

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

CORIOLANUS

EDITED BY PETER HOLLAND

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CORIOLANUS

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The earliest volume in the first Arden series, Edward Dowden's *Hamlet*, was published in 1899. Since then the Arden Shakespeare has been widely acknowledged as the pre-eminent Shakespeare edition, valued by scholars, students, actors and 'the great variety of readers' alike for its clearly presented and reliable texts, its full annotation and its richly informative introductions.

In the third Arden series we seek to maintain these well-established qualities and general characteristics, preserving our predecessors' commitment to presenting the play as it has been shaped in history. Each volume necessarily has its own particular emphasis which reflects the unique possibilities and problems posed by the work in question, and the series as a whole seeks to maintain the highest standards of scholarship, combined with attractive and accessible presentation.

Newly edited from the original documents, texts are presented in fully modernized form, with a textual apparatus that records all substantial divergences from those early printings. The notes and introductions focus on the conditions and possibilities of meaning that editors, critics and performers (on stage and screen) have discovered in the play. While building upon the rich history of scholarly activity that has long shaped our understanding of Shakespeare's works, this third series of the Arden Shakespeare is enlivened by a new generation's encounter with Shakespeare.

THE TEXT

On each page of the play itself, readers will find a passage of text supported by commentary and textual notes. Act and scene

divisions (seldom present in the early editions and often the product of eighteenth-century or later scholarship) have been retained for ease of reference, but have been given less prominence than in previous series. Editorial indications of location of the action have been removed to the textual notes or commentary.

In the text itself, elided forms in the early texts are spelt out in full in verse lines wherever they indicate a usual late twentieth-century pronunciation that requires no special indication and wherever they occur in prose (except where they indicate non-standard pronunciation). In verse speeches, marks of elision are retained where they are necessary guides to the scansion and pronunciation of the line. Final -ed in past tense and participial forms of verbs is always printed as -ed, without accent, never as -'d, but wherever the required pronunciation diverges from modern usage a note in the commentary draws attention to the fact. Where the final -ed should be given syllabic value contrary to modern usage, e.g.

Doth Silvia know that I am banished?
(*TGV* 3.1.214)

the note will take the form

214 **banished** banishèd

Conventional lineation of divided verse lines shared by two or more speakers has been reconsidered and sometimes rearranged. Except for the familiar *Exit* and *Exeunt*, Latin forms in stage directions and speech prefixes have been translated into English and the original Latin forms recorded in the textual notes.

COMMENTARY AND TEXTUAL NOTES

Notes in the commentary, for which a major source will be the *Oxford English Dictionary*, offer glossarial and other explication of verbal difficulties; they may also include discussion of points

of interpretation and, in relevant cases, substantial extracts from Shakespeare's source material. Editors will not usually offer glossarial notes for words adequately defined in the latest edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, but in cases of doubt they will include notes. Attention, however, will be drawn to places where more than one likely interpretation can be proposed and to significant verbal and syntactic complexity. Notes preceded by * discuss editorial emendations or variant readings.

Headnotes to acts or scenes discuss, where appropriate, questions of scene location, the play's treatment of source materials, and major difficulties of staging. The list of roles (so headed to emphasize the play's status as a text for performance) is also considered in the commentary notes. These may include comment on plausible patterns of casting with the resources of an Elizabethan or Jacobean acting company and also on any variation in the description of roles in their speech prefixes in the early editions.

The textual notes are designed to let readers know when the edited text diverges from the early edition(s) or manuscript sources on which it is based. Wherever this happens the note will record the rejected reading of the early edition(s) or manuscript, in original spelling, and the source of the reading adopted in this edition. Other forms from the early edition(s) or manuscript recorded in these notes will include some spellings of particular interest or significance and original forms of translated stage directions. Where two or more early editions are involved, for instance with *Othello*, the notes also record all important differences between them. The textual notes take a form that has been in use since the nineteenth century. This comprises, first: line reference, reading adopted in the text and closing square bracket; then: abbreviated reference, in italic, to the earliest edition to adopt the accepted reading, italic semicolon and noteworthy alternative reading(s), each with abbreviated italic reference to its source.

Conventions used in these textual notes include the following. The solidus / is used, in notes quoting verse or discussing verse lining, to indicate line endings. Distinctive spellings of the base text follow the square bracket without indication of source and are enclosed in italic brackets. Names enclosed in italic brackets indicate originators of conjectural emendations when these did not originate in an edition of the text, or when the named edition records a conjecture not accepted into its text. Stage directions (SDs) are referred to by the number of the line within or immediately after which they are placed. Line numbers with a decimal point relate to centred entry SDs not falling within a verse line and to SDs more than one line long, with the number after the point indicating the line within the SD: e.g. 78.4 refers to the fourth line of the SD following line 78. Lines of SDs at the start of a scene are numbered 0.1, 0.2, etc. Where only a line number precedes a square bracket, e.g. 128], the note relates to the whole line; where SD is added to the number, it relates to the whole of a SD within or immediately following the line. Speech prefixes (SPs) follow similar conventions, 203 SP] referring to the speaker's name for line 203. Where a SP reference takes the form e.g. 38+ SP, it relates to all subsequent speeches assigned to that speaker in the scene in question.

Where, as with *King Henry V*, one of the early editions is a so-called 'bad quarto' (that is, a text either heavily adapted, or reconstructed from memory, or both), the divergences from the present edition are too great to be recorded in full in the notes. In these cases, with the exception of *Hamlet*, which prints an edited text of the quarto of 1603, the editions will include a reduced photographic facsimile of the 'bad quarto' in an appendix.

INTRODUCTION

Both the introduction and the commentary are designed to present the plays as texts for performance, and make appropriate reference

to stage, film and television versions, as well as introducing the reader to the range of critical approaches to the plays. They discuss the history of the reception of the texts within the theatre and scholarship and beyond, investigating the interdependency of the literary text and the surrounding 'cultural text' both at the time of the original production of Shakespeare's works and during their long and rich afterlife.

PREFACE

I am fairly sure that, like Philip Davis (Davis, 201–2), the first time I saw *Coriolanus* was on television in 1963, cut into three fifty-minute episodes as the first three parts of an epic (in many senses) presentation of the play together with *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, over nine weeks under the title *The Spread of the Eagle*, directed by Peter Dews. It starred Robert Hardy and, though Davis remembers it well, I don't remember it at all. Watching the opening episode (named 'The Hero') a few years ago on video, kindly leaked to me from the BBC Archive by a former student, Alan Griffiths, then working at the Corporation, brought back no memories of an early response to the play. I have not seen the other two episodes (called 'The Voices' and 'The Oucast') since and I don't think my parents and I stuck with all nine episodes of the series.

I am sure, however, that I first read the play in the summer of 1970, as a first-year undergraduate at Cambridge, spending the entire term lying on the backs at Clare (as it seems now), reading Shakespeare and discovering plays I knew nothing about. *Coriolanus* was one of four set plays for the Shakespeare paper and I listened to Anne Barton's lectures on them with the same excitement that I always felt listening to her. All those brilliant qualities of her criticism evident, a year or so later, in her introductions to Shakespeare's comedies for the *Riverside Shakespeare* were just as plain in those lectures and I knew then that *Coriolanus* was a play I was always going to care deeply about. For those lectures, as for so much else over all the many years since, I owe Anne more than I can ever repay.

I still hadn't seen it on stage when, the following autumn, I saw the RSC's thrilling production of Günter Grass's *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, his study of Brecht's response to an uprising in East Germany through an overlaying of the rehearsal room where the Boss, as the character representing Brecht was called, was rehearsing *Coriolanus* when a bunch of workers burst in, demanding that the Boss join their 'revolution'. At the centre of the stage was Coriolanus' Roman uniform, gleaming in the stage-lighting. Grass's complex, subtle play has made me ever since much more willing to think of the play as fiercely political than as family drama, a narrowing of perspective that may make some complain about the dominant concerns in the many pages that follow. As my son Adam said when he first saw the play in 2002, 'I had no idea Shakespeare could be so political.'

When Richard Proudfoot asked me what play I might like to take on for the Arden third series – and I would be ashamed to admit how many years ago that conversation took place – *Coriolanus* was high on my list and I have never regretted for a moment that choice, even if Richard and his co-General Editors may often have regretted asking me, given how long this edition has taken to appear. I knew, of course, that Philip Brockbank's edition of the play for the Arden second series was one of the greatest achievements of that series. I did not know – or I would never have committed to the work – that in the years that followed Brian Parker's edition for the Oxford Shakespeare (1994) and Lee Bliss's for the New Cambridge Shakespeare (2000) would be equally superb. There is no Shakespeare play that was edited so outstandingly in each of the three major series of the late twentieth century. It is, of course, something of a cliché for an editor to praise her/his predecessors but I am painfully aware of how much I have relied on their insights, their scholarship and their labours. As often as I have coded what I have taken directly from them in my commentary, there must, I am sure, be moments when I have not acknowledged the profound debt I owe them *ad loc*. May they forgive me.

My copy of John Ripley's richly researched and judicious stage history of *Coriolanus* in England and America to 1994 has almost fallen apart through over-use and Sandy Leggatt and Lois Norem's *Coriolanus: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1995) has been a constant companion, directing me to much work I might not otherwise have found.

I owe much too to innumerable friends and colleagues (and friends who are colleagues) for help and advice, both material and in support and encouragement. I cannot name all and I apologize to any miffed to be missing. But I must name Anne Barton, Jean Chothia, Michael Cordner, Alex Huang, Barbara Hodgdon, Russell Jackson, John Jowett, Hyon-U Lee, Ruru Li, Peter Lichtenfels, Stephen Orgel, Adrian Poole, Claire Preston, the late Wilbur Sanders, Brian Vickers, Martin Wiggins. Special thanks to Stanley Wells for his characteristic generosity in giving a beautiful watercolour of *Coriolanus* at Aufidius' house by John Massey Wright to Romana and me as a wedding present! And to Bill Sherman for sharing with me the wonderful marginal sketches of *Coriolanus* and others in a 1549 Livy. Thanks too to students in Cambridge, Stratford-upon-Avon and Notre Dame who were thankfully not so bored listening to me droning on about the play that they couldn't come up with many sharp thoughts and comments. I particularly thank Ethan Guagliardo at Notre Dame for help with some research tasks.

Thanks too to librarians in many cities. I have been fortunate to have been able to spend periods working on this project in five of the world's greatest libraries for Shakespeare studies. The Cambridge University Library has riches that no-one could ever exhaust and it always feels like home as I walk into that forbidding building. The Shakespeare Institute Library is a remarkable resource and the friendliest of places and its succession of librarians, especially, for this project, Susan Brock and Jim Shaw, are always both resourceful and friendly. The Shakespeare Centre Library contributed much when it came to my working on the play's stagings in Stratford; thanks, as always, to Helen Hargest

(not least with photo research for illustrations), Sylvia Morris and the much-missed Marian Pringle. In the US I had the privilege of working for a semester at the Folger Shakespeare Library where the book-fetchers are wont to drop by one's desk with a book you haven't ordered and have never heard of, with the passing comment 'I thought you might like to see this'; thanks especially to Betsy Walsh and Georgianna Ziegler. And the Huntington Library is a special place where the lunchtime walk in the gardens with friends is an endless source of advice and information; thanks to Roy Ritchie for his many kindnesses there. The Hesburgh Library of the University of Notre Dame has made my research life very much easier through its wonderful provision of databases and other such materials. Indeed, I count myself very fortunate to be working at Notre Dame, an institution deeply committed to the support of humanities research.

Parts of the introduction were first given at conferences, including the Blackfriars Conference in Virginia (thank you, Ralph Alan Cohen), in Amiens (thank you, Dominique Goy-Blanquet) and at the Société Française Shakespeare in Paris (thank you again, Dominique). Early versions were first published in the proceedings of both French events: *Le Poète dans la Cité*, edited by Dominique Goy-Blanquet (Amiens, 2003) and *Shakespeare et l'excès*, edited by Pierre Kapitaniak (online, 2008). And other versions in the *festschrift* for Stephen Orgel: *The Forms of Renaissance Thought*, edited by Leonard Barkan, Bradin Cormack and Sean Keilen (Basingstoke, 2008); and the one for Jill Levenson, *Shakespeare/Adaptation/Modern Drama*, edited by Randall Martin and Katherine Scheil (Toronto, 2011). Ralph Fiennes kindly enabled me to see his film of *Coriolanus* at the Chicago Film Festival, as my writing of the Introduction was nearing completion.

Thanks to Emily Hockley at Arden, for picture research and much else, and to Kate Reeves, an eagle-eyed copy-editor. Two people had particular hands to play in seeing this edition through to completion. Margaret Bartley knows well when to dangle the

carrot and when to wield the stick. Long-suffering as I delayed the final throes of completion, always helpful, never unfairly annoyed but willing to be very annoyed when necessary, Margaret did far more than she might have done to ensure that this editor's unwillingness to let go could be overcome. As she knows, perhaps my favourite line in the whole play is Coriolanus' comment 'I have sat too long' (5.3.131) – I have certainly sat too long over this edition but I naively think it may be the better for it (or at least none the worse).

And what shall I say of you, Richard Proudfoot? I remember the terror of sending you a sample text of one act and getting it back, accompanied by warm praise for how good it was and only ten pages of single-spaced suggestions. And those suggestions, gently correcting stupidities and mildly reproaching errors, included some of the most brilliant thinking about Shakespeare's text, especially his metrics, about the work of other editors and about the possibilities of emendation that I have ever encountered. If your work on the text was unremittingly superb, your comments on my commentary were even better. I have kept and cherished all those pages (and pages and pages) of advice, for they are a model of scholarly generosity and modesty. I recall, too, those notes you sent later, when I would leave in a suggestion for relineating without adopting it with a textual note ascribing it to '(RP)', and you would suggest that perhaps I could delete it. I took out some but left in others so that readers can see a great textual scholar at work, sensitive to the evidence and freshly finding new ways to address cruces large and small in the Folio's presentation of Shakespeare's language. To say that this edition is the better for your guidance, learning and friendship would be the most ridiculous of understatements.

And what finally could I possibly say to Romana, to whom I owe most of all? Your labours have been toughest, not least in the sheer hard work of packing all those boxes of books and papers as we both sent our research materials to and fro between South Bend, Indiana, and Cambridge, UK, over ten years of summers

and some Christmas holidays too. But it is the intangible that matters far more, the love and support, putting up with bad days when nothing got written, as well as the good when a few pages were drafted. We both remember that glorious summer in Montmartre, in a sixth-floor apartment with no lift or air-conditioning, in the hottest summer Paris ever endured, as you wrote at furious speed about Stevie Smith's poems and I constructed the first draft of much of the commentary to *Coriolanus*, working side-by-side at tiny desks, looking out across the roof-tops at the Eiffel Tower, listening to the flat's owners' wonderful collection of jazz CDs. If only all scholarly work were always so idyllic and loving and joyous – but with you it always is, even in the cold of a South Bend winter or the greyness of a Cambridge summer.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Coriolanus was not printed until its inclusion in the Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623. The Textual Analysis describes the transmission of copy and the difficulties caused by Shakespeare's handwriting and lineation practices, by the theatre's annotator in preparing the play for performance, by a scribe who transcribed the authorial manuscript and by the practices in the printing-house, especially those of the two compositors who set the entire play in type for the first time.

This edition modernizes the text in accordance with the guidelines for the *Arden Shakespeare Third Series* and with the proposals set out by Stanley Wells in 'Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling' in Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling, with Three Studies in the Text of 'Henry V'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Modernizing is a difficult process and a complex art. Its parameters can often seem a little unclear. But there is a significant and clear distinction for an editor between, say, altering F's spelling of 'heare me speake' (1.1.1) to 'hear me speak' and altering F's phrase spoken by Menenius 'scale't' to 'stale't' (1.1.87). In the first case removing the terminal *-e* on both words brings the spellings in line with modern forms; in the latter the verb is changed from one word to another for reasons that have to do, here, with possible misreading of handwriting somewhere in the process of moving from Shakespeare's act of writing to the printing of F.

Most straightforward alterations of a word to modernize it are made silently in this edition. At 1.1.5 'Resolu'd' becomes 'Resolved'. If 'Resolved' were to have a final syllable that would be sounded, then a commentary note would make that clear: at

1.1.110, F reads ‘crown’d’ but, since Alexander Pope’s edition in 1723, editors have usually changed F’s monosyllable into a disyllable for metrical reasons; the text is spelled ‘crowned’ in this edition but the commentary note explains the pronunciation:

crowned crownèd

The source of this change, the first editor to make it, is identified in the textual note:

110 crowned] *Pope*; crown’d F

Other simple modernizing changes are also made without comment. At 1.1.74 F’s ‘nere’ becomes the modern ‘ne’er’ and there are numerous comparable cases, for example, at 122, ‘Y’are’ becomes ‘You’re’; at 141, ‘too’t’ becomes ‘to’t’. Punctuation, too, is silently modernized where the alteration of the pointing makes no change to meaning. At 1.1.19–20, for instance, F places a comma before ‘our sufferance is a gaine to them’, where modern conventions require a semi-colon or a heavier mark between two independent clauses.

On occasion, where the change needs further explanation, the evidence is in the textual notes and, if necessary, in the commentary. At 1.1.14, for example, F reads ‘surfets one’; ‘surfets’ silently becomes the modern spelling of ‘surfeits’ but ‘one’ becomes ‘on’ and the change, since here it might just be an arguable alteration (if one really wanted to argue that F’s ‘one’ is the modern ‘one’), is noted in the textual note printed at the foot of the page:

14 on] (one)

This means that at line 14 I follow F, modernizing F’s spelling ‘one’, with F’s form given in the parenthesis.

Editors spend many, many hours writing and checking textual notes such as the ones I have just quoted but few readers read them, let alone understand them, for the conventions can produce something that is dauntingly opaque. In the hope that readers of this edition might crack the code, see why the material

is presented and enjoy following the process of creating a modern Shakespeare edition, I shall explain some examples, though the commentary considers each at greater length.

(1) At 1.1.6 my text reads ‘First, you know’. The textual note is:

6 First, you know] *Dyce (Cornwall)*; First you know,
F; First, you know, *F4*

This means that my reading was first printed by Alexander Dyce in 1857 but the change was first proposed or conjectured by Cornwall; his name is placed in brackets to indicate it was a conjecture rather than a reading printed in an edition. The note goes on to give the reading in F and then adds that in the Fourth Folio of 1685, the comma between *First* and *you* was present but that, by adding another comma after *know*, F4 produced a significantly different sense, making *you know* a parenthetical phrase.

(2) For line 26, the textual note reads:

26 SP] 1. *Cit. Hudson¹ (Malone)*; *Third Citizen*
Against . . . first. *Fourth Citizen* He’s . . .
commonalty. *Oxf*

This means that the speech prefix in this edition comes from F (since no reading from F is listed) but that Malone first proposed assigning the speech instead to the First Citizen and Hudson, in the second edition of his text, was the first to follow the suggestion in an edition. In the Oxford edition (1986), the line is split between the Third and Fourth Citizens and, since that change is well worth noting and is also discussed in the commentary note, it is included in the textual note. The textual note does not include Ard¹’s suggestion in a note that ‘It is likely that the first sentence is spoken by all, and the second . . . by one voice only’, even though the commentary note mentions this suggestion, since it is not part of the text of that edition.

- (3) For lines 50–1 the textual note explains the lineation adopted in this edition:

50–1 *Theobald; F lines hand? / matter / you. / ;
prose Pope*

This means that the arrangement of the lines is that first used by Theobald. In F the two lines of my text are set as three, the first line ending with *hand?* and so on, while Pope printed it as prose.

- (4) At line 52 the textual note reads:

52+ SP] (*2 Cit.*); *1. Cit. / Capell*

The + sign indicates that what happens at this line happens throughout the rest of the scene. My speech prefix, 2 CITIZEN, is effectively the same as that in F but F's form '2 *Cit.*' is given in the parenthesis to make clear how I have modernized F's attribution. Capell, however, was the first to change the speaker and gave all of these speeches to the First Citizen.

- (5) When Menenius has the belly describe how the other members receive 'the flour of all' (140), the textual note is:

140 flour] (*Flowre*); *Flower Capell*

showing that my *flour* is a modernization of F's *Flowre* but that Capell modernized that to *Flower* instead.

- (6) Some of my textual notes give evidence of emendations made by Nahum Tate in his adaptation of the play, *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (1681), and by John Dennis in his version, *The Invader of his Country* (1720). But in such cases I also give the first edition of Shakespeare's play to incorporate the change, if there has been one. So at 1.6.20 the note is:

21 SD] *after man 27 Dennis (subst.), Dyce*

The stage direction for Martius' entrance appears after line 27 in Dennis's adaptation (with *subst.* indicating that it is not

quite in the same wording as I have used in the text here) and in Dyce's edition.

The textual and commentary notes explain why such decisions have been taken, give some solutions tried by other editors and, in general, set out to clarify how F's text becomes the text of this edition. But there is one kind of editorial intervention that readers all too rarely appreciate. Whenever I have made changes or additions to stage directions, the different text is put in square brackets, as is conventional in editions of Shakespeare. Over the years I have discovered surprisingly often that actors and directors do not appreciate the difference between words that are in square brackets and those that are not, taking both as equally authoritative, as equivalent instructions about what must happen onstage rather than what might happen. Sometimes, of course, the words in square brackets are not really all that likely to be a matter of contention: in 1.5 I have added a direction at 26 to make absolutely clear that Lartius' final lines, beginning 'Go sound thy trumpet', are spoken to the trumpeter who entered with him at 1.5.3.1. But at line 25 I follow Capell in adding a direction for Caius Martius to exit after Lartius' line of praise, 'Thou worthiest Martius'. F does not include an exit for him here and he would seem to leave the stage at the end of the scene, where F marks '*Exeunt*'. The commentary note explains why I favour Capell's addition but the square brackets will, I hope, help to make readers aware that this is an editor's idea, not an action given in F. I have tried to explore staging possibilities in the commentary notes but there are many ideas I have not found described occurring in productions of the play or that I have not had enough imagination to consider. Readers, like those involved in productions, will find their own possible stagings – but only if they are alert to the provisional and non-authoritative nature of the information in those square-bracketed stage directions.

A NOTE ON THE INTRODUCTION

I also offer here, finally, a brief explanation of the nature of my Introduction. Introductions to editions of Shakespeare plays, especially those for the best-known scholarly series (Arden, Oxford, Cambridge), have come to have a format that tends to suggest a required template. My Introduction to *Coriolanus* tries, in small measure, to resist some of those expectations derived from what can often seem a rather formulaic shape. Readers will find here that there is no single substantial section devoted to the play itself and its major concerns, no chronologically ordered narrative of *Coriolanus*' performance history, no extensive surveying of the history and current state of critical analysis, especially through the provision of densely packed footnotes. Indeed, the entire Introduction has deliberately been written without a single footnote. Some readers may miss and regret missing some or all of these features. But I hope readers will find that the Introduction's shape and the materials it considers offer attractive and stimulating perspectives on the play, some familiar (e.g. through considering the play's sources) and some rather less so (e.g. through considering the play's influence on poets and on productions/adaptations at particular moments in time). For the absence of those kinds of introductory commentary that I have excluded, not least because of pressures of space, and which readers would prefer to have found in the pages that follow, I can only apologize.

INTRODUCTION

Intransigent, intractable, often difficult to love, sometimes difficult to like – it is striking how often words and phrases that might aptly describe Coriolanus also fit *Coriolanus*. There are times when the play can feel as contemptuous of its audiences as Caius Martius does of the citizens of Rome. And if he seems so often to hide what emotions, if any, might lie inside, beyond those consequent on a class-based ideology and set of values (in a tragedy in which the central character has remarkably few moments alone and therefore few chances to soliloquize), the play too can seem to hide its mysteries, and then to yield up its subtleties more slowly than Shakespeare's earlier tragedies. With its hero it shares what can in performance be a certain monumental magnificence, as in John Philip Kemble's lofty classical patrician (see Fig. 1). But, unlike



1 *John Philip Kemble as Coriolanus* (1798) by Sir Thomas Lawrence

Coriolanus' almost excessive commitment to a particular partisan position, *Coriolanus* has a subtle and ever-changing balancing of the possibilities of political change and the preferability of particular courses of social action. Like its hero, *Coriolanus* can, by turns or simultaneously, be exhilarating, troubling, noisy, unnerving, bold and astonishing.

It is easy to see how *Coriolanus* resonates with other Shakespeare plays and, in those resonances, I can see what is markedly different, what defines so emphatically its individuality. Like an English history play it shows us three generations of the same family but here in a non-dynastic structure of power. Like *Antony and Cleopatra* it moves with equal intensity from the private and domestic to the politics of nation, but not with *Antony's* charting of the whole known world, only what is at this point in history a provincial power struggle. Like *Timon*, Coriolanus leaves his city to seek a space outside, not the liminal space of the seashore but the home of the balanced other to everything Roman, the Volscian world he had so violently fought against. Like *Timon* too, and unusually for Shakespearean tragedy, only the title-character dies but the ambiguity of *Timon's* death (suicide or not) is here a full knowledge that to abandon the attack on Rome is likely to be 'most mortal to him' (5.3.189). Like *Macbeth* and *Othello* it worries about the place for the soldier in the state no longer at war but the former finds a place in murderous ambition and the latter is denied a private domesticity of love he has finally found; it is not Coriolanus but his mother who nurtures for him vicariously the imaginings of rule and, though we see Coriolanus' family in a domestic space, we do not see him there, except as a refuge from the turbulence that threatens his confirmation as consul in 3.1. Like *Julius Caesar* it is deeply concerned with transitions in the government of Rome and the place of the people in a state that can seem not to know where they fit in its institutions; both plays begin with the people refusing to work, even if there is a vast political gulf between the 'mutinous' citizens of *Coriolanus* and the holidaying ones of

Caesar. Like *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus* is a drama whose location is as much within the family as in the public spaces of the state but its drawing of Caius Martius' family completely suppresses his father and there is nothing in all of Shakespeare quite like this play's exploration of the dynamics between mother and son.

A listing of parallels and differences could go on for pages. But at the core of any such embedding of *Coriolanus* in Shakespeare's development of tragedy always comes an awareness that Shakespeare searches in each play for a something distinctively new, something unprecedented, even in this, his last tragedy. There is nothing before quite like *Coriolanus*' unremitting study of the political landscape of Rome, nothing too that has allowed a Shakespeare tragedy to be appropriated by political right and left with equal success – and with equal refusal to see how deftly Shakespeare keeps the play from ever being fixed in its political preferences. There is perhaps nothing in all drama – not just Shakespeare's – like the fierce power of this mother in her absolute commitment to her ambition for her son. In a play so frequently intrigued by images of humans feeding on each other, of starvation and of the meaning of anger, Volumnia feeds on herself: 'Anger's my meat: I sup upon myself / And so shall starve with feeding' (4.2.50–1) (see Adelman).

While *Coriolanus*' wife and mother are first shown at home, sewing, and while the play's world of war is masculinity at its most homosocial and often markedly homoerotic, the gender boundaries in this play can seem permeable. Caius Martius' wounds have made him read as a feminized male (Marshall, '*Coriolanus*'), while Volumnia can be seen and has been played as both the overpowering mother created by male neurosis and the mother who embraces, even swallows up and becomes the absent father (see Fig. 2). The play leaves gaps in its information that can be filled in performance in very different ways. So, for instance, *Coriolanus*' age is intriguingly unfixed. That he is taunted by Aufidius with 'boy' (5.6.103) does not mean he is one or only just an adult man: it is, after all, the word Volumnia uses



- 2 Coriolanus (Toshiaki Karasawa) kneeling to Volumnia (Kayoko Shiraishi) (5.3.182–3), directed by Yukio Ninagawa, Ninagawa Company, 2007

to describe him, ‘my boy Martius approaches’ (2.1.97–8). But played by Toby Stephens when aged twenty-five (RSC, 1994) or by Olivier when thirty-one (*Old Vic*, 1938), the character is different from when played by an actor significantly older, like Olivier again at fifty-two (*SMT*, 1959). And a younger Coriolanus allows for a younger Volumnia: Edith Evans was over seventy, playing opposite Olivier in 1959, but Toby Stephens’ Coriolanus could have had a mother in her mid-forties, a woman whose own political ambitions were thwarted by the male structures of power in Rome. Such fluidity can open up new ways of considering the meanings of the interaction of the family and the state.

Like assumptions about gender roles, much of what can seem fixed proves reversible: it may seem to be the prerogative of a city-state to expel a troublesome member of its community but

Coriolanus announces instead that 'I banish you'. Shakespeare always plays on our expectations, not least the playgoers' attentive wait for the entry of the title-character, the play's star, but here it is over 600 lines into the play before there is a character named Coriolanus at all, as Caius Martius metamorphoses into him and his speech headings can change: 'from this time, / For what he did before Corioles, call him, / With all th'applause and clamour of the host, / Martius Caius Coriolanus' (1.9.61–4). And what could seem fixed in dramatic form – that tragedy tends to move towards battle, as in *Julius Caesar*, or circles back to it, as in *Macbeth*, or moves away from it to find another kind of drama, as in *Othello* – proves untrue here, for the battle in *Coriolanus* is present at the start but proves to be avoided at the end for reasons that have little to do with the politics of nation. This military man who so loathed the people will enter the stage for the last time surrounded by 'commoners', albeit Volscian rather than Roman, announcing that the war has made a profit of more than a third, a military economy dependent on a peace treaty, unlike those battle spoils that in Act 1 he had disdained (5.6.77–9, 1.9.36–40). Dr Johnson worried that 'There is, perhaps, too much bustle in the first act, and too little in the last' (Johnson, 6.627) but that is precisely Shakespeare's point.

Inevitably, as with any Shakespeare play in all its astonishing richness, what is of interest to a reader or to a critic changes over time and across the world as cultures find different meanings, different emphases that matter. What Johnson found 'amusing' in the play, in the sense that these things engaged his mind and pleased him, constitutes a list that is not in the order we might choose to create it:

The old man's merriment in *Menenius*; the lofty lady's dignity in *Volumnia*; the bridal modesty in *Virgilia*; the patrician and military haughtiness in *Coriolanus*; the plebeian malignity, and tribunitian insolence in *Brutus* and *Sicinius*, make a very pleasing

and interesting variety: and the various revolutions of the hero's fortune fill the mind with anxious curiosity.

(Johnson, 6.627)

Modern playgoers, modern readers and, especially, modern critics do not start with Menenius and move on to analyse Virgilia before turning to Coriolanus – and Johnson does not even mention Aufidius, in so many ways Coriolanus' understudy. But perhaps his comment may stand as a mark of the inevitable provisionality of any comment on or approach to the play, especially my own as that will unfold over the rest of this introduction.

CORIOLANUS IN THE 1930s

Shakespeare's plays have meant very different things to playgoers and readers, creative artists and other playwrights across their histories and across many cultures. Since much of this introduction will be concerned with setting the play into the moments of Shakespeare's writing it and the first audiences' watching it, I want to begin, instead, with a brief look at some of the ways in which the play has generated others' creative thinking later. But where to start?

I could have begun with the contrary views of the play's politics or the ways in which it can be used for a particular party politics, exemplified by its first two adaptations: Nahum Tate's version, written in the midst of a political crisis in the 1680s and renamed *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (1682), and John Dennis's version of 1720, renamed *The Invader of his Country or The Fatal Resentment*. The two titles make clear the adapters' political positions and the political functions of the adaptations, for, as Tate wrote in his dedicatory epistle, 'Upon a close view of this Story, there appear'd in some Passages no small Resemblance with the busie *Faction* of our own time' (Tate, sig. A2^{r-v}). The object of his attack is

those *Troublers* of the *State*, that out of private Interest or Mallice, Seduce the Multitude to *Ingratitude*, against Persons that are not only plac't in Rightful Power above them; but also the Heroes and Defenders of their Country.

(Tate, sig. A2^v)

For Dennis, as he puts it in his prologue, the play summons up awareness of the recent moment when 'Britain's Rebel Sons of late / Combin'd with Foreign Foes t'invade the State' (Dennis, sig. A7^r). Both Tate and Dennis support monarchical government but their views of Coriolanus' actions differ radically.

I could have begun with the profound influence of the play on Henrik Ibsen, the central figure in the transformation of drama towards a new realism. Ibsen had read the work of the critic Hermann Hettner in 1855 and Hettner's high praise of *Coriolanus*, the Shakespeare play to which he devoted most attention, was a powerful influence on the development of Ibsen's vast drama *Brand* (1865) with its uncompromising and tragic central figure, standing out against community and family in the absolute conviction of the truth of his principles. Ambiguous in the extreme, Brand seems by turns magnificently right and horrifically wrong, a figure whom, as with Shakespeare's central figure, it is remarkably difficult to like, even when one might be in sympathy with his beliefs (see Zucker). When, later, Ibsen came to explore how a community could destroy someone working for its benefit, his title, *An Enemy of the People* (1882), appears to quote directly from *Coriolanus* (e.g. 1.1.6–7, 'chief enemy to the people' or 3.3.135, 'The people's enemy'). As Ibsen's Dr Stockmann considers moving to America in the face of the town's opposition to him, the play resonates with Coriolanus' exile, as it does when he imagines destroying his opponents or when townspeople come to him in Act 5 to encourage him to abandon his plans (Van Laan, 302–3).

Or I could have opened with Charlotte Brontë's engagement with the play in her novel *Shirley* (1849), where Caroline Helstone makes the mill-owner Robert Moore read *Coriolanus* and Brontë sets his sympathy with Coriolanus' denunciation of the citizens against Helstone's emphasis on the hero's faults (see Poole, *Victorians*, 105–10). Or with Ted Hughes's poem 'Rights' (published in 1985) where the speaker, lying on the grass 'Reading *Coriolanus*', is interrupted by some people out shooting game who claim he is on private land but 'I represent the public so I stay'. The dispute is unresolved and the shooting party give up:

Some things have changed, some haven't.
None of us were quite sure which. So they trooped off.

And I went on lying there, in a turmoil.
Reading *Coriolanus*.

(T. Hughes, 700–1)

Or I could even have begun with the decision of the French perfume house Guerlain in 1998 to name their new fragrance for men *Coriolan* and then to relaunch it in 2008 as *L'Âme d'un héros* ('The soul of a hero'), with the implication that a heroic soul is exactly the essence of *Coriolanus*.

All of these would have given some sense of the sheer breadth of responses to *Coriolanus*, something of the complex cultural work this play has been seen as able to perform. But I focus here on four examples, all from the 1930s, two English (albeit that one is arguably so), one American and one French. In little, they suggest how the play fires writers and crowds, politicians and theatre workers to explore its possibilities.

Coriolanus and militarism

At 11 a.m. on 12 May 1931 *Coriolanus*, directed by William Poel, began its first and only performance at the Chelsea Palace Theatre. Poel, now nearly eighty, had spent his theatrical life

trying to recover the conditions of playing in early modern theatre, mounting production after production, mostly acted by amateurs, on an approximation of an Elizabethan stage, often putting extras in Elizabethan costume onstage, seated on stools as spectators. Eccentric in his methods and often far from accurate in his scholarship, Poel was devoted to his cause. But his *Coriolanus* was different from his earlier style.

There were again the oddities of scholarship: believing that the play had been co-authored by Shakespeare with George Chapman, Poel felt justified in cutting everything that he thought was Chapman's contribution, over 2,000 lines (nearly 60 per cent) of the text. Some gaps were filled with his own prose versions of North's Plutarch, Shakespeare's source. The running time was abbreviated to little more than 90 minutes and the play was over in time for the audience to leave for lunch.

But more important than the cutting were the interpretation and the resultant costuming. Poel's beliefs seemed to some in stark opposition to the play. Robert Speaight who played Coriolanus wondered why Poel 'had ever chosen it':

Here was a violent Radical trying to make dramatic sense out of a play which is not exactly a manifesto in favour of democracy, however evenly Shakespeare may have weighted the scales. Here was a pacifist – a pugnacious pacifist, it is true – trying to suppress any suggestion of violence in a play which is violence from beginning to end.

(Speaight, *Property*, 133)

But that was precisely the point. For Poel the play was not a study of politics: as he wrote in the programme, the 'apparent aim of the play is to show the ageless spirit of militarism' (quoted Munro, 44). As such it was logical for him to think of the central figure, as he wrote to Speaight, as, at his first appearance, 'something that is an emblem more than a personage or portrait of yourself' (Speaight, *Poel*, 256). Costuming followed interpretation, not

the play's historical period or the date of its writing. Poel had begun with the intention of setting the play in the Napoleonic era but, as Munro shows,

this did not, perhaps, lend itself to the 'ageless spirit' that he sought; as *The Times's* reviewer pointed out, 'the Napoleonic period is really more definite and particular for us to-day than the Roman'. Instead, therefore, Poel mixed costumes in a dizzying fashion.

(45)

At his first entry Speaight, under protest, wore a leopard skin, the consequence of Poel's seeing a painting of a young man wearing one at an exhibition. Returning from the war, he appeared, 'in the full-dress uniform of a Colonel of the Hussars'. By the end he was in 'the helmet and breastplate of a Roman general' alongside Volumnia 'dressed as an imperious Gainsborough in hat and plumes and Virigilia was a pure pre-Raphaelite' (Speaight, *Poel*, 256). Other choices were, for the conventions of 1930s Shakespeare, equally extreme: the tribunes dressed 'as railway porters from the Gare du Nord' (Speaight, *Property*, 133) and Aufidius 'in the gorgeous robes of an Oriental potentate' (*Manchester Guardian* review, quoted Ripley, 266). But, as Poel had explained to Speaight, 'Since it was not in the character of Coriolanus to imitate other people, he must therefore be dressed quite differently' (Speaight, *Property*, 133).

While Speaight was never convinced by this eclecticism, we can see that it was part of Poel's wish to generalize the play's relevance. This was no longer a play about Rome but about all ages and the ways in which different societies viewed militarism. The costume could also, at moments, create a strong irony, as in Coriolanus' Roman dress at the very moment at which he is moving against Rome (Munro, 46).

As Ripley recognizes, Poel's *Coriolanus* 'may be seen as the harbinger of contemporary "director's theater" approaches to the play' (267). Nowhere was that clearer than in the

astonishing ending, a moment that, for Speaight, 'may have been magnificent, but it was not Shakespeare' (Speaight, *Poel*, 261). After Volumnia's intercession worked, Coriolanus bid his family farewell and watched them 'pass through the gates where they are received by the villagers with much cheering' (promptbook, quoted Ripley, 265). It is significant that the populace of this Rome are 'villagers', not citizens. Volumnia beckons Coriolanus to follow but, after 'the curtains of the gate close', he now, alone onstage, wonders 'O mother, my mother! / What have you done?', ending 'But, let it come. O Mother! Wife!' (Shakespeare's 5.3.182–9, rewritten by Poel). The stage direction that followed marked the end of the play and one can appreciate Speaight's suspicion:

He buries his face in his hands then he walks closely towards the Corioli door, and gives two loud knocks with his fist. The door opens, he enters and it closes. Singing and dancing heard in the Roman City followed by tumult and killing of CORIOLANUS in the city of Corioli.

(quoted Ripley, 265)

In its stark opposition of the two cities in the two exits from the stage and in the contrast of sounds in a play whose soundscape is so consistently complex and provocative, Poel's ending is indeed 'magnificent' in its emblematic conclusion.

Coriolanus and an unfinished epic

At least Poel's production was completed. In 1931 and 1932 T.S. Eliot published separately two poems, 'Triumphal March' and 'Difficulties of a Statesman', the first two parts of a proposed long poem called *Coriolan* that Eliot never finished. The later two parts would have taken the poem's journey from 'empty shows of power to a state of mystical elevation based on St John of the Cross' (Gordon, 246). If Caius Martius was to have continued to be the poem's focus, that would have marked

a strange transfiguration for a character for whom mystical elevation is not exactly a natural state. But perhaps it was the working-class figure, 'Arthur Edward Cyril Parker', the poems' antithesis to Coriolanus, who would have made that mystical journey.

Eliot had long been intrigued by the play, quoting from it, analysing it, referring to it and returning to it again and again. Sometimes the reference is buried, a memory of the writer rather than something for the reader to be aware of. So, for instance, when he compares life as 'Broken and scarred' like the 'dirty broken finger nails' of someone in a bar, Christopher Ricks hears an echo of Coriolanus' description of Aufidius' body against which his 'grained ash ... hath broke / And scarred' (4.5.110–11) (Eliot, *Inventions*, 198). Much more visibly, Eliot had placed Coriolanus' self-description as one who had done 'To thee particularly and to all the Volsces / Great hurt and mischief' (4.5.68–9) as an epigraph at the start of his 'Ode on Independence Day, July 4th 1918', published in 1920, turning the lines into a salutation to the reader as an Aufidius (Eliot, *Inventions*, 383). In 'A Cooking Egg', first published in 1919, the speaker anticipates that he 'shall not want Honour in Heaven' for he will 'have talk with Coriolanus / And other heroes of that kidney' (Eliot, *Complete*, 44). The heavenly heroic mode of Coriolanus and Sir Philip Sidney (the rhyme for 'kidney') is in stark contrast to the banality of the London suburbs inhabited by 'red-eyed scavengers' where the poem's voice can wonder 'Where are the eagles and the trumpets?' (Eliot, *Complete*, 44). By 1922, in *The Waste Land*, Eliot could envisage some resuscitation for Coriolanus: 'Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours / Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus' (Eliot, *Complete*, 74). In 1919, the year of 'A Cooking Egg', he had praised the play as a way of marking Shakespeare's dramatic failure in *Hamlet*: 'Coriolanus may not be as "interesting" as *Hamlet*, but it is, with *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's most assured artistic success' (Eliot, *Essays*, 124). Where, for Eliot, *Hamlet* failed to

find ways to turn its matter into drama, *Coriolanus* succeeded in transmuting 'the pride of Coriolanus' into a tragedy that was 'intelligible, self-complete, in the sunlight' (124). Clearly both character and play were much on his mind and, in 1932–3, he turned to *Coriolanus* again in lectures at Harvard, defending his opinion of it in relation to *Hamlet*, not as being 'a greater play than *Hamlet*' but seeing it as a clear sign of the 'maturity' of early modern drama for its approach to 'that *unity of feeling* which Sidney desires' (Eliot, *Poetry*, 44, 42). The Harvard lectures were given just after Eliot had published the two sections of *Coriolan* which would be firmly placed in the section of 'Unfinished Poems' in his collected poetry, a project itself as broken as the hero had seemed to Eliot to be. The poem's title is *Coriolan*, not *Coriolanus*, strongly influenced by the *Coriolan* overture (Op. 62) Beethoven wrote in 1807 for Heinrich Joseph von Collin's 1804 tragedy. Eliot had read J.W.N. Sullivan's 1927 study of Beethoven's 'spiritual development' which saw in Beethoven's Third Symphony, the 'Eroica', the hero who 'marches forth, indubitably heroic' and wondered 'What is he like in his loneliness?' (quoted Bollier, 631). The transfer to *Coriolan* was simple. But Eliot had also corresponded with the Shakespeare critic G. Wilson Knight and wanted to see Knight's notes for his study of *Coriolanus* (Bollier, 630–1), published in 1931 as 'The Royal Occupation: An Essay on *Coriolanus*', in *The Imperial Theme*. Knight found the play's imagery – his key for understanding any Shakespeare play – to be 'hard', 'metallic', 'ice-cold, intellectual' and violent, with Caius Martius a 'blind mechanism' of 'self-centred pride', the personification of 'Iron, blood, death' (Knight, 155, 160).

Eliot's 'Triumphal March' sees the heroic in much the same way, tinged with Eliot's view that, as he wrote in an essay on 'The Literature of Fascism' in 1928, 'Order and authority are good', even though 'the increasing popular demand' for them leads to 'parroting of the words'. With the 'deterioration of democracy . . . human beings are inclined to welcome any regime which relieves

us from the burden of pretended democracy' so that there is a 'craving for a regime that will relieve us of thought and . . . give us excitement and military salutes' (quoted Reeves, 205). Set in a deliberate blur of Rome, the City of London and France (with its impressive list of munitions being those Germany surrendered in 1918; Smith, 162), the March is a quilt of voices, appropriately so, given *Coriolanus*' intense scrutiny of the depersonalization of the individual in the crowd, those 'voices' whose votes Coriolanus seeks. Quite who is speaking, whose voice we are hearing, is often deliberately unclear. But the poem is also a study of watching, for, as Eliot puts it, adapting the phenomenology of Husserl, 'The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving' (Eliot, *Complete*, 127; Smith, 162). The crowd watches the procession in all its extravagant spectacle, from the military to the triviality of the civic groups ('Those are the golf club Captains'), just as playgoers relished the staging of the triumph from Sheridan's 1752 adaptation until the early twentieth century – until, finally, 'There he is now'. Eliot's *Coriolanus* is described primarily in terms of his eyes: 'There is no interrogation in his eyes', though they are also 'watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent' (Eliot, *Complete*, 127). After the sacrifice in the temple, the crowd disperses, awe-struck but also chattering. There is, for Eliot throughout the poem, a strong contrast between this state procession and Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday: Coriolanus is the arrogant secular general, not the son of God. Eliot borrowed some phrases and the March's tone of ridicule and incredulity from an account in Charles Maurras of a civic parade accorded to a literary figure (Smith, 160). Again and again 'Triumphal March' veers vertiginously from admiration to mockery, from the grand to the overblown, from the inscrutable individual at the heart of the procession to the common people who are caricatured and obvious.

After this virtuoso depiction of the public display of military triumph and the sound of the crowd's many voices, Eliot's 'Difficulties of a Statesman' moves to the internal voice of

the hero, listening to the tedious, frustrating processes of bureaucracy but unable to speak aloud at all, from its opening question, 'CRY what shall I cry?', a phrase derived from Isaiah, 40.6 and repeated four times in the poem, and its repetition of 'mother', hinting at Coriolanus' words of defeat, 'O mother, mother! / What have you done?' (5.3.182–3), right through to the poem's end. For Eliot, the search for the mother's response is desperate and there is no sign here of her ever answering, any more than there is in Shakespeare's scene. The repeated 'mother' both is and is not the answer to the question 'what shall I cry?': Eliot's Coriolan both asks his mother what to cry and makes her name that which he should cry. After the silence of response, the last line picks up on the shout 'CRY' at the opening with 'RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN' which may be the people's cry but perhaps also includes the Statesman's own voice, his call for his own resignation (Reeves, 209). Often comically bathetic in its representation of the banalities of the crowd or of government, of the signs of family, 'dingy busts, all looking remarkably Roman' (Eliot, *Complete*, 130), and of state honours, Eliot's *Coriolan* balances the difficulties of seeing the procession with the difficulties of being the object of the crowd's gaze. The one and the many, the sharply separate and the totally undifferentiated constitute a set of antitheses that reflect powerfully on the acute reading of Shakespeare's play that underpins Eliot's fragments.

Coriolanus and a completed epic

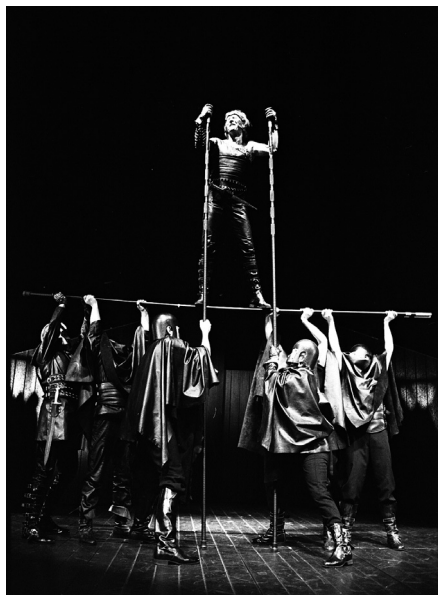
Eliot's project in *Coriolan* was part of his conservative, high-church Anglican, right-wing approach to the construction of nation and society. Shakespeare's play functioned as a touchstone for an opposition between the externalities of power as seen by the unthinking crowd in 'Triumphal March' and the internal desperation of the thinking, emotionally distraught statesman in its successor. Coriolanus and *Coriolan* remain broken, incomplete fragments of an individual and a poetic project. But in 1938

the young American Jewish poet Delmore Schwartz (1913–66) published in his first collection of his poems and prose a long poem, *Coriolanus and his Mother: The Dream of One Performance*, running to more than sixty pages (Schwartz, *Dreams*, 21–88). Divided into five acts with prose speeches marking the intervals, the poem is, at one level, a narrative of the experience of a boy watching the play in performance in a theatre. The performance both is and is not of Shakespeare's play, for, while some of the plot is Shakespeare's, there are many moments, many speeches that Schwartz 'quotes' (or effectively paraphrases) that derive less from Shakespeare than from Plutarch. As Schwartz's note to its first printing makes clear,

This poem is intended as one interpretation among the many possible of the play by Shakespeare and the life by Plutarch. The assumption throughout is that the play has been read by the reader of this poem.

(Schwartz, *Dreams*, 172)

As a sustained examination of a Shakespeare play through the construction of a long poem, only W.H. Auden's meditation on *The Tempest*, *The Sea and the Mirror* (first published in 1944), stands comparison – and Schwartz, described as 'the American Auden' on the jacket of his 1938 collection, had his volume sent to Auden, though without the jacket (Firchow, 171). At times Schwartz's description of performance can have a piercing exactness that startles: to take just one example, when the soldiers cheer him in the assault on Corioli, his line, 'O me alone! Make you a sword of me!' (1.6.76, here as Schwartz punctuates it; see Fig. 3), is the sound of 'Narcissus baritone in brittle armor' (Schwartz, *Poems*, 88). Narcissus is a key figure in Schwartz's analysis of Coriolanus: in exile he is 'the tough Narcissus' who 'Rather takes pleasure in this exile's wound, / And thinks it shows him perfect once again' (122) and he becomes 'Narcissus, Brutus, Judas', a mixture of self-lover and traitor (McDougall, 73). If his transposition of Shakespeare's lines into his own verse



- 3 'Make you a sword of me!' (1.6.76): Coriolanus (Alan Howard) standing on a raised spear, directed by Terry Hands, RSC, RST, 1977

can flatten the brilliance of Shakespeare's language, at other moments he can rethink a simple statement into something with a powerful resonance: Coriolanus' parting comment

While I remain above the ground you shall
Hear from me still and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly.

(4.1.51–3)

becomes

Telling them that they soon will hear of him
And what they hear will be but as before
The future like the past as one stone like
Another stone in hardness.

(Schwartz, *Poems*, 122)

But *Coriolanus and his Mother* is more than an account of the play in performance, for the boy is accompanied by five ghosts, never named but representing Beethoven (whose overture accompanies the performance), Marx, Freud and Aristotle, together with an unidentified fifth who never speaks but, according to Aristotle, sees and hears ‘what you did not’ (142). The ghosts produce their own analysis of the action. Freud, for instance, sees Coriolanus, preparing for the final encounter with his family –

so this much-struck man now tried
A harder face each blow, a strange answer,
A greater void, the womb, the wish to die
(136)

while Marx sees the citizens’ commitment to war as a sign that

In war’s magnified ache, brilliantly blared,
The poor mistake their grandeur and their grief;
Adding their weakness, they affirm the state . . .
(84)

Between the acts Schwartz places prose passages, voiced by one of the ghosts, providing short essays that amount to sustained analysis of the topics which title these speeches: pleasure, justice, the city, choice and the individual. Standing back from the immediacy of the progress of the performance, these passages articulate some of Coriolanus’ crucial problems and those of performance in general.

Where Eliot articulates in his two poems a moderately simple binary as the dominant mode of response, Schwartz sees the play’s articulation of its concerns as needing engagement with the crucial determining thinkers for the project of modernism and, in the opposition of the internal state of the individual and the external organization of the state, the fundamental binaries of the play’s method. At times his Freud and Marx agree; at others they oppose. Where Freud sees Caius Martius as the victim of the ‘aloneness’ that begins in the womb – ‘How

you have marred and marked this childhood's man!' – Marx blames society: 'Not that poor widow, but society / Nursed him to being, taught him what to be: / She is the actual mother' (86–7). Sometimes the play can be contained by the ghosts' comments. At others, it seems – with Schwartz's full awareness – to lie beyond their controlling theories of the individual and the state, of pleasure and repression, of historical determinism and social freedoms. Above all, as Schwartz's revision of the poem's subtitle for his *Selected Poems*, from *The Dream of One Performance* to *A Dream of Knowledge*, suggests, Schwartz's exploration is of the limitations of knowledge, of the lure and fantasy of understanding that is always rebuffed by reality. *Coriolanus* becomes a contested space, a text that allows for and encourages contradictory meanings, meanings that can be ascribed to the dominant thinkers of our world but which always remain partial, incomplete, no more than a dream.

Coriolanus and political scandal

The contestation over *Coriolanus* can move from the acute perception of an individual poet's response to an imagined performance to the reality of a production. In Paris in 1933–4, it was a production that became a site of political contest as the play was annexed to a right-wing attack on democracy and, in particular, on France's elected representatives, some of whom were mired by their association with a swindler, Sacha Stavisky. When the Comédie-Française mounted a production of *Coriolanus* in a free translation by René-Louis Piachaud, the Stavisky scandal had not yet broken. The play had not often been performed in France, especially after Napoleon stopped an 1806 production, starring the famous actor Talma, after only four performances because Talma's *Coriolanus* was seen as a portrait of Napoleon himself (Schwartz-Gastine, 125). The production opened in December 1933 to excellent reviews. Certainly Piachaud's version, adapted 'au goût du jour', 'to the taste of the times', saw Caius Martius as the hero whose honesty and moral values rightly lead him to

attack the fickleness of the crowds. For a nation many of whose citizens were inclined to see the value of the authoritarianism embedded in emerging fascism, a right-wing version certainly suited ‘th’interpretation of the time’ (4.7.50). When the onstage crowds, numbering well over 200, gave the Roman salute as Coriolanus triumphantly returned to Rome, the gesture echoed the recent adoption by the Nazis of exactly this raised right arm as their sign of acclaim (Schwartz–Gastine, 129).

If Piachaud’s text often softened the brutality of Shakespeare’s language, some of his additions made the tribunes even more completely the embodiment of the hypocrisy of the demagogue. As Sicinius and Brutus left at the end of 2.3, they had new exit lines:

Brutus. Les tribuns n’ont rien fait!

Sicinius. Les tribuns n’ont rien vu!

Brutus. Les tribuns n’ont rien su!

[The tribunes have done nothing.

The tribunes have seen nothing.

The tribunes have known nothing.]

(quoted Londré, 121–2, my translation)

Even where Piachaud was not inventing, his simplifications created clear slogans: ‘Romains dégénérés, vos pires ennemis, c’est vous-mêmes’ (‘Degenerate Romans, you are your own worst enemies’, Londré, 122), lines which derive from Shakespeare so indirectly (compare 3.3.128–30) that, in their new form, they speak of a more precise political position.

It was true, too, that, at the early performances, particular speeches were applauded for their reflections on contemporary political events: the two changes of government in October and November 1933 meant that Coriolanus’ mockery of the way that ‘gentry, title, wisdom / Cannot conclude but by the yea and no / Of general ignorance’ (3.1.145–7) provoked an enthusiastic response, especially given Piachaud’s version’s contempt for ‘la foule imbécile’ (‘the idiotic crowd’) and the warning that ‘le

désordre règne' ('disorder reigns', Londré, 124). As a report in the *New York Times* of the premiere noted, the audience's cheering surprised those Deputies present who 'resented this enthusiasm as directed against themselves' (quoted Wheeler, 376). The reviewer noted that

The management had not thought the play had any special modern significance at all until spectators this week began wildly applauding passages in the play in which Gaius Martius excoriates the fatuousness of the Roman mob and rails against the stupidities of democracy.

(quoted Wheeler, 375)

But it was not until January 1934, after another change of government, Stavisky's death and the gradual revelation of the extent of political complicity in his con schemes, as well as the sacking of the director of the Comédie-Française, Emile Fabre, and his replacement by a former head of the police, that performances began to be disrupted by opposing factions. At one performance the arrival of the tribunes was greeted with a cry of 'V'la Léon Blum et Paul Boncour', naming them as the leader of the Socialist Party in the Chambre des députés and the Foreign Minister. At another a whistle that opposed the cheering of Coriolanus' anti-republican speeches in 3.2 resulted in a full-scale riot with cheers in favour of the Republic and cries of 'Bravo, Hitler'; the actors carried on the performance without a chance of being heard, until the audience calmed down when the house-lights were turned on (Londré, 126). The major newspaper *Le Figaro*, in an attack on the government on 1 February, suggested a correspondence between Coriolanus and Hitler, as it advocated fascism as the solution for the collapse of France's democracy (Schwartz-Gastine, 131). The failure of parliament to engage with the Stavisky scandal meant that the theatre was the obvious place for spectators to protest. When on 6 February guards opened fire on a demonstration of more

than 20,000 people against the government, resulting in fifteen deaths and over 1300 injured police, rioters and spectators, the government resigned and, as a coincidental consequence, the production of *Coriolan* was closed (Londré, 129). Only in March 1934 did performances resume – and continue without further incident.

That translation is a space in which a particular interpretation can become more explicit is familiar. Piachaud's adaptation effectively enabled a particular slanting of the play towards a rightist ideology to be established. It was also the case that apparently innocuous lines in other plays being performed at the time encouraged strong responses: the enquiry 'Shall we have another ministry tonight?' in de Musset's light comedy *Un Caprice* (1837) was met with applause (Wheeler, 376). There does not seem to have been any political intent in the choice of *Coriolanus* and nothing about the production was designed to cause unrest. This was a classic revival, not a piece of agit-prop. But *Coriolanus* became an excuse for a theatre riot as contemporary events made the production's support for Coriolanus' gibes at the citizens into something the audience could not passively approve. The play in production became not simply an analysis of the politics of the state but a vehicle for the playgoers' political engagement. As my four examples – Poel, Eliot, Schwartz and the trials of the Comédie-Française – all suggest, it is only too easy for *Coriolanus* to become less a space for considering the nature of a state's internal divisions than a drama of partisanship, demanding not dispassionate analysis but active participation.

BEGINNINGS

When does the long process that leads to the writing of a play begin?

Take a short view and *Coriolanus* can be seen to emerge out of King James's troubles with Parliament, the popular unrest in

the Midlands in 1607 and the grain shortage in 1608. Equally it can be described as having begun to be formed in Shakespeare's mind out of, say, his reading of North's translation of Plutarch's 'The Life of Alcibiades', the life Plutarch places as parallel to 'The Life of Coriolanus', as part of his research for writing *Timon of Athens* shortly before.

Go further back and there is Shakespeare's mention of Coriolanus in *Titus Andronicus* early in his career where Aemilius brings Saturninus the terrifying news that the Goths are invading, and Lucius 'threats in course of his revenge to do / As much as ever Coriolanus did' (4.4.66–7). The latter part of the play makes the story of Coriolanus serve as source and parallel to the developing narrative of the Andronici and shows, at the very least, a powerful suggestion of the possible transposition of such events from prose narrative in North's Plutarch into drama. Go further back still and it is likely that Shakespeare first encountered the name and the narrative at school in reading Livy or Livy's summarizer, Lucius Annaeus Florus, as part of his learning to study and perform oratory as much as history; there too he would have read another potent analogue in studying Virgil's *Aeneid* and could have come across the fable of the belly in Camerarius' version of Aesop's fables.

Probably even earlier in his life, Shakespeare would have known the gospel account of the arrival of the three Marys at Jesus' tomb and perhaps seen a performance or semi-performance of their encounter with the angels ('Whom seek ye?' or, as it is known from its Latin form in the Easter liturgy, the *Quem Quaeritis* trope), an event which may be echoed in the arrival of the three Roman women (not sharing the same name but all with names beginning with V) at Coriolanus' camp.

Most of these materials and many more, all of which certainly had or may have had or could conceivably have had a place in the writing of the play, will be discussed substantially later, fleshing out the brief allusions I have offered so far. But there is another and equally crucial layering in the materials out of which the

play is formed, for not only the playwright but also the playgoers construct the play from matter they have encountered. Let me take the last of my examples above a little further. Emrys Jones argues that, given the ease with which analogical thinking was crucial to medieval and early modern encounters with narrative, the discovery of parallels was familiar and probable:

What I am suggesting here is not that Shakespeare's three Roman women adumbrate the three Marys of the Gospel, but that this possible point of comparison . . . may have encouraged Shakespeare to develop his new tragic subject in terms of the Passion sequences.

(Jones, *Origins*, 66)

For Jones the connection may have been the result of the nature of Shakespeare's 'intensely theatrical' imagination: 'it may have been enough to have imagined the three Roman women going out to see Coriolanus for him to have associated it with the theatrically comparable effect of the three Marys going to visit Christ's tomb' (66).

I remain cautious of the strength of the presence of this analogy, in spite of Jones's care in arguing for it, even if I do not share Vickers's scathing view of Cavell's use of a slightly different analogy, the presence of the three Marys at the foot of the cross (Cavell, 158; Vickers, *Appropriating*, 382). But, even if the connection has no functional effect for Shakespeare in the act of writing the play or for the King's Men in performing it, it may well have served with the immediacy of analogue for some of the playgoers at the Globe or Blackfriars or court or wherever else the play may have been performed. Certainly the long editorial and performance tradition increased the likelihood of the echo being perceived by playgoers and readers of *Coriolanus* later, for the women entered 'all in Mourning' in Nahum Tate's 1682 adaptation *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (p. 47) and Theobald adopted the phrase in his edition of Shakespeare's

play in 1728, the costumes enhancing the possible resonance with the women mourning at the tomb. Sceptical though I am about many of the suggestions scholars have offered of ‘sources’ for moments in the play, my doubts do not diminish the potential presence of those analogues as materials out of which a playgoer formed an understanding of *Coriolanus*, just as they have formed significant materials for those scholars who propose them, for playwrights adapting the play and directors staging it.

READING

Reading Livy and Virgil

It would have been almost impossible for Shakespeare to have avoided reading Livy at school. Titus Livy’s great history of Rome, *Ab Urbe Condita*, was a foundational text in Elizabethan education and, indeed, reading Livy is something that anyone learning Latin is still likely to have to do quite early on (see Fig. 4). There was a great Elizabethan translation by Philemon Holland, *The Romane Historie*, published in 1600, which Shakespeare probably read as he was working on *Coriolanus* – its language seems to lie behind parts of the fable of the belly – but Livy was known first in Latin. Studying Livy was a way not only to learn about Roman history but also to understand and practise oratory. Livy’s narrative of Coriolanus is in Book 2. Rapidly and elegantly told, it builds to the great speech by Veturia, Livy’s name for Coriolanus’ mother, effective enough ‘so as at length the man was overcome’ (Bullough, 505). Livy may well have given Shakespeare some details that he used in the play: Livy’s Martius enters Corioli entirely alone (‘whiles the gate stood open, fiercely rushed in himselfe: and . . . made a foule slaughter of people thereby, at his first entrance into the cittie’, Bullough, 498), though the dramatic power of the solo foray was something Shakespeare did not need to have taken from Livy and other sources may have affected this moment.