

# D Y S K U S J E

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## AN EARLY MODERN-DRESS "HAMLET" PRODUCTION IN HUNGARY

The Birmingham *Hamlet* of Sir Barry Jackson's company in 1925 was one of the interesting vanguard experiments of the age. H. K. Aylliff mounted there the first modern-dress production of *Hamlet*, setting with in the fashion of this kind of staging for some years to come. The priority and the originality of the production have been contested several times, as for instance with reference to the 18th-century *Hamlet* performances or to the Japanese production of Oto Kawakami whose company played the tragedy in modern European dresses already in 1891, and went on a tour with this modern-dress version to the USA and to Europe in 1900 and 1903 respectively. But these performances were, in a certain respect, different from the attempt of the English company in 1925. The 18th-century *Hamlet* appeared on the stage in court dresses and with courtly manners so that, as D. A. Russel points it out in one of his papers on Shakespearean costume, contemporary spectators must have felt themselves far from him, if not in time still in rank and social status. As for the Kawakami production, its modern setting is not likely to have brought *Hamlet* nearer to the audience. For Japanese spectators European dresses, let they be renaissance or modern ones, were equally unfamiliar, while for European players Japanese actors, and Japanese way of acting made it difficult to come near to this up-to-date *Hamlet*.

Sir Barry Jackson's company, on the contrary, did its best to free the play from all historical vestiges and to bring it as near as possible to 20th-century people. Thus it was, after all, the first modern-dress *Hamlet* production that was intended to have, and actually had the intensive and immediate effect of contemporary life and contemporary problems.

The success of the performance shows that the audience understood and appreciated the novelty and the importance of this experience. The company was invited, still in the same year, to Kingsway Theatre London and in the next year Mr Aylliff staged his modern-dress version already in the Deutsches Volkstheater Vienna with the original setting of Paul Shelving, and Alexander Moissi as *Hamlet*. On the

28th of May 1926, the Austrian company gave already a guest-performance of the play in the Hungarian capital, and before some further months were gone, the fever of modern-dress *Hamlet* productions pervaded the whole theatre world. Still in the same year, Robbeling produced it in Hamburg, and K. H. H. Hilar in Prague, in the next year Jessner in Berlin, and we could continue this enumeration mentioning almost all European and American cities, but instead of listing up these well-known facts, let us add rather a new episode to the stage-history of *Hamlet*.

Few Shakespeare critics know, even in Hungary, that about a year after the Birmingham premiere, of the 8th September 1926, a modern-dress *Hamlet* had its first performance in a small Hungarian country town. Békéscsaba, this is its name, is one of those Hungarian market or prairie towns which, as far as their culture, civilization and way of living are concerned, have more in common with village than with city life. Though Békéscsaba had a theatre building, it had no permanent company, so that some amateur performances together with those given by strolling companies were everything that people over there knew about theatre. They were by no means sophisticated. The modern-dress *Hamlet* turned out however, to be a box-office hit, and the company performed it in the next 5 years of its activities 44 times in 35 different country towns. We know from the managing director of the company, from the late Nándor Alapi, that he got the idea of going on a tour with a modern-dress *Hamlet* when seeing the Aylliff-Moissi production in Budapest — but we do not know where he got the courage of bringing to the country a *Hamlet* deprived of all its spectacular surroundings and historical hocus-pocus so dear to popular audiences before and after Fielding's Partridge. But this company was not at a loss for courage and for high artistic demands. They toured the country with a repertory including, instead of the usual musical and non-musical burlesques, plays of Shakespeare, Shaw, Wilde, Sophocles, Molière, Ibsen, Pirandello, Dickens, Hauptmann, Kaiser, Rolland, and a lot of other classical and modern authors. But it is not only to the company's but also to the spectators' credit that the modern-dress *Hamlet* could make the tour of the country. For, as contrasted with the audiences of several metropolitan theatres, they appreciated this strange *Hamlet* production and were grateful for it. Perhaps because they were less spoiled by excellent performances as townspeople are sometimes and perhaps because *Hamlet* has ever been one of the most popular plays in Hungary. The first translation of the tragedy in 1790 by Francis Kazinczy was in the same time one of the first victories of the Hungarian cultural renaissance at the end of the 18th century and since its first performance in Hungarian language in 1794 the play was holding the boards throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th both in the capital and in the country. Let us quote only one example of its popularity. We think that since the time of Shakespeare, *Hamlet* had seldom such a popular audience, in the original sense of the word, as on the 6th of October 1835, when a strolling company performed it in Debrecen before the country folk crowding into the town for the great annual fair.

But instead of conjecturing the causes of the success cored by the modern-dress *Hamlet* and for fear of overrating the achievement of both actors and spectators, let us rather state the simple fact that a new idea, a new Hamlet-conception starting from a great metropolitan stage arrived within a year, i.e. sooner than some films do today, in small Hungarian country towns and thus, due to the initiative of a daring company, simple country-spectators of a poor strolling company saw the new *Hamlet* production earlier than theatre experts and devotees of several big European cities,

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## LA STYLISTIQUE POLONAISE EN 1944-1964\*

Le trait essentiel de la stylistique polonaise de cette période c'est sa collaboration étroite avec la linguistique. Les postulats concernant cette collaboration ont été définis par Kazimierz Rudzyk dans une dissertation synthétique sur l'histoire des recherches stylistiques en Pologne (1). La stylistique polonaise s'inspire dans son développement de la linguistique; son programme de recherches d'après-guerre en fait preuve, ainsi que le fait de sa réalisation incomplète.

On s'est surtout clairement rendu compte du lien qui unit la stylistique historique avec l'histoire de la langue. "Les problèmes [...] de la stylistique historique — disent les auteurs de l'introduction au *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku* (*Dictionnaire de la langue polonaise du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*) — ne peuvent être formulés sans une étude approfondie de la langue. D'autre part une histoire de la langue ne saurait être complète sans prendre en considération ses différenciations stylistiques, le rythme inégal des styles particuliers de la langue générale, l'instabilité des rôles historiques de ces styles" (2). Cette opinion est au fond de la pratique, elle est avant tout l'un des résultats les plus précieux des recherches entreprises en commun par les linguistes et les théoriciens de la littérature, à l'occasion des congrès scientifiques consacrés au Siècle des lumières en Pologne, à la Renaissance et à l'œuvre de Mickiewicz.

Les problèmes et les buts de la stylistique historique et de l'histoire de la langue s'unissent dans les grandes études lexicographiques: *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*, que nous venons de mentionner, dans *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza* (*Dictionnaire de la langue d'Adam Mickiewicz*) (3) et dans *Słownik języka Jana Chryzostoma Pasika* (*Dictionnaire de la langue de Jan Chryzostom Pasek*), préparé dans l'Institut de l'Histoire de la langue polonaise de PAN à Varsovie (4). Le premier de ces dictionnaires, "partant du principe de la variété du vocabulaire et de sa plénitude [...] tend à reproduire le caractère lexical des différents styles de la langue commune". Les deux autres servent à élucider le difficile problème limitrophe de la langue et du style individuel.

Ce qui sert dans ce domaine comme base aux synthèses futures, ce sont aussi les études dont le but direct ou indirect consiste à pénétrer la conscience linguistique et stylistique des gens d'époques passées et à connaître les modèles de style et de

\* Les chiffres dans le texte se rapportent à ceux de la bibliographie ci-jointe.