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THE WORKS OF
JOSEPH CONRAD

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THE SHADOW-LINE

A CONFESSION

EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES BY
Owen Knowles

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

Joseph Conrad's place in twentieth-century literature is now firmly established. Although his novels, stories and other writings have become integral to modern thought and culture, the need for an accurate and authoritative edition of his works remains. Owing to successive rounds of authorial revision, transmissional errors and deliberate editorial intervention, Conrad's texts exist in various unsatisfactory and sometimes even confused forms.

During the last years of his life he attempted to have his works published in a uniform edition that would fix and preserve them for posterity. But although trusted by scholars, students and the general reader alike, the received texts published in the British and American collected editions, and in various reprintings of them since 1921, have proved to be at least as defective as their predecessors. Grounded in thorough research in the surviving original documents, the Cambridge Edition is designed to reverse this trend by presenting Conrad's novels, stories and other prose in texts that are as trustworthy as modern scholarship can make them.

The present volume contains critical texts of Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* and of its preface. The Cambridge text of the novella is based on the extant composite manuscript-typescript preserved in the collection of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The selected copy-text is emended to incorporate authorial revisions drawn from later authoritative documents as well as editorial emendations. The copy-text for the 'Author's Note' is the revised typescript also held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The appendices present materials relevant to the autobiographical and historical background Conrad drew upon for his novella and to its American serialization.

The 'Introduction' provides a literary history of the work focused on its genesis, sources and early reception, including its place in Conrad's life and art. The essay on 'The Texts' traces the volume's textual history, examines the sources of its individual texts and explains the

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policies followed in editing them. The 'Apparatus' records basic textual evidence, documenting the discussion of genealogy and authority in 'The Texts: An Essay' as well as other editorial decisions, and the 'Textual Notes' deal with cruxes and textual issues. The 'Explanatory Notes' comment on specific readings that require glosses, dealing with sources, identifying real-life place-names and related matters. A glossary deals with nautical terms. Supplementing this material are maps and illustrations.

The textual essay, textual notes, appendices and 'Apparatus' are designed with the textual scholar and specialist in mind, while the 'Introduction', 'Explanatory Notes' and nautical glossary are intended primarily for a non-specialist audience.

The support of the institutions listed on p. vii has been essential to the success of this series and is gratefully acknowledged. In addition to those, and the individuals and institutions listed in the Acknowledgements, the General Editors and the Editorial Board also wish to thank the Trustees and beneficiaries of the Estate of Joseph Conrad, Doubleday and Company and J. M. Dent and Company for permission to publish these new texts of Conrad's works.

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A number of individuals kindly supplied information or otherwise shared their expertise, and we should especially like to thank the following: Mary Burgoyne for generously undertaking the task of researching and acquiring copies of crew-lists of the *Otago* in Australian archives; Hugh Epstein for on-site work on the manuscript-typescript; Alexandre Fachard for arranging on-site verifications, supplying digital versions of the first editions and commenting on the textual essay; the Institute for Bibliography and Editing, Kent State University, for providing a rudimentary transcription of the composite manuscript-typescript prepared by Gale Graham; Jeremy Hawthorn for useful advice on various topics; Mark Larabee and Richard Niland for sharing copies of reviews; Andrew Purssell for assistance with verifying the serial transcriptions; and Donald Schewan for preparing the maps. Thanks for assistance with support tasks are due to Catherine L. Tisch. Stephen Donovan's endeavours to bring Conrad's serializations into the digital age with *Conrad First: The Joseph Conrad Periodical Archive* (www.conradfirst.net) have proved valuable. We are also grateful to John G. Peters for advice and James C. Hatch for his help in seeing the volume through the vetting processes established by the Committee on Scholarly Editing of the Modern Language Association. Lastly, gratitude is expressed to Linda Bree and Maartje Scheltens at Cambridge University Press for steadfast support and helpful advice; to Tom O'Reilly, who saw the volume through production; and to Penny Wheeler for her careful and sensitive copy-editing.

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CHRONOLOGY

JOSEPH CONRAD'S life may be seen as having several distinct stages: in the Ukraine, in Russian exile and in Austrian Poland before his father's death (1857–69); in Austrian Poland and the south of France as the ward of his maternal uncle (1870–78); in the British merchant service, mainly as a junior officer sailing in the Far East and Australia (1879–early 1890s); after a transitional period (early 1890s), as a writer of critical esteem (1895–1914); as an acclaimed writer, although perhaps with his greatest work achieved (1915–24). After 1895 the history of his life is essentially the history of his works.

Publication dates given below are those of the English book editions, except for those of the present volume. Only the first serial appearance of essays is noted.

1857 December 3	Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (Nałęcz coat-of-arms) born in Berdyczów in the Ukraine to Apollo Korzeniowski and Ewelina (or Ewa), née Bobrowska, Korzeniowska
1862 May	Apollo Korzeniowski, his wife and son forced into exile in Russia
1865 April	Ewa Korzeniowska dies of tuberculosis
1867	Conrad visits Odessa with his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski; perhaps his first view of the sea
1868	Korzeniowski permitted to leave Russia
1869 February	Korzeniowski and Conrad move to Cracow
May	Korzeniowski dies
1870	Conrad, ward of Bobrowski, begins study with tutor, Adam Pulman
1873 May	Visits Switzerland and northern Italy
1874 October	Takes position in Marseilles with Delestang et Fils, wholesalers and shippers

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1875	Apprentice in *Mont-Blanc* (to Caribbean)
1876–7	In *Saint-Antoine* (to Caribbean)
1878 late February or early March	Attempts suicide
April	Leaves Marseilles in British steamer *Mavis* (Mediterranean waters)
June	Lands at Lowestoft, Suffolk; first time in England
July–September	Sails as ordinary seaman in *Skimmer of the Sea* (North Sea)
1878–80	In *Duke of Sutherland* (to Sydney), *Europa* (Mediterranean waters)
1880	Meets G. F. W. Hope and Adolf Krieger
June	Passes examination for second mate
1880–81	Third mate in *Loch Etive* (to Sydney)
1881–4	Second mate in *Palestine*, *Riversdale*, *Narcissus* (Eastern seas)
1884 December	Passes examination for first mate
1885–6	Second mate in *Tilkhurst* (to Singapore and India)
1886	Submits 'The Black Mate', perhaps his first story, to *Tit-Bits* competition
August	Becomes a British subject
November	Passes examination for master and receives 'Certificate of Competency'
1886–7	Second mate in *Falconhurst* (British waters)
1887–8	First mate in *Highland Forest*, *Vidar* (Eastern seas)
1887 December 8	Death at sea of John Snadden, master of barque *Otago*
December 20	*Otago* arrives in Bangkok
1888 January 4	Signs off *Vidar* in Singapore
January 24	Leaves Singapore for Bangkok to take command of *Otago*
February 9	Departs Bangkok for Sydney with cargo of timber, encountering calm waters as crew falls ill with malaria
March 1	Arrives in Singapore, where some crew members are hospitalized and new crew members sign on

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March 3	Departs Singapore for Australia
May 7	Reaches Sydney
1888–9	Captain of *Otago* (Australia and Mauritius)
1889 April 3	Having resigned his command, sets sail for England
autumn	Begins *Almayer's Folly* in London
1890 February–April	In Poland for first time since 1874
May–December	In the Congo as second-in-command, then temporarily as captain, of *Roi des Belges*
1891	Manages warehouse of Barr, Moering in London
1891–3	First mate in *Torrens* (London and Plymouth to Adelaide)
1893	Meets John Galsworthy and Edward L. ('Ted') Sanderson (passengers on *Torrens*)
autumn	Visits Bobrowski in the Ukraine
November	Signs on as second mate in *Adowa*, which sails only to Rouen and back
1894 January	Signs off *Adowa*, ending career as seaman
February	Bobrowski dies
autumn	Meets Edward Garnett and Jessie George
1895 April	*Almayer's Folly*
1896 March	*An Outcast of the Islands*. Marries Jessie George
September	Settles in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, after six-month honeymoon in Brittany
1897	Begins friendship with R. B. Cunninghame Graham; meets Henry James and Stephen Crane
December	*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*
1898	Meets Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford and H. G. Wells
January	Alfred Borys Leo Conrad born
April	*Tales of Unrest*
October	Moves to Pent Farm, Postling near Hythe, Kent, sub-let from Ford
1899 February–April	'The Heart of Darkness' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*
February 14	First mention of plans to write story called 'First Command' (*The Shadow-Line*)

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1900 September	Begins association with literary agent J. B. Pinker
October	*Lord Jim*
1901 June	*The Inheritors* (with Ford)
1902 November	*Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories*
1903 April	*Typhoon and Other Stories*
October	*Romance* (with Ford)
1904 October	*Nostromo*
1905 June	*One Day More* staged in London
1906 August	John Alexander Conrad born
October	*The Mirror of the Sea*
1907 September	*The Secret Agent*. Moves to Someries, Luton, Bedfordshire
1908 August	*A Set of Six*
1909	Moves to Aldington, Kent
1910	Moves to Capel House, Orlestone, Kent
1911 October	*Under Western Eyes*
1912 January	*Some Reminiscences* (as *A Personal Record* in America)
October	*'Twixt Land and Sea*
1913 September	*Chance*, with 'main' publication date of January 1914
1914 July–November	Visits Austrian Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War; returns via Vienna and Genoa
1915 February	*Within the Tides*. Begins writing 'First Command', renamed by mid-March
September	*Victory*
November 20	Engages typist for dictation, with another stint of dictation at month's end
December 15?	First draft of *The Shadow-Line* completed
December 31	*Land & Water* rejects *The Shadow-Line*
1916 September	*The Shadow-Line* begins serialization in *Metropolitan Magazine* (concludes October) and in *English Review* (concludes March 1917)
mid-September–early October	Visits naval bases in north England and Scotland

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November 6–16	On mission in North Sea in Q-ship *Ready*; unable to correct *English Review* proofs of Part IV
1917 late January	Provides Dent's with typescript for novella's ending
February 11	Returns corrected book proofs to Dent's
mid-February	Dent's print and forward revise proofs; further changes to the text
March 19	*The Shadow-Line, A Confession* published in England (27 April in America)
1919 March	Moves to Spring Grove, near Wye, Kent
August	*The Arrow of Gold*
October	Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent
1920 late May	Writes 'Author's Note' to *The Shadow-Line* for collected editions
June	*The Rescue*
1921 January–April	Visits Corsica. Collected editions begin publication in England (Heinemann) and in America (Doubleday)
February	*Notes on Life and Letters*
March	'Author's Note' in 'Five Prefaces' in *London Mercury*
1922 November	*The Secret Agent* staged in London
1923 May–June	Visits America, guest of F. N. Doubleday
December	*The Rover*
1924 May	Declines knighthood
August 3	Dies at Oswalds. Roman Catholic funeral and burial, Canterbury
September	*The Nature of a Crime* (with Ford)
October	*The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad*
1925 January	*Tales of Hearsay*
September	*Suspense* (unfinished)
1926 March	*Last Essays*
1928 June	*The Sisters*

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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

Abbreviations

[London is the place of publication unless otherwise specified.]

Bibliography	William R. Cagle and Robert W. Trogdon, 'A Bibliography of Joseph Conrad'. Typescript, unpublished
CEW	Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge University Press, 1966
CR	*Joseph Conrad: The Contemporary Reviews*. General Editors Allan H. Simmons, John G. Peters and J. H. Stape, with Richard Niland, Mary Burgoyne and Katherine Isobel Baxter. 4 vols. Cambridge University Press, 2012
Documents	*Conrad between the Lines: Documents in a Life*, ed. Gene M. Moore, Allan H. Simmons and J. H. Stape. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000
Letters	*The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. General Editors Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, with Owen Knowles, Gene M. Moore and J. H. Stape. 9 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1983–2007
OHYS	*One Hundred Years of Singapore*, ed. Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E. Brooke and Roland St John Braddell. 2 vols. John Murray, 1921
Register	Gene M. Moore, 'A Descriptive Location Register of Joseph Conrad's Literary Manuscripts', *The Conradian*, 27, no. 2 (2002), 1–93
Stape	J. H. Stape, 'Topography in "The Secret Sharer"', *The Conradian*, 26, no. 1 (2001), 1–16

Locations of Unpublished Documents

Beinecke	Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

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Berg	Berg Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Note on Editions

References to Conrad's works are to the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad where these have been published. Otherwise, references are, for the sake of convenience, to Dent's Collected Edition, 1946–55, whose pagination is identical with that of the various 'editions' published by Doubleday throughout the 1920s. References to the Cambridge Edition take the following form: title (year of publication), whereas publication dates are not provided for citations from Dent's Collected Edition.

Citations from critical and other works are identified by author, title and date only.

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INTRODUCTION

COMPOSED IN 1915, *The Shadow-Line* (1917) has a special place in Conrad's canon as his most substantial creative work undertaken during the First World War. His twentieth published volume – a novella, a form that he found particularly congenial – appeared at a time when the writer, approaching the age of sixty, enjoyed an international reputation, with a body of major work behind him, including *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911) and the commercially successful *Chance* (1914) and *Victory* (1915). With a career extending back over twenty years, he was now in the 'late' period of his writing-life.

To many early reviewers, however, *The Shadow-Line* seemed to signal a surprising reversion to the 'simpler' sea-pieces of Conrad's early career: it returns to an Eastern setting, draws upon a phase of the writer's maritime life, covers a single ship's voyage and celebrates the characteristic Conradian 'nobilities and sonorities':[1] that is, the sea as 'the only world that counted' and its ships as 'the test of manliness, of temperament, of courage and fidelity – and of love'.[2] Moreover, as Conrad's early readers also noted, he avoids the strenuous narrative indirections of his most challenging fictions, preferring the linear progress of the *Bildungsroman* or coming-of-age novel, here devoted to a young sea-captain's rite of passage through the trials of command and self-command, to an adult sense of his place in the world. Adulthood arrives with the captain's recognition of the interconnectedness of two precious values: the pursuit of a vocation and the performance of a social obligation in the cause of human solidarity. The structural correlative for the latter theme even extends to the manner of the young man's education, which unfolds under the eyes of a veritable community of mentors, in the shape of Captains Ellis and

[1] The terms are Virginia Woolf's; see 'Joseph Conrad' (1924), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, 1925–1929*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (1994), IV, 232.

[2] See p. 38.28–30. Subsequent references to the texts of the present edition appear in round brackets.

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Giles, the 'sympathetic' doctor of the British Legation in Bangkok and the ship's steward, Ransome.

This appearance of simplicity proves to be deceptive, however. Although not belonging to what is commonly considered Conrad's 'major' phase (1897–1911), *The Shadow-Line* has the capacity to surprise and challenge, with its sudden modulations of mood, perspective and genre. Again, its unusual plotting can lead to a persistent sense of doubleness; and one critic has plausibly argued for the presence of a dual narrative – a main 'secular' plot, but also a covert 'supernatural' one involving the imposition of a curse and its exorcism.[1] Finally, it would indeed be strange if a Conrad work written during the second year of the First World War – a 'year of fire and slaughter', as he called it (*Letters*, v, 545) – did not in some way register the enormity of its historical moment. Indeed, its dedication, which builds a bridge between the young sea-captain's ordeal and the greater trial awaiting the author's son and his generation, actively invites the reader to attend to the story's wartime origins, as does Conrad's description of it as 'the product of the darkest hours of the war'.[2] These and other possibilities were presumably in his mind when, in the 'Author's Note' (1920), he modestly introduced *The Shadow-Line* as 'in its brevity a fairly complex piece of work' (5.2–3).

Origins

At the beginning of composition in February 1915, Conrad wrote to his agent, J. B. Pinker: 'It's an old subject something in [the] style of Youth. I've carried it in my head for years under the name of First Command. ... An early personal experience thing' (*Letters*, v, 441). The earliest origins of this 'old subject' date back to the period 1899–1900, when Conrad was thinking of possible short stories for inclusion in *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* (1902). Described at this point as a tale that would suit the volume's character as 'a record of personal experience purely' (*Letters*, II, 273), its subject clearly looked back to the late stage of Conrad's sea-career and to his only captaincy, which had come about when, at the age of thirty, he was appointed master of an Australian-owned barque, the *Otago*, and

[1] Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots* (1984), pp. 90–9.
[2] Part of Conrad's inscription in George T. Keating's presentation-copy (Yale); see *A Conrad Memorial Library: The Collection of George T. Keating* (1929), p. 262.

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served in her from January 1888 to March 1889. In the event, however, no version of 'First Command' was written for the *Youth* volume.

The idea of reviving the story was not to recur for some fifteen years. However, during the period between 1899 and early 1915, Conrad's memories of his fourteen-month service in the *Otago* provided an intermittent source of material, resulting in three shorter pieces – 'Falk: A Reminiscence' (1901), 'The Secret Sharer' (1909) and 'A Smile of Fortune' (1910) – with *The Shadow-Line* eventually making up the fourth in what he came to regard as the 'Otago cycle' (*Letters*, VI, 99). Although they play no direct part in *The Shadow-Line*'s germination, the three preceding tales in the cycle form a significant pre-history and context for the later work, offering antecedents for both its form and content. All three have family characteristics deriving from their *Otago* origin: they dramatize with first-person immediacy the trials of a young, untested sea-captain; involve varieties of difficult initiation; and draw upon a common group of characters, events and places. 'The Secret Sharer', an earlier, more inwardly focused study of 'First Command' set in Bangkok and the Gulf of Siam (present-day Gulf of Thailand), is in several ways a distant prequel to the more ambitious *The Shadow-Line*.[1]

The immediate facts about *The Shadow-Line*'s origins can be stated simply. In mid-February 1915, Conrad finally began work on 'First Command', at this stage envisaged as a short piece of indeterminate length destined for the New York *Metropolitan Magazine*. Characteristically, composition took much longer than he had anticipated and extended over most of 1915.[2] On the subject of its origins, Conrad further explained that the tale turned out to be not as 'easy' as he had initially expected, a discovery soon signalled in its altered title: 'This story [*First Command*] had been in my mind for some years. ... When I managed in the second year of war to concentrate my mind sufficiently to begin working I turned to this subject as the easiest. But in consequence of my changed mental attitude to it, it became *The Shadow-Line*.'[3]

[1] For a comparative study of these two stories, see Barbara Handke, *First Command: A Psychological Reading of Joseph Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer' and* The Shadow-Line (2010).
[2] For a detailed history of the story's composition, see 'The Texts', pp. 116–21.
[3] Inscribed in Richard Curle's presentation copy; see his *The Last Twelve Years of Joseph Conrad* (1928), pp. 105–06. Conrad had changed the title to *The Shadow-Line* at an early stage in composition, by mid-March (*Letters*, V, 458).

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As is often the case with Conrad's stories, the account of origins becomes a record of mounting complications. In what did this 'changed mental attitude' consist, and how did it originate? Why, in February 1915, was *The Shadow-Line*, as its 'Author's Note' claims, the 'only' thing that he 'found it possible to attempt at the time' (6.24–25)? Answers must largely lie in the fact that, by this date, the catastrophic effects of the War throughout Europe were becoming shockingly clear: in Conrad's case, the consequent emotional and intellectual distresses left him in a generally 'deplorable' state of mind (*Letters*, v, 498).

To understand the magnitude of his changed attitude, it is necessary to go back in time from February 1915 to the summer of 1914, when Conrad undertook his first visit for over twenty years to his boyhood home in Austrian Poland, a visit marked by the fact that he was accompanied by his wife and two sons, who were seeing the writer's homeland for the first time. What, however, had been planned as a family odyssey and sentimental *recherche du temps perdu* was utterly disrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, which forced the family to flee Cracow at the end of July and find refuge in unmilitarized territory to the south. Finally arriving back in England in early November, Conrad would soon begin writing 'Poland Revisited' (1915), a long autobiographical essay that proved to have a twofold importance in relation to *The Shadow-Line*: as Conrad the writer's first attempt to picture a Europe suddenly transformed by war, it registered his sense of having crossed a historical shadow-line; and, since the essay's revision ran concurrently with the beginning of *The Shadow-Line*, it turned out to be a significant catalyst in the story's germination.

'Poland Revisited' begins with Conrad representing himself as a pilgrim and time-traveller returning to his native soil after a long separation. Through the agency of a reactivated memory, he is engaged in a quest for origins and for the moral pattern that has given his life both meaning and continuity. Hence, much of the essay represents a cyclical pilgrimage though a landscape of memory, in which the pilgrim seeks to discover the sense of a unified self, one at the same time inseparable from the communal values that have variously sustained him as a Pole, a seaman and an English writer. This vision of continuity also extends from Conrad's past into a future generation, since he is accompanied by his two 'English' sons, who may discover a meaning for themselves in their father's return to his origins. However, at a crucial point in the essay, with the sudden outbreak of war, the very basis of

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the pilgrimage is thrown into doubt: the celebration of the closing of a thirty-six-year cycle of an individual life suddenly gives way to a fearful apprehension – as if a shadow-line has been crossed – of a chaotic historical flux presided over by the 'War Angel'.[1] At this early stage, the physical wreckage of war cannot be predicted; but, as in *The Shadow-Line*, its havoc can be measured obliquely by its capacity to destroy precious historical continuities and cherished sanctities. Hence, the journey back to England registers the shock of hopeful expectations suddenly defeated: 'On that sea route I might have picked up a memory at every mile if the past had not been eclipsed by the tremendous actuality ... But what were to me now the futilities of my individual past!'[2] This final question also hangs movingly over the whole literary enterprise of using 'words' and artistry to recapture a 'mere' chapter of personal history in a world 'desecrated by violence, littered with wrecks, with death walking its waves, hiding under the waters'.[3] With these last images of menace stalking the seas, Conrad already seems to be very close to the symbolic seascape of *The Shadow-Line*.

The essay foreshadows the novella in other important respects. Conrad's return to his homeland in 1914, as well as the essay born of that experience, helps to explain his re-adoption in the story of an autobiographical mode that he had not employed for some years. Both works bring a first-person immediacy to the exploration of origins and the passage into adulthood; both open with older men speaking with the hindsight of age but who, in their retracing of earlier experiences, meet with varied manifestations of their younger selves; and both are concerned with the cyclical pattern in individual lives, the most notable instance in *The Shadow-Line* being the appearance of Captain Giles at the beginning and end of the young sea-captain's journey. It should also be added that, as a form of immediate prequel to *The Shadow-Line*, 'Poland Revisited' is one of Conrad's most 'literary' essays: outwardly a personal travelogue, it is a sophisticated fusion of inner autobiographical record, impressionistic narrative and symbolic geography.

Written during the period from December 1914 to March 1915, 'Poland Revisited' was the only piece of work that Conrad was well enough to undertake in the immediate aftermath of his visit to the Continent. His return home – to an England gripped by

[1] *Notes on Life and Letters*, ed. J. H. Stape (2004), p. 124.3.
[2] Ibid., p. 137.3–4, 12–13. [3] Ibid., p. 124.30–31.

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crisis – coincided with a period of illness and psychological distress, the description of which provides a rubric for his worsening mood throughout 1915: 'the thoughts of this war sit on one's chest like a nightmare. I am painfully aware of being crippled, of being idle, of being useless with a sort of absurd anxiety, as though it could matter to the greatness of the Empire' (*Letters*, v, 427). Caught in the toils of a drab and uncreative 'sick-apathy', he spoke in the tones of a man prematurely ageing with each successive month, reiterating his fear that, as a result of the 'ugly and desperate adventure' unleashed by war, the world he had known – and, with it, he himself – was broken to pieces and beyond repair (*Letters*, v, 424, 468).

Various additional reasons come into play to explain the changed mental attitude that Conrad would bring to *The Shadow-Line*. By February 1915, there was startling evidence of the War's escalation at the Eastern and Western Fronts, while a further anxiety for the writer was the thought of his beleaguered former countrymen in Poland 'seeing nothing but ruin and ultimate extinction whatever would happen' (*Letters*, v, 446). Nearer to home, the first Zeppelin raids on Britain had occurred, a German sea-blockade of the British coast was in place and 104,000 British casualties had already been reported, all of which would find Conrad brooding on gathering shadows: 'The shadow lies over this land. This is a time of great awe and searching of hearts and of resolute girding of loins' (*Letters*, v, 500). By early 1915, it had also become clear that Conrad's elder son Borys, then aged only seventeen, would soon enlist for active service, and a month before the latter left for his army-training in September, the writer lamented: 'Everybody we know has lost someone ... They all go. My boy's turn will be coming presently to start off' (ibid.).[1]

Meanwhile, daily life at the Conrads' Kentish home had become increasingly lonely, this isolation compounded by the writer's awareness that his age and lameness had left him stranded, in his own eyes a useless relic unable to participate in the war-effort. Inevitably, these afflictions impacted negatively upon the creative writer, whose constant complaints about his physical and mental enervation point to a more deep-seated malaise caused by the effect of the War upon his

[1] Like Captain Giles in *The Shadow-Line*, Conrad oversaw the young man's departure. The writer was probably thinking of his work-in-progress and its central motif of the shadow-line when he observed of that September day of leave-taking: 'I wanted to be with him [Borys] as long as possible on the day he had to put his boyhood definitely behind him' (*Letters*, v, 512).

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