

“By Jupiter, forgot”: Volscians and Scots in Shakespeare and Arbella Stuart*

Lisa Hopkins
Sheffield Hallam University, UK

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the representation of Volscians in two texts, Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* and a letter of Lady Arbella Stuart’s referring to Virgil’s Camilla. It argues that for both authors, it matters that the relationship between the Volscians and the Romans could trope that between the Scots and the English. In the month in which Queen Elizabeth died, Arbella Stuart reached for a Volscian as a way to connect herself to Scotland; five years later, in the wake of James’s failed attempt to achieve political and constitutional union between England and Scotland, *Coriolanus* uses the Volscians to question that project.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare; *Coriolanus*; Arbella Stuart; Virgil; Scotland; Union.

“By Jupiter, forgot”:

Volscos y escoceses en Shakespeare y Arbella Stuart**

RESUMEN: Este artículo examina la representación de los volscos en dos textos, *Coriolanus*, de Shakespeare, y una carta de Lady Arbella Stuart en la que se refiere a la Camila de Virgilio. Se argumenta que para ambos autores es importante que la relación entre volscos y romanos puede ser una representación metafórica de la de escoceses e ingleses. En el mes en el que murió la reina Isabel, Arbella Stuart recurrió a una volasca como forma de relacionarse con Escocia; cinco años después, tras el intento fallido de Jacobo I por conseguir una unión política y constitucional entre Inglaterra

“By Jupiter, forgot”:

Volscos e escoceses em Shakespeare e Arbella Stuart***

RESUMO: Este ensaio examina a representação de volscos em dois textos, *Coriolanus* de Shakespeare e uma carta de Lady Arbella Stuart referindo-se à Camila de Virgílio. Argumenta-se que, para ambos os autores, é importante que a relação entre os volscos e os romanos possa metaforizar a relação entre os escoceses e os ingleses. No mês em que a rainha Elizabeth morreu, Arbella Stuart recorreu a uma volasca como maneira de se relacionar com a Escócia; cinco anos depois, na esteira da tentativa fracassada de James de alcançar a união política e constitucional entre a Inglaterra e a Escócia,

* Acknowledgements: With thanks to Matt Steggle, Sara Jayne Steen, Crosby Stevens, and Elaine Walker.

** Translation into Spanish by Tamara Pérez-Fernández.

*** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

Hopkins

y Escocia, *Coriolanus* usa a los volscos para poner en duda ese proyecto. *Coriolanus* usa os volscos para interrogar esse projeto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: William Shakespeare; *Coriolanus*; Arbellá Stuart; Virgilio; Escocia; unión. PALAVRAS-CHAVE: William Shakespeare; *Coriolanus*; Arbellá Stuart; Virgílio; Escócia; união.

In Elly Griffiths' detective story *The Dark Angel*, an archaeologist interested in the Romans has his dig sabotaged by one of his students, whose motive turns out to be that she resents the Romans and feels that more attention should be paid to the Volscians. The student has a point, for Volscians are often remembered primarily in conjunction with *Coriolanus*. So who and what were the Volscians, and what did they want? Although the King's Men had never heard of anything like method acting, when Henry Condell (presumably) played Tullus Aufidius, the most prominent Volscian in early modern drama, he would have needed some sense of what kind of role it was. The only direct information offered by the play on this point prompts as many questions as it answers: Aufidius speaks of

our aim, which was
To take in many towns, ere, almost, Rome
Should know we were a-foot. (1.2.22–24)

What the Volscians want is apparently to expand their territory in defiance of Rome. This obviously makes them enemies of Rome, but it also makes them mirror images of the Romans; the two sides are locked in a conflict whose basis is paradoxically not opposition but similitude.

In one sense this might have been familiar territory to Condell, whose primary task seems to have been to play second fiddle to Richard Burbage. David Grote sees Condell as the company's best swordsman, but nevertheless condemned always to lose to Burbage; only in *Macbeth* was Condell "at last [...] allowed to win the swordfight, although Burbage apparently insisted they go off-stage to do it" (2002, 141). If Grote is right, Condell's roles would thus have included Laertes, Macduff, and Polixenes – all antagonists of the hero in the same way as Aufidius is, but with one significant difference, which is that we know what their causes of conflict are: Laertes fights Hamlet because Hamlet killed his father; Macduff kills Macbeth because Macbeth murdered his wife and children; Polixenes breaks

with Leontes because Leontes is jealous. Aufidius, however, fights Coriolanus because he himself is a potential Coriolanus; the only difference between the Romans and the Volscians seems to be that the Romans ultimately win. I shall argue that the unusual dynamic between Coriolanus and Aufidius is colored by the fact that in early modern England, Volscians trope dual nationality and can be used to interrogate the tensions within it. Christina Wald notes that in *Coriolanus* “the word ‘home’ occurs more frequently than in any other Shakespearian drama” (2019, 139); Coriolanus himself, however, is a man who tries to move from one home to another, until the play shows him that that is not possible.

The sense that the Volscians and the Romans are very closely aligned—and indeed that today’s Volscian enemy is tomorrow’s Roman citizen—is pervasive in early modern culture, but it is particularly prominent in the visual arts. One such art which is particularly pertinent to *Coriolanus* is tapestry. For a play about a military hero, *Coriolanus* is surprisingly interested in sewing; there are for instance five separate references to cushions (1.3.5, 2.186, 2.2.sd, 3.1.103, 5.3.53), more than in any other Shakespeare play. The feeling is mutual, for tapestries are interested in Coriolanus, who formed a popular subject for them. In telling the story of Coriolanus tapestries often represent the Volscians, but they typically depict them in exactly the same way as the Romans. In a set of Coriolanus tapestries in the Brooklyn Museum, woven in the first quarter of the seventeenth century but based on drawings made between 1570 and 1590, it is impossible to tell whether the fourth panel represents Coriolanus taking his leave of Volumnia and Virgilia in Rome or receiving them in a town occupied by the advancing Volscian army; the only thing that is clear is that “the male figures in attendance wear military garb” (Cavallo 1995, 12), but there is no way of identifying which side they belong to because Romans and Volscians are ethnically and iconographically indivisible.

Volscians are thus hard to pin down, but if Condell did in any sense research the role of Aufidius, he would have found a few sources and ideas he could draw on. For one thing, Aufidius was not the only famous Volscian. The Emperor Augustus himself was of Volscian descent, and so was the warrior Camilla, an important character in Virgil’s *Aeneid* who was remembered by at least one

Hopkins

politically prominent early modern person. In March 1603, Lady Arbella Stuart wrote,

I finding my selfe scarce able to stand <on my feete> what for my side and what for my head, yet with a commaunding voice called a troupe of such viragoes as Virgilles Camilla that stood at the receipt in the next chamber. (Steen 1994, 152)

The reference to “my side” is to the recurrent pain that Arbella experienced there, probably a symptom of the hereditary disease porphyria, which gave rise to bouts of insanity, and it seems likely that Arbella was in the midst of one such bout when she wrote this letter, which would account for its fevered tone. It does however yield some sense, and is in fact a good example of what Carolyn Sale identifies as the way in which “Stuart’s letters situate her in a narrative landscape as densely symbolic as that of Ben Jonson’s court masques or Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*” (2003, 950). Being a virgin, Camilla is not an inappropriate analogue for Arbella’s ladies-in-waiting, whom she might perhaps think of as a troupe of viragoes. Alexandre de Pontaymeri’s 1599 intervention in the *querelle des femmes*, *A womans woorth, defending them against all the men in the world*, asks “Where is he that can produce the Captaine of any nation, who in valour, prowess and councell, might be equalled with the victorious Volscian queene Camilla, or the magnanimous Penthesilea?” (63); Pontaymeri dedicated the work to Elizabeth Vernon, countess of Southampton, whose husband was a close ally of the earl of Essex, and Arbella’s strong interest in Essex might have meant that she could have come across it. It might also be significant that Camilla would later be one of the queens in Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* (1609), in which Arbella’s first cousin the Countess of Arundel danced (although it was Lady Catherine Windsor who actually danced Camilla); the close ties which Jonson would later develop with the Cavendish family might already have been forming, and his inclusion of Camilla might conceivably be a sign of interest in her in circles in which they moved.

More directly, Arbella may have been influenced by the decorative scheme of the High Great Chamber at Hardwick Hall, where she was confined in the custody of her grandmother Bess of Hardwick. The main theme of the chamber is praise of the goddess Diana, and Crosby Stevens notes that “One of Diana’s attendants is also wearing a crown. Perhaps (especially given the pronounced upper body strength of the nymphs, and their spears or javelins which could double up as

weapons for war as well as hunting) this second royal figure could represent Camilla"; Stevens suggests that Arbella seems to be mustering her "regiment" (Diana's nymphs are called her "regiment" in Ovid) and that "a troupe of such viragoes as Virgilles Camilla that stood at the receipt in the next chamber" could thus refer not only to her waiting-women but also to the iconography of Hardwick.¹

If so, the frieze on the wall of the High Great Chamber would be an image of a Volscian. In *The Aeneid*, the first thing we learn about Camilla is her ethnicity:

With these, Camilla came. She was of Volscian race, and led her cavalcade of squadrons a-flower with bronze. She was a warrior; her girl's hands had never been trained to Minerva's distaff and her baskets of wool, but rather, though a maiden, she was one to face out grim fights and in speed of foot to out-distance the winds. She might have skimmed over the tops of uncut corn-stalks without ever harming their delicate ears as she ran, or upheld her way through the midst of the sea supported on heaving waves without once wetting her swift foot-soles in its surface. A gathering of mothers and all the young men who were streaming from houses and fields looked forth admiringly at her as she passed, in open-mouthed astonishment to see how regal splendour clothed her smooth shoulders in purple, how her brooch clasped her hair in its gold, and how she wore on her a Lycian quiver and carried a shepherd's myrtle-staff with a lance's head. (*Aeneid* VII.803–817; p.200)²

There is an unusual amount of detail here, and indeed throughout the story of Camilla, where we find a couple of things that might have attracted the attention of Arbella. Camilla is an excellent horsewoman, and actually leads the cavalry of the combined forces of Latium:

Camilla rode up to meet Turnus, her Volscian regiment with her, and hard by the gates the princess leapt from her horse; and all her band, following her lead, dismounted, slipping deftly to the ground. Camilla spoke to Turnus: "Turnus, if the brave have a right to self-confidence, then I, having the courage, offer to meet the Horse of Aeneas' army and to advance alone against the Etruscan cavaliers. Let me set my hand to the opening perils of war. You take your stand

¹ Personal communication with Crosby Stevens (May 2020).

² All quotations from Virgil's *Aeneid* are from W. F. Jackson Knight's translation (Virgil 1956); reference to page numbers in this edition are included for convenience.

dismounted near the walls and keep watch over our ramparts.”
(*Aeneid* XI.498–506; p.294)

It is Arbella’s cousin the earl of Newcastle who is principally famous for his horsemanship, but he was continuing a family tradition (Edwards 2018); although we know nothing about how well Arbella herself could ride, she certainly knew men who plumed themselves on their equestrian skills, and this might have helped prompt her interest in Camilla. In addition, Camilla had female friends—we hear of Larina, Tulla, and Tarpeia (XI.655–656; p.299) and then later of Acca (XI.820; p.304)—so she is an appropriate figure to evoke in connection with the support offered by Arbella’s waiting-women.

Perhaps, though, the appeal of Camilla lay in the ways in which she was *not* like Arbella. The portrait at Hardwick Hall of Arbella as a child shows her holding a doll, but Camilla “used to cast baby spears from her soft little hand” (XI.578; p.297), and she kills twelve men (an event that becomes known in art as “The Carnage of Camilla”) before herself being slain by Arruns. Even then, the goddess Diana kills Arruns because she favors Camilla. Sara Jayne Steen notes that one of Bess’s letters to Walsingham spoke of “the importance of having Arbella ‘the soner be redye to attende on her Majestie’, a theme to which Bess often referred in promoting her granddaughter” (Steen 2019, 183); Bess suggests that she has dedicated Arbella to Elizabeth as Camilla’s father dedicated her to Diana, but Diana reciprocated, and Elizabeth did not. For Arbella, whose life was wholly constrained and who did not benefit from the favor of Elizabeth, who is represented as Diana in the High Great Chamber, Camilla might have represented what she desired but could not attain. Moreover, Elizabeth could sometimes be figured as Aeneas (who according to the myth of the *translatio imperii* was her ancestor), as in the Sieve Portrait, commissioned apparently by Sir Christopher Hatton in a self-conscious attempt to stop Elizabeth becoming a second Dido by marrying her foreign suitor the Duke of Alençon, or “William Alabaster’s *Elisaeis* (an imitation of the *Aeneid* with Elizabeth, rather th[a]n Aeneas, as its hero” (Freeman 2003, 27). Camilla, who opposes Aeneas, is a provocative identification for Arbella.

Another reason Arbella might think of Virgil could be that she is thinking, as she often does, of the earl of Essex, whose sister was named Penelope and who was himself, as Andrew Hiscock notes,

often figured in classical terms, particularly as Achilles but sometimes also as Aeneas. Arbella connects Essex with the *Aeneid* when, writing on the anniversary of the earl's execution, she demands,

how overviolently hasty [...] to recover [the queen's favor] he was this fatal day Ashwensday and <the> newdropping teares of somm might make you remember if it were possible you could forgett. *Quis talia fando Temperet a lachrimis? Myrmidonum Dolopumque aut duri miles Ulissei?* (Steen 1994, 167)

Essex also intersects with the history of the Volscians in another way, because he was compared to Coriolanus in William Barlow's Paul's Cross sermon on 1 March 1601, which spoke of "*Coriolanus*, a gallant young, but a discontented Romane, who might make a fit parallel for the late Earle, if you read his life" (Shakespeare 2013, 99). Arbella and Essex, two losers in the game of politics, gravitate naturally to stories which speak of opposition to the power of Rome, and which use Volscians to do so. I shall suggest, however, that there is more at stake than individual political success or failure, for Volscians also raise wider questions about what factors lead to success or failure.

Coriolanus gives us the most detailed study of the Volscians in early modern drama, and the first thing it shows us is that they, like Essex, were warlike. This is characteristic of stories about Volscians. At the end of the story of Camilla, Virgil declares that "the Volscian ranks were all destroyed" (XI.898; p.307), but the story told in Livy makes it clear that the Volscians are very hard to kill, and also very hard to defeat, and Anne Barton shows that "Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* was in Shakespeare's mind when he was reading *Coriolanus*" (1985, 116). Livy notes that "It was Tarquin who began the long, two-hundred years of war with the Volscians" in ca. 530 BC (1960, 92), and as his history unfolds it becomes clear that though there might be lulls in the fighting, it was a constant feature of Volscian-Roman relations: he says of events in 496 BC that "the Volscians soon reverted to their normal practices: once again they began secret preparations for war" (1960, 128), clearly implying that forty years after the outbreak of hostilities, there was already a pattern. He also says of the fighting in 462 BC that "In what followed the Volscian name almost ceased to exist" (1960, 192), but by the next year "the Volscians and Aequians, in spite of their recent losses, were on the warpath again" (1960, 194). This same indomitability is evident in *Coriolanus* too: when the

Hopkins

Tribunes refuse to believe there is danger because the Volscians cannot possibly be advancing again, Menenius asks scornfully

Cannot be?

We have record that very well it can,
And three examples of the like hath been
Within my age. (4.6.47-51)

In Shakespeare as in Livy, the Volscians are the enemy who will not give up or lie down. Coriolanus may demand "If these shows be not outward, which of you | But is four Volscies?" (1.6.77-78), but the fact remains that he is the only Roman prepared to enter Corioles and face its Volscian defenders, and at the end of the play the Volscians seem as powerful and as martial as they were at the beginning.

However, despite this consistently oppositional identity, there are other features of Livy's Volscians which are contradictory. On the one hand, they are Rome's indomitable enemies, and hence radically unacceptable Others: in 486 BC Camillus harangues the Romans "maybe your old enemies the Aequians or Volscians might take it into their heads to do the same—and how would you like to change nationalities with *them*?" (1960, 400). On the other hand, they blend easily with the Romans: Attius Tullius (Livy's name for Shakespeare's Tullus Aufidius) warns the Senate that "many hundreds of my people are here in Rome" (1960, 147), and Livy notes that in 402 BC "the garrison at Anxur was overwhelmed and the town taken. The disaster was due to neglect: troops were away on leave, Volscians were being indiscriminately admitted for trading purposes, with the result that the sentries at the gates were suddenly and treacherously attacked" (1960, 349). The Volscians, it seems, are mixing freely with the Romans, and when Tullius incites them, "Surely you cannot fail to feel that Rome is an enemy city" (1960, 148) it is by no means clear that they are really bound to feel that at all.

Nor need they feel that Rome's greater size means they will inevitably be swallowed up by it: Livy notes that in 494 BC "Numerical superiority made the Volscians over-confident" (1960, 138). Actually, Livy makes it quite clear that the Romans did not fight the Volscians because the Volscians were threatening or different, but because they made an expedient enemy of the sort which the dying Henry IV tells Hal is conducive to national unity. Livy has Cincinnatus observe that "God seems to smile more kindly upon this

country of ours when we are at war" (1960, 206), and the Volscians afforded a ready pretext for maintaining that state of war and for using it as a cover for Rome's rulers to advance other, less popular agendas: Livy notes that in 461 BC "War had been declared, indeed, against the innocent Antiates; but the real enemy which the Senate meant to fight was the common people of Rome" (1960, 195). The Volscians are a stalking-horse, and one of the issues which they are particularly useful for deflecting is Rome's debt crisis. Livy observes that in 495 BC

a double danger was threatening the City's peace: first, imminent war with the Volscians and, secondly, internal discord of ever-increasing bitterness between the ruling class and the masses. The chief cause of the dispute was the plight of the unfortunates who were "bound over" to their creditors for debt. (1960, 129)

It might credibly have been the connection between Volscians and the plight of debtors which prompted Henry Barlow to compare Essex to Coriolanus, who fought for the Volscians as well as against them, for one of the principal factors motivating Essex's disastrous rising was the crippling load of debt under which he was struggling after Elizabeth refused to renew his monopoly on the sale of sweet wines. The Volscians thus speak not only of external enmity to Rome but of internal division, financial problems, and dispossession.

Livy ultimately refuses to take a position on the Coriolanus story:

Whether Coriolanus was actually right is not easy to say; I do, however, think it is possible that the senatorial party might have succeeded in freeing themselves from the various restrictions, including the tribunate, to which they had been forced to agree, if only they had consented to reduce the price of grain. (144-145)

Shakespeare similarly fails to commit himself, but there are some notably provocative elements of his depiction of Coriolanus. John Velz argues that "Coriolanus is strikingly like Turnus" (1983, 63); Turnus was the foe of Aeneas and the ally of Camilla, so to see Coriolanus as like Turnus is implicitly to connect him both with the Volscians and with opposition to the monarchy founded by Aeneas, and supposedly continued by the Tudors and Stuarts. It is also clear that the Volscians in *Coriolanus*, like their counterparts in Livy, belong to a thriving society which does not seem in any way inferior to Rome.

Shakespeare seems to tacitly acknowledge that the Volscians were unlucky rather than unworthy through the play's unusual emphasis on things that are unaccountably forgotten. Peter Holland observes that "few moments have proved quite as contentious for interpretation as the moment of Martius' forgetting the name of his one-time host in Corioli" (Shakespeare 2013, 42): "By Jupiter, forgot!" (1.9.89). In one sense this has an extradiegetic force in that it prepares for the unprecedented moment of silence, which is Coriolanus' initial response to his mother's request, where our knowledge that Coriolanus has previously forgotten something might keep us on tenterhooks by making us genuinely uncertain whether it is the actor or the character who is unsure what to say. It is also worth noting that Coriolanus started his career by fighting Tarquin – "At sixteen years old, | When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought | Beyond the mark of others" (2.2.85–87) – but according to Livy, not only did Tarquin start the war with the Volscians, he also used loot from it to found the temple of Jupiter:

It was Tarquin who began the long, two-hundred years of war with the Volscians. From them he took by storm the town of Suessa Pometia, where the sale of captured material realized forty talents of silver. This sum he allocated to the building of the Temple of Jupiter. (1960, 92)

This gives sharp point to Coriolanus' "By Jupiter, forgot!," for to forget the Volscians is in this sense to forget Rome's own history. At the same time, though, Coriolanus' inability to remember the name of his Volscian host also sets up an implicit contrast with Aufidius' final verdict on Coriolanus, "Yet he shall have a noble memory" (5.6.155). Yes, he will: Livy testifies to that, as do the several sets of Coriolanus tapestries, and Shakespeare's play itself. For Livy, it was (some of) the Romans who were at risk of being forgotten: "no one would have remembered that Cominius had fought at all in the action against the Volscians, had it not been for the record, on a brazen column, of the treaty made at that time with the Latins" (1960, 143). For early modern England, however, the Volscians are likely to be remembered only as the defeated enemies of Rome. The Volscians, like the Trojans, stand for loss and defeat.

This did not have to be so. In both Shakespeare and Livy the Volscians are not less virtuous, less numerous or less valiant than the Romans, and Shakespeare concurs with Livy in understanding that

the war against them is a ploy to deflect attention from internal problems. Coriolanus may be a military hero, but he is also careful to note that

Our spoils we have brought home
Doth more than counterpoise a full third part
The charges of the action. (5.6.77–79)

The war may be about honor and glory, but it is also about territory and money, and someone always needs to keep an eye on the bottom line. Such awareness of *realpolitik* is implicitly Machiavellian, and Barton suggests that Machiavelli is indeed a direct influence on the play. She points to “a series of overall attitudes, attitudes peculiar to this play, which I believe Shakespeare owed not to any one particular passage in Livy, but to his history as a whole—in itself, and also as it had been interpreted by another, celebrated Renaissance reader” (Barton 1985, 116), and Patrick Ashby notes that Aufidius “expresses his discontent in words which echo those of Machiavelli [...] ‘our virtues | Lie in th’interpretation of the time’” (4.7.49–50). Gilberto Sacerdoti suggests that what both Livy and Machiavelli saw in the story of Coriolanus was an idea of constitutional balance (2018, 52), and Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy* certainly supports this when it observes of the Volscians’ success under Coriolanus that

Livy says it reveals that the Roman republic grew more through the exceptional ability of its commanders than of its soldiers, considering that the Volscians had in the past been defeated and only later had won when Coriolanus was their commander. Although Livy holds this opinion, it is nevertheless evident in many passages in his history that the exceptional ability of soldiers without a commander accomplished miraculous feats, and that they were more organized and ferocious after the death of their consuls than before they were killed. (1997, 292)

For Machiavelli, the story of Coriolanus and the Volscians raises some big general questions about whether history is the story of great men, whether leaders help or hinder, and whether events mean by themselves or need to have meanings made from them. His is a wry, pragmatic perspective which privileges the political rather than the providential.

Machiavelli’s response to Livy’s story of Coriolanus and the Volscians might prompt us to wonder whether the Volscians might

have wider political overtones in early modern culture. It may well be that they did. Adolph Cavallo suggests that in the case of the Brooklyn Museum tapestries, which were woven in France, "it is not far-fetched to seek some allusion in the story of Coriolanus to the life of the Queen Mother, Catherine de' Medici," whom he sees as figured as Volumnia (1995, 16), and John Astington implies that in fact Coriolanus had a continuing currency at the French court: noting that there were ten Coriolanus tapestries displayed at Fontainebleau for the baptism of Henri IV's children in September 1606 (the drawings for which were printed), Astington suggests that one of the poses of Coriolanus "would have struck contemporary observers, particularly Catholics, as reminiscent of the *Ecce homo* tradition of Passion cycle pictures" (2017, 49), a piece of opportunistic iconography which would presumably have resonated with a monarch who had espoused Catholicism only because Paris was worth a mass. The Volscians could also have meanings closer to home. In his 1640 tract *The Case of Shipmony*, the Leveller Henry Parker compared the relationship between the Romans and the Volscians to that between the English and the Scots (Mendle 1995, 49), and there are other signs that the story of Coriolanus could be connected to Scotland. John Thornborough's 1605 *The ioiefull and blessed reuniting the two mighty and famous kingdoms, England and Scotland into their ancient name of Great Brittain*e cites the Volsci as an example of assimilation, and John Kerrigan observes that

Coriolanus, which works with London perceptions of Anglo-Scottish difference in the polarity that it establishes between the fractious, politically complex world of Rome and the more archaic, aristocratic, and militaristic milieu of the Volscians, responds to the stubbornness of MPs in the Commons (Tribunes of the people) during the union debate as it reached its climax in the parliamentary session of 1607. (2008, 18)

Alex Garganigo develops this: remarking that "in many ways, the Union debate revolved around the status of the king's body" (2002, 335), he shows both that the belly fable was applied to the Union project and that "Pro-Union tracts frequently adduced the expansion of the early Roman Republic as an example of successful union by conquest and incorporation, citing the Sabines and Volscians as peoples it had absorbed" (2002, 338); Garganigo thinks it is therefore suggestive that "the play's Rome and Antium, as states extremely

close to one another and so alike in language, customs and government as to be virtual mirror-images, are very similar to England and Scotland" (2002, 340), and he further considers that "the mother-son bond between Volumnia and Coriolanus transacts topical business as well in paralleling James's vexed relationship with his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, and with the mother figure of Elizabeth" (2002, 357). Nor is it only in the context of the Union debate that Coriolanus might crop up in connection with Scotland. In Shakespeare's play a Volscian servingman, hearing of a possibility of renewed conflict, says "Why, then we shall have a stirring world again" (4.5.221-222); when Sir Robert Carey, son of Shakespeare's first patron Lord Hunsdon, came to record his recollections of serving as a Border Warden, charged with policing the difficult frontier between England and Scotland, he observed that "we had a stirring world, and few days passed over my head but I was on horseback, either to prevent mischief, or to take malefactors" (Mares 1972, 48). If Carey was deliberately quoting *Coriolanus*, that would in fact have been perfectly apposite, for as Barton notes, "historically, the Volscians were a semi-nomadic, cattle-raiding people" (1985, 124), and it was cattle (and sheep) raids that were at the heart of Carey's troubles on the Border, where Reivers regularly bore off animals from England and drove them back to Scotland.

Catherine Loomis has suggested that Robert Carey was a direct influence on *Macbeth*. Carey was the man who rode north on Elizabeth's death to inform James of Scotland of his accession, and on the way he fell off his horse and suffered an injury which left him bloodstained and bandaged, which Loomis thinks is remembered in Duncan's question "What bloody man is that?" (he means the sergeant who brings him news of the success of the battle). If Carey did indeed influence *Macbeth* before going on to quote from *Coriolanus*, he would have been underlining the fact that there are some suggestive parallels between the two plays. Both *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* feature tableaux of three women, the latter an invention of Shakespeare's: Livy has only Coriolanus' wife and mother trying to persuade him, along with "a number of women" (1960, 150). There is no equivalent of Valeria, who is indeed something of an opaque figure. Coriolanus hails her as

The noble sister of Publicola,
The moon of Rome, chaste as the icicle

Hopkins

That's candied by the frost from purest snow
And hangs on Dian's temple – Dear Valeria! (5.3.64–67)

Because of this emphasis on purity, the Arden note suggests she was a Vestal Virgin, developing Wilson Knight's view that Valeria, Virgilia and Volumnia represented three forms of womanhood, virgin, wife, and mother, while Emrys Jones compared them to the three Marys (Jones 1977, 66). Equally, however, they could alternatively (or additionally) be seen as past, present and future, and as connected to the Norns and to the three Weird Sisters of *Macbeth*, whose hero is not going to play the Roman fool but may perhaps foreshadow one. *Coriolanus* may be set in ancient Rome, but it does in this respect look as if it is remembering the Scottish play.

Another potential connection, and one which again has a Scottish resonance, is between *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*. In the *Aeneid*, Turnus tells Camilla,

I have in hand a ruse of war. There is a sunken track within the forest where I plan to block the jaws at each end by posting armed soldiers there. You must take position and prepare to receive the charge of the Etruscan Horse. (XI.515–517; p.295)

He goes on,

There is a glen, with winding curves, apt for concealment and the uses of war. The slopes crowd down on it from both sides, shadowed by clustering leaves; the path leading into it is ill-defined, its jaws are narrow, and the entrances close and forbidding. (XI.522–525; p.295)

Perhaps there is a parallel here with the episode in *Cymbeline* in which a "strait" lane (5.3.7), "Close by the battle, ditch'd, and wall'd with turf" (5.3.14), is ultimately held against the Romans by Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus. This is traditionally traced to a story in Holinshed, who tells it of a Scots family named Hay living in the time of Kenneth Macalpine and fighting the Danes, but perhaps it points in both directions and thus connects Scots and Volscians. *Cymbeline* is also a play in which echoes of Arbella Stuart have been detected (Gristwood 2004, 451), and one of Arbella's chosen go-betweens in her marriage negotiations was the resonantly-named Owen Tudor. When the plan went wrong Tudor fled to Anglesey, suggesting that he was, or thought he was, connected to the actual Tudors, who came originally from Anglesey, and *Cymbeline's* reference to Milford Haven is clearly a direct glance at the Tudors.

Scottishness was one of the few things that Arbella claimed in her own right and not through her formidable grandmother; perhaps, then, it was in connection with Scottishness that she reached for an identification with the Volscian Camilla. If the figure whom Arbella connects with Camilla was indeed one of the attendant nymphs in the frieze in the High Great Chamber, then the room next door to it, the Long Gallery, contained a portrait of Arbella as a child labelled Arbella Comitissa Levinae (Arbella Countess of Lennox), underscoring her Scottish identity; elsewhere in the house, “the with drawing chamber” contained “the pictures of the Quene of Scottes, the same Quene and the King of Scotcs with theyr Armes both in one, the King and Quene of Scotcs hir father and mother in an other” (Boynton 1971, 27). For Arbella, these represented her paternal aunt, cousin, great-uncle and great-aunt. Perhaps, too, she remembered that the most famous Volscian of all was Augustus, the preferred self-identification of Arbella’s cousin King James. Not long after her reference to Camilla, Arbella told Sir Henry Brouncker that her secret lover was the King of Scots. Arbella never went to Scotland, and when she finally met her cousin the king, he proved first a disappointment and then a persecutor. But in identifying herself with Camilla she claimed an identity which was wholly her own: royal, admirable, and familial in a way which was completely separate from her bitterly resented grandmother, who kept her a virtual prisoner at Hardwick and who Arbella thought would be the first to run to the queen with tales about her. As she fantasized about her cousin the King of Scots coming to save her, Arbella’s reference to Camilla the Volscian offered another way of connecting herself to Scotland and of asserting an oppositional identity.

If the relationship between the Volscians and the Romans could be used to figure that between the Scots and the English, *Coriolanus* starts to look like a rather different kind of play from the one we have been accustomed to see. It has often been noticed that it appears to reflect on the politics of England, but perhaps it thinks too about those of Scotland, and perhaps it is interested not only in the Midlands grain riots but in oppositional identities more generally, and in the ways that Volscians in particular can stand for those who are deserving and noble but nevertheless ultimately fail. If Volscians can express both Scottishness and an oppositional identity, it is also unsurprising to find them associated with Essex, who intrigued on behalf of James I

and whose son was rewarded for that when James acceded to the throne. Above all, if Volscians can be used to talk about England and Scotland, *Coriolanus* becomes a way of talking about what it might be like to try to bring together two different nations. At the heart of the conflict between plebeians and patricians is the question of who is able to articulate national identity. Barton observes that “the plebeians claim that they alone embody Rome” (1985, 118); in this respect *Coriolanus* echoes Marlowe’s *Edward II*, where both king and nobles claim to speak for England, but it also develops the potential complications. After his accession, King James VI and I claimed to speak for both Scotland and England. Ultimately, however, *Coriolanus* as a play suggests that, however similar two societies may be, it is not in fact possible for one man to speak for both. While other writers use the Volscians as an example of integration, Shakespeare uses them to figure the difficulties that might attend integration. In the month in which Elizabeth died Lady Arbella Stuart reached for a Volscian figure as a support and, I have suggested, as a way of personally connecting herself to Scotland; five years later, in the wake of James’s failed attempt to achieve political and constitutional union between England and Scotland, *Coriolanus* uses the Volscians to question that project.

References

- Ashby, Patrick. 2016. “The Changing Faces of Virtue: Plutarch, Machiavelli and Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*.” *Early Modern Literary Studies* special issue 25. Accessed July 23, 2021.
<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/219>
- Astington, John. 2017. *Stage and Picture in the English Renaissance: The Mirror up to Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barton, Anne. 1985. “Livy, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*.” *Shakespeare Survey* 38: 115–130.
- Boynton, Lindsay. 1971. *The Hardwick Hall Inventories of 1601*. London: Furniture History Association.
- Cavallo, Adolph S. 1995. “The History of *Coriolanus* as Represented in Tapestries.” *Brooklyn Museum Bulletin* 17, no. 1: 5–22.
- Edwards, Peter. 2018. *Horses and the Aristocratic Lifestyle in Early Modern England: William Cavendish, First Earl of Devonshire (1551–1626) and His Horses*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

- Freeman, Thomas S. 2003. "Providence and Prescription: The Account of Elizabeth in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'." In *The Myth of Elizabeth*, edited by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman, 27–55. Basingstoke: Palgrave 2003.
- Garganigo, Alex. 2002. "Coriolanus, the Union Controversy, and Access to the Royal Person." *Studies in English Literature* 42: 335–359.
- Griffiths, Elly. 2018. *The Dark Angel*. London: Quercus.
- Gristwood, Sarah. 2004. *Arbella: England's Lost Queen*. London: Bantam.
- Grote, David. 2002. *The Best Actors in the World: Shakespeare and His Acting Company*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hiscock, Andrew. 2013. "'Achilles alter': The Heroic Lives and Afterlives of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex." In *Essex: The Cultural Impact of an Elizabethan Courtier*, edited by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins, 101–132. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jones, Emrys. 1977. *The Origins of Shakespeare*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Kerrigan, John. 2008. *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603–1707*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Livy (Titus Livius). 1960. *The Early History of Rome*. Translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Loomis, Catherine. 2001. "'What Bloody Man Is That?': Sir Robert Carey and Shakespeare's Bloody Sergeant." *Notes and Queries* 246: 296–298.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1997. *Discourses on Livy*. Translated by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mares, F. H., ed. 1972. *The Memoirs of Robert Carey*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mendle, Michael. 1995. *Henry Parker and the English Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pontaymeri, Alexandre de. 1599. *A womans woorth, defending them against all the men in the world*. London: John Wolfe.
- Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2018. "From Valour to Counterpoise: Coriolanus' Machiavellian Moment." In *Rome in Shakespeare's World*, edited by Maria Del Sapio Garbero, 47–65. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- Sale, Carolyn. 2003. "The 'Roman Hand': Women, Writing and the Law in the Att.-Gen v. Chatterton and the Letters of the Lady Arbella Stuart." *ELH* 70 no. 4: 929–961.
- Shakespeare, William. 1955. *Cymbeline*. Edited by J. M. Nosworthy. London: Methuen.
- Shakespeare, William. 2013. *Coriolanus*. Edited by Peter Holland. London: Bloomsbury.
- Steen, Sara Jayne, ed. 1994. *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hopkins

- Steen, Sara Jayne. 2019. "A Difficult and Volatile Alliance: The Countess of Shrewsbury and the Lady Arbella Stuart." In *Bess of Hardwick: New Perspectives*, edited by Lisa Hopkins, 181–198. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Thornborough, John. 1605. *The ioiefull and blessed reuniting the two mighty and famous kingdoms, England and Scotland into their ancient name of Great Brittain*. Oxford: Joseph Barnes.
- Velz, John W. 1983. "Cracking Strong Curbs Asunder: Roman Destiny and the Roman Hero in *Coriolanus*." *English Literary Renaissance* 13, no. 1: 58–69.
- Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro). 1956. *The Aeneid*. Translated by W. F. Jackson Knight. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Wald, Christina. 2019. "The *Homeland* of *Coriolanus*: War Homecomings between Shakespeare's Stage and Current Complex TV." *Shakespeare Survey* 72: 136–149.

How to cite this article:

Hopkins, Lisa. "'By Jupiter, forgot': Volscians and Scots in Shakespeare and Arbella Stuart." *SEDERI* 31 (2021): 55–72.
<https://doi.org/10.34136/sederi.2021.3>

Author's contact: l.m.hopkins@shu.ac.uk

Postal address: Humanities Research Centre – Sheffield Hallam University – City Campus, Howard Street – Sheffield, S1 1WB, UK

Submission: 06/07/2020

Acceptance: 19/10/2020