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The Narcissistic Skeptic and the Human Community: Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as Read by Stanley Cavell¹

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I reconstruct Cavellian reading of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Stanley Cavell stands out as an original interpreter of *Coriolanus* due to his perspective on its specific themes and motifs. While they have been explored in earlier – mostly psychoanalytical and political – interpretations of the play, Cavell studies them through the lens of his concept of narcissistic skepticism. Framing the question of the narcissistic skeptic versus the human community highlights the particular value of Cavell's perspective. It incorporates a political theme within the context of a psychoanalytical approach, while simultaneously going beyond it and leading to a unique synthesis of both areas. As a result, it allows for conclusions to be drawn about the political nature of the human community and its defining characteristic, which Cavell identifies as being rooted in language.

KEYWORDS: *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare, Cavell, Narcissistic Skepticism, Language, Psychoanalysis.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, reconstruo a leitura cavelliana de *Coriolano* de Shakespeare. Stanley Cavell destaca-se como um intérprete original de *Coriolano* pela sua perspectiva sobre os temas e motivos específicos da peça. Embora tenham sido explorados em interpretações anteriores da obra — principalmente psicanalíticas e políticas —, Cavell estuda esses temas através das lentes de seu conceito de ceticismo narcisista. Enquadrar a questão do cético narcisista versus a comunidade humana destaca, pois, o valor particular da perspectiva de Cavell, uma vez que incorpora um tema político no contexto de uma abordagem psicanalítica, enquanto vai além deles e nos conduz a uma síntese única de ambos. Como resultado, permite-nos tirar conclusões sobre a natureza política da comunidade humana e a sua característica definidora, que Cavell identifica como estando enraizada na linguagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Coriolano*, Shakespeare, Cavell, Ceticismo narcisista, Linguagem, Psicoanálise.

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Commentators of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* have tended to focus on two issues. One group, including critics like Burke and Rabkin, has examined the play's political content, while another group, represented by Stoller, Hoffling, Barron, and Adelman, has been looking at its psychoanalytic issues, especially Coriolanus' dysfunctional relationship with his mother Volumnia.² It is this aspect that occupies Stanley Cavell's attention in his comments on *Coriolanus* and seems to have come closest to his own reading of the play.

The psychopathological mother-son relationship has often been discussed partly in tandem with Coriolanus' narcissism. Somewhat less attention has been paid to Coriolanus' extremely or even compulsively self-adulatory demeanor, which must certainly have been founded on a psychopathological substrate as well,³ but which may be interpreted in a slightly different context, as Cavell reads it.

He sees Coriolanus' actions reflecting his aspiration for some form of superhuman status or, at the very least, his desire to become completely independent of the conditions associated with being a member of the human community.⁴

What makes Cavell stand out as an original interpreter of *Coriolanus* is his unique perspective on its themes and motifs, which, of course, were addressed by earlier critics. However, Cavell looks at them from the vantage-point of his concept of narcissistic skepticism, one of the potential sources of which (though not the only one) may be linked to the psychopathological features of Coriolanus' character.⁵ A particularly notable aspect is the motif of feeding, eating, and ingestion, which is connected with the theme of cannibalism. This aligns with one of the key ideas in Cavell's concept, where he suggests that such an attitude reflects a desire to absorb the Other in order to avoid being absorbed by them. Cavell considers this one of the defining characteristics of the narcissistic skeptic. In this sense, the psychoanalytic interpretation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* resonates with his own reading of the play.⁶

But he takes this interpretation further, adding new elements. One of them is Coriolanus' attitude to language, human speech, and acts of communication, as well as to human society as such. From this perspective, Cavell draws insightful conclusions regarding Coriolanus's relations with the political sphere and, more broadly, the potential for a narcissistic skeptic like him to engage with the political community. Framing the question

of the narcissistic skeptic versus the human community highlights the particular value and originality of Cavell's perspective, which also incorporates a political theme.

Therefore, the aim of this article is not only to present the Cavellian reading of *Coriolanus* in the context of the psychoanalytical approach to this play, even if it seems the most useful point of departure for my remarks. My aim is to present the originality of Cavell's approach as a unique synthesis of the aforementioned psychoanalytic and political perspectives, which helps him surmount the one-sidedness in each of them within the framework of his concept of *narcissistic skepticism* considered in the context of politics.

As a result, Cavell is able to draw conclusions about the political nature of human society and its defining characteristic, which he sees as rooted in language. Cavell is able to reach these conclusions by carrying out a case-study, so to speak, of the psychopathological traits in the main character of Shakespeare's play.⁷

But since all these issues stem from a common source, Coriolanus's relationship with his mother, I will use this relationship as the starting point for my discussion.⁸

2. CORIOLANUS AND THE MOTIF OF CANNIBALISM

Cavell writes that cannibalism is the leitmotif of *Coriolanus*. It comes to light on both the sociopolitical and psychological levels and is the result of a specific narcissistic attitude. He makes the following observation: "The circle of cannibalism, of the eater eaten by what he or she eats, keeps being sketched out, from the first to the last. You might call this identification of narcissism as cannibalism" (152).

I will not dwell on cannibalism that relates to the social sphere. Instead, my primary focus is on Coriolanus's pathological relationship with his mother, which generates his narcissism. This can be taken as a starting point for Cavell's considerations, which also encompass the social sphere. Specifically, I will examine the connection between the narcissistic skeptic Coriolanus and the outside world that arises from his relationship with his mother.

However, I will also mention cannibalism in the social context, because it provides a broader interpretive framework for the play's plot, which refers to eating and being consumed from the opening lines of Act One, Scene One,⁹ allowing Shakespeare to set

the tone for all the subsequent events of Coriolanus's life and his personal drama that will be played out later.

At the beginning of the play, Coriolanus addresses the citizens of Rome with the following accusation:

You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another?¹⁰

It is only the disciplining role of the Senate that prevents society from degenerating into a Hobbesian state of nature, a situation of universal struggle punctuated by acts of violence and consumption. The fighting between patricians and plebeians is depicted as a conflict well-nigh of two different species devouring each other, the individual links in a great food chain. Crucially for Cavell, Shakespeare avails himself of the complex and eloquent metaphor of the belly, the skeptical motif of eating and ingesting others (or the Other) right from the opening scene. He reproduces the traditional body metaphor of the state, with its viscera serving as the site where various vital processes occur, much like in the digestive system. The plebeians and patricians are engaged in a dispute over who should assume the role of the storehouse represented by the stomach, responsible for distributing food—specifically, the grain stocked in the granaries by the patricians—to different parts of the body-politic.¹¹

3. VOLUMNIA THE PHALLIC MOTHER: BLOOD AS MILK

Coriolanus subscribes to the idea that public life is a continuous process in which individuals metaphorically ingest one another. This concept tallies with Cavell's notion of the behavior of a narcissistic skeptic, who ingests the Other so as not to be ingested by them. Most importantly, love, especially maternal love, is depicted in *Coriolanus* as a metaphor for mutual devouring. Cavell describes Coriolanus' relationship with his mother in the following way:

To be fed by Volumnia is to be fed to her. But since the right bleeding depends upon its being a form of feeding, of giving food, providing blood identifies him with his mother. His mother's fantasy

suggests here that the appropriate reciprocation for having nourished her son is for him to become her, as if to remove the arbitrariness in her having been born a woman; and since it is a way of putting her into the world, it is a way of giving birth to her. (Cavell 1987, 155)

The mother's feeling of being eaten by the child she nurses (here, the child in question is Coriolanus) triggers a converse situation, a kind of "expected reciprocation" once the suckling reaches adulthood. Now it is the mother who expects to lead a surrogate life through her child, essentially "consuming it" (absorbing it into herself). Now that Coriolanus has reached manhood, it is Volumnia who, in a form of retribution, "consumes" him, annihilating his independence and autonomy as he obsessively tries to break free from her influence (Cavell 1987, 155). This is because for Volumnia, the fact that she is a woman seems incidental, not something that would define her identity, as her words to Coriolanus seem to express:

Thy valiantness was mine; thou suck'st it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself.
(III, ii, 157–158)

It is to his warrior-mother that the future conqueror of Corioles owes his bravery on the field of glory. In this light, the declaration she makes in the following lines assumes a key significance:

The breasts of Hecuba,
When she did suckle Hector, looked not lovelier
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
At Grecian sword, contemning. . . .
(I, iii, 43–46)¹²

Cavell comments:

The suckling mother is presented as being slashed by the son-hero, eaten by the one she feeds . . . the lines set up an equation between a mother's milk and a man's blood, suggesting that we must understand the man's spitting blood in *battle not simply as attacking, but equally, somehow, as providing food in a male's fashion*. (Cavell 1987, 154)

Thus, the act of nursing a child seems to involve a form of struggle, the launching of an attack (by the newborn at the mother's breast). This would make the mother feeding her boy-child perform an act of initiation, turning him already at this stage into the future warrior.¹³

The psychoanalytic interpretations of the text, including those by Adelman and other authors, highlight the motif of Volumnia as a mother who views her son Coriolanus' career as a way to pursue her own unfulfilled ambitions and expectations. She views his social role as the outcome of a script that she is the author of. Volumnia subordinates her son's life and career to the accomplishment of this script, or rather, Coriolanus is essentially programmed by Volumnia to implement this plan.¹⁴

Therefore, if Coriolanus aspires to full independence, he must, as it were, declare war on his mother, nullifying the act of his biological birth. He must become the "Author of Oneself".¹⁵ In other words, he must stand up to and contend with his mother in order to become independent of her. This is possible only through associating the milk with which Volumnia fed him with the blood shed on the battlefield. As Cavell puts it, "providing blood is becoming her" (1987, 155).

Only by equating the blood shed on the battlefield with the milk, the nourishment he owes to Volumnia, can Coriolanus symbolically settle his score with his mother, making himself independent of her. Only in this way can he attempt to wrest himself free of his mother, defy her within himself (155).¹⁶ The identification of the milk with which Volumnia nursed Coriolanus with the blood he shed on the battlefield during his fight against the enemies of Rome creates a symbolic connection, equating Volumnia, his biological mother, with Rome herself a symbolic maternal figure.¹⁷

The motif of Coriolanus being consumed by Volumnia corresponds with Cavell's interpretation of their relationship as a prime example of the skeptic's tendency to metaphorically incorporate, absorb, and devour the Other or Others (in this case, the ingestion is done by Volumnia, although for Cavell, Coriolanus is the chief embodiment of the skeptic). It is a metaphor for the external world, which the skeptic wants to internalize and make part of himself for fear of being absorbed by the Other. That is the essence of Coriolanus' relationship with Volumnia.¹⁸

4. SKEPTICISM AND LANGUAGE: *CORIOLANUS* AND THE REPUGNANT COMMONPLACE OF COMMUNICATION

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One of the most important motifs inherent in cannibalistic imagery is that of words as food (mutual partaking of their comprehension), as well as the metaphor of comprehension as in- and digestion, etc.) (Cavell 1987, 163). In this sense, too, communication is depicted in *Coriolanus* as a form of cannibalism. Representative of this process of mutual ingestion and devouring is the use of the same language in everyday acts of communication. One of the reasons why Coriolanus the skeptic disdains and spits out words is precisely because they are our common food. They exist, so to speak, within the body of language or the realm of speech and are something we all share and have in common (*idem*, 170).

This concept, in Cavell's view, is linked to Wittgenstein's critique of the notion of private language, which can be seen as a legacy of skepticism. What makes the skeptic privatize his language is the word's inevitable defilement—the fact that words are a common good, partaken of by all users of speech. The universality of words, words “being for all,” is something unacceptable to the skeptic, something that arouses his revulsion (the mistake he makes in this view is that, for a word to have meaning at all, it must hold this status, i.e. be available to all, Cavell notes) (*idem*, 163-167). Words derive their meaning through repetition. According to Cavell, this is also the foundational aspect of language, which serves as an anchor for consciousness and acts as its sole medium of expression. In this perspective, consciousness has a strictly linguistic character.¹⁹

Describing the use of language (its circulation in communication) as the skeptic sees it, Cavell employs the metaphor of the circulation of organic matter (Cavell 1987, 169-ff). The stock of words publicly available to us in daily communication resembles a waste tip. This metaphor seems somewhat risqué, but it is consistent with Cavell's observations in the Postscript to his essay on *Coriolanus*, in which he uses the metaphor of the circulation of organic matter, including feces, to explain the organic cycle:

What alarms him [Coriolanus] is simply being part, one member among others of the same organism . . . [Coriolanus'] disgust is a function of imagining that in incorporating one another we are asked to incorporate one another's leavings, the results of waste of what has already been incorporated. (169)

The point is that “[w]hat the mouth receives as food is normally mediated by passing it through nature, so to purify the contribution made to the process by other, let us say, human beings” (170).

Thus, in the mind of the skeptic (and therefore of Coriolanus), two images intertwine: the organic circulation of matter in nature (of which humans are a part) and the circulation of verbal matter, which is the language we share in everyday communication. In this context, there is a metaphorical image of the circulation of words as something analogous to the circulation of matter, consisting of the “circulation from mouth to mouth of language” (*ibidem*). In this metaphor, words become something tangible, almost physical, like particles and elements found in nature. This tangibility of words, as it might seem, enhances their value and intrinsic weight, but it can also serve as a degrading factor.

A new component of this extended metaphor is the theme of the material artifacts of language. The materialization of language, Cavell writes, is made possible by the suggestion that “language is at the same time something retained, which perhaps means hoarded, for expulsion, or banishment, a way of conceiving of writing, physically altering the world” (*ibidem*).

Words put on record and the methods used to record them serve as instruments to transform the world in an absolutely tangible, purely physical way (170). At the same time, as Cavell points out, *Coriolanus* also presents the image of the circulation of money, which acts as a means of exchange similar to words as regards commodities, serving as the material counterpart of words:

Finding the words/food representation so compelling, I am ignoring here the path along which the circulation of words also registers the circulation of money (as in “So shall my lungs/coin words” [III, i, 99–100]; and in “The price is to ask it kindly” [II, iii, 83]). The sense of consuming as expending would relate to Coriolanus’ frantic efforts to deny that his actions can be recompensed (“better to starve than crave the hire” – for example for receiving voices in return). (166)

Money, which in the human world has the power to relativize (reduce) everything to its own value, seems to function in Shakespeare, too, as a universally accepted proxy for the value of all things. The link and common denominator connecting words (and their cultural avatars), the transformation of matter, and the circulation of money is the symbolic

nature of the material carriers/substrates that enable their mutual symbolic association (money = words = the circulation of organic matter).²⁰

However, Coriolanus refuses to participate in a system based on the equivalence of these components and the measurability of all things as potential goods whose value is quantifiable both in terms of language as an ordered system of words (a value system) and the measurability of goods (a system for the exchange of commodities for money): “Money depends upon the equating of values, Coriolanus, on their lack of equation, on measurelessness, pricelessness” (Cavell 1987, 166).

Therefore, also in this sense, Coriolanus’ skepticism challenges prevailing social relations.²¹ According to Cavell, Coriolanus, a skeptic who is repulsed by the commonness and vulgarity of language, harbors a unique fantasy: he wants to communicate with others—only when it is absolutely necessary—using means of expression other than language. He does not intend to participate in the circulation of words, goods, values, and the matter signified by them at the symbolic level. In a word, Coriolanus does not intend to take part in the processes of social exchange and all that it inevitably entails. And since language is a fundamental component and requisite of this, Coriolanus refuses to participate in speech, in conversation with others, thereby attempting to free himself from the cannibalistic cycle (*idem*, 160-ff).

In constructing and contesting with a hero for whom the circulation of language is an expression of cannibalism, Coriolanus takes cannibalism as symbolic of the most human of activities, the most distinctive, or distinguished, of human activities. (*idem*, 165)

To put it yet another way, since communication involves the symbolic absorption of one by the other as part of an all-encompassing food chain, with language as a crucial ingredient of this process, Coriolanus seeks rescue and a way out of this cannibalistic cycle by attempting to escape from language itself.

5. CORIOLANUS’ NARCISSISTIC DESIRE

This escape from language can be interpreted as an expression of the skeptic’s yearning for liberation from the influence of the community, which in psychoanalytic terms can also

be symbolized by the mother, which brings us back to the dialectic of narcissistic desire and thus a paradoxical form of desire as non-desire.

In his book *Looking Awry*, Slavoj Žižek considers Shakespeare's anaphora in *Richard II* and presents a dialectic of desire that undergoes an autonomous process of self-enhancement and intensification. The paradox of this kind of desire, as Žižek observes, is that it generates its own objects of desire, continuously producing more and more of them but never achieving satisfaction or fulfillment (1992, 6-10). According to Žižek, in the dynamic of desire, the conclusion drawn by Lear in Act I, Scene 1 of *King Lear*, that "nothing will come of nothing" is challenged by psychological findings, which suggest that something *does come* of nothing (*idem*, 99). Although the object which is the cause of desire is a mere semblance, this kind of desire has significant consequences for human psychology. It is no coincidence that Shakespeare was so preoccupied with the paradox of generating something out of nothing and, more broadly, with the dialectic of being and nothingness.²²

In fact, according to Žižek, that is precisely what Lacan has in mind with his concept of the *objet petit a*, which is the element that generates desire and is also created retrospectively by this same desire. Emphatically, the paradox of this desire is that it subsequently defines or posits the object which is both the source and cause of that desire, generating an object that can only be perceived through the distortion created by that very desire. The gaze of a person not subject to such a distortion is unable to perceive this object. In other words, by its very definition, the *objet petit a* does not exist in itself. It is merely an embodiment and materialization or function of a distorted perception, an "extra" entity arising from the cognitive confusion generated by desire in the area of so-called "objectively existing reality". In other words, the *objet petit a* is simply a construct of desire, and only from a specific perspective does it appear to be "something". While in *King Lear*, we are dealing with the consequences of the "nothing will come of nothing" formula, as Lear tells Cordelia in Act I, Scene 1, in *Coriolanus*, we have the opposite situation.

It is precisely the negation of desire that we encounter in *Coriolanus*. Like Žižek, Cavell observes that desire has an "infinite structure" (1987, 149). Perhaps we should say that it has an infinity of structures, and therefore infinite, inexhaustible power to generate



objects of desire (Žižek 1992, 8). However, Coriolanus wants to become someone who desires not to desire; he wants to be free of all desire:

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Coriolanus and Volumnia are, I am taking it, starvers, hungerers. They manifest this condition as a name or a definition of the human, like being mortal. And they manifest this as a condition of insatiability (starving by feeding, feeding as deprivation). It is a condition sometimes described as the infiniteness of desire, imposing upon the finiteness of the body. But starving for Volumnia and her son suggests that this infiniteness is not the cause of human insatiability but is rather its effect. It is the effect not of an endless quantity, as though the self had, or is, endless reserves of desire; but of an endless structure, as though desire has a structure of endlessness Starving by feeding presents itself to Coriolanus as being consumed by hunger, and his words for hungering are desiring and craving. And what he incessantly hungers for is ... not to hunger, not to desire, that is, not to be mortal. (Cavel 1987, 149)²³

And yet, desire is an inherent part of human nature. Therefore, Coriolanus wants to transcend it; he desires a completeness that negates desire as a manifestation of want: “He hungers to lack nothing, to be complete, like a sword . . . not to hunger, not to desire, not to be mortal” (*ibidem*).

In other words, Coriolanus desires to transcend his own humanity, to become complete (“complete like a sword”), so that he can finally be able to not desire—therefore he wants to become a divine being. In one of his confrontations with the citizens, we encounter the following dialogue:

CORIOLANUS

You know the cause, sir, of my standing here.

. . .

Mine own desert.

SECOND CITIZEN

Your own desert?

CORIOLANUS

Ay, but not mine own desire.

(III, ii, 71–75)

Elsewhere, Coriolanus observes:



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Better it is to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.

(III, ii, 123–124)

and

. . . pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word

(III, iii, 115–117)

The desert is put in contrast with desire; it can invalidate and negate it. It is also associated with hunger, which corresponds with the portrayal of Coriolanus as a “starver”. Coriolanus seeks a situation where the honors and privileges owed to him are granted solely on the grounds of his own merit.²⁴ Cavell’s notion of Coriolanus being “perfectly deserving” supports this perspective: “If you desire to be desireless, is there something you desire? . . . Coriolanus’ answer to this paradox is to become *perfectly deserving* . . . He hungers to lack nothing” (Cavell 1987, 149).

This motif is linked to the skeptic’s logic of inverted cannibalism, the ingestion of all by all, an image that fills Coriolanus with revulsion. Although in this case, there is something more, Coriolanus’ disgust for common speech and ordinary forms of communication. He sees language as something unspeakably vulgar, as Cavell writes, something that passes “from mouth to mouth” (*idem*, 170). Coriolanus’ voluntary self-condemnation to a “famine of words”, and thus his rejection of/disdain for words of praise is an attempt to reassert the primacy of the logic of merit over the logic of desire/need (who does not desire, lacks nothing).²⁵

Suicide would be an extreme instance of a desire for non-desire. In this case, however, it would be the inverse of narcissism, self-love replaced by the highest intensity of self-hatred, finding its extreme expression in an act of self-destruction: “The openest case in which doing a deed and suffering the deed are inseparable. The logic is that of narcissism, and the sense is that there is a narcissism under a negative sign, with love replaced by hatred” (Cavell 2010, 537).

Understood in this way, consistent narcissistic desire would in fact be a desire for death, and only in death would it find its final satiation.²⁶

6. SELF-DIRECTION OF NARCISSISTIC DESIRE

Coriolanus's situation as a narcissistic skeptic is further complicated by the fact that the desire he nurtures is self-directed; it is the narcissist himself who is its object: "One picture of this structure is given by Narcissus, for whom what is longed for is someone longing, who figures beauty as longing" (Cavell 1987, 149).

As I have already said, Coriolanus's narcissistic desire is a desire for non-desire, and at the same time, he is a narcissistic character, so he becomes the object of his own desire, which makes it self-directed, intrinsic, and self-targeted. The architect of this enterprise is simultaneously the addressee, subject, and object of his own deeds:

Narcissus's fate is mirrored in the figure of Coriolanus, a figure whose *every act is, by that act, done to him so perfectly that the distinction between action and passion seems to lose its sense, a condition in which human existence becomes precarious, if perhaps transcendable. (Idem, 144)*²⁷

Jean Laplanche, whom Cavell cites, speaks of narcissism in the same vein, as a phenomenon accompanying perversion, particularly sexual perversion. The narcissist's sexual self-direction does not send him outside of himself; he remains in a closed, unbroken circle of desires of which he himself is the sole object.²⁸ Such a desire is dysfunctional because the object of its satisfaction is itself, or rather an endless sequence or spiral of (by definition) futile acts and vain attempts to achieve satisfaction. In psychiatric terms, we could speak of a fixation or a series of compulsive acts which, by definition, cannot bring satisfaction.

In this view, Coriolanus is no longer merely caught up in the logic of his conflict with the Other from which there is no way out and positioned at the mercy of the Other (here this role is played by the plebeians, as I will show below). He is trapped in the dead-end logic of narcissistic desire, which involves a paradoxical self-negation that renders it self-contradictory and therefore inexhaustible. Paradoxically, his desire begins to resemble Žižek's *désir petit a*, which, in Cavell's interpretation, Coriolanus' narcissistic desire was intended to bring to an end. This shows the inevitable and hopeless entanglement of the narcissistic skeptic in the contradictory logic of his own desire and its ultimate insolubility.

7. CORIOLANUS VERSUS THE PLEBEIANS

Like Shakespeare's other skeptical characters, Othello or Lear, Coriolanus believes that his own merit should be the sole reason for the admiration and respect due to him, thus treating desire for love and acknowledgement from others as an inessential. He faces a similar challenge: he is destined to rely on others to be able to indulge in his narcissism and maintain his self-esteem. Consequently, he experiences the same conflict other Shakespearean protagonists face: he strives for narcissistic autarky (as I will show below), yet remains unable to attain it. This struggle is particularly pronounced for Coriolanus because his source of validation comes from the plebeians, whom he holds in utter contempt.

Coriolanus harbors a deep contempt for the plebeians, yet their existence is essential for him to assert his own superiority in contrast to them. This ambivalence, this unavoidable contradiction, fuels the hatred he has of them. Moreover, perhaps this hatred is also directed inward, towards himself, which could further intensify his narcissistic urge for self-destruction.

His insufferable position is best illustrated by the situation in which he must seek the votes of the people to obtain the title of consul. To do so, as custom prescribes, he should lay bare in public the wounds he received during the wars fought in defense of Rome. And while he is initially inclined to submit to custom, in the end he does not display his wounds to the people.²⁹

BRUTUS

I heard him swear,
Were he to stand for consul, never would he
Appear i' th' marketplace nor on him put
The napless vesture of humility,
Nor showing, as the manner is, his wounds
To th' people, beg their stinking breaths.

(II, i, 257–262)

MENENIUS

It then remains
That you do speak to the people.



crowd to bolster his own identity: he accuses them of being exactly what he wishes not to be. (Adelman 1992, 153)

The plebeians are exclusively a negative reference point for Coriolanus. He reasserts his own identity by ostentatiously *distancing himself* from the crowd.

The people's lack of desert entails his lack of desert, entails that he cannot do the thing that acquires love; he is logically debarred from reciprocating. The fact that he both has absolute contempt for the people and yet has an absolute need for them is part of what maddens him . . . (Cavell 1987, 155)

The logic of Coriolanus's position and his ambivalent relationship with the plebs require him to establish a distinct separation from them and highlight the contrast between the ordinariness of the commoners and his uniqueness. For this reason—as well as to free himself from the influence of Volumnia—he must become “The Author of Oneself/Me Alone”. At the same time, as Cavell points out, Coriolanus is also motivated by a desire for self-creation that is difficult to fully articulate or comprehend.

8. CORIOLANUS' ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE SUPERHUMAN STATUS AND ITS UTTER FAILURE

The key difference between Shakespeare's other skeptics, Othello and Lear, on the one hand, and Coriolanus on the other, lies in the fact that, as Cavell suggests, Coriolanus takes his narcissistic desires even further. He yearns for non-desire and seeks liberation from the cycle of human desires, thus aspiring to become a kind of superhuman being.³¹

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the mechanism behind such desires seems quite straightforward: the unsatisfied needs of Coriolanus' early life manifest later redoubled and rebound as a vicarious, insatiable longing to perform heroic deeds bringing him glory. Over time, these unfulfilled childhood desires transform into a perpetual yearning. His response to this longing is a desire not to desire, which intertwines with the aspiration to achieve the status of a non-desiring, and thus, as Cavell argues, superhuman being (Act IV, sc. 5; Act III, Scene 1; Act I, Scene VI; Act V, Scene III).³²

One aspect of Coriolanus’s quest for superhuman status, according to Cavell, is his attempt to make a self-sacrifice; however, his endeavor ultimately fails. Let’s consider this problem in detail.

In Part One of this article, I discussed Coriolanus’s desire for self-creation—his aspiration to become “The Author of Oneself.” This desire can be seen as a longing for rebirth on the battlefield, effectively erasing the fact of his own biological birth from his mother’s womb. However, the more Coriolanus attempts to free himself from Volumnia’s influence, the more he realizes he is following her script. When he tries to break away by turning against Rome—a symbolic act of turning against his mother—he ultimately fails.

In the pivotal scene of the play, when Coriolanus attempts to force his way through the gates of Rome, Volumnia addresses him, once again equating herself, the biological mother, with the symbolic mother that is Rome:

VOLUMNIA

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.

(V, iii, 140–143)

In response, Coriolanus holds her by the hand and says:

CORIOLANUS

O mother, mother!

What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O, my mother, mother, O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome,
But, for your son—believe it, O, believe it!—
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,
If not most mortal to him. But let it come.

(V, iii, 205–212)

This raises the following question: how can Coriolanus’ gesture and his decision to abandon the plan to burn Rome be interpreted, considering Cavell’s perspective?



Cavell's reading of these lines invokes another sacrificer, Jesus Christ, noting that Coriolanus is not simply imitating, but competing against him (*idem*, 161). Like Christ, Coriolanus attempts to make a self-sacrifice in a redemptive mission; however, ultimately his mission fails.

Coriolanus' inability to achieve redemption and the failure of his mission stem from the fact that it is Volumnia who tells him that he is not superhuman. When he plans to burn Rome, she manages to stir his human emotions, demonstrating that he is not an avenging or punishing deity. By exposing his intentions, Coriolanus' mother foreshadows his ultimate defeat (*idem*, 163). In the Christian narrative, Jesus' mother realized that he was divine, whereas with Coriolanus', the success of Volumnia's plea announces the opposite— that he is merely a man made of flesh and blood (*ibidem*).³³

Coriolanus' death ultimately saves Rome, moreover, it is something inevitable, necessary. By leading the Volscians up to Rome, only to call off the expedition at the last moment, Coriolanus effectively signs his own death warrant, laying down his life for the values of the community (symbolically saving Rome, the mother figure). Yet he cannot make a sacrifice of himself, he does not become a sacrificer, the savior of Rome (in the way that Jesus is seen as the savior of the Christian communion). This is because, unlike Jesus' death, the death of Coriolanus does not act as a catalyst for a new life or a rebirth of the community. Although his actions enable Rome to be saved, they do not lead to its renewal.

At this stage in Cavell's interpretation, the central theme of cannibalism reemerges, connecting all the other themes. As we have seen, there is a recurring motif in *Coriolanus* that equates words with food. In this context, words transform into food, serving as the symbolic foundation for the exchange of organic matter.

However, while Coriolanus can become a provider of food, he cannot become the food itself; unlike Christ, he cannot say, "I am the Bread of Life". His sacrifice and death to save Rome do not carry the same redemptive value as Christ's death. In other words, while Coriolanus' actions ultimately make for the salvation of Rome, this is only because they stop a threat, not because they serve as a source of life.

Cavell comments:

He has from the early lines of the play been identified as the people's chief enemy, here in particular as chief of those who withhold food; and his opening main speech to them, after expressing his

disgust by them, is to affirm that he does withhold and will go on withholding “good words” from them. Accordingly, every word he speaks will mean the withholding of good words. He will, as it were, have a sword in his mouth. There are other suggestions of the equation of words and food in the play (for example, the enlivening of the familiar idea that understanding is a matter of digesting) but this is enough for me, in view of my previous suggestions, to take the equation as part of the invocation of the major figure of our civilization for whom words are food. The word made flesh is to be eaten, since this is the living bread. (*idem*, 163)

So, here we have two forms of cannibalism: the life-giving one, the body of Jesus fulfilling the role of food, the eating and partaking of which enables those in communion with him to strengthen their mutual bonds; and the cannibalism that has a more problematic meaning and serves as a metaphor for the social system and human relations, evoking the image of mutual devouring of its partakers.

As I said at the beginning of this article, the opening scene of the play, which introduces the metaphor of the belly, the most important component of the digestive system responsible for the distribution of food to all the parts of the body, prefigures the latter type of cannibalism. In my opinion, Coriolanus’ death, too, aligns with the latter cannibalism and lacks a transcendental quality. Although Coriolanus strives to surpass the human condition, he suffers a symbolic defeat. The fundamental reason for his inability to assume the role of a religious symbol in the play’s final scene lies in his attitude towards words and human speech, which he rejects and denies their role as a source of spiritual nourishment.

9. THE NARCISSISTIC SKEPTIC AND THE COMMUNITY

Coriolanus cannot claim to be “the Bread of Life” or “live food”. He is unable to do so because words and interpersonal communication provoke his disgust and revulsion. Consequently, he cannot engage in any form of communal participation that involves words as a source of spiritual nourishment. As an enemy of the people and the plebeians, he has no “good words” to offer them, Cavell tells us.

Cavell argues that sacrifice, particularly redemptive sacrifice, is meant to unite and strengthen the community. However, what we have here is an incomplete sacrifice—a kind of hypo-sacrifice. The essential aspect of such a sacrifice lies in the community of its participants, who are united as partakers in the body of the sacrificed victim. This could be

“the Lamb of God”, who holds redemptive power, or some other figure with a symbolic meaning. However, with Coriolanus, we are caught in a cycle of mutual participation in an altogether different process.

As we have seen, mutual ingestion and devouring form a leitmotif in *Coriolanus*. According to Cavell, Coriolanus “spits out” words rather than taking them in and nourishing himself with them. This action represents a reversal—a parody of the communal experience of treating words as sustenance and feeding on them. In this context, cannibalism serves as a mockery of a shared verbal communion:

. . . the formation of a society depends on there being, on our achieving, a partaking of one another that is beneficial, creative, not annihilating, as if our mutual cannibalism is a parody of what we might be, that we are standing jokes on ourselves, wishing to transcend what would no longer deserve to be transcended . . . (*idem*, 173)

Coriolanus’ desire for transcendence, to rise above the human community, is destined to fail because it involves a skeptical rejection of the human condition, which is characterized by limitation and uncertainty. Humanity is engrossed with language as a way of life, and our experience is shaped by the linguistic nature of existence. This is associated with the Cavellian notion of “ordinariness,” which is revealed to us through the language of everyday life. I would venture to say that in a broad sense, *Coriolanus* captures the emergence and formation of the political, presenting it as participation in conversation, as an endless exchange, as a rationality with conversation and discussion as its most obvious, tangible expressions.³⁴

Read in this way, Shakespeare appears to recognize our capacity to form a human community by means of overcoming the cannibalistic narcissism of language, which can lead to the kind of insularity Coriolanus falls prey to. Its symbol or figure is the mutual absorption of participants in speech (communication), conceived as the sum of inescapable acts of cannibalism.

Cavell contrasts this vision or diagnosis of Coriolanus’ narcissism with the ability to engage in language, which he sees as the only form of transcendence available to humans. By reaching out to the Other through communication, we can move beyond our solipsistic ego and the confines of self-absorption. In Cavell’s interpretation of Shakespeare, this is the only way to achieve self-transcendence.

As Cavell writes, that is why Coriolanus' vision of the world may be considered a parody of authentic communication understood as participation in the living sustenance of human speech. People like Coriolanus, who challenge this, perceive speech acts as just another form of cannibalism, ingesting others so as not to be ingested by them, situate themselves beyond the community and condemn themselves to inevitable death, failure both in the symbolic dimension and in the very literal sense.

10. CONCLUSION

I think we can concur with Cavell that *Coriolanus* presents a unique perspective on the problem of skepticism, particularly in the version that is of paramount importance to Cavell, the skepticism that questions the existence of other minds and assumes a narcissistic form. We may also agree with Cavell on his point regarding Coriolanus' narcissistic intuitions, in contrast to what he says about the narcissistic skepticism in some of Shakespeare's other tragedies, such as *Othello* or *King Lear*. Cavell's observations on *Coriolanus* seem quite self-evident, and we could even go as far as to say that the main character of this play is a textbook example of the narcissistic personality of the kind described in the work of Reich or Freud (even though Freud never mentioned *Coriolanus*, albeit Shakespeare was one of his major sources of inspiration).³⁵

However, while some of Cavell's remarks may be reduced to a reiteration of earlier psychoanalytical pronouncements on *Coriolanus*, he discerns and introduces some new points. One is his observation of language and speech, an absolutely innovative note. Another of his novel interpretative approaches is his reading of Coriolanus' attempt to achieve autarky and superhuman status. Here, too, he goes beyond the earlier presentations, such as the sociologically or politically oriented ones offered by critics like Marshall or Rabkin, and even beyond the psychoanalytical readings, which are the most interesting and probing endeavors. Finally, Cavell stuns us with his detection of the motif of self-sacrifice and redemptive mission in Coriolanus' mindset. All these absolutely original features in Cavell's reading of Coriolanus as the paragon of narcissistic skepticism, which is his signal contribution to the studies on this play, take the criticism beyond the sphere of sociological and political discourse, offering a supplement and inviting discussion.

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² See esp. Kenneth Burke, “‘Coriolanus’: And the Delights of Faction”, *The Hudson Review* 19 (Summer 1966) 2, pp. 185-202; Norman Rabkin, “Coriolanus: The Tragedy of Politics”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17 (Summer 1966) 3, pp. 195-212, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2867716>; Robert J. Stoller, (“Shakespearean Tragedy: Coriolanus”, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 35 (1966) 2, pp. 263–274., doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1966.11926386>; Charles K. Hofling, “An Interpretation of Shakespeare’s Coriolanus”, *American Imago* 14 (Winter 1957) 4, pp. 407-435; David B. Barron, “Portrait of the Artist as Infant”, *American Imago* 19 (Summer 1962) 2, pp. 171-193. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26301862> (accessed on 26 March 2025); Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers. Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest*, Routledge, New York 1992.

³ Coriolanus’ act of self-worship and his ambition to achieve superhuman status become clearer when we treat them (at least partly) as a result of his psychopathological relationship with his mother Volumnia. His struggle to break free from her influence partially fuels his desire to be “the Author of Oneself”.

⁴ For an analysis of Coriolanus’ unsuccessful attempt to achieve autarky and attain independence of the human community, see Sarah Marshall, “‘O’me alone?: Aristotle and the failure of autarky in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*” (2020). Senior Capstone Projects. 970. Available at: https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/970 (accessed on 26 March 2025). This study, though in-depth, focuses mainly on the sociopolitical aspect of Coriolanus’ failed quest for autarky, which does not overlap with Cavell’s interpretation.

⁵ At the same time giving to narcissism some specifically Cavellian shade of meaning, and characterising it – in the context of his essay on *Othello* - as “a kind of denial of an existence as shared with others” (Stanley Cavell, *Themes out of School*, North Point Press, San Francisco 1984, p. 61). Cf. M. Filipczuk, “Shakespeare and Skepticism. Stanley Cavell’s Interpretation of Skepticism in *Othello*”, *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich* 61 (2018) 1, doi: <https://doi.org/10.26485/ZRL/2018/61.1/2>.

⁶ “I bring *denial by the mother* [my italics – M.F.] here in juxtaposition with the denial of the world in order to mark the possibility of a direct psychoanalytic interpretation from skepticism, one that would not exact what may seem the detour through literature. The interpretation would be to the effect that what philosophy registers as uncertainty in our knowledge of the existence of the world is a function of, say, an intellectualization of the child’s sense of loss in separating from the mother’s body.” Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare*, C.U.P., New York & Cambridge (UK) 1987, p.



13. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/disowningknowled0000cave> (accessed on 17 March 2025).

⁷ As Barron aptly states, “it is important to note that the additions and emphases by Shakespeare provide unity to the play by converging on themes relating to the infantile origins of Coriolanus centering on his relation to his mother. *Shakespeare's contributions to the character of Coriolanus are thus quite comparable to a psychoanalytic interpretation and construction of a patient's infantile past.* The embellishments which provide thematic unity to the dramatic material pertain to the emotional life of the infant”. (D. B. Barron, “Portrait of the Artist as Infant”, p. 182)

⁸ Cf. Stoller’s observation regarding the critical significance of the psychoanalytic underpinnings of this play: “Coriolanus. Certainly Shakespeare was not consciously aware of these dynamics. We know that the great writers did not discover the unconscious; it made itself known through them by their genius. Freud freely acknowledged this debt. It is probable, judging by much of the modern American stage, that a conscious knowledge of psychoanalysis is an insuperable barrier to great creativity. It produces at best beautifully described case reports from which the ambiguity and mystery of man’s nature have been removed. In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare has created a relationship between a mother and her son which reveals with direct clarity the antecedents of the development of the play and the inevitability of the tragedy” (R. J. Stoller, “Shakespearean Tragedy: Coriolanus”, p. 265).

⁹ While in the sociopolitical realm, cannibalism represents the hunger of the plebeians, who create unrest in response to the patricians’ closure of the granaries, in the psychoanalytic context, this act of “eating”, along with mutual absorption, symbolizes the inescapable interdependence between Volumnia and Coriolanus. This dynamic continues to affect Coriolanus in his adult life and ultimately contributes to his downfall.

¹⁰ *Coriolanus* (I, i, 198–200) Quotations from “Coriolanus” used in this text come from the Folger online edition available at <https://shakespeare.folger.edu/>

¹¹ As Adelman writes, “In this hungry world, everyone seems in danger of being eaten. The crowd suspects the senators of cannibalistic intentions: ‘If the war does not eat us, they will’” Act I, Scene 1. (J. Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 154).

¹² Cf. Barron’s remarks on this passage: “This surprising juxtaposition of nursing infant and warlike combat along with her preceding description of her rushing her son to war suggests the tremendous strain put on the young Coriolanus to mature precipitously and to renounce the dependent gratifications of childhood. The wounds of Hector suggest that the weaning process was conceived as a physical trauma, and the transition from mother’s breast to battlefield suggests the displacement of his feelings onto other external objects. (D. B. Barron, “Portrait of the Artist as Infant”, p. 173).

¹³ “In her image feeding, incorporating, is transformed into spitting out, an aggressive expelling . . . the wound spitting blood thus becomes not a sign of vulnerability but an instrument of attack” (J. Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 154).

¹⁴ Cf. Act 1, Sc. iv.



¹⁵ It is no coincidence that in the scene just before the impending attack on Rome – an event that signifies Coriolanus’ liberation both from his biological mother and the symbolic mother of the city – he utters these words: “(...) let the Volsces/ Plow Rome, and harrow Italy, I’ll never/ Be such a gosling to obey instinct; but stand/As if a man were *Author of Himself* And knew no other kin.” Such self-creation represents a symbolic rebirth, becoming “the Author of Oneself,” [V, iii, 3437-3440] which overturns the reality of one’s biological birth from the womb.

¹⁶ At the same time, not only Volumnia herself, but also the city of Rome appears in the metaphor of the play as a cannibalistic mother devouring her offspring, an “unnatural dam,” a mother eating her own child and herself: “Being devoured = being loved unconditionally” (Cavell 1987, 154). Cf. the following lines: “Now the good gods forbid / That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude / Towards her deserved children is enrolled / In Jove’s own book, like an unnatural dam / Should now eat up her own” (II, i, 373–376).

¹⁷ As Stoller notes, “Shakespeare’s language understandably conveys the universal consensus of the transitional equivalence of city, home, and mother.” (R. J. Stoller, “Shakespearean Tragedy: Coriolanus”, p. 267). Following the same logic, in his intention to plunder Rome, Coriolanus seeks to exact symbolic revenge on Volumnia.

¹⁸ One might even claim that not only Coriolanus but also Volumnia demonstrates the skeptical attitude as understood by Cavell, even if he himself does not pursue this notion.

¹⁹ Cavell, “Macbeth Appalled” in: Garry L. Hagberg, Walter Jost (eds.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, Blackwell Publishing 2010, p. 528-529. The same intuition, Cavell notes, was observed by Wittgenstein, who identified the human form of life with language (Ibid.). But if this is the case, then Coriolanus’ desire to free himself from language, for this is how his disgust with speech is to be understood, is in fact a desire to free himself from the human condition.

²⁰ Hence, usury, defined as generating unauthorized profit, is tantamount to control of the granaries. This issue is the bone of contention in the conflict between the plebeians and patricians in the opening scene of *Coriolanus*.

²¹ Importantly, the desire for liberation from the cycle of organic matter – the wish to transcend this aspect of human destiny – also appears in other Shakespeare plays. “Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike / Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life / is to do thus . . . And it is great / To do that thing that ends all other deeds . . . / Which sleeps and never palates more the dung/The beggar’s nurse and Caesar’s . . .” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, I, i, 40–42; V, ii, 4–8). As Cavell writes, “these imaginings of the earth as feeding its inhabitants . . . are . . . expressions of minds in a mood that seeks transcendence of the common lot of humanity” (Cavell 1987, 170).

²² Cf. David Willbern, “Shakespeare’s Nothing” in: Murray M. Schwartz, and Coppélia Kahn (eds.), *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1980, pp. 244-264.

²³ The first sentence of the quote highlights a significant theme concerning Coriolanus and Volumnia, referred to by Cavell as “starvers” and “hungerers.” This notion suggests that they abstain from eating and refuse to engage in consumption, which is presented as a



defining aspect of the human experience. This, too, could be a manifestation of their aspiration – typical of the skeptic – to superhuman status, as they seek to rise above being mere “bread eaters” and ordinary members of the human community, with all of its basic needs, including the need to satisfy hunger. Similarly, Volumnia expresses this idea in another passage, when she says, “Anger’s my meat: I sup upon myself / And so shall starve with feeding” (IV, ii, 68–69). She seems to convey a sense of skeptical insularity and a reluctance to participate in the community.

²⁴ A similar situation occurs in Act I, Scene i of *King Lear*, in which Lear demands unconditional love from his daughters.

²⁵ Cf. *idem*, 148–ff.

²⁶ As Shuli Barzilai persuasively argues, Coriolanus’ behavior reveals “a death-wish ‘silently pressing for dissolution of the self’” (Shuli Barzilai, “Coriolanus and the Compulsion to Repeat”, *Hebrew University Studies in Literature* 19, pp. 126–53).

²⁷ “Transcendable” means something which can be transcended. Thus, for Coriolanus, the possibility of transcending the limitations imposed by the conditional nature of human existence is an opportunity. This is evident in his desire to elevate himself to a superhuman state, a topic I will examine in more detail below.

²⁸ Cf. Jean Laplanche’s remarks about how narcissism accompanies perversion and is one of its manifestations. In *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, he observes that “What counts, in this first sketch, in the rare – though exemplary – cases of ‘narcissism-perversion,’ is the resemblance which is affirmed between the subject’s own body and the ‘body of a sexual object,’ treated as a whole and cajoled, contemplated and caressed; contemplation, care, and caresses are the process constituting and confirming the total form, the limit, the closed envelope of the cutaneous covering” (J. Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1976, p. 68).

²⁹ The scene has received numerous interpretations in the psychoanalytic literature. Cf. Adelman’s commentary, which is especially insightful; she points out that “His reluctance to show his wounds to win the consulship depends partly, I think, on the complex of ideas that stands behind his characterization of the crowd. In Plutarch, Coriolanus shows his wounds; in Shakespeare, the thought is intolerable to him and, despite many promises that he will, he never does. *For the display of his wounds would reveal his kinship with the plebeians in several ways: by revealing that he has worked for hire (2.2.149) as they have (that is, that he and his deeds are not sui generis after all); by revealing that he is vulnerable, as they are; and by revealing, through the persistent identification of wound and mouth, that he too has a mouth, that he is a dependent creature*” (Adelman 1992, 155).

³⁰ “The fact that he both has absolute contempt for the people and yet has an abject need for them is part of what maddens him” (Cavell 1987, 155). Perhaps repulsion, disgust, and fear are also triggered by his submission to the mercy of the Other and their gaze. When we surrender to their mercy, we become objectified.

³¹ Cf. *idem*, 157. Martius’s speech, when he rejects the help of his comrades-in-arms and successfully launches an attack on Corioles, later earning the cognomen Coriolanus, which symbolizes rebirth on the field of glory, resonates with the following lines: “O, me alone!



Make you a sword of me / If these shows be not outward, which of you / But is four
Volsces? None of you but is / Able to bear against the great Aufidius / A shield as hard as
his” (I, vi, 95–99).

³² *Idem*, 146: “[desire] not to be mortal . . . , to be complete, like a sword”.

³³ Divinity is a closed path for Coriolanus. Cavell writes that if the father in the patriarchal framework of Christian mythology had sacrificed Coriolanus to save the city, which is a common motif in many religions, the situation might have been different. But in the story of Coriolanus, the one who offers the sacrifice is not the father, but the mother, and moreover, she is convinced of Coriolanus’s humanity.

³⁴ Plato and Aristotle, the key figures of the classical tradition viewed it similarly and defined man as the ζῷον λόγος ἔχων, the animal capable of *logos*, and therefore, primarily, capable of conversation.

³⁵ Cf. Chin-jung Chiu, “Freud on Shakespeare. An Approach to Psychopathic Characters”, *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 5 (April 2012) 1, pp. 33–56.

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