

IRSTI 18.45.01

L. Chkhartishvili<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Modern Georgian Theatre Research Center of Ilia State University  
(Tbilisi, Georgia)

**GEOGRAPHY OF "KING LEAR" (BY THE EXAMPLE  
OF CREATIVE WORKS OF PETER BROOK,  
GIORGIO STREHLER AND ROBERT STURUA)**

**Annotation**

*During the study of the geographical area and signs of "King Lear" we have used proven methods of scientific research, and we have found that there is apparent harmony and logical connections between these performances. First of all, the first one from the first three performances was realized in the outermost north-west Europe (the UK, Stratford-upon-Avon): the second one – in the middle of Europe (Italy, Milan); and the third one – in the outermost south-east of Europe (Georgia, Tbilisi).*

**Keywords:** Shakespeare; interpretation on the world stage; Piter Brook; Giorgio Strehler, Robert Sturua.

Л. Чхартишвили<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Илья мемлекеттік университеті, Қазіргі заманғы Грузиялық Театр ғылыми-зерттеу орталығы  
(Тбилиси, Грузия)

**"КОРОЛЬ ЛИР" ҚОЙЫЛЫМЫНЫҢ КЕҢІСТІГІ (ПИТЕР БРУКА,  
СТРЕЛЕР ЖӘНЕ РОБЕРТУ СТУРУА ШЫҒАРМАШЫЛЫҚ  
ЖҰМЫСТАРЫ МЫСАЛЫНДА)**

**Аннотация**

*Шекспирдің «Король Лир» шығармасының қойылымын зерттеу, оның географиялық кеңістігін салыстыру барысында ғылыми зерттеудің қалыптасқан әдістеріне сүйенуді талап етті, нәтижесінде қойылымдар арасындағы логикалық байланыс пен үйлесімділікке куә болдық. Еуропаның ең шалғай солтүстігінде (Ұлыбритания, Стратфорд-на-Эйвоне), екінші – орталық Еуропада (Италия, Милан), үшіншісі – шалғай оңтүстік-шығыс Еуропадағы (Тбилиси, Грузия) үш қойылымды автор басты назарға алған.*

**Тірек сөздер:** Шекспир, әлемдік аренадағы интерпретация, Питер Брук, Джорджо Стрелер, Роберт Стурва.

Л. Чхартишвили<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Современный Грузинский Театральный Исследовательский Центр  
Илийского Государственного Университета  
(Тбилиси, Грузия)

**ГЕОГРАФИЯ "КОРОЛЯ ЛИР" (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ТВОРЧЕСКИХ РАБОТ  
ПИТЕРА БРУКА, СТРЕЛЕР И РОБЕРТУ СТУРУА)**

**Аннотация**

*Исследование постановок произведения Шекспира "Король Лир" в соотнесении с их географическим ареалом обязало обратиться к устоявшимся*

*методам научных исследований, в результате чего мы обнаружили очевидную гармонию и логическую связь между этими выступлениями. В центре внимания автора находятся первое из трех выступлений, которое прошло в самом удаленном месте северозападной Европы (Великобритания, Стратфорд-на-Эйвоне); второе – в центре Европы (Италия, Милан); а третье – на крайнем юго-востоке Европы (Грузия, Тбилиси).*

**Ключевые слова:** Шекспир, интерпретация на мировой арене, Питер Брук, Джорджио Стрелер, Роберт Стура.

The scenic interpretation of Shakespeare's plays has been studied by scientists of humanitarian field yet since the XVII – XVIII centuries. The research of the Georgian stage Shakesperiana starts at the beginning of the XX century. However, considerable researches have not been carried out until the 70's of the XX century. During this period, publication of a series of scientific articles "Georgian Shakesperiana" began, that was aimed at the study of Shakespeare's creative work from different angles.

In the 80's of the XX century considerable researches were conducted by theater critic Paola Urushadze. Her book "Shakespeare and the Georgian Theatre" (in Georgian and Russian languages), which is a collection of articles published at different times, greatly helps researchers interested in problems of scenic interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. Georgian theater science avoided complex study of this problem in the context of the world theater processes. Because of this the researchers have a feeling of dissatisfaction. The situation is complicated by the fact that most of the scientific literature is published in the Soviet era, so the influence of Soviet ideology is obvious. The socio-political context in relation to the artistic phenomenon, as well as the international context of local events is lost in existing works published in small amounts.

"King Lear" by its theme and acuteness of problems is just as relevant today for the general public. The range of issues is global and it has no borders. It is also important that at any time and in any space "King Lear", as well as other plays of Shakespeare, does not lose its relevance. Consequently, the theater, as the most modern art, can not avoid this dramaturgic material. This is confirmed by the fact that in the recent years this play is often staged around the world.

The relevance of the studied problem stems from the dramaturgic primary source itself. "King Lear" covers the problems that have always worried and will worry any society. Dramatic texts were perceived differently in different eras by those who revived the play on stage. And the ones, who will implement the scenic interpretation of Shakespeare's "King Lear" in the future, will show it in different perspective. Despite

the different artistic levels of the majority of the productions of the play, they reveal a breath of the epoch, its main characteristics and ideology of the society of the time.

The scientific assessment, review and reassessment of the creative processes are still on the agenda in the post-Soviet space. Reassessment process started in various fields studying art, as well in the post-Soviet Georgian theater. This research also is an attempt to make a contribution to this cause.

The primary sources of the dissertation are specific performances, video-records of which are protected in the centers of culture and art. Among them, the video center of the Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film University, audio-video funds of the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia, the Rustaveli Theatre museum. Among the different types of scientific sources there are also available: funds of directors' manuscripts, rehearsal recordings and diaries stored in archives and museums, which are significant sources during the study of the issue. Phono (audio)-video archives (interviews, topics, reports) are used as well. These types of sources contain important nuances and often suggest a way of solution of the problems better than scientific literature do.

The research process was complicated by the fact that to date there is no systematic, fundamental researches on scenic interpretations of "King Lear" in Georgian and European theaters, despite the fact that Robert Sturua's "King Lear" is part of the dissertation of some Georgian scholars.

As for the performances of Peter Brook and Giorgio Strehler, unfortunately, the Georgian theater science was not interested in the well-known works of the directors recognized in Europe, which played a certain role in their creative work. Moreover, the performances carried out by them have made significant contributions to the new understanding of scenic interpretation of Shakespeare's play. Unfortunately, the scientific literature is almost unavailable in Georgian language (with the exception of Georgian edition of Peter Brook's "The Empty Space"). Most of the sources and scientific literature is available in Russian (40 per cent) and English (60 per cent) languages.

A significant part of the scientific literature was worked out during the research. This thesis is based on the following documents: full video records of performances; rehearsal diaries; funds of personal manuscripts (stored in the museum collections of the Piccolo Teatro, the Globe Theatre); researches conducted until today, dissertations, articles

and publications; interviews with the directors of the performances that we investigate.

During the research I use modern methods approbated in social and humanitarian sciences: qualitative method (common, continuous, logical development of creative processes related to the interpretation of Shakespeare in the XX century); quantitative method (survey, social experiments); method of statistical analysis (to strengthen the hypotheses raised in the thesis and to draw conclusions); The method of content analysis (the choice of this method is determined by systematic, objective and quantitative character of this method, which excludes the personal attitude of the researcher to the issue); method of cultivation analysis (distinguishing the leader authors and analysis of their works based on the results of statistical surveys).

During the study of the geographical area and signs of “King Lear” we have used proven methods of scientific research, and we have found that there is apparent harmony and logical connections between these performances. First of all, the first one from the first three performances was realized in the outermost north-west Europe (the UK, Stratford-upon-Avon): the second one – in the middle of Europe (Italy, Milan); and the third one – in the outermost south-east of Europe (Georgia, Tbilisi).

If we look at the map of the European continent, we can see that Stratford-upon-Avon (one of the ancient cities in the UK), is at a distance of 81 kilometers from London. Accordingly, it is considered to be in the region of London and is considered at the same longitude and latitude, as the capital of Great Britain. Stratford-upon-Avon is located at a longitude of 51°; Giorgio Strehler staged “King Lear” in the Italian city of Milan, at a distance of 477 km from the capital. Milan is located at a longitude of 45°; As for Tbilisi, it is located at a longitude of 41°. If we compare these figures (51-45-41), we would be able to see some kind of mathematical regularity in the intervals. The interval between these three data are five units, and between the first and the last – 10 units.

As for the distance between these places: Distance from Stratford-upon-Avon to Milan is 1,020 km; from Milan to Tbilisi – 2876 km, while the distance between the first and last places is 3553 km. If we draw a diagram of the distance, intervals between them easily fits every thousandth kilometer.

The diagram clearly shows that the locations of the performances of “King Lear” are separated from each other not only by ten-year, but by thousand-kilometer intervals. While distance between Stratford-upon-Avon and Milan 1,020 km, distance between Milan and Tbilisi is 2876 km, almost twice as much as between Stratford and Milan. If counting

the distance we take an interval of 4000 km, we get one so-called irregularity.

If we approach the issue according to this logic, it will turn out that the performance of Robert Sturua is more distant from the performances of Brook and Strehler than the performances of Brook and Strehler are distant from each other. In fact, from the point of view of theatre science, the interpretation of "King Lear" by Robert Sturua is more distant from the performances of Brook and Strehler not only in terms of the director's concept, but also in terms of scenography and artistic solution, as well as musical setting and choreography.

The analysis showed that the evolution of progressive ideas in the world is observed from the west to the east. The significant searches of new interpretations of Shakespeare are observed in the extreme western point of Europe (Peter Brook's searches). Then it moves to the middle of Europe (Giorgio Strehler's experiments). And the searches of the XX century in Eastern Europe are summarized by the performance of Robert Sturua.

The theatrical searches of Brook since the 40's of the XX century, with its innovative productions made a revolution. His experiments on the British theater stage completely changed the style of theater, from rhetoric to action, and as a result, using the phrase of critic Michael Costo, Brook made Shakespeare our contemporary.

Brook's "King Lear" as if legitimized a tradition of new way of reading Shakespeare. Theater critics consider the performance as the peak of the British theater of the 60's of the XX century. At the same time, it is given the function of a program performance.

The explication of Giorgio Strehler for the production of "King Lear" will be subject of consideration for directors of different generations for a long time. Strehler's feeling of space in "King Lear" is the same as the idea of scenic realization.

For Strehler the sharp contrast between the characters was important, that was expressed in the decision of stage space, musical line and principles of lighting. He continued his searches in this direction in the following performances, which were well used in "The Cherry Orchard" by Anton Chekhov staged in 1974.

In Georgian theatre of the second half of the XIX century and the early XX century several stage version of "King Lear" were created. Kote Kipiani was the first one who revived Lear on Georgian stage. And after three decades Valerian Gunia enlivened the artistic image of Lear.

Quite naturally, the unrealized interpretations of Kote Marjanishvili and Sandro Akhmeteli still arouse interest. Obviously, they had their own, and, above all, creative approach to “King Lear”.

The scenographic solution of the play by these two great directors is very important. Although “King Lear” practically was not realized in the 20’s of the XX century, but understanding of the two great directors is of particular importance for us, as a significant artistic phenomenon in the scenic history of “King Lear” and a path that leads to future searches of Georgian scenic Shakesperiana in the 60’s – 80’s of the XX century.

In the 40’s of the XX century, when actors took upon themselves the function of a director in Georgian theater, they had a great influence on directors. It was necessary to urgently update theatrical forms. Critical situation was created in the theatre and it was necessary to fight for urgent improvement.

From the second half of the XX century some kind of revaluation of the tragedy became necessary. The searches, which began in the 20’s, and have been suppressed under the ideological and physical press of the Soviet government dictate, was relaunched in the 60’s. It was Tumanishvili who first tried modernization of Shakespeare in Georgian Soviet reality. He refused to read Shakespeare’s plays in a traditional manner and rejected repeatedly approved methodology. First productions of Shakespeare on the stage by Tumanishvili were the first attempts of modernization on the Georgian stage.

The success of Sturua’s “King Lear” in 1987 had its historical, social and political background. It did not appear on a dry ground. He himself prepared this ground by his performances along with the socio-political background. In Robert Sturua’s “King Lear” a certain stages of the formation of his theatrical language have been already completed.

Statistical study of scenic interpretation of “King Lear” in Georgian theater shows that, despite the complexity of the dramaturgic structure, from Shakespeare’s plays “King Lear” is realized on the Georgian stage most often after “Hamlet”. Production of “King Lear” is associated with the period of the Georgian theater, when the leading position in the theater is kept by an actor. At the same time, the desire to stage the play appeared more in actors than 7 directors. From the existing eleven performances the initiative of their staging belongs only to the three directors. Production of “King Lear” coincides with the most of significant phases in the history of the Georgian theater. From the seven periods the play was not realized in only two of them. This indicates to the fact that over the past two centuries Georgian theatre considers Shakespeare’s “King Lear” as an important and topical piece

of work. The research revealed the fact that the the authors devote much more time to staging "King Lear" than to other plays by Shakespeare and other authors. According to the study, "King Lear" is staged in every twenty-year interval in the history of Georgian professional theater.

„King Lear“, one of the most complex mysterious dramaturgic structures, still remains a stumbling block for the world theater directors of the XXI century, as, despite the fact that in the twentieth century Shakespeare has been many times read in an original way, it still leaves a feeling of dissatisfaction, unattainability and inexhaustibility.

#### Literature:

1. Alpers, Paul J., „*King Lear* “and the Theory of the „*Sight Pattern* “in Reuben A. Brower and Richard Poirier eds. In *Defense of Reading. A Reader's Approach to Literary Criticism*, New York, Dutton & Co; **1963**.
2. Bennett, Susan. "Godard and Lear: Trashing the Can(n)on." *Theatre Survey* 39, no. 1. **1998**.
3. Bradley, Lynne, *Adapting „King Lear “for the Stage*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, **2010**.
4. Bratton, J. S., editor, „*King Lear* “, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, **1987**.
5. Brown, John Russell, editor. „*King Lear* “, New York and London: Applause, **1996**.
6. Champion, Larry S., „*King Lear* “: *An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols., New York: Garland, **1980**. Cox, Brian. *The "King Lear "Diaries: The Story of the Royal National Theatre's Productions of Shakespeare's "Richard III" and „King Lear* “London: Methuen, **1992**.
7. Gussow M., *Theatre On the Edge*. New York: Applause Books., **1998**.
8. Halio, Jay L. "Staging *King Lear* 1.1 and 5.3." in *Shakespeare Illuminations: Essays in Honor of Marvin Rosenberg*, 102-9. Jay Halio & Hugh Richmond, editors Newark: University of Delaware Press, **1998**.
9. Halio., Jay L., „*King Lear* “: *A Guide to the Play*. Westport and London: Greenwood, **2001**.
10. Holmberg A. *The Theatre of Robert Wilson*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP., **1996**.
11. Hunt A., Reeves G. Peter Brook. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, **1995**.
12. Johnson Samuel., „*Notes on „King Lear* “from his edition of 1765.
13. Kelly Philippa., *Performing Australian Identity: Gendering „King Lear”*., *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (**May, 2005**).