

***The Shot by Pushkin and The Duel by Conrad: A Cross-Cutting Dialogue in a Post-modern Field / O tiro de Pushkin e O duelo de Conrad: diálogo transversal em um território pós-moderno / El disparo de Pushkin y The duel de Conrad: diálogo sesgado en un territorio posmoderno***

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**ABSTRACT**

This article revisits the dialogic and polyphonic perspective that is established between Pushkin's and Conrad's works and sets interrelations that are based on the works' intersubjectivity and social attitudes. The theoretical and cultural perspective is a key factor to establish some relationships that enable a dialogue between genres, cultures, issues of multicultural situations, times and customs, which make possible the comparison between the multiplicity of levels of a semiotics of culture expressed in Ridley Scott's work and some references to Dostoyevsky's work.

**KEYWORDS:** Dialogic Perspective; Postmodernity; Multiculturalism

**RESUMO**

*Este artigo retoma a perspectiva dialógica e polifônica que se estabelece entre as obras de Pushkin e Conrad e estabelece inter-relações que se fundamentam na intersubjetividade e nas atitudes sociais das obras. A perspectiva teórico-cultural é um fator fundamental para estabelecer algumas relações que permitem um diálogo entre gêneros, culturas, problemas de situações multiculturais, épocas e costumes, que permitem uma comparação com a multiplicidade de níveis de uma semiótica da cultura apresentada na obra de Ridley Scott, com algumas referências à obra de Dostoiévski.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Perspectiva dialógica; Pós-modernidade; Multiculturalidade*

**RESUMEN**

*Este artículo retoma la perspectiva dialógica y polifónica que se establece entre las obras de Pushkin y Conrad y traza interrelaciones que se fundamentan en la intersubjetividad y en las actitudes sociales de la obra. La perspectiva teórico-cultural es un factor fundamental para establecer algunas relaciones que permiten un diálogo entre géneros, culturas, problemas de situaciones multiculturales, épocas y costumbres que permiten una comparación con la multiplicidad de niveles de una semiótica de la cultura presentada en la obra de Ridley Scott, con algunas referencias hechas a la obra de Dostoiévski.*

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** *Perspectiva dialógica; Postmodernidad; Multiculturalidad*

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The theme of this research was developed over thirty years of literature teaching from the standpoint of literary theories that made me repeatedly face the topics that cross many cultural fields, authors, languages, nations and expressive media: film, literature, Poland, Russia, Britain, France and, finally, Argentina.

It is a string of causalities and coincidences that often drive and direct our interests related to both teaching and theories. When I watched a great movie in the 1980s, I considered a fact that deserves full credit, beyond its obvious cinematic merits - production, acting, photography: the same story that supported the film's motif allowed an original reading, which was not so remote, distorted or inclusive inverted in relation to *The Shot*<sup>1</sup> by Pushkin. This text of classical Russian literature is the first text of the collection *Tales of Belkin*, 1832. The film *The Duellist* (1977), by British director Ridley Scott, was an *opera prima* (which won, in this category, the prize of the Cannes Film Festival), and it is considered by many his best work. The actors are Keith Carradine and Harvey Keitel, whose performance is deemed unparalleled. The script is based on a long tale of Joseph Conrad, of which I was unaware at that time.

*The Duellists'* script follows the motif – of course, with some modifications – of the long tale or, if preferred, short-story, *The Duel* (2011/1908) by Joseph Conrad, who is a rather peculiar writer, taking into consideration his origin and history. The short-story was published in the book *The Set of Six* under the title The Point of Honour. However, its first serial publications were in *The Pall-Mall Magazine*.

The film's motif, which is the same that appears in Conrad's text, is set during the Napoleonic war, between 1801 and 1816. It is a range of consecutive duels, which occur throughout these years between two officers of the Imperial army, whose surnames are Feraud and D'Hubert. Feraud is the one who provokes the first duel due to an insignificant matter; the others do not end with a death, which would be a permanent closure of an absurd dispute pictured in the mind of mad Feraud and of his supporters, reaching imaginary and improbable dimensions. In Conrad's text, Feraud is a kind of "socially

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<sup>1</sup> TN. For this English version, see PUSHKIN, A. *The Shot*. Translated by T. Keane. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, 2014. Available at: [<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/pushkin/aleksandr/p98sh/>]. Accessed on: 04 Feb. 2016.

resentful person,” a commoner, the son of a blacksmith, who achieves fortune after the fall of the old regime in Napoleonic times. By the time of the Hundred Days, when he finished his military career, he is promoted to the rank of general. D'Hubert is of noble origin and, as we grasp, he follows the emperor by a heroic vocation and by his own family tradition of nobility. To end this brief profile, Feraud is dark-skinned, short, and bad-looking, while D'Hubert is blond, tall, and handsome. Thus, accents are placed in Conrad's story, which are devoutly preserved in the film. In one way or another, luck is something that always favors D'Hubert due to his warrior merits and strategic ability as well as his good mood and friendliness. He is not so affected by actions as Feraud is. The latter, although presenting a bold spirit, is always promoted shortly after his rival. Ultimately, in their last meeting, after a series of duels with swords, on horseback, on foot, or with pistols, D'Hubert tames Feraud and is finally able to force him to stop with his insane persecution based on an imaginary problem. He makes Feraud shoot twice, thus preserving his right to shoot at any time, according to the rules of dueling. However, he refuses to make use of his right. As if it were not enough, at the end, D'Hubert anonymously provides the elder veteran, Feraud, with a pension. While the latter gets socially marginalized during the Bourbon Restoration, D'Hubert retains all the privileges that birth and fortune granted him, and joins Louis XVIII's army.

Joseph Conrad (born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski; 1857-1924) was Polish and a member of a family that belonged to nobility. He was a subject of the Russian empire, left home at seventeen and emigrated to Europe, becoming a sailor in Marseilles. Then, he obtained British citizenship, was in the service of the English merchant marine for about seventeen years, and achieved the rank of captain. After resigning, he devoted himself fully to literature. He had always written in English, which was not his mother tongue, and achieved the status of a classic writer.

Taking into account that the short-story *The Duel* represents a rejoinder – that I will soon analyze – of Pushkin's *The Shot*, it represents a fascinating range of knots and intersections that is a great challenge for the comparatist: it was written by a Polish in English; it approaches French matters and, disguised as a real story, indirectly refers to a Russian classic text on a man who supposedly had an attitude that can at least be qualified

as conflicting to the Poland of its time (I am considering here a key date: 1831)<sup>2</sup> and culture (symbolized in the figure of Poland's national poet Adam Mickiewicz, who, at a certain level, set himself up as Pushkin's rival). The context of the historical and cultural circumstances accompanying the uncertain genesis of *The Duel* is irrelevant for the general English readership who, in the early twentieth century, could not read this book except as a tale of adventure. Of course that all these connotations are of little importance to Ridley Scott, who simply agrees to speak in English to his alleged French interlocutors. For this reason, at the moment, he is left aside, because the material provided by Conrad gives itself aesthetic tasks of a different nature, which are particular to its means of expression.

I must warn that this relation to Pushkin is not my idea: of course that the Slavists and the Russian and Anglophone specialists in Russian studies highlighted this relation too - it can be assumed that, in this sense, they did so via Conrad before anything. I confess that my way was through Ridley Scott's film; therefore, it was not a result of the involvement in the Russian affair concerning the literary domain exclusively. The internal tensions that are established between the two narratives are impossible to be disentangled without resorting to literary and social history and even without mentioning the possible usefulness of a biographical review: the important thing is to keep the perspective that one wants to defend at any given time in order to deviate from the temptation to identify work with life. A dialogic and polyphonic perspective that, at first, establishes a complex network of interpersonal relations and of social attitudes, subsequently allows moving further into the theoretical and cultural perspective in order to reach relations between genre and cultural fields, issues of multicultural and postcolonial situations, which could give place to the unity of a complex approach with its multiplicity of levels, of a semiotics of culture.

At no point do I intend to state that Joseph Conrad had Pushkin as a model to imitate or to be influenced by. As irrelevant as it is, there is not even an affirmative positing

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<sup>2</sup> In 1796, Poland was divided among Germany, Austria, and Russia. In 1831, there was an important Polish uprising against the Russian imperial rule. The rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed by the army of Nicolas I, a fact that provoked many demonstrations by European intellectuals. Pushkin reacted to the situation with a poem, "To the Slanderers of Russia," in which he apparently justified the actions of the regime. In this case, he showed to be more patriotic than libertarian (as traditionally corresponded to him). His gesture gave way to critical reactions from his contemporaries.

regarding the matter of Conrad being, at any time, directly in touch with Pushkin's prose, a question that he seems to have denied repeatedly. And yet ...

In *The Shot*, after a duel in which each opponent had the right to a single bullet, Silvio leaves the army to patiently wait whole years for an appropriate opportunity to challenge his rival, the Count, who had given him a slap. In the beginning, The Count, without apparently attaching importance to the duel, calmly shoots at Silvio. Although he did not succeed, his shot made a hole in Silvio's crochet cap. As if it were not enough, while being at the aim of Silvio's revolver, he carelessly eats the cherries that he brought in his bag for lunch. Silvio prefers to wait for the time when the Count gives his life more value. After waiting for five years, he finds his offender newly married for love and comes face to face with him so he can demand his right to shoot. Silvio makes his opponent's wife aware of their duel and encourages the Count to shoot once again. Still, he misses it. Then, instead of firing against his opponent, he shoots towards the spot where the Count's stray bullet left a hole, sealing it with ostentatious accuracy. He says to the Count, "I am satisfied. I have seen your confusion, your alarm. I forced you to fire at me. That is sufficient. You will remember me. I leave you to your conscience" (PUSHKIN, 2014, p.13).<sup>3</sup>

In Pushkin's brief account, Silvio is seen from a threefold perspective: first, he is described by a narrator; then the very Silvio tells the story of his challenge to the Count and, finally, the latter tells Silvio about the last shooting situation. Silvio becomes a contradictory figure: first, his conduct evokes the literary style of Byron's characters and epigones; then, he reveals that the reason for his conflict with the Count was simply envy, quietly discrediting his romantic posture; finally, as he fulfills his vindictive purpose, he makes a gesture of somewhat grudging generosity. The Count, on the other hand, is a subject who is greatly favored by fortune: "Never in my life have I met with such a fortunate fellow! Imagine to yourself youth, wit, beauty, unbounded gayety, the most reckless bravery, a famous name, untold wealth" (PUSHKIN, 2014, p.7).<sup>4</sup> The only thing that could censure him is the excessive frivolity with which he deals with the sensibilities

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<sup>3</sup> TN. For full reference, see footnote 1.

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of other people, which he himself would recognize years later when he had to face his enemy in a circumstance in which the value of life had become inestimable to him.

Thus, Silvio becomes a controversial figure: resentful and envious, used to playing the leading role in all parts, he himself causes the Count's assault and the impending duel; on the other hand, despite the experimental parodic character of the narration and of the entire collection *Tales of Belkin*, we can perceive certain sympathies from the intradiegetic narrator and metanarrator Belkin towards Silvio, an attitude proven by generations of readers. At the same time, the role that Silvio intends to play before the other characters – both in the episode related to his regular contact with the officers of the narrator's regiment, during which he keeps the house and the table open to them and organizes card games, and in the entire story of his relations with the Count - is the role of fate,<sup>5</sup> of destiny. In the latter case, it is a parody of the romantic model of conduct and a psychological trait of the subjects of the time intended to imitate such exalted features by the literature of that period. Thus, it draws attention to Silvio's self-conscience, a trait, which I believe has been the guarantee of sympathy from readers.

We must say a few words about duels in Pushkin's times and their refraction in Conrad's text. Since the second half of the 18th century and around 1830, despite being legally prohibited, duels were a daily practice, intent to sort out the so-called "matters of honor." Pushkin himself was involved in 28 challenges during his life (not all ended in a duel, but some did) and participated in four. In fact, the poet died from a wound he had received in a final duel in 1837. It is a recurring theme in classical Russian literature (Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Kuprin, etc.), and more than one work has a reference to the practice of dueling in their titles. It can be deduced that *The Shot* is more related to the issue of the ethical implications of this practice than it is a view of duels as an excuse for adventures, as in *The Three Musketeers*. Indeed, the very institution of the duel and the bitter figure of the duelist Silvio seem to be subverted in the story, and somehow they are challenged or even parodied: the rigid and irrevocable rules of the duel are handled discretely to allow the existence of the roles that the characters play and to

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<sup>5</sup> As pointed out by Lotman (see *La dama de picas* y el tema de los naipes en la literatura rusa de los inicios del XIX [in Russian]. In: LOTMAN, I. M. *Izbrannye stat'i v 3 tomaj*. Alexandra, Tallinn, v. 2, pp.389-415,1992).

highlight the theme of fate with which they wish to play. However, as a current habit, the duel did not support scams and was not turned into the only truculent resource to obtain literary effect. As a Turgenev's involuntary duelist (the positive and sober Bazarov, in *Fathers and Sons*) says in fact "from the theoretical point of view dueling is absurd; but from the practical point of view--well, that's quite another matter" (TURGENIEV, 1960, p.129).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it implies the inviolability of its social use.

The episode of cherries that the Count eats at the aim of a revolver refers to an identical case to the author's biography. Once, Pushkin himself ate cherries while someone pointed a gun at him. Transferred to literature, the fact connotes that the subject that played him despises both the danger and his opponent, who is portrayed as transformed, semantically off, in Conrad's *nouvelle* and later in Ridley Scott's film. They are the two oranges that D'Hubert eats in the context of the final challenge. In the Polish writer's case, this is undoubtedly a conscious intention to take, from this gesture, its unique semantic load, its meaning of bravado, making it situational and not directed to anyone, while in life and in Pushkin's story, it was a gesture full of meaning.

As the author of a short story, Conrad has been treated in different ways by the critics when it comes to his novelistic production. In the early 20th century, it was considered that the stories published in popular magazines and weeklies (raw material intended to be arranged in a certain way in order to be marketed to mass entertainment) required a handmade treatment as opposed to the depth of a novel. Conrad himself made a reference to this genre as silly short-stories and considered his own series production a second-hand Conradese (ERDINAST-VULCAN; SIMMONS, STAPE, 2004), developed for entertainment, but not containing the problematic and the in-depth study of the topics addressed.<sup>7</sup> However, maybe this same conscious effort to direct the short narrative to a popular market had a liberating effect on the writing process of the novelist, who was always very self-critical, leading his pen, paradoxically, toward a more daring experience

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<sup>6</sup> TN. For this English version, see TURGENEV, I. *Fathers and Sons*. Translated by Richard Hare. New York: Rinehart Editions, 1960. Available at: [<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ist/fas.htm>]. Accessed on: February 04, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> These Conrad's publications can be compared to the "novelas de folletín," as they are called in Spanish, or deliveries, distribution practices and literary circulation in which Dostoyevsky took part in his time.

with radical and renewing effects, featured in many of his short narratives (ERDINAST-VULCAN; SIMMONS, STAPE, 2004).

Nevertheless, concerning *The Duel*, Conrad expressed a very disdainful attitude when he referred to this tale as “a languish (and) stupidish story,” “a silly little form” – even though he reconsidered his opinion in one of the last editions of his work in life in the 1920s with an eye to the Nobel Prize (DONOVAN, 2005, pp.167-168).

In fact, in *The Duel*, it is difficult to find the virtues of modernist writing that D. Erdinast finds, generally, in Conradian brief fiction, such as a particular point of view,<sup>8</sup> a new temporality treatment or the “reliable” use of metaphor and metonymy. None of this can be found in the story that I am analyzing: the narrator is the most traditional, the omniscient third person and, above all, impersonal, or almost so; the story does not change the temporality of events, moving only between action and description, and there is a visible lack of “poetical” resources, even if the text does not lack an efficient use of verbal resources. The resulting irony comes from very brief rhetorical procedures and from what is called “content,” which can be related to the concept of “cultural memory,” referring not only to customs (the institution of duel), but also to facts and historical names (related to the Napoleonic period).

For some time, the critics found that the first impulse for the duel fable was perhaps a historical piece of news about two duelists of the Napoleonic era, whose last names were Dupont and Fournier. Apparently, the news served as a skeleton for the story told by Conrad.<sup>9</sup> Fictions on swordsmen were usual subjects in the short stories published by popular magazines (DONOVAN, 2005, p.167). However, the literary work of the writer’s submitted material makes evident reference to Pushkin’s text; therefore, it clearly creates a form of implicit dialogue.

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<sup>8</sup> “The viewpoint of the Modernist short story is that of the outsider; its position is on the margins of society; its material is a fragment of what was once a communal web. Conrad’s short fiction, like his novels, revolves on this nostalgia for the sense of community and the awareness of its loss” (ERDINAST-VULCAN; SIMMONS, STAPE, 2004, p.vi).

<sup>9</sup> “Fournier, taking out his subsequent rage on the messenger [Dupont, que le dio la noticia de arresto domiciliario], challenged Dupont to fight. This sparked a succession of encounters, wages with sword and pistol, that spanned decades. The context was eventually resolved when Dupont was able to overcome his opponent during a pistol duel, forcing him to promise never to bother him again” (EVANGELISTA, N. *The Encyclopaedia of the Sword*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995, p.187). The accuracy of the news was overshadowed by the Conradian fiction itself, *post factum*.



At various times and with some fanfare, Conrad denied the fact of knowing, even superficially, Russian language and literature. For example, he stated that he had only read Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in English in order to enjoy Constance Garnett's professional translation skills. Still, such a radical ignorance of the matter is hardly acceptable because he was born in the Russian empire territory and lived in Vologda and Chernigov until he was eight. Afterwards, he was taken to Warsaw and then to Krakow. Furthermore, his father, being a litterateur and former officer of the Russian army, must have known the language at a certain level.<sup>10</sup> Besides, his uncle and protector, who must necessarily have visited him during his adolescence years, owned a farm near Kiev, where he lived for seasons. His aversion to everything that is Russian can be understood by his biography and, in general, by his own origin; in fact, on more than one occasion, researchers have indicated that he was familiar with Russian literature much more than he was willing to accept.<sup>11</sup>

I do not intend to make psychological speculations regarding Conrad's attitude to the Russian literary and cultural legacy and I lack the space here to make historical tours on the Russian-Polish relations: This type of reference can be found in the bibliography of the writer's life and work. I limit myself to mentioning that at the base of this criticism, which is of nationalist nature, lies a kind of rivalry between two great Slavic powers for cultural dominance and historical prestige in Eastern Europe, specifically as Slavic world leaders.

In its historic time and literary context, Pushkin's *The Shot*, published as the opening story of a series of five stories, each of which offered an example of short prose based on European models that genuinely parodied them, represented an innovation in Russian literature due to the introduction of several elements: the irony of the whole, highly characterized parodic narrator, the actuality of the references, the absence of an explicit moral in almost all of his tales, which was interpreted as preposterous by critics, etc. All this set a precedent for the nascent national literature.

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<sup>10</sup> Apollo Korzeniowski was deported with his family for taking part in an independence conspiracy in Vologda, a city located in the North of Russia. There, his wife quickly died of tuberculosis, and he did not last long in this world.

<sup>11</sup> These readings are especially expressed in his novel *Under Western Eyes* (1916), which is an undercover replica of *Crime and Punishment* and *Demons*.

The elements that constituted the network of meanings of *The Shot* are disabled by the semantic inversion of values that Conrad introduces in order to take advantage of a magazine short story, the old structure of Pushkin's experimental narrative, which also makes extensive use of parodic features that are the very essence of the *Tales of Belkin*. Silvio is an antecedent of Dostoyevsky's "underground man," who is a resentful narrator that assesses his behaviour by his literary precursor. He does it not without an ironic rationality, for he is aware of the parodic nature of the model and of the actual desire to follow him in real life.

Silvio's replica is Feraud, who leads the duel situations to the level of absurdity and, with obsessive zeal, follows each step of his imaginary rival. As he considers all his successes as personal offenses, he seems to be a caricature of the "underground man." Conrad grants Feraud only the skills of a soldier: he does not seem to be conscious of himself or his intelligence; not having a sense of humor and irony, he lacks the ability to speak about the nobility of the soul or culture. His martial fervor is easily explained by the demand for a misconstrued equality, by the envy and social resentment that he feels towards his companion, who is favored by nature and fortune. For this reason, he defames his comrade in arms without even being aware that he is doing it. His twisted mind is only straightened up when he follows the rules of the duel, when he is able to behave according to circumstance. As an eternal adolescent, he is unable to change and grow emotionally. Despite being fortune's favorite and packed with social and natural gifts, D'Hubert acts with the uprightness of an eternal teenager. Nobody can take him off the path of good luck, not even in near-death situations: he comes out of them morally unscathed, even when he is physically hurt. The importance of the last duel, as in Pushkin, is due to a relationship with the opposite sex. That is when D'Hubert gets to know the true feelings that his young betrothed has for him, whereas the Count fears for his life and his wife's well-being in the midst of complete happiness.<sup>12</sup>

The simplicity of Conrad's narrative layout, whose short-story is really long, is only justified when we see it as a replica of Pushkin – whose writing is, although very brief,

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<sup>12</sup> In current criticism, some have interpreted the conflict between the duelists as latent homosexuality as well as immaturity (see Durkin, 2000).

much more complex structurally. Conrad systematically disables all significant elements that were explicit in Pushkin: as to the Count's fuss during the duel, Silvio responds with a sophisticated revenge, making him feel unworthy and reserving a heroic role for himself. In his turn, during fifteen or sixteen years, D'Hubert only defends himself from his angry opponent and, finally, wins Feraud by means of a ploy, which completely breaks with the strict duel rules. The last noble gesture is made by D'Hubert. First, he saved Feraud from the pursuit by Fouché, the secret police chief during Napoleon and the Restoration periods who would kill, and, after all this, he gets Feraud a pension.

Certain essentialism lies behind the figures of a commoner and a noble, who have fixed characteristics that stem from their birth. This can be perceived in Conrad's short story, behind the long lines explained by the action.<sup>13</sup> From a secular social imaginary, this opposition is widely developed in Dostoyevsky's works (in a very explicit way, in *The Adolescent*) in an iconoclastic way.

At this point, if the reader is enabled to interpret the chronotope of Conradian report (cultural associations), the same cultural memory can expand the context in which the characters of Feraud and D'Hubert would demand a latent sense that, in fact, it contains. In principle, Feraud is a child of the French Revolution, an event that allows the son of a blacksmith to climb socially due to his own efforts. He should be more appreciated if we compare him to the Baron D'Hubert's context of birth and upbringing. In this case, Feraud is a self-made man and, thus, he shows much more strength than his opponent, taking into consideration where they came from. Even so, in the short-story, Feraud incessantly highlights his devotion to the Emperor, whose fate, no doubt, can be compared with his. As to him, the Russian classical literature and, in particular, in Dostoyevsky, Napoleonism is an important source to interpret the impact of social mobility in capitalist societies.

Ridley Scott's film picks up on the adventure only, and based on its framework he is able to produce a visually striking film. Despite Keitel's and Carradine's outstanding performance, the subject and the characters remain in the background. (Incidentally, thanks to Keitel's performance and the accents placed by the director, part of the historical

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<sup>13</sup> According to the values of the old regime, in principle, matters of honor are not for commoners and social climbers, who occupy a place that is not theirs.

motivation of his character is preserved). The costumes of the period, landscapes and interiors, and the same perfection of fencing exercises are the main details of interest. The addition of extra characters and the change of the final elements of the work intensify the suspense that the genre requires. Although the production work seems to be the result of a museological effort, the film as a whole contributes to the total loss of the chronotopical nature of the conflict. The result is a tasteful and stupendous film that deserves to be watched due to its photographic virtuosity, compared to painting, but the ideological and dialogic aspects that the reading of the story can potentially offer obviously disappear. I imagine it would not be of interest to the cinema to reproduce Pushkin's context of *The Duel*, once it would require the recovery of a multitude of nuances and elements that make up the co-text (historical *avant-texte*) of Conrad's work, which includes references to the years of 1612, 1796, 1812, 1831, 1862; the origins and the family heritage of the British-Polish narrator; the romanticism of the 1831 and 1862 uprisings and the permanent defeat; Mickiewicz; Apollo Korzeniowski; Lord Jim, and finally Nostromo, who is a hybrid being, an Italian lost in Costaguana, a semi-romantic leader of an unlikely Latin American village that is actually a thief who dies from a stray bullet in a strange land. But of course, it would be a film in which the interest would shift from the motif of a historical adventure and the explicit reference to painting (landscape and gender), complemented by resources, such as the soundtrack, features of Scott's film, to a historical exegesis that would exalt the characters, preserved in their motivation by the historical memory found in literature.

The dialogue between Russian and Polish cultures and Russian literature and Joseph Conrad is renewed and reset in new historical conditions, when many elements, which remained hidden in the unutterable territories, can be read by new generations. The dialogue is refracted through another language, English, and its literature, which absorbed Conrad's writing with his well-buried Polish historical trauma (although present), and, despite everything, gathers new voices that arise in new social and historical conditions, producing new meanings and projecting itself into other languages and literatures.

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