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Summary of the doctoral dissertation

In the shadow of „Death”. Life and works of Ignacy Dąbrowski (1869–1932)

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Ignacy Dąbrowski was among his contemporaries one of the more recognizable Polish prose writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He became famous on the European literary scene in 1892 with his debut diaristic novel entitled *Śmierć* (*Death*), which became the voice of a generation, as well as an anon of a new era – Young Poland. Even though both the figure of Dąbrowski and his works enjoyed great popularity at the turn of the century, to this day there is still no monographic study.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to fill this gap: to reconstruct Dąbrowski's biography and discuss in detail all of his works, along with an analysis of their reception from the 19th to the 21st centuries. The thesis emphasized in the title of the dissertation assumes the existence of Dąbrowski as a writer doubly determined by „death” – both shaped by his autoptic experience of it as a child, and having appeared on the literary scene solely through his debut novel, *Śmierć*, which overshadowed his later works ante facto. This monograph therefore aims to show that his entire oeuvre was determined by the issue of loss, and therefore – that Dąbrowski's biography is the key to understanding his works. During the research, a hermeneutic perspective was used, and biographical, archival and manuscript genetics methods were employed.

The work consists of five main chapters. The first part is centered around Dąbrowski's factography and biography, which was reconstructed based on numerous manuscript and printed materials collected. The second chapter opens with a section on the author's works and provides a detailed discussion of all printed works and drafts of unpublished works, which the author worked on in 1888–1897 (the governess period). The third chapter analyzes works created from 1898 to 1904 (the Italian period), while the fourth chapter analyzes works from 1905 to 1929 (the Warsaw period). The decision to adopt a chronological arrangement was dictated by the need to show Dąbrowski's oeuvre as a process and to make visible the changes and interdependencies occurring in it. The chapters devoted to the writer's works are analyzed and interpreted, evoking various contexts (in addition to the biographical – primarily historical and theoretical-literary, social and philosophical), as well as discussing the reception

of works, showing them against the background of the era. The subsections were also supplemented with information obtained while analyzing the manuscripts of the works – this made it possible to bring Dąbrowski's creative process closer and show a given work in a broader spectrum.

The work also includes a calendar of the writer's life and works, a complete bibliography of his works, and the *Ignacy Dąbrowski Archive* – which collects detailed information on the surviving autographs of literary pieces, correspondence and describes the paths of the search for lost manuscripts.

It concludes by proving that Dąbrowski's prose is characterized by a tendency to introspectiveness. From reading all his works emerges the image of an original creator, endowed with exceptional sensitivity and a keen sense of observation, which translate into the way of creation. The writer creates the world depicted through the prism of emotions and fears, striving for a deeper reflection on subjectivity. This was confirmed by the confrontation of biographical information with Dąbrowski's literary work carried out in the analytical and interpretative chapters. Moreover, it uncovered themes that are key to the writer's entire oeuvre. The factor that particularly influenced the formation of his literary sensibility and determined all of his writing – was orphanhood. It left its mark on him, which also determined his „metaphorical orphanhood” in adult life – the writer strived hard to define his own subjectivity.

The themes with which Dąbrowski's prose is filled – including the ephemerality of existence, the psyche of the individual, and attitudes toward transience – remain timeless. Other aspects of his writing – primarily autopathographic, maladic and tanatic issues – also deserve special attention. This is because the dominant features of the writing and the topicality of the works of the author of *Śmierć* are anchored in his most difficult experiences of his youth. There is no doubt that writing became self-therapy for him, understood as an action taken to work through traumas, as well as an attempt to merge his torn self. His prose works, rich in symbols and references, are moreover a key, decrypting each other. It also proved that Dąbrowski's work, viewed as a coherent whole, is his constant, re-taken attempt to tell the story of himself, an attempt to constitute his own identity.