties which blur our receptivity to the other side of the conflict. I have attempted to deal with the social political side of Coriolanus in Chapter Four of this thesis, and to show that the issues are rather more ambiguous than is generally held. But even to the receptor who is not equipped with background information, these issues evoke a clearer response because

they will always be contemporary while men live in cities and try to impose systems of moral order on one another. Their explication is within the scope of our dialectic equipment. This is not true of Coriolanus' side of the conflict. He functions to a large extent in terms of a code which was beginning to become obsolete even in 1608. So before we can consider it, our moral consciousness has to be neutralised to some extent. We should go no further than to say "might is" before carefully considering what it is shown to be in this context. Coriolanus, after all, has been reared to operate with conspicuous success on the battlefield where might not only flourishes, but is rewarded as right.

In these terms the conflict becomes enriched and complicated. It is at the same time a personal one between individual and society, a political one between the ideals of warrior and citizenry but also a conflict between the moral worlds of the hero and civil society. As Brower expresses it: "Shakespeare sets the 'deeds of Coriolanus' against the great parable of Menenius...The nature of the state is counterpoised by the nature of Coriolanus."²²

After investigating the Graeco-Roman heroic tradition and Elizabethan translations of the

major poems in order to discover something of the way in which Shakespeare's contemporaries understood the tradition, Brower proceeds to search Coriolanus for analogies to the tradition.

Waith undertook very much the same task, but with specific reference to the myth of Hercules and its recurrence in classical and Elizabethan literature. A synthesis of their respective findings is particularly useful for the study of Coriolanus.

The concept of the true hero assumed in Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus is close to the ideal implicit in Chapman's Homer, so, as Brower points out²³, Shakespeare had the tradition freshly at hand in his main source for the story. Brower then names Cominius' "great eⁿcomium" (II.ii.83-123) and the closing processional speech as vital areas for the interpretation of the hero's career. The latter is of the type that "marks the death of a hero in the great tradition"²⁴ (cf Hamlet). The key to the former speech lies, Brower says, in Menenius' comment at the end: "he's right noble"²⁵. The meaning of "noble" -- as often in Shakespeare, equivalent to heroic -- is summed up in this tremendous survey of the 'deeds of Coriolanus'...the core of the narrative is an heroic narrative in the Graeco-Roman manner.

Brower analyses the speech to reinforce the point:

In the earlier part of Cominius' story, the stress falls first on Coriolanus as wonder boy, as the beardless youth with 'Amazonian chin' (92) - a description that reminds us oddly of his potent mother, Volumnia. We next see him crowned, 'brow-bound with the oak' (99); then we get an impression of boyhood swiftly thrust into manhood: 'His pupil age / Man-ent'red thus' (99-100). The brusque compound renews the physical energy of 'ent'red ('initiated into'), especially as it is linked with 'waxed like a sea' (100), and image that turns the 'man' into a vast natural force. Again Coriolanus is crowned: 'He lurched all swords of the garland' (102); but how oddly this is put, as if men were swords and swords wore garlands, as if the man himself now wore the ornament of 'swords'. He stands a 'rare example' (105) against the 'fliers', who appear as mere 'weeds before / A vessel' (106-7). With 'below his stem' (108), the man becomes the 'stem', the bow of a ship. From pointed bow, the image glides in true Shakespearian fashion to 'sword', to 'stamp' (108), a die for stamping a coin or a medal. Where the 'stamp' made its 'mark', its cutting edge 'took' (109): it killed. X The sword is seen now as a great sword-machinē coming down on its victims, quite literally 'impressing' them. Then Coriolanus himself is dehumanized, turned into a mere blood-thing. (110), with 'every motion...timed' (110-11), working with mechanical regularity, yet incongruously dripping with blood. X

'Alone' - once more the 'rare example' - he entered the 'mortal', the fatal, gate by which death comes (111-12). He 'painted it / With shunless destiny' (112-13): the bloody instrument smeared it with the gore of dying men, made it one with the deaths of men who could not escape their fate. The abstractness of idiom fits in with the whole style of Shakespeare's vision in the speech and in the play, imparting to the hero the added

appealing to 'Great Nature' and at the same time asserting the greatness of his own nature, he betrays the Stoic ancestry of the Elizabethan tragic hero.

But there is no moment when, like Achilles, he sees his anger and curses it, nothing to correspond to the scene with Priam, no vision of himself and a higher order within which his action and suffering are placed and made more comprehensible. His last gesture is like his first, to 'use his lawful sword'. He knows little of what Chapman calls the soul's 'sovereignty in fit reflection', not to mention 'subduing his earthly part for heaven'. He is the most Roman, the least 'gentle' and the least Christian, X of Shakespeare's major heroes.²⁷

At this point I would like to move from generalisation into a close examination of how the hero is actually dramatised, introducing further reference to the heroic tradition at appropriate points.

It is worth stressing that Shakespeare's Coriolanus did not spring fully armed from the tradition. Material related to the 'anthropology' of this hero is carefully provided. As Brower says, "Shakespeare sets his hero in a much more complex social world (than that of Achilles)"²⁸ Marcius' childhood and upbringing is one of the few areas in the past which is dramatised in the play, so it is justifiable to examine it as primary information about his character.

As I remarked in Chapter ^{One} X, Shakespeare omitted Plutarch's brief mention of Marcius' father.

The message is clear. Volumnia's alone was the honoured mold/mould wherein this trunk was fram'd.²⁹ Shakespeare also avoids the suggestion that Volumnia may have been regarded as misguided in her rearing of the boy. Great stress is laid in the play on the exclusivity of their relationship. At points it closes in to a suffocating entanglement which is expressed in terms of incest. The 'if' is pale when Volumnia says

....If my son were my husband,
I should freelier rejoice in that absence
wherein he won honour than in the embrace-
ments of his bed where he would show
most love. I.ii.2-5

From the Herculean Coriolanus, the following speech is just as insidious in suggestion:

If you had been the wife of Hercules
Six of his labours you'd have done, and sav'd
Your husband so much sweat. IV.i.17-18

But far greater stress than this is laid on Volumnia's dominance. Her claims echo through the play. "My son³⁰....My first son³¹...the only son of my womb³²...my boy Marcius³³...My gentle Marcius³⁴...my good soldier³⁵...thou art my warrior/I help to frame thee³⁶...thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me³⁷." The people say: "He did it to please his mother."³⁸ Sicinius says: "He loved his mother dearly."³⁹ She affirms: "There's no man in the world/More bound to's mother."⁴⁰ But her dominance is more than a personal relation-

central relevance to his character.

His relationship with Virgilia will be considered first. In the Plutarch story, Marcius married, at his mother's wish, a wife of her choice and then continued to live in Volumnia's house. Shakespeare pointedly omits these details and makes the house Marcius' own. Even without taking the further evidence from the Life/Coriolanus comparison into consideration, it is obvious that there is a real bond of affection between Coriolanus and Virgilia.

Marriage for Shakespeare's Romans is a bleak affair. "That business" Antony calls it, and "patient Octavia" is a seal on a treaty more than a bride. She is the cement to patch up the shaky relationship between the triple pillars of the world. In a peculiarly reversed set of relationship she is actually the ring used to wed Antony and Octavius -- "a hoop to hold them staunch." Marriage for Brutus and Portia is a union between a pair well-matched in breeding and nobility. Portia is Cato's daughter and, moreover, "a woman Lord Brutus took to wife" so she is not only chosen because she is worthy, but also worthy because she is chosen. It is as his "self" \times , his "half" that she has a place with "right and virtue."

Calpurnia, Portia, and Virgilia, all fear for

their husbands' safety. Calpurnia is receptive to the super-rational world beyond reason and consciousness, but her dream premonition is regarded as symptom of a despicable female weakness. Portia despises her own weakness. "I have a man's mind," she cries, "but a woman's might." Like Virgilia, she is unable to take any effective action. All Virgilia can do is hold fast to her resolution to stay indoors until Coriolanus' safe return. Portia wounds her thigh and bears the pain in stoic silence to prove her devotion. Finally she is driven so far from her natural potential as pro-creator and conservator that she commits suicide, the only affirmation left for her. The gentle Virgilia is driven to lengths as extreme. At the beginning she could hardly tolerate even the mention of blood. By the time Coriolanus is banished she is even seconding some of Volumnia's bloody invective to the tribunes.

The ill is the same in all three plays. The nature of social structure stultifies these women so they are not free to play their naturally ordained roles or maintain the proper balance in the ideal Shakespearian mixture of male and female elements in their characters.

But in spite of these severe social restrictions and the huge shadow of Volumnia in which she

moves, Virgilia manages to convey the impression of having more simple human goodness and healthy feeling for human life than any other character. Probably one of the severest indictments of the society and way of life presented in the play is the fact that a character like Virgilia is ineffective within its framework. At the same time, the greatest single redeeming feature in Coriolanus' life is that he loves her. In the Rome of the play, however, this love is as ineffective as Virgilia's natural virtues. If he were to indulge in love, Coriolanus would be regarded as 'luxuriously surfeiting out of action.' Eroticism is thus denied its proper outlet. The high ideals of Rome and Coriolanus' rigid adherence to the code of virtus do not admit of any indulgence of the senses. All his energies and emotions are channelled into his life as a warrior.

But the senses cannot be denied without cost. The price in this case is the gross displacement of eroticism. Brower finds

... war-making, love, and marriage are closely related and almost identified in the minds of Volumentia and her son... Coriolanus has a way of embracing generals as if they were brides of war:

Marcus (to Cominius) O, let me clip ye
 In arms as sound as when I wooed; in heart
 As merry as when our nuptial day was done,
 And tapers burned to bedward! 41

I.vi.29-32

Professor F.G. Butler⁴² believes that the confusion extends much further than Coriolanus' mind. Several passages in the text testify to a physical misplacement of eroticism.

One of the requirements for the Herculean hero is a

worthy opponent. Victory is only truly glorious if he overcomes an evenly matched or stronger adversary. Death is only honourable if he falls to a worthy conqueror. In The Women of Troilus, for example, Hercules' dying agonies are intensified by the fact that Jupiter allowed him to be poisoned so ignominiously.⁴³ When the exiled Coriolanus enters Antium he is uncharacteristically nervous. He does not fear death, but the dishonour of being slain in 'pung battle' by the population. For psychologists, the necessity of finding a worthy opponent is closely related to the "drive towards self-destruction which is latent in all heroic risks."⁴⁴ For Coriolanus, Aufidius seems to be the ideal opponent, but Shakespeare sees much more than a contest for glory in their relationship. They do not strive as two opposing generals, but as individuals. As in the myth of Hercules, the heroic act here is "first of all a vindication of individual integrity." They are engaged in a prolonged and exclusive fight. Coriolanus would be happy to make his wars only with Aufidius. But there is an insidious suggestion that the joy is in the contest, rather than in the idea of winning. The text is full of indications that rather than a battle, they are in fact engaged in something closely analogous to a lovers' relationship. They are bound together by an oath:

'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike
 Till one can do no more. I.ii.35-36

Coriolanus is excessively eager for news of Aufidius: "Saw you Aufidius?... Spoke he of me?... How? What?... At Antium lives he?... I wish I had cause to seek him there..." (III.i.3-19). Aufidius is excessively jubilant in his welcome of Coriolanus:

.....
 ...O Mercius, Mercius!

 ...Let me bring
 Mine arms about that body, where against
 Thy ground ash an hundred times hath broke,
 ... here I slip
 The scyvil of my sword, and do contest
 As hotly and as nobly with thy love
 As ever in ambitious strength I did
 Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
 I lov'd the maid I married; never man
 Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee here,
 Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
 Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
 Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars!...

 ... A thousand welcomes!
 And more a friend than e'er an enemy;
 IV.v.103-148

This scene is perhaps best interpreted by the shrewd, vulgar, yet perceptive third serving man:

Our general himself makes a mistress of him;
 sanctifies himself with's hand, and turns up
 the white o' the eye to his discourse.
 IV.v.199-202.

This is then the other side of the coin of heroic virtus. Shakespeare has created a hero in the classical tradition. He is a warrior who "seeks not riches but immortality, glory, and honour."⁴⁵ He fights ferociously to "extend the limits of his sovereignty" not sparing even to "gird the gods" in his defiance of destiny,⁴⁶

Above everything, he has the potential either to degenerate into a beast, or to become a god.⁴⁷ This statement sounds simple enough, but it is crammed with ambiguities. As Coriolanus grows progressively more god-like it is found more and more convenient to describe him in terms of beasts like the tiger and the dragon. The more god-like he becomes, the less god-like and the more machiavellian his heroic adversary becomes. In the end, the god is undone by the machiavel. The more confirmed the hero grows in his almost divinely vengeful strength, the more susceptible he becomes to the calls of nature, the influence of his mother, and the love of his wife and child.

Perhaps the ultimate tragedy is that, in spite of all these meaningful ambiguities and the transformation they seem to hint at in Coriolanus, his downfall and death are brought about by exactly the same traits that hampered his progress to 'humane education' from the beginning.

Footnotes for Chapter Five.

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e.g. I.vii.
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- 29
V.iii.22-23.
- 30
I.i.32
- 31
IV.i.33

32 I.iii.6

33 II.i.98

34 II.i.169

35 II.i.168

36 V.iii.62-63

37 III.iii.129

38 I.i.37-38

39 V.iv.15

40 V.iii.158-159

41 Hero & Saint., p.362.

42 Personal communication, 1972.

43 The Herculean Hero, p. 36

44 Ibid., p.83.

45 Ibid., p.40.

46 Ibid., p.15.

47 Ibid., p.42.

A P P E N D I C E S

Note: All page references, unless otherwise stated, are to The liues of the Noble Grecians and Romanes compared together by that grave and learned Philosopher and historiographer Plutarke of Chaeronea translated out of the Greeke into French by James Amyot : and out of French into Englishe by Thomas North... London: The Nonesuch Press, 1930. (From the 1579 edition [STC 20065]).

A P P E N D I X A.TULLUS AUFIDIUS

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

Tullus Aufidius, who for his riches as also for his nobilitie and valliantness, was honoured among the Volsces as a King. Martius knewe very well, that Tullus did more malice and envie him, then he dyd all the Romaines besides: bicause that many times in battells where they met, they were ever at the encounter one against another, like lustie coragious youthes, striving in all emulation of honour, and had encountered many times together. In so much, as besides the common quarrell betweene them, there was bred a marvelous private hate one against another...Tullus Aufidius was a man of greate minde, and...he above all other of the Volsces, most desired revenge of the Romaines, for the injuries they had done unto them... (410)

he went directly to Tullus Aufidius house... (410)

they went to Tullus who was at supper...Tullus rose presently...and...asked him what he was... (410)

Tullus hearing what he sayed, was a marvelous glad man... (411)

So he feasted him for that time, and entertained him in the honorablest manner he could... (411)

they fell to consultation together, in what sorte they should beginne their warres... (411)

Now Tullus and Martius had secret conference with the greatest personages of...Antium. (413)

Tullus, agravating the matter, dyd...inflame the Volsces ...Tullus dyd counsel them to take Martius into their service...Thus he was joyned in commission with Tullus as generall of the Volsces...Martius bade Tullus choose ...Tullus made him aunswer...he thought it best for him to have the leading of those abroad: and him selfe would keepe home... (415)

Tullus...though he had receyved no private injurie or displeasure of Martius, yet the common fault and imperfection of man's nature wrought in him, and it grieved him to see his owne reputation blemished...and...himself to be lesse esteemed of the Volsces, then he was before. (417)

Tullus that hated and could no lenger abide him for the feare he had of his authoritie: sought divers meanes to make him out of the waye, thinking that if he let slippe that present time, he should never recover the like and fit occasion againe...Tullus having procured many other of his confederacy, required Martius might be deposed...(425) Tullus fearing that if he dyd let him speake, he would prove his innocencie...Tullus though he might no longer delaye his pretence and enterprise, neither to tarie for

the mutining and rising of the common people against him: wherefore, those that were of the conspiracie, beganne to crie out...And in saying these wordes, they all fell upon him, and killed him in the market place... (426)
 After that, the Romaines overcame them in battell, in which Tullus was slaine in the field, and the flower of all their force was put to the sworde... (427)

A P P E N D I X B.

COMINIUS

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

there was a...cittie...called Corioles, before the which the consul Cominius dyd laye seige... (395)
 The Consul Cominius understanding this, devided his armie also in two partes... (395)
 the other Consul and their fellowe citizens...were fighting with their enemies...(396)
 they sawe him ronne with a lively cheere to the Consul... and...they sawe the Consul Cominius also kisse and embrace him...they all beganne to call upon the Consul to marche forward...The Consul made him aunswer...greatly praysing his corage. (397)
 which the Consul Cominius perceyving, he sent thither... of the best soldiers he had... (397)
 Martius went to the Consul...There the Consul going up to his chayer of state...gave thankes to the goddes... (397)
 The Consul Cominius beganne to speake in this sorte. (398)

A P P E N D I X C.

TITUS LARTIUS

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

and the other part of his armie he left in the campe with Titus Lartius (one of the valliantest men the Romaines had at that time). (395)
 he was entred the cittie with very fewe men to helpe him ...Lartius that was gotten out, had some leysure to bring the Romaines with more safety into the cittie. (396)

A P P E N D I X D.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA

(i) Source Material in North's Plutarch.

The senate...dyd send unto them certaine of the pleasauntest olde men, and the most acceptable to the people among them. Of those, Menenius Agrippa was he, who was sent for chief man of the message from the Senate. He, after many good persuasions and gentle requestes made to the people, on the behalfe of the senate: knit up his oration in the ende, with a notable tale. (394)

(ii) Possible Source Material from The Romane Historie of T. Livy tr. Philemon Holland (1600).

So it was...agreed upon, that one Menenius Agrippa (a faire spoken and eloquent man, gracious withall and welbeloved among the commons, for that he was from them descended) should be sent as an Orator to treat with them...he turned quite the peoples' hearts.

The same yeare died Menenius Agrippa, a man all his life time before beloved indifferently of the Senatours and the Commons: but after the insurrection, much more deere unto the Commons than before. This truchman, this mediator for civile attonement, this Embassadour and messenger from the Senatours to the Commons, this reconciler and reducer of the commons home againe into the cittie, had not at his death sufficient to defray the charges of his funerals: the commons therefore made a purse and a contribution of a Sextant by the poll, and were at the cost to interre and burie him worshipfully.

(quoted by Bullough Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare vol. V. pp. 497-499)

(iii) Possible Source Material in Remaines of a greater worke concerning Britaine, by William Camden (1605).

and were perswaded also by the authoritie of Menenius Agrippa, a wise and eloquent man... (quoted by Bullough, p. 550)

(iv) Possible Source Material in An Apology for Poetrie by Sir Philip Sidney (1595).

Menenius Agrippa, who, when the whole people of Rome had resolutely devided themselves from the Senate,...though he were (for that time) an excellent Oratour, came not among them upon trust of figurative speeches or cunning insinuations...but forsooth he behaves himself like a homely and familiar Poet. (quoted by Bullough, p.551)

A P P E N D I X E.

THE TRIBUNES

(i) Source Material in North's Plutarch.

there should be yerely chosen five magistrates, which they now call Tribuni Plebis, whose office should be to defend the poore people from violence and oppression. So Junius Brutus and Sicinius Vel utus, were the first Tribunes of the people that were chosen, who had onely been the causers and procurers of this sedition. (394)

But Sicinius and Brutus, two seditious Tribunes, spake against either of these devises, and cried out upon the noble men, that under the gentle name of a colonie, they would cloke and culler the most cruell and unnaturall facte as might be...This were (said they) even as much, as if the Senate should hedlong cast downe the people into a most bottomles pyt. (400-401)

For the Tribunes...when they saw that the opinion of Martius was confirmed...they left the Senate, and went down to the people...crying out for helpe, and that they would assemble to save their tribunes...the Tribunes layed all the faulte...upon Martius, and sent their sergeantes forthwith to arrest him...then the Tribunes in their owne persones, accompanied with the Aediles, went to fetche him by force, and so layed violent hands upon him. Howbeit the noble Patricians...made the Tribunes geve backe. (404-405)

So the most parte of the people being pacified...the Tribunes then...rose out of their seates, and sayed. Forasmuche as the Senate yelded unto reason, the people...dyd likewise geve place unto them: but notwithstanding, they would that Martius should come in persone to aunswer to the articles they had devised... (405-406)

Whereupon Sicinius, the cruellest and stowtest of the Tribunes, after he had whispered a litle with his companions, dyd openly pronounce in the face of all the people, Martius as condemned by the Tribunes to dye. (406)

But...their wordes...could [not] preveile...untill suche time as the Tribunes owne friendes and Kinsmen weying... the impossibleness to convey Martius to execution, without great slaughter and murder of the nobilitie: dyd persuade and advise not to proceede in so violent...a sorte...Then Sicinius, bethinking himself a litle, dyd aske the Patricians, for what cause they took Martius out of the officers handes...Well, then sayed Sicinius, if that be the matter, let there be no more quarrell or dissention against the people: for they doe graunt your demand, that his cause shalbe heard according to the law. (406-407)

Then the Patricians assembled...to consult how they might... keepe the Tribunes from occasion to cause the people to mutine againe. (407)

The Tribunes answered him that they would shewe how he aspired to be King... (403)
 the Tribunes would...that the people would...geve their voyces by Tribes...And then when the Tribunes saw they could not prove he went about to make him self King: they beganne to broache a freshe the former wordes that Martius had spoken...in hindering the distribution of the corne... and persuading also to take the office of Tribuneship from them.(403)

(ii) Possible Source Material in The Romane Historie of T. Livy Tr. Philemon Holland (1600).

So there were created two Tribunes of the commons, C. Licinius and L. Albinus. And these elected three other fellow officers unto them. Of whom Sicinius, the author of the sedition or insurrection was one...
 But above all others Martius Coriolanus, an utter and capitall enemy to the Tribunes power and authoritie, [said] "...Why see I...these Magistrates of the Commons? Why see I Sicinius so mightie?...I that could not beare Tarquinius to be King, shall I brooke and suffer Sicinius?" (quoted by Bullough, pp.498 & 500)

A P P E N D I X F.

VALERIA

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

the greatest Ladies...were continually about the aulter of Jupiter Capitolin, amonge which troupe by name, was Valeria, Publicolaes owne sister...His sister Valeria was greatly honoured and reverenced amonge all the Romaines: and did so modestlie and wiselie behave her selfe, that she did not shame nor dishonour the house she came of...
 Now all...these ladies sitting rounde about her [Volumnia]: Valeria first beganne to speak..."We...are come...through the inspiration...of some god...who...hath moved us...to intreate you in a matter, as well beneficiall for us, as also for the whole citizens...but to your selves in especiall...let us go...unto Martius, to intreate him to take pitie upon us, and also to reporte...howe much you are bounde unto the citizens: who...have not...sought revenge upon your persons...but doe deliver ye safe into his handes, though thereby they looke for no better grace or clemency from him." When Valeria had spoken this unto them, all thother ladyes together with one voyce confirmed that she had sayed. (420-421)

A P P E N D I X G.VIRGILIA

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

but at her [Volumnia's] desire tooke a wife also. (393)
and had taken leave of his mother and his wife, finding
them weeping and shreeking out for sorrowe, and had also
comforted and persuaded them to be content with his
chaunce...(409)

[Valeria and friends] went straight to the house of
Volumnia...and...founde her, and Martius wife her daughter
in lawe set together... Valeria beganne to speake..."We
Ladies, are come to visit you ladies (my Ladie Volumnia
and Virgilia)... (420)

she tooke her daughter in lawe...they went together unto
the Volsce camp... (421)

Martius...knowing his wife which came forrest, he deter-
mined at the first to persist in his obstinate and
inflexible rancker... (421)

first he kissed his mother...then his wife and litle
children... (421)

"my daughter here" (422)

her selfe, his wife and children, fell down upon their
knees...he spake a little apart with his mother and wife
... (423)

A P P E N D I X H.VOLUMNIA

Source Material in North's Plutarch.

was brought up under his mother a widowe... (390)
the only thing that made him to love honour, was the joye
he sawe his mother dyd take of him. For he thought
nothing made him so happie and honorable, as that his
mother might heare every bodie praise and commend him,
that she might allwayes see him returne with a crowne
upon his head, and that she might still embrace him with
teares ronning down her cheekes for joye...thinking all
due to his mother that had also bene due to his father...
dyd not only content hymself to rejoyce and honour her,
but at her desire tooke a wife...and yet never left his
mother's house... (392)

For when he...had taken leave of his mother and wife,
finding them weeping and shreeking out for sorrowe, and
had also comforted and persuaded them to be content with

his chaunce... (409)

and they all together went to the house of Volurnia, Martius mother: and...founde her, and Martius wife...set together...Valeria beganne to speake..."We Ladies are come to visit you ladies (my Ladie Volurnia and Virgilia)..." Then Volurnia in this sorte did aunswer h. r. "My good ladies, we are partakers...of the common miserie...yet our grief exceedeth yours...to feele the losse of my sonne Martius former valiancie and glorie, and to see his personne environned...with our enemies in armes...But yet the greatest grief...is to see our poore countrie brought to such extremitie, that all hope...is nowe...cast uppon us simple women: bicause we know not what accompt he will make of us, sence he hath cast from him all care of his naturall countrie and common weale, which heretofore he hath holden more deere and precious, then either his mother, wife or children. Notwithstandinge, if ye think we can doe good...bringe us to him I pray you. For if we can not prevaile, we maye yet dye at his feete, as humble suters for the safetie of our countrie." (420-421)

She tooke her daughter in lawe, and Martius children... and...went...unto the Volsces camp: whome when they sawe, they of them selves did both pitie and reverence her, and ...not a man...durst say a word unto her. (421) first he kissed his mother... (421)

she spake..."If we held our peace...the state of our poor bodies...and...rayment, would...bewray...what life we have led... But... how much more unfortunatly, then all the women livinge we are come...considering...spitefull fortune...hath made...my selfe to see my sonne... beseiging the walles of his native countrie. So...to pray unto the goddes...for aide; is the onely thing which plongeth us into...perplexitie...we can not...pray, both for victorie, for our countrie, and for the safetie of thy life also...the bitter soppe of most hard choyce is offered thy wife and children...either to lose the persone of thy selfe, or the nurse of their native countrie. For my selfe...if I cannot persuade thee, rather to doe good unto both parties...preferring love and nature before the malice and calamitie of warres...thou shalt no soner marche forward to assault thy countrie, but thy foote shall treade upon thy mothers wombe... And I maye not deferre to see the daye, either that my sonne be led prisoner...by his naturall country men, or that he him selfe do triumph of them... For as to destroye thy naturall countrie it is altogether unmete and unlawfull; so were it...less honorable, to betray those that put their trust in thee. But my only demaunde...[is] to make a gayle deliverie...which delivereth equall benefit...to the one and the other...Of which goode...thy selfe is thonly author, and so hast thou thonly honour. But if it faile...thy selfe alone deservedly shall carie the shameful reproche and burden of either partie...if it be thy chaunce to conquer...[thou shalt] be chronicled the plague and destroyer of thy countrie. And if fortune also over-

throwe thee, then the worlde will saye, that through desire to revenge thy private injuries, thou hast for ever undone thy good friendes, who did most lovingly and curteously receyve thee." (422-423)

she beganne again to speake..."My sonne, why dost thou not answer me? Doest thou think it good...to geve place unto thy choller and desire of revenge, and thinkest thou it not honestie...to graunt thy mothers request...?...doest thou take it honorable for a noble man, to remember the wrongs and injuries done him: and doest not in like case thinke it an honest noble man's parte, to be thankfull for the goodnes that parents doe shewe to their children, acknowledging the duety and reverence they ought to beare unto them? No man living is more bounde to shewe him selfe thankfull in all partes and respects then thy selfe: who so unnaturally sheweth all ingratitude. Moreover (my sonne) thou hast sorely taken of thy countrie, exacting grievous payments upon them, in revenge of the injuries offered thee: besides, thou hast not hitherto shewed thy poore mother any curtesie. And therefore it is not only honest, but due unto me, that without compulsion I should obtaine my so just and reasonable request of thee. Eut since by reason I cannot persuade thee to it, to what purpose do I deferre my last hope?" And with these wordes her selfe, his wife and children fell downe upon their knees before him. (423)

For in that he uncurteously rejected all publike petitions, requests of Ambassadors, intreaties of the Bishoppes and priests, to gratify only the request of his mother with his departure: that was no acte so much to honour his mother with, as to dishonor his contrie by, the which was preserved for the pitie and intercession of a woman, and not for the love of it selfe, as if it had not bene worthie of it. (428)

A P P E N D I X I.

CORIOLANUS

(i) Source Material in North's Plutarch.

Caius Martius...being left an orphan by his father... taught us...that orphanage bringeth many discommodities to a childe...and also is a goode prooffe...that a rare and excellent witte untaught, doth bring forth many good and evill things together... For this Martius naturall wit and great harte dyd marvelously sturre up his corage, to...notable actes. Eut...for lacke of education, he was so chollericke and impacient, that he would yeld to no living creature: which made him churlishe, uncivill, and

altogether unfit for any mans conversation. Yet men marvelling...at his constancy, that he was never overcome with pleasure, nor money, and howe he would endure easily all manner of paynes and travailles: thereupon they well liked and commended his stowtnes and temperancie. But... they could not be acquainted with him...his behaviour was so unpleasaunt...by reason of...insolent and sterne manner he had, which bicause it was too lordly, was disliked.(390) Martius being more inclined to the warres...beganne from his Childehood to geve him selfe to handle weapons, and daylie dyd exercise him selfe therein. And outward he esteemed armour to no purpose, unles one were naturally armed within. Moreover he dyd so excercise his bodie to hardnes, and all kynde of activitie, that he was very swift in ronning, strong in wrestling and mightie in griping so that no man could ever cast him... [they] would saye when they were overcome: that all was by reason of his naturall strength, and hardnes of warde, that never yelded to any payne or toyle he tooke upon him. (391)

Martius valliantly fought [in the battle against Tarquin] ...and slue the enemy with his owne handes that had before overthrowen the Romaine...the Dictator...crowned Martius with a garland of oken boughs. (391)

desire being bred in Martius, he strained still to passe him selfe in manlines: and being desirous to show a daylie increase of his valliantnes, his noble service dyd still advance his fame...there was not a battell fought from whence he returned not without some rewarde of honour... but touching Martius, the only thing that made him to love honour, was the joye he sawe his mother dyd take of him. For...nothing made him so happie and so honorable, as that his mother mighte heare every bodie praise and commend him, that she might...see him returne with a crowne...and that she might still embrace him with teares ronning downe her cheekes for joye... [he] dyd not only content him selfe to rejoyce and honour her, but at her desire tooke a wife also...and yet never left his mothers house therefore. (392-393)

Now he being growen to great credit and authoritie in Rome for his valliantnes, it fortunend there grewe sedition ...some thought...they should...yeld... Other held hard against that opinion, and that was Martius for one. For he alleaged...that...lenitie...was a beginning of disobedience, and that the proud attempt of the communalitie, was to abolish lawe, and to bring all to confusion. Therefore he sayed, if the Senate were wise, they should betimes prevent, and quenche this ill favored and worse ment beginning. (393-394)

Martius...though it like him nothing to see the greatness of the people thus increased, considering it was to the...imbasing of the nobilitie...he dyd persuade the Patricians ...to let them knowe by their dedes and actes, that they dyd not so muche passe the people in power and riches, as they dyd exceede them in true nobilitie and valliantnes.(395)

Martius being there [at the seige of Corioles]...ronning out of the campe with a fewe men...he slue the first enemies he met withall...crying out to the Romaines... and calling them to fight with a lowde voyce. For he was ...not only terrible, and fierce to laye about him, but to make the enemie afeard with the sounde of his voyce, and grimnes of his countenaunce... (395)

But Martius not staying so, dyd chase and followe them to their owne gates, that fled for life...he dyd encourage his fellowes with wordes and dedes...Martius being in the throng among the enemies, thrust him selfe into the gates ...without that any one of them...offer to stave him. But he looking about him, and seeing...very fewe men to helpe him, and perceyving he was environned by his enemies... dyd things then...wonderfull and incredible, as well as for the force of his hande, as also for...agillitie, and with a wonderful corage and valliantnes... The cittie being taken...the souldiers beganne to spoyle... But Martius was marvelous angry with them, and cried out on them that it was no time now to looke after spoyle... whilest...their fellowe cittizens peradventure were fighting...taking those that...offered...to followe him, he went out of the cittie...exhorting and intreating them by the waye...not to be fainte harted, and ofte holding up his handes to heaven, he besought the goddes to be so gracious...unto him, that he might come in time to the battell...to hazarde his life in defence of his country men. (396)

When they sawe him...all bloody, and in a swet...some beganne to be afeard. But sone after, when they sawe him ronne with a lively cheere to the Consul and to take him by the hande...[they] tooke harte againe to him...Martius asked...howe the order of their enemies battell was and on which side they had placed their best fighting men... Then prayed Martius to be set directly against them... Then Martius...went so fiercely to geve charge...that they could stande no lenger in his handes...the battell was marvelous bloudie about Martius...they prayed Martius he would retire...bicause they sawe he was...already so wearied with the great payne he had taken, and so faynte with the great woundes he had upon him. But Martius answered them, that it was not for conquerours to yeld, nor to be fainte harted: and...beganne a freshe to chase those that fled... (397)

Martius...thanckefully accepted the gifte of his horse, and was a glad man besides, that his service had deserved his generalls commendation: and as for his other offer, which was rather a mercenary reward, then an honorable recompense, he would none of it, but was contented to have his equall parte with other soldiers...Only, this grace (sayeth he) I crave. Among the Volsce there is an olde friend and hoste of mine, an honest welthie man, and ...now a...prisoner...it would doe me great pleasure if I could save him...(398)

The souldiers...made a marvelous great showte...and they ...wondred at his great contention and abstinence, when they sawe so litle covetousnes in him... For even they... that dyd...malice and envie his glorie...dyd thincke him so muche the more worthy of an honourable recompence... as the more carelessly he refused the great offer made him for his profit; and they esteemed more the virtue that was in him, that made him refuse suche rewards, then that which made them to be offred him... (398)

Martius then, who was now growen to great credit, and a stowte man besides, and of great reputation with the noblest men of Rome, rose up, and openly spake against these flattering Tribunes. (401)

And...for Velitres, he dyd compell those that were chosen to goe thither... Martius taking his friendes and followers with him, and such as he could by fayer words intreate to goe with him, dyd ronne certen forreyes into the dominion of the Antiates, where he met with...a marvelous great spoyle...which he brought away with him, and reserved nothing for him selfe...then the hometerriers spited to see his credit and estimation increase still more and more, because they accompted him to be a great hinderer of the people. Shortely after this, Martius stode for the Consulshippe: and the common people favored his sute, thinking it would be a shame to them to denie, and refuse, the chieftest man of bloude, and most worthie persone of Rome. (401)

Martius following this custome, shewed many woundes and cuttes upon his bodie, which he had receyved in seventeene yeres service at the warres...being ever the foremost man that dyd set out feete to fight...one of them sayed to another, we must needes chuse him Consul...then the love... of the common people, turned...to an hate and envie... fearing to put this...authoritie into his handes, being a man somewhat partiall toward the nobilitie, and of great credit and authoritie among the Patricians, and as one they might doubt would take away altogether the libertie from the people... (402)

Martius tooke it in farre worse parte... For he was a man to full of passion and choller, and to muche geven to over selfe will and opinion, as one of a highe minde and great corage, that lacked the gravity, and affabilitie that is gotten with judgement of learning and reason... and that remembred not how wilfulness is the thing of the world, which a governour...should shonne, being that which Plato called solitarines. As in the ende, all men that are wilfully geven to a selfe opinion and obstinate minde, and who will never yeld to others reason, but to their owne: remaine without company, and forsaken of all men... (403)

Martius being a stowte man of nature, that never yelded in any respect, as one thincking to overcome allwayes, and to have the upper hande in all matters, was a token of magnanimitie, and of no base and fainte corage...went home

...full fraughted with spite and malice...with all the lustiest young gentlemen...[who] commonly used for to followe and honour him...to his muche harme: for they dyd but kyndle and inflame his choller more and more, being sorie with him for the injurie the people offred him, bicause he was their captaine and leader to the warres, that taught them all marshall discipline, and stirred up in them a noble emulation of honour and valliantnes, and yet without envie, praising them that deserved best. (403)

Martius...dyd...sharply take up those who went about to gratifie the people, and called them people pleasers and traitours to the nobilitie...therefore sayed he, they that gave counsell...that the corn should be geven out...dyd but only nourishe their disobedience, which would break out in the ende...we [he said] should if we were wise, take from them their Tribuneshippe, which...is the embasing of the Consulshippe, and cause of the division of the cittie...and will never suffer us againe to be united into one bodie...Martius wanne all the young men, and almost all the riche men to his opinion: in so much they range it out, that he was the only man...who stode out against the people, and never flattered them... (404) Martius stowtely withstode these officers that came to arrest him. (405)

So Martius came...but where they thought to have heard very humble and lowly wordes come from him, he beganne not only to use his wonted boldness of speaking (which of itself was very rough and unpleasaunt, and dyd more agravate his accusation, then purge his innocencie) but also gave him selfe in his wordes to thunder, and looke therewithall so grimly, as though he made no reckoning of the matter...their hate...grew so toward him, that they could...no lenger...endure his bravery and careles boldnes. (406)

Martius seeing the Senate in great doubt...asked allowde of the Tribunes, what matter they would burden him with... thereupon he dyd willingly offer him selfe...to be tried upon that accusation. And that if it were proved...he would then refuse no kinde of punishment...conditionally (quoth he) that you charge me with nothing els...and that ye doe not also abuse the Senate. (408)

this matter was most straunge...to Martius...being burdened on the sodaine, and having no ready excuse to make even at that instant... (408)

Saving Martius alone, who neither in his countenaunce, nor in his gate, dyd ever shoe him selfe abashed, or once let fall his great corage: but...dyd outwardly shewe no manner of passion, nor care at all for him selfe...he was so caried away with the vehemencie of anger, and desire of revenge, that he had no sence nor feeling of the hard state he was in... (409)

when he...had taken his leave of his mother and wife... and had also comforted and persuaded them to be content

with his chauce...he went on his waye with three or foure of his friendes only... (409)

So he remained a fewe dayes in the countrie at his houses, turnoyled with sundry sortes and kynde of thoughtes, such as the fyer of his coller dyd sturre up...he thought it his best waye, first to sturre up the Volscce... (409) Martius knewe...Tullus dyd...malice and envie him... bicause that many times in battells where they met, they were ever at the encounter one against another, like lustie coragious youthes, striving in all emulation of honour, and had encountered many times together. In so much...there was bred a marvelous private hate one against another...[Martius] disguised him selfe in suche arraye and attire, as he thought no man could ever have knowen him...he went...to Tullus Aufidius house, and...got him up straight to the chimney harth...and spake not a worde to any man, his face all muffled over. They of the house... wondered what he should be, and yet they durst not byd him rise. For ill favoredly muffled and disguised as he was, yet there appeared a certaine majestie in his countenance, and in his silence... (410)

Then Martius unmuffled him selfe, and...sayed..."If thou knowest me not yet, Tullus, and seeing me, dost not perhappes beleve me to be the man I am in dede, I must of necessitie bewraye my selfe to be that I am. I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thy self particularly, and to all the Volsces generally, great hurte and mischief, which I cannot denie for my surname of Coriolanus that I beare. For I never had other benefit nor recompence, of all the true and paynefull service I have done, and the extreme daungers I have bene in, but this only surname: a good memorie and witnes, of the malice and displeasure thou showldst beare me. In dede the name only remaineth with me: for the rest, the envie and crueltie of the people of Rome have taken from me, by the sufferance of the darstardly nobilitie and magistrates, who have forsaken me, and let me be banished by the people. This extremitie hath now driven me to come as a poore suter, to take thy chimney harthe, not of any hope I have to save my life thereby. For if I had feared death, I would not have come hither to have put my life in hazard: but prickt forward with spite and desire I have to be revenged of them that thus have banished me, whom now I beginne to be avenged on, putting my persone betweene thy enemies. Wherefore, if thou hast any harte to be wrecked of the injuries thy enemies have done thee, spede thee now, and let my miserie serve thy turne, and so use it, as my service maye be a benefit to the Volsces: promising thee, that I will fight with better good will for all you, then ever I dyd when I was against you, knowing that they fight more valliantly, who knowe the force of their enemie, then such as have never proved it. And if it be so that thou dare not, and that thou art wearye to prove fortune any more: then am I also weary to live any lenger. And it

were no wisdom in thee, to save the life of him, who hath bene heretofore thy mortall enemie, and whose service now can nothing helpe nor pleasure thee." (411)

Tullus and Martius had secret conference... (413)

Some thincke this was a craft and deceit of Martius... (413-414)

Martius spake so excellently in the presence of them all, that he was thought no lesse eloquent in tongue, then warlike in showe: and declared him selfe both expert in warres, and wise with valliantnes. Thus he was joyned in commission with Tullus as generall of the Volsces, having absolute authoritie betwene them to followe and pursue the warres... (414)

his chiefest purpose was to increase still the malice and dissention... he was very carefull to keepe the noble mens landes and goods safe from harme... but spoyled the whole countrie besides... (414)

his fame ranne through all Italie, and every one praised him for a valliant captaine... (416)

Martius hearing this sturre about him, was in a greater rage with them then before... (416)

he was set in his chayer of state, with a marvelous and unspeckable majestie... he answered them very hottely, and in great choller... (417)

every man honoured Martius, and thought he only could doe all... (417)

Martius suffered them to come into his campe, but yet he graunted them nothing the more, neither dyd he entertaine them or speake more curteously to them, then he dyd the first time that they came unto him, saving only that he willed them... to accept peace under the first conditions offered, or els to receyve warre. (419)

Martius set then in his chayer of state... knowing his wife which came formest, he determind... to persist in his obstinate and inflexible rancker. But overcome... with naturall affection, and being altogether altered to see them: his hart would not serve him to tarie their comming... but comming downe in hast, he went to meete them, and first he kissed his mother, and imbraced her a pretie while, then his wife and litle children. And nature so wrought with him that the teares fell from his eyes, and he coulde not keepe him selfe from making much of them, but yeilded to the affection of his bloode... After he had thus lovingly received them... (421-422)

Martius gave good eare unto his mothers wordes, without interrupting her speache at all... he held his peace a prety while, and answered not a worde. (423)

Martius seeing [them kneeling]... could refraine no lenger, but went straight and lifte her up, crying out: Oh mother, what have you done to me? And holding her hard by the right hande, oh mother, sayed he, you have wonne a happy victorie for your countrie, but mortall and unhappy for your sonne: for I see my self vanquished by you alone. (423)

Martius fearing to become a private man againe under Tullus being generall...answered: he was willing to geve up his charge...if they dyd all commaund him...and...he would...geve up an accoapt unto the people. (425)

(ii) Source Material in The Comparison of Alcibiades with Martius Coriolanus.

So dyd the Romaines malice also Coriolanus government, for that it was to arrogant, prowde, and tyrannicall... he is lesse to be blamed, that seeketh to please...his common people: then he that despiseth...them, and therefore offereth them wrong and injurie, bicause he would not seeme to flatter them, to winne the more authoritie. For as it is an evill thing to flatter the common people to winne credit: even so is it besides dishonesty, and injustice also, to atteine to credit and authoritie, for one to make him selfe terrible to the people, by offering them wrong and violence. It is true that Martius was ever counted an honest natured man, plaine and simple, without arte or cunning. (427)

And Martius...dyd by craft and deceit bring the Romaines into warres against the Volsces, causing the Volsces maliciously, and wrongfully to be suspected... But the cause why he dyd it, made the fact so much more fowle and wicked. For it was not done for any civill dissention, nor for any jelouzy and contention in matters of government...but only following his cholerike moode, that would be pleased with no thing, as Dion sayed, he would needes trouble and turmoile the most parte of Italie, and so beinge agrie with his countrie, he destroyed many other townes and cities that could not helpe it, nor doe with all... Where Martius...did...grest hurte unto the whole citie of Rome, though all in Rome had not generally offended him... Furthermore, the Romaines sought to appease one onely displeasure and despite they had done him, by many ambassades...whereunto he never yelded, while his mother, wife, and children came, his harte was so hardned. And hereby it appeared he was entred into this cruell warre (when he would harken to no peace) of an intent utterly to destroy...his countrie, and not as though he ment to...returne thither againe. (428)

Martius...would not so much as accept giftes lawefully offered him by his Captaines, to honour him for his valliantnesse. And the cause why the people did beare him such ill will, for the controversie they had with the Nobilitie about clearing of dettes, grew: for that they knewe well enough it was not for any gayne or benefit he had gotten thereby, so much as it was for spite and displeasure he thought to doe them. (429)

all Martius noble actes and vertues, wanting that affabilitie, became hatefull even to those that received benefit by them, who could not abide his severitie and selfe will: which causeth desolation (as Plato sayeth)

and men to be ill followed, or altogether forsaken... Martius being present was condemned by the Romaines: and in his person murdered, and slaine by the Volsces. But here I can not say they have done well, nor justly, albeit him selfe gave them some colour to doe it, when he openly denied the Romaine Ambassadors peace, which after he privatly graunted, at the request of women. So by this dede of his, he tooke not away the enmity that was betwene both people: but leaving warre still betwene them, he made the Volsces (of whome he was generall) to lose the oportunity of noble victory. Where in deede he should (if he had done as he ought) have withdrawen his armie with their counsaill and consent, that had reposed so great affiance in him, in making him their generall: if he had made that account of them, as their good will towards him did in ducty binde him. Or else, if he did not care for the Volsces in the enterprise of this warre, but had only procured it of intent to be revenged, and afterwards to leave it of...yet he had no reason for the love of his mother to pardone his contrie, but rather he should in pardoning his contrie, have spared his mother, bicause his mother and wife were members of the bodie of his contrie and city, which he did besiege. For in that he uncurt- eously rejected all publike petitions...to gratifie only the request of his mother with his departure: that was no acte so much to honour his mother with, as to dishonour his contrie by, the which was preserved for the pitie and intercession of a woman, and not for the love of it selfe, as if it had not bene worthie of it. And so was this departure a grace...very odious and cruell, and deserved no thankes of either partie, to him that did it. For he withdrew his army, not at the request of the Romaines, against whom he made warre: nor with their consent, at whose charge the warre was made. And of all his misfor- tune and ill happe, the austeritie of his nature, and his hawtie obstinate minde, was the onely cause: the which of it selfe being hatefull to the worlde, when it is joyned with ambition, it groweth then much more churlish, fierce, and intollerable. (430)

Whereas Martius stowtnes, and hawty stomake, did stay him from making much of those, that might advaunce and honour him: and yet his ambition made him gnawe him selfe for spite and anger, when he sawe he was despised. And this is all that reasonably may be reproved in him: for other- wise he lacked no good commendable vertues and qualities. For his temperaunce, and cleane handes from taking of bribes and money... (431)

A P P E N D I X J.CHARACTERS IN NORTH'S PLUTARCH OMITTED BY SHAKESPEAREAPPIUS CLODIUS

And there Appius Clodius (one that was taken ever as an heavy enemie to the people) dyd avowe and protest, that they would utterly abase the authoritie of the Senate, and destroye the common weale, if they would suffer the common people to have authoritie by voyces to geve judgement against the nobilitie. (407)

TITUS LATINUS

There was a cittizen of Rome called Titus Latinus, a man of meane qualitie and condition, but otherwise an honest sober man, geven to a quiet life, without supersition, and muche lesse to vanitie or lying. (411-412)

VOLUMNIA'S HUSBAND, CORIOLANUS' FATHER

Gaius Martius...being left an orphan by his father, was brought up under his mother a widowe... (390)
Martius thinking all due to his mother, that had bene also due to his father if he had lived. (393)

VIRGILIA'S SECOND CHILD

See pages 393, 420, 421, 422. (Two children or just children in the plural mentioned five times in conjunction with Volumnia and Virgilia.)

A P P E N D I X K.POSSIBLE SOURCES IN NORTH'S PLUTARCHFOR THE IMAGERY IN CORIOLANUSACTING/DISGUISE

There needed no difference of garments I warrant you, nor outward shoves to know a Plebeian from a Patrician, for they were easely decerned by their lookes. (409)
he disguised him selfe in such arraye and attire, as he thought no man could ever have knowen him for the persone he was...whereupon they went to Tullus...to tell him of the straunge disguising of this man... (410)

FARMING/CULTIVATION

like as a fat soile bringeth forth herbes and weedes that lieth unmanured. (390)
 honour...lighting on young men...the desire to winne more dieth straight in them...the same having no deepe roote in them before...(392)
 Bicause the most part of the errable lande within the territory of Rome, was become heathie and barren for lacke of plowing...by reason of their warres. (400)
 he sayed they nourrished against them selves, the naughty seede and cockle, of insolencie and sedition, which had bene sowed and scattered abroad amongest the people, whom they should have cut of, if they had bene wise. (404)
 if it be thy chauce to conquer, this benefit shalt thou reape of thy goodly conquest. (423)

DISEASE

the plague had bene so extreme among them, and had killed such a number of them... to cleare the same of many mutinous and seditious persones, being the superfluous ill humours that grevously fedde this disease. (400)
 this pestilence crept in by litle and litle, and dyd secretly winne ground still... (402)
 spitteth out anger from the most weake and passioned parte of the harte, much like the matter of an impostume. (403)
 he him selfe was so taken in all his limmes, that he became lame and impotent... (412)
 be chronicled the plague and destroyer of thy countrie.(423)

EROTICISM AT WAR

they sawe the Consul Cominius also kisse and embrace him ... (391)
 Tullus...was a marvellous glad man...and taking him by the hand... (411)

VOICES AS VOTES

by free voyce the people may give sentence. (407)
 judge by voyces...tell voyces...three voyces odd. (408)
 confirm by voyces. (416)

COALS AND FIRE

they dyd but kyndle and inflame his choller... (403)
 This stirred coales among the people...(406)
 For when sorrow...is set a fyre, then it is converted into spite and malice... (409)
 turmoyled with...thoughtes, such as the fyer of his coller dyd sturre up... (409)

MOON

whose valliantnes he commended beyond the moone... (398)

BODY

the state...becometh dismembred in two factions, which mainteines allwayes civill dissention and discorde betwene us, and will never suffer us againe to be united into one bodie. (404)

the Romaines...were so fainte harted, so mistrustfull, and lothe besides to make warres. In so muche as they properly resembled the bodyes paralyticke, and losed of their limmes and members: as those which through the palsey have lost all their sence and feeling... (418)
that a bodie which hath neither life nor soule, should have any direct or exquisite worde formed in it by expresse voyce, that is impossible. For the soule, nor god him selfe can distinctly speake without a bodie, having necessarie organes and instrumentes mete for the partes of the same, to forme and utter distincte wordes. (425)

A P P E N D I X L.NARRATIVE SECTIONS IN NORTH'S PLUTARCHOMITTED BY SHAKESPEARE

1. Discussion of the "discommodities of orphanage." (390)
2. Explanatory digression on the oaken garland and the origins of the tradition. (392)
3. Discussion of the disadvantages of honour gained in early youth. (392)
4. The appearance of Castor and Pollux at the battle against Tarquin; their re-appearance in the market-place in Rome; the subsequent building of a temple in their honour; and the consecration of the date to them. (392)
5. The example of Epaminondas as a dutiful son. (392)
6. The victory over the Sabines and the senate's failure to make good their promise of relief if the people served faithfully in this campaign. The details of the continued oppression by usurers (although this oppression is referred to in the play). The first rebellion with the people's refusal to respond to a call to arms. (393)
7. The senate's divided opinion about yielding to the poor people's request. Martius' denunciation of leniency which would not only cause loss to creditors, but also encourage the people to disobedience. (393)
8. The people's evacuation of Rome and encampment on the Holy Hill. Menenius' success in persuading them to return to the city. (394)

9. Martius' exhortation to the patricians to show themselves superior not only in power and wealth, but also in courage and valour.
10. Martius' refusal to rest after the route of the Antiates, because "it was not for conquerors to yield", and his pursuit of the fliers.
11. Explanation of the Roman custom of awarding an extra surname. (399)
12. The explicit reasons for the dearth in Rome. (400)
13. The arrival of ambassadors from plague-stricken Velitres and the nomination of colonists according to the opinion that the city's distress offered Rome a timely opportunity not only to rid herself of seditious elements, but also to ease the dearth. The levying of troops for a new campaign against the Volscæ. The tribunes' objections on the grounds that the people were being sent into an unhealthy environment and "the tuition of a strange god", and that the new war was nothing but an excuse for a fresh hurt to the people. (400)
14. Martius' denunciation of the tribunes and enforcement of the colonisation scheme. (401)
15. A discussion of the corruption of voting systems. (402)
16. The election of other consuls in Martius' stead. (402)
17. The encouragement of Martius' wrath and frustration by a group of hot-blooded patrician comrades. (403)
18. The arrival of corn from Sicily and the senate's indecision over its distribution. (403)
19. A fresh outbreak of war against the Antiates, quickly extinguished. (407)
20. The argument that, given power, the people would behave responsibly and that their desire for power was caused by insecurity rather than delinquency. (407)
21. Martius' surprise and embarrassment at the trial on being taxed afresh about the Antiate spoils. (408)
22. The "telling of the voices of the Tribes" to decide Martius' fate. (408)
23. An explanation of the effect of anger when "sorrow is set afire." (409)
24. Sights and wonders in the Roman air and the story of Titus Latinus and his recurring dream of Jupiter and the lewd dancer.
25. A discussion of Roman practises in the treatment and punishment of slaves. (412)
26. The scrupulousness of Roman religious observances. (413)

27. The Roman games in honour of Jupiter. (413)
 28. The two-year peace treaty with Rome which the Volscian elders were hesitant about breaking. (413)
 29. The eviction of the Volscian tourists from Rome upon "some suspicion" secretly instigated by Martius. (413 & 423)
 30. Martius' light raiding party and selective plunder of plebeian property only, designed to increase class dissension in Rome. (414)
 31. Aufidius' decision to remain in charge of defence while Martius made for Rome. (415)
 32. The details of Martius' conquests in Italy. (415)
 33. The fact that it was the siege of Lavinium "in which were all the temples and images of the goddesses their protectors, and from whence came first their ancient original" which made the frightened Romans call for Martius' repeal; escalating class hatred; and the patrician refusal to grant a repeal at the plebeian request on the grounds that Martius now seemed to be threatening revenge to his own class as well as the people.
 34. The fact that news of this impasse enraged Martius so much, he moved his force to Rome. (416)
 35. The embassy of abjectly humble friends and kinsfolk who were granted thirty days to consider certain terms of peace. (417)
 36. Martius' temporary withdrawal from Roman territory. (417)
 37. The second embassy, offering to negotiate if the Volscians withdrew from Roman territory. Martius' answers, first as Volscian general and secondly as Roman citizen. (418)
 38. The unsuccessful religious embassy. (418)
 39. A dissertation on the gods, free will, and judgement. (419)
 40. The voice of fortune and Valeria's initiation of the women's embassy. (420)
 41. The erection of the Temple of the Fortune of Women. (424)
 42. Speaking and other signs from inanimate statues, natural causes of the phenomena, and reasons for a literal belief in their divine origin. (424)
 43. Aufidius' fear of Martius' eloquence and its power to win the people to his favour. (426)
 44. Permission for the Roman women to mourn Martius the customary ten months. (426)
 45. The Roman defeat of the Volscians and Aufidius' death. (427)
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A P P E N D I X M.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE PLAY FOR WHICH THERE ARE
NO SOURCES IN NORTH'S PLUTARCH

- I.i. Brutus' theories on the advantages to Marcius of being second-in-command under Cominius.
- I.ii. Aufidius' conference in Corioles with the Volscian senators.
- I.iii. The relationship between Volumnia and Virgilia; their friendship with Valeria; and the boy and butterfly story.
- I.iv. Marcius' bet with Lartius for a horse, on the progress of Cominius' battle.
- I.vi. The messenger to Cominius with "bad" news from Corioles; Marcius' stirring call for volunteers; the single combat between Aufidius and Marcius.
- I.vii. Lartius' mounting of guard in Corioles and departure to join Marcius and Cominius.
- I.x. Aufidius' rage and frustration at being defeated and his vow of revenge by fair means or foul.
- II.i. Coriolanus' triumphal entry of Rome, the itemisation of his wounds, and the tribunes' speculation on his behaviour in the gown of humility.
- II.ii. The cushion-laying officers whose conversation owes something to the source material in The Comparison of Alcibiades with Martius Coriolanus; Cominius' long laudatory speech on the deeds of Coriolanus.
- III.ii. Volumnia's prevailing, temporarily, upon Coriolanus to play a part to win the people.
- IV.ii. The encounter of Volumnia and Virgilia with the tribunes.
- IV.iii. Nicanor and Adrian's meeting on the highway from Rome.
- IV.v. Aufidius' servants comic debate on the advantages of war.
- IV.vi. Complacency in Rome before the news of the seige; the tribunes' order to have the messenger whipped before the people's eyes.
- IV.vii. The discussion between Aufidius and his lieutenant of Coriolanus' dangerous stature and the necessity for his destruction.
- V.iv. The plebeian attack on Brutus; the reward of the messenger who brought news of Volumnia's success.

V.vi.70. Coriolanus' rage and boasting in Antium; Aufidius' accusations that he is both a traitor and a boy.

A P P E N D I X N.

INCIDENTS BORROWED FROM NORTH'S PLUTARCH

WHICH SHAKESPEARE CHANGED IN DETAIL

1. In the Life, Martius is introduced at the battle of Corioles as one of the men in the besieging army.

In the play, he is held personally to a former promise to assist Cominius, and he has enough status to make the tribunes wonder at his willingness to be commanded.

2. In the Life, Martius enters Corioles with very few men to help him, and it later appears that Martius was one of them.

In the play, Marcius enters Corioles alone.

3. Plutarch does not mention the name of Martius' Coriolan host, and no point is made of the difficulty of identifying him.

In the play, Coriolanus has forgotten the man's name and this fact is emphasised.

4. In the war against Tarquin, Plutarch says Martius "valiantly fought in the sight of the Dictator" and saved the life of a Roman.

In the play Cominius relates a version of the story in which Marcius not only saved a Roman, but slew three opposers and actually struck Tarquin to his knee. The oaken garland is mentioned twice but it is never explained to be a specific reward for saving a life.

5. Plutarch declares that to obtain any office, the candidate must canvass the citizens in the market-place some days before the election.

According to Shakespeare, the senate are well pleased to make him consul, but to be elected he must stand in the forum, show his wounds and ask the plebeian passers-by for their votes.

The process of "confirmation" or investiture some time later appears to be much the same in Plutarch and Shakespeare.

6. In the Life, Coriolanus observes the custom of appearing in the garment of humility and showing his wounds without any difficulty.

In the play the procedure is amplified and Shakespeare is explicit about Coriolanus' revulsion.

7. After the unsuccessful consular campaign in the Life, Coriolanus' cholera is inflamed by the company of all the lustiest young noblemen in Rome.

In the play, he receives only the tacit support of the nobles' presence.

8. In Plutarch, the division of Antiate spoil is the most decisive and unwarranted allegation against Coriolanus. Plutarch dwells on it twice and gives it prominence in the trial narrative.

It is mentioned by Shakespeare only as a subordinate point, never urged.

9. In the Life, Coriolanus is voted into banishment at the instigation of the tribunes.

In the play, although voting seems to be prepared for, it never takes place and Coriolanus is condemned by the tribunes supported by the shouts of the crowd. The sentence of banishment is spoken by Sicinius, even though the popular voice would seem to have been in favour of the rock.

10. In the Life, Coriolanus is so enraged by the sentence he outwardly shows no passion.

In the play, he rages aloud and banishes the people of Rome. His unnatural calm is reserved for the farewell scene.

11. In the Life, Coriolanus parts from family and friends at home.

In the play, the farewell scene is set before the gates of Rome.

12. In the Life, the embassies are composed of unspecified numbers of people. The first is composed of familiar friends and acquaintances; the second completely anonymous; the third "a goodly rabble of superstition and priests"; and the fourth the Roman women, led by Valeria, Volunna and Virgilia.

In the play, the first embassy is conducted by Cominius, consul and general, but also a friend and admirer of Coriolanus. The second is conducted by Menenius, who loves Coriolanus as a father. The third is conducted by his mother, wife, and child, attended by Valeria and other women.

13. In the Life, the first member of the women's party Coriolanus sees is his wife, and he resolves not to relent. Then he sees his mother, relents, and embraces her first. Volunna does not kneel before making her first plea.

In the play, he embraces Virgilia first and then kneels to Volunna. She raises him and kneels herself.

14. In the Life, Coriolanus returns to Antium willing to surrender his generalship if the lords require him, and to give account of his actions to the people. A common

council is called and he is accused by orators, but before he can answer Aufidius' conspirators fall upon him and kill him.

In the play, he enters the city claiming to have won peace and honour for the Volscæ. Aufidius calls him a traitor and accuses him of stealing his name and selling Rome for a few drops of salt like a boy. Coriolanus loses control and rises to a climax of boastful fury, inviting the Volscæ to cut him to pieces. The conspirators fall on him and kill him. Aufidius stands on his body.

A P P E N D I X O.

BORROWINGS FROM NORTH'S PLUTARCH WHICH SHAKESPEARE

REPLACED IN THE TIME-SCHEME OF THE STORY

1. Menenius' successful use of the belly fable as persuasion is linked with the corn riot instead of the plebeian evacuation of Rome.
2. The battle of Corioles is shifted to take place after the corn riot.
3. After the fall of Corioles in the Life, Martius arrives to help Cominius before the general has engaged in battle. In the play he arrives after Cominius has suffered an initial set-back.
4. The naming ceremony in the Life takes place the day after the battle. In the play it comes directly after the battle.
5. In the Life, Coriolanus pleads for his Coriolan host before the assembled army after Cominius' formal thanks. In the play, the request is made in private, after the formal naming ceremony.
6. In the Life, the battle of Corioles is followed by the corn riots, the forced colonisation of Velitres, and the private and profitable raid on the Antiates, before Coriolanus stands for consul. In the play, the consular election follows the battle of Corioles, so Coriolanus is nominated as a recognition for his services in that campaign in particular.
7. In the Life, Coriolanus speaks out against the people, and the tribunes, at the debate on the distribution of corn, causing the tribunes to rush out to the people for help. This, as well as Coriolanus' resistance of arrest, is brought forward in the play to the middle of the election campaign (after his appearance in the gown of humility and before his general confirmation as consul). The two attempts

to hold a proper trial in the Life (the first when Coriolanus was sentenced to death and won back by the patricians, and the second when he was voted into banishment) are condensed into one by Shakespeare.

8. The brief list of the noble members of the house of Martians opens the Life. In the play it is introduced by the tribunes as incidental tactical material in the election campaign.

9. In the Life, the idea of repealing Coriolanus is born when he besieges Lavinium. In the play it comes only later as part of the grateful demonstrations to honour Volumnia after her successful embassy to Coriolanus.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Abbreviations have been used for the following periodicals, journals and festschriften:

- AI American Imago
 BuR Bucknell Review
 CE College English
 CentR The Centennial Review (Mich. State Univ.)
 CQ The Cambridge Quarterly
 CR The Critical Review (Melbourne; Sydney)
 DA Dissertation Abstracts
 E&S Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association
 EIC Essays in Criticism (Oxford)
 EIE English Institute Essays
 ELH Journal of English Literary History
 ES English Studies
 ESA English Studies in Africa
 HLQ Huntington Library Quarterly
 HR Hudson Review
 JEGP Journal of English and Germanic Philology
 JHI Journal of the History of Ideas
 MLN Modern Language Notes
 MLQ Modern Language Quarterly
 MLR Modern Language Review
 N&Q Notes and Queries
 OSUTCB Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin
 PBA Proceedings of the British Academy
 PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
 PP Philologica Pragensia
 PQ Philological Quarterly (Iowa City)
 PsyR Psychoanalytic Review
 RES Review of English Studies
 SAB Shakespeare Association Bulletin
 SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900
 Shaks Shakespeare Studies (Univ. of Cincinnati)

ShN	Shakespeare Newsletter
ShS	Shakespeare Survey
SJ	Shakespeare Jahrbuch
SoRA	Southern Review: An Australian Journal of Literary Studies (Univ. of Adelaide)
SP	Studies in Philology
SQ	Shakespeare Quarterly
SR	Sewanee Review
TAr	Theatre Arts
TLS	London Times Literary Supplement
UKCR	University of Kansas City Review
UTQ	University of Toronto Quarterly
WVUB	West Virginia University Bulletin

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