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***Dziady* directed by Kazimierz Dejmek  
– an attempt at demythologisation**

On 25 November 1967 in the National Theatre in Warsaw one of the most important theatre premières in Polish history took place: *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) directed by Kazimierz Dejmek. Through staging *Dziady: Part III* the Ministry of Culture and Art wanted to celebrate the October Revolution. That decision proved to be a failure on the part of the authorities, but most of all it was one of the factors which spurred demonstrations and strikes. The removal of the play from the repertoire was one of the indirect causes of the events March of the following year. It is noteworthy that the director, having anticipated the possible consequences of staging *Dziady*, decided to move the première from the 7th to the 25th of November. During rehearsals, the actors did not feel the play was supposed to provoke anyone to any demonstrations, but the growing politics-based social unrest caused some anxiety amongst them as well.<sup>1</sup>

Less than a month after the première, the play was cancelled due to the illness of the lead actor: Gustaw Holoubek. The actor's health problems caused speculation that the play was inconvenient for the authorities due to its anti-Soviet nature. Today, one could refer to such a situation as a marketing strategy, since the cancelling of the play and the related rumours resulted in increased attendance. The spirit of Romanticism was reborn in Poles. Thunderous applause during the play constituted a patriotic affirmation of its anti-Soviet passages.

Any insinuations or sudden reactions of the audience during consecutive performances were increasingly alarming for the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). The authorities decided to limit the number of tickets available for university students, and level the prices of those tickets to the same as the normal ones.<sup>2</sup> They tried to limit the participation of university students due to their anti-Soviet disposition.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Holoubek, M. Dziewulska, "O *Dziadach* Dejmka", *Teatr*, 1999, issue 5, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> M. Raszewska, "Teatr Narodowy Kazimierza Dejmka", [in:] *Teatr Narodowy 1949–2004*, Warsaw 2005, p. 137.

The play was the meeting point of the concern and frustration, increasingly visible amongst the representatives of the Polish intelligentsia. The bitter disappointment in the “socialist” system was a result of not only the limitation of freedom of speech, but also the sense of isolation in relation to Western culture (the lack of access to foreign publications, limited opportunities for foreign trips, e.g. to symposia held on the western side of the Berlin Wall, a ban on general publishing of the works of European writers “inconvenient” for the authorities). In such, an atmosphere, the staging of the play, which carried a huge patriotic or even liberational potential, offered hope of the long-awaited political thaw. A hope which was even stronger as, from January 1968, in Czechoslovakia was the Prague Spring, which was a time of great change (lifting of censorship, ability to establish independent organisations, liberalised policy towards the Church) started by Alexander Dubček, the new leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.<sup>3</sup> That was one of the reasons why the authorities saw in Dejmek’s *Dziady* anti-Soviet allusions and Tyrtaeic accents which existed not so much in the play itself as in the society. Therefore, the authorities decided to remove the play from the repertoire as of 30 January 1968. The cancellation of the performances of *Dziady* was supposed to quieten the negative reactions of students and the intelligentsia, but the resolution created a wave of protests.

Today, the events of 1968 are a symbol of the fight for freedom of speech and independence. The première of the play and the later ban on staging *Dziady* coincided with work on amending the Constitution of the People’s Republic. That concluded in the “Resolution of the Prime Minister dated 21 March 1970 on the scope and mode of supervision and monitoring by control authorities of the press, publications, and performances.”<sup>4</sup> The concern about the ever increasing scope of interventions of censors in the works of journalists, writers, and artists was amplified by the limit on staging *Dziady*, and the eventual decision to cancel it altogether.

Certainly, the political circumstances (limited freedom of speech, the nearing Prague Spring, defiance of university students, disappointment in the new political system) were not the best context for staging the play, on which the director had worked for five years.<sup>5</sup> The growing social unrest and the expected strikes could have eclipsed the première, and diminished the significance of the cultural event. Can anyone believe that the aesthetic values of the play could have resulted in the tumultuous March 1968? Or maybe the riots related to the première on 25 November 1967 were only an excuse, and the artistic idea was not worth the audience’s attention?

<sup>3</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Praska wiosna*; [http://www.marzec1968.pl/wai/m68/797/6962/Praska\\_wiosna.html?search=569592](http://www.marzec1968.pl/wai/m68/797/6962/Praska_wiosna.html?search=569592) (accessed on: 27.02.2013).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Pawlicki, *Kompletna szarość. Cenzura w latach 1965–1972. Instytucja i ludzie*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 39–40.

<sup>5</sup> G. Pielużek, “Sceniczne dzieje *Dziadów* (Próba podsumowania)”, *Warsztaty Polonistyczne*, 1998, issue 1, p. 63.

Post-première reviews were unfavourable as the authorities blocked all positive one. As a result, the majority of press releases included superficial and vague evaluations. The director was accused of adding some and removing other parts of the text. A firm statement of the authorities proved the suppression of any positive evaluations of the play: “Wincenty Kraśko, manager of the Culture Division of the Central Committee of the PZPR, accused the staging of the play of an anti-Russian and anti-Soviet attitude, and excessive focus on religion; later, there also appeared accusations towards Dejmek for «abusing» the original, «twisting the text’s focus», «rambling» (possibly intentionally or by someone else’s inspiration), or even that he «added» (both literally and figuratively).”<sup>6</sup> The *religious focus* of the play irritated Zenon Kliszko, but the main reason for his resentment was the reading of the play as an allusion to himself (Kliszko believed that the sections regarding Novosiltsov applied to him, and referred to him as a representative of the authorities, one of the closest collaborators of Władysław Gomułka). One could conclude that Dejmek’s staging became a false mirror for the authorities, though the director often stressed that nothing like that was his intention.

All evaluations and debates regarding *Dziady* ceased when the student protests ended. The authorities pretended nothing had happened, while the National Theatre did not stage the play. Edward Krasiński referred to the situation as “historical oblivion.”<sup>7</sup> Only as years went by did there appear new official opinions regarding Dejmek’s staging.<sup>8</sup> People started looking past its political aspects and trying to see and evaluate its artistic qualities. Maria Dziewulska lamented such a course of events in the history of the staging. She was one of the few representatives of the student community to have had a chance to see the historic performance:

That version of *Dziady* did not become established in the social space in which it should have been established and did not start to exert its influence. The fact that it was not seen probably also had consequences for the development of theatre. [...] And as often in our history, it remained rather in the political domain instead of in the artistic or social realms in the most solemn sense of the words. That was a real loss that theatre and culture suffered.<sup>9</sup>

Dziewulska noted the loss the theatrical culture suffered, and did not form any judgements whether the play deserved a high evaluation in artistic terms; she did, however, notice a lack of any evaluation of said features. Małgorzata Dziewulska’s remarks confirmed that throughout the years Dejmek’s *Dziady* has become surrounded by a myth which protected the play against any objective assessment. It might be yet another myth in the Polish culture which proves the prevailing

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<sup>6</sup> M. Raszewska, *Teatr Narodowy...*, p. 137.

<sup>7</sup> E. Krasiński, “Dziady (1967)”, [in:] *Teatr Kazimierza Dejmka*, A. Kuligowska-Korzeniewska (ed.), Łódź 2010, p. 239.

<sup>8</sup> M. Fik, *Kultura Polska po Jalcie. Kronika lat 1944–1981*, Warsaw 1991, p. 508.

<sup>9</sup> G. Holoubek, M. Dziewulska, “O *Dziadach...*”, p. 10.

Romantic mood in the country. The audience submits to emotions regardless of the quality of the artistic activities, which for creators are of primary significance.

Nonetheless, some researchers and critics have attempted an objective evaluation of the staging. They were aware that it would be easy to be indiscreet if one condemned it. 37 years after the première, Jerzy Timoszewicz confessed to Magdalena Grochowska<sup>10</sup> that for many years he kept his silence regarding Dejmek's *Dziady* as "it was in poor taste to speak ill about a play which played such a huge role in politics and culture."<sup>11</sup> While he emphasised the significance of *Dziady* within the political-cultural area, Timoszewicz subjected it to criticism:

As a staging it [the play] was nothing outstanding. The "Improvisation" was delivered brilliantly. It is not easy to transform a poetic metaphoric text to one which is rational, and yet Holoubek managed just that. That was the apogee of Holoubek delivering his text, but he failed to deliver Konrad.<sup>12</sup>

A particular focus was placed by the reviewers on Gustaw Holoubek's interpretation of his character. They stated unanimously that the role of Konrad was a breakthrough moment in the career of one of the greatest Polish actors. It was best described by Zbigniew Raszewski:

Holoubek: a great surprise. We expected him to be bad. We had proof for it, that he is an excellent character actor but a poor tragic actor. (Deficient Hamlet, rather uninspiring Richard II, completely unnatural Oedipus) Here, Holoubek impresses mainly with his technique and mastery. He delivers, for the first time in history, the entire "Improvisation", and he does it in such a way that you could listen to him over and over again.<sup>13</sup>

Gregorz Pielużek shared Timoszewicz's and Raszewski's positions, and compared Dejmek's *Dziady* with other stagings of the same play in the Polish theatre, placing particular focus on the unique presentation of the character of Konrad played by Holoubek:

Gustaw Holoubek created in Dejmek's play one of the greatest versions of the character of Konrad, and one of the greatest characters in the whole of Polish theatre. His Konrad was an intellectual character.<sup>14</sup>

Holoubek's performance was noticed not only by teatrologists, but also by the authorities which identified intentional anti-Soviet activities there as well. Dissatisfaction was even higher since Holoubek's character received thunderous applause, as he created a unique and elevated mood:

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<sup>10</sup> M. Grochowska, "Tam cię zmielą jak w młynku do kawy", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2004, issue 172, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> M. Raszewska, *Teatr Narodowy...*, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> G. Pielużek, "Sceniczne dzieje...", p. 63.

After the final scene when Mickiewicz's Konrad (played by Gustaw Holoubek) came to the front of the stage with shackles, the audience burst into thunderous applause. The curtain was raised 11 times.<sup>15</sup>

The critics' evaluations have often been discussed by theatre historians considering the political and social context. Of course, it is impossible to consider the whole from a purely artistic perspective. One should take into account also the events which occurred after *Dziady* was cancelled, i.e. starting from 30 January 1968.

After the last performance the "commandos" from the University of Warsaw (the group included Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik and Karol Modzelewski) and the students of the Theatre Academy (e.g. Małgorzata Dziewulska, Ryszard Peryt, Andrzej Seweryn) set off carrying banners towards the statue of Adam Mickiewicz. The march was accompanied by chanting aloud "Dejmek! Dejmek!", "Independence without censorship!" The demonstration resulted in the arrest of 35 students.<sup>16</sup>

The following day, people started signing a petition demanding the reintroduction of *Dziady*. The students' initiative was not only limited to Warsaw youths; the petition was also signed by Wrocław students, and initiated further student actions in defence of freedom of speech.

On the 4th of March, Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer, students of the University of Warsaw, were expelled from the university by Henryk Jabłoński, the minister of education and higher education at the time. The official reason for their expulsion was the release of a press note regarding *Dziady* to Western media.<sup>17</sup> In response to the situation, students started protests, which in time spread to many other academic centres throughout Poland.

Gradually, the cancelling of Dejmek's play transformed into dissent transcending the student community. It was a dissent of the entire young generation, people who did not want to live any more in a country ruled by hypocrisy and lies.

The events which accompanied the staging of *Dziady* in the National Theatre require researchers to study the artistic side of the performance. It can be recreated to some extent by analysing the assistant's script (the only one which has survived until today), and comparing it with Mickiewicz's text, as well as with the recorded recollections from the rehearsals and fragments of the play included in a documentary by Ireneusz Dobrowolski entitled *Teatr i polityka (Dziady Dejmka – 1968)*<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> A. Krajewski, *Ostatni taki spektakl*; <http://www.archiwum.kurierlubelski.pl/module-dzial-printpub-tid-9-pid-50046.html> (accessed on: 03.02.2013).

<sup>16</sup> Ł. Kamiński, *Dziady*; <http://www.marzec1968.pl/wai/m68/797/6959/Dziady.html> (accessed on: 18.02.2013).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., *Protesty studenckie*; [http://www.marzec1968.pl/wai/m68/797/6964/Protesty\\_studenckie.html](http://www.marzec1968.pl/wai/m68/797/6964/Protesty_studenckie.html) (accessed on: 18.02.2013).

<sup>18</sup> *Teatr i polityka (Dziady Dejmka – 1968)*, directed by Ireneusz Dobrowolski, produced by: Polish Television, Warsaw 1991.

As I have already mentioned, critics mainly focussed on Gustaw Holoubek playing Gustaw-Konrad. The biggest number of comments about the character survived in relation to the “Improvisation”. Thus, it was no accident that Andrzej Jarocki writing about Dejmek’s *Dziady* first referred to the “Improvisation”: “that presentation of the “Improvisation” and grand staging.”<sup>19</sup> Many years later, Jitka Stokalska, Kazimierz Dejmek’s assistant, reminisced that during the rehearsals the lead actor could not decide how to interpret the “Improvisation”: “Initially during rehearsals of the scene, Holoubek feigned a lot.”<sup>20</sup>

However, Holoubek’s character was not the only aspect which made the “Improvisation” stand out in the staging. Kazimierz Dejmek was the first director in the history of Polish theatre to decide that the “Improvisation” should be delivered in its entirety.

In Jitka Stokalska’s assistant’s script,<sup>21</sup> the pages with the scene did not include, in terms of Konrad’s passages, any deletions, the only correction was due to a typing error made by the person re-typing the script:

Thou art love? A liar Thee so named!  
Thou art nothing but ~~love~~a brain.<sup>22</sup>

Dejmek did not change Konrad’s passage, though he introduced changes in the passages of the Voices, which were not in the staging as in the original with Voices from the left / right side of the stage. The director gave the Voice from the left to the Devils, while the Voice from the right became the voice of the Archangel and other angels.

In the script, two lines from the devil’s passage were deleted:

~~From eagle to hydra!~~  
~~Fill tear out his eyes, jab~~  
Him on to more  
Storming!  
More smoking, more  
Burning!  
Howl! Thunder!

The Devils were not located around the platform on which Konrad stood, but wriggled around his feet to wrap around him tightly after he fainted. The whole scene concluded after the words of the Devils: “Grab him! Snatch him!”

<sup>19</sup> Z. Majchrowski, *Cela Konrada. Powracając do Mickiewicza*, Gdańsk 1998, p. 135.

<sup>20</sup> J. Stokalska, “*Dziady* (1967)”, [in:] *Teatr Kazimierza Dejmka...*, p. 233.

<sup>21</sup> The assistant’s script kept by Jitka Stokalska included both assistant’s remarks and Kazimierz Dejmek’s original remarks which were introduced in violet pencil; the analysed script came from Jitka Stokalska’s private archive.

<sup>22</sup> All translations of quotations of *Dziady* are taken from: Mickiewicz, Adam. *Forefathers’ Eve*. Glagoslav Publications. Kindle Edition.

The “Improvisation” delivered by Holoubek concluded with the actor turning away from the audience and facing the altar, which was supposed to signify the protagonists turning to God. As the director’s assistant reminisced, Holoubek did not agree to such an ending for a long time.

Krystyna Mazur, stage speech specialist who cooperated with Dejmek during the staging of *Dziady*, stressed that in the case of the “Improvisation” neither she nor the director helped the actor.<sup>23</sup> That is why many years later she described her impression upon watching Holoubek’s interpretation, and not the preparations for that particular fragment:

This is how I recall it: he appears suddenly out of nowhere, in the centre of the stage, and begins to utter the “Improvisation”. Initially, it carries a slightly bombastic tone, revealing anxiety in the very fact of playing such an exceptional role. [...] So from the very first words it was slightly bombastic, and I got the impression as if the words flowed and he was only observing them. The text was not being interpreted or offered in a form requiring it to be understood or felt; it rather felt as if a wave of words was flowing through Holoubek and he only observed the process. In the initial part of the text when it refers to solitude, you could not sense any bitterness. There was emotion but without adorning any emotional stilts, without posing as a poet or an artist. You could see that it was rather an attempt at facing the words, which referred to the status of an artist, so, in turn, also his, Holoubek’s, status.<sup>24</sup>

Mazur’s recollections confirmed the gravity of the situation, which even during rehearsals was noticed by the people working on the play. Gustaw Holoubek did not try to play the character of Konrad, but he tried to be him. As a grown man and an artist he was fully aware of the significance of art and creation in human life. The words which he spoke were not foreign to him, which further amplified the expressiveness of Mickiewicz’s protagonist. For the first time in Polish theatre the “Improvisation” was spoken not performed.

During final rehearsals, Kazimierz Dejmek decided that the “Improvisation” would conclude that part of the play. The script includes a large inscription: “curtain drop.”

Jitka Stokalska recalled the decision regarding the choice of the ending of the first part of the spectacle as one of the few exalted moments during the rehearsals:

When Holoubek spoke the entire text of the “Improvisation” during a rehearsal for the first time, it was an exceptional experience for us, and there were not many of those during our work on the play. Dejmek, who was not known for praising actors, was also clearly moved. It became clear that that was the moment for an intermission. No one could say anything more!<sup>25</sup>

After a twenty-minute-long intermission, the second part, which started with a scene of the Exorcisms, began. In Dejmek’s division, it was the fifth scene of the staging. It began with the Corporal, Fr. Piotr, and one of the prisoners.

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<sup>23</sup> K. Mazur, no title; <http://www.teatr-pismo.pl/archiwalna/index.php?sub=archiwum&f=po-kaz&nr=492&pnr=32> (accessed on: 18.02.2013).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> J. Stokalska, “Dziady (1967)...”, p. 234.



The director substituted the character of the Prisoner with Jankowski. That decision seems fully justified as Jankowski was a person who doubted the existence of Jesus and Mary. He gave evidence of that in the third scene (Prison) by uttering the words:

You know, this faith of yours is worthless, priest.  
 Say what you will — that I'm worse than a beast,  
 A Turk, a Tatar, a thief, spy, or bandit,  
 Austrian, Prussian, or even Russian, damn it —  
 But God's ire, if such thing be, creeps still afar.  
 They're dead, we're here, and smiling lives the Tsar!

Underneath the text there is a note regarding a move to page 37, which might suggest that *Jankowski's Song* was omitted. On page 35, there is a scene with the song, but it is struck through several times. Even though the song was omitted, the character of Jankowski was not tempered. The character was presented in Dejmek's staging, just like in Mickiewicz's drama, as a blasphemer who only believed in what he saw and what he saw was the rule of the Tsar not God.

When, in the Exorcisms scene, Jankowski notices Konrad has fainted, he tries to bring him around not allowing the slightest thought of the latter being possessed. He sees a man in an epileptic seizure. He wants to help. At the same time, Fr. Piotr prays for Konrad.

Dejmek juxtaposed in the scene a rationalist with a clergyman showing the gap between those two attitudes in a prison context.

Evil spirits, demons that accompany the exorcisms, were presented polyphonously to suppress Konrad's words. "Krystyna Mazur [...] used the text to create sheet music of «devilish responses». The actors were divided into four groups. Each group had its own words or just sounds which they repeated «covering» Konrad's words."<sup>26</sup> The uproar, noise, and confusion created on the stage had to make a huge impression. The fight of the exorcist with the evil forces concluded in a musical scene offering cleansing, and solace. When one watches the scene<sup>27</sup>, she/he can feel the gravity of the moment, the solemn mood. Then through a sound contrast the director showed the fight with the demons and the exorcist's triumph over evil spirits. The monumental setting, surrounded by angels, was devised to constitute a visible proof of the existence of God.

The second, and at the same time the final, scene of the act was the Vision of Fr. Piotr. In its initial version, the scene was deleted by Dejmek (the text was struck through in violet pencil), but in the final version the deletion was cancelled with blue lines. One can assume that the director hesitated whether it should be included in the staging. Stokalska's recollections seem to corroborate that:

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>27</sup> The conclusion of the exorcisms scene was included in the previously-mentioned documentary *Teatr i polityka (Dziady Dejmka – 1968)* directed by Ireneusz Dobrowolski.



Clearly, it was not the director's favourite fragment. He mocked and ridiculed it.<sup>28</sup>

The assistant went on to describe the problem with the interpretation of Fr. Piotr's monologue by the actor who played him. As a possible reason for that she referred to the director's previously-mentioned attitude to the scene. Eventually, the scene remained in the staging, and Józef Duriasz was aided by Dejmek in finding the right expression in the monologue:

During one of the rehearsals, Dejmek sent all the actors away and stayed with Duriasz alone and that was the first time I saw him enter the stage and passionately propose, nudge, and show what to do with the monologue. His acting interpretation was extremely interesting. Duriasz slowly "thawed," and eventually there appeared a glimmer of hope – the monologue was becoming more and more interesting.<sup>29</sup>

In Dobrowolski's film, there is a fragment of the scene, or more precisely – its conclusion.<sup>30</sup> In the short recording one can see the dignity and resolve emanating from Fr. Piotr. Upon completing the monologue, the actor slowly fell to his knees, crossed his arms on his chest, bowed, and froze in that pose. One cannot state with complete certainty whether he was sleeping or praying. According to the script, Fr. Piotr falls asleep, but the proposition of the scene was not entirely clear.

Fr. Piotr's vision concluded with a song about Christ's resurrection. Just like in the Exorcisms, the context shaped the mood. The choir created an unbelievably mystic atmosphere. It is noteworthy that the scene often featured singing or music, which is marked in the script with a treble clef.

Grzegorz Pielużek reminisced that two particular scenes evoked the most emotion in the audience: A Warsaw Salon and The Ball:

However, A Warsaw Salon and the Ball received the biggest applause. It must have been the juxtaposition of patriots and traitors by placing the former in the foreground and the latter in the background, and the surprisingly politically appropriate words (Bestuzhev: They'll group together in petition to close your universities, etc.) that agitated comrade Wiesław so much.<sup>31</sup>

The company at the table in A Warsaw Salon did not sit or stand, they were in constant motion on the stage. Actors uttered their lines while walking. The scene was branded with a note "advances" – and over the note there is a large exclamation, which emphasised that remark of the director. The director's assistant thus described the note:

Dejmek wanted the actors on the platform to stay in constant motion. Down at the foot of the platform a motionless group of young people with bitter remarks. On the platform, characters

<sup>28</sup> J. Stokalska, "Dziady (1967)...", p. 235.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>30</sup> *Teatr i polityka (Dziady Dejmka – 1968)*, directed by Ireneusz Dobrowolski. Cf. footnote 18.

<sup>31</sup> G. Pielużek, "Sceniczne dzieje...", p. 64.

from A Warsaw Salon circled like moths. [...] “choose your own paths. I won’t set them for you. Try!” Dejmek said. And everything set off.<sup>32</sup>

### The passage by Lady 2:

Ever since Novosiltsov left Warsaw  
There hasn’t been a single tasteful ball.  
At his evenings, everyone knows his part —  
His groupings are a very work of art!

received a note indicating that the actress was supposed to address the audience, which is a clear breaking of the fourth wall. That theatrical device was very negatively received by the authorities, especially when the passages addressed to the audience were political in nature.

Music was extremely significant in the scene. In the background, was located a string quartet and a piano – they were supposed to relate to 19th-century instruments. In that instance, music was in the centre of the events, it accompanied actors, and defined the rhythm of the lines spoken by the actors.

The Ball is marked as scene 9a, continuing The Senator (scene 9). Dejmek presented the Senator as a ruthless man. Pielużek said this about the character:

Dejmek presents the Senator (Zdzisław Mroźewski) as a cold despot – behold a villain from a Mediaeval mystery play.<sup>33</sup>

The despotic Senator together with the Ladies and the Young Men danced on the platform. Dialogues in the scene were lively. I believe that one could compare that liveliness to the rush of a dance. The ball was going well until Fr. Piotr entered. When the clergyman came in, the party stopped, and the father asked:

Will they never see punishment? Will no one ever avenge us?

Then, Mrs. Rollinson entered, and desperately begged to meet her son. After the scene with the begging mother, one could hear a thunder strike, and Pelikan entered the scene to inform the Senator about the Doctor’s death. Upon hearing the news all parted except the Senator, Pelikan, and Fr. Piotr who told two parables. They portended a just punishment for thieves, and the nation’s oppressors. The allusion to the deserved judgement of criminals enraged the Senator. When the father finished, the Senator closed the scene with the words<sup>34</sup>:

Il bat la compagne... Father, I won’t delay you  
Longer — but should I see you again, I’ll flay you  
So, that even Rollison’s sharp-nosed old mother  
Won’t be able to tell one pulp from the other.

<sup>32</sup> J. Stokalska, “Dziady (1967)...”, p. 236.

<sup>33</sup> G. Pielużek, “Sceniczne dzieje...”, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> J. Stokalska, “Dziady (1967)...”, p. 237.

The Senator and Pelikan left, and father remained alone. The choir entered from the side, and stood at the back of the platform. Russian soldiers passed in front of the platform leading Konrad in shackles. The protagonist entered accompanied by a song of the choir who sang the chant *Zmiłuj się nad nami* (Have mercy on us).

It was the final scene of the staging, and it proved the most problematic for the director. Jitka Stokalska thus described the never-ending hesitation and rehearsals:

Mickiewicz's drama includes a meeting between Fr. Piotr and Konrad in shackles. Konrad is led away for interrogation. Therefore, it was no political demonstration, just an ending true to the original. Dejmek only deleted the last dialogue between Fr. Piotr and Konrad. There were many problems until the very end with the final scene that raised so many emotions. Dejmek wanted to include in it *To My Muscovite Friends*, but was not completely sure. Eventually Holoubek, who generally did not support the idea, uttered the lines of the poems. Then, Dejmek asked his well-known question: "What the f... are you trying to do, send me to Siberia?" And thus the situation became clear.

Eventually, the poem *To My Muscovite Friends* was not included in the staging. However, Dejmek's abandoning of the text did not prevent the scandal that the play created, especially the scene when Konrad was led onto the stage in shackles, which obviously, as Stokalska reminisced, was not politically allusive – it was only true to the original work. Due to the stir produced by that fragment of the final scene, Dejmek removed the ending and replaced it with a song from the choir that accompanied Guślarz saying:

Listen! Now the third rooster crows.  
Forefathers' Eve is almost done —  
Our nation's ancient lays are sung  
And everyone moves off toward home.

In the script by the passage there are many deletions, notes, and questions about the previously-discussed *To My Muscovite Friends*. The most significant, though, is the remark by the final line of the quoted fragment, to which an arrow points:

And processions here:  
of children with [unclear, I assume it might be candles]  
auschwitz prisoners<sup>35</sup>  
soldiers  
deportees  
the youth from warsaw  
Jews from the ghetto.

Eventually, the idea was not implemented.

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<sup>35</sup> Original spelling.

The script also includes a remark regarding the musical setting – that was supposed to be the final scene with *Hallelujah*. An arrow from the previously quoted passage by Guślarz led to the information, which could mean that the words decisively closed the entire spectacle.

An analysis of the scenes indicates that it was a mystery play in nature. That is yet another proof it was an accurate reproduction of Mickiewicz's idea. In his *Literatura słowiańska* (Slavic Literature), he presented the notion of a folk mystery play as the origin of the Christian drama. The forces of good and evil meet on the stage; everything is presented within the space of three areas: heaven, earth (the stage proper), and hell.<sup>36</sup> The contiguity of those worlds built Mickiewicz's drama; he placed the earthly protagonist amongst angels and devils. And that was the vision of *Dziady* as delivered by Dejmek.

The characters did not descend beneath the stage proper, which could be considered as earth. Angels usually emerged from behind the altar, and stood above the events, which confirmed their heavenly provenance. The devils wriggled around Konrad's feet beneath the front of the stage, which indicated their rise from hell. One should not also forget about the huge three-part altar which also referred to the traditions of the mystery play. It symbolised the division of the world into the sacred and the profane.

The script included many treble clefs indicating musical insertions, which in time became common in mystery plays. Song was one of the elements of propagating the word, thus it could not be absent in that form of theatre.

Dejmek's staging certainly met the mystery play requirements, however, the audience read the director's intentions more as a political play, which led to the previously discussed extra-theatrical events. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find the director's intentional political comments in the script. Dejmek knew all too well how great the power of Mickiewicz's drama was and the potential of theatre, thus, in order to prevent a political storm, he tempered the meaning of many scenes or removed some of them altogether. He also warned the actors not to provoke the audience.

In choosing the aesthetics of a mystery play for staging *Dziady*, Kazimierz Dejmek referred to his previous works (*Historyja o Zmartwychwstaniu Pańskim*, *Dialogus de passione*). Thus, Dejmek's *Dziady* easily matched his artistic identity. Just as in the case of a mystery play, the director used for the stage design an approach he knew well: he used a monumental stage set which turned the stage into an extraordinary canvas for creating moving images. By combining the huge decorations with folk/religious rites it was possible to achieve an effect of exaltation. The acting was another advantage of the staging: it was balanced and harmonious,

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<sup>36</sup> J. Wnuczyńska, "Aniołowie w Dziadach drezdeńskich Adama Mickiewicza", [in:] *Aniołowie w III części „Dziadów” Adama Mickiewicza i w teatralnych realizacjach dramatu XX wieku*, Krakow 2007, p. 26.

referring to the traditional school of acting – of reciting the text in a thought-through manner and with particular care about one's diction. The combination of immaculate recitation and the polyphony in the Exorcisms scene also resulted in creating the appropriate atmosphere.

The staging of *Dziady* as directed by Dejmek was measured and perfected in every detail. In terms of the technique and artistry, the spectacle was a big success. The skilful creation of an atmosphere adequate to the moods described in the drama (and the contemporary social mood) raised the temperature in the audience. One could venture a conclusion that the staging transcended artistry thanks to the hard work of the artistic team and the difficult political situation. However, I believe that the spectacle could not have been so successful if it had not been created in 1967.

In this case there was a feedback loop between the political events and the existence of *Dziady* on the stage. The events of March without Dejmek's *Dziady* would not had occurred in Polish history, but *Dziady* without those events would only be one of the many more or less successful stagings of the famous Romantic drama.

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***Dziady* directed by Kazimierz Dejmek – an attempt at demythologization**

(Summary)

The author of the article attempts to recreate the famous staging of *Dziady* directed by Kazimierz Dejmek, in order to demystify the spectacle. The performance is analysed in terms of art, taking into account the political situation (March 1968). In order to establish the facts, the author uses an assistant's script, the recollections of the witnesses of the release of *Dziady* and fragments of the performance. The reconstruction of the staging enabled the researcher to conclude that it was artistically valuable, but it was the political situation at the time that played the most important role in popularising that interpretation of the drama.

**Key words:** *Dziady*, Adam Mickiewicz, Kazimierz Dejmek, March 1968, Polish theatre