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INNOVATION IN A.P. CHEKHOV'S SMALL PLAYS (THE SKETCH «ON THE HIGHWAY»)

The article pays attention to the existence of different opinions on innovation in small and big plays by A.P. Chekhov in literary studies. All Chekhov's small plays («Bear», «Proposal», «Wedding» and others) are conventionally considered to have poetics usual for plays: conflicts of heroes (clash of heroes), plots with heroes (with histories of heroes) where images-circumstances play a subsidiary part.

The article represents views of some researchers of the middle of the XXth century (S. Balukhatyi, G. Berdnikov, G. Bialyi) concerning the traditional character of the poetics of Chekhov's sketch «On the Highway» (1884). It points out that critical and educational literature of the beginning of the XXIth century (Henry Troyat, V. Kuleshov) makes no mention of the sketch. Attention is focused on V. UdaloV's book «Poetics of Chekhov's Drama» (1993), which gives concise interpretation of the sketch on the basis of broader views on the typology of the conflict and the plot of the work.

In view of the existence of different opinions on A.P. Chekhov's sketch in literary studies, the author makes a more detailed analysis of the text structure of the work in its development taking into account different quality of levels of the earlier approaches.

The main part of the research consists in analyzing the poetics of A.P. Chekhov's sketch «On the Highway», the second of Chekhov's earlier plays. Among the observed poetic devices of the author's unmasking the «romantic hero» and depicting petty outlook of «poor people» a more prominent place in the sketch is held by the device which is traditionally called in literary studies in regard to Chekhov's works «heretically innovative».

Thus, Chekhov's sketch «On the Highway» is characterized by «heretically innovative» (Gorkiy) poetic principles and ideas: a multifaced symbolic image-background (a great number of mutually connected small images-circumstances: «Storm», «On the Highway» and others), which stands out in the general conflict of the play (the major bearer of the main idea of the plot) and specific images-characters (Merik and othes). Separate textual commentary is given on the circumstances of unmasking Merik as a «romantic hero».