

AN ENGAGED AND ENGAGING DRAMA  
CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN DRAMATURGY AND THE ISSUE OF FEMININITY

Summary

This dissertation attempts to reflect on contemporary Russian dramaturgy's engagement in terms of defining and redefining the role of women in the modern world. Assuming that the figure of the author constitutes an important component of a created text, and taking into account the centuries-long dominance of male over female writing in the work *An engaged and engaging drama. Contemporary Russian dramaturgy and the issue of femininity* plays written by women are analysed.

The starting point for the discussions in the dissertation consists in the preconception that every female voice in literature disrupts the male hegemony, broadens the perspective of perceiving the world, and allows stating what was previously impossible. Such a position allows to interpreting the work of women playwrights taking into account their relationships with the political and social engagement of literature. The basis for such discussions consists in Jacques Rancière's concept of the politics of literature and the philosopher's position that all artistic activity should not only react to the surrounding reality, but through its performative properties is able to intervene in and change it.

The first chapter of the work focuses on discussing the issue of socially engaged literature as understood by Jacques Rancière, and interpreting his theories presented by Paweł Mościcki. After defining concepts such as "politics" and "politicity", this part of the work presents also the issue of the presence of social engagement in Russian literature so far, with a particular focus on drama. The diachronic approach shows that the striving to influence the audience through artistic creation present in recent drama has a long literary tradition.

The second chapter has been devoted to the issue of the politicity of feminism and the participation of female authors in the artistic life of Russia. The wide range of topics raised by feminists serves to bring people and issues into the space of visibility that have until then been hidden and tabooed. That is why an important part of

feminism consists in politicity, understood as, among other things, being sensitive to the voices of others, showing various versions of “normality”. The aforementioned aims also guide the Russian female writers, who have increasingly made their presence felt on the literary scene since the turn of the 20th century. After modernism, which favoured feminist tendencies, came the Soviet period, which was unfavourable for female writers who were marginalised in literature, only to return in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the third part of the paper, an attempt was made to confirm the validity of the thesis concerning the engaged nature of contemporary Russian drama on the basis of specific references to dramatic works. The analysed material constitutes the work of female playwrights debuting after 2000, as part of the “new drama” of Russia. The first subchapter has a closer look at Yaroslava Pulinovich’s works, which are largely devoted to the problems of teenagers and the difficult transition into adulthood. The issues of becoming a woman and searching for oneself are placed by the author against a background of socio-political changes of the beginning of the new century.

Pulinovich’s formally quite traditional dramas are juxtaposed with Olga Shilyayeva’s play *28 Days*, discussed in the following section. Presented alongside the work of Irina Vaskovskaya, it constitutes an example of a reflection on the position of women in the world. Unafraid to experiment on the level of language, composition, and subject matter, both playwrights present texts in which female corporeality and sexuality play a significant role.

The following subchapter traces the activity of female authors in the space of documentary drama, which is often regarded as the closest to the colloquial definition of politics understood in terms of the activity of the political party due to the fact that the plays created within its framework often constitute a reaction to current events in Russian public life. Using the example of Teatr.doc and the work of its associated authors such as Yelena Gremina, Yelena Isayeva, Svetlana Petriychuk, Polina Borodina or Zarema Zaudinova, this part of the work demonstrates the possibilities of active dialogue with reality included in documentary dramaturgy and the verbatim technique used with it.

The final subchapter of this analytical part of the dissertation concerns one of the more tabooed issues of femininity, namely lesbian and queer discourse. The social commitment of young Russian female authors, manifested, among other things, in their desire to try to change the existing social order, could not fail to include *queer* themes – homosexual relationships are increasingly represented in contemporary Russian-language drama, including those written by women. In the described plays, the authors (including Natalya Milantyeva or Yekaterina Kovaleva) allow minority communities to speak up, bringing a rich mosaic of their stories and experiences to the stage, which can be regarded as an important step towards changing the previous balance of power.