

## Ill Seen, Well Said (On the Uses of Rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*)

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Knowledge and mastery of rhetoric played an important social role in Elizabethan England. In two of Shakespeare's plays studied here, *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, various aspects of (ab)uses of rhetorical skills come to the fore. Problems such as whether the nature of language is contingent or essential are seen to be entangled in the events staged and crucial for understanding the predicament of certain dramatic characters.

*It is eloquence that prevaieth in an active life.*  
Bacon  
*Language idles.*  
Wittgenstein

The art of speaking well seems to have had its heyday in the early modern period. Amid a welter of rebirths, rhetoric and eloquence were also undergoing a renaissance. Between 1400 and 1700, Brian Vickers affirms, "rhetoric attained its greatest prominence, both in terms of range and influence and in value."<sup>1</sup> Around 2500 books (usually in editions of 1000 copies), by about 1000 authors, both classical and contemporary, are known to have been published on the subject, which would mean, taking into account how many people would read one copy of a book, that some 7 million Europeans, "had a working knowledge of rhetoric."<sup>2</sup> And they were dispersed over all strata of society: "every person who had a grade school education in Europe between Ovid and Pope knew by heart, familiarly, up to a hundred figures, by their right names,"<sup>3</sup> and acknowledged the supreme power of the word. Admittedly, it was a very narrow scope

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<sup>1</sup> Vickers, "On the Practicalities of Rhetoric", p. 133. Cf. also Moseley, pp. 171-205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Vickers, "Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric", p. 86.

that this general notion of rhetorical skill covered, hardly more than dexterity in the use of figures and tropes. However, combined with the newly established confidence of the vernacular and social energies and philosophical investigations favourable to the rise of the self-made man, self-consciousness in the use of the modes of signification naturally comes to the fore.

The correct use of language was conceived to be a civilizing force, a medium of all social interaction, a prerequisite for understanding, and the origin of all human learning, since language was a gift given to man by the gods.<sup>4</sup> Without the resources of language, the conduct of human affairs is impossible. In the words of Thomas Wilson:

“Neither can I see that men could have been brought by any other means, to live together in fellowship of life, to maintaine Cities, to deale freely, and willingly obeye one an other, if men at the first had not by art and eloquence perswaded that which they full oft found out by reason.” (*The Arte of Rhetorique*, 1553)<sup>5</sup>

It could, moreover, come in handy and even produce an astonishing variety of effects. Shakespeare, for example, has been shown to have mastered more than 200 rhetorical figures. Nor was the use of it limited to writing verse: rhetoric was used for practical purposes, it taught you “how to win over friends, and either persuade enemies or make them look ridiculous.”<sup>6</sup> This meant that words and things were interchangeable, that which is said comes into being: becomes, *is*. Furthermore, the Bible cannot be understood nor the souls of the congregation moved without it. Eloquence was a necessity in every aspect of social life and everyone partook of this interplay of appearances. Life was playing your part on the stage of the world. The new world in the permanent state of becoming, needed to be interpreted and the best way was the apt use of rhetorical figures, be they enunciated by the priest, the schoolmaster or the magistrate.

That the art of rhetoric is essential to the government of any kind of society is, therefore, a point on which Thomas Elyot, Anthony Monday, Richard Rainolde, Henry Peacham, George Puttenham, Thomas Wilson and probably all other 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century writers on the subject would have agreed. What is more, “rhetorician is in a manner the emperor of mens minds & affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of perswasion, by grace, & divine assistance,” writes Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593).<sup>7</sup> If you want to prosper in this brave new world, you should master verbal magic. The self-fashioning of a Renaissance man was largely a matter of speaking well, and even more importantly, of being well spoken of.

Usefulness of rhetoric as a tool of instruction, first and foremost of princes and rulers, comes from it being a standardized system. “The unity of rhetoric as a system is seen in the connection it makes between language and the feelings, it moves from psy-

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<sup>4</sup> The idea was adopted from Cicero’s classical formulation, and is ultimately tracable at least to Plato’s *Protagoras*.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Murphy, p. 413.

<sup>6</sup> Vickers, “On the Practicalities of Rhetoric”, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Murphy, p. 419.

chology to style (or *elocutio*) and back again, offering a coherent model how language can influence behaviour.<sup>8</sup> On how this is achieved, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian all agree: by moving the feelings. Of the three ends of classical rhetoric, *movere* was given more prominence than either *docere* or *delectare*. Rhetorical figures have the power to move the feelings, and thereby, the figures being fixed, while meaning and feeling are flexible and prone to change, enable the orator to manipulate people for his own ends. "Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration."<sup>9</sup>

This aspect, however, seems somehow to have escaped the English Renaissance writers of treatises on rhetoric, for we can witness a "striking inability, or unwillingness, to conceive that language could be applied to evil ends, or used to deceive or corrupt."<sup>10</sup> For them, just like for Cicero, eloquence and ethics were indissoluble. Thus Peacham: "So mighty is the power of this happie union (I meane of wisdom and eloquence) that by the one the Orator forceth, and by the other he allureth, and by both so worketh, that what he commandeth is beloved, what he dispraiseth is abhorred, what he perswaideth is obeyed, & what he diswaideth is avoided."<sup>11</sup> In Caxton's translation of the French encyclopaedia *Mirror of the World* (1480) one could have read: "who wel knowe the scyence of Rhetorique, he should know the right & the wronge."<sup>12</sup> The orator is, like the poet, (for Puttenham these are "the first Philosophers Ethick") a teacher who praises virtue and attacks vice, and instructs people, his task being to persuade "princes & rulers ... in good causes & enterprises, to animate & incense them to godlie affaires & business."<sup>13</sup> Figures of rhetoric can actually be seen as "martiall instruments," so Peacham proposes we use them "to defend ourselves, invade our enemies, revenge our wrongs, ayd the weake, deliver the simple from dangers, conserve true religion, & confute idolatry."<sup>14</sup>

This is the general atmosphere in which Shakespeare writes. Even more specifically, "in the playwrights' practice, the style was thought of as something apart from, and imposed upon the material,"<sup>15</sup> and subject to the rules of rhetoric. Nowhere is it more easily seen than in *Julius Caesar* (c. 1599) and *Coriolanus* (c. 1608). It will be clear that the sketch outlined above shows a situation that bears heavily on these works in many respects, only a handful of which can here be touched upon. In both plays these ideas will find rich resonance, the turning points being not actions but reports of the actions, connotation powerfully holding sway over denotation. In both plays the crucial discussions revolve around a name.

<sup>8</sup> Vickers, "On the Practicalities of Rhetoric", p. 135.

<sup>9</sup> De Man, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Vickers, "Powers of Persuasion", p. 412.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Murphy, p. 419.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Murphy, p. 420.

<sup>13</sup> Rainolde, quoted in Murphy, p. 421.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Murphy, p. 421.

<sup>15</sup> Bradbrook, p. 77.

What's in a name? Apparently, nothing. What should be in that "Caesar"? And yet this Caesar, the titular hero of the play who only has three not particularly big scenes while alive, seems to dominate the action on the strength of his name alone: it is mentioned 216 times, far more frequently than the name of any other leading character in Shakespeare.<sup>16</sup> He even bestows that name on all future rulers of Rome, turning it into a function: to be like Caesar. A rather obscure and insignificant name up to that point, it becomes, by virtue of Julius' self-fashioning, the greatest distinction in the known world. At the same time, we witness the decline and tragedy of the name of Brutus, hitherto one of the greatest names in Roman annals, sliding towards brutishness. He sets out to murder the *spirit* of Caesar, only to find that he has helped to engender it. The whole play can in fact be seen as an attempt to grasp what the essence of that Caesar is, and, indeed, if there be an essence to it.

Name itself is taken to be the essence of another Shakespearean Roman general, Coriolanus. It is a name earned on the battlefield, where alone one can prove worthy of his being, true to his own self. This essence, however, is by the same token elusive to everyone else, and we are offered various versions of it. To the patricians, he is the killing machine in the service of his class. The plebeians regard him as "a very dog to the commonality," who wants but to please his mother. For Volumnia there is only his filial obedience toiling ceaselessly for the ever greater glory of the Mother. Aufidius, in what is certainly the most insightful estimate, sees him as a strange mixture of pride, defect of judgement, and nature "not to be other than one thing." All the persons concerned are involved in a struggle over Coriolanus as a means in their respective endeavours of vying for dominance and power. Everybody refuses to "read" Coriolanus intrinsically, opting instead for an appropriation useful in the context of fueling their own interests. Meanwhile, Coriolanus' own problem is that he refuses to accept that his being depends on and is determined by the responses of his audience and their subsequent narratives of him. Brutus, although he fails to grasp the full consequences of it, knows this to be impossible: "for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things." (*Jul. Caes.* I. ii. 51-2) For a character to exist, an audience is needed, other *dramatis personae* must contribute to the effect of a fullfledged personality. Even he, though, "can *not* start a spirit because he lacks both Caesar's faith in the magic of words and Antony's knowledge of the connotative power of words."<sup>17</sup> Substantive power can only be achieved through the masterful use of verbal appearances. Words speak louder than deeds, at least in the theatre and in a theatrical world.<sup>18</sup> Coriolanus only half senses the source of real danger: "When blows had made me stay, I fled from words." (*Cor.* II. ii. 70)

What cannot be said, can be shown, therefore Coriolanus, like Caesar and Brutus, demonstrates his essence, his "bosom's truth," in battle. However, descriptions distort

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Doran, p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> M.M. Mahood, in Ure, p. 77. A brief but significant discussion, from his *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957).

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the essentially theatrical nature of Elizabethan politics, see Greenblatt, *passim*.

his deeds beyond recognition. Even to him they seem "acclamations hyperbolic" and "nothings monstered." Coriolanus sees himself as identical to himself, his name is his deeds, his deeds are his name: an authentic idealist. This is why he refuses to show his wounds, for that would mean acknowledging that the essence of his being is not self evident.

*Better it is to die, better to starve,  
Than crave the hire which first we deserve.* (II. iii. 112-13)

The need to explain, or give proofs short-circuits his absolutist self-identification. "You are too absolute," his mother would say. The same applies to Brutus who places unconditional belief in the transparent and transcendental goodness of his deed, that need only be logically outlined to be understood. They both fail to project themselves in a dramatic light, to turn their lives into an act.

Mark Antony, in sharp contrast, owes his name to his theatrical and rhetorical abilities alone, and grows to prominence with every line of his speech over Caesar's cadaver. Profoundly aware of the essential mutability of signs, of the metamorphoses of being, he fights for his own life by fashioning himself rhetorically. Adding the finishing touches to the creation of Caesar, he also creates himself. The same can be said of Volumnia, who turns herself into "the life of Rome," over her son's butchered body. It is interesting to observe parenthetically that, paradoxically perhaps, Coriolanus, Brutus and Caesar, identical with themselves and unique, will come to signify an abstract quality applicable to any person, whereas Mark Antony and Volumnia, masters of verbal legerdemains, authors of their own fictions, remain confined to their particular embodiments.

That the nature of a person is taken by the people to be contingent of his name can be further witnessed in the lurid murder of the poet Cinna, the reason being his name alone. The episode "seems irrelevant, but in fact sums up the main theme of the play."<sup>19</sup> Aufidius recognizes Coriolanus, against whom he has fought face to face, "unbucking helms, fisting each other's throat", only after he introduces himself: "I know thee not. Thy name?" For a Coriolanus stripped of any signs of his being, "only the name remains." In this world, names are indexes of personality, and one's personality is, as it were, "his totem: it is the signifier of his signified being."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, *Julius Caesar* opens with reproaching people who do not wear their identifying signs. There is everything in a name. In this, as in so many other respects, Caesar again appears unique. While sharing some of the essentialist traits of Brutus and Coriolanus, he also understands that the name of the game is illusion, that creating a supreme fiction, a persona, a mask ("always I am Caesar"), is the only way of beating others at the game of naming, lest they impose their idea of who you are, and call you names.

The habit, most prominent in Caesar, of Shakespeare's Romans to address themselves in the third person hints at the important fact that their idea of the self, especially the public self, implies a fiction created daily in accordance with certain accepted

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<sup>19</sup> Mahood, in Ure, p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> Lvi-Strauss, p. 214.

values.<sup>21</sup> When Coriolanus, Caesar and Brutus hesitate whether to do one thing or the other it is the notion of what becomes their image more that prevails. The crucial difference is, again, that Caesar knows how to manipulate his image and is aware of its contingent nature. He knows that to be oneself "means to perform a part in the scheme of power rather than to manifest one's natural disposition."<sup>22</sup> Coriolanus and Brutus, though they take their identity to be of their own making or somehow passed onto them by their ancestors, believe that this identity is stable and true to their "natural disposition." They cannot be other than one thing. When Coriolanus finally masters this (V. vi. 71 ff), when he learns how to dramatize himself, turning his defeats into victories, by shifting the point of view, it is already too late. The difference between the two prevalent beliefs, one that the nature of signs is conventional and the other that it is essential, can best be seen in the climactic scene of *Julius Caesar*.

The contrast between the oratories of Brutus and Antony in III. ii. can hardly be more striking, the former laconic, abstract, seemingly casual and antithetically symmetrical, the latter florid, charged with emotional imagery, rhetorically ingenious and impossibly convoluted in its logic. Brutus gives his speech as if demonstrating an example from a textbook of rhetoric, briefly stating objective verifiable facts, talking without the slightest regard for the audience, appealing to the abstract judgement of some impersonal supernatural force. Completely oblivious to the fact that such argumentation is intended exclusively for a learned audience,<sup>23</sup> he speaks as if the logically ordered perfect language, isomorphic to truth and reality, sought by philosophers from Bacon to Russell, really were a means of human interaction. Exit Brutus, convinced that the truth has been demonstrated, overconfidently leaving the floor to Antony, forgetting, fatally, that "he who holds the stage last sums up the events just past and controls the action to follow."<sup>24</sup>

Enter Mark Antony, to deliver his "masterpiece of demagoguery,"<sup>25</sup> and fashion himself an identity in the process. He immediately starts to undermine Brutus' position, first by ridiculing his opening line: the awkward movement, moving nowhere in particular and ending on a weak trochaic note, of "Romans, countrymen, and lovers," is mercilessly exposed by Antony's "friends, Romans, countrymen," extending in a widening gesture to embrace the whole populace of the republic. He states his intention, "not to praise" Caesar and "not to disprove what Brutus spoke," and further establishes his

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<sup>21</sup> A glimpse of how a Roman Stoic consciously constructed his identity can perhaps be found in *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

<sup>22</sup> Greenblatt, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive summary of the chief points of the debate on the nature of language and rhetoric, see Moseley, pp. 171-205.

<sup>24</sup> Vickers, "Power of Persuasion", p. 426.

<sup>25</sup> Kennedy, p. 99. Since the actual nature nor content of historical Mark Antony's oration cannot be determined with any certainty, Mark Antony as we know him really is a self-fashioned Shakespearean hero. Cf. Kennedy, *passim*.

bond with his audience by invoking common wisdom. He seeks to be judged by them. This calculated flattery masks his shameless lie, for as everybody is about to hear, he will do precisely what he stated as not being his intention. In a concealed masterstroke he then relegates the objective facts of Brutus' speech to hearsay. If what Brutus said may or may not be true,<sup>26</sup> it follows then that what he, Antony, says, namely that Brutus is honest, also need not be true. Everything hinges on who is speaking and to which audience. The theories of Wilson, Peacham et al. are put on a difficult test here. Antony bases his oratorical exhibition not on facts or acts, but on Brutus' speech, reporting on a report, interpreting an interpretation to show that there is nothing in the words as such and everything in the use we make of them. He then proceeds to an epideictic apotheosis of Caesar by means of a bedazzling exercise in rhetorical acrobatics, brilliantly analyzed by Jakobson. "The most effective device of Antony's irony is the *modus obliquus* of Brutus' abstracts changed into a *modus rectus* to disclose that these reified attributes are nothing but linguistic fictions." When "properties and activities are exhibited *in recto*, whereas their carriers appear *in obliquo* ... or as subjects of negative actions,"<sup>27</sup> it is obvious that, his statements to the contrary notwithstanding, Antony demands action by pointing rhetorically to the horrible inertia of his hearers. What is more, as Aristotle wrote, "to praise a man is in one respect akin to urging a course of action."<sup>28</sup> The tribute Antony will at the end of the play pay Brutus, hailing him as "the noblest Roman of them all," cannot but echo ironically in the light of his superb deconstruction of the essential concept of "honourable man" and his deflective praise of Caesar here.

Antony's omnipotent Asiatic eloquence, his "bolted language", is precisely what Coriolanus does not have in the least. Not that he wants it. "Nothing can pretend to express the truth, he is saying, but the whole existential presence of the person, the man or woman, in all their living complexity," as Ted Hughes puts it.<sup>29</sup> The character of Coriolanus poses problems of identity for everybody, especially for the actor who plays him.<sup>30</sup> Small wonder, for he has to play a character that declines throughout to stage his being, to resort to rhetoric or theatrics in any way, to dramatize his performance in front of an audience.

*I will not do't,  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness. (III. ii. 120-3)*

He is indeed "a dull actor", who has forgotten his part and is "out ... to a full disgrace." He is so completely self-absorbed, that he becomes a sort of blank tautology.<sup>31</sup> His

<sup>26</sup> Mark the subjunctive of line 79.

<sup>27</sup> Jakobson, p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1367b35, quoted in Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric*, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, p. 277.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Goldman, *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> Eagleton, p. 73.

cardinal trait, in fact, is the superhuman endeavour to completely cut himself off from the social intercourse, to exist independently of any given context, in a vacuum of eternal truths, where “annals” are “written true.” Here, there, or elsewhere. The most important link to be severed is language, and Coriolanus, by constantly denying the possibility of language to convey actions and repeatedly refusing to play the role linguistically, seeks refuge in action and silence. But, “silence is not the absence of language; there is no such absence for human beings; in this respect, there is no world elsewhere.”<sup>32</sup> Coriolanus wants to break “all bonds of privilege and nature”, to become the only author of himself, never being “false to his nature,” in other words, to become God, the only exclusive creator of himself exclusively for himself, not owning any allegiance to anyone. Only the supreme creator completely controls the language he uses in creation, wherein he expresses his essence. A human author always of necessity falls prey to the discrepancy between his belief that he commands his medium and the actual need of his use of the medium to conform to the common usage in order to be able to communicate anything, to assure certain minimal readability. To be perceived, he must create his being rhetorically, thereby undermining his claim to an exclusive position outside any social or historical contingency, from where he could govern the entire scene. All Coriolanus’ crucial social failures are moments of attempting to flee from words, of avoidance of speaking in some way. But when we ask ourselves how to avoid speaking, it is already too late. “Language has started without us, in us, and before us.”<sup>33</sup> In the moment of his political downfall, Caius Martius is silent, vanquished by his mother’s rhetoric, and finally resigns completely his function as Coriolanus. He has already partly done so when refusing to answer to “Coriolanus”, waiting, in a sort of existential limbo, “a kind of nothing, titleless” until “he had forged himself a name i’th’ fire of Rome.” (V. i. 12) Ironically enough, had he persevered in his destructive course, he could have, presumably, by razing Rome to the ground, earned himself the name of “Romanus.”<sup>34</sup> Declining to destroy his city, he physically destroys himself, but this moment of self-destruction is also the moment of his spiritual ascendance. While his mother kneels theatrically, overcoming the unbearable impasse of not being anything, having “forbade all names,” he bows, as ever, for real.

He accepts his fall, understanding the impossibility of his position. There is no firm ontological footing outside social and historical contingencies, one’s “essence” cannot be said to reside beyond the confines of evanescence and mortality of any given context. At least not in this world, where men like Coriolanus must endlessly suffer to be outflanked by rhetorical wizardry and theatrical tricks of those who set greater store by their immediate worldly success than by their eternal lot. “The silent truth (of Divine Love) cannot be dramatized and demonstrated at all, except as a creature suffering in a world where the egomaniac voices of the tragic error reject it, violate it, exploit it.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cavell, p. 167.

<sup>33</sup> Derrida, p. 29. The formulation is, of course, Heideggerian.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Burke, p. 91, footnote.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes, p. 278.



But everything is, as the Neoplatonists believed, in the constant state of becoming, unstable, mutable and imperfect, and Coriolanus is through his submission elevated to a higher plane, just as Mark Antony will be in *Antony and Cleopatra*.<sup>36</sup> "The gnostic, Neoplatonist or alchemical myth of the Female as the hero's own soul, the Divine Truth of his being, from which he is somehow alienated, and which he tries to repossess, ignorantly, in the external form, ... bringing about destruction of his own soul on the mythical plane,"<sup>37</sup> is acknowledged and comprehended by Coriolanus, which is why he abandons this course of action and thereby becomes the first Shakespearean tragic hero, except Hamlet, who relinquishes his tragic purpose. Because he has yielded to the greater power than his own, to that of love, although broken, he can, in the words of T.S. Eliot, be revived. As with Caesar, the tearing apart of his body but gives birth to his true existence.

When we come to the end of both plays we can witness the apparent victory of radical political relativism. The encomia that Aufidius and Octavius both deliver<sup>38</sup> are strikingly similar in their sinister *Realpolitik* tones. It is the language of political opportunism, pragmatism, magnanimity in the use even of a mortal enemy for self-promotion. It is essential that both leaders personally take part in paying respects to their vanquished opponent. Aufidius and Octavius, like Menenius, Volumnia and Antony, know their Machiavelli: "how men live is so different from how they should live that a ruler who does not do what is generally done, but persists in doing what ought to be done, will undermine his power, rather than maintain it."<sup>39</sup> Witness the cases of Brutus and Coriolanus. What succeeds is skillful manoeuvring and image manipulation, not perseverance and integrity. Since no one believes in the existence of these virtues, they cannot be to one's advantage. The intercourse grounded in pure logic, providing the universal truth of meanings is but an idealistic delusion in a world of pure rhetoric, where signs only engender other signs, endlessly deferring interpretation, forever procrastinating the ultimate, true decoding, offering only yet another reading of other readings. The virtues lie in the interpretation of time. Nothing needs must remain as it is, everything can change. Actions undertaken in the name of ideals are often dishonourable and ideals illusory, allegiances are changed and coats turned, truths ironically turn to be lies and falsehoods become sincerities. "Such then is the radically contingent nature not just of individual identity but, inseparably, of the present historical conjecture."<sup>40</sup> The ruler who understands that he need not possess qualities that are generally held in esteem, but that it is essential that he seems so<sup>41</sup> and that the best way to achieve this is to put on an act that

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<sup>36</sup> On this issue see Knight's discussions of *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, as well as Hughes, *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> Hughes, p. 213.

<sup>38</sup> *Coriolanus*, V. vi. 148 ff. and *Julius Caesar*, V. v. 77 ff, respectively.

<sup>39</sup> Machiavelli, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Dollimore, p. 229.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Machiavelli, p. 62.

will circumvent all other acts being played, will be successful. To wit: Caesar, Antony and Octavius.

It is eloquence that prevails in an active life. To decide whether rhetoric has been put to evil ends in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, or whether it had helped prevent horrors of slaughter, destruction and tyranny, and what has been said by Shakespeare, rests with any given audience. "It is an old dream that in time psychology might be able to tell us so much about our minds that we would at last become able to discover with some certainty what we mean by our words and how we mean it."<sup>42</sup> In the meantime, it will hardly be possible to deny that what we have seen is not what we are told. Caesar is murdered exclusively on the strength of the unwarranted assumption that he would become a tyrant, Coriolanus is opposed solely on the grounds of what others, pandering to the prejudices and expectations of the hearers, say about him. The people, who are supposedly to become the victims of the demagogic leaders who have usurped the power, are led instead to fall the victims of the usurping power of the demagogues. It is more likely than not, though, that we as spectators will also choose to believe our ears, and fall prey to Shakespeare's verbal and theatrical magic, than to follow the gracious example of Virgilia, who, like Cordelia, understands that since true essence of one's being lies beyond the confines of language, any act of understanding depends on context and faith, and that nothing is more true than a tautology.

*Who is it that says most? which can say more  
Than this rich praise, that you alone are you?*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Richards, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Sonnet 84.

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LOŠE VIDENO, DOBRO REČENO  
(O UPOTREBI RETORIKE U "JULIJU CEZARU" I "KORIOLANU")

Poznavanje pravila i umijeće u korištenju retorike igrali su važnu društvenu ulogu u Elizabetanskoj Engleskoj. Dvije Shakespeareove drame koje su predmetom ovog rada, *Julije Cezar* i *Koriolan*, dovode u prvi plan različite aspekte (zlo)uporabe retoričkih vještina. Problemi poput toga da li je priroda jezika kontingentna ili esencijalistička pokazuju se isprepletenima s uprizorenim događajima te ključnim za razumijevanje položaja nekih dramskih likova.

