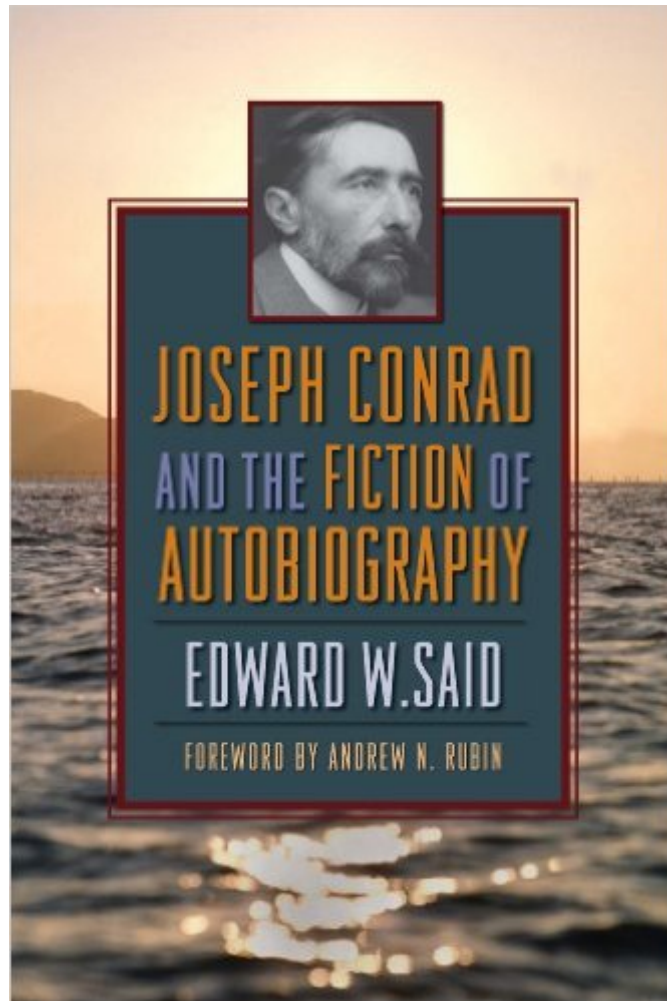


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Joseph Conrad And The Fiction Of Autobiography



Synopsis

Edward W. Said locates Joseph Conrad's fear of personal disintegration in his constant re-narration of the past. Using the author's personal letters as a guide to understanding his fiction, Said draws an important parallel between Conrad's view of his own life and the manner and form of his stories. The critic also argues that the author, who set his fiction in exotic locations like East Asia and Africa, projects political dimensions in his work that mirror a colonialist preoccupation with "civilizing" native peoples. Said then suggests that this dimension should be considered when reading all of Western literature. First published in 1966, Said's critique of the Western self's struggle with modernity signaled the beginnings of his groundbreaking work, *Orientalism*, and remains a cornerstone of postcolonial studies today.

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Customer Reviews

Edward Said locates Joseph Conrad's fear of personal disintegration in his constant re-narration of the past. Using the author's personal letters as a guide to understanding his fiction, Said draws an important and telling parallel between Conrad's view of his own life and the manner and form of his stories. The critic also argues that the author, who set his fiction in exotic locations like East Asia

and Africa, projects political dimensions in his work that mirror a colonialist preoccupation with "civilizing" native peoples. Said then suggests that this dimension should be considered when reading all of Western literature. This study of Conrad was published in 1966 - a critique of the Western self's struggle with modernity - and a precursor, a beginning and a preface, as it were, to his groundbreaking work "Orientalism" - although in addition to being a cornerstone of postcolonial criticism and a valuable reading of Conrad and his fiction, it also contextualizes the faults and rifts that autobiographical narratives must navigate and explore so as to offer a self that is intimately non-self. A pleasure to read and think through.

Said appreciates the evolution of Conrad the writer, especially the relationship between the exile, the sailor, and the man of letters. He understands the particular gifts Conrad brought to looking at imperialism, even as he sought acceptance in Victorian and Edwardian England. Said makes a strong case that the war brought a new phase to Conrad's work.

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