



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Report

Jaromír Moravec, “The Madness of Adaptation: [An] Analysis of Film Adaptations of Alan Bennet’s *The Madness of George III* and *The History Boys*” (BA Thesis)

*The Madness of George III* and *The History Boys* present themselves as interesting material for a case study in adaptation scholarship since both plays were adapted for the screen by the playwright, and the stage and screen versions were all directed by the same director, Nicholas Hytner. The strengths of the present thesis by Jaromír Moravec lie in its meticulous examination of detail and the rigour with which the structure, plot, characters, and language are compared in the individual works. The argument is mostly lucid, as much as each of the chapters dedicated to the individual works would benefit from a brief introduction of the characters and the plot in order to facilitate easier navigation of the analysis for the reader (particularly with *The History Boys*, it is initially difficult to find bearing among the multiple names).

The quality of writing is fine overall, with only minor language mistakes occurring sporadically. The research is based on an acceptable range of sources for a BA thesis, also given that the aim of the thesis is primarily to discuss the process of adaptation rather than analyse the meaning of the respective works. However, better (and more extensive) use of the work of adaptation theorists should have been made in the thesis introduction in order to position the subsequent analysis of the respective adaptations.

The thesis introduction also calls for revision due to its multiple contradictions, including in the initial assertion by the candidate that the adaptation process has been similar with both plays, which is negated by the subsequent claim that in the case of *The Madness of George III*, the film adaptation focused on emphasizing the strengths in what was a weak play, as opposed to *The History Boys* where the film version focused on merely suppressing minor details in a strong play. Moreover, each of these claims is further contradicted in the subsequent discussion of the works: for instance, one may ask how the rewriting of the character of Prince George for the film version (outlined in section 2.4) corresponds to emphasizing a presumed strong point of the stage play. Likewise, in the case of *The History Boys*, how is the assertion – made already in the introduction and later documented in the analysis – that new scenes and “longer sequences” were inserted in the film adaptation to be reconciled with the presumed suppression of minor points in the stage version? These matters should be clarified in the thesis defence.

The defence should also address issues of the genre and temporal setting of the respective plays in relation to their cinematic adaptations. Would the fact that *The Madness of George III* is largely a



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history play, while *The History Boys* speaks more immediately to the present moment, have influenced the nature of the reception of their film versions? What should be considered in particular is the relatively vague temporal setting of *The History Boys* in its stage original, as opposed to the film version that – perhaps unsuccessfully – negotiates specificity required by the medium (this question is further triggered by the candidate’s use of the phrase “controlled silliness” in relation to the stage play – p. 46 –, which may indicate a lack of understanding of some of the work’s central concerns).

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as “very good” (2).

Prague, 10 January 2020

Prof. Ondřej Pilný, PhD