

# Religious Conflicts Reflected in German, Polish and Ukrainian Literature from Austrian Galicia

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## Abstract

Galicia was created as a result of the First Partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century. It is often described and idealized as a prototypical province of the Austrian monarchy because of its multicultural nature. Its large social variety has become a popular research topic, especially for history and literary studies. My research project deals with one of many aspects of this variety: with religious life in Galicia and its reflection in literary works. Religion was one of the main reasons of cultural differences in Galicia. In general, three separate groups marked the religious life of this region: Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Jews. The relations between these three groups influenced virtually all cultural and political processes in Galicia, dividing it into a western and an eastern part. The reason for the great influence of religion can be found in the strong cultural ties of these ethnic groups with their religious life at that time, especially in the case of Jews and Ukrainians. Identifying the national and the political with the religious often caused confessional conflicts, which can be interpreted both as a defense or an offensive action against other groups. Religious (confessional) conflicts were used by many Galician writers to show, analyze and in some cases to criticize the religious life and social relations in Galicia. The depiction of the region's religious life played a very important role in many descriptions of Galicia precisely because of its exotic image and multiethnic character. These conflicts, however, were depicted from different points of view, which is why it is so interesting to investigate their origins. For this reason, religious conflicts and their literary depiction are interesting research objects for literary studies. Their analysis could contribute to the description of literary and historical processes in Galicia and help us to gain a better understanding of that cultural space.

*"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." (Jonathan Swift)*



## Theoretical Approaches and Methods

Research is based on methods of comparative analysis of historical and literary discourses. Specifically, I employ theoretical approaches of New Historicism (Stephen Greenblatt) and semiotics of culture (Yuri Lotman), which I use to compare the literary with the historical context and to describe work-immanent features regarding religious conflicts. To gain an overview of religious life and conflicts as reflected in literary works, it is important to include different sources, especially the oeuvre of writers with very diverse ethno-confessional and linguistic backgrounds. For this reason, I chose six authors from different confessional backgrounds who described religious conflicts in their works.

## Research Questions

- ▶ How are religious conflicts described with regard to the historical reality?
- ▶ For what purpose and how often does an author use these conflicts in his or her work?
- ▶ What were the reasons behind these conflicts in reality and to which extent does the author reflect these reasons?
- ▶ To which degree was national identity connected with confessional affiliation?
- ▶ Did the conversion to another religion result in the loss of national identity, especially for Orthodox Jews?
- ▶ Are there any special features to be found in the representation of religious conflicts between Christians and Jews on the one hand and between Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics on the other hand?

## Writers from Galicia



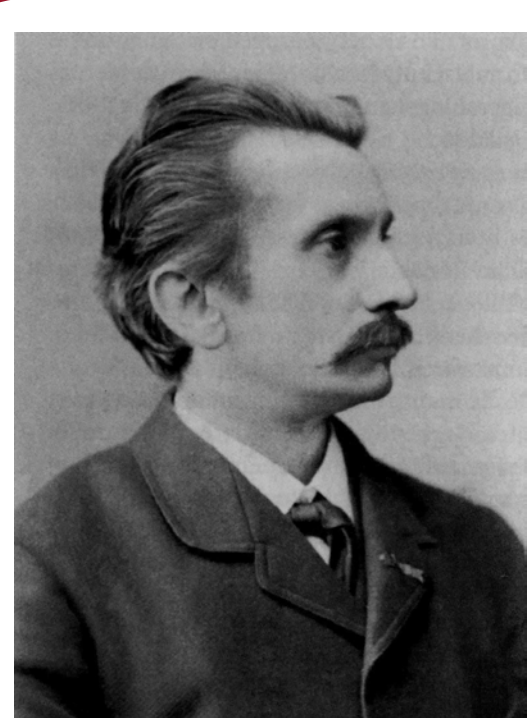
Karl Emil Franzos  
(1848-1904)



Ivan Franko  
(1856-1916)



Józef Rogosz  
(1844-1896)



Leopold von Sacher-Masoch  
(1836-1895)



Osyp Makovej  
(1867-1925)



Jan Zacharysiewicz  
(1823-1906)

## Two Types of Religious Conflicts

▶ **"Purely religious"** conflicts are directly caused by religious differences between two or more confessional groups, such as differences of dogmas and belief systems. Conflicts of this type are usually conflicts between the Jewish and Christian population, for example caused by the marriage of a Jewish and a Christian person. Conflicts between the Catholic Church and socialist parties or between Jewish Orthodoxy and Haskala also belong to this group since religious doctrines are criticized or rejected.

▶ **"Pseudo-religious"** conflicts are a result of political, economic or cultural contradictions between different confessions that are depicted or could be interpreted as religious. This type of conflict was typical for Ukrainian or Polish literary works in which, for example, the economic conflicts between Jews and Christians were interpreted as a result of confessional diversity. Most of the conflicts between Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic believers also belong to this group owing to the strong political contradictions between Poles and Ukrainians.