



FACULTY OF ARTS Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Report

Analia García Priego: Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and the Gender of Revenge

MA thesis

In the first part, the thesis discusses the figures of revengers in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (Tamora, Titus, Lavinia), *Othello* (Othello, Iago), and *Hamlet* (Hamlet), with focus on the role the characters' gender plays in the traumatic experience that fuels the need to be avenged, and how it affects the execution and outcome of their retributions. In the second part, the candidate traces Shakespearean inspirations and influences in three films by the American director Quentin Tarantino which feature prominent characters of female revengers and work with excessive and stylised violence: *Kill Bill 1 & 2* (Beatrix Kiddo) and *Inglourious Basterds* (Shoshanna Dreyfuss).

Exploring gender and revenge in Shakespeare's plays is not a new research enterprise, and the candidate draws on some of the major works in the field, including Marguerite A. Tassi's *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare* (2011) and a selection of recent essays on specific topics, although the range of secondary reading employed and referred to could have been broader. The innovative aspect of the thesis resides in the employment of concepts from trauma theory and in the idea of comparing and contrasting the treatment of revenge and gender in Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies and in the works of a postmodern filmmaker who acknowledges his Shakespearean inspirations. The candidate shows original thinking, detailed knowledge of the primary sources, be it the films or the plays, and ability to work across periods and genres, which is also reflected in their interest in revenge studies as a research approach that they would like to develop further in their work.

The merits of the projects, and the scope of the candidate's interests and awareness of revenge narratives in literature and cinema which explore the gender dimension of trauma and vengeance, are also related to its weaknesses, as the thesis involves a wide-ranging discussion of works from different centuries and in different media, and also draws on various fields and research lens. The thesis would have benefited from a clear initial outline of the basic concepts and a more structured argument, and also from a statement outlining the genesis of the project and its shifting focus. A more rigorous grounding in gender and trauma theory, a more nuanced discussion of the differences between the media examined, and a more detailed engagement with the problems of performativity and adaptation would have been welcome in terms of complementing and balancing the candidate's own insightful observations on the primary sources.

These points were part of the discussion with the candidate during the supervision process, and the candidate always showed willingness to take feedback on board, and was diligent and communicative, but due to time constraints and the challenging



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

conditions the candidate had to deal with during the writing of the thesis, were not implemented as fully and thoroughly as would have benefited the project.

The thesis is clearly formatted and appropriately referenced, the candidate has a fluent, readable style, which also attests to their experience with journalism and creative writing, and is able to balance their own thoughts and ideas with observations from secondary sources on the topic – indeed, while some theses suffer from being overly reliant on secondary sources which drowns the student's own voice, my recommendation for the candidate's future academic work would be to juxtapose their views more frequently with the voices of other scholars, be it to support their own position or to contrast it.

For the viva, I would like to propose the following questions / comments:

1. If you had a chance to do the same project again, knowing what you know now, what would you consider changing or approaching differently in terms of structure, methodology, and choice of primary and secondary material?

2. Could you comment in more detail on the performativity of revenge in the chosen plays and films?

3. You refer to Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* at the end of the thesis – could you elaborate on how this particular work of theory might have benefitted your discussion of the topic – and possibly enrich your future work?

4. In the introduction, you mention other plays by Shakespeare that involve some elements of revenge – which of them would be in your opinion most interesting to discuss through the optics of gender and trauma?

I recommend the thesis for the defence, suggesting the preliminary grade 3 (“good”), pending the candidate's performance during the viva and their responses to the points raised in both reports.

Petra Johana Poncarová, PhD.

8 June 2023, Prague