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JOSEPH CONRAD'S "THE DUEL" AND EUSTACHY RYLSKI'S *WARUNEK*, OR THE TEXT AND ITS SPECTRE

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyze the spectral presence of J. Conrad's short story "The Duel" in Eustachy Rylski's novel *Warunek* [*The Condition*] employing the methodology of hauntology. In the present paper the term hauntology will be used as an umbrella concept for the investigation of the interpretative possibilities offered by the figure of spectre and phantom text present in literary narratives. Analysing the process of haunting or in other words, the process of the text being re-visited by some other older story, new/hidden meaning arises. In this way we can trace the action of opening of the text so that something from the past might enter and shutter its original structure.

Keywords: "The Duel", Conrad, Rylski, spectre, hauntology

I shall start with an anecdote. In 1932 Jessie Conrad and Cyril Clemens published a pamphlet entitled "Did Joseph Conrad Return as a Spirit" in which Mrs Conrad recapitulates her vicissitudes with Arthur Conan Doyle and Conrad's spirit.[1] Conan Doyle wrote a letter in which he claimed that Conrad had returned as a spirit during a séance and asked him to "finish a book of his about French history."[2] Conan Doyle comments that none of the people present "knew there was such a book. On inquiry I [A. Conan Doyle] found that it was so, but apparently it had been finished by someone else. So I did no more."[3] He probably meant Conrad's *Suspense*, which was unfinished and published posthumously.[4]

Whether or not Conrad returned as a spirit to ask Conan Doyle a favour, we cannot say for sure, but one thing we can be sure of is that Conrad has returned and is constantly returning as a revenant in the writings of other authors. Gene Moore made a strong case for Conrad's status as "a *living* part of our cultural self-awareness."[5]

[1] Mrs. J. Conrad, *Did Joseph Conrad Return as a Spirit*, with an Introduction by C. Clemens, International Mark Twain Society, Webster Groves, Missouri, 1932.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[4] For a comprehensive discussion of the novel's composition process, see G. Moore, "Introduction" and "The Text" [in:] J. Conrad, *Suspense*, Conrad's Works, Cambridge 2011, pp. xxvii-li, 197-235.

[5] G. Moore, "Conrad's Influence" [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*, ed. J. H. Stape, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, p. 223 (emphasis added).

Robert Bowen pushes the case even further and asserts that Conrad "is sometimes less a 'living part' than a peculiar ghost; or maybe not even a ghost, but a revenant, a displaced and remote cultural memory, an unfamiliar spirit returning briefly, and unbidden."[6] Bowen is right when he claims that Conrad is present as a literary model and absent, or diminished, as a cultural figure behind some of the contemporary fiction.[7] The aim of this paper is to analyze one case in point—the spectral presence of Conrad's tale "The Duel" in Eustachy Rylski's novel *Warunek* [*The Condition*] employing the methodology of hauntology.

Conrad is at once present and absent in a number of modern narratives. He is a spectral presence behind some of the stories cultural ideas, a revenant among some of the stories' characters, from time to time making a brief appearance only to evaporate without a trace. In other stories, his life serves as a paradigm for other artists to measure their existence against his. Last but not least, Conrad's works function as "phantom texts" or "textual phantoms," to borrow Nicholas Royle term, which "do not have the solidity or objectivity of a quotation, an intertext or explicit acknowledged presence […]."[8] I will elaborate on this aspect later.

HAUNTOLOGY AND SPECTRALITY

At this point, a preliminary statement of the methodology of hauntology and spectrality as it will be applied in the following discussion should be made. The idea of hauntology (a combination of *haunting* and *ontology*) is a theoretical approach postulated by Jacques Derrida (*hantologie*).[9] The term refers to the situation of ontological, temporal and/or historical disjunctions in which the apparent presence of a being of something is replaced by an absent non-origin, represented by "the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive."[10] The term functions as a homophone to "ontology" (*ontologie*) in Derrida's French. Peter Buse and Andrew Scott, helpfully elucidate Derrida's concept of hauntology:

> Ghosts arrive from the past and appear in the present. However, the ghost cannot be properly said to belong to the past. […] Does then the "historical" person who is identified with the ghost properly belong to the present? Surely not, as the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality. The temporality to which the ghost is subject is therefore paradoxical, at once they "return" *and* make their apparitional debut. Derrida has been pleased to call this dual movement of return and inauguration a "hauntology," a coinage that suggests

[6] R. Bowen, "Journey's End: Conrad as Revenant in Alex Garland's *The Beach*," *Conradiana* 2007, 39(1), p. 40.

[7] Bowen's case in point is Alex Garland's novel, *The Beach*, pp. 40-53.

[8] N. Royle, *The Uncanny*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003, p. 280.

[9] J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, transl. P. Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 1994.

[10] A. Marzec, *Widmontologia*, Warszawa: Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, 2015, pp. 126-131. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author of the article.

a spectrally deferred non-origin within grounding metaphysical terms such as history and identity […].[11]

The concept of hauntology has inspired literary critics who have applied it to the interpretation of literary texts. Julian Wolfreys argues in *Victorian Hauntings* that "texts are neither dead nor alive, yet they hover at the very limits between living and dying. The text thus partakes in its own haunting […]."[12] He makes maybe a too overarching conclusion that "to tell a story is always to invoke ghosts, to *open* a space through which something other returns"[13] so that "all stories are, more or less, ghost stories" and all fiction is, more or less, hauntological. Nevertheless, I believe that this idea of *retelling as opening the textual space* may be helpful to understand "the way the ghost of the original text opens a way"[14] or creates a fissure in a new text. Due to this process of haunting or in other words, of the text being re-visited by some other older story, new/hidden meaning arises. Some critics prefer to use the more general term of *spectrality* to explore the process of opening of the text so that something from the past might enter and shatter its original structure.[15]

It should be emphasized that the field of hauntology includes many facets that could be described as structures or modes of interpretation "rather than the actual presence of the ghostly figure. The spectral thus embraces intertextuality, the concept of the double, openness and anachrony or the more general idea of the Other."[16] Yet it must be differentiated from intertextuality proper since as Edyta Lorek-Jezińska persuasively argues: "Phantom text seen in this way can be perceived as different from intertext or quotation because of the omission and indirectness of the intertextual connection."[17] She calls that "spectral intertextuality" and clarifies further that what is essential in spectral intertextuality is "the way the text itself problematises its relationship to the pre-texts and uneasiness about its integration combined with the urgency or necessity to refer to the source text."[18] Haunting thus designates "the openness of each text and the impossibility of ever grasping, defining or making explicit—and thus corporeal—the meanings and associations present in the text."[19]

[11] P. Buse, A. Scott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, London: Macmillan, 1999, p. 11 (italics in the original).

[12] J. Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, p. xii.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 3 (emphasis added).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[15] For a detailed discussion of the "Spectral Turn" not only in literary studies, see M. del Pilar Blanco, E. Peeren, eds., *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

[16] E. Lorek-Jezińska, *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2013, p. 39. I was greatly inspired by her mode of analysis and employ this type of interpretation, slightly remodelled, in the further part of this paper.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

In the following discussion haunting stands for the presence of other texts in the analysed original, visible or sometimes only intuited as present. The return of the spectre justifies its localization in-between two realms—the place where it comes from and the place which it haunts. Lorek-Jezińska maintains that the return constitutes "the site of the opening of a text to another […] text where the spectre comes from". Hence, we can perceive the spectral as a mode "through which the openness of the text is generated—its reliance on a different text and the lack of closure."[20] In the present paper the term hauntology will be used as an umbrella concept for the investigation of the interpretative possibilities offered by the figure of spectre, phantom text and spectral intertextuality present in literary narratives re-visiting (or alluding to) Conrad's fiction.

What does it mean for a text to be a ghost? Let me repeat, after Nicholas Royle, that "the spectral is a mode, a perspective that as such, can be perceived as a figure of deconstruction without a need for the actual presence of the ghost or phantom."[21] This perspective enables us to perceive and investigate in a text a gap through which its connection to something else is created—"its symbolic tomb, its origin or its former life."[22]

HAUNTOLOGY AND SPECTRALITY IN CONRAD STUDIES

The approach of hauntology and spectrality, to my knowledge, has been applied only partially twice to Conrad's works: by Robert Bowen and Remy Arab-Fuentes.[23] Robert Bowen uses the term "revenant" but makes no mention of hauntology. He takes as a case in point one novel, *The Beach* by Alex Garland, and asserts that Conrad "is present as a literary model and absent, or diminished, as a cultural figure. He is both ghost and revenant: he is a ghost behind the novel's settings and cultural ideas, and a revenant within the story itself, making one short, crucial appearance near its end."[24] Bowen analyses different aspects of the novel (narration, setting, protagonists, allusions) and shows how Conrad's fiction (*Youth*, *Lord Jim*, *Heart of*

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[21] See N. Royle, *The Uncanny*, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-279.

[22] E. Lorek-Jezińska, *Hauntology and Intertextuality…*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[23] Another scholar who applied a similar methodology was Esther Rashkin to analyse "The Secret Sharer". However, she uses the works of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok to study "the haunting effects of family secrets on characters in narrative" (5). She aims at exploring "how phantoms can be concealed rhetorically and linguistically within literature, how they concealed presence can be detected and exposed as the driving force behind the actions and discourse of certain fictive characters and how the analysis of the modes and processes of their concealment makes possible the articulation of a new approach to literary character analysis and a new theory of narrative generation" (6), E. Rashkin, *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992, pp. 3-48. The works of Abraham and Torok were the inspiration behind Derrida's theory of hauntology. For more on this, see J. Castrican, *Cryptomimesis*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Pres, 2001, pp. 16-30.

[24] R. Bowen, "Journey's End…," *op. cit.*, p. 40.

Darkness, among other works) influenced the imagination and shaped the writing of Garland. Bowen concludes that Conrad's legacy "informs *The Beach*, he is everywhere in the novel, but his visitations are oblique […]. He haunts the land that was once Siam and dogs the steps of the novel's narrator."[25]

Remy Arab-Fuentes, on the other hand, uses the term hauntology to explain Conrad's mode of narration, but makes no mention of revenants. He contends that Conrad's first-person plural narrative voice is deliberately "spectral and transgressive."[26] He analyses the narration of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *An Outcast of the Islands* and concludes: "Because the people referred to as WE are both present and absent, real and unreal at the same time, they can be considered as 'phantom members.' WE refers to a group of shades […]."[27] The application of hauntology is restricted to the investigation of a specific narrative form (we-narration) to argue that the community reaches "cosmic dimensions."[28] Humanity, as it is expressed in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"*—writes Arab-Fuentes—"is an idea that transcends time by including the dead and the unborn in the equation." It is close to Derrida's concept of hauntology because it "acknowledges the existence of potential speakers who are 'neither present, nor absent, neither dead, nor alive.'"[29] Furthermore, he finds parallels between Derrida's main idea of hauntology—the idea of "learning how to live" and Conrad's vision of the crew of the "Narcissus" who "have collectively learned how to live."[30]

THE TEXT AND ITS SPECTRE

In the following few pages I propose to consider a novel *Warunek* [*The Condition*] by Eustachy Rylski[31] which, to my mind, tacitly re-visits Conrad's story "The Duel."[32] The protagonists in *The Condition* are two Polish Napoleonic officers who start a duel because of an insignificant cause, and keep duelling in various ways with unfair sub-

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[26] R. Arab-Fuentes, "Think of Us…of Us…of US!" The First-Person Plural Hauntology in Conrad's Fiction," *The Conradian* 2017, 41(2), p. 47.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[31] Eustachy Rylski (b. 1944) is a prose-writer, playwright and screenplay writer. He made his debut with a very well-received volume of prose containing two mini-novels: *Stankiewicz* and *The Return*. Later in 2005 Rylski published a longer novel *Man in the Shadow*. This novel was granted the prestigious Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award. In the same year another favourably reviewed novel appeared—*The Condition* which was shortlisted for the influential Nike Literary Award. Rylski wrote dramas and scripts for the television theatre. His works were translated into Italian, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Czech, and Hungarian.

[32] None of the Polish critics recognized the affinities of Rylski's novel to Conrad's short story; although one pointed out the parallels between *The Condition* and Ridley Scott's film *The Duellists*.

terfuge. In the end one of them dies. The heroes of Rylski's story are the recklessly fearless light cavalryman Captain Andrzej Rangułt, and an ambitious Lieutenant Semen Hoszowski who suffers from an inferiority complex. It is a story of a *Hassliebe* relationship, which began at the siege of Moscow and can be divided into several stages: first the duels (in fact one duel: unresolved, interrupted, continued in the form of a game of dice) then desertion and journey home across the frozen wastes of Russia, a sojourn at Rangułt's estate in Lithuania, and eventually a period of convalescence full of dramatic events that end in the death of Rangułt and Hoszowski's re-birth with a mission to uphold the Napoleonic legend of Rangułt. It is a novel about a toxic relationship; even more—about hatred and rivalry that forever unite two uncompromising men.

Analogously, Conrad's tale begins during the Napoleonic wars and concludes with the restoration of the Bourbons in a post-Napoleonic France. It portrays the relation of two cavalry officers in Napoleon's army: Armand D'Hubert, a young man from a wealthy aristocratic family, a well-mannered *officier d'ordonnance* and his antagonist Gabriel Feraud, an impulsive and hot-blooded Gascon commoner. They are complete opposites in temperament, appearance and background. They conduct a series of duels in between Napoleon's campaigns using a variety of weapons (sabres, swords, pistols) on foot or on horseback.[33]

Even this brief collation of the two stories' plots indicates common grounds, yet I do not intend here to reveal the parallels between them. In contradistinction, I want to explore Rylski's novel in relation to Conrad's through the optics of the concept of "phantom texts" propounded by Royle. The critic defines phantom texts as "textual phantoms which do not have the solidity or objectivity of a quotation, an intertext or explicit acknowledged presence and which do not in fact come to rest *anywhere*. Phantom texts are fleeting, continually moving on, leading us away […] to some other scene or scenes, which we, as readers, cannot anticipate."[34]

By the same token, although we cannot pinpoint the exact references to *The Duel* (the phantom text), it does operate in Rylski's narrative through its openness to the pre-text. Rylski mentioned *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* in some of his television and radio interviews so one can infer from this that he is familiar with Conrad's work. Hence his apparent silence on *The Duel* in press interviews after the success of the novel seems thought-provoking. And this is precisely this silence which phantomises Conrad's tale. I propose to consider not only the surface analogies but also the lacunae or to put it simply what the text does not say, or "says without saying."[35] I will suggest that Rylski's novel has a certain "phantomistic structure", to borrow Royle's phrasing, i.e. it contains areas of silence which generate gaps, strange "places"[36]

[33] For a thorough account of the plot of the story and its historic sources, see J. H. Stape, J. Peters, eds., *Conrad's "The Duel": Sources/Text*, Leiden & Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2016, pp. 1-89. See also G. Moore, "History and Legend in 'The Duel,'" *The Conradian* 2016, 41(2), pp. 28-45.

[34] N. Royle, *The Uncanny*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

[35] This mode of analysis was applied by N. Royle, *The Uncanny*, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-287. In what follows I am pursuing this method of analysis.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 279.

where Conrad's text might be sensed. As has been noted, according to Royle, this "phantomistic topography" requires a new critical vocabulary: "neither 'subtext' nor 'intertext,' 'source' nor 'precursor'"[37] are relevant to describe what might be encrypted in a work's topography.[38] That is why Conrad's tale will be called a phantom text in relation to Rylski's novel. To identify its phantomistic structure and trace the gaps where Conrad's text comes to the surface in Rylski's narrative, I will focus on three aspects of the novel: setting, plot and the characters.

SETTING

The mode in which Rylski's story can be said to represent a "haunted" text is largely delineated by the manner in which it is pervaded by the Napoleonic setting because the major component of Conrad's tale is the Napoleonic era as well. As the critics noted the private duel of Feraud and D'Hubert is to depict Napoleon's wars in Europe in a nutshell which is already highlighted at the beginning of the story: "Napoleon the First whose career had the quality of a duel against the whole of Europe disliked duelling between the officers of his army […]. Nevertheless, a story of duelling which became a legend in the army runs through the epic of imperial wars."[39] The original title of the story "The Masters of Europe" makes the intended analogy even more obvious.[40] The conflict starts in 1800 and lasts for more than fourteen years to correlate it with the Napoleonic wars in Europe and achieve the unity of background (the rise and fall of Napoleon).[41] Conrad mentions the names of the battles (Austerlitz, Gratz, Jena, Lübeck, Eylau, Leipsic) which culminate with the hardships of the retreat from Moscow. The detailed settings in continental Europe play a key role since Conrad openly admits to J. Pinker that he aimed at historical fiction and wanted to capture "the Spirit of the Epoch—never purely militarist in the long clash of arms, youthful, almost childlike in its exaltation of sentiment—naively heroic in its faith."[42] In Rylski's novel the optics differ and the historical setting is narrowed down because the duel is delineated against the backdrop of the Russian

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 279.

[38] Royle bases his argument on Derrida's apparent silence about N. Abraham and M. Torok texts in *Spectres of Marx*, and in particular his silence about their theory of the phantom. Derrida wrote a preface to Abraham and Torok's book *The Wolf Man's Magic World: A Cryptonymy*. Royle claims that Abraham's book and theory might "constitute a phantom […] and serve as a sort of model for thinking about texts in general in terms of "phantom effects." Such texts do not have "the solidity of a quotation" or "explicit, acknowledged presence" (N. Royle, *The Uncanny*, *op. cit.*, p. 280).

[39] J. Conrad, "The Duel" [in:] *idem*, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Other Stories*, eds. J. H. Stape and A. H. Simmons, London: Penguin Classics, 2007, p. 333. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Duel*.

[40] J. H. Stape, "Conrad's 'The Duel': A Reconsideration," *The Conradian* 1986, 11(1), p. 42.

[41] Cf. G. Moore, "History and Legend in 'The Duel,'" *op. cit.*

[42] "Author's Note," [in:] *A Set of Six, Dent Uniform Edition*, p. xi. However, a number of critics claimed that Conrad failed to write a historic fiction (e.g. L. Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 144-149).

campaign only. The Polish officers never participate in any battles because they start the feud in September just after the Battle of Borodino and then they desert.[43] Only in the background of their escape do they smell the choking smoke of the great fire of Moscow, but presume it was Napoleon who set the capital ablaze. Rylski selects one specific moment of the Napoleonic wars—the moment of the Grand Army's fall to intensify the shattering of the Napoleon myth that was prevalent in Poland. Hence, to my mind, it is through the figure of Napoleon and the Napoleonic setting that the text of Conrad's *The Duel* enters Rylski's narrative.

In the phantom text the Napoleonic campaigns are almost as important as the personal conflict since they shape it (not infrequently wars, distance or promotion intervene rendering the fight void). Thus first we are informed of the movements of the Grand Army (Austerlitz, Gratz, Jena, Lübeck, Eylau, Moscow, Lutzen, Bautzen, Leipsic, Laon) and only then do the adversaries meet. If we view Conrad's tale as a macrocosm of the Napoleonic era, Rylski's story would be perceived as its microcosm. Interestingly, Rylski does mention some of the earlier battles but only as a reminiscence of times past and they perform a specific function, which I shall discuss now.

General Lamont, for one, recalls the bravery and daredevilry of younger Rangułt and himself when they were fighting in Spain under the command of general Nicolas Soult and participated the siege of Cadiz.

> During the siege of Cadiz […] they made a raid from Huércal to Almeria Bay. Unbridled like the Almanzora River, which they had to cross and like Arab stallions which they rode. The bulky Rangułt lost then the race with the slimmer Lamont. […] Soult, who was their general at that time, was furious for this kind of daredevilry in this part of Spain which was not controlled by the republican army […].[44]

At first glance, it is a positive image of the soldiers courage and bravura but on deeper exploration of the historical context (they raced on the territory not controlled by the Napoleonic army), we discern that it was a senseless and risky competition between the officers in which they could lose their lives as well as endanger the safety of the whole corps. This reminiscence occurs on the point when general Lamont decided to get rid of his Rangułt because he had discovered the physical and mental deterioration of his favourite companion.

This apparently positive image is juxtaposed with an unpublished press note on the allegedly heroic exploits of the Emperor's favourite. This time the battles are mentioned to expose the legend of Rangułt: to show his lack of competence (in fighting, horse-riding), irresponsibility and drunkenness.

> On the Estremadura highland […] the Spanish *grande* knocked out the sabre from Rangułt's hand and would have pierced him through but for the attentiveness and mastery of the nearest

[43] The Battle of Borodino was fought on 5-7.09.1812 and the initial duel takes place on 9.09.1812. Polish Lancers (*Chevau-légers*) were kept in reserve during this battle. (R. Pawly, *Napoleon's Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard*, Midland House: Osprey Publishing, 2007, p. 37).

[44] E. Rylski, *Warunek* [*The Condition*], Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2005, pp. 100-101. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Condition*.

> lancer. […] During the battle of Jena Rangułt was saved by sergeant major Sulga when in the last moment he pulled up by halter his [Rangułt's] falling mare, rescuing his commander from the spikes of the Brandenburg infantry. Only a shameful distraction could cause such an equestrian ineptitude because the ditch which they were crossing was not an obstacle for any of the other cavalryman. […] There were such raids and marches during which Rangułt was tied with straps to the saddle because he was so drunk. (*Condition* 57)

The unpublished report (blocked by Lamont) lays bare the true nature of Rangułt's dauntlessness and bravura. The article (mentioned in the novel only in passing) constitutes a fissure through which we are able to see the other unheroic side of war and in particular the demythologised portrayal of the Polish chevau-léger.

In case of the setting we discover a clash of perspectives. Rylski openly ridicules the Napoleonic legend and shows the mechanisms of its creation and cultivation not only in Poland but in the whole of Europe. Napoleon took advantage of the Polish desire for regaining independence[45] and used the courageous and committed Polish lancers in the most dangerous battles.[46] Yet in spite of Bonaparte's unfair treatment of Poles and the general disillusionment about his politics (recreating independent and sovereign Poland in particular), his myth of Man of Destiny and Liberator was upheld in Polish culture and society throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.[47] While Rylski as a contemporary writer offers a scathing criticism of the Napoleonic legend, Conrad being closer to the Bonaparte legacy is more cautious with its critique which is not direct but developed through irony.[48] For one, after the

[45] The Polish light cavalry was known for bravery and an uninhibited *joie-de-vivre*. The 1st Polish Light Cavalry Regiment of the Imperial Guard fought in many battles, distinguishing itself at Wagram, Beresina, and especially Somosierra. On at least three occasions, light-horsemen of the Regiment saved Napoleon's life. (R. Pawly, *Napoleon's Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20, 36).

[46] The extreme case of manipulation and hypocrisy was sending the Polish Legions who craved for their own independence to Haiti to put down the Haitian Revolution (on the Caribbean island of Haiti, known then as Saint Domingue. Napoleon wanted to regain the colony of Saint Domingue, but preferred to save his French army for more important matters so he sent the disillusioned Polish legionnaires to eliminate the revolutionaries. This campaign undermined belief in Napoleon's good intentions toward Poland. (J. Pachonski, R. K. Wilson, *Poland's Caribbean Tragedy: A Study of Polish Legions in the Haitian War of Independence*, New York: Columbia UP, 1986).

[47] For an in-depth analysis of the Napoleonic myth in Polish culture and literature, see A. Pochodaj, *Legenda Napoleona I Bonaparte w kulturze polskiego romantyzmu* [*The Legend of Napoleon Bonaparte in Polish Romantic Culture*], Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 2002; J. Lyszczyna, *"Bóg jest z Napoleonem, Napoleon z nami". Mit Napoleona w literaturze polskiej XIX wieku* [*"God Is with Napoleon and Napleon Is with Us": The Napoleon Myth in 19th-century Polish Literature*], Katowice: Studio Noa, 2009. See also M. Brandys, *Koniec świata szwoleżerów* [*The End of the World of the Chevau-légers*], vol. 1, Warszawa: Iskry, 1972.

[48] Conrad met in person his ancestor Mikołaj Bobrowski (1792-1864), a Napoleonic soldier (J. Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea and A Personal Record*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988, pp. 53-64, 159). Undeniably, Conrad was fascinated with the Napoleonic era since he re-visited this theme in several of his works (J. H. Stape, J. Peters, "Preface" [in:] *Conrad's "The Duel": Sources/Text*, *op. cit.*, p. vi.) As a Pole he could not completely distance himself from the historical and cultural influence of the Napoleonic myth flourishing and cherished in Poland by the greatest Romantic poets, by Adam Mickiewicz, among others). For a detailed discussion of Conrad's fascination for this subject matter see, A. Adamowicz-Pośpiech, "Conrad and Napoleon" (forthcoming).

disastrous Russian campaign D'Hubert harbours doubts about the general tactics of the wars, yet never openly expresses criticism of the Great Leader: "The early buoyancy of his belief in the future was destroyed. If the road of glory led through such unforeseen passages, he asked himself—for he was reflective—whether the guide was altogether trustworthy. […]" (Duel, 374). He also reflected "upon the uncertainty of all personal hopes, when bound up entirely with the prestigious fortune of one incomparably great it is true, yet still remaining but a man in his greatness" (Duel, 374).

Yet this veiled criticism is quickly modified by further comments "Peace is not yet. Europe wants another lesson. It will be a hard task for us, but it shall be done, because the Emperor is invincible" (Duel, 374) which sound like mind-engraved slogans of Napoleon's propaganda.[49] Moreover, D'Hubert's negative comments, are not uttered in direct conversation, but are further mediated by a written form, a letter to his sister. Paradoxically, it is Feraud who starts and then fuels the rumour that D'Hubert "never loved the Emperor" on different occasions and among various people so that this information spreads among the army. Similarly to Rylski, Conrad is interested in the mechanisms of creating and spreading legends and gossip.[50] And it is through gossip, as it seems to me, that the irony operates. The fiery Gascon repeats over and over that D'Hubert 'does not love the Emperor'. Then others believe it and repeat it among calvarymen. Finally, Feraud openly admits it as a truth since he has known his adversary for years so the other veterans take it for granted (Duel, 375, 380). Then, in the end, one of the soldiers repeats this opinion in the presence of D'Hubert (Duel, 392). Likewise, Rylski analyses the rise of a legend based on rumour, juxtaposing Lamont's memories and the press report. He shows the general's efforts to quash the gossip of Rangułt's misconduct and arrange the service of four comrades to protect him from himself. And the final stage of the building of the legend: Hoszowski's decision to uphold Rangułt's fame in spite of the evidence to the contrary.

PLOT

The second element I would like to investigate is the plot and in particular the duel(s). It constitutes the opening of the intertextual connection with Conrad's pretext. As has been noted, in Conrad's novella the precedence is given to the movements of the Grand Army, only then the adversaries' feud is related. For example,

[49] Napoleon was conscious of the power of propaganda and cultivated his image and the Grand Army's successes through the use of various media (the press, theatre, medallions, paintings, among others). For a discussion of this aspect of Napoleon's reign see, A. Zahorski, *Spór o Napoleona we Francji i w Polsce* [*Debates on Napoleon in France and Poland*], Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974, pp. 9-19, and W. Hanley, *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda 1796-1799*, New York: Columbia UP, 2005.

[50] Gossip is one of the recurring themes in Conrad's works. See for example, T. Tanner, "Gentlemen and Gossip", *Critical Quarterly*, Summer 1986, reprinted in: J. Conrad, *Victory*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, pp. viv-xx.

after the battle of Austerlitz when the most urgent cavalry duties were completed Captain Feraud "took measures to arrange a meeting without loss of time" (Duel, 365):

> This duel was fought in Silesia. […] It became the subject of talk on both sides of Danube, and as far as the garrisons of Gratz and Laybach. […] In the cafés in Vienna it was generally estimated, from details to hand, that the adversaries would be able to meet again in three weeks' time on the outside. […] These expectations were brought to naught by the necessities of the service which separated the two officers. […] [T]hey were still captains when they came together again during the war with Prussia. Detached north after Jena, with the army commanded by Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, they entered Lübeck together. It was only after the occupation of that town that Captain Feraud found leisure to consider his future conduct […]. This encounter took place outside the town of Lübeck. (Duel, 365-366)

This agenda of battles and the following duels repeats itself after each major campaign unless the officers are separated by distance (e.g. Feraud fights in Spain while D'Hubert marches the fields of Eylau and Friedland).

Similarly to the previous component that has been analyzed where Conrad introduced the panorama of Napoleonic wars while Rylski focused on the Russian invasion, in the case of the plot, Conrad describes several frays while Rylski concentrates on one feud and its protean forms. It is through the figure of the duel that the text of Conrad's tale enters Rylski's narrative. Rylski's story revolves somnambulistically around *one* unfinished duel, which gets re-enacted in various forms several times but cannot be settled. So what forms does it take and how does it start first of all? Hoszowski is invited for a supper to Rangułt's rooms in a plundered palace after which he is asked to drink a toast to Napoleon. Hoszowski refuses since he believes that the officers are drunk at which Rangułt takes offence and demands satisfaction. They choose pistols and Rangułt who is the first to shoot, misses. When Hoszowski sights his target the generals' staff officers arrive and interrupt the duel. At night Hoszowski is forced by Rangułt to finish the contest; he partly agrees but wants to settle it in the form of gambling (a game of dice). Rangułt loses everything (money, jewelry) and Hoszowski takes the spoils and keeps his shot. Early in the morning desperate Rangułt after he robbed the regiment's funds, forces Hoszowski to another dice game. This time Rangułt wins the valuables and the shot. On hearing that his pet soldier stole the regimental money, general Lamont clandestinely orders Hoszowski to kill Rangułt in a contrived duel to uphold his legend of a brave Polish lancer and the Emperor's favourite. Hoszowski has no choice and consents to duel with Rangułt because he has allegedly offended Bonaparte under the influence (Lamont informs Hoszowski that there was no other duel between them before, that his officers did not see or interrupt anything the day before). Again Rangułt is the first to shoot and again he misses but Hoszowski after a long aiming at him, kills both general's officers and runs away with his shocked opponent. One more time Hoszowski keeps his shot and the life of Rangułt is at his disposal.

If Conrad's personal contest between the officers is to symbolize Napoleon's duel with the whole of Europe, Rylski's confrontations, to my mind, may represent Bonaparte's Russian invasion. He wanted to bring the Russians to battle but they

continually retreated avoiding direct engagement.[51] Hence there was no convincing victory and clear-cut termination of the war. Similarly in Rylski's fights, there is no definite winner.

After the final unresolved duel Rylski focuses on the four months after Borodino to depict in detail the hardships of the duellists escape through Russia to Lithuania where Rangułt had his estate. The winter is so severe that the officers almost die of starvation and cold but for Hoszowski's cunningness. Although in *The Duel* only one section is devoted to the officers retreat from Moscow, there is a number of fine points in *The Condition* which open up for the phantom text to enter and broaden its meaning. Due to space considerations two examples have to suffice: the former duellists cooperation during their retreat and their changing clothes.

Both officers cooperate to a greater or lesser extent forgetting about their personal quarrel. On their way home Hoszowski is the more ingenuous and stronger one and takes care of the more fragile aristocratic Rangułt who does not believe that they will succeed. He gives up to the harsh conditions and does not participate in Hoszowski's efforts to survive. It is Hoszowski who organizes the defence against Cossacks while the count almost ruins it by speaking to them in French. But, when at the end of their journey, wounded Hoszowski asks Rangułt to leave him behind and go forward without him, Rangułt carries his companion on his back in knee-high snow.

> – It's not worth it – sighed Hoszowski, when Rangułt lifted him for the second time and dragged him along the road […]. After some time they were blinded by the whiteness of the snow, tears dropped from their eyes. […] Hoszowski asked Rangułt to leave him and his bag behind. Rangułt didn't answer. He dragged the colonel behind him, bent towards the soil like a ploughman, like a tired horse, mule, clumsy, pointless, resigned. (*Condition*, 162)

The officers' relations described in this way open up for Conrad's text in which they help each other to march forward with the whole army. Sometimes it is the aristocratic D'Hubert who helps the Gascon: "During that afternoon they had leaned upon each other more than once, and towards the end, Colonel D'Hubert, whose long legs gave him an advantage in walking through soft snow, peremptorily took the musket of Colonel Feraud from him and carried it on his shoulder, using his own as a staff […] "'Here's your musket, Colonel Feraud. I can walk better than you'" (Duel, 371-372). On another occasion it is Feraud who plans the defence against the attack the Cossacs: "You take the nearest brute, Colonel D'Hubert; I'll settle the next one. I am a better shot than you are'. Colonel D'Hubert nodded over his leveled musket" (Duel, 372).

Another detail which builds spectral intertexuality is the trope of changing clothes. After several days of journey Hoszowski reasonably observes that wearing Polish cavalry uniforms is to dangerous so when they meet villagers they take off their clothes and dress up as Russians (*Condition*, 117-118). Yet the tall and bulky Rangułt does not fit into the sheepskin and looks funny in it. This conjures up a similar potentially humorous episode in *The Duel* when the D'Hubert wears too small and feminine garments. He wore "a sheepskin coat looted with difficulty from the frozen

[51] R. Pawly, *Napoleon's Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-38.

corpse of a camp follower found in an abandoned cart […]" and a "woman's black velvet hood, over which was rammed forcibly a cocked hat". Later on he put on a couple of mats and bent them about "his elegant person and fastened solidly round his waist [which] made a bell-shaped nether garment, a sort of stiff petticoat" […] (Duel, 373).

The element of looting the bodies returns in Rylski's story when the escapees have travelled for more than a month and they come across several frozen to death Neapolitan soldiers. They decide to take off their shoes which was a very difficult task since the frozen bodies were very stiff so the deserters wrestle with them for many hours:

> – What are you doing – asked the colonel coughing. […]
> – I'm taking his shoes off. And I advise you to do the same. And then all the other garments.
> – It's despicable – cried Rangułt without conviction. […]
> Rangułt equipped himself with everything except for the shoes – they were too small for him. They put on themselves whatever they could. They bared four out of six infantrymen. Stripping off the cadavers took much time till dusk." (*Condition*, 150).

Similarly Conrad highlights the time-consuming complications of taking off the clothes from the dead comrades:

> A thoughtless person may think that with a whole host of inanimate bodies bestrewing the path of retreat there could not have been much difficulty in supplying the deficiency. But to loot a pair of breeches from a frozen corpse in not so easy as it may appear to a mere theorist. It requires time and labour. You must remain behind while your companions march on. […] [A]nd the ghastly intimacy of a wrestling match with the frozen dead opposing the unyielding rigidity of iron to your violence was repugnant to the delicacy of his [D'Hubert] feelings (Duel, 373).

To sum up this aspect of spectral intertexuality, in Rylski's plot there can be traced many points which open up for Conrad's text; it is, among others, the figure of the duel and also some details of the Moscow retreat. *The Condition* seems to constitute the narrative bare bones which the fleshy portions of "The Duel" neatly fill in.

PROTAGONISTS

The third aspect to be considered is the two pairs of the main characters: Feraud—D'Hubert and Hoszowski—Rangułt. To begin with, both writers had their ancestors enmeshed in Napoleonic wars which did not remain without influence on their creation of the fictional protagonists. Rylski's ancestor Seweryn Fredro (1785-1845) fought in the regiment of Polish Lancers (1806-1813). He was wounded in the battle of Avignano and after the battle of Wagram he received Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Then he took part in the Russian campaign. In recognition of his bravery in Peterswalde battle where as a squadron leader he led a headlong cavalry charge and took general Gebhard Blücher's son hostage, he was awarded the Officer's Legion of

Honour.[52] Likewise, Conrad's ancestors both on his mother's and father's side fought for Napoleon. Mikołaj Bobrowski (1792-1864) joined the Polish regiments in 1811. His nephew Tadeusz Bobrowski recalled that he "silently and unreservedly worshipped Napoleon."[53] He had been decorated with the Legion of Honour and the Polish highest medal, the Military Cross. "He was wounded only once, in the heel like the Great Napoleon himself […]."[54] On Conrad's father's side, Teodor Korzeniowski participated in Napoleon's campaigns against the Austrians (1807) then again in 1830-1831 in the November Rising. He also held Poland's highest military decoration—the Military Cross.[55]

Unsurprisingly then, both stories were called remarkably Polish in character. Rylski emphasizes the Polish dimension of his novel: "*The Condition* is […] is an eminently Polish book; a book on Polish misfortunes, failures, paradoxes but also on Polish greatness."[56] Critics who commented upon Conrad's story also stressed its foreign aspect. For one, Edward Garnett considered "The Duel" an example of Conrad's "Polish virtuosity" and "one of the finest instances of the fusion of the two moods in Conrad's temperament": tender buoyancy and biting irony. And explained its unconcerned reception in England by pointing to its Polish qualities: "This brilliant, gay, ironical masterpiece has been underrated because the Anglo-Saxon spirit is temperamentally unsympathetic to its qualities."[57] Another critic Robert Lynd in the review of the volume *A Set of Six* openly criticized Conrad's writing in an adopted language:

> Mr Conrad, as everybody knows, is a Pole, who writes in English by choice, as it were, rather than by nature. According to most people this choice is a good thing, especially for English literature. To some of us, on the other hand, it seems a very regrettable thing, even from the point of view of English literature. A writer who ceases to see the world coloured by his own language—for language gives colour to thoughts and things in a way that few people understand—is apt to lose the concentration and intensity of vision without which the greatest literature cannot be made. […] Mr Conrad, without either country or language, may be thought to have found a new patriotism for himself in the sea. His vision of men, however, is the vision of a cosmopolitan, of a homeless person. Had he but written in Polish his stories would assuredly have been translated into English and into the other languages of Europe; and the works of Joseph Conrad translated from the Polish would, I am certain, have been a more precious

[52] http://culture.pl/pl/tworca/eustachy-rylski (10.04.2017).

[53] T. Bobrowski, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 60. Qtd. in Z. Najder, ed., *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, transl. H. Carroll-Najder, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983, p. 6.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 18. The familial Napoleonic legacy must have been important for both writers: Conrad mentions it to his French translator H.-D. Davrey: "J'ai deux officiers de Napoléon parmi mes ancêtres. Mon grand oncle maternel et mon grand père paternel. Donc c'est une affaire de famille comme qui dirait." *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, eds. F. Karl, L. Davies, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991, vol. 4, p. 57. Rylski also mentions his ancestors who took part in Napoleonic campaigns in a number of interviews.

[56] *Do gnozy mi blisko* (Rozmowa Jakuba Winiarskiego z Eustachym Rylskim), http://www.literaturajestsexy.pl/do-gnozy-mi-blisko-rozmowa-z-eustachym-rylskim/ (7.07.2017).

[57] E. Garnett, *Letters from Conrad*, p. xvii. Qtd. in Z. Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Life*, transl. H. Najder, Rochester: Camden House, 2011, p. 373.

possession on English shelves than the works of Joseph Conrad in the original English, desirable as these are.[58]

Lynd accentuates the Polish timbre of the stories and the fact that they would sound much better in the Polish language and by extension, for a Polish audience.

As regards the literary protagonists, Feraud is an example of the passionate, low-born 'southern temperament' while D'Hubert is a reasonable, aristocratic exemplar of the 'northern temperament'. The protagonists are clear-cut and the differences between them do not change, although they themselves evolve.[59] As Stapes observes "Ferraud's ferocity becomes a symbol of Napoleon's unrelenting quest for domination and his living death a symbol of his final exile."[60] Contrary to his opponent, D'Hubert was selected for special attention and serves as an *officier d'ordonnance* who obeys the orders given by the general without question. Yet, after the first duel in the garden he is dismissed "without a word" (Duel, 350) from the general's staff and returns to the battlefield. Only in the end of the Napoleonic campaigns does he serve again as a staff officer (Duel, 375). He is the general's and the Emperor's favourite.

In Rylski's fiction we also have an aristocrat and a low-born man. But it is the aristocrat Captain Andrzej Rangułt who is a reckless drunkard, compulsory gambler, killing the time with plunder and devastation[61] while the low-born staff officer Semen Hoszowski, a former tutor to the sons of Ukrainian estate owners, is rational and commonsensical. It is he who saves the life of the nobleman once he knows that the general planned to get rid of his adversary in a contrived duel. Hoszowski is the wiser man during their enforced escape across the frozen wastes of Russia, helps Rangułt to survive (finds shelter, organizes new clothes, brings food) which has been discussed earlier. Finally, it is Hoszowski who has an aim in his life, in spite of everything, of the atrocities of war, of the suffering during the comeback to Lithuania, frostbite, he still dreams of going to the south of France to Antibes to study there in a library (he wants to solve an equation with condition). At the denouement of the novel there is another twist in the tale modifying the title: Hoszowski resolves to stay in Nekla and marry Rangułt's sister on condition that he will become the guardian of Rangułt's legend. He finds new sense in life, but to keep up the legend of the greatest Polish lancer, the most courageous cavalry officer of the Grand Army, Captain Rangułt, Hoszowski needs to return to the Grand Army to France and bring home the Legion of Honour promised to Rangułt in a letter delivered by him as a courier to general Lamont in September 1812, just prior to the duel. On departure, Hoszowski merges both understandings of the story's title:

[58] Review, *The Daily News*, 10.08.1908 [in:] N. Sherry, *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*, London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, pp. 210-211.

[59] Flavio Gregori rightly notes that "'The Duel' shows Feraud's and D'Hubert sluggish growth from pubescence to adulthood" (F. Gregori, "Youthful Resentment, Bourgeois (Anti-)Heroism and Sublime Unrest: Conrad's 'The Duel' and R. Scott's 'The Duellists,'" *South Atlantic Review* 2010, 75(3), p. 112).

[60] J. H. Stape, "Conrad's 'The Duel': A Reconsideration," *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[61] Paradoxically, in spite of all these flaws, he was the Emperor's favourite (*Condition*, p. 56).

On the following day at breakfast he informed Anne that there is one condition.
– Of what? – asked the lady.
He answered that this is the condition of his sojourn in Nekla. That he will leave.
– Where to? asked Anne putting aside, a butter roll with marmalade.
– To the army.
– What army?
Hoszowski answered that he doesn't know to which army, under whose command, with what plans; but the man who brought the promise of the Emperor's order of merit [for Rangułt] was he himself. And he must close the case. […]
– An equation Anne, is a condition in the form of equality. Each equality has at least one solution. The point is to find it. (*Condition*, 249-250)

In spite of the differences Rylski's characters are based on the paradigm outlined in "The Duel"; the stories' structural pattern is based on the same opposites: aristocrat—plebeian, recklessness—rationality, Emperor's favourite—common soldier. The divergent portraits may stem from the protagonists' nationality—Conrad's heroes were French[62] while Rylski's—Polish. Rylski chose a chevau-léger, the elite of the Grand Army to show its degeneration and contrasts it with the conduct of the low-born Hoszowski, mockingly called "staff asshole" (*Condition*, 59). Contrary to Conrad's balanced portrayal, Rylski ultimately shatters the myth of Napoleon and his elite corps, depicting them as bullies, carousers and gamblers. Conrad's attitude towards Napoleon was ambivalent which resulted from his cultural baggage[63]; hence, in the short story he is only indirectly critical of the Emperor.

To conclude it seems obvious that between Rylski's and Conrad's stories exists the relation of a text and its spectre. *The Condition* contains a great number of traces of "The Duel" and the idea of spectrality changes our understanding of the novel. These traces can be found in the setting (the Napoleonic period), the plot structure (the figure of the duel, the specifics of the Russian campaign), the construction of the protagonists (based on opposites). As I argued, after Derrida and Wolfreys, what returns "is never simply a repetition that recalls an anterior origin or presence, but is always an iterable supplement: repetition with a difference."[64] Rylski manipulates the whole idea of the duel. He shows how the well-established tradition degenerated among not only the common cavalrymen but also the generals of the Grand Army. Likewise, the code of honour is questioned by Conrad as an accepted and venerated

[62] Although Conrad's protagonists were French (which was in line with the reports he read in January 1907 in Montpellier (J. H. Stape, J. Peters, eds., *Conrad's "The Duel": Sources/Text*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2), creating their detailed portraits he must have thought of *Polish* cavalry officers since in the *Preface* he explained: "They were officers of cavalry, and their connection with the high-spirited but fanciful animal which carries men into battle seems particularly appropriate. It would be difficult to imagine for heroes of this legend two officers of infantry of the line, for example, whose fantasy is tamed by much walking exercise, and whose valour necessarily must be of a more plodding kind. As to gunners or engineers, whose heads are kept cool on a diet of mathematics, it is simply unthinkable." "Preface" [in:] *A Set of Six*, p. x.

[63] In the "Preface" to *A Set of Six* he confessed: "I had heard in my boyhood a good deal of the great Napoleonic legend. I had a genuine feeling that I would find myself at home in it, and 'The Duel' is the result of that feeling, or, if the reader prefers, of that presumption," p. x. See also A. Adamowicz-Pośpiech, "Conrad and Napoleon".

[64] J. Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings…*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

code of behavior. He presents it as "a nightmare, an irrational form of conduct in a civilized community. The absurdity of the duel as well as the fact that the adversaries try to kill each other in accordance with the code of honour cause this value into question."[65] Again, as in some other more grave narratives, Conrad is sceptical about any idea that takes precedence over human life.[66] Rylski goes even further: he shows how the concept of honour became a phantasm. Rylski's text participates "in its own haunting"[67] because while describing the story of two Polish officers he created fissures enabling the return of some other story about two French cavalrymen told one hundred years earlier by Conrad. The spectral approach which has been employed fruitfully, as it seems, to the analysis of these two works clearly demonstrated the persistence of the past text in the present story but, as Wolfreys suggests, never as a presence as such. "Instead, the ghost of and from the past leaves its trace in the structures of the present."[68]

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65 J. Peters, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. Conrad*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, p. 85.

66 See for example: *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness* or *Nostromo*.

67 J. Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings…*, op. cit., p. xii.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

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