

HRYHOR LUZHNYTSKY

Chorny Snih. Zamok Yanhola Smerty. 12 lystiv otsa Andreya Sheptytskoho do materi. [Black Snow, The Castle of the Angel of Death, Twelve Letters from Andrey Sheptytsky's Father to his Mother], compiled and edited by Natalia Vivcharyk. Ivano-Frankivsk: City NV, 2017.-364 p
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Hryhor Luzhnytsky (1903-1990) was a poet, writer, dramatist, church historian, literary critic, and journalist. He wrote under numerous pseudonyms, the best known among them are Meriyam, Nyhrytsky, and B. Polyanych. Following World War II, Luzhnytsky spent his life far beyond Ukraine; he came to the United States in 1949. Nevertheless, Luzhnytsky never ceased to work for the cause of Ukrainian culture.

The volume contains three prose works by Luzhnytsky. *The Black Snow* is a collection of short stories published in 1928 in Lviv under the pseudonym Meriyam. The work is a psychological study of Man and his emotions during certain of life's critical moments. It is a masterpiece of short prose. The protagonists of Luzhnytsky's stories are in a search to find themselves and to come to terms with their emotions, complexes and moral norms. The writer portrays both his deep personal feelings and experiences related to socio-political events. The historical novella, *The Castle of the Angel of Death*, which is comprised of thirteen short chapters and a conclusion, is set in the days of Hetman Kyrylo Rozumovsky and Count Hryhor Orlyk; it deals with Ukraine's quest for independence and international diplomacy in the eighteenth century. The third prose contribution, *Twelve Letters of Andrey Sheptytsky's to Father His Mother*, is a documentary epistolary novel about the Ukrainian archbishop, which has been translated into English by Roman Orest Tatchyn (1983).

Preceding each entry are short essays and commentaries by the compiler, Natalia Vivcharyk: "Hryhor Lushnytsky as Master of Short Prose" (pp. 5 – 11), "The Poetics of the Detective Story of Hryhor Lushnytsky" (pp. 61 – 71), and the introduction to the above novel, "Features of the Epistolary Novel on Andrey Sheptytsky" (pp. 228 – 232). To each work a brief short bibliography is appended.

The next major chapter entitled "Materials on the Work of Hryhor Lushnytsky" (pp. 297 – 354) consists of reprints of essays on Lushnytsky's prose featuring such authors as Vasyl Jaszczun and Leonid Rudnytzky which provide a short biography of the author; Natalia Pazuniak, a commentary of Lushnytsky's prose; Leonid Rudnytzky, a brief study of the author's poetry; Taras Salyha's incisive essay on Lushnytsky's role in the Catholic group of writers known as *LOGOS*. An essay on Lushnytsky's dramaturgy by Stepan Khorob and a personal, intimate, analytical memoir by Oleh Kupchynsky entitled "Our Lushnytsky," complete this section.

Natalia Vivcharyk analyzes the innovations of Hryhor Luzhnytsky as a writer. In discussing *Black Snow*, she stresses the author's flow of consciousness and the aesthetic form of the narrative which often recalls a monologue. According to Vivcharyk, the author offers subjective impressions and observations dwelling on the variability of instant feelings of the characters. In her opinion, the collection *Black Snow* is a work in which the impressionistic motifs become tangible; the writer does not think, he focuses on the internal conflicts of the characters, favoring allusions and color symbolism.

In Vivcharyk's comments on Luzhnytsky's detective tales and mystery novels she underscores the Ukrainian and European historical framework, the element of adventure, the presence of mysticism, patriotism and religion which are present in most of his stories.

According to Vivcharyk, Lushnytsky attempts to see historical facts in a new light. The themes of these works revolve around one major idea, namely the struggle for independence and statehood for Ukraine. Lushnytsky's heroes are always ready to commit the supreme sacrifice for their country. The stories feature an element of adventure and well-developed plot in which the reader becomes an "accomplice," rendering the narrative interesting and exciting.

In her analysis of *The Twelve Letters of Father Andrei Sheptytsky To His Mother*, written in the United States for a literary contest and republished in Ukraine in 1994 by Taras Salyha, Lushnytsky managed to create a comprehensive holistic image of Andrei Sheptytsky at the same time mystifying many of his readers who thought the letters were an authentic historical document and not fiction. The Metropolitan is depicted not only as a church figure, but also as a public figure. Based on historical materials the author reproduces a fictional, but compelling, history of Andrey Sheptytsky's relationship with his mother. Upon its publication in 1982 in Philadelphia the work created a sensation. Many readers considered the fictional letters as authentic historical documents. This mystification caused widespread discussion and controversy among readers in the Ukrainian diaspora which contributed to the popularity of the novel.

In his introduction to the English translation, the Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia, Robert Moskal, aptly comments, "In an age when literature and art in general all too often addresses the darker, more venal, and more sordid side of life, *Twelve Letters of Fr. Andrey Sheptytsky to his Mother* reestablishes Christian virtues and absolute moral values as fitting subjects for a literary work. Thus, in this sense also, the publication of the novel is most timely and relevant... The novel serves as a poignant reminder to all of us to pray for the successful completion of the canonization process of the Servant of God Andrew Sheptytsky."

Natalia Vivcharyk's tome is an important contribution to the reintroduction of the author, Hryhor Luzhnytsky, whose work was proscribed to readers in Ukraine by the Soviet regime.

Oksana Chubok, *La Salle University*