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INTERTEXTUAL MASKS OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S REMINISCENCES

Joseph Conrad began his autobiographical project in 1908 not knowing exactly its scope, audience or even title. He outlined generally its content and the probable title to his literary agent, James B. Pinker:

These are to be intimate personal autobiographical things under the general title (for book form perhaps) of *the Life and the Art*. They will tell in a measure my own story and as it were the story of my books – they will be concerned with Polish life and life at sea, intimate thought and sensations. (emphasis added)¹

Those personal sketches were subsequently serialised in the *English Review*, a magazine edited by Conrad's friend, Ford Madox Ford under the title of *Some Reminiscences*. While composing his memories, Conrad was still unsure whether the general British public would be interested in them. Hence he tried to minimise the significance of his recollections and present them as familial stories for his relatives:

Ford has persuaded me to give some personal stuff for the [English] R[evue]... But I was thinking of doing something of that kind for the boys [Conrad's sons], yet fearing that I would never do it from mere

* Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech – adiunkt w Instytucie Kultury i Literatury Brytyjskiej i Amerykańskiej Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Wykłada literaturę brytyjską i teorię przekładu. Opublikowała dwie książki *Lord Jim Conrada. Interpretacje* (Kraków 2007), *Joseph Conrad: Spory o biografie* (Katowice 2003) oraz artykuły na temat Roberta Browninga, T.S. Eliota, Williama Goldinga i Josepha Conrada. Zajmuje się brytyjskim modernizmem, rozwojem powieści angielskiej oraz przekładem artystycznym.

¹ F.R. Karl, L. Davies, *The Collected Letters of J. Conrad*, Cambridge 1983–2008, vol. IV, p. 125.

horror of writing, and this seemed an unique opportunity to pull myself for an effort in that direction.²

Conrad planned to write more about Poland and the Polish past of his relatives but the acquaintanceship with Ford ended quite abruptly and he stopped writing for the *English Review*.³ Therefore, finally he did not finish that autobiographical project and the memories were published in a book form under a new title *A Personal Record* (1912). As late as February (and March) 1912 he was still devising a kind of ‘a sequel’ to his autobiographical recollections:

I was indeed thinking of a “suite” to my Rem[iniscences] under the general title of *Some Portraits* family and others – my uncle the conspirator, two marriages, episodes of the liberation of his[?] peasants and of the ’63 rising and so on [...]. (emphasis added)⁴

Yet since no prospective publisher was willing to print it he renounced the idea altogether.

I have discussed elsewhere the reasons why Conrad was extremely unwilling to write directly about his past and to what extent Conrad’s volume of sketches is an autobiography.⁵ The aim of this paper is to disclose the techniques that Conrad uses to reduce the confessional character of his recollections.

Conrad, in contrast to Rousseau, delineating the remembered pictures from his past, did not reject the existing literary tradition and developed conventions, he did not regard himself as somebody exceptional, a unique artist, creating a new genre. On the contrary, he wanted to immerse himself in mankind’s cultural legacy. Thus literary tradition served as a costume in which he clad multifarious crumbs of the olden days.

² Ibidem, p. 149.

³ Another title he proposed was *The Pages and the Years. Reminiscences. The Collected Letters*, IV, p. 139. In the same letter he mentioned broader Polish historical perspective that he wanted to focus on in his recollections: “To reveal a very particular state of society, bring forward individuals with very special traditions and touch in a personal way upon such events for instance as the liberation of the serfs [...]”, p. 138.

⁴ *The Collected Letters*, V, p. 20–21 and 45.

⁵ *Joseph Conrad’s A Personal Record: An Anti-Confessional Autobiography?* in: W. Kalaga et al. (eds.), *Repetition and Recycling in Literary and Cultural Dialogues*, Częstochowa, p. 87–97. In this article I just signalled the ‘intertextual masks’ that Conrad used to distance himself from the readers.

Such procedure is evidently a form of intertextuality, applied in order to diminish the confessional mode of his reminiscences. Employing and transforming remembered fragments of texts, motives, pictures or comparisons from literature was for Conrad an almost inborn and unpretentious activity. His early fascination with books is described by him in the following words:

Since the age of five I have been a great reader, as is not perhaps wonderful in a child who was never aware of learning to read. At ten years of age I had read much of Victor Hugo and other romantics. I had read in Polish and in French, history, voyages, novels [...].⁶

Moreover Conrad admits that: "Books are an integral part of one's life" [PR, 73] which sufficiently, in my opinion, justifies analysing Conrad's autobiography from the intertextual perspective.

Genres/conventions

The influence of two literary conventions can be traced already on the structural level of the text. Those conventions are characterised by achronological, even chaotic presentation of events, which are linked with one another by apparently random associations. Such construction and mode of narration was typical of Polish *gawęda* and also for the English novels by Laurence Sterne. Let us look closer at those two models which serve as a potential source for Conrad's technique of telling a story.⁷ As regards *gawęda*, it was best exemplified by collections of stories by Henryk Rzewuski's fictional raconteur – Seweryn Soplica. Those were characterised by chaotic and amorphous qualities (expressed by total disregard of the rules of eliminating the episodes irrelevant to the story which consequently resulted in multiple digressions and repetitiveness), ignoring the chronology of events, rambling composition structure, fragmentation, apparent incompleteness of the tales. Apart from that the domineering stance of a highly individualised narrator and a well-defined audience

⁶ J. Conrad, *A Personal Record*, Oxford 1996, p. 70; hereafter cited in the text as PR.

⁷ I have discussed the polemics about English and Polish roots of Conrad's narrative method in *The Mosaic Structure of Lord Jim: A Survey of the Genres and Literary Conventions Present in This 'Free and Wandering Tale'*, in: *Beyond the Roots: The Evolution of Conrad's Ideology and Art*, ed. W. Krajka, Boulder: East European Monographs, Lublin–New York 2005, p. 39–62.

are crucial for this genre.⁸ *Gawęda* has a specific structural form, which is very loose, not bound in any frames.

It is revealing to juxtapose the mode of narration in *A Personal Record* with a romantic memoir by Aleksander Fredro, *Trzy po trzy* [*Topsy Turvy Talk*]. A well-known Polish Conradian, Wit Tarnawski states definitely that Conrad did not know Fredro's whimsical book, yet he accentuates that the similarities between the books' composition and narration are due to the fact that both works originate from "common to both of them tradition of the old Polish *gawęda*."⁹ The analogous features of those works which he enumerates are the following: "the same discursive inconsequence [...], the same casual way of tying up loose threads by means of a chance image, the same disregard for chronology, the same slow, sauntering way of telling the story, the same habit of circling round some event or theme."¹⁰

The other model which Conrad brought into play while composing *A Personal Record* were, undoubtedly, the books by Laurence Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey* which was very popular in Poland and which found many imitators and successors.¹¹ Much more sophisticated narrative structure of Sterne's *opus magnum* – *Tristram Shandy* was appreciated by few. Many critics believe that it was Sternean narration with its free, associative and anti-linear composition, multiple digressions, fragmentation of presented tales that shaped Conrad's technique of narrating the events.¹²

The juxtaposition of some haphazardly chosen chapters of *A Personal Record* and *Tristram Shandy* aptly discloses the analogies between the seemingly chaotic and heavily digressive mode of narration in those two works:

⁸ Cf. K. Bartoszyński, *O amorfizmie gawędy* [On the amorphous structure of *gawęda*], in: *Prace o literaturze i teatrze* [Studies in literature and theatre], Wrocław 1966, p. 110–111.

⁹ W. Tarnawski, *Źródła gawędy* [Sources of *gawęda*], in: *Conrad. Człowiek – pisarz – Polak* [Conrad. The Man-the Writer-the Pole], Londyn 1972, p. 33. However, we know that in Conrad's private library there was a copy of Fredro's memoirs. Cf. the list of books of Conrad's library for sale in Heffner's and Sons', from Cambridge Catalogue No. 283, of 1927. Qtd in W. Weintraub, *Alexander Fredro and His Anti-Romantic Memoirs*, "The American Slavic and East European Review" 1953, no. 4, p. 546.

¹⁰ W. Tarnawski, *Conrad...*, p. 28.

¹¹ Zofia Sinko gives a thorough survey of the Polish reception of *A Sentimental Journey*, in: *Wstęp* [Introduction] to Laurence Sterne, *Podróż sentymalna przez Francję i Włochy*, trans. A. Glinzanka, ed. Z. Sinko, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1973, p. LXXVI–LXXXIII.

¹² Cf. Z. Najder, *Introduction to A Personal Record*, p. xviii, and R. Jabłkowska, *Joseph Conrad*, Wrocław 1961, p. 199.

Among the main points mentioned in the 2nd section of *A Personal Record* are:

- Conrad's visit to his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski in Ukraine (1890)
- presentation of Conrad's mother, her worrisome engagement to Conrad's father; the story of – his mother's sister's journey and ensuing death ("40 years ago," i.e. around 1850)
- Borowski's commentary on the lot of his brothers and sisters (1820s and 30s)
- the story of Nicholas Bobrowski, his military ordeals and orders (1808, 1813, 1830)
- Conrad's reflections on his experiences as a mariner (1908–9)
- Conrad's rumination upon his youthful decision to go to sea and the reactions of his family (1873–74)
- Conrad's holidays with his tutor (1873)
- the evaluation of Bobrowki's significance in Conrad's life (1908–9)
- Conrad's holidays with his tutor once again
- Conrad as a Master of the British Merchant Service ('eleven years later' – in fact, in 1886)
- portrait of his former tutor, the story of his medical career and service (1870s and 80s)
- one episode from Conrad's holidays with his tutor (1873)

On top of that, particular 'rings' of the associative chain are not homogeneous, namely one can trace some other 'sub-loops' within a given 'thematic ring' which altogether form a closely knit structure. An example of such multi-topical loop is the fragment devoted to the analysis of Conrad's adolescent desire to become a sailor which almost seamlessly weaves into the reconsideration of Don Quixote's mien and its reception among his neighbours.

Sterne's ramified thematic structure of chapters II–VII in Book I presents itself as follows:

- discussion of the nature of the question Shandy's mother asked at night
- the origin of Homunculus
- the presentations of Tristram Shandy's uncle, Mr. Toby Shandy
- digression about different kinds of readers
- the significance of Shandy's book
- reference to Horace's method of writing
- advice for the readers
- the description of the night Shandy was begotten
- eccentricities of Shandy's father

- a quote from Shandy's father's pocket-book
- Shandy's conversation with the reader
- the description of the night Shandy was begotten
- meditation upon the vicissitudes of Fortune
- invocation to the reader
- the life story of a midwife
- the discussion of the Formula of Didius
- the discussion of men's Hobby-Horses

This is just a sample of the wayward method of narration that Sterne's uses. The parallels with Conrad's erratic mode of telling his story are evident. On the surface, those extended chains of associations seem hardly connected, yet at a closer analysis, we perceive some unifying seeds which keep sprouting in different areas of the text.¹³

It is also significant that Sterne has shaped not only the structure of Conrad's reminiscences but also the peculiar way of conducting the dialogue with the reader (e.g. addressing him directly and very often half-heartedly). For instance, Sterne, after long digressions, frequently, comes back to the episodes that he had started talking of earlier but did not manage to finish and about which he either informs the reader or for which he apologizes explicitly to him:

It is so long since the reader of this rhapsodical work has been parted from the midwife, that it is high time to mention her again to him, merely to put him in mind that there is such a body still in the world, and whom, upon the best judgement I can form upon my own plan at present, – I am going to introduce to him for good and all [...].¹⁴

The same procedure is applied by Conrad when he affirms to the reader that he remembers about the story he started before:

It must not be supposed that in setting forth the memories of this half-hour between the moment my uncle left my room till we met again at dinner, I am losing sight of "Almayer's Folly." [PR, 68]

¹³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to present an in-depth analysis of the structure of those two works, yet I would like to provide just one example of such unifying thematic thread. In Conrad's fragment it would be the Don Quixote motif reoccurring in the above-mentioned section explicitly twice, and then it is echoed implicitly in such words as e.g. folly, giant or in the portrayal of some characters (the sober tutor and his dreamy student among others). In Sterne's chapters the binding thread would be the surfacing, from time to time, attempt at precise dating of T. Shandy's conception.

¹⁴ L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy. Gentleman*, Hertfordshire 1996, p. 26.

Another idiosyncrasy of Sterne's is quoting an imagined dialogue with the reader, his questions, astonishment or indignation:

But pray, Sir, [the reader asks the author, A.A.P] What was your father doing all December, – January, and February? Why Madam, [the author answers the reader, A.A.P.] – he was all that time afflicted with a Sciatica.¹⁵

Conrad also exhibits the same comradeship with his readers:

Here I perceive (speaking without offence) the reader assuming a subtle expression, as if the cat were out of the bag. I take the novelist freedom to observe the reader's mind formulating the exclamation, 'That's it! The fellow talks *pro domo*.' [PR, 93]

It is difficult to specify definitely what was the original inspirational source for Conrad's mode of narration; whether it was the leisurely digressiveness of such Polish story tellers as Ignacy Chodźko, Waclaw Rzewuski or Aleksander Fredro or the artfully elaborate multi-facetedness of associations in Sterne's books. It is worth mentioning that some scholars believe that the English novelist had influenced Polish literature (among others Fredro's way of writing), and thus indirectly Conrad. Waclaw Borowy enumerates the following parallels between Sterne and Fredro: analogous friendly addresses to the reader(s) ("sir," "Sir Critic," "may it please your worships and your reverences" – "panie szlachcicu," "łaskawi moi słuchacze," "szanowny Obywatelu"), realism in presenting mimics (wonderful pictures of movement and gesticulation), elaborateness in describing the so called 'silly situations' (e.g. the story of the torn trousers in *Tristram Shandy* and a similar tale of torn trousers while playing the blind man's buff in *Trzy po trzy*), thorough analyses of the most trivial details (button-holes in Sterne and a nose drop in Fredro). All those pseudo-scientific reflections are written in a highly formal style, which allows the authors to achieve the comical effect.¹⁶ However, Borowy does not come to a definite conclusion identifying Conrad's source of inspirations.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 9.

¹⁶ W. Borowy, *Uwagi o „Trzy po trzy”* [Some remarks on *Topsy Turvy Talk*], in: *Studia i szkice literackie* [Literary studies and sketches], Warszawa 1983, vol. I, p. 184, 188, footnote 9; W. Weintraub, *Alexander Fredro...*, p. 546–568.

Quotation

On the level of the text, we can distinguish several techniques which enable Conrad to enter into that multi-layered dialogue with literary tradition and whose role is to lessen the confessional character of his autobiography. The most obvious form of intertextuality are quotations which fulfil various functions.¹⁷ However, I would like to broaden the semantic field of this lexical item; thus under the term quotation I will classify not only “repeating or writing the words used by another or used in a book”¹⁸ but also transforming (*read* translating) other people’s utterances or diaries. Other forms of masks which conceal the writer and separate him from his readers are based on such literary devices as paraphrase, travesty and parody.

Regarding quotations *sensu stricto*, such passages are enclosed within inverted commas. For instance a line taken from a religious book entitled *Imitation of Christ* written by a German monk, Thomas a Kempis: “there are persons esteemed on their reputation who by showing themselves destroy the opinion one had of them” [PR, xiii]. Conrad used this quote to illustrate his thesis that there can arise two different images of the author created by his friends: one is built upon the basis of his fictional works and it clashes with the other constructed from the novelist’s autobiographical writings. The discrepancy between those imaginings results in the disappointment of relatives and friends [PR, xiii]. Here returns like a boomerang the aforesaid anxiety of Conrad’s how he (but also his work) will be received by the literary public as well as his concern that he might be misunderstood. The function of this kind of citation is supportive – it is used to uphold the writer’s opinions.¹⁹

Another role of a quotation might be called contrastive: when the author cites a passage only to disagree with it. Emblematic for it is the Marcus Aurelius aphorism: “Let all thy words have the accent of heroic truth” [PR, xii]. Conrad believes that such words are “easier said than done,” to use a common saying. Such admonitions could be uttered by kings and emperors while the common man must find for himself a “humble truth”:

¹⁷ Cf. G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, London–New York 2003, p. 1–7.

¹⁸ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford 1974, vol. II, p. 688.

¹⁹ H. Markiewicz, *O cytatach i przypisach* [On quotations and footnotes], Kraków 2004, p. 19.

This is very fine, but I am thinking that it is an easy matter for an austere Emperor to jot down grandiose advice. Most of the working truths on this earth are humble, not heroic; and there have been times in the history of mankind when the accents of heroic truth have moved it to nothing but derision.' [PR, xiii]

Close translation is one more variation of the quoting technique. In Conrad's case this is the rendition from Polish into English extensive parts of his uncle's, Tadeusz Bobrowski's memoirs.²⁰ To show how close the translation is, let us compare just one fragment illustrating the childhood of his guardian and uncle.

Lata niemowlęstwa i dzieciństwa mojego [Tadeusza Bobrowskiego] nie rokowały ani życia, ani zdrowia [...]. Otóż inaczej, sprzecznie z przywidywaniami ludzkimi, stało się! bo z licznego i daleko zdrowszego rodzeństwa mego czterech braci i dwie siostry przeżyłem, z rówieśników też bardzo wielu, przeżyłem żonę i córkę – a pozostał mi z rodziny tylko brat jeden i siostrzeniec. Wiele więc nadziei pełnych życia do grobu złożyłem przedwcześnie²¹.

For years I remained so delicate that my parents had but little hope of bringing me up; and yet I have survived five brothers and two sisters, and many of my contemporaries; I have outlived my wife and daughter, too – and from all those who have had some knowledge at least of these old times, you alone are left. It has been my lot to lay in an early grave many honest hearts, many brilliant promises, many hopes full of life. [PR, 30]

There are more than ten complete stories, which Conrad has rewritten from his guardian's reminiscent papers, and what is more the entire Polish part of *A Personal Record* is loosely based on them. However, even if he copied whole paragraphs word for word, Conrad "developed and adjusted Bobrowski's text, making his anecdotes more pointed and adding lyrical or ironic comments."²² Most of those loan episodes and details are not signalled by any punctuation marks, so the audience does not know that these excerpts were appropriated by Conrad.

²⁰ T. Bobrowski, *Pamiętnik mojego życia* [Memoirs], vol. I–II, ed. S. Kieniewicz, Warszawa 1979.

²¹ *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 8–9.

²² Z. Najder, *Joseph Conrad and Tadeusz Bobrowski*, in: *Conrad in Perspective...*, p. 64. In this article, Najder meticulously traces and juxtaposes Conrad's quotations and borrowings from Bobrowski in *A Personal Record*, with their original source, p. 59–64.

Having traced a large number of unadmitted borrowed fragments, can we accuse Conrad of plagiarism? Yet another puzzling question is why such a creative writer usurped second-hand recollections instead of using his first-hand experience of, at least, the figures of his parents? As regards the accusation of plagiarism, Lejeune maintains that this term should not be applied to autobiographic writing since each autobiography incorporates inestimable portions of the books, paintings, music which the author has previously read, seen or heard. The writer is not always aware of the intertextual nature of his reminiscences. To defend autobiography against the allegation of derivativeness and unoriginality, Lejeune coins a new term for this kind of writing, i.e. *l'autobiocopie*.²³ The probable answer to the second query could be that his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski was the major (if not the sole) depositary of the familial memories and traditions for the orphaned child, and later, maturing adolescent. Today we know that many recountals were untrue or deliberately mistaken since the guardian modified, according to his own prejudices or preferences, the Bobrowskis' and the Korzeniowskis' mythologies for the growing youth.²⁴ Additionally, one more explanation of Conrad's resorting to his uncle memories of Ewa and Apollon instead of his own, might be the psychological phenomenon of *Verdrängung* – suppression of the painful or unpleasant experiences or memories from one's past.²⁵

Paraphrase

Another instance of the intertextual devices are paraphrases. Conrad retells the story of Don Quixote along with the reaction of the local society to his odd behaviour:

²³ P. Lejeune, *Autobiokopia* [Auto-bio-copy], in: *Wariacje na temat pewnego paktu* [Variations on the theme of a certain pact], trans. R. Lubas-Bartoszyńska, Kraków 2001, p. 219–239.

²⁴ Cf. A. Adamowicz-Pośpiech, *Tadeusz Bobrowski: Conrad's Positive Mecaenas or Negative Mentor?* "Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny", vol. L, 2003, no. 4, p. 486–504. In this article I have discussed the complicated relationship between the uncle-cum-guardian, Bobrowski and the nephew-cum-ward, Conrad-Korzeniowski. I have also presented some of the incorrect narratives created by Bobrowski concerning Conrad's parents and their erroneous reiterations on the pages of *A Personal Record*.

²⁵ J. Jacobi, *Psychologia C.G. Junga* [C.G. Jung's psychology], trans. S. Łypaciewicz, Warszawa 1996, p. 173–175.

The barber and the priest, backed by the whole opinion of the village, condemned justly the conduct of the ingenious hidalgo who, sallying forth from his native place, broke the head of the muleteer, put to death a flock of inoffensive sheep, and went through very doleful experiences in a certain stable. God forbid that an unworthy churl should escape merited censure by hanging on to the stirrup-leather of the sublime *caballero*. His was a very noble, a very unselfish fantasy, fit for nothing except to raise the envy of baser mortals. But there is more than one aspect to the charm of that exalted and dangerous figure. He, too, had his frailties. After reading so many romances he desired naively to escape with his very body from the intolerable reality of things. He wished to meet eye to eye the valorous giant Brandabaran, Lord of Arabia, whose armour is made of the skin of a dragon, and whose shield, strapped to his arm, is the gate of a fortified city. O amiable and natural weakness! O blessed simplicity of a gentle heart without guile! Who would not succumb to such a consoling temptation? Nevertheless it was a form of self-indulgence, and the ingenious *hidalgo* of La Mancha was not a good citizen. [PR, 36]

The role of the digression is to elucidate the young Konrad Korzeniowski's irrational and fantastic desire to become a sailor. Conrad introduces this longish paragraph commenting on the lack of indulgence (or understanding) among his countrymen for the decisions and choices of other people if they diverge from the norm. The function of this paraphrase is twofold: illustrative and supportive. Firstly, it serves as an evocative picture mirroring the family's and relatives' reactions (not infrequently personally engaged in Polish uprisings) to the youth's inexplicable decision to leave Poland and go to sea. It aims at showing that certain patterns of human behaviour have not changed through the ages, let alone the standard reactions to atypical conduct, which were and not infrequently, still are, resentment and/or outrage. Secondly, it seems to me, that after more than 30 years since that momentous decision, Conrad still was not sure of his "following the dream"²⁶ and still searched for solid justification. This could be provided by an analogous example from literature, which he duly furnished.²⁷

²⁶ J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, Oxford 1996, p. 215.

²⁷ Cf. A. Gillon, *The Eternal Solitary. A Study of Joseph Conrad*, New York 1966, p. 22.

Travesty

One more way of playing with tradition practiced by the autobiographer is travesty. In this particular case Conrad playfully echoes the cadence and the language of Shakespeare.²⁸ The excerpt focuses on an imaginary conversation between the writer himself and Almayer, the main protagonist of Conrad's first novel.

It is true, Almayer, that in the world below I have converted **your name** to my own uses. But that is a very small **larceny**. **What's in a name, O Shade?** If so much of your **old mortal weakness** clings to you as to make you feel aggrieved [...], then, **I entreat you, seek speech** without delay with our **sublime fellow-Shade-** with him who, in his transient existence as a poet, commented upon **the smell of the rose**. He will comfort you. You came to me **stripped of all prestige** by men's queer smiles and the disrespectful chatter of every vagrant trader in the Islands. **Your name** was the common property of the winds: it as it were, floated naked over the waters about the Equator. I wrapped round its unhonoured form **the royal mantle** of the tropics and have **essayed** to put into the hollow sound **the very anguish of paternity-** feats which you did not demand from me- but remember that all the toil and all the pain were mine." [PR, 88]²⁹

Let us compare it with the Shakespearean passage that Conrad refers to:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet. [...]
'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.³⁰

²⁸ Conrad mentioned several times how he got acquainted with the English language by reading a one-volume edition of Shakespeare works which he took with him for every sea voyage.

²⁹ I have put in bold the phrases which might constitute reverberations of Shakespeare.

³⁰ W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* in: *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, eds. S. Wells, G. Taylor, Oxford 1998, p. 345.

It is an instance of elaborate multilayered travesty of Shakespeare's style and diction in general, by no means of only one play – *Romeo and Juliet*.³¹ Indeed as far as thematic analogies are concerned, Conrad's passage draws upon and reiterates the idea of the dislocation of the name/mark (signifier) and the concept/object (signified). But it is much more than this. It imitates the Bard's vocabulary, register, tone and style. The high frequency of Shakespeare's "verbal suggestions" (to borrow Conrad's phrase)³² or loan vocabulary items in which this short excerpt abounds, is unquestionable. Most of the phrases which have been marked above were used by Shakespeare³³, some of them are classified as outdated now or limited to high literary style (as used by the Elizabethan playwright). To crown it all and to ensure that his reader will not miss the literary affinity, Conrad alludes to his favourite English author³⁴ – the poet who commented upon the smell of the rose, directly.

Parody

Last but not least, one more example of playing with literary convention which can be detected in *A Personal Record* is parody. Conrad imitates Heinrich Gottfried Ollendorff's method of language teaching, programmed for young learners and self studying students.³⁵ This method was very popular at the time of Conrad's sojourn in Kraków, thus he must have heard about it, if not

³¹ The scope of this paper does not allow for a more extensive comparison of the thematic as well as stylistic affinities of Conrad's excerpt and several plays by Shakespeare, hence I will limit myself only to a fragment of *Romeo and Juliet*. A detailed comparative study of some of Conrad's works (not of *A Personal Record*, though) was carried out by Adam Gillon, *Joseph Conrad and Shakespeare and Other Essays*, New York 1976.

³² Qtd. in Gillon, *Shakespearean and Polish Tonalities in Conrad's "The Lagoon"*, *Conradiana*, vol. VIII, no. 2, 1976, p. 130.

³³ Ch.T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, Oxford 1958. Let me just provide a few examples: entreat (Onions, p. 71), essay (Onions, p. 72), mantle (Onions, p. 135), shade (Onions, p. 195), unhonoured (Onions, p. 234).

³⁴ Conrad accentuates the importance of Shakespeare for him in *A Personal Record*, p. 73.

³⁵ H.G. Ollendorff (1803–1865), German aristocrat and grammarian, founder of the so called "Ollendorff's System." His books were adapted for the acquisition of different languages. The Polish version for learning German was entitled: *Teoretyczno-praktyczna metoda dla nabycia wprawy w czytaniu, pisaniu i mówieniu językiem niemieckim w sześciu miesiącach*, Warszawa 1864; the English one for learning French: *New Method of Learning to Read, Write, and Speak a Language in Six Months. Adopted to the French*, London 1848; there were French, Russian, Italian and Spanish versions as well.

be taught according to it. Here is a short fragment from a several-page emulation of a standard Ollendorffian textbook:

Nevertheless, later on, I [Conrad] duly escorted her to the field gate. I wanted to be civil, of course (what are twenty lives in a mere novel that one should be rude to a lady on her account?), but mainly, to adopt the good sound Ollendorffian style, because I did not want the dog of the general's daughter to fight again (*encore*) with the faithful dog of my infant son (*mon petit garçon*). – Was I afraid that the dog of the general's daughter would be able to overcome (*vaincre*) the dog of my child? – No, I was not afraid... But away with the Ollendorff method. [PR, 102]

By creating this fictitious text imitating reading passages in student's books, Conrad intensifies the unreal existence of his novelistic world of characters, events and topography which burst like a soap bubble, when the aforementioned lady intrudes abruptly into the writer's study. On the whole, this fragment describing the guest carelessness (who is not aware of the range of destruction she has done by her surprise visit) may also reflect the learners' unawareness what a huge number of skills they have to master and how hard they have to work on their own in order to speak a language fluently. Furthermore, it might emulate Conrad's own ups and downs while mastering the English language.

The author of *Amy Foster* referred to the process of recording his memories as a 'ghoulish enterprise' which entailed 'stirring up of all these dead.'³⁶ The pivotal tool for maintaining a distance to the described events is filtering them through literary texts, recollected motives and pictures. Those borrowings from literature constitute specific masks for the author, who does not want to or cannot write explicitly about the past. Thus Conrad's *A Personal Record* should be viewed as a collage of quotations, quasi-quotations, paraphrases, travesties and parodies.

Keywords: *autobiography*, "*Personal Record*", *Conrad*, *intertextuality*, *genres*, *travesty*, *paraphrase*, *quotation*

³⁶ *The Collected Letters*, IV, p. 149.

INTERTEXTUAL MASKS OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S REMINISCENCES

Summary

The article analyses Joseph Conrad's reminiscences from the perspective of intertextuality. The author argues that Conrad, in order to write about his biography, employed a number of intertextual masks – an intertextual filter. Enlarging on the events from his past life, he employed various literary conventions, eg. parody, travesty, quotation or paraphrase.

INTERTEKSTUALNE MASKI WSPOMNIEŃ JOSEPHA CONRADA

Streszczenie

W artykule są analizowane wspomnienia Josepha Conrada *A Personal Record* z perspektywy intertekstualności. Autorka stawia tezę, że Conrad potrzebował swoistego „filtra intertekstualnego”, „intertekstualnej maski”, aby pisać o swojej biografii. Przedstawiając wydarzenia z własnego życia, zastosował różne konwencje literackie, m.in. parodię, trawestację, cytaty i parafrazę.