

## Summary

### The strange shape of life Studies and sketches from mid-nineteenth century Polish biography studies

The book presents nine studies and sketches from the history of mid-nineteenth-century Polish biography. The author studies the history of biography not from the perspective of biographical genres, but in terms of the writing practices and beliefs of biographers. Therefore, the true heroes of these sketches are the biographers themselves, their views on biography, and its place in literature, as well as its methods and techniques: the use of sources and the issue of archive. The first two sketches are dedicated to three biographies of Antoni Malczewski, written by August Bielowski, Seweryn Goszczyński and Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki. The author presents the first biographies of Malczewski, the author of *Maria*, in the terms of the ideology of Ziewonia, Towiański and the aesthetics of Biedermeier. In the study dedicated to Karol Estreicher's biography of Mickiewicz, the issue of the scientific traditions of the biographer and the tradition of bio-bibliography are raised. In the next chapter, the author discusses the biographical strategies of Antoni Małecki, a biographer who also published unknown works by Juliusz Słowacki. All the sketches combine the author's reflections on biographers' awareness and their methods.

The second part of the book comprises studies devoted to attempts at collective biographies: *Cmentarz Powązkowski (Powązki Cemetery)* by K.W. Wójcicki, *Literary portraits* by L. Siemieński and Michał Czajkowski's *Dziwne życia Polaków i Polek (The bizarre lives of Polish men and women)*. The first work is an expression of Wójcicki's biedermeierian sensitivity and doubts about the power of stone inscription and, at the same time, these collective biographies are an expression of the faith in the power of the printed word. In turn, Siemieński's collection is testimony to the search for life's patterns. What he primarily seeks in biography is moralistic and parenetic writing. Above all, the art of biography is the creation of an ideal by well-known quasi-scientific methods (using correspondence, memoirs etc.). In Siemieński's work, what draws attention is the metaphor of biography as a statue.

At the other extreme is Czajkowski's collection of biographies of Polish emigrants in Turkey. This biographical material does not come from archives but from the oral tradition and fiction. Czajkowski's protagonists come from the periphery of society, their reputations are dubious and they themselves lack credibility. Czajkowski quotes lies and fabrications produced by his heroes that have become part of the biography, and his tales

turn themselves into an apology for Poles in Turkey. For this reason, in contrast to Siemieński, *The bizarre lives of Polish men and women* was defined as an anti-canon.

In the last two sketches, the author describes various manifestations of the life of a literary biographical legend. The first presents Camões' biography realized in literary works in both Portuguese and Polish romanticism. What is important in reading the poems of Garrett, Korsak and Halm is the reconstruction of research into the biography of this Portuguese poet. The last sketch shows the history of an episode from Mickiewicz's biography (a meeting with Pushkin at the monument to Peter the Great), which became an element of his literary legend, as well as of political discussions. The sketch discusses the contexts in which the motif of the meeting between Mickiewicz and Pushkin was used as a symbol of Polish-Russian friendship.