Olena Haleta, Drama for / of Reading: Joanna the Wife of Chuza by Lesia Ukrainka as a receptive challenge

This article analyzes Lesia Ukrainka’s drama Joanna the Wife of Chuza as an open work establishing a new mechanics of aesthetic perception and a new relationship between the artist and his/her audience in Ukrainian literature. Characterized by the limited stage performance, the static nature of the plot and the lack of an obvious ending, this drama is seen as a purposeful realization of a modernist text strategy, which the author gradually developed in her previous works, in particular in The Babylonian Captivity, On the Ruin, and In the Field of Blood.

From an intertextual perspective Joanna is seen as a kind of interpolation in relation to the Gospel text – insert ‘between the lines’, joint with them in content, due to the demands and needs of modern times. The action takes place in the special time between the crucifixion and the resurrection, which in the personal dimension can take any length. The culmination of history does not lead to a turning point and an ending, it is prolonged on the principle of amplification, deepens the existential crisis. The space-time architecture of the Joanna corresponds to such a composition and emphasizes the role of readers. The drama in Lesia Ukrainka works is not limited to the depicted events and relations between the protagonists – it is the drama of finding one's own answer to complex worldview questions.

As shown by the study of manuscripts and intertextual connections of Joanna, the change introduced by Lesia Ukrainka at the level of a separate work is also a change within the genre as a way of cognitive and rhetorical response to a certain type of situation. Lesia Ukrainka introduce a new reading practice through a special structure of the work, transforming a reader literally into an active, or rather acting participant, a person involved in active interaction through the text with the author.

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