8-2004

Beyond gender : the pursuit of power in the Henriad and Coriolanus

James Aaron Beavers

Beyond Gender: The Pursuit of Power in the *Henriad* and *Coriolanus*

James Aaron Beavers
M.A. in English
University of Richmond
August 2004
Dr. Anthony Russell

The feminine in Shakespeare's plays, like the Bakhtinian grotesque, often offers a critical perspective on patriarchal society. Shakespeare creates characters whose feminine perspective enables them to stand outside of the patriarchal paradigm and operate according to alternative modes of behavior. While the dominant system regards power solely as a masculine territory, Shakespeare suggests that true power can only be effectively pursued by those who are not bound to a particular gender identity, but are able to shift their personas in accordance with their ever-changing milieu.

In *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare depicts both the ineffectiveness of characters that are completely committed to a masculine sense of identity, and the effectiveness of characters who are able to stand outside of the patriarchal system, and perceive identity as an artificially imposed construct which can be altered at will.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

5/31/04

Dr. Anthony Russell, Thesis Advisor

5/3,/04

Dr. Raymond Hilliard

Alan L. Loxterman

Dr. Alan Loxterman

BEYOND GENDER: THE PURSUIT OF POWER IN THE *HENRIAD* AND *CORIOLANUS*

By

James Aaron Beavers

B.A., Grove City College, 2001

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

Of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English Literature

August 2004

Richmond, Virginia

In *The Prince* Machiavelli provides rulers with detailed advice on how to gain and maintain power.

> Therefore, a prince must know how to use wisely the natures of the beast and the man. This policy was taught to princes allegorically by the ancient writers, who described how Achilles and many other ancient princes were given to Chiron the Centaur to be raised and taught under his discipline. This can only mean that, having a half-beast and half-man as a teacher, a prince must know how to employ the nature of the one and the other; and the one without the other cannot endure. (Bondanella and Musa 133-4)

The critical idea here is that the prince must know how to *employ* two different natures. Machiavelli does not propose that a prince become, literally, a centaur, containing both man and beast within himself. For Machiavelli, a good ruler does not operate within the realm of ideology, but stands outside of it, and so is able to manipulate the system to his own advantage. He is not bound to behave as a man or a beast, or as some combination of the two. His identity is flexible and mutable, and this allows him to act always in his own best interests to achieve and maintain power. His question is not, "what ideal shall I commit myself to?", but "what nature shall I utilize in this specific instance?". Here, as elsewhere, Machiavelli indicates the necessity for a prince to be an accomplished actor and manipulator of public opinion in order to maintain power. In this paper I will prove that Shakespeare uses the traditional opposition of the masculine and the feminine in much the same way as Machiavelli speaks about men and beasts. Shakespeare's successful ruler is the one who is able to stand outside of the ideological system of his society, and employ both the masculine and the feminine in his pursuit of power. Rather

than simply operating within the ideological construct of patriarchal Renaissance England, Shakespeare's victorious rulers are those who are able to peer beyond it, and recognize it as a façade. Appearance becomes more important than actual identity; masculinity and femininity are nothing more than roles to be played by the successful wielder of power. The *Henriad* and *Coriolanus* serve as particularly good examples of this because their protagonists pursue power in very different ways. The main characters in *1 Henry IV* and *Coriolanus* are almost mirror images of one another, and their antagonists seem similarly opposed. Coriolanus and Hotspur operate entirely within the realm of masculine ideology and are utterly devoted to its principles, while Aufidius and Prince Hal seem to share the ability to stand outside this construct, and are thus successful in both the military and political arenas. Even the mother figures in these plays are opposites. Falstaff, despite being a man, embodies the Renaissance notions of the feminine with his grotesque body and excessive indulgence, while Volumnia is an extremely masculine figure who raises her son accordingly. Both Henry and Coriolanus fashion themselves through warfare, and demonstrate their conflicting methods of achieving power on the battlefield and at the court and Senate. *Coriolanus* depicts the rise and fall of a character who is completely devoted to the idea that power is solely the domain of the masculine. Coriolanus bases his identity on his own virility and military prowess, and ultimately fails to maintain power because he is unable to reconcile his masculinity with the compromises, role-playing and theatricality that the political realm requires. Henry is successful because he is not devoted to a particular gender ideology, but is able to manipulate appearances and utilize both masculine and feminine traits as

they best serve his purposes. Sometimes he appears to us as a masculine figure who stands apart from others, while at other times he adopts a more "feminine" stance by emphasizing his relationships with other characters. He recognizes the need for creating a masculine identity for himself in order to establish a firm hold on the throne of England, but he also understands that this identity is only one of various roles that he must play in order to be a successful king.

In these plays, the masculine is tied to the belief that power comes to those who are the strongest; to those who are most capable of asserting their will through force, and who have created an identity for themselves based on independence. It is defined by a devotion to a particular set of ideals that serve to structure the world of characters like Coriolanus and Hotspur. Self-consciously masculine characters are devoted to warfare, virtue and honor and organize their lives around these standards. War is a particularly masculine milieu. It allows characters like Coriolanus and Hotspur to assert their masculinity, without any help from others, through the forceful repression and domination of their enemies. In war they are able to be uncompromising in their pursuit of masculinity. Henry also uses war to create a masculine identity for himself, but he is not defined solely by this identity, as are Coriolanus and Hotspur. The masculine in these plays is that which attempts to impose a structure and order on the unrestrained elements of a person or a nation. There is also a sense in which masculinity defines itself merely by the repression of its Other, its opposite, or that which it is not. By clearly defining themselves as not feminine, the self-consciously masculine characters in these plays attempt to support their identities through the repression of those around them who

represent the feminine. From the perspective of the masculine, the feminine is merely a negative. It represents everything that the patriarchy regards as outside proper modes of behavior. In these plays, however, Shakespeare seems to suggest that the feminine offers a more genuine view of the world that is subversive of the masculine/feminine binary. It stresses the fact that societies and people always require relationships, and that no one can be truly independent.

The feminine, in these plays, is that which defies ideological constructs. For this reason it is opposed to the masculine. It is repressed by the masculine because it refuses to be bound by any system. The feminine in these plays celebrates freedom, plurality and homogeneity rather than structure, hierarchy, and inequality. It is consistently repressed by the dominant masculinity within the plays, but is, at the same time, irrepressible and constantly stepping outside the bounds set for it. While the masculine attempts to define its identity clearly through structure and order, the feminine perceives identity as mutable and arbitrary. In the plays we will be studying, the feminine subversion of identity is demonstrated through theatricality and deception, which gesture towards a world where identity is always and merely a role.

Women in these plays are often merely repressed figures who serve to reinforce the masculine identity of the male characters. They are not representations of the subversive feminine that I have defined above, but depictions of the feminine as it is viewed within the narrow scope of the masculine ideological system. Women like Hotspur's Kate and Virgilia support masculine ideology, rather than subverting it, by

allowing themselves to be repressed by their male counterparts, and operating entirely within the dominant patriarchal system of the plays.

Though the women in the *Henriad* and *Coriolanus* operate within the paradigm of patriarchal society, Shakespeare does recognize the subversion of this paradigm as feminine. In other plays he uses women to undermine the masculine system through theatricality, role-playing, and the shifting of identities. For example, it is Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* who is able to circumvent the masculine legal system in order to save Antonio from death. She is able to achieve this by altering her identity from an heiress to a male law clerk. Rosalind, in *As You Like It*, is only able to achieve freedom and the love of Orlando by transforming herself into a boy. Both of these women subvert the masculine world in which they live through role-play. They suggest that identity is not fixed, but a mutable construct that can be manipulated at will. Shakespeare perceives the feminine, not as an aberration within a masculine system, but as a perspective that stands outside the masculine paradigm and critiques it.

Before beginning this paper in earnest it may be helpful to briefly discuss some of the predominant Renaissance views on gender and the status of women in society that Shakespeare explores in the *Henriad* and *Coriolanus*. In the hierarchical society of Renaissance England, women were considered inferior creatures to their male counterparts. It was believed that they were more subject to the emotions and more easily ruled by their passions and desires than men, so that excessive sensual indulgence was considered a feminine quality. There seemed to be, in Renaissance men, a latent fear of women and their power to incite lust (Traub 51). Associated with this was a fear of

the deceptiveness of women. For example, Thomas Tuke, a Renaissance minister, spoke strongly against the use of makeup as a deceptive practice, which enflamed dangerous passions. In his treatise on the subject Tuke writes, "And what is a woman painted but a certain type of hypocrite, resembling that in show which she is not truly? Is deceit and falsehood lovely? And what is this artificial facing but a true deceit, or a deceitful truth?"(Davis 112), and later, "Without doubt, then, a deceitful and effeminate face is the ensign of a deceitful and effeminate heart"(Davis 118). A Renaissance man was considered corrupt and effeminate if he allowed himself to be ruled by his passions and surrendered to the seductions of women. Though allowances were made for married couples, the predominant ideology encouraged restraint, and women were seen as a threat to man's self-discipline. In the Renaissance, then, the genders were seen as separate and even opposed to one another. Men were expected to rule over women and restrain them since women could not be expected to control themselves. Men were even considered to be physically more capable of superior virtue because they were supposed to generate more heat than women. "He may be ambidextrous wheras she rarely is, and has mental characteristics which may also be attributed to body heat: courage, liberality, moral strength, honesty. The female on the other hand, being colder, is characterized by the deprivation or opposite of these features"(Maclean 32). In her study of *The Elizabethan Woman*, Carroll Camden describes typical Renaissance attitudes towards women. "To get what she wants, a woman will do or say anything; thus she is deceiving, dissembling, and lying...In Nicholas Ling's compilation appears a poem stating that woman habitually dissembles, going on to say that a man who can find constancy in a woman can find

anything in a woman"(Camden 27). To the Renaissance mind, then, deceptiveness, sensuality, and any form of role-playing is associated with the feminine. Women were perceived as never being satisfied, and as always trying to change their identities or their roles in society (which men imposed on them) through the use of makeup, equivocation and theatricality.

That theatricality is connected with the feminine is not, perhaps, an immediately obvious point, so I will attempt to demonstrate this more clearly. Referring to *1 Henry IV*, Howard and Rackin state that, "the tavern is clearly marked as a feminized, theatrical space"(165). They go on to note the confluence between the playacting that takes place between Falstaff and Hal in the tavern world of the Henry IV plays, and the prostitutes who would look for customers among theatergoers. Licentiousness, acting, and the feminine are all conjoined in the taverns of Eastcheap. Like the actor's ability to perceive the world through a multitude of different viewpoints, the feminine is subversive of the masculine Self because it suggests a reality beyond the single ethos asserted by the masculine. Bamber calls this ethos "the dogma of 'man-honor-fight'"(91) which so clearly defines purely masculine characters like Hotspur and Coriolanus. These characters devote themselves to a single set of rules, which they associate with masculinity. For them, no behavior or perspective that lies outside of their doctrine of masculinity is acceptable. Characters like Falstaff, however, suggest "a world beyond the dialectic of politics, just as the women do in the tragedies"(Holderness 68). Falstaff exists in a world that pays no homage to a particular set of ideals, but regards all such

boundaries as arbitrary and meaningless. In an exploration of Greek theater, with which Shakespeare was undoubtedly familiar, F.I. Zeitlin notes,

> This double dimension of role playing is a feature that Greek society would perceive as not exclusively but yet fundamentally feminine. Woman is the mimetic creature par excellence, ever since Hesiod's Zeus created her as an imitation with the aid of the other artisan gods and adorned her with a deceptive allure. Woman is perennially under suspicion as the one who acts a part – that of the virtuous wife – but hides other thoughts and feelings, dangerous to men, within herself and the house. "Counterfeit evil" is the charge that Hippolytus is not alone in bringing against the *genos*, the race of women, for she has the best capacity, by her nature and origin, to say one thing and hide another in her heart, to sow the doubt in her husband's mind, to cite perhaps the radical cause, that the child she bears may be his but again may not be. (121-2)

Acting is a feminine skill that Prince Hal learns from Falstaff and utilizes in constructing his royal authority throughout the *Henriad*. By contrast, characters such as Coriolanus and Hotspur, who devote themselves solely to a masculine ideology, frequently express their distaste for speaking and acting according to any role other than the one they have chosen for themselves. The ability to role-play and manipulate appearances is associated with the feminine, which always subverts the clearly defined gender identity of the masculine Self.

Stephen Greenblatt calls this mode of behavior "improvisation" (227) and delineates the Renaissance origins of this mode in his essay on *The Improvisation of Power*. In his analysis of *Othello* he explores Iago's ability to role-play and "empathize" (to use Daniel Lerner's term) with the people around him (Greenblatt 225). This improvisational power is echoed in characters like Henry V and Aufidius who orchestrate

their rise to power through the assumption of multiple roles. While never fully identifying with masculine or feminine ideologies, these characters utilize both to achieve and maintain authority. Henry and Aufidius stand outside of the imposed patriarchal system that defines the characters as either masculine (positive) or feminine (negative), and instead adopt an alternative feminine perspective that perceives all such definitions as subjective.

In order to further clarify my use of the term "the feminine" it will be helpful to incorporate Bakhtin's paradigm of the classical and grotesque body into our study of gender in these plays. Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque sheds light on the distinction between the masculine and the feminine by aligning the feminine with the grotesque and the masculine with the classical. "The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world"(Bakhtin 317). As I have already mentioned, the masculine seeks individuality above interrelatedness. Characters like Hotspur and Coriolanus purposefully distance themselves from those around them in order to reinforce their masculine identity. The feminine in Shakespeare's plays is associated with the grotesque body which is open and interconnected with the world at large, as opposed to the closed classical body. It stresses relationships over individuality. Gareth Hill describes the feminine as having both a static and a dynamic element, but in both cases he notes the confluence between the feminine and interrelatedness. Using particularly grotesque terminology he writes of the static feminine, "Its essence is the

impersonal, rhythmic cycle of nature, which gives all life and takes all life. It is *being*: organic, undifferentiated, all components interdependent, and no one component more important than any other"(Hill 4-5). He goes on to depict this feminine as an Uroboros, the circular figure that grows as it feeds on itself (Hill 6). In describing the dynamic feminine he tells us that, "In its highest aspect, the dynamic feminine is the synthesizing creation of new possibilities and new combinations"(Hill 20). His distinction between the static and dynamic is not particularly relevant to my purposes, but I wanted to note that in both cases the feminine is associated with relationships and interconnectedness. There is, then, a strong correlation between Bakhtin's grotesque body and the feminine that I am exploring in Shakespeare's work. In fact, Bakhtin himself associates the grotesque body with the feminine. He stresses the prevalence of the image of the gaping mouth (itself suggestive of female genitalia) and notes that it "is organically combined on the one hand with swallowing and devouring, [and] on the other hand with the stomach, the womb, and childbirth"(Bakhtin 338). He goes on to state that, "the same features (gaping jaws and depths) also appear in the open womb of Pantagruel's mother...The bodily depths are fertile: the old dies in them, and the new is born in abundance. The entire Second Book is saturated with pictures of procreative force, fertility, abundance"(Bakhtin 339). For Bakhtin, the grotesque body is feminine in that its procreative ability and openness connect it with the world at large. In the plays I am exploring here there is a scarcity of female characters that embody the grotesque, but Shakespeare does directly connect the feminine and the grotesque in other plays. Perhaps the best example of this is Cleopatra, of whom it is said, "Age cannot wither her, nor

custom stale / Her infinite variety: other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies; for vilest things / Become themselves in her, that the holy priests / Bless her when she is riggish"(*Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.2.241-6). She is a "grotesque" woman in that she emphasizes the interconnectedness of the world. She elevates the base and lowers the exalted. Her "infinite variety" defies time itself, and gives her an ageless quality. Like the Uroboros, she both satisfies and makes hungry in an endless cycle of feeding and devouring. Like Falstaff she enjoys the pleasures of food and companionship, again emphasizing her connectedness with the world around her. Indeed, according to Enobarbus's account, the world itself seems to move and respond to her with an almost physical palpability. Both the Shakespearean view of the feminine and the Bakhtinian grotesque are paradigms that stress the interconnectedness of the world. In the plays I am exploring, Falstaff is a particularly good example of the grotesque, as his body is often described as excreting or ingesting, thus emphasizing his connection with the world around him.

Bakhtin's classical body, in contrast to the grotesque, closes itself off from the world around it and is threatened by the feminine/grotesque body that seeks to absorb it. The classical body, which we can see represented in the characters of Hotspur and Coriolanus, is marked by

> An entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual…All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface and the body's "valleys" acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. (Bakhtin 320)

The masculine Self, like the classical body, is obsessed with defining itself in absolute terms and distinguishing itself from the world around it. Bakhtin uses specifically masculine terminology when describing the classical body. For Bakhtin the classical body is connected with "the isolated biological individual...the private, egotistic 'economic man'"(19). He goes on to tell us that the classical imagery is "of the finished completed man, cleaned, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development"(Bakhtin 25). The classical body is associated with severe restraint and isolation, and it attempts to control and structure the world. It is that which denies and represses its connection with the world. I will, therefore, be using the terms masculine and classical interchangeably in this paper, as will also be the case with feminine and grotesque.

In the plays we will examine in this paper most of the characters fall fairly neatly into one gender category or the other. Characters like Coriolanus, Hotspur and Volumnia are completely devoted to the masculine ideology of restraint and the pursuit of power and honor. Other characters, like Falstaff, seem to embody the Renaissance notions of the feminine by displaying excessive appetites and deceptive theatricality. Nor is it a mistake that Falstaff spends most of his time among the lower classes in the taverns. The lower classes are also consistently represented in feminine terms while the upper classes are depicted as masculine. In *Coriolanus* the plebeians are represented as cowardly, weak, deceptive and conniving. When seen through the eyes of characters like Coriolanus, the plebeians are feminine simply because they lack the ability to defend themselves, but they also represent the feminine in the Bakhtinian sense, in that they

subvert the classical ideology of Rome through their political machinations. The same can be said of the commoners who occupy the tavern world of the two Henry IV plays. The characters that populate the taverns of Eastcheap are associated with the unrestrained and appetitive nature ascribed to Renaissance women because of their preoccupation with food, sex and strong drink. They also represent the subversive feminine through characters like Falstaff, who seems to delight in pointing out the many flaws in the patriarchal system, as when he jokes about Henry IV's illegitimate claim to the throne (*I Henry IV*, 1.2.134-5).

Feminist critics have often found that Shakespeare perpetuates the masculine bias of Renaissance England. In this thesis, however, I will argue, that the *Henriad* and *Coriolanus* suggest the fallacy of masculine ideology, and propose that only those who are able to stand outside of the masculine ideological system can maintain power. In these plays, Shakespeare presents us with two different types of protagonists. Characters, like Coriolanus and Hotspur, are completely devoted to the masculine ideology of the patriarchal worldview of Renaissance England. For these characters, the feminine is always defined in negative terms. It is the antithesis of the masculinity, which they regard as the only true and proper mode of behavior. The *Henriad* and *Coriolanus*, however, demonstrate a subversion of this idea, and suggest that the feminine is a positive quality that a ruler must employ, along with the masculine, in order to maintain power. Hotspur and Coriolanus are both destroyed because of their inability to utilize the feminine. No matter how hard they try to establish their masculine independence through great feats on the battlefield they remain connected to their societies. They are not

independent because they are bound within a system that strictly defines their behavior. By devoting themselves to the pursuit of masculinity, Hotspur and Coriolanus relinquish their ability to be truly independent and make choices for themselves. Instead, they are doomed to follow codes of behavior that are set down for them by society. Nor are these codes themselves constant. Though Coriolanus and Hotspur are unable to see it, the societies in which they live are, in fact, far more feminine than masculine. They are based on relationships and are in a constant state of flux. It is important to note that Shakespeare bases the *Henriad* and *Coriolanus* at moments in history in which England and Rome are in a particularly high state of unrest. Rebellion plagues both Henry IV and Henry V in the *Henriad*, and the Roman aristocracy is grappling with an increasingly powerful and vocal underclass in *Coriolanus*. Coriolanus and Hotspur, however, choose to believe that these upheavals are not signs of change, but aberrations in the masculine ideology to which they adhere. Eventually, both characters are destroyed because they are unable to accommodate themselves to such a constantly shifting world. Set against such characters are heroes like Henry and (to some degree) Aufidius who rise to power because of their ability to see beyond the myth of masculine identity. Henry, whose identity is developed over the course of three plays, refuses to operate within the patriarchal ideology, but perceives that his identity can be whatever the situation requires. He seems to have the ability to move between gender categories and utilize both masculine and feminine traits without ever defining himself as either. It is Henry's ability to transform himself and change his appearance, like Renaissance women who wore makeup, that enables him to successfully enact his own self-fashioning and

maintain power in an England rocked by civil strife. Though his character is not nearly as well developed, Aufidius also seems to possess some of these same characteristics. In their focus on the relation of power to masculinity and femininity, these plays suggest that concepts like identity and gender are social constructs that can be altered or exchanged at will.

Hotspur provides us with an excellent link between the worlds of Henry and Coriolanus. He is an example of the masculine or classical self. He is devoted to the pursuit of a wholly masculine ethos of honor and warfare and can be seen as a sort of prototype for the character that Shakespeare would more fully develop in *Coriolanus*. He is a consummate warrior who devotes his life to the pursuit of honor and glory in battle. His personality is marked by a passion for war and an extreme distaste for the feminine. His character is not complex, but some of his more interesting scenes take place with wife Katherine. Despite the flirtatious and easy relationship they seem to have with one another, Harry Percy's mind is never far from the battlefield. In terms of dialogue, Hotspur's relationship with his wife is more fully fleshed than any of the other characters I will examine. In keeping with his devotion to the masculine he persists in maintaining a barrier between himself and his wife in order to protect his masculinity from any weakening feminine influence. Unlike Henry, Hotspur maintains firm control over his sexual impulses and he always rejects his wife's advances. Kate tells us that even while they are sleeping together Hotspur's dreams are about strategy and conflict. Katherine's speech to Percy is particularly telling and reveals a number of qualities about Hotspur that are well suited to our discussion of the masculine/classical perspective:

O my good lord, why are you thus alone?
For what offense have I this fortnight been
A banished woman from my Harry's bed?
Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
They stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sit'st alone?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in they cheeks
And given my treasures and my right of thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?
In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron war,
Speak terms of manage to they bounding steed,
Cry "Courage! To the field!" And thou hast talked
Of sallied and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners' ransom, and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream,
And in they face strange motions have appeared,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are
these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not. (2.3.38-65).

Katherine represents the feminine Other in Hotspur's world because she suggests the importance of relationships and encourages the satisfaction of appetites, but she is not a strong enough personality to truly threaten Percy's masculine Self. It is significant that Hotspur answers none of her questions after such an impassioned and heartfelt speech. He turns immediately to some matter of business and hardly even regards her presence. Here are represented many qualities that will be even more fully developed in the character of Coriolanus.

First, Katherine speaks of Harry's poor appetite and inability to sleep or take pleasure. These bodily functions represent weakness or vulnerability to Hotspur and are therefore rejected as a threat to his masculine identity. From a Bakhtinian perspective, they are elements of the grotesque body that is marked by orifices which eat, defecate, and copulate in an endless cycle of life. By contrast we are told that Hotspur has lost his rosy glow and has become reserved and quiet towards his wife. He seems to literally be transforming himself into a classical body, like a statue that is lifeless and impenetrable.

Katherine also speaks of Hotspur's desire to be alone. That desire will become very important in Coriolanus, who takes an intense pride in the accomplishments that he achieved without help. Both of these characters crave honor and resist sharing it with anyone. They always fight alone and relish being outnumbered. Hotspur's martial imaginings seem to arouse him to so great an extent that we can understand Katherine's jealousy at not being able to inspire similar feelings in her husband.

Finally, we return to our previous point that Hotspur's relationship with Katherine always takes place across a barrier that he persists in maintaining. He consistently turns away from his wife and towards war in order to reaffirm his masculinity and distance himself from the threatening feminine Other that Katherine represents. He ignores her and refuses to express his love for her unless it is on his own terms or in a joking fashion. "Away, away, you trifler! Love? I love thee not; / I care not for thee, Kate. This is no world / To play with mammets and to tilt with lips. / We must have bloody noses and cracked crowns"(2.3.90-3). Even something as innocent as a kiss seems to threaten Hotspur to the extent that he phrases it in martial terms. He associates love with a

childish game and even, perhaps, equates Kate herself with a mammet or doll. She is, for Hotspur, simply an ornament. Her function is placeholder rather than partner and she exists for Hotspur only as another means of displaying his virility. Hotspur, like Coriolanus, is devoted to perpetuating masculine ideology. It is in *Coriolanus*, however, that Shakespeare provides us with a complete examination of the inherent flaws in a total commitment to patriarchal dogma.

Coriolanus and the failure of masculine autonomy

In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare gives us the rise and fall of a character whose commitment to the masculine ideal is so complete that he is caught in its paradox. Coriolanus is devoted to making himself into a completely independent man, but is, at the same time, inextricably connected to the mother who instilled the masculine virtues in him, and to the Roman society that he needs to legitimate his achievements. Coriolanus cannot abide the plebeians, but he needs them to secure the consulship. He desires power, but is unable to compromise his masculine ideals in order to get it. His story is a tragedy because his character, though noble and impressive in scale, is too rigid to survive in a Rome where the grotesque nature of society is no longer so easily repressed; where the plebeians are gaining real political power and are no longer so easily silenced by the masculine authority of Coriolanus and the aristocracy he represents. Coriolanus's masculine ideology orders men vertically, with himself, being the most virile and powerful of men, at the top. He is threatened by the establishment of the Tribune and the

increasing political power of the plebeians, of which he says, "Thus we debase / The nature of our seats, and make the rabble / Call our cares fears; which will in time / Break ope the locks o' th' Senate and bring in / The crows to peck the eagles"(3.1.135-9). He figures this move towards a more egalitarian and "grotesque" society in harshly negative terms. He foresees that the establishment of the Tribune will undermine the structure and hierarchy of Rome, a structure that is vital to his masculine ideology. Coriolanus fears a society which is ordered horizontally, and in which he is no different from anyone else and cannot maintain his masculine independence.

Coriolanus is not successful in the political realm because he lacks access to the feminine and the grotesque that would allow him to see that his own masculine identity is itself a role that can be put on and off. Bedford notes that Coriolanus's lack of irony comes from his direct and singular vision of himself and the world around him. "Shakespeare's Coriolanus acts and speaks from the simple strength of personal, passionately held beliefs. He can see but a single truth, and irony implies the ability to stand back and examine a situation from many different angles. Coriolanus is incapable of responding in such a detached manner"(Wheeler 351). Volumnia seems to sense this intuitively when she admonishes Coriolanus to flatter the plebeians for their support of his consulship. "If it be honor in your wars to seem / The same you are not, which for your best ends / You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse / That it shall hold companionship in peace / With honor as in war; since that to both / It stands in like request?"(3.2.46-51). Coriolanus attempts to follow his mother's instruction, but, in the end, he is unable to play any part other than his own, and he cannot bring himself to take

on the role of the flatterer and earn the respect of the plebeians by speaking softly to them. Coriolanus rankles at the thought of deceiving the plebeians with words. "Must I go show them my unbarbed sconce? Must I / With my base tongue give to my noble heart / A lie that it must bear?"(3.2.99-101). Though Coriolanus attempts to turn his tongue to flattery he cannot and fulfills his own prophesy, albeit not as he had intended, in which he says "I'll return consul; / Or never trust to what my tongue can do / I' th' way of flattery further"(3.2.135-7). Coriolanus's great pride and his intense identification with a masculine doctrine that will not brook any falsehood or mutability prevents him from deceiving. He rejects any form of theatricality as another sign of feminine weakness.

Coriolanus lacks the ability to play any part other than the one that he believes to be his own. His devotion to his masculine Self blinds him to the possibility that there are advantages to having a more flexible identity. In fact, the mere suggestion that he play a different role when coming before the plebeians is deeply threatening to Coriolanus. When Volumnia and the patricians urge him to flatter the plebeians and take back the insults that he hurled at them he replies, "Would you have me / False to my nature? Rather say I play / The man I am"(3.2.14-6). Coppelia Kahn notes, "In suggesting that his masculinity might be only a costume that he wears (like Macbeth's 'borrowed robes'), artificial rather than natural, Coriolanus flirts with a truth that would disrupt the binary oppositions on which Rome is based"(154). Coriolanus's own identity is based on these same binary oppositions between plebeians and aristocrats, grotesque and classical, masculine and feminine. Later, when he finally consents to appeal to the lower classes

we can sense the threat that this play-acting poses to his masculine identity in his words, "Away, my disposition, and possess me / Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turned, / Which quired with my drum, into a pipe / Small as an eunuch or the virgin voice / That babies lulls asleep! The smiles of knaves / Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up / The glasses of my sight!"(3.2.111-7). The thought of seeming to be something that he is not causes Coriolanus to figure himself as a child, a woman, or a sexless being. Kahn tells us that Coriolanus "identifies the feminine with acting and duplicity, and the male with natural, essential truth"(155). Feminine theatricality is deeply threatening to Coriolanus's sense of masculine identity.

Coriolanus's classical ideology is static and unchanging, which is why he has such trouble with the idea of role-playing. Bakhtin tells us that, "the grotesque....discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, or another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable"(48). Unfortunately, for Coriolanus, he is unable to understand the feminine/grotesque body and remains stuck in the confines of a false masculine ideology. His constant repression of the feminine denies him the opportunity to understand the feminine and the subversion of identity that it suggests. If, as the feminine/grotesque body suggests, there is no truly bounded identity, since everything is interconnected and mutable, then the isolated masculine identities of Coriolanus and Hotspur are merely myths, unfeasible in the real world. This is precisely the truth that Henry and Aufidius seem to grasp as they move freely between gendered roles in the pursuit of power. Their understanding of the "grotesque" nature of their selves and their

societies allows them to perceive masculine power as a myth and to use it along with aspects of the feminine in order to manipulate those around them. Their identities are not tied to the masculine or feminine, but to the pursuit of power, which lacks a gender.

In *Coriolanus* Shakespeare expands on the character of Hotspur and creates a hero whose identity is completely bound up in the myth of masculinity. Coriolanus is devoted to making himself into a completely classical body, and he consistently denies relationships, which he fears make him vulnerable and weak. What Coriolanus fails to understand, however, is that his individualistic identity is not of his own making, but is imposed on him by the predominantly masculine Roman ideology of the play, specifically through his relationship with his mother. He is, paradoxically, dependant on Rome and his mother for an identity that defines itself through independence. He consistently supports his masculine identity through the repression of the feminine and grotesque elements of the world around him, though ultimately he is destroyed in pursuit of an impossible autonomy. Most specifically we can see this in his relationship with the plebeian class, which represents the feminine and grotesque elements of Roman society.

A predominant feature of the classical body, and the masculine identity that Coriolanus so ardently pursues, is that it must always define itself by the repression of what it is not. The masculine and classical is primarily concerned with laying down boundaries and imposing a structure on the world around it. Its desire for setting up limits always brings it into conflict with the feminine and the grotesque, which seeks to move beyond any restrictions. At the beginning of the play, Coriolanus confronts a mob of plebeians who are angry because they feel the aristocracy is not giving them enough

food. This rebellion over grain results in the establishment of the Tribune, which gives the Roman people their first real political power. It is the first crack in the veneer of masculine ideology, which the aristocracy and Coriolanus seek to perpetuate. In *Coriolanus*, the plebeians represent a feminine and grotesque body that the protagonist is constantly attempting to subdue and restrain. "The Roman mob stands in for the feminine Other as the target of the hero's excessive rage"(Bamber 104). Their appetitive nature associates them with the grotesque and the feminine and it is significant that the play opens with the unrest caused by hungry plebeians clamoring for more food. Adelman notes that the mutinous plebeians are also associated with dangerous sexual passions (Bevington and Halio 109) that align them with the Bakhtinian grotesque body. She goes on to point out Coriolanus's repeated rejection of food and his preference for starvation over dishonor (Bevington and Halio 110). "Better it is to die, better to starve, / Than crave the hire which first we do deserve"(2.3.112-3). Feeding connects both with the grotesque body and the feminine. For Coriolanus it is a sign of dependency, which his masculine self-sufficiency cannot allow. Coriolanus's rejection of the grotesque body is also a rejection of community with others, specifically the lower classes that are always depicted as being driven by the baser passions. Again, Adelman informs us that Coriolanus's "insistent portrayal of the plebeians as an unmanly mouth, as feminine where they should be masculine, in effect as castrated, suggests that his hatred of the crowd conceals not only his own hunger but also his fears for his own masculinity"(Bevington and Halio 114). Coriolanus, not surprisingly, wants nothing to do with the plebeians and keeps himself distinct from their feminine vulnerability.

Coriolanus's masculine identity is the opposite of the plebeian's feminine nature, and is bound up in the isolation that is found in the classical body. Zvi Jagendorf notes that Coriolanus represents "the single isolated, discrete body of the man who stands alone, the man who would claim to be all of one piece and even author of himself"(Wheeler 239). It is important to note that Shakespeare sets his play at a period in Roman history when the lower classes were gaining political power through the establishment of the Tribunate. The grotesque body of the plebeians, true to form, is beginning to move beyond the boundaries set down for it by people like Coriolanus, and they can no longer be simply repressed and ignored. The masculine Rome that instilled in Coriolanus his sense of masculine identity is beginning to reveal its hollowness. In the world of the play, Rome turns out, in reality, to be a grotesque body in which Coriolanus finds himself unable to successfully operate.

Coriolanus was raised, from the time he was very young, to be a completely masculine figure. He is never given a strong example of the feminine to temper his masculinity. His mother, Volumnia, concentrates solely on indoctrinating her son in the masculine virtues esteemed so highly in the Rome of the play. At the beginning of his life of Coriolanus, Plutarch tells us that,

> Those were times at Rome in which that kind of worth was most esteemed which displayed itself in military achievements; one evidence of which we find in the Latin word for virtue, which is properly equivalent to manly courage. As if valour and all virtue had been the same thing, they used as the common term the name of the particular excellence. (291)

Coriolanus never encounters a character like Falstaff and is raised to believe, like Hotspur, that honor and power can be achieved only through masculinity and warfare. While Henry is able to perceive and understand the feminine and grotesque through his relationship with Sir John, Coriolanus becomes devoted solely to the masculine ideology that revolves around independence and violence due to the guidance of his mother. By the time we meet him, Coriolanus has become so devoted to his masculinity that he perceives examples of the feminine/grotesque body as threats, and tries only to repress them.

Ironically, it is a woman that inscribes in Coriolanus this masculine ideology of power through violence. In *Coriolanus* Volumnia is a powerful force who, because of the restrictions placed on her gender, must act out her own fantasies of masculine self-creation through her son. Janet Adelman offers a brilliant assessment of their relationship, which is defined by a complete rejection of the feminine through the denial of the appetites. Volumnia, though she is a woman, is a very masculine figure who raises her son to adhere strictly to Roman virtues, which hold military prowess in the highest esteem. Despite her gender, it is her influence that fosters such deep devotion to the masculine ideals of independence and military virtue in Coriolanus.

"Masculinity belongs first to the mother; only she can pass it on to a son"(Kahn 149). Volumnia does indeed pass on masculinity to her son and we can see this clearly in her speech to Virgilia at the beginning of the play where she reveals her method of initiating her son into manhood.

> When he was but tender-bodied, and the only son of my
> womb; when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his

> way; when, for a day of kings' entreaties, a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding; I, considering how honor would become such a person – that it was no better than picture-like to hand by th' wall, if renown made it not stir – was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. (1.3.10-7)

Volumnia never ceases to remind Coriolanus that he is her son. She constantly maintains that connection between them, and it is significant that one of the first descriptions given of Coriolanus describes his desire to please his mother (1.1.37-40). In her constant reiteration of their connection, Volumnia paradoxically undermines the very autonomy that she is trying to inculcate in Coriolanus. Their relationship reveals that feminine interconnectedness underlies the myth of masculine autonomy. Despite all of his efforts to make himself into a completely invulnerable and masculine figure, Coriolanus is unable, finally, to dissociate himself from his mother.

Many critics have noted the intense bond that Coriolanus has with his mother. This connection is so strong and so frequently reiterated that it becomes the primary characteristic of their relationship. Kahn points to the frequent use of the word "bound" in the play as an indicator of this idea. "In the play, 'bound' implies not just a specific moral obligation, but a connection equally physical and emotional that bespeaks the totalizing indebtedness of son to mother"(148). According to Jung this intense attachment between a mother and son, or "mother complex", can result in the child developing many of the qualities that we recognize in Coriolanus, such as a "bold and

resolute manliness; ambitious striving after the highest goals; opposition to all stupidity, narrow-mindedness, injustice, and laziness; willingness to make sacrifices for what is regarded as right, sometimes bordering on heroism; perseverance, inflexibility and toughness of will"(115). Though these are generally positive qualities, the consequence of this close bond between Coriolanus and his mother makes it impossible for him to successfully distinguish himself from her and establish his own identity. "Both Volumnia and Lady Macbeth are the opposite of the Jungian feminine. Instead of connecting us to natural fertility, family love, or a sense of the body, they represent fanaticism according to the dogma of 'man-honor-fight'"(Bamber 91). Coriolanus perpetually denies and silences his connection with the feminine in the belief that it will serve only to weaken him and make him vulnerable.

Janet Adelman argues in her essay on Coriolanus and Volumnia that Coriolanus's entire identity revolves around making himself into a completely self-sufficient entity. Coriolanus's mother is both responsible for making him into the independent creature that he is and the greatest threat to his independence. As we have already shown, Volumnia constantly reminds Coriolanus of his connection to her, thereby disabling the masculine independence that she endeavors to instill in him, and which he tries to establish. Adelman argues that Coriolanus unconsciously desires to destroy Volumnia and remove her influence, but is ultimately unable to do this. Adelman succinctly identifies the act of self-birth that Coriolanus enacts in his assault on Corioli and identifies the important dynamic between mother and son as it relates to identity.

> For the assault on Corioli is both a rape and a rebirth: the underlying fantasy is that intercourse is a literal return to

> the womb, from which one is reborn, one's own author.
> The fantasy of self-authorship is complete when Coriolanus
> is given his new name, earned by his own actions.
> (Bevington and Halio 113)

Volumnia provides her son with the abilities that make him a great warrior, but deprives him of the ability to fashion his identity independently of her. His identity cannot ultimately be extricated from that which framed it. Though Adelman does not specifically point this out, it is worth noting that Coriolanus's acceptance of his name is not an act of self-fashioning, but of submission. He seems to realize this before the gates of Rome where he rejects any title. "Coriolanus / He would not answer to; forbad all names; / He was a kind of nothing, titleless, / Till he had forged himself a name o' th' fire / Of burning Rome"(5.1.11-5). He rejects the title of "Coriolanus", which had been given to him after his dazzling victory over Corioli at the beginning of the play, because it undermines the autonomous nature of his masculine identity. Here we get the sense that Coriolanus begins to realize the paradoxical nature of his masculine Self. His title, like the very identity that was inculcated in him by Volumnia and the Roman society, is given to him, and so is subversive to his sense of masculine self-sufficiency. He rejects the title as he tries to reject Rome itself, thus he desires to make a new name for himself after Rome has been destroyed and he has truly established his independence from it. But he cannot achieve this. Adelman notes that Coriolanus never quite succeeds in separating himself from his mother or Rome. Volumnia creates his identity in much the same way as it is created by the Rome that names him Coriolanus. Volumnia and Rome are both mothers of Coriolanus and his inability to destroy either of them at the close of the play

represents his inability to finally separate himself from them and establish his own identity independently from them (Bevington and Halio 115-6). He simply cannot sustain the myth of masculinity to which he devotes himself.

Coriolanus also maintains a barrier between himself and his wife in an attempt to reinforce his masculine individuality. As delineated above, men, in Shakespeare's time, were especially fearful of the effeminizing influence that their wives might have over them, particularly through sex. Valerie Traub writes, "And if 'lust' was seen as effeminizing in its power to subordinate men to women by making men more 'like' women, the anxiety about desire itself obviously infused and structured heterosexual relations"(51). In another essay Traub states that the, "masculine imposition of silence, and more particularly stasis, on women is connected, I believe, with a fear of chaos associated with the sexual act"(Orgel and Keilen 90). Coriolanus describes his wife Virgilia as "My gracious silence"(2.1.181) and, indeed, she says very little in the course of the play. This seems to be exactly as Coriolanus wishes. Virgilia becomes a sort of ornament that he can wear to set off his own virility, but she does not pose a great threat to his self-made identity by speaking too much and drawing him into a relationship that will be a detriment to his masculinity. Bamber says of Virgilia,

> The role that she plays is small throughout; she is only ornamental to her husband's life, not essential to him as Cleopatra is to Antony. Virgilia's opposition to Coriolanus's militarism is patient and passive. Like Octavia, and unlike Cleopatra, she only awaits and welcomes her husband; she plays a ceremonial rather than a sexual role. Virgilia, like Lady Macbeth, fails to enact the intransigent separateness of the Other. (96)

From what little Virgilia does say we can identify her as a peace-loving individual who fears for her husband while he is at war. Were she a stronger personality we can imagine that she might resist his military ambitions. As it is, she is unable to do more than sit in her house and hope that her husband will return carrying his shield, rather than on it.

Coriolanus, however, seeks out war, and seems most at home on the battlefield where his masculinity can be most successfully asserted. The most striking example of the establishment of his masculine identity through warfare occurs before the Senate in Rome as Cominius praises his comrade.

> At sixteen years,
> When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought
> Beyond the mark of others. Our then dictator,
> Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,
> When with his Amazonian chin he drove
> The bristled lips before him. He bestrid
> An o'erpressed Roman, and i' th' consul's view
> Slew three opposers; Tarquin's self he met,
> And struck him on his knee. In that day's feats,
> When he might act the woman in the scene,
> He proved best man i' th' field, and for his meed
> Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
> Man-ent'red thus, he waxed like a sea. (2.2.88-100)

Sprengnether's insightful explication of this passage points to the fundamental dissociation from the female that it endorses. "Coriolanus associates fighting and the kind of male bonding offered in battle with manhood....The appeal of the battlefield, as Cominius describes it, seems to reside in its function as a place of ritual disidentification from femininity"(Rose 99). In the passage above, Coriolanus is first depicted as a boy and a woman (Amazonian) who, through his acts of bravery, sheds these distinctions and

is recognized as a man. War enables him to distinguish himself from feminine influences so that he can create for himself an identity built solely on the masculine.

Unlike Henry, who emphasizes his wounds, in his famous St. Crispin's Day speech, as a means of reinforcing his connection with his comrades, Coriolanus fears to display his wounds to the plebeians because he constantly seeks to deny his relationship with the lower classes. Bleeding wounds symbolize a unity with the common soldiers and serve to conjoin them to this grotesque body. They suggest the openness and permeability of the grotesque body in much the same way as does eating. Coriolanus denies his wounds and refuses to even hear others speak of them. "Your honors' pardon: / I had rather have my wounds to heal again / Than hear say how I got them"(2.2.69-71). His desire to have his wounds heal is symptomatic of his denial of the grotesque body to which they connect him. Coriolanus's wounds are a threat to his masculine identity, and he refuses to show them to the plebeians in an attempt to distance himself from the grotesque body that they represent, even though doing so would ensure his election to the consulship.

The final victor in *Coriolanus* is Aufidius, who seems much more politically savvy than his counterpart. It is, in fact, a sort of theatricality that directly results in Coriolanus's death. Like Henry, Aufidius seems to have the ability to play multiple roles and manipulate his relationships with others to serve his own goals. At the close of the play, Aufidius engineers Coriolanus's death, which he seems to have been planning since the start of their friendship in act four. Aufidius is a much more deceptive and successfully political creature than Coriolanus. Though they are mortal enemies Aufidius

welcomes his foe with open arms when Coriolanus comes to Antium (4.5.105-7). Later, however, we find that he is concerned over his troops' zealous support of his former enemy, and he tells his lieutenant that he still has a score to settle with the hero after Rome has been sacked (4.7.24-6). We get the sense that he saw in Coriolanus's coming to Antium a chance to kill two birds with one stone. Without their great warrior, Rome would be unable to stop the Volscians, and once Rome is destroyed Coriolanus would be at the mercy of his enemy. At the close of the play when Aufidius has regained control of his army, achieved a personal victory upon the death of so great an adversary, and will probably reap the political benefits of his coup he offers up a short eulogy as he stands on Coriolanus's dead body. We get the distinct impression that the entire scene has been orchestrated by Aufidius like a stage play in which he has cast himself as the hero. In the end his eulogy serves only his own interests as he displays magnanimity and generosity in praising his greatest enemy. In truth, the praise Aufidius heaps on Coriolanus benefits only himself as the final victor, much as Prince Hal's admiration of Hotspur on the eve of the battle of Shrewsbury will later serve only to gild his own glories. It is little wonder, then, that critics failed to find Aufidius' final speech over Coriolanus's body sincere or convincing. As Danson notes, "We could believe in Antony's 'This was the noblest Roman of them all,' spoken over Brutus; but Aufidius's sudden, inexplicable remorse is so hollow that it seems to me only to add insult to mortal injury"(Wheeler 140-1). Like Henry, Aufidius plays multiple roles in his successful bid for power. His oration over the body of his fallen enemy enables him to lay claim to his triumph over Coriolanus, as well as present himself as a magnanimous victor. "Take him up. / Help, three o' th' chiefest

soldiers; I'll be one. / Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully; / Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he / Hath widowed and unchilded many a one, / Which to this hour bewail the injury, / Yet he shall have a noble memory"(5.6.148-54). Aufidius is never able to defeat Coriolanus on the field of battle. Ultimately, he has the hero assassinated at a public gathering in Corioli. Still, Aufidius, by giving Coriolanus a soldier's burial and identifying himself as one of the "chiefest soldiers" manages to cast the entire affair in martial terms, as if he had, in fact, conquered the unconquerable soldier in a fair fight. He is careful to remind his listeners that Coriolanus had been the chief enemy of their city, and, in so doing, casts himself as their savior. Though his speech may sound insincere to our ears it is designed to create an identity for Aufidius that will enable him to rise to power. His understanding of the feminine enables him to see identity as a mutable tool that he can use to attain supremacy. Henry is very similar to Aufidius in this respect. As we will see, Henry, from the very beginning, is capable of altering his identity and manipulating public opinion so that he can achieve power and solidify his claim on the throne of England.

Henry and the triumph of the feminine

While Coriolanus represents the failure of the myth of masculine identity, Henry's success comes as a result of his awareness of the feminine and grotesque, and his ability to perceive identity as mutable. Henry's accomplishments grow out of his ability to move between the masculine and feminine, grotesque and classical, and adapt his own

identity to the world around him. The fact that Henry seems capable of perceiving gender roles as social constructs, which can be slipped into and out of like sets of clothes, is a result of his understanding of the feminine/grotesque. If, as the feminine or the grotesque body imply, the world is constantly shifting and infinitely interconnected, then absolute autonomy is an impossibility. Henry perceives that no one, especially not a leader, is able to separate himself from other people or the world at large. Societies are built, not on individuals, but on the relationships that exist throughout and between everyone in the community. The feminine, as Shakespeare seems to understand it, suggests that all life is a function of relationships, and that individual identities are an externally imposed façade. The difference between commoner and king exists only in the minds of those who cannot see beyond patriarchal ideology. It is Henry's understanding of the feminine as a mode of demystification that allows him to perceive this. He, therefore, contains many seeming contradictions within his character. Henry portrays himself as both a man of the people, and an independent, masculine ruler. He is sometimes ruthless, and at other times merciful. He is capable of remarkable eloquence, but sometimes chooses to speak in plain terms. He is both a masculine soldier and a "feminine" lover, and he is able to encompass these inconsistencies because his identity is not a rigidly defined construct. Henry realizes that he must appear to be a strong and masculine ruler to maintain control over the throne. As Richard II discovered at the hands of Henry's father, a weak and dissolute king cannot command the necessary respect to preserve his power.

Henry's victory over the French in *Henry V* demonstrates his ability to utilize the masculine to assert himself and achieve his goals. By figuring the French in the feminine terms he can operate within the patriarchal system to create a masculine identity for himself in the conquest of France and the symbolic repression of the feminine. He does this in order to satisfy those ignorant yet powerful elements of his kingdom that still, like Hotspur, believe that the king should be an entirely masculine ruler. In his great struggle to unite a divided land he adopts different identities to appeal to the widest possible number of people. For this reason Henry has often been perceived by critics as an entirely masculine ruler who operates within a patriarchal system that represses the feminine. Howard and Rackin assert that Henry functions as a component of a masculine system that dominates and excludes women (187-8), and Valerie Traub also finds the *Henriad* to be an example of the repression of the feminine (51). For Traub the phallocentric culture of the history plays eliminates women as a means of perpetuating itself. The exclusion of women is what history is based upon (Traub 54). What I am suggesting here, however, is that Henry also recognizes the need for operating outside of a strict set of rules, and for adopting different personas and identities throughout his career to allow him to maintain his power amidst changing circumstances and a changing world. He understands the feminine, not merely in masculine terms as something to be repressed, but from the Bakhtinian perspective which subverts masculine ideology and suggests the mutability of identity. He does not believe in the masculine system, but merely uses it to pursue his own ends while maintaining a feminine perspective that allows him to alter his identity at will in order to manipulate those around him and secure

his claim to the throne. His ability to role-play enables him to adapt and change himself. While Coriolanus ignorantly rejects theatricality because it threatens his ideal of the masculine Self, Henry's use of this ability reflects his deeper understanding of politics and human nature which are themselves constantly changing and shifting. As I have noted above, society in these plays is much more feminine than masculine if we understand these concepts in Bakhtinian terms. In the *Henriad*, England is still reeling from Bolingbrooke's usurpation of Richard, and is wracked by a succession of civil wars. It is a nation in the midst of change, and Henry's ability to alter his persona as the situation requires ensures that he will be able to maintain his influence in such a constantly fluctuating political realm.

While never committing himself to the patriarchal ideology of Reniassance England, Henry defines a masculine identity for himself in order to more effectively rule his nation. The primary tool with which Henry creates for himself an identity as a strong and virile leader is warfare. Shakespeare demonstrates this by conflating the siege of Harfleur with an act of rape, in which the masculine English army asserts is dominance over a feminized French city. As King Henry and his troops are besieging the French city of Harfleur the King threatens to allow his "fleshed"(3.3.11) soldiers to essentially rape the city, which is consistently represented as female. "What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause, / If your maidens fall into the hand / Of hot and forcing violation?"(3.3.19-21). Not only are the women inside the city at risk of being raped, but the city itself becomes a woman who has been molested by war. Indeed, the king of France refers to his untouched towns as maids, "for they are all girdled with maiden walls

that war hath never ent'red"(5.2.334-5). Henry must appear strong in order to unite his kingdom, and the establishment of a masculine identity through the invasion of France enables him to adopt this appearance. He knows that he cannot rely merely on his title as king, since it is based on nothing more than ceremony, but that he must provide an example of his masculine authority in order to effectively rule his nation. The roles that Henry adopts in order to secure his claim on the throne do not end with his masculine identity, however. Throughout the *Henriad* the hero consistently demonstrates his affinity for theatricality and his ability to manipulate his own appearance.

Henry's theatrical abilities seem to grow out of his relationship with Falstaff. Ironically, since he is both a man and a knight and would thus be expected to exemplify masculine individuality and virtue, Falstaff acts as a perfect embodiment of the grotesque and the feminine. The taverns of Eastcheap and Falstaff's corpulence represent the grotesque body, which is aligned with the feminine Other.

> Although within the Oedipal narrative, Falstaff figures as Hal's surrogate father, he is coded in feminine, maternal terms: his fat belly is the masculine counterpart of the pregnant woman, his Rabelaisian excesses of food and drink make him the Carnival antithesis to Henry IV's ascetic Lenten identity. (Hodgdon 155)

Bakhtin stresses that the grotesque body is a life-giving one and is ceaselessly recreating itself. Falstaff's huge girth not only makes him look pregnant (he himself refers to his belly as "my womb"(*2 Henry IV*, 4.3.22)) but also seems to be the source of his joking and mirth, as if he were constantly giving birth to cheerfulness. Falstaff also represents

the grotesque body in his ability to change and remake himself to suit the situation, now playing the king, now the prince, now the dishonest rogue, and now the noble soldier.

In *Engendering a Nation* Howard and Rackin discuss the presence of the feminine in the character of Falstaff and in the world of the tavern over which Falstaff rules. "Falstaff's contempt for honor and military valor, his gross corpulence, and his sensual self-indulgence all imply effeminacy within the system of analogies that separated spirit from body, aristocrat from plebeian, and man from woman in early modern England"(166). This femininity is also subversive of the masculine system that dominates the England of the play, and it threatens characters like Hotspur who are completely devoted to the myth of masculine power. When Falstaff wounds the already dead Hotspur he recalls the mutilation of English soldiers at the hands of Welshwoman that is recounted at the beginning of *1 Henry IV*. He is symbolically unmanning the dead soldier and enacting the feminine threat to masculinity and military achievement (Howard and Rackin 166-7).

Falstaff's body, then, is at the intersection of the Renaissance view of women and the Bakhtinian grotesque. As Valerie Traub puts it, "That Falstaff is figured in female terms is suggested first by his body, which is associated with the metaphors of women's bodies and carnality...Such a focus on the bulging and the protuberant, the opening, permeabilities, and effusions of Falstaff's body situate him as a 'grotesque body'"(56). Falstaff's body, which, "sweats to death and lards the lean earth as he walks along"(*I Henry IV*, 2.2.109-10) is always permeable and connected with the world. Its very presence in the play undermines the masculine/classical ideology that men should be

independent. Falstaff acts as a sort of mother figure to the young Prince Hal. Though he is ultimately banished in *2 Henry IV*, his presence continues to be felt throughout the *Henriad*, and Henry continues to exhibit qualities that he displays in the tavern scenes. Though Henry does not share Falstaff's total devotion to the feminine and grotesque, neither does he repress it, as do Coriolanus and Hotspur. Instead, Henry appears to us sometimes as the "classical" king and sometimes as the grotesque companion. Though Falstaff's connection with the feminine/grotesque allows him to see beyond the constructs that order his society, he is never concerned with using this ability to pursue power. Ultimately, Falstaff is banished because he is simply no longer useful to Henry. When it becomes necessary for Henry to adopt the role of a virile king he rejects his feminine friend in order to demonstrate his masculine independence. It is significant that the moment of Falstaff's rejection in *2 Henry IV* takes place in public and comes just as Henry has been crowned king and must, therefore, adopt the role of the strong and masculine ruler.

One crucial ability that Henry learns in Eastcheap, and adapts to political use, is the facility for acting and role playing. Henry plays multiple roles throughout the *Henriad* in order to maintain his authority. This ability comes from his association with the very theatrical Falstaff and his recognition of the mutability of identity. Howard and Rackin point to Falstaff's theatricality as a feminine trait, which Prince Hal is able to employ to his own political advantage. "Hal appropriates Falstaff's theatrical power for his own use, as indeed he must, since the power of theatrical performance is a requisite for royal authority in the modernized world of the second tetralogy"(Howard and Rackin

166). According to these critics, Henry's banishment of Falstaff somehow sanitizes his own theatricality of any weakening feminine pollution (ibid). In *Engendering a Nation* Howard and Rackin propose that the play of history in the *Henriad* revolves around the repression of the feminine Other as a way to assert masculine dominance. They are, therefore, placed in an awkward position when confronted with the fact of Henry's feminine theatricality. But their claim that Henry's acting is no longer a feminine trait simply because he expels Falstaff does not quite satisfy. What we are here suggesting is that Henry does not fully subscribe to one position. He is neither Falstaff nor Hotspur, but is capable of appearing as either in the pursuit of power. In gaining the support and admiration of his people he utilizes the ability to play different roles and constantly creates new identities for himself in the pursuit of power.

That Henry is an actor is one of the first things we learn about him in *I Henry IV*. "Yet herein will I imitate the sun, / Which doth permit the base contagious clouds / To smother up his beauty from the world, / That, when he please again to be himself, / Being wanted, he may be more wond'red at"(1.2.201-5). In this opening soliloquy he speaks of his ability to "imitate", and, indeed, we find him a very different character than he had been in the company of Falstaff and Poins. His speech tells us that his entertaining interplay with Falstaff is nothing more than the acting out of a part, which will be discarded at the opportune moment. We can readily see how his relationship with Falstaff has made him aware of the advantages of acting. In this scene, Falstaff plays the part of a pious Puritan to humorous effect. The setting up of opposites (like Falstaff's impiety masquerading as saintliness) facilitates the aims not only of comedy, but also of

politics. It is Hal's goal to set himself off against the bawdy and lawless tavern world by allowing himself to be absorbed by it and then setting himself apart from it. "And, like bright metal on the sullen ground, / My reformation, glitt'ring over my fault, / Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes / Than that which hath no foil to set it off"(1.2.216-9). Like Coriolanus, Henry understands the importance of developing a masculine image of himself in order to be an effective ruler and command the appropriate levels of respect. He does this, again like Coriolanus, by setting himself apart from others and seeming to reject the feminine. Henry differs from Coriolanus, however, because his ability to see through the illusion of identity enables him to enhance his masculine appearance by setting it off against a feminine past. Henry's stratagem enables him to win the love of the commoners while at the same time earning him the respect of the nobility that he will need to rule effectively. The lower classes always remember him as a man of the people, while the aristocracy sees him as a strong and courageous leader. Coriolanus' devotion to his masculine identity prevents him from becoming such a universally supported leader.

If Henry is already an accomplished actor when we meet him, we may ask why he needs Falstaff at all. The answer, quite simply, is that he doesn't. Henry is, in fact, very like Falstaff (which may be why they get along so well), except that Henry is driven by a passion for power, while Falstaff seeks only pleasure. Henry seems to perceive all of his relationships as tools to be used. Falstaff offers him a window into a completely feminine or grotesque perspective, and acts as a foil against which Hal will distinguish himself when he rises to the throne. But Hal's ultimate goal is never to develop a lifelong

friendship with Falstaff, or anyone else for that matter. He is not bound, by the rules of the masculine, to be loyal to his friends. I think that Falstaff always recognizes this about Henry, and, in some sense, he always knows that his relationship with Hal will never survive the young prince's rise to power. There is certain poignancy behind Falstaff's mirth, at those times when he refers to Hal's future role as king, as he does in their first scene of the play.

Falstaff: Do not thou, when thou art king, hang a thief.
Prince: No; thou shalt. (*1 Henry IV*, 1.2.64-5)

In the famous tavern scene where Falstaff and Hal play the parts of king and prince, there is a similar note of desperation underneath Falstaff's jollity.

Falstaff: No, my good lord: banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins; but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish plump Jack, and banish all the world!
Prince: I do, I will. (2.4.474-81)

In both cases, the Prince's reply to Falstaff's subtle pleading is cryptic and dangerous. He offers his friend no assurances that their relationship, or even Falstaff himself, will survive when Henry becomes king. Falstaff loves Hal, and, perhaps, in his own way, Henry loves Falstaff as well. But Henry always places his relationships second to his pursuit of power. To him they are, first and foremost, a means of asserting his authority.

Henry does not need Falstaff in the fullest sense of the term, but only as a craftsman needs the proper tools to fashion his wares.

Henry seems to perceive his entire life as a role, or rather a succession of roles, which he acts out in order to achieve power. Even his relationship with Falstaff, compelling as it is, is an act that Henry is able to quit when the scene ends. One particularly telling scene in which Henry displays his ability to act a part, and in which Shakespeare demonstrates the mutable nature of identity, takes place in the taverns of Eastcheap in *1 Henry IV*. In this famous scene Falstaff and Hal alternately act out the parts of the king and prince. A. P. Rossiter writes, "In that three-move epitome you have all the special technique of the *Henry IV* plays: a constant shifting of appearances, like the changing lights of an opal, so that every event, every person becomes equivocal – as Falstaff made Honour"(Berman 78). Falstaff's "catechism" at Shrewsbury (5.1.127-41) reveals the hollowness of honor in much the same way as Henry's ability to shift roles undermines the concept of identity. When Falstaff changes his identity, in the tavern, for that of the king, the representation is so funny that Mistress Quickly begins to cry for laughing so hard. Of course, Falstaff immediately casts her in the role of the weeping queen. Falstaff's representation of himself as "A goodly portly man, i' faith, and a corpulent; of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble carriage"(3.4.421-3) demonstrates how easy it is for him to take on multiple roles. Just as Falstaff reaps the comedic benefits of contrasting the two versions of his nature, so the young prince will reap the political benefits of acting different roles in order to suit his situation.

Henry uses his ability to role-play when he interacts with the lower classes, which are often represented as both feminine and grotesque in these plays. His theatricality is made very clear in the tavern scenes of *1 Henry IV*, as when Hal says, "Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis"(2.4.6-8). Henry's acceptance of the grotesque body of the lower classes is also apparent in *Henry V* when the king assumes a disguise and debates with Williams, a common soldier, on the eve of the battle at Agincourt, in an attempt to bolster the spirits of his troops. As if to emphasize the effect contact with the feminine/grotesque body has on Henry he immediately enters into a soliloquy on the hollowness of appearances. Ceremony, says Henry, is all that differentiates him from the common man (4.1.235-89). Indeed, when he adopts the voice of a commoner he says,

> I think the King is but a man, as I am: the violet smells to him, as it doth to me; the element shows to him, as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. (4.1.103-10).

Here Henry not only demonstrates his ability to role-play, but also indicates his awareness of the fundamental meaninglessness of all the roles which people play. In his exchange with Williams Derek Traversi points out that in this scene,

> There is about the argument a universality which transcends the royal situation. Men, differentiated by a 'ceremony' ultimately vain, are united in their common 'weakness,' and the most notable feature of human behaviour seems to the speaker to be its domination by impulse, its helplessness before the universal stooping of the affections. (Berman 62)

Traversi indicates that, in the *Henriad*, the nature of society itself is grotesque and feminine. There is no difference between the nobility and the peasantry but what the patriarchal system imposes. The weakness and domination by impulse that Traversi refers to were frequently associated with the feminine in Shakespeare's time. In addition, the idea that all men are connected to one another by a fundamental impulsive nature, which can never be completely controlled or restrained, reflects the Bakhtinian grotesque body. Henry, like Williams and Falstaff, is a grotesque body, and is part of the larger grotesque body of his society. His identity as king is based on an "idol ceremony" (4.1.245), which, as the pun on "idol" and "idle" suggests, is both worshiped and worthless. Henry V is, therefore, able to change roles and shift his identity (as he does in this scene) whenever it becomes expedient to do so. As the Chorus of act four suggests, Henry is able to comfort and bolster the spirit of his troops by his "looks" (4.Cho.42) and "A little touch of Harry in the night"(4.Cho.47). This role-playing supports his masculine identity, as well, as his troops remain loyal to him on the following day, and go on to achieve a glorious victory over the more numerous French troops.

After his victory at Agincourt, Henry consummates his victory by forcing the French king to sign a treaty and taking the young princess Katherine as his wife. At the close of *Henry V* the final courtship scene between Henry and Katherine functions as a final example of Henry's facility for role-playing and his ability to utilize both the masculine/classical and feminine/grotesque identities to gain power and achieve his goals.

The scene in which Henry courts Katherine is filled with double entendres which indicate Henry's desire to make love to his future bride. "If I could win a lady at leapfrog, or by vaulting into my saddle with my armor on my back, under the correction of bragging be it spoken, I should quickly leap into a wife"(5.2.139-43). Charney points out that both "leap" and "vault" are euphemisms for the sexual act (191). He goes on to suggest that the use of the French word *baiser* "seems already to imply its meaning in modern French, to fuck. In this scene, Shakespeare dwells on the word as if it had an off-color connotation"(ibid). Here, Henry defies the conventions followed by Hotspur and Coriolanus. Where these two men are very cool towards their wives, and constantly resist their impulse to lust, Henry embraces his sexual desires, in opposition to the typical Renaissance view that lust feminized and weakened men them by making them slaves to their own urges. Henry emphasizes his literal relationship with Katherine, as a symbolic representation of the union between England and France, in order to more fully secure his power.

There is also a sense in which Henry establishes his masculine identity through his courtship of Katherine. "[Katherine] is the final prize in Henry's French war, sealing his power over the French king as surely as his soldiers' rape of the women of Harfleur would have sealed his power over those women's fathers and husbands. Henry's masculinity is defined by his dually compelling performances as warrior and wooer"(Howard and Rackin 6). It is curious that, though the King seems to know a great deal more French than he lets on, he refuses to admit this fact, and insists on speaking mostly in English and using a translator to communicate with his bride-to-be. From the

beginning of their conversation Henry seems much more capable in the French tongue than the princess is in the English, yet he speaks to her in English for most of the scene. When Katherine and Alice speak to one another in French the King enters into the conversation as naturally as if it had been in English (5.2.112-6). Then he pretends to merely be guessing at the meaning of Katherine's French, but he still translates better than Alice is able to. Katherine's English is obviously broken and disordered, but Henry's French seems much more fluent. There is another indication that he is simply pretending to ignorance of the French language. Towards the end of their interlude Katherine speaks to Henry, again in French, and he responds immediately as if she had spoken English. When she speaks again he asks for a translation, but is quick to supply his own when Alice is not up to the task. Henry perpetuates the language barrier that exists between himself and Katherine so that he can maintain as much or as little distance as he likes from his new wife. He places himself in a position of power by controlling the amount of interchange he allows between himself and Katherine. Katherine's lack of English serves as a sort of buffer, which enables Henry to secure his rule of France and demonstrate his masculinity.

In this single relationship, then, Henry displays his ability to demonstrate both masculine dominance and enact feminine interconnectedness. Katherine represents France, and his ability to role-play enables him to set up the parameters of the relationship in much the same way as he dictates terms to the French royalty at the close of the play. Henry defines the structure of the relationship, and, thereby, asserts his masculine authority. But he also recognizes the benefits of a happy union over

oppressive control. His father had a great deal of trouble uniting the English nation after he had taken it by force, and we can imagine that Henry has this in mind when he pursues a more "grotesque" union with France through his symbolic relationship with Katherine.

Grotesque societies in the Henriad *and* Coriolanus

Both England and France are, in fact, grotesque and feminine entities, just like the Rome of *Coriolanus*. We have already noted some of the ways in which Shakespeare presents this concept, but it is necessary to further clarify this idea because the environment in which Henry and Coriolanus operate plays such a crucial role in our understanding of their identities and their different approaches to the pursuit of power.

The socio-political environments we encounter in these plays are in the process of changing. Indeed, Shakespeare seems to indicate in *Coriolanus* and the *Henriad* that nations themselves are, in a sense, grotesque bodies. In the broadest terms, the feminine/grotesque body is one which is constantly changing and altering itself. The masculine/classical body is far more conservative, being associated in the Henry IV plays with chivalry which was an antiquated ideology, even in Shakespeare's day. The primary characteristic of the classical body is its closed orifices, which disconnect it from any contact with the world at large. It remains inviolable and distinct, and, because of this, it is not capable of change. In the England of the *Henriad* and Rome of *Coriolanus* the political climate is in a state of flux. England is still experiencing turmoil as a result of Henry IV's usurpation of Richard, and is divided against itself. The invasion of France is

Henry V's answer to this civil conflict. It is worth noting that, in both the Henry IV plays and *Henry V*, Henry's antagonists are aligned with chivalry. Hotspur's devotion to honor and his horse (many have pointed out that the word *chivalry* comes from the French word *cheval*, meaning horse) identify him with an outdated ideology which is left behind by a more modern England. France, in *Henry V*, is also identified with the chivalric tradition and is defeated by the English army. In both cases Henry V emerges victorious because of his connection with the feminine/grotesque body, which enables him to change along with his nation, rather than simply being left behind. By contrast, Coriolanus is a thoroughly distinct character. He is closely identified with the masculine/classical body and is unable to alter himself to accommodate the changing political climate of Rome. It is significant that the play takes place at a pivotal moment in Roman history when the Tribunes were elected to serve as the voice of the common people. Coriolanus remains strictly tied to the aristocratic ideology of Rome which values martial virtues above all else (much like the chivalric tradition), and his devotion to the masculine/classical ideology brings about his destruction.

In a sense, both Henry and Coriolanus are personifications of their societies. The tavern world plays a prominent role in the Henry IV plays and in the development of Henry's identity. In these plays he manages to straddle the line between the feminine tavern world and the masculine world of the courts and the battlefield becoming, in one person, a representative of all of England. In *Henry V* he affects the identity of a masculine England which achieves dominance over the effete French. His marriage to Katherine at the close of the play is symbolic of England's victory over France. "In the

person of the princess, the entire French nation will assume the role of a married woman, the *feme covert* whose identity was legally subsumed to that of her husband and whose property became his possession"(Howard and Rackin 207). Henry uses masculine ideology to enlarge his kingdom and gain power. Both literally and symbolically, his marriage to Katherine increases and solidifies his power by placing France under his authority. The gender duality that was confined to England in the Henry IV plays is, in *Henry V*, enlarged and modified to include France. It is Henry's ability to manipulate roles that allows him to successfully overcome his enemies in both arenas, and to alter his identity in order to maintain his power over a nation that, like a grotesque body, is constantly in flux.

The Rome of *Coriolanus* begins as a predominantly masculine space. Here there is no contrasting feminine nation to offer an alternative such as we have seen in *Antony and Cleopatra* in which Cleopatra's feminine Egypt acts as a counterpoint to Rome's masculinity. Rome, like Coriolanus, is successful in repressing the feminine Other, at least for a while. As Willems states, "Rome and its hero seem to me to be characterized by the precedence given to the warrior instinct thought to be noble and virile, to the detriment of the urge to love, considered as feminine, and therefore to be spurned and repressed"(Maguin and Willems 195). The Rome of *Coriolanus* seems completely devoted, as Coriolanus is, to the establishment of a masculine identity through war. Its conflict with the Volscians is not based on differences in ideology but on the purely masculine desire to establish military dominance.

The establishment of the Tribune, with which the play begins, undermines this masculine world. Ultimately, Rome finds itself to be a grotesque society based on relationships rather than individuality, and on democracy rather than on a rigidly structured hierarchy. It is forced to accommodate the plebeians and adopt a more compromising and democratic stance. Coriolanus is forced to watch Rome, which had inculcated in him a devotion to the masculine Self, begin to accept and incorporate feminine elements like the plebeians into its power structure. This proves to be more than he can bear. Though the Rome Shakespeare represents is decidedly masculine it is also a place where the more feminine elements of society, represented by the lower classes, are on the rise. Coriolanus is unsuccessful precisely because he is unable to adapt to these changes in the government of Rome. His identity is based on his singular achievements and a fierce independence and he cannot identify with these more feminine aspects of his city. "In this new political climate of accommodation and compromise, where gesture masks power, Coriolanus' rigid integrity is out of place and his aristocratic pride a liability"(Kahn 165).

Coriolanus does, like Rome, begin to recognize his dependence on the world around him at the end of the play, but his realization comes far too late to be of any use to him. Even as Volumnia and the rest of Coriolanus' family approach to try and persuade him to stop the siege of Rome he seems to struggle with the dawning knowledge that he cannot extricate himself from his dependency on them.

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

> Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
> What is that curtsy worth? Or those doves' eyes,
> Which can make the gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows,
> As if Olympus to a molehill should
> In supplication nod; and my young boy
> Hath an aspect of intercession which
> Great Nature cries "Deny not." (5.3.22-33)

Ultimately, Coriolanus is swayed by his mother's pleas. It seems, at this moment in the play, as if Coriolanus might, in fact, be capable of changing and incorporating some feminine and grotesque mutability into his identity. His identity, based on military achievement and independence, seems finally to soften and become more malleable. We are never able to see if he might be able, like Rome, to achieve a different notion of self, however, since he is soon after killed by the machinations of Aufidius.

Coriolanus is never able to access the feminine because of the strictly masculine environment into which he is raised. Because of this he tries to establish his masculine independence as his mother taught him, through violence and warfare, but is ultimately defeated because he cannot escape his dependence on his mother. This is perfectly captured in his opening display of masculinity when he enters Corioles alone and conquers it. He symbolically rapes the city in an effort to demonstrate his masculinity, but his entering into the city also enacts a return to the womb and symbolically reinforces his connection with Volumnia. It is both a demonstration of his masculine Self and a desire for the feminine Other which he sums up at the close of the play with "Alone I did it. Boy!" He is both man and boy throughout the play. His stunted relationship with his mother and wife have never enabled him to develop fully as a man, despite his titanic

efforts on the battlefield. Like Narcissus and Adonis he remains enamored with his own masculine Self and fearful of a feminine Other which he has never experienced. His rejection of the feminine comes from a fear of that very thing which could complete him, but which he has never known.

Coriolanus's masculine identity, which is inscribed in him by his mother and his nation, and which serves him so well on the battlefield, does not translate to the political arena because it is based on an ideology that cannot allow for change or compromise. Throughout *Coriolanus* he attempts to deny his dependence and interconnection with others and repress the feminine Other. Henry is able to easily move between battlefield, tavern, and court because his identity is not based on an association with a particular gender. It is, in fact, his ability to access the feminine/grotesque body that enables him to perceive the mutability of identity, since, as the grotesque body suggests, everything is interconnected and constantly changing. Henry's contact with the feminine and grotesque comes primarily through his relationship with Falstaff, who acts as a sort of surrogate mother figure to the young Prince Hal, and constantly undermines the value system set up by characters like Hotspur and Henry IV. Henry's ability to act out a multitude of differing roles throughout his life enables him to successfully adapt to the changes that are occurring in an England troubled with rebellion and civil war.

In the end, there is a paradoxical relationship between an understanding of the feminine/grotesque and the ability to dissociate oneself from others in the act of self-fashioning. One might think that the realization of one's connection with the world, through the feminine/grotesque body, would serve only to undermine individuality and

prevent autonomous self-creation. For Henry, however, it is precisely his understanding of the feminine that allows him to stand apart from the other characters in the play and define himself. His identity is constantly shifting, but it is decidedly his own, and no other character can take credit for making Henry into what he is. We get the sense that, for Henry, all relationships are only tools to be used or discarded as best benefits his rise to power. He does not seem to have a genuine relationship with anyone, certainly not his wife, and he even sacrifices his relationship with his best friend to the cause of his autonomous self-fashioning. Coriolanus exists at the other end of this paradox. Despite his constant striving for individuality, he is unable to achieve a true self-fashioning because he lacks any understanding of the feminine/grotesque body that might enable him to perceive his relationships as constructs and tools. We are, perhaps, surprised at those moments when Coriolanus expresses a passionate love for his friends, as he does to Cominius at the beginning of the play. It seems strange that a person so devoted to individuality as he is would allow himself to be strongly attached to others. But it is, in fact, these relationships that, for Coriolanus, compose his identity. He defines himself in the light of who he is to those around him, be it husband, father, son, friend, protector of Rome or destroyer of his enemies. His relationships do not appear to him as artificial constructs, but as real entities that he protects and fosters. Coriolanus is, finally, destroyed by this paradox when he is unable to destroy those relationships that define him and can neither enact an autonomous self-fashioning nor sacrifice his masculine identity.

Works Referenced

Adelman, Janet. "'Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*." *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature*. Eds. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978.

Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Bamber, Linda. *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare*. Stanford: University Press, 1982.

Bamber, Linda. "History, Tragedy, Gender." *Shakespeare's History Plays:* Richard II *to* Henry V. Ed. Graham Holderness. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Bedford, S.K. "'On Both Sides More Respect': A Very British *Coriolanus*." *Coriolanus: Critical Essays*. Ed. David Wheeler. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Camden, Carroll. *The Elizabethan Woman*. Houston: The Elsevier Press, 1952.

Charney, Maurice. *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Danson, Lawrence. "*Coriolanus*." *Coriolanus: Critical Essays*. Ed. David Wheeler. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Davis, Lloyd, ed. *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998.

Foakes, R.A. *Shakespeare and Violence*. Cambridge: University Press, 2003.

Grady, Hugh. *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from* Richard II *to* Hamlet. Oxford: University Press, 2002.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University Press, 1980.

Hill, Gareth S. *Masculine and Feminine: The Natural Flow of Opposites in the Psyche.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1992.

Hodgdon, Barbara. *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History.* Princeton: University Press, 1991.

Howard, Jean E. and Phyllis Rackin. *Engendering a Nation.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Jagendorf, Zvi. "*Coriolanus*: Body Politic and Private Parts." *Coriolanus: Critical Essays.* Ed. David Wheeler. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Jung, C.G. *Aspects of the Feminine.* Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: University Press, 1982.

Kahn, Coppelia. *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Kahn, Coppelia. *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Lowe, Lisa. "'Say I play the man I am': Gender and Politics in *Coriolanus*." *The Kenyon Review: New Series* 8.4 (1986): 86-95.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Portable Machiavelli.* Trans./Ed. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.

Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman.* Cambridge: University Press, 1980.

Pearlman, E. *William Shakespeare: The History Plays.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Plutarch. *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.* Vol. 1. Trans. John Dryden. Ed. Arthur Hugh Clough. New York: The Modern Library, 1992.

Rossiter, A.P. "Ambivalence: The Dialectic of the Histories." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Henry V. Ed. Ronald Berman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968.

Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra.* Ed. Barbara Everett. New York: Signet Classic, 1998.

Shakespeare, William. *Coriolanus.* Ed. Reuben Brower. New York: Signet Classic, 2002.

Shakespeare, William. *The History of Henry IV (Part One)*. Ed. Maynard Mack. New York: Signet Classic, 1998.

Shakespeare, William. *The Life of Henry V*. Ed. John Russell Brown. New York: Signet Classic, 1998.

Sprengnether, Madelon. "Annihilating Intimacy in *Coriolanus*." *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*. Ed. Mary Beth Rose. Syracuse: University Press, 1986.

Traub, Valerie. *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of sexuality in Shakespearean drama*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Traversi, Derek. "Henry the Fifth." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Henry V. Ed. Ronald Berman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968.

Watson, Curtis Brown. *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor*. Princeton: University Press, 1960.

Williams, Charles. "Henry V." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Henry V. Ed. Ronald Berman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968.

Willems, Michele. "'Women and horses and power and war': Worship of Mars from *1 Henry IV* to *Coriolanus*." *French Essays on Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. Eds. Jean-Marie Maguin and Michele Willems. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995.

Zeitlin, F.I. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama." *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World*. Ed. Laura K. McClure. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

James Aaron Beavers, the son of Jim and Anne Beavers, spent the first twelve years of his life in Williamsburg, VA until moving with this family to Northern Virginia when his father accepted a position as Headmaster of a private school in Fairfax. From an early age, and throughout his primary and secondary educational career, he demonstrated an appreciation for the written word. After graduating with a double major in English and History from Grove City College he took a year off of school before deciding that his formal education was not finished. In 2002 he enrolled in the masters program at the University of Richmond to pursue a degree in Renaissance English. Currently he is pursuing a career in education, and hopes to return to Northern Virginia to teach English to high school students.