

The Return of Elizabeth: William Poel's *Hamlet* and the Dream of Empire

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1. Translation and Authenticity

There would be no dispute that few works of art have been ‘translated’ more widely than some plays in the Shakespeare canon. With a Shakespeare play, translation does not confine itself to language alone; its theatrical mode also undergoes a transformation when it is staged in a new cultural environment. Odd it may sound, Shakespeare has been translated even in England. It was Harley Granville-Barker who first emphasized the temporal distance between Shakespeare’s plays and the modern audience that needs to be translated: “The literature of the past is a foreign literature. We must either learn its language or suffer it to be translated”(7).

Elizabethan plays “are like music written to be performed upon an

instrument now broken almost beyond repair”(9). Shakespeare’s plays, their putative universality notwithstanding, underwent changes and adaptations to suit the demands of different times. Shakespeare was ‘translated’ in terms of theatre as well. Anachronism was essential on the Elizabethan stage, which accommodated the fictional world of drama as well as the reality of the audience’s everyday life through presentation and representation. Elizabethan anachronism gave way to a more accurate representation of the dramatic world in the illusionist proscenium stage of the Victorian age. At present, modern directors are at liberty to ‘translate’ Shakespeare’s plays virtually in any period and style as they wish; it took an iconoclastic experimental spirit to break with the long standing Victorian tradition of archaeologically correct and pictorially spectacular staging.

At the turn of the twentieth century when Victorian pictorial theatre was at its apex, William Poel held different ideas of authentic Shakespeare. Poel pursued his ideal of ‘Elizabethanist’ theatre with vehemence throughout his life, suggesting a new paradigm of authenticity that prizes authorial intention above anything else. Intriguingly, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the last guardian of Victorian pictorialism, appealed to the same rhetoric of Shakespearean authenticity in defense of his “modern method” of lavish illusionist staging: Shakespeare “not only foresaw, but desired, the system of production that is now most in the public favour”(61). Taking the lines of the prologue of *Henry V* as evidence, Tree argues that Shakespeare himself, who “regretted the deficiencies of the stage of his day,” would have preferred the modern method had he had the resources available(61). Tree even promotes “the theory of Shakespeare’s ‘prophetic vision’ of what the stage would compass when he had been laid in his grave,” having given detailed stage instructions in *Henry VIII*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest* among others for their realization on the future stage(61-62).

Surely no complaint can be raised against those who seek, in putting an author's work upon the stage, to carry out the author's wishes in the matter, as it is better to follow those directions than to listen to the critics of three hundred years later, who clamour for a system exactly opposite to the one which the author distinctly advocated. (62)

No doubt, William Poel was most poignant among "the critics of three hundred years later," who derided "the rage for foisting foreign local colour into a Shakesperian play":

The way in which some modern managers, both here and in America, set about producing a play of Shakespeare's seems to be as follows: Choose your play, and be sure to note carefully in what country the incidents take place. Having done this, send artists to the locality to make sketches of the country, of its streets, its houses, its landscape, of its people, and of their costumes. Tell your artists that they must accurately reproduce the colouring of the sky, of the foliage, of the evening shadows, of the moonlight, of the men's hair and the women's eyes; for all these details are important to the proper understanding of Shakespeare's play. (Poel, *Shakespeare* 21)

The "same amount of industry bestowed" in Victorian pictorialism, Poel regrets, if spent in "acquiring the knowledge of Elizabethan playing," would produce more authentic Shakespeare(121). The question of authentic Shakespeare is a matter of continuing controversy, but Poel had his answers crystal clear.

2. William Poel and Shakespeare Absolutism

The modern Victorian theatre, Poel believed, was not for Shakespeare. Shakespeare's plays were written for the specific stage of his time, and thus,

the modern pictorial stage inevitably led to the distortion of Shakespeare's original intentions. Among the 'evils' of Victorian Shakespeare theatre, the greatest was the sacrifice of the text for star players, spectacle and ultimately commercialism. The text was butchered and mangled for the best advantage of star players. For instance, one favorite method of Victorian actor-managers was the use of act-drops to cut a scene and create a tableau that highlights star actors. Poel felt that the act-drop "falls like the knife of a guillotine" upon Shakespeare's plays, which were written for the Elizabethan open stage that allowed actions to follow upon one another continuously without a break(Poel, *Shakespeare* 119-20). The "interdependence of Shakespeare's dramatic art with the form of theatre for which Shakespeare wrote his plays" was Poel's rationale(3). The modern picture-stage with its proscenium arch and perspective scenery cannot produce Shakespeare's plays as the author intended, as "the nature of Shakespearian dramatic construction is simplicity itself, and can be described in the words *continuity of action*"(Poel, "Prompt Books" 593).

Poel's emphasis on Shakespeare's intention is almost obsessive. To realize the author's intention, restoring the original stage conditions of Shakespeare's theatre was essential. Poel's efforts for this purpose include the formation of "the Elizabethans" in 1879, a small group of "professional ladies and gentlemen whose efforts are specially directed towards creating a more general taste for the study of Shakespeare"(Speaight 46), the Shakespeare Reading Society at University College London for which Poel served as instructor from 1887 to 1897, and ultimately the Elizabethan Stage Society(ESS) from 1895 to 1905:

The Elizabethan Stage Society was founded with the object of reviving the masterpieces of the Elizabethan drama upon the stage for which they were written, so as to represent them as nearly as possible under the conditions

existing at the time of their first production – that is to say, with only those stage appliances and accessories which were usually employed during the Elizabethan period. (Poel, Shakespeare 203-4)

With the Elizabethan Stage Society, Poel staged a number of plays including Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*(1895, 1897, 1903), *The Comedy of Errors*(1895), *The Two Gentleman of Verona*(1896, 1897), *The Tempest*(1897), *The Merchant of Venice*(1898), *Richard II*(1899), *Hamlet*(1900), *Henry V*(1901), *Much Ado about Nothing*(1904), *Romeo and Juliet*(1905) and other early modern plays such as *Arden of Feversham* and *The King and the Countess*(1897), Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*(1896, 1904) and *Edward II*(1903), Middleton and Rowley's *The Spanish Gypsy*(1898), Ford's *The Broken Heart*(1898), Jonson's *The Sad Shepherd*(1898) and *The Alchemist*(1899, 1902).¹⁾ During the twelve years of its existence, five or six plays were annually staged, for which the ESS used “the earliest accessible texts” as prompt books(Poel, “Prompt Copies” 75). While the ESS was disbanded in 1905 and re-founded as “the Elizabethan Stage Circle” in 1927, Poel did not cease to produce early modern plays in tandem with his Elizabethan principles until his death in 1934.

Despite his devotion to early modern plays, Poel remained marginal to the mainstream theatre of his own day which was dominated by actor-managers and pictorial staging. Poel's productions worked in a different way from other actor-managers, as they were no commercial enterprises. Nor was Poel a professional manager like Henry Irving or Beerbohm Tree. Due to his aversion to commercial theatre, Poel hardly managed to raise enough funds to stage his productions. He staged his productions at unusual places such as halls, churches

1) For the chronology of William Poel's productions, see Appendix I in Speaight (279-85).

and charterhouses using amateur actors, and only for very short runs. Many of his productions were staged just once or twice. Some plays Poel staged were little known to the theatre-going public of the time. While the significance of his Elizabethan experiments was barely recognized by his contemporaries, Poel established a new authenticity that liberated Shakespeare from the Victorian illusionist realism, and made great influence on later generation artists including Granville Barker, Barry Jackson, Tyrone Guthrie, Robert Atkins, Walter Bridges Adams, John Gielgud, and Peter Brook.

3. Poel's *Hamlet*: the Return of Elizabeth

Poel's three productions of *Hamlet* in 1881, 1900 and 1914 (four, if the 1924 production of *Fratricide Punished*, a variation of *Hamlet* of German origin, is included) provide a useful model in understanding the development of his theories and methods on Elizabethan drama. If the 1881 *Hamlet* exemplifies Poel's preoccupation with the original text, and the 1900 *Hamlet* his obsession with the original Elizabethan stage and theatre conventions, the third *Hamlet* in 1914 is most interesting in that Poel even imposed Elizabethan meanings on the modern audience.

The 1881 *Hamlet* at St. George's Hall was initiated by Poel's acquisition of the facsimile 1603 Quarto *Hamlet*, which was published by F. J. Furnivall and the New Shakespere Society in their zeal of "studying the progress and meaning of Shakspeare's mind" (New Shakspeare Society Proceedings of the First Meeting, qtd. in Lundstrom 13). Poel saw its significance as a step closer to the author, as the quartos, "published during the poet's lifetime," were the "only copies of Shakespeare's plays which can with any authority be called

acting-versions”(Poel, *Shakespeare* 45). With the 1603 Quarto as the prompt-book, the production “was given without scenery, without act waits, and the characters wore Elizabethan costumes. The original stage directions were observed and no extraneous ‘business’ interpolated”(Poel, “Prompt Copies” 75). The relatively short quarto version, staged “with simplicity and rapidity with which they were acted in [Shakespeare’s] day,” allowed the play to be performed in its entirety(Poel, “Play” 17). Poel recalls later in triumph that “probably for the first time since Shakespeare’s day, was reality given to Shakespeare’s words: ‘The two hours’ traffic of our stage’”(Poel, *Shakespeare* 204). Preserving the full text as Shakespeare wrote it bore a great significance to Poel for retaining the author’s intention, as cutting the text “may leave out scenes which are essential to elucidate the dramatist’s point of view” and be the undoing of Shakespeare(Poel, “On Cutting” 480).

If Poel’s first *Hamlet* experiment proved, at least for Poel himself, the validity of Shakespeare’s quarto texts as acting versions, his second *Hamlet* at Carpenter’s Hall(1900), was an experiment in staging that attempted to restore the original theatre form for Shakespearean plays. Poel, after a number of essays in ‘original’ staging, was in possession of an Elizabethan simulacrum set, often called by later critics as the Fortune fit-up. The Fortune fit-up was first used by Poel for *Measure for Measure* in 1893, at the Royalty Theatre Soho. It consisted of

a practical rostrum and balcony and canvas painted cloths, representing galleries, boxes and amphitheatre, two entrances to Stage under balcony, a centre entrance, closed by pair of painted oak doors, two pillar supports, 18 feet high, to carry the roof or ‘Heaven’ to centre of stage, with facsimile ceiling piece of blue ground and gilt stars and covered by a lean-to tile painted roof joining on to tyring house, roof and wall, a pair of reproduction

curtains, each 18 feet high by 9 feet, suspended on brass rods between the pillars, with ropes, pullies, etc. (Catalogue of the Elizabethan Stage Society sale by auction, qtd. in O'Connor, "Reconstructive" 9)

The 1900 *Hamlet* was staged in this Elizabethan set modeled on the Fortune theatre. As the program emphasizes again, this *Hamlet* was "acted from the first published quarto of the play in 1603, on an Elizabethan Stage after the manner of the period"(Poel, 1900 *Hamlet* Program).

Poel repeats his previous argument on the validity of the 1603 Quarto as the actual acting version of Shakespeare's time, although he conceded the inferiority of its language to the better-known Second Quarto and the Folio text. The irresistible value of the First Quarto for Poel was that "it bears evidence of being printed from notes taken at a representation of the play, and therefore must indicate how it was acted before an Elizabethan audience"(Poel, "First Quarto 'Hamlet'"). Thus, Poel followed the scene arrangement and structure of Q1, while borrowing the words from F1, as he explains in the program note. Another value Poel put on Q1 was the stage directions. Thus, Ofelia, in her mad scene, enters "playing on a lute, and her haire downe singing"(Poel, 1900 *Hamlet* Program). The Ghost, in his visit to the Queen, wears his "night gowne," "the gown he would wear 'in his habit as he lived' at the time of night"(Program). For Ofelia's funeral procession enter only "King and Queen, Laertes, and other lordes, with a Priest after the coffin" to indicate it as a maimed rite. Poel took further cues in staging from the dialogues: "Hamlet in the graveyard wears a pirate's costume, a change suggested as necessary by the dialogue in the fuller play"(Program).

Poel argues that Elizabethan England is "the most appropriate period for the play, because to adopt an early Danish period is contradictory to the text, and

overloads the piece with material foreign to the author's intentions"(Poel, *Shakespeare* 157). Due to the limit of resources, Poel could not always abide by the Elizabethan theatrical convention of using boy actors; but all of the actors were male for the 1900 *Hamlet*, including Master A. Bartington for Ofelia and Mr. Edgar Playford for Gertrude. Poel's Elizabethanist effort was extended to music: "The whole of the Instrumental Music, including the trumpet tunes and flourishes is of the time of the play, or earlier"(Poel, 1900 *Hamlet* Program). The Elizabethan rapiers were specially loaned for the fencing scene; "The fencing bout has been rehearsed under the direction of Captain Hutton, F.S.A., and is a correct revival of the one of the period"(Program). Costumes were meticulously designed in Elizabethan style: for instance, "the dress of the Gravedigger is copied from the picture of Will Scarlett, the Peterborough Sexton, which is still to be seen in Peterborough Cathedral: he buried Mary Queen of Scots there"(Program). Poel's antiquarian validation through reliable historical sources is strikingly similar to that of Victorian actor-managers he criticizes, although the period of their interest differs. Scenographically, the 1900 production was the most 'Elizabethan' of Poel's three *Hamlets*, as far as Poel could imagine.

With his third *Hamlet*, Poel took more liberty in textual arrangement and interpretation. Accordingly, he advertised it as "a New Stage Version of *Hamlet* arranged and produced by William Poel"(Poel, Order Sheet for 1914 *Hamlet*).

The Object of this production is to present all those scenes which are usually omitted from the modern acting version, and also to restore the part of the King to its proper place in the play. The character and setting of the production will be Elizabethan instead of Danish. Some of the better-known scenes and speeches, which are not immediately connected with the action, will be omitted in order to keep the performance within normal limits.

(Order Sheet)

As he clarified in the program, Poel's intention in the 1914 *Hamlet* was to restore the meaning of the play as "Londoners, in the year 1600, would have interpreted the dramatist's intention from the dialogue, as they heard it spoken from the platform of the Globe Playhouse"(Poel, 1914 *Hamlet* Program).

The play might not inappropriately be called "The Revolt of Youth," for it seems to give expression to the growing restlessness of young England, now becoming impatient of the tyranny of Court intriguers. Few residents in London could have been ignorant of the position at Court between 1599 and 1601, when the Queen's health was failing and she had become the victim of self-interested politicians. (Program)

In the program, Poel juxtaposes dialogues of the play with fragments from historical writings to show "how much the play reflects the incidents of Shakespeare's time." Despite his disapproval of and invectives against mangling the text, Poel seems to have made radical cuts and arrangements to highlight his Elizabethan interpretation. The promptbook for 1914 *Hamlet* is lost; eyewitness records and Poel's notes suggest a radical treatment of the text. The production "opens with the Second Scene of the Play, showing the new King being received by the Privy Council," Poel informs(1914 *Hamlet* Program). The curtain was raised to reveal "an elderly lady pompously enthroned [Gertrude], and below her at a table Claudius sat among the gallants"(Speaight 223). It immediately reminded the audience of the Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers, Burleigh, Raleigh and Essex(223). Lundstrom further tracks Poel's textual arrangement: Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be" was cut along with some other soliloquies, while the fifth soliloquy "How all occasions do

inform against me” was left intact(112). The scenes with the gravediggers and Osric were also cut(113). Poel's arrangement focused on the figure of Hamlet as Essex to emphasize the play's topical messages, “especially those connected with the Earl of Essex and his position at Court”(Poel, 1914 *Hamlet* Program).

The 1914 *Hamlet* deviates from Poel's Elizabethanist principles in a great deal. The text was cut and rearranged to fit Poel's version of Shakespeare's intention. Lundstrom explains it as Poel's shift from the experiment with Elizabethan staging conventions to one with “the Elizabethan frame of mind”: “Poel tried to turn his Edwardian audience into Elizabethans”(113). If Poel's first two *Hamlets* attempted to present the play in the original Elizabethan form as the absolute *Ding an sich*, the third one tried to secure its ‘original’ meaning as the Elizabethans would have understood it, which might escape the perception of the modern audience. It indicates Poel's later obsession with the production of the authentic meaning, even at the expense of the authentic form, which anticipates the later modernist experiments of Barry Jackson.

It is doubtful if Poel, with his Elizabethan experiments, was able to fulfill “Shakespeare's intention” as he was wont to proclaim. It was, at best, “Edwardian Elizabethanism,” conditioned by the beliefs and conventions of the Edwardian theatre that also underlay Tree's pictorial illusionism. Poel's method was no less antiquarian than Charles Kean's or Tree's, securing the ‘authenticity’ of Elizabethan costumes, music and properties from reliable sources, as he did for the second *Hamlet*. As Cary M. Mazer points out, Poel's desire to reconstruct Shakespeare's original staging was itself “a manifestation of broader Edwardian attitudes toward history and the effect of ongoing historical forces on the present”(47), Poel's Elizabethanism “a projection of the needs and values of the Edwardian theatre onto the shape and dynamics of the Elizabethan stage”(65). Poel was not free from the stage illusionism that he was

fighting against; if Kean and Tree created the illusion of the dramatic world, Poel was creating the illusion of the Elizabethan theatre, staging his Fortune fit-up inside the Edwardian proscenium arch, and in one extreme case for *Measure for Measure*(1893), even Elizabethan spectators in costume to enhance the Elizabethan environment.

Another objection raised against Poel's Elizabethanism was the fact that his audience was not Elizabethans; even if Poel succeeded in resurrecting the original Elizabethan staging condition, it would not offer the same theatrical experience to Poel's audience. For the Victorian/Edwardian audience, Poel's allegedly Elizabethan costume, setting and theatre space were no more archaic and antiquarian than those of Henry Irving's medieval Denmark, while the Elizabethans would have found the stage business contemporary and commonplace. Poel's Elizabethanism made Shakespeare a dead artifact, or museum piece.

4. Elizabethanism and the Dream of Empire

Underlying Poel's Elizabethanism is his wish to revive the glorious moment of the Elizabethan theatre, "the Golden Age of English Drama," which, as Poel saw it, had "touched its lowest level on record" with the commercialism of the Victorian stage(Poel, *What is Wrong* 4-9). The publicity that Poel deliberately sought for through public lectures on Elizabethan theatre and documentation of his experimental productions in photographs was the consequence of his desire to communicate his ideas and opinions as widely as possible, with the ultimate aim of having a working Elizabethan playhouse erected as national institution. Poel used various channels to pursue this project, advertising the need in the

programs of his own Elizabethan productions and contributing to sundry literary magazines.

Poel's petition in April 1899 asking the London County Council for "the grant of a site for the erection of an Elizabethan Theatre in London as a memorial to Shakespeare" is noteworthy (Poel, MS. Papers). In this petition, Poel lists six reasons for the need of erecting an Elizabethan playhouse:

1. That the building was the outcome of native design and invention, and was unknown in other countries, being an object remarked by foreigners visiting London.
2. That its construction was unlike the Greek Theatre, and the Present-day Theatre.
3. That it was the only Playhouse that Shakespeare knew or used.
4. That English Drama reached its highest excellence while this form of building was in existence.
5. That it is a picturesque object.
6. That the data for the erection of such a building are ample and well known to students. (MS. Papers)

Poel's main rationale, to sum up, is based on the unique Englishness of such a building, with its association with the greatest national Bard and the golden age of national theatre. With the presence of an Elizabethan playhouse on the bank of the Thames, "the modern Londoner would feel that the gulf of time had been bridged, and no foreigners or visitors from the Colonies could reproach him with ignorance of one of the most striking characteristics of Shakespeare's London" (MS. Papers).

It was not Poel alone that related Shakespeare and the Elizabethan age to the modern British Empire. The "Shakespeare's England" Exhibition at Earl's Court in 1912 paraded a number of replicas of exemplary Elizabethan

architectures, the two most prominent among which were the reconstructions of the Globe Theatre and of the Revenge, Sir Francis Drake's ship that defeated the Armada in 1588(O'Connor, "Theatre of the Empire" 82). British nationalism associated with the Armada would need no further explanation. As for the replica Globe, Marion O'Connor cites *Windsor Magazine* to relate the sentiment it roused in the English people:

In every walk of life it was an age of bourgeoning and renaissance, an age of virility and ability. Maritime enterprise and exploration... not only brought new commercial prosperity to England, but laid the foundations of her colonial empire; and the literature of the period, with which the name of Shakespeare is for ever associated, forms an imperishable memorial of an extraordinarily brilliant epoch in the history of the world. (*Windsor Magazine*, 35, December 1911 May 1912, qtd. in O'Connor 91)

Elizabethan England harbingers the ensuing British Empire, with Shakespeare memorializing the present empire as well as the past one.

Indeed, turning to the glorious past in the heyday of the Empire was another way of reinforcing British national identity. If Victorian pictorialism with its insistence on historically, geographically and archaeologically precise representations of Shakespeare's dramatic world is an expression of expansionist desire through the knowledge of other territories, Poel's Elizabethan project registers England as the centre of the Empire, reclaiming Shakespeare as *our* own. The "Shakespeare's England" Exhibition in 1912 operates on a similar logic amid numerous colonial Exhibitions that visualized the territorial dominion of the British Empire. Such impulse of 're-owning' Shakespeare may be ascribed to the anxiety held by many Edwardians that the Empire might not last. Ronald Hyam states, pointing to various historical records that witness a sense

of defeatism in the Edwardian era: "Pessimism was in fact an all-pervasive and quintessential characteristic of Edwardian thinking about the Empire"(49-50). The humiliating experience in the South African War from 1899 to 1902(better known as the Anglo-Boer War), long-fought and hard-won, was decisive in disillusioning the Edwardians from the "optimistic idea that the Englishman was the born ruler of the world"(50). So was the strong resistance from the nationalists in the African and Asian colonies. With imperial ambition replaced with skepticism, the Edwardians could have turned inward to their historical past than outward to the "wider empire." I have found no explicit evidence whether or not such cultural milieu directly affected Poel's Elizabethanism. In hindsight, Poel's Elizabethan project seems to realize the dream of empire in an alternative way: reinforcing the cultural ownership of Shakespeare, branding the Bard as English, and subordinating other Shakespeares as illegitimate and inauthentic.

5. Epilogue: the Globe Experience

Poel's dream of authentic Shakespeare theatre was finally materialized on the South bank of the Thames in 1997, ironically by an American actor, Sam Wanamaker. "The reconstruction is as faithful to the original as modern scholarship and traditional craftsmanship can make it," the information on a Globe Theatre Program advises. Grant that the reconstruction had successfully restored the original stage conditions of the original Globe of 1599, it is doubtful if performing in the new Globe would realize Shakespeare's intention. Even so, it is questionable whether the dead dramatist's intention would have the same meaning to the living audience as then. In short, the modern audience

is not Elizabethans, and without bridging the gap between past and present, the Globe easily turns into a ‘Disneyland.’ As Marion O’Connor’s caveat, “the pursuit of authenticity may not always end in theme parks, but it does generally seem at least to skirt very close to them”(“Useful” 32).

“The task of the translator,” writes Walter Benjamin, “consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original”(76). An accurate reproduction of the original, if any, would not necessarily guarantee the same effect that it had on the original reader, as the historical context where the translation takes place is not identical with that in which the original was located(76). Against the absolutist view of the traditional theory that dictates translation as “conveying the form and meaning of the original as accurately as possible,” Benjamin takes a relativist stance: a good translation should aim to recreate the experience of the original rather than the thing itself(72). Benjamin’s idea of translation, while intended for a linguistic one, also has certain relevance to cultural translation, as both are concerned with the afterlife of works of art, with an effort to make them accessible when they move out of their original context. What Poel leaves out in his pursuit of absolute Shakespeare is the dynamics between the author and the audience. To quote Harley Granville Barker again, “We must either learn its language or suffer it to be translated.” Poel’s Elizabethanism savors cultural imperialism, when it forces the audience to learn Shakespeare’s language and to become Elizabethans.

Kennedy’s dismaying statement that “Shakespeare is foreign to all of us” applies to native English-speakers as well, whose ability to understand Shakespeare’s English diminishes year by year: the familiarity they assume for Shakespeare is no more than “the myth of cultural ownership”(16-17). The illusion of ‘owning’ Shakespeare(despite the distance and unintelligibility) leads

to meaningless cultural tourism; outside England, the refusal to translate Shakespeare in favour of 'authenticity' often results in cultural subordination and *mimicry*. Is it the audience, or the author that needs to be translated? It is easy to ascribe authenticity solely to the author; authenticity should be negotiated through dialogue between author and audience. To quote W. B. Worthen, authenticity is "the way in which performance claims 'authority' by asserting 'proximity' to 'something we value'"(26).

주제어: 셰익스피어, 윌리엄 포얼, 엘리자베스주의, 햄릿, 번역, 정통성, 저자, 제국, 글로브 극장

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Abstract

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This essay examines William Poel's three Elizabethanist experiments of *Hamlet* as a way of addressing the issue of authenticity and translation. Poel objects to the pictorial staging of Shakespeare by actor-managers on the ground that their Shakespeare is 'inauthentic.' Poel's *Hamlets* attempt to achieve authentic Shakespeare by restoring the original text(1881), the original theatre condition(1900), and the original meaning(1914). Underlying Poel's Elizabethan project is his wish to revive the glorious moment of the Elizabethan theatre. This paper argues that Poel's Elizabethanism was conditioned by the imperial anxiety of Edwardian England. Poel, by inscribing the authorial intention as sole source of authenticity and thus restoring Elizabethan England to Shakespeare, reinforces the idea of the Empire and the cultural ownership of Shakespeare. However, it is doubtful if Poel was ever able to realize Shakespeare's intention, as he ignores the dynamism between the author and the audience and turns his Shakespeare into a museum piece. Poel's case presents the pitfalls of authorial authenticity, rigid adherence to which without negotiating the gap between past and present may result in cultural tourism, or cultural imperialism.

Key Words

Shakespeare, William Poel, Elizabethanism, *Hamlet*, translation, authenticity, author, empire, the Globe