

Summary

The Theme of Rejection in Selected Contemporary Novels of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski

Józef Ignacy Kraszewski is counted among the most prolific novelists in European literature. One of the most significant themes which he dealt with was that of rejection. Kraszewski's arduous life covering the late Polish romanticism and positivism abounded in social observation and devotion to man. The experience of rejection, exclusion and alienation in different spheres of life had a crucial influence on the artist's biography, thus determining the dominant developments in his prose. Kraszewski was not only an author of historical novels, a publisher and a feature writer, but also a vigilant observer of society and a writer who would bend over individuals from different walks of life.

It is always worthwhile to note that Kraszewski's novels have hardly dated. Many of today's researchers representing social sciences subconsciously seem to allude to the psychology of his characters. It is hard to omit a number of psychological, philosophical and pedagogical studies, which have served in this dissertation as the background for the analysis of selected novels.

The dissertation emphasizes certain connections between Kraszewski's literary output and various trends in European literature, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. The pursuit of individual independence and search for the unique space to live are two aspects of character creation which are fitted in maturation of particular figures in literature. That process is clearly present in Kraszewski's characters who having experienced rejection, create their lives anew, taking different existential routes, either trying to save their integrity or, otherwise, they yield to influences and surrender.

The predominant emotion which conditions the characters' attitudes is the feeling of being rejected caused by melancholy, the feeling which cannot be verbalized or expressed in any other way, and which may also take the forms of pity and regret. Antoni Kępiński uses the term 'melancholy' to describe certain depressive states of mind, emphasizing that it was the 19th century which brought about its clarification. Freud saw melancholy ('melancholia') as a response to loss, and in this context it turns out to be a useful tool in the analysis of Kraszewski's characters' psyche.

The dissertation deals with selected novels of Kraszewski and it applies the thematic criterion in the choice of works to be discussed. Kraszewski's phenomenon and his legend lie, among others, in the fact that he is a versatile representative of European romanticism. However, the reader recognizes in him not only the literary implementation of the most crucial artistic manifestos of the period, but also a preoccupation with the human individual and collective psyche.

Kraszewski was not always straightforward in expressing his views on many issues that defined the life of man. In his novels he depicted people at different stages of life and in different life situations. The reader becomes acquainted with artists, abandoned women, as well as the femme fatale type who overtly changes lovers. There are individuals who have been excluded from society alongside with those hurt by love and disappointed as a result.

Chapter One of the dissertation is devoted to artists, where it is showed what the causes of rejection might be and what necessitates the withdrawal from the feelings which are, in such a situation, impossible to be developed. Here Kraszewski, in his observation of society, is concerned with spiritually outstanding figures in their states of solitude. The emotional experience of each of them is unique. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that they all develop their artistic passions early in life, young age, thus, being the factor that shapes their psyche for the times to come. In adulthood they are prone to long for the past and search for the metaphysical, which leads them to various doubts about the meaning of life.

Chapter Two elaborates on selected female characters in Kraszewski's novels. It provides an analysis of strong, emancipated and independent women who renounce the social reality and refuse to accommodate themselves to the present norms.

Chapter Three discusses that aspect of rejection which is connected with unrequited love. Attention given to that omnipresent literary motif enables to elucidate the problem of rejection from yet another perspective. Kraszewski utilizes some traditional story patterns in which unrequited love has a conventional literary function.

Chapter Four focuses on socially excluded characters, the exclusion pertaining to different planes of social relations. There seem to be innumerable reasons for such an exclusion and rejection, that is why the chapter discusses only some of them.

Chapter Five is introducing few Kraszewski characters under different methodology than one which is dominating in dissertation. Gender perspective allow to read anew particular behaviors and attitudes with emphasizing rejection motive.

The characters who experience rejection find various ways to cope with their emotions. It must be emphasized that solitude, as the consequence of rejection, is often the

foundation of the feeling of alienation. Due to the differences in the motives of rejection, the characters project different reactions such as the acceptance of the rejection and reconciliation with the world, or a rebellion against the rejection which results in building up particular emotions and following a particular course of action.

Kraszewski's novels may serve as literary documents which give utterance to the ideas of the 19th, for example by illustrating the aesthetic, metaphysical and religious attitudes. As well as this, they brilliantly give the sense of the colour of the period in which they are set.

In the focus of the present dissertation are Kraszewski's characters who have either been abandoned and rejected themselves, or have decided to leave someone or something. The analysis covers both lonely and suffering individuals whose love has been unrequited, and those who have been rejected by society or expelled from their families. Further, it discusses abandoned artists and, separately, women who face the problem of rejection.

The subject matter dealt with in the present study is of psychological nature, yet the problems it gives rise to are relevant to social and pedagogical studies which complement the literary approach.