Chapter – II

THE DUAL HERITAGE

(i) Apollo Korzeniowski and Polish Messianism

Conrad’s art was closely related to its author’s life. “Every novel”, said Conrad, “contains an element of autobiography – and this can hardly be denied, since the creator can only express himself in his creation”. It is now necessary to trace the development of the inner man, the formative intellectual influences which finally produced Conrad the novelist. Before settling down as a novelist, Conrad had acquired a vast and variegated experience of life. His unhappy childhood with indelible impressions imprinted on his susceptible mind had had a seminal influence on all his fiction. The irrational and hostile universe portrayed in Conrad’s fiction could be traced to his appalling experiences in the Poland of his childhood which tended to undermine any vision of a stable society. A close look at his own life would definitely offer reasons for his lifelong preoccupation with the themes of exile, loneliness, isolation and issues pertaining to man’s existence in the world. In order to explore the background of Conrad as a novelist, we must look further into the past than the period 1894-1924 during which he was engaged in creative activities.

The English critics – and indeed I am an English writer – when speaking of me always add that there is in my work something incomprehensible, unfathomable, elusive. Only you can grasp this elusiveness, understand the incomprehensible. It is Polishness."

This was said by Conrad in 1914 in an interview with Marian Dabrowski. Indeed, to understand and interpret Conrad properly and to explain the “oddities and mysteries” of his art some ‘additional clues’ are necessary, which are no doubt embedded in Conrad’s national, social, and cultural background –
in the dual heritage of his father Apollo Korzeniowski and his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski.

One striking aspect of Conrad's creative imagination is that it did not represent one culture and tradition. He has been called a 'cosmopolitan of French culture'. In fact, a mixture of different and remote traditions had converged in Conrad – those cultures and traditions to which he had been exposed under different trying circumstances since his childhood. In course of reading his fiction – particularly the fiction of the early and great middle period – we are constantly reminded, and brought to a recognition, of the presence in them of inner tensions between two conflicting selves or natures of Conrad, originating in two different sets of circumstances. Conrad himself was profoundly aware of these tensions to which his letters and works bore ample witness. His father Apollo Korzeniowski and his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski were mainly responsible for these tensions. For Poland was passing through a very crucial time. And Apollo Korzeniowski and Tadeusz Bobrowski responded and reacted to the contemporary social and political thinking and happenings in Poland in ways that were diametrically opposed to each other. Conrad no doubt came under the impact of both of them and their divergent principles. As a result of their continued and persistent influence on Conrad since his childhood upto 1869 when Apollo sacrificed his life for the country, and thereafter for the period upto 1894 when Tadeusz Bobrowski died, Conrad became the inevitable victim of two contrary states, two conflicting ways of existence. He turned into a 'homo duplex' – the man with a dual character. In a letter to a fellow Pole, fellow compatriot, fellow exile, and fellow writer in Paris, Kasimir Waliszewski, Conrad wrote:

_Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning. You will understand me. I shall not dwell upon that subject._

Conrad's suggestive phrase 'homo duplex' points among other things to a basic division in his mind. And an imaginative writer with this kind of 'divided'
mind seemed ‘usually’ to have achieved “that complicated balance of elements which is necessary for good fiction”. Out of these conflicting perceptions of father and uncle, patriot and cosmopolitan, revolutionist and conservative, romantic and realist, dilettante and craftsman, real father and spiritual father, Conrad created some of his finest fiction. His creative activities suffered immensely when the ‘homo duplex’ became the homo simplex, when he resolved the psychological tensions within him in favour of his father Apollo Korzeniowski. The signs of inner reconciliation began to appear after a severe illness in 1910, and these became clearly evident in the short story *Prince Roman* (1911) in which Conrad “for the first time whole heartedly accepted romantic nationalism”.

The impact of Apollo Korzeniowski upon Conrad was strong and profound. In the contemporary cultural and political life of Poland Conrad’s father occupied an important position and played a very significant role in the Polish struggle for independence. Apart from the family tradition which warranted this sort of action, Apollo Korzeniowski was also influenced by great poets like Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasinski who were the pioneers of the romantic movement in Polish literature.

Apollo Karzeniowski’s deep love and concern for his country were apparent in the title of a poem that he wrote on the occasion of Conrad’s birth: ‘To My Son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression’. Korzeniowski wrote:

> My child, my son, if the enemy calls you a nobleman and a Christian – tell yourself that you are a pagan and that your nobility is rot... My child, my son – tell yourself that you are without land, without love, without Fatherland, without humanity – as long as Poland, our Mother, is enslaved.

The content of the poem expressed not only the agony and desperate hopelessness of Apollo; it also came to symbolise ‘the combination of national and personal tragedy’ that surrounded Conrad’s early years.
At this critical moment in Poland's national life Polish literature, and particularly poetry, played a very significant role. “It was at that time that the notion of a ‘wieszez’ – a prophetic bard, a poet and spiritual and political leader of the nation – was born”. Literature undertook the noble responsibility of keeping the national culture alive and united by awakening national feelings in the people. Thus the spirit of resistance was strengthened.

Apollo Korzeniowski was much influenced by the three great Polish poets: Mickiewicz, Slowacki and Krasinski. Their works dealt with the Christian doctrines of suffering, sacrifice and redemption which came to be interpreted in Poland in a nationalistic context.

Mickiewicz in turn derived his vision from the mystic Andrzej Towianski (1799-1878). The new-made political myth of Towianski was that “Poland is the national incarnation of Christ, destined to become the messiah among the nations of Europe. The martyred people of Poland, as part of a mystical body, are destined to rise ‘on the third day’.” Mickiewicz enunciated this messianic doctrine to Polish exiles in Paris during the 1840s.

Apollo's unfinished drama “The Father” ('Ojciec') dealt with “the choice between fidelity and death versus betrayal and life, and presenting all the basic aspects of this choice: honour and happiness, shame and fear, reputation and care for others.” Apollo also criticized in his writings the irresponsibility of the Polish aristocracy, the luxury-loving class which was easily won over by the Russian strategists in the eighteenth century.

Polish Messianism grew and stimulated the suffering people tremendously by encouraging high and lofty ideas: sacrifice, endurance, the solidarity of nations and liberty. According to F.R. Karl, Polish Messianism developed as “one of the outgrowths” of the futile protests by the Polish gentry against Russian imperial power. Messianism was often applied to the entire nation “to explain her misfortunes and to sanction her struggles”. Mickiewicz pointed out that the
principal dogma of Messianism was the choice of the best developed soul as an instrument of Godhead. As a result, Messianism was frequently projected into the figures of representative men and heroes.\textsuperscript{14} It established patriotism as the highest virtue while making it particularly difficult to translate patriotism into intelligent action. At the same time it discouraged thorough rational analysis of contemporary social and political problems.

The independence of Poland was another goal for the Polish nobility in the Ukraine, as also in ethnic Poland. But regarding the ways and methods of achieving independence the Poles were divided in three major groups – the appeasers, the ‘whites’, and the ‘Reds’.

Apollo Korzeniowski was an outspoken left-wing member of the ‘Reds’ in pursuit of his family tradition. Apollo had two dominant passions in life – literature and politics, apart from his engagement as an estate manager and lease holder. That lasted for three years. Leaving his family behind in the Ukraine, he alone went to Warsaw ‘to become one of the leaders of the Reds’,\textsuperscript{15} and was soon arrested and imprisoned for conducting underground activities. Ewa his wife was also co-accused in the trial and ultimately they were sent to face the deadly climate of Vologda. After three months Ewa was ordered to go back to Chernikov where she died on 18 April, 1865, at the age of thirty-two.

The death of his wife stunned him. “Apollo turned to sombre religiosity; even his patriotism, practical and socially conscious before, now became permeated with mysticism: he saw no hope in this world and desperately sought for it in the idea of divine purpose”.\textsuperscript{16} His bitter inner strife between the thought of rearing his son and his utter helplessness in this regard plunged him into a spiritual crisis, as recorded in a letter written this year to a cousin.\textsuperscript{17}

Apollo Korzeniowski died on 23 May 1869. The funeral procession that was brought out in Cracow took the form of a great ‘patriotic manifestation’ with
little Conrad at the head of the cortege. It was a ‘silent tribute’ to Apollo Korzeniowski who had burnt himself out in the cause of the nation.\(^{18}\)

Not long before his death Korzeniowski wrote to a friend about his aims in raising his son. “My main purpose”, Korzeniowski wrote, “is to bring Conrad up to be neither a democrat, aristocrat, demagogue, republican, monarchist – or a servant or lackey of any of those parties – but only to be a Pole”.\(^{19}\) Here Korzeniowski simply referred to the boy as Conrad – a name rich with patriotic associations. Conrad was christened ‘Jogef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski’. His first name, given after his maternal grandfather, was connected with ‘a legacy of anti-romanticism, political opportunism, and enlightened conservatism in social opinion’. The second name was attributed to the boy after his paternal grandfather, who was an ex-captain of the Polish Army and a fervent patriot. ‘Nalecz’ signified the branch of the Korzeniowski line from which the boy descended. But his third name was heavily endowed with meaning, and it gained immense popularity in Poland through Adam Mickiewicz who gave this name ‘Konrad’ to two of his heroes. The first one was the title-hero of a romantic tale in verse, *Konrad Wallenrod* (1827).\(^{20}\) The other and more important hero referred to the main character in Mickiewicz’s great poetic drama “The Forefathers’ Eve” (*Dziady*, 1832).

It was apparent that Apollo Korzeniowski by naming his only son ‘Konrad’, marked him, too, as one who must fulfil his political mission. Apollo’s affirmation that Conrad must be brought up “only to be a Pole” also implied the “impossible obligations to the fatherland”, while, paradoxically, it warned against any action.\(^{21}\)

For, Apollo Korzeniowski’s arguments in defence of Poland’s right to exist as a nation and the romantic credo of many Polish *emigrés* came to be echoed in Conrad’s essays after 1905 in *Notes on Life and Letters*. 
1) Poland had never threatened any outside nation though she served as an obstacle to aggressors;
2) Polish wars were defensive only and took place only within Poland’s frontiers;
3) Poland’s territorial expansion resulted from spontaneous unions with neighbouring states who remained sovereign, not from conquest;
4) bloodshed and civil strife in Poland were always the result of excessive individualism and faith in freedom pushed too far; and
5) when heads were rolling on European scaffolds, only one political execution took place in Poland.22

When in 1919 Conrad was called upon by one of his critics to defend his father Apollo Korzeniowski against the charge of “revolutionist”, Conrad protested: “No epithet could be more inapplicable to a man with such a strong sense of responsibility in the region of ideas and so indifferent to the promptings of personal ambition as my father”. Conrad firmly stated that his father was not a revolutionary but a “Patriot”23 in the sense of a man who “believing in the spirituality of a national existence could not bear to see that spirit enslaved”.24

The circumstances of his life, the conflicts of his mind, and the contradictions of his political and religious philosophy worked to make Apollo Korzeniowski “an ill-integrated personality”.

*His sensitive heart was at war with his pride; practical ineptitude frustrated his attempts to become a country gentleman; his liberal beliefs conflicted with his aristocratic ego; the political realities of the mid-nineteenth century broke in rudely on his flaming poetic idealism; and his messianic mysticism revealed to him visions of hell rather than of heaven. He is an example of the romantic personality; impetuous, contradictory, irrational, by turns generous and selfish, withal attractive.*25
(ii) Tadeusz Bobrowski as spiritual father: Duty and Profession

When Conrad was nineteen Tadeusz Bobrowski, Conrad’s uncle and spiritual father, wrote to him:

_I consider it my duty by advice and reminders to keep you on the right path: that is on the path of reason and of duty._26

He wanted to teach Conrad “an idea of rational and practical duty” which was irreconcilable with Apollo Korzeniowski’s “belief in the primacy of duty to the fatherland”. So Bobrowski in his letters constantly drew Conrad’s attention to the weaknesses of the Korzeniowski family and to the strengths of the Bobrowski family. Bobrowski also tried to enlighten Conrad on the supposed differences between the two families with the help of a proverb: “Hope is the mother of fools and calculation the father of the sober-minded”.27

Tadeusz Bobrowski was also strongly opposed to all socially radical movements. For Bobrowski was a man

_who was absolutely convinced of the unshakeable laws and duties of reason; criticism, and free will ... and rejecting all external influences of feeling, passions, and one’s environment, possessing for every problem of life a ready formula obtained by abstract reasoning._28

In his letters to Conrad, Bobrowski recurrently asked Conrad to discard, as being dangerous, his paternal heritage of unreason, melancholy, pride, and romantic idealism. At the same time, he encouraged Conrad to cultivate his maternal heritage of good sense, modesty and devotion to duty “defined by circumstances”.29 Bobrowski also held the view that Conrad’s fantastic decision to turn a seaman was the result of the romantic absurdity that Apollo Korzeniowski “had instilled in Conrad during their years together in exile”.30

Bobrowski attributed Conrad’s frequent change of plans to his restlessness and carelessness which were again Korzeniowski traits.31
It was interesting to know that Evelina Bobrowska, Conrad's mother, also willingly joined the Polish national movement and it took long years to know "the fact that she was arrested, tried, and convicted with her husband".32

Still Bobrowski's credibility was unquestionable to Conrad for the simple reason that he maintained a balanced judgement in his bitter criticism of Apollo Korzeniowski. In a letter Bobrowski declares:

"... I don't in the least deny that the Naleczes have a spirit of initiative and enterprise greater than that which is in my blood".33

He also sincerely believed that the combination of these two "excellent" inheritances should produce a "truly superior man" who would astound the world "by its endurance and wise enterprise".34 In this way Bobrowski could impress upon Conrad the truth of his criticism.

Bobrowski persistently tried to make his nephew "a useful moral man with a good deal of self-control". He strove to make his idea of duty clear to Conrad and advised the boy to choose a definite profession. At the same time, he sought to remind Conrad of the failings of his father Apollo who evidently did not have any profession in his life.

Bobrowski sermonized Conrad that 'profession' had its foundation on proper education. He told Conrad that in order to be a cultivated man he should aim at acquiring proper education which consisted in learning thoroughly "the first principles" of every subject, of knowing them "fundamentally". Emphasising the acquisition of "endurance", "strength of character", and personal initiative as essential ingredients of man, Bobrowski asked Conrad to be "useful, hard-working, capable and therefore a worthy human being" in this world.35

This was the first letter that Bobrowski wrote to Conrad after his father's death.

Thus in Conrad's mind the idea of professional duty was an antithesis to his father's concept of patriotic duty.36 In forming this concept of duty Conrad was
strongly influenced by his maternal uncle. In fact, Apollo Korzeniowski and Tadeusz Bobrowski were poles apart in their attitudes to duty. “Apollo Korzeniowski, of course, saw duty as the unwavering devotion to the Polish cause despite disappointment, circumstances, or the claims of his personal life”.37 Bobrowski’s conception was realistic and quite different. He saw it as part of a philosophy agreeing with the new realistic movement in Polish culture. This attitude specifically rejected Polish messianism, insurrection, and the primacy of patriotic duty.

Bobrowski’s attitude to duty was not primarily patriotic but practical. Nor did it seek to aspire to that transcendent religio-political duty of “only to be a Pole” but rather the “duty according to circumstances and time”.38 Having explained to Conrad the travails and tribulations in “my own fate and the fate of my family and my nation” that developed in him this calm outlook on the problems of life, he said in a letter that the motto in his life,

_I venture to say, was, is, and will be ‘usque ad finem’. The devotion to duty interpreted more widely or narrowly, according to circumstances and time – this constitutes my practical creed which – supported as it is by the experience of sixty years – may be of some use to you._39

Now for Conrad, as well as for Tadeusz Bobrowski, ‘profession’ had significant connotations. A profession or craft should have “a long and honourable history with clearly marked traditions” that would have “a restraining moral effect upon the character”. For Conrad, profession served in this age without dogma, as a substitute for more general codes of behaviour that would create “genuine moral strength” as they had done in earlier eras. To their mind, ‘profession’ had hardly any relation to “economic security”, or “matter of class”, or “formal education”. Conrad’s ideal was that a man’s profession, which was his true work, should also be a vocation, a calling.40 In Conrad’s view of life the absence of profession usually had disastrous effects. One of the significant things that Marlow came to learn about Kurtz in _Heart of Darkness_ was his lack of definite profession.41
Bobrowski also warned Conrad against constant change of profession. Bobrowski remarked that changing from one profession to another made “people become déclassé, who never having warmed a place for themselves nor having built anything for themselves ... bear a grudge against the whole world for not having succeeded”. Bobrowski never trusted businessmen and politicians and expressed his strong objections against them:

You must see it for yourself – does it agree with personal dignity and reason to tie oneself to the fate of another man – however great he might seem – and in this particular case to some American businessman or politician? It is much more dignified and sensible to devote your life and tie your future to a certain profession, putting into it your work & determination .... By changing from one career fortuitously to another you may encounter on your way nothing but deception and pain.

Almost the echo of Bobrowski’s admonitions was detected in Conrad’s shorter fiction *The Duel* where Colonel D’Hubert, an officer under Napoleon and a rational hero of Conrad, reflected in a letter “upon the uncertainty of all personal hopes, when bound up entirely with the prestigious fortune of one incomparably great it is true, yet still remaining but a man in his greatness”.

As a Korzeniowski Conrad felt the fascination of business and politics. As a Bobrowski he was aware of their dangers and tragic possibilities. Again under the influence of his uncle Conrad saw that occupations like business and politics did not follow inherent codes of values and standards of behaviour by which a man could conduct his life. He treated the subject of business ironically in *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*. For the same reason, Conrad rejected the nineteenth century cult of individualism and hero-worship. At first Conrad consciously chose the profession of a seaman where he made steady advancement filling positions of ever increasing responsibility until he became the captain. As a sailor he fully abided by the seaman’s code of duty and responsibility – facing dangers in oneself, among one’s shipmates, and in the elements. In this professional advancement and strict performance of duty
Conrad saw that he actually followed the principles inducted in him by his uncle Bobrowski.

Even when Conrad took the profession of an author, leaving behind his career in seamanship, he still carried with him his uncle's ideas of profession. But lest Bobrowski should interpret it as a dangerous Korzeniowski trait in him, Conrad could not commit himself to writing until after his uncle's death in February 1894. It was reported that Conrad with the arrival of the news of his uncle's death was suddenly able to complete his first novel *Almayer's Folly* (1895). Before its completion, for almost five years Conrad had struggled with this novel and carried the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* with him in his adventures through the world.

So, at his uncle's death Conrad felt free to devote himself to writing. He took the profession of a craftsman quite seriously. This was explicit in the way he tried to acquire literary friends. In fact, Conrad wanted to fill the role of the professional novelist. This role involved visits, criticism of one another's manuscripts, the exchange of new books, and dedications. The way he went along with Ford Madox Ford to H.G. Wells who was selected as the local representative of the Republic of Letters, to officially and formally announce their decision to collaborate, showed the devotion and earnestness with which Conrad decided to act his role as an author. In reality, Conrad as an author wished for the same bond of fellowship and mutual security with other authors as he had achieved in his career as a sailor. And he considered this a deep, psychological necessity. This was clearly marked in a letter that he wrote to Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) on receiving a gift from him of *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902). Praising the book Conrad said:

*It is indeed a thing done: good to see and friendly to live with for a space. This is the final impression – the whole feeling freed from that quarrelsomeness of one craftsman – appreciating another – if you do me the honour to take me for a fellow craftsman.*
This intense desire to be regarded "as a fellow craftsman" was manifest in another letter to Cunninghame Graham who had just dedicated a book to him:

"This moment I receive *Progress*; or rather the moment (last night) occurred favourably to let me read before I sat down to write."

Nothing in my writing life (for in the sea life what could approach the pride of one's first testimonial as a "sober and trustworthy officer"?) has given me greater pleasure, a deeper satisfaction of innocent vanity, a more distinct sense of my work being tangible to others than myself — than the dedication of the book so full of admirable things, from the wonderful preface to the slightest of the sketches within the covers.

Conrad was happy to learn that his work was "tangible to others than myself". This note of happiness was again apparent in his letter to Arnold Bennett who had just written to him, praising his *Twixt Land and Sea* (1912);

*It is indeed a rare happiness for a craftsman to evoke such a response in a creative temperament so richly gifted and of a sincerity so absolutely above suspicion as all your work proclaims to be.*

It is clear that Conrad found satisfaction in establishing a bond of relationship with his fellow authors. Bobrowski who taught him to be a useful and moral man, also urged him to adopt a definite profession. This attitude of Bobrowski was not shared by Apollo Korzeniowski who taught Conrad in his childhood "to be a good Pole". This contrast in attitudes between Bobrowski and Apollo Korzeniowski created for Conrad "a type for one of the most significant human relationships" — the figure of the spiritual father who has got "a profession and workable ideals and without the automatic claim of blood father". Conrad saw the figure of the spiritual father as an ideal and projected it into some of his own relationships. This was easily recognised in his personal life as well as in his two careers as sailor and author.

*The pattern of Conrad's relationship with his uncle recurred several times in Conrad's life; in both his careers Conrad felt that he was the son or apprentice to a spiritual father who initiated him into his profession and also that he himself served as a spiritual father for younger seamen and writers.*
In fact, as we turn to Conrad's fiction we see that of all the relationships in his life Conrad found the relationship between spiritual father and son, between master and apprentice, the most profound and satisfying. He portrayed this relationship with much emotion and deep significance. In *Lord Jim* Conrad explored and illustrated that the spiritual father might not always be able to extend his assistance to the young man even if he tried his utmost to do so. On the other hand, in *The Shadow-Line* Conrad showed the optimistic view of the relationship where the young man amply benefited from his spiritual father.

In *Lord Jim* Jim looked outwardly like a seaman and had a trustworthy appearance about him. But the reality of his jump from 'The Patna' made the effectiveness of the seaman's code of duty and moral responsibility questionable to Marlow. For it also challenged Marlow's own role in passing on this code to young seamen; it threatened Marlow's whole "complex of satisfying and justifying memories". That was one of the first reactions of Marlow to Jim.

In the novel the relationship between Marlow and Jim was the central father-son relationship. Other relationships depicted in the book threw light upon it by contrast and parallel. Jim approached Marlow as he in fact wanted to receive simple approval for his excuses from Marlow rather than the absolution that a priest could offer to the repentant sinner. Obviously, Jim's appeal had made Marlow's role as a spiritual father less compelling. Marlow was well aware of it.

*Didn't I tell you he confessed himself before me as though I had the power to bind and to loose? He burrowed deep, deep, in the hope of my absolution, which would have been of no good to him. This was one of those cases which no solemn deception can palliate, which no man can help; where his Maker seems to abandon a sinner to his own devices.*

Here Jim was different from the young captain of *The Shadow-Line*. At the beginning of *The Shadow-Line* the young captain felt the loss of illusions. But finally he averted this by the command of a ship and the development of a
sense of professional duty with the help of Captain Giles. The case of Jim was more complex and subtle. Actually he was retreating from professional maturity, although Marlow looked upon this young man as if he were at the shadow line or the point of initiation.

Since his first meeting with Jim, Marlow was aware of Jim’s tremendous sense of egotism. It was painful to Marlow that he could not help Jim, initially. As he grew more and more involved with Jim, his identification with Jim became more and more close, and this sense of identification not only disturbed Marlow, but also rendered him inadequate to play the role of spiritual father to Jim.

He was a youngster of the sort you like to see about you; of the sort you like to imagine yourself to have been; of the sort whose appearance claims the fellowship of these illusions you had thought gone out, extinct, cold, and which as if rekindled at the approach of another flame, give a flutter deep, deep down somewhere, give a flutter of light ... of heat.53

Of the spiritual father Conrad demanded detachment which Marlow failed to cultivate in his relationship with Jim. To justify his role of the spiritual father Marlow should have accepted Jim’s weaknesses as his own, not his failure only. Captain Brierly had admitted this, and seeing the weaknesses of Jim as his own, had committed suicide. Therefore, the relationship between Marlow and Jim tended to be a failure. Self-knowledge, profession, and duty that are essential for building the relationship were prevented by Jim’s pride, by his refusal to accept his own weakness and guilt.

This central relationship in Lord Jim between Marlow and Jim was paralleled by two other relationships which Jim formed first with Mr Denver and secondly, with Mr Stein, the German trader of the East. But the romantic nature of Jim was such that he followed his own dream to the very end for the sake of self-fulfilment only, showing his incapacity to receive subtle advice from anyone. By so doing he had disappointed all the three men who had looked upon him as a son. Jim spoiled the relationship with Marlow by his betrayal of
the seaman’s code of professional duty and responsibility. Jim’s desertion of Mr Denver and self-sacrificing death in the Patusan had destroyed the beginnings of two other filial relationships. This ultimately led to the betrayal of Marlow, who had sent Jim to them in a bid to save him from his tormenting disgrace.

Marlow had seen in Jim a younger and more idealistic self. Both Denver and Mr Stain had seen in Jim a son, a new self, who with his youth and energy would fulfil their hopes. That was why Stein sent Jim to Patusan to restore Doramin and his people, the Bugis community, to peace and prosperity. Doramin and the Bugis community in Patusan were passing through a precarious time with menacing threats from the tyrannical Sultan and a roving robber band. Within two years Jim was able to suppress the menacing threats and established peace and order with his energy and courage. But the relationship between Jim and Stein as son and spiritual father ended disastrously when Jim, for the second time, failed to protect the people under his charge, and at the “call of his exalted egoism” he simply committed suicide before the bullets from Doramin’s pistols. Jim felt that he could not continue to live in Patusan once the natives’ strong belief in him had been shaken.

The character of Stein was important from another point of view. It was evident that he combined elements of both Conrad’s father and uncle. Conrad gave to Stein his uncle’s motto, *usque ad finem*.

But the motto expresses not only that duty which reason perceives to be defined by circumstances, as Tadeusz Bobrowski had once explained it, but also the duty to the inner necessities of the romantic personality, an idea of duty reminiscent both of Conrad’s own inexplicable desire to go to sea and his father’s personality.54

A refugee from the liberal revolution of 1848, Stein was ‘romantic’ but at the same time was a man of practical intelligence. He argued that man must immerse himself in the “destructive element” and keep floating with his hands and feet so as to avoid drowning. Stein gave this subtle advice to Jim who,
however, was incapable of utilizing it and followed his own dream as self-fulfilment. It is clear then that Conrad consciously brought some biographical detail to bear on the relationship between Jim as son and Stein as spiritual father, in *Lord Jim*.

In *The Shadow-Line* Conrad dealt with positive aspects of the relationship between a young man and his spiritual father. Conrad here introduced Captain Giles, an older seaman, who helped the young man obtain the command of a ship and later set the stamp of approval on the young captain’s painfully learned wisdom. It was clear, though, that the young captain met on his own all the difficulties in course of the voyage – of a deadly calm, a fever-ridden crew, useless mates, as well as the young man’s own temptation to collapse superstitiously in defeat.

As the spiritual father Captain Giles took an active interest in the young man who had already inexplicably relinquished the post of the first mate from a ship. Captain Kent, the young man’s former commander, interpreted this decision as something done in a moment of irrationality or madness, although he was sorry to lose this excellent officer.

Just as Marlow had brought Jim’s case to Stein in *Lord Jim*, so Captain Kent discussed the young seaman’s case with Captain Giles. Captain Kent saw the young man’s difficulties as psychological, while Captain Giles saw them as moral. The experienced Captain Giles was quick to understand that the young man was passing through a dangerous state of mind and that probably he had seen through the ‘glamour’ of seamanship. Captain Giles also perceived that the young man needed “to develop the perfect love of the craft to replace his immature desire for constantly varying stimulation”.55

In his first conversation with the young man Captain Giles disapproved of the young man’s irresponsibility “in a benevolent heavy-uncle manner”. However, resented Giles’s “paternal intrusion into his affairs, preferring to drift
with circumstance and his own irresponsible impulses”. His resentment was an attempt to protect his own sober self-possession which Conrad claimed as one of the prime seaman-like virtues. As a spiritual father Captain Giles was quick to detect the young man’s difficulties. He saved him from his chaotic impulses by offering him the command of a ship by which the young man could prove himself and attain maturity.

Both Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and the young Captain in *The Shadow-Line* saved themselves by hard work and the strict performance of duty. Both Marlow and the young Captain began their journeys with an irrational action and discovered at the farthest point of navigation the evil of which they were capable. Both Kurtz and the dead Captain – the recently deceased predecessor of the young Captain – had betrayed the trust of a position of command.

Conrad’s profession of ideals found significant expression in *The Shadow-Line*. Soon after the young man had accepted the new command he entered the cabin for the first time, sat on the Captain’s chair and fell into a meditation on the succession of men who had sat there before him and what their “composite soul, the soul of command” might tell him.

But the young Captain had to soon revise his conception of the dynasty of command and “the blessed simplicity of its traditional point of view on life” when the mate intruded upon his meditation and reluctantly impressed upon him the evil and madness of the former command. The young Captain was profoundly shocked at the “act of treason” of his immediate predecessor.

*That man had been in all essentials but his age just such another man as myself. Yet the end of his life was a complete act of treason, the betrayal of a tradition which seemed to me as imperative as any guide on earth could be. It appeared that even at sea a man could become the victim of evil spirits. I felt on my face the breath of unknown powers that shape our destinies.*
In course of the entire tortured progress of the ship through the becalmed gulf, the young captain was haunted by the presence of the malevolent ghost of the dead captain.

The deceased captain in *The Shadow-Line* was in direct contrast to Captain Giles who symbolised sanity and duty in the narrative. It seemed that Conrad created this character solely to fill the role of spiritual father. He had no other motives for existence outside this specific role of spiritual father. And the narrator insisted emphatically and repetitiously on the “benevolence” of the older seaman Captain Giles. Captain Giles’s motives for helping the young Captain reach maturity were never made clear in the narrative.

In Conrad’s world Captain Giles was the embodiment of professional virtues. He also seemed to represent Conrad’s uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski: “a source of continuing affectionate interest and moral authority, to which has been added professional wisdom”.59 The contrast of the dead captain and Captain Giles as presented in *The Shadow-Line* seemed to suggest in a general way the differences between Apollo Korezeniowski and Tadeusz Bobrowski. The real father passed on to his son madness and destruction from which he could save himself only by carefully following the example and advice of the spiritual father.60

**Notes and References**


Zdzisław Najder, *Conrad's Polish Background*, p. 5.

*ibid*, p. 5.

*ibid*, p. 3.


*ibid*, pp. 22-3.

Zdzislaw Najder, *Conrad's Polish Background*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

*ibid*, p. 9.


Najder, *Conrad's Polish Background*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.


*Konrad Wallenrod* (1827), a romantic verse tale by Adam Mickiewicz. The poem celebrated the kind of extreme nationalism with which Poland was rocked at the time. If one’s nation was Christ and thus, innocent and divine, then the desire to destroy her enemies was innocent, divine, and dutiful. Konrad, a medieval Pole, joined the order of Teutonic Knights, rose to the head of this enemy force, and treacherously led the Knights to their death.

This savage story of deceit and national revenge satisfied Mickiewicz’s oppressed contemporaries and succeeding generations.


‘patriot’: “The term ‘nationalist’ though commonly used, is misleading, as it suggests exclusive pre-occupation with Polish national interest. Apollo Korzeniowski, like most Polish political leaders of his time, wanted to liberate all nationalities of the old Polish Commonwealth : Poles, Ukranians,
Lithunians, etc., and did not consider that this precluded their future autonomy”. – Najder, *Conrad Under Familial Eyes*, p. xiv(n).

24 Joseph Conrad, Author’s Note to *A Personal Record* (1912), pp. vii-viii.
26 Zdzislaw Najder (Letter, dated September 27, 1876), *op. cit.*, p. 37.
27 Najder (Letter, Aug. 3/15, 1881), *op. cit.*, p. 73.
28 Najder, *Conrad’s Polish Background, op.cit.* (Quoted by Najder), p. 17.
29 R.R. Hodges, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
30 Eliose Knapp Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
31 R.R. Hodges, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
34 *ibid*, p. 66.
35 Najder (Letter, Sept. 8/20, 1869), *op. cit.*, p. 35.
37 *ibid*, p. 66.
38 *ibid*, p. 69.
40 R.R. Hodges, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
41 *ibid*, p. 76.
42 Najder (Letter, 18/30 May, 1880), *op. cit.*, p. 63.
43 *ibid*, p. 63.
45 R.R. Hodges, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
51  *ibid*, p. 105.
53  *ibid*, p. 128.
55  *ibid*, p. 98.
56  *ibid*, p. 98.
58  *ibid*, pp. 160-61.
60  *ibid*, p. 103.