

# **The former Eastern Galicia in Poland, Poland in the former Eastern Galicia. The Image of the (multi)national province in interwar Polish literature**

## **Summary**

The book is the first monograph on the Polish interwar literature concerning the former Eastern Galicia. After the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy in the autumn of 1918 and the Polish-Ukrainian War for the former Eastern Galicia in 1918–1919, the contested province was incorporated into the Second Polish Republic and constituted the south-eastern Polish voivodships. The subject of analysis in the book embraces processes of covering the region with signs and meanings evoked by them, connected with Polishness. In other words, the book discusses meaning-making activities, which aimed at the symbolic appropriation and adaptation of the region to the dominant – Polish – political, social, and cultural sphere in the Second Polish Republic. In the interwar period, the aforementioned activities were carried out in the public space in various spheres: practices, materiality, visual arts, and discursive acts. The book focuses on the latter phenomenon – discursive acts with particular emphasis on the literary works which created the image of the post-Habsburg multinational province as (a part of) Poland: the national, Polish land and the domain of Poles. Alongside literary works, highly artistic and popular ones, the thesis presents other texts from the epoch: published, such as autobiographical texts, press articles, political speeches, and unpublished, i.e. numerous archival documents. Analysing these texts, I pay attention both to the mechanisms of appropriation of the province to make its image conform to the expectations of Poles, and to the related mechanisms of marginalisation, depreciation, and exclusion of the Others. For them, the province was not a space of power but remained a home – though not always a friendly one.

The introductory section, which precedes the three main parts of the monograph, tells the story of Galicia within the Habsburg Empire, between 1772 and 1918. This part of the book aims to shed light on the extraordinary heterogeneity of this crown land. It is as much an account of the multilingual, multireligious, multicultural, and multinational character of the region as of the very complex and, moreover, unstable hierarchies of identification of its inhabitants. The aforementioned heterogeneity provides the necessary backdrop for further analysis. It was due to this factor that the symbolic appropriation of the province to the sphere of Polishness required the involvement of so much “symbolic capital” and costly (financially and socially) symbolic measures.

The first part of the book discusses the discursive acts, above all the literary works, which carried out the appropriation in question, referring to the events of the Polish-Ukrainian War for the former Eastern Galicia, especially the Battle of Lviv in November 1918. In the perception of Poles, the significance of the Polish-Ukrainian War went far beyond its military and political consequences. For those who felt attached to the former Eastern Galicia, this war marked the end of the Habsburg world and the beginning of another one, the Polish world. Moreover, for all Poles, it became a source of myths that spoke of matters as fundamental as the unity of the Polish nation and state. For these reasons, almost from the first days of the Battle of Lviv until the end of the interwar period, the dominant Polish discourse, including the literary one, treated the war and the battle as interpretable historical facts and generators of meaning, which effectively created the image of the region as Polish land and the Poles as its only legitimate hosts.

The second part of the book examines the dominant Polish discourse, especially the literary one, which created the Polish image of the erstwhile Eastern Galicia, depicting its reality of the 1920s and 1930s. The literature of my interest adjusted visions of the region and its inhabitants to the needs of the Second Polish Republic and the claims of the titular nation. As such, it placed Poles – their spaces, issues, and interests – at the centre of its representations. Occasionally, it took the Others – Ukrainians, Jews or Hutsuls – into account, but it put their portraits within a specific Polish cognitive framework. In terms of inspiring writers to create the Polish image of the region, the political, social, and cultural reality of the “post-war” Eastern Galicia was a weaker stimulus than the Polish-Ukrainian War. However, when modelled according to the dominant Polish point of view, this reality was transformed into an image that lost its national complexity and gained a Polish unambiguity.

The last part of the book presents literary stories on the former Eastern Galicia other than those dominating the Polish interwar discourse. I introduce the term *alter-discourse*, i.e. a discourse alternative to the mainstream, and use it to describe those discursive acts which did not destroy the Polish image of the province but attempted, more or less successfully, to deconstruct it. Although literary works of alter-discursive character did not counteract the symbolic appropriation of the erstwhile Eastern Galicia into the Polish sphere of interwar Poland, they asked questions about that process, undermined and sometimes even contested it. In analysing these works, I take into account not only the extent to which the authors writing in Polish, associated with the Polish culture, were able to perceive the former Eastern Galicia from a different viewpoint than the dominant Polish perspective. I also try to examine the reasons why they undertook such literary acts, and the reasons why those acts sometimes proved to be a great challenge for them.

Extending the scope of materials interpreted in the book beyond the literature itself results from the aim to create a map of the Polish discourse about the former Eastern Galicia between 1918 and 1939; literature, however, remains at the centre of this map. Particularly important for me are the methods provided by critical discourse analysis, which make it possible to look at different discursive acts – literature, memoirs, journalism, political and historical documents – as testimonies to the state of consciousness of a given community at a particular time. This methodological approach treats a sense of reality – and texts about it – as non-obvious, even if it imposes itself as natural. Considering my main methodological inspirations, I therefore assume that the survey of various texts in the monograph represents a meeting point of critical discourse analysis and anthropologically oriented literary studies, as well as contextual analysis and comparative studies.