


**REVIEW OF ANDRZEJ BUSZA, *CONRAD'S EUROPEAN CONTEXT*, EDITED BY ALLAN H. SIMMONS, JOHN G. PETERS, LEIDEN–BOSTON: BRILL, 2024**

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Andrzej Busza's dispersed essays, meticulously collected and edited by Allan H. Simmons and John G. Peters, have been published in a single volume entitled *Conrad's European Context*. This compilation is a most propitious decision, as some of these essays have become virtually inaccessible today. The book is part of the well-established and renowned "Conrad Studies" series, whose general editors include Allan H. Simmons, John G. Peters, and Gene M. Moore. This series has published indispensable volumes for Conrad scholars, such as *Conrad in the Public Eye* or *Conrad's Drama* which have contributed significantly to the field. The book spans texts written between 1966 and 2023, and, in my view, it serves as a response to a single sentence written by Conrad to his editor, Edward Garnett, in which he describes his contact with literature before 1895: "All I had in my hand was some little creative gift – but not even one single piece of 'cultural' luggage."<sup>1</sup> Busza's essays effectively challenge this view, arguing that Conrad's "cultural luggage," which he carried with him to sea, was far from as minimal as Conrad himself may have believed (p. 10). The volume contains 16 essays, each offering insightful analyses of Conrad's works, including *Under Western Eyes*, *Lord Jim*, *The Rover*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Poland Revisited*, among others. Two appendices further enrich the volume, examining Conrad's attitude toward Russia and his schooling in Cracow.

The collection is preceded by a "Preface" by John G. Peters, which outlines Andrzej Busza's significant contribution to Conrad scholarship. It highlights the scholar's lifelong engagement with Conradian studies, particularly his focus on the influence of Polish literature on the writer. Additionally, it addresses Busza's broader examination of the European context in his analysis of works such as *The Rover*, *Prince Roman*, *Autocracy and War*, *Lord Jim*, and *Heart of Darkness*, among others (p. xi). One may inquire into the motives of Busza's lifelong dedication to the study

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<sup>1</sup> *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 8, eds. Laurence Davies et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 167.

of Joseph Conrad's works.<sup>2</sup> In an interview, he discloses the origins of his profound fascination with Conrad:

Conrad was almost a semi-mythical figure to me, like General Sikorski<sup>3</sup> or Staś Tarkowski<sup>4</sup> [...]. Long before he presented himself to me as a text. I suppose I first heard or rather overheard his name when I was five years old and quietly drew pirate ships on the cool tiles of a veranda in a Jerusalem suburb while my uncle sipped countless cups of tea with lemon and discussed *Lord Jim* with friends. Ten years later, I read "Typhoon" in the infirmary of the St. Joseph's College in London during an attack of the mumps. It was not so much a reading as a powerful hallucinatory experience so intensely and completely engrossed me in the story.<sup>5</sup> So when it came to choosing a topic for my dissertation, I initially tried to make sure it had nothing to do with our old family friend [...]. Fortunately, my supervisor convinced me to write about Conrad's Polish literary background. [...] In the early 1960s, Conrad was not widely popular in England. his Polish origins and connections barely began to generate research interest. Indeed, when I proposed the topic of the influence of Polish literature on Conrad's writing, the Head of the English Department at London University College, a distinguished elderly Scot, asking smoking his pipe, murmured laconically 'and was there any influence?' – this gave me a boost. All my reservations and fears melted away with this superior smoke.<sup>6</sup>

In another interview, Busza recounts again his memories of the cool veranda in Jerusalem, stating that his "uncle [W. Tarnawski] was preparing an edition of *Lord Jim* accompanied by an extensive preface. He then translated *Prince Roman* into Polish. [...] Some of the Polish versions of the titles of Conrad's works – *Lord Jim*, *Jądro ciemności* [*Heart of Darkness*], *W oczach Zachodu* [*Under Western Eyes*] – which I first heard on that veranda, still resonate in my ears to this day like incanta-

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<sup>2</sup> In addressing this question, Stefan Zabierowski highlights the significant influence of Busza's uncle, Wit Tarnawski, a prominent figure in Conrad Studies within the émigré community. Moreover, it appears that Busza's biography was uniquely tailored to prepare him for his role as a Conrad scholar. His familial connections to the Borderlands, the region from which Conrad originated, his extensive time abroad – including in Palestine, England, Canada, and France – his deep understanding of both English and Polish cultures, his own literary contributions, and the experience of returning to his homeland nearly thirty years after fleeing Eastern occupation as a young child – these factors collectively shaped his identity. This biographical context seems to have endowed Busza with a deeper and more intuitive understanding of Conrad's work, particularly the writer's complex relationship with Poland, than that achieved by many other scholars. (Stefan Zabierowski, "Wszystko zaczęło się w Kosowie... Andrzej Busza – interpretator Conrada," *Fraza* 1-2 (2021), p. 142; *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik biobibliograficzny*, vol. 1: A-B, ed. Alicja Szałagan and Jadwiga Czachowska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1994), p. 360-361).

<sup>3</sup> Władysław Sikorski (1881-1943) was a Polish military and political leader.

<sup>4</sup> Staś Tarkowski is a fictional character, the protagonist of a popular young adult novel *W pustyni i w puszczy* (In Desert and Wilderness; 1911) by Henryk Sienkiewicz.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this short story also held profound significance for another émigré writer, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński. For an analysis of this connection, see Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, "Gustaw Herling-Grudziński as a Reader of Conrad," *Yearbook of Conrad Studies* 3 (2007), pp. 181-193.

<sup>6</sup> "Wyznania Piłaza. Z Andrzejem Buszą rozmawia Andrzej Niewiadomski," in *Londyn – Toronto – Vancouver. Rozmowy z pisarzami emigracyjnymi*, ed. Andrzej Niewiadomski (Lublin: Stowarzyszenie literackie "Kresy," 1993), p. 140. Unless otherwise indicated all the translations are my own.

tions.”<sup>7</sup> Notably, these works are all extensively and expertly discussed in the collection of essays presently under review.

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The collection opens with a rare and sought-after booklet, *Conrad's Polish Literary Background and Some Illustrations of the Influence of Polish Literature on His Work*, originally printed in Rome and now scarcely available. This dissertation, published in 1966, was a milestone in the scholarly comprehension of the relationship between Conrad and his Polish heritage, particularly among Western academics. Owing to its publication in English, albeit in an exclusive periodical with limited circulation, it rapidly gained recognition within the community of Conrad scholars. The work garnered numerous reviews and was referenced by prominent interpreters of the author. Furthermore, it was subsequently included in key bibliographies of Conrad's works in both Poland and the United Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

The booklet provides a succinct yet illuminating exploration of the cultural influences on Conrad, particularly through figures like Apollo Korzeniowski and Tadeusz Bobrowski. One fascinating yet little-known detail discussed is A. Korzeniowski's play *Batożek* (“The Little Whip”), a modern fairy tale based on an incident in Tadeusz Kościuszko's life (p. 19).<sup>9</sup> Busza argues that this play was likely written with young Conrad in mind, and there are fragments of documentary evidence that suggest it played an important role in Conrad's early life (p. 68). In a letter written with his mother's help in June 1861, Conrad proudly informs his father that a friend had sent him a “fine, little whip,” and a photograph from 1862 shows Conrad standing in front of a huge chair holding a small whip. Additionally, Konstancja Montrésor in a letter thanking Conrad for a copy of *Almayer's Folly* alludes to Conrad “running about the room with the little whip” (p. 68).<sup>10</sup> This is particularly intriguing as it offers a rare glimpse into Conrad's life in Poland, about which very little is known. Moreover, this lesser-known fact may help explain Konradek's eagerness to write patriotic plays.<sup>11</sup> Busza highlights the political undertones of *Batożek*, noting that it reflects a conflict between Western ideals of democracy and Russian tyranny. This idea resonates with Conrad's own belief that “the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had

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<sup>7</sup> Beata Tarnowska, “‘Należę wszędzie i nigdzie.’ Z Andrzejem Buszą rozmawia Beata Tarnowska,” *Fraza* 3/4 (2010), pp. 269-272.

<sup>8</sup> Owen Knowles, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Joseph Conrad* (Hemel Hempstead, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 211; Wanda Perczak, *Polska bibliografia conradowska 1896-1992* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1993), p. 333.

<sup>9</sup> Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817) was a Polish military leader who then became a national hero in Poland, the United States, Lithuania, and Belarus. He fought in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's struggles against Russia and Prussia, and on the U.S. side in the American Revolutionary War. As Supreme Commander of the Polish National Armed Forces, he led the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising.

<sup>10</sup> Konstancja Montrésor's letter to J. Conrad, 6 December 1895. In *A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad*, eds. J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Dybowski, “From Conrad's Youth,” in *Conrad Under Familial Eyes*, ed. Zdzisław Najder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 137-142.

received its training from Italy and France and, historically, had always remained [...] in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought.”<sup>12</sup>

Busza’s essays dismantle the myth that Conrad’s cultural heritage, when he came to England, was negligible. He demonstrates that Conrad’s “cultural luggage” was far more substantial than often assumed, deeply rooted in Polish literary and political traditions. This is particularly evident in Busza’s analysis of Apollo Korzeniowski’s influence, which he describes as formative (p. 27). Apollo’s writings (*Polska i Moskwa*, among others), marked by a stark contrast between Polish ideals of democracy and freedom and Russian tyranny, resonate strikingly with contemporary geopolitical conflicts, such as the war between Ukraine and Russia. Apollo’s comments on the political situation in Poland and Russia seem ominously prescient today. Busza aptly foregrounds this:

Poland stands for the Western ideals of democracy, personal freedom, and patriotic idealism; Russia offers tyranny, moral nihilism, corruption, and cynicism. [...] Thus, the conflict between Poland and Russia is not merely a national affair – it is a prelude and first stage of a far more momentous struggle: the struggle between the West and the East, between civilization and barbarism (p. 23).

Busza further emphasizes Apollo’s warning: “The aim of the spirit of Muscovite civilization is to spread the smear of falsehood over all mankind” (Korzeniowski, *Polska i Moskwa 2*, Busza p. 23), a sentiment that resonates eerily in today’s era of disinformation and fake news.

Another key figure in Conrad’s life, Tadeusz Bobrowski, is also discussed in detail in this collection. Busza acknowledges the ideological differences between Bobrowski and Apollo Korzeniowski, yet he emphasizes the positive aspects of Bobrowski’s influence on his nephew (p. 45). The scholar highlights the uncle’s role in introducing Conrad to political and social issues, including discussions on pan-Slavism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and Polish positivism (p. 62). Busza also foregrounds his love for literature and talent for conversation (p. 47). A particularly delightful anecdote involves Bobrowski’s witty response to Conrad’s assumption that he had not read Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, showcasing his literary acumen and the intellectual rapport between uncle and nephew: “Well, let us begin with Barataria, the metaphor of which you explained not only very wittily, but also in such a pure Polish style that I really enjoyed the whole passage. In answer to your unjust insinuation that work of the famous Cervantes is unknown to me, let me tell you that not more than a year ago I read the work in Toeplitz” (p. 49).<sup>13</sup>

One can identify several key themes that organize Busza’s writings, including the importance of Conrad’s Polish background, his use of rhetoric, and his ideological views, particularly his attitude toward Russia. Several of Conrad’s works, including

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Conrad, “Author’s Note,” in Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea and A Personal Record*, ed. Zdzisław Najder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. vii.

<sup>13</sup> Tadeusz Bobrowski’s letter to Konrad Korzeniowski of 13 June 1885, in: Zdzisław Najder, *Conrad’s Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 97.

*Prince Roman*, *Under Western Eyes*, *The Rover*, and *Poland Revisited* receive particular attention in the collection of essays.

One of the most compelling chapters for me is “Reading Conrad’s *Poland Revisited*,” in which Busza intertwines his own experiences of returning to Poland in 1981, just before the imposition of martial law, with Conrad’s return in 1914, on the eve of World War I (p. 233). The scholar emphasizes the essay’s generic hybridity, blending autobiography, political commentary, and fiction. He interprets *Poland Revisited* as a complex interweaving of disparate threads: a travel narrative, a meditation on Europe’s descent into war, a journey into memory, and an elegiac reflection on the end of an era (p. 238). Busza argues that *Poland Revisited* serves as a supplement to *A Personal Record*, highlighting Conrad’s use of impressionistic, ironic, and symbolic techniques to reflect on his life and the broader historical context. Both works aim to make sense of an individual’s life within the larger context of historical events and political crises. In *Poland Revisited*, Conrad reflects on his past and the political situation in Europe, using techniques developed in his fiction to explore the intersection of personal history and contemporary events.

Another illuminating and novel interpretation is Busza’s reading of *The Rover*, one of my favourite Conrad novels. As he himself asserted in an interview: “I proposed [in the *Introduction* to the *Oxford World’s Classics* edition] an anti-modernist reading of *The Rover* (in my view, one of the underappreciated) novels of Conrad.”<sup>14</sup> He expanded upon this argument in the *Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures*, where these ideas are developed further (these constitute chapters VI and XII of the collection). Busza reads *The Rover* in light of ancient literature. Peyrol, like Homer’s Odysseus, is pleased to set foot on dry land, but unlike Odysseus, he does not seek to “repose somewhere in the country.... out of the reach of the sea.” For Busza, *The Rover* is an example of Conrad’s *Spätstil*, akin to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* or Cézanne’s cut-outs. In its substance and conception, the novel marks Conrad’s leave-taking of the world: “I have wanted for a long time to do a seaman’s ‘return’ [...] and this seemed a possible peg to hang it on” (p. 361).<sup>15</sup> It tells the story of Peyrol’s homecoming, which echoes the classical *nostos*. Symbolically, for Busza, it represents Conrad’s return to his Mediterranean teenage utopia, which replaces the unrealisable fantasy of returning to his Polish homeland, finally in aesthetic terms, *The Rover* constitutes a return to “storytelling as a useful communal art” (p. 361).<sup>16</sup>

Busza examines the critical reception of *The Rover* (press reviews, as well as critical views of M. Dąbrowska, M.C. Bradbrook, A. Guerard) noting that during the period dominated by the New Criticism, to which Thomas Moser’s study clearly belongs, *The Rover* was largely excluded from the established Conrad canon (p. 260).

<sup>14</sup> *Londyn – Toronto – Vancouver. Rozmowy z pisarzami emigracyjnymi*, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 8, p. 318.

<sup>16</sup> Busza briefly mentions the parallel between *The Rover* and *A Personal Record* (p. 360). It is noteworthy that the thematic lens of *nostos* (nostalgia and homecoming), has only recently been fully applied to *A Personal Record* by Sylwia Wojciechowska in her monograph *Nostalgia as a Mode of Reflection in the Autobiographical Narratives of Joseph Conrad and Henry James* (Berlin: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2023).

However, later critiques, including those by Avrom Fleishman and John A. Palmer, introduced more extrinsic approaches. Busza seeks to reconcile the divergent positive and negative assessments of *The Rover* while addressing the challenges of evaluating *The Rover*. Conrad, he argues, is a uniquely complex, unconventional, and problematic figure. His life can be divided into two distinct phases: the first marked by action and adventure, and the second by reclusion and an intense dedication to his craft as an artist. Early in his career, Conrad was acknowledged as a pioneer of a new form of fiction. However, unlike other members of the modernist avant-garde, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, who refined and expanded their narrative techniques, Conrad moved in the opposite direction. While he continued to broaden the geographical and historical scope of his fiction, his technical approach became less experimental and more aligned with traditional forms. While *Lord Jim* (1900) represents a modernist text, *The Rover* (1922) looks back to authors like Flaubert, Maupassant, and Stevenson, drawing on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel tradition (p. 261).

Why did this shift occur? Busza contends that Conrad always “wanted to be read by many eyes, and by all kinds of them”<sup>17</sup> (p. 262). Conrad believed in the social role of the artist and rejected the aestheticism of the “ivory tower.” He argued for the need to combine fidelity to art, the world, and the reader. Busza rightly claims that, for Conrad, writing was not an insular or self-referential activity but a communicative act and a form of engagement with the world. As his popularity grew, he felt a greater obligation to address the pressing concerns of his time through his work. This shift entailed adopting a more functional and less self-conscious approach to technique, as well as selecting themes with broader appeal (p. 262). The thematic diversity of Conrad’s middle and later works reflects this deliberate orientation. In the case of *The Rover*, the narrative combines elements of an adventure tale, a love story, a nostalgic portrayal of the Mediterranean landscape, and a meditation on the impact of political violence and social upheaval on individuals and communities – a theme particularly resonant in the aftermath of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution (p. 262).

To me, the most compelling and perceptive aspect of Busza’s analysis is his observation that *The Rover* is rooted in the archetypal Mediterranean narrative of *nostos*, or homecoming (p. 361). The *nostoi* (plural of *nostos*) serve as an epilogue to the legend of the Trojan War, recounting the fates of the Greek warriors after the fall of Troy, particularly focusing on their journeys home. Three such stories are woven into the *Odyssey* – the returns of Nestor, Menelaus, and Agamemnon – alongside the central narrative, which revolves around Odysseus’s full-fledged *nostos*: his return to Ithaca (p. 353). In Conrad’s novel, the aging protagonist, Peyrol, after four decades of peril, labour, and adventure as a freebooter in the eastern seas, returns to the region of his birth and childhood – his own Ithaca on the Giens Peninsula. However, Busza also highlights the distinctions between Peyrol and Homer’s Odysseus, drawing a parallel between Peyrol and Dante’s or Tennyson’s Ulysses, who defy the divinely imposed boundaries of the world. Unlike Odysseus, who ultimately seeks rest and

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<sup>17</sup> *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 6, eds. Laurence Davies et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 333.

reconciliation, Peyrol resembles these later iterations of Ulysses, who resist complacency and submission to fate (p. 353). Peyrol is drawn out of his quiet, self-contained existence by the needs of those around him, such as Arlette and Lieutenant Réal. In a striking departure from the self-centred and ambitious Ulysses of Dante and Tennyson, Peyrol concludes his life with an act of self-sacrifice, enabling a new generation to rebuild from the ruins of a world shattered by political violence (p. 258).

The final subject area I intend to examine is Busza's essays on rhetoric in Conrad's writings. These include the texts "Rhetoric and Ideology in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*" and "The Rhetoric of Conrad's Non-fictional Political Discourse." An item that warrants particular attention is Busza's chapter titled "Rhetoric and Ideology in *Under Western Eyes*." In his analysis of Conrad's attitude toward Russia, as reflected in both his journalistic and epistolary writings as well as in his novel *Under Western Eyes*, Busza explicitly diverged from the prevailing trends of the 1970s, which focused predominantly on textual analysis in isolation ("I question the adequacy of approaches that dogmatically refuse to go beyond the text" (p. 186). Instead, he emphasized the author's intent, the historical context of the work, and its contemporary relevance. In interpreting Conrad, Busza pursued two distinct approaches: the first involved examining Conrad's intricate stance toward Russia through the lens of intellectual history, while the second focused on the rhetorical strategies employed to articulate this stance (p. 186). Busza observes that the writer's engagement with Russian issues coincided with a broader fascination among young English intellectuals with Russian culture, particularly the works of Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. This cultural interest was partly propagated by Conrad's close friend Edward Garnett, whose wife Constance Garnett translated more than 60 volumes of Russian literature into English.<sup>18</sup> The enthusiasm for these authors reflected an idealistic and neo-romantic reaction in England against the prevailing ideology of positivism (p. 188).<sup>19</sup> However, alongside these aesthetic currents, significant political events also played a crucial role in shaping this interest, including the Russo-Japanese War, the 1905 Revolution, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.<sup>20</sup> At the height of this fascination with Russian affairs, Conrad addressed the subject in his essay *Autocracy and War*. In his critique of the prevailing image of Russia, Conrad eschewed rational argumentation in favour of rhetorical devices. He contended that the so-called "Russian Soul" was a synecdoche for the autocratic state – a grotesque spectre and, ultimately, a representation of nothingness.

Another significant contribution on a related subject is the study "The Rhetoric of Conrad's Non-Fiction." This analysis focuses on two texts by Conrad, both addressing the theme of Polish-Russian conflicts. The first is a letter written by the writer to

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<sup>18</sup> Sherry Simon, "Constance Garnett: The Power of a Name" in *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (Routledge: London, New York, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> For in-depth analysis of Mickiewicz's writings influence on Conrad's political discourse, see Karol

<sup>20</sup> Samsel, "Joseph Conrad's Independence Journalism and its 'Postromantic Entanglement'," *Perspektywy Kultury* 24, no. 1 (2019), pp. 39-50.

For a discussion of these, see Zabierowski, "Wszystko zaczęło się w Kosowie... Andrzej Busza – interpretator Conrada."

John Quinn, a New York lawyer and patron of the arts, while the second is a political essay titled *The Crime of Partition*, published in 1919. The primary objective of the letter was to sway American public opinion to support Poland in the Polish-Soviet conflict. In pursuit of this objective, Conrad employs clear dichotomous divisions in his essay. The Polish-Soviet conflict is framed in terms of stark oppositions: Poland is depicted as embodying positive values, while Bolshevism represents negativity. Poland symbolizes order, youthful vitality, and life, whereas Bolshevism is portrayed as a destructive force, associated with barbarism, savagery, and death (p. 204). In addition to this binary pattern, Conrad's letter also utilizes two interrelated Polish ideological myths: the "Antemurale" myth and its post-partition transformation, the Messianic doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

Busza further examines Conrad's political discourse through the example of *The Crime of Partition*, highlighting its Polish Romantic origins. The scholar also notes that the essay was influenced by a political pamphlet written by his young friend and advisor, Józef Hieronim Retinger, titled *La Pologne et l'Equilibre européen*, from which Conrad directly translated several passages. However, Busza underscores that there are significant distinctions between these two works: Retinger's perspective was pragmatic, while Conrad's was moralistic. In his depiction of the partitions, Conrad draws on the historiographical and philosophical framework of the Polish Romantics, particularly Krasiński and Mickiewicz (pp. 208-211). Busza contrasts pertinent excerpts from the *Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrims* and *The Crime of Partition*, demonstrating that the Conrad replicates the structural elements of Mickiewicz's historical narrative.<sup>22</sup>

Other compelling chapters include the competing interpretation of *Lord Jim*, in which Busza argues that Jim's death was modelled on that of Stefan Bobrowski<sup>23</sup> (pp. 280-282):

Jim (like Stefan Bobrowski) comes forward unflinchingly to meet certain death. Moreover, the meaning of both deaths remains obscure: having asked Jewel for forgiveness, Jim leaves the girl to lead "a sort of soundless, inert life," while Borowski before the fatal duel entrusted to his second a letter to his mother and family in which he asked them to forgive: "this last painful blow." The ambiguities of Tadeusz Bobrowski's judgement on his younger brother's life and death seem to have been carried over into the open ending of [*Lord Jim*] (p. 282).

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of these two myths see Samsel, "Joseph Conrad's Independence Journalism and its 'Postromantic Entanglement'."

<sup>22</sup> On the affinities of Conrad's rhetoric of political discourse and Mickiewicz's writings see Samsel, "Joseph Conrad's Independence Journalism and its 'Postromantic Entanglement'."

<sup>23</sup> Stefan Bobrowski (1840-1863) was a politician and activist for Polish independence. He participated in the January Uprising (1863) as one of the leaders of its "Red" faction. He died in a pistol duel with a member of the "White" faction, Count Adam Grabowski. He had agreed to the duel though he was sure to lose due to his extreme short-sightedness. Polona, <https://polona.pl/sets?searchCategory=objectSets&page=0&size=24&sort=RELEVANCE&searchLike=stefan%20bobrowski> [accessed: 8.03.2025]. I find Busza's suggestion that Stefan's fatal duel inspired Tadeusz Bobrowski, and later Conrad himself, to construct a narrative that obscured Conrad's attempted suicide to be highly plausible.

and *Conrad and History*, in which Busza perceptively and convincingly contends that, despite Conrad's desire to distance himself from Polish history, he remained inextricably bound to it.

While the book is a significant contribution to Conrad studies, it is not without minor flaws. First, the book would have been more reader-friendly with the inclusion of an index of persons and Conrad's works. Second, the manuscript would have benefited from proofreading by a native Polish speaker to eliminate occasional spelling errors (e.g., Evelina – Ewelina p. 39, Lubomirska – Lubowidzka p. 68, Kozeniowski – Korzeniowski p. 74, Koźmian – Koźmian p. 75, Dąbrowska – Dąbrowski p. 87, odpowiedź – odpowiedź p. 102, polish – Polish p. 147). However, these shortcomings do not detract from the volume's immense scholarly value.

Overall, *Conrad's European Context* is an essential volume for anyone interested in the life and works of Joseph Conrad. Andrzej Busza's essays provide new insights into Conrad's Polish heritage, his ideological views, and the influence of key figures in his life. The book also offers a nuanced reading of Conrad's later works, particularly *The Rover* and *Poland Revisited*, and provides a fresh perspective on the intersection of personal history and global political events in Conrad's writing.

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