

This project aims to investigate the culture of fame and celebrity in Poland in the period between the last partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1795) and the November uprising (1830-1831). Its main goal is to understand celebrity as a social and cultural phenomenon in the context of the period. I intend to examine the category of a public figure in contemporary culture, to consider the public sphere as the increasingly significant place of encounters between famous people and the reading public, and to assess the role of the media such as newspapers and magazines in mediating their interaction. The project follows the line of inquiry opened by historians of early modern celebrity, but applies it to Polish history yet unexplored in this regard.

The planned study will:

- Focus on the culture of fame in order to examine the conditions in which outstanding reputations were socially constructed. Specifically, I will be interested in the *actors*, *spaces*, and *cultural practices* facilitating the celebration of public figures and the *ideas*, *emotions*, and *attitudes* that underlay it.
- Examine the impact of *democratisation*, *mediatisation*, and *commercialisation* of fame on the Polish culture and expose the role of public figures in the formation of Polish *collective identity*.
- Demonstrate the relevance of public individuality to *understanding Polish modernity*. By introducing the perspective of history of fame to Polish history, I will be able to find new connections and differences between the Western model of modernity and to better understand the Polish specificity in this regard.

The project assumes the examination of several kinds of sources, focusing most prominently on sources related to the public discourse, such as newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, popular poetry, biographical materials including the collections of eminent lives, as well as complementary sources such as academic works, memoirs, and spy reports.

Focusing on the period of important transition in Polish history, I intend to shed new light on the relationship between celebrity and modernity as exhibited beyond the canonical examples of England and France. As concentrated on the publicity created around living figures, the project departs from the older methodologies associated with heroes and role models and analytically connects abstract exemplarity to the conditions of actual popularity. Through the analysis of the ideas, practices, and attitudes involved in the celebration of public figures I endeavour to demonstrate the significance of the relationship between the members of the elite and the public to the formation of modern values and Polish national identity. Problematising the concept of celebrity in terms of the Polish post-partition situation, this project will be first academic study of the history of celebrity in Polish historiography.