Makaryk, Irena R., and Joseph G. Price, eds. *Shakespeare in the Worlds of Communism and Socialism*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006 (pp 440). ISBN 0802090583.

The territory this volume attempts to cover is vast, ranging as it does across Europe from Russia and Ukraine through Latvia, Poland and Hungary to Germany and then all the way east to China and west to Cuba. Its time span is similarly ambitious, encompassing the whole of the twentieth century with occasional excursions back into the nineteenth and forth into the twenty-first. To expect that a survey on such a scale can be absolutely comprehensive would, of course, be exorbitant. The map is only tentatively sketched out with some areas filled in with greater detail and other left blank. The most concentrated attention is allotted to Russia, Germany, Ukraine and China, each of which is discussed in more than one of the anthology's eighteen essays. One cannot help feeling that a glimpse at the experience of countries like Georgia, Romania and those in the Balkans would have enriched the general picture. And so would the consideration of such outstanding Shakespearean artistic interpreters as Efros, Liubimov, Waida, Sturua, Daniel, Cernescu, etc., some of whom have not even been mentioned. The editors' claim that their book is "the first sustained, global look at Communist and Socialist Shakespeare" (10) is therefore only partly borne out by its contents. They could have more graciously acknowledged some obvious precedents. One of these at least, *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (1994), which, significantly, figures in the references of a number of essays, ought to be recognized as such. Other regional and national studies, notably Zdeněk Stříbrny's *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (2000), could also be added. It is not just a matter of courtesy: for the assessment of Shakespeare's role in the countries subject to the Marxist social experiment is a complex and daunting task, and a greater co-ordination and continuity of scholarly efforts would be most essential for its realization.

Even so, the achievements of the present collection with its international team of respected authors are many and valuable. It is impossible to do justice to all of them in a brief review. I will therefore only try to outline what appear to me to be the most interesting contributions of the book to our understanding of the phenomenon it deals with. First of all, the reader is struck by the dramatic careers of some outstanding modernist theater directors and actors, like Les Kurbas, Solomon Mikhoels and Sergei Radlov, whose unorthodox approach to their work, and to Shakespeare's drama in particular, cost them their lives or long-time incarceration in the Gulag. In aberrant times Renaissance tragedy seems to engulf its most dedicated

interpreters. The different fates of their near contemporaries, Aleksei Popov and Nikolai Okhlopkov, who managed to survive the prewar purges without entirely compromising their artistic talent, are also enlightening.

Since the recently discovered landscape of Sovietized Shakespeare is getting rapidly overgrown by clichés, a very important merit of this book is its maturely balanced and unprejudiced approach to the studied material. Most of the analyses included in it manage to steer clear of what Robert Weimann defines as the pitfalls of the "salvaging and muckraking operations" (329) to be avoided in this kind of historical criticism, focusing instead as they do on the productive intersection of "highly diverse and contradictory discourses" in the process of reception. The Russian, the German and the Chinese contributions seem to me to contain the most illuminating insights. From Arkady Ostrovsky's and Alexey Bartoshevitch's essays one gets the impression that, in spite of its apparent perversity, the predominant staging of Shakespeare's light-hearted comedies in the USSR during the prewar years of Stalin's bloodiest terror helped to preserve the spirit of the nation and its vitality. Also, it appears that the frequently declared ideological conformism of theater directors did not prevent them from creating artistically accomplished productions.

Werner Habicht shows that the political division of Germany after the war managed only partly and for a relatively short period of time to polarize the reception of the Bard, mainly in its critical aspect, and argues that the Berlin Wall was unable to sever completely the intellectual links between the two parts of the country. It is instructive to hear from Lawrence Guntner that "[i]t was not the performance itself but the historical and ideological backdrop against which the player performed and the particular audience for which he was performing that made Shakespeare at specific times and places a highly political critique of official cultural politics, ideological falsehood, and political suppression" (197). Weimann aptly underscores this observation by insisting that "even when the theater's management and its own publicized project were completely marked by orthodoxy, the result—that is, the performed play—inevitably was exposed to multivocal mediation and response through the work of actors interacting with not quite controllable occasions and audiences. In a situation like this the East German theater more often than not tended to play out an ambivalent type of politics—one characterized by a desire to discover something new within and beyond the dominating Marxist analysis of history, something that often enough was marked by complicity with unorthodox audience perceptions and expectations" (332). Conclusions of this kind could easily be illustrated from the experience of the other

countries examined in the anthology. The variety of concrete stage history studies in it, however, is so large that it would need a separate review to reflect upon.

Two essays drawing on the Chinese experience, written by Xiao Yang Zhang and Shushua Wang, make no bones about exposing the vulgarization of Shakespeare in the Maoist era, yet point out the positive role played by Marxism in the nation's development away from its ritualized traditional theater to a modern, more individualistic one. Ironically, this revolution takes place in the conditions of a blatantly totalitarian regime. Things are not all black or white even in such drastically uniform societies, and this book does a lot to alert us to the complexities of a culture that has learnt to function (with unpredictable results) in the imposed conditions of Orwellian doublespeak.

Both Chinese contributions are concerned with the theoretical and critical perspective at Shakespeare's work rather than with its theatrical life. A final piece by Sharon O'Dair, about recent post-Marxist trends in Shakespeare criticism in the USA, such as materialist feminism, new historicism and (the mainly British) cultural materialism, veers away from Shakespearean matters altogether and leans heavily towards issues of professional politics. The picture it presents can hardly substantiate the editors' claim that "Marxist Shakespeare is also very much alive in North American academic circles" (305).

To come back finally to the title of the volume, one is tempted to ask: which after all are the "worlds of Communism" and which of "Socialism"? Why should Poland be referred to as Communist while Hungary and the German Democratic Republic are labeled Socialist? This is, no doubt, due to our lingering taxonomic uncertainty about the Cold War political history but such arbitrary distinctions affecting the overall title itself are certainly disorientating. It is also to be regretted that a new exotic and unwieldy transliteration of Slavic names (in some cases well established in their traditional Latin version) should have been introduced here, producing oddities like Konstantin Rudnitskii, Matvii Shatulskyi and even Gorkii, Maiakovskii and Stanislavskii. There is little consistency in this spelling reform, for Granovskii is Alexei but Popov is Aleksei, and, of course, the contributors are mercifully granted their habitual name forms: Arcady Ostrovsky, Alexey Bartoshevitch. Transliteration is a tricky thing: it appears simple only on the surface and should not be tampered with unless that is absolutely unavoidable. The truly valuable contributions of the book, as I have tried to point out, lie elsewhere.

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