

Sylvia Janina Wojciechowska

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7390-6952>

Ignatianum University in Cracow

sylwia.wojciechowska@ignatianum.edu.pl

DOI: 10.35765/pk.2024.4603.32

Essays on Joseph Conrad in Memory of Professor Zdzisław Najder (1930–2021)

Book review: Dudek, J., Juszczak, A., & Skolik, J. (eds.). (2022). *Essays on Joseph Conrad in Memory of Professor Zdzisław Najder (1930–2021)*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, pp. 380.

In Poland, the names of Joseph Conrad and Zdzisław Najder are profoundly intertwined across various domains, including literary and political spheres. This connection is natural, given that Najder was a preeminent Conradian scholar in post-war academia. The volume *Essays on Joseph Conrad in Memory of Professor Najder (1930–2021)* serves as a testament to Najder's esteemed global reputation as a leading authority on Conrad. The collection, featuring contributions from distinguished scholars such as John G. Peters, Cedric Watts, Laurence Davies, and Andrzej Busza, highlights the significant impact and enduring legacy of Najder's work in Conradian studies. Already at first glance, the collection attracts general attention by its careful layout whose focus is the dual linguistic vestige, both English and Polish, which justly reflects the divided national loyalties of Joseph Conrad, a Polish-born English writer: while the first section includes nearly two dozen of essays in English composed by scholars from Poland and abroad, the second part consists of the texts written in the Polish language. Moreover, both sections seem carefully designed counterparts, with their argumentation opened with the biographical details and personal recollections of Professor Najder as a Conradian scholar, through the notes upon Conrad's prose as explored by prof. Najder, and closing with the articles considering Conrad in the context of intertextuality.

For a Pole with memories of the 1980s in Poland and even clearer recollections of the 1990s, the opening texts of each section are particularly valuable. The general public in Poland likely remembers Zdzisław Najder as an academic who became involved in post-communist politics, notably serving as a political advisor to Lech Wałęsa. Cedric Watts' *Notes on Professor Najder* and Stefan Zabierowski's corresponding Polish article are especially engaging, depicting Najder as a person who was once persecuted and even sentenced to death in absentia by the Jaruzelski government. Zabierowski's

extensive contribution is remarkable for its panoramic portrayal of both past eras and Najder's academic achievements within the Polish academic landscape. The English counterpart by John G. Peters, titled "Zdzisław Najder's Contribution to Conrad Studies in English," is equally revealing. Both Zabierowski and Peters compellingly illustrate Najder's exceptional contributions to Conrad studies through their meticulously crafted and insightful explorations of Najder's excellence as a literary scholar.

The major part of the volume consists of literary investigations authored by outstanding scholars such as Jakob Lothe, Hugh Epstein, Anthony Fothergill, Andrzej Busza, and Jolanta Dudek. The wide range of topics and themes discussed attests to Conrad's remarkable achievement. Thematic articles by Laurence Davies, Cedric Watts, and Gene M. Moore explore Conrad's prose in terms of contingency, pity and sympathy, and fidelity, respectively. Subsequent elaborations examine Conrad's technique, engaging with the technicalities of the Gothic (Joanna Pyplacz), the impressionistic (Joanna Kurowska), and narrative hermeneutics (Jakob Lothe). Language itself becomes an issue, with Conrad's personal voice and linguistic identities discussed by Jakob Lothe and Ewa Kujawska-Lis. Hugh Epstein's investigation of words as representatives of reality forms a separate and engaging contribution, further enriching this part of the volume.

The English section closes with an intertextual inquiry into Conrad's relations with other writers and thinkers. This dialogue includes analyses of Conrad's interactions with the prose of Tolstoy (Brygida Pudelko), Kafka (Anthony Fothergill), and Forster (Andrzej Busza), while the philosophical perspective centers on Roman Ingarden (Jolanta Dudek). The section concludes with three personal notes on Conrad and Najder by Marcin Piechota, Joanna Kurowska, and Gene M. Moore, forming a conceptual bracket that highlights the biographical intimacy of those who knew Najder as a fellow scholar and mentor.

The Polish section closely mirrors the thematic structure of its English counterpart. Stefan Zabierowski's article stands out, offering a personal reflection on Najder's influence in academia. Subsequent articles delve into the biographical intersections of Conrad and Najder, such as Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech's examination of Conrad as a reader of the Polish magazine *Wędrowiec*, and Marek Pacukiewicz's analysis of Polish literary and cultural contexts. Other Polish scholars explore various aspects of Conrad's work, including his nuanced use of implication (Grażyna Maria Teresa Branny), the dialectic of dual personalities (Andrzej Juszczyk), and themes of adventure (Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska). This section also engages with Conrad's phenomenology, referencing Roman Ingarden's theory (Łukasz Front). Contributions discuss the complexities of literary reality (Monika Malessa-Drohomirecka), Conrad's engagement with literary conventions

(Wiesław Ratajczak), and his connections to Polish Romanticism (Karol Samsel). The section concludes with personal reflections on Najder by Michał Komar and Joanna Skolik, complementing those in the English section. The final text provides a comprehensive bibliography of Najder's publications and interviews, both in Poland and abroad.

The volume is a unique interdisciplinary publication that not only offers fresh insights into Conrad's scholarship but also highlights the perseverance of Polish scholars, particularly Zdzisław Najder, in their literary and academic pursuits. It is valuable for both non-Polish academics and Polish scholars. The former may uncover new interpretations of concepts like "conviction and solidarity" (Epstein, in: Dudek, Juszczak, & Skolik, eds., 2022, p. 125), linking the Polish *Solidarność* to Conrad's notion of fidelity. Meanwhile, Polish scholars can explore "Conrad's own creative restlessness" (Epstein, in: Dudek, Juszczak, & Skolik, 2022, p. 126), reflecting ideas that transcend national boundaries and are rooted in a "belief in a common humanity" (Hampson, 2020, p. 49). The volume provides new readings of Conrad's "innumerable shades ... so fine, so difficult to render in colourless words" (Conrad, 2012, p. 76).

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Sylwia Janina Wojciechowska – an Associate Professor in the Department of Literary Studies at the Institute of Modern Languages, Ignatianum University in Cracow. She holds a degree in Classical Philology from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and in English and Italian Philology from the University of Stuttgart, Germany. Her research interests include British modernist literature, idyllic literature, nostalgia studies, and the pastoral mode. Wojciechowska has authored numerous articles and two monographs: *Re(Visions) of the Pastoral in Selected British and American Post-Romantic Fiction* (2017) and *Nostalgia as a Mode of Reflection in the Autobiographical Narratives of Joseph Conrad and Henry James* (2023). She also edited the volume *Colossus: How Shakespeare Still Bestrides the Cultural and Literary World* (2018). She is an active member of several scholarly associations, including the British Comparative Literature Association, the Polish Association for the Study of English, the Joseph Conrad Society (UK), the Joseph Conrad Society of America, and the Polish Conrad Society.