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# “My birthplace hate I, and my love’s upon / This enemy town”: The Politics of Enmity in *Coriolanus*

**Authors**

Yağmur Tatar[1*]

**Affiliations**

[1]Doctoral Program in English Literature, Graduate School of Social Sciences Yeditepe University, Istanbul, 34755, Turkey.

*To whom correspondence should be addressed; E-mail: yagmur.tatar@yeditepe.edu.tr

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on the politics of enmity in relation to the concepts of carnival and politics of friendship in Shakespeare's late Roman play, *Coriolanus*. It further investigates the politics of enmity that reconstructs *Coriolanus* as a play through the play's interpretation of the carnival politics, sacred Roman ideals, and the dichotomy between the figures of the friend and the enemy.

**Keywords**

Carnival; Coriolanus; enmity; friendship; politics; Shakespeare

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## INTRODUCTION

> The Goths have gathered head, and with a power
> Of high-resolved men, bent to the spoil,
> They hither march amain, under conduct
> Of Lucius, son to old Andronicus;
> Who threats, in course of his revenge, to do
> As much as ever Coriolanus did.
>
> —Aemilius in *Titus Andronicus*

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In her extensive study *The Time Is Out of Joint*, a work that thoroughly interprets Shakespeare as a philosopher of history, Agnes Heller (2002) explains how *Coriolanus*, one of the most politically rich tragedies of Shakespeare, portrays us “an unsympathetic but by no means wicked hero” (p. 281). With a rich portrayal of her own, Heller (2002) regards Caius Martius as “a man who remains a spoiled child almost until the last moment of his life”:

> He is an adult man still doted on and lionized by his mother, from whose love and judgment he can never extricate himself. He is a patrician who hates the plebeians but is still deeply hurt when they do not repay his hatred with adoration and respect. He is the warrior who cannot even imagine that his love and respect for fellow warrior Aufidius, a Volscian patrician, is not returned. Haughty and naïve, easily inflamed and cruel, Coriolanus does not seem likely to appeal to a modern man’s sympathy. Yet he does (p. 281).

*Yet* he does: in spite of the countless remarks on the play’s “half-worked” state (Evans, 1952, p. 174) and its action being “so often predictable” (Oliver, 1952, p. 53), *Coriolanus*, both as a man and as a play, appeals to the scholars of Shakespeare through being “a tragedy of personality” (Hofling, 1957, p. 408). This ‘tragedy of personality’ is at the same time a tragedy of politics; one that is skillfully woven with the explicit politics of friendship and enmity, family and state, gratitude and ingratitude in such a way that as Farnham (1963)

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puts it, "[Coriolanus] does not merely stand at the center of tragedy; he *is* the tragedy. He brings no one down with him in his fall, and his character is entirely sufficient to explain his fall. No supernatural forces are shown to be at work against him" (p. 207). Through this state of being a tragedy of personality and politics, *Coriolanus* also stands different in the way that its loyal emphasis on the enemy and the concept of enmity from the very beginning of the play to the end separates it from *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. This emphasis has even affected many productions of the play throughout the years to the extent that in some of the productions actors who played the role of Coriolanus also played the role of Aufidius at another production—like Ian McKellen who played Aufidius at Nottingham Playhouse in 1963 and Coriolanus at the National Theatre in 1984. As Wilders explains in his introduction to the play, "[i]f such pairing of characters is in some sense a fundamental part of a dramatic method, creating the *agon* between the two men, it is a process that Shakespeare found and perhaps responded to intensely in Plutarch's work" (p. 44).

## RESULTS

As a play that has been regarded as "[u]ncannily temporary" *Coriolanus* is "replete with the stuff of day-to-day political life: handlers, plots, propaganda, demagoguery, street riots, restive mobs, corrupt electioneering and manipulations on all sides, all set against the background of a constitutional crisis and famine" (Leithart, 2006, p. 345). Reminding us of *Julius Caesar*, the play opens at a crucial political moment, one that aspires change through mutiny, and it "harks back to a previous moment of even more momentous change with the expulsion of the last king of Rome, Tarquin, and the establishment of the Republic, with Coriolanus' first battle being the 'repulse of Tarquin'". *Coriolanus* even surpasses *Julius Caesar* with the graveness of its riotous opening: it is the plebeians that utter the first words on stage with their desire to speak and to be heard by the patricians rather than a couple of patricians reprimanding the common people's celebration with a snapping "Is this a holiday?". Mehl (1996) comments on the crowd of plebeians in *Coriolanus*, a crowd that rebels on a different level than the one in *Julius Caesar*: "As in Plutarch, the people's rebellion is not an anarchic resistance against any form of hierarchical order, but rather a desperate act of protest against flagrant misuse of power" (p. 181). The plebeians are

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already given the capacity of speech in the first scene: "Before we proceed any further, hear me speak" (2013, 1.1.1). They are "all resolved rather to die than to famish" (2013, 1.1.3), and as Heller (2002) further points out "[o]ne notices that this plebeian crowd is not the faceless multitude that we encounter in *Julius Caesar*. In this drama, the plebeians have faces. It is not merely their representatives who have faces but also the individual citizens" (p. 288). These 'individual citizens' are the ones that create the first serious "friend versus enemy" dichotomy in the play, overtly political in nature and the first of many to come, by announcing Caius Martius as the "chief enemy to the people" (2013, 1.1.6). Caius Martius is not only one of the enemies, but he is the "chief" enemy of the people—and his death is the ultimate solution to the overtly political problem of the plebeians' hunger. Consequently, rather than the opening scenes of carnivalesque atmosphere in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* opens with a scene that is nearly "a grim parody of the opening of *Julius Caesar*" with a dire emphasis on the politics of enmity, which will be a topic of discussion throughout the entire play (Rabkin, 1966, p. 196). There is no feast of Lupercal of *Julius Caesar* to celebrate and no images to disrobe, nor eight wild boars roasted for breakfast of *Antony and Cleopatra* in *Coriolanus*—there is only famine, thirst for revenge, and outraged mutiny.

**DISCUSSION**

All the plebeians agree that Caius Martius is "a very dog to the commonalty"—an imagery that emphasizes Martius' cruelty (2013, 1.1.26)—but still, the question is to be asked since it is essential to not be mutinous in vain in the Roman context: "Consider you what services he has done for this country?" (2013, 1.1.27). This tiny window of questioning what Caius Martius has done for the good of Rome especially underlines the Roman emphasis on valor and virtue. While *Coriolanus* as a play does not precisely give way to *Julius Caesar*'s civil war, it still portrays us "a subtle and ever-changing balancing of the possibilities of political change and the preferability of particular courses of social action" with the angry plebeians determined to take what they need as the sword of Damocles hanging over the Senate (p. 2). In *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, Bate (2019) explains that Shakespeare's history plays, and one can also add the Roman plays here, "are all marked with the Ciceronian idea of the peculiarly heinous nature of civil war" (p. 108). This political clash

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between the plebeians and their deep resentment toward Caius Martius, a clash that is a common theme in Shakespeare's Roman plays, brings about the initial understating of the concept and politics of enmity in the play. Soon it also becomes clear that although Caius Martius is an honorable warrior who has acted as Rome's sword against her enemies—as Mehl (1996) underlines, "it must be remembered that Coriolanus' excessive prowess is only an extreme form of that Roman *virtus* which, Plutarch tells us, was identified with valor" (p. 186)—his ultimate downfall lies in his pride. For the plebeians, Caius Martius has done what he has done for Rome in the name of being proud rather than truly caring about her people:

> I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end. Though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud – which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue (2013, 1.1.33-37).

The fundamental issue of political enmity that lays the foundations of the opening scene is thoroughly validated through the plebeians' judgment that Caius Martius' valor, honored above all other Roman virtues, is not genuine; or at least, it is not done in the name of Roman ideals. The following lines only make two things clear: firstly, it emphasizes the plebeians' hatred for Caius Martius by their addressing "worthy" Menenius, who is "one that hath always loved the people" and prophesizes Martius' own hatred toward the 'commonalty', a hatred that will set the tone of the play until the death of Caius Martius (2013, 1.1.46).

Caius Martius' first words in the play only proves what the plebeians have remarked about his pride: "What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, / That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, / Make yourselves scabs?" (2013, 1.1.159-161). This aggressive entry, according to Traversi (1937), is a "masterpiece of irony", a "perversion of the traditional speech of war heroes" (p. 46):

> They'll sit by th' fire and presume to know
>
> What's done i'th' Capitol: who's like to rise,

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Who thrives and who declines; side factions, and give out

Conjectural marriages, making parties strong

And feebling such as stand not in their liking

Below their cobbled shoes (2013, 1.1.186-191).

The plebeians, who set the political climate of the opening scene, but whose "affections" are "a sick man's appetite," are effectively and immediately excluded from the realm of politics by Caius Martius (2013, 1.1.172-173). This initially founded enmity between the plebeians and Caius Martius, however, is soon to be followed by the most preeminent figure of the enemy in the play, an equally aggressive foil to Caius Martius and the political and military leader of the Volsci, Tullus Aufidius. Although Plutarch introduces the contradictory figure of Aufidius after Caius Martius' banishment in the "Life of Coriolanus," Shakespeare establishes their reciprocal hatred from the very beginning of the play, which will make their newfound friendship in the following scenes even more startling. While Mehl (1996) remarks that "Aufidius' reaction to the Roman triumph makes him appear as the weaker of the two, inferior in moral integrity and heroic stature," the boundaries that separate Caius Martius and Aufidius as political figures and future enemies/friends will get so transparent in the following scenes that it will become impossible to tell where the boundaries of either is set (p. 186).

It is right in the first scene of the play that we get to hear the name Tullus Aufidius: the Volsci are gathering an army, and Caius Martius knows too well who is leading them: "They have a leader, / Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to't. / I sin envying his nobility, / And were I any thing but what I am, / I would wish me only he" (2013, 1.1.223-227). Aufidius is not only an enemy of the Romans, but he is specifically the chosen enemy of Martius—there is a nearly 'star-crossed' enmity between the two: "Were half to half the world by th'ears and he / Upon my party, I'd revolt to make / Only my wars with him" (2013, 1.1.228-230). Martius' "sin" is "envying" Aufidius' nobility—he is even ready to lose his own self and be Aufidius if he were not Caius Martius. This level of antagonistic respect and high-esteem, a kind of setting-apart that nearly cherishes the enemy, reminds us of Cleopatra's violent reaction to Charmian, who makes the mistake of comparing

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Caesar to Antony: “By Isis, I will give thee bloody teeth, / If thou with Caesar paragon again / My man of men” (1995, 1.5.83-85). The introduction of Aufidius elucidates that Martius nearly *treasures* him as a fellow warrior and most importantly as an enemy. This crucial line of thought sets the tone for Martius and Aufidius’ relationship throughout the play and further prophesizes Martius’ banishment from Rome—where he leaves his identity, Caius Martius Coriolanus, and becomes, in a way, a Volscian—becomes Tullus Aufidius. The language Martius uses when he talks about Aufidius carries a great deal of passion and sometimes nearly amazement: he regards Aufidius as a “lion” he is “proud to hunt” (2013, 1.1.230-231); “There is the man of my soul’s hate, Aufidius, / Piercing our Romans” he declares in a moment of bleeding haze while in combat (2013, 1.5.10-11), which, in the presence of Aufidius, becomes “rather physical / Than dangerous to me” (2013, 1.5.17-19). The blood he “violently” loses in battle against Aufidius consequently functions as a remedial act of bloodletting rather than a fatal battle wound, and as a result, Aufidius’ enmity becomes Martius’ cure. Eventually, all Martius cares about is to combat with Aufidius and only Aufidius, yet he still “hates” him “[w]orse than a promise breaker (2013, 1.8.1-2). Aufidius responds to Caius Martius’ hate in the most reciprocal manner as he declares, “We *hate alike* [emphasis added]: / Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor / More than thy fame and envy” (2013, 1.8.3-4). The boundaries of love and hatred get progressively blurry as Martius and Aufidius loses their own selves in the image of one another. As Miller (2015) points out, Aufidius becomes “the other of myself who reflects my self to myself”; he carries the potential to “call the integrity, the sufficiency, of my self into question”—as a result, the enmity that Caius Martius and Aufidius hold dear against one another both alludes and resembles “a potential violence in friendship: a violence that recalls the passion of love” (p. 176). In their case, however, it is a violence that recalls the passion of hatred, of enmity—separated from friendship and the friend with a ghostly Shakespearean boundary.

This desire to fight with one another exclusively is reciprocated by Aufidius in the following lines and remains a theme throughout the entire play: “Five times, Martius, / I have fought with thee; so often hast thou beat me, / And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter / As often as we eat”; a past that Aufidius nearly indulges in reminiscing, and even conceptualizes into a future to come, “By th’elements, / If e’er again I meet him beard

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to beard, / He's mine, or I am his (2013, 1.10.7-12). This possessive streak of their enmity—'He's *mine*, or I am *his*' carries a decisive tone in it that implies the death of the 'other' in any other case—is contrasted with the overwhelming passion of enmity and hatred they bear for one another:

> My valour's poisoned
>
> With only suffering stain by him, for him
>
> Shall fly out of itself. Nor sleep nor sanctuary,
>
> Being naked, sick, nor fane nor Capitol,
>
> The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifice –
>
> Embargements all of fury – shall lift up
>
> Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst
>
> My hate to Martius. Where I find him, were it
>
> At home upon my brother's guard, even there,
>
> Against the hospitable canon, would
>
> Wash my fierce hand in's heart (2013, 1.10.17-27).

Aufidius is ready to break all 'custom' to clash with Caius Martius—even the sacred law of hospitality or over his brother's protection—and this sentiment stays the same except during the brief time of their short-lived friendship. What strikes us, however, is how ephemeral the political favor of the common people of Rome stands, or how frequently their view of Caius Martius is prone to change throughout the play. The opening scene's outrage toward Caius Martius transforms into flung gloves and handkerchiefs with blessing following his military victory over the Volsci: "All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights / Are spectacled to see him. Your prattling nurse / Into a rapture lets her baby cry, / While she chats him" (2013, 2.1.199-202). The famished plebeians of the opening scene, who have initially declared Martius as their "chief enemy" and "a very dog to the

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commonalty" are now "all agreeing / In earnestness to see him" (2013, 2.1.206-207), which, as Sicinius, one of the *tribunus plebis* assures, the common people "[u]pon their ancient malice will forget, / With the least cause, these his new honours, which / That he will give them make I as little question / As he is proud to do't" (2013, 2.1.221-224). As Caius Martius becomes Coriolanus, the common people's hatred turns into a fleeting adoration, but one that is ready to disappear in the slightest change. Brutus remarks that he heard Coriolanus swear "[w]ere he to stand for consul, never would he / Appear i'th' market-place nor on him put / The napless vesture of humility, / Nor, showing, as the manner is, his wounds / To th' people, beg their stinking breaths" (2013, 2.1.227-229). Surely this proud act of refusing to show his battle wounds will be enough for the common people to reclaim their hatred toward Coriolanus, since, as Sicinius has wisely put, "Nature teaches beasts to know their friends" (2013, 2.1.6). Menenius asks: "Pray you, who does the wolf love?" (2013, 2.1.7). While Sicinius' answer "the lamb" here represents "the hungry plebeians [devouring]…the noble Martius", it also prophesizes Coriolanus and Aufidius' future friendship that is solely founded on gain and manipulation. At the end of the day, Sicinius is right: Coriolanus beseeches the Senate for passing the spectacle of wounds "for I cannot / Put on the gown, stand naked and entreat them, / For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage" (2013, 2.2.135-137). The idea of begging the commoners for their vote is pitiful to Coriolanus, to "brag unto them 'Thus I did, and thus', / Show them th'unaching scars which I should hide, / As if I had received them for the hire / Of their breath only" (2013, 2.2.146-149). He is simply too proud for the gown of humility; too much that he simply "cannot bring / My tongue to such a pace. 'Look, sir, my wounds! / I got them in my country's service, when / Some certain of your brethren roared and ran / From th' noise of our own drums'" (2013, 2.3.49-53). This pride prevents the foundation of the political friendship necessary for him to be chosen as a consul, which results in an outrageous politics of enmity. Although it is widely accepted both by the tribunes and the common people that Coriolanus has been a worthy warrior of Rome—he has been "a scourge to her enemies", "a rod to her friends"—it is still unacceptable that he has not "loved the common people", who hope to "find you our friend" (2013, 2.3.89-102). In the most Aristotelian way, however, this type of friendship between Coriolanus and the plebeians is not only unnecessary, but it is simply impossible; even the idea of it is

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meaningless. Coriolanus prefers them “rather to have my hat than my heart”, however, to his dismay, the political responsibility of being a consul of the Senate carries in itself the expectation of “[making] him good friend to the people” (2013, 2.3.133).

Although Coriolanus’ contempt toward the plebeians carries an insulting condemnation in it, his insolent attitude is completely different in nature when it comes to his greatest enemy. Tullus Aufidius is to the Volscians what Coriolanus is to Corioles: they are both warriors of valor, of *virtus,* and they are both the swords of their cities. Coriolanus repeatedly remarks how he despises the common people and how he despises Aufidius separately throughout the play, but we never get the impression that they are similar kind of enmities. As the “Hydra” of plebeians is a “common cry of curs whose breath I hate / As reek o’th’ rotten fens” (2013, 3.3.119-120), the problem makes itself clear when we see that Coriolanus’ loyalty and love toward Rome do not extend to its common people. As a result, Brutus’ question, “What is the city but the people?” (2013, 3.1.199) completely lays flat since Coriolanus not only does not regard the commoners as a political part of Rome, but also “speak o’th’ people as if you were a god / To punish, not a man of their infirmity” (2013, 3.1.82-83). This may be why Coriolanus is greatly insulted by the commoners’ ingratitude as a god is insulted by the ingratitude of its subjects:

I banish you;

And here remain with your uncertainty!

Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!

Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,

Fan you into despair! Have the power still

To banish your defenders; till at length

Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,

Making not reservation of yourselves,

Still your own foes, deliver you as most

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Abated captives to some nation

That won you without blows! Despising,

For you, the city, thus I turn my back:

There is a world elsewhere (2013, 3.3.122-134).

Coriolanus, like a “viper, / That would depopulate the city, and / Be every man himself” (2013, 3.1.265-267), denounces Rome, his home, out of his blind hatred for her citizens. His enmity toward the commoners, then, strikes us as a pure enmity of class and his hateful reverence for Aufidius reveals that Coriolanus deems Aufidius, an enemy of higher class, more worthy than the plebeians of Rome, the supposed friends of lower class. The uncanny equality of Coriolanus and Aufidius’ status is one of the reasons that grant them a nearly obsessive streak toward one another, and Aufidius is worth Coriolanus’ time especially because Coriolanus *is* Aufidius: when he gets the news of Aufidius gathering a new army he nearly finds the news exciting—“Spoke he of me?”, “How? What?”, “At Antium lives he?” (2013, 3.1.12-20)—while the only praise and appreciation he ever shows throughout the play is when there is a talk of Tullus Aufidius.

After his banishment from Rome with his Timonesque exit with curses upon Rome, Coriolanus’ first words in Antium, the enemy city, will be of praise: although it is a city that he “made thy widows” while “[m]any an heir / Of these fair edifices fore my wars / Have I heard groan and drop”, Antium now is “a goodly city” (2013, 4.4.1-4). As one of the few soliloquys in the entire play, the following speech not only demonstrates Coriolanus’ interpretation of the fragility and fickleness of all human relationships, those of friends and family, but also presents a view of friendship and enmity that precisely emphasize opposition and conflict:

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,

Whose double bosoms seems to wear one heart,

Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise

Are still together, who twin, as ’twere, in love

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Unseparable, shall within this hour,

On a dissension of a doit, break out

To bitterest enmity. So fellest foes,

Whose passions and whose plots have broke their sleep

To take the one the other, by some chance,

Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends

And interjoin their issues (2013, 4.4.12-22).

This may be one of the most Nietzschean demonstrations of the concepts of enmity and friendships throughout Shakespeare's late Roman plays: Coriolanus' former home with his friends and family, those with whom he shared "one heart" through "double bosoms" are now a reason for his "bitterest enmity" while his "fellest foes" are his "dear friends (2013, 4.4.12-22). There is, then, nothing else left to do: "My birthplace hate I," declares Coriolanus, "and my love's upon / This enemy town. I'll enter. If he slay me / He does fair justice; if he give me way, / I'll do his country service" (2013, 4.4.22-26). As we have mentioned in the previous chapters regarding Nietzsche and the (dis)appearance of the enemy and the friend, then, it is nearly possible to imagine Coriolanus echo Zarathustra when he claims that "[o]ur longing for a friend is our betrayer" (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 82). Nietzsche's interpretation through Zarathustra—"'At least be my enemy!'—thus speaks the true reverence, that does not venture to ask for friendship"—preaches us to "honor even the enemy in your friend" and "possess your best enemy" in a friend since one cannot go near his friend without going over to his enemy and one's heart feels closest to a friend when one opposes him (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 83). Under these circumstances, Coriolanus' previous statement near his banishment from Rome, "We have as many friends as enemies" prophesizes the "slippery turns" of the politics of enmity and further emphasizes the validity of the vice versa (2013, 3.1.32). The oppositional change in the status of the concept of the friend and the enemy in *Coriolanus* carries the undertones of Nietzsche's reversal of the Greek tradition of *philia*, as Derrida (1993) explains, "the Christian mutation which prefers the neighbor to the Greek friend" (p. 359). The neighbor (Romans) is the

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enemy while the enemy (Volsci) is now the new friend, which may remind us the possibility of there not being (many) friends: if "o my friends, there is no friend" then it is true, as Derrida (1993) further explains, that the "the certitude of a strange affirmation" that the "painful and plaintive irony of the address" states means that "someone is *turning* toward his friends, 'O my friends…' but the apostrophe carries within it a predicative proposition, it envelops an indicative declaration. Stating a fact, it also utters a general truth: 'there is no friend' (p. 367). Then, it is the very *act*, the very "possibility of the apostrophe" that contradicts the general truth of this "fact" or "the possibility of its being serious" since "there must indeed be friends in order for me to address myself to them in this way, if only so as to say to them 'there is no friend.'" (Derrida, 1993, p. 367). Having emphasized that friendship is "never a given in the present", Derrida (1993) concludes that it "belongs to the experience of waiting, of promise or of engagement. Its discourse is that of prayer, and at stake there is what responsibility opens to the future" (p. 368). This is where Coriolanus finds himself, then, at the end of the world, seeking for a world 'elsewhere', a world that has (better) friends in it, a world where his appeal is heard:

> His honor drives the only honorable man in Rome to treachery, to the betrayal of the state with whom not only his fortunes but also his values are inextricably associated. The process means the destruction of the man. Having accepted his identity and his name as Rome's defender, he must now reject that identity until nothing is left but his ever intenser sense of personal honor and a consuming hatred for what he takes to be the source of his humiliation (Rabkin, 1966, p. 206).

## CONCLUSION

The fact that Coriolanus arrives in the middle of a lively banquet in Antium is ironic: the feast we never had the chance to experience back in Rome greets Coriolanus '*in mean apparel, disguised and muffled*' with the loud chanting of "[w]ine, wine, wine!" of the Servingmen (2013, 4.5.1). Although we have a truly carnivalesque scene before our eyes, Coriolanus is not quite himself, both stripped of his Roman title and name and uncrowned before he was even properly crowned a consul, a discrepancy he notices

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himself: “The feast smells well, but I / Appear not like a guest” (2013, 4.5.5-6). The conundrum about Coriolanus’ present identity, now that he is banished from Rome and stripped of his Romanness, is the initial issue. Aufidius asks Coriolanus’ name six times while Coriolanus keeps repeating “Knowst thou me yet?” (2013, 4.5.55-66), but he still has to explain that he is “Caius Martius who hath done / To thee particularly and to all the Volsces / Great hurt and mischief” (2013, 4.5.67-69). The name Coriolanus is the only thing that remains after his old life, and Rome’s sword, who “[a]t sixteen years, / When Tarquin made a head for Rome…fought / Beyond the mark of others” (2013, 2.2.85-87) is now at the door of Rome’s enemy “not out of hope to save my life” but “in mere spite / To be full quit of those my banishers” (2013, 4.5.81-85). Coriolanus is now very clear that his reason for turning to Aufidius is revenge and the fact that he is “past pursuing any political ends and only wants to see Rome consumed by fire and sword” is the most fundamental reason why the case of Coriolanus is taken up both by Cicero and Montaigne (Mehl, 1996, p. 196). Cicero’s inquiry, “If Coriolanus had any friends, shouldn’t they have taken up arms against their own country alongside him?” underlines the Roman taboo of civil war since “[m]en so noble would consider it just as wrong to ask for such a favor as to grant one” (77). This is why the following scenes where Coriolanus and Aufidius turn into “dear friends”, who share one heart through double bosoms, strike the reader as a nearly forbidden notion. Coriolanus offers his throat to Aufidius, to his formal enemy, and his “ancient malice” in the name of political friendship, but what is more striking is Aufidius’ own reaction to the fact that Coriolanus, his biggest enemy, has forsaken Rome and is now asking his help to burn it down (2013, 4.5.97-98):

> Know thou first,
>
> I loved the maid I married; never man
>
> Sighed truer breath. But that I see thee here,
>
> Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
>
> Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
>
> Bestride my threshold…Thou hast beat me out

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Twelve several times and I have nightly since

Dreamt of encounters ’twixt thyself and me –

We have been down together in my sleep,

Unbuckling helms, fisting each other’s throat –

And waked half dead with nothing (2013, 4.5.115-128).

Aufidius’ speech, so full of fervor to the point of homoerotic insinuations, has caused many interpretations of the relationship between Coriolanus and Aufidius to spring to life. It may be noted, however, that Aufidius’ passion is most probably affected with not only the idea of “[p]ouring war / Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome, / Like a bold flood o’erbear’t” but also doing it with Coriolanus by his side (2013, 4.5.131-133). From the very beginning of their pseudo-friendship, however, Shakespeare makes sure to inform the reader that Aufidius only has his own interest in mind: “One fire drives out one fire, one nail one nail, / Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail. / Come, let’s away. When, Caius, Rome is thine, / Thou art poor’st of all; then shortly art thou mine (2013, 4.7.54-57). The hands of the enemy is now greeted as friendly as Coriolanus is directed to “take our friendly senators by th’ hands” (2013, 4.5.134) and declared “more a friend than ere an enemy” (2013, 4.5.147). The transition from great enemies into “fast-sworn” friends is almost dizzying; and soon the news that “Martius, / Joined with Aufidius, leads a power ’gainst Rome / And vows revenge as spacious as between / The young’st and oldest thing” reaches Rome (2013, 4.6.65-68). As Aufidius has foretold, Coriolanus will be to Rome “[a]s is the osprey to the fish, who takes it / By sovereignty of nature” (2013, 4.7.33-35).

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It is only unacceptable to Menenius back in Rome that Coriolanus might have joined forces with Aufidius; it is such an unlikely union of the most opposite extremes that “[h]e and Aufidius can no more atone / Than violen’st contrariety” (2013, 4.6.73-74). However, it is true; and he will see it himself when he visits Coriolanus at the enemy camp: reduced into “a kind of nothing, titleless,” Coriolanus does not answer to his name “[t]ill he had forged himself a name o’th’ fire / Of burning Rome (2013, 5.1.11-14), which is further emphasized by his answer to Cominius in regards to forgiveness “[f]or’s private

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friends: “His answer to me was / He could not stay to pick them in a pile / Of noisome musty chaff. He said ’twas folly, / For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt / And still to nose th’offence” (2013, 5.1.23-28). Coriolanus’ decisive action to ‘burn’ all of Rome, however, soon turns into “convenient peace” after he is persuaded by his family, especially his mother, to Aufidius’ strategic dismay (2013, 5.3.190-191). Aufidius declares that he has “raised” and “pawned” Coriolanus, and it is now him that feels the ingratitude of Coriolanus in exchange for what he has done for him, “who being so heightened, / He watered his new plants with dews of flattery, / Seducing so my friends, and to this end / He bowed his nature, never known before / But to be rough, unswayable and free” (2013, 5.6. 19-25). Aufidius’ emphasized enunciation of Coriolanus’ ingratitude takes us back to Coriolanus’ own outrage and disappointment with the citizens of Rome, which was his reason for leaving and being a traitor to his own country:

> Being banished for’t, he came unto my hearth,
>
> Presented my knife to his throat. I took him,
>
> Made him joint-servant with me, gave him way
>
> In all his own desires; nay, let him choose
>
> Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,
>
> My best and freshest men; served his designments
>
> In mine own person, holp to reap the fame
>
> Which he did end all his and took some pride
>
> To do myself this wrong, till at the last
>
> I seemed his follower, not partner, and
>
> He waged me with his countenance as if
>
> I had been mercenary (2013, 5.4.29-39).

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Like in *Julius Caesar*, we see Conspirators of Aufidius' faction help Aufidius justify the murder of Coriolanus as the necessary evil; a result of Coriolanus' own actions of betraying Aufidius and the Volsci by making peace with the Romans. Coriolanus is now a changed man, and with this change comes the change of the notion of friendship—a change that carries the violent potential of enmity through surpassing a friendship "prior to friendships, an ineffaceable, fundamental and bottomless friendship, the one which draws its breath in the sharing of a language (past or to come) and in the being together which any allocution supposes, including a declaration of war" (Derrida, 1993, p. 368). Ironically, Coriolanus' final triumphal entry in the play portrays him with the Volsci plebeians rather than the patricians, and the following scene elucidates the contrast between Coriolanus' last moments before his banishment from Rome and his last moments before his death in Altium: while it was the Roman plebeians who were the main cause of his banishment from Rome, it is now the Volsci plebeians that accompany him on the stage for the last time, but it will be the Volsci patricians that will bring Coriolanus down this time around. While the question if the Volscian plebeians prove as easily manipulatable and changeable as their Roman counterparts hangs over the scene, Coriolanus is one more time reduced to a "traitor" and further, to a "boy of tears" (2013, 5.6.85-92). All there is left is the chanting of murder through the Conspirators' doing, and the commoners' immediate transition from Coriolanus' supporters to another 'Hydra' of commoners, one that is filled with hatred: "Let him die for't! / Tear him to pieces! Do it presently! He killed my son! My daughter! He killed my cousin Marcus! He killed my father!" (2013, 5.6. 120-123). Consequently, love, as Miller (2015) explains, functions here "on the cusp of turning into hate. Friendship is both the other of love in its irrational self-centered passion and its mirror image" (p. 195). This is parallel to how Derrida (1997) interrogates the oppositional negativity between friendship and enmity as he explains that "[t]he enemy, the enemy of morality in any case, is love. Not because it is the enemy, but because, in the excess of attraction in unleashes, it gives way to rupture, to enmity, to war. It carries hatred in it" (p. 287):

> The ontological categories that define our existence and that a certain Stoic rationality seeks to keep apart are forever crossed by friendship as a moment of

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> universal singularity, in which the dead live, the absent are present, and in which too often the object of love, a friend, becomes our enemy (Miller, 2015, p. 195).

“No other Shakespearean hero,” explains Mehl (1996) ends in such an unheroic manner” (p. 199): Aufidius final declaration that he is “struck with sorrow” over Coriolanus’ death does not sound very convincing from the mouth of the murderer and the idea, the prayer, the promise that “he shall have a noble memory” falls flat as Coriolanus dies far from Rome, away from both friends and enemies (2013, 5.6.149-155).

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