Coriolanus: The Betrayal of the Uncanny

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Shakespeare is obsessed with doubles. His comedies are famously saturated with twins, mistaken identites, bed tricks, and reflections. Few, though, have considered the double in Shakespeare's tragedies. Though ever-present, the doubles of Shakespearean tragedy have seemed to elude popular criticism for the better part of a century, I should say. We will here consider that play which, in my view, more than any other, shows Shakespeare wrestling with this question of doubles. *Coriolanus* is, more than any other of Shakespeare's plays, a play about doubles.

Let us begin by considering the character of Coriolanus. Caius Martius Coriolanus is the exemplar of the proper Roman: a seemingly indestructible war hero who has brought legendary prestige, power, and glory to Rome. His allegiance to Rome is unmatched. He fights on behalf of Rome with the ferocity of an animal protecting its kin; with seemingly no regard for his own life, he charges into combat headfirst and without a fear. He is *the* Roman. He is all but synonymous with Rome, so much so that his very name, Caius Martius, is amended to reflect his service to Rome. He is not Caius Martius, employee of the Roman state, he is Caius Martius Coriolanus: literally, Caius Martius, the Roman possessor of Corioles. No one is more of a Roman than he.

One would expect, then, that Coriolanus, being the ultimate embodiment of Roman power, would love his comrades - his fellow Romans - as if they were his own children. After all, he is their protector, till death come to claim him. So why, in his first lines in the play, does he ask the protesting citizens "What's the matter?"[1]. Should he not be well aware what the matter is? In direct contrast to Oedipus, he appears to hold no knowledge, or at least, no interest, in the problems of the Roman public, whose welfare he places above his own. He has, after all, offered his life for them seventeen times already. One would think that the semi-deific Roman war hero would, at least, hold some care and interest for his own city and its citizens, perhaps especially when the disaster at hand was his own creation! The question to be asked, then, is: what accounts for the division between Martius and the citizens of Rome? How, indeed is it possible that Martius can hold, seemingly, two minds simultaneously? On the one hand,

[1]William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Holland (New York: Arden, 2013), I.i.159. All further citations of the play will be to this edition and will occur parenthetically in the text.

he surrenders his throat to the fickle nature of war in the name of Rome, and on the other, he vindictively starves its citizens. What accounts for this split in him?

To answer this, let us consider Martius' distaste for the people. Why does he hate them so? He starves them of the food with which the "storehouses [are] cramm'd with grain" (I.i.75). He takes them to be inferior beings, "dissentious rogues (I.i.159)", "curs (I.i.163)", hardly even Romans at all. "Hang 'em! (I.i.176, 185, 199)", he cries again and again. Spitting, with barely restrained fury, he promises

> Would the nobility lay aside their ruth,
> And let me use my sword, I'ld make a quarry
> With thousands of these quarter'd slaves, as high
> As I could pick my lance. (I.i.192)

There is no other word for it: our general *hates* the Roman populus as vehemently as he hates Rome's enemies. His grisly statement makes that abundantly clear. But again, wherefore does he hate? And by what ethic does he continue to sacrifice his life for Rome if he hates its people? The answer, it seems clear, is that Coriolanus allows for no contradiction between these two propositions. He is able to, at once, depise the people of Rome and give himself totally to Rome because he draws no similarity between the people and the city. The public are, on his view, in no way connnected to or representative of Rome, and are certainly not constitutive of it. "Go, get yout home, you fragments (I.i.217)" he orders the citizens - "home" meaning "not Rome". He takes too literally his synonymity with the city: instead of supposing that he is all *but* synonymous with Rome, he suppose that he *is* synonymous with Rome, enitrely and without exception. He is, in many ways, the mirror opposite of Oedipus: Oedipus supposes his ultimate equivalence with Thebes *through* the people, Coriolanus supposes his ultimate equivalence with Rome *against* the people. Therefore are his actions the actions of Rome, his thoughts are the thoughts of Rome, and his wishes are the wishes of Rome. Then, of course, are the people his enemy: for not only are they not Coriolanus, they threaten Coriolanus, and therefore threaten Rome.

This is Coriolanus' nature: he is unwilling, or perhaps unable, to think the difference between *all* and all *but*. For, though he is the exemplary Roman, he is not, of course, equivalent with Rome itself. The discrepancy, though, is unbelievably slight; one has quite the difficult task in attempting to seperate Coriolanus from Rome. This is, of course, the debate over Martius' election as consul. He is at once deserving of the consulship and the antithesis of the good consul. The very first debate in the play features the citizens arguing precisely this duplicity:

> SECOND CITIZEN:
> Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius?
>
> ALL:

> Against him first. He's a very dog to the commonality.
>
> SECOND CITIZEN:
> Consider you what services he has done for his country?
>
> FIRST CITIZEN:
> Very well, and could be content to give him good report for't, but that he pays himself with being proud. (I.i.24-30)

And yet, though the difference is slight, even infinitesimal, it is a nonzero difference and cannot be dispensed with. This incredibly subtle difference - between the all *but* and the all - demonstrates with beautiful clarity the Shakespearean signature. Had Coriolanus but an iota more humility, he might have avoided many problems. This would make for quite the uneventful play, though, and we undoubtedly find a kind of perverse enjoyment in watching the story of our too-proud general unfold. This is precisely Martius' difficulty - he cannot think the crossing of borders. There can be no similarity whatever between the thing and its opposite. The presence of the thing within its opposite or vice versa is the one occurrence that, for Coriolanus, ought never occur. Rome cannot be, at once, one and many. Recall the end of his furious speech, upon being denied consulship:

> [. . .] my soul aches
> To know, when two authorities are up,
> Neither supreme, how soon confusion
> May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
> The one by the other. (III.i.109-112)

In short, Coriolanus cannot think the existence of repetition with a difference. This will prove fatal for our general, as we shall soon see.

This problem is not unknown in the history of Western thought - far from it. In his 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny), Freud provides a seminal study of what we might now call the problem of Coriolanus: coming into contact with that thing which ought not be there. Freud, through an uncharacteristicly etymological analysis, locates this feeling, referred to as "the uncanny", with the prescence of the most familiar within the most foregin and the most foreign within the familiar. He notes that the German word *Heimliche*, meaning homely, tame, or known, exists in an odd relationship with its negation, *Unheimliche*. The meanings of *Heimliche* and *Unheimliche* coincide, even while the words maintain their own meanings. The familiar traverses the foreign and the foreign traverses the familiar. Never more, Freud notes, than in confrontations with well-crafted dolls, automota, and doubles. Such interactions leave one with an unsettled, creepy feeling that 'that thing shouldn't be there'. Why else is a plaster victorian doll the most terrifying thing in the world, except that its features are *too* lifelike. It repeats the human too well. That thing, whatever it may be, that identifies the human as human is replicated in the doll, bringing the foreign entirely too close for comfort. But, of course, it's only a doll, and

we can put it back in its box and hide the box in the back of our closets where it can't hurt us.

Dolls, though, are not the only things that show us the uncanny, and certainly are not the most potent examples. One's double, it has long been realized, is the ultimate 'thing that shouldn't be there'. There are too many doubles to count in the western literary canon: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Leah and Rachel, Poe's William Wilson(s), Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and, of course, many characters from Shakespeare. And more often than not, by a great margin, we see one double kill the other. Why should this be? After all, when one encounter one's double, why should the uncanny feeling not quickly fade, giving way to a kind of narcissistic love? What is the origin of the compulsion to kill one's double? To answer these questions, we must first consider precisely what sort of thing the double is. For the double is not oneself - it is all *but* oneself. It is the repetition of oneself, but elsewhere. It is a repetition with a difference.

So why, for the human, is such repetition so terrifying? The double is not only a repetition with a difference, it is an *uncanny* repetition. This is what distinguishes Deleuzian repetition from the uncanny: Deleuzian repetition makes no claims whatever concerning what ought to be repeated, in particular. The repetition of the double, though, seems to carry with it a transgression of some implicit ethic of the human; for the human, the double 'ought not be there'. We may find both what this implicit ethics consists of and where, to some extent, it originiates, in Heidegger. Heidegger's human, existing in the mode of Dasein, is that being for which its own being is an issue. The human must grapple with its finitude and eventual death, and find some way to exist in the face of it. For the human does not only exist, it exists *there*: Da-sein: being-*there*. The human exists, not in an abstract or general state, but as an individualized being, distinct and seperable from others. When the double, or the uncanny more generally, reveals itself, these borders become blurry and fuzzy. It is no longer clear, when standing face–to-face with your double, that you are quite as individual as the mode of being of Dasein necessitates.

Heidegger further notes that nothing individuates us more than our own deaths: our deaths are the one thing that cannot be repeated by any other. You cannot die my death for me - it is *my* death. This individuating power of death creates a kind of morbid and paradoxical parternship between mortality and the mortal; death isn't so bad if it can be *my* death, unrepeatable and totally unique. It is here that we find the implicit ethic that is irritated by the prescence of the double. The double repeats that individualizing characteristic which defines each life *in particular* - that life's particular death. This is the terror of the uncanny - by meshing the familiar and the foreign, the uncanny presents one with the meaningless generality of one's own death. As Freud writes, "From having been an assurance of immortality, [the double] becomes the uncanny harbinger of death[2]". It is in this way that the familiar betrays itself - for the

[2]Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny". The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmun Freud. ed. James Strachey, (London, The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 235.

familiar is also, necessarily, the foreign. The uncanny is a naturally traitorous force. One's double is a traitor to oneself: the whole of one's individuality is stripped away by the repetition of one's very self.

And how better to remove individuality than to remove the uniqueness of the name? This, too, the double does; by making what ought to be singular, the proper name, common, the double betrays the one it doubles. For, in the same way as before, if one's name can be legitimately used to name something other than one's self, in what way does it name one at all? In his book on the uncanny, Nicholas Royle includes an excerpt from his own double's novel, *The Director's Cut*, in which a man's double beats him to death (with a camera, fittingly enough) while repeating "that's *my* name"[3]. This is Derrida's point about the signautre. If, within those few strokes of ink which are meant to pick out one author in particular, there must exist the capacity for repetition, even for forgery, what is quite so particular about the signature? The signature, in the same way as the double, strips one's individuality away and presents one with death in the raw. When the double possesses one's name, the one thing that is meant to be particular, the double, again, steals from and alienates the one it repeats. Further, and more paradoxically, it may be said with all validity that it is not the double, but the singular that steals and alienates from itself. For if the single is able to be signified as the single, it already admits of the possibility, and even the certainty, of repetition. The uncanny thing therefore, being at once most foreign and most familiar, at once single and double, presents the singular with its mortality in the necessity of its own repetition. The singular betrays itself by virtue of its own existence. The uncanny is a betrayal of the canny.

And who, in the entire corpus of western literature, finds himself more plagued by this problem than our dear general Coriolanus? He hates the citizens not because they are foreign to him, but because they are at once infinitely foreign *and* infinitely familiar. Coriolanus, whose very name identifies him with Rome, who ought (as fas as he is concerned) to be the singular representative of Rome, sees his singularity, that sacred thing which ought not be repeated, repeated in the face of every Roman citizen. Nothing incenses him more than the presence of Roman democracy - of the location of Roman representation, not in the most foreign place, but in the place most foreign and most familiar, that being with the people. Their fickleness infuriates him; that is, their capacity to repeat what he supposes is unique to himself, Roman rule, presents him again with the uncanny. His wish is to classify the citizens, not as citizens but as "fragments". Within the city, yes, but anomalously so. Rome (or equivalently, Coriolanus) will not withstand this strict drawing of boundaries. The customs of the city necessitate the showing of battle wounds to the people before instantiation as consul. Again, one would naively think that the ultimate Roman soldier would be more than proud to display the wounds he took for his country to its citizens. But this, perhaps more than anything else, is the thing that Coriolanus will not

[3]Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 2003), p. 1, 2.

do. Quite understandably, too, given his disposition. He did not, on his view, take the wounds for the citizens of the city, but for the city itself, and therefore for himself. To show them to the citizens would validate the claim that Rome is determined by its citizens: too uncanny a claim for our general. He will not allow his wounds, the most private and definitive things about himself, to be made public. As he says to the citizens, when asked to show his wounds in the forum, "I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private (II.iii.75-76)". "Private" meaning, of course, infinitely private, meaning only to himself. The only other person to ever see his wounds is his mother - we will return to this later. The citizens of Rome are a foreign body, contained within the very walls of Rome - within Coriolanus' own body. In every Roman citizen, Coriolanus sees the individuality of his death repeated in his double.

Of course, it is not that Coriolanus fears death, for on the field of battle he confronted his own death many times, but then in the particular. Though his life is not threatened in Rome, he hates the citizens more than the enemies he faced in war, even more than the Volsces. His enemies, being outside the walls of Rome, may be be clearly defined *as* enemy, foreign, non-Roman. Coriolanus, it can be reasonably said, has a sort of compassion for his enemy, as his enemy assists him in fulfilling his own particular death. This may be said only, however, of the enemy external to our general. The internal enemy inflames his rage ceaselessly. Recall what he shouts to his soldiers:

> He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce,
> And he shall feel mine edge. (I.iv.29-30) And again,
>
> Mend, and charge home,
> Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
> And make my wars on you. (I.iv.39-41)

What is the cry here? The cry is not "pick up your weapons, comrades, and charge the enemy with me", but rather "do not betray me, you organs of my own body". Our general does not hate the external enemy with a fraction of the intensity of the hate he holds for the internal enemy. He will not allow lines to be blurred: Romans are Romans and Volsces are Volsces, and each are unified and total in their respective definitions. He cannot think, that is, that the Volsce and the Roman are present within one another. Even in his own mother, the person closest to him in the world, he find the uncanny lurking. During the frenzy of his denial from the consulship, he questions Volumnia:

> [. . .] Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me
> False to my nature? Rather say I play
> The man I am. (III.ii.15-17)

"Why, mother, from whom I hold myself indivisible, do you stand against me?" his question asks. Volumnia, even in seeking her son's good has made concessions to the uncanny, and Coriolanus knows it. For Coriolanus, definitions and categories must be as solid and unmoving as the walls of Rome, and if his own mother attempts to blur lines, she has betrayed him.

Now, we may turn to Coriolanus as a tragic figure. For, even in the face of his denial of the uncanny, he is locked in an eternal struggle with his own double. This is not unexpected, not at all. After all, the uncanny, by its nature, is invasive. One cannot simply exclude the uncanny thing, for within the uncanny thing is a copy of oneself - the uncanny is always both within and without. The uncanny and the canny are linked, though they may be infinitely far apart. Here, we find the relation between Coriolanus and Aufidius. They are the uncanny and the canny, and each is, at once, both. From the start, we find that these two powers, though enemies by every empircal measure, have a strange and ghostly link between them. Even (or, perhaps, especially) while the two are separated by the walls of Rome, there is the definite presence of a profound, seemingly inner awareness of the other. Aufidius, in his first lines, fears the prescence of Roman infilitrators:

> FIRST SENATOR:
> So, your opinion is, Aufidius,
> That they of Rome are enter'd in our counsels
> And know how we proceed.
>
> AUFIDIUS:
> Is it not yours? (I.ii.1-4)

It seems not - Aufidius seems to be the only one concerned of such a thing. That is, Aufidius is the only one who seems to be acutely aware of the prescence of the foreign within the familiar - he knows the uncanny well. Not the general uncanny, but the uncanny through his double: "They of Rome" may as well be "He (Martius) of Rome" to Aufidius' ears. The war between the Romans and the Volscians seems to be motivated not by a general disagreement between the two countries, but rather by the compulsion of the two generals to resolve the problem of doubles. Aufidius swears,

> If we and Caius Marcius chance to meet,
> 'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike
> Till one can do no more. (I.ii.34-36)

Note the structure of this statment: it is not a unilateral declaration, as might be "I'll fight my hardest to end his life", but rather a statement containing the unresolved tension of the double. "Either he will win or I will win", with no preference, seemingly, given to one choice over the other. This is repeated at the end of the act, immediately following the fight between the two:

> [. . .] By the elements,
> If e'er again I meet him beard to beard,
> He's mine or I am his. (I.x.10-12)

Coriolanus' statements about Aufidius contain this exact tension; they are saturated with a deep respect, even a deep love, for his mortal enemy:

> [. . .] I sin in envying his nobility;
> And were I anything but what I am,

I would wish me only he. (I.i.225-227)

And soon thereafter,

[. . .] he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt. (I.i.230-231)

These are not the same words he used against the people of Rome. These words hold nothing of the tones of disgust and hatred that he spat at the public. These are words telling of a beloved rival. "He is a lion that I am proud to hunt" - quite reminiscent of Adonis and the boar. As Coriolanus himself spoke before: "[. . .] two authorities are up, neither supreme [. . .]".

This relationship between the two is never more starkly clear than during the encounter on the battelfield:

CORIOLANUS:
I'll fight with none but thee, for I do hate thee
Worse than a promise-breaker.

AUFIDIUS:
We hate alike.
Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor
More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot. (I.viii.1-5)

One wonders for whose benefit the words "I do hate thee" are spoken. "We hate alike" being the operative line: "I hate you exactly as you hate me" reveals the profound intimacy between the two. The word "hate" is here so near the word "love", it is impossible to characterize these two men as anything but brothers. Without realizing it, Coriolanus engages in a profoundly intimate relationship with his own double: the one who is, at once, furthest from and closest to himself. Their fight may just as well be the embrace of long-lost brothers. And still, even the doubles stares each other in the face, there is no recognition of the uncanny. Both leaders are convinced that one is a Roman, one is a Volsce, and ne'er the twain shall meet. Both still draw their boundaries with too thick a line. But doubles cannot be seperated, as has been said. The uncanny penetrates both, linking them eternally.

Coriolanus is, himself, invaded in this way by the citizens of Rome. They are *inside* him, and yet foreign to him. They are parasites, feeding off of his own body - therefore does he seek to starve them. He vies for the consulship, but will not participate in the necessary common rituals. He insists upon leaving the senate before his deeds are read aloud:

Your Honours' pardon:
I had rather have my wounds to heal again
Than hear say how I got them.
. . .
I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun

When the alarum were struck, than idly sit
To hear my nothings monster'd. (II.ii.67-74)

Why will he not hear his deeds spoken? Because in speaking his deeds, Cominius *repeats* them. Coriolanus' deeds are, quite literally, his name. Being unable to bear the repetition of his own name and what it presents him with, he leaves the chamber.

And, at the risk of repeating myslef, he refuses to show his wounds to the people - a sacred tradition:

CORIOLANUS:
What must I say?—
'I pray, sir'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace.—'Look, sir,—my wounds;—
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of your brethren roar'd, and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'

MENENIUS:
O me, the gods!
You must not speak of that: you must desire them
To think upon you.

CORIOLANUS:
Think upon me! Hang 'em!
I would they would forget me, like the virtues
Which our divines lose by 'em. (II.ii.48-58)

To a citizen, "I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private". "In private" meaning, of course, **not** in public.

And once more, in the senate:

To brag unto them 'Thus I did, and thus',
Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had receiv'd them for the hire
Of their breath only! (II.ii.146-149)

Why will he not show his wounds? It seems the simplest thing in the world to show his scars, especially if it would secure his position as consul. But to show his wounds would bring the uncanny too close for our general. What are his wounds but the proof of his name? Who knows his wounds better, or even other than he? To show his wounds would be to repeat that thing which identifies him above all others as *the* roman. He must keep the public at a distance.

This distance, of course, leads ultimately to his downfall as consul and as the Roman. The imposed distance between himself and the citizens removes from Coriolanus the possibility of being both particular and common at the same time. He, being devoted to his particularity, dispenses with the common completely. He screams in the senate upon banishment:

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air,— *I* banish *you*; (III.iii.119-122)

"Common cry of curs" may as well be "Common nouns, who have stolen from me my own proper name, my own Roman death". This is precisely what has occurred. The common, after being repressed for so long, has come back with a vengence and has alienated Coriolanus from his home, his name, and his very definition. Coriolanus has been betrayed by his own body, repeated in every Roman citizen.

And where does such a man, who allows no contamination of one category by another, find a home when his home has been taken from him? Where can such a man flee to when his very name has alienated him? How can such a man strip himself of his name - his only method by which to escape the uncanny that he carries within him. He must seek, surely, another definition of himself. When borders must be as strong as the walls of Rome, as they are for our banished general, the banished Roman must be anything but a Roman: there can be no intersection in categories. Where else, then, could Coriolanus find haven except with Aufidius and the Volsces? He did not hate the Volsces by dint of any intrinsic characteristic, but only insofar as they were the enemies of Rome, and therefore the enemies of Coriolanus. When he still was Coriolanus, the archetypal Roman, his hatred of the Volsces was necessary. After being banished, his name no longer signifies him as it once did. As his Roman citizenship is stripped from him, so too is his hatred of the Volsces. Indeed, our general's allegiances exchange places: if a Roman, then not a Volsce. If not a Roman, then a Volsce. Quite a mathematical thinker, our Coriolanus. On this dismal ground does this nameless general tread towards Antium. His alienation from his own name and body leaves him in a kind of limbo. He is, at once, alive and dead.

Upon entering Aufidius' house, a grisled Coriolanus comes, once again, face-to-face with his former rival. In stark contrast to their last meeting in Corioles, a neutral ground where both generals held their names and recognized each other without a word said, we find that here, in Aufidius' own house, he cannot recognize the man before him.

AUFIDIUS:
[. . .] Speak, man: what's thy name?

CORIOLANUS:
If, Tullus,
Not yet thou knows't me, and, seeing me, dost not
Think me for the man I am, necessity
Commands me name myself.

AUFIDIUS:
What is thy name?

[. . .]

AUFIDIUS:
Say, what's thy name?. . .what's thy name?

CORIOLANUS:
Prepare thy brow to frown: - knows't thou me yet?

AUFIDIUS:
I know thee not:- thy name?

CORIOLANUS:
My name is Caius Martius [. . .] (IV.v.56-67)

Why can Aufidius not recognize the one man in the world he should know in an instant? Because he, being Martius' double, cannot think the possibility of the uncanny. One wonders if he ever thought, or even wished the Volsces to invade Rome. Here, where the uncanny stares him in the face, he cannot recognize it. He cannot think the crossing of lines: Romans are Romans and Volsces are Volsces, and there is none of the one in the other. When **the** Roman enters **the** Volsce's house, then, recognition is made all but impossible.

Why, now, does Aufidius not kill Martius? This would seem the perfect opportunity for Aufidius to kill his double and solidify his individuality. This is accounted for by realizing that Martius, though still a double, holds a different form than he did in Corioles. Martius is no longer Coriolanus. He is, at most, Caius Martius. He holds a common name - the name of his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc. It does not signify him with Rome in any way, nor does it signify him as Aufidius' enemy. The name that served that purpose was stripped from him by his own body - he is no longer the man who met Aufidius in battle at Corioles. Is it any wonder, then, that Aufidius embraces his double with such immediate warmth? This is an aspect of the double not often noted: one hates one's double for betraying one, yes. But one also loves one's double as one loves oneself! The double is not only the fly in the ointment, but is also the long-lost brother. In that moment of surrender, Aufidius sees in Martius none of the Roman enemy present at Corioles, seeing only his long-lost brother, finally come home. He does not yet feel the presence of the uncanny - he only sees that himself and Martius are one, failing to notice that they are also two repetitions of the same.

It will be only a short time later that Aufidius feels the breath of the uncanny on the nape of his neck. Act IV, Scene VII: we see Aufidius speaking with his Lieutenant. "He bears himself more proudlier, even to my person, that I though he would when first I did embrace him (IV.vii.8-10)", Aufidius muses. "When, Caius, Rome is thine, Thou'rt poorest of all; then shortly art thou mine (IV.vii.56-57)" he promises. What else can account for this abrupt change in attitude towards Coriolanus than Aufidius' realization that he has allowed his double into his own camp? For Coriolanus does, indeed, "bear himself to [Aufidius'] person"; that is, repeats Aufidius so perfectly that the Volscian

soldiers "use him as grace 'fore meat, their talk at table, and their thanks at end (IV.vii.3-4)". And Aufidius is, indeed, "darken'd in this action (IV.vii.5)", without a doubt. This is the traitorous nature of the double and of the uncanny. The union of the perfectly familiar with the infinitely foreign removes one's individuality, and steals from one one's own death. Coriolanus exists too near Aufidius, repeats him too well, and Aufidius can feel it. He will kill his double, not because they are different, but because they are the same. His double has betrayed him, and he will betray his double in like fashion.

And yet, even in the act of repeating Aufidius, Martius is still without a name. He holds only the common name, which fails in its attempt to signify any particular thing. At least for the moment, he is stealing Aufidius' name, insofar as "Aufidius" means "the ultimate anti-Roman". As Cominius tells,

> [. . .] 'Coriolanus'
> He would not answer to: forbade all names;
> He was a kind of nothing, titleless,
> Till he had forged himself a name o'the fire
> Of burning Rome. (V.i.11-14)

Martius still, though able to find haven with the Volsces, still lacks a name proper enough to signify himself in particular. As Cominius rightly reports, he would not form a new name for himself until he conquered his traitorous body, the embodiment of the uncanny. Martius will remain Martius, dispossessed by the other that traverses his own self, until he can define himself anew with the conquest of that other.

We now arrive at the final leg of our general's journey. Act V, Scene III. Martius, with his double by his side, is visited by those parts of his body that never betrayed him - these he has forgotten. He must convince himself, indeed, to reject them. "I'll never be such a gosling as to obey instinct; but stand, as if a man were author of himself, and knew no other kin (V.iii.34-37)", he reassures himself, privately repeating what he assured Aufidius a short time ago: "Wife, mother, child, I know not (V.ii.81)". His doubles are intruding once again, and he must take care to defend himself against them at all costs. "These are not the same eyes I wore in Rome (V.iii.26)", he warns Virgilia. But this is the aspect of the double that Martius has not realized before: the double does repeat one, yes. The double may betray one, certainly. But the double is also oneself! One's double is, at once, one's mortal enemy and one's dearest love. This general has not noticed that his mother, wife, and child are all doubles: he has repeated his mother, his wife had repeated his mother, and his son has repeated him. This could not have been noticed inside the walls of Rome, of course. But here, from just outside Rome, it becomes unavoidably clear to him that his doubles, who he loves, stand before him. It is only now that he may truly take proper account of the uncanny. For here, he must reconcile the fact that the ones he is closest to in the world are those farthest away from him. He recognizes that the double is, itself, double. Volumnia's speech forces him to realize this:

VOLUMNIA:
[. . .] but this certain,
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,
Whose repetition will be dogged with curses;
Whose chronicle thus writ, - 'The man was noble,
But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
Destroy'd his country; and his name remains
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' (V.iii.141-148)

This name, "whose repetition will be dogged with curses", is not Martius', if it is to signifiy him in any way. Rome is, after all, *his* city, and he knows that he does not, in fact, hate Rome. He is therefore left bereft of the name of "Aufidius", for he is not the ultimate Volsce - such a man would hate Rome. So who is he? If his name is neither Coriolanus nor Aufidius, what is his name? He is quite right to cry out

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at [. . .] (V.iii.182-185)

This is the tension Martius has wrestled with throughout the entire play: he both is and is not a citizen of Rome. He name is both proper and common. He both is and is not himself, and he now he can see it. An unnatural scene indeed.

Martius does, I think, forge himself a new name, though. Not in the fires of burning Rome, but in the pages of the peace treaty between Rome and the Volscian people. Neither Martius Coriolanus nor Martius Aufidius would have signed such an accord - both were too absolute for such weakness. But Martius, with a never spoken new surname, is the one who can make peace between Rome and the Volsces. He is the one who can transform the common name of Martius into the proper name of Martius. He is the one who can come to terms with the uncanny - or, at least, all but come to terms with it. Aufidius must fullfill his promise yet.

Here is the tragedy of Coriolanus. His transformation from Martius Coriolanus to Martius Aufidius to Martius has all been for naught. In uniting the common and the proper, he comes too near Aufidius, repeats him too well. In signing the treaty, Martius becomes both a Roman and a Volsce. This pricks too near Aufidius' heart, presents him with his mortality in too raw a fashion. Therefore does he murder Martius. He finally betrays his double.