

# Modern Intentions in Lesia Ukrainka's Drama *Cassandra*

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## Abstract

In her drama *Cassandra* (1903–1907) Lesia Ukrainka pays considerable attention to language and demonstrates its two defining forms and functional paradigms. One of them is language that appeals to the essential components of being. It is language that reflects human existence in all its acuity and fullness of appearance. This language is complex and difficult to understand, but is the only real language of the age of modernism. Another language is superficial, appealing not to the depths of life and universal categories, but to temporary human needs and aspirations. Its task is to identify the ways and means of achieving a desired goal. Such language is manipulative, because its speakers tend to hide their personal interests under claims of the common good. Also, in the drama, Lesia Ukrainka innovatively raises a number of questions related to the internal laws of world development, the processes of human cognition, the functioning of language, and the understanding and interpretation of the word. The formulation and presentation of these issues demonstrate the clear modern attitude that the writer professed and embodied in her drama.

**Key Words:** Lesia Ukrainka, drama, modernism, communication, language, understanding, existential problem.



## Introduction

Critics have repeatedly spoken about the modern essence of Lesia Ukrainka's dramatic poems and revealed this essence from different points of view. Mykola Zerov emphasized the writer's individualism, which lies in a "violent protest against the weakness and drowsiness of the citizenry, against its slave spirit and passivity."<sup>1</sup> He also emphasized the similarity of Lesia Ukrainka's creative loneliness with its "loftiness" of the spirit to the loneliness of Zarathustra, who must "rethink all his wisdom in order to carry it to the valleys at the right time to give it to the people."<sup>2</sup>

Yurii Sherekh observed a special figurative technique in the dramatic works of Lesia Ukrainka, when images are presented "in several dimensions at once," these dimensions "somehow bizarrely coexisting"; the images themselves reflect the "penetrating depth of the philosophical mind" of the writer, which is impossible to unravel to the end.<sup>3</sup> And as a consequence of such complex writing, Sherekh claimed

1 Mykola Zerov, *Tvory: v 2 t.* [Works: In 2 vols.], vol. 2 (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990), 400.

2 Zerov, *Tvory*, 400.

3 Yurii Sherekh, *Porohy i Zaporizhzhia. Literatura. Mystetstvo. Ideolohii: v 3 t.* [Thresholds (Rapids) and Zaporizhzhia. Literature. Art. Ideologies: In 3 vols.], vol. 1 (Kharkiv: Folio, 1998), 384, 388.

that the staging of Lesia Ukrainka's dramatic poems using traditional means of the stage does not reflect what underlies these dramatic poems.<sup>4</sup>

Oleksandr Biletskyi spoke more specifically about the modernism of the drama *Cassandra*. He noted that the image of the main heroine is "largely modernized," but "in this modernization the poet stopped at the point where her artistic sense allowed her to hold back."<sup>5</sup> Biletskyi makes it clear that at the level of artistic intuition the author of *Cassandra* maintained a balance between the representation of an ancient theme and its modern representation. Lesia Ukrainka did so by combining artistic material for the drama, "developing and completing what her sources, mostly ancient, hinted at."<sup>6</sup> The traditional portrayal of Cassandra emphasized the passivity of her role, because as a prophetess, she was incapable of "preventing disaster by acts of her own will and altering fatal courses of events."<sup>7</sup> And on the basis of this traditional image of the main character, Biletskyi notes, writers of the New Age created their own ideological and semantic variations. For instance, Schiller emphasized that knowledge itself is problematic: "Because of it, enthralling and tempting delusions dissipate, as do illusions, by which people are so easily drawn."<sup>8</sup> Instead, Biletskyi continues, in the image of Cassandra Lesia Ukrainka sees one of the "spiritual daughters of Prometheus, who will always give priority to the struggle of life over personal happiness and peaceful repose."<sup>9</sup>

Tamara Hundorova considers *Cassandra* in the context of the crisis of rationalism and the manifestation of a new ontology of the modernist word. She sees in the drama a manifestation of the

anti-rationalist communicative gap in the cultural and spiritual situation of the *fin de siècle*, when the power and truth of rational discourse are lost, and the spontaneously intuitive, deep power of irrational, chaotic, disordered law of necessity, destiny, and language breaks through.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the positivist word, which "flies straight like an arrow, to a single and logical meaning," the drama affirms the status of the modernist word, which is determined by suggestibility and polyvalence, it "diverts from direct meaning and leads to it by circular paths, through symbol, myth, and allusion."<sup>11</sup>

4 Sherekh, *Porohy i Zaporizhzhia*, 389.

5 Oleksandr Biletskyi, *Zibrannia prats: v 5 t.* [*Collected Works: In 5 vols.*], vol. 2 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1965), 560.

6 Biletskyi, *Zibrannia prats*, 552.

7 Biletskyi, *Zibrannia prats*, 550.

8 Biletskyi, *Zibrannia prats*, 550.

9 Biletskyi, *Zibrannia prats*, 551.

10 Tamara Hundorova, *ProYavlennia Slova. Dyskursiia rannioho ukrainskoho modernizmu. Postmoderna interpretatsiia* [*The Emerging Word: The Discourse of Early Ukrainian Modernism. A Postmodern Interpretation*] (Lviv: Litopys, 1997), 241.

11 Hundorova, *ProYavlennia Slova*, 263.

Hundorova appeals to the idea of the “liberating word” (Lesia Ukrainka), in which the communicative gap between *the word* and *the body*, *the word* and *the deed* is overcome by existential experience.<sup>12</sup> With the help of such a genuine and truthful word, communication takes place “as a form of human existence in the human world.”<sup>13</sup>

Vira Aheieva also observes in *Cassandra* the problem of the communicative gap between the word and what the word means. No one is able to adequately perceive what the main character sees in her prophetic visions. Thus, the researcher points to the hermeneutic problem revealed in the drama – “understanding the inadequacy of the spoken and perceived word.”<sup>14</sup> Aheieva emphasizes the important ontological status of the word, which, manifesting itself, “in of itself makes real essence.”<sup>15</sup> She also points to the concept of death revealed in the drama, which by its manifestation affirms the “ethical absolute” of the main character. Death draws a line under Cassandra’s life, and makes it impossible for her to adapt, to betray “faith in goodness and her own truth.”<sup>16</sup>

As we can see, researchers emphasize the modernity of Lesia Ukrainka’s drama, and in *Cassandra* trace the author’s formulation of important problems of the ontology and hermeneutics of the word.<sup>17</sup> In a broader perspective, it can be said that Lesia Ukrainka’s drama was widely known in Ukraine, but the true meaning of her works mostly escaped wider readership. She belongs to those figures of culture who many know, but few understand. My task will be to comprehend the problems of the ontology and hermeneutics of the word in the relevant philosophical and aesthetic discourse; as well as to show the depth and modernity of their reflection in the text of *Cassandra*.

### Main Subsection

According to the Greek myth, when Cassandra fell asleep in the temple, Apollo appeared to her and promised to teach her the art of clairvoyance if she shared his bed. Cassandra, while accepting Apollo’s gift, refused his request. Apollo then convinced her to give him a kiss, during which he spat in her mouth, ensuring that no one would ever believe in her prophecies. In her drama Lesia Ukrainka says nothing about

12 See Hundorova, *ProYavlennia Slova*, 248.

13 Hundorova, *ProYavlennia Slova*, 273.

14 Vira Aheieva, *Poetesa zlamu stolit: Tvorchist Lesi Ukrainky v postmodernii interpretatsii [A Poetess at the Turn of Centuries: Lesia Ukrainka’s Writings in Postmodern Interpretation]* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1999), 134.

15 Aheieva, *Poetesa zlamu stolit*, 146.

16 Aheieva, *Poetesa zlamu stolit*, 167.

17 These problems were also considered in the monographs of Solomiia Pavlychko, *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukrainskii literaturi [The Discourse of Modernism in Ukrainian Literature]* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1997); Nila Zborovska, *Moia Lesia Ukrainka [My Lesia Ukrainka]* (Ternopil: Dzhura, 2002); Oksana Zabuzhko, *Notre Dame d’Ukraine: Ukrainka v konflikti mifolohii [Notre Dame d’Ukraine: Ukrainka in a Conflict of Mythologies]* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2007).

Cassandra's deception of Apollo, instead she unfolds other semantic intentions. The work begins with the very statement of the fact that no one believes the predictions of the main heroine. Furthermore, Cassandra herself is unable to control her gift, to somehow influence what is to happen. She confesses:

Always I can hear sorrow, can see sorrow,  
But I cannot express it. I can never  
Say: "It is here!" or "It is over there!"  
I only know that it is already is  
And there is no one now who can avert it,  
No one, no, no one! If I only could,  
Then I myself straight would avert this sorrow.<sup>18</sup>

The inability to influence the course of events causes considerable mental suffering for the heroine. But this inability is not only caused by the fact that no one believes her, but also because she herself is unable to comprehend and reveal in words what appears in her inner visions. And the latter tortures Cassandra perhaps the most. She makes a clear distinction between the visions that appear before her eyes and the language that she and the people around her use:

That's not words, I see all that, sisters,  
what I am saying. I see: Troy dies.<sup>19</sup>

These prophetic visions, despite their ominous expression, are semantically multidimensional; such that they are difficult to fathom in a singular life-event storyline. For example, when Cassandra sees Helena taking her first step on Trojan land with her "white foot in its fine scarlet shoe," in her inner vision, Helena's foot "wounded our soil."<sup>20</sup> However, it is almost impossible to deduce from this vision the future war of the Trojans with the Greeks, caused by Helena, as well as the fall of Troy; and then to foretell it in words. It is also impossible to properly interpret and present in words a vision in which Cassandra sees a "bloodstained form of a hyena" and hears "the piercing and rapacious voice."<sup>21</sup> This vision marks the fact that the horse gifted to the Trojans poses a mortal threat as it hides a Greek detachment tasked to open the gates of the besieged city. Thus, under no circumstances should the gift be accepted and brought to Troy.

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18 Lesia Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, translated by Vera Rich (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 190.

19 Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv: v 12 t. [Collected Works: In 12 vols.]*, vol. 4 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1976), 22. Vira Rich's translation does not reflect the author's important opposition between the visions seen by the main character and the words she uses. So in this case I provide my translation.

20 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 185.

21 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 225.

Overall, according to the concept revealed in the drama, events in the world develop in accordance with the commands of Moira, the goddess of fate. It is she who rules the world. All other gods obey her, nothing can happen outside of her verdict. Cassandra says:

Yes, it is true, enough, what use are prayers?  
 What good are all the gods against stern fate?  
 They too are bound by the eternal laws,  
 They, just as mortals – sun and moon and stars  
 Are torches in the mighty fane of Moira,  
 Gods, goddesses, are servant in that fane,  
 Only the slaves of that unyielding Empress.  
 And to implore *Her*, that is work in vain,  
 She knows no pity, she can know no grace;  
 Deaf she is; and blind, as primal Chaos.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, there is an inviolable verdict determined by the goddess of fate, which regulates the unfolding and formation of events. There is Cassandra with the gift of seeing the future. There is the language through which she tries to express what has appeared to her in her inner vision. And finally, there is the environment that seeks to understand what Cassandra is saying. Lesia Ukrainka shows that there are greater or lesser semantic discrepancies and distortions in the information chain, because, as already mentioned, Cassandra's visions do not fully correspond to relevant future events. Cassandra cannot clearly express in words what she sees in her visions. Her social surroundings, moreover, cannot understand her words. It is because of these discrepancies and distortions that Cassandra and many of those around her suffer. The problem is not that the main character lacks language competence to convey her visions in words. On the contrary, she has a good command of language. She is highly observant, and in accurate and expressive phrases is able to give accurate characteristics of people and phenomena. This problem has a universal dimension related to the functioning of human consciousness and the nature of language. Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* claimed: "Just as human consciousness is essentially 'inaccurate,' because it presupposes a 'greater' or 'lesser' correspondence to the subject, so is human language inaccurate."<sup>23</sup> This is due to the nature of language itself, which, as noted by Alexander Potebnia, acts as "a middle link between the world of objects that are known and the person who knows, and in this sense combines objectivity and subjectivity."<sup>24</sup>

22 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 200.

23 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Istyna i metod. Osnovy filosofskoi hermenevtyky: v 2 t.* [*Truth and Method. Fundamentals of Philosophical Hermeneutics: In 2 vols.*], vol. 1 (Kyiv: Univers, 2000), 404.

24 Aleksandr Potebnia, *Estetika i poetika [Aesthetics and Poetics]* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), 59.

On the other hand, the multidimensionality of the phenomena of reality and the semantic ambiguity of the word also do not contribute to the accuracy of expression, and give considerable grounds for the manifestation of a subjective factor in the process of speech. Thus, there is certain experience that cannot be fully and clearly expressed in language.

The problem of a correspondence between subject and word has long troubled philosophers. Plato tried to solve it by upholding the principle that naming a thing should be in accordance with its nature, not on a whim. Thus, the “precision of a name” lies in the fact that it “indicates what the thing is.”<sup>25</sup> The ancient Greek philosopher saw the manifestation of this principle in the activities of the first founders of language, who were not simpletons, but “thoughtful observers of celestial phenomena” and “subtle connoisseurs of the word.”<sup>26</sup> So, despite language being inherently subjective, it is possible to successfully describe life phenomena in words. In particular, says Plato, this can be done by poets who, in a state of inspiration and obsession, lose their minds and say “important things.”<sup>27</sup> The poets themselves do not understand what they are saying, for they are only mediators between God and people; and only people with developed thinking and a talent for explanation can properly understand the message from above. The drama *Cassandra* reflects everything mentioned above, as its main heroine is not able to properly understand what she sees due to her gift. Cassandra sees important and deep things, moreover, she sees them ahead of time.

The world can be understood only with its appearance in language and reflected upon with its help. This thesis, fundamental in the philosophy of the twentieth century, is reflected in several episodes of the drama. For example, Andromache accuses Cassandra of influencing events with her “accursed word.” And finally, the main character herself begins to think the same way:

Perhaps, indeed,  
It is the truth my words are poisonous,  
And that my eyes murder the strength of men!  
Would I had blinded them, had plucked them out...  
Ah, that would be great happiness indeed!<sup>28</sup>

It is not that Cassandra foretells the already predestined and determined by Moira, but that she herself constructs further events by what she says. Her words create the world in a wondrous way. However, this world is full of suffering, injustice, betrayal, which greatly distresses Cassandra. In a letter to Ahatanhel Krymskyi in 1903, Lesia Ukrainka confessed:

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- 25 Plato, *Sobraniiie sochinenii: v 4 t.* [*Collected Works: In 4 vols.*], vol. 1 (Moscow: Mysl, 1990), 666.  
26 Plato, *Sobraniiie sochinenii*, 635.  
27 Plato, *Dialohy [Dialogues]* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2008), 74.  
28 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 195.

It seems to me that when I write about this and call a fact by its name, I actually make it a fact, translate it into reality from the possession of some terrible, but only illusory abstraction of fiction... Do you understand me? I think you don't, because I myself comprehend that it is impossible to understand this with a normal mind... So let's not talk about this.<sup>29</sup>

Through writing / language, a fact becomes "itself," passing from the sphere of something illusory and abstract into the real. Note that this process is seen from the phenomenological point of view. Language does not express something that exists in the surrounding reality. It represents and makes visible what exists in an illusory and abstract topos, in the space of Plato's ideas.

The decisive role of language in the creation of the world is also evident from the remarks of Cassandra's brother Helenus:

You think that is truth gives birth to speech?

I think that is speech gives birth to truth.

.....

The word is fruitful

And gives birth more than Proto-Mother Earth.<sup>30</sup>

Both Helenus and Cassandra are soothsayers; they are both aware of the importance of language in the creation of the world. But at the same time, brother and sister profess a radical difference in understanding the nature and tasks of language. For Cassandra, language is a reflection, albeit imperfect, of the prophetic visions that appear before her inner vision. Also, thanks to language, she can adequately perceive and clearly appraise what is happening around her and in her own mind. Cassandra makes clear moral distinctions; she appeals to the ideas of truth, justice, human dignity, etc. Her language is rooted and deep. And although it inevitably brings Cassandra considerable mental suffering, it is a true language. Instead, Helenus adheres to the functionalist view of language. He professes the idea of conventionality of the basic concepts of human existence. Helenus sees truth in the following way:

And what is truth? And what is untruth? Lies

Which then came true are hailed by all as truth.

For instance, once a slave told me a lie,

Saying my phial was stolen, simply meaning

He did not want to go and seek the phial.

But while this slave was idling, then indeed

29 Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv: v 12 t.* [Collected Works: In 12 vols.], vol. 12 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1979), 93.

30 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 217.

The phial was stolen. So where was the truth?  
 In that, and where the lie? The thinnest line  
 Divides the lie from truth in what has passed,  
 But in the future there's no line at all.<sup>31</sup>

He professes skepticism, which calls into question the possibility of reliable knowledge of the world; as well as moral relativism, rejecting the idea of an absolute criterion according to which appropriate moral judgments can be made. Helenus does not want to “look into the eyes of the Truth,” as Cassandra does, because it does not bring happiness and success, but deep suffering. Instead, Helenus uses language to tell people what they want to hear. It brings him benefits and glory. His vitally sharp “Phrygian mind” uses language as a perfect tool for manipulation. Helenus’ language is effective and in demand by society. It is noteworthy that after the fall of Troy, Helenus moves to Delphi and already in this Greek city “proclaims the will of God.” This confirms Cassandra’s prediction that he would defeat the Greeks with his mind. When people find themselves in a situation of choosing between an awkward truth and a convenient lie, they are mostly inclined to choose a lie. As Andromache says:

All the same, Cassandra,  
 Of your truth we have had enough and more,  
 Evil-presaging, evil-bringing, let us  
 Live now in hope, even if it is false.  
 Oh, I am weary with your kind of truth!<sup>32</sup>

Lesia Ukrainka shows why Helenus’ language is so favored in society, both Trojan and Greek. Helenus says exactly what people want to hear. In the case of the Trojan horse, he says it should be accepted as a gift from the Greeks and evidence that Greek troops have retreated from the city. It is quite natural that the Trojans, who have been under siege for a long time and have lost many of their soldiers, are glad to hear these words. They want to believe that the war is over, and what Helenus tells them confirms their faith in that. He meets their aspirations, although subsequent events show that his words contribute to the fall of Troy. When Cassandra instead foretells that the horse is “an impure gift,” “a cursed gift,” part of the crowd wants to banish her. Her words do not bring the Trojans a feeling of peace and comfort. The vast majority of Cassandra’s social circle is guided by their own self-interests, and Helenus’ predictions correspond to these interests. His practical language corresponds to their practical aspirations. Helenus’ only objective is to guess what people want and to present it in words under the guise of divination. And this, after all, is easy to do. It suffices to look at a situation in terms of individual gain. Language that does not grow from the depths of life and has nothing behind it, language with zero existential meaning is very well suited for such a mission.

31 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 216–17.

32 Ukrainka, *Selected Works*, 213.



Cassandra's curse can be interpreted as the curse of literature in general. She speaks, warns, shouts, but society does not hear her. It does not want to hear her. To satisfy their inner and outer comfort people aspire to leave behind their own essence.

In reflection on the problem of language as experience of the world, Gadamer refers to Wilhelm von Humboldt, who said that language is the product of human "spiritual power": "Wherever there is language, there is the primordial 'linguistic force' of the human spirit, and every language is capable of achieving the common goal to which this natural human force aspires."<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the source of language is the human spirit, and the stronger this spirit is, the more expressive and deeper the language becomes. Cassandra has spiritual power, making her language deep and expressive; it truly does foretell future events, although these prophecies are difficult to understand. Cassandra is constantly in conflict with her environment, which is devoid of spirit, thus not understanding her. Instead, the environment understands Helenus, also devoid of spirit, very well.

The drama also outlines the difficult problem of verifying the word that comes from the spirit. When Cassandra predicts that Sinon, a Greek warrior caught near the walls of Troy, poses a threat to the city (as subsequent events show, he indeed is a hostile spy), she is given a sword to kill him. However, Cassandra refuses to do so. Her visions do not give her complete confidence in knowing that he is a spy and because of this she doesn't want to take the sin of murder onto herself. In addition, the cunning Sinon tells Cassandra a true or imagined story that he has recently unsuccessfully tried to save from murder a Trojan spy caught by the Greeks; that spy being Cassandra's ex-fiancé Dolon. This obviously disarms Cassandra, and she cannot kill the man who tried to save the life of her ex-fiancé. But the situation can also be interpreted in a different dimension. Cassandra's vocation is to inform people of what she sees in her prophetic visions. This is her destiny, what she excels in. In a similar way, a poet fulfills his/her vocation, revealing in language what appears to her/him in a state of inspiration. The poet's main purpose is to convey to people, according to Plato, the message of God. At the same time, it is not the poet's task to understand what he/she saw and expressed in language. This should be done by others, whose vocation is to understand and interpret what is said. It is telling that when Cassandra finds herself in a situation where she is offered functions that are not natural for her, she refuses to make a final decision. In other words, a poet should not verify her/his own words. This should be done by someone else.

Worthy of mention in this context is Lesia Ukrainka's letter to her sister Olha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, in which she wrote:

I just couldn't advise you in any way as I don't know how to advise, but only to understand and sympathize, no, only to foretell – only my premonitions never help me. There are things that a person must dare to do on their own, without asking for anyone's advice, and I am glad that my Lily has such

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33 Gadamer, *Istyna i metod*, 406.

courage. ... Yes, I am alone, because in many ways I think and feel differently than the rest of our family and your friends, but *normal* people don't have much access to things that are quite clear for people like me.<sup>34</sup>

The quoted passage testifies to the autobiographical basis of Cassandra's image. Lesia Ukrainka felt alone in her family circle and among friends, tending toward well-founded premonitions, which, however, could not help her influence events. A poet with her works does not have a clear influence on what is happening around her, but she can clearly identify certain existential phenomena and make moral and aesthetic distinctions. In her prophecies and assessments, Cassandra sees the essence of what is happening better than anyone else, and gives very accurate descriptions of people and life phenomena.

After all, this situation reveals a very difficult connection between rooted language and reality, which do not appear in a direct and clear correlation. Rooted language appeals to certain existential phenomena, which in reality are manifested incompletely or partially. Therefore, it is difficult to say for sure that a certain fragment of the surrounding reality corresponds to what has appeared in front of the inner vision and was expressed in words.

In an article on Gerhard Hauptmann's drama *Michael Kramer*, Lesia Ukrainka writes about the phenomenon of the "liberating word," which can free, for example, Cassandra from clairvoyant helplessness. Such a word is "death," or something that approaches that.<sup>35</sup> Further on she expresses her wish in the following way, let art "more often repeat for us 'liberating words,' no matter how cruel they may be; 'cruel words' are better than 'cruel customs.' Let art repeat *memento mori* more often at our banquets, celebrations, and holidays!"<sup>36</sup> According to the plot of the drama, death, which Cassandra also foresees, frees her from a difficult, painful, and unbearable state of seeing tragic future events and not being able to protect the Trojans from them. Death frees her from the awful pain of existence. At the same time, the concept of death can be interpreted differently. Death draws the final line under a person's life, it stops the growth of experience and the possibility of changing life priorities. And most importantly, under this line everything begins to appear in its true form. Cassandra appears as a seer who, although suffering from her gift, speaks honestly on behalf of Moira, the goddess of fate. She remains a courageous and dignified person, the voice of conscience of the Trojans, to the end of her life. Her brother Helenus instead appears as a fraud who pretends not to be who he really is and fools people for his own benefit and fame, using their belief in superstition. Like Cassandra, Helenus received a gift, which was his flexible natural mind. And if Cassandra served her gift, he used his for

34 Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv: v 12 t. [Collected Works: In 12 vols.]*, vol. 11 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1978), 234–35.

35 See Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv: v 12 t. [Collected Works: In 12 vols.]*, vol. 8 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1977), 153.

36 Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv*, vol. 8, 154.

gain. The protagonist of the drama reveals the fullness of human existential formation, while her brother Helenus demonstrates the superficiality of such formation. The realization of one's own existence is one of the important problems posed by Lesia Ukrainka in the drama.

### Conclusions

The drama *Cassandra* was written during 1903–1907, and it reflected in the figurative word the latest approaches to understanding the nature of language and human thought, which would be crucial for the philosophy, aesthetics, and sociology of the twentieth century. In his article “The Diversity of Languages and Understanding of the World,” Gadamer notes that in twentieth century Western philosophical thought there was a “kind of linguistic turn,” which consisted of an orientation on language, a realization of its extreme importance in reflecting the surrounding world and thought processes. On the one hand, Ludwig Wittgenstein became interested in the use of language, its form, and the way we speak in trying to understand each other. Thus, the importance of language in phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics has increased. Language is understood as such an essential and defining fact that even metaphysics, as the doctrine of being, has come to depend on it.<sup>37</sup>

Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, seeks to show how language with its means confuses the human mind. Accordingly, he sees the task of philosophy in getting rid of this confusion, giving human thinking a clear vision of philosophical problems and coherent logical form. Instead, Martin Heidegger sees in language the self-disclosure of being; through naming it introduces for the first time the extant into a word and a phenomenon. Thus poetry, Heidegger says, is the embodiment of truth. However, the language of poetry is ambiguous, complex, “dark,” just like being is. After all, according to the famous saying of the German philosopher, “language is the house of Being,” there are no differences between them, one arises and appears through the other. Heidegger contrasts complex poetic language to rational language, that is based not on the amazing self-disclosure of being, which entices a person with its secret, but on the relationship between “facts” and “human judgments.”<sup>38</sup> For his part, Maurice Blanchot argued that written language is attuned to “charm” and thus comes into contact with the absolute environment.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, through such “charmed” language it is possible to approach the understanding of existential universals. There is no other way of an approximation to them other than language.

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37 See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermenevtyka i poetyka* [*Hermeneutics and Poetics*] (Kyiv: Univers, 2001), 168.

38 See Ivan Fizer, *Filosofia literatury* [*The Philosophy of Literature*] (Kyiv: NaUKMA; Ahrar Media Group), 38.

39 See Maurice Blanchot, *Prostir literatury. Ese* [*The Space of Literature. Essay*] (Lviv: Kalvaria, 2007), 21.

In *Cassandra*, Lesia Ukrainka conducts her “linguistic turn,” paying considerable attention to language and demonstrating its two defining forms and functional paradigms. One is a profound language that appeals to the essential components of being; it makes us aware of these essences. It is language that reflects human existence in all its acuteness and fullness of appearance. It reflects clear moral distinctions between what is good and what is bad. This language is complex and difficult to understand, but it is the only genuine language in the age of modernism. It creates the world, and also shows a person who he or she really is, what his or her destiny is, and to what extent a person has been able to fulfill his or her vocation. This language manifests itself mostly in poetry. Another language is superficial, it appeals not to the depths of life and universal categories, but to temporary human needs and aspirations. Its task is to identify ways and means to achieve the desired goal. This language is manipulative, because speakers tend to hide their personal interests under allegations of the common good. It has become extremely widespread in contemporary mass media. Thanks to this language, various fake news and information distortions are created. This kind of language is simple and clear for everyone. Lesia Ukrainka perceptively predicted the emergence and spread of such a language, revealing the psychological basis of its emergence. People tend to escape the difficult problems of existence and reside in a clear and comfortable zone of discourse. This applies both to those who manipulate others through language and those who are manipulated.

In this drama, the author also defends the idea that in the epistemology of the twentieth century the definition of a correspondence theory of truth has been acquired. The latter presupposes not the congruence of some assertion with a more general system of knowledge, which took place in the coherence theory of truth, but the conformity of knowledge to the immanent characteristics of the ideal sphere. In the case of the drama *Cassandra*, the truth of judgments is determined not by facts of reality, but by the inner visions of the main heroine, who owes their origin to the gift of seeing actions determined by the goddess of fate Moira. In other words, events in reality are determined by factors in an ideal sphere, and to understand the essence of these events, their truth, it is necessary to correlate them with such universal categories as fate, truth, dignity, and guilt.

The discussion between Cassandra and Helenus appears to be very modern and even postmodern. But this discussion can be traced back to the beginning of the formation of the philosophical and aesthetic thought of the West. Thus, in the *Cratylus* dialogue Plato opposed the relativistic view of the Sophists on the origin of names and argued that “we cannot name things as we choose”; rather, “we must name them in the natural way for them to be named and with the natural tool for naming them.”<sup>40</sup> He also claimed that “the correctness of the name consists in displaying the nature of the things it names.”<sup>41</sup> From this point of view, it can be said that the problem of ontology

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40 Plato, *Complete Works* (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 106.

41 Plato, *Complete Works*, 145.

and hermeneutics of the word belongs to those problems that “eternal return” at certain stages of the cultural history of humankind.

Altogether, in the drama *Cassandra* Lesia Ukrainka innovatively raises a number of questions related to the internal laws of the world, the processes of human cognition, the functioning of language, and the understanding and interpretation of the word. Their formulation and the way of presenting these questions testify to the expressive modern orientations that the writer professed and embodied in her plays.

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