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IDEOLOGICAL APPROPRIATION: THE TRAGEDY OF *CORIOLANUS*

Ideologická apropiace: Tragédie Coriolana

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí diplomové práce (supervisor):

Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.

Zpracoval (author):

Bc. Jaromír Moravec

Studijní obor (subject):

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V Praze dne 9.8.2023

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Permission

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used to study purposes.

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Permission	iv
Table of Contents	v
1. Introduction	6
1.1 The Aim of the Thesis	6
1.2 Methodology of the Thesis.....	8
2. <i>Coriolanus</i> in the period of Restoration and the Glorious Revolution	11
2.1 Nahum Tate’s <i>The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus</i> .	11
2.1.1 The Brutal Ending	14
2.1.2 The Proud Coriolanus Against the Mob	16
2.2 John Dennis’ <i>The Invader of His Country, or The Fatal Resentment</i>	20
2.2.1 Ideology in the Forefront.....	22
2.2.2 The People Are Rome.....	28
2.2.3 A Tale of Two Epilogues (and a Dedication).....	33
2.3 Findings of a Comparative Analysis of the Two Adaptation Processes	39
3. <i>Coriolanus</i> in the Interwar Period	45
3.1 A Brief Note on Bardolatry	45
3.2 The Elitist <i>Coriolanus</i>	46
3.3 The Marxist <i>Coriolanus</i>	54
3.4 The Accidentally Fascist <i>Coriolanus</i>	61
3.5 The Führer’s <i>Coriolanus</i>	64
4. <i>Coriolanus</i> from World War II until Now	75
4.1 Bertolt Brecht’s <i>Coriolanus</i>	75
4.1.1 The Hero Does Not Matter	77
4.1.2 The Afterlife of Brecht’s <i>Coriolanus</i>	85
4.2 John Osborne’s <i>A Place Calling Itself Rome</i>	88
4.3 <i>Coriolanus</i> , the Soldier.....	94
5. Conclusion	109
Bibliography	113
Abstract	118
Abstrakt	120

1. Introduction

1.1 The Aim of the Thesis

It is impossible to know when the conception of *Coriolanus* began in the mind of William Shakespeare, and it is also not known when exactly the play was completed and performed. The last contemporary event the play is supposedly referencing is the grain shortage of 1608,¹ so it can be reasonably ascertained that the play was completed sometime after that. The story of the half-mythical Roman general Gnaeus/Gaius Marcius Coriolanus who led a Volscian army on Rome after his banishment had been told and retold many times prior to that by many a notable figure of historiography such as Livy² and Plutarch.³ Again, what versions of the story were utilised to assemble Shakespeare's account is a matter of educated estimates and speculation. The presented thesis is, however, ultimately mostly uninterested in developments, both historical and literary, which preceded the first performance of Shakespeare's play. Instead, this thesis is interested in the play's afterlife as the established urtext of the Coriolanian canon. It is this version of the Coriolanus story that would be adapted, reinterpreted and appropriated over the coming centuries, completely overshadowing its predecessors in the process.

This thesis is focused on ideologically charged appropriative adaptations and interpretations of the play in particular. The play has to this day been repeatedly appropriated by opposing ideologies and this thesis aims to examine the aspects of the urtext which attract appropriative efforts, as well as appropriative and adaptational strategies used in said efforts. The first significant example of opposing ideologies claiming the play to be supportive of their cause come from approximately the hundred years following the play's premiere. The first adaptation comes from the Restoration period, having been first performed in 1682 to be precise, and that

¹ Peter Holland, "Introduction" in *Coriolanus*, ed. Peter Holland (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), 23.

² Titus Livius, *History of Rome, Book 2*, ed. Benjamin Oliver Foster (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919).

³ Plutarch, "The Life of Coriolanus" in *The Parallel Lives, Vol. IV* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1916) 119–201.

is Nahum Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus* written in support of the recently emerged parliamentary Abhorrers faction supporting the ascendancy of James II. Then, in 1719, premiered John Dennis' *The Invader of His Country, or the Fatal Resentment*, which was produced as a reaction to a threat of foreign invasion, and therefore this play's Coriolanus is strongly denounced for his attack on Rome. Yet, both authors express a debt to Shakespeare's text in their respective dedications of their plays.⁴ They also both use large portions of text from Shakespeare's play and, except for Act V of Tate's play, stay relatively close to Shakespeare's plot distribution. An examination of these two plays, related to the same cultural environment, provides a good initial assessment of the aspects of the urtext attractive to opposing ends of an ideological spectrum, which should prove itself useful at the onset of examining the most vast period of contrary appropriations of Shakespeare's text, one taking place within much more diverse ideological environments.

The inter-war period was marked by the fall of a number of European monarchies which correlated with the expansion of the political spectrum. As a result, there is a number of traditional anglophone elitist academic interpretations of *Coriolanus* which can be contrasted with appropriative efforts from ideologies which have only recently become prominent at the time. These include A.A. Smirnov's interpretation produced as a part of *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation*, his 1936 book written with the aim of depicting Shakespeare as a proto-Marxist. The most important appropriative effort to be discussed in the chapter focused on the inter-war period is, however, that of the German Nazi Party, and that is because it was arguably successful. Not only did it integrate *Coriolanus* into the culture of the fascist state, but it has also ensured that the play's protagonist is still connected with modern dictators within both

⁴ Nahum Tate, *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus* (London: Joseph Hindmarsh, 1682), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>. ; John Dennis, *The Invader of His Country, or the Fatal Resentment* (London: Pemberton, 1720), 8–17, <https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

academic and popular discord. This thesis is then to analyse whether there was any textual basis which would aid their successful appropriation in addition to the Nazi Party's political power.

The last chapter focuses then on observing how do post-WWII adaptors proceed when it comes to adapting an already appropriated play. The first significant effort to do so comes from Bertolt Brecht in the form of his never finished adaptation, a left-wing rewrite which functions as a denouncement of a societal need for heroes who would become their nation's tyrants. On the opposite end of the spectrum is then John Osborne's never produced play *A Place Calling Itself Home* which instead utilises *Coriolanus* to voice the author's displeasure at 1970s Britain by retelling the story as one of a strong individual being brought down by a society which grows increasingly weaker, which is reminiscent of the Nazis' interpretation. It is, however, also the first significant adaptation which modernised the setting which laid the groundwork for recent major productions and adaptations. Finally, Ralph Fiennes' 2011 film adaptation is to be discussed as a culmination of the tendency to move the focus of adaptations and productions away from the political and towards a personal drama of a soldier damaged by years of war and no longer being able to adjust back to civilian life. It will also be discussed how this tendency is not a new development, but how it might have risen in prominence due to heightened presence of war imagery in everyday life and due to rising understanding of combat trauma. Ultimately, the thesis is to produce historically mappable trails of adaptational trends from contents of the adapted text to individual appropriative uses until now.

1.2 Methodology of the Thesis

The term "appropriation" as used in this thesis is taken from Julie Sanders' work *Adaptation and Appropriation*. There she differentiates "adaptation" and "appropriation" by their relationship with their intertext, with "appropriation" being generally defined by a greater distance from the intertext and a relative concealment of the relationship between the two which

lead to the creation of a wholly new cultural product.⁵ How successful this concealment is however depends on the readership's knowledge of the source, which makes certain sources difficult to fully appropriate. That includes Shakespeare due to his position as one of the central figures of the Western literary canon. Sanders also notes the perception that adaptors of Shakespeare's work aim to authenticate their own work by attaching Shakespeare's name to it, and this results in "honorific adaptations" of the Bard, as she dubs them.⁶ This would suggest that it is easier to convincingly appropriate the author himself than his work. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, "ideological appropriations of *Coriolanus*" are to be understood as adaptations, including critical interpretations as interpretation is also an act of adaptation, that utilise Shakespeare's text to deliver their own ideological message, be it with the claim of authenticity to Shakespeare or without it.

These appropriative efforts will be analysed in chronological order across the three delineated time periods. Adaptations will be analysed with the use of adaptation theory as delineated by Linda Hutcheon in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, utilising her categories denoted by the questions "What? Who? Why? How? Where? When?"⁷ combined with close reading of changes made and their effect on the text and subtext of the piece. In cases of appropriation through the use of a critical text, the text's arguments will be examined and used to attempt to reinterpret Shakespeare's play in accordance with them, before analysing what aspects of the original text might oppose the claims of the appropriators. A definite conclusion can be drawn from such process as to what aspects of the play attracted and allowed for appropriation. The findings of both adaptational and critical analyses will allow for the formation of a definitive overview of features of Shakespeare's text crucial to the play's appropriation by ideological movements.

⁵ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2016), 35.

⁶ Sanders, *Adaptation*, 58-9.

⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013), 1-32.

This process could then be replicated in future analyses of appropriations of other of Shakespeare's texts and their afterlife of ideological appropriation.

2. *Coriolanus* in the period of Restoration and the Glorious Revolution

2.1 Nahum Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus*

Nahum Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or, the Fall of Coriolanus* was first performed in 1682 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The play's author's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, written by Henry Leigh Bennett, portrays him as a son of an Irish protestant clergyman Faithful Teate, who at one point dedicated sermons to Oliver and Henry Cromwell, who nevertheless found patronage among the Tory faction of the Restoration era parliament.⁸ The patron to whom this particular play is dedicated is "Charl's, Lord Herbert, the Eldest Son to the Marquess of Worcester,"⁹ a title the aforementioned Charles Somerset would inherit the same year the play premiered. In *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715*, D.W. Hayton portrays Somerset as a politician usually following the lead of the most influential member of his family ahead of his own convictions.¹⁰ Hence why he, despite associating with Jacobite loyalists in the 1690s, did take part in William of Orange's invasion and later re-swore loyalty to him at the behest of his brother-in-law James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormonde. At the time of the play's creation, however, the political head of the family was Charles' father Henry, a stout restorationist and a member of the Court party.

The reason why Charles assumed the title of Marquess of Worcester in 1682 is that his father was rewarded with a new one, the Duke of Beaufort, a title which recalled the man's descendancy from English royalty, specifically John of Gaunt. The cause for this reward was

⁸ Henry Leigh Bennett, "Tate, Nahum" in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 55* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Tate,_Nahum.

⁹ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

¹⁰ D.W. Hayton, "SOMERSET, Charles, Marquess of Worcester (1660-98)" in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715*, ed. D.W. Hayton and Eveline Cruickshanks (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/somerset-charles-1660-98>.

Henry's strong opposition to the Exclusion Bill in 1680, which called for the exclusion of Charles II's brother James from succession to the throne.¹¹ His role in the Exclusion Crisis was significant enough to make it into John Dryden's satirical treatment of it, *Absalom and Achitophel*, in the role of Bezaiel.¹² The Exclusion Crisis is now viewed as the event during which discernible political parties rose in the Parliament, with supporters of the Exclusion Bill becoming the Whigs and its opposition the Tories.¹³ During it, Henry established himself among the leading figures of the Abhorrers. Dedicating the play to the Somersets then delineates a clear intent of relaying a message concerning the Exclusion Crisis from the Abhorrers' perspective. It also points to the likelihood of Tate's *Coriolanus* being decisively a stand-in for the future James II. Therefore, what message does Tate claim he wished to impart through his play in its dedication?

The dedication features two statements crucial to this analysis. The first is Tate's admission of taking the story from Shakespeare, as he imposes "not on your Lordship's Protection a work meerly of my own Compiling; having in this Adventure Launcht out in *Shakespear's* Bottom. Much of what is offered here, is Fruit that grew in the Richness of his Soil; and what ever the Superstructure prove, it was my good fortune to build upon a Rock."¹⁴ This wasn't the first time Tate adapted Shakespeare as just the year prior he produced *The Sicilian Usurper*, based on *Richard II*, and arguably his biggest hit, a reworking of *King Lear* which would continue to be staged until 1840.¹⁵ It is more significant for the argument of this thesis that Tate omits any other possible source, thus supporting the claim that Shakespeare's version becomes the urtext

¹¹ Thomas Seccombe, "Somerset, Henry" in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 53* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Somerset,_Henry.

¹² Seccombe, "Somerset," https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Somerset,_Henry.

¹³ Robert Willman, "The Origins of 'Whig' and 'Tory' in English Political Language," *The Historical Journal* 17, no. 2 (1974): 247-64.

¹⁴ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

¹⁵ Bennett, "Tate," https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Tate,_Nahum.

of the story in the anglophone world. The other important claim is Tate's statement of choosing to foreground, or "set nearer to Sight" in his words,¹⁶ the text's already present parallel to the heavily polarised English political situation of the early 1680s. Here is a passage from the dedication proclaiming what Tate intended to tell his audiences and why:

Where is the harm of letting the People see what Miseries *Common Wealths* have been involv'd in, by a blind Compliance with their popular Misleaders: Nor may it be altogether amiss, to give these Projecters themselves, examples how wretched their dependence is on the uncertain Crowd. Faction is a Monster that often makes the slaughter 'twas designed for; and as often turns its fury on those that hatch it. The Moral therefore of these Scenes being to Recommend Submission and Adherence to Establish Lawful Power, which in a word, is Loyalty; They have so far a natural Claim to your Lordship's Acceptance: This Virtue seeming Inheritance in Your Lordship, and deriv'd from your Ancestours with Your Blood.¹⁷

The final matter remaining to be established prior to discussing Tate's modifications is an account of what he left unchanged from Shakespeare's version.

From Shakespeare's play, this remains: Rome is on the brink of mutiny due to a corn shortage; Menenius attempts to calm the mob with the fable of the belly; Martius shows disdain to the mob before being sent to siege Corioli; he takes Corioli and then battles his nemesis Tullus Aufidius in the field but they are interrupted without a clear winner; Martius gains the name Coriolanus and runs for consulship; he is forced to wear a garment of humility and show his wounds to the plebeians in order to receive their votes and he does gain the votes but does so without showing his wounds; the people's tribunes, Brutus and Sicinius, hate Coriolanus and his pride and use this offence to raise a mob against him; Coriolanus loses his temper in the ensuing argument and is accused of treason which later leads to his banishment; Coriolanus then joins the Volsces and Aufidius and is treated like a hero of the warlike society; he proceeds to lead the Volscian army on Rome with the aim of destroying it, changing his mind only at the

¹⁶ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

¹⁷ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

behest of his stern warrior-like mother Volumnia, wife Virgilia and his son; Aufidius then kills Coriolanus.

2.1.1 The Brutal Ending

Before starting the ideological analysis of the adaptation, it is necessary to acknowledge that it is not likely to produce many concrete answers pertaining to Tate's adaptation strategy. The primary reason for this is that Tate leaves the play without a satisfying ending by producing a new Act V which is almost entirely isolated from the rest of the plot. The act's first scene, the triumph received by Volumnia and Virgilia, earned by the sacrifice of their beloved Coriolanus, already signals to the audience that the action on stage is about to depart from the familiar territory of the adapted play's events. The solemn resigned tone of the original is replaced by the family of Coriolanus being informed about the tragic fate awaiting him (which Volumnia seemed to understand would come to him in Shakespeare's text) and resolving to go to Corioli and save him.¹⁸ That, however, does not prepare the play's audience for the sharp tonal shift which awaits them in the play's final scene. Here is an account of the events which take place in the final scene of *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth*:¹⁹ Coriolanus is mortally wounded by Aufidius and his conspirators but he also mortally wounds Aufidius and kills the others; Aufidius intends to rape Virgilia in front of Coriolanus but she rather commits suicide and Aufidius dies of heartache upon seeing her dying; Menenius is killed off-stage; Young Martius, Coriolanus' son, dies in his father's arms after having all of his bones broken by being bashed against the wall; Volumnia having gone mad after seeing her grandson's fate kills Nigridius, the primary antagonist of the final act, and runs away; Coriolanus finally dies. The shift towards

¹⁸ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 54.

¹⁹ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 57-64.

extreme violence in itself makes the ending appear as if belonging to a different play, but the main issue is that it doesn't serve as a culmination of the play's central conflict.

It is at this point that it becomes necessary to discuss the character of Nigradius. Nigradius is Tate's invention and the fact that he doesn't really belong in the complex political setting of the play is quite clear just from his characterisation in the play's *dramatis personae* which calls him simply "A Villain."²⁰ He used to serve under Coriolanus' command at some point until he was "Disbanded for his Villainy,"²¹ in the words of Virgilia, after which he switched sides by joining the Volsces and his sole aim is revenge upon Coriolanus. He is a very minor figure prior to the final act, only exchanging dialogue with Aufidius, whom he tries to provoke into action against Coriolanus. Aufidius is, however, still mostly the same character as in Shakespeare's play and his relationship with Coriolanus, be it when they are rivals or allies, is based on their similarities and shared experience with warfare. Nigradius is a corrupting voice without much success until Act V. That is when Aufidius stops resembling his counterpart from Shakespeare's play, and even himself from the previous acts, and suddenly starts sharing characteristics with the villain Nigradius.

Ultimately, the play's tragic protagonist Coriolanus and his entire family don't meet a brutal end because of anything they have done during the play's events but simply due to grudges held by the antagonists for something that happened a long time ago and doesn't affect the plot almost at all until this point. Nigradius' unspecified villainy and subsequent banishment are at least previously mentioned even if it has no bearing on the plot until this point. Aufidius, meanwhile, starts seeking revenge against Coriolanus for a never before mentioned shared past in which Aufidius was in love with Virgilia as a youth but she chose Coriolanus over him, and this was apparently the whole basis for the rivalry between the two. Aufidius strangely explains

²⁰ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:4?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

²¹ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 54.

it away by basically saying that they both kind of forgot what their rivalry was about but now he was reminded of it as Virgilia came to beg Coriolanus to spare Rome and Aufidius felt the attraction of his youth once more.²² In no way did Tate's *Coriolanus* bring on his own end, nor was his end in any way tied to Tate's stated intent of showing the horrific results of a Commonwealth's mistreatment of their rightful leaders. Instead, Tate's final act is completely isolated from the rest of the play to the point of almost belonging to a different genre, a melodrama of heightened emotions and added shock factor. Thus, the previous four acts are thematically and tonally left without a satisfying ending.

2.1.2 The Proud Coriolanus Against the Mob

When it comes to the play's central political conflict between Coriolanus and the people of Rome, Tate significantly alters the establishment of both sides through his redactions of the adapted text. Reduction, or alternatively extension, is commonly used in adaptation processes as adaptation is rarely a perfect transfer of content,²³ but Tate's reductions make his play into a summary of the adapted story with important details left out. For a concrete example, one doesn't have to read far into the text. In the opening scene of both plays, a riotous crowd of commoners has assembled to take grain/corn from the rich for themselves. Shakespeare's citizens plead their case to Menenius, described as friend of both the people and Martius in both texts, thusly:

2 CITIZEN: Care for us? True, indeed, they ne'er cared for us yet. Suffer us to famish, and their store-houses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us.²⁴

²² Tate, *Ingratitude*, 55.

²³ Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 16.

²⁴ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 1.1.74-81.

Tate reduces this passage into “Care for us? Yes, by shutting up the Store-Houses, and suffering us to Famish: If the Wars Eat us not up, they will; and there's the Care they bear for us.”²⁵ The loss of the detailed accounts of all the steps taken by the Senate that have harmed the poor makes Tate’s plebeians far less engaged and simpler than Shakespeare’s.

This might be a part of a concentrated effort to turn the incensed citizenry of Shakespeare’s play into a regular mob. As Robert Shoemaker writes in his book *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England*, mobs would become a frequently used political tool during the Exclusion Crisis as both an intimidation tactic and evidence of widespread support.²⁶ However, it is telling that Tate assigns these tactics only to one side of the play’s political conflict, ignoring that both sides of the political aisle would use them. His citizens are also shown to indeed be pathetically fickle as accused by Coriolanus. This is shown both as comedic, in moments such as when the same citizen who is elated at being called “Sir” by Coriolanus becomes the one most adamant he should be denied in less than a page,²⁷ and barbaric, specifically when the mob turns against the tribunes and kill them in hopes of saving themselves from Coriolanus.²⁸ They are certainly far removed from Shakespeare’s people of Rome whom Peter Holland describes as almost tragic figures showing political and social awareness in the opening scene before having their political power usurped by those meant to serve their interests.²⁹ Therefore, one might at first see Tate’s reductions as motivated as they do aid in successfully transforming Shakespeare’s citizenry into a mob of late 17th century London, but that is contradicted by the fact that Tate similarly reduces some of Martius’ establishing scenes.

²⁵ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 2-3.

²⁶ Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2004), 112-3.

²⁷ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 23-24.

²⁸ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 46.

²⁹ Holland, “Introduction,” 82.

There is a duality to Martius in the eyes of the plebeians. On one hand, he is the man who despises them and hurls insults at them from the first moment he appears on stage,³⁰ but on the other, he is a war hero doing incredible deeds on the field of battle for Rome, and the plebeians view themselves as Rome even if that is not the case in Martius' eyes. This duality is the basis of all of the citizens' discussions about the play's protagonist. And Shakespeare let Martius be extreme in both his hatred of the people, as shown by his aforementioned first entrance on stage, and his heroism, as he had Coriolanus be trapped on his own in Corioli and valiantly fight his way out even when his comrades thought him dead.³¹ Tate keeps only the first extreme as he merged the scene in which Martius is trapped inside Corioli with the following scene of Shakespeare's play which features Martius admonishing some soldiers who are showing each other the spoils of battle they intend to take home.³² Tate's solution how to seemingly merge these two scenes is to have Martius get trapped inside Corioli "with his Party"³³ and have it be them who take spoils with them and are then admonished for it. Tate's Martius technically does in battle all the things Shakespeare's did, but the context of these actions is changed and that changes the context of his actions still to come.

Martius' exceptional heroism no longer being exceptional due to the fact that he is joined by other soldiers is not necessarily a flaw, but his disdain for those who joined him is. Shakespeare's Martius is the superior soldier, but he does treat his fellow soldiers as brethren even if his motivational techniques of them involve provocative belittling when they get beaten back to their trenches in front of Corioli.³⁴ Tate's Martius criticises indiscriminately, ignoring the heroic deeds just done by his men in the process, which makes him appear purposefully self-aggrandising as being above their baseness. That is then in stark contrast with the scene in

³⁰ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 1.1.159.

³¹ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 1.4.44-67.

³² Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 1.5.1-8.

³³ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 11.

³⁴ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 1.4.31-43.

which he obtains his new name Coriolanus, which Tate adapted from Shakespeare without significant changes. In it, Martius is offered a tenth of the spoils taken from Corioli but he refuses and wishes to take an equal share to that of those who joined him in the fight.³⁵ Suddenly, Martius claims to be just one of the same men he despised a scene earlier and he does so in front of the only man who outranks him, Cominius, which could give the impression of Martius putting on a façade in front of those above him in Rome's social hierarchy. Once Coriolanus is accused of treason in the later acts, he does stick by his principles and his behaviour is consistent, but Tate's somewhat clumsy reductions created dissonances in scenes where his character is being established for the audience, thusly Tate seemingly undermined his own effort to portray Coriolanus as a person "plac't in Rightful Power"³⁶ above others and gave support to the assessments of his protagonist's character as ultimately being self-serving made by the citizens in the play's opening scene.³⁷ This might also have an influence on the play's audience when watching the pivotal scene of Coriolanus' showing of his wounds to the people. Peter Holland in his introduction to *Coriolanus* in the Arden Shakespeare edition identifies Coriolanus' resolute reluctance to show his wounds to the people of Rome as a change made by Shakespeare to the texts he used as sources, one made with the purpose of pointing towards his protagonist's interior life inaccessible to other characters, as well as to the audience.³⁸ Both Shakespeare's and Tate's versions of the character spend the ceremonial showing of wounds simultaneously being humiliated by having to beg the poor of the city, and viewing them as almost subhuman due to their lack of military qualities.³⁹ Tate even oftentimes uses Shakespeare's dialogue word for word in the scene and yet his protagonist appears more explicitly elitist in his refusal. He might have his Coriolanus repeat Shakespeare's line

³⁵ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 11.

³⁶ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

³⁷ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 2.

³⁸ Holland, "Introduction," 47.

³⁹ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 2.3.48-135; Tate, *Ingratitude*, 20-23.

denouncing senseless customs, but he has already showed his Coriolanus to be more versed in them than his predecessor in the previously discussed scene taking place after the sacking of Corioli. Shakespeare's Coriolanus is a harsh critic of character, but his criteria are tied to his own values as a Roman soldier. Tate meanwhile made his supposed rightful ruler appear as a social climber conscious of political hierarchy who abuses those below him and acts exemplary in front of his betters.

The end result of Tate's adaptational efforts is an odd play in many ways. On one hand, Tate established a contemporary antagonistic force in the form of a base mob and those who stoke it for their personal gain, but the same reductionist approach which created them also produces a protagonist more flawed than his adapted predecessor. And as the focus of the play moves away from its plot in the final act, it is unclear how the ingratitude of the commonwealth is to blame for his tragic end at the hands of Nigrilius and Aufidius when their motivation was simple revenge. Although Tate is self-admittedly in the political camp of the Abhorers, his lack of focus on the conflict between Coriolanus and the plebeians prevents him from piercing the ideological ambiguity of the adapted text and producing a clearer ideological statement through the means of his adaptation, which also leaves his adaptational strategy somewhat unclear. Therefore, John Dennis' Whig version of *Coriolanus* should be looked at now as Dennis was far more ideologically conscious in his adaptational method and that could also illuminate more of Tate's ideologically motivated changes by contrast and comparison.

2.2 John Dennis' *The Invader of His Country, or The Fatal Resentment*

John Dennis' *The Invader of His Country, or The Fatal Resentment* was first performed on the 11th of November 1719⁴⁰ at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Dennis, primarily known for his works

⁴⁰ Dennis, *Invader*, 12,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n11/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

of criticism, essentially made a career out of his ideological stances as his support of the Glorious Revolution and of Queen Anne earned him the patronage of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough who also got Dennis the position of a royal waiter in the port of London.⁴¹ As a playwright, his biggest hit was *Liberty Asserted*, a play the success of which was attributed to its vicious attacks against the French in Dennis' entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*.⁴² The primary manager of Drury Lane at the time was Colley Cibber, an actor-manager whose managerial practices frequently led to his being compared to the tyrants he portrayed on stage by his literary rivals who felt he held complete control over their playwrighting careers, as noted by Elaine M. McGirr in her book *Partial Histories: A Reappraisal of Colley Cibber*.⁴³ John Dennis also felt himself to be a victim of Cibber's practices, as well as of intentional sabotage on Cibber's behalf, when *The Invader of His Country* spent only three days on the stage of Drury Lane due to its not being a hit.⁴⁴ Ideologically, however, Cibber was also a devoted Whig and due to this devotion, his appointment as a Poet Laureate in 1730 was supposedly widely considered to be a reward for his loyalty to the party of the prime minister Robert Walpole.⁴⁵ These facts provide a definite ideological framework through which to interpret the play, but in this case, there is not a single clear statement of intent behind the play's production as there are instead three conflicting ones which will be discussed later.

Therefore, prior to the commencement of the adaptational analysis, it only remains to list what Dennis left unchanged from Shakespeare: Martius is awarded the name Coriolanus for his

⁴¹ William Roberts, "Dennis, John" in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 14* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), 370, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Dennis,_John.

⁴² Roberts, "Dennis," 370, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Dennis,_John.

⁴³ Elaine M. McGirr, *Partial Histories: A Reappraisal of Colley Cibber* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 68.

⁴⁴ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 9, <https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n8/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁴⁵ Richard Hindry Barker, *Mr. Cibber of Drury Lane* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939): 157-158.

heroism at Corioli; Coriolanus is to be elected consul, but fails to show the citizens' his wounds and they revoke their votes at the behest of Brutus and Sicinius, the two tribunes opposed to Coriolanus; Coriolanus is charged with treason after he loses his temper, and banished from Rome; Coriolanus joins the Volsces and marches against Rome alongside his arch rival Aufidius, Coriolanus is swayed from his intention to burn Rome by the delegation of his militaristic mother Volumnia and wife Virgilia, and is then killed for his betrayal of the Volsces.

2.2.1 Ideology in the Forefront

Opposite to Nahum Tate, John Dennis makes an ideological analysis of his play rather easy as his main addition to Shakespeare's text are explicit discussions of ideology to which he gave prominence over the play's action at certain points. The evidence of this is that Dennis began his version of Coriolanus with what was the sixth scene of Shakespeare's, Coriolanus coming to the aid of Cominius against Aufidius.⁴⁶ This was possibly done in an effort to maintain a unity of place in Act I which seems to have led Dennis to combine scenes into one on more occasions throughout the play but never with as crucial effect to the play's events as here. In Dennis' Act I, all of the events that have taken place prior to Shakespeare's Scene Six are still mentioned in dialogue as having happened, but the audience is denied access to the details of those events due to not having seen them. The rest of Dennis' first act closely mirrors that of Shakespeare until roughly the final two pages which feature a dialogue between Coriolanus and Cominius comprised of explicit characterisation of the play's protagonist and an explanation of his ideology. Coriolanus is described as essentially perfect except for one "blemish" which will "disgrace" all, "a Soul to haughty and severe/For one who lives in a Free State, a State/That's so much founded on Equality."⁴⁷ In these lines, Cominius also provides the audience with

⁴⁶ Dennis, *Invader*, 1-7.

⁴⁷ Dennis, *Invader*, 11.

instruction how to imagine the play's Rome as a generically idealised state, despite the play's story being built around social inequality and the conflict it causes, thus hinting at the work perhaps being concerned with propaganda above an objective exploration of reality and its issues. Both Coriolanus and Cominius agree at this point that Rome is a great state, but they do not agree on who is Rome.

Dennis' Coriolanus is a soldier who believes a state should run like an army with the people obeying the commands of the Senate as it is the senators and nobles who are Rome and whom he serves. Cominius on the other hand criticises the Patricians' want to curb peoples' rights as abject tyranny and considers all people of Rome to be equal due to being "all compounded of one Stuff." He also prophesises for the people to be the reason why Rome shall one day "rule the Universe."⁴⁸ In this passage, Cominius functions essentially as the voice of the author lecturing his tragic hero about his tragic flaw. Although Dennis wrote the play as a Whig retelling, he kept Coriolanus as his protagonist instead of vilifying him, and he also kept the political setting of the play nuanced despite clearly denoting that Coriolanus is the one in the wrong. Similarly, he kept the tribunes as Coriolanus' antagonists, but he made their motivation more noble.

As the play skips over the first five scenes of the adapted play, Brutus and Sicinius are stripped of their introduction during the citizens' riot. Instead, Dennis wrote a private dialogue between the two as their first scene in his play,⁴⁹ one that is just as explicit about the ideology behind their actions as that of Coriolanus and Cominius. The tribunes' actions in the play remain unchanged from Shakespeare's play, as do their personal grievances with Coriolanus' pride and their focus on maintaining their position and strengthening their influence over the business of the patricians. What changes here, in their first dialogue, is that they also express genuine

⁴⁸ Dennis, *Invader*, 11-12.

⁴⁹ Dennis, *Invader*, 18-20.

concern over the people granting Coriolanus the consulship resulting in the loss of their liberty and the start of the rule of three hundred tyrants so soon after getting rid of one.⁵⁰ Having Brutus and Sicinius discuss this in private moves their concern for the rights of the plebeians from the empty populist rhetoric it was in Shakespeare's play to the forefront of the motivations of these characters. Even if they remain as conniving as Shakespeare's tribunes were, the aim of their actions is the protection of the people they serve instead of being self-serving. And the audience would also at this point be aware that Coriolanus would be inclined to restore a tyrannical rule of the patricians over the plebeians due to his ideological discussion with Cominius. In this way, Dennis reframes the conflict between Coriolanus and the tribunes as a clash between two well-meaning sides destined for tragedy.

Both Coriolanus and the two tribunes also get killed by what or whose interests they promoted. Apart from the previously mentioned private scene, the two tribunes faithfully follow the actions of their stage predecessors, manipulating the people to have their enemy Coriolanus banished, although that private scene makes that manipulation morally greyer as they now have a legitimate claim of protecting the people. Yet, that does not protect them from the plebeians' ire once Coriolanus joins the Volsces and leads them on Rome, as the two tribunes suffer the same fate as in Tate's play and are killed by the citizens of Rome. Having themselves previously exploited judiciary customs, they're sentenced to death by the citizens based on Cominius' accusation and, without a chance to defend themselves, thrown off the Tarpeian Rock,⁵¹ the same fate they intended for Coriolanus when charging him with treason.⁵² The anger of a mob which they once stoked for their aims causes their undoing. Somewhat amusingly, Volumnia mentions their fate as "ev'n the Rabble" revenging Coriolanus when appealing to him for mercy

⁵⁰ Dennis, *Invader*, 18.

⁵¹ Dennis, *Invader*, 62.

⁵² Dennis, *Invader*, 34.

for Rome,⁵³ although their turning on their tribunes does not represent a change from their usual conduct. On the other hand, Coriolanus, now a soldier in the service of the Volscian warrior society which resembles what in the first act Coriolanus said Rome should be,⁵⁴ is then himself killed for disobeying a command.

Perhaps the most significant omission of Dennis' play is the intimate friendship between Coriolanus and Aufidius. All that remains from it is the welcome Coriolanus receives in Aufidius' home in Antium, where Dennis left Aufidius' dialogue without significant changes. In both Shakespeare and Dennis, Aufidius compares seeing Coriolanus enter his home as a friend to the loving excitement he felt when his wife first entered it.⁵⁵ Yet, in his next scene, Aufidius already discusses Coriolanus as a mere asset, one which weakened Rome by his absence, but also one about whose emotional strength Aufidius has his doubts as they await the arrival of the final pleaders, Volumnia, Virgilia and a column of Roman women, and whose fate is already determined to be a traitor's death were he to relent and grant Rome mercy.⁵⁶ More importantly, out of the three plays so far discussed, this is the only one where Aufidius is not present to Coriolanus' meeting with his family as he explicitly grants Coriolanus privacy instead of now being a part of Coriolanus' private life.⁵⁷ This also prevents Aufidius' moment of weakness as he himself is affected by the pleas in the other two versions and does not protest Coriolanus' decision to sign a peace treaty with Rome.⁵⁸ Therefore, Dennis' Aufidius remains a nearly mechanical soldier ready to do what is to be done with traitors without a significant personal emotional involvement.

⁵³ Dennis, *Invader*, 67.

⁵⁴ Dennis, *Invader*, 11.

⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.5.117-120; Dennis, *Invader*, 53.

⁵⁶ Dennis, *Invader*, 63-65.

⁵⁷ Dennis, *Invader*, 66.

⁵⁸ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 5.3.194; Tate, *Ingratitude*, 51.

As previously mentioned, in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, Aufidius kills Coriolanus for his betrayal, but it is quite clear that he's punishing him more for a personal betrayal rather than a purely military one, and he is also the one who eulogises Coriolanus. The opposite is the case in Dennis' version of their final confrontation⁵⁹ where the most personal grievances Aufidius expresses are either that Coriolanus' betrayal dishonours him, as he gave his word for Coriolanus to the Volscian lords, or that Coriolanus "seduced" Aufidius' soldiers and friends to become his supporters. Retrospectively, there is a stark difference between the determined Aufidius of the play's final act, and the smitten Aufidius of the dinner party scene imported from Shakespeare, as the passionate love/hate relationship he previously had with Coriolanus just dissipates. He does not fit the role of a character who could mournfully eulogise the play's protagonist anymore. That is, however, not an issue in this version as Coriolanus kills Aufidius along with three Volscian tribunes, whom he heroically fights on his own, before he is mortally wounded from behind by a fourth tribune. Therefore, it is up to Coriolanus to repent for his previous actions and send the audience home with the intended ideological message, with Cominius later finishing the task in the play's final lines.

Coriolanus in his dying words⁶⁰ relays two important pieces of information. The first is proclaiming his mother Volumnia to be the saviour of her country and also absolving her of all guilt for killing her son, one which she never openly expresses in Shakespeare's play. The other is decrying himself as a tyrant and commanding Virgilia to be a proper Roman and not feel sorry while watching a tyrant die. Cominius, who enters the scene after Coriolanus' death and who acted before as the author's speaker, then closes the play by softening Coriolanus' harsh

⁵⁹ Dennis, *Invader*, 73-77.

⁶⁰ Dennis, *Invader*, 77-78.

words spoken towards himself, intending to give him a hero's burial for his sacrifice for the sake of Rome.⁶¹ He closes the play with the following warning:

But they who thro' Ambition, or Revenge,
Or impious Int'rest, join with foreign Foes,
T' invade or to betray their Native Country,
Shall find, like *Coriolanus*, soon or late,
From their perfidious Foreign Friends their Fate.

It is a general warning to all potential traitors who would ally themselves with a foreign power following the Jacobite rising of 1715 and the Swedish invasion which threatened England a year prior to the play's premiere. Its being so general, however, makes it seemingly unrelated to the specifics of the conflict between Coriolanus and the people of Rome.

Although Cominius, while speaking for the author, declared the people of Rome to be what the future of the, at that time, small city state was going to be built on, the people themselves are secondary in the play's political conflict. Ultimately, the conflict is between two entities with political and financial power, albeit the tribunes are on a lower rung of social hierarchy than a member of a noble family with high position in the Roman military. The tribunes at least find their end at the hands of the people for having manipulated them, but Coriolanus' fate is not tied to the plebeians of Rome, as the people he shows mercy to are specifically the noble women of Rome whom Volumnia leads to him to plead for it. She presents to him a group supposedly isolated from Rome's political process but also responsible for raising those Coriolanus considered to constitute the real Rome from the start. Who accompanies Volumnia and Virgilia in productions of Shakespeare's text differs from production to production, with a note in The Arden Shakespeare edition saying that some productions choose to have only the family of Coriolanus attend him while others choose to have it be a column of women, possibly due to the fact that that is how the scene was portrayed in pre-Shakespearian sources.⁶² It should be

⁶¹ Dennis, *Invader*, 79.

⁶² Holland, *Coriolanus*, footnote 21.2 on p. 379.

noted that neither Shakespeare nor Tate had Coriolanus come to forgive the people of Rome either, but the absence of such development is far more striking in a play which sets the role of the people in the building of Rome's future empire as a central focus of its ideological conflict in the very first act. In fact, for a play which is so intent on glorifying a supposedly equal and free Rome, the Roman people's role in it is smaller than in both Shakespeare's and Tate's text.

2.2.2 The People Are Rome

Dennis' play, which openly declares the people of Rome to constitute the idea of Rome which Coriolanus serves, also has the curious distinction of depicting the people of Rome in the most beastly manner of the plays so far discussed. It is partially an unavoidable effect of leaving out the opening scene of popular unrest. As Peter Holland notes, in Shakespeare's play, it is this scene where the citizens of Rome speak the most as it is the only scene where they plead their own case before their voices are essentially taken away by those meant to represent them in the democratic system, Brutus and Sicinius.⁶³ For the rest of the play, they function as a mob which either acts based on their emotional inclinations, which Brutus and Sicinius manipulate for their aims, or are preoccupied with discussing what would be proper for them to do in the ceremonial events of Roman public life. This is also the case in their deliberation on whether they should give their voices to someone antagonistic towards them prior to the ceremonial showing of the wounds.⁶⁴ The omission of the scene in which they are the most autonomous is, however, not enough to substantiate the claim that Dennis' citizens are beastly. It is their assigned behaviour when on stage which makes them so, as is perhaps the most clearly seen during the aforementioned ceremonial showing of the wounds.

⁶³ Holland, "Introduction," 82.

⁶⁴ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 2.3.1-38.

Coriolanus may not be as skilled of an orator as other Shakespearian protagonists but the ceremonial showing of the wounds⁶⁵ is built on him professing humility to people he sees himself as superior to without actually having to suffer the humiliation of subjecting his wounds to their voyeurism. The people are also dehumanised by him, as he continually refers to them just as “voices,” the only part of them he is interested in. It might appear to a current reader that the citizens are also framed by the text itself as unable to exercise their own democratic power and deny Coriolanus his nomination for his not fulfilling of his role in the ceremony. For this reason, it is important to take into account something discussed by Holland, and that is that elections were in the overwhelming number of cases not contested in Shakespeare’s time.⁶⁶ The custom was that somebody in position of power would appoint someone to a post and the voter base would then merely ceremonially confirm the appointment and that was the extent of the democratic power of the commoners. The same is the case in this scene in Shakespeare’s play, as the citizens are essentially only focused on performing their part of a traditional ceremony, exercising their supposed democratic power a la mode, without really noticing the other side not fulfilling their part of the ceremony. It then takes the politically savvy tribunes to stoke the frustration this disrespect causes and direct it towards a political act, protesting Coriolanus’ appointment and charging him with treason. Yet, Dennis writes this crucial scene imbued with the hierarchal dynamics of society almost as comedic.

To show how Dennis compresses the scene and eliminates nearly all of Coriolanus’ evasions, here is a large portion of the dialogue between Coriolanus and the citizens:

Cor. You know the cause of my standing here? Your voice?
2 Cit. ‘Tis yours noble Sir.
Cor. And yours?
3 Cit. Ay, ay, Sir.
Cor. And yours?

⁶⁵ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 2.3.60-135.

⁶⁶ Holland, “Introduction,” 78.

- 4 Cit. Were it as big as (unintelligible), it were yours, Sir.
 Cor. And yours?
 5. Cit My Voice, My Lungs, and my Midriff, all are at your
 Service, noble Sir.
 Cor. And yours?
 6. Cit Ay, by all means, Sir.
 Cor. And yours?
 7. Cit Give you Joy, Sir.
 Cor. And yours?
 8 Cit. You shall ha't, worthy Sir.⁶⁷

With the exception of the Ninth Citizen, whose role it is to draw the plot-important line about having wounds to show in private out of Coriolanus, and the First Citizen, who gets beaten for mocking Coriolanus, the scene is comprised of Coriolanus dryly asking for voices without any rhetoric of humility whatsoever while the responders are too focused on pompously devising answers unique to them, possibly to assume certain self-importance in the proceedings. Coriolanus gets all of the required voices, even despite physically attacking one of the voters, and the tribunes are then required to explain to the citizens how they were insulted by Coriolanus despite his being quite forward with his disdain for the people during the scene, in comparison with the adapted text certainly so. It is quite odd for a play which in its first act declares the people to be the foundation of a state's glorious future to then go forward and portray them as simultaneously brutish and pompous simpletons, thus proving right the views of them expressed by a character whom the play portrays as having tyrannical tendencies. And that is before the Citizens violently turn against those protecting their interests.

When Coriolanus leads the Volscian army on Rome, Shakespeare takes the opportunity to admonish the tribunes and the citizens for their mistreatment of a loyal servant which has now doomed the entire city.⁶⁸ Dennis does the same, but the context here is unavoidably different. As the tribunes are shown to have an honest concern about the liberties of the citizens were

⁶⁷ Dennis, *Invader*, 25-26.

⁶⁸ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.6.81-163.

Coriolanus to assume consulship, his being determined to slaughter the entire city as revenge for a personal injury is essentially a confirmation of their reservations about his being unfit for such a position. That is also something the play's text openly admits through Cominius in previously discussed scenes. It is, however, also true that their motivations were not entirely altruistic, and they've done far more to him than just prevent him from assuming a position he was not fit for. The citizens, on the other hand, are not in a similarly complex position as they merely acted as a mob which passionately chased Coriolanus out of town. Their attempts at shedding any blame for Coriolanus' banishment⁶⁹ then come off as entirely pathetic denial of reality presented to the audience. As they attempt to free themselves of any personal accountability for the situation they find themselves in, Cominius presents the two tribunes as a target of misguided ire, and the citizens take out their frustration and rage stemming from a situation they were involved in putting themselves into on the two people the play portrayed as defending their interests in a political environment they were portrayed as not having the mental capacities to participate in themselves. It is at this point, that the Volscian civilian characters of Dennis' play should also be taken into account in this overview of the commoners of Dennis' play.

Although Dennis makes it clear that Rome is the city destined for greatness due to its people being free and equal, he does also provide a more detailed look at the Volscian civilians than Shakespeare did. For Shakespeare, they primarily carry a function over being characters themselves, as their interaction with Coriolanus shows that he has not been humbled by his banishment and still carries himself as a man of stature despite losing it.⁷⁰ After Aufidius and Coriolanus meet, they inform the audience of how Coriolanus was received, that he was always superior to Aufidius as a soldier and they also present the ideology the warlike culture of the

⁶⁹ Dennis, *Invader*, 61-62.

⁷⁰ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.5.7-51.

Volsces is built on, and that is that they prefer bloody war over an idle peace which leads to the degeneration of society.⁷¹ Or, in their words, they prefer the “destroyer of men” over the “great maker of cuckolds.”⁷² Dennis fleshes their characters out, as he gives them, besides their names Tony, Pompey, and Mark, a gleeful affection for schadenfreude, as shown when two of them trick the third one into getting beaten by Coriolanus like they did in what is essentially a clown routine,⁷³ and a desire to gain power that they could abuse.⁷⁴ War for them is a way of amassing somebody else’s wealth for themselves and use that wealth to live a life of corruption and idleness. In Dennis’ play, the people of Rome are fickle and commanded by their frustrations, and the Volscian civilians are downright despicable vultures dreaming of profiting off of bloodshed. Coriolanus may not have been fit to do it, but in the world Dennis presents, the people must be governed.

There is a sense of righteous hierarchy to the way Dennis set up the characters in the political hierarchy. Cominius, the commanding general of the Roman army and the most powerful politician of the named characters, also essentially serves as the author’s stand-in authorised to deliver ideological messages and sovereignly pass judgment onto other characters. Coriolanus is almost perfect, except for that one character flaw defined by Cominius which causes his fall. Brutus and Sicinius, characters of the common people but not common themselves, are manipulative and self-serving but they do also care about the interests of those below them in social hierarchy in Dennis’s version. It is the common people who are then entirely self-serving. If the people are those who will build the glorious future of Dennis’ imagined Rome, it is only under the rule of a rightful head of state. The play is ultimately concerned with the freedoms of

⁷¹ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.5.150-237.

⁷² Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.5.224-231.

⁷³ Dennis, *Invader*, 47-49.

⁷⁴ Dennis, *Invader*, 55-58.

the people but still shows that they should have someone controlling how much of those freedoms they receive so they would not abuse them.

2.2.3 A Tale of Two Epilogues (and a Dedication)

So far, only the text of Dennis' play has been discussed but Dennis had it published along with four accompanying texts: a dedication, a prologue, and two epilogues. These texts provide three separate interpretational lenses for the play. The prologue,⁷⁵ which was delivered to the audience at Drury Lane by John Mills who played Aufidius, is the one supported by the playtext. It is rather simplistic and includes praise of Shakespeare's original, Dennis' plea to have his play defended by those who are "truly Britons," as he writes for the same cause as "Champions fight," and it ultimately states the purpose of the text to be prevention of treason by showing the fate of traitors, the same one as they suffered "in recent memory." Prevention of treason through playwriting is a lofty goal but the play's story fits its stated purpose with Coriolanus' renouncement of his treason before his death, and Cominius' final warning. Unlike Tate, Dennis adapted Shakespeare's text in a way which closely corresponded with the adaptation's stated purpose. The author's epilogue⁷⁶ is then merely a playful warning to the audience against "banishing" the hero and Shakespeare for the hero might as is in his nature return and revenge himself by destroying the stage. This is, however, not the epilogue the audience would hear when the play was staged.

This is where Colley Cibber's willingness to alter authors' works without a consultation with them or a regard for their authorial intent made its presence felt. Dennis states that he was not

⁷⁵ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 18,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n17/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁷⁶ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 19,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n18/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

privity to the new epilogue written by Cibber until it was spoken on stage by Anne Oldfield,⁷⁷ otherwise unnamed in the dramatic personae. The epilogue⁷⁸ Cibber had written for her is far fierier than Dennis'. Oldfield, a highly popular actress at the time often designated by Cibber to deliver prologues or epilogues of his, was to bemoan the usage of women by authors as the ones to sway the critics from being harsh on plays and instead was to also deride the play as "preaching Morals to wild English brains." The epilogue essentially reads as a personal attack to be performed in front of an audience. That being said, the play was published in print by Dennis, along with the epilogue, so it can't be determined whether it is a precise account of what would've been delivered on stage at Drury Lane. Whatever the degree of verity of the epilogue may be, it does also include an opinion on the state of contemporary English society and the play's relevance to it.

Opposed to Dennis' stated intent for the play as a warning to potential future traitors, Cibber reframes it as a reprimand for those Englishmen who'd clamour for the old order as the audience "for half a Crown (...) might have seen/What Madness 'twere to live such Days again." The epilogue, with its revolutionary rhetoric, denounces some people's pining for kings without explicitly stating that the denouncement applies only to the deposed Stuarts until the final two lines which read: "Let Free-born Souls endeavour/That BRUNSWICK's Line may give us KINGS for Ever." Framing the play in this lens does present inconsistencies with the play's text since Coriolanus is only a prospective tyrant who never actually assumes rule over Rome. It would also frame the tribunes as the heroic figures of the play for ridding Rome of said tyrant, by Cibber more strongly linked to the deposed Stuarts, and it would simultaneously further problematise the messaging behind the citizens' turning against them. The published play also

⁷⁷ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 19,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n18/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁷⁸ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 20,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n19/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

included an advertisement⁷⁹ in which Dennis derides Cibber's epilogue as giving audience a wrong impression of the play (which is impossible to argue against as no one else would know better what the intended impression was), being at points unintelligible, and, most interestingly, being itself treasonous as Dennis sees the final lines as being only tacked on, doubting Cibber's loyalty to the Protestant succession in the process and describing the manager of Drury Lane as an opportunist who sucks up to those who rule for personal profit. These accusations also correspond with the third and final interpretation of the play provided in Dennis' publication.

Dennis dedicated the published play to Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, and, at the time, Lord Chamberlain of the Household, who was embroiled in a personal rivalry with Richard Steele and, subsequently, Cibber, after he dedicated the publication of his play *Ximena* to Steele, thus publicly, even if unintentionally, picking a side in an internal conflict among the Whigs.⁸⁰ Dennis states in the dedication that it is simultaneously a plea for justice⁸¹ as he felt wronged by "two or three players,"⁸² Cibber being one of them, due to their "banishment" of his version of *Coriolanus* from the English stage, having in Dennis' mind previously sabotaged the play from the very beginning.⁸³ This he considered to be evidence of artists' careers and art itself being killed in England by a group of players whom he saw as base, proud, and inferior to himself and other "greatest Persons in *England*."⁸⁴ He also saw his art as a service to England,⁸⁵ therefore any act against it could in his mind be deemed treasonous, an accusation

⁷⁹ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 19,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n18/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁸⁰ Helene Koon, *Colley Cibber: A Biography* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1986), 94-95.

⁸¹ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 8,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n7/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁸² Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 9,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n8/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁸³ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 10,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n9/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁸⁴ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 10,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n9/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁸⁵ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 10,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n9/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

echoing his commentary on Cibber's epilogue. The specific accusations may not appear to be immediately relevant to the text of the play, but that will shortly be shown not to be entirely true. Before that, however, it is necessary to recount them.

The chronologically first mistreatment of Dennis' play was its postponement as it was originally intended to premiere the previous winter when England faced the threat of an invasion from Sweden, Spain and Russia, the last of which Dennis doesn't mention, with the aim of restoring the Stuarts as their puppets. Roger Shaw in *The Military Engineer* proclaimed this to be the closest England came to being successfully invaded since 1066 as it would be attacked by the Swedish army, at the time seen as the most efficient force in the world due to its track record from the Thirty Years War. In addition to that, the Swedish would be bankrolled by the Spanish, who might have been losing territories and influence over the previous years but still possessed large amount of wealth from their colonies in the Americas.⁸⁶ The planned invasion failed before it could begin, when the King of Sweden, Charles XII died on November 30th 1718 at the Siege of Fredriksten in Danish Norway, the shoreline of which was necessary for the Swedish to control in order to launch an invasion of England. Charles' chief minister, the other mastermind behind the plot, Georg Heinrich von Görtz was then executed in February of 1719, essentially as an act of political revenge, after which Sweden adopted a pacifist policy and the threat of their military might dissipated.⁸⁷ Dennis' play therefore couldn't capitalise on the atmosphere of fear of foreign invasion present in London at the time. Dennis understandably presents this to Lord Chamberlain as being prevented from providing a service to the English society in its time of need,⁸⁸ but there would certainly be a significant monetary incentive for him to have his reactionary play be staged while the threat he was reacting to was still present.

⁸⁶ Roger Shaw, "Swedes over England 1717," *The Military Engineer* 42, no. 285 (1950): 43-44, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44561037>.

⁸⁷ Shaw, "Swedes," 45.

⁸⁸ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 10, <https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n9/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

Instead, Drury Lane spent the winter of 1718 staging plays that Dennis considered to be only “Debauching the People,”⁸⁹ essentially an accusation of treason by the means of withholding meaningful art from a populace in need of it.

Dennis also accused the theatre company of damaging the play by miscasting comedic roles and “maiming” some tragic ones,⁹⁰ but his more severe accusations proceed to stem from the business side of the production. Firstly, they postponed the premiere of the play by a day as not to collide with the third performance of a “young author” at a different playhouse before cancelling any further performances of *The Invader of His Country* after its third performance due to the attendance generating hundred pounds only on the first day, and that was the sum considered to be the mark of a play’s success.⁹¹ His treatment by Drury Lane then functions as a basis for his argument about the detrimental effect of purely profit-focused management of playhouses on the quality of plays, and literature in general, produced in England.⁹² His warnings of the assured discouragement of promising young authors in favour of mediocre ones with the right connections rings timely even now. His solution to this would be for the Lord Chamberlain to once again assume oversight over playhouses and support plays of artistic merit. As fascinating as this argument regarding the production of art in a profit-focused environment may be, the details of it are essentially irrelevant compared to the framework Dennis gave to the situation he found himself in.

Before reporting the mistreatments he and his play have suffered, Dennis compares them to the affront Coriolanus suffered when he received “injurious Treatment (...) from the Brutal Rage

⁸⁹ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 11,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n10/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁹⁰ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 11,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n10/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁹¹ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 11-13,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n10/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁹² Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 14,
<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n13/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

of the Rabble.”⁹³ In doing so, he provides a new interpretation of the Coriolanus story. It also isn’t one which his own text would support, as the banishment in it is portrayed as justified even if it was done underhandedly, and therefore it should be treated as an interpretation of the adapted text rather than of the adaptation. The interpretation he uses in pleading his case is one which features Coriolanus as a faithful and skilled servant of his nation, with a role in opposing its foreign enemies, who is prevented from performing his duties by self-serving figures of power because of their “groundless Jealousy of Power,”⁹⁴ although in Dennis’ case it would be jealousy of talent and skill. Coriolanus in this interpretation becomes a great man who is not allowed to be great due to the judgment of those who are base in their worldview and do not match him in his qualities. The self-aggrandisement of an author, who claims to have produced a work which would somehow be of aid to the people of England when faced with an invasion from the world’s most fearsome army, is laughable in the grand scheme of things, but it is the first occurrence in the analysed materials of an instance when the emotional core of the play overpowers its ideological implications.

Shakespeare’s Coriolanus is an emotionally stunted protagonist whose nearly only emotional response in the entire play is rage. His lived experience is extreme and his motivations rigid, at least until a certain point, as he lives his life in a constant conflict, be it with Rome’s enemies or with the Roman people who do not even attempt to fit Coriolanus’ ideals of what a good Roman should be like. That is until he is accused of treason and banished which is when revenge becomes his motivation and that feeling of being demeaned and wronged, especially by someone shown to be morally and ability-wise inferior to him, is the first real emotional hook his character provides to the audience to be sympathised with. Dennis in his dedication reframed

⁹³ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 9,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n8/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

⁹⁴ Dennis, *Ingratitude*, 9,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n8/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

the entire story as being about the mistreatment of this great figure by those lesser than him caused by jealousy because he saw himself in that way. He might have written a somewhat drier version of the story which foregrounded ideological discussions but his dedication highlights that a personal identification with the mistreated and misvalued hero might function as the lure for ideologically charged appropriative efforts. The potency of this hypothesis is to be determined in analyses of further appropriations and adaptations in the other two significant periods of appropriative efforts.

2.3 Findings of a Comparative Analysis of the Two Adaptation Processes

Before moving on to the other two boom periods which remain to be examined, it is important to note adaptational tendencies of the two texts that become more apparent when the two plays are compared rather than analysed in isolation. Perhaps the most significant of these tendencies are the efforts of both Tate and Dennis to make Coriolanus a more emotionally sympathetic character than in Shakespeare's version and both playwrights attempted to do so by changing Coriolanus' relationships with the women in his life, Volumnia and Virgilia, and his son. These changes are more subtle in Tate's play than Dennis'. They either take form of small expansions, example of which is the scene in which Coriolanus says his goodbyes to his family, where in Shakespeare he essentially bids farewell only to his mother with the only words said to his wife being "Nay, I prithee, woman,"⁹⁵ but Tate included farewells with both Virgilia and Young Martius, who manages to bring the soldierly protagonist to tears.⁹⁶ Alternatively, these modifications are hidden behind more significant changes made to the play, such as the final act. It is difficult to describe Coriolanus' loving rhetoric towards Virgilia⁹⁷ or distress at his

⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.1.12.

⁹⁶ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 36-37.

⁹⁷ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 60-61.

son's fate⁹⁸ as a motivated change made to his character when he is just one of many behaving as entirely different characters than they were in the rest of the play. As such, the only scene when this tendency to amend Coriolanus' relationships with his loved ones becomes pronounced is when they attempt to sway the general from destroying Rome.

In Shakespeare's version of the scene,⁹⁹ Coriolanus is emotional when receiving his family even if he makes a concerted effort to banish his own affection and receive them as a delegation. Ultimately, Volumnia doesn't utilise his emotions to convince him to refrain from attacking Rome but his assigned roles. Beyond promises of having his reputation tarnished as a traitor in the annals of history, she specifically admonishes him for how his revenge would affect his mother, wife, and son, but not on the level of hurting them as people but of failing in his role in relation to them. Holland notes how Coriolanus forms his own isolation in the world by interacting with people in accordance with what the relationship between their positions should entail on theoretical level.¹⁰⁰ That leaves him bound by duties he strictly associates with his roles which his militaristic mother exploits to sway him from fulfilling his personal goal of vengeance. While Volumnia appeals to Coriolanus' sense of duty, Virgilia barely speaks unless commanded to speak by her mother-in-law, which highlights that only his mother really understands her son's worldview and his way of defining his identity. Tate, however, would not have Virgilia be a mere bystander to Volumnia's triumph.

What this results in is that when the procession of ladies of Rome attends Coriolanus,¹⁰¹ Virgilia is simply given some of Volumnia's lines from Shakespeare's playtext to deliver. This is despite Tate's maintaining of the dichotomy between the two female characters in previous scenes. This apparent sudden understanding of her husband makes their relationship more complete as

⁹⁸ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 62-64.

⁹⁹ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 5.3.22-209.

¹⁰⁰ Holland, "Introduction," 72.

¹⁰¹ Tate, *Ingratitude*, 47-52.

opposed to the one Shakespeare presented, in which Virgilia does love her husband but can't really grasp the world he lives in, and that also influences Coriolanus' motivation for making peace with Rome. When picturing the motivations on a scale between duty and personal want, Shakespeare's Volumnia succeeded by pushing his motivations towards the fulfilment of his duties as a son, husband, father and a soldier, whereas Tate's Coriolanus is successfully swayed by Virgilia whose primary connection to him in the play is emotional. Therefore, Coriolanus has been moved somewhere closer to the middle on that motivational scale as someone who acts more on his emotional bonds than his isolated predecessor. However, as mentioned, Dennis makes that change to Coriolanus' character even more apparent.

Dennis portrays the relationship between Coriolanus and Virgilia as outwardly romantic and he does so by adding dialogue between the two without any equivalent in the adapted text. These include a loving embrace upon Coriolanus' return from Corioli,¹⁰² a scene in which Virgilia is present on stage in Shakespeare's version but entirely silent,¹⁰³ a heartfelt parting once Coriolanus is banished,¹⁰⁴ the only instance of the husband and wife being alone on stage, and, as mentioned, Coriolanus dies in Virgilia's arms in this version. In addition to these additions, Dennis also increased Virgilia's role in persuading Coriolanus to abandon his campaign against Rome, but he didn't just give her some of Volumnia's lines and instead wrote new pleas for her to make towards her husband for him to return to Rome where the two of them can be together again.¹⁰⁵ In fact, during their aforementioned parting scene, Coriolanus states that the entire reason for his upcoming invasion of Rome is to return to Virgilia and to avenge the sorrow caused to the two of them rather than the mistreatment he received and of which he later tells Aufidius.¹⁰⁶ Dennis' Coriolanus is in a way a macho version of a romantic hero who fights for

¹⁰² Dennis, *Invader*, 15-16.

¹⁰³ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 2.1.157-198.

¹⁰⁴ Dennis, *Invader*, 43-45.

¹⁰⁵ Dennis, *Invader*, 65-73.

¹⁰⁶ Dennis, *Invader*, 52-53.

ideals and out of love. Both Dennis and Tate have made their protagonist more emotionally open to the audience, thusly making him easier to sympathise with, despite Dennis intending to depict him as tyrannical. The two authors might find themselves on the opposite sides of a political dichotomy, but both of their imagined Romes are to have a ruler.

That is to say that the difference between the two is only whether they depict Coriolanus as fit or unfit for the position. And it should be noted that all three thus far discussed plays depict the consulship as an office of absolutist power and omit the fact that, if elected, Coriolanus would presumably share the position with another person. As such, the plays are not concerned with the merits of the political system itself and the depictions of the citizens reflect that. Tate infantilises them, as their predisposition for being manipulated is their primary characteristic, while Dennis depicts them in need of being well governed in order to curve their base nature. Re-examinations of the political system absent from adaptations from the Early modern period can, however, be expected from adaptations and interpretations from the next period to be examined which will be the interwar period when many monarchies fell all over Europe. Adversely, those works can be only expected to maintain a different trend introduced in Tate's and Dennis' adaptations and that is the change of scale of the story.

The conflict between Rome and the Volscas, as they're called in the play, was a conflict between two tribes of the same ethnolinguistic group called the Italic peoples, the Volsci and the Latins, Rome being the largest Latin state on the Italian peninsula but not the only one. Rome and Corioli stood approximately 24 kilometres away from each other, which Peter Holland brings attention to.¹⁰⁷ And Shakespeare depicts the Volscas and the Romans not only as geographically close, but also culturally as the Volscas seem to have the same political system as Rome and they certainly have the same gods, although they are more militant than the Roman society. It

¹⁰⁷ Holland, "Introduction," 91.

should also be taken into account what events inspired Shakespeare to write the play. Among those, Holland lists the Midland Revolt of 1607, a grain shortage in 1608, and King James' "troubles with Parliament,"¹⁰⁸ but also a local dispute in Stratford-upon-Avon between Sir Edward Greville and the town bailiff Richard Quiney, father of Shakespeare's son-in-law Thomas, which culminated with Quiney's murder in 1602,¹⁰⁹ an event a London theatregoer would hardly be expected to be familiar with some seven years later. And even the other events, which would be on the minds of Shakespeare's audience when the play was staged, would likely not come to his adaptors' minds when interpreting his text. Instead, they found its content to be ahead of its time and perfectly suited to the time of the adaptation.

Both Tate and Dennis describe what they have done as only augmenting Shakespeare's text in some way instead of creating anew based on it. Tate admits to only accentuating a parallel which Shakespeare's play already featured¹¹⁰ while Dennis claimed in his play's prologue that he would not dare to depart from Shakespeare's plan.¹¹¹ Given that they have both made significant changes to the adapted text, it can be said that they're essentially only using Shakespeare's name to add heft to their own arguments, which is consistent with Julie Sanders' claims about honorific adaptations of Shakespeare.¹¹² They effectively appropriated Shakespeare's reputation to use it as support for their ideas about a political environment he never experienced. Thusly, Shakespeare is assigned a prophetic role by his adaptors through their calling back to his authority, denying him the possibility of merely writing based on personal experiences and framing him as an author who provided beautiful words to high universal and timeless ideas. The story of Coriolanus might come from Ancient Rome, but only the reproduction of

¹⁰⁸ Holland, "Introduction," 22-23.

¹⁰⁹ Holland, "Introduction," 82.

¹¹⁰ Tate, *Ingratitude*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A62946.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

¹¹¹ Dennis, *Invader*, 18,

<https://archive.org/details/invaderhiscount00denngoog/page/n17/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

¹¹² Sanders, *Adaptation*, 58-9.

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* gives the adaptor a proverbial seal of approval from a genius to stamp on their own ideas. And this idolatry of Shakespeare as an authority would not subside over the next two centuries before the next period of frequent ideologically motivated attempts to appropriate *Coriolanus*.

3. *Coriolanus* in the Interwar Period

3.1 A Brief Note on Bardolatry

In 1901, G.B. Shaw published a collection of plays titled *Three Plays for Puritans* and one of the three published plays was *Caesar and Cleopatra*, a retelling of a story previously retold by Shakespeare. Therefore, Shaw included in the collection's preface a defence of his right to retell a story previously told by the supposed perfect playwright and it is in this defence that he coined the term "Bardolatry." Bardolatry, as defined in the preface, was to him the public worship of Shakespeare by those who had no scruples about bastardising his texts for their own gain and thusly depriving audiences of experiencing Shakespeare.¹¹³ Even in an earlier section of the preface, one not focused on Shakespeare, Shaw criticised productions for merely usurping Shakespeare's reputation for their purposes and ignoring the man's words.¹¹⁴ The two previously discussed plays already fall into this tradition of bardolatry, *Cibber* is after all mentioned by name by Shaw as a culprit of this phenomenon,¹¹⁵ but they still remain within the context of English parliamentary monarchy, albeit that monarchy was finding itself at the centre of a much grown empire compared to Shakespeare's time. It is the early twentieth century, however, when Shakespeare becomes widely interpreted as a supporter of various political ideologies and systems of government in the aftermath of multiple fallen monarchies across Europe. Contradicting ideologies wanted to appropriate the Bard as a spiritual predecessor and *Coriolanus* was a particularly in-demand play for appropriative interpreters.

Being able to claim ideological ownership over the text equalled being able to claim the supposed greatest playwright that ever lived as a proponent of any ideology in question and *Coriolanus* is a play quite open to ideological interpretation. Lee Bliss in the introduction to

¹¹³ George Bernard Shaw, *Three Plays for Puritans* (London: G. Richards, 1901), xxx-xxxi.

¹¹⁴ Shaw, *Three Plays*, ix-x.

¹¹⁵ Shaw, *Three Plays*, xxx.

New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of the play noted how its political ambivalence made it a suitable target for appropriation and retooling into propaganda.¹¹⁶ Hence, the sphere of literary criticism became saturated in the interwar period with interpreters eager to declare that Shakespeare agreed with them, and *Coriolanus* would provide them with arguments. The question then is what arguments were found in the text by contradicting ideologies and which of its aspects had to be ignored. And what overarching tendencies can be observed in ideological movements' efforts to worship Shakespeare as long as it is their Shakespeare.

3.2 The Elitist *Coriolanus*

The first interpretation of Shakespeare's text to be examined in this period will be that by Wyndham Lewis, a co-founder of the Vorticist movement, published in his 1927 collection of essays *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare*. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, Lewis interprets the character of Coriolanus and the message of the play within the context of British society, continuing the cultural line of Tate and Dennis. Secondly, Lewis' interpretation is a rather apparent example of an interpreter attempting to convince their imagined reader that Shakespeare would now agree with their views. Lewis' interpretation also doesn't belong to interpretations made from a standpoint of a political ideology per se, and therefore functions as a template for the examinations of explicitly ideologically charged appropriative interpretations. That is not to say that Lewis would be an apolitical figure. He is after all the same man who would come to openly support Nazis in the early 1930s, publishing *Hitler*¹¹⁷ in 1931, before renouncing that support as the decade continued, most prominently by publishing *The Hitler Cult and How Will it End*¹¹⁸ and *The*

¹¹⁶ Lee Bliss, "Introduction" in *Coriolanus*, ed. Lee Bliss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67.

¹¹⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931).

¹¹⁸ Wyndham Lewis, *The Hitler Cult and How Will it End* (London: Dent, 1939).

*Jews, Are They Human?*¹¹⁹ in 1939. He, however, does not treat *Coriolanus* as a political statement as, for him, it is a nearly indiscriminate denouncement of British social classes.

Specifically, Lewis reads the play as a denouncement of its titular character who, to Lewis, epitomises a typical aristocratic snob. He postulates that such “cheerless and unattractive snob(s) must have pullulated in the court of Elizabeth” and the English public-school and university system has been producing them ever since.¹²⁰ Lewis repeatedly calls Coriolanus a child in his essay, and a “cruel and stupid” one at that,¹²¹ but he does also deem him to be a product of his environment, specifically of an equally snobbish but more practical mother and of an aristocracy eager to use his status as a war hero for the purposes of propaganda but also willing to turn their backs on him for populist reasons.¹²² Lewis’ view of Shakespear’s play as a negative but truthful portrait of aristocracy and his openly connecting the aristocracy of the play with the aristocracy of his own day could give the impression of Lewis possibly promoting revolutionary ideas of dismantling the current political system in favour of the citizenry, but them he views equally negatively. He specifically finds “the one very nearly worthy of the other – the violent, dull, conceited leader, and the resentful but cowardly slave.”¹²³ As a critic, Lewis positions himself outside this dichotomy and disdains both, but what is more important for this analysis, and therefore why his particular interpretation is being examined, is that he also depicts Shakespeare as holding the same position as himself.

It has to be said that a large portion of Lewis’ criticism is built on speculation about Shakespeare’s feelings, intentions and character. Some of these speculations are still presented as mere possibilities, such as when Lewis paradoxically postulates that Shakespeare seems to

¹¹⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *The Jews, Are They Human?* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1939).

¹²⁰ Wyndham Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 241.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 239.

¹²² Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 238; 242.

¹²³ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 245.

have felt the coldest towards Coriolanus of all his heroes because he supposedly wasn't his creation but Volumnia's,¹²⁴ who would presumably be also a creation of Shakespeare's, but other of his claims are frequently far more brazen. At one point, he claims that "we possess a great deal of evidence as to what Shakespeare thought of military glory and martial events"¹²⁵ without stating what evidence that should be except, presumably, ideas about and depictions of these topics to be found in his work which can hardly be read as concrete expressions of his personal views. Shortly thereafter, Lewis abandons even that flimsy effort at supporting his arguments when he states that "Shakespeare no doubt agreed with all the abuse his puppet Coriolanus was called upon to hurl at the Roman crowd" and that he probably held the same feeling towards the London crowd of his time which would come to see his plays¹²⁶ Perhaps Lewis had no doubt about this because, as he made known in an earlier referenced passage, he himself agreed with the abuse hurled towards the crowd, as he provides no other reason to remove such doubt. That said, beyond transference of own opinions onto author's intent, Lewis does also present textual evidence for his interpretation.

Central to Lewis' interpretation of the character of *Coriolanus* is an episode recounted by Valeria in Shakespeare's text in which Young Martius, showing he inherited his father's temper, tormented a butterfly for fun before becoming enraged and tearing it apart.¹²⁷ The whole episode takes up only approximately fifteen lines of verse, but Lewis notes how problematic has it been for literary critics, into whose view of the play it rarely fits, and how they tend to simply denote it as one of Shakespeare's lapses.¹²⁸ To him, on the other hand, it is the perfect image of the cruelty and stupidity of the aristocracy capable of destroying such a beautiful creature for fun. And Shakespeare's audiences were surely supposed to have the same impression, because

¹²⁴ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 238.

¹²⁵ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 244.

¹²⁶ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 245.

¹²⁷ *Coriolanus*, 1.3.59-69.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 239.

otherwise, according to Lewis, the author wouldn't have picked "such a pretty and flimsy thing" to be the child's victim were he to be attempting to gain the child the sympathy of the audience.¹²⁹ It is certainly a plausible interpretation of the episode in isolation and the reading of it as a commentary on Coriolanus' nature is more than warranted by the story's framing, but what Lewis then does is invert the strategy of those critics whose exemption of the episode from their overarching critique he derides. He forms his interpretation of the play based on the imagery of a single brief passage.

For Lewis, the parental relationship between Volumnia and Coriolanus is at the core of the play, which is a reasonably proposed structure as Coriolanus is after all depicted primarily as a product of her nurture and it is a relationship often discussed by critics as central to the play's events. His view of it however is tied to the vision that Volumnia raised a cruel and conceited brat. Here his criticism enters the territory of a proposed production because many of his comments about the text, such as his view of Coriolanus being a naïve child still and attempting to act entirely upon the instruction of his mother given to him in his upbringing only to be surprised by his mother not approving of him,¹³⁰ are more suggestive of how Shakespeare's text could be acted out on stage. In fact, Peter Holland notes how the relationship between the mother and her son is flexible in its depiction as even just the casting alone of the two roles can significantly change the impression the audience will have of it.¹³¹ Lewis, however, doesn't deal with potential portrayals as he still writes from the assumed position of being able to discern Shakespeare's intent. Yet, there are also instances where textual changes would be necessary if a production of the play intended to portray Coriolanus the way Lewis sees him.

¹²⁹ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 239.

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 243.

¹³¹ Holland, "Introduction, 4.

By framing Coriolanus as an archetypal glum and vain aristocrat, Lewis backgrounds his militaristic aspect, or rather he reframes it as a by-product of his aristocratic identity as that is what provided him with every opportunity of training and with a stimulus of self-interest for his heroism.¹³² It is here where the text does not support Lewis' interpretation because ultimately the only thing Coriolanus does purely out of self-interest is his revenge campaign. He is heroic for the purpose of honouring and glorifying his mother, as that is what a good son should do in the worldview he's been imbued with, but also because it is simply what a good soldier should do and Coriolanus, as previously established, acts in accordance with the presumed duties he holds in all of his roles. Lewis sees Coriolanus as someone who seeks flattery¹³³ and yet, numerous times does Coriolanus refute his praises sung by Menenius or Cominius for he does not view his deeds as something that should be exceptional. Lewis himself even quotes a passage further in his text in which Coriolanus denounces any interest in the people's affectation.¹³⁴ Hardly a picture of a man focused on personal gain and flattery. Lewis also mentions how Aufidius goads Coriolanus in the final scene by calling him a "boy,"¹³⁵ but entirely omits the other word used to enrage the general and that is "traitor." To read *Coriolanus* the same way Lewis does is to observe a less complex hero than the text holds. Lewis ultimately does the same as the critics he aims to correct and ignores or explains away passages which do not fit his preformed opinions.

The question to be asked now might be why examine in such a detail an interpretation which is not ideologically motivated but merely an interpreter's attempt to identify Coriolanus with a particular type of person they didn't like and then to convince any supposed readers that Shakespeare didn't like that type of person either. The reason for that is that Lewis'

¹³² Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 241.

¹³³ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 241.

¹³⁴ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 241-42.

¹³⁵ Lewis, *Lion and Fox*, 244.

interpretational strategy is far from unique, but his brazenness in writing of Shakespeare as if they shared one mind allows for rather easy pattern recognition. As mentioned earlier, *Coriolanus* is a play of ambivalence without a prescribed judgment on the conflicts and relations it presents and an effort to present it as an ideologically unified text forces interpreters to accentuate some aspects, to recontextualise and explain away others, and to omit some completely. Other interpreters of Lewis' era may have been more sophisticated than him when presenting their overarching and unifying conclusions, but they still attempted to do the same thing and that is to present the play in such a way that their intended reader would believe that what the interpreters found in the text they found not because it is what they were pre-decided to find but because it is what Shakespeare intended to be found there. To prove that is the case, one can just briefly summarize a few of the more prominent interpretations which follow this pattern in terms of what they claimed about the text and what aspects of the text they had to either omit or re-explain in order for those claims to appear legible.

That is not to say that the criticisms and interpretations about to be mentioned are meritless, although they are being mentioned for their shortcomings. Even Lewis despite his arrogant rhetoric provides an insightful consideration of the butterfly episode and its implications regarding the inherited ideals of the nobility. For the purposes of this analysis, however, it is more important how authoritative declarations about the text open holes even in the best formulated interpretations of Lewis' contemporaries. This is how John Middleton Murry when he wrote "A Neglected Heroine of Shakespeare"¹³⁶ in 1921 through his effort to reframe the role of Virgilia as the gracious and noble factor that swayed Coriolanus from avenging himself against Rome rather than his mother, an effort which forced him to replace the absence of Virgilia's textual expression with manufactured non-verbal expression in his interpretation,

¹³⁶ John Middleton Murry, "A Neglected Heroine of Shakespeare," in *Coriolanus: Shakespeare: Critical Tradition*, ed. David George (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 351-6.

ended up revealing more about himself and his view of women than about anything Shakespeare related. Two years later, Agnes Mure Mackenzie wrote *The Women of Shakespeare's Plays: A Critical Study from the Dramatic and Psychological Points of View and in Relation to the Development of Shakespeare's Art*, where she outwardly identified the plays' characters with political actors of her time, calling Coriolanus a "die-hard Tory" and Brutus and Sicinius "Labour leaders."¹³⁷ She primarily focused on Volumnia in the chapter on *Coriolanus*, but even her seemingly definitive exploration of the character shows cracks once Mackenzie ascribes emotional effects to Volumnia's conduct not implied in the playtext, as when she states that Volumnia's main motivation was her son's honour,¹³⁸ ignoring in the process that the restoration of Coriolanus' remains undeclared but the women are welcomed back as conquering heroes.¹³⁹ In fact, David George suggested in his introduction of Mackenzie's text in the collection *Coriolanus: Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition* that her interpretation of the character is based on Genevieve Ward's performance of it in a 1920 production at the Old Vic,¹⁴⁰ therefore on a specific adaptation of the text, for each performance is an adaptation in itself.

A further example of this pattern would be George Wilson Knight's "The Royal Occupation: An Essay on *Coriolanus*" published in 1931, an essay brilliant in its examination of imagery used in the play's dialogue, depicting a hardened and metallic world populated by animalistically behaving men. Yet, Knight's reading of the play's ending as Coriolanus accepting his fate with relative peace due to having his inner love awoken by his family¹⁴¹ again doesn't represent a reading of the text as is, but a personal wish for how the text should be

¹³⁷ Agnes Mure Mackenzie, *The Women of Shakespeare's Plays: A Critical Study from the Dramatic and Psychological Points of View and in Relation to the Development of Shakespeare's Art* (Ellistown: Norwood Press, 1977), 346.

¹³⁸ Mackenzie, *Women of Shakespeare's Plays*, 347.

¹³⁹ *Coriolanus*, 5.5.

¹⁴⁰ David George, *Coriolanus: Shakespeare: Critical Tradition* ed. David George (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 368.

¹⁴¹ George Wilson Knight, "The Royal Occupation: An Essay on *Coriolanus*" in *Coriolanus: Shakespeare: Critical Tradition*, ed. David George (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 403.

performed. Peter Alexander then, in *Shakespeare's Life and Art* published in 1939, essentially ignored the ambivalence of the play by interpreting Coriolanus as a great pillar of heroic society standing strong against knaves.¹⁴² Even Derek Antona Traversi, who had his essay simply titled “*Coriolanus*” published in 1937, bases his thorough structural examination of the play on the supposition that its events are a result of Rome being a decadent and stagnating society despite having no evidence for that supposition in the text itself nor in Roman history, as *Coriolanus* is a story set in a young republic at the start of the process which would culminate with it becoming a stagnant empire. George speculates that this reading of the play’s Rome is again simply a product of Traversi’s own experience with living in an empire in its twilight.¹⁴³ The evidence Traversi presents¹⁴⁴ is of Menenius’ fable of the belly but he omits both the expressed point of the story, i.e., that the belly was only seemingly stagnant in comparison to the limbs, and the simple biological fact that a “stagnant belly” would be an animal’s cause of death, as he focuses only on the act of digestion in his interpretation. A search for an overarching meaning of the play or its intended central message seems to inevitably lead to flawed results and that is even when those results are not formulated as evidence of Shakespeare’s support of an ideology. Yet, before advancing towards ideologically motivated interpretations, it should be mentioned that the aforementioned critics all agreed on one aspect of ideology expressed in the play.

Regardless of interpretational differences in their criticism, the aforementioned critics all to a certain degree agree that Coriolanus’ reprimands of the plebeians are to be taken as justified as they are indeed inferior to the noble characters. The shared argument for this reading of the text is based, however, on Shakespeare’s own implied view of the citizenry of both his play and Elizabethan England. Murry is the one most open about this presumption as he instructs his

¹⁴² Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1961) 178-182.

¹⁴³ George, *Coriolanus*, 409.

¹⁴⁴ Derek Antona Traversi, “*Coriolanus*” in *Coriolanus: Shakespeare: Critical Tradition*, ed. David George (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 411-12.

prospective readers to “picture to (themselves) the finest creative spirit in the world acting in his own plays before a pitiful of uncomprehending base mechanicals” after which they’ll be sure to agree that Shakespeare must have detested the city mob just as much as Coriolanus did, and he might have even picked Coriolanus as a protagonist to write about due to these shared sympathies.¹⁴⁵ For the others, they are various combinations of weak-minded, base, and selfish, with Alexander being, perhaps surprisingly, the kindest to them by viewing them as the base ordinary backdrop the heroic ideal forms itself in contrast to, but he does not paint them as actively and intentionally malicious.¹⁴⁶ Ultimately though, none of these critics concern themselves with the people of Rome or with their conditions, treating them instead as the many-headed multitude. In their interpretations of the elitist Coriolanus, they paint a picture of an equally elitist Shakespeare far removed from his audience by intelligence and overall quality. However, while the protagonist is firmly set in the societal landscape of the play, the play’s author is movable in interpretations and that can be exploited by ideologies wishing to portray the play as a piece of populist writing.

3.3 The Marxist *Coriolanus*

It should be noted that even giving this subchapter a title presents certain difficulties due to the historical background of the appropriation attempt about to be analysed here. In isolation within the confines of literary criticism, Shakespeare and Marx seem to be nearly inseparable merely due to the fact that the majority of critical frameworks through which Shakespeare has been processed since the middle of the 19th century is to a degree descendant from Marx, which is the subject of Gabriel Egan’s 2004 book *Shakespeare and Marx*.¹⁴⁷ That connection, however,

¹⁴⁵ Murry, “Neglected Heroine,” 356.

¹⁴⁶ Alexander, *Shakespeare’s Life*, 181.

¹⁴⁷ Gabriel Egan, *Shakespeare and Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

isn't a one way street and scholars have also written about Shakespeare's influence on Marx, be it his influence on Marx's writing style, as is the case of Joe Luna's "Money, *die Ware*, and Marx's Shakespeare,"¹⁴⁸ or the possibility that Marxist theory itself is partially a product of Marx's reading of Shakespeare, as argued by Christian A. Smith in 2022's *Shakespeare's Influence on Karl Marx*.¹⁴⁹ The author of the appropriative interpretation of *Coriolanus*, Alexandr Alexandrovich Smirnov, attempted it in 1936 in a book explicitly titled *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation*. However, it is the cultural and ideological development of Soviet Russia since the October Revolution, and also the evolution of communist movements across Europe, which lead to hesitance to accept Smirnov's proclamations of allegiance to Marxism.

The establishment of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic should have been a tremendous triumph for socialist thought as it was the very first constitutionally socialist state. Yet, according to anti-Stalinist Marxist Victor Serge, by 1923, even Lenin saw Soviet Russia as socialist in name only.¹⁵⁰ That in itself makes comparison between Marx's ideology and the communist ideology of the Bolsheviks essentially redundant for the purposes of this thesis, and this was prior to Stalin gaining power and turning the state into a totalitarian one. Despite that, socialist movements across the world would begin following the Russian model of socialist and Marxist politics, leading to the emergence of various national communist parties. By 1936, Smirnov is writing for a regime which presents itself as Marxist but has long ago ceased to be so, and his effort is therefore primarily a work of reactionary propaganda rather than an isolated work of ideological interpretation. To understand Smirnov's aims, it is necessary to understand what position Shakespeare and *Coriolanus* were placed in in Russian society following the October Revolution.

¹⁴⁸ Joe Luna, "Money, *die Ware*, and Marx's Shakespeare," *Textual Practice* 29, no.5 (2015): 927-947.

¹⁴⁹ Christian A. Smith, *Shakespeare's Influence on Karl Marx* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2022).

¹⁵⁰ Victor Serge, *From Lenin to Stalin* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1937), 55.

The evolution of Shakespeare's reception in Soviet Russia in the interwar period is succinctly outlined in Aydin Dzhebrailov's *History Workshop* article "The King Is Dead. Long Live the King! Post-Revolutionary and Stalinist Shakespeare."¹⁵¹ Said article notes how Shakespeare never fully disappeared from Russian cultural spheres but the man would be seen as a class enemy, leading to the number of Shakespearean publications published per year to decline to six by 1925, and to vicious parodies of Shakespeare's plays being staged in prominent theatres. The idea of Shakespeare being a class enemy of the proletariat came from literary critics of the era, the most prominent, although certainly not the only one, being Vladimir Maksimovich Fritsche, a professor at the Moscow State University and the director of the Institute of Red Professors. Dzhebrailov postulates that Fritsche's denouncement was not based on his reading of Shakespeare's work itself but rather on Fritsche's belonging to the anti-Stratfordian movement, i.e., he didn't view Shakespeare's work as a work merely concerned with aristocracy but as a defence of aristocracy written by an aristocrat, Sir Robert Rutland, and this view became prevalent among his contemporaries.¹⁵² The plays positioned as proof of this hypothesis were *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *Henry VI Part II*, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the play in which an aristocrat continuously abuses the common people of Rome, *Coriolanus*. Nowhere else has the anti-Stratfordian theory been as influential in Shakespearean critical discourse as in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. But then came the First Five Year Plan in 1928 and with it came Stalin's cultural revolution during which Shakespeare was rehabilitated as a masterful author once again, leading to 144 works on Shakespeare being published in 1935. Although his main ideological detractor was now dead, as Fritsche died in 1929, Shakespeare was, despite his once again praised skill, still not perceived as compatible

¹⁵¹ Aydin Dzhebrailov, "The King is Dead. Long Live the King! Post-Revolutionary and Stalinist Shakespeare," *History Workshop* no. 32 (1991): 1-18.

¹⁵² Dzhebrailov, "The King," 3.

with Marxist thought. That is when the task was taken up by Leningrad State University professor A.A. Smirnov to make Shakespeare a Marxist.

Shakespearean critical discourse in 1930s Russia would start focusing on those aspects of Shakespeare's work the discourse of the previous decade was forced to ignore or diminish in importance. The strongest arguments for Shakespeare being of proto-Marxist persuasion would be found in *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens* and, ironically, *Henry VI Part II*. *Othello* also experienced a steep rise in popularity and acclaim, but that appears to have been due to Stalin's personal affinity for the play rather than any textual ideological aspects.¹⁵³ Understandably, the plays on which the critics of the 1920s built their accusation of Shakespeare's being an aristocracy apologist would be assigned minor roles in the restructured canon of Shakespeare's work. That would also be the fate of *Coriolanus* to which only five pages of *The Marxist Interpretation* would be designated. Another important factor to take into account when examining Smirnov's effort to appropriate *Coriolanus* is that it occurred during Smirnov's second attempt to appropriate Shakespeare. His first attempt, 1934's *The Works of Shakespeare* was criticised as insufficient, because, although his depiction of Shakespeare as of a supporter of the rising bourgeoisie would have made him a progressive in his own time, it was not enough for Stalinist Russia which needed him to be a perfect proto-Marxist.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, Smirnov became willing to abandon text-based literary criticism in favour of mythmaking in his second attempt to create an ideologically compatible Shakespeare.

It stems entirely from the critical discourse of the 1920s that the first order of business in reframing *Coriolanus* in order to make it ideologically compatible is to separate the character of Coriolanus from Shakespeare. Smirnov does this by depicting the play as a case of a socially conscious author having written a character stricken with "social blindness," as Smirnov calls

¹⁵³ Dzhebrailov, "The King," 10-16.

¹⁵⁴ Dzhebrailov, "The King," 10.

his affliction.¹⁵⁵ Coriolanus' disdain for the masses on the basis of their supposed baseness of character combined with apparent ignorance of the formative influence one's social environment would have on one's character could indeed be read as supportive of such an understanding of the play's protagonist. At the same time, Smirnov's view of the plebeians is similar to that of Dennis, i.e., he also sees them as in the process of becoming, but Smirnov is not vague about what they will become at the end of it and that is "politically mature."¹⁵⁶ Framing the conflict of the two sides as a clash between two parties deficient in political understanding and who are as a result being exploited by third parties is certainly a fascinating interpretational suggestion. Here, however, is where Smirnov reintroduces Shakespeare's assumed sensibilities and sympathies, and his argument of the play being a proto-Marxist work proceeds to fall apart.

There is no euphemising the fact that Smirnov's argument for Shakespeare having been sympathetic to the plebeians is, to put it mildly, horribly flimsy. It consists of a few quoted passages from the play's opening scene, the only one where plebeians get to speak for themselves, followed by proclamations such as "one can find no hypocrisy in such words, and the poet who can write them must be in sympathy with them."¹⁵⁷ A sentence like this can be attached to any isolated quotation and Shakespeare can be proclaimed anything from a Coriolanus apologist to the president of a fan club devoted to Servingman 2. Smirnov's case also isn't helped by his need to denote all patricians as inherently villainous, including Menenius, a character positioned as a friend of both the people and Coriolanus. Smirnov solved this conundrum by proclaiming Menenius the most villainous of them all precisely because he has tricked the people into thinking he is their friend, thus proving their political immaturity.

¹⁵⁵ Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Smirnov, *Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York: The Critics Group, 1936): https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁵⁶ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁵⁷ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

The reason Smirnov is sure of this is once again because Shakespeare “could not possibly agree” with the words he had written for Menenius to say.¹⁵⁸ Having supposedly successfully revealed Shakespeare to be a sympathizer of the masses and a detractor of the aristocracy, the final point Smirnov makes is about Coriolanus’ downfall and Shakespeare’s judgment of him.

Smirnov claims that by the end of the play Coriolanus is “unequivocally” condemned by Shakespeare, despite being written as a heroic paragon were it not for a lack of social feeling.¹⁵⁹

For this claim, however, Smirnov provides no textual evidence of such condemnation. The closest to it is a quotation of Volumnia’s appeal to Coriolanus¹⁶⁰ but Volumnia would hardly be the deliverer of her author’s condemnation if she were as bad as the patricians, which Smirnov declared her to be in an earlier statement.¹⁶¹ In reality, it would be essentially impossible for Smirnov to provide textual evidence of any unequivocal stance expressed in the play, because the play is marked by its vagueness and a lack of an expressed moral position being imparted on the play’s audience, as previously discussed. Smirnov’s attempt at appropriating *Coriolanus* for the ideological purposes of Stalinist Russia is hardly thorough as it constitutes only a small part of the portrait of Shakespeare as a proto-Marxist he tried to paint, but it perhaps could be potentially seen as providing a framework for a future, more sincere, attempt at interpreting the play as Marxist. Could the play be successfully interpreted through the lens of class conflict without the pressures to fit the specific design of a concrete political regime?

Ultimately, it isn’t so much that the play in particular can be viewed this way but rather that Roman politics in general can be. A major issue with focusing on the dynamic between the plebeians and patricians is that it is a rather small part of the play and one that the play’s protagonist is essentially not interested in. Smirnov’s reading of Coriolanus as a socially blind

¹⁵⁸ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁵⁹ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁶⁰ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁶¹ Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

heroic paragon is potent if one were to do a pure character study. It is true the heroic general whose entire moral compass is based on meritocracy is entirely blind to the fact that his family's social standing gave him every opportunity to prove his merit and also provided him with a social standing which allows to have such lofty goals over the simple focus of not starving to death that the plebeians have. But the claim that it is entirely this social blindness that precipitates Coriolanus' downfall does not seem to be supported by the text. In fact, even Smirnov, when providing the not convincing quotation of Volumnia as a supposed proof of Shakespeare's unequivocal condemnation of the character, reaches for one which accuses Coriolanus of a lack of nationalist feeling, not social understanding.¹⁶² However, what really complicates efforts to view the events of the play under a somewhat simplistic framework of social struggle is the presence and actions of two characters Smirnov omits entirely from his Marxist interpretation, Brutus and Sicinius.

Although there is an antagonistic relationship between Coriolanus and the people of Rome, they're not the main antagonistic domestic force working against the protagonist. That role belongs to the tribunes Brutus and Sicinius who, as Holland phrases it, are supposed to be for the people but are not of them.¹⁶³ The antagonist role being filled by someone who takes advantage of the underlying animosity between the patricians and the plebeians to accumulate political power for their own aims, as the tribunes do, to the detriment of both sides of said animosity takes focus away from the conflict that gave them rise. It is really no wonder that Smirnov omitted them from his interpretation because if the play was to be reframed as an allegory for post-revolutionary Russia, the Communist Party, whom Smirnov tried to please, would probably not be too pleased with how well they fit the roles of the two popular misleaders. One might attempt to paint them in a similar light to Mackenzie, when she called

¹⁶² Smirnov, *Shakespeare*, https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/shakes.htm.

¹⁶³ Holland, "Introduction," 85.

them “Labour leaders,” as previously mentioned, but the way Shakespeare wrote them makes them entirely self-serving in their supposed championship of the people against the proud patrician Coriolanus. Therefore, attempting to interpret the play’s political conflict within the simplified parameters of class warfare inevitably forces the interpreter either to, probably unsuccessfully, wrestle with the presence of the two tribunes acting as essentially enemies of both sides and of Menenius acting as a friend of both sides, or omit them entirely, thus presenting a glaringly flawed interpretation of the text for the sake of ideology. *Coriolanus* resists canonisation as a proto-Marxist work and Smirnov only shoddily concealed that resistance from those who wished to overlook it.

3.4 The Accidentally Fascist *Coriolanus*

Before moving on to the arguably successful ideological appropriative effort which took place in Nazi Germany, there is a significant incident which took place in 1933-34 Paris, where a simple revival of the play without a political intent behind it on behalf of the producers became reinterpreted by the play’s audience as sharp revolutionary commentary on a political situation the performances just happened to coincide with. The production was staged at Comédie-Française after the play was in considerable disrepute in France ever since Napoleon stopped an 1806 production, because Francois-Joseph Talma’s portrayal of Coriolanus was seen as a direct portrait of the emperor.¹⁶⁴ The production’s reviews were very positive but some, like the reviewer for the *New York Times*, already noted the surprise of the theatre company at some of the scenes receiving loud applause from the crowd, specifically those where Coriolanus admonishes the plebeians and seemingly attacks democracy as a whole.¹⁶⁵ The review also notes that the theatre management was truly surprised by this as they didn’t think the play had

¹⁶⁴ Holland, “Introduction,” 19.

¹⁶⁵ David Wheeler, *Coriolanus: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 1995), 375.

any modern political significance. However, there are three significant factors which imbued the play with the new meaning so appealing to the audience without the production's creators noticing.

The first factor is that the French theatre would not perform Shakespeare's text, but a French translation provided specifically for this production by René-Louis Piachaud. Holland postulates that Piachaud aimed to cater to present tastes with his translation and a result of that is the play losing its inherent ideological ambiguity in favour of a depiction of Coriolanus as a moral hero justified in his outbursts, and a depiction of the tribunes as villainous demagogues.¹⁶⁶ Thusly, the play's strongest defence against appropriation was removed. He also adds to this that Piachaud's theatrical rhetoric often led to actors essentially delivering slogans on stage, a form inviting a response of the audience as a mode of political participation.¹⁶⁷ The second factor would be the play's Roman setting and Roman customs internationally acquiring a new significance as a result of appropriation by fascist and nazi movements. The image of Coriolanus being welcomed upon returning triumphant from the siege of Corioli by a crowd performing the Roman salute would now echo recent images of German and Italian town squares rather than the long-gone civilisation which originated the gesture. The seeds for the play to now be viewed as a statement of support of fascism were already sowed before the production opened in December 1933, but the reason why the play's performances would eventually become notorious for the political actions of the audiences over the action taking place on stage is to be found in France's political atmosphere at the time.

French governments tended to have an almost remarkably short shelf life at the time. The Radical-Socialist Party's prime minister Édouard Daladier's government fell on October 26th after assuming their posts less than ten months earlier. The government of his successor from

¹⁶⁶ Holland, "Introduction," 20.

¹⁶⁷ Holland, "Introduction," 20.

the same party, Albert Sarraut, fell exactly a month later. Yet, the real spark which turned the atmosphere of the performances explosive would come on the 8th of January 1934 when Alexandre Stavisky was found dying of a gun wound. Stavisky was a financier with ties to prominent political figures, an embezzler put on trial for fraud in 1927 but the trial had been mysteriously getting postponed ever since and Stavisky had already been granted bail on nineteen occasions. He also happened to be a Ukrainian-born Russian Jew, thus making him a perfect target of fascist hatred. Stavisky's death would officially be ruled a suicide but a theory of it being a hit ordered as part of a cover-up would spread and only strengthen with revelations of prominent figures involved in the fraud, including some ministers. The Prime Minister Camille Chautemps would resign on the 30th of January to be once again replaced by Daladier who ordered an investigation into the Stavisky affair, but this was seen as too little by those on the right side of the political spectrum who had by now attached themselves to the conspiracy theory, which appealed to them due to both Stavisky's Jewishness and some of the other implicated figures' being Freemasons. They demanded constitutional reform and strengthening of the executive branch, as Kevin Passmore explained in *The French Right Between the Wars: Political and Intellectual Movements from Conservatism to Fascism*.¹⁶⁸ And it just so happened that those on the far right had the ideal production to attend at the Comédie-Française to show support to the image of a strong fascist leader they saw as the solution to France's political crisis while he was verbally abusing political cronies.

Over the next month, the performances of *Coriolanus* became the stage for the audience to engage in a partisan conflict which included incidents such as a riot caused by Coriolanus' anti-republican speech being interrupted by a whistle, during which the cries of "Bravo Hitler" were

¹⁶⁸ Kevin Passmore, "Anti-Southern Prejudice, and Constitutional Reform in 1930s France: The Stavisky Affair and the Riots of 6 February 1934" in *The French Right Between the Wars: Political and Intellectual Movements from Conservatism to Fascism*, ed. Samuel Kalman and Sean Kennedy (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 26.

heard.¹⁶⁹ As a result, among the steps taken by Daladier in order to strengthen his position to combat the protests in Paris was also the sacking of the director of the Comédie-Française. The situation changed radically when on the night of the 6th of February during a riot on the Place de la Concorde the police opened fire at the rioters, killing fifteen of them in the process. There have been attempts to denote the event as an attempted putsch, but historians such as Joel Colton have dismissed the possibility due to the various right-wing actors present being far too disorganised for that scenario to be plausible.¹⁷⁰ The next day, however, Daladier once again resigned, supposedly due to being frightened by the lack of support his violent response to the protests received from law enforcement and the judiciary branch.¹⁷¹ Shortly after that, also as a result of the incident, the Comédie-Française's production of *Coriolanus* was temporarily closed. The performances would resume the following month without any changes but also without any further incident, although the Parisian protests did not stop. The production would shed its connection to fascism and reacquire its identity as a politically insignificant revival entirely because the political performance which had been taking place in its audience had found a new stage elsewhere. *Coriolanus* would however not be so lucky as to escape the performative grasp of France's Nazi neighbours.

3.5 The Führer's *Coriolanus*

In Nazi Germany, the performance of plays written by British authors was strictly prohibited with the notable exception of G.B. Shaw and William Shakespeare. In Shaw's case, the reasoning behind the exemption is rather straightforward and that is that some of his plays were

¹⁶⁹ Holland, "Introduction," 21.

¹⁷⁰ Joel Colton, "Politics and Economics in the 1930s" in *From the Ancien Regime to the Popular Front*, ed. Charles K. Warner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 183.

¹⁷¹ Passmore, "Anti-Southern," 25.

deemed supportive of Nazi ideology while others would remain banned.¹⁷² The reason Shakespeare was allowed, and in fact would be the most performed author in Nazi Germany,¹⁷³ was, however, that he was already viewed not as a foreigner but a German long before the Nazi party even came to exist. The appropriation of *Coriolanus* by the Nazis, which is to be discussed in this subchapter, was in fact part of a second wave of appropriative efforts aimed at Shakespeare's work in Germany of the first half of the twentieth century. The first wave also needs mentioning if the second is to make logical sense. It occurred the first time Germany found itself in conflict with the country of origin of the ultra-popular author and therefore in need to reconcile its enjoyment of the Bard's work with its animosity for his nationality.

Although it has to be mentioned that the road to German appropriation of Shakespeare as a classic German author spans far beyond a singular moment. The author's reputation in Germany was built on the reception of the translations of his works by August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, which were viewed by some as superior to the English original.¹⁷⁴ However, it was specifically during WW1 that the Germans had to confront their adoration of an English author. This cause was spearheaded by the German Shakespeare Society. At a meeting in 1915, the president of the Society, Alois Brandl, declared Shakespeare an integral part of the German soul and that the soul of a nation could not lose what Shakespeare had become to them.¹⁷⁵ At the same meeting, another member of the society and a Nobel Prize laureate Gerhart Hauptmann both denationalised Shakespeare, by proclaiming his work to belong among those

¹⁷² Werner Habicht, "German Shakespeare, the Third Reich, and the War" in *Shakespeare and the Second World War: Memory, Culture, Identity*, ed. Irena Makaryk and Marissa McHugh (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 24.

¹⁷³ Laura M. Nelson, "Appropriating Shakespeare: *Coriolanus* as Twentieth Century Propaganda," *ResearchGate*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265625367_APPROPRIATING_SHAKESPEARE_CORIOLANUS_AS_TWEENTIETH_CENTURY_PROPOGANDA.

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, "Appropriating," https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265625367_APPROPRIATING_SHAKESPEARE_CORIOLANUS_AS_TWEENTIETH_CENTURY_PROPOGANDA.

¹⁷⁵ Rodney Symington, *Nazi Appropriation of Shakespeare: Cultural Politics in the Third Reich* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 15.

texts that belong to all humanity, such as the Bible or the works of Homer, while simultaneously declaring that Germany had done the most for Shakespeare's legacy and thus do hold a claim to national ownership of it when he stated this:

There is no nation, not even the English, that has acquired the right to claim Shakespeare as the German nation has. Shakespeare's figures are a part of our world, his soul has become one with ours: and even if he was born and is buried in England, Germany is the land where he truly lives.¹⁷⁶

It should also be noted that the Society was not just some congregation of authors and critics, but an institution with a significant monetary power which could use that monetary power to make their positions become the official positions of the state in exchange for their financial support of the war effort, which was supposedly quite sizable.¹⁷⁷ As a result, not only did Shakespeare's position in German culture not wane due to the conflict with England but became stronger, and it was this German Shakespeare the Nazis inherited upon coming to power in 1933.

The Nazi regime itself was highly performative, focused on manifesting its power and the veracity of its national narrative. Arts and education would be utilised as the ideal spheres for the spread of propaganda which can be evidenced in the artistic sphere simply by the fact that the same person, Joseph Goebbels, acted as both the minister of propaganda and the head of the Reichskulturkammer, the Reich Chamber of Culture. After his appointment, Goebbels outlined that going forward German theatres were to produce only "heroic," "steely romantic," "unsentimentally factual" and "national" drama.¹⁷⁸ Shakespeare's position in this new environment was not safe with some ready to discard him on ideological grounds but his work

¹⁷⁶ Symington, *Nazi Appropriation*, 17.

¹⁷⁷ Nelson, "Appropriating,"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265625367_APPROPRIATING_SHAKESPEARE_CORIOLANUS_AS_TWEENTIETH_CENTURY_PROPOGANDA.

¹⁷⁸ Habicht, "German Shakespeare," 22-23.

had many defenders within the Nazi regime willing to create a new narrative of Shakespeare as a Nordic visionary and Werner Habicht in a chapter on Shakespeare in the Third Reich in *Shakespeare and the Second World War: Memory, Culture, Identity* informs that *Coriolanus* was among the plays crucial to constructing this narrative as one of the two heroic plays along *Julius Caesar*.¹⁷⁹ Each of Shakespeare's plays would have its own particular fate on the Reich's stages. Some were used by prominent theatre directors, tolerated by the regime due to personal sympathies of the Nazi Party's foremost members, to stage progressive and provocative versions, others were staged as escapist entertainment, and some were eventually cast aside as anti-Nazi, most prominently *Richard III* due to an ideologically convincing staging in Switzerland by German emigrants.¹⁸⁰ Their fates were only unified when all of Shakespeare's and Shaw's works were banned for about six months in 1941 after Germany's loss in the Battle of Britain and Hitler's supposed definitive loss of belief in a potential alliance with Britain.¹⁸¹ However, *Coriolanus* is a significant exception as the play, despite its significance for the regime, did not perform its role on the German stage.

In his chapter, Habicht lists all major Shakespearean productions staged in WWII Germany, but there is not a single one of *Coriolanus*. This then leads him to also list *Coriolanus* among the plays which had fallen out of the regime's favour alongside *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and the aforementioned *Richard III*.¹⁸² He, however, provides reasons for the discarding of the other plays and none for *Coriolanus*, besides a repeated note of the play's importance for the Reich's propaganda machine. He does propose that the play would've become derided as a lesson of false leadership, a notion taken from Heinrich Heerwagen's 1936

¹⁷⁹ Habicht, "German Shakespeare," 23.

¹⁸⁰ Habicht, "German Shakespeare," 30.

¹⁸¹ Habicht, "German Shakespeare," 28.

¹⁸² Habicht, "German Shakespeare," 30.

article,¹⁸³ but that would not be an issue because Coriolanus' ultimately being a failure would not contradict the position assigned to him in the lineage of strong fascist leaders. The key to the appropriation of *Coriolanus* by the Nazi regime would not be the drawing of a direct correlation between the Roman general and Adolf Hitler but painting the dictator as the next evolutionary step of the fallen hero.

Here one encounters the issue that, unlike the Soviets did by the way of Smirnov, the Nazis did not leave behind even an attempt at definitive appropriative literary criticism of *Coriolanus*. Contemporary critics concerned with the play's, and generally Shakespeare's, appropriation by the Third Reich, such as the previously quoted Habicht, Rodney Symington¹⁸⁴ or Laura M. Nelson,¹⁸⁵ point to the major feature of Shakespeare's play being used by the Nazis and that is the image of Coriolanus as a strong leader of unmatched military skill battling an inherently corrupt democratic system. It also has to be said that the idea of democracy being inherently corrupt and corrosive is integral to fascist ideology and therefore isn't specifically a result of a reading of Shakespeare's text. Therefore, it is necessary now to turn one's analytical attention to the urtext to see to what degree such a framework is applicable to it. The first target of said attention should be the protagonist before turning to evaluating the potency of claims about the world he exists in.

It is undeniable that Coriolanus is depicted as the paragon of military skill, which is both repeatedly said and also shown in his solitary attack on Corioli. The suggestion, however, that Coriolanus' image dispersed by the Third Reich was dependant on his strong leadership opens a hole in their interpretation by the way of a character detail not yet encountered by any of the

¹⁸³ Heinrich Heerwagen, "Shakespeares *Coriolanus* als Beitrag zur Führerfrage," *Politische Erziehung: Monatsschrift des NS-Lehrerbundes* (1936): 241-7.

¹⁸⁴ Symington, *Nazi Appropriation*, 160.

¹⁸⁵ Nelson, "Appropriating,"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265625367_APPROPRIATING_SHAKESPEARE_CORIOLANUS_AS_TWENTIETH_CENTURY_PROPOGANDA.

other interpreters and that is that despite his position of leadership, Coriolanus is not much of a leader at all. In fact, even his most heroic act performed in the play, his single-handed attack on Corioli, is essentially a result of his failure as a leader to make his subordinates follow him. A direct comparison to this scene offers itself in the form of the siege of Harfleur from *Henry V*, Henry's rousing speech and its effect,¹⁸⁶ and Coriolanus does not come out of that comparison looking like a strong and capable leader. Coriolanus is an individualist who fails to appeal to his subordinates because they are not motivated by the same sense of duty and heroic honour as he is and that is the only mentality he knows how to appeal to by provoking it. Although he has a faction of sympathisers in Rome, it would once again be a reach to claim that he is their leader, as they seem more inclined to his side on the basis of belonging to the same class. It is only once Coriolanus allies with the warrior society that are the Volsces, that he is mentioned to have acquired loyal followers among Aufidius' men.¹⁸⁷ That can easily be interpreted as his finally getting to lead men with similar philosophy of a soldier's duty rather than improving his leadership skills. Claiming that Coriolanus is not much of a leader at all, however, makes it necessary to also address the fact that the integral event of the play's political plot is his unsuccessful bid for a position of leadership.

This is where Coriolanus' adherence to duty becomes highly relevant again. Although consulship was the highest political position in the Roman republic, military accomplishments would sometimes be crucial in attaining it, to the point of being a reason to overlook a candidate's inadequacies in other areas. Take as evidence of this that Pompey the Great was elected consul despite not even being old enough to be eligible for the post on the back of ending Spartacus' slave revolt in 71 BC.¹⁸⁸ That sort of military opportunism is entirely foreign to

¹⁸⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry V*, (Project Gutenberg, 2022), 3.1, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1521/pg1521-images.html>.

¹⁸⁷ *Coriolanus*, 5.6.23-25.

¹⁸⁸ H.H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133 BC to AD 68* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2021): 80.

Coriolanus who lives to serve. His service has earned him promotions to positions of leaderships that he is increasingly unfit for as he is merely a model soldier, not a military nor a civil leader. The question whom would he aim to please were he to serve as the republic's consul is quite likely accurately identified by the disgruntled citizens to be his mother.¹⁸⁹ While her son is a model soldier, she is a model Roman perfect for a military and political career in all but her sex. This leads to a critical evaluation of her, such as the one presented by Edel Semple in a guest lecture at Charles University in 2022,¹⁹⁰ as a mother using her son as a mere proxy to vicariously climb up the state hierarchy through. The play, however, depicts the exact instant when that proxy reached its limit in the Roman hierarchy. Volumnia's command over her son was not stronger than his rage, which caused him to lose a virtually already won position, fuelled by his hatred for the plebeians. This is the point to transition on towards confronting the other feature of his character promoted by the Nazis, his supposed opposition to the democratic system.

The truth of the matter is that an opposition to a democratic system is far too nuanced of an aim for Coriolanus who divides people into whom he should honour and whom he should defeat. He himself is incapable of functioning within the system due to its performative features, as shown by the showing of wounds ceremony. He is not a character likely to devise a manifesto about the shortcomings of democracy, certainly not in its early stages when the vast majority of power is still in the hands of the patricians and the plebeians' participation is highly limited. Afterall, Coriolanus is in open conflict with the plebeians, and the Nazis did not hide this feature of his character in their treatment of him. Therefore, were one to determine what type of government would possibly be ideal in Coriolanus' view, it would likely be an aristocratic oligarchy, far from what the Nazis promoted as ideal. After his banishment, Coriolanus turns

¹⁸⁹ *Coriolanus*, 1.1.33-7

¹⁹⁰ Edel Semple, "Shakespeare's 'Badass Mothers' on Screen," May 3 2022, Faculty of Arts of Charles University.

against all of Rome, admittedly due to his binary view of the world as either allies or enemies, but it is his perceived betrayal by the other patricians that could potentially be used to support the fascist interpretation of his subsequent campaign as an attempt to dismantle a rotten democracy. Coriolanus and Aufidius, however, talk of it as an ingratitude shown to loyalty, a violation of an unwritten military code more than a political failure.¹⁹¹ There are certainly holes in the portrait of a great leader opposed to the corrupting democracy that the Third Reich wanted to paint of Coriolanus, which might become even more puzzling once it is discovered they considered the moral of the story to be the importance of popular support.

When dealing with a fascist regime, one automatically finds themselves in an environment of paradoxes, as the fascist is always presented as inherently stronger than the rest but at the same time perpetually victimised by those weaker than him. If one omits most details of the events in the play, what happens to Coriolanus seems to fit that framework of Rome's best being brought down by the lowliest political schemers. The idea of the play's events is far more important to this appropriation effort than the play itself, hence why it wasn't prominently staged perhaps. Nelson writes of how that idea was important in crafting Hitler's image as a leader, his being described as the next evolutionary step in great leadership, one who matches the Roman general in all his heroism but is also beloved by the people. It is their love that makes him invincible.¹⁹² It should perhaps be noted here that in his criticism of the play, Wyndham Lewis called Coriolanus a failed Nietzschean in that he posed as better than everybody else but was still desperate for their sympathies.¹⁹³ Lewis' vision of Coriolanus is one which fits the role of the delusional Führer's progenitor better than the tragic soldier of Shakespeare's text.

¹⁹¹ *Coriolanus*, 4.5.67-148.

¹⁹² Symington, *Nazi Appropriation*, 161.

¹⁹³ Lewis, *The Lion*, 238-41.

Nonetheless, it is the heroic proto-Hitler, a Roman hero of German spirit, that the Nazi propaganda machine entered into the German consciousness. Nelson also writes of the play's important role in the Third Reich's education as schoolchildren would be indoctrinated with the image of the play's protagonist as a hero whose qualities to aspire to and whose one significant flaw to avoid, as well as with the protagonist's connection to the nation's leader.¹⁹⁴ Ultimately, one could say that whether one's attempted ideological appropriation is successful is dependent on whether they possess enough political power to make it so. This would leave Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia as the only countries that ever had a chance to appropriate the play successfully, but Russia was merely interested in making their enjoyment of Shakespeare guilt-free rather than to truly make an effort to make his work a part of their regime like the Nazis did. It is irrelevant that the interpretation of the play they built their appropriation on is among the most surface-level ones of those so far encountered in this thesis. Although, it is true that the Nazis successfully appropriated essentially all of Shakespeare for the twelve years they were in power and therefore it should perhaps be no wonder that their interpretation being faulty did not prevent them from appropriating *Coriolanus* too. Still, essentially no one would now say that Shakespeare was a fascist. Yet, *Coriolanus* is still marred by that perception in popular discourse.

When scouring the internet for reviews of recent productions of the play, one finds that some of them, including the *New York Observer* review of a 2005 Karin Coonrod-directed production¹⁹⁵ and a *New York Times* article tied to the release of the 2012 Ralph Fiennes-directed film,¹⁹⁶ which is to be discussed in the final section of this thesis, also function as a

¹⁹⁴ Nelson, "Appropriating,"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265625367_APPROPRIATING_SHAKESPEARE_CORIOLANUS_AS_TWENTIETH_CENTURY_PROPOGANDA.

¹⁹⁵ John Heilpern, "Shakespeare's Least-Loved Play; But This *Coriolanus* Stands Apart," *New York Observer*, February 25, 2005, <https://observer.com/2005/02/shakespeares-leastloved-play-but-this-coriolanus-stands-apart/>.

¹⁹⁶ Ruth Franklin, "Revisiting Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus,'" *New York Times* January 20, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/magazine/revisiting-shakespeares-coriolanus.html>.

defence of the play, addressing the implied belief that the play is in some way extremist. Although these articles insist on such interpretations being misapprehensions, reading them further reveals how inseparable from the idea of military dictatorship has the play's protagonist become. In fact, *Coriolanus* seems to have received a new afterlife in lousy political analogies made by people barely familiar with the play. Ruth Franklin, the author of the *New York Times* article, mentions that comparisons to Coriolanus were used against Barack Obama when he appeared elitist during the 2008 campaign. Similarly, one of the first results Google provides to those searching for "Coriolanus + politics" is a strategic communications & leadership advisor-authored opinion piece on Donald Trump's 2016 candidacy,¹⁹⁷ painting both Trump and Coriolanus as unapologetic despots. One would be hard-pressed to find any similarities between Shakespeare's stern and honest-to-a-fault soldier and a draft-dodging reality tv star, other than they both make for bad leaders. What becomes apparent from contemporary pieces of popular discourse surrounding the play is that WWII did irreparable damage to the play's reputation, leading to its primarily being approached as the story of a military authoritarian.

Perhaps, one could point to the banning of the play in the US-controlled section of post-war Germany as the supposed verifying factor of the presupposition of the play's authoritarian nature. To that point, it should be noted that the play was in low repute in American academic discourse since before the war, as can be evidenced by the work of Hazelton Spencer¹⁹⁸ and Elmer Edgar Stoll.¹⁹⁹ In the United States, the play's supposed ties to fascism have even been used in promotion of its productions, enticing audiences to witness a controversial play. Most recent example of this can be found in promotional material for a 2017 American Shakespeare Center production, where Coriolanus is described as "what we would today call a fascist

¹⁹⁷ Scott Monty, "What's Past Is Prologue: Coriolanus and Trump," February 28, 2016.

<https://scottmonty.medium.com/what-s-past-is-prologue-coriolanus-and-trump-5c99d8eb6a6e>.

¹⁹⁸ Hazelton Spencer, *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare* (New York: Harcourt, 1940), 346-9.

¹⁹⁹ Elmer Edgar Stoll, *Shakespeare and Other Masters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 37-8.

hero.”²⁰⁰ Even on stages one would expect to be unaffected by the fascist appropriation of the character, such as that of the 1959 Royal Shakespeare Company production with Laurence Olivier in the titular role, one which prominent theatre critic Michael Billington recalled to have greatly humanised the protagonist,²⁰¹ did the play get tied to the connection drawn between the character and 20th century dictators. The highly celebrated 1959 production is specifically being mentioned because it ended with Coriolanus dying hanging upside down in a manner explicitly evoking the death of Benito Mussolini. Although, on textual basis, fascism’s claim that the text was somehow supportive of the ideology of strong leaders dismantling corrosive democracies was rather void, it has become accepted that that is an aspect the text inherently carries. In this way, a demand is retroactively placed on Shakespeare to express his opinion on a situation he likely never perceived arising and the play is judged as that expression. A question then arises of how appropriators and adaptors of the post-war era would pursue reappropriating the play for their ideological commentary once it was deemed authoritarian in nature.

²⁰⁰ “Coriolanus,” *American Shakespeare Center*, <https://americanshakespearecenter.com/events/coriolanus-2017/>.

²⁰¹ Michael Billington, “Hail, Coriolanus! The greatness of Shakespeare’s shape-shifting epic,” *The Guardian*, March 5, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/mar/05/coriolanus-shakespeare-laurence-olivier-ralph-fiennes-ian-mckellan>.

4. *Coriolanus* from World War II until Now

4.1 Bertolt Brecht's *Coriolanus*

The first adaptor to sink their teeth into *Coriolanus* after World War II was Bertolt Brecht who started working on his version in 1950. The German playwright and theatre director first read the play in 1917²⁰² but only turned to adapting it after the play's protagonist's transformation into a symbol of authoritarianism and the play's banning in West Germany. His efforts, however, did not lead to a Brecht-directed production of the adaptation as, at the time of his death in 1956, he left behind only an unfinished playtext and an analytical dialogue about adapting the play, "Study of the First Scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*." Brecht's theatre company, the Berliner Ensemble, would eventually stage supposedly Brecht's version of *Coriolanus* in 1964, but the true authors of that production were Manfred Wekwerth and Joachim Tenschert. Yet, it would still be treated as Brecht's by some theatre critics of the time. It is specifically in a *Daily Telegraph* review of the production where William Aubrey Darlington states a crucial thought, that Brecht's "adaptation" of Shakespeare could more honestly be called a "contradiction."²⁰³ Brecht does indeed stand out among the adaptors so far encountered as he does adapt and appropriate Shakespeare's narrative and, at many sections, language for his purposes, but he shows no interest in appropriating the author himself. The relationship between Brecht's *Coriolanus* and Shakespeare's is that of two works of art in direct cross-generational argument. Brecht's *Coriolanus* can be viewed as the ideal resolution of the political predicament presented by Shakespeare and then reproduced through over three hundred years of theatrical tradition, specifically in the view of mid-20th century leftist political ideology. It also has to be acknowledged, that there seems to be no source carrying information on how the play would have been staged. As a result, one can only speculate how Brecht's staging practices would have

²⁰² Bertolt Brecht, *Letters, 1913-1956* (Milton Park: Routledge, 1990), 23.

²⁰³ W.A. Darlington, *The Daily Telegraph*, August 12, 1965.

influenced the playtext. The play does however correspond to the epic theatre's strategy of depicting historical narratives in a way that draws connection to the present. The playtext itself reads as an unsubtle demonstrative lecture of how things ought to be rather than as having the function of illuminating the world as is, which Brechtian epic theatre is usually assigned. Instead, the playtext is one side of a discourse with the adapted text, specifically a rejection of Shakespeare's premise, which Brecht identified as hinging on an individual's perceived indispensability to a society that individual disdains.²⁰⁴ The same situation that leads to personal tragedy in Shakespeare's presented worldview, culminates in collective triumph in Brecht's.

The last thing remaining to do prior to further analysing Brecht's iconoclastic adaptation of Shakespeare, as it would be classified under Julie Sanders' terminology,²⁰⁵ is recounting what of the Bard's play was kept intact: An uprising over the price of corn is being subdued by Martius, who is disdainful of the masses; it is ended by the outbreak of war with the Volsces; Martius through his heroism in battling the Volsces and gaining Corioli for Rome earns the name Coriolanus (the battle is the only part entirely missing from the playtext as Brecht wanted to figure the staging of it out during rehearsals which never took place,²⁰⁶ it is only spoken about in retrospect), Coriolanus runs for consulship on the back of his military success but his refusal to show his wounds to the plebeians leads to him being charged with treason by the people's tribunes; Coriolanus is banished and joins the Volsces and leads them alongside his previously arch-rival Aufidius on Rome, Coriolanus relents in his campaign for revenge following a visit by his family; Aufidius kills Coriolanus.

²⁰⁴ Bertolt Brecht, "Study of the First Scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*" in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New Delhi: Radha Krishna, 1978),

<https://ia601601.us.archive.org/14/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.150164/2015.150164.Brecht-On-Theatre.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ Sanders, *Adaptation*, 59.

²⁰⁶ Bertolt Brecht, "Coriolanus" in *Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays, Volume 9*, ed. Ralph Manheim and Joe Willett (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 70.

4.1.1 The Hero Does Not Matter

What should become apparent from the presented list of story beats left unchanged is that Brecht appropriates the character of Coriolanus and what he experiences relatively unchanged. The characters that do receive significant transformation are the tribunes, Menenius, Cominius and the citizens of Rome. However, their evolution, especially that of the people, is not a mere result of the author's choice but a result of the evolution of the political system and environment they exist in. And it is the evolution of Roman society which takes prevalence over the fate of the play's titular hero, thus rendering the story far from tragic as Rome ultimately triumphs. In somewhat simplified terms, Brecht's *Coriolanus* presents a situation in which a Shakespearian character is forced to inhabit a world which grows increasingly Brechtian and progressively loses all of his might and relevance in it. The focus is progressively taken away from Coriolanus' psyche and personality in favour of his position of the supposedly indispensable individual, a position which is ultimately not needed in a truly collectivist society. And this argument of Brecht's is being openly formulated since the play's opening scene, even though it technically takes place in the same environment as Shakespeare's.

That said, there are already significant alterations made to the first scene that make it distinctly Brecht's. There is the addition of the Man with the Child, a citizen resolved on leaving Rome rather than joining the revolt, who can be lectured on the importance of fighting for a better future for his offspring by the First Citizen,²⁰⁷ as well as the transformation of Menenius into a character close to how Smirnov described him in Shakespeare, a man who attempts to manipulate the citizens with his oratory skills. He arguably has a measure of success as evidenced by his introduction as having "a weakness for the people," while showing contempt for them as soon as he is backed by Martius and his men.²⁰⁸ This new Menenius helps in

²⁰⁷ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 60.

²⁰⁸ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 60-3.

enforcing a point Brecht and his collaborators made in the study of Shakespeare's opening scene, that this is an environment where implied inherent superiority of some over others is gained and maintained through might.²⁰⁹ None of these changes, however, influences Martius, in that the character lifted from Shakespeare is not required to react to the non-Shakespearean environment he is now placed in. Yet, the revolutionary force which will eventually force him to do so also arises in this scene.

In Shakespeare's play, the establishment of the office of people's tribunes does come as a result of the revolt, but it is quickly overshadowed by the news of war with the Volsces. Brecht makes sure to highlight the success the revolt had even if the ire of the people was quickly transferred to the foreign power whose corn could be made theirs.²¹⁰ This corresponds with Mao Zedong's *On Contradiction*, as Brecht claims in his study of the first scene,²¹¹ as a new dominant contradiction being established between Rome and the Volsces forces the resolution of the conflict between the Roman social classes. That in turn leads to the establishment of the office of the tribunes. Brecht's tribunes then proceed to prove themselves to be a revolutionary force for societal change and far removed from the schemers of Shakespeare's text but that would not necessarily be obvious in the first scene. The difference that would probably be rather obvious to anyone with knowledge of both texts is that Brecht's tribunes are certainly fully of the people, unlike Shakespeare's. In fact, in the study of Shakespeare's opening scene, Brecht and his collaborators discuss the possibility of merging the characters of the opening scene's First Citizen and the elder of the two tribunes, Sicinius.²¹² Thusly, Coriolanus is to face a new form of domestic opposition, one established as a result of a revolt from the same people who revolted

²⁰⁹ Brecht, "Study," 258.

²¹⁰ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 65-7.

²¹¹ Brecht, "Study," 261-2.

²¹² Brecht, "Study," 259.

and have therefore been shown to possess social consciousness. And it is in that clash that the adaptation starts significantly diverging from the adapted text.

The world the central character inhabits may seem unchanged until the ceremonial showing of the wounds. After his tricking of the people into electing him without having seen his wounds, the tribunes demand to question Coriolanus on “his program and his general opinions.”²¹³ Menenius, being truly a snivelling bootlicker of Coriolanus’ in Brecht’s version, protests this due to it not being mentioned in the charter, but the tribunes dismiss his protestation on the basis that their very presence is not mentioned in said charter. This is a clear signal to the patricians of the city that the establishment of the tribunate, possibly done as a mere gesture, will have severe societal consequences due to the characters of the men filling that position. The mere public confrontation of Coriolanus distances Brecht’s Brutus and Sicinius from Shakespeare’s schemers who would only muster the courage to openly oppose the patrician after secretly raising a mob and instructing them as to how to behave in a way which would not implicate them in the act.²¹⁴ Coriolanus, whose claim to consulship is built entirely on military successes, then proceeds to completely discredit himself in front of the assembled plebeians due to his refusal to hide his disdain for them in favour of attaining a position of power. Yet, although the setting and audience might be different, the act itself is not that different from the one in Shakespeare.

Coriolanus is still the titular character, and ostensibly the central one, but the text seems to be far less interested in his fate than in the evolution of the city state of Rome. Coriolanus functions as the primary actor to whom the Roman populace reacts in its development, but it is arguably that reaction that is more central to the text than the Shakespearian character that caused it. After all, he was the target of the initial revolt which gave rise to the tribunes as people’s

²¹³ Brecht, “Coriolanus,” 99.

²¹⁴ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 2.3.171-260.

champions²¹⁵ and their first significant act was to adjust the political system in a way which would prohibit individuals with tyrannical tendencies, such as Coriolanus manifests, from assuming the highest political office. Were the adaptational analysis to focus on Coriolanus, there would be no significant change to his story from Shakespeare's version until the visitation of his camp by the Roman women. It is in that scene that the indispensable soldier towering above all of Rome of Shakespeare's play is finally made to confront the reality that he has been stripped of his indispensability in a Rome transformed in Brecht's vision.

It has to be noted that Brecht's vision of a Rome without Coriolanus is somewhat utopic. Brecht kept a scene of Act IV oftentimes omitted by adaptors in which otherwise irrelevant Roman and Volscian meet to discuss recent developments in Rome and Antium,²¹⁶ and to deliver exposition to the audience, but he replaced the spy and scout of the original with two craftsmen on their way to try offer their services in the two respective opposing cities. It is therefore here that the audience would learn that, somehow, the banishment of Coriolanus resulted in an increased freedom of mobility to and from Rome.²¹⁷ The tribunes then in their next scene inform the audience that, since Coriolanus' departure, one could hear "bakers, ropers, sandal-/Makers all singing at their work."²¹⁸ These claims read as propagandist writing and it is never explained how the banishment of one man resulted in such societal change which would turn the starving mob of the first act into this idyllically satisfied citizenry, beyond the somewhat secondary suggestion that the tribunes have been fulfilling their role as a shield from the patricians. Yet, in a way, these changes to the Roman society do not need to be expanded on because they're not that significant to the central conflict between the people of Rome and the city's champion who hates them. It is more so that the sense of improvement having taken place is needed to

²¹⁵ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 59.

²¹⁶ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.3.

²¹⁷ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 119-20.

²¹⁸ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 125.

understand the changes to the conduct of the Roman populace when faced with the direct threat of a sacking at the hands of Coriolanus and Aufidius.

While Coriolanus awaits the surrender of Rome to be signalled by smoke from the Capitol, and the patrician characters attempt to plea with the banished soldier as they did in Shakespeare, the tribunes issue a command for the civilians of the city to be armed.²¹⁹ Then, once Menenius fails to sway Coriolanus in a humiliating way befitting this snivelling version of the character,²²⁰ the patricians of the city hide in their estates while the plebeians are volunteering to defend the city.²²¹ Notably, Cominius, being a commander of the Roman forces, joins Brutus and Sicinius in preparation of the city's defences in this scene, which brings to mind Brecht's and his collaborators' discussion of how to stage the opening scene in a way which would signify solidarity between the plebeians, many of whom might've served in the army in their time, and those serving currently.²²² The class division is made rather crystal clear here with the parasitic patricians protecting only themselves without any real loyalty to their own city while those who have been abused in order for the patricians to maintain their lifestyles are ready to possibly lose their lives in Rome's defence. The reason for this willingness is the improvement in the living conditions of the plebeians which came with the establishment of the office of the people's tribunes and with the banishment of the would-be tyrant. Brutus specifically states he has been told by many that with Coriolanus gone, Rome is "a city worth defending/Perhaps for the first time since it was founded."²²³ The absence of a character such as the Man with Child of the play's opening scene who would rather escape the city at the time of crisis than risk his life for its betterment should also be marked as a subtextual proof of this statement. Coriolanus,

²¹⁹ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 133-4.

²²⁰ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 134-6.

²²¹ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 137.

²²² Brecht, "Study," 262.

²²³ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 138.

however, can't possibly have any awareness of such a change having taken place in the city, but he is about to be informed about it by his mother.

Compared to Shakespeare, Brecht is generally far more economic with his language, usually preserving of Shakespeare's dialogue what is needed for the sake of the plot's progression and exposition while expanding it when there is a political point to be made. Nowhere is this more felt than during the Roman women's visitation of the Volscian camp. What is the emotional pinnacle of Shakespeare's conflict during which the model soldier is swayed from his campaign of revenge by his mother at the cost of his life, is quite sped through in Brecht's version. Any pleas Coriolanus' family could have made are, after all, secondary now to this information delivered by Volumnia to her son:

... The Rome you will be marching on
Is very different from the Rome you left.
You are no longer indispensable
Merely a deadly threat to all. Don't expect
To see submissive smoke. If you see smoke
It will be rising from the smithies forging
Weapons to fight you who, to subject your
Own people, have submitted to your enemy.
And we, the proud nobility of Rome
Must owe the rabble our salvation from the
Volscians, or owe the Volscians our
Salvation from the rabble. ...²²⁴

There is no longer a need to plea with Coriolanus because he's been stripped of his exceptionality by the means of uniting the plebeians of Rome into a functioning symbiotic collective. Coriolanus is no longer the one figure in the play deciding everyone's fate due to his superior martial prowess. He is not being overcome by his mother in this scene anymore as he is only being informed of having been bested by Rome. As such, Volumnia doesn't leave her final meeting with her son triumphant either.

²²⁴ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 142.

Interestingly enough, Brecht ended the scene with Coriolanus' exclamation of "O mother, mother! What have you done?"²²⁵ The lamentations of a son sentenced to death by his mother's actions ring anachronistic in Brecht's version because his Volumnia has done virtually nothing during the runtime of the play. There is in fact no character who would lose more of their significance than her and that is because, by the time her moment to act came, the significance of her entire social class had diminished. As mentioned in her previously quoted speech, the oligarchic lifestyles of the Roman patricians were already over no matter the outcome of Coriolanus' invasion. Had Rome prevailed, the patricians were already having their power limited by the plebeians' representatives, and were the Volscians to win, the patricians would become subservient to a foreign power. This also echoes how the two tribunes evaluated the play's first conflict between the two powers.²²⁶ Both mother and son leave their final scene defeated as there is no triumph awaiting Volumnia and Coriolanus is killed by Aufidius as per usual,²²⁷ but in a colder fashion than in other versions as Brecht allowed him to fail the Volscians completely, without any profitable peace treaty, while also barring him from forming an intimate friendship with Aufidius. And to further underline that, for Brecht, Coriolanus wasn't the main focus of the play named after him, his death is not this adaptation's final scene.

The final scene is instead entirely of Brecht's design and depicts the events that take place in the Roman senate upon learning of Coriolanus' death. The tribunes end the play by denying Menenius' motion to inscribe Coriolanus' name in the capitol to commemorate his heroism, as well as the request of Coriolanus' family to wear mourning in public for ten months.²²⁸ In this way, they refuse to let him be thought of as anything else than a traitor and an enemy of the people. This is also indicative of Brecht's attitude towards the Shakespearean protagonist. As

²²⁵ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 142.

²²⁶ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 85.

²²⁷ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 145.

²²⁸ Brecht, "Coriolanus," 146.

mentioned before, the character of Coriolanus survived the adaptation process largely unchanged, meaning he did carry over all of his complexities that drew many of the Bard's play's interpreters and adaptors into an exploration of the character as to how does such a man come to be and how to judge the morality of his actions. Yet, the people's tribunes, Brecht's tool previously used to form his ideal society on stage, strike both his martial prowess and his private life from Rome's, and presumably the audience's, memory.

Understandably, one must take into account that Brecht started working on the adaptation just five years after the end of World War II. Coriolanus, the indispensable Roman, came to be identified during that period with those self-proclaimed *Übermenschen* that brought it on by placing themselves into the role of the only possible saviours of their nations whose only ways to survival and prosperity was through domination of foreign enemies. The rise of these fascist movements with their glorified leaders is also seen by many historians, such as Renzo De Felice as expressed in his book *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice*,²²⁹ by the upper classes' exclusion and disfranchisement of the lower classes. Therefore, Brecht presents an ideal society which would prevent any such would-be tyrants from emerging. Over the events of the play, and under the guidance of their tribunes, the plebeians learn of the strength their numbers give them against the supposedly inherently superior patricians and their financial and military power. It is due to this strength that Rome is no longer in need of a singular figure in position of the state's chief protector who would be able to abuse his station to fully subjugate those he is meant to protect for his own means. Herein lies Brecht's rejection of Shakespeare's premise, as Shakespeare's narrative hinges on the perceived superiority of Coriolanus and puts it in contrast with his flaws, dealing with their nature, origin and the tragic fate they lead to. Brecht meanwhile solved the conundrum he was presented with by

²²⁹ Renzo De Felice, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1976), 71.

Shakespeare by outright dismantling the notion that any one individual should be allowed to have a position of superiority over a community, with their character being irrelevant to this statement. That is why Coriolanus' other deeds and roles in life are all to be undone by his campaign against Rome in the collective memory. There is to be no fascination with his skills and character, only the condemnation of the harm he's done to the people, as should perhaps be done with all dictators according to Brecht.

4.1.2 The Afterlife of Brecht's *Coriolanus*

For a short amount of time, Brecht's version of *Coriolanus* became an ur-text to be responded to as well, particularly among German-speaking left-wing intellectuals. As previously mentioned, Brecht's *Coriolanus* would be staged by the Berliner Ensemble only some eight years after the man's death, but it was still staged under the pretence of being his. Peter Holland goes into detail as to how the politics of the 1964 production were distinctly its directors', Wekwerth's and Tenschert's, and in fact signalled a departure in the Ensemble's output from the ideology of its deceased founder.²³⁰ In this way, they helped Brecht on his way to being "the best representative of a well-developed socialist culture," which is how the powers that be of Eastern Germany would depict him.²³¹ They introduced many attention-grabbing changes to the play from the playtext left behind by Brecht such as making the revolt of the opening scene a sit-in protest or naming each character to ensure their personhood, while the tribunes were restored into the relatively minor schemers compared to the revolutionary force Brecht had them be. Therefore, although they are now named, the people lose the strength Brecht had them find. But perhaps their most significant change is that, unlike Brecht, they did modify the

²³⁰ Holland, "Introduction," 122-3.

²³¹ Marc Silberman, "Recent Brecht Reception in East Germany (GDR)," *Theatre Journal* 32, no. 1 (1980): 95, JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207245>.

character of the titular figure by subduing his rage to make him distinctly theirs. The dialogue Brecht's playtext led with Shakespeare about his protagonist was interrupted and replaced by a dialogue between the Berliner Ensemble's directors and their significantly more radical predecessor. They created a hybrid which would still be recognisably socialist, but they also restored so much of the originally adapted text that it may appear as a reprimand of Brecht for over-politicising what is still an Elizabethan tragedy in nature.

In contrast to this, there is Günter Grass' response to Brecht's adaptation which adversely criticises him for not being radical enough in his real life which makes his *Coriolanus* a monument to his hypocrisy. This criticism came in the form of a 1966 play titled *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* which depicts a Brecht stand-in named "The Boss" rehearsing his *Coriolanus* while the East German uprising of 1953 takes place. Construction workers, with whose strike the uprising started, burst into the theatre in hopes of gaining his influential help, because his plays would indicate him to be "a friend of the people."²³² However, all The Boss does is mine the workers' lived experiences of the uprising for the sake of his own play before ultimately denying the workers active support, leaving them to their fate of suppression by Soviet tanks. The play was also accompanied by a preface in the form of an address Grass delivered to the Berlin Academy of Arts and Letters in 1964, prior to the premiere of Berliner Ensemble's *Coriolanus*, on the occasion of Shakespeare's 400th birthday titled "The Prehistory and Posthistory of the Tragedy of *Coriolanus* from Livy and Plutarch via Shakespeare to Brecht and Myself." Although the address offers somewhat of an overview of what aspects of the story came from which of the two ancient historians and what might have informed the adaptational changes that Shakespeare made, the majority of the address²³³ is a criticism of Brecht's adaptational failure, in Grass' view, and it ends with the announcement of Grass' intention to

²³² Günter Grass, *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), xxxiv.

²³³ Grass, *Plebeians*, xv-xxxiii.

write *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*. In his critique, Grass goes through Shakespeare's and Brecht's play nearly scene by scene and makes each of them a piece of evidence of Brecht's version being inferior due to factors such as loss of beauty of language, of subtlety and of humour, all for the sake of his didactics. Grass, essentially, used the occasion of the 400th birthday of perhaps the most celebrated dramatist in human history to ensure another won't be as celebrated as him.

In fact, both the Berliner Ensemble's *Coriolanus* and Grass' *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* function as denouncements of one of the most influential figures of theatre of the first half of the 20th century. That is why, despite their being Shakespearean in nature, there isn't much sense to analysing them within this thesis as an adaptation of Shakespeare. Brecht might have achieved for a period of time a placement in the hierarchy of literary greats parallel to that of Shakespeare, but, unlike the Bard who became the subject of centuries of bardolatry, the literary descendants and contemporaries of Brecht's devoted concentrated effort to strip him of such position in the eyes of the public. Yet, it is striking that Wekwerth, Tenschert and Grass all chose *Coriolanus* to be the means to do that, although for completely different reasons. Perhaps, there is more than little relevance to Peter Holland's point that there are similarities between the fictional Roman general and the German playwright due to their existence in a space between defined parties their nature doesn't allow them to fully join.²³⁴ Wekwerth and Tenschert have Brecht become milder in order to fit the image of him presented by the Eastern German regime while Grass mocks him for only pretending to be radical in his writing while remaining personally inactive.

²³⁴ Holland, "Introduction," 128-9.

4.2 John Osborne's *A Place Calling Itself Rome*

A curious space in the canon of adaptations of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* is obeyed by John Osborne's never produced play *A Place Calling Itself Rome* which was rejected by thirty producers and directors for a multitude of official reasons²³⁵ before the playtext was published in 1973. The major issue in dealing with this play within this essay is that although the play is certainly concerned with politics, to analyse the play will always lead to analysing the character of its author at the time of writing, as Peter Holland also found to be the case.²³⁶ One might attempt to assign the play to ideological movements but that will ultimately always be a foolish effort which would be attempting to ignore the play's true central motif, blind rage. And the fact, that this rage should not be interpreted as belonging to the play's protagonist, although he is rageful in the adapted text, is that even the stage directions of the play are filled with it. The text possesses a certain air of authorial delight on each occasion when someone is to be verbally abused and unusual insults are to be thought of, especially if Coriolanus is the one doing the abusing as he does in the battle of Corioli.²³⁷ Yet, the play's rage is to a degree political and therefore should be discussed as such, and the play also introduces features which function as foreshadowing for the final phase of adaptations of *Coriolanus* to be discussed in this thesis. Its inclusion is therefore necessary.

Before that, however, it is also necessary to note that *A Place Calling Itself Rome* is just a weak play, especially when treated in comparison to Shakespeare. Peter Holland also notes this, writing that perhaps the real reason why Osborne's adaptation was passed on by so many in the industry is because he ultimately constantly flattens Shakespeare's language with his attempt at using a supposedly modern idiomatic language, thus producing a rather uninteresting retelling

²³⁵ John Heilpern, *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 376.

²³⁶ Holland, "Introduction," 131.

²³⁷ John Osborne, *A Place Calling Itself Rome* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), 28.

of the story of the Roman general.²³⁸ Furthermore, it should be also noted that, even in isolation, the play possesses significant flaws. Perhaps most noticeable is its introduction of new plot points to the story in early scenes only for them to never be followed up on in the rest of the text as Osborne later stuck more closely to the events of the adapted play. The second scene of Osborne's play, which is the adaptation of Shakespeare's first, the same scene Brecht published a study of, is truly emblematic of this issue. During it, the mob is confusingly depicted as supporters of Aufidius,²³⁹ a foreign military officer leading campaigns against all of Rome and not just Martius. It is even mentioned that the tribunes might be inclined to organise marches to support the Volscians, making them appear like a subjugated minority rather than an independent foreign power. The price of corn, i.e., the burning issue that sparks the revolt in other versions, is vaguely replaced by unemployment and over-taxation,²⁴⁰ and there are also heavy hints included in the scene that Martius is not likely to deal well with being a subordinate to Cominius and they might get into a conflict with each other.²⁴¹ None of these points are elaborated on again in the play with Aufidius reverting into a foreign enemy, the people are left complaining without a defined direct cause, and the relationship between the current consul Cominius and his general is left identical to Shakespeare's version of it. The result is a frustrating retelling of a familiar story which was perhaps originally intended to contain new intriguing dynamics only for the author to seemingly give up on them.

The last weakness of the play is one which paradoxically makes it a significant predecessor of adaptations and productions of Shakespeare's play to come, and that is Osborne's modernisation of the play's setting. Osborne applies his idea to modernise the setting rather haphazardly, but the depthlessness of it is admittedly mostly harmless as there is not much difference between

²³⁸ Holland, "Introduction," 130.

²³⁹ Osborne, *A Place*, 14.

²⁴⁰ Osborne, *A Place*, 18.

²⁴¹ Osborne, *A Place*, 23.

Rome facing the threat of getting burned down and the threat of being bombarded. Similarly, the inclusion of news teams into public scenes is also without a consequence, beyond increasing the numbers of the play's cast. In other instances, the results of the attempted modernisation can be somewhat comical. For example, the wounds Coriolanus received in the service of his country are turned into bullet wounds specifically, and the fact that Coriolanus has therefore been shot twenty-eight times according to Osborne makes him appear like a predecessor of characters from the works of Guy Ritchie, such as Bullet Tooth Tony or Boris "The Blade/Bullet Dodger" from *Snatch*.²⁴² In worst case scenarios, however, the modernising changes can be outright damaging to the scenes they affect. To demonstrate this as clearly as possible, one should look to Osborne's version of the crucial ceremonial showing of the wounds.

Firstly, there is no ritual importance to the event and there is not even any need for Coriolanus to show his wounds. That eliminates the entire aspect of the scene where Coriolanus tries to avoid having to prostitute his deeds and inner life for the sake of a political office while still having to not antagonise the plebeians to the point of refusing him their voices. Osborne's Coriolanus is instead required to just wear regular clothes that resemble that of the man on the street and talk of his policies.²⁴³ Replacing a meaningful ritual, that is understandably uncomfortable for the protagonist, with a bit of ordinary present-day political theatre, which Coriolanus ultimately ruins for himself by acting like a petulant child and making a mockery of the whole thing, eliminates the emotional potency of a scene during which Shakespeare's protagonist is at his most vulnerable. This appears to be done for the sake of Osborne's once again being reactionary to his extratextual environment. Osborne ultimately keeps too much of Shakespeare's political setting in the play for it not to clash with his bits of modern day setting. Those seem to be there seemingly only for Osborne to show what makes him mad about 1970s

²⁴² *Snatch*, dir. Guy Ritchie, SKA Films, 2000, 00:57:23-00:58:11; 01:02:06-01:02:21.

²⁴³ Osborne, *A Place*, 43-5.

Britain, and leave the whole political setting confused. And using every such opportunity for Coriolanus to express his author's rage also harms the protagonist's emotional availability to the audience, leaving him relatable only to the angry Osborne. Yet, although mostly shoddily executed, there is, as previously mentioned, an aspect of the modernisation effort which would ultimately become influential and that is the modernisation of warfare.

Having the combat on stage resemble the audiovisual representation of war the audience would now be closely familiar with from televised reports and documentary accounts of recent military conflicts, if they weren't to have their own lived experience of war, significantly affects the play's notion of heroism. Simply put, the idolisation of armed combat is lost once automatic weapons are introduced. Osborne, in his haphazard modernising effort, changes the greatest heroic feat of Coriolanus' in only a minor way, forcing the general to charge into an opening in a random barricade instead of the city's gate in the process.²⁴⁴ What in all the previous version was a proof of the protagonist's superior martial prowess and courage to face an overwhelming force is turned into an act of reckless idiocy and his survival is a matter of mere luck. Whether Osborne's vision of warfare would translate well on stage is up to speculation and would most likely depend on the skill of the director who would be faced with the task of seamlessly combining the realistically envisioned parts of warfare with the inherent comic potential of moments when characters are to lead a dialogue while moving from cover to cover and shooting at each other, which is the form the duel between Coriolanus and Aufidius takes.²⁴⁵ The one way, however, this change seems to benefit Osborne's apparent design is that with the idealised form of heroism out of the picture, the audience would arguably become more intrigued in examining what causes Coriolanus' apparent death wish.

²⁴⁴ Osborne, *A Place*, 28.

²⁴⁵ Osborne, *A Place*, 31-2.

Osborne produces his own explanation of Coriolanus' anger and expresses it through an added opening scene.²⁴⁶ It is a scene almost unlike any other in the Coriolanian canon in its privacy and intimacy as it takes place in Coriolanus' bedroom as he awakes from what seems to be a nightmare about Aufidius. After this, another layer of privacy is added as Coriolanus writes into his diary of his sexual impotence, self-starvation, alcoholism and general despair. Peter Holland writes that this scene defines Coriolanus as a typical protagonist of Osborne's in that he is self-destructive, frustrated and incoherent for those around him.²⁴⁷ His behaviour in combat then becomes a case of self-expression, perhaps the most successful case of it in the entire playtext. Coriolanus is after all a hero defined in the Shakespearean canon by his lack of rhetoric prowess. His frustrations have an outlet on the battlefield, but they also cause his downfall in the political warfare of the place calling itself Rome.

As previously stated, the place calling itself Rome is rather explicitly meant to be 1970s' London. The name of the play doesn't only refer to the ancient Roman tradition Western powers derive its origin from, but it is specifically meant here to suggest that the place at one point was Rome before losing its "Romeness." The play then is a portrayal of a frustrated Coriolanus spouting vitriol at a society he sees as being in decline from what it once was. Here it has to be stated that the play is far from a well-articulated political critique. Yes, the play is clearly a conservative work as the citizenry is openly showed as being undeserving of respect or more equality to the patricians, the patricians are criticised for playing a political theatre for them with empty phrases instead of utilising their power fully to put them in their place,²⁴⁸ and, if the connotations were not explicit enough, Coriolanus also repeatedly sings a vulgar parody of the Labour Party's anthem "The Red Flag"²⁴⁹ to firmly identify the mob and the people's tribunes

²⁴⁶ Osborne, *A Place*, 11-3.

²⁴⁷ Holland, "Introduction," 133.

²⁴⁸ Osborne, *A Place*, 50-1.

²⁴⁹ Osborne, *A Place*, 58.

as stand-ins for socialists. And, of course, there is Osborne's clear displeasure at Britain's becoming more multicultural, which can't go unmentioned. This displeasure makes itself most apparent in Osborne's decision to make Sicinius a black woman, a decision which changes nothing about the character except for the fact that she is occasionally addressed demeaningly for her race or gender or both. But, since the author's chosen orator spends most of his time hurling abuse as the plot points of Shakespeare's play take place as per, there isn't really a concentrated effort made to develop an argument concerning the issues facing a changing society at the time. Instead, all the play really is, is a celebration of individualism.

The deliverer of the final moral judgment is once again Aufidius in Osborne's version, who, having avenged himself on Coriolanus for his betrayal, also bids his men to carry Coriolanus' body with him in a procession. His reasoning for it is this:

... he was like some of us, unable to forgive wrongs
when they seemed to darken death or night, to defy power,
which seems omnipotent... neither to change, nor to falter,
nor repent even this... this to him was to be good, great
and joyous, beautiful and from this alone, yes, life, joy,
empire and victory.²⁵⁰

Central here is the idea that a great empire is built by great powerful men unwavering in their belief in their own convictions. Due to this, Osborne's adaptation is an echo of the Nazi Germany's interpretation of the play as a tale of a great man undone by those lesser than him. It should also be noted that once Rome was faced with the invasion, not a single Roman character possessed the power to sway Coriolanus, and especially the tribunes were showed as pathetic and powerless once their playing to the mob couldn't achieve anything.²⁵¹ It were only Coriolanus' own convictions that Volumnia appealed to that made him spare Rome even though it meant a tragic end for himself.²⁵² The play itself is a tribute to the great individual that

²⁵⁰ Osborne, *A Place*, 77.

²⁵¹ Osborne, *A Place*, 74-5.

²⁵² Osborne, *A Place*, 72-4.

maintains his (for that great individual is surely a man) greatness in an environment that has lost its, written by a man clearly thinking of himself as such a great individual, but also one who failed to write a great play in the process.

4.3 *Coriolanus*, the Soldier

The final subchapter of this thesis is to focus primarily on the latest significantly transformative adaptation of Shakespeare's play which is simultaneously the only case of media transfer to be discussed here, the Ralph Fiennes-directed 2011 film *Coriolanus*. It is also the culmination of a tendency to view the play's protagonist through his role as a soldier above his social and ideological standing. Soldiership has always been an inseparable part of the character but, as should've become apparent in previous chapters, rarely has it been the primary focus of adaptors. *Coriolanus* is always someone who has greatly served his country, but the nature of that service is usually backgrounded, and the play then takes on the framework of either a political play or a family drama, as Peter Holland postulates.²⁵³ Yet, before approaching the film in the main portion of this subchapter, it is necessary to show that the choice to approach Shakespeare's play as the account of a plight of a soldier is not a modern trend although there is far more clinical psychological interest in the psyche of war veterans now than in centuries past. Yet, the first example of productions of Shakespeare's play that utilised it as a medium for garnering support for war veterans comes already from the American War of Independence.

Coriolanus was among the plays frequently staged for the continental forces and civilians alike, which may not be necessarily surprising as there is a potential interpretation of the play's events as the people of Rome getting rid of a tyrant. Yet, that was seemingly not the intention behind

²⁵³ Holland, "Introduction," 134.

these productions as there was an epilogue written for them by poet Jonathan M. Sewall.²⁵⁴ The epilogue admonishes the people of Rome for their ingratitude to Coriolanus, but, unlike Tate's rightful ruler, Coriolanus is here to represent any soldier. Therefore, the epilogue functions as an admonishment of the civilians who do not appreciate enough what soldiers are put through in their service. The epilogue therefore strips Coriolanus of all his other stations and treats him only as a comrade of the men going to battle at the time which points to a universality of their experiences. Similarly, during the inter-war period when disparate ideologies competed for possession of the play, there was a significant production exploring the play as a story of unchanging militarism.

To textually analyse William Poel's 1931 production of the play which ran for all of one performance at the Chelsea Palace Theatre, would be entirely pointless due to Poel's decision to cut approximately 60% of the play's lines. He cut them due to an ill-conceived notion that those were not of Shakespeare's writing but George Chapman's.²⁵⁵ However, the most significant aspect of the production are its costumes. Robert Speaight, who played Coriolanus in the production, wore over the course of the play a tribal leopard skin, a hussar uniform and only once Coriolanus waged war against Rome did he wear a uniform of a Roman general. Speaight later wrote of being confused why Poel even chose the play as it seemed so opposite to his radically democratic views. Speaight was also apparently against the eclectic costumes,²⁵⁶ but those costumes were the primary means for Poel to convey his intended message as stated in the performance's programme. The intended purpose of the production was to show "the ageless spirit of militarism,"²⁵⁷ and the only way to convey agelessness over the course of an

²⁵⁴ Jonathan M. Sewall "Epilogue to *Coriolanus*" in *Shakespeare in America: An Anthology from the Revolution to Now* (New York: Library of America, 2014), E-Book, 25-27.

²⁵⁵ Holland, "Introduction," 9.

²⁵⁶ Robert Speaight, *The Property Basket: Recollections of a Divided Life* (Glasgow: Collins, 1970), 133.

²⁵⁷ Lucy Munro, "Coriolanus and the (in)authenticities of William Poel's Platform Stage" in *Shakespeare in Stages: New Theatre Histories*, ed. Christie Carson and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44.

approximately 90 minutes long play was to have each costume be from a different era and a different regime of rule. That would take care of the expression of agelessness of militarism, but a second issue faced by Poel, and by theatre in general, was how to convey the brutal nature of war in the limited space that is the stage.

Poel solved the issue by having the play's final events take place off-stage. From one side would come the sounds of Rome celebrating its diplomatic victory while the sounds of Coriolanus paying for that Roman victory with his life could be heard from the other. Whatever did the audience member visualise as happening on the basis of the sounds of Coriolanus' murder was most likely already far more visceral than any bogus stage-killing the actors could have choreographed. But having one's audience imagine violence arguably doesn't equal producing a realistic depiction of violence. What Poel did certainly create is, as Holland puts it, a magnificent emblematic ending, showing the disparity of experience between those for whom war is done elsewhere by others and those whose life is in war.²⁵⁸ Yet, it might've now become rather apparent how film as a medium might have always been the ideal medium to make Coriolanus' experiences as a soldier the central aspect which influences other of the story's plots. Film, after all, has the ability to show violence, although still fake, in a visceral and almost documentary fashion. That said, attempts at palpable viscerality have not been given up on stage, nor have they been necessarily unsuccessful.

The 2013 Josie Rourke-directed Donmar Warehouse production is to be used here as evidence that Poel's idea of ageless militarism and its toll on an individual being at heart of the play has grown from an oddity among the productions of the 1930s into a staple of contemporary productions even if they're otherwise loyal to the adapted text. It is arguably the most well-known stage production of the play due to the international theatrical run of its recording as

²⁵⁸ Holland, "Introduction," 11.

part of NT Live and likely also due to the casting of Tom Hiddleston in the titular role. He was riding a wave of newfound popularity at the time due to his portrayal of Loki in the MCU which was likely instrumental in getting non-traditional theatregoers to come and see the piece. The intimate setting of the Donmar Warehouse does not allow for the large cast Shakespeare wrote for and therefore the idea of naturalism is swiftly abandoned with multiple actors portraying multiple roles each. A large-scale battle scene can also hardly be staged in such a space and, therefore, the battle of Corioli²⁵⁹ is left more conceptual. Yet, it gets across the idea of the timelessness of combat by combining trench warfare (although the trench is made of chairs), shelling as represented by dropping fireballs, and sword fighting in close combat by soldiers wearing combat boots and black trousers along with Roman vests and gauntlets. And all of the costumes follow this trend as even characters dressed as plainly as Brutus, wearing black shirt and trousers, will wear at least one anachronistic accessory, a Roman belt in Brutus's case. More importantly though, even in this suggestive production, the brutality of a soldier's life is shown concretely.

First, Martius returns from his solo foray into Corioli covered in blood in what could be possibly seen as a mere aesthetic choice, an overstated symbol of brutality.²⁶⁰ Then he has his duel with Aufidius.²⁶¹ It is a standard stage sword-fighting affair until they move to hand-to-hand combat which is somehow even more awkward with Hiddleston at one point guiding the hand of Hadley Fraser, who played Aufidius, so that he would choke him properly. So how does the director then convey a brutality of warfare if warfare itself is presented rather cheaply? The answer is in an added scene in which the newly titled Coriolanus washes off dried blood.²⁶² Hiddleston's brilliant portrayal of horrible pain caused first just by pulling off the shirt that's stuck to him,

²⁵⁹ *Coriolanus*, dir. Josie Rourke, NTLive, 2014, 00:17:55-00:26:22.

²⁶⁰ *Coriolanus*, Rourke, 00:21:40.

²⁶¹ *Coriolanus*, Rourke, 00:23:27-00:25:57.

²⁶² *Coriolanus*, Rourke, 00:30:40-00:31:45.

and to his wounds, due to the dry blood and then by the water descending from above on his fresh wounds is extremely unpleasant and relatable on a primal level to anyone with a personal experience of dealing with such sensation. Those wounds discussed by Menenius and Volumnia as fortunate decorations of a political candidate are results of a suffering that is clearly felt by Coriolanus, but never shown publicly. It is also reasonable to assume that Coriolanus has through his years of service learned to deal with the mental damage that comes with it in the same secretive way. Being made to understand this aspect of the character is enough to take it into account when seeing his actions in the rest of the play without having to devote any more text to it than Shakespeare does.

If one was to do a full analysis of this production in terms of changes affecting the political sphere presented in the play, only one would remain. It is one which John Osborne also made, although in his case it was a change hardly worth mentioning in the face of many weaknesses he inflicted on his own text. The Donmar Warehouse also gender swapped Sicinius, but this change stands out far more in their production. It may be appealing to weaken the patriarchal regime of both Ancient Rome and Shakespeare's play, but this minor change harms one of the play's central dynamics. If Roman politics weren't strictly patriarchal then Volumnia would have been able to enter it and there would be no need for her to raise Martius as if he is supposed to attain the political post she was suited for but barred from ever attaining due to her sex. The play's protagonist had been from his childhood forced to act as a model Roman male because his mother wasn't permitted to. It is necessary to bring up this seemingly minor point because this is only the second modernised version of the play discussed in this thesis, and, although it is done far more skilfully than by Osborne, it shows how even the smallest of changes can affect the play's carefully balanced political setting. In this case, it strips Volumnia of much of her complexity while making her more of an archetype of a generally overbearing mother.

Before the exploration of the final, and arguably the most skillfully, modernised adaptation, it should also be discussed why highlighting the effects of militarism on the psyche of the protagonist specifically and, therefore, soldiers generally, which was viewed as a novelty when Poel did it, has become such a frequent practice. The likely answer is in the establishment and a growing, both public and medical, understanding of what is being called “post-traumatic stress disorder.” The condition itself is not modern, with an account of such condition as a result of war trauma being found in Herodotus’ account of the Battle of Marathon.²⁶³ The condition’s definition under a unified term by experts, however, wouldn’t be completed until 1978 when the term was officially recommended for use following years of work with veterans of the Vietnam War.²⁶⁴ The unifying term would then be, naturally, gradually used to re-examine accounts of war that preceded it, non-fictional and fictional alike. When Clinical Professor of Psychiatry Richard Waugaman wrote “A Psychoanalytic Perspective on the Character of Coriolanus: The ‘Hen’ is Mightier than the Sword” in 2013, he listed PTSD among possible diagnoses, although he primarily focused on Coriolanus’ apparent Oedipus complex and self-creation fantasies.²⁶⁵ Ultimately, as the understanding of the effects of experiences of war on the human psyche have become more openly discussed and widely known, creating a portrait of the supreme soldier without giving it notice is likely to create a portrait that is missing a crucial feature. And while the stage is sufficiently equipped to explore the afterlives of surviving war victims, it is hardly sufficient in conveying the severity of the cause. That has become the domain of the war movie.

²⁶³ Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus, Vol. II*, trans. G.C. Macaulay (London: MacMillan, 1914), 6.100-117.

²⁶⁴ Sandra L. Bloom, “The Lost is Found: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder” in *International Handbook of Human Response to Trauma*, ed. Alexander C. McFarlane, Arieh Y. Shalev and Rachel Yehuda, (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2000), <https://web.archive.org/web/20071029021559/http://www.istss.org/what/history2.cfm>.

²⁶⁵ Richard M. Waugaman, “A Psychoanalytic Perspective on the Character of Coriolanus: The ‘Hen’ is Mightier than the Sword,” *American Shakespeare Center*, <https://americanshakespearecenter.com/app/uploads/2013/10/coriolanus-blackfriars-2013.pdf>.

This is where Ralph Fiennes' directorial debut finally comes into the forefront as arguably the version which handles both the modernisation and universalisation of the play most successfully out of the works that have attempted it. There is not necessarily much use for a textual analysis of the film's script as it mostly keeps the events and language of Shakespeare's playtext intact. Textual changes here primarily function to support an aesthetic or practical choice demanded by the transfer between media. That is what allows the modernisation of the play to be quite seamless, especially when compared to Osborne's attempt. Osborne was, however, clearly an influence on this film, as becomes apparent from the setting alone as it is once again "a place calling itself Rome." In the case of this film, however, it is not a stand-in name for contemporary Britain, but it is indeed a carefully crafted everywhere, empirical though in nature, where people of various regional and national accents co-exist as one nation. Still, the countries most closely resembled by the setting are Britain, due to the use of British-style media and the depiction of the political environment in the film, and the former Yugoslavia, as the film was shot in Serbia and Montenegro and the film therefore immediately reminds its viewer of the publicly broadcast images of the Yugoslav Wars. Yet, the concrete settings are arbitrary as all that matters is the contrast between the two worlds, of war and of civility.

To claim that Fiennes' *Coriolanus* is purely a war film would also not be entirely accurate as another way the disparity between the two worlds, the term "world" being used here due to Coriolanus' statement of their being a world elsewhere,²⁶⁶ is further exemplified by their existing in separate film genres. The war film is contrasted with a political drama shot in a way which resembles documentaries about political machinations, such as *The War Room*, and political dramas, especially *The West Wing* as Aaron Sorkin's style seems to be what inspired the delivery of political dialogue in the film. What unites the two genres into one is a handheld camera which gives the proceedings an air of documentarism and therefore authenticity. The

²⁶⁶ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 3.3.134.

harshness of familiar reality mixes with Shakespeare's stage language in a way which makes both look more universal, simultaneously concretised and yet expressible through centuries old phrases. Coriolanus and Aufidius are the only two men forced to exist in both the civilised world and the world of war concurrently. Unlike Aufidius though, only Coriolanus is written as a character who strives in one world and genre and perishes in the other.

What is meant by "strive" is not just that he is successful in it, but that Coriolanus truly comes alive in a situation where it is either kill or be killed without any subtlety involved. Due to the nature of film as a medium, Coriolanus' deeds while isolated in Corioli are shown in Fiennes' version and the audience gets to see a man systematically making his way through a building and killing Volsces as if he were a machine.²⁶⁷ However, there is a sense that the simplicity of combat brings him satisfaction, hence why once he and Aufidius meet each other in a knife-fighting duel, the struggle between the two men is passionate with their physical and mental proximity being show in unison.²⁶⁸ Compare that with the scenes he has in Rome, even with the people supposedly closest to him. He exudes awkwardness in public scenes and the most private moment he has with his wife Virgilia is laying motionlessly next to her as she gets into bed.²⁶⁹ Coriolanus is a man oscillating between two worlds and only being satisfied in the world that constantly attempts to destroy him.

At this point, it should be noted that Fiennes' *Coriolanus* has a cinematic relative exploring the same issue. While Peter Holland aligns *Coriolanus* with other "thoughtful action movies," such as *Gladiator* or *The Last Samurai*, due to sharing a screenwriter with those films in John Logan,²⁷⁰ he ignores the influence of the film's cinematographer Barry Ackroyd. Three years prior, Ackroyd was also the cinematographer of the Academy Award for Best Picture-winning

²⁶⁷ *Coriolanus*, dir. Ralph Fiennes, Icon Productions, 2011, 00:17:41-00:19:28.

²⁶⁸ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 00:22:34-00:25:16.

²⁶⁹ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 00:36:25.

²⁷⁰ Holland, "Introduction," 135.

The Hurt Locker,²⁷¹ a film which Fiennes also had a small role in. The film focuses on a US Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal expert William James serving in the Iraq War and shows him and his team go through one traumatic experience after another with different results on their psyche until the end of their deployment. In the end, James re-enlists having admitted that he can't be happy in civilian life without risk of death. This is also a tendency which leads him to be reckless in a manner similar to Coriolanus' storming of Corioli on his own. Two films set, either openly or implicitly, in recent military conflicts featuring characters who are only alive when their lives are in danger. Yet, the closeness of the two films seems to be orchestrated by the universality of the situation rather than that *The Hurt Locker* could be said to be of Shakespearean origin or that Fiennes' *Coriolanus* is to be viewed as a mere Shakespearification of a recently successful film.

Yet, despite the condition not being uncommon, it is deeply isolating in its nature. Therefore, Coriolanus and Aufidius present for each other a possibility for a genuine human connection with full understanding of the other person. There is a brilliant addition in the film, noted by Holland as well,²⁷² of a scene where the recently banished Coriolanus stalks Aufidius in Antium to get to his headquarters and sees the Volscian commander interact with the common people of the city without any of the issues Coriolanus has in that area.²⁷³ This makes it apparent that Aufidius is the better adjusted one of the two. Yet, despite his relative adaptation to civilian life, it is confirmed by his hearty welcoming of Coriolanus, that he too is alienated from other people by the extremities of his experiences in war. Putting these alienating experiences at the centre of the whole piece turns the story with an entire city state at stake into a closely personal drama among those who share them. Another cinematic addition which underlines the connection of the two isolated soldiers on opposing sides is the film's opening during which Aufidius is shown

²⁷¹ *The Hurt Locker*, dir. Kathryn Bigelow, Voltage Pictures, 2008.

²⁷² Holland, "Introduction," 137.

²⁷³ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 01:15:05-01:15:59.

watching Martius on television and brandishing the knife he would eventually land the final blow to him with.²⁷⁴ It is being clearly communicated here that the way the two see each other is integral to the film, with only one character being later able to interfere with the strength of their connection of shared experiences, Volumnia.

Shakespeare already depicts Volumnia as the only Roman fully understanding her son, but Fiennes' film makes them even closer by making her also a military veteran as signified by her wearing a uniform during official events. Edel Semple in her previously mentioned guest lecture also singled out the fact that she is throughout the play allowed to function as a trusted advisory of the highest-ranking male officials of the state.²⁷⁵ This even more strongly underlines how well suited she is for the positions of power she is denied access to due to her sex. The setting of another scene between her and her son was changed to take place in a bathroom and was also made to include Volumnia tending to Coriolanus' wounds, the symbol of his private inner life, to similarly underline the closeness between the two. That is palpable especially in comparison to the distance between Coriolanus and Virgilia, who walks into the bathroom during the scene and is communicated to be an unwanted invader of a safe space.²⁷⁶ Yet, the relationship between them is deeply unequal because Coriolanus is by his nature a servant to those above him in a hierarchy he sees as rightful and that hierarchy of course includes his mother, the architect of his nature to a large degree. She is the originator of his quest for a position he is, unlike her, unsuited for and doesn't want. Later, when he returns to the gates of Rome for revenge, his resolve is defeated by his mother, utilising her deep knowledge of her son's inner processes, and that is celebrated in Rome as her triumph. Coriolanus, the unflinching war machine, is

²⁷⁴ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 00:00:51-00:02:36.

²⁷⁵ Semple, "Badass Mothers," May 3, 2022.

²⁷⁶ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 00:34:12-00:35:30.

defeated when he is made to cry by the same person who instructed him to hide vulnerability his whole life.

The moment when Coriolanus tells his mother how “mortal” her victory could be to him has been played many a ways over different productions, with some choosing to absolve Volumnia of the guilt of knowing ahead of time. There is, however, no doubt that Fiennes’ Volumnia knew her son’s fate for there could be only one in the world of war. The world of war is not only inhabited by men like Coriolanus and Aufidius, but it is also created by men like them who operate in extremes and within rigid hierarchy and binaries of animosity. It is why Aufidius is ultimately disappointed with the partnership he forged with Coriolanus, complaining of Coriolanus’ assumption of the position of the sole leader instead²⁷⁷ which was to him natural to do as, after all, he had previously proved himself superior to Aufidius on the battlefield on numerous occasions. The world of war is shown here as an indiscriminate destroyer of men, which makes them unable to function outside of it and prohibits any empathy with others if one is to survive. Relevant to this is the observable change portrayed by Gerard Butler between Aufidius’ demeanour during Volumnia’s plea²⁷⁸ and his demeanour in Coriolanus’ death scene. Afterall, he is present as Volumnia appeals to those values of Coriolanus he had to subdue in order to honestly enter the service of a foreign power and thusly makes him break his loyalty to the Volscians. Yet, Aufidius not only does not protest Coriolanus’ decision to make peace with Rome but is played as genuinely moved as well by Volumnia’s appeal, as he and Coriolanus operate identically and on the basis of identical sets of values. Then, Aufidius can be seen ridding himself of any sign of that empathy at the start of the film’s final scene.

²⁷⁷ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 01:26:00-01:26:52.

²⁷⁸ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 01:38:08-01:49:35.

The continuous transformation of Aufidius in the final scene is indeed marvellously done.²⁷⁹ He starts clearly dejected about the fact that Coriolanus' signing of the peace treaty also meant signing his own death warrant, but he understands Coriolanus must be killed in order to re-unify Volscian forces under Aufidius' singular command. So, he responds by building up his own anger by reminding himself, and truly convincing himself, of how Coriolanus mistreated him, since anger is the only useful emotion in war. Once Coriolanus arrives, somewhat sheepishly declaring that he still aims to serve the Volsces as he still clearly wishes to live in the world of war along the one man whom he could ever have a genuine human connection with, Aufidius uses deliberate trigger words "traitor" and "boy" to overtly attack the man's honour and manhood and to stoke his rage too. Coriolanus responds in kind by reminding his supposed comrades of his deeds in Corioli. A knife fight ensues, echoing the earlier duel of the two generals, but this time it is not a test of skills, but a deliverance of warrior's justice, and Coriolanus is overwhelmed by his opposition's numbers. Yet, the brutal fight ends with another intimate moment between the two men as Aufidius delivers the final blow. This is where the film offers perhaps the most significant textual change from the play.

Once Coriolanus is dead, there are no more words spoken in the film. The intimate moment between Aufidius and Coriolanus in the latter's final moments cuts to a long shot which stands out visually from the rest of the film's style by being staged like a painting with Aufidius kneeling over Coriolanus' body. Meanwhile, the other soldiers pay attention only to them, and none to their comrades Coriolanus killed or injured during the struggle. It is a rather serene moment showing the warriors' respect for Coriolanus as the greatest among them and yet it is followed by a cut to his body being unceremoniously dumped on the back of a truck and the world of war simply moves on. It is a very effective underlining of a perhaps not an immediately apparent aspect of Coriolanus' tragedy and that is that despite his greatness, his life is without

²⁷⁹ *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 01:50:47-01:57:39.

an impact. Rome and the Volsces might have signed a truce but it has been acknowledged before in the play that such a truce had been broken previously on numerous occasions²⁸⁰ and, of course, one knows from history that Rome eventually subjugates the Volsces only to wage other wars elsewhere. One might temporarily strive in the world of war, but that individual is always eventually spent and spat out as young fodder is fed to its unchanging ways. It is here that the one adaptational change the film made that, however, weakens the message of Coriolanus' life being quite meaningless in the end, has to be mentioned.

The change, which Peter Holland also noted to be odd,²⁸¹ is the added suicide of Menenius after he fails to sway Coriolanus.²⁸² Notably, no named characters other than Coriolanus die in the play and this also supports the point of how little was Coriolanus able to influence despite all his might. Yet, the Brian Cox-portrayed Menenius of the film slits his wrist by the riverbank for not entirely clear reasons. Coriolanus and Menenius are framed by the play and all its encountered adaptations as friends, but their friendship is framed by a lack of understanding of each other. The jovial patrician is incompetent in appealing to Coriolanus to be mild and the general disdains having to charm the masses while Menenius does it effortlessly. There is attention paid to Menenius' watch which he takes off prior to slitting the wrist he wore it on, but there is no prior mention of the watch in the film. This could be a hint at the possible existence of a cut scene or dialogue which would have defined Menenius's motivation better than mere possibilities to be speculated about. Outside of the specific narrative, Shakespeare in some of his tragedies used the death of a comedic character, which, if *Coriolanus* has one, would be Menenius, to signal tonal shifts, as he did in *Hamlet* with the death of Polonius²⁸³ or

²⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.6.48-51.

²⁸¹ Holland, "Introduction," 140.

²⁸² *Coriolanus*, Fiennes, 01:35:41-01:36:58.

²⁸³ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, (Project Gutenberg, 1998), 3.4, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1524/1524-h/1524-h.htm>.

with Mercutio's in *Romeo and Juliet*.²⁸⁴ There is no such effect so late into the story here, however. Therefore, it can be comfortably stated to be an ill-made change that even one significant figure of Roman politics is dead as result of Coriolanus' actions. It seems antithetical to the film's poignant ending which underlines Coriolanus' futility rather succinctly.

The point of this subchapter is not to claim that there is only one legitimate way to adapt Shakespeare's play or that this way is somehow closest to his authorial intent. However, every single strongly ideologically defined adaptation of *Coriolanus* reaches a point where the ambiguity of the play's political plot comes to naturally resist that definition. Meanwhile, it is the personal tragedy of a broken soldier who loves war that translates no matter the time period of adaptation and while Ralph Fiennes' film is certainly not to be declared the definitive production of the text, it is arguably the one adaptation that pays the most attention to this timeless aspect. Fiennes first played the character on stage in 2000 and, although he is not the sole creative mind behind the film, the film does indeed come off as the work of someone who spent a decade thinking of how to expand the story's portrayal of the damage war does to a man in a way the stage did not allow. The result is a film set in a sort of cinematic anywhere. The politically charged adaptations are always forced to reconcile the political environment they're currently being produced in, the political environment of Shakespeare's England, and of the early Roman Republic the story originated in. Yet, no matter the era, the personal aspects of Coriolanus' tragedy stays the same. Both, Coriolanus and war itself, might wear different clothes, speak a different language, and use different weaponry, but their nature does not change.

It could be considered comforting that major productions and adaptations have as of late been foregrounding the universal aspect of the so-often mishandled text, despite the play's reputation

²⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (Project Gutenberg, 1998), 3.1, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1513/1513-h/1513-h.htm>.

being that of a controversial and anti-democratic work since WWII. Thusly, the play currently has two afterlives. One is that of a supposedly eternally reactionary piece, an estimation that imbues Shakespeare with a supposedly prophetic power, whose protagonist can be read as commentary on the rise of fascist leaders from Hitler to, as is frequent recently, Trump, despite the comparison showing holes upon any closer inspection. This afterlife is entirely politicised with attention being paid to the man's rhetoric over the man who produces it. Then there is the afterlife of a personal tragedy which is significantly stripped of ideological aspects. War is a political tool, but it is also a unifying experience across cultures, and it damages equally regardless of in what name or for what idea is it being fought. It becomes a story of a man alienated by a world where scars are treated as ornaments, "treason" is a buzzword for self-centred schemers, and what rights are people to be granted is debated, and who finds shelter in the world that hands out those scars, where "treason" is the worst crime, and men fight each day to survive without any guarantees. Even though his existence in that world can't end otherwise than with his destruction. Between the conceiving of the idea for this thesis and the commencement of its writing, images of war have once again become ever present due to Russia's imperialistic invasion of Ukraine. One might wonder, when that war is over, will Coriolanus be used by adaptors as a stand-in for the warlord who caused it, or a representative of the millions of broken men it will have created?

5. Conclusion

The three time periods of ideologically appropriative adaptational surges of *Coriolanus* can mostly be defined as reactions to that which came before them. Nahum Tate and John Dennis, being the first adapting Shakespeare's play, both took advantage of the ambiguity at the heart of the play's political plot to try and sway the audience towards their own position within the binary political system of England of their time under the pretence of having Shakespeare on their side. Still, their social view was rather limited as they would really only disagree on whether Coriolanus should or shouldn't be consul. Tate, being a restorationist, treats the general's banishment as pure ingratitude, while Dennis does admit that Coriolanus is unfit for such position of power due to his hatred of the common people. It is the start of a political division of the play but in an environment where politics are still the playing field of the aristocracy, and not even the Whig Dennis would challenge that it is not rightfully so. The financial failure of Dennis' play and subsequent feud with the manager of Drury Lane, Colley Cibber, then also left behind textual evidence of the play's possession of another attractor of appropriation, the sense of Coriolanus' victimisation at the hands of the far less accomplished tribunes.

Moving forward to the interwar period, one finds a dissonance between academic interpretations of the ideologies of Shakespeare's play and popular responses to it. There is a plethora of academic interpretations attempting to appropriate Shakespeare's writing for the purposes of their views the same way Tate and Dennis did, while usually referring to a certain elitist connection with the idolised writer. Reading through these interpretations shows an impotent drive to argumentatively impose one's defined views on a text marked by its ambiguity. These academic efforts at appropriating the play in its entirety are then best contrasted with the brief role of the play in the heart of a French political scandal in 1934 France, seemingly caused by the audience's strong resonance with only a relatively brief part of it. It

were specifically Coriolanus' admonitions of the tribunes, which happened to echo the audience's own aimed at the left-wing government in the midst of a corruption scandal, and which, therefore, turned Coriolanus into a speaker for the frustrated right-wingers in the eyes of audiences. This turned the theatre into a venue of a nightly political theatre, with both sides of the political conflict attending to get into shouting matches with each other. The fact that strong arguments are not needed to appropriate the play for one's own means if one already possesses political power, is best shown by the Soviet and by the exemplarily successful Nazi appropriations. The Soviets only looked for a permission to further enjoy Shakespeare's work and for that aim needed an examination of the work which would declare the Bard to be an ally of the proletariat. Such examination was provided by one A.A. Smirnov, whose leftist interpretation of *Coriolanus* is extremely flimsy, but it was enough for it to exist in order to function as wanted. In Nazi Germany, where they were building on the nationalist appropriative effort of WWI during which Shakespeare was declared to be of German spirit, the play wasn't even prominently performed. It was instead taught in schools with the idea that Coriolanus is a strong leader undone by a weak democracy. He would be directly identified with Hitler as Hitler would be described as the Roman general's next evolutionary step possessing the one thing Coriolanus missed, the love of the people. Given the power of Nazi propaganda, this political association with the self-obsessed dictator would sadly stick with the play, leading to its bans and brandings of it as being anti-democratic in essence.

Bertolt Brecht reacted by writing, but never finishing, an adaptation of the play which would act as a rejection of the moral dilemma whether it was right of Rome to banish its warrior hero. It does so by outright declaring that no such hero should be needed by a well-functioning society, and he certainly shouldn't be placed above it in importance. Then, some twenty years later, in Britain, John Osborne used an adaptation of the play to essentially rant about his frustrations at what he perceived to be a downfall of British society since the days of an empire.

This way he returned to the idea of Coriolanus being a great man undone by those beneath his qualities, which was central to the Nazi appropriation as well, and he did so while clearly identifying himself with Coriolanus. The most significant tendency in adapting and staging the play since WWII has been the increased focus on the impact of Coriolanus' military experiences on his psyche, and their universality, which effectively turns the play into a personal drama in nature but keeps the play's overreach and timelessness. While productions prioritising this aspect of the play used to be a relative rarity, Coriolanus' being affected by his experiences of war is inherently part of all versions of the play. It would, however, often be overlooked for the purposes of the political plot, despite the fact that the protagonist's behaviour is dictated by them. That has changed with the increased presence of war imagery in everyday life and increased knowledge of conditions such as PTSD. The peak of this tendency can be seen in the Ralph Fiennes-directed film version which utilised the medium of a war film to communicate as viscerally as possible the brutality of Coriolanus' existence as a soldier, and the medium of a political drama to show his alienation from the civilian life.

Ideologically speaking, the play does not lend itself to a leftist interpretation, as evidenced by Smirnov's half-hearted attempt, due to its abandonment of the people's self-expression after the opening scene in favour of their representatives who function as self-serving scheming antagonists. To produce a consistently leftist version, one is to produce a rewrite which does not appropriate Shakespeare but rejects him, the way Brecht did. Yet, although the play's protagonist is certainly conservative in his ways as he adheres to unchanging ideals imbued to him by his mother, the imposition of a right-wing interpretation on the text faces the issue that Coriolanus' lack of social awareness is a clearly defined flaw of his and the play does not provide a denouncement of the people on a moral ground. This leads to interpretations based on multiple degrees of inference. The worst of these are understandably the simplifying interpretations finding connection with Coriolanus' victimhood which turn the story into one of

greatness being hampered by baseness, such as that of John Osborne or the German Nazi Party, i.e., the one which has historically done the most damage to discourse about the play and to its reputation. In a way, with the widely disseminated fascist interpretation of the play, the potency for ideological appropriation of the play has been spent. Therefore, it makes logical sense that recent productions of the play and its adaptations have moved back towards an aspect of the adapted text which maintains its relevance to date. The result are productions of *Coriolanus* as personal drama of a broken soldier unable to re-adapt to a complicated civilian society without easy solutions and without any use for his aggression.

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Abstract

This master's thesis is concerned with the appropriative and adaptational afterlife of William Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*. Particularly with the reasons for and strategies behind appropriative efforts from contradicting ideological movements. Appropriative adaptations of the play appeared already within the first hundred years after Shakespeare's passing with the first being Nahum Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* which recontextualises Shakespeare's text to support the cause of the Abhorrers during the Exclusion Crisis. Then, less than forty years later, John Dennis wrote his adaptation *The Invader of His Country* which represents the adapted text as supporting the Whigs in opposition of the Stuarts, who threatened to return on the English Throne with the support of foreign armies. This chapter's analysis seeks to establish the appropriative strategies that allowed single text to be claimed by two opposing political camps.

That knowledge is then applied in the next chapter which focuses on the interwar period during which was Shakespeare claimed by a number of contradicting ideologies making their way on the political spectrum in the wake of the fall of a number of Europe's monarchies. This chapter is primarily focused on interpretative texts rather than on dramatic rewrites. These include texts ranging from elitist interpretations from the Anglophone cultural context to A.A. Smirnov's attempt at appropriating the play for the purposes of Stalinist Russia. The chapter ends with the exploration of fascist appropriations of the text, mainly with that of the German Nazi regime which arguably succeeded and damaged the play's reputation as anti-democratic. It is primarily examined to what extent are these ideological claims of being supported by the play legitimate, and how did the appropriators attempted to conceal the aspects of the text that contradicted them.

The final chapter then examines adaptations and appropriations of the play created since WWII, to see how adapters reacted to the Nazis successful appropriation and attempted to reappropriate an appropriated text. These adaptations include Bertolt Brecht's unfinished socialist rewrite of the play, John Osborne's rage-filled and never-produced modernisation, and Ralph Fiennes' film version. Brecht is also the only iconoclastic adaptation of the thesis, i.e., an adaptation which arguments against Shakespeare rather than claiming his support. Fiennes' adaptation is meanwhile explored as a culmination of a tendency to depict Coriolanus as an apolitical soldier. This tendency reaches centuries back but has only recently become prominent in adaptations of the play. All of the analyses are done in accordance with adaptational theory as delineated by Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* and by Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation*.

Key words: Adaptation, appropriation, Coriolanus, William Shakespeare, stage, film, adaptation process, early modern theatre, English revolution, 20th century, PTSD, fascism

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá apropriacemi a adaptacemi divadelní hry *Coriolanus* od Williama Shakespeara. Především se strategiemi apropriačních snah navzájem si odporujících ideologických směrů a jejich důvodům k apropiaci. Apropriační adaptace této hry se začaly objevovat již v prvních sto letech po Shakespearově smrti, přičemž první z nich je *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* od Nahuma Tatea, který se snažil přenést text do kontextu, ve kterém by podporoval nástupnictví budoucího Jakuba II. Pak, o méně než čtyřicet let později, napsal John Dennis svou adaptaci *The Invader of His Country*, která naopak představuje adaptovaný text jako vyjádření podpory Whigům, kteří byli opozicí Stuartovců, kteří v té době hrozili návratem na trůn s pomocí cizích armád. Analýza se v této kapitole zaměřuje na rozpoznání apropriačních strategií, které umožnily, aby se toho stejného textu zmocnily dva oponující si politické tábory.

Tyto znalosti jsou pak aplikovány v následující kapitole, která se zaměřuje na meziválečné období, během kterého si Shakespeara přivlastnilo hned několik navzájem si odporujících ideologií, které prorazili na politické spektrum po pádu několika evropských monarchií. Tato kapitola se převážně zabývá interpretativními texty spíše než divadelními předělvkami. Mezi ty patří texty od elitářských interpretací z anglofonního kulturního kontextu až po pokus A.A. Smirnova o apropiaci Shakespearovi hra pro účely Stalinova Ruska. Kapitola končí rozborem fašistických apropiací, především té nacistického Německa, která se dá říci, že uspělo a poškodilo tím reputaci hry. Primárně je posuzováno, do jaké míry jsou ideologická nárokování Shakespearovy podpory legitimní, a jak se apropiátoři pokusili zakrýt aspekty textu, které jim odporovali.

Poslední kapitola se pak zabývá adaptacemi a apropriacemi stvořenými po druhé světové válce, aby se zjistilo, jak adaptátoři reagovali na úspěšnou Nacistickou apropiaci a jak si pak tedy

pokusili přivlastnit již přivlastněnou hru. Tyto adaptace zahrnují nedokončenou socialistickou verzi od Bertolta Brechta, modernizaci hry plnou hněvu z pera Johna Osborna, která ovšem nebyla nikdy hrána, a filmovou verzi režírovanou Ralphem Fiennesem. Brechtova hra je také jedinou obrazoboreckou adaptací v této práci, to znamená adaptací, která představuje argumenty proti Shakespearovi a neusiluje o jeho podporu. Fiennesova adaptace je pak zase řešena jako vyvrcholení tendence zobrazovat Coriolana jako apolitického vojáka. Tato tendence sahá století do minulosti, ale v adaptacích této divadelní hry se stala prominentní až v nedávné době. Všechny analýzy v této práci byly provedené podle adaptační teorie po vzoru *A Theory of Adaptation* Lindy Hutcheon a *Adaptation and Appropriation* od Julie Sanders.

Klíčová slova: Adaptace, apropiace, Coriolanus, William Shakespeare, divadlo, film, adaptační proces, divadlo ranného novověku, anglická revoluce, dvacáté století, PTSD, fašismus