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« Ces blessures cicatrisées que je devrais cacher » : la machine de guerre monstrueuse dans Coriolan

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"Th'unaching scars which I should hide": The Monstrous War-Machine in *Coriolanus*

LIANNE HABINEK♦

O world, thy slippery turns![1]

The wounded man, a staple of early modern medical textbooks for treating battle-scarred soldiers, can alternatively be read a number of ways: as a testament to the horrors of war, for which the image stands perhaps most powerfully; as an enumeration of possible wounds; as an enumeration of possible weapons; as a typological linking of Man to Christ (note the wounds in side, hand and foot common to both images below, Figures 1 and 2) or to the Fisher King (note the wounds in the thigh) or to Saint Sebastian (note the multiplicity of wounds); as a warning to mankind concerning a perpetually antagonistic world (in which you may be hit, clubbed, pierced, shot, bombed, cut, sawed through, poked, bit); or as an example of the perfect soldier, who bears all wounds with stoicism, looking to the side with something of a sneer curling his upper lip, his contempt for the viewer as apparent as his mastery over his pain.[2]

In each case, the fact of the physical wounds remains the same, but their meaning shifts depending on context framing the given reading. Are these wounds instructive? A warning? A demonstration? A revelation? Given its indeterminacy, the wounded man's body suggests a text, begging (it would seem)

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1 *Coriolanus*, 4.4.12. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (Arden 3rd edition), ed. Peter Holland, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013. All references to the play are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

2 See, of course, Cynthia Marshall's extended reading of *Coriolanus* and the wounded man: Marshall, Cynthia, "Wound-man: *Coriolanus*, Gender, and the Theatrical Construction of Interiority," *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 93-118. I here use the wounded man as jumping-off point for considering specific performances; Marshall's work on the history of anatomy in this context is essential for a broader consideration that is outside the scope of this paper.



Fig. 1: "Wound man," Thomas Gale, *Certaine workes of chirurgerie, newly compiled*…, London, 1563: sig. Aa7v. Wellcome Collection, STC 11529.

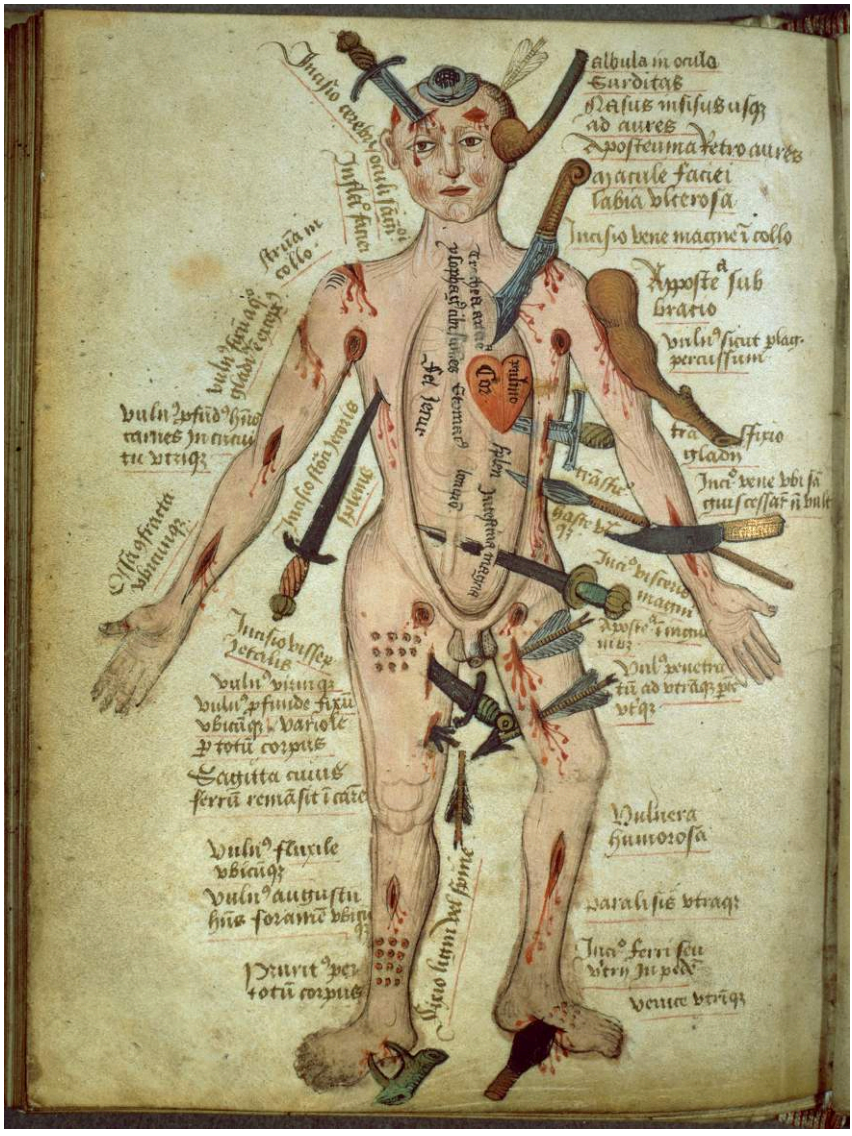


Fig. 2: "Wound-man," Pseudo-Galen *Anathomia*. 15th c. WMS 290, Wellcome Collection.

for interpretation—the second of the two figures above makes this point clear, as each wound is tidily diagrammed, to be read against an index elsewhere.[3] The multiplicity of readings such an image makes possible resonates well with *Coriolanus*, both in text and in performance, given the play's morbid fascination with the explication of wounds upon the warrior. Coriolanus seems at first pass to resist what the figures below exemplify: the making-public of the wounded body, the way in which the (presumed) warrior opens himself publicly to the scrutiny of all comers, all classes. As Anna Kamarelli suggests, "The body of [Coriolanus] is the site upon which Shakespeare charts the matrix of emotion, the rhetoric that expresses it and the performance that animates it… [Coriolanus] becomes identified with his body, but there is a perpetual anxiety about the potential for that body to be misinterpreted."[4] Ultimately the wounded man and Coriolanus share an important identity. Their wounds *must* signify for someone, somewhere, and the breaching of the body, the breaking of the border between interior and exterior territories, is crucial for an understanding of both figures. At the same time, precisely what the wounds signify seems to be unfixed, particularly for Coriolanus, whose identity is bound both to the name given to him because of his wounds, and to the wounds themselves. What happens to such an identity when both sets of wounds close and heal—that is, when the wounds trace only the memory of action?

Coriolanus is a slippery play. With whom are we, the audience, to side? The text itself is famously problematic in answering this question—the decision to condemn or to praise the title character lies, it would seem, in the hands of the receptor: the audience, the critic, the reader, or history itself. An excellent case in point is Nahum Tate's 1682 adaptation, titled *The Ingratitude of a Common-Wealth*, which would seem to speak clearly enough, particularly during the Restoration, when the wounds of Cromwell's reign were still relatively fresh.[5] The subtitle of Tate's play, however, undercuts even this seemingly stable reading: *The Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus* suggests at once that Coriolanus has fallen

3 See as well Jaspreet S. Tambar, who notes that "scars and wounds have different semantic potentials, for while the scar is healed and thus hermeneutically sealed, allowing the body narrative control, the wound, which resembles and mimics an organ of speech, 'evacuates the body of authority and opens it to semantic appropriation.'" Tambar, Jaspreet S. "The Rhetoric of Wounds in *Coriolanus*; or, a Tragedy of Renaissance Rhetoric," *Comparative Drama* 54.1-2, 2020: 43. Tambar quotes Jeffrey Sychterz, "Scarred Narratives and Speaking Wounds: War Poetry and the Body," *Pacific Coast Philology* 44, no. 3, 2009: 140.

4 Kamaralli, Anna, "Putting Tongues in Wounds: The Search for an Honest Body in *Coriolanus*," In *Coriolanus: A Critical Reader*, ed. Liam E. Semler, London, The Arden Shakespeare, 2021: 96.

5 Among other things, Tate slims down substantially the initial encounter between the Volsces and Coriolanus; thus the action of the play which gives Coriolanus his wounds is elided, and so is the power of those wounds.

and that he had some height from which to fall.[6] While Tate's revision ultimately is pro-Coriolanus, a broader straightforward reading of Shakespeare's hero—or anti-hero—is ever-elusive. Any judgment of the titular character must lie in the hands of the audience, though any interpretation is necessarily inflected by performance, staging, and directorial decisions.

This paper examines two recent interpretations alongside the playtext itself, to argue that an understanding of Coriolanus' identity is colored by what we the audience can and cannot see of his body. The very naming of Caius Martius as Coriolanus collapses the boundary of his bodily actions with his identity, and the point of contact between the two is precisely his wounded body. The wounds and scars are, as Peter Holland observes, things which must signify in multiple dimensions:

> In their operation […] as political symbols of state service, of the longevity and commitment of his work for the city [the scars] are inscriptions of worthy candidature. These multivalent writings on the body are a location of voyeuristic desire, the aftermaths of wounds and death […] that are signs of shame that neither the citizens nor the spectators may see.[7]

The politics of the stagings hinge on how the wounds and scars themselves signify differently in different political spheres. Ralph Fiennes' 2011 film and the Donmar Warehouse's 2013-2014 staging (directed by Josie Rourke, and filmed and broadcasted globally by the National Theatre) offer two versions of Coriolanus which, though they diverge notably in age and anger (and, as Stephen Greenblatt would put it, *nausea*), nevertheless emphasize the means by which the soldier's refusal to show his wounds in public contrasts sharply with the presentation of the same wounds to the audience.[8] The audience, that is, sits in

6 Likely fresher even than the memory of the Protectorate would have been Milton's *Paradise Lost*, first published just fifteen years previously. Naturally that poem is concerned primarily with the fall of mankind, but impossible to overlook is the fall of the rebel angels, who are given an entire back-story supplemental to a Biblical history. Of particular interest is Satan's monologue at the start of Book IV, which comprised part of the play *Adam Unparadised* which was to become *Paradise Lost*, and which was (allegedly) the first passage of the poem written by Milton: O thou that with surpassing glory crowned / Look's from thy sole dominion like the God / Of this new world, at whose sight all the stars / Hide their diminished heads; to thee I call / But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,vO Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams / That bring to my remembrance from what state / I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere, / 'Til pride and worse ambition threw me down / Warring in Heaven 'gainst Heaven's matchless King. (*PL* 4.32-41) The parallels between the figures of Satan and Coriolanus may be observed elsewhere.

7 Holland, Peter, "'Musty Superfluity': *Coriolanus* and the Remains of Excess," *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 25, 2007: 96.

8 See Greenblatt, Stephen, "A Man of Principle," *The New York Review of Books*, March 8, 2012.

a privileged position: able to view the wounds and to view them in a variety of different contexts, the audience is granted a force of judgment unmatched by any single entity in either production.[9]

Though Shakespeare withholds from the audience the exact means by which the wounds are created, he does make much of their reception by various figures in the play. Volumnia rhapsodizes prophetically about her son's "bloody brow" (1.3.36). Andrea Ria Stevens points out: "A fact of staging often overlooked is that Caius Martius spends most of the play's first act so covered in blood that he appears 'flayed,' appearing in 1.5 'bleeding and assaulted by the enemy' and remaining to bloodied until his exit in 1.10, the effect maintained for nearly 300 lines."[10] Indeed, in both Fiennes' and Rourke's stagings this vivid image is made manifest, as both Fiennes and Hiddleston appear onstage with their heads covered in blood. Fiennes, in particular, has framed Caius Martius such that his opened eyes are the only sign-posts upon an otherwise illegible map of blood.[11]

Stevens observes that Coriolanus, in the play-text, "emphasizes the fact that his blood, which he explicitly refers to as paint, makes him initially unrecognizable, and later unreadable," and we could go so far as to add that, in Fiennes's case, the blood renders him inhuman.[12] Though Coriolanus' weapon of choice is a product of the historical context of each performance (a modern-day Serbia reconfigured as "a place calling itself Rome," and a more generic Rome, respectively), each actor's face is similarly coated in a disturbing combination of fresh and drying blood. Coriolanus taunts Aufidius, when the two meet in Corioles, claiming that he is drenched in the blood of his opponents—"'Tis not my blood / Wherein thou seest me masked"—and though this seems unlikely, the later account of the places of each wounds gives the line a ring of truth (1.8.10-11). Fiennes' Coriolanus looks absolutely deranged as he heads into this confrontation. His eyes are the focus of the shot, white against the mottled red map of battles upon his face, and wide with something akin to mad hatred.[13] While Rourke frames the battle between Aufidius and Coriolanus as a reasonably conventional stage-fight, with elastic body blows and sharp sword clashes, wherein Coriolanus ultimately has the clear upper-hand, Fiennes' choreography is more ambiguous, pitting the two in extremely close hand-to-hand combat; eventually they crash out of

9 It is no accident that the word "wounds" occurs a total of sixteen times in the play—more frequently than any other of the tragedies.

10 Stevens, Andrea Ria. *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama*, Edinburgh, Edinburg University Press, 2011: 50.

11 Permissions for images from the films referenced were unfortunately not available. For image references, the following website is useful here: Barshad, Amos. "*Coriolanus* Trailer: Ralph Fiennes Does Shakespeare and War," https://www.vulture.com/2011/08/coriolanus_trailer_ralph_fienn.html. Accessed 27 April 2023.

12 Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 64.

13 For an image reference (following footnote 11), see: Caldwell, Thomas, "Film Review—Coriolanus (2011)," https://blog.cinemaautopsy.com/2012/03/07/film-review-coriolanus-2011/. Accessed 27 April 2023.

a window and fall about a story to the ground below, where, as bombs drop in the background, the distinction between martial crushing and erotic embracing is all but elided. A blast apparently knocks the two apart, and both Coriolanus and Aufidius regain consciousness still bloodstained, amidst smoke and rubble, from which their confederates pull them away. Thus Fiennes' staging presents something of a stalemate, rather than the just conquering of one opponent by his better.

Hiddleston's Coriolanus washes off the blood from his head, in a visceral scene wherein a shower of water from high above center stage falls on him, and he gasps and cringes as the water hits his shoulder and arm. He pulls off his shirt, uses it to wipe at the cuts on his body, and the viewer cannot help but see not only the wounds but their effect upon him—though he has attempted, haltingly, to protest special treatment from Cominius, here in the shower scene we are privately given to witness the supreme pain he has been suppressing. Fiennes, on the other hand, cuts from Aufidius' declaration of hate (in the play, 1.10.7-8; 16-27) to the preparation of Volumnia and Menenius for the homecoming of the newly-christened Coriolanus, saving any reaction Coriolanus might have to his wounds for a later bathroom scene between the soldier and his mother. Both performances linger on the perverse glee with which Volumnia and Menenius enumerate Coriolanus' scars:

> Menenius: Is he not wounded?
> He was wont to come home wounded.
> […]
> Volumnia: O, he is wounded, I thank the gods for't!
> Menenius: So do I too, if it be not too much. Brings a victory in his pocket, the wounds become him.
> […]
> Menenius: Where is he wounded?
> Volumnia: I'th'shoulder and i'th'left arm. There will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place. He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i'th'body.
> Menenius: One i'th'neck and two i'th'thigh—there's nine that I know.
> Volumnia: He had, before this last expedition, twenty-five wounds upon him.
> Menenius: Now it's twenty-seven; every gash was an enemy's grave. (2.1.115-6; 118-120; 142-152)

Here wounds and scars signify on multiple levels: they are, specifically, a map, each pointing to "an enemy's grave," but they are also more laurels than any external

garland ("the wounds become him"), they are "victory," they are testimonies "to show the people," they are "receipts" for his service, they are an occasion to thank the gods, and finally, crucially, they are his "wont." If Coriolanus can be said to *be* anything, insofar as Volumnia and Menenius, and perhaps the audience too at this point, are concerned, he is his wounds. The specific locations of the wounds upon his body—shoulder, left arm, neck, thigh—recall vividly the portrait of the wounded man. While Hiddleston's Coriolanus has only the fresh marks from his battle at Corioles, Fiennes' Coriolanus shows his old scars even before we encounter him in person. The scars on his face are almost-distinct in his initial television appearance at the start of the film, and the rebel plebeians circulate images with his likeness struck through. Thus the scars trace the marks of the territory between battles waged and battles yet-to-be-waged, inviting in the viewer the expectation of coming melees while simultaneously reminding the viewer of previous violence.

The first time we see Fiennes' Coriolanus in the flesh, the right side of his face is turned to the camera, displaying a prominent curving scar running from his temple and across his cheek. In a sense, the Coriolanus of Fiennes' film charts an always-already wounded, scarred, blotched, or otherwise damaged body. Thus wounds here vie with scars as maps upon a body marked (and marked out) by war so intensely he cannot function in any capacity other than that of the machine of war for the state (which I elaborate upon below). The banishment of Fiennes' Coriolanus takes place in a live newsroom, and the camera tracks his bald and scarred head as he spits out his own pronouncement:

> You common cry of curs whose breath I hate
> As reek o'th' rotten fens, whose loves I prize
> As the dead carcasses of unburied men,
> That do corrupt my air, I banish you! (3.3.119-122)

With the pronounced emphasis not just on wounds but on the traces they leave behind when they are healed, the film makes Coriolanus's contempt for *rotting dead carcasses*—which would no longer bear wounds or scars—utterly natural, even if, as we know, he himself is an unburied man.

Yet though we only see the fresh wounds upon Hiddleston's Coriolanus, those, too, are emphasized particularly. The introductory material (comprising interviews with actors and director) that accompanies the NT Live staging of the play studies in particular the application of makeup to create the wounds on Hiddleston's Coriolanus. The filmed version of the performance puts its viewer at an advantage, at times, over the perspective of the live audience—though the member of a live audience is free to focus his attention at nearly any point, such a broad view is compromised by the audience member's inability to see in close-up particular details of the performance, even in a venue as intimate as the Donmar

Warehouse.[14] The camera angles for the filmgoer both constrain the visible and bring into tight focus certain images, from which an invested viewer cannot look away.

If the audience (or the viewer) is invited, encouraged, even forced to contemplate Coriolanus' wounds, why is it, then, that Coriolanus balks when he is asked to display these same wounds to the multitude? His attempts to wall himself off from a (projected) salivating public signal his desire to control the image of his contained body as a form of an historical map, such that his wounds will heal to create traces of battles as his scars have done. His argument to his mother, therefore, revolves around the central concern that doing so will fundamentally displace his identity, albeit in a very particular way:

> A beggar's tongue
> Make motion through my lips and my armed knees
> Who bowed but in my stirrup bend like his
> That hath received an alms!—I will not do't,
> Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth
> And by my body's action teach my mind
> A most inherent baseness. (3.2.118-124)[15]

Add to this his earlier protestation that putting on the gown of humility and appearing before the public is "a part / That I shall blush in acting […] To brag unto them, 'Thus I did, and thus', / Show them th'unaching scars which I should hide" (2.2.143-4; 146-7). Indeed, as Kamarelli observes, "The citizens seem at first unsure whether or not Martius has shown them his scars" in the marketplace, so avoidant is his rhetoric; she reasons that "on the battlefield [Martius] knows his wounds to be honest, but he does not trust that his wounds are a representation being used honestly in the Forum."[16] His resistance involves the ceding of control to some other entity, a forcing of his own identity into an empty projection, through which someone else's tongue may speak, whereby evidence of battle constitutes bragging, and when his body will drag down and corrupt his soul and, consequently, his "own truth."[17]

14 The genre of the filmed "live" performance, though not altogether novel, does deserve some theorization, given the recent initiatives by the National Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera (for example).

15 See, for example, Sanders: "Coriolanus bases his self-construction on a fantasy of pure action without performance," Sanders, Eve Rachele, "The Body of the Actor in *Coriolanus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.4, 2006: 398.

16 Kamarelli, "Putting Tongues in Wounds": 101.

17 Ralph Berry considers this set of lines: "Why should Coriolanus fear that his *body's* action [emphasis in original] will corrupt his mind? The answer, surely, lies in the preceding imagery: the images of impotence, virginity, and weeping schoolboys. The wounds of adolescence have never, for Coriolanus, healed." See Berry, Ralph, "Sexual Imagery in *Coriolanus*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 13.2, 1973: 306.

Yet this resistance also signals Coriolanus' inability to distinguish between interior and exterior, or to distinguish the parts that comprise the whole, as he specifically desires to hide his wounds from the plebeians. Janet Adelman suggests that such a collapse for Coriolanus derives from the fact that showing his wounds would remove any distinction between himself and the commoners:

> For his wounds would then become begging mouths (as they do in *Julius Caesar*), and their display would reveal his kinship with the plebeians in several ways: by revealing that he has worked for hire as they have (that is, that he and his deeds are not sui generis after all); by revealing that he is vulnerable, as they are; and by revealing, through the persistent identification of wound and mouth, that he too has a mouth, that he is a feminized and dependent creature.[18]

For Coriolanus, such commingling seems abhorrent. Yet this is an ignorance of the same brand that Menenius chastises the citizens for having in his opening fable of the belly: the parts which revolt against the belly cannot grasp the inner workings of the system that connects each of them to the rest of the body, so the belly makes this system explicit: against "discontented members," "mutinous parts," and "incorporate friends," the belly marks the body as an unified whole, itself "the store-house and the shop / Of the whole body," reminding the pats of "the rivers of your blood," "the strongest nerves and small inferior veins" that interweave to create the entire entity—or, indeed, commonwealth (1.1.106; 125; 128-30; 133). It is telling that the belly gets the last word in this fable; it is left to Aufidius to restore Coriolanus to "noble memory" and a measure of wholeness (5.6.155), though this of course comes at the expense of Coriolanus's bodily integrity.

Thus these wounded men all signify multiply, in a shifting context in which we are invited to read the wounds (and their scars) as the apparent lack of meaning in Coriolanus's "mine own truth," a truth we never fully figure. An excellent connective tissue point comes from Greenblatt's review of Fiennes' film:

> Beyond inflexible pride, martial valor, and disgust… Coriolanus' character has a quality that Shakespeare had already begun to explore in the very different figure of Cordelia in *King Lear*: an adherence to principle so extreme and uncompromising that it threatens the whole social order and must in effect be eliminated if life is to go on.[19]

18 Adelman, Janet, "'Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*," in *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1978: 114-115.
19 Op. cit. and I should note I object to this characterization of Cordelia.

The idea is that such "adherence to principle" is triggered by the demand he show his wounds, and it forces him into exile and another shift in identity, yet the status of the principle itself seems ever unclear. Such principle leads to his reflexive and reflective banishment of Rome from himself; as Gwyn Daniel observes,

> It is possible to construe the cry of '*There is a world elsewhere*' as containing a moment of triumphant apotheosis where he might escape his binds by leaving the field and facing the possibility of a period of aloneness, uncertainty and 'statelessness.'[20]

By becoming, indeed embracing such a sense of statelessness—in particular as it is framed in Fiennes's film, as Coriolanus leaves on a desolate and featureless stretch of Rome—Coriolanus solidifies his position as a *war machine*.

This set of identity-shifts, which are demanded by the state and witnessed by the audience, connects almost inexorably to the *nomad/war machine* of Deleuze and Guattari, who suggest that "[t]he war machine is exterior to the State, that it is "irreducible to the State… outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere" (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 351-2). Indeed, Slavoj Žižek reads further Fiennes' Coriolanus specifically as "*fully asserted*… as a figure of [a] radical Left": "It is clear that, whatever Coriolanus is, he does not stand for the body, but is an organ which not only rebels against the body politic [i.e., of Rome], but abandons its body by way of going into exile—a true *organ without a body*."[21] This Coriolanus in particular has allegiance only to his "own truth," a truth which must always be exterior to himself: just as Coriolanus takes his name from outside of Rome, so, too, he has been brought up by his mother to be a perfect soldier who unwillingly has his wounds numbered by others. We would do well to agree with Daniel, who argues that Coriolanus

> is presented as a one-man war machine, a person whose identity is at times whittled down to the sole function of fighting. He even describes himself as a weapon: '*make you a sword of me*.' He is at times imbued with a robotic quality; in the words of Menenius Agrippa, '*he moves like an engine*.'[22]

It is telling, too, that in reflecting upon his performance of the play on stage with the Almeida Theatre Company in 2000, Fiennes himself refers to Coriolanus as a

20 Daniel, Gwyn, *Family Dramas: Intimacy, Power, and Systems in Shakespeare's Tragedies*, London, Routledge, 2018: 175.
21 From "Foreword: The Dark Matter of Violence," Slavoj Žižek, in Sophie Wahnich, *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution*, trans. David Fernbach, London, Verso, 2012.
22 Daniel, *Family Dramas*: 168.

machine: "He's one of the hardest characters to like, I think… [The play] seems to be a relentlessly uncompromising, jagged piece. Likewise, [Coriolanus] is this peculiar, twisted, repressed machine."[23]

Deleuze and Guattari note, as well: "It is true that war kills, and hideously mutilates. But it is especially true after the State has appropriated the war machine. Above all, the State apparatus makes the mutilation, and even death, come first" (422). For Coriolanus, however, the "State" is variably any one of a number of figures: Rome, the Volsces, the plebeians, his family, his army, the audience itself. This last identification proves most problematic and reductive: just as the Roman State has birthed Coriolanus, named him, celebrated him, so too they can expel him. Indeed, in a study of the play's seeming fascination with disgust, Bradley J. Irish argues:

> Coriolanus is cast as a disease of the state, a figuration *enabled* by his own constant professions of disgust: by announcing himself as sickened by the commoners, he unwittingly enables the tribunes to construe his insolence as a dangerous infection, which itself must be purged for the sake of the state's social harmony.[24]

Coriolanus is thus expelled as a doubly foreign entity, as disgust for his disgust, shame of his shame. His wounds in this sense become markers of a kind of contamination for which the State has no place. Mutilation and death are required of the war machine, seem entirely to constitute it, but it is precisely the point at which the war machine desires agency, desires to hide those aching wounds, that the State may disband it.

The final encounter between Coriolanus and Aufidius presents a constant re-framing of Coriolanus—a stripping-away of those elements, ideals, and designations that seemed to constitute his identity. First, Aufidius names him (or, rather, renames him) "the traitor" (5.6.85). "'Traitor?'" Coriolanus asks in disbelief. "How now?" (5.6.87) "Ay, 'traitor,'" Aufidius confirms, before adding another strike: "Martius" (5.6.88). Coriolanus' disbelieving echo of "Martius" in the next line establishes the use of his name as a taunt, a taunt Aufidius repeats twice in the next line, "Ay, Martius, Caius Martius," stopping there, cutting off the supplement that had, in essence, *created* Coriolanus. "Dost thou think / I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stolen name / 'Coriolanus,' in Corioles?" asks Aufidius (5.6. 90-92). Upon hearing the elaboration of Aufidius' accusation—that Coriolanus had "given up / For certain drops of salt" the city of Rome—

23 *Ralph Fiennes on Coriolanus: An interview with Julian Curry*, London, Nick Hern Books, 2010: n.p.
24 Irish, Bradley J., "*Coriolanus* and the Poetics of Disgust," *Shakespeare Survey*, 2016: 209.

Coriolanus says, wonderingly, "Hear'st thou, Mars?" invoking his literal and figurative namesake (5.6.94-5, 102).[25]

At this point, Aufidius infamously delivers the final blow, which will resonate across Coriolanus' final speeches: "Name not the god, thou boy of tears" (5.6.103). This particular hurt smarts the most, for Aufidius had, upon their first friendly encounter, referred to Coriolanus multiple times as "Martius" (which was his proper name at that point) and ultimately as "Mars" (4.5.120). Aufidius has renamed Coriolanus (from "friend" to "traitor"), has stripped him of the martial aspect of his very name, and has finally reduced him to a boy. (The word, as Berry notes, can only be spoken by Aufidius, comprises the taunt only he can give to strike at the heart of his enemy.)

Fiennes' Coriolanus meets his end in a dusty patch of road, a spot pointedly outside city and civilization, really a spot in transit between one set of ruins and other. The final confrontation between Coriolanus and Aufidius is shot in tight close-ups, mirroring the close-ups of their initial confrontation in Corioles; so their lines are spat into each other's frame, in particular the repeated derogatory "boy" so elemental as part of Coriolanus' final undoing. When Butler's Aufidius names Coriolanus "Martius, Caius Martius," and asks him if he thinks he would actually call him "Coriolanus," the lines are spoken over a shot of Fiennes' face—as is the line "Breaking his oath and resolution" (5.6.97). Thus the audience is given to see the lines of his face hardening, so that he becomes a kind of quivering statue, taut and drawn with rage. It is perhaps here that he reaches the apex of Greenblatt's nausea, or the type of nausea rather terrifying to behold. Here he hisses the ultimatum that he should be cut to pieces, that the Volsces should stain all their edges on him. When he shoots back the word *boy*, the camera cuts quickly to Aufidius, so that we seem to have attained Coriolanus' point of view, whereby *he* reduces his opponent by rhetoric to a *boy* (rather than, textually, the other way around). The sneer and snarl with which Fiennes' Coriolanus reminds his audience (of one) that he, *alone*, "like an eagle in a dovecote," tossed the Volscians from Corioles (5.6.115) forces his face like a pistol to cock, so that his final *boy* flies from his mouth as a bullet. Aufidius, before replying, steps back and breaks eye contact, conceding ground, it would almost seem. Turning his back on Coriolanus, he shifts calls his order—"Let him die for it"—over his shoulder, not quite to Coriolanus, but neither entirely to his soldiers, so that the shift in address is clear but the new addressee is not. At that command, the soldiers circle Coriolanus to thrust at him with their knives. As soon as the circle forms, we are given to know he has no chance. Through a series of rapid close shifts, Coriolanus' death is thus made so intimate that the viewer must see and hear the blows, though we see rather the aftermath—the blood and the effect of the wounds—than the death wounds themselves. As Stevens observes of the play-

25 See Holland, 5.6.102n.

text, "The manner of his death thus emphasizes the messy transferability of stage blood, its capacity to spread and to circulate rather than to preserve, to enclose, and to bind."[26] This blood will allow for no scars, unaching or otherwise.

Far simpler but more violent still is the demise of Hiddleston's Coriolanus. After exchanging final taunts with Aufidius, he is chained by his feet and raised into the air so that he dangles, head down, above the stage, his back to the audience. Aufidius, holding his head close, slits his neck, then bathes in his blood in a crooked mirror of the earlier scene in which Coriolanus washed off his blood. An audience member might be able to look elsewhere, to reframe the scenes, but the filmed version of the performance is shot so that the parallels are unmistakable.

The audience becomes a privileged witness to Coriolanus's wounds—the army celebrates them, his family tends to them, the plebians are denied them, but we the audience can look upon them from a vantage-point unstained by political desire. What are the consequences of this extra-spatial viewing? The audience cannot choose to desire or not to desire to see the wounds, and the variety of contexts in which we see them lays bare their shifting purpose in making and unmaking Coriolanus' identity.

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26 Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 78.

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