

Joseph Conrad's Authorial Self: Polish and Other

Wiesław Krajka, ed., *Joseph Conrad's Authorial Self: Polish and Other*, Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives Series, edited by Wiesław Krajka, vol. 27 (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2018; distributed by Columbia University Press), 402 pp., index of non-fictional names, index of Conrad's works and letters. ISBN 978-83-227-9056-4.

This collection examines the biography and literary works of the Polish-British novelist, reflecting upon significant aspects of his Polish heritage. It consists of

sixteen papers that were presented at the Sixth International Joseph Conrad Conference, organized by the Centre for Conrad Studies in the English Department at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin in June 2016 and held under the Honorary Patronage of the European Parliament. The contributors are scholars from diverse fields and countries, including Bulgaria, Canada, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and the United States. The volume continues the research on various facets of Joseph Conrad's Polish and East-Central European origin in conjunction with his *oeuvre*, which constitute a major feature of the series *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives*.

The book begins with an introduction by Wiesław Krajka, an eminent professor at Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin and Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, an acknowledged authority on English nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, literary theory, and comparative literature as well as the editor of the volumes in the *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives Series*. His essay is followed by Nathalie Martinière's "Like a Damaged Kaleidoscope Multiple Contemporary Images of Joseph Conrad," a theoretical treatment of Conrad's authorship. Martinière argues for the importance of the authorial figure in interpretations of Conrad's works and in Conrad studies more broadly. She discusses the significance of Conrad as an author who made a significant mark on writers such as Salman Rushdie and W.G. Sebald, along with the rendition of Conrad as a character in fictional works by Mario Vargas Llosa (*The Dream of the Celt*) and Juan Gabriel Vasquez (*The Secret History of Costaguana*). Such works accentuate Conrad's literary prestige and moral influence enriching his status as the writer and the author in literature.

In the subsequent essays, Richard Ambrosini centers on Conrad's autobiography and creative process by viewing his personality as being positioned between his Polish ancestry and his artistic project in English literature, while G. W. Stephen Brodsky emphasizes the relevance of Conrad's Polish heritage, especially his Catholicism. Likewise, Harold Ray Stevens discusses Conrad's Polish upbringing as revealed in his biography, letters, and the novel *Heart of Darkness*. Stevens lists the main Christian elements in Conrad's life, the backbone of his personality, his baptism in a Catholic church in Berdyczów, the Catholicism of his parents, the funeral service of his father, the baptism of his elder son, and his Catholic funeral in the cemetery in Canterbury. He argues that it was Conrad's travel to Congo that reawakened his inherent Christianity, when he learned about the indispensable and helpful work of Christian missionaries in that area, and that influenced his use of Christian symbolism in his works, such as *Heart of Darkness*. Then, Lilian Omelan devotes her two papers to the author's distant relative Antoni Syroczyński and his role in young Conrad's education as well as the lives of the Korzeniowski and Bobrowski families. In her biographical studies based on the significant documents, Omelan establishes new and important biographical facts. This set of studies is followed by the three papers written by Anna Brzozowska-Krajka, Wiesław Krajka, and Carl Schaffer on Conrad's masterpiece, *Amy Foster*. This novella is relevant for Conrad's authorial émigré self. In her paper, Anna Brzozowska-Krajka uses the

theoretical perspective of geopoetics, where geography and topography perform the role of imaginative and creative inspiration, asserting the significance of the Polish contexts in understanding and interpretation of *Amy Foster*. Wiesław Krajka, applying frames of universal ethics, devotes his paper to the study of the Other in *Amy Foster* and Conrad's literary works. Carl Schaffer's paper ("They ain't where they belong to be at': Conrad's and O'Connor's Displaced Poles") centers on Yanko Goorall, the main protagonist in *Amy Foster*, and Guizac, the character in the story "The Displaced Person" by Flannery O'Connor. Both characters are viewed as tragic archetypal outsiders, post figures of Christ, innocent scapegoats, universal Aliens, mirror images of the primeval. In following paper, Monika Majewska ("A somewhat discredited sentiment'? Conrad, Tolstoy, and Zdziechowski on Patriotism") demonstrates important similarities between Conrad's novella *Prince Roman* and Tolstoy's *Zashto?*, in which the authors render a positive image of patriotic Poles, participants in the 1830 uprising. Next, Rafał Szerbakiewicz compares and contrasts Conrad with Stanisław Lem, a world-famous Polish science fiction author who was influenced by Conrad's literary works. Their protagonists make their own choices, resembling the lonely ship commanders, and undertake exotic voyages, Conrad's sea journeys while Lem's space expeditions. Lem's ethical foundation and science fiction technology is associated with the Conradian marine universe.

Conrad as a writer is represented in translations of his *oeuvre* into Polish in the papers written by Ewa Kujawska Lis ("Conrad's Introduction to the Polish Literary Scene: 'Wygnaniec' (1897) [or] 'An Outcast of the Island' by Maria Gąsiorowska"), Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech ("A Set of Three: Polish Versions of Joseph Conrad's 'II Conde'"), and Olga Bińczyk and Grzegorz Gwóźdź ("Imagining the Never-Experienced: Aniela Zagórska's and Magda Heydel's Translations of *Heart of Darkness*"). The volume concludes with the papers offering relevant studies that include the first Polish translation of Conrad's work published in 1897 and the most recent one issued in 2011, along with the presentation of Juliusz Ripper's influence on the young Conrad during his stay in Kraków, and the current reception of his works in Bulgaria (Margareta Grigorova and Petya Tsoneva's "Perspectives on the Contemporary Bulgarian Cultural Space: Conrad, Bulgarians and the Sea").

Joseph Conrad's Authorial Self: Polish and Other features a collection of critical perspectives, all of them revealing Conrad's complex authorial self in the new light and combining a study of Conrad's biography with his remarkable literary works. It presents a number of different methodological approaches, including biographical criticism, historical- social-cultural contextualizations, autobiographical interpretations, literary comparison and contrast, translation criticism, philosophical/literary criticism, ethical criticism, and postcolonial critique. Consequently, the volume constitutes a major contribution to Conrad studies as well as comparative literature, literary studies, translation studies, postcolonial criticism, Polish studies, and modernist East-Central European studies.

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