



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Report

MA Thesis by Jaromír Moravec, IDEOLOGICAL APPROPRIATION: THE TRAGEDY OF *CORIOLANUS*

The thesis focuses on one of Shakespeare's most problematic Roman tragedies, whose conflict often caused controversial ideological responses. Individual chapters concentrate on the reception of the play in the late Restoration and early eighteenth-century theatre (Nahum Tate and John Dennis), the period between WW1 and WW2, where the author discusses diverse academic interpretations of the play, including the communist ones (A.A.Smirnov), and finally in the long post-WW2 period. In the last mentioned span of time the author discusses the unfinished adaptation of the play by Bertolt Brecht, John Osborne's conservative drama *A Place Calling Itself Home* (c. 1973) and recent film adaptation by Ralph Fiennes (2011).

The oversize thesis (almost twice as long than the recommended format) compares selected adaptations and interpretations of the play. To call them "ideological appropriations", would require a critical reflection of recent theories of appropriation and also shifting the focus from the comparison of the appropriations with Shakespeare's original to the study of these appropriations in their specific historical contexts. This is most evident in the discussion of Brecht's appropriation influenced by abstract hard-line Marxism of Mao Ce-tung and covering up Brecht's personal and political failure to support the Anti-Soviet 1953 rising in East Berlin, crushed by Soviet tanks.

The thesis is also deficient in the critical reflection of the recent theories of adaptation, especially Linda Hutcheon's 2006 book. It stubbornly compares individual adaptations with Shakespeare's original, which is at variance with Hutcheon's definition of adaptation emphasizing the chief role of the transformation of the original artwork. It also does not focus on the differences between adaptation and appropriation, as discussed in recent Shakespearean criticism.

My last reservation is against loose structure of the whole thesis, sometimes mixing accounts on adaptation with those on academic interpretation (as in the chapter on the "Interwar Period"). The criteria of appropriation are different on the stage and in academic writing. The selection of researched text is not adequately explained and makes an impression of the subjectivity of the author's choices. The reluctance to narrow down the material sometimes leads to the increased dependence on secondary sources providing a survey of the problem area: this is the case of Peter Holland's Introduction to the 2013 edition of the play or Werner Habicht's chapter on Shakespeare in the Third Reich.

The positive features of the thesis include a close reading of the play and its early adaptations, as well as the breadth of the research of secondary sources. It is a pity that some of them, such as Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* are not given more attention. Surprisingly, Alexa Huang's and Elizabeth Rivlin's edited volume on *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation* is missing from the bibliography.

In spite of the above reservations, I am happy to recommend the thesis to the defence and propose the grade "very good" – "velmi dobře", mainly because of the good standard of the close reading of Shakespeare's play and its early adaptations.

Prague, 24 August 2023

prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.