

CORIOLANUS AND THE ‘COMMON PART’

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This article seeks to briefly explore some roots of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*: historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, theological, even etymological roots. The play grows, I believe, from a synergistic set of underlying tragic questions. How can a person who aspires to embody a cultural ideal – in this case, the ancient Roman criteria for manly virtue – survive his entanglement in the life within and around him that compromises or contradicts that ideal? How, in other words, does a devotion to nobility, integrity and a centred self that is always like itself (*sui similis*: a Senecan tag Shakespeare echoes repeatedly) endure reminders of all it has in common with supposedly lower forms of life, its dependency on give-and-take with a community, and the casting and shattering of that self into parts? How would that revered legacy have withstood the Christian and especially Calvinist doctrines of Shakespeare’s world – doctrines that deemed no person self-sufficient, and insisting that all must instead depend on a communion of bread and blood for eternal life, and that God alone is ‘resolute, and immutable, always one, and like himself, not wavering or varying in those things which once he willed’ (Lipsius, *De Constantia*, 1.17; 1584: p. 53)? How, finally, does this tragic topic reflect the transhistorical reality of the human mind and spirit delimited by the mortal body?

In Caius Martius Coriolanus’s war against ‘the beast / With many heads’ (4.1.1–2), the boundaries defining the human species and the human individual stand or fall together. Human exceptionalism is coded as Roman exceptionalism in Coriolanus’s animal epithets for those who fall short of his ideal.

Taken together, his hatred of the undifferentiated plebian masses, his embarrassment about his wounds, his determination to ‘stand / As if a man were author of himself / And knew no other kin’ (5.3.35–7), and his threats to purge with fire anyone who threatens to compromise or complicate his martial definition of himself and the Roman body politic offer a fascinating limit case to the classical project of selfhood. Historical contexts, close reading and data mining all reveal this play’s ambivalence about the Senecan insularity of its title character.¹

Just a few years before Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus*, Sir William Cornwallis’s *Discourses upon Seneca the tragedian* warned that ‘No extreme continueth’ because nature ‘hath given limits to all things, and to all things courses fitting their natures’; otherwise ‘there would be nothing, for combating against one another, & setting their forces one against another; the Victor would convert all things to his owne nature, and that would destroy nature, whose glory is the multiplicitie of her instruments, and the working of them with one another’. That conversion is practically the mission statement of the disincorporation called Caius Martius Coriolanus, who threatens his fellow Roman soldiers that he will ‘leave the foe / And make my wars on you’ (1.4.40–1) and who ‘would

¹ Gordon Braden’s influential *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger’s Privilege* (New Haven, CT, 1985), p. 57, demonstrates how Senecan tragic personae ‘strain to take a fantasy of individual autonomy beyond almost any kind of limit’.

depopulate the city and / Be every man himself (3.1.266–7).

This protagonist's disdain for both the creatureliness and the interchangeability of Rome's plebeians, and thereby for their appetite for individual and collective survival, seems valid even as it proves fatal. The tragic dilemma is therefore Hegelian. Its fulcrum is the transition from the waning classical values of the play's setting to the waxing Christian-communitarian values of its original audience. The particular historical moment of the play's action, when Rome was moving from monarchy to republic – 'between the heroic age of personal achievement and the age of the city-state in which an organic society will be the moral standard'² – is homologous to the protagonist's struggle to maintain a self-dominion that subjugates his own potential commonness. That the play was written at a political moment when King James was testing the limits of his sovereignty over the House of Commons, referring to his opponents there disdainfully as 'Tribunes of the people' and 'plebeian tribunes',³ is probably no mere coincidence. Scholars connecting the composition of *Coriolanus* to the Midlands uprisings of 1607 generally focus on food shortages.⁴ But Shakespeare may have associated Coriolanus's destructive self-enclosure, which excludes food and community as the loci of mingled life, more specifically with the social tragedy then called enclosure. Class arrogance in agronomics resembled a broader human presumptuousness that Coriolanus epitomizes, and in eight other plays Shakespeare uses the word 'common' – which haunts this play – to refer to land open to shared grazing.

Coriolanus's mistrust of connection manifests itself even in his peculiar verbal style. As Russ McDonald has demonstrated so compellingly, this protagonist's speeches 'eschew connectives, both within and between sentences, and such withholding creates a disjunctivity that sets every utterance apart from every other', creating 'a language in which the interdependence of sentences is suppressed, clauses do not touch'.⁵ His key rhetorical quirk is asyndeton – the omission of a conjunction that would normally hold parts of a sentence together.⁶ So the protagonist's

rhetorical style is as Senecan as his tragic character; structurally as well as explicitly, he uses language to break rather than build connections. Sean Benson observes that 'the driving imagery and language of the play concern themselves with fragments, which are often represented as synecdochic parts of some larger whole . . . Similarly, Coriolanus's life is fragmented by the many relational roles he must assume'.⁷ Lawrence Danson convincingly highlights the prevalence of synecdoche and metonymy in the play⁸ – a language of parts with ambiguous relation to the whole. The question of whether the tragic hero can separate himself from common life without shattering the identity he seeks to consolidate – a theme prominent also in *Macbeth* – informs the plot of *Coriolanus* from beginning to end, this article will argue, and pervades the play's peculiar diction as well as its peculiar syntax.

The opening scene evokes the same passage from First Corinthians evoked by Bottom's syncretic rhapsody toward the end of *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

God hath tempered the body together, and hath given the more honor to that part which lacked, Lest there should be any division in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. Therefore if one member suffer, all suffer with it; if one member be had in honor, all the members rejoice with it.

(12: 24–6, Geneva Bible)

² John Velz, 'Cracking Strong Curbs Asunder', *English Literary Renaissance*, 13 (1983), 58–69; p. 62.

³ Quoted by Peter Holland in the introduction to his Arden edition of *Coriolanus* (London, 2013), p. 105. Citations of *Coriolanus* are taken from this edition. Except for *King Lear*, as cited below, all other Shakespeare references are taken from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells et al. (Oxford, 1986).

⁴ For an important early example, see E. C. Pettet, 'Coriolanus and the Midlands Insurrection of 1607', in *Shakespeare Survey 3* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 34–41.

⁵ Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 56.

⁶ McDonald, *Late Style*, p. 57. On the Senecan as opposed to the Ciceronian style of this speaker, see p. 61.

⁷ Sean Benson "'Even to the gates of Rome'", *Comitatus*, 30 (1999), 96.

⁸ Lawrence Danson, *Tragic Alphabet* (New Haven, CT, 1974).

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But Coriolanus's dream city hath no Bottom. What happens in *Coriolanus*, from the opening scene onward, is this failing to happen. Through the belly-fable, Menenius preaches the Pauline sermon to the plebeian mob, but just as they seem ready to convert, in swaggers Caius Martius – a stony-hearted, honour-hoarding heretic in this religion of collectivity. The fable about 'incorporate friends' proposes, and the rest of the play uneasily explores, a continuity between communities of bread and communities of blood.

The idea of shared bread – established by the opening debate about the sharing of grain – turns up with remarkable persistence in the mouths of the play's compromisers and conciliators: 'company' (in each of the first four acts), 'accompany', 'accompanied', 'companion', 'companions' and 'companionship'. Food provides everyone with what Menenius calls 'that natural competency / Whereby they live' (1.1.134–5). If 'trans-' is the Latin prefix that haunts *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *Coriolanus* it is surely 'cum-' (abetted by 'part', in tension with 'sole', 'lone' and – five times each – 'whole' and 'wholesome'). The word 'common' appears more often here than in any of Shakespeare's other works; it is the unnamed antagonist of the plot, and a cause of all the debates. It also seems worth noting that the very next play Shakespeare wrote exploits the same root to characterize its protagonist's aversion to adulterate mixtures: Leontes rants that affection

Communicat'st with dreams – how can this be? –
With what's unreal thou **co**active art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
Thou mayst **co**-join with something, and thou dost –
And that beyond **com**mission . . .
(*The Winter's Tale*, 1.2.142–6)

If Leontes's breakdown is a symptom of his hubristic denial of the shared appetites and mortality of the human body – a denial (I argued long ago) he shares with Coriolanus⁹ – then this verbal correlation is all the more significant.

My sense that anxiety about mixture and (especially) human interaction manifests itself in the frequent deployment of the Latin *cum-* and *part-*

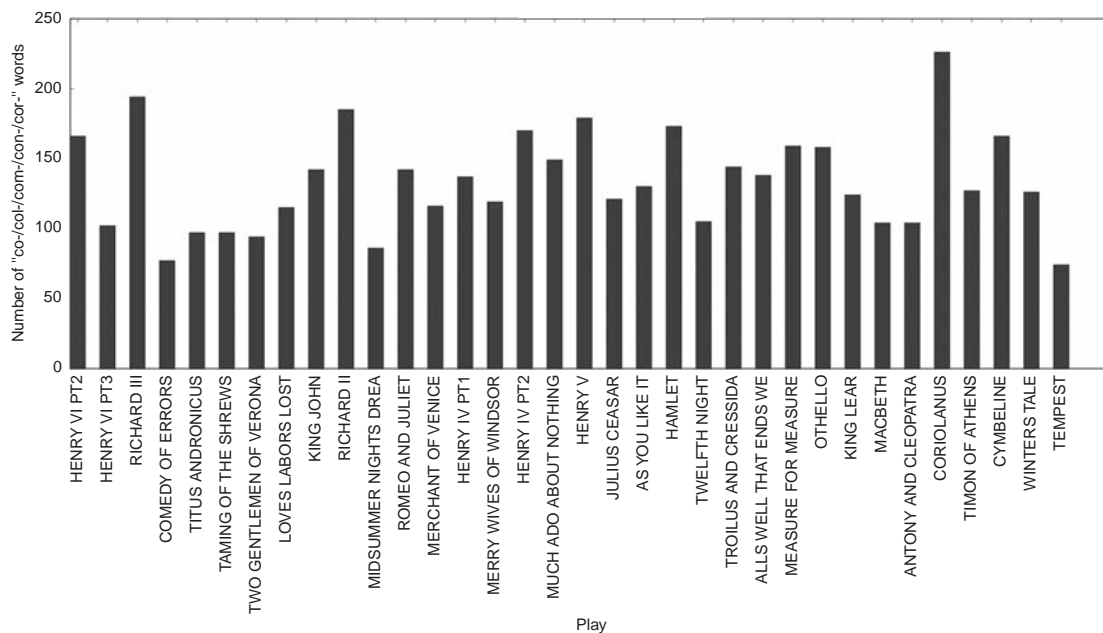
prefixes in *Coriolanus* is supported by statistical study. Both quantity and frequency might contribute to an audience's sense of this topic's importance, and as Illustrations 9 and 10 show, *Coriolanus* contains far more of these *co-/com-/col-/cor-* words than any other Shakespeare play, with only *Richard II* having a higher percentage of such words (by a minuscule difference of 70 vs. 69 per 10,000; the next closest is *Henry V* at 62).¹⁰ When the sample is reduced to only those words that actually refer to mixtures or human interactions, *Coriolanus* stands out starkly atop the list (Illustrations 11 and 12), with 71 instances where the other plays average only 30, and the highest percentage as well.¹¹ Furthermore, the cumulative subliminal effect of these instances would have been strongly augmented by the 34 namings of Coriolanus,¹² 17 of Corioles and 18 of Cominius, as well as 10 of

⁹ Robert N. Watson, *Shakespeare and the Hazards of Ambition* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), pp. 222–79.

¹⁰ This statistical work was conducted with the excellent assistance of Craig Messner, a doctoral student at UCLA. We derived a list of words beginning 'co' and 'part' from Shakespeare concordances and trimmed it to include only those whose prefixes were plausibly derived from the Latin 'cum-' or 'part-' roots. We used the texts at www.ibiblio.org/xml/examples/shakespeare/, which are already marked up in XML and thus made it easy to omit stage directions, character lists, speech headings, and other meta-features. We then ran the text of plays believed to be entirely or almost entirely by Shakespeare through a Python algorithm Craig Messner developed for this purpose, and finally converted the results to bar graphs using the Python plotting library called *matplotlib*.

¹¹ This category was narrowed by eliminating 113 words beginning with *co-* that derived from a different root or drifted away from any implication of combinatory work, leaving the 184 that pointed toward mixture and/or interaction. All these lists will be available on <https://github.com/messner/>

¹² Peter Holland, 'Coriolanus: The Rhythms and Remains of Excess', in *The Forms of Renaissance Thought*, ed. Leonard Barkan, Bradin Cormack and Sean Keilan (London, 2009), p. 151, observes that those who focus (probably anachronistically) on the *-anus* at the end of the protagonist's name somehow 'never explore the Latin heart of his name in the "Cor" that opens it'. But where Holland takes this syllable to signal 'heart', I am interested in its contribution to the pervasive theme of combination.



9. Number of co-/col-/com-/con-/cor- words.

Shakespeare's 35 uses of 'corn', the sharing of which is the initial main topic of the plot. These are not included in my charts because they do not share the *cum-* etymology, but they might still have contributed to an audience's sense of relentless pressure toward mingling (much as the interplay of Duncan's name with 'dun' and the many echoes of 'done' haunts *Macbeth*). That verbal pressure ironically becomes all the more intense through Caius Martius's attainment of a *cognomen ex virtute* supposed to honour what he did alone, as that same achievement ironically drives him into the interactive role of candidate for the consultative position of consul.

My other hunch – that anxiety about parts (body parts, theatrical parts and participation) would be reflected, at the same micro-level, in a notably high number and rate of *part-* prefixes – proved to be similarly verifiable: *Coriolanus* again surpasses all the others in both number and rate (Illustrations 13 and 14).¹³

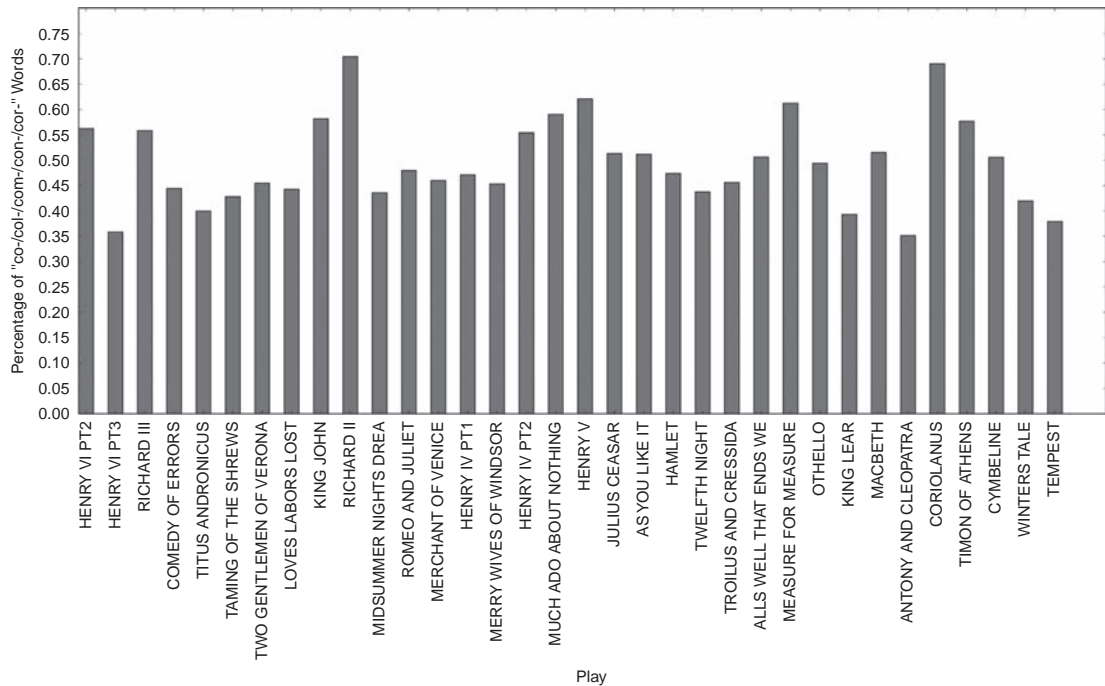
The last thing this protagonist wants is to 'mutually participate' in 'the appetite and affection

common / Of the whole body' (1.1.98–100). Attention to these word-roots seems especially well justified in a play where Menenius plays off the suffixes of the tribunes' names – Sicinius Velutus and Junius Brutus – with a jeering homophone: 'I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables' (2.1.56–7). And attention to prefixes may be apt in a play where Shakespeare – although this derives from Plutarch – shows his hero finally caught between forces beginning with the same consonant: the Volscians, Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria.

In contrast to Volumnia, Coriolanus's wife Virgilia is horrified by the idea of him exchanging blood, and she 'will not out of doors . . . not over the threshold . . . I will not forth . . . I must not', despite Valeria's admonishment that 'you confine yourself most unreasonably' (1.3.73–112). Virgilia's

¹³ Here I omitted 'Parthian' and 'partridge' as etymologically unrelated.

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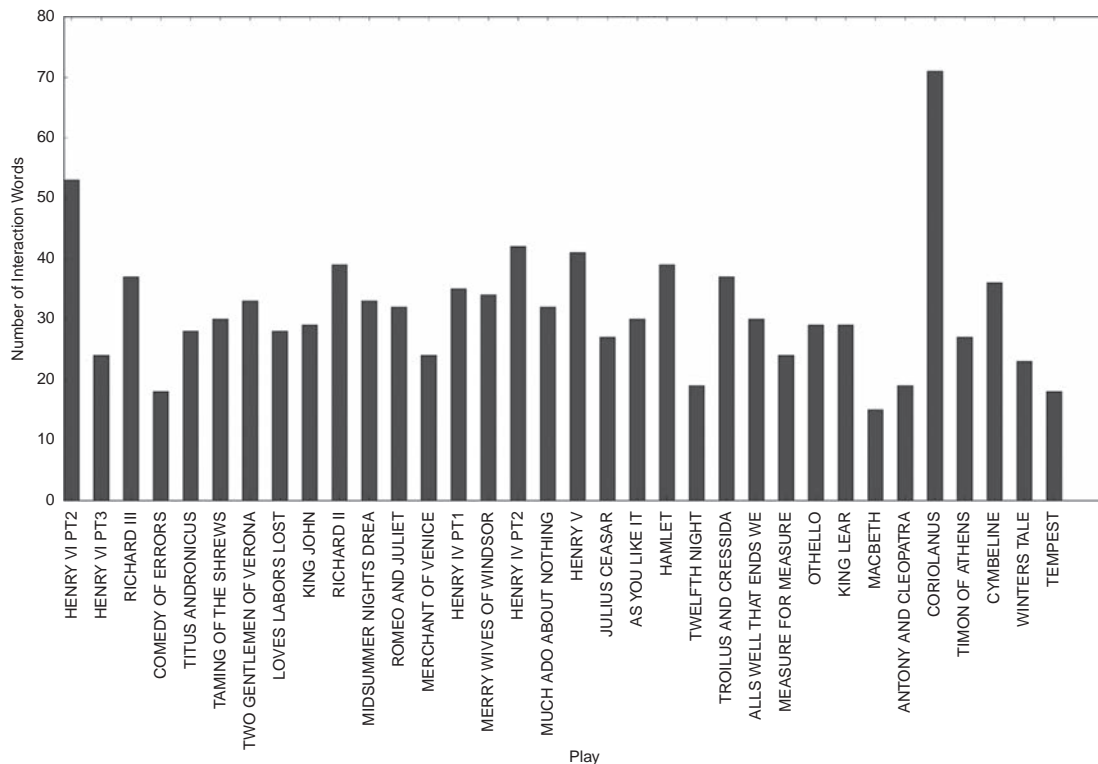
10. Co-/col-/com-/con-/cor- words as percentage of play words.

determination to sustain herself in an intact domestic sphere seems to be a gendered counterpart to her husband's imperviousness in battle, and designed superstitiously to ensure that such insularity extends to his body: marital chastity evoking martial impenetrability. But her domesticity also signals a more positive view of collective life. Twice here we are superfluously reminded that Virgilia is sewing (1.3.54, 84–8) – the same kind of function Shakespeare gives Bottom the weaver, who must lace together all the living worlds of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Anthropologists have observed that 'The ritual and discourse that surround its manufacture establish cloth as a convincing analog for the regenerative and degenerative processes of life, and as a great connector, binding humans not only to each other but to the ancestors of their past and progeny who constitute their future.'¹⁴ Sewing thus extends Virgilia's role as a counterpart to Coriolanus, who

has, according to the tribune Sicinius 'unknit himself / The noble knot he made' by alienating his fellow Romans (4.2.31–2), tearing up what the First Citizen, in the first scene, describes as 'this our fabric' in which the various social roles work together as various parts of the human body do. As flesh of his flesh and mother of his son, Virgilia weaves Coriolanus back into that fabric.

To be fully human – or, at least, fully Roman, which from Coriolanus's perspective is much the same thing – is to be integral and impenetrable. Caius Martius's first words depict the people as itchy 'scabs' (1.1.161): the maddeningly incomplete boundary of the skin-bound self. They represent the same unpleasantly liminal case that King Lear invokes with his alienated flesh and blood:

¹⁴ Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider, eds., *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington DC, 1989), p. 3.



11. Number of co-/col-/com-/con-/cor- words implying combination or human interaction.

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
A plague sore, or embossed carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood.¹⁵

When Rome's soldiers fail to show 'hearts more proof than shields' (1.4.26), he curses them as dermatological diseases of the body politic and as non-human (because non-heroic) bodies:

All the contagion of the south light on you,
You shames of Rome! You herd of – boils and plagues
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorred
Farther than seen, and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese
That bear the shapes of men . . . (1.4.31–6)

Failing to defend the boundary of the Roman body politic makes these commoners failures of the

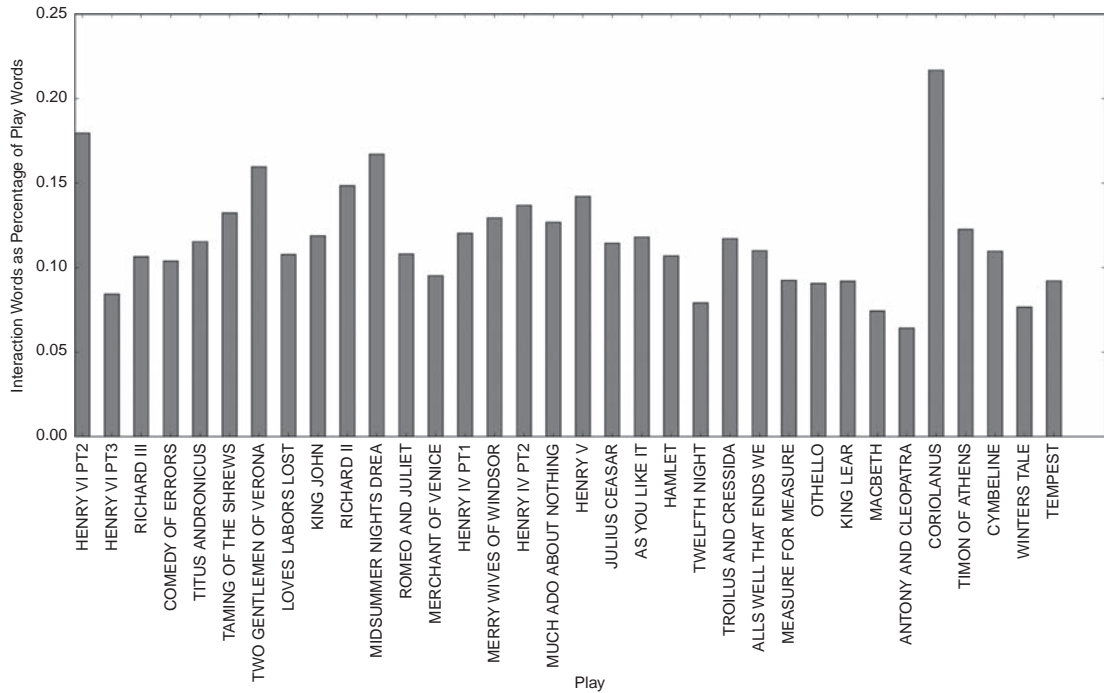
moral boundary of humanity and failures of the skin boundary of the individual.

Their collective cowardice allows Coriolanus the solo conquest that wins him his new name and also converts the carbuncle from a symptom of mortality permeable flesh to its other meaning: a fiery jewel, hard and sharp as a sword fresh from the forge. When a Roman soldier reports that the Volsces 'Clapped to their gates', leaving Coriolanus 'himself alone / To answer all the city', Titus Lartius exclaims

O, noble fellow,
Who sensibly out-dares his senseless sword
And, when it bows, stand'st up! Thou art left, Martius.

¹⁵ *King Lear*, 2.2.410–15; Arden Shakespeare Third Series, ed. R. A. Foakes (London, 1997).

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12. Co-/col-/com-/con-/cor- words implying combination or human interaction as percentage of play words.

A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,
Were not so rich a jewel. (1.4.55–60)

Yet, in order to win the plebeians' votes for consul, Coriolanus will be obliged to display the wounds that resemble the more fleshly kind of carbuncle, the swollen red markers of a body whose integrity is under threat. A similar ambiguity haunts the word 'tent' in this play, which three times refers to a soldier's habitation, but twice refers to the medical practice of propping open an infected wound: again the idea of a valiant enclosure sits in tension with the idea of mortal openness.

Cominius wonders what human form he sees returning from Corioles 'That does appear as he were flayed? O gods / He has the stamp of Martius' (1.6.22–3). If a person's outline is the envelope of skin, then what are the borders and markers of Coriolanus's self? Cominius – whose name echoes 'common', but with an ennobling *différance* – worries that perhaps Coriolanus 'come[s] not in

the blood of others, / But mantled in your own' (1.6.28–9); another uneasy question suiting a scene of birth, again on the contested borderlines of self and other. This hero, however, insists that his enemies have been porous while he remained enclosed:

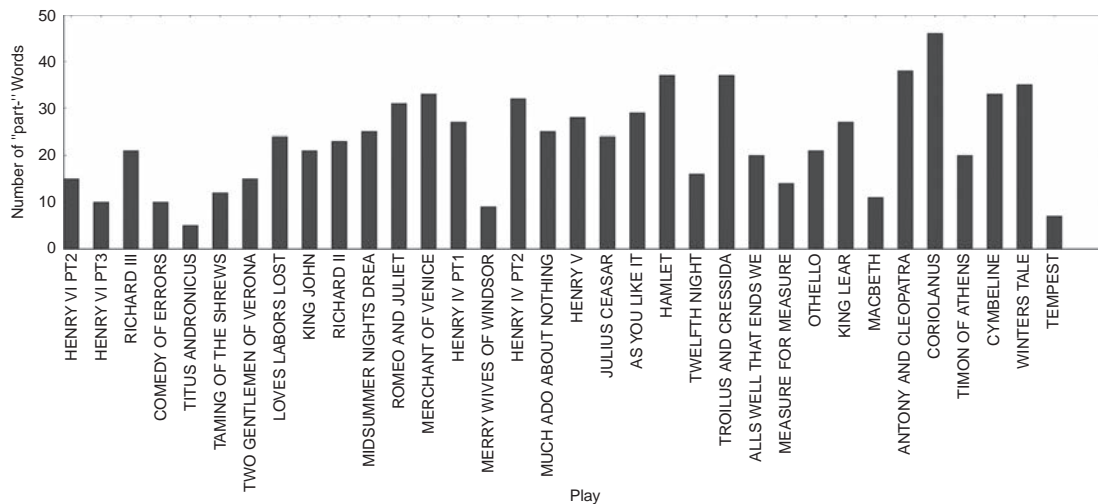
CORIOLANUS. Alone I fought in your Corioles' walls
And made what work I pleased. 'Tis not my blood
Wherein thou seest me masked. (1.8.9–11)

Is that alien blood merely a mask – a *persona* – or instead an expression of this person's truest self?

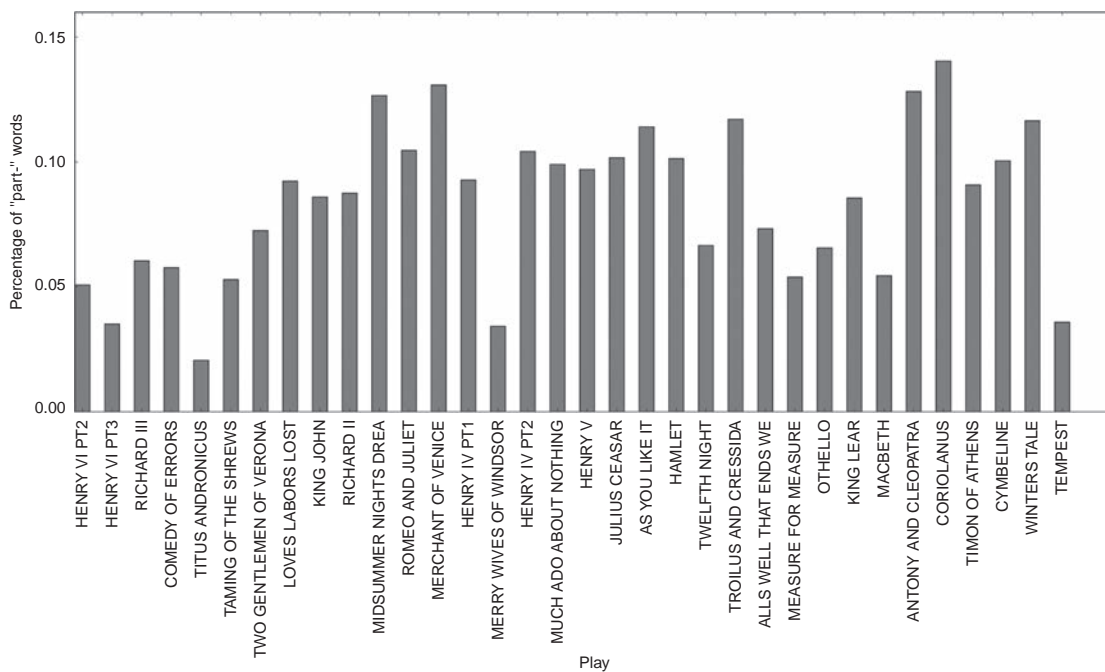
Thanks, paradoxically, to his many wounds, this mortal creature can now be replaced by a *cognomen* signalling his solitary enclosure, his epitomizing achievement:

HERALD. Know, Rome, that all alone Martius did fight
Within Corioles' gates: where he hath won,

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13. Number of part- words.



14. Part- words as percentage of play words.

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With fame, a name to 'Martius Caius'; these
In honour follows 'Coriolanus'. (2.1.157–60)

The tension between 'all' and 'alone' in 'himself alone to answer all the city' (1.4.55–6) is further compressed here. In both cases, it precipitates out the 'one'.

In the distribution of the spoils from this victory, Coriolanus requests no more than 'my common part with those / That have beheld the doing' (1.9.39–40), but there is a sarcastic sting in the end of his egalitarian and communitarian gesture. He considers such spoils a spoilage: he will go no further into 'the common muck of the world' (2.2.124). Then, in an incident so irrelevant to the plot that it begs for thematic interpretation, Coriolanus forgets the name of the poor man who sheltered him and now needs his rescue (1.9.81–91) – plausibly, another instance of his pre-conscious refusal of the mutual dependency of life.

Cominius proceeds to depict Coriolanus as a warrior who 'cannot in the world / Be singly counterpoised', and who is repeatedly bound in encircling garlands, reserving for him the role of the phallic aggressor rather than the one penetrated:

When he might act the woman in the scene
He proved best man i'th' field, and for his meed
Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
Man-entered thus, he waxed like a sea,
And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
He lurched all swords of the garland.
(2.2.94–9)

And thus engaged, thus engorged, he enforced the birth of his new, renamed, swordlike, martial self:

from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was timed with dying cries. Alone he entered
The mortal gate of th' city . . . (2.2.106–9)

Again Coriolanus is isolated; he makes his way into the world, not vice versa. When Menenius urges the people to 'think / Upon the wounds his body bears, which show / Like graves i' the holy churchyard', Coriolanus has to insist the wounds are not really penetrations of his body or spirit, let alone signals of mortality: 'Scratches with briars, / Scars to move laughter only' (3.3.48–51). But the jokes are on him.

This self-betrayal of showing those wounds makes Coriolanus aware that the 'part' called 'half' – both words to which I will return – comes between 'the one' and 'the other': 'I am half through: the one part suffered, the other will I do.' But he won't. For Coriolanus, 'to make his requests by particulars, wherein every one of us has a single honour' (as a plebeian describes the process at 2.3.42–4) would be to share the honourable 'singularity' the tribunes complain he demands (1.1.273). It would grant particularity to the commoners while he is trapped playing 'a part / That I shall blush in acting' (2.2.143–4):

. . . such a part which never
I shall discharge to th' life.

COMINIUS. Come, come, we'll
prompt you.

VOLUMNIA. I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast
said
My praises made thee first a soldier, so,
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before. (3.2.106–11)

The reassurance that his common touch will be merely a dramatic part comes with the unwelcome implication that his supposedly spontaneous and characteristic posture as a martial hero was also merely a scripted performance.

Before the scene is over, exasperated by the mixed character of a government whose parties (the term Menenius uses for these political opposites at 3.1.316) are simultaneously even and at odds in a common cause, Coriolanus swears by an immortal and pre-eminent selfhood:

By Jove himself,
It makes the consuls base; and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by th' other. (3.1.108–13)

'Other' (like 'many', and as in 'one infect another' at 1.4.34) is again inherently the foe of the one; and later Aufidius will comment that it is Coriolanus's 'nature, / Not to be other than one thing' (4.7.41–2). In fact, the word 'one' appears more often in *Coriolanus* than in any of

Shakespeare's earlier plays. Coriolanus's fear of 'confusion' here is validated when the tribunes orchestrate a 'din confused' from the plebeians to enforce his execution (3.1.111, 3.3.20), and he disdains 'congregations' and any 'consent' that derives from his fellow citizens rather than from Jove (3.2.12, 5.3.71).

The Senate can reasonably hope that the tribunes will offer 'your kindest ears and, after, / Your loving motion toward the common body' (2.2.50–1). That, however, is exactly the kind of openness and intimacy that Coriolanus cannot tolerate. Menenius tells the tribunes, 'He loves your people, / But tie him not to be their bedfellow', because he wants no connection to 'Your multiplying spawn' (2.2.62–3, 76); later he will insist that 'I have not been common in my love' (2.3.93). The tribunes, as the representatives of the common people within the body politic, represent the common burdens of mortal creatureliness within Coriolanus. What Menenius urges against their excessive pride – 'an interior survey of your good selves' (2.1.38) – would be no less corrosive to the pride of Coriolanus. Menenius then flees the interview in order to protect himself from very much the same contagions – multiplicity, animality, commonness: the census of the senses – that repel Coriolanus: 'More of your conversation would infect my brain, being the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians' (2.1.91–2).

The etymology of 'ambition' links it to the practice of canvassing for votes, and Coriolanus seems uneasily aware that the election will compromise rather than institutionalize his sovereignty, driving him toward the identity of consul which (as the Latin root again indicates, and the play's use of various forms of 'counsel' reflects) is founded in an interactive rather than an autonomous function. It is a relationship of mutual dependency, rather than the imperial role that, ironically, young Caius Martius helped eliminate when he fought against the tyrant Tarquin (2.2.85–93), thus establishing the republic that now repels him.

When the citizens describe their role in the making of Coriolanus as consul, it becomes clear (largely through a swarm of alliterative m-words: 'multitude' and 'monster' thrice each, 'many' and

'members' twice each) why that political role threatens his bodily integrity:

THIRD CITIZEN. . . . We are to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them. So, if he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them. 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.

FIRST CITIZEN. And to make us no better thought of, a little help will serve; for once we stood up about the corn, he himself stuck not to call us the many-headed multitude.

THIRD CITIZEN. We have been called so of many . . .
(2.3.6–17)

Later in the scene, Coriolanus hurries to change back into more dignified clothes and, 'knowing myself again, / Repair to th' Senate-house' (2.3.145–6) – the discriminating locale that cures the disease of a marketplace where exchange erases transcendent values. He is practically a hypochondriac in his hyper-vigilance for symptoms of that disease, seemingly anticipating Karl Marx's insight that a wage-labourer 'sells his very self, and that by fractions'.¹⁶ When a citizen argues that no special respect is owed to Caius Martius for his military service to Rome, because 'he pays himself with being proud', that too seems to be an insight about commodification and alienation; what Coriolanus feels are inherent expressions of his noble valour are reconceived as a social economy of payment and exchange, even within his supposedly integral self. His own mother says he fights 'Like to a harvest-man that's tasked to mow / Or all or lose his hire', which might have reminded Shakespeare's original audiences of the role of enclosure in the explosion of wage-labour. Coriolanus is indignant about showing the people his wounds, 'As if I had received them for the hire / Of their breath only', and hates to seem to 'Crave the hire'. He sardonically asks those citizens 'Your price o' the consulship?', only to be reminded that

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital* (New York, 1933), ch. 2, p. 20.

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they do not see this as quite the alienated and quantified transaction he implies: 'The price of it is to ask it kindly.' Later he says he 'would not buy / Their mercy at the price of one fair word' (3.3.89–90). Perhaps the word 'money' shares more than the obvious auditory association with 'many' and 'meinie' (a Volscian soldier says, 'The wars for my money', because men in peacetime 'less need one another' (4.5.233–4)).

As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the boundary of the human individual and the boundary of the human species collapse simultaneously. Coriolanus asks 'the tribunes of the people, / The tongues o' the common mouth',

Are these your herd?

Must these have voices, that can yield them now
And straight disclaim their tongues? What are your
offices?

You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?
(3.1.24, 34–7)

Menenius's belly-fable is clearly lurking in the plebeians' minds when they pursue this metaphor: 'The noble tribunes are the people's mouths / And we their hands' (3.1.273–4). When Sicinius asks a rhetorical question still often audible from the left wings in the twenty-first century – 'What is the city but the people?' – the citizens respond, 'True, / The people are the city' (3.1.199–200). The shifting number of the verb is revealing. Coriolanus complains that the 'meinie' compromise 'the honoured number' (3.1.68–74) – an echo of his complaints about the 'many' who threaten his unique selfhood and Aufidius's complaint that his 'seconds' have 'shamed' him by intervening in his single combat with Coriolanus (1.8.15–16). For Aufidius, as for Coriolanus, the only honourable number (because the loneliest) is one: the Roman 'I'. 'I would I were a Roman; for I cannot, / Being a Volscie, be that I am'.

Coriolanus warns the Senate that these 'minnows' or 'fragments' threaten the distinction of identity, which even his oppositional syntax strives to defend:

If you are learned,

Be not as common fools; if you are not,

Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,
If they be senators, and they are no less
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste
Most palates theirs. (3.1.100–5)

Again the intimacy of a shared mouth disgusts him. In response, the tribune Brutus sees no reason for the plebeians to join mouths with someone who disdains their love: 'Why shall the people give / One that speaks thus their voice?' (3.1.119–20).

Coriolanus's answer, in its evocation of failed birth and feeding, again suggests anxiety about the core of shared life: 'Even when the navel of the state was touched, / They would not thread the gates. This kind of service / Did not deserve corn gratis'; furthermore, their complaints, 'All cause unborn, could never be native / Of our so frank donation. Well, what then? / How shall this bosom multiplied digest / The Senate's courtesy?' (3.1.124–33). He therefore urges the Senate to

pluck out

The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
The sweet which is their poison. Your dishonour
Mangles true judgment, and bereaves the state
Of that integrity which should become't.

(3.1.156–60)

What defends 'integrity' – wholeness – against the 'multitudinous' alternative is Coriolanus's favourite integer: the single self, standing up like a lone sword against the mindlessly appetitive mass of living flesh. But playing 'a part which never / I shall discharge to the life' has shattered even Coriolanus's body into discordant parts (3.2.106–24); his attack on the unifying belly-fable dismembers him when it reverts to microcosm. The tribunes, speaking 'Upon the part o'th' people' (3.1.211), condemn him to death.

Ignoring Cominius's advice that he either 'make strong party or defend yourself / By calmness' (3.2.95–6). Coriolanus provokes the exile that suits his deeper purpose. His fare-ill speech renews his complaints about the stinking mob of decaying animals (disguised as Romans) trying to corrupt his unity and uniqueness: 'You common cry of curs whose breath I hate / As reek o'th'rotten fens' whose 'carcasses . . . do corrupt my air' (3.3.119–22). Thus

begins a flurry of alliteration in Coriolanus's speech that continues through his arrival in Antium, and could signal subliminally, at the micro-level, an insistent sameness always threatening to collapse into otherness, always on the brink between doubleness and difference. He tells his mother that 'the beast / With many heads butts me away', and while 'common chances common men could bear', he must 'go alone, / Like to a lonely dragon' (4.1.1–2, 5, 29–30); the way 'calm' echoes the doubled 'common' in the preceding line may reinforce Coriolanus's determination to be furious instead, and no other Shakespeare play has more uses of 'calm-', or of 'many'.

Coriolanus's earlier compulsion to flee the shared domestic space of Rome manifested itself in his nostalgia for confrontations with Tullus Aufidius, mirror of his martial self—confrontations that establish his identity by offering to liberate him from it: 'were I anything but what I am, I would wish me only he' (1.1.226–7). The subjunctive hides what is, for Coriolanus, an inconvenient truth: we are each (as microbiology, racial genetics, depth psychology, sociology and many other disciplines have shown) many things other than what we are. Having strenuously separated from the body politic of Rome, Coriolanus arrives in Antium—another name that hints at an apt prefix—weirdly eager to enter another co-mingling: comparing his former identity with Rome to friends 'whose double bosoms seems to wear one heart . . . who twin, as 'twere, in love / Unseparable', Coriolanus now seeks to join his flesh and blood with the Volscians, like friends who 'interjoin their issues' (4.4.13–22).

The very first mention of Tullus Aufidius makes clear that Coriolanus finds him so alluring because Aufidius allows Coriolanus to inhabit his favoured role of heroic warrior, especially in difficult single combat: 'Were half to half the world by th'ears and he / Upon my party, I'd revolt to make / Only my wars with him' (1.1.228–30). The word 'half' appears more often in *Coriolanus* than in any other Shakespeare play, including four more instances seemingly imposed in this first Act for no particular reason: 'half an hour' (twice, about two different

events), 'half a hundred years', and 'Within this mile and half'. As the story progresses, however, instead of making Coriolanus whole, Aufidius intensifies the divisions between the halves already constituting Coriolanus's identity in order to destroy him.

Aufidius knows how to flatter his guest, calling him 'all-noble Martius' and 'thou Mars', and seeming to accept that he could never penetrate his foe's body, only encircle it: 'Let me twine / Mine arms about that body, where against / My grained ash an hundred times hath broke / And scarred the moon with splinters' (4.5.108–11). But Aufidius's homoerotic rhapsody culminates ominously with these two mirrored men waking 'half dead with nothing' (4.5.127); it may actually impose a divided self, again signalled by the word 'half'. Within a dozen lines, that poison pill in the humbly offered feast resurfaces: 'Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have / The leading of thine own revenges, take / Th'one half of my commission' (4.5.138–40).

So much for 'absolute' ('Free from dependency, autonomous; not relative' (*OED* A1)); to halve is to have not. The tension between the implications of the 'com-' root and the 'sol[e]' root are probably not accidental, since the same pairing (with the addendum of 'part-') recurs two scenes later when Aufidius's lieutenant wishes 'for your **particular**, – you had not / Join'd in **commission** with him; but either / Had borne the action of yourself, or else / To him had left it **solely**'. In uniting with the enemy that he assumes verifies his martial self, Coriolanus immediately joins the kind of commensal event by which human otherness had always threatened to get inside the gates of the self. He repeatedly accepts food, drink and popularity with the multitude. Departing Rome, he had vowed to 'exceed the common or be caught / With cautelous baits and practice' (4.1.32–3); he is now unwittingly trending toward the latter.

The meal might seem to be Coriolanus feeding at last on his greatest foe: a first servingman recalls that Coriolanus 'was too hard for [Aufidius] directly, to say the truth on't: before Corioles he

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scotched him and notched him like a carbonado', and a second servingman adds, 'An he had been cannibally given, he might have broiled and eaten him too'. This is hardly good news for Aufidius, who has his own bifurcation problems: 'the bottom of the news is, our general is cut i'th' middle and but one half of what he was yesterday; for the other has half, by the entreaty and grant of the whole table' (4.5.188–202).

But Aufidius has already decided to sacrifice his integrity, to avenge his wounded vanity; it is Coriolanus's integrity that is now at risk. However disguised as a martial project, this is still the common experience of feeding that kept threatening to invade Coriolanus's fantasy of the self as sword. His mother (as Janet Adelman has discussed)¹⁷ wanted feeding to be subsumed by battle: 'the breasts of Hecuba / When she did suckle Hector looked not lovelier / Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood / At Grecian sword contemning' (1.3.42–5). Cominius describes Coriolanus's return to battle as a man coming 'to a morsel of this feast / Having fully dined before', which Coriolanus complains makes it seem 'as if I loved my little should be dieted / In praises sauced with lies' (1.9.10–11, 51–2). So, in Antium, he is being served, but ill-served. The supper table is the altar where the soldier is redomesticated, and the god of unity is sacrificed into his mortal parts. The final surrender of his violent mission to tender sentiments of fleshly kinship is actually only the culmination of a process that had been insidiously underway since that first embrace and feast in Antium.

Back in Rome, the tribunes, celebrating a 'more comely time', a time of calm for the commons, recognize that Coriolanus's self-regard depended on self-containment, on the absence of others except as opponents:

BRUTUS. Caius Martius was

A worthy officer i'th' war, but insolent,
O'ercome with pride, ambitious past all thinking,
Self-loving.

SICINIUS. And affecting one sole throne
Without assistance. (4.6.27–33)

That addendum is revealing in its redundancy. At the core of 'insolent' lurks another 'sole'; at the heart of the haughtiness is the isolation. The etymology – from *absolutus*, meaning 'made separate' or 'set free' – may be different from that of 'sole', but both similarly evoke Coriolanus's project. Perhaps the most striking of the play's four versions of 'insolent' is Sicinius wondering how Coriolanus's 'insolence can brook to be commanded / Under Cominius', where the repetition of the 'com-' prefix emphasizes the tension between working alone and working with others, and aurally links Cominius to the latter. Nor can Coriolanus's old supporters imagine this solitary figure at one with another: 'He and Aufidius can no more atone / Than violent'st contrariety' (4.6.73–4). But, in Antium, *contra-* has become an alternative *com-*: Cominius confirms that Coriolanus has 'join'd wi'th' Volscians', and the many evolve toward an army of one, at some level superior to the massed 'clusters' of ordinary Roman life (4.6.90, 125, 131). Coriolanus's Volscian followers may resemble that 'multiplying spawn', but they are generated by martial charisma rather than biological functions.

The great son of Rome brings a high fever to cleanse the body politic of all life forms that do not epitomize this supposed Roman self, and the umbilical cord of his Roman origins will be not only cut but cauterized. Cominius reports that Coriolanus now acknowledges neither shared blood, even with a noble Roman warrior, nor the title Rome gave him for his noblest battle:

I urged our old acquaintance and the drops
That we have bled together. 'Coriolanus'
He would not answer to, forbade all names.
He was a kind of nothing, titleless,
Till he had forged himself a name o'th' fire
Of burning Rome. (5.1.10–15)

¹⁷ Janet Adelman, "'Anger's my meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*", in *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. David Bevington and Jay Halio (Newark, NJ, 1978), pp. 108–24.

Might this name (in parallel with ‘Coriolanus’) be Romulus, and this his chance to give new birth to his decadent imperial city, as well as to his compromised martial identity? Menenius had earlier analogized Coriolanus to a creature loved to death by a wolf (2.1.8–10), and certainly being a suckled canine would hardly suit Coriolanus’s determination to transcend nursing on milk amid ‘the common cry of curs’. But as he returns in vengeance, the Romans are the wolf he is hunting (4.6.112). Sloughing off human father figures such as the anonymous old Volscian and Menenius, Coriolanus will allow his identity to be permeated or penetrated only by the god Mars (lurking in his *nomen* and linked to him by multiple attributes of Mars, including fatherlessness, in classical texts and Renaissance mythographies)¹⁸ and the demi-god Hercules (twice explicitly associated with him, and twice more via a fiery battle against a many-headed Hydra). These were the two warriors most often proposed as Romulus’s father; and a servingman reports that Coriolanus was welcomed in Antium ‘as if he were son and heir to Mars’ (4.5.194–5).

Menenius is reluctant to make a claim on Coriolanus’s filial loyalty, given the rebuff of similar claims by Cominius, who ‘was sometime his general, who loved him / In a most dear particular. He called me father – / But what o’ that?’ (5.1.2–4). Yet the seeds of Coriolanus’s destruction are already showing some shoots. His own diction inadvertently evokes the breast and the family:

my remission lies
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,
Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison rather
Than pity note how much. Therefore, be gone.
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than
Your gates against my force. (5.2.83–8)

His determination to make his body a fortress of isolation – and his inability to see that subservient communing with the Volsces defeats that project – could hardly be clearer.

Even his exalted title of ‘general’ implies the compromises of shared humanity. The word ‘general’ appears more often than in any other Shakespeare play, including ones such as *Othello*

and *Troilus and Cressida* where the term for the top military commander is similarly relevant. Although it is mostly used in that sense here, Menenius speaks of ‘the general food’ in the opening belly-fable, Coriolanus complains about the plebeians’ ‘general ignorance’, and his mother condemns them as ‘general louts’. Political exaltation again carries a thinly veiled threat to render the transcendent person merely a generic one.

The Volscian soldiers do not yet recognize that paradox: ‘The worthy fellow is our general: he’s the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken’ (5.2.107–8). Menenius’s claim to have been ‘on the party of your general’ proved, not surprisingly, unavailing (5.2.30–1). Then, however, the rhetorical winds, and with them the emotional temperature, start to rise. The next scene begins with Aufidius endorsing Coriolanus’s self-praise for having ‘stopped your ears against / The general suit of Rome’, in obedience to the Volsces (5.3.5–6). But only fourteen lines later, the ‘general’ Coriolanus finds that stopping his ears may not stop his eyes, widely supposed in Shakespeare’s culture to be the main channel to the heart. The fabric of his proudly asserted self-containment begins to fray at the fringes: ‘Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow / In the same time ’tis made? I will not’ (5.3.20–1). ‘Shall I be tempted’ is a question that answers itself, and does so by reminding us that the psychological self is always divided, despite the disciplinary functions of the will.

If Caius Martius’s symbolic death and rebirth at the gates of Corioles lifted him free from his hereditary identity by granting a new name reflecting his martial deeds, then the confrontation at the gates of Rome calls him back to his first birth, his dependencies and dependants, and the meaning of common blood:

My wife comes foremost, then the honoured mould
Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
The grandchild to her blood. But out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature break!

¹⁸ Peggy Muñoz Simonds, ‘Coriolanus and the Myth of Juno and Mars’, *Mosaic*, 18.2 (1985), 33–50.

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Within three lines, what dissolves instead is his metallic, stauary self: 'I melt, and am not / Of stronger earth than others'. His son 'Hath an aspect of intercession which / Great Nature cries "Deny not"' (5.3.22–33).

For a moment he rallies, determined to let Rome be the penetrable field, while himself remaining uncreaturely and purely autonomous:

Let the Volsces
Plough Rome and harrow Italy, I'll never
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,
As if a man were author of himself
And knew no other kin. (5.3.33–7)

But this resolution, too, fails within a few lines, rendering Coriolanus again a creature of theatrical and fleshly 'parts':

Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part and I am out,
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny. (5.3.40–3)

This resembles the Mad Hatter defending to Alice his decision to butter his watch on the grounds that it was 'the very best butter', and Coriolanus continues to try to frame his concessions to his biological identity with superlatives:

You gods, I prate
And the most noble mother of the world
Leave unsaluted. Sink, my knee, i'th' earth;
Of thy deep duty more impression show
Than that of common sons. (5.3.48–52)

That adjective again: in trying to remain more than common flesh, he yields to common flesh. As he sinks back into the earth, and back into the allure and mutual obligation of family life, the whole project of radical autonomy is systematically retracted. Nor is identity unique or even possessory: in a line that richly anticipates *The Winter's Tale*, Volumnia presents Coriolanus's son as 'a poor epitome of yours, / Which by th'interpretation of full time / May show like all yourself'. Time makes the self (back) into the all – a fact at once tragic and comic – and his Senecan determination to be 'like himself' (2.2.46) and 'like me formerly' (4.1.53) must be deferred hopefully into a next generation.

When Coriolanus returns to the enclosure of Rome, his mother stands blocking the gates – gates which partly represent the passageway through which he first emerged into the world as a separate being.¹⁹ If he thinks he is a self-made man, and thinks being a wholly self-contained being is the ideal, she will remind him that she surrendered her own bodily integrity to bring him into being, when she could instead have prevented his birth. Pushing through those gates to erase his compromising Roman identity will in fact only confirm disgracefully the messy truth of his biological derivation.

Wavering, he begs not to be told to 'capitulate / Again with Rome's mechanics. Tell me not / Wherein I seem unnatural' (5.3.82–4). But, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, what those mechanics or mechanicals largely represent is the natural aspect – the functional body, as opposed to abstract ideal – of the human animal. Even the term 'capitulate', although familiar enough as a term for negotiating terms under headings, suggests that both Coriolanus and the Roman state will be obliged to mingle their higher faculties – the *caput* and the Capitol – with the mere vessel (yet mostly master) of human life that Hamlet (2.2.124) calls 'this machine'.

Volumnia warns him against 'Making the mother, wife and child to see / The son, the husband and the father tearing / His country's bowels out' (5.3.101–3). His identity is multiple because it is relative and derivative, made of 'parts' that will only become more deeply engaged as he tries to free himself:

If I cannot persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts
Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread –
Trust to't, thou shalt not – on thy mother's womb
That brought thee to this world. (5.3.120–5)

'Tread' persists as Coriolanus's mode of domination (even over himself, at 1.1.254–6), set against

¹⁹ Watson, *Hazards of Ambition*, pp. 174–5.

'trade', which derives from it and links the class disdain of both the protagonist and his mother to a disdain for exchange (an emergent meaning of 'trade') as a means of survival. The bawdy sense of 'tread' proposes an oedipal crisis, but one centred (like most post-Freudian views of early childhood psychology) less on sexuality than on differentiation. His mother's intervention is 'most mortal to him' – mortal, as in fatal, but also fatal because mortal, because his claim to self-authorship and transcendence has been exposed as unsustainably 'unnatural'. Asking Coriolanus to 'reconcile' the warring sides is demanding a surrender of the anti-'con-' project that matters more deeply to him than any battle between city-states; it would be a compromise, but – as events prove – a compromise is, for him, an ultimate defeat.

Uneasily awaiting the outcome of this final plea for mercy, the people's politician Sicinius (as he does so often) raises the relevant question about Coriolanus's apparent escape from the con- condition of a fellow Roman: 'Is't possible that so short a time can alter the condition of a man?' Menenius answers in terms that seem to endorse Coriolanus's transcendence, but keep remanding him to the zoo and its feeding troughs:

MENENIUS. There is differency between a grub and a butterfly; yet your butterfly was a grub. This Martius is grown from man to dragon. He has wings; he's more than a creeping thing.

SINCINIUS. He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS. So did he me and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes . . . there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger. (5.4.11–28)

These admirations of Coriolanus's transcendence (including his disdain for feeding) contain within them subversions of it: he has no stable self, and no immunity to the identification with non-human creatures that was his primary rhetorical weapon against his domestic enemies.

Coriolanus thus implicitly becomes the butterfly his son and his metaphoric sons in the Volscian army will dismember²⁰ – the disastrous end of his

effort to rise above his vermicular condition – and Eric Brown argues that Aristotle's definition of insects as creatures that are simultaneously whole beings and separable parts guides many of the play's key insect references.²¹ Furthermore, the son's 'confirmed countenance' in chasing the butterfly is a double-barrel shot of the 'con-' prefix, with the latter word derived from the idea of containment: a holding together that, in this case, leads to a tearing apart.

George Bernard Shaw called *Coriolanus* 'the greatest of Shakespeare's comedies'. Shaw enjoyed turning conventional views upside-down, not least regarding Shakespeare, but one can easily imagine a comedy celebrating the survival of ordinary Romans achieved by eliminating a fanatically militarist and disciplinarian leader. *Coriolanus* is not, however, that play. Caius Martius is not just the 'puritan' Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*, 2.3.135) on steroids, although he does seem at moments to represent a revision of monasticism and martyrdom, redirected from Christian to classical aims of glory with some of the old emphasis on works and purification intact.

Still, from one exalted perspective, this is a comedy after all: 'The gods look down and this unnatural scene / They laugh at' (5.3.184–5). Like the performers of the Twelve Worthies in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.579), Coriolanus feels 'o'erparted': ridiculed out of his role as an immortal Roman hero. Not only is the battle against the complexity of a human self (including its Roman macrocosm) difficult; victory would be Pyrrhic. Explicitly and subliminally, Shakespeare calls his audience's attention to the way human beings are, from a tragic perspective, unitary, and from a comic view, parts shared in common.

Aufidius understands that Coriolanus's failure to complete his cleansing of Rome constitutes the triumph of his mortal aspect. An 'empoisoned'

²⁰ Watson, *Hazards of Ambition*, pp. 215–16.

²¹ Eric C. Brown, 'Performing Insects in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*', in *Insect Poetics*, ed. Eric C. Brown (Minneapolis, 2006), pp. 29–30, 48.

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Coriolanus cannot 'purge himself with words', despite claiming to be 'returned your soldier, / No more infected with my country's love / Than when I parted hence' (5.6.8, 71–3). But parted he has been; made back into a part of the human and Roman collectives that seek survival above all, because parts of himself turned him against the parts of himself that cast him into a more heroic role. He could defeat a whole city of Volscians alone, but he cannot overcome his own disabling multiplicity. He had vowed to 'fight against my cankered country' (4.5.92–3), but the *contra-* root of 'country' – a word that, in its various forms, occurs forty times in *Coriolanus*: twice as many as in any other Shakespeare play – has become an insurmountable paradox.

Aufidius refuses to use 'thy stolen name, / "Coriolanus", in Corioles' (5.6.91–2). A few scenes earlier, one Volscian watchmen taunted the retreating Menenius by asking, 'Now, sir, is your name Menenius?' and the other added, "'Tis a spell, you see, of much power. You know the way home again' (5.2.94–6) – a devastatingly apt anticipation of the taunt that is about to send the 'boy' Coriolanus back home to his mother earth without the name he had achieved. Aufidius twice calls Coriolanus 'traitor', echoing not only the charge of the tribunes but also – aurally, via the Latin *trāditor* – the project of treading on the trades (as Aufidius and perhaps his confederates apparently 'Tread' on Coriolanus's corpse at 5.6.130–5). Coriolanus responds with predictable boasts, but his integrity is forfeit. Rather than admit to the unmanly leaking of tears, he claims to 'sweat compassion' (5.3.196), but the *cum-* prefix word undermines the already shaky claim. Now he is the one seeking 'conditions' (5.3.205) – the *cum-* prefix word that humiliated Aufidius earlier (1.10.3–7).²² His foes are now the sword, and he merely the stain: 'Cut me to pieces, Volscies men and lads; / Stain all your edges on me' (5.6.112–13). In his final line he reprises his favourite boast – 'Alone' – but the mob will then 'Tear him to

pieces' to avenge their relatives he killed, including a 'Marcus' who recalls Coriolanus's own patronymic (5.6.117–23). I think Shakespeare may have recognized, in the classical tradition of the *sparagmos*, in which the protagonist is literally torn to pieces, something toward which he could build the story of a man torn apart by the very nature of community. Thus concludes the tragedy of the uncommon, the tragedy of the insular man. Kinship – the life of us all – is inevitably the death of him.

A stage direction specifies that '*Two conspirators*' kill Coriolanus: a violation of singularity tied to another con- word, framed by five consecutive cries of 'kill' and four of 'hold'. Then a penitent Aufidius surrenders himself to the 'censure' of his community and says, 'Take him up. / Help three o'th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one . . . Though in this city he / Hath widowed and unchilded many a one' (5.6.143, 149–53). Why, in just the last twenty-five lines of the play, does Shakespeare impose a two, a three, a four, and a five, along with 'many a one', if not to remind us again of the singularity that has been destroyed?

A Volscian lord offers a command that momentarily grants Coriolanus, posthumously, an honourable identity separate from the body that has taken him the way of all flesh, but that separation promptly collapses in the second sentence:

Bear from hence his body
And mourn you for him. Let him be regarded
As the most noble corpse that ever herald
Did follow to his urn. (5.6.143–6)

Another of the lords then absolves Aufidius of 'a great part of blame'. The very last word is 'Assist': Caius Martius Coriolanus disappears in the midst of a collective exit.

²² McDonald, *Late Style*, p. 55 notes that 'condition' is '*con* and *dicere*, or "speaking with"'.