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Shakespeare

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Compared to Hamlet and Gertrude’s relationship, Coriolanus and Volumnia’s relationship could be categorized as idealistic and representative of the majority of successful realtionships; nevertheless, the core of the mother-son duo is comprised of Volumnia’s manipulation and dominance of her son.

According to Norman Holland, Coriolanus related to and followed the example of his mother rather than following the example of the male figures close to him. Though Holland goes on to say Menenius and Aufidius act as “surrogate fathers”, I would discredit this line of thinking. Throughout the play, Coriolanus’s actions are direct results of his mother’s advice and guidance. His arrogance, according to Holland is attributed to his mother’s training. For the entirety of his life, Volumnia had been filling Coriolanus’s head with the ambitions that he “should” attain in order to accurately and honorable live up to the expectation presented by society to be a successful male leader. Moreover, while Volumnia sees the need for Coriolanus to act as a strong and influencial leader for the sake of leading the country and thus bringing honor to the family name, Coriolanus is more interested in pleasing Volumnia and living up to here exception.

Within the same article, critic Charles K. Hofling alludes to the fact that often times, “phallic-narcissistic characters” such as Coriolanus demonstrate strong attachments to people. Perhaps his self-confident, aggressive, and haughty behavior was directly correlated to his need to impress Volumnia. For a young boy, growing up with no male guidance had to be somewhat devastating. I would assume Coriolanus’s childhood was filled with self-doubt and a lack of self-identity. Volumnia would have been the one figure in his life that helped him pinpoint his direction and ambition in life.

Linda Bamber examined Shakespearean Tragedy in terms of the tragic hero having conflict between himself and what was characterized as the “other”(a main female character). In her describe she wrote “a tragic hero explains or justifies himself, finds fault in himself, insists on himself, and struggles to be true to himself”. However, she does point out that *Coriolanus* is an exception to this rule. Nevertheless, I would argue that Coriolanus does in fact question his merit and meaning as a person. When told to show his battle scars to the Plebians, he seriously contemplates the action before refusing. If in fact, Coriolanus was confident in himself and aggressive in establishing his power and authority, he would have not hesitated to take up the offer and show his wounds.

She goes on to explain the theory which says “projections involve the subjects refusal to recognize what he is doing”