

“‘Hey! Master Bartholomew,’ said Rupert from downstairs. ‘Let me in, for tomorrow I will go to the Jesuits, to the King, and I will betray you by telling them that you are a sorcerer, heretic, Aryan, Socinian—a dog’s head—I will ask and will obtain that your head be cut off, quartered, that they burn you at the stake, pluck, flog, and fry you in hot tar.’”

This quotation from Józef Ignacy Kraszewski’s (1812–87) *Majster Bartłomiej, czyli piekarz i jego rodzina* (Master Bartholomew, that is, the baker and his family; Vilnius, 1837) is representative of the anti-Jesuitism of the nineteenth-century Polish literature that criticized the role of the Society of Jesus in the Commonwealth of Poland–Lithuania in the period before the Jesuits’ suppression in 1773. It coincided with the period of the partitions (*rozbiory*), after which Poland lost its independence (1795–1918). Several Polish intellectuals, including political historians such as Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) and his disciples Jędrzej Moraczewski (1802–55) and Henryk Schmitt (1817–83), were preoccupied with the causes of the fall of Poland–Lithuania and asked whether it was the Jesuits who had ruined the Commonwealth’s political and educational system. Indeed, Kraszewski’s historical novel is set in the early seventeenth century, when the Jesuits became King Sigismund III Vasa’s (r.1587–1632) ally in assuring the privileged place of Catholicism in the country. Tellingly, Kraszewski’s other historical novel is titled *Ostatni rok panowania Zygmunta III* (The last year of Sigismund III’s reign; Vilnius, 1834) and portrays the Jesuits as *kuglarze*, or (political) jugglers.

A similar prejudiced portrayal of the Society, with all its nuanced variations, can be traced in other prominent writers of Polish Positivism and Romanticism, including, among others, Stefan Żeromski (1864–1925), Bolesław Prus (1847–1912), Cyprian Norwid (1821–83), Juliusz Słowacki (1809–49), and Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855). The latter, during his tenure at the Collège de France, was close to two prominent French anti-Jesuit writers, Jules Michelet (1798–1875) and Edgar Quinet (1803–75). Their violent attacks on the Jesuits in their lectures and publications were part of the longstanding anti-Jesuitism of important French writers—such as Étienne Pasquier (1529–1615), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), and Voltaire (1694–1778)—that found other influential literary expressions in the works of Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), Alexandre Dumas (1802–70), and Eugene Sue (1804–57) in the 1880s. French anti-Jesuit literature reflects a global trend against the Society of Jesus, which after forty-one years of suppression was restored by the papacy in 1814 (the same year of the Congress of Vienna) and was identified by republicans in Europe and across the Atlantic as an ultra-conservative, anti-democratic, anti-liberal, and anti-modern force of the pre-revolutionary *ancien régime*. Such adamant opposition to the return of the Jesuits and their political and theological agendas resulted in their political persecution not only in France but also, for example, in France’s neighboring territories of the newly created German empire, where Otto von Bismarck (in office 1871–90)—in response to the alleged conspiracy of the Jesuits during the Franco-Prussian War—issued anti-Jesuit laws as an integral part of his *Kulturkampf*. Such legislation found support especially among Protestants, who had established a long tradition of theological anti-Jesuitism since the sixteenth century that found more recent literary expression in Friedrich Schiller’s (1759–1805) *The Ghost-Seer*, in which a secret Jesuit society attempts to convert a Protestant prince.

While the Jesuit myth in France or Germany (parallel in many respects to that of witchcraft, the Templars, freemasonry, and the Jews) has already been the subject of a scholarly investigation that resulted in the publication of authoritative monographs, anti-Jesuitism in the Polish literature of the long nineteenth century still lacks a systematic study despite its obvious importance for our understanding of this turbulent period. The goal of my project is to fill this lamentable historiographical gap as a natural chronological extension of the NAWA/NCN *Polskie powroty* project on anti-Jesuit literature for the previous historical period (1500s–1700s), which I began in April 2022. The project proposed here will thereby allow me to thoroughly catalog, investigate, critically analyze, and describe the anti-Jesuit Polish literature of the nineteenth century within hitherto unexplored historiographical frameworks of its broader pan-European contexts in order to determine not only its common threads but also its peculiarity in terms of genre, language, tropes, influence, and political background, which was unique in socio-political and cultural context of post-partition Poland.

My research plan reflects the methodological approach of the ongoing project: with the help of a research team of specialists, I aim to: (a) compile a database of all anti-Jesuit literature in the nineteenth century written not only in Polish but also in other major European languages (and make it available to the public in the form of an Open Access website maintained by an academic publisher); (b) add new articles to the lexicon of anti-Jesuit literature composed for the previous period; and (c) publish in Open Access the first comprehensive monograph on the subject in the broader European context of a modernity that turned out to be uniquely vulnerable to the emergence of conspiracy theories, of which the Jesuits had been a favored and traditional target.