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***The Taming of the Shrew and Coriolanus:* Re-interpretations and Adaptations after the Major Western Ideological Revolutions**

David George, *Urbana University*

Many critics wish that Shakespeare had never written *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Coriolanus*, and so adapters have set out to right their apparently mistaken biases. They believe *The Shrew* is misogynistic, and *Coriolanus* is pro-patrician and pro-war. And indeed, for many centuries audiences saw neither play in its Shakespearean form.

The Taming of the Shrew

Shakespeare's Katharine is tamed by the supposedly wealth-seeking Petruchio in four scenes. In 2.1 he uses sweet flattery, sexual innuendo, and a *fiat*, setting the wedding date despite Kate's protest; in 3.2 he abandons the wedding feast and takes his bride off to his home near Verona; in 4.1 he denies Kate an evening meal, will not let her sleep (he will throw the bedclothes about), and do it all in "reverent care of her." In 4.3, he has Grumio remove her beef and mustard, denies her a new cap and gown, and on the way back to Padua, insists it is 7 a.m. and not the real 2 p.m. He claims the moon is shining, and when Kate corrects him, threatens to go back. In 5.2, Kate comes when called for, and delivers a 43-line sermon on obedience to Bianca and the Widow, both also newlyweds.

The play set off four general kinds of adaptations: first, counter-attacks; second, Kate's retaliation and reconciliation with Petruchio; third, swashbuckling, slapstick, and farce; fourth, romantic metadrama, including Christopher Sly's dream about the play-within-the-play. These shifting emphases derive from cultural changes as Western society devolved from aristocratic to more democratic. Broadly speaking, conservative governments lost most of their power about 1930, with a short rebound after World War 2 until about 1962.

John Fletcher's sequel to *The Shrew* was *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed* (1611). Petruchio's second wife Maria, cousin to the deceased Kate, breaks his control by denying consummation of the marriage and pursuing a career of scholarship and horsemanship. At last

he decides to play dead, and is put into a coffin. When he sits up, Maria is baffled but not respectful, and the two pledge to start their marriage over.

Though John Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1667) copies *The Shrew*, it also takes on *The Woman's Prize*, performed together for Charles I's court in 1633. (Fletcher's language had been bowdlerized for the 1633 version.) Typical of Restoration comedy, when women first appeared on the London stage, *Sauny* is in prose, Petruchio and Peg (Kate) are much coarser, and the action is in London. Peg thus attacks Geraldo (Hortensio) in Act 1: "Take heed I don't bestow the breaking of your calf's head for you. . . . Go, get you a seamstress, and run in score with her for muckinders to dry your nose with, and marry her at last to pay the debt." Petruchio fares no better after telling Peg he will marry her: "I matched to thee? What? To such a fellow with a gridiron face? With a nose set on like a candle's end stuck against a mud wall, and a mouth to eat porridge with ladies? Foh! It almost turns my stomach to look on't."

Peg remains vengeful in Act 5 after Petruchio's attempt to tame her, which includes having Sauny undress her, Petruchio's dampening the bed sheets, and his attempt to make her smoke and drink. Not to be thus mastered, Peg tells Biancha, "I'll muster up the spite of all the curs'd women since Noah's flood to do him mischief and add new vigour to my tongue." She takes to sullen silence, is diagnosed as having a toothache, rejects the barber-surgeon, and goes stiff. Petruchio pronounces her to be dead, and calls for a coffin and a funeral procession, whereupon she sits up and submits to her husband: "Hold, hold, my dear Petruchio; you have overcome me, and I beg your pardon. Henceforth I will not dare to think a thought shall cross your pleasure. Set me at liberty, and on my knees I'll make my recantation." But Petruchio compromises with her new humility: "My best Peg, we will change kindness, and be each other's servant." The test of sending for the three new wives follows, and Peg wins Petruchio's bet for him (Lacy 319-98). The play was last performed in 1736.

Following the demand for politeness and the burgeoning proto-feminism in the 18th c., David Garrick (1717-79), the greatest actor of the eighteenth-century London stage, in 1754 staged his three-act moral afterpiece *Catharine and Petruchio*, the only version of *The Shrew* acted until 1844, and lasting till the early 20th c. Just four scenes survived: the wooing, the wedding, the dinner, and the tailor episode, plus Katharine's final speech, a sincere submission (5.3.136-79). But Garrick's heroine is

more spirited than Shakespeare's, aiming to tame Petruchio by means of marriage. She gets tamed in the taming school, however, telling her father that "So good a Master cannot chuse but mend me." Petruchio is a gentleman, and, like Lacy's protagonist, promises "mutual Love, Compliance, and Regard" at the end. The couple split the sermon on wifely duty between them, Petruchio getting the lion's share (Haring-Smith 15-16).

Though in 1793, Petruchio carried a dangling whip in 2.3 (as illustrated by Francis Wheatley), in the hands of the dignified John Philip Kemble (1786), Petruchio became a complete gentleman (as illustrated by the 1786 Bathurst edition and Julius Caesar Ibbetson, 1803) and did little taming, and so Catharine had little to say in her last (now apologetic) speech:

Nay, then I'm all unworthy of thy love,
And look with blushes on my former self.
How shameful 'tis when women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace;
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
Where bound to love, to honour and obey.

In 1810, at Covent Garden, Kemble played opposite Mrs. Charles Kemble, "a lady but no Shrew," according to George Daniel's edition (1830). But by 1828, Petruchio, played by Charles Kemble, had become wilder, though "at bottom he was a man of high breeding, though for the nonce he found it expedient to behave like a ruffian" (*The Times*, 30 Dec. 1867, 9). Katharine (Miss Chester), though resisting her husband's effort to tame her, had become so refined that she embodied the ideal Victorian woman in the last scene, reformed and feminine (Haring-Smith 26-8).

It was only after Queen Victoria's ascent to the throne in 1837 that Shakespeare's play returned to the London stage (1844), in which Louisa Nisbett as Katharine carried off the honors, her final speech being her best; it won enthusiastic applause. J. R. Planché, the designer, persuaded Benjamin Webster, the manager, who also played a very rough, whip-cracking Petruchio, to restore the scenes with Christopher Sly, who remained drunk on stage throughout (Haring-Smith 44-9). And not till 1887 was *The Shrew* performed in America, at Augustin Daly's Theatre in New York, complete with the Induction, but Daly brought in bits of Garrick's version; in 2.1 Katherina (Ada Rehan) threatens to tame

Petruchio. She was reputed to be the finest Katharine ever. The production ran for 121 performances and toured to London, Stratford and Paris, effectively breaking the Garrick tradition. Of Ada Rehan's first appearance, delayed till Act 2, George Odell wrote, "I may say that her stormy entrance as the shrew, with her flaming red hair and her rich dress of superb mahogany-colored damask, was the most magnificent stage-entry I have ever seen" (Rehan, Ada; Haring-Smith 63). She was both shrew and Victorian lady, and after her taming at Petruchio's house, she was "brought to the saving grace of woman" (Haring-Smith 64). However, Petruchio (John Drew), being a gentleman at heart, lacked sufficient authority to be a tamer even though he cracked a whip in the wedding scene (Drew). (A similar polite Petruchio appears in a painting of c. 1900, showing him doffing his hat courteously when he arrives to woo Katharine in 2.1 (anon, pictorem.com)).

Late in the 19th c., in 1889, Frank Benson transformed the play into a farcical romp, in which he, as Petruchio, leapt athletically about the stage terrorizing his real-life wife, played by Constance Benson. He held that an actor's primary attribute was athleticism, so he recruited swimmers and cricketers (Haring-Smith 75). His Petruchio threw food and dishes, smashed the crockery, and "leapt about among the furniture" (Crosse, unpublished diaries). Petruchio carried a whip and Katharine a cane (Benson). In the supper scene (4.1), denied food, she stole Hortensio's and ate it. In 4.3, after Petruchio had sent the Tailor away, she threatened Petruchio with a knife, but when he stared hard at her, she suddenly stuck it into the table and fell sobbing at his feet (Haring-Smith 77). He never hurt her with blows or words.

However, by 1910, "first-wave feminism," with its suffragette movement, was afoot, and in 1912 a votes-for-women activist, Violet Vanbrugh, replaced Constance Benson's Katharine. Unfortunately she was timid; during the supper scene, she tried to escape rather than fight (Haring-Smith 81).

In 1904, Oscar Ashe (Benson's Biondello in 1896) and Lily Brayton, another married couple, had a tremendous success, with about 1,500 performances worldwide. Ashe, who was massive, though a whip-cracker, went in for some psychological realism, which consisted of his Petruchio showing some affection for his bride-to-be, drying her muddy cloak in 4.1, and of Katherina softening her vixenish temper when being tamed at his

house. But Asche mainly relied on violence (toward the servants), farce and slapstick. They were “all merry madcaps” (*The Times*, 30 Nov. 1904). Bianca was also a shrew who slapped her husband in the last scene.

Similarly, early 20th c. American productions, such as that starring E. H. Sothorn and Julia Marlowe (1905), offered whip-cracking horseplay and Kate’s gradual submission (3 photographs of E. H. Sothorn). Sothorn played a seemingly brutal but sentimental Petruchio who kissed his wife’s wet slippers at his country house, and a childish shrewish Kate. “How he adores his Kate! Even when he abuses her, when he starves her, when he delivers his address on continence . . . he would yield at one gentle touch. . . He is more than a crack-brained bully with a snapping whip. He is an Italian gentleman” (Hale 5). Her tantrums continued until the last scene, when she spoke her submission speech seriously, and put her hand under his foot – and Petruchio returned the gesture (Haring-Smith 90).

The advent of the “New Woman” in the 1910s equalized tamer and tamed, each learning to understand and respect the other, so that farce and a battle of wits were the only way to temper this social trend. “The Victorian ideal of the Womanly Woman faded as suffragettes and the New Woman came to the fore . . . twentieth-century audiences looked on as both the tamer and the shrew were educated” (Haring-Smith 95). Hence Martin Harvey’s Petruchio (1913) was a great gentleman, and Nina de Silva managed a peevish but loving Kate (Harvey). However, by 1935, the version by Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne upped the farcical ante with endless sideshows, and attraction plus antagonism between Petruchio and Kate. She hit, kicked, and gouged him, but comforted him when she dropped a music-stand on his head. He mistreated her by seeming high-spirited and very wild. At the end, the couple ascended blissfully into the sky in a chariot (Rose Theatre Collection). In 1948, at Stratford, Michael Benthall, aware of the Lunt-Fontanne hit, resorted to similar horseplay and a Kate (Diana Wynyard) who threw things at her wooer (Anthony Quayle). Sly watched the play from his bed at stage right. Petruchio tamed Kate “out of love” (Haring-Smith 135, 137). Sly’s prominence frames the main plot, drawing attention to its theatrical nature, which is therefore metadramatic. But in the romantic 1950s, Lilli Palmer and Maurice Evans showed true romantic affection for each other in the 1956 NBC-TV production, as their embrace with half-closed eyes shows (Palmer).

The metadramatic concept found its real breakthrough with the use of Shakespeare's frame (the Induction) at Stratford (1953, with Marius Goring and Yvonne Mitchell). George Devine adapted the Epilogue from *The Taming of a Shrew*, permitting Sly and the strolling players to end the play. Sly also often interjected himself into the main action by being an on-stage observer. We see him watching in a striking photograph: Petruchio, carrying an ax, bears off Kate over his shoulder, capturing the essence of this madcap production (Goring).¹ It was left, however, to John Barton to capitalize on *The Shrew's* three plots, with his Peter O'Toole and Peggy Ashcroft production: Sly, the drunken tinker; Bianca's wooing by three suitors; and Kate's taming (RSC 1960; theredlist.com). In each case deception is at work: Kate and Petruchio are deceptive role-players (she is no shrew and he is no bully), and various characters adopt false names to further their impersonations. Most of all, the main play is acted out to make Sly think it is realistic. He "watched the performance from a variety of locations: he sat on the stairs, on the ground and on benches." The taming plot was really a romantic comedy, and though Petruchio still had a whip, he used it only on the servants (Haring-Smith 155-6). In 1961 Maurice Daniels revived Barton's production at the Aldwych with Vanessa Redgrave and Derek Godfrey, with love at first sight and increased slapstick, as did Michael Langham at Stratford, Ontario, and Trevor Nunn at the RSC in 1967. Nunn ended the play with "the cloaked players laden with burdens and babes in arms — homeless wanderers — hurrying out of [Sly's] life into the shadows" (*Punch* 12 Apr. 1967, 539).

By 1978, Barton's idea had not completely caught on, and Wilford Leach's semi-farcical Delacorte production in New York attempted to pass over the play's alleged chauvinism with gags and gimmicks, though Raul Julia and Meryl Streep were untroubled. She gave her final submission seriously, commenting in an interview, "I'll do *anything* for this man" (Streep; Haring-Smith 144). Better than Leach's effort was Jonathan Miller's BBC film (1980), whose Petruchio (John Cleese) desired Kate (Sarah Badel), and went to great lengths to get her. She played a very out-of-control woman (she even tried to reach up for the vanishing dinner meat in 4.1), but Petruchio put up with her antics because he believed she could become a wonderful wife (Miller). Barry Kyle at the RSC (1982) employed

¹ Tori Haring-Smith seems to indicate that this scene first appeared in the 1905 production starring E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe (87).

slapstick and dealt with feminist objections by claiming that Kate's taming sets her free from her barbaric ways. At 4.1.188-211, Petruchio (Alun Armstrong) had a wild falcon on his wrist after the taming, which he unhooded and held high as a symbolic free bird (Haring-Smith 145).

The Induction scenes with Sly, in modern English, were back as a frame to the central action, as with Bill Alexander's Swan production (1992), with Anton Lesser and Amanda Harris; as a result, "the audience felt more sympathy towards Sly than Katherine" (anon, *Cahiers Elisabethains* 89). Katharine and Petruchio fell in love at first sight, but their emotional attachment could only grow within the play that the actors had undertaken to stage. They had to check their scripts frequently and forgot lines, but then they were acting impromptu to please the lords who were deceiving Sly ("Productions 1960-2008"). Gale Edwards' 1995 RSC production followed suit, except that Sly's "wife" and Sly doubled as Katharine and Petruchio, and the ending brought back a penitent Sly (Donkers 2). Similar was Toby Frow's Globe production (2012), in which Sly fought with the theatre staff and Katharine gave her final speech sincerely. She gave the impression that she and Petruchio had truly fallen in love, and that Petruchio's wife-taming is mostly therapy for Katharine's violence. "This intelligent and energetic production finds the tenderness in the text, and sends its audience home amused, exhilarated, but also disturbed" (Day; Shilling 2)

The first real modern feminist production was by Gale Edwards (RSC, 1995), with Josie Lawrence and Michael Siberry. She kept the Induction with Sly, and presented the main plot as his dream. "It was set in a surreal landscape, with the characters sporting a bizarre mixture of costumes." Petruchio arrived for his wedding in a pantomime outfit. Katherine's submission speech "was delivered lovingly until she realised she was part of a wager, at which point she began to speak angrily, and by the end, Petruchio had become bored with shame." Sly also repented of his drunken behavior (*The Taming*, Wikipedia 7).

Gender exchanges began with an all-male cast mooted for Michael Benthall's 1948 RSC production, but it was denied. However, Phyllida Lloyd employed an all-female cast in her 2003 Globe *Shrew*, with Janet McTeer as Petruchio and Kathryn Hunter as Katherine. The reviewers were uncertain whether it was a feminist or farcical production, or in the end neither (*The Taming*, Wikipedia 8). Three years later, Edward Hall

used an all-male cast for his Courtyard Theatre production, with Dugald Lockhart as Petruchio and Simon Scardifield as Katherina, who was treated brutally by her wooer. Terrified, she gave her submission speech for fear of disagreeing with him (*The Taming*, Wikipedia 8).² Another all-female cast acted the play at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater (2017), with Crystal Lucas-Perry as Petruchio and Alexandra Henrikson as Katherina. Barbara Gaines set the play in 1919 when Congress was debating the 19th Amendment, the votes-for-women debate (*The Taming*, Wikipedia 9).

Coriolanus

Coriolanus has an adaptation history similar to *The Shrew*'s, except that state politics affected it more than any other Shakespearean play.³ The play dates from c. 1608 when unemployment and starvation were widespread in England; the spring and summer of 1607 saw "enclosure" insurrections in seven Midlands counties. "Enclosing" was fencing in arable fields for grazing sheep and profiting from wool sales, and it deprived farm-workers of their livings. The rioters intended to re-open the arable fields for corn (wheat) and other crops, and they pulled down hedges and stone walls. In June, King James and his Privy Council issued a proclamation to suppress these rebels, by force if necessary. Also, the poor harvests of 1607 and 1608 led to high corn prices from September 1607 till March 1609. Starvation had begun by the summer of 1608, and so King James issued "A Proclamation for the preventing and remedying of the dearth of Graine, and other Victuals" on June 2, 1608. Thus the play was political from the start, but by the time adapters worked on it, all memory of the starvation had vanished. Mostly the rioters were changed into base, discontented citizens, a bias which lasted until Bertolt Brecht's Marxist adaptation (1952) made them into resourceful and triumphant individuals.

² Kate's final speech quotes Ephesians 5:23 and "has numerous overtones of the Prayer Book and the homilies regarding several well-known Tudor doctrines. 'Such duty as the subject owes the prince' . . . has clear overtones of the homily 'Concerning Good Order, and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates'" (Shaheen 97-9). Various Kates have spoken it ironically, with "an eager, sensible radiance"; lifelessly; sincerely; lovingly-turned-angrily when she realized it was part of a wager; warmth and real affection; terrifiedly; and condemningly. But Shakespeare probably meant it to be an affirmative lesson aimed at Bianca and the Widow. As Robert Heilman wrote in 1966, "forty-five lines of straight irony would be too much to be borne; it would be inconsistent with the straightforwardness of most of the play, and it would really turn Kate back into a hidden shrew whose new technique was sarcastic indirection . . . while her not very intelligent husband, bamboozled, cheered her on" (326).

³ This section is based largely on David George, *A Comparison of Six Adaptations of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, 1681-1962*. Lewiston, N.Y: Mellen, 2008. For its use of sources, see pp. 111-19.

The Act 1 battle scenes were generally cut, which of course deprived Coriolanus of his great feat of heroism.

Nahum Tate's *Ingratitude of a Commonwealth* (1682), which cut 40% of Shakespeare's lines, was Tory, and supported James Stuart, later King James II in 1685. (The Tory party was in power from 1678 to the 1760s.) Tate saw a strong parallel between James Stuart and Shakespeare's Coriolanus. Since, however, the latter has an ungovernable tongue, and ruins himself in Act 3 by outbursts against the tribunes and the plebeians, Tate made him more agreeable and the plebeians more brutal and uncivilized. He becomes a family man, tender to his wife Virgilia and child, helpful and pious; he also assents to the corn dole during the Roman famine. Shakespeare's domineering and heartless mother, Volumnia, is changed to an "idealized mother figure selflessly committed to family and country" (Ripley 62).

Tate completely rewrote Act 5, turning Virgilia into a rescuer who tries to stop Nigridius (a villain Tate invented) from killing her husband. Aufidius, Coriolanus's Volscian nemesis, plans to rape Virgilia before her husband's eyes, but she inflicts a wound on herself, the sight of which kills Aufidius. Nigridius has torn Young Martius apart, and Volumnia, delirious, kills Nigridius.

It only remains for Coriolanus to die, expiring with one arm around his wife and the other around the child. The adaptation failed after one or two performances.

In 1715 the Whig party had taken control of the government. In 1719 John Dennis, who supported James Stuart's deposition in 1688, tried to tilt the play toward Whig politics. His son, James Edward Stuart, made several vain attempts to seize the throne, notably in 1715. Hence Coriolanus's failed attempt to invade Rome made an admirable parallel to James's invasion. However, Dennis required plays to punish the wicked and reward the good, so he sacrificed Aufidius and the tribunes, made Coriolanus heroic, and Volumnia into a classical sculpture. She turns her son from his project of burning Rome by producing a dagger to commit suicide with.

Having spared the city, Coriolanus is attacked by Aufidius's tribunes, fatally stabbed, and dies on as kiss from Virgilia. The adaptation failed after three performances.

After looking over Shakespeare's text, Thomas Sheridan decided it needed a "historic and heroic" Coriolanus — a dignified hero, and a better motivated Aufidius. In 1755 he published his *Coriolanus: Or, The Roman Matron*, a blend of Shakespeare and James Thomson's *Coriolanus* (1749). Thomson had made Attius Tullius (Aufidius) more villainous, added a moralist called Galesus, and a bitter Volscian officer, Volusius. In act 3 Coriolanus is offered his senatorial position again if he will make peace with Rome, but Attius resolves to kill Coriolanus even if he rejects his mother's pleas to spare Rome. After Veturia (Volumnia) rejects her son's suggestion that his family live with him in Antium, she kneels, weeps, and threatens suicide; Coriolanus relents and orders his troops back to Antium. There he is murdered by Volusius and conspirators, and Galesus swears revenge on Attius Tullius. He eulogizes Coriolanus in moral terms:

This Man was once the Glory of his Age,
Disinterested, just, with every Virtue
Of civil Life adorn'd, in Arms unequal'd.
His only Blot was this; That, much provok'd,
He rais'd his vengeful Arm against his Country.

Sheridan took his first two acts mostly from Shakespeare (much cut) and the last three mostly from Thomson. He removed the battle scenes; the Roman Ovation (victory celebration) appears as early as 1.3. He moved quickly to Coriolanus's offer of his services to the Volscians and their readying the attack on Rome in 3.1, and to Coriolanus's banishment at 3.2. Notably, the citizens remain silent as he leaves the city. In 4.1, Coriolanus reports victories against Rome, resulting in Volusius encouraging Tullus to avenge the hero's success. Act 5 has the Roman matrons pleading with Coriolanus to spare Rome, with Veturia threatening suicide; then Coriolanus insults Tullus, and Volusius and conspirators kill him.

Only about half the length of Shakespeare's play, there was room for two processions, and so the play was very successful in 1752 up till 1768. In its early years, Sheridan played the lead with Peg Woffington as Veturia. John Lacy and David Garrick tried to rival it with Shakespeare's play at Drury Lane, with Henry Mossop and Hannah Pritchard in the star roles. These producers filled it with noise — "the most mobbing, huzzaing, shewy, boasting, drumming, fighting, trumpeting Tragedy I ever saw," wrote Paul Hiffenan.

In 1788, John Philip Kemble, a conservative, created his own Shakespeare-Thomson amalgam, keeping over 60% of Shakespeare's lines. He too cut the battle scenes, removed political discussions from acts 2 and 3, suppressed the emphasis on plebeian power, magnified Coriolanus, and left out references to his weaknesses. In short, Coriolanus became "the kind of severe, antique hero of ancient times who would provide . . . a moral example in an era of political and social upheaval." The era, after all, was that of the French Revolution and Napoleon. Spectacle loomed large: the Ovation procession required 240 extras.

Kemble played the lead, and his sister Sarah Siddons, Volumnia. She was magnificent in the Ovation scene, "marching and beating time to the music; rolling . . . from side to side, swelling with the triumph of her son. Such was the intoxication of joy which flashed from her eye and lit up her whole face, that the effect was irresistible." Kemble's adaptation was acted from 1789 to 1878 in Britain and America, with leading actors like Edwin Forrest making their reputations as the hero.

The next significant version was French, adapted by René-Louis Piachaud in the late 1920s and performed as *Coriolan* at the Comédie-Française in late 1933 and 1934. It began with Coriolanus's return to Rome. At two January and two February 1934 performances, rioting broke out, driven by the crisis of France's leftist radical government and its opposition, the right-wing Action Française party. Piachaud made his play amenable to the French theatre, a kind of regular classical tragedy; the plebeians and the tribunes are base, and Coriolanus is "the misunderstood hero, the individual against the many" (*L'Illustration* 1934). The adaptation was banned on the Paris stage until 1956.

The play's last important adapter was Brecht, who had become a firm Marxist in the 1920s, and perfected "epic" style for his plays — that is, no emotionalism, simple gestures, and the audience's critical detachment. His *Coriolan* shows the tribunes in a better light than Shakespeare does, and cuts lines that show the hero's nobility. Brecht never wrote the battle scenes (and thus robbed Martius of his heroic feats), and he changed acts 4 and 5 completely; smoke rises from the Roman smithies where weapons are being forged for the citizens under siege. Volumnia gets no welcome in Rome, and at the end the Roman plebeians, having resisted Coriolanus, get their city back. Above all, Brecht considered Coriolanus a dispensable

military type, and so his name is condemned to oblivion and his wife and mother not permitted to wear mourning.

Coriolan was acted in Frankfurt (1962), East Berlin (1964), and the Old Vic (1965); after Brecht died in 1956, the Berliner Ensemble directors added balletic battle scenes and toned its radicalism down for both latter venues. It was a huge international success, and returned to London in 1971, but by then was deemed disappointing. Actually, the best Brechtian production had been mounted in Milan in 1957 by Giorgio Strehler, complete with actors standing back from their roles (the *verfremdungseffekt*) and agitation propaganda (agitprop) captions. The adaptation's legacy lived on in Glasgow (1974), Liverpool (1975), Bucharest (1978), Philadelphia (1980), Burlington, Vermont (1982), Paris (1983), and Athan, Wales (2012). However, Gunter Grass's counter-Brechtian play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* (1964) features a director, "the Boss" (Brecht), who refuses to support a workers' uprising and is taunted by Volumnia as "a coward and esthete."

Since then, Shakespeare's play has been preferred over Brecht's because it is so even-handed, already dialectical; indeed, Brecht found that the closer he looked at *Coriolanus*, the less he felt a need to rewrite it. Indeed, when Laurence Olivier played the lead role at the Old Vic in 1938, he made him a heroic patrician with a streak of the bad boy; his acting was fiery and brilliant, the mob disgusted him, and his wife and mother were the objects of his delicate tenderness. He repeated the role in 1959 with sly comedy and athleticism.

After 1994, however, *Coriolanus* has often been demoted into a dictator, "a burly baby-faced bully" in the 2000 production at the Stables Theater, Lenox, Mass. (Markland); or into a deficient character, as played by Greg Hicks in the 2002 RSC production. Hicks was costumed as a Japanese samurai hero, obdurate and arrogant (Billington). Bleaker and more anti-militaristic was John Logan's adaptation, filmed in Serbia, Montenegro and the U.K. (2011), with Ralph Fiennes as director and as *Coriolanus*, and Vanessa Redgrave as Volumnia. For example, Martius, after fighting his way into Corioles, attacks on old man in his room inside the city walls; Menenius, rejected, commits suicide (*Coriolanus*, Wikipedia).

However, the very successful Donmar Warehouse production (2013) made Tom Hiddleston into "a fine *Coriolanus*." Equally effective

were Mark Gatiss as the good-humored Menenius and Deborah Findlay as the commanding, proud Volumnia. The performances were sold out, and one reviewer said “if you can beg, borrow or plunder a ticket . . . let it be *Coriolanus*” (*Coriolanus*, Wikipedia 1). In July 2016, Brian Crowe directed the play for the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey in New York. Combat and physicality ruled this production, as the photograph of Martius and Aufidius squaring off in 1.8 shows (Reardon).

From its stage history we can see that the play swung left, center, or right according to national politics and the economy, and in stable times, such as the mid-twentieth century, regained its delicate balance between plebeian and patrician, poverty and privilege, peace and war.

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