

**Fabien Cavaillé, ed. and Richard Hillman, ed. and trans. *Coriolan* by Alexandre Hardy. Tours, France: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2019. Pp 180. Paperback €24. ISBN: 978-2-86906723-3.**

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Alexandre Hardy is the most prolific early modern French playwright, though he has consistently been overlooked in favour of his more illustrious mid- to late-seventeenth-century counterparts, Corneille and Racine. Hardy was hailed by contemporaries such as Théophile de Viau to be the most forward-looking playwright of his day, and he swiftly became the go-to writer for a number of eminent troupes, including the Comédiens du Roi and the Vieux Comédiens du Roy. As well as being known for his dramatic skill, Hardy was commissioned because of his speed and efficiency: he is purported to have written around six hundred tragedies, tragicomedies, comedies, and pastoral plays, many of which are relatively lengthy. *Coriolan* was first published in 1625 as part of the second volume of the *Théâtre d'Alexandre Hardy*. The play is difficult to date, although it was probably written between 1605 and 1615.

This modern edition, edited by Fabien Cavaillé and translated by Richard Hillman, is an extremely valuable addition to the corpus of critical editions of French drama on the market, and complements very effectively some other publications in the series, such as Nicolas de Montreux's *La Diane* (1594) and Antoine de Montchrestien's *La reine d'Escoce* (1604). This volume also presents the first translation into any language of a play by Hardy, thereby allowing a new set of readers access to his work. The French-language introduction by Cavaillé is the most extensive analysis to date of *Coriolan* and provides a wealth of new information about the play as well as the conditions in which it was written. In the first part of the introduction, Cavaillé focuses on the life of Hardy, offering some new and engaging evidence about the playwright's career. He argues, for instance, that Hardy most likely began his career as an actor and provides an innovative reading of Hardy's relationship with patrons and employers; while scholars have often seen this relationship as exploitative, Cavaillé shows very convincingly the ways in which this rapport was probably mutually beneficial.

Using *Coriolan* as a case study, Cavaillé also provides a lively discussion of Hardy's theatre as written very purposefully for the stage. He outlines the pre-eminence of machinery and spectacle in the context of Hardy's work, showing how this focus on the visual contradicts the attempts made by Hardy's humanist

predecessors to recreate the theatre of the ancients. Cavaillé also supplies a meticulously researched account of Hardy's possible sources, underscoring the crucial role of Plutarch's *Lives* in Hardy's dramatization whilst also pointing out the playwright's deviation from historical and ancient narratives. Some of the most thought-provoking deviations noted by Cavaillé are explored through the characterization of Coriolan himself, and through sections dedicated to his sacrifice and to his sometimes anti-political nature.

A final introductory section dedicated to outlining the play's publication history, as well as to providing explanatory notes on the spelling and punctuation of the present edition, offers a convenient route into the edition itself. The modernized spelling is highly accessible. The footnotes clearly outline essential context and help to shed light on more nuanced issues of imitation and dramaturgy which will be of interest to specialists. Cavaillé also highlights textual variants in the footnotes with an A or B, denoting the different editions used to create his modern version. Developments or shifting priorities within the text's history are thereby easy to identify. Line numbers are clearly signalled, which facilitates any cross-referencing within the modern edition and with the English translation.

Richard Hillman's introduction to his translation explores the merits of Hardy's drama, and considers the shadow cast over early seventeenth-century theatrical writings by authors such as Molière and Racine. Hillman also contests that this play is worthy of study by virtue of its cross-cultural significance. Scholarship has often treated early modernity as an indigenous phenomenon, whereas it should be examined through a pan-European lens. By retracing the path of English actors in France at the turn of the seventeenth century, Hillman lays a foundation for his claims that Hardy's drama may have been influenced (however indirectly) by early modern English theatrical culture. Although Hillman stresses that his aim is not to prove that Hardy was inspired specifically by Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, nor indeed to show that Shakespeare was influenced by Hardy, he does draw a range of rich and fruitful parallels between the two plays. First and foremost, Hillman notes the scarcity of early modern dramatizations of the subject, setting out how both Hardy and Shakespeare imitate Plutarch not just in content, but also in style. Hillman considers the ways in which *Coriolan* evokes the treason of Charles, duc de Biron, who was executed in 1602, and recalls that links were often drawn between Biron and the earl of Essex, who was executed in 1601. Yet Hillman does not always find similarities between the two plays, and some of his most important observations are in his setting of *Coriolan's* depiction of familial relationships against the very different tensions and anxieties presented by Shakespeare in his tragedy.

The English translation of Hardy's *Coriolan* fulfils the aims of the series in that it is both faithful to the meaning of the source text and highly accessible to a general readership. Hillman draws attention to the stageworthiness of the play — an aspect always at the forefront of Hardy's mind — by inserting stage directions; he also imitates the French structure of hexameter Alexandrines. His footnotes nod to further links with Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and provide some useful suggestions for secondary reading. This edition will be valuable not only to scholars of early modern French and English theatre, but also to those interested in comparative literature and cross-cultural exchange. Furthermore, specialists in baroque drama will find convincing new information in the critical apparatus of both the modern edition and the translation, as will researchers of classical reception.

