



The Storm

Alexander Nicolaevich Ostrovsky

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The Storm, by Ostrovsky, is generally regarded as one of the finest plays to have been written in 19th-century Russia. Contemporary critics viewed it either as showing the dark forces of conservatism or as the highest expression of love for the traditional life and character of the Russian middle class. A 19th-century drama in five acts, The Storm (like Ostrovsky's other plays) a work of social criticism directed particularly towards the Russian merchant class. The Storm provoked fierce debate in the Russian press of the time concerning moral issues. While Vasily Botkin was raving about "the elemental poetic force emerging from secret depths of a human soul... for Katerina's love is a woman's nature thing exactly in the way that any of climactic cataclysm is a thing of physical nature", critic Nikolai Filippov lambasted the play as an "example of vulgar primitivism", calling Katerina "shameless" and the scene of rendezvous in Act III "scabrous". Mikhail Shchepkin was highly skeptical too, especially about "those two episodes that take place behind the bushes". Stepan Shevryyov wrote about the decline of a Russian comedy and drama, which was "sliding down the ranking stairs" to the bottom of social hierarchy. When the play was produced in Saint Petersburg, under the personal supervision of its author, Katerina was played by young and elegant Fanny Snetkova who gave lyrical overtones to the character. In Moscow as well as Saint Petersburg the play angered most of the theater critics but appealed to audiences and was a tremendous box office success.

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