

Heather Fielding, **Lesia Ukrainka in British Modernism: The Case of *The New Age***

“The Ukrainian question” emerged as a subject of particular interest for the British public between 1912 and 1920, as David Saunders has shown. Within this context, British readers encountered the work of Lesia Ukrainka when a translation of *The Babylonian Captivity* appeared in the 27 May 1915 issue of *The New Age*, an influential magazine in modernist intellectual culture. Edited by A.R. Orage, *The New Age* featured a blend of political, literary, and cultural analysis in an international frame. This translation—by Carl Bechhöfer and Sofia Volska—was then republished in 1916 in Bechhöfer’s volume *Five Russian Plays with One from the Ukrainian*. In this form, it was one of the pieces of Ukrainka’s oeuvre most easily and widely accessible to English readers.

This presentation excavates a role for Ukrainka in British literary modernism by exploring the layers of contextual meaning around this translation. Within *The New Age*, Ukrainka’s work appeared in the context of the struggle for Ukrainian independence, juxtaposed with translations of Shevchenko’s poetry and George Raffalovich’s frequent articles in support of Ukrainian independence. In his volume *Five Russian Plays*, however, Bechhöfer described her work as a “counter” to Ukrainian nationalism, exemplifying instead a transnational European impulse expressed in the style of her works. Bechhöfer’s volume situated Ukrainka’s work both within and against a Russian context, arguing that her play elevated the style of Chekhov and Evreinov beyond national limitations. This presentation explores the ambiguities around the positioning of this translation of *The Babylonian Captivity*, in between Raffalovich’s political writing in support of Ukrainian independence and Bechhöfer’s transnational stylistic analysis.

Works Cited

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