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“This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king!.” Political Dynamics of Four Hungarian Translations of *Hamlet*

Abstract: In this paper I endeavour to retell a partial history of the Hungarian translation of Hamlet’s commentary: “This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King!” (3:2:239) on the “Murder of Gonzago,” aiming to elucidate the intricate interplay between translation, cultural discourse, and socio-political dynamics. Hamlet’s commentary, seemingly straightforward yet laden with complexity, poses implications capable of reshaping the trajectory and purpose of his theatrical experiment, crafted to probe and establish Claudius’ guilt. The partial history of translations encompasses the epochs of Ferenc Kazinczy (18th century) and János Arany (19th century) up to the modern renderings of István Eörsi and Ádám Nádasy (20th-21st centuries). Within this framework, I claim that exploring these translations of Hamlet’s commentary offers a gauge of *Hamlet*’s position in Hungarian cultural discourse. The evolving connotations of words, reflective of linguistic shifts, imbue layered meanings not only onto the statement itself but also onto the theatrical experiment it encapsulates. This exploration of translation, interpretation, and linguistic evolution sheds light on Shakespeare’s and *Hamlet*’s socio-cultural-political role in Hungary, as translations serve not merely as transparent channels of meaning but also as reflections on the political and cultural commitments of translators and their audiences.

Keywords: translation, Hamlet, Shakespeare, politics, Hungary, Ferenc Kazinczy, János Arany, István Eörsi, Ádám Nádasy.

Within the context of the “Murder of Gonzago” scene, Hamlet’s statement, and commentary “This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King!” (3:2:239) (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*) presents a seemingly simple and yet complex claim that merits examination. It holds the potential to reshape the outcome and intention of Hamlet’s theatrical experiment, meticulously devised to investigate and establish Claudius’ culpability. The reason for this is that embedded within the

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interplay of metatheatrical performance and truth-seeking there lies an intriguing political dimension. The performative experiment functions as an opportunity that accentuates the divide between the individual and authority, subject, and monarch. Moreover, it serves as a tool for unveiling concealed truths, those veiled within the depths of human emotions and motivations.

The significance of Hamlet's statement extends further upon closer analysis. It unveils insights into the inclinations guiding the translation, Hungarian in this particular case, and understanding of this statement. An interpretive framework becomes indispensable as we navigate through various translations, spanning from earlier renditions to contemporary interpretations. This journey encompasses the eras of Ferenc Kazinczy and János Arany up to the modern works of István Eörsi and Ádám Nádasdy. It is in this context that I shall argue in this article that investigating the trajectory of translations of Hamlet's commentary on the "Murder of Gonzago" offers a measure of *Hamlet's* integration into Hungarian cultural discourse. Additionally, the evolving meanings of words, reflective of linguistic changes, confer layered meanings not only onto the statement itself but also onto the theatrical experiment it embodies. When navigating this exploration of translation, interpretation, and linguistic evolution, I shall uncover insights that shed light on Shakespeare's and *Hamlet's* socio-cultural-political role in Hungary, as the translations are not only neutrally transparent vessels of meaning in Shakespeare's tragedy but also fascinatingly comment on the political, cultural commitments of translators and their audiences. This role, I contend, has undergone shifts as it spanned from the 18th century to the 21st, showcasing a transformation over time crossing borders in terms of languages, intentions when translating *Hamlet*, reflecting on national and cultural identity, and agency. All these crossings of borders, hopefully, can be demonstrated through retelling a partial history of the translation of a line in the play, namely Hamlet's commentary: "This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King!" (3:2:239).

Hamlet and Bacon: the Theatrico-Scientific Experiment and its Discontents

I shall start the exploration by scrutinizing the very context in which the given sentence emerges. It is uttered by Hamlet in the royal court, during the play-within-the-play, "The Murder of Gonzago" with which Hamlet's aim, as he claims, is to "catch the conscience of the King" (2:2:600-601). This couplet that closes the final scene of Act 2 sufficiently establishes in the mind of the audience that they are to witness a theatrical experiment to capture the guilty, which is further corroborated by Hamlet telling Claudius not much before the given line that the title of the play is in fact "The Mousetrap" (3:2:232).

Hamlet’s plan is to recreate the past in his theatrical experiment, his experimental theatre to expose Claudius, orchestrated by means of a past crime showcased in the dramatic performance. The intention is to arouse Claudius’ conscience to the point where it prompts his inadvertent revelation of the fratricide and regicide he committed—the slaying of his own brother, Old Hamlet, motivated by ambitions for the throne and wife.

This theatrical experiment and the intention behind it are like putting Claudius to a test, an experiment. The experiment seems to be based on four assumptions. The first hypothesis is that the play can have an effect on the spectator, the second that Claudius has a conscience, the third that the conscience can be awakened, and the fourth that Claudius is guilty. The hypotheses involve aesthetic and theatrical-aesthetic assumptions, and what might today be called psychological-theological ideas about the nature of conscience. The fourth hypothesis is a suspicion, which is a consequence of Hamlet’s conversation with the Ghost and of his own “prophetic soul” (1:5:48). In fact, the latter hypothesis is ontologically different from the former in so far as the experiment proceeds from a suspicion, as all experiments do, i.e. from a suspicion that there is something that cannot and must not be taken for granted but must be tested by an experiment.

Nonetheless, the formulation of hypotheses alone does not suffice for an experiment to be deemed well-founded and efficacious; an equally meticulous design of the experimental conditions is requisite. Foremost, the experiment’s success is contingent upon the precision of its objective orientation—nature demands to be interrogated, for it harbours its enigmas akin to the concealed conscience. This assertion aligns with Hamlet’s discernment, nurtured over the course of time, encompassing the interval between Old Hamlet’s demise and the enactment of the play-within-the-play scene. Ophelia’s testimony accentuates this temporal framework: “Nay, ’tis twice two months, my lord.” (3:2:126). Thus, Hamlet, to optimize the experiment’s efficacy, undertakes the task of composing and infusing a “speech of some dozen or sixteen / lines, which I would set down and insert” (2:2:535-536), into the original script. This meticulous adjustment bolsters the experiment’s intent, enhancing its purposefulness.

Moreover, the experiment necessitates an observer to monitor the subject’s responses throughout the course of the test. Hamlet, naturally, assumes the mantle of the observer, as he avows, “I’ll observe his looks;” (2:2:592). It is particularly significant here that Hamlet uses medical language for testing, since his wording “I’ll tent him to the quick” (2:2:593) reveals a medical terminology. “I’ll tent” (2:2:593) refers to a medical activity where a “tent,” as Harold Jenkins explains, is “an instrument for examining and cleansing a wound” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 273). The medical terminology aligns with Hamlet’s intentions in so far as he intends to experiment and then cleanse the throne, the state of Denmark. However, the presence of a single observer, particularly one invested in the

outcome of the experiment, introduces the risk of compromised objectivity. Hence, the introduction of an additional observer becomes imperative. Within Hamlet's experimental framework, this role is assumed by Horatio, serving as the second, dispassionate observer. Hamlet precisely delineates their respective responsibilities. Guiding his laboratory collaborator, Hamlet and Horatio undertake the task of vigilant observation, adhering to a structured protocol: "I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot, / Even with the very comment of thy soul / Observe my uncle" (3:2:78-80). Following the experiment, they convene to collectively assess their observations, as articulated by Hamlet: "And, after, we will both our judgments join / In censure of his seeming" (3:2:86-87). Should the subject of their scrutiny divulge their true nature, thereby corroborating the hypothesis, the experiment attains its intended success. This outcome allows for the pursuit of justice, the unsealing of a festering wound, and the initiation of the subsequent purgative process.

Hamlet's engagement in theatrical experimentation, aimed at uncovering the concealed motives of hearts, specifically that of Claudius, assumes notable significance within the intellectual milieu of Shakespeare's times. This historical juncture witnessed the emergence of philosophical and scientific contemplation concerning the pursuit of knowledge through experimental inquiry. Among the thinkers of this era, Francis Bacon stands as a preeminent figure, endeavouring to expand the realm of human knowledge (Gaukroger; Rossi) Bacon's intellectual efforts converged along three distinct trajectories, collectively poised to enhance both the breadth and depth of human knowledge.

In his *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon orchestrated a partition of human knowledge into discrete, investigable domains, as outlined in Book 2. Simultaneously, his magnum opus *Novum Organum* served to lay the cornerstones of systematic scientific exploration, encompassing processes, methodologies, and the systematization of experimentation. This comprehensive framework provided a scaffold for scientific progress. In a complementary vein, his fragmentary treatise "New Atlantis" encapsulated the institutional aspect of scientific enterprise, occasioning the collaborative efforts of scientists (Sargent). This depiction resonates harmoniously with the very process of acquiring scientific knowledge, fostering the collective endeavour that underpins the edifice of scientific advancement.

In the context of the Baconian advancement of knowledge acquisition, discerning parallels with Hamlet's conceptual framework aimed at unearthing the monstrous truth of Claudius' ascent to the throne, and by extension, becoming Hamlet's stepfather, emerges as a tenable proposition. Delving into the orchestration of methodological design, Hamlet finds himself remarkably aligned with Baconian thoughts. Evident is the strategic intent to facilitate an experiment, wherein the enactment of the "Murder of Gonzago" assumes the

role of empirical validation, corroborating Hamlet’s underlying conjecture: Claudius’s complicity in the demise of Old Hamlet.

In this paradigm, the play-within-the-play serves as the institutional apparatus, with Horatio assuming a pivotal position as the collaborator par excellence, actively engaging with the principal investigator across both the experimental phase and the subsequent data analysis juncture. Through Hamlet and Horatio’s optic, the experiment unfolds with flawless precision. The desired impact is efficaciously achieved, with Claudius casting off the veneer of innocence, agitatedly vacating the auditorium. This denouement seemingly suffices to render Hamlet content with the outcomes attained, poised to embark upon his retributive journey, metaphorically alluding to the drinking of “hot blood” (3:2:421). From the vantage point of the audience, the experiment stands validated in its construct and culmination. In swift succession, immediately after the theatrical performance, Claudius surrenders in a (quasi)-prayer scene, therein confessing his sins—an overt confirmation that amplifies the efficacy and resonance of the performed experiment.

If, however, we stop here for a moment and reflect on what has been seen on stage, a nuanced perspective emerges, revealing that the experimental venture did not unfold in strict accordance with its intended design. While the requisite constituents are undeniably present, a supplementary element emerged during the experiment, one that lay beyond the initial ambit of planning. Amidst the unfolding of the “Murder of Gonzago” scene, it becomes evident that Claudius’ reaction was not confined solely to the theatrical rendition itself. Rather, an additional layer came to the fore in the form of Hamlet’s commentary—a commentary that bore distinct audibility to Claudius, for certain utterances were notably and overtly addressed to him, to which he responded. Another reciprocal interaction manifested as Claudius posed inquiries, to which Hamlet responded in kind.

The impetus underlying Hamlet’s decision to interject within the performance could conceivably be traced back to the conclusions he drew from his discourse with the Ghost. This exchange had fostered a realization: that Claudius, the skilful actor, possessed the artistry to mask his authentic nature, veiling it beneath the veneer of dissembling amiability—after all, he “may smile, and smile, and be a villain” (1:5:108). However, cognizant that Claudius was unlikely to spontaneously unveil his true self, particularly following the abortive nature of the dumb show’s impact, Hamlet’s restraint wavered. The compulsion to summon forth Claudius’ concealed crime, coupled with insinuations of Hamlet’s cognizance thereof, proved irresistible.

In sum, thus, the introduction of the commentary precipitated a deviation from the original experimental trajectory. Consequently, certainty proves elusive as to whether Claudius’ perturbation stemmed from the emotive resonance to the theatrical performance or rather from the contours of Hamlet’s

accompanying commentary. The resultant intertwining of these variables obfuscated the pristine integrity of the experiment, leaving a measure of ambiguity concerning the sources of Claudius' reasons to the auditorium.

Particularly salient is a certain commentary, wherein Hamlet seems to redirect the temporal framework of the unfolding performance. At the juncture of Lucianus' entrance upon the stage, Hamlet's comment—"This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King!" (3:2:239)—casts an intriguing light upon a specific textual configuration, prompting further scrutiny. The choice of phrasing prompts a certain curiosity, as certain words—namely, "nephew" and "King"—beckon closer examination. The term "nephew," in particular, elicits an air of peculiarity, for while the narrative refrains from the explicit delineation of the filial affiliation between Gonzago and the murderer, the trajectory of the experiment implies a fraternal bond. This inference thereby invites interpretive engagement, necessitating an elucidation of the shift from a fraternal relationship to one of avuncular lineage. A similar vein of inquiry encapsulates the term "King," for the prior context situated the subject of impending demise as a "duke" (3:2:234), thereby signifying a status divergent from that of a monarch. This terminological recalibration imparts a transformative dimension to the dialogue, demanding a nuanced exegesis.

The introduced alterations, when subjected to interpretative analysis, proffer an intriguing potential: that of a reconfiguration in the temporal facet of the "Gonzago" play. Contemplating the prospect wherein a "duke" and a "brother" figure into the equation, the narrative trajectory could conceivably assume a retrospective tenor, delving into historical underpinnings. In this scenario, the agitation stirred within Claudius could conceivably derive from a dual realization. The initial cognizance centres on the unearthing of truth, wherein the act of murder is thrust into the limelight. A secondary realization entails the confrontation with the sin of the past, thereby catalysing the emergence of guilt's emotional resonance within Claudius' conscience.

Conversely, if the relational dynamic pivots upon the nexus of "nephew" and "King," a paradigm shift transpires. Notably, the past trajectory excludes the presence of a "nephew" in the assumed sinful past, prompting the quest for analogous figures within alternate chronicles. The present configuration unfurls a pertinent relationship—the "nephew" embodied in Hamlet, and the "King" manifested in Claudius—a dynamic far from harmonious. Within this juncture, a volte-face transpires. The theatrical performance relinquishes its historical purview, reframing itself as a harbinger of future events. As Deutermann contends it is "a slip that identifies Hamlet, Claudius's nephew, as a potential regicide" (Deutermann 249). Or as Gottschalk argues "Hamlet's commentary holds the mirror up to Hamlet: he is threatening Claudius, and he is threatening him in the mode of the revenge-villain. The threat cuts two ways" (Gottschalk

163; Bernáth 227-229; Calderwood 95).¹ Thus, the narrative fabric can be construed as an overt admonition, publicly issued before the entire court, signalling Hamlet’s intent to kill Claudius—in the words of Schneiderman, “here the words make the play a realization of his desire to murder his uncle-father and to win the love of his aunt-mother” (Schneiderman 81). In the wake of this pivotal trajectory shift, the experiment may well fail to substantiate its initial hypothesis. Nonetheless, Claudius’ reaction assumes centrality, divulging an underlying disquiet borne of the menace implicit in the publicized threat. As Kemp argues, Claudius’ response stands as a testimony to his agitation, “[i]t is fear, however, not guilt, which motivates Claudius here” (Kemp 10).

The ostensibly unsuccessful endeavour encapsulated within the theatrico-scientific experiment, compounded by the definitive denouement involving Hamlet’s commentary concerning the murderer, resides as an artifact of notable cultural resonance within the Hungarian context. The ensuing sections of this paper shall embark upon a comprehensive examination of the preeminent translations that have rendered Hamlet’s commentary into Hungarian, traversing the spectrum from earliest iterations to contemporary renditions. Noteworthy is the selective focus applied herein; an exhaustive engagement with the ten translations spanning the chronology from the 18th to the 21st century is precluded. Rather, the spotlight is cast upon those translations that boast relative accessibility to contemporary readers and concurrently unveil the politico-cultural stratum underpinning the renderings of Hamlet’s assertion.

During the 18th-19th centuries, the choice of terminologies, whether “*atyjafia*” or “*öcs*” emerges for “nephew” as more than mere linguistic variance; it assumes the mantle of a vessel for socio-political connotations, encapsulating the resonance of Hungarian identity vis-à-vis oppressive authority. While Kazinczy safeguards Hamlet’s experimental design even more than his source, Schröder, Arany’s translation mirrors a nascent Hungary’s pursuit of cultural resilience within an increasingly assertive socio-political landscape. This transition catalyses nuanced interpretations, wherein familial dynamics and regicidal themes beckon a spectrum of connotations, perpetuating a dialectic that bridges the chasm between Hamlet’s intent and Arany’s nuanced yearnings for cultural integrity.

Indeed, the dual prism of Kazinczy and Arany inscribes a chapter in the intricate narrative of translation, one that transcends linguistic boundaries to engage with the pulse of a nation’s intellectual and political awakening. It

¹ Calderwood states that “As a result the player-murderer is an ambiguous combination of Hamlet, nephew to the present king, and Claudius, killer of the former king; and the theatrical murder tells two truths, one about the past, the other about the future. By substituting ‘nephew’ for ‘brother,’ Hamlet makes his own future murder of Claudius issue causally from Claudius’ murder (both real and theatrical) of Hamlet’s father.”

reflects the art of rendering foreign literature not only across languages, but through the crucible of historical and cultural transformation, where translators wield their pens as agents of both linguistic preservation and politico-cultural reinvigoration. Equally of note is the discernible facet that within these efforts, Shakespeare does not manifest as a conduit for cultural subjugation; instead, he assumes a role as a vehicle for the affirmation of a national politico-cultural autonomy, agency and identity.

Ferenc Kazinczy: *Hamlet* and the Politics of the Hungarian Language

The first rendering of the sentence diverges from Hamlet's intended English semantics, elegantly cohering with the cultural-political milieu of its contemporary epoch, the 18th century. Ferenc Kazinczy's (1759-1831)² translation echoes this alignment, articulating the sentence as "Ezt Luciánnak hivják; Atyjafia a' Hertzegnek" (Kazinczy 76), which in a literal construal translates to "This is named Lucian; Brother [atyjafia] of the Duke [Hertzeg]."³ The first clause of the sentence harmonizes with the English version, unlike the second part. The term "atyjafia" harbours variegated connotations that mirror the lexical fluidity of the 18th century. As elucidated by a contemporaneous lexicon, the term signifies "brother, conceived by the same father in its strictest sense, but this is rather archaic and [...] has a broader meaning such as 'kin,' 'blood relative,' or in an even broader sense brother-in-laws are included. In its vulgar use, it can be used as a friendly address" (Czuczor and Fogarasi 223). Consequently, within the strict definition, Lucianus could be perceived as both a brother or even a companion, thereby eluding a singular construal of the murderer-victim dynamic, precluding a direct analogical mapping onto the Old Hamlet-Claudius or Claudius-Hamlet affiliations. Consequently, the transition from past to future, from historical homicide to prospective threat, becomes contingent upon this interpretative ambiguity.

Conversely, the term "Hertzeg" ("Duke," "Prince") assumes a more conspicuous tenor, summoning forth the original status of the victim. In this light, the translation appears to maintain fidelity to the core tenets of the original experiment, perpetuating a degree of opaqueness in the relational dynamics and adhering to the veracity of the primary design. These deviances from the source

² Kazinczy was one of the most influential intellectuals of his time. He is known as one of the founders of the Hungarian Reformed Era, he worked for the renewal of the Hungarian language, of Hungarian literature, and of the Hungarian theatrical culture. He was a famous poet and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. To sum up all these Reuss refers to him as an intellectual "blogger" (Reuss 68) of his times.

³ All translations of the Hungarian sources into English are mine if not indicated otherwise—Zs. A.

text suggest that Kazinczy, through these subtle alterations, sought to preserve the integrity of Hamlet’s endeavour, striving to mitigate any impinging deviation that might threaten the experiment’s coherence.

In juxtaposition with its source text, Kazinczy’s translation emerges as an even more deliberate champion of Hamlet’s original intentions underscoring the experiment. To this end, Kazinczy’s praxis, echoing the *zeitgeist* of his era, forwent an English rendition, opting instead to translate from the German. As Sirató convincingly argues in this era it was Shakespeare’s “dramaturgy” and not his texts that bore crucial importance for translations (Sirató 190). Kazinczy’s rendition is a prose translation derived from Schröder’s German tradaptation of *Hamlet*. The specific line in question, as presented within Schröder’s work, reads as “Das ist einer, Namens Lucian, ein Neffe des Herzogs” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prinz von Dännemark: Ein Trauerspiel in 6 Aufzügen. Zum Behuf des Hamburgischen Theaters* 78), translating to “This is one, named Lucian, a nephew of the Prince” (—my translation, Zs.A.). The discernible inference here is that the term “Duke” or “Prince” owes its inclusion within Kazinczy’s version to Schröder’s influence. The term “Neffe” (“nephew”), however, retains a definitive connotation of different generations, and age group relationship. This element conveys that Kazinczy radicalised Schröder’s impulse to return to the original plans of the theatrical experiment. Hence, while Schröder’s translation might be construed as posing a menace directed at Claudius, Kazinczy’s rendition exudes a more explicit guardianship of Hamlet’s original concept. This alignment is evidenced by the resolute retention of Schröder’s terminology, thereby fostering a harmonious echo between Kazinczy’s rendition of Hamlet’s commentary, and Hamlet’s original design, enshrining the essence of the experiment.

Inevitably, the question arises as to the rationale underlying Kazinczy’s decision to translate *Hamlet* from Schröder’s version rather than from the original. The resolution to this question is embedded within the cultural-political undercurrents of 18th century Hungary. During this epoch, Hungary existed as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a dominion permeated by Germanic cultural predilections. Within the cultural tapestry of Budapest, theatrical renditions transpired in the German tongue, thereby endowing the local audience with familiarity predominantly attuned to the German Shakespearean canon. The literary milieu was similarly shaped, with accessibility skewed toward works transcribed in German. Given this contextual backdrop, Kazinczy’s predilection for translating *Hamlet* from the German source material surfaces as a choice both innate and discernible, underscored by the era’s prevailing sociocultural milieu, sociolinguistic dynamics, and literary accessibility.

Kazinczy’s decision to translate *Hamlet* from a German adaptation introduces an element of complexity that, to some extent, imparts a degree of instability, if not a measure of erosion, to the overtly political connotations

inherent in the act of translation and the apparent intentions of the translator. The published text is prefaced by Kazinczy's Dedication, initially printed separately and subsequently incorporated into the volume. This Dedication is imbued with political and nationalistic assertions, underscored by his advocacy for the establishment of a Hungarian theatre and his veneration of the Hungarian language as a medium for national preservation and as a suitable conduit for literary expression. The Dedication corroborates Fazekas's assertion that "Kazinczy made his translation for political purposes, at a turbulent time when Hungary was hoping to elect a Hungarian-friendly (or Hungarian) ruler after Joseph II" (Fazekas). Within this political context, Kazinczy's deliberate obscuring of the identity of the murderer (whether past or future) and his adherence to Schröder's substitution of the "King" with the "Duke" in the original experiment takes on interpretative significance. The transformation of the "King" into a "Duke" resonates with a world where the King (Joseph II) is already deceased, necessitating a dependable successor who will not impulsively disrupt the experiment's pursuit of truth. Furthermore, Hamlet's reliability and moral integrity are of crucial importance, as in this rendition Hamlet survives and becomes the king of Denmark (Sirató 194).

János Arany: The English Text and the Politics of Ambiguity

After the 18th century, the next generation of translators, in the mid-19th century, embarked upon their Shakespearean endeavours propelled by different motivations than their predecessors. Their engagement with Shakespeare assumed a new role, wielding to fashion a distinctly Hungarian cultural ethos, an autonomous theatrical realm disentangled from the embrace of the Habsburg dominion, perceived as oppression. What is also significant is that at this time poetry was the most significant genre, and instead of dramaturgy, Shakespeare was "respected for his text, for his lines, consequently for his poetry" (Nádasdy 40). Consequently, a conspicuous divergence unfolds: the recourse to German translations wanes, supplanted by a reorientation toward the English source texts. This strategic shift is substantiated by a fusion of not solely philological considerations but equally fortified by political underpinnings that synchronously resonated with the fervent pursuit of emancipation from the Habsburg Empire during the upheaval of 1848-1849, and after the defeat, the passive resistance articulated by Ferenc Deák. In his seminal study Cieger notes that intellectuals' political positions in the 1860's went beyond a bipolar coward-hero dichotomy: "the real political and private realities may have led to a much wider range of behaviours. They may have involved pretence, concealment, self-exemption, but also introspection and the maintenance of moral integrity" (Cieger 104).

Within this politico-cultural context, János Arany, the eminent poet of this epoch, undertook the task of translating two of Shakespeare’s plays: *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*. These translations, becoming the canonical renderings, endured as hallmarks of linguistic and cultural legacy until the end of the 20th century. Arany’s pivotal role underscores the confluence of literary and sociopolitical imperatives, exemplifying a synergy of literary pursuits intertwined with the broader struggle for political agency and cultural emancipation against the backdrop of Habsburg dominion. Furthermore, Arany also had, maybe unconscious motivations when translating in general and *Hamlet* in particular. As Keresztury notes “the play in Arany’s time still had a very strong political charge, as in *Bánk bán* [A famous Hungarian 19th century drama by József Katona—Zs.A.], since a royal person who benefited from a rotten state was killed in them” (Keresztury 505). This contextual backdrop is further accentuated by the events that enveloped Arany during the 1850s, a period characterized by personal humiliations and existential contemplations. During this phase, Arany grappled with reconciling his identity as a poet with the vulnerabilities arising from exposure to a repressive regime (Dávidházi 77). The subsequent decade, encompassing the 1860s, witnessed Arany’s intricate rapport with the burgeoning regime under Franz Joseph. In navigating this complex terrain, Arany’s hesitant, sometimes self-loathing acquiescence to honours and roles was met with pronounced censure from factions opposed to the embracement of Habsburg sovereignty. This juxtaposition is emblematic of his nuanced stance: “He welcomed the Reconciliation, Franz Joseph as king (we know he was in the crowd on the day of the coronation), but aware that there were significant political and social groups opposed to the new political system” (Cieger 94). Arany’s interpretive renderings reframe Shakespeare’s legacy within the contours of historical nuances, augmenting their relevance within the broader discourse of cultural evolution and socio-political transformation.

Arany’s translation of Hamlet’s commentary assumes a more proximate alignment with the original text, yet within the framework of modern Hungarian, the rendering harbours a degree of potential misinterpretation. In Arany’s rendition, the commentary takes form as follows: “Ez valami Lucianus, a király öccse.” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Dán Királyfi* 401), meaning “This is some Lucianus, younger brother to the King” (—my translation, Zs.A). Arany, thus, revisits the designation of the victim as a “King,” thereby retracing the thematic trajectory toward regicide. However, the designation of the murderer introduces a layer of intricacy. In contemporary (20th-21st century) Hungarian, the term “öcs” translates to “younger brother.” Consequently, if one were to peruse Arany’s translation in the absence of commentary—a scenario applicable to most editions—it is conceivable that an assumption might arise, positing either a mistranslation of Shakespeare’s intent or an (un)intentional transmutation of terminology designed to revert to the original blueprint set against Hamlet’s plan.

Yet, upon a closer scrutiny, the matter proves less straightforward. Consultation of the Czuczor-Fogarasi lexicon imparts nuanced illumination, elucidating that “öcs” refers not merely to a “younger brother” (as in modern Hungarian) but also extends to encompass a broader spectrum—embracing a male relative, such as both a “younger brother” and “nephew.” In a more expansive connotation, the term is further applicable to “a “younger man,” subsuming instances wherein a fifty-year-old man assumes the role of the “öcs,” in relation to a sixty-year-old counterpart” (Czuczor and Fogarasi 4/1154). This multidimensional scope of the term, thus, unveils an intricate linguistic landscape that complicates the seemingly straightforward dichotomy, underscoring the imperative of approaching Arany’s translation with a sensitivity to the historical-linguistic nuances embedded within the fluidity of language evolution over time.

Consequently, akin to Kazinczy’s “atyjafia,” Arany’s rendering of “öcs” could potentially allude to a nephew; yet its signification extends beyond this, encompassing a spectrum that refers not solely to a “nephew,” but to a “younger brother,” or even a more generalized reference to a younger male figure. This linguistic intricacy engenders a nuanced realm of interpretative latitude, whereby Hamlet’s commentary on the stage action and character might, or might not, harmonize with the original intentions of the experiment. Central to this contention is the query of the murderer’s identity—whether Claudius in the historical past or Hamlet in a prospective future—whose definitive resolution remains undetermined, persistently hovering within an indeterminate zone.

What endures as immutable from the original sentence, and within the confines of the experiment, is the figure of the victim. Irrespective of the perpetrator’s identity—past or impending—the sentence either commemorates or prophesies the regicide of a sovereign, the monarch, wherein the precise individual manifesting the royal persona remains ancillary (be it Old Hamlet or Claudius). A discernible thread emerges that harks back to Arany’s era, wherein the undercurrents of collective consciousness seemingly grappled with a latent issue pertaining to the monarch—a phenomenon particularly resonant in Hungary, where the prevailing Habsburg monarchy had recently defeated the Hungarian uprising against their dominion. This historical juncture elicits the contemplation that an underlying yearning for the monarch’s demise might have nestled within the recesses of Arany’s contemporary ethos, even if he celebrated the coronation of the new king.

As a conclusion to the 18-19th century efforts, the translations traced from Kazinczy to Arany cast an illuminating trajectory upon the interplay of linguistic fidelity and socio-political contextualization in rendering Hamlet’s seminal line. The shift from Kazinczy’s discerning alignment with Schröder’s German tradaptation to Arany’s recourse to the English source text underscores the dynamism inherent in translation as a mediating agent of cultural

metamorphosis. Arany’s choice, resonating with the broader *zeitgeist* of striving for autonomous cultural expression, reflects the congruence of linguistic adaptation and nationalist aspiration within the crucible of 19th century Hungary. In Arany’s version, the elusive contours of familial relationships and regicidal intent traverse the domains of language, culture, and politics, engendering a hermeneutical tapestry that reverberates beyond its linguistic confines.

Eörsi and Nádasdy, Scholarship as Politics

The latter part of the 20th century ushered in a distinct sociopolitical and cultural paradigm, particularly resonant around the end of the socialist-Kádár regime and after its fall. This transitional juncture bore the promise of liberation for the people. This liberating impulse, nuanced in its essence, encompassed the relinquishment of the regime’s centralized cultural politics, coupled with an ardent pivot toward the “Western” sphere—a trajectory that materialized through a fevered wave of translation endeavours, yielding a sea of renderings of contemporary literary works by British and American authors into Hungarian, with varying degrees of quality.

Within this evolving panorama, the advent of new translations can be apprehended as more than mere linguistic enterprises; they encode a palpable agency in the configuration of a national and cultural identity. A side effect of this emergent ethos was a pursuit of heightened translational excellence, punctuated by an evolution in the way Shakespeare’s *oeuvre* was approached. This transformation bore evidence of a perceptible departure from the utilization of theatrical Shakespeare as a covert vessel for promulgating political agendas or critiquing the incumbent regime, which does not mean that Shakespeare production would become apolitical. This alteration was notably facilitated by the availability of contemporaneous voices who could serve these ends more overtly. These overarching proclivities naturally imbued the arena of Shakespearean translation with discernible transformations—translations characterized by a reoriented politicization and an augmented dedication to philological precision, emblematic of an epoch navigating the transition between political epochs and cultural paradigms.

The end of the 20th century witnessed the ascension of translating *Hamlet* into the echelons of heightened significance. János Arany’s translation, having evolved into the national literary canon, acquired an aura of inviolability—a sacred text—from very early on. As Minier argues “The taboo around Arany’s *Hamlet* is as old as the text itself. Indeed, it may be argued that it dates back to even before the emergence of Arany’s translation, [...]. This apparently paradoxical phenomenon is primarily because of Arany’s fame and the ‘sartorial’ role he was endowed with in the cultural life of the nation”

(Minier 167). Owing to the taboo status of Arany's translation the history of the Hungarian renditions of *Hamlet* can be represented as the history of "detectable attitude of discipleship (utmost reverence for Arany as a significant and defining Hungarian voice of Shakespeare) and the attitude of mastery (translatorial identity that establishes itself in overt rivalry with Arany as a master)" (Minier 164). Simultaneously, however, along with a sense of liberation, the theatrical enactment of Arany's rendition encountered linguistic intricacies, posing formidable challenges for both actors and spectators alike. This predicament, fostering a climate of innovation, catalysed the inception of pioneering initiatives; specifically, directors found themselves compelled to commission fresh translations, with the intention to surmount these communicative impediments and thereby facilitate the unimpeded realization of the play upon the stage. István Eörsi's (1983, Csiky Gergely Theatre, Kaposvár, dir. Tamás Ascher) and Dezső Mészöly's (1996, New Theatre, Budapest, dir. János Ács) translations, the first ones in the line of forthcoming translations, were only partial ones. They selected iconic parts of Arany's translations and kept them unmodified, and retranslated the rest. The complete translations were those of István Eörsi (2003, Csiky Gergely Theatre of Temesvár, dir. Victor Ioan Frunză), Ádám Nádasdy (1999, Csokonai Theatre, Debrecen, dir. György Lengyel). Some of these translations found their ways to the printed page. Eörsi István's complete translation came off the press in 1993 (Shakespeare, *Hamlet Dán Királyfi Tragédiája*) and Ádám Nádasdy's rendering was first published in 2012 (Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Három Dráma: Hamlet, Szentivánéji Álom, Lear Király*).

Both the translations by Eörsi and Nádasdy evince a distinct disposition towards the act of translation, diverging from their predecessors in substantial ways. Géza Balogh posits that the divergence between the two translators resides in Eörsi's aspiration to imbue *Hamlet* with the voice of "the roaring poetry of the Beat Generation" (Balogh 6), while Nádasdy's translation "sweeps away all conventions" (Balogh 6). Despite the different translatorial dispositions, both translators have endeavoured to replicate Hamlet's original commentary pertaining to the "Murder of Gonzago" episode with a fidelity that extends to the lexical dimension. István Eörsi's rendering reads as follows: "Ez itt Lucianus, a király unokaöccse." (Shakespeare, *Hamlet Dán Királyfi Tragédiája* 85), while Nádasdy's version concurs: "Ez itt Lucianus, a király unokaöccse" (Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Három Dráma: Hamlet, Szentivánéji Álom, Lear Király* 110). The two translations are visibly identical and are faithful translations of the English version, entailing that in both cases, Lucianus is the nephew of the King. The only difference between the two versions is that Nádasdy augments his translation with a footnote, in which he offers an explanation, positing that "perhaps Hamlet did not intend to remind people of

Claudius’s dark past.” (Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Három Dráma: Hamlet, Szentivánéji Álom, Lear Király* 110 (—my translation, Zs.A.).

István Eörsi’s and Ádám Nádasdy’s Hungarian renderings, marked by their meticulous congruence with the original English sentence, veritably approximate the source text within the confines of the Hungarian language. Consequently, within the ambit of 20th and 21st century translations, the deliberate convergence of these renditions culminates in a comprehensive dismantling of Hamlet’s theatrical experiment, harmoniously resonating with the source material. Remarkably, one of the translators undertakes to ascribe particular significance to these modifications to the original plan, and thus to the temporal scheme of the experiment, thereby engendering an exegetical apparatus to elucidate the rationale underpinning the alteration—underscoring an overt interplay between linguistic fidelity and translatorial interpretation.

The impetus behind the reversion to the philologically accurate source text is entrenched within a transformative shift in the paradigms governing the sphere of translation. Commencing from the latter decades of the 20th century, Shakespeare has risen to an exalted stature within (Hungarian) English studies, emerging as a preeminent subject of scholarly inquiry. Evidencing a panoptic international and domestic scholarly engagement with the Shakespearean corpus, this epoch witnessed the ascendancy of Shakespeare into a beacon of academic veneration. Nádasdy, himself an erudite historian of the English language and a professor who taught linguistics and literature at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, inherently aligns with this tradition (Almás). In this context, the palpable visibility and presence of scholarship within Hungary on this thematic terrain assumes an ineluctable significance that could not be cavalierly disregarded by translators of Shakespearean works. This trajectory is distinctly manifest in the perspectives propounded by both translators, emphatically articulating their reliance upon critical editions of Shakespeare’s play. Each has harnessed the second series Arden edition crafted by Harold Jenkins, alongside a comprehensive consultation of additional critical editions as well as a panoply of translations into disparate languages (Eörsi 7; Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Három Dráma: Hamlet, Szentivánéji Álom, Lear Király* 469). Furthermore, it seems that they intended to make the texts as contemporary as possible, since both translators were working for theatres and theatrical productions aimed at bringing *Hamlet* home, making him and the productions non-historical. Eörsi claims that the director requested a text that can be given to a Hamlet “in jeans” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet Dán Királyfi Tragédiája* 161). Nádasdy defines his method of translating as against the 19th century methodologies: “We can put aside the Hungarian tradition, which translates Shakespeare’s texts with a more colourful vocabulary, a more sophisticated metrics than the original” (Nádasdy 46).

Substantially, it is the aegis of scholarship and the tenets of historical and poetic fidelity that have not merely permeated, but decisively guided the realm of Shakespearean translations within Hungary in the aftermath of the iconoclastic new translations of *Hamlet*. This epochal reconfiguration aspired to foster a nascent canon of Shakespearean translations, underpinned by the edifice of rigorous scholarly engagement, concurrently spanning Hungarian and international spheres of erudition. This scholarly edifice serves to navigate the intricate dialectic between the timeless reverberations of Shakespeare's corpus and the evolving contours of translation, emblematic of an epoch wherein intellectual rigour coalesces with translatorial discernment to shape a distinctly scholarly prism through which Shakespeare's iconic work is rendered anew.

The scholarship and poetic fidelity find resonance within a broader political context, manifesting on two significant fronts. The reference to both national and international scholarship as the underpinning of the translators' endeavour introduces a dimension akin to what may be termed an act of internationalization. In this light, *Hamlet* transcends its role as a mere vehicle for historical nationalism, instead assuming the role of a conduit that facilitates engagement within the international sphere of cultural accomplishments. This aligns seamlessly with the notion of liberation that emerged in the wake of, and subsequent to, the dissolution of the socialist regime. Secondly, the contemporisation of *Hamlet*'s language obviated the necessity for the "double speak"⁴ inherent in the theatre of the socialist era. In this respect, *Hamlet*, occupying the realm of our own contemporaneity, emerges as a potent tool for overtly articulating critique against the backdrop of political discourse in the contemporary Hungarian theatre.

Conclusion

The exploration undertaken herein has unveiled the profound import that *Hamlet*'s commentary on the "Murder of Gonzago" play-within-the-play assumes within the broader ambit of experimental natural philosophy contemporaneous to its inception. My contention has hinged upon the premise that this commentary, with particular emphasis on the line under scrutiny, precipitates an inadvertent derailment of the very experiment it was intended to embody. This spoiling of the experiment is even more conspicuous in light of Francis Bacon's methodological reflections on experimental science. Rather than compelling Claudius to unfurl his concealed past, *Hamlet*'s discourse transmutes

⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the status of Shakespeare in the socialist regime, and the use of "double speak" see Veronika Schandl's works especially her monograph (Schandl).

into a veiled threat, casting its spectral shadow across the entire court—a transformation emblematic of the multifaceted subtleties attendant to this intricate metatheatrical experiment.

In the subsequent juncture of inquiry, the gaze was intently directed toward four Hungarian translations of Hamlet’s statement and commentary: the 18th century rendition by Ferenc Kazinczy, the 19th century translation by János Arany, and the 20th-21st century ones by István Eörsi and Ádám Nádasdy. The examination of these renderings has been undertaken within a contextual matrix that rigorously embeds their genesis within the historical context of their inception. This contextualization, as an analytical device, has engendered a heightened understanding of the translations’ symbiotic interplay with the prevailing socio-political and cultural exigencies that crystallized during their respective historical epochs. The translational endeavours of the 18th and 19th centuries emerge as deliberate acts of cultural assertion and the fostering of intellectual integrity. A palpable emphasis on nurturing an authentically Hungarian cultural milieu is discernible within these translations, reflecting an awareness of the significance of cultural distinctiveness in an era characterized by shifting socio-political tides. Conversely, the translations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are underpinned by a distinct proclivity towards scholarly engagement and the cultivation of philological precision. In alignment with the evolving landscape of Hungarian politico-cultural dynamics, these translations exhibit a symbiotic engagement with both national and international scholarship, serving as conduits that bridge scholarship and the tenets of the Hungarian socio-political sphere.

The analysis embarked upon herein attests to the active agency of translations, positioning them as dynamic interlocutors who intricately embroider the historical tapestry with threads of linguistic expression. These successive strata of translation, informed by the provenance of their historical origins, amalgamate to forge an unfolding continuum. In so doing, they facilitate the inexorable evolution towards novel renderings—an iterative process emblematic of the perpetual dialectic between the temporal nuances encapsulated within the prism of translation and the timeless resonance that emanates from Shakespeare’s *oeuvre*.

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