

A summary

Linking Joseph Conrad's literary work with Polish Romanticism is not a trivial task, although at first glance it would seem that these threads Polish literary studies recognized immediately, whereas the world ones were recognised as the relevant much later, when Andrzej Busza's extensive monograph on the subject was published in 1966. Recognition did not mean, in a similar case, uncritical acceptance of the entire system of allusions and references that Busza proposed, showing the literalness and directness of Conrad's references to Polish Romanticism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the type of cipher or Aesop style with which the author of *Lord Jim* masked everything that, at first glance, could sound Polonocentric in his work. Conrad never experienced an effusion and expansion of Polish topics, rather, we should talk about spreading clues, collecting and dispersing unstable traces, the generally understood uncertainty accompanying the expansion of the Polish motif in his work. How different will Joseph Conrad be once he can use the cipher and talk about Polishness indirectly! A very good example is *Nostromo* in the insightful recognition of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, who – successfully – extracted from the images of the Gould court all borderland accents placed there: customs, ways of treating servants, the type of household items Conrad knew in his childhood years. The Polish writer from Eastern Borderlands demonstrated his intuitions in “Życie Warszawy” paper in 1964 – until today they are part of Polish “secret knowledge” – not extracted from the press of the era, unfortunately, they do not penetrate by any means into world research on Conrad. I hope to change this state of affairs with this monograph. However, we need a way to talk about the camouflaged presence of intertexts of Polish Romanticism.

The book I present to the reader does not resemble similar books about rich and mosaic intertextuality of Conrad's work; first of all, – is not like an unprecedented study by Yves Hervouet, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad*. It cannot be. Here we touch, in a sense, on Conrad's mystery and his Polishness, including – the writer's feeling that demonstrating openly intertextuality of the 19th century Polish literature is unproductive and incomprehensible. Polish Romantic intertexts become a kind of “a letter in a bottle”, which is supposed to occur instead of the Polish topic, which is no longer able to manifest itself clearly. In 1966 Busza made it sufficiently clear that it was “a letter” constructed in an encrypted but also deep way: Conrad encrypts Polish motifs in his work, knowing everything or almost everything about them: in *Nostromo* – as we have already indicated – he displays knowledge and erudition in Eastern Borderlands. With my argument, I try to prove that there is still the matter of this display, much less frequently noticed than the background of life and existence. It is literary

substance. Conrad knows and remembers Polish Romantic text perfectly, he encrypts it in various ways, which I attempt to show, without deciding beyond any doubt the existence of various reminiscences appearing in works: there are many indications that Conrad has countless Polish Romantic references. Analysing subsequent echoes of Polish Romanticism appearing in *Karain*, *The Rover*, or *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, I try to authenticate my special reading mode, activating "on the way" everything in Conrad's text that is Polish Romantic; however, it does not have to have a strong guarantee of presence – we do not talk about a simple system of allusions and real references: I believe that Polish Romanticism is revealed in Conrad's work primarily as spectre intertextuality. To prove this, I use Derrida's metaphor of the spectre, as well as hauntology and haunted intertextuality as an unusual tool for literary research. It is also my answer to the question of how to conduct research on "Conrad and Polish Romanticism" today. Today, that is, over 50 years after Busza's groundbreaking research, still in reference to him and his ageless findings.