



The Shakespearean International Yearbook

THE SHAKESPEAREAN INTERNATIONAL YEARBOOK

18: SPECIAL SECTION, SOVIET SHAKESPEARE

Edited by
Tom Bishop, Alexa Alice Joubin
and Natalia Khomenko





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For its eighteenth volume, *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* surveys the present state of Shakespeare studies, addressing issues that are fundamental to our interpretive encounter with Shakespeare's work and his time, across the whole spectrum of his literary output. Contributions are solicited from among the most active and insightful scholars in the field, from both hemispheres of the globe. New trends are evaluated from the point of view of established scholarship, and emerging work in the field is encouraged. Each issue includes a special section under the guidance of a specialist guest editor, along with coverage of the current state of the field. An essential reference tool for scholars of early modern literature and culture, this annual publication captures, from year to year, current and developing thought in Shakespeare scholarship and theatre practice worldwide. There is a particular emphasis on Shakespeare studies in global contexts.

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Preface

As scholars and critics, we can learn a great deal about the politics of literary interpretation by studying the encounter between Shakespeare's works and cultures that are far removed from the context in which the playwright worked. In Stalinist Russia, just a few years before the Great Purges, Maxim Gorkii encouraged USSR writers during an All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 to emulate Shakespeare as a model of socialist realism. This is only one of the better-known landmarks of Shakespeare's afterlife in the Soviet cultural sphere. While there were ideologically homogeneous approaches to Shakespeare, there were also debates about the value of Shakespeare after the First World War.

Thanks to Karl Marx's references in his political treatises, Shakespeare held a significant place in a number of communist and other left-authoritarian countries, including China and the USSR. And although there were themes in Shakespeare that turned out to be inconvenient for communist ideology, other Shakespearean plays were put into service. In Part I of this volume of the *Yearbook*, the special section of chapters explores the vicissitudes of artistic and political uses of Shakespeare in Soviet culture and ideology after the October Revolution in 1917, including in some of the continuing resonances of those uses since the collapse of the Soviet Union. And while the real and perceived resistance to prevailing ideologies of Soviet directors has tended to capture recent critical attention, there is a wide range of Soviet and post-Soviet interpretations of Shakespeare. Scholarship on global Shakespeare has drawn more frequently on Sergei Iutkevich's *Othello* (for its influence outside the USSR) and on Grigori Kozintsev's mid-century films of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, since Kozintsev is seen as a political dissident. The present cluster of chapters, edited by Dr Natalia Khomenko, not only sheds new light on differing interpretations of these canonical films but also expands our horizon beyond Kozintsev and Iutkevich, telling a lesser-known story of Soviet Shakespeare by attending not only to conflicts but also to uneasy collaborations between artists and the representatives of official ideologies. In this way, the current chapters offer a more nuanced picture than has been usual of the dynamics between ideology and "front-line" artists,

complicating the more traditional narrative of mere opposition between stifling socialist realism and political dissent.

In Part II of this volume, Tom Ue presents interviews with novelist Lisa Klein and filmmaker Claire McCarthy, creators of two recent revisionings of Ophelia's story, and John Mucciolo discusses recent work in Shakespeare studies in the review essay format, which is a regular feature of the *Yearbook*.

Tom Bishop
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