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Coriolan

by Alexandre Hardy

Translated with Introduction
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

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by Alexandre Hardy
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Introduction
to the translation

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There are thirty-three plays in the five-volume collection that Alexandre Hardy published in 1624-28[1] (out of a total production of between five and seven hundred, by various—probably inflated—accounts[2]). None has ever been translated into English (or, as far as I know, into any other language). It seems time to initiate the process for several reasons. Foremost must be the intrinsic interest of his varied dramatic writing, which helped to shape French theatre over several decades by innovative contributions in every genre (especially tragicomedy). Such interest has not always been perceived, and it is still not universally conceded, but French theatre historians are increasingly liberating themselves from the somewhat oppressive shadow cast backwards, as well as forwards, by mid- to late seventeenth-century Classical achievement (Corneille, Racine, Molière). A prime beneficiary of such liberation is the "âge baroque", to which Hardy belonged (retrospectively speaking, of course), and which was characterised by widespread and diverse theatrical activity, although our knowledge of the latter is, to date, largely confined to the relatively well-documented Parisian scene.

One result of the new interest in this period—and a necessary instrument of, and impetus to, further appreciation—is the production of modern scholarly editions of authors previously neglected. Fortunately, their texts were printed, and have survived, in considerable

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1 *Le théâtre d'Alexandre Hardy* (Paris: Jacques Quesnel, then François Targa [I-III, V]]; Rouen: David Du Petit-Val [IV], 1624-28). Hardy also published separately a vast multi-part dramatic romance, *Les chastes et loyales amours de Théagène et Cariclée, réduites du grec de l'Histoire d'Héliodore en huict poèmes dragmatiques [*sic*] ou théâtres consécutifs, par Alexandre Hardy* (Paris: J. Quesnel, 1623).

2 See Cavaillé, Introd., p. 5.

numbers. Given his major contribution and the large number of texts extant, Hardy is an unavoidable figure in this regard, although the enterprise is at an early stage. The new edition of *Coriolan* by Fabien Cavaillé that accompanies the present translation and has served as the basis for it evidences the evolution in scholarly thinking: it is distinguished by a concern for authenticity at every level, from the linguistic to the theatrical to the typographical—hence by a desire, not only to respect the conventions of Hardy's time, but to recuperate them as part of the experience of the text, insofar as is possible, by understanding them on their own terms.

Another reason for translating Hardy is the increasing recognition of early modern drama as a European, rather than a strictly national, phenomenon. To foster such a perspective is the *raison d'être* of the boundary-crossing publication project in which this volume participates, as well as of the research team behind it. It seems fair to say that such an approach to drama is catching up with comparative thinking about the other genres which circulated across linguistic and political frontiers—hence even, to a remarkable degree, across official religious ones—at a time when national literatures were in the early stages of (self-)definition. Such circulation can be traced with relative ease where printed texts were translated, as was unusual for contemporary drama, and it obviously reflects commercial imperatives. A salient case in point is the enormous and Protean body of neo-chivalric romantic narratives, *Diana* (by Jorgé de Montemayor) and *Amadis de Gaule* being outstanding examples, although Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, too, had surprising international reach. Across and within the economics of the international book-trade, however, it remains possible to discern the conditioning influence of the diffusion practices of the late-medieval and humanist heritage, even as Latin yielded to the vernaculars, and even in more popular literature.

The romantic narratives themselves spawned theatrical adaptations, of course, in various countries. Such independent generation of analogues from common raw material is hardly without interest for comparative theatrical study: on the contrary, instances of this kind—and the respective treatments of Plutarch's account of Coriolanus by Hardy and Shakespeare must be considered analogously, given the lack of evidence for a more direct link—not only throw into relief the approaches of individual dramatists but provide privileged windows on the divergent conditions of production and representation. Obviously, such local specificity would itself tend to discourage direct translation (as opposed to free adaptation) of dramatic texts with a view to production. Regardless of the Neoclassical arguments of Sidney (in *An Apology for Poetry*), Shakespeare's stage would never have settled for the combination of rhetorical inflation and representational minimalism that is practised in Hardy's *Coriolan* (two on-stage deaths notwithstanding), any more than it took up Mary Sidney Herbert's translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (as *Antonius*, pub. 1592).

Yet we also do wrong to underestimate the application to theatrical ideas of the same cultural climate that fostered the international circulation of printed books. For one thing, such play-texts as were printed were obviously susceptible to transmission and intelligible to a great many foreign dramatists without benefit of translation. The same is true of works of dramatic theory: a case regularly cited by English theatre historians is the diffusion, by the mediation of John Fletcher, of Giovanni Battista Guarini's justification of tragicomedy (1601).[3] To speak at once in more concrete terms and, regrettably, with sporadic documentary support, professional theatrical troupes no doubt crossed national, hence linguistic, boundaries more liberally than we have been used to assuming. Certain cases—notably involving Italian players in France, English players in Germany, French players in the Low Countries—have long been recognised as representative of broad vectors of influence. It seems important to emphasise, as does Christian Biet, the presence of English actors in France and with him to extrapolate, especially from the end of the French civil wars, "une relative internationalisation de l'espace et de la pratique dramatiques [a relative internationalisation of dramatic space and practice]".[4]

It is true that the sparse information concerning the English in France—the fact of their performances, with few additional details, is documented in several locales, including the court, in 1599 and 1604—has not been fully accommodated in English-speaking criticism, and we do not know what trends, if any, to deduce from it. Yet the facts themselves should not be underestimated on this account, nor because they are so matter-of-factly recorded: on the contrary, what this suggests is some degree of regular commerce, despite the linguistic barrier, which we are no doubt right to think of as especially restricting knowledge of English (one cannot imagine the "French" scenes of *Henry V* as having an equivalent in a piece written for the Hôtel de Bourgogne). And while there seems to be no evidence that such commerce was reciprocal in the period, it is inconceivable that English theatrical professionals working in France would not have come in contact with native practitioners of their common craft and carried home, if nothing else (such as play-scripts or notes of performances), at least impressions, concepts and ideas for dramatic subjects. It therefore bears significantly, if indistinctly, on the present project that the

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3 See, notably, Eugene M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (1952; rpt. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), esp. p. 46. Fletcher's response is usefully discussed in context, and with respect to subsequent criticism, by Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope, "Introduction: The Politics of Tragicomedy, 1610-50", *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. McMullan and Hope (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-7.

4 Christian Biet, "Introduction", *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants: en France XVI^e^-XVII^e^ siècles*, ed. Christian Biet *et al.* (Paris: R. Laffont, 2006), p. xiv.

several decades of Hardy's ascendency within French theatrical practices correspond to the most fertile period in early modern English drama.

Coriolan and *Coriolanus*

This is not the place to introduce Hardy's *oeuvre* and his theatre generally, even if I could pretend to specialist credentials in the field. Such credentials are amply displayed, and profitably deployed, by Cavaillé in his extensive companion introduction, and it is our working assumption for this series that Anglophone readers sufficiently interested in the French theatre of the period will be able to follow critical writing in that language. The archaic language of Hardy himself is another matter, channelled and compressed as it is, moreover, into elaborately rhetorical verse. His expression is often obscure to French speakers today, and the objective here must be to render it as accessible as possible, while preserving something of its literary flavour.

What I may usefully do further in these preliminary remarks is, in effect, to justify the choice of Hardy's *Coriolan* to initiate translation of his *oeuvre* by developing some specific points of contact—and contrast—with the Shakespearean analogue, on the assumption that English-speaking readers are likely to want to approach Hardy's version from a comparative angle. This translation is intended, in part, to give them a ready means to do so. It needs to be stipulated that, despite what has been said about boundary-crossing, I am making no claim here for specific indebtedness in either direction. For one thing, if a claim were to be argued, the question of direction would need to be the starting point, and, since the date of Shakespeare's play is well established (1608), that would require more assurance about the date of composition and staging of Hardy's play than we are ever likely to possess. *Coriolan* was first published, as far as is known, in 1625, in the second volume of the collected works, but Hardy, using typically (and literally) flowery language, speaks in his preface to that volume of its six works as "fleurs vieillies depuis le temps d'une jeunesse qui me les a produites [flowers grown old since the time of a young age that produced them for me]". Given the dramatist's then-age of forty-three or so, one is left to speculate as to what would have constituted "jeunesse" from his personal and cultural points of view—and to what extent he may be exaggerating. The fact remains that he is pointedly situating these compositions at a distant period, the very outset of his career. All in all, a date preceding that of *Coriolanus* seems probable, and in fact, without clear warrant, conjectures have tended to converge on the year 1607.[5]

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5 See Alexandre Hardy, *Coriolan*, ed. Terence Allott, Textes Littéraires, 28 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1978), p. viii, and S. Wilma Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Vie d'Alexandre Hardy poète du roi 1572-1632: 47 documents inédits*, 2nd ed. (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1972), p. 155. Cavaillé, Introd., p. 2,

Whatever the chronological relation between *Coriolan* and *Coriolanus*, several basic features of the two plays link them so as to anchor and encourage comparison.[6] The most evident is the choice of subject. Plays about the rebellious Roman hero are relatively rare, if not unprecedented, in the European theatre of the period—rare, for instance, by comparison with those presenting Caesar or Antony and Cleopatra. Moreover, in treating that subject, both Hardy and Shakespeare closely traced the contours, and often imitated the expression, of their common dominant source, Plutarch's *The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus* (as translated by Jacques Amyot into French, and thence, for Shakespeare, by Thomas North into English). There were at least two other dramatic treatments of the subject at the turn of the sixteenth century—one in Latin, one in French—but these have far less in common with Hardy's and Shakespeare's plays than the latter do with each other.[7] For Shakespeare, of course, the recourse to Plutarch's *Lives* had precedent (most substantially for *Julius Caesar* [1599] and *Antony and Cleopatra* [1606-7]). By contrast, Hardy's play is not just his only adaptation of Plutarch, but his only known dramatic treatment of a Roman historical theme.

The exceptional character of the material in Hardy's own eyes is underlined when he concludes his introductory Argument by affirming, "Few subjects will be found in Roman history more worthy of the theatre than this one". He does not explain the statement, probably because his preceding account of the plot had stressed conventional elements that his public would have agreed in accounting eminently theatrical: reversal of fortune, conflict within the hero between filial instinct and a "great spirit [*grand cour-*

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more cautiously proposes 1605-15.

6 I have elsewhere taken a frankly intertextual approach to this question; see Richard Hillman, "Tragedy as a Crying Shame in *Coriolanus* and Alexandre Hardy's *Coriolan*: The 'Boy of Tears' and the Hardy Boys", *Coriolan de William Shakespeare: Langages, Interprétations, Politique(s)*, Actes du colloque international organisé à l'Université François-Rabelais les 3-4 novembre 2006 sous les auspices de la Société Française Shakespeare, ed. Richard Hillman (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2007), pp. 175-94. Otherwise, a limited comparison is presented by M. W. MacCallum, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background*, Introd. T. J. B. Spencer (1910; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1967), on the premise of an "interesting" series of "coincidences" (pp. 475-76). This view is endorsed by Geoffrey Bullough, Introduction to *Coriolanus*, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols., vol. 5: The Roman Plays: *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* (London: Routledge; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 474-76, who, although he dates *Coriolan* prior to 1600 (on no clear evidence), offers this explanation of the basic resemblance: "That Shakespeare's play comes nearer to French classical drama than any of his others is due, not to influence by any French writer, but to the neatness of Plutarch's presentation and to the moral intensity which Shakespeare brought to the theme" (p. 476).

7 Allott, ed., pp. xvii-xviii, cites Hermann Kirchner, *Coriolanus Tragicomica* (1599), and Pierry Thierry, *Tragédie de Coriolanus* (1600); see also Philip Brockbank, ed., *Coriolanus*, by William Shakespeare, The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd ser. (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 75.

age]" thirsting for vengeance. These are not necessarily the determinants of theatricality for English drama of the period, however, and Shakespeare's choice of subject has often been attributed less to the inherent dramatic appeal of the story and characters than to its potential for raising (if hardly answering) political questions, notably about the distribution of goods and powers in a state. Such questions are not salient in Hardy; certainly, there are no mobs of starving Citizens, while the Fable of the Belly resoundingly retailed in Shakespeare's first scene by Menenius (I.i.93 ff.[8]) is effectively reduced to a two-line commonplace served up by the ineffectual Senate (ll. 603-4). Nevertheless, the manipulation of the Tribunes (here concentrated in one, Licinie), the blindness of the plebeians and the pusillanimity of the Senators (both the latter figuring in choric form) strike a Shakespearean chord. As for the combination of personal and political factors that leads Coriolan to destruction among the Volscians, this constitutes one of the most striking innovations introduced by both playwrights.

There is conceivably another political point raised and left unspoken by Hardy's affirmation of the aptness of his subject, and this, too, would make for common ground with Shakespeare. Whether or not Hardy was consciously glancing at the idea, it would surely have been difficult for contemporaries to avoid taking both plays as an invitation to consider the question of the danger to the commonwealth posed by disgruntled aristocratic military figures who, rightly or wrongly, considered themselves neglected or dishonoured by their respective sovereigns. *Coriolan* has been read as particularly evoking the treason of Charles, duc de Biron, who was executed by Henri IV in 1602—a reference that would favour, if not impose, a relatively early date.[9] Of course, the case of Biron was hardly unique in early modern France, and alternative candidates for such an allusion can easily be cited,[10] but it is true that the "*grand courage*" of Hardy's hero, which swells his sense of grievance to the point of blinding him to his own best interest, makes a special match with the character of Biron as depicted in contemporary accounts.

The point becomes interesting comparatively because Biron was habitually likened in this respect to his rebellious English counterpart, the Earl of Essex, whose maverick heroism had gone to, and cost him, his head in 1601. French and English pamphlets make the comparison;[11] so does the English poet and playwright George Chapman, who had

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8 All references to Shakespeare's tragedy (as *Cor.*) are to William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. R. Brian Parker, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

9 See Allott, ed., p. xiv.

10 See Cavaillé, Introd., p. 16.

11 See John Margeson, ed., *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, by George Chapman, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 17; see also Appendix 3, pp. 280-82.

patronage connections with Essex, in his two-part dramatic treatment, the *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*. And it is Essex that Lee Bliss, in introducing the New Cambridge edition of Shakespeare's play, finds to be insistently present within Shakespeare's portrait of Coriolanus, to whom Essex was explicitly compared in a Paul's Cross sermon.[12]

Regardless of any possible overlap in political topicality—regardless, too, of more local textual "coincidences", some of which will be signalled in the notes—there are two broad areas in which Hardy and Shakespeare adapt, rather than simply follow, Plutarch in such a way as to produce some highly distinctive common ground. At issue here are the roles created for the hero's mother and for his Volscian rival—that is, respectively, the ultimate cause and the immediate instrument of his destruction. Both plays thus take essentially the same approach to developing the personal forces that impinge on the hero's public role.

It should be stipulated that Hardy's representation of the mother-son relation, while foregrounded well beyond Plutarch (and by some of the same techniques as in Shakespeare, the climactic supplication scene being even more tightly concentrated along these lines)—would hardly qualify as psychological in the modern sense. There is no evocation of the hero's upbringing such as Shakespeare extrapolated from Plutarch, no characterisation of Volomnie as a dehumanising mother who dominates her son's psyche. One cannot imagine Hardy's portrayal eliciting anything like the profusion of psychoanalytical studies that constitute a major school of *Coriolanus* criticism.

The French playwright's terms were quite otherwise, in keeping with a tragic theatre of outwardness, conducted across the rhetorical display of highly conventional emotions, values and attitudes—hence, the dramatic appeal of a conflict between the honour-driven impulse for vengeance and filial piety. Neither of these feelings is complicated in itself, in Hardy's treatment, but in order to sustain the theme, he was led to enlarge Volomnie's role well beyond Plutarch. It is not merely that she urges her son to moderation—one of the additions noted by MacCallum.[13] Rather, this is means of installing a powerful emotional dynamic—and from the opening scene: the play begins with Coriolan summoned to face the accusations of the Tribunes and his mother's anxious pleading (cf. *Coriolanus*, III.ii). Moreover, her discouragement at her son's stubbornness bears at least a family resemblance, as it were, to the emotional manipulation so persistently practised by her Shakespearean counterpart:

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12 William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Lee Bliss, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 33-40; see also Parker, ed., pp. 37-38.

13 MacCallum, p. 478.

> Wretched Volomnie! O mother unfortunate!
> You see yourself disdained, your offspring obstinate.
> Your counsel, your reasons, your prayers, your tears' full flood
> Cannot moderate these hot outbursts of his blood.
> (ll. 109-12)

It is because Volomnie is here trying to save her son that her similar rhetoric echoes so ironically in the supplication scene, where her entreaty on behalf of Rome will cost Coriolan his life.

The latter climatic scene, in turn, prepares for an astonishing conclusion that enfolds Volomnie memorably into the tragic closure, at once throwing her role into relief and literally effacing her. The cruelly paradoxical mixture of victory and defeat associated with Volumnia in Shakespeare's supplication sequence is made to resonate in her silence, which contrasts so powerfully with the popular rejoicing at her return as "the life of Rome" (*Cor*., V.v.1).[14] This is the ironic culmination of the discourse of the maternal body that Shakespeare assigns her (closely following Plutarch) in her supplication:

> thou shalt no sooner
> March to assault thy country than to tread—
> Trust to't, thou shalt not—on thy mother's womb
> That brought thee to this world. (*Cor.*, V.iii.123-26)

"The life of Rome" is paradoxically drained of life, virtually disembodied.

Silence, ambiguity and implication were not the hallmarks of Hardy's theatre, but he invests the issue of Volomnie's ironically tragic triumph with equal impact and at least equally exploits the corporeal imagery. As Cavaillé's analysis shows, the character pathetically plays the card of physical maternity for all it is worth during her supplication.[15] The subsequent disembodiment, moreover, is literalised. Volomnie is given the last word—and deed—beginning with a grieving monologue that focuses the paradox:

> O gods, O cruel gods! What execrable fruit
> Has it pleased you to bring forth from my pious suit!
> Wretch! When I prevented my homeland's devastation,
> To my race I brought ruin, my child's immolation.
> (ll. 1327-30)

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14 See, notably, Christina Luckyj,"Volumnia's Silence", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 31 (1991): 327-41.

15 See Cavaillé, Introd., pp. 31-34.

Next, Hardy pushes to a spectacular, and flamboyantly spoken, resolution of what Shakespeare keeps in silent suspension. For he makes Volomnie punish her life-giving and death-dealing body by committing a guilt-stricken onstage suicide to match her son's onstage murder:

> There is no one but myself who tears will devote;
> His country still recalls his knife against its throat,
> Remembers that it could not turn aside his hate,
> And that to me alone it owes this happy state.
> This happy state it owes me; death to him I owe:
> I cruelly took his life when I made him stoop low.
> (ll. 1337-42)

Still, when Volomnie projects her feelings of guilt onto her son, imagining his spirit as thirsting for vengeance, no longer against Rome, but against her—"Not with my complaints can your shade be satisfied: / You require me to be below at your side" (ll. 1349-50)—she articulates a dynamic that Shakespeare arguably builds deep into his mother-son relation. For the relentlessly self-destructive dimension of Coriolanus' behaviour may be read, finally, as his only possible means of revenge against the woman who at once gave and denied him life—revenge pursued in the irreproachable guise of obedience.[16] Filial piety becomes a double-edged sword, as is explicitly the case in Hardy, and as there, the "cruel gods" may be blamed for wielding it: "Behold, the heavens do ope / The gods look down, and this unnatural scene / They laugh at" (*Cor*., V.iii.184-86).

The second major site of Hardy's innovation with respect to Plutarch is the dynamic involving Coriolan's nemesis Amfidie. (So the French playwright names the Volscian leader who figures as Tullus Aufidius in Shakespeare and Plutarch.[17]) In fact, Plutarch says very little about Aufidius, who is introduced only at the point when Coriolanus seeks him out in Antium and not mentioned again until the conspiracy scene, where he is said to act simply "for the feare he had of his authoritie".[18] Hardy also introduces the char-

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16 I first presented this case in *Shakespearean Subversions: The Trickster and the Play-text* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 195-99.

17 The variant "Amphidios" is found in certain Greek manuscripts of Plutarch and made its way into several translations (see Allott, ed., p. 61, and Cavaillé, p. 20. The name Licinie for the tribune (Sicinius in Plutarch, as in Shakespeare) is supposed to have been borrowed from the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Allott, ed., p. xii), but Cavaillé can confirm no such spelling in Dionysius and proposes instead that Hardy, advisedly or not, introduced an allusion to a tribune of the following century, Licinius Stolo, the first tribune of plebeian origin and a noted champion of his class; see Cavaillé, ed., n. 6..

18 *The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus, Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579),

acter through his apparently warm and generous reception of Coriolan, but the latter has already set the stage for doubt in the "threshold" soliloquy (II.i) with which Hardy, like Shakespeare, provides him:[19]

> with him alone I am in contention
> For glory—he who holds their great republic's reins;
> It is on him that I must first expend my pains.
> A hundred times we have been, by honour induced,
> Blind with fury, to the extremity reduced
> Of challenging each other in our armies' sight
> To death or total fame of conquest in the fight.
> (ll. 364-70)

Next, as their alliance against Rome advances successfully, Hardy produces a soliloquy remarkable for its vivid evocation of Amfidie's unfolding thoughts (ll. 825-68 [IV.ii]), endowing him with an unstable combination of jealousy and thirst for honour—"My life is worth only what honour will afford— / I can stand to have no equal, much less a lord" (ll. 843-44)—which issues in a resolution to destroy his rival at all costs.

Shakespeare likewise installs, though from the first act, a psychology of violent envy (tinged in Aufidius' case with homosocial, if not homoerotic attraction). The process begins with the evanescence of "honour" from "emulation" (*Cor.*, I.11.12-13)—a significant variant on Plutarch ("they were ever ... striving in all emulation of honour" [Bullough, ed., p. 526])—to leave only obsessive hatred and infinite subtlety:

> for where
> I thought to crush him in an equal force,
> True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way,
> Or wrath or craft may get him.
> (*Cor.*, I.xi.12-16)

Even more closely corresponding to Amfidie's soliloquy in Act Four, Scene Two, is Aufidius' exchange with his lieutenant (*Cor.*, IV.vii), likewise an ironic preparation for the supplication sequence. Very similar changes are rung on the jealousy theme,

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trans. Thomas North, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Bullough, vol. 5, p. 545; subsequent references are to this edition.

19 These speeches correspond roughly to Plutarch's description of Coriolanus at his country house after the banishment, "turmoyled with sundry sortes and kynde of thoughtes, such as the fyer of his choller dyd sturre up" (Bullough, ed., p. 526).

including a self-reproach for having accepted Martius in the first place. The speech of Hardy's villain is charged with the motif of spying, strong in Coriolanus but lacking in Plutarch, as has been observed.[20] The two conclusions particularly bear comparison, for Shakespeare's character, too, breaks into ominous apostrophe:

> When, Caius, Rome is thine,
> Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.
> (*Cor*., IV.vii.56-57)

> I shall set such a trap when you come back
> That your glory and your life shall both go to wrack.
> [*je te prepare un tel piege au retour,*
> *Que tu perdras ensemble et la gloire et le jour.*]
> (ll. 867-68)

Within the supplication scene itself, while only Shakespeare introduces the hero's nemesis in person and thereby confirms what awaits him on his return to Antium—in both cases, he clearly returns despite his better knowledge[21]—Hardy provides similar pivotal foreshadowing through the commentary of the Volscian composite figure called Council; the latter is at once bitterly critical of Coriolan's yielding and open to comprehension, as Aufidius professes himself to be ("I was moved withal" [*Cor*., V.iii.195]). And it is Amfidie who will profit from the scene, as if he had witnessed it, by playing the card of tearful effeminacy. Amfidie does not make use of the hero's own tears as a provocation, unlike Aufidius in the famous taunt, "thou boy of tears" (*Cor*., V.vi.103): the requisite psychological mechanism is simply absent. Yet there is a similar accusation ("*lâche*" most basically means "cowardly") in Amfidie's charge to the Council that Coriolan, "Basely suborned by tearful femininity, / Has countermanded our siege for the second time [*Lâchement suborné de feminines pleurs / Pour la deuxiesme fois a levé nostre siege*]" (ll. 1140-41), and this makes for a decided parallel to Aufidius: "But at his nurse's tears / He whined and roared away your victory" (*Cor*., V.vi.99-100). That Coriolan also weeps on stage is confirmed by Volomnie ("closing our adieu with tears" [l. 1267]). The tears themselves flow from Plutarch, at least at the beginning of the encounter ("nature so wrought with him, that the teares fell from his eyes" [Bullough, ed., p. 539]). Only in

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20 Parker, ed., n. to I.ii.2.

21 Hardy highlights the point by giving Coriolan another doubtful soliloquy at the opening of Act Five, in which Amfidie's hostility is evoked: "He alone, driven by emulous jealousy, / At all costs aims at purloining my life from me" (ll. 1109-10).

the two tragedies, however, do they come back to haunt the hero by way of a deadly and ingenious adversary, whose attempt to dishonour the Roman grotesquely dishonours himself. That point is ironically sealed, again in both cases, by his final re-appropriation of honourable language after his conspirators have done their work. "Yet he shall have a noble memory" (*Cor*., V.vi.154) are Aufidius' last words; Amfidie's are no less devastating at his own expense: "I approve what you have magnanimously said; / It is an enormous crime to insult the dead" (ll. 1237-38).

A Note on the Translation

I have already mentioned the aim of preserving, insofar as possible, the "literary flavour" of Hardy's language. To this end, as in several other translations of French drama from the period where it has seemed appropriate, I have roughly imitated the formal structure that was early modern French tragedy's standard medium, the equivalent of blank verse in Shakespeare's theatre—namely, couplets employing the hexameter Alexandrine, or *vers noble*. This has also meant resisting the impulse to smooth out the rough edges of a self-consciously poetical, often Latinate, style or to "neutralise" the more extravagant rhetorical effects, although there are also surprisingly direct and down-to-earth discursive moments. I have naturally attempted to reproduce such nuances of register and tone to the best of my ability—with the invaluable guidance on many points of Fabien Cavaillé, who has also helped to clarify a number of obscure passages. A few doubtful points remain for both of us, and these are signalled in the notes.

On one major issue, however, our two texts inevitably and deliberately diverge. The punctuation of Hardy's original editions, rigorously preserved by Cavaillé, follows seventeenth-century French conventions that are far from transparent for modern readers; it is no doubt influenced, as well, by Hardy's personal preferences and the particularities of theatrical delivery. I have sometimes (though not always) found this punctuation useful as a guide to meaning, but to attempt to incorporate it in the translation would compound difficulties already present. I have therefore freely employed the punctuation conventions of modern English to bring out the sense as I conceive it, knowingly at the risk of imposing modern grammatical structures that would have seemed as alien to Hardy as his often do to us.

Finally, I have supplied stage directions in italiques at a few points where this seemed useful (the original has none). Lines originally marked by *guillemets* as sententious or aphoristic are also placed in italics.