Shakespeare's excellence as a narrative poet and sonneteer is explored in chapter six. In chapter seven, Chakrabarti returns to Shakespeare the dramatist. By the end of the sixteenth century Shakespeare was famous as a dramatist though the same cannot be said about his acting career. By this time, he had learnt well the trick of saying what he had to say without antagonising the censor board. His rise in the society is evident, because by 1596 he was able to get a Coat of Arms, a necessary requirement to be considered a man of importance in the early modern English society. Chapter eight identifies the period 1603 to 1605 as the apex of Shakespeare's dramatic career citing the famous tragedies produced during the period where the quality of his writing was at its supreme best.

The last two chapters of the book deal with the last days of Shakespeare. He has been subject to endless scholarship since then. Chakrabarti's book is an important supplement to any Bengali speaking reader who wants to get an overview of Shakespeare's life and his age. The author is successfully able to bring Shakespeare to the common reader without diluting the high degree of informative and critical insight required to comprehend this very complex age. This is a book fit to cater to both the casual reader and the serious scholar of the early modern age.

https://doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.3.08

SOKOLYANSKY, Mark G., *Perechityvaja Shekspira. Raboty raznykh let* [re-reading Shakespeare]. Odessa 2000, Astro-Print

Reviewed by *Ekaterina RAKITINA, Artyom ZORIN*

The need for re-reading Shakespeare is once again urgent for the present-day world culture, especially for Russian culture. For the first time in post-Soviet Russia the opera *Hamlet* is on, an exhibition of paintings interpreting Shakespearean plots is being held, Shakespeare's "secondary" plays are insistently called up on stage and new genre modifications of apparently worn-out major plays are being presented. An author for all times, Shakespeare offers the scope to set off the concept of God-designed human being against modern aggressiveness. "Shakespeare is with us", states Mark Sokolyansky conclusively, the author of a new volume entitled suggestively *Re-reading Shakespeare*.

The book is a collection of this eminent scholar's papers on Shakespeare, both written long ago and new ones, prepared especially for this edition. It is the result of many years' reflections on the enormous scale of the bard's creative ability and an attempt to consider the classic author against new dimensions of socio-cultural realities. Sokolyansky believes that the rapid shift of ideological criteria and cultural paradigms are the reasons for re-evaluating classical heritage as a reference point within the system of *floating* co-ordinates. At the same time, he realises the boundaries of discussion – how current interpretations and modern ideas breach the ontological preoccupation of the classics. The author focuses on dialogues, fundamental for Shakespearean texts, on their extreme *responsiveness* to rhythms and events of any epoch. In the "Preface" (3–4), Sokolyansky refers to the term introduced by British and American New Criticism, "close reading", inviting one to read, re-read and analyse not just the original texts, but the interpretations presented in his own book as well.

The essays successfully reveal the degree of response to Shakespearean poetics in cultural space, and explore Shakespearean philosophy and ethics through modern spatial-temporal categories. Sokolyansky dedicates his work to the memory of his teacher, Alexander Anikst, and his own perception of Shakespearean demonstrates obvious spiritual and aesthetic links with the fundamental discoveries of this leading Russian Shakespearean scholar. In the first part of the book, the author reflects on the unique daring creativity of Shakespeare and presents a modern approach to Shakespearean genres related to Anikst's ideas of genre combination in most of Shakespeare's plays.

Re-reading is itself a bold experiment in genre combination. Literary criticism of the first part gives way to essays on classical authors' perceptions of Shakespeare in the second. The author presents an account of appropriations of and critical responses to Shakespeare by Henry Fielding, George Bernard Shaw and Leo Tolstoy. The analysis of criticism by different authors allows not only the reconstruction of the poetics characteristic to their specific epoch, but also throws new light on literary history and draws attention to the problem of accordance between historic interpretation and the playwright's original message. "A Voice Which Was Not Heard in Its Time: Henry Fielding on Shakespeare" is a brilliant essay, presenting both a new approach towards the evolution of Shakespearean reception and Sokolyansky's own methodology of *literary authorities' hierarchy*.

The Russian version of the book was first published in 2000, following the 200th Anniversary of Alexander Pushkin's birth, an author equal to Shakespeare on the Russian literary scale. Numerous scholarly and festive

events demonstrated the common attitude to classics as something already *conquered* and hence submissive to any kind of experiment. Revealing the grounds for anti-Shakespearean crusades, Mark Sokolyansky warns against both thoughtless rejection and blind adoration of the classics. He disagrees with Tolstoy's negative opinion of Shakespeare and yet admires the logic of Tolstoy's polemics. Comparing Shaw's and Tolstoy's thoughts on Shakespeare, Sokolyansky notes, "Tolstoy still recognised the global fame of Shakespeare, finding a positive aspect in his works – the ability to 'express the development of emotions'" (91). As an adherent of the drama of ideas, Shaw was less interested in the "development of emotions" than in the "development of thought", but he too had to acknowledge Shakespeare's skill in tracing and amplifying the latter (91).

Shakespeare is an indisputable authority to Sokolyansky himself. Commenting on an increase of interest in the Shakespearean authorship controversy and the publications by Ilya Gililov in the Russian press, in particular, the scholar is both mercilessly logical and emotional to the point of regarding literary problems as personal issues. Such hypotheses are, to Sokolyansky, "ghosts of the long-forgotten versions" and need to be countered effectively and this is one of the stated aims of his work (117–138). The essay on authorship controversy follows "Giant-like Rebellions and New Reality" that views Shakespearean irony as a clue to modern history. The article is replete with sarcastic remarks on dilettante guesses and on "literary critics influenced by the vulgar sociological methodology, popular in the USSR in the 1920–1960s" (109–10). The tone is that of an admirer never doubting the global importance of Shakespeare as well as a scholar dealing with facts.

The third part of the volume includes essays on theatre and cinema criticism, and miscellaneous notes. A variety of styles allows a constant shift of ambience, from mirth to wistfulness, inspired by original Shakespearean texts. Theatre and film criticism by Mark Sokolyansky – "Thalia's Season in Stratford", "From *Hamlet* to *King Lear*" – is in line with his literary studies. Sokolyansky knows what he likes in Shakespearean productions, preferring the works of Russian film director Grigory Kozintsev. Comparing theatre or cinema productions to Shakespeare's original plays, Sokolyansky is ever true to his own perception of Shakespearean drama.

As a textual whole *Re-reading Shakespeare* has much in common with the well-known Shakespearean text constructions. It contains monologues and dialogues ("Genre System of Shakespeare's Plays"), author's remarks ("Ghosts of the Long-Forgotten Versions"), mass scenes ("Giant-like Rebellions and New Reality"), which probably account for the impression of a real *event*: a genius *arriving* to create a literature and philosophy of his own. This lends an appreciable vitality to the work.