The life of Joseph Conrad a critical biography

John Batchelor

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The Life of Joseph Conrad

The Life of JOSEPH CONRAD

A Critical Biography

John Batchelor



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First published 1994

Blackwell Publishers 108 Cowley Road Oxford OX4 1JF UK

238 Main Street, Suite 501 Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142 USA

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Batchelor, John, 1942-

The life of Joseph Conrad: a critical biography / John Batchelor.

p. cm. — (Blackwell critical biographies: 4)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-631-16416-2 (alk. paper)

1. Conrad, Joseph, 1857-1924. 2. Novelists, English-20th

century—Biography. I. Title. II. Series. PR6005.04Z557 1994

823'.912—dc20

[B]

93-3674

CIP

Typeset in 10 on 11 pt Baskerville by Graphicraft Typesetters Ltd., Hong Kong Printed in Great Britain by T.J. Press Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

This book is printed on acid-free paper

For my son Leo

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- 5 The Tilkhurst at San Francisco. Conrad served in this sailing ship as second mate, voyaging to Singapore. He said of her captain that he was: 'One of the best seamen whom it has been my good luck to serve under.'
- 6 A. P. Krieger and his wife. Krieger was one of Conrad's earliest English friends.

7 Jessie George in 1896, the year of her marriage to Conrad.

8 Augustine Podmore Williams, first mate of the *Jeddah* and the main source for *Lord Jim*, with his young wife in Singapore, c.1883.

9 Captain John Snadden, who preceded Conrad as Master of the Otago and whose spirit vitally informs Conrad's The Shadow-Line, was buried at sea, probably off Cape St Jacques on the coast of Cochin/China.

10 The Otago, in 1888 Conrad's first command.

11 Stanley Falls, 1896.

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- 13 Edward Garnett with his son David in 1897. It was in October 1894 that Garnett, one of the readers for Fisher Unwin, advised acceptance of Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly*. Garnett's support for Conrad and his critical appreciation of his work were to outlast the writer's life.

14 Conrad and H. G. Wells together. Their friendship resulted from Wells's review of An Outcast of the Islands in 1896. Conrad wrote at the time, 'He descended from his "time machine" to be kind as he knew how.'

Pent Farm, near Hythe in South West Kent. Conrad lived here from 1898 to 1907, a period in which he wrote some of his best works.

16 R. B. Cunninghame Graham dressed as a gaucho, probably soon after his return from South America in the late 1870s. Conrad's friendship with him lasted from 1897 until Conrad's death in 1924. In a letter to Graham in 1920, Conrad wrote: 'May you ride firm as ever in the saddle, to the very last moment, et la lance toujours en arrêt, against The Enemy whom you have defied all your life!'

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18 Conrad's wife, Jessie, with their eldest son, Borys, at Pent Farm, in 1900.

19 Ford Madox Ford.

20 J. B. Pinker and Conrad at Pinker's home in 1922. Pinker approached Conrad in 1899 and later acted as his literary agent until Pinker's death in the year this photograph was taken. Pinker was agent for many leading writers of the day. When he recognized talent he was generous with his financial aid, as Conrad and Arnold Bennett knew from experience.

Joseph Conrad with his son Borys and Edmund Oliver on the occasion of Borys's joining HMS Worcester in 1911. Edmund Oliver was

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22 Capel House, Conrad's residence from June 1910 to March 1919.

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24 Joseph Conrad, c.1911.

Oswalds, Bishopbourne, near Canterbury. This was Conrad's last home, where he lived from 1919.

26 Conrad in the garden at Oswalds, June 1924, shortly before his death.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the British Academy for a research grant which enabled me to visit the Conrad archives in the USA, to the Trustees of the Joseph Conrad Estate for permission to quote copyright material, to the Warden and Fellows of New College, Oxford, for two periods of sabbatical leave and to the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne for research equipment, and to the following institutions and individuals: the Beinecke Museum and Library, Yale University; the Berg Collection, New York Public Library; the Harry Ransome Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas; the Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia; Birmingham University Library, the Bodleian Library, the British Library, Cambridge University Library, Durham University Library, the Oxford English Faculty Library, Rhodes House Library and the Robinson Library, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Claude Rawson who commissioned this biography and Andrew McNeillie my editor at Blackwell, my agent, Felicity Bryan, who has nurtured this project from its inception, Hermann Moisl who taught me how to use the computer on which it was written, David Saunders who alerted me to some of Conrad's source material, my wife, Henrietta, who has lived with my preoccupation with Conrad for many years, and Andrzej Busza, Zdzisław Najder, Tony Nuttall, Ken Robinson and Cedric Watts who read my drafts and made a large number of detailed and valuable comments. The book's limitations are, of course, all my own.

> JBB April 1993

1

Conrad and Poland

'My first object is to bring up Konradek not as a democrat, aristocrat, demagogue, republican monarchist, or as a servant and flunkey of those parties – but only as a Pole.'

Apollo Korzeniowski to Stefan Buszczyński, 5/17 March 1868¹

'What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal? What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?'

Henry V, III, ii.

When Joseph Conrad was born, in 1857, the 'Congress Kingdom' of Poland (established in 1815) was all that remained of a great medieval empire.² 'Poland' existed as a culture, a history, a language and a geographical region, but not as an independent nation. In 1795 it became an administrative area split up between three different states, Russia, Prussia and Austria. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the map was redrawn and a nucleus of the old Poland, 'the Congress Kingdom of Poland', centred on Warsaw, was created. Recognition of this restored 'Poland' as a separate entity did not mean independence for the Poles: the King of this 'Kingdom' was the Tsar of Russia. The Kingdom's constitution, designed by Prince Czartoryski, conferred some degree of autonomy on its inhabitants but that independence was drastically curtailed in 1831 and finally lost in 1864. An armed patriotic rising in 1830, the 'November Rising', organized by young army officers, led to a punitive expedition sent out by Tsar Nicholas I who declared that 'Russia or Poland must now perish'. After the military defeat of Poland in 1831 severe punishment was handed out: 254 of the military and political leaders of the 1830 rising were sentenced to death and some 80,000 other Poles were condemned to deportation to Siberia. Among those punished was Prince Roman Sanguszko, a courageous young man who refused, at his trial, to accept the prosecution's

suggestion that he had joined the rising because he was depressed by his wife's death and without seeing the consequences of his actions. He declared that he joined the rising out of conviction: he was sentenced to deportation. Nicholas I personally insisted that Prince Roman should make the whole journey to Siberia - five thousand miles - on foot. Conrad's only Polish narrative, his story 'Prince Roman', is based on his uncle Bobrowski's account of Roman Sanguszko's heroism.⁵ The relatively liberal constitution set up for the Polish Kingdom in 1815 was replaced by a 'constitution' whereby Poland was in practice governed by military decree.4 A further patriotic rising in 1863 directly involved Joseph Conrad's family: his father, Apollo Korzeniowski and one of his maternal uncles, Stefan Bobrowski were members of the committee of 'Reds' which had planned the rising. Stefan Bobrowski died in a duel in April 1863 and another maternal uncle, Kazimierz Bobrowski, was imprisoned after resigning his commission in the (Russian controlled) army. Two other uncles, Apollo Korzeniowski's brothers, were also involved: Robert Korzeniowski was killed in May 1863 and Hilary Korzeniowski was imprisoned and later (1865) deported to Tomsk: he died in exile.⁵

The rising of 1863 was ruthlessly suppressed by the Russians by 1864 and in 1865 the Congress Kingdom was dissolved. Russian punishment for the 1863 rising inflicted unprecedented damage on Poland. There was mass slaughter in Lithuania, and in Poland itself a whole generation of political and cultural leaders was lost. The most able and courageous (including Conrad's parents) were sent into exile and for most of them there was to be no reprieve. Some partisans of 1864–5 were still living out

their punishment in Siberia forty years after the event.6

Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, 'coat of arms Nalecz', was born 3 December 1857 at Berdyczów, in Podolia, one of the provinces of what was then known as Ruthenia and is now known as the Ukraine.7 His parents were figures of extraordinary and exemplary qualities. His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, was a member of the szlachta. This term, commonly translated as 'nobility', has no exact equivalent in English.8 The 'coat of arms Nalecz' in Conrad's name refers to the way - unique in Europe - in which the szlachta organized themselves into clans. These clans were based not only on kinship but also to some extent on community of interest (so that the Polish coat of arms is not an exact equivalent of the coat of arms of an English aristocratic family).9 In medieval Poland the szlachta were an hereditary class of landowning gentry. In 1573 Poland became an elective monarchy and this enhanced the political role of the salachta who now had the right to elect the King. In theory at least any member of this class might himself be elected King. The szlachta were about ten per cent of the population - a much larger group than the aristocracies of Britain or France - and although many of them were wealthy, land and serf-owning figures who became effectively local princes, others were reduced to an economic level no better than that of the peasants (but they retained their political privileges).

The Korzeniowskis at the time of Conrad's birth were no longer landowning. Their estates had been confiscated because of their participation in the uprisings of 1794 and 1830. Apollo Korzeniowski was a brilliant, passionate, courageous patriot, totally committed to the liberation of Poland from Russia. From 1840 he had studied Law and languages at St Petersburg university but seems to have left without taking a degree. From 1846 onwards he helped his father to manage various leasehold properties in the Ukraine, and probably in 1847 he met and fell in love with Ewa Bobrowska, who was twelve years his junior. The Bobrowskis, Ewa's family, were much more prudent (and much richer) than the Korzeniowskis, and resisted the match between Ewa and Apollo until, under the pressure of Ewa's illness (depression) in 1855, they gave in, and Apollo and Ewa Korzeniowski were married at Oratów, the family estate of the Bobrowskis, on 4 May 1856. 10 Apollo was already marked out as a patriot and a radical: his poems, 'Purgatorial Cantos' (1849-55), could not be published because of their patriotic and subversive content, and were circulated among the Polish-Ukrainian gentry in handwritten copies. His play, Komedia (1854), regarded as dangerously radical when it was performed in the 1850s, advocates an alliance between the patriotic gentry and the peasants against newly enriched landowners (landowners who prospered under the Russians - like the Bobrowskis - could, of course, be seen by fervent Polish patriots such as the Korzeniowskis as collaborators). 11 From 1852 onwards Korzeniowski worked in effect as a tenant farmer; his wife's dowry enabled him in 1857 to take on a farm at Derebczynka, in Podolia, but through a combination of financial mismanagement and a policy of generosity towards the peasants on the estate he seems to have lost most of their money by 1859, and moved with his wife and small son to Zytomierz, where he became a shareholder in a publishing company. He wrote and translated, and became increasingly involved in politics. In 1861 he committed himself entirely to politics, moving to Warsaw in order to take part in the resistance movement against the Russians, as a member of the 'Reds'. Polish patriots had split into two camps, the Reds, who advocated direct action and the Whites, who advocated negotiation. He had introduced his brother-in-law, Stefan Bobrowski, to the Reds. Stefan soon became one of their leaders but was killed, as we have seen, in a duel with a White in 1863. 12 Stefan Bobrowski is of particular interest to us as I shall show because his life and death may have contributed to Conrad's dramatizations of Haldin in Under Western Eyes and Jim in Lord Jim. 14

In October 1861 Apollo Korzeniowski was arrested by the Russians and imprisoned in the Warsaw citadel. Both Apollo and Ewa Korzeniowski were convicted of 'political activism', but their real, and serious, political activities remained undiscovered by the Russians and they were convicted on trumped-up charges. They were exiled to Vologda, a town in the Northern part of European Russia which had a penal settlement. In June 1862, about two weeks after their arrival at Vologda, Apollo Korzeniowski wrote to his cousins Gabriela and Jan Zagórski:

Vologda is a huge quagmire stretching over three versts, cut up with parallel and intersecting lines of wooden foot-bridges, all rotten and shaky under one's feet.... A year here has two seasons: white winter and green winter. The white winter lasts nine and a half months, the green winter two and a half. Now is the beginning of the green winter: it has been raining continually for twenty-one days and it will do so till the end.... We do not regard exile as a punishment but as a new way of serving our country. There can be no punishment for us, since we are innocent. Whatever the form of service may be, it always means living for others – so let our Lord Jesus Christ be praised for having rewarded us more than we deserve! Our serene faces, proud bearing and defiant eyes cause great wonder here: because after what we have seen and what God saw a luminous glow has remained in our eyes, a glow which will not be dimmed by anything and which will stay with us like a testimony when one day we appear before God's tribunal. So do not pity us and do not think of us as martyrs. 17

This letter demonstrates Korzeniowski's best qualities, his courage, high self-esteem, stoicism and fidelity (qualities which Conrad would, of course, dramatize as exemplary in his novels). It brings out, too, the strength of the Korzeniowskis' Christian conviction and the extent to which their Catholic faith sustained the couple in exile. To be Catholic was itself part of the composite which made up the identity of a Pole in the absence of a Polish nation. In 1863 Conrad, aged five, wrote an inscription on the back of a photograph which he addressed to his grandmother: 'To my beloved Grandma who helped me send cakes to my poor Daddy in prison – grandson, Pole, Catholic, nobleman – 6 July 1863 – Konrad'. Although Korzeniowski says in the above letter 'Do not think of us as martyrs' his and his wife's plight is, in a way, analogous with that of the early Christian martyrs in that the physical privation, which led directly to their deaths, was endured for the sake of convictions which they held passionately and unwaveringly.

Ewa Korzeniowska's health deteriorated, with some remissions, from the date of her exile until her death on 18 April 1865. Najder says of her that she was 'the only person in Konrad Korzeniowski's whole family about whom there are no conflicting reports. All the evidence points to her exceptional qualities. . . . For many years she kept her faith in the man she loved, even when his hope was waning, and her unshakable decision to participate in all his activities testifies to her strong character'. 19 At the time of her death Conrad was seven. After his wife's death Apollo Korzeniowski, himself suffering from tuberculosis, broke down. He became the figure whom Conrad recalled from his own childhood: the popular, brilliant and romantic patriot who had always been at the centre of highly charged political activity was transformed into something of a recluse, though not a despairing recluse. He engaged in a series of literary projects and tried to educate his little son, his 'Konradek', himself. The patriotism was undimmed. His central preoccupation, Polish national freedom, remained with him until his death in 1869.

Conrad was, then, the son of a man who was both a hero and a man of letters. Under Western Eyes is a major political novel expressing, in a re-An Fracted way, Conrad's feelings about Russia's relationship with Poland,20 and it is an interesting fact that Conrad's father might himself have written a somewhat similar novel, had he lived. In October 1868, when he was already mortally ill, Apollo Korzeniowski wrote to his closest friend, Stefan Buszczyński: 'A long Polish novel is in my head - about the depravity flowing to us from Moscow through the Asiatic splendour, the bureacratic honours, the disbelief inculcated into public education, the baubles of civilized fashionable Muscovy, and finally by penetration through intermarriage. It would begin in '54 and end in 1861.' He adds in the same letter a phrase which anticipates one of Conrad's titles: 'Usually those at the end of their tether keep making plans: I suppose I am not unlike them'.21 Korzeniowski did not write his patriotic novel but he was productive, and respected, as a poet, playwright, critic, political essayist and translator. The Purgatorial Cantos, written between 1849 and 1854, express his disappointment at the failure of the Poles to join the majority of other nations of Europe in revolution in 1848. The poetry is full, as Andrzej Busza says, of despair and patriotic grief:

So many days and so many years have we groaned with the voice of orphans on this our mother's grave, accompanied by the music of thunder; on our own soil – yet dispossessed, in our own homes – yet homeless! This once proud domain of our fathers is now but a cemetery and a ruin. Our fame and greatness have melted away in a stream of blood and tears; and our sole patrimony is the dust and bones of our ancestors.²²

His best known work, his play Komedia, deals, with a poet, Henryk, an idealist and revolutionary, who is at odds with the materialist society surrounding him (Komedia was revived in Wroclaw in 1952 and was very successful).²⁸ It is important for a reader of Conrad to note that Apollo Korzeniowski worshipped Shakespeare, and published in 1868 a long essay, 'Studies on the Dramatic Element in the Works of Shakespeare'. This essay displays exalted admiration for the poet's universality and, interestingly, for the England that he may be said to embody:

Shakespeare! It is enough to pronounce this name and at once a whole world of alluring visions deludes the mind. Before one's eyes, the man and the poet, his people and its civilization, and his age stand out – enigmatical and alluring... The new pattern of dramatic art was born in his [Shakespeare's] soul through an insight into the essence of man. The bard's genius

was moved and inspired by a universal spectacle; a spectacle of almost daily recurrence and yet one which goes unperceived by mankind, in spite of the fact that man is in it both the author and the spectator. This spectacle is the deadly struggle of the might of *Man* with the powers of Fate.²⁴

Andrzej Busza suggests that the ideas here can be compared with parts of the *Preface* to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. I agree with that and I would make more of it: it seems to me that the Preface's post-romantic view of the relationship between the artist, the art and the audience is more likely to be indebted to Apollo Korzeniowski's mid-nineteenth-century post-Romantic view of Shakespeare than it is, as some critics maintain, to the English romantic tradition as expressed in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. We will see that in much of his work, especially *Lord Jim, Chance* and *Victory*, Conrad displays a desire to do homage to Shakespeare.

In A Personal Record Conrad tells us that Shakespeare was the first English writer whom he read, and he read him in his father's translations: 'My first introduction to English literature [was] the "Two Gentlemen of Verona", and in the very MS. of my father's translation. It was during our exile in Russia, and it must have been less than a year after my mother's death, because I remember myself in the black blouse with a white border of my heavy mourning' (p. 71). This memory, which must date from 1866 (when Conrad was in his ninth year), reminds us that much of Korzeniowski's literary work consisted of translations: his other Shakespeare translations were The Comedy of Errors and Much Ado About Nothing, and he translated all Victor Hugo's plays (except Cromwell) and two of his novels (Les Misérables and Les Travailleurs de la mer). Conrad says that his father's translation of Les Travailleurs de la mer was his, Conrad's, 'first introduction to the sea in literature'. He gives Hugo's title as 'Toilers of the Sea' (A Personal Record p. 72): it is peculiarly relevant to Conrad's own preoccupations with the duties of sailors that work at sea should have been his introduction to sea literature. Among other French works Korzeniowski translated de Vigny's tragedy Chatterton and Dickens's Hard Times (this latter translation was reissued in Poland as recently as 1955). Bobrowski said that Korzeniowski also translated some of Heine's poetry into Polish. Andrzej Busza remarks that 'It is worthwhile noticing that Korzeniowski's choice of the materials which he translated was not haphazard. Three of the writers, Hugo, Heine and Dickens, whom he wished to introduce to the Polish reader were radicals who shared, in some measure, his own social and political creed'. 27 His translations would presumably have passed into Stefan Buszczyński's hands after Korzeniowski's death and some of those that were unpublished were subsequently lost (Buszczyńsky published a memoir on Korzeniowski, Malo znany poeta ['The Little-Known Poet'], in Cracow in 187028). His political essay, 'Poland and Muscovy,' was published in 1864, anonymously and allegedly 'posthumously'. The editors undoubtedly knew that the author was alive and under police supervision

in Russia. This essay foreshadows Conrad's own political essays, 'Autocracy and War' (1905) and 'The Crime of Partition' (1919). Apollo Korzeniowski writes [Najder's translation]:

The aim of Muscovy's development is to bring to a standstill all progress of humankind. So there is nothing surprising that Muscovy should keep this aim secret, and if it were not for her history I could be accused of exaggeration. Muscovy's history, however, shows that ever since she wriggled her way into European affairs, she has launched passionate attacks against every holy principle which happened to bloom in the civilized world, devouring or maiming it dangerously.²⁹

Compare Conrad's treatment of Russia as a mindless and carnivorous force:

Holy Russia, arrogating to itself the supreme power to torment and slaughter the bodies of its subjects like a God-sent scourge, has been most cruel to those whom it allowed to live under the shadow of its dispensations. The worst crime against humanity of that system we behold now crouching at bay behind vast heaps of mangled corpses is the ruthless destruction of innumerable minds. The greatest horror of the world – madness – walked faithfully in its train ('Autocracy and War', Notes on Life and Letters, p. 9).

It is within this context that we need to see Apollo Korzeniowski's letters about his son. Conrad is to live under an abominable tyranny within which one needs to be strong, intelligent and highly motivated in order to survive. And, as he writes on Christmas Eve, 1868, the little boy is worryingly undirected:

My Konradek is in good health. And this pleases me more than anything else, for his nerves were shaky. He is receiving formal education in accordance with the local school syllabus, although this year he will not attend classes. He is quite capable but has as yet no taste for learning and lacks stability. Admittedly he is only eleven. But before I close my eyes I would like to foresee the course he will follow. He likes to criticize everything from a sympathetic standpoint. He is also tender and good beyond words (to Stefan Buszczyński, 24 December 1868⁵⁰).

This is the loving and concerned language of a father who knows that he is dying and seeks to make provision for his only child.

It will be obvious from my account that I regard Korzeniowski as a heroic figure. His behaviour, which Tadeusz Bobrowski liked to represent as Quixotic and absurd, makes perfectly good moral sense given the historical situation within which he found himself.³¹ At the end of 1867, because of his extreme ill-health, Apollo Korzeniowski was given permission to leave Russia. The year and a half of life that were left to him were apportioned equally between his two greatest loves, his little son and his unhappy country: he tried to make plans for 'Konradek's' education, but

he also involved himself in the setting up of a new patriotic newspaper to be published in Cracow. In February 1869 he and Conrad moved to 6 Poselska Street, Cracow. On 23 May Apollo Korzeniowski died. The funeral, on 26 May 1869, was made the occasion of a major Polish patriotic demonstration. Conrad, aged eleven, led a funeral procession of several thousand people to the graveyard a few miles away from the medieval centre of Cracow.

Apollo Korzeniowski was an idealist, a radical, a man of action and a devout Catholic. His son was to grow up a sceptic, a conservative, a thinker and a declared unbeliever, though his resistance to Christianity softened in his last years. See Yet the two men have much in common: they share an exalted notion of literature and of the writer and his moral duty. And, as Andrzej Busza remarks, they were both pessimists who were wholly sceptical about the prevailing nineteenth century myth of human progress. In addition, they were both ironists who were, paradoxically, fascinated by heroism and convinced of the validity of a few fundamental truths, and they were both individualists who insisted on their identity as gentlemen.

The works of the Polish romantic and patriotic poet Adam Mickiewicz were of huge importance to Poles, and Conrad recalled that his father read to him Pan Tadeusz (1834: Mickiewicz's greatest work, a twelve-book poem which became in effect the Polish national epic) and two other works (which, he said, made more impression on him as a child) Grażyna (1823) and Konrad Wallenrod (1827). 34 'Konrad' was habitually used as the first name when Conrad was a child and then anglicized by him as his last name when he settled in England. Apollo Korzeniowski had chosen the name 'Konrad' for his son partly because of its associations with two works by Mickiewicz, Konrad Wallenrod and Dziady ['The Forefathers' Eve'] (1832), in each of which the protagonist's name is Konrad (in Dziady the poet 'Gustaw' is renamed 'Konrad' and becomes a patriotic hero35). The Konrad of Konrad Wallenrod is hero of a medieval struggle between Lithuanians and Germans which was understood, by all Poles, to stand for their contemporary struggle with the Russians. Konrad was obliged, for the ultimate good of his country, to engage in actions for which he was likely in the short-term to be judged a traitor. Julian Krzyżanowski sees this kind of moral conflict, whereby the hero is perceived as a traitor by those he seeks to help, as peculiar to occupied countries like Poland, and 'entirely foreign to the happy nations that have never known servitude and alien oppression'. In his view Under Western Eyes dramatizes a similar moral conflict, 'the influence of the wrong and rotten social conditions that affect, poison and destroy the human soul'. In Polish romantic literature the romantic hero embodies ideals of national and social responsibility and is an exceptional individual burdened with special duties to his nation. In Juliusz Słowacki's Kordian (1834), a work Conrad knew well, the hero wanders Europe, a 'lost soul', until he finds moral identity by fighting for his country's freedom. 57 (Kordian is in part a polemic with Mickiewicz's Konrad Wallenrod, 'Kordian' being almost an anagram of 'Konrad'.38)

Apollo's behaviour is thus part of a distinctly Polish romantic tradition, and the naming of his son shows a clear intention to pass that tradition on.

After his father's death care of Conrad passed in the first instance to Stefan Buszczyński, his father's friend and executor. Like Apollo Korzeniowski, Buszczyński was a literary man and had been a fellow member of the 'Reds' of 1861. Buszczyński was a dramatist, a poet, a literary critic and a journalist but he was also, and preeminently, an historian. In his historical works, published between 1860 and 1890 in Polish, French and German, he showed himself a radical and patriotic opponent of foreign domination (especially Russian and Austrian) and an advocate of education and political freedom as the only truly liberalizing forces in Europe. 59 Buszczyński's guardianship was a temporary arrangement, and in 1870 the Bobrowskis and the surviving Korzeniowskis placed Conrad. now aged twelve, under the joint guardianship of his maternal grandmother, Teofila Bobrowska, and Count Władysław Mniszek (who had been a friend of Conrad's mother). Teofila Bobrowska shared her daughter's -Conrad's mother's - patriotic spirit and romanticism. Between 1870 and 1873 Conrad lived in Cracow with his grandmother. In 1873 Bobrowski sent him from Cracow to a boarding school in Lwów, the capital of Galicia, where he stayed with Bobrowski's cousin, Antoni Syroczyński, who ran a boarding-house for boys orphaned by the 1863 insurrection.

In practice Conrad's real guardian during this period was his uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, his mother's brother. Tadeusz felt that as the son of well-known political activists Conrad would be unsafe living in Russia: hence the decision to settle him in Cracow, which was under Austrian rule, with his grandmother. We have seen that Apollo Korzeniowski had tried to educate Conrad himself, with the result that Conrad was very backward in some subjects and lacked the German and Latin that he would need to be admitted to the Gymnasium. He was placed at a boarding house run by Ludwik Georgeon in Floriańska Street in Cracow and a medical student from the Jagiellonian university, Adam Marek Pulman, was appointed as his private tutor. In 1870 Conrad passed an examination for St Anne's Gymnasium, reputedly the best school in Cracow, but it is not certain that he actually attended the school.40 (Zdzisław Najder believes that Conrad did not go to St Anne's but Andrzej Busza puts forward good arguments for thinking that he did. 41) If Conrad was indeed educated at that school then he went there at a fortunate time. As a result of a reform of 1867 Polish had replaced German as the official school language of 'Galicia' (Austrian Poland) and the principal text books had been translated into Polish.42

Conrad recalled his Cracow years very emotionally. The city centre was, and still is, small and exceptionally beautiful: the walking distances between his lodgings in Floriańska Street, St Anne's Gymnasium, and the apartment on Poselska Street where his father spent the last months of his life, were not great. He speaks of Cracow as 'that town of classical learning

and historical relics' ('Poland Revisited', Notes on Life and Letters, p. 165) of 'glorious tombs and tragic memories' (p. 169). Even for an eleven year old it was intimate and atmospheric. The middle-aged Conrad recalls his young self walking up Floriańska Street, just off the great central square where the 'unequal massive towers of St Mary's Church soared aloft into the ethereal radiance of the air' (p. 166). To walk up Floriańska Street and into the square today is to have exactly the visual experience that Conrad describes. Sadly, though, the air is no longer 'ethereal' but dangerously polluted. The Communist regime built a huge steel-works close to Cracow. It is believed that this was done with the deliberate intention of preventing its inhabitants from retaining elitist notions of the city's royal and academic status. This measure has seriously damaged the citizens' health but has done nothing to undermine their veneration of Cracow's traditions.

Tadeusz Bobrowski had a reputation for being ambitious and selfseeking and had few friends. He wanted to control Conrad's view of his parents. Throughout Conrad's childhood Uncle Tadeusz seems to have encouraged Conrad to see his mother as a helpless victim of his father's recklessness. He concealed from Conrad the fact that his mother had been convicted, with his father, of fostering rebellion against the Russians. The young Conrad was given a simple scenario: that he was the child of an adored and martyred mother and of a reckless father from the consequences of whose wild actions he, Conrad, had been rescued by his prudent uncle. 45 Yet this obstinate, prickly man has been misunderstood, both at the time and by posterity: he was capable of being warm and generous and he was genuinely affectionate. He loved Conrad, who to some degree replaced in Bobrowski's affections his daughter, his only child, Józefa, who died in 1871 aged twelve. She was a year younger than Conrad and had been his playmate 'in the clean country air' of Nowochwastów (the family estate of the Lubowidzkis, Tadeusz Bobrowski's parents-in-law) in 1866 (letter from Apollo Korzeniowski, November 1866⁴⁴). Conrad and Józefa were both lonely children and like Conrad, Józefa had had a childhood which could be seen as tragic in that her mother had died giving birth to her (27 April 1858). This woman, Józefa Lubowidzka, was from a wealthy family - Bobrowski had 'married well', as became so circumspect a man - and it is relevant to the Apollo Korzeniowski and Tadeusz Bobrowski relationship to note that Apollo had facilitated Tadeusz's courtship of Józefa Lubowidzka. 45 Apollo was nine years older than Tadeusz and had been a friend to him when they were students together at St Petersburg. Tadeusz studied Law but never practiced; on his father's death in 1850 he took on the responsibility of managing the Bobrowski estates. On 11 May 1849 Apollo, then twenty-nine, wrote to Tadeusz, who was then twenty:

I entertain a strong affection and great respect for you;.... I wish to be worthy of your friendship, which I find most rewarding;.... I cherish blissful hopes that having read this letter you will place me among dreamers and

unrecognized geniuses and that you will laugh; but if sincere feeling may evoke a reciprocity, then in spite of our different characters you will remember that we share the same feelings on human dignity, and you will not deny me your friendship.⁴⁶

This is affectionate but also nervous: Apollo seems very anxious to propitiate the younger man and is also seeking reassurance from him. In a curious way its tone anticipates the tone of the letters that Apollo's son in the 1890s was to write to Edward Garnett, whom – though he was much younger – Joseph Conrad treated as a senior and almost patriarchal friend. Tadeusz was to propagate the myth of Apollo as the insecure prodigal, himself as the confident anchor-man. Apollo's letter colludes with that myth: its writer clearly has little confidence – about the relationship with the recipient, at least – and is seeking reassurance. Tadeusz was then twenty.

We know far more about Tadeusz's view of Apollo than we do about Apollo's view of Tadeusz. It seems likely that Tadeusz was jealous of Apollo. While expressing affection for the older man, in his *Memoirs* (published after his death in 1900) and his letters Tadeusz fleshes out his myth of Apollo as an impulsive prodigal:

In our part of the country he had the reputation of being very ugly and sarcastic. In fact he was not beautiful, nor even handsome, but his eyes had a very kind expression and his sarcasm was only verbal, of the drawing-room type; for I have never detected any in his feeling or in his actions. Openhearted and passionate, he had a sincere love of people. In his deeds he was impractical, often even helpless. Uncompromising in speech and writing, he was frequently over-tolerant in everyday life. . . . Although he regarded himself as an avowed democrat, and others took him for an 'ultra' or a 'Red', he had in him – as I kept telling him – a hundred times as many salachta traits as I. . . . Actually it was his tender heart and his sympathetic feeling towards the poor and oppressed which made some people, including himself, believe that he was a democrat. In reality this was nothing more than the case of a well-born Nalecz being transported by his emotions and ideas, and not by any democratic principles. 47

Najder points out that this last assertion – that Apollo had no firm political beliefs – is contradicted by Apollo's writings, where 'he expresses his democratic views quite unequivocally.' In all his writings about Apollo, Tadeusz displays a natural, if uningratiating, impulse to denigrate his dead brother-in-law's impulsiveness and thus vindicate his own caution. Tadeusz outlived Apollo by many years and we know a great deal about him from his writings, including his letters to Conrad, the 'Document' that he prepared for his nephew, and his *Memoirs*. The most attractive side of Tadeusz's personality is revealed in his relationship with his nephew.

Joseph Conrad's childhood can be said to have lasted until he was twenty-nine. From his father's death when he was eleven he was loved, cajoled, nagged, worried over and subsidized by Uncle Tadeusz, who saw

his nephew as a gifted young man who was wasting his talent and who needed to settle to something. Most of the knowledge of this period of Conrad's life comes from Bobrowski's letters to him. Sadly Conrad's letters to Bobrowski were all destroyed by fire at Kazimierówka manor, Bobrowski's house, which was burnt down in the 1917 revolution. Bobrowski viewed the stages towards Conrad's final qualification in the British merchant marine as the father of a student might view the stages in the young man's protracted higher education, and when Conrad passed his Master's certificate in 1886 Bobrowski wrote to him in undisguised relief as a person who has at last become an independent adult: 'As the humble provider of the means for this enterprise I can only rejoice that my groats have not been wasted but have led you to the peak of your chosen profession.... You are, my dear Sir, now 29 years old and have mastered a profession'.50 The years at the start of this process, between 1869 and 1874, are very poorly documented. And they were the crucial years of Conrad's life. As Conrad says in 'Poland Revisited', his early adolescence in Cracow was decisive: 'It was in that old royal and academical city that I ceased to be a child, became a boy, had known the friendships, the admirations, the thoughts and the indignations of that age. It was within those historical walls that I began to understand things, form affections, lay up a store of memories and a fund of sensations with which I was to break violently by throwing myself into an unrelated existence' (p. 145). He is referring obliquely to his decision to leave Poland and join the French merchant marine.⁵¹

The bare bones of Conrad's last years in Poland are as follows: from 1869 to 1870 Buszczyński was his guardian. Between 1870 and 1873 Conrad lived in Cracow with his grandmother. In 1873 he went to Syroczyński's school in Lwów. On 19 September 1874 Conrad left for Marseille and joined the French merchant marine.

Conrad was a difficult adolescent for Tadeusz to look after. Since childhood he had been subject to illnesses: a letter from his father in 1868 speaks of gravel in the bladder which causes gripes, and some of Tadeusz's letters seem to refer to the risk of epilepsy (there was epilepsy in the family: another of Bobrowski's nephews suffered from it). 52 Bobrowski had his hands full. As the son of a political criminal Conrad could not safely live within the Russian state and in any case Bobrowski was preoccupied with many other responsibilities including the health of his little Józefa. Also he had other wards: in his *Memoirs* he records that he was guardian to eighteen young people. Conrad presented a number of problems. The fear that he might have epilepsy was fuelled by a series of nervous illnesses and was not put to rest until he was fourteen or so: in 1873 he was sent away travelling round Europe for twelve weeks with Adam Pulman for the sake of his health. 53 He displayed challenging behaviour, resisting all forms of authority and indulging himself in illicit pleasures: a 'talent for cigars' is mentioned by his irritated uncle.⁵⁴ He was disobedient and troublesome at school both in Cracow and in Lwów.⁵⁵ And the stirrings of adolescence

were giving trouble of a more normal kind: it is likely that during a holiday in Krynica (with Adam Pulman) in 1871 or 1872 he was attracted to the girl who became the source for the early love affair reflected in *The Arrow of Gold.* Syroczyński's daughter remembered Conrad in Lwów (1873–74):

He stayed with us ten months while in the seventh class at the Gymnasium. Intellectually he was extremely advanced but disliked school routine, which he found tiring and dull; he used to say that he was very talented and planned to become a great writer. Such declarations coupled with a sarcastic expression on his face and with frequent critical remarks, shocked his teachers and provoked laughter among his classmates. He disliked all restrictions. At home, at school, or in the living room he would sprawl unceremoniously. He used to suffer from severe headaches and nervous attacks; the doctors thought that a stay at the seaside might cure him. ⁵⁷

Conrad was a constant source of trouble. Bobrowski was at his wit's end to know what to do with him. The plan to become a merchant seaman appears to have been conceived by Conrad in 1872 and resisted at first by the family, but Bobrowski was eventually brought round to the conclusion that for someone so undirected and seemingly unteachable a career in the French merchant marine was better than nothing. There was little more future for Conrad in Galicia than there was in the Ukraine, since attempts to obtain Austrian citizenship for him had failed. Bobrowski could thus have seen two strong reasons for consenting to Conrad's wish to seek his fortune abroad: the chance of becoming a French citizen, and the (rather more remote) possibility that the sea-life would cure Conrad's nervous illnesses. If Conrad's illnesses were all part of the mix of anger, frustration and intense anxiety that are constituents of depression then a complete change of environment could, indeed, have been an appropriate way of dealing with the problem. See the contraction of the contraction of the problem.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Bobrowski and Conrad seem to have become warmer, more intimate and more friendly after Conrad had left home. Both took letter-writing seriously. Conrad's side of the correspondence has been lost, as we have seen. Bobrowski's letters display affection, concern, a desire to guide and to warn together with an acknowledgement of the young man's ambition and nobility of spirit. The Korzeniowski and Nalecz inheritance was blamed for Conrad's impulsiveness:

You always, my dear boy, made me impatient – and still make me impatient by your disorder and the easy way you take things – in which you remind me of the Korzeniowski family – spoiling and wasting everything – and not my dear Sister, your Mother, who was careful about everything (27 September, old st., 1876)

I recognize your Nalecz blood – in this tendency to fly into a passion (28 July/8 August 1877)

But Bobrowski was also able to say, with justice and foresight, that Conrad combined the best of both families, the Korzeniowskis and the Bobrowskis:

I see with pleasure that the Nalecz in you has been modified under the influence of the Bobroszczaki, as your incomparable mother used to call her own family after she flew away to the Nalecz nest. This time I rejoice over the influence of my family, although 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. From the blending of these two excellent families in your worthy person there should spring a race which by its endurance and wise enterprise will astound the whole world! (28 June, old st., 1880)⁵⁹

Apollo Korzeniowski had provided the romanticism, the ardour and the exalted self-image, Bobrowski provided the vigilance, the wit and the irony. Bobrowski kept up his correspondence with his beloved young ward for twenty years, from 1874 when Conrad left Poland until Bobrowski's death in 1894, by which time Conrad had almost completed the first novel, Almayer's Folly, which was to be dedicated to Bobrowski. In a sense it was Bobrowski who made Conrad a writer. Both uncle and nephew seem to have regarded letter-writing as an art form. Conrad seems to have written detailed accounts of his travels in the merchant marine for his uncle, and one of Bobrowski's letters indicates that he was encouraging the young man to write for publication:

As thank God you do not forget your Polish (may God bless you for it, as I bless you) and your writing is not bad, I repeat what I have already written and said before – you would do well to write contributions for the Wedrowiec⁶⁰ in Warsaw. We have few travellers, and even fewer genuine correspondents: the words of an eyewitness would be of great interest and in time would bring you in money. It would be an exercise in your native tongue – that thread which binds you to your country and countrymen, and finally a tribute to the memory of your father who always wanted to and did serve his country by his pen. Think about this, young man, collect some reminiscences from the voyage to Australia and sent them as a sample (16/28 June 1881)⁶¹

But for the fact that they are written in English rather than Polish, Conrad's early novels could be said to fulfil Bobrowski's requirement here in that they are traveller's tales, bringing exotic subjects – the far East, the Malay archipelago, unknown peoples – to a European metropolitan audience.

Although not consciously literary in the way that Conrad's father had been, Bobrowski was widely read and peppers his letters to Conrad with literary references: Polish writers like Zaleski and Słowacki, and great European figures like Shakespeare, Molière, Pushkin and Cervantes. It is assumed that easy familiarity with great literature is part of the equipment of a cultivated person. Bobrowski writes in September 1886 warning Conrad that he may not be able to respond to future requests for money. He sends £30 and adds:

I do not know how much longer I shall be able to manifest my remembrance in such a tangible form. For if Hamlet said 'Something is rotten in the State of Denmark', so it has been the case for some time in our agricultural affairs. The fall in the prices of grain (in spite of the bad harvest this year our local needs can always be met) and sugar affects the rent one can get for one's land (18/30 September 1886)⁶²

The fact that a very large number of Tadeusz Bobrowski's letters to his sailor nephew have survived⁶³ is a silent tribute to the great affection that Conrad felt for his uncle. Conrad was prodigal and careless with some of his possessions. In 1875 he lost a trunk and in September 1876 he is rebuked by Bobrowski for losing a family photograph and some Polish books: 'And you ask me to replace them! Why? So that you should take the first opportunity of losing them again!?'64 But he obviously treasured his uncle's letters. Many of the letters show that Bobrowski and Conrad were both lonely and that they were the two people in the world best placed to understand each other. The old squire on his estate at Kazimierówka fills his life with day-to-day rural activity but is essentially lonely. As he gets older the loneliness becomes more pronounced: 'I shall . . . stay at home writing my memoirs. My health is good, and I am used to being alone. Write to me, Panie Bracie ['Sir Brother', the form of address between equal members of the szlachta], what your plans are for the future' (18/30 September 1886).65 He is distressed when an old servant dies: 'My last link with the past has been broken. An ever-growing emptiness surrounds a man, till at last he falls himself' (5/17 April 1887).66 He preoccupies himself with anxieties about his own health and worries about his vagrant nephew. He fusses persistently and touchingly over Conrad's health, especially inquiring after his 'precious little liver'. On 1/13 May 1881 he writes to say that he is feeling old, missing Conrad and hopes to see him. As the expatriate son of a convict Conrad could not visit Kazimierowka while he is still a Russian subject for fear of arrest, so Bobrowski plans that they might meet at Marienbad or Wiesbaden, 'where I intend to undergo a grape cure [for haemorrhoids] - and I have chosen to take it there solely to make it nearer for you to drop in on me.' It is ten years since the death of his beloved daughter Józefa ('my Józieczka') and he intends to keep her anniversary. The letter goes on and on in the same way: Bobrowski longs to see his nephew but is assailed by scruples about making demands on his time and the scruples are set out in obsessional detail ('I know that staying on shore does not agree with you, and above all that it seems a waste of money to spend an unproductive 3 months on land while waiting for a fortnight's meeting'68). And he ends with fussy honesty: his health will improve ('I shall try to fight it with Marienbad and grapes'), he is not likely to die yet. Conrad wrote back to say that he ought not to take time off to visit his uncle.

Bobrowski's health remains a dominant theme of his letters to Conrad throughout the 1880s: he suffers from haemorrhoids, diarrhoea, neuralgia,

rheumatism, anxiety, sleeplessness and 'nerves'. He visits Marienbad regularly to drink the spa-water and he has 'electrical' treatment, grape treatment, whey treatment, rain-water baths, mud-baths and friction. Some of these cures are good, others less good: Cieplice water aggravates the haemorrhoids while Marienbad water produces gentle stools.70 A subordinate, but important, topic in these letters is the troubles of his brother Kazimierz. Kazimierz, who had resigned his commission and been imprisoned in the uprising of 1863, now had a poorly paid job as a stationmaster on the railway. He had six children whom he couldn't afford to feed and educate, and Bobrowski found himself providing for Kazimierz's family as well as for Conrad. Kazimierz's fecundity prompts an earthy joke (14/26 May 1882): 'You will admit that your Uncle worked successfully in this field [begetting children]. I don't even know when he had time to achieve all that as at nights he always had to be on the look-out for trains. Probably between one train and another he devoted himself to "social work" to keep himself from falling asleep!'71 Kazimierz died of pneumonia in 1886 and Bobrowski stoically, and characteristically, took responsibility for the children.

With regard to Conrad himself, Bobrowski's letters have two leading themes, both eminently sensible: Conrad must gain his qualifications in the British merchant marine and he must become a naturalized Englishman and thus cease to be a Russian subject. Conrad achieved both these things: he qualified as second mate in 1880, first mate in 1884 and gained his master's certificate in 1886, and on 31 March 1889 the Russian Ministry of Home Affairs released him from the status of a Russian subject. This made it possible for Conrad to visit his uncle in the Ukraine without being arrested. The letters containing these items of advice contain references to many other schemes. Conrad seems to have represented service in the British merchant marine to his uncle as a stop-gap career, and was constantly coming up with schemes for setting up partnerships to engage in trade in London. Adolf Krieger was a fellow lodger at Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, in 1880. He was an American of German origin who had a series of jobs: as agent for Barr, Moering and Company in the later 1880s he found work for Conrad in the company's warehouse. It seems clear that Conrad and Krieger proposed to set up a trading partnership and that early in 1886 they proposed to Bobrowski that he should invest in them. At about this time Conrad borrowed an unknown, but substantial, amount of money from Krieger and did not repay it. (Later, in 1897, this was to cause estrangement between the friends. In 1898 Conrad dedicated Tales of Unrest to Krieger 'for the sake of old days' possibly in an attempt to placate him.) The relationship with Krieger is the background to Bobrowski's letter of 24 March/5 April 1886: 'I deduce from your and Krieger's letters [that] you intend to devote yourself to trade and stay in London.... I would strongly recommend a thorough investigation in London of two possibilities: trading in wheat-flour...and trading in granulated sugar.'72

His connection with uncle Tadeusz and his knowledge of merchant

shipping meant that Conrad was well placed to import Polish agricultural products of the kind that Bobrowski grew on his estate - sugar and flour - into England and this could have been quite a good scheme. The letters indicate that Bobrowski sent some capital to be invested in the scheme (some £350) but later letters anxiously asking what has happened to the money suggest that it had gone on Conrad's extravagant habits. Nothing came of the proposed trading company.

Some of Bobrowski's letters to Conrad contained Shandean requests for the sailor. One of these was on behalf of Dr Kopernicki, an old friend of the family who had helped with Conrad's education between 1870 and 1873 and who treated Tadeusz at Marienbad in the late summer of 1881. He was a craniologist, and Conrad is asked to 'collect during your voyages skulls of natives, writing on each one whose skull it is and the place of origin' (3/15 August 1881).73 The idea was that Conrad should collect these skulls and send them off in batches of a dozen to the Museum of Craniology in Cracow. Not surprisingly, Conrad refused. There is an ugly context to this letter (and the following letters of 1881): on 10 August Conrad had written to Bobrowski asking for immediate funds because a ship on which he was serving, the Annie Frost, had foundered and he had lost his luggage and spent several days in hospital. Bobrowski sent the money. The reality was that Conrad had been squandering money on speculations, the details of which are obscure, and had invented the Annie \hat{F} rost calamity to lever a further subsidy out of Bobrowski (a ship called the Annie Frost existed but Conrad didn't serve on it). 4 Bobrowski was no fool and perhaps sensed, after a bit, that his generosity was being abused. He wrote that anxiety about the Annie Frost misfortune is making him ill ('your last calamity has upset me', 'the worry gave me diarrhoea'75), and in successive letters he pressed Conrad to explain why he had failed to obtain compensation from the owners of the Annie Frost. Conrad must have squirmed. It is a pity that we don't have the letters in which he tried to come up with a convincing reply.

Despite this and other deceptions, Conrad's love for Bobrowski was real. It was genuinely difficult to visit Poland, but Conrad and Bobrowski had a pleasant summer reunion at Marienbad and at Teplice in Bohemia in the summer of 1883. The reunion stirred up Conrad's sense of himself as a Pole, and on 14 August 1883 he wrote from Teplice to Stefan Buszczyński, his first guardian:

During the last few years - that is, since my first examination,76 I have not been too happy in my journeyings. I was nearly drowned, nearly got burned,7 but generally my health is good, I am not short of courage or of the will to work or of love for my profession; and I always remember what you said when I was leaving Cracow: 'Remember' - you said - 'wherever you may sail you are sailing towards Poland!'78

Early in 1890 Conrad returned to Poland - for the first time for sixteen years - and stayed in Warsaw and then for two months with Tadeusz at

Kazimierówka. The visit was made possible by the fact that the Russians had finally (31 March 1889) released Conrad from Russian citizenship. The account of the visit in A Personal Record is curiously oblique: there is a mention of the stay in Warsaw and a good deal about the sleighride from Kalinówka to Kazimierówka, but very little about Kazimierówka itself. The testimony of Polish friends and neighbours who saw him at his uncle's house during this visit suggests that he was awkward and out of place, that he resented suggestions that he ought not to have gone abroad and that there were problems of adjustment for this mature man returning to a place where people were accustomed to thinking of him as a wayward child.79 There was one more visit to Kazimierówka, in the late summer of 1893: Conrad seems to have been ill on this visit and spent a week in bed. He writes to his cousin (by marriage) Marguerite Poradowska: 'As for me, I have been very unwell and in bed for five days. This is a good place to be ill (if one must be ill). My uncle has cared for me as if I were a little child.'80 One of the functions of this visit, seen in retrospect, was to enable Conrad to say goodbye to his childhood.

In February 1894 Bobrowski died. He had left his estate to the widow and six children of his brother Kazimierz, but to Conrad he left fifteen thousand roubles and silver and other valuables. The love and loyalty for Tadeusz Bobrowski had remained unchanged by the disappointing 1890 visit, and Conrad was distressed at his loss. Several years later he wrote to Kazimierz Waliszewski (5 December 1903):

I cannot write about Tadeusz Bobrowski, my Uncle, guardian and benefactor, without emotion. Even now, after ten years, I still feel his loss. He was a man of great character and unusual qualities of mind. Although he did not understand my desire to join the mercantile marine, on principle, he never objected to it. I saw him four times during the thirty [sic] years of my wanderings (from 1874–1893) but even so I attribute to his devotion, care, and influence, whatever good qualities I may possess.⁸²

Bobrowski had been both a second father to him and, in a sense, a literary godfather, since Bobrowski was himself a writer. In 1900 his book *The Bobrowski Memoirs*, some nine-hundred pages long, was published in Poland. There are three major strands to the memoirs: a thorough and unsparing criticism of contemporary Polish society, an account of the attempts of forward-looking Poles – among whom Bobrowski included himself – to reform that society (especially by pressing for the emancipation of the peasants), and the absurdity of the 1863 rising and its consquences. The last of these gave offence to patriotic Poles who charged Bobrowski – quite unfairly – with collusion with the Russians. Conrad would have read the Bobrowski memoirs soon after receiving them in 1900. I have referred above to the death in a duel in 1863 of Bobrowski's brother, Stefan Bobrowski (p. 3) and to the possibility that Bobrowski's account of Stefan in the *Memoirs* has influenced the ending of *Lord fim* and part of the Haldin

plot of Under Western Eyes. Stefan played a key role as a member of the 'Reds' and was challenged to a duel by Adam Grabowski, who was a member of the 'Whites'. Stefan Bobrowski had poor eyesight and Grabowski was well-known to be an expert marksman: a duel with Grabowski meant certain death, and Stefan Bobrowski must have known that. At first he refused to accept the challenge but then bowed to the pressure of a 'court of honour' which ruled that the duel must be fought. Tadeusz Bobrowski believed that Stefan had chosen to die in a duel as an honourable alternative to suicide: 'Having lost faith in the cause he had embraced - his mind was too alert and realistic to harbour illusions - he no longer wished to live and preferred to die by another's hand than by his own.' If Bobrowski's reading of the event was correct then Stefan's death would have resembled Jim's death in Lord Jim: after his defeat by Brown Jim chooses to be executed by Doramin, father of his friend whom Brown has murdered. Bobrowski's account of the betrayal of Stefan by an informer may have contributed to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin in Under Western Eyes: "The informer was a Warsaw Iew named Bernstein.... He was sent to Kiev to discover the secret lithographic press [Stefan's press] which had been causing trouble to the police for some time. In Warsaw he had been a student, and so in Kiev he also mixed with students, pretending to be one himself.'84

Conrad made use of Bobrowski's memoirs again in 1908 when he was writing *A Personal Record*. He wrote to his literary agent, J. B. Pinker, on 7 October:

To make Polish life enter English literature is no small ambition – to begin with. But I think it can be done. 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 [this doesn't appear in A Personal Record] . . . is a big enterprise. And yet it presents itself easily just because of the intimate nature of the task, and of the 2 vols of my uncle's Memoirs which I have by me, to refresh my recollections and settle my ideas. 85

Bobrowski was Conrad's epistolary companion throughout Conrad's sea years. The prudence and the maturity that Bobrowski displayed were valued by Conrad and became part of the fabric of his works. He wrote to Conrad late in 1891 as follows:

I have gone through a lot, I have suffered over my own fate and the fate of my family and my Nation, and perhaps just because of these sufferings and disappointments I have developed in myself this calm outlook on the problem of life, whose motto, 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 (28 October/9 November 1891)⁸⁶

2

The faith in good order and the motto, usque ad finem, are associated with the figure of Stein in Lord fim:

He [Stein] sat down and, with both elbows on the desk, rubbed his fore-head. 'And yet it is true – it is true. In the destructive element immerse....' He spoke in a subdued tone, without looking at me, one hand on each side of his face. 'That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream – and so – ewig – usque ad finem...' (chapter 20, pp. 214–15)

Seeing things through to their conclusion, tenacity, loyalty, persistence, good workmanship, judgement – these were all Uncle Tadeusz qualities. Conrad dramatizes the contrast between these virtues and the flamboyant virtues of his father – idealism, risk-taking and self-sacrifice – in all his works. And although he left Poland so young there is a sense in which Poland – the Poland of Tadeusz Bobrowski as much as the Poland of Apollo Korzeniowski – remained with him all his life. His thick Polish accent, his mannerisms and his appearance marked him off until his death from the English people among whom he lived; this included, of course, his own wife and children. After his marriage he chose to live in rural places in the south-east of England in a succession of rented farmhouses and country properties. It was often remarked that in the various country houses of his long English exile he was reproducing for himself, as far as he could, the life-style of a Polish landowner. He was a szlachcic to the end.

Officer of the Merchant Marine

Long live the 'Ordin. Master in the British Merchant Service'!! May he live long! May he be healthy and may every success attend him in every enterprise both on sea and on land!

Bobrowski to Conrad, 14/26 November, 1886, on the news of Conrad gaining his Master's certificate.¹

Conrad was, as has often been said, 'set' to loneliness, and yet he had two powerfully contrasting males on whom to model himself, his father and his uncle. R. R. Hodges writes of Conrad as 'the man with two fathers' ... torn between his father's impractical idealism and his uncle's practical morality'.2 The question of what it means to be a fully mature male as well as a complete moral being is considered in many of Conrad's novels and tales. Further, it has often been said - by, for example, Thomas Moser, Bernard Meyer and Graham Hough - that Conrad's many years in the merchant marine give a particular bias to his dramatization: that he finds it easier to dramatize relationships between men than relationships between the sexes because throughout his early adult life his experience of human interaction had been largely restricted to the society of men on a ship. In Image and Experience Graham Hough writes 'There is only one kind of society that Conrad had ever known intimately, had fully participated in as an adult human being - the society of a ship at sea'. But it is easy for literary critics to engage in wishful thinking. Just as Polish political sympathy seems to determine the nature of some of the work that has been done on Conrad's Polish background and identity, so homosexual political conviction seems to have determined some of the work that has been done on Conrad's interaction with other men. On guilt in Conrad's writings Professor Hodges writes: 'I would suggest that in addition to patriotic guilt, which played a large and fairly conscious part in Conrad's inner life, a suppressed attraction to members of his own sex contributed to his