

**RECLAIMING CONRAD IN POLAND
REVIEWS OF: *JOSEPH CONRAD A POLSKA* [JOSEPH
CONRAD AND POLAND], VOL. I, 2011, PP. 367, AND
*POLSKOŚĆ I EUROPEJSKOŚĆ W JOSEPHA CONRADA
WIZJACH HISTORII, POLITYKI I ETYKI* [POLISHNESS
AND EUROPEANISM IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S VISION OF
HISTORY, POLITICS AND ETHICS], VOL. II, 2013, PP. 324
(ED. WIESŁAW KRAJKA, LUBLIN: MARIA
CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA UNIVERSITY PRESS)**

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech

University of Silesia

Known worldwide and published since 1992, *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives* series—edited by Wiesław Krajka—has become a valuable and incisive contribution to Conrad scholarship. The series has both raised novel issues and re-examined the old ones. It has published selected papers from the prestigious international Conrad conferences organized by Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and Kazimierz Dolny every five years. The aim of the series has not only been to emphasise the Polish and East-Central European contexts for the works of Joseph Conrad, but also to present those in an international perspective (Krajka, I: 11). The thematic variety of the series can only be matched by its critical diversity: the essays—grounded in diverse intellectual traditions and cultural backgrounds—represent various methodologies and take different approaches to Conrad's life and oeuvre as well as to the reception and comparative criticism of his works. As yet, articles and studies on Conrad published in Polish are rather hard to come by. Hence the importance of the new series titled *Joseph Conrad a Polska, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia i świat* [Joseph Conrad and Poland, Central and Eastern Europe and the world]—initiated by Wiesław Krajka and based on the texts previously published in English in the twenty two volumes of the mother-series *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives*—can hardly be overestimated. Generally, the aim of the new series is to bring a selection of texts by leading Polish and world Conradians to the Polish reader in order to popularize Conrad's works in contemporary Polish culture and education where they are hardly present at all. Therefore, the prospective readership of this Polish series includes scholars and students of Polish and Slavonic philologies, com-

paratists and those Poles whose command of English is insufficient to read Conrad in the original.

The first volume of the series *Polskość i europejskość w Josepha Conrada wizjach historii, polityki i etyki* [Polishness and Europeanism in Joseph Conrad's vision of history, politics and ethics] contains eighteen articles on various aspects of Conrad's Polish background, grouped in three thematic blocks and three sections: "Conrad and Poland," "Dual Historical and Familial Heritage," and "Joseph Conrad: *Homo Duplex*." The opening essay announces programmatic assumptions underlying the new series. One of its aims is to make Conrad studies written in English available to the Polish reader. The series also hopes to show Conrad's links to the geo-cultural area of East-Central Europe: present-day Poland and those parts of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus that lay within the borders of the pre-war Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, for the writer's Polishness had to a large extent been moulded by his relation to this area. It had shaped his Polish and European point of view, which remained in a sharp contrast to the Russian political vision. And last but not least, one of the purposes of the series is to affirm and promote Polish literature, culture, ethos and tradition, all of which had contributed to the development of Conrad's imagination and creativity (Krajka, I: 15).

Hence, the first volume of the series concentrates on Poland, while the second one on East-Central European aspects of 'the phenomenon of Joseph Conrad.' Subsequent volumes will focus on comparative European and world studies of the key issues of Conrad's writings. However, it seems that for the Polish reader the most compelling and illuminating issues of Conrad criticism would be those relating to his particular works and presenting diverse interpretations of individual novels and short stories since, unfortunately, in Poland, contrary to what happens in England, France or Japan, familiarity with Conrad is mostly confined to "Heart of Darkness" and *Lord Jim*, with other works read rarely, or never.

As we learn from the editor's introduction, the significance of Conrad's Polish heritage and the formative aspects of his early years spent in Poland and the Ukraine are discussed by Juliet McLauchlan, Wiesław Krajka, Katarzyna Sokołowska and Alex S. Kuczarba. These articles are preceded by an opening address of Jerzy Buzek (the then Prime Minister of Poland), who emphasizes the significance of Conrad's works and the Polish ethos with which they are infused for Europe (Buzek, I: 29). He emphasizes the fact that a return to Conrad's Polish roots in the analysis of his works, may lead to new and original interpretations. While admitting that "Conrad was, supremely, a Pole, and remained [...], supremely, a Pole," Juliet McLauchlan, like Buzek, believes that the writer's literary output "though distinctively Polish is felt to be universal" (Juliet McLauchlan, I: 31).

The first chapter of the volume ends with a series of contextualizing essays by Alex S. Kuczarba, Wiesław Krajka and Katarzyna Sokołowska. In the first one, using Goethe's motto "Wer den Dichter will verstehen / Muss in Dichters Lande gehen," Kurczaba discusses Conrad's reception in a broader perspective than does Krajka in the essays that follow. Similarly to Krajka, he argues that an in-depth knowledge of "Polish culture [...]" is a *sine qua non* of a genuine understanding of Conrad's *oeuvre*"

(Kuczarba, I: 35). Moreover, the study of Conrad's reception may offer a deeper insight into his works. By way of illustration the critic mentions "Heart of Darkness," which generates "different responses with Zairan, Belgian, and Polish readers. These differences are rooted in the divergent historical and cultural experiences which readers bring to bear on the text; since history does not end, reading within the same culture also changes over time: survivors' of Hitler's camps and Stalin's gulags bring to bear on their reading of "Heart of Darkness" and *Under Western Eyes* a burden of experience unimaginable prior to the Nazi or Soviet regimes" (Kuczarba, I: 35).

The following two articles are devoted to Conrad's Polish background and his reception in Poland. Wiesław Krajka and Katarzyna Sokołowska catalogue all Polish sites mentioned in the writer's works and letters (Warszawa, Kraków, Lublin, Zakopane, among others) in the order Conrad visited them, thus, in a way, enabling the reader to follow in Conrad's Polish footprints. The third essay is a concise but informative discussion of the Polish reception of Conrad, with a special focus on Krajka's generation. As emphasized by the author of the article, unfortunately, in Poland Conrad has all too frequently been used by critics as an instrument of ideological debate (e.g. by Eliza Orzeszkowa, Jan Kott, etc.). In his overview of Conrad's vicissitudes with different political authorities and regimes, Krajka claims that the writer's case was a unique phenomenon in the history of letters. Yet, the impact of Polish culture and literature in his oeuvre needs to be "researched more extensively, thoroughly and profoundly as well as proven more convincingly" (Krajka, I: 74). Krajka expects "that such masterpieces as 'Heart of Darkness,' *Nostramo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* will be 're-discovered' in Poland and will become very popular" (Krajka, I: 86). Let us hope that the new series will become propitious to that end.

In the second section of the first volume the historical and cultural contexts of Conrad's childhood and family are discussed. Lilia Omelan presents Conrad's Polish ancestors: Robert and Hilary Korzeniowski as well as Emilia Korzeniowska, who were active participants in the clandestine Polish national movement, and, together with Apollo Korzeniowski, Conrad's father, prepared the 1863 January Uprising (Omelan, I: 113). Thanks to her pioneering research of Russian and Ukrainian documents in the Ukrainian archives, Omelan provides us with new biographical facts about Apollo's sister Emilia. Contrary to Zdzisław Najder's speculations, she proves that Emilia was unmarried, and reveals that she was engaged in a distribution of patriotic newspapers in Zytomir (Omelan, I: 116).

The three essays that follow are all written by Addison Bross, who researches the cultural and historical contexts of Conrad's childhood. In one of them ("Powstanie styczniowe i jego skutki: temat nieobecny w świadomości politycznej Conrada" [The January Rising and Its Aftermath: The Missing Theme in Conrad's Political Consciousness]), he offers an intriguing reading of the lacunae in Conrad's fiction of the Polish debates between the romantics and the positivists, which lay at the core of the January Uprising. As Conrad lacked "either experience or guidance" for absorbing and analyzing the controversy between the two visions of Polish history, romantic and idealist, on the one hand, and pragmatic and materialist, on the other

hand, Bross states that the writer produced “political fiction in which the idealist-materialist conflicts are blurred” (Bross, I: 208). Thus in *Almayer's Folly* and *Nostromo* we find only a vague and arbitrary presentation of “material interests.” Arguing that the public debate on the idealism of the romantics and the materialism of the positivists should be taken into account when considering Conrad's early years, Bross questions the long-standing claim of Conrad studies that the writer's uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski destroyed his faith in his father and the Polish cause. In his well-researched essay, Bross persuasively demonstrates that “given the frequent and open condemnation in the Galician press of all uprisings, Bobrowski's negative judgment of Apollo Korzeniowski's politics was immaterial for this outcome. If Bobrowski had never uttered a word to Conrad about his father or the Uprising, the debates raging in Conrad's youth in the intellectual circles of Warsaw, Kraków and Lwów were quite sufficient to shake any young person's belief in the soundness of the insurrectionist cause” (Bross, I: 211).

Krajka's essay offers an antithesis to Bross's article in concentrating on the figure of the writer as presented in *Kapitan Conrad*, a six-part Franco-Polish docu-drama produced in 1990 by Andrzej Kostenko, where the director depicts Conrad and his father Apollo Korzeniowski, as “martyrs” for the Polish national cause. The author of the article concludes that the filmmakers move from fact to fiction rather freely as they pursue their polemical ends, yet, as a whole, the image of the writer projected by the film coincides with Conrad's biography and the drama reflects the complex historical and cultural context of 19th century Poland quite well. In the final section of the first volume the issue of the double nature of Conrad's identity is revisited. Ernest W. Sullivan points to the importance for Conrad of his Polish documents, which he managed to preserve over the years (which was no small matter given his unstable and nomadic life) to, finally, submit when he needed to prove his identity. Sullivan concludes that “Conrad's preservation of his father's passport and his own baptismal extract is surely a powerful testimony of his feelings about his father and their homeland” (Sullivan, I: 263).

Likewise, Carola Kaplan tries to verify Conrad's identity. Referring to the writer's past, she argues that being neither “an English writer,” nor “a Polish author writing in English,” Conrad was able to “subvert the discourse of imperialism.” Taking recourse to postcolonial criticism, Kaplan convincingly demonstrates that Conrad “saw himself as a subaltern within the shadow of the dominant English culture, colonized by his adopted language” (Kaplan, I: 272). Hence, early in his career he expressed his Polishness in two crucial ways: “in *Lord Jim*, he adopts an ironic mask of approval to expose the fatuousness of English self-regard; in “Amy Foster,” he condemns the xenophobic intolerance that underlies this self-approbation” (Kaplan, I: 272). Similarly to Bross, Kaplan draws our attention to the silences in Conrad's works: “What the work *cannot say* is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is acted out, in a sort of journey to silence. [...] It is this silence which informs us of the precise conditions for the appearance of an utterance, and thus its limits, giving its real significance [...] (Kaplan, I: 275).

The *homo duplex* metaphor is further elaborated in Joseph Dobrinsky's psycho-biographical study of "The Secret Sharer." The article is very stimulating in its comparison of the process of writing of Conrad's story and his psychological state in 1909. Dobrinsky's working hypothesis is that "the symbolism of self-integration and self-mastery [...] bears, as often in Conrad's work, both on his private plight as an exile under the burden of his tragic family heritage (for the multilingual Conrad, "Leggatt" was likely to connote the French *leguer*, to bequeath), and on the artistic mode of his self-assertion" (Dobrinsky, I: 291). Dobrinsky puts forward a premise that critics have so far analyzed only the isolated elements of the story, while what he proposes is a comprehensive interpretation of its symbolism (Dobrinsky, I: 290).

Bringing the volume to a close, Grażyna Branny meticulously traces the ups and downs of the Conrad–Retinger friendship, which started with a fascination of the fifty-year-old writer with the young patriotic Pole and blossomed into Conrad's visit to Poland in 1914 as well as his engagement with the Polish cause, and ended in their cool parting possibly over a woman, Jane Anderson, according to Branny's speculation (cf. Najder, *Życie Conrada-Korzeniowskiego 2*: 190-193, 200-204). The figure of Hieronim Retinger still raises more questions than it answers: "he was variously suspected: by the British of being a secret agent working for the Germans in WW I ([Ciechanowiecki] 202); by Americans of being a Mexican agent (Pomian, *Życie i pamiętniki* 67); by the Belgians of being a Soviet one (Ciechanowiecki 203), and, finally, a British one by the Polish Underground movement in WW II" (Nowak 252) (Branny, I: 336). However, Branny astutely tries to prove the opposite: that Retinger undertook most of his spectacular and daring but frequently surreptitious and semi-official activities exclusively on his own behalf. Upon an investigation of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) Library archives in Kraków, Branny discovered Jessie Conrad's correspondence with Retinger, whose aim, apparently, was to postpone his visit at Oswalds in 1923. Branny presents Retinger as an *eminence grise* on the European political scene (Branny, I: 337), the view which is partly corroborated by the older study of Stefan Zabierowski and a recent one of Bogdan Podgórski.¹ Still, the riddle of the true character of Retinger's activities and of the possible secret service missions he undertook, cannot be solved so long as the British archives remain sealed (i.e., for another fifty years).

Some essays of the first volume are marred by occasional editorial (p. 347) and factual inaccuracies, but bearing in mind that most of those texts were written by foreigners, those should be treated as negligible, e.g., Conrad arrived in Cracow on 28th July 1914 rather than on 1st August (p. 43); the photo of a five-year-old Konradek (with a dedication: "To my dear Granny, who helped me send cookies to my poor Daddy in prison," signed: grandson, Pole–Catholic, and nobleman, Konrad) was sent to his grandmother Teofila Bobrowska not from Warsaw (where his father was imprisoned in the citadel) but from Wologda (p. 159); when Conrad met Stefan Żeromski in Zakopane in 1914, he could not have been the "author of an appreciative essay on Conrad" (p. 207), since the first text on Conrad written by Żeromski (a foreword to

¹ Stefan Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada*. Katowice: KAW, 1984. Bogdan Podgórski. *Józef Retinger: prywatny polityk*. Kraków: Universitas, 2013.

the translation of *Almayer's Folly* by Aniela Zagórska) was published only in 1923; the village Topolnica was in Galicia, not in Russia (p. 262); during his sojourn in Cracow and Zakopane in 1914 Conrad could not have met Stanisław Wyspiański and Bolesław Prus (p. 347) since they were both long dead by that time.

The second volume *Polskość i europejskość w Josepha Conrada wizjach historii, polityki i etyki* [Polishness and Europeanism in Joseph Conrad's visions of history, politics and ethics], comprises fifteen articles, which are arranged thematically into three groups: the first one revolves around "Prince Roman," the second focuses on the political aspects of Conrad's works, and the last one embraces speeches and texts accentuating the European and ethical facets of Conrad's writings.

In the foreword, Krajka explains that the volume is dominated by political essays and that its main premise is that Conrad retained the Polish perspective on history, politics and ethics all throughout his career, the fact which both found its reflection in his works and in his criticism (Krajka, II: 11). The ensuing articles are arranged along the lines of the threefold focus of the volume, starting with a consideration of Conrad's texts pertaining to history, passing on to those concerned with politics, and finally, focusing on the ethics of his oeuvre in general.

As stressed by Krajka, the importance of "Prince Roman" for Conrad's Polish contexts is reflected in the number of essays in the volume which are solely devoted to this story. A broad historical, political and cultural background to "Prince Roman," whose protagonist was an actual historical figure, is provided by Stephen Brodsky, Wiesław Krajka and Oleksandra Szałaginowa.

Arguing that the fictional Prince Roman "is entirely Conrad's creation of a composite generic figure whose fortunes represent the Polish experience, but [...] have no basis in fact relating to the historical Prince Roman" (Brodsky, II: 28), Brodsky poses a question why Conrad fictionalized both the figure of Prince Sanguszko and the story's historical framework. Comparing and contrasting myth and history in his convincing essay, Brodsky concludes that "Conrad simply conjured a noble pilgrimage for his monastically humble Prince Roman, by compressing time [...]. He may have thought it symbolically important and more important, that his Prince Roman S—make a conscious choice to set off on his own fight for Lithuania's freedom. That way, Prince Roman may be seen as an icon of the sacred Polish-Lithuanian Union" (Brodsky, II: 64). As the first text of the three in the volume to address "Prince Roman," it finds a twisted reformulation of myth and history in the novella, which are to symbolize the values and the ethos of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (*Rzeczpospolita obojga narodów* [Republic of two nations]), the "bastion of Europe" (Brodsky, II: 73).

The next two texts by Szałaginowa and Krajka are illuminating appendices to Brodsky's article. Szałaginowa, who searched the Central State Historical Archives in Kiev, found some previously unknown documents concerning Prince Roman Sanguszko and his family. Her historical study makes barely legible documents written in unique 19th century official Russian available to contemporary scholars. She orders chronologically and comments on secret police files produced by different officials to register 1832-1863 activities and whereabouts of Prince Roman Sanguszko,

a participant of the November Uprising (1831-2). What emerges from Szałaginowa's study is a grim picture of ruthless reprisals taken by the Tsar to punish the Insurgents: first, land confiscation: "a directive was sent to the Podolsk, Mińsk, Grodno, Wilno Provinces and the Białystok District, to register all local estates, to establish what part of them was the land of the Sanguszko family, and to seize the part of the estates belonging to Roman Sanguszko as heir presumptive" (Szałaginowa, II: 101); secondly, degradation: "Sanguszko was stripped of his army rank and nobility, disenfranchised" (Szałaginowa, II: 103); and, finally, banishment: "and condemned to exile in Siberia" (Szałaginowa, II: 103). He made that journey in chains (Krajka, II: 78). In a letter that has survived (in Russian translation, prepared for the secret police by a district police officer), Sanguszko asks for warm clothes for the journey and a book by Adam Mickiewicz. Interestingly enough, as the tsarist government took over the Sanguszko family archives (as well as those of the other patriotic families), "a unique list of the manuscripts kept in Zasław appeared" (Szałaginowa, II: 108). Among the documents of the November Uprising, there are also letters by king Sigismund II Augustus addressed to Chief Roman Sanguszko, Prince Roman's ancestor. These records are priceless for the Polish cultural and historical heritage and are still waiting to be explored. Correspondingly, Krajka detects and catalogues short references to Sanguszko and the fictional Prince Roman in the city of Lublin and the vicinity which are preserved in contemporary correspondence, memoirs, biographies and monographs relating to the Sanguszko family.

In the section of the volume pertaining to politics in Conrad's works, we find essays devoted to *Nostromo*, "Autocracy and War," *Under Western Eyes*, "The Crime of Partition," etc. Taking *Nostromo* as his starting point and with repeated recourse to Italian and Polish history (*Risorgimento* and the January Rising), Arnold Schmidt compares and contrasts Garibaldi, Giorgio, and *Nostromo*, speculating about why Garibaldi intrigued Conrad and why the writer juxtaposed the political situations of Costaguana and Italy. He claims that the reason "lies in Italy's implicit connections with Poland. Support of independence for Italy and Poland remained strong among European and American liberals. Not only political elites but average citizens contributed money and manpower, and citizens of both nationalities fought in each other's wars of liberation" (e.g., Polish Legion organized by Adam Mickiewicz fought for Italian independence) (Schmidt, II: 125). The author of the article believes that Conrad associated Polish and Italian national causes for historically justifiable reasons because of his own heritage, but to understand Conrad's political attitudes better, we must take into consideration his father's legacy (Schmidt, II: 127).

Polish heritage and its sway over Conrad is even more directly the subject of the subsequent essay by Krajka, who, rather provokingly, phrases the eponymous question whether the above was a curse or a blessing. Analysing Polish history, its Golden Age and decline, Krajka refers to Conrad's political essays and recapitulates the writer's views on the partitions of Poland, the political conflicts of 19th century Europe as well as the conduct of the Western Powers towards Poles during and after World War I. Similarly to Schmidt, Krajka believes that: "All these penetrating insights originated in Conrad's Polish heritage. His father Apollo Korzeniowski, a writer and

political activist, was a representative of Poland's Messianic romantic national movement" (Krajka, II: 148). Krajka goes on to show the positive facets of Conrad's Polish legacy: "The Conradian mixture of idealism, romantic illusion and pragmatism, work, duty and solidarity had originated in the writer's family heritage. Polish mentality and ethos pervade his works [...]. Conrad's literary output is one of very few instances of international transmission of Polish ethos, mentality, and culture in ways attractive to the world, making readers in other countries appreciative of Polish values and contributions to humanity" (Krajka, II: 150-152). In the end, Krajka answers the titular question: "Paradoxically, Conrad's Polish legacy was simultaneously moribund and beneficial, in that it is his sufferings and psychic pain that were largely responsible for his greatness as a writer. [...]" (Krajka, II: 150).

George Gasyňa affirms Krajka's diagnosis of the "romantic-martyrological-patriotic cast of mind" being one of the characteristics of nineteenth century Polish elite, with the experience of exile forming the second component of the cultural milieu of this Polish community. He examines Conrad's "Polish writings" and claims that "the 'Polish problem' on the broader European stage—and indeed the very idea of a Polish national essence and historical right-to-nation—was vital for Conrad in his public polemics with political *bête noires*, chief among which were the international roles of Poland's two main partitioning powers, Russia and Germany" (Gasyňa, II: 155).

In his essay on *Under Western Eyes* Noel Peacock juxtaposes two widely different critical perspectives on the novel, wondering whether "Conrad is in fact concerned in the novel with conveying 'the effect produced on him by Russia' or [...] whether the novel is not 'about' Russia at all" (Peacock, II: 198). He offers a detailed analysis of visual metaphors appearing in *Under Western Eyes*, particularly the trope of "the scopic regime," or "a political mode of perception," which is a kind of centralized surveillance, and by no means an exclusively Russian phenomenon. He comes to a conclusion that "Conrad's association of autocracy with Russia in *Under Western Eyes* was not to limit it to Russia. It was, however, to suggest the scopic regime by which Russian autocracy maintained itself as a mechanism by which an entire national character as Conrad saw it could be turned monstrous; to suggest the strategies of deceit necessitated by existence under such conditions of perpetual scrutiny; and to worry about the spread of that spectral surveillance, and the autocracy it reinforced, far beyond the boundaries of Russia itself" (Peacock, II: 199).

Focusing on Conrad's views on the East and the West, Eloise Knapp Hay examines several of his politically-charged letters and essays to demonstrate the evolution of his views on his native land and its place in Europe after 1916. She concludes that "Conrad's implications after 1916, that Poland is a 'Western' nation and that 'Slavonism' is foreign to the Polish temperament, were evidently at the time *quite new ideas* in his thinking. He had long believed that Poland was an isolated East European nation, chiefly made up of Slavonic peoples, and he believed so until the last years of his life. Then, anticipating a new map of Europe inevitably to be drawn after the First World War, his previously unbelieving eyes opened for the first time to the possibility that a new Poland could enter a new community of 'Western' nations" (Hay, II: 216: emphasis original).

The last group of articles in the volume concentrates on ethical (honour and fidelity) and European values present in Conrad's works, the issues which feature prominently in the opening addresses by Jerzy Buzek and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, to the 2001 and 2006 Lublin conferences, respectively. While the section contains many informative and persuasive essays, the cohesion within this group of articles does not seem to be as convincing as in the previous two sections.

Buzek gives priority to the Polish tradition, which shaped Conrad, and to its European dimension "reflected in his literary output. He [Conrad] claimed that to live decently one must believe in a few simple ideas. They included freedom combined with responsibility, solidarity and tolerance. Those were the same values which in the second half of the twentieth century lay at the foundation of the United Europe" (Buzek, II: 243). In the same vein, Marcinkiewicz, refers to "a few very simple ideas," which stem from the European and the Polish traditions, alike. He confirms that Conrad's vision of ethics constitutes a crucial aspect of Poland's contemporary culture and public life (Marcinkiewicz, II: 241-2).

In the subsequent essay, Brodsky addresses at length Conrad's criticism of the 1960-1990s, which he provokingly terms the years of "critical misrule." Both Polish and Anglo-American scholars misunderstood Conrad's cultural and historical pasts: "the former, because of the close relationship between national ideology and literary criticism, and the latter, because of isolation from continental European cultural traditions" (Brodsky, II: 247). Brodsky alludes to Krajka's essay "Conrad and Poland: Under the Eyes of My Generation" and to his diagnosis of the ideological bias of Polish criticism, "the deleterious effect of positivism" (Krajka, I: 74). On the other hand, following Jean-Aubry, Anglo-American scholars reiterated "a critical mythology of guilt, obscuring more typically Polish themes of fidelity and inner honour" (Brodsky, II: 251). Although written in 1996, Brodsky's text prophetically encourages Polish scholars to take "their chance [...] to free critical theory from ideological strictures and resurrect Conrad's reputation among Poles" (Brodsky, II: 268). Hopefully, this fledgling Polish series will prove expedient in achieving the goal.

In his perceptive essay, which first appeared in his *Conrad in Perspective: Essays on Art and Fidelity*, Zdzisław Najder analyses the concept of fidelity "which occupies a central position within the framework of Conrad's ethical concerns" (Najder, II: 271). Yet, contrary to other critics, he does not discuss "the function of fidelity in Conrad's system of values with a view to demonstrating the influence of Apollo Korzeniowski on his son's beliefs or of Polish Romanticism." Instead, he presents the writer's contentions in terms of their affinity, similarity and continuity. Similarly to Brodsky, Najder points to a misunderstanding in Conrad's scholarship concerning the issue of fidelity in his works, which is perceived primarily in biographical terms: "Conrad is thought to have been exceptionally sensitive to the problems of faithfulness because of his private experience, his own struggles with conflicting loyalties" (Najder, II: 281). The critic claims that one should view Conrad's statements about fidelity in a general context rather than the biographical one.

Taking quite a different stand, Rafał Szczerbakiewicz offers a detailed discussion of the ideologically biased Polish interpretations of Conrad's works triggered by Jan

Kott's 1945 essay "O laickim tragizmie" [Secular Despondency]. Szczerbakiewicz rightly points to "the Marxist bias of Kott's criticism" and dubs the critic's evaluation of Conrad "a camouflaged attack on the ethos of Home Army" (Szczerbakiewicz, II: 287, 292). Next, the author summarizes the reaction of other Polish writers, who could not "state their views openly" because their texts "would have been banned from publication by censorship" (Szczerbakiewicz, II: 293). Thus their polemics had to be highly euphemistic and allegorical. Szczerbakiewicz's text contributes to the study of the history of reception and *manipulation* of Conrad's works in Poland.

To conclude, I would like to stress the fact that the new series demonstrates Conrad's relevance for our times, so his fiction and literary essays secure his position as *Our Contemporary*. This is confirmed by Eloise Knapp Hay's discerning remarks about the parallels in the visions of Europe between Conrad and modern political leaders and thinkers: "Conrad's decisive change, then, was to identify himself and his native land as "Western" and non-Slavonic [...]. In extraordinary ways, his last position exactly parallels that of another famous literary man of politics, the Czech President Vaclav Havel. Fittingly, enough, Havel presented his views in his address to the re-born Polish parliament on 21 January 1990. There Havel described the current European movement as very like the one Conrad had witnessed some seventy-five years earlier, the movement from Europe which 'did not exist' [...] toward a united federation of European nations, erasing the border between Eastern Europe and the West. Like Havel (and the Polish government now), Conrad gradually and warily began to declare his own politic and Poland's identity-of-being with Western Europe. Even more significantly, he and Havel both (in these parallel periods) expressed their conviction that Poland was providing a vital, missing element in Western Europe's political regeneration. *Havel seemed to be reading from Conrad's script*" (Hay, II: 232; emphasis added). Polish Prime Minister (1997-2001) and later President of the European Parliament (2009-2012) Jerzy Buzek develops this line of argument, claiming that the values of "freedom combined with responsibility, solidarity and tolerance [...] were the values [...] which lay at the foundation of the United Europe. Those were also the values fought for by the Solidarność in the 1980s, which peacefully stood up to the Communist tanks. We should remember the Conradian values, those "simple ideas," also today, in the European Union." (Buzek, II: 243).

This legacy of Europeanism has been explored and popularized in the twenty two volumes of the English series edited by Wiesław Krajka, and is and will be further disseminated in Polish in his new Conrad series *Joseph Conrad a Polska, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia i świat*. At the beginning of the 21st century, the time of hybrid wars in Eastern Europe, bloody ethnic retaliations and material exploitation in Africa, terrorist attacks in America, Spain, England, France, Germany, etc., our reading "from Conrad's script," aided by the new series, should secure a deeper understanding of his works, and, in consequence, a better understanding of the modern world.