

Deviations from Plutarch in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

シェイクスピアの「コリオレイナス」におけるプルタルコスの原典からの逸脱に関する考察

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要 約

シェイクスピアの戯曲「コリオレイナス」は「プルタルコスの『英雄伝』に大きく依拠している」(フィリップ、1970年)とされている。シェイクスピアがどのようにこの原典から逸脱しているかを探ることは、この戯曲の適切な解釈に識見をもたらすものであろう。本論ではプルタルコスの原典からの24カ所の逸脱を解釈を一切交えずに紹介し、逸脱に見られる顕著な傾向について考察するものである。

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus* is "heavily dependent on Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* as source material" (Phillips, 1970). Where Shakespeare deviated from the source could bring insight into properly interpreting the play. A list of 24 deviations in *Coriolanus* from Plutarch's writings is presented here, though with no interpretations. Some comments about apparent trends of the deviations are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said of *Coriolanus* that of all the Roman plays, Shakespeare follows Plutarch* most closely (Phillips, 1970). Yet, Shakespeare deviated from Plutarch in many significant ways. From such deviations it might be possible to glean more understanding of what he intended this play to portray.

Goddard (Goddard, 1951) alone refers to Plutarch five times concerning various aspects of the play, which are:

It is possibly significant that the poet makes no use of several passages involving the supernatural to be found in his source.

*The translation of *Plutarch's Lives* used to compare with *Coriolanus* is Perrin's translation, not North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* which Shakespeare used.

A comparison with its source will show that Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* fills the prescription of a plebeian-patrician treatise far better than Shakespeare's tragedy.

...in the inimitable scene of the three women...for which Shakespeare found no hint in Plutarch.

"First he kissed his mother," says Plutarch. Shakespeare altered that!

The incident of the poor man in Corioli who had been his host but whose name he forgets shows both sides of Coriolanus. In Plutarch the man is an old friend of Marcius' (Coriolanus), formerly of great wealth. Shakespeare clearly left out that touch, for a reason.

In the first deviation mentioned by Goddard, only as an aside and not expounded on at all, Shakespeare omitted something that Plutarch covered in some detail. In fact, the supernatural in Plutarch is covered in much greater detail than Menenius and Aufidius are. The second deviation that Goddard notes is of Shakespeare altering Plutarch, and Goddard then *understatedly questions those who had asserted that Coriolanus is a political play* (e.g., Schlegel (1815), Knight (1849), or more recently, Rossiter(1970)). The next two deviations are central to the points that Goddard wanted to make, so they are treated in greater detail. The scene with the three women was totally made up by Shakespeare. The last deviation covered by Goddard about the man in Corioli is, like the first, only an aside, yet the above deviations are all that Goddard wrote about. It appears that Goddard recognized the deviations (omissions, alterations, and creations) as meaningful, but apparently didn't have the inclination or time to investigate them.

Farnham talked about the combination of good and bad and those paradoxes, and thus cited the differences between Plutarch and Shakespeare within this context (Farnham, 1970). Rossiter sees *Coriolanus* as a political play stating, "There you have a tragic clash: the basis of a political tragedy, not a Tudor morality. And to achieve that, Shakespeare had to twist his source, for he and Plutarch are entirely at odds" (Rossiter, 1970). Jorgensen sees Coriolanus as an Elizabethan soldier, thus the deviation (number 3, see below) he highlights is that in Plutarch Coriolanus entered Corioli with some of his men, while in Shakespeare he entered alone (Jorgensen, 1970). Indeed, many critics have cited deviations to support a point, but only in support, not actually starting with the deviations themselves.

This paper will merely be a compendium of such deviations with some comments on the apparent trends of these deviations. Also, though extensive, I cannot claim that all the deviations will be touched upon, or indeed that that is the goal of the paper; to list every deviation would be more confusing than helpful. When reading Plutarch's history of Coriolanus I noted the changes that in my eyes were significant in altering the character of the play,

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though eyes which might be tainted as I have strong opinions about *Coriolanus* (Maune, 1999). Presenting the deviations as a list should make it easier to reflect on their meaning.

DEVIATIONS

Deviations will be listed as they occur in the play. Plutarch's version is discussed first then compared with Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Caius Marcius is always referred to as Coriolanus.

1 The citizens rebellion is totally peaceful and non-confrontational, while in *Coriolanus* their rebellion appears violent and could lead to the overthrow of the government. Indeed, in Plutarch the citizens appear to have been lied to and abused by the patricians. Shakespeare actually mixes two examples of citizens' unrest for the opening scene, and the apparent cause of the unrest stemming from the lack of distribution of corn, procured by Coriolanus and those who followed him, actually occurred after he "single handedly" captured the city Corioli for Rome, and thus earned his appellation Coriolanus. Shakespeare followed the famous speech about the body rebelling against the belly by Menenius very closely, but the speech was in relation to the first rebellion which Shakespeare never touched upon.

2 In scene III of *Coriolanus* Valeria remarks on Coriolanus's son's treatment of a butterfly. This is completely Shakespeare's creation.

3 Coriolanus enters Corioli with a few of his men, while in *Coriolanus* he enters alone.

4 Plutarch only introduced Aufidius when Coriolanus went to seek him out following his banishment but, Aufidius is in the battle outside Corioli in *Coriolanus*.

5 Coriolanus is pleased by Cominius's praise for the battle of Corioli, while in *Coriolanus* he is decidedly uncomfortable being praised.

6 Coriolanus says that he won't accept the booty offered him by Cominius following his triumph in Corioli as he considered it pay and not honor, while in *Coriolanus* he calls such largesse "a bribe to pay my sword", but honor is not mentioned.

7 The man that Coriolanus asks Cominius to free is a rich man that hit hard times, but in *Coriolanus* he is a poor man - not a noble.

8 There is no indication that Coriolanus is at all opposed to becoming consul, while in *Coriolanus* he repeatedly states that he doesn't want the position.

9 Coriolanus entered the forum, when he was to be made consul, pompously led by the senate which is not in *Coriolanus*, and, all the sarcasm and ill will towards the citizens he is "begging" votes of is Shakespeare's invention.

10 He gets into trouble with the citizens for speaking out in very strong condescending terms against giving the citizens grain for free and lowering its price, while in *Coriolanus* the tribunes incite the citizens to change their votes for his election to the consulship.

11 The tribunes first inform him that he will be tried for usurpation of the government, but they change the charges to conspiring to remove the tribunes from power and bring up his speech against lowering the price of grain. In *Coriolanus* the tribunes originally tell him about his rude treatment of the citizens while he was wearing the gown of humility and about the corn (see deviation 1) he wouldn't distribute, and at the trial they accuse him of usurpation and tyranny, and will bring up the corn only if Coriolanus can overcome the first two accusations.

12 Following his banishment, portents from angry gods occur. In Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, there are no supernatural forces alluded to. However, when the intercession scene occurs in the play, Coriolanus does mention the gods in relation to the unnatural scene and also before his death when he calls upon Mars to hear him.

13 Coriolanus exposes himself to Aufidius and entreats him to accept his services to fight Rome as "I will fight better for you (Aufidius) than I have against you, in just so far as those who know the secrets of their enemies fight better than those who do not" (Plutarch, p175). Yet, in *Coriolanus* Aufidius raises the point about Coriolanus knowing the strengths and weaknesses of Rome.

14 The Volscians wouldn't attack Rome as they had a two year peace treaty with them. Coriolanus used trickery to incite some Roman rudeness towards the Volcians which incensed them so that they allowed Coriolanus to attack (Plutarch at first states that he doesn't know if trickery was fomented by Coriolanus, but when comparing Coriolanus to Alcibades, Plutarch flatly states that Coriolanus "used deceit to stir up war between the Romans and Volscians" (Plutarch, p221)). In *Coriolanus* we hear that the Volscians have broken a treaty and have done it before three times in Menenius's lifetime, but no hint that Coriolanus was at all responsible for the breaking of the treaty.

15 When the war started Coriolanus was given half the command of the Volscian soldiers, while Aufidius the other, but his half remained at home to protect Volscian possessions. In *Coriolanus* Aufidius also attacks Roman possessions with no mention of staying to protect the homeland.

16 When Coriolanus first attacked Roman territories, he attacked Roman lands and allies, but didn't disturb patrician holdings. This was a cunning tactic that infuriated the citizens who thought the patricians were in league with Coriolanus. No such cunning was ever shown in *Coriolanus* at any time by Coriolanus.

17 Coriolanus did lots of pillaging against those who wouldn't surrender, but didn't touch those who pledged to the Volscians. This again shows some sense of tactic or cunning not all alluded to in the play.

18 After he laid close siege to Lavinium, the original city of Rome founded by Aenas and the seat of their gods, the people wanted to bring Coriolanus back, but the patricians now wouldn't have it though they had wanted to before. In *Coriolanus* there isn't any mention

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of taking him back until the intercession scene.

19 When Coriolanus's army camped only five miles from Rome, they entreated him to come back, but he'd hear none of it. He demanded that the Volscians be made equal citizens and all former Volscian land be returned. He gave Rome 30 days to decide. In *Coriolanus* it was simply sack Rome—no conditions or 30 day wait.

20 Valeria entreated all the woman to plead with Coriolanus. In *Coriolanus* we don't really know who brought it about, but Valeria has a minor role in the intercession.

21 Volumnia comes first at the head of the entreating women, while in *Coriolanus* Virgilia does.

22 He embraces his mother first, then his wife and children. In *Coriolanus* he kisses Virgilia then addresses Volumnia, and he is cast as having only one son.

23 Volumnia's heavy handed speeches moved Coriolanus greatly, while if you agree with Goddard (Goddard, 1951) her speeches moved him not, but rather seeing his wife and child did. It is interesting to note that the long silence during which Coriolanus decides his course, most mortal, is in Plutarch too.

24 Aufidius outright kills Coriolanus in an attempt to get his honor as well as the sole command of the Volscian forces back. He cited how Coriolanus had betrayed the Volscian command by not pressing on with the sack of Rome. In *Coriolanus* Aufidius goads the "boy of tears" into losing his temper before Aufidius kills him. The whole murder is premeditated but performed as an apparently unpremeditated act.

CLOSING REMARKS

Observing the deviations as a whole, some trends are quite evident. As stated by Goddard, Shakespeare downplayed the plebeian-patrician conflict. Moreover, from deviations 1, 10 and 11, Shakespeare depicted the patricians in a much more favorable light than Plutarch while denigrating the plebeians which Plutarch didn't do. Shakespeare removed any indications of cunning, the ability to twist the truth, of any kind in *Coriolanus* (deviations 10,13,14,16, and 17), making him a man bound by his own truth (Act III, Scene II):

Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness.

All the supernatural references in Plutarch are omitted (deviations 12 and 18) supporting the contention of some critics that Coriolanus is of God-like stature as Cominius states (Act IV, Scene VI):

He is their god: he leads them like a thing
Made by some other deity than nature,

And the tribune Brutus's remarks about the content state of Rome following Coriolanus's banishment made prior to the above are pertinent (Act IV, Scene VI):

The gods have well prevented it, and Rome
Sits safe and still without him.

Shakespeare portrayed Coriolanus as a man who wasn't influenced by wealth or power which strongly contrasts with Plutarch (deviations 7,8,9,10, and 16).

The deviations listed were chosen based on their apparent significance in altering the nature of the history. Some, and possibly even all, of these deviations have been noted in other publications in relation to points of interpretation, but not all together contiguously.

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