

SUMMARY

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Literature in the shadow of history. Stanisław Rembek - life and works

The subject of the work is the analysis of the works of Stanisław Rembek (6/7/1901, Łódź - 21/03/1985, Warsaw) in the context of their relationship with history.

A substantial part of Rembek's work is devoted to broadly understood history, which was the main source of creative inspiration for the writer. The writer's interests included various moments from the past of Poland, including the old history of the state, as evidenced by the beginning of the novel about Mieszko I and an article devoted to the ruler of the Polans' state. Rembek's subject was also the beginning of the Bar Confederation, the November Uprising, the January Uprising and the history that was created before his eyes - the Polish-Bolshevik war, the Second World War and the Warsaw Uprising.

The aim of the work was to examine, on the one hand, how much the writer's works are embedded in history, of which he was an eyewitness, and on the other hand, to what extent in his work he referred to the distant past and what topics interested him in particular. Another goal was to analyze the picture of history emerging from the diaries, novels, stories, journalistic texts by Rembek, including those unpublished, and the answer to the questions about the sources of his perception of history, the laws governing history presented in his works, how he perceived the role of the individual in history and how he showed man and his choices in the face of the challenges posed by history. My intention was also to investigate whether Rembek's historiosophic concept constitutes a certain continuity and whether its elements can be pointed out in subsequent works.

The answer to the question about the source of Rembek's perception of history was brought by the reading of his diaries and the analysis of the writer's biography. The family tradition and education in the patriotic spirit had a significant influence on the writer's worldview and his historiosophical concept. An important factor were also the works of the Romantic period, stressing the patriotic idea of fighting for the homeland, even at the price of the ultimate sacrifice. Rembek's awareness was also influenced by the aforementioned historical events, of which he was a witness and participant. Personal experiences have determined the area of interest of the literary writer in a significant way. It is also important that the time of Rembek's



maturation was in the years that marked a special generation experience, which was the struggle for freedom of the homeland and the creation of an independent Poland.

An analysis of Rembek's works leads to the conclusion that history in his works is not only a background to the events being presented, but it is a complex mechanism in which human fates, both individuals and the whole nation, are interwoven. By showing his characters in situations in which they must make choices, Rembek examines the laws governing history and tries to indicate how an individual can determine his place in it.

The world emerging from Rembek's works is a place of the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this struggle, everyone has a role to play, even if he does not see the point in it, the connection of his own individual actions with the history of the nation. In the light of the writer's work, a man should believe that this struggle, which will take place in a number of stages affecting the development of the world, will ultimately end in the victory of good, despite the fact that he often experiences the brutality of history and the feeling of senselessness of events taking place. Rembek also portrays the world as a theater of history, a comedy in which people play their roles. On the other hand, the world becomes a puppet theater, which emphasizes the feeling of fragility and uncertainty of human existence as well as the vanity of human actions. Man as an actor plays an imposed role. As a marionette, he turns out to be God's toy, a plaything for a powerful higher power, mocking at his futile actions and attempts of independent action. This vision, rich in cultural context, is in contradiction with Rembek's concept of the program that the individual must accomplish in the struggle for the victory of good over the world.

It is characteristic for the writer to present lost matters in Polish history, both the history of his time as well as distant history. His works have the same special feature - they do not show triumphs or victories, but failures. By including such images in his work, Rembek does not analyze the causes of defeat, but emphasizes their symbolic dimension, e.g. through the intertextual references to other cultural texts, such as the works of Henryk Sienkiewicz, Stefan Żeromski, Artur Grottger or Maksymilian Gierymski.

The writer emphasizes the role of the individual in history, indicating that everyone can influence the history of the community - both the great leader and the ordinary man. It is the ordinary man that is the focus of his works - regular insurgents, soldiers, city dwellers, and the

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individual story of each of them intertwines with the story of the others, influencing the history of the whole nation.

Rembek devotes a lot of space in his works to the images of war, which he also takes part in. As a writer and soldier, he is realistic, deprived of pathos, reflecting the conditions of life in a constant sense of the threat of death. He portrays war as hell, a fight of inhuman machines that are alienated by feelings and emotions. Man is shown as a slave of a dangerous and powerful machine, dependent on it, associated with it in life and death. Although he is its creator, it ceases to be subjected to his control, arousing the fear of impersonal death.

The characteristic feature of Rembek's works is that he does not show a stereotypical division into good or evil characters. The image of the enemy in his work is therefore unobvious, complex, deviating from schematic images. Traitors and collaborators appear among Poles in works about the January Uprising, novels about the war of 1920 and World War II. The writer is aware that human characters and attitudes are different, especially in borderline situations, when a man is exposed to the most difficult test. Not all of Rembek's characters succeed in these tests. For some of the characters entangled in history, the only solution turns out to be suicide.

Rembek's characters often die, but it is not in vain. The meaning of death manifests itself in the contribution to the national cause - basing on what is passed on from one of the January's tales, the idea of the struggle for liberation goes further: following the work, it will be taken over by subsequent generations. The same function is fulfilled by the saber from the novel about Józef Wybicki, symbolizing the tradition of independence struggles.

The analysis of Rembek's works shows that the individual's identity is shaped throughout his whole life in the process of confronting reality and making choices, including the most difficult ones. A man on the path to self-understanding, when analyzing the events of his life, gives these events meaning, connects them with the present and influences his own future. In this way, he discovers the meaning of his own existence and determines his position in the world, complementing in a way this unfinished project of his own identity.

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