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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Anna Mikyšková

THE year 2022 is rather unfortunate for celebrating *Hamlet*, in the eyes of many not only Shakespeare's greatest play, but also the greatest piece of Western literature at least since the end of the Middle Ages. The year does not mark any round Hamletian anniversary, though it falls very close to three of them: In 2023, it will be four hundred and twenty years since the publication of the (in)famous First Quarto of the play – the first ever printed edition of Shakespeare's tragedy, textually very different from the *Hamlet* which most of us know from our school years. The same year will also mark the four hundredth anniversary of the so-called First Folio of Shakespeare's plays – the first time any English playwright's dramatic works were collected in one volume (in this case, including *Hamlet*, of course). Finally, a year later will mark four hundred and twenty years since the publication of the Second Quarto of the play, the longest version of the work that we have, and one different in quite a few respects from the other two versions. Even in Shakespeare's lifetime, or shortly after, his greatest tragedy apparently lived multiple lives, both on the stage and in print.

While the words of the anonymous author of the 1604 volume of poetry *Daiphantus, or the Passions of Love*, claiming that "Prince Hamlet" is able to "please all," were true for Shakespeare's era, it is even more the case for ours. In the past four centuries, the story of the Danish prince has provoked a plethora of artists, creators and critics to define and re-define *Hamlet* anew, and generations of reading, watching and listening audiences felt a special bond with the play's main protagonist. Just as Hamlet accuses Rosencrantz of being a sponge that "soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities" (4.2), so has the entire play sucked in the times, events and lived experience to gain new relevance with every new performance, reading or re-imagination.

With the forthcoming anniversaries in view, we decided to celebrate the ongoing influence of the play on our culture and lives with the present monothematic issue of *THEPES*. And since the scope of *Hamlet*'s influence is infinitely broad, we decided to go beyond the strictly academic sphere and address the creative potential of the play from additional perspectives, be they academic research, the sphere of popular music, practical theatre, translation and visual arts.

Beatrice Berselli opens the issue with her study about the late eighteenth-century German performance history of *Hamlet*. By focusing on F. L. Schröder's 1776 adaptation of *Hamlet* and comparing J. F. H. Brockmann's performance as the Danish prince with Schröder's later own interpretation of the role, Berselli demonstrates how their revolutionary acting styles, newly based on physiognomy and imitation of emotions, contributed to the growing popularity of Shakespeare on German stages. **Ivona Mišterová** traces the reception of *Hamlet* productions in Pilsen theatres since the opening of the new Municipal Theatre in 1902 until the beginning of the twenty-first century. By drawing on period reviews for older productions enriched by personal experience for more recent productions, the article showcases the rich variety of directorial and acting strategies and the changing ideologies behind them that have been applied to Shakespeare in this West Bohemian city for more than one hundred years.

David Livingstone shifts the discussion about *Hamlet* to the world of prose fiction. In his analysis of three contemporary novels that adapt the story of the Danish prince – Lisa Klein's *Ophelia* (2006), Ian McEwan's *Nutshell* (2016) and Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* (2020) – Livingstone identifies three adaptation strategies: the Joycean, the Stoppardian and the "updating" approach, which all, though to a different effect, play with intertextuality. With a similar focus on *Hamlet*'s non-theatrical adaptations, **Jarrod DePrado** discusses the fictional persona of Shakespeare depicted in three recent works which deal with the playwright's relationship to grief. By analysing O'Farrell's *Hamnet*, Kenneth Branagh's film *All Is True* (2018) and Dead Centre's play *Hamnet* (2017), DePrado argues that, similarly to the myth of Shakespeare the classical author, the myth of Shakespeare the grieving father transcends the limits of biographical reality and has, likewise, become part of our cultural consciousness.

Yvonne Nicolle Stafford-Mills directs our attention back to theatre and offers an analysis of the 1990 Chinese theatre production of *Hamlet* by Chinese *avant-garde* director Lin Zhaohua, which was shaped by the massacres that took place on Tiananmen Square in 1989. In Zhaohua's rendition, Shakespeare's most famous tragedy not only received a new *avant-garde* look, but also assumed new, topical political and social connotations, commenting on the unreliability of official political narrative, governmental control, and the inevitability of the violent events. **Ashley-Marie Maxwell** opens the topic of theatre translation with her article about the Japanese perspective on *Hamlet*. By analysing Japanese translations and adaptations, namely Shoichiro Kawai's translation of *Hamlet* (2003) – which was used for Yukio Ninagawa's several productions of *Hamlet* (2003–2015) as well as for the Takarazuka Revue's

2010 rock opera *Hamlet!!* – Maxwell traces contrasting interpretations of the Shakespearean Danish tragedy and demonstrates how the story of *Hamlet* had become rooted in the Japanese theatre tradition and cultural consciousness. In his article, **Mateusz Godlewski** focuses on the problem of textual variants of Shakespeare's plays that are usually lost in translations, which need to offer definite versions of the English text and which later determine any potential theatre productions based on those translations. On the example of Polish translations of *Hamlet* of the last two centuries, Godlewski traces various translating approaches to textual variants found in Polish *Hamlet* editions and argues for a thorough critical apparatus accompanying the translations, one that would highlight the plurality of *Hamlet* versions and, thus, mediate the original interpretative richness to non-English speakers. Lastly, **Daria Protopopescu** and **Nadina Vișan** offer a different perspective on *Hamlet* translations in their article in which they set out to test Antoine Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis on a number of Romanian translations of Shakespeare's longest tragedy. Apart from providing an insightful outline of Romanian *Hamlet* translation history, their analysis, which focuses on the lexeme *ghost* in sixteen different translations, not only exemplifies the semantic richness of *Hamlet* but also explores the underlying principles of the Retranslation Hypothesis.

The issue then continues with a section entitled "Double Bill: Ophelia and Co. in Popular Music," which offers two brief essays addressing allusions to Shakespeare in popular music. **Michaela Weiss** focuses on selected songs by Bob Dylan, showing how *Hamlet* shaped their symbolic, political and social message. **Filip Krajník**, on the other hand, goes beyond *Hamlet* to discuss Shakespearean allusions in songs by Queen and how Shakespeare's influence blends into their highly personal messages.

The last section of the issue, entitled "Interviews and Reviews," offers a number of both academic and practical takes on *Hamlet* and Shakespeare in general. It opens with an interview with the translator and Shakespeare scholar **Kareen Seidler**, who talks about her work on the *Early Modern German Shakespeare* project and her English translation of *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, the seventeenth-century German adaptation of *Hamlet*. In her opinion, studying German early modern play texts not only gives us insight into early modern dramaturgy in general but, in the case of the German *Hamlet*, also sheds light on the English players' theatre techniques and *Hamlet*'s stage history itself. The interview that follows with the Shakespeare scholar, translator of drama, professor of theatre and theatre practitioner **Pavel Drábek** addresses the topic of translating Shakespeare both from the theoretical and practical perspective. Drábek shares with the readers his views concerning what it takes

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to translate Shakespeare nowadays, as well his own experience with translating Shakespeare's dramatic works. (He is the author of the most recent translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into Czech).

The rest of the articles are all tied to *Hamlet* in Czech: **Klára Škrobánková** and **Eva Kyselová** first discuss two recent productions of the play, one staged last year by the ABC Theatre in Prague (directed by Michal Dočekal), while the other premiered in the studio of the South Bohemian Theatre (directed by Jakub Čermák). It is interesting to observe how differently one text can be approached, especially when staged in two very different translations: a traditional one by a preeminent Czech translator (and a theatre practitioner himself), the late Jiří Josek (in Dočekal's production), and a brand new one by Filip Krajník (produced by Čermák), whose ambition is to present Shakespeare's words to the new generation of readers and theatregoers in a way that departs from the well-established traditions of translating the play in the country. **Michal Zahálka** interviewed Jakub Čermák, the director of the latter of the two productions, who is mostly known in Czech theatre circles for his work for the independent scene. Čermák talks about his experience with directing *Hamlet*, as well as the difference between staging a play in the capital and a regional theatre, and between the official and the independent scenes. **Eva Kyselová** further evaluates the first volume of the upcoming edition of Shakespeare in new Czech translations, entitled "William," that contains the aforementioned translation of *Hamlet* by Filip Krajník. Finally, **Anna Mikyšková** conducted an interview with Kateřina Fůrbachová, a student of a secondary art school and the illustrator of the student edition of Krajník's translation, about how her illustrations materialised, from the initial inspiration to the ultimate product, as well as her own interests and ambitions for the future.

We hope that, with the diversity of perspectives, academic insights and personal takes on Shakespeare's work and related topics in these articles, the current issue will not be just empty "words, words, words," but will, indeed, "please all."

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