



DEUTSCHES
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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

*Polish Romanticism.
Transnational Constellations.*

DEUTSCHES ROMANTIK-MUSEUM
HAUS AM DOM

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, 21–24 OCTOBER 2026

Call for Papers

Romanticism represents a central epoch in Polish literary and cultural history that continues to have an impact to this day. It is regarded, with good reason, as the decisive, almost paradigmatic formation for Poland's cultural identity. The Romantic canon of arts, music and literature has a strong identity-forming function and continues to influence (in part through politically motivated ideologization) how Poland understands itself – and is understood by others. However, this sometimes encounters counterreactions or polemical demarcation from a Polish identity as it was shaped in the Romantic period. While the debates about Polish Romanticism continue, even in a controversial manner, its rank and significance are undisputed.

In the summer of 2027, an exhibition at the *Deutsches Romantik-Museum* ("Spirits of Freedom. Polish Romanticism". Frankfurt am Main) will provide insights into the characteristic features of Polish Romanticism and shed light on its connections within European contexts. Our conference prepares this exhibition from an academic perspective by focusing specifically on its transnational dimensions. The aim of the conference is to recontextualize Polish Romanticism in a broader international framework of reference and influence. In particular, the relationship to German culture, to its literature and philosophy, was formative for Polish Romanticism, which manifested itself in a variety of ways (like the influence of Herder's folk ideas or Goethe's *Werther* on Mickiewicz). But other European cultures also provided 'contexts

of reference' ('Anlehnungskontext', Niklas Luhmann) – or even 'contexts of rejection' – for the development of an independent Polish Romanticism.

At the same time, the comparative perspective also highlights the individual characteristics that distinguish Polish Romanticism in the international arena. The partitions of Poland and, associated with that, the rule by foreign powers or cultural hegemony; the statelessness as a nation, but also the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional demographic situation in divided Poland-Lithuania; as well as the experience of emigration – all this together has a decisive influence on the specifics of Polish Romanticism. Regarding this intercultural entanglement, its profile and contours appear more diverse than suggested by the canonical approach to interpretation, which posits a homogeneous national culture as a closed entity.

The conference aims to provide a better understanding of Polish Romanticism, not as a national exception, but in its interaction with neighboring European cultures. The following key topics, only roughly outlined here, arise from this context. Individual contributions may also take up several themes together, and contributions with a comparative orientation are particularly welcome. Furthermore, one major panel will focus specifically on the European dimensions of Poland Romanticism in art history.

A: Influences – Discourses – Objects

- Discourses on Polish Romanticism in **dialogue (and demarcation) with European literatures and cultures**, especially with the neighboring cultures of the partitioning powers. Of particular interest here are German-Polish and Polish-Russian constellations.
- Negotiations of Polish culture as a **hegemonic culture**, particularly with regard to Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, but also other ethnic or religious groups in the territory of the divided dual state of Poland-Lithuania (postcolonial approaches to processes of cultural appropriation, exoticizing fascination, othering, orientalism - as well as counterreactions).
- The **Jewish inspirations** and backgrounds of Polish Romanticism, especially in the context of romantic messianic concepts and historical designs as well as ideas of the diaspora (esp. in emigration). The Polish-Jewish (post-Romantic) entanglements also show up in the later Zionist movement leanings towards Polish romantic ideas.
- Individual case studies: Which **objects in art, architecture, music and literature** are particularly suitable for a transnational examination of Polish Romanticism? In addition to literature and music, we are also looking forward to contributions from the field of visual arts: How does Polish Romanticism in the visual arts relate to European painting and representation in the first half of the 19th century?

B: Ideas – Concepts – Aesthetics

- Romantic **semantics of the national** in international comparison: comparative studies of the vocabularies of the national with their implicit and explicit mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and in relation to romantic **regionalism**. The focus is not least on the dilemma of the **nation without a state** (relevant, among other things, for Ukrainian, Czech, and South Slavic Romanticism, but also for Irish, Scottish, and Greek Romanticism).

- **Political thought** in the Romantic era: engagement with revolution, irredentism, republican ideas, with violence as a political tool, etc. The interweaving of political and religious thought (politicization of religion, sacralization of politics). Particular interest is given to an international comparison of the European visions of Romanticism.
- Romantic **orders of gender** – in international and intercultural comparison (including semantics and practices of the masculine/feminine/androgynous). The works of female authors of Polish Romanticism could be explored here.
- Questions of **Romantic aesthetics** (including imagination, fantasy, irony, concepts of authorship) in international and intercultural comparison.

C: Aftermath

- **Aftermath** and discourses of Romanticism and the romantic to this day: the legacy of Romanticism in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the associated ideological implications and political objectives. Of interest here are both Polish discussions of the romantic heritage (including Maria Janion's work) and critical discussions of Romanticism in international comparison.

The conference languages are German, Polish, and English. Part of the conference will be interpreted simultaneously into German and Polish. Presentations may be given in any of the three languages. The organizers will cover travel and accommodation costs.

Abstracts (max. one page, 2500 characters, biogram 500 characters) are requested with topic suggestions for presentations (25 minutes) or short panels (90 minutes) with several thematically coordinated presentations led by one or more persons. This call for papers is open to scholars at all career stages.

Please submit proposals by **15 March 2026**, to: maj-mehrvarz@dpi-da.de and loew@dpi-da.de.

The conference is held in conjunction with **the German-Polish Working Group for Art History and Monument Preservation** (33rd Annual Conference).

Main organizers: Prof. Anne Bohnenkamp (German Romanticism Museum/University of Frankfurt), Prof. Alfred Gall (University of Mainz), Dr. Łukasz Kamiński (National Ossoliński Institute Wrocław), Prof. Peter Oliver Loew (German Institute for Polish Affairs Darmstadt), Prof. Magdalena Marszałek (University of Potsdam)

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Ossoliński Institute), Robert Kostro (Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw), Dr. Paweł Rojek (Jagiellonian University), Prof. Dr. Justyna Bajda (University of Wrocław), Dr. Seweryn Kuter (Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw).

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