HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AS SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S FICTION

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Abstract:This study presents interpersonal relationshipsas characters' strategies of survival in Conrad's fiction. Since he views nature as generally hostile to men, regarded as intruders, when facing reality and nature, they need to be shielded by interindividual ties. As a social being, man lives in a community, whose cell is the family, which is meant to be a strategy of survival. Conrad's familial relationships have typical features. At least as important as family ties are friendship/ mentorship/ foster parenthood relations and "doubles". For those spending their lives on ships, the family is replaced by the crew as a biome in the heterotopia of the ship.

Keywords: relationship, family, crew, friendship, double.

Introduction

Surviving wilderness, both at sea and on land requires certain strategies to which Conrad's fictional characters resort, among which interindividual relationships. Looked upon synthetically, these tend to fall into a few categories.Thus his novels, novellas and stories on navigation evince features of the crews as biomes surviving on Foucault's "heterotopias par excellence" - ships.

Family relationships, both on land and on ships have certain characteristics, telling of his fin de siècle apocalyptic outlook on society, his sailor life and personal biography experiences.

A master of the fiction on friendship, Conrad wrote in his works about interindividual ties such as mentorship, foster fatherhood, quasi-brotherhood, devotion, collecting acquaintances as specimens. His characters are frequently structured as pairs of doubles.

The crew as a biome: a 'world of men'

Living together in isolation in the heterotopia of the ship, the crew forms a self-sufficient, autonomous biome, surviving in the wilderness like a planet in miniature. The real family and home of the single sailors are the crew and the ship, an exclusively male world. Fulfilling the ship's routine is an effective spiritual medicine: it both disciplines a human, it keeps his mind busy with surface truths and it integrates him in the great monotonous rhythms of the sea wilderness, it grows biophilia. "It is a great doctor for sore hearts, too, your ship's routine, . . .It borrows a certain dignity of sameness from the majestic monotony of the sea. He who loves the sea loves also the ship's routine." (*The Mirror of the Sea* 5) There is equity on the ship in task sharing, the crew is connected by solidarity, commitment and fidelity; it rejects shirkers (like Donkin) and is suspicious to malingerers (like Wait). The captain and mates have undisputed decisional power and discipline, work and restraint are self-uderstood. "Do or Die", the motto of the *Judea* can be the motto of any ship. "Work till you drop. That's what you're here for" says mate Baker in *The Nigger of the'Narcisssus'* (32). "A man is a worker.If he is not that he is nothing, just nothing" (*Notes on Life and Letters* 190). In "The Ludic Imagination: "Youth", Kenneth Simmons analyses Conrad's story as a paean to youth's invulnerability and ludic spirit.Beginning with the work at the pumps, young Marlow's mood oscillates between romance and responsibility, adventure and duty. Everyone on the ship,

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captain included, does the pumping, in equalitarian democracy. It is extenuating toil, but they manage to keep the ship afloat:" We pumped all night, all day, all the week- watch and watch. . . for dear life"(*Youth* 12). The crew fights fire and sails "in equality , and if not exactly fraternity then a deal of good feeling." The ship's motto is to him romantic and "that took [his] fancy immensely" (5). "To me" he says of the *Judea*, " she was the endeavour, the test, the trial of life" (12). All the misadventures allow "a chance to feel his strength" a rite of passage, a central episode in a Bildungsroman"how good a man he is".(42)

They have food provisions (even a pigstye on the *Narcissus*) including drinking water used in limited portions throughout the voyage. In both *The Nigger of the'Narcisssus'* and"Youth", they suffer from thirst. Drinking water is portioned in "strict allowance". When someone is ill (e.g.Wait), they obey his pretensions, give up music and loud talks to ensure quiet to the sick one and bring him the best food available. When they have to save Wait out of his cabin during the gale, they risk their lives. In the fiercest storm, the cook declares "As long as she sails, I will cook" and makes them coffee. If there is an epidemics on the ship, (in *The Shadow Line*) the only two members who are not sick with malaria, the captain and the cook, work day and night to replace the whole crew and manage to keep the ship functional. When the crew of the *Narcissus* separate in London, they are a brotherhood: the narrator addresses them with "Goodbye, brothers". Their biome ceases to exist, they will never meet again. With every new voyage they will live in new biomes. They have superstitions. A dead or dying man aboard brings about a windfall (to the *Narcissus* and to the brig in *The Shadow-Line* passing the point where the late jinx captain was buried at sea.)

They stand for an endangered social species, to which Conrad himself belonged - the sailing ship sailors. They are an extinct species whose voyage was unique and unrepeatable, and whose destinies separated further on. Ecocritical Conrad deplores the extinction of two symbiotic species: the sailing ships and the heroic sailors of brigs, "the crew of Shades." He was such a sailor himself, who refused to do what everybody else did - "go into steamers" which he was advised to do, as mentioned in *A Personal Record.*Each of his biome-crews is "a world of men."In an eco-feministic approach, Conrad is patriarchal, sexist and misogynist. The best of Conrad's fiction, as Nina Pelican Straus observes in "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing"(1996), addresses an exclusive masculine circle of narrators, characters, listeners, and readers. The woman"is out of it"(Pelican Straus, 1996: 48).

Racism or jingoism do not exist in the biome, the crew is internationalist, nationality is replaced by egalitarian cooperation, as Conrad unawarely confirms Marx's claim that the workers have no nationality: on the ship there is only "the brotherhood of the sea." Devotion to the ship and to one another is spontaneous. The *Narcissus* sailors are generous to new-coming Donkin, although they are poor, and provide him with clothes, shoes and blankets in no time."Solidarity" of the crew community as a key notion for both the sailors' and the Victorian ethic is the pre-requisite of the crew facing the sea's vicissitudes(*The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Shadow-Line,* "Youth").The biome of *The Shadow- Line* is impressive in the unceasing efforts of Ransome and the young captain to save the crew and manage the ship. It is about this solidarity that Conrad speaks in his famous Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*: "[The artist] speaks. . . to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation . . .the solidarity in mysterious origin, . . . which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world."(Conrad1897:1-3).In "A Familiar Preface" to *A Personal Record,* he mentions *The Mirror of the Sea* as a volume intended to be "his tribute to the sea, its ships and its men "("A Familiar Preface" 3).

The subtitle of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* is "*A Tale of the Forecastle: About My Friends at the Sea."* The crew of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* is a group of sailors of various nationalities, culturally uprooted, deterritorialized at the beginning, but reterritorializing as a new biome with a specific professional culture and ethic code.They are helpful to new-

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comers, generous to Wait”afraid of death and making her his accomplice", "an impostor of some character - mastering our compassion, scornful of our sentimentalism, triumphing over our suspicions” ("*To My Readers in America*"1). There is no racism on the ship, except for Donkin's anti-internationalist xenophobia against "bloddy furriners" and "black-faced swines."(45) Toiling and struggling together to survive in a biome isolated at high sea, they unite in a spontaneous brotherhood, generous to the point of self-sacrifice, illustrating the precepts of the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (3). This social ecological communion of people and nature recalls by contrast Conrad's opposition humans vs. nature as compared to Wordsworth's perfect biophilia in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802). Through the lenses of eco-Marxism, this "solidarity" is the beginning of class unity among the membres of the proletariat of the seas. Belfast brags to have insulted a second mate (8), there is a strike attempt out of solidarity with a comrade, but, as conservative Conrad presents it, not a reasonable one, which the wise captain diplomatically disarms. One must mention the exception of the conflictual Donkin, who instigates to revolt but dodges, steals the dying nigger's money but expresses xenophobia, accepts the others' clothes as alms but is not fair to assume the responsibility of his murder attempt. Conrad portrays him as a shirker, a sham spokesman for trade union ideals.There is a dual attitude in Conrad versus the emerging socialist ideas of the workers' group of the *'Narcissus'*. Their need for group action and organizing is approved, but at the moment when the revolt outbreaks they are presented as having no clear reason for complaint. When they attempt to lead the the ship, they end in confusion. They are lovable simple people, sentimentally attached to Captain Allistoun's courage, who risks the ship's limits in the storm and to chief mate Baker being energetic about discipline. Conrad's collective portrait of the crew is a tribute to proletarian lives at a time where they were presented as "stereotypical and demeaning postures"expresses the force of "a collective conciousness" and the spectre of radical social movements (Richardson 213). Their definition as "the simple minds of the big children" (*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* 6) is overcome by Singleton's resistance and self-sacrifice: no simple-minded could manage to steer with care, standing at the helm for thirty hours. When, at the end, on land at the payment moment, the clerk expresses spite for seamen ("How stupid those sailors are!") as Singleton approaches (168), readers can judge this as calumny.

When Wait explains to them that he is ill, cannot work and needs quiet, they suspect him of dodging but at the same time they pity him because they identify with him as their destiny: their common future death at sea. By maintaining doubt he is a source of suffering to them, nevertheless they spoil him along the journey, especially after they extract him from his cabin. He "represents our human blackness"(Guerard 107).The only one, beside selfish Donkin, who is not impressed by Wait is disciplined stern Singleton, who tells him coldly to "get on with his dying" and not to "raise a blamed fuss with them"(*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*17). When saving Wait from his cabin, the sailors risk their lives forming a human chain and "literally pass him from hand to hand"(25) although they say they "hate" the "dodger". Belfast, who puts his oilskin on him and shudders in the frosty wind, is also the most affected one by Wait's death - he sews his sack and helps him sink at the burial, then mourns for him after landing, asking the clerk for an object of Wait's as a souvenir.

Their separation at the end of the voyage is final and painful for the narrator, the inevitable deterritorialization of their cultural group, when they leave the ship to move on land. It is to be presumed that similar histories of other biomes and reterritorialization will happen on other sailing ships, and have occurred before.The final paragraph of the novel is a declaration of brotherhood to a special crew, in a luminous description vibrating with animism of "the remembering and mute stones", like photographic storied and storying matter. Some sailors' only family is the crew and only home is the ship. There are two who have nowhere to go to - old Singleton and Baker, the latter remains on the ship as a

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permanent dwelling. Singleton has been an orphan on ships for forty-five years; Baker is single and his lady sister avoids him; Wait had no relatives.

One can interpret the plot of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* through Hubert Zapf's 'triadic phase reading' (which he applied to Melville's *Moby Dick*): the 'triadic functional model': literature as 'cultural-critical metadiscourse'-the crew's discontent, 'imaginative counterdiscourse'-the revolt and 'reintegrative interdiscourse'-the pacification.In Edward Said's 'counterpuntal reading', one finds theme 1 - the storm and Wait's saving, theme 2 - the revolt and its quieting, the coda - Wait's death.

In "Typhoon", all the crew thinks that the resistance of the *Nan-Shan* is overestimated by the simple-minded Captain MacWhirr acting in a gale against the book which bewilders him and facing "straight" "the heart of the gale" instead of circumscribing the storm, as the complicated sailing manual says and he,with his limited intellect, cannot make any sense of that manual; yet the ship has the luck to be more resistant than it was thought and the engineers toil in double watches. Tenacious MacWhirr has certain merits though, and his simple-minded approach to complicated problems makes him efficient at the end of the voyage, when he manages to calm down the crowd of angry coolies by giving their dollars back to them in equal shares. Engineer Rout comments upon MacWhirr's unexpected success in solving all the problems of the exceptionally difficult voyage: "Give me the dullest ass for a skipper before a rogue" ("Typhoon" 16). Conrad portrays a long varied list of heroic captains' figures in: *The Nigger of the'Narcissus'* (Alistoun), "Youth" (Beard), "The End of the Tether"(Whalley), "Typhoon" (McWhirr), *The Rescue* (Lingard).

Conrad's ships always surpass the expectations, and behave exemplarily. Singleton says: "Ships are all right. It is the men in them!"(*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*11)Allistoun "had commanded the *Narcissus* since she was built. He loved his ship and drove her unmercifully; for his secret ambition was to make her accomplish some day a brilliantly quick passage which would be mentioned in the nautical papers." (*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* 13)Captain Alistoun is humane and diplomatic, takes risks in the storm, although the crew asks for the masts to be cut.The ship succeeds to win the master's wager, thanks to the crew's efforts and to Singleton who "steered with care" for more than thirty hours and, because he is tired out after this exploit, he realizes that he has grown old: "getting old....and then?" (33) "The guardian spirit of the *'Narcissus'*" (Watt 124), "boasted. . . that generally from the day he was paid off from one ship till the day he shipped in another he seldom was in a condition to distinguish daylight". He is "a child of the sea", whose home is the ship, whose family is the crew and whose grave will be the sea. He can be perceived as an amphibian man and feels like an alien on land. Singleton stands as symbol of the passing of a type of sailors and of the age of brigs, also of the innocence of the non-polluting ships and purer souls in seamen: he is also "a child of time, a lonely relic"(*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*11).He personifies the ship, acts with her like a tamer, talks to her: "You...hold!"

In Conrad's fiction, no one of the crew dies at sea except de Barral and Captain Anthony in *Chance* and James Wait in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. Even the flying crew in *Youth* survive their burning in the explosion, their flight and landing in the sea are a jocular story. The universe plays a farce on the crew but spares them.They arrive in the East harbour like a pitiable group of hairless scarecrows, but none is seriously hurt by the fire.

In *Lord Jim*, the crew acts collectively in the crime of abandoning the ship and the pilgrim passengers.In *Conrad and Imperialism*, Benita Parry sees this novel in great contrast with *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* as Conrad questions here the conduct code of the merchant marine. He would seem seditious if he raised such questions in 1897 with *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*:"In *Lord Jim* - the political functions of moral absolutes, the mutability of fixed standards, . . . in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* would have resounded as a call to rebellion, . . . causing Marlow to be cast in the role of a seditious intruder" (Parry 128).

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Conrad describes in *The Shadow-Line* the effort of creating ethical order in an indifferent cosmos, by the humans who cannot accept chaos, and try to impose their reason to the irrational incidents that besiege their existence. the young captain idealizes his role, has the naïve illusion of supreme power because of the authority bestowed on him.There is no other happier moment than promise of mastership: "Command is a strong magic" (*TheShadow-Line* 29),he views his possession of the ship as his last warrant of saving his threatened power against inimical hazard, the ship being, in pathetic fallacy, a secondary nature symbiotic with him. Cook Ransome at the end of the novella is the opposite of the Ransome throughout the story. No longer heroically dismissing the warnings of nature to his frail body, he only requests retirement and survival, rest for his sick heart.

In *Chance*, Conrad compares the simplicity and discipline and isolation of the crew's life at sea to a monastery community life shaping character:"Profane men living in ships like the holy men gathered in monasteries develop traits of profound resemblance. . . The service of the sea and the service of a temple are both detached from . . . a world which follows no severe rule" (*Chance* 17)

Family relationships

Conrad's fictionshows individuals who are supposed to be opposing natural and social vicissitudes with the support of family biomes. But this is a hypothetical situation. The reality of Conrad's fiction is multifarious. His heroes are usually single or widowers. His couples vary from alliances, friendships, to truces, antithetical pairs, master-victim pairs or murder-generating conflictual pairs. There are few harmonious marital couples and these are paradoxically, or precisely because of that, those of sailors,who seldom meet: the Beards ("Youth"), the Whalleys ("The End of the Tether"), the Routs ("Typhoon").There are hardly any children in Conrad's fiction, his characters are individuals of an endangered species, on the verge of extinction. Conrad's couples are childless (like the Beards in "Youth" or the Goulds in *Nostromo*, the Travers in *The Rescue*, the Routsin *Typhoon*.) Heroines are often widow fiancées (the Intendedin *Heart of Darkness*, Antonia, Linda, Giselle in *Nostromo*, Jewel in *Lord Jim*). If some heroes have children, they are taken away and appropriated by other races, who turn them into half-castes (*Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*). Conradian characters close the history of their family tree, menaced by apocalyptic extinction. Significantly, some children die before their parents: Dain Waris, Jim, and Stein's own child and wife in *Lord Jim*. Some critics see this as a psychoanalytical darkness of human soul, present in Oedipus and Laius relationships of actual or foster parenthood. (Rising 1990; Meyer 1967).

A psychological ecocritical analyst sees Conrad's interior conflicts as generated by his double bind acknowledging his father's romanticism and covert anarchism, and his uncle's realism and devotion to fidelity and duty. In a large number of Conrad's works, one can come across fathers who are widowers - *The End of the Tether*, *Chance*, *Nostromo*, *Almayer's Folly*; also, most sailors are orphans. This has an autobiographical explanation in *A Personal Record*. The crew replaces their family. Mother-child relationships are less frequent, a fact which is also explained by Conrad's biography (mentioned in *A Personal Record*, *Notes on Life and Letters*): "Because of the Dollars" (Laughing Anne), *Nostromo* (Teresa Viola). Almayer's native wife sells her daughter to the Balinese prince. Joanna Da Souza, Willems's wife (*An Outcast of the Islands*) obliges him to support all her parasitical relatives and in the end casts him away. Interracial marriages are disastrous (*Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*). "Karain"'s Dutchman and Malay princess are a happy exception.Each national group is a self-locked biome, and the respective spouse belongs to it. He/she cannot commune with the other spouse, originating in another self-enclosed biome. Both have phenotype features, traditions and customs, religion, language, allegiances.A child resulted from such a marriage

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is a hybrid obliged to make a choice, because the would-be truce he/she attempts is only a schismogenic double bind of two different customs, two warring parties. Dain Waris, the easterner who wants to become a westerner is symbolically killed by Brown. He and Jim have attempted a "rare friendship between white and brown" but their fates observe racial appurtenance.

Native mistresses are abandoned: Kurtz's black concubine, Willems's Arab lover Aissa, Jewel's mother. Jim "goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct" (*Lord Jim* 313).In *Almayer's Folly*, Almayer's half-cast wife is a heinously hateful reversed racist. In *An Outcast of the Islands,*Willems's half-caste wife Joanna has a similar pattern of behaviour. Her presence provokes Arab Aissa's shooting him dead. While the white colonists stand for culture, native wives stand for nature's hostile anthropomorphic materializations. However, Nina, Almayer's half-caste daughter is romantic anthropomorphic nature, and so is Jewel. However, Jewel's half-caste mother's story of abandonment and maltreatment by white husbands is the cause of Jewel's fears of being abandoned by Jim. In the three plots mentioned here, the native wife standing for nature is incompatible with the white husband standing for culture.

Coracial couples are not far more harmonious. Marital relations, if they exist, are fragile. Some heroines get married to secure fathers to their problematic children (like Laughing Anne in "Because of the Dollars") or brothers (like Winnie in *The Secret Agent*). Winnie fakes marital harmony for the sake of ensuring her half-witted son-brother normal living conditions without sending him to an asylum. When he is killed, murder and suicide follow immediately. Similarly, in "The Idiots", with four oligophrenic children, Susan stabs her husband and drowns. In *The Rescue*, the Travers are a mismatched couple:she is fanciful, eccentric,he is arrogant, narrow-minded. In *Nostromo*, the Goulds are a disharmonious couple: she is a loving loyal partner in his enterprises, he is estranged, manipulative,their love bond is weaker than his obsession with his silver mine. Emilia, Linda, and Giselle are women whose lovers cheat on them with the silver. (Raghinaru 125).While talking to his wife, Charles has for a moment the revelation that the mine has lured him much too far; but he immediately acknowledges that "there was no going back." (*Nostromo* 82).

Siblings' relationships are characterized by unconditioned devotion.The paragon is the princely pair of Hassim and Immada in *The Rescue,* idealized "ecological Indians", fighting together to recover their reign and dying together. Nature as represented by them is ethical devotion and rightfulness of purpose, in sharp contrast to the whites' meanness (Travers) and the other tribes' native chiefs' (Tengga, Daman and Belarab) reversed racism.

Fatherly feelings range from personal sacrifice in *The End of the Tether* to criminal jealousy in *Chance* andselfishness in *To-morrow,* from self-destructive dreaming in *Almayer's Folly* to criminal guardianship in *Nostromo*. Father-child relationships are more frequent, and the father is unmarried or a widower. Hudig and Lingard provide rich dowries for their half-caste foster daughters to get them married to white colonists. Almayer dreams to make a white lady of his half-cast daughter, but loses her to the natives. De Barral loves his daughter with a psychotic jealousy and tries to poison his son-in-law. Doramin loses his only son-heir killed by a white man. Stein loses his only half-caste daughter in early childhood. Foster fatherhood and devoted mentorship evoke Conrad's uncle Bobrowski's tutorship.

In *The End of the Tether,* Captain Whalley, Conrad's own favourite hero, spares gains and fights old age and blindness for the sake of his impoverished daughter. Not wanting to be his daughter's burden, he becomes a fraud, hiring a Malay serang as his "eyes" "to the end of the tether"; yet he is an environmental danger, too.Whalley chooses going down with the stranded ship rather than being exposed. The ethical dilemma of the story is whether a blind captain, although devoted to his family, is not a threat to his ship. Where exactly does the end

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of the tether lie? Should humans oppose nature or surrender to it? Should ethics praise well-meaning risk or condemn it?

In *Almayer's Folly*, Almayer builds a luxurious house and spends wildly to make a white lady of his daughter Nina; he does not succeed in either ambition. Almayer's daughter tells her father about an insurmountable racial barrier existing between them, "I am not of your race. Between your people and me there is a barrier that nothing can remove."(*Almayer's Folly* 179)

In *Nostromo*, a classical tragedy occurs in the family, with the murder of a foster-son by the father, who unawares prevents unnatural bigamy for the sake of silver. Viola killing his son-in-law replacing his real son has a Laius complex. He condemns his daughters to spinsterhood and himself to having no lineage. The irony is that it is not love but silver that kills Nostromo on the fateful night. Giselle's gipsy double Morenita publicly asks for Nostromo's silver buttons, making him cut them off. The gesture is symbolical of Nostromo's future destiny: the earth steals his silver at the end, has him pay with his life, and will return into the earth, to an unknown place. Linda's cry closes the novel under a sky covered by "a big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver"(463).

In *A Smile of Fortune*, Jacobus tries to ensnare the narrator captain with the help of his daughter Alice and then to blackmail him into buying his potatoes.If Jacobus is willing to use his daughter as a bait, can humans be exchanged for rotten potatoes?

Mother-child relationships are less frequent. Conrad's memories of his mother date from a very early age (*A Personal Record*, *Notes on Life and Letters*). Jewel's mother 's "unquiet grave" is a reminder of white men's abusive colonialism in a racial patriarchal world, the source of Jewel's reversed racism combined with feminism. Seeing her mother dying weeping, Jewel swears not to repeat her story, but she fears she will.Trying to answer her disquieting questions, Marlow has a vision of cosmic chaos (*Lord Jim* 209).

In *The Secret Agent*,Winnie's mother is confronted with her impossibility of protecting her disabled son from the universe's cruelty.Her retreat to an almshouse, presented as her "heroic proceedings" (*TheSecret Agent* 144), is an example of the lack of shelter offered to women in an androcentric world, a sacrifice in order to ensure Stevie's security in the Verlocs' household.

The Almayers' relationship is a lifelong interracial rivalry for Nina's love.Disappointed by the whites' meanness, Nina is brought round by her mother to the Malay outlook on life; Mrs. Almayer sells her like a commodity to Dain Maroola, bargaining her beauty and nobility; she counsels her daughter on marital strategy to keep her husband's hatred for the white men alive.

All the family links listed above are flawed, if not overtly conflictual, and cannot ensure the protection of the family biome for the vulnerable individual confronted with nature. "We live, as we dream, alone" (*Heart of Darkness* 39).

Friendship and mentorship; doubles

Conrad's heroes are devoted friends. Friendship takes the form of brotherhood, foster fatherhood, mentorship. It connects his characters in pairs and meshes of doubles. Many critical concepts applicable to Conrad's fiction have duality/ janicity: it should come as no wonder that his heroes can be grouped as doubles. Conrad's major antithesis, reflecting the thought about natural science and anthropology before 1900, is culture versus nature. The members of such doubles' pairs stand for the self / culture / persona vs. the id / nature / shadow, being closer either to nature or to culture For instance, in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is the self and Kurtz the id. In "The Secret Sharer" the captain is the self, and Leggatt is his id. Generally they are coracial, although in *Lord Jim*, Jim and Dain Waris belong to different races. They are also co-gender, although Jewel is the double of both Jim and Dain

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Waris. Doubles are often culturally similar. Marlow's doubles are Stein and the "privileged man". Both Stein and Marlow identify with Jim - the embodiment of their youth's dilemmas. Jim is also the double of Brierly, who is contaminated to such an extent by the discovery of the flaws in the marine code that he commits suicide. Jewel loves so much her Jim that she imitates him in everything, even in speech and clothes. Mrs Travers (*The Rescue*) finds a double in princess Immada and dresses up as her. Karain's double is his haunting friend Pata Mahara. Arsat's double is his haunting brother ("The Lagoon"). In "To-morrow", old Hagberd and old Carvil, each other's doubles, tyrannize Bessie Carvil.The Intended's double is the queen of the tribe of the lake. Marlow does not realize that his double is the harlequin, the naïve adventurer devoted to Kurtz. Although Conrad dislikes psychoanalysis, he organizes his characters in pairs corresponding to the self/id (Jim/Brown, Jim/Dain Waris, Marlow/ Kurtz, the captain/Leggatt), super-ego/self (Brierly-Jim), civilization/savagery (the Intended/ the African concubine).Moreover, each person has a Janus-like personality. This complicates the relationships *individual/nature* further, and leads to other types of double correspondences.Thus a mesh of identities is created round Kurtz, surrounding him with doubles of his id, self or super-ego. Marlow's preference for befriending anti-heroes may be explained by his identification with them, and Brierly's suicide has its explanation in his identification with Jim's unsolvable quandary. "Well, let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there! . . . *I* would." (*Lord Jim* 55). Shattered by the consequences of Jim's act, Brierly requests the latter's self-burial and actually buries himself at sea. He is, more dramatically than Marlow, a man totally dedicated to the code of the navy. Neither Jim nor Brierly admit the flaws of that code overtly.

Ecocritically, Conrad's doubles are pairs or groups of individuals sharing psychological and cultural features. Beside friendship, this is a typically Conradian manner of connecting human individual variants to face nature. They are coracial, have similar proccupations and belong to similar social strata. What connects them is that they are aware of their mutual mirroring and are sometimes friends/ mentors/ confessors. Their outlook on nature and society is reciprocally accepted. They exist in most Conrad's novels and stories. Nostromo is the double of Don Pepe and Father Román in a different work context. Antonia is the double of Corbelán and Avellanos. Giselle is the double of Linda, and also of Morenita. Mrs. Gould's double is Monygham, who perceives reality with her lucidity. The difference is that she is by common acceptance empathetic and generous, whereas he adopts a mask of cynicism, under which he hides devotion and self-sacrifice.

Marlow and Jim influence each other in a friendship fringing foster parenthood. Marlow intervenes actively in finding various positions for Jim, finally bringing him to Patusan. Reciprocally, Jim influences Marlow by shattering the latter's confidence in the "privileged man's" belief in racial superiority and his belief in Brierly's navy's ethical code, so Marlow starts thinking about an alternative ethic that includes contingency of confrontation with nature, imprevisible reactions to crisis. "What Marlow is concerned to prove is how Jim's fidelity to imperialism's saving ideals establishes him, despite his defection, as "one of us". (Parry 137)

Marlow constantly complains of a vision of Jim which lacks intelligibility : "He was not - if I may say so - clear to me. He was not clear"(136) Marlow 's "bafflement is often strategic: the story may have counsel neither Marlow nor his audience/ readership would wish to heed." (Conroy 144) That is because Jim's deceitful appearance of clear racial features, warrating appurtenance to a noble Arian race is identifiable as representative of the western colonialism and of the British merchant marine, "one of us." His "failure of nerve" is extremely intriguing to the court of Malabar, who cannot understand how a perfectly appropriate youth could not serve his duties(Conroy 146).The appeal of Jim to "all [Marlow's] sympathies" is thus marked by a profound ambiguity, a sense of depth beyond

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reach. In fact, this fatal ambiguity may be the richest source of Marlow's fascination with Jim - racial, social, professional and psychological as an intriguing "specimen." "He was of the right sort; he was one of us."(*Lord Jim* 64).Marlow desires to keep his trust in the merchant marine because the contradictions of the code involve the questioning of the British Empire itself. The series of doubles shows that Jim's case is contagious. (Schwarz 1980: 83.)Marlow's capacity of doubling is infinite. He empathises so completely with Jim, that the implications of the latter's inadequacy frighten him. Since Jim is "one of us" "not one of us is safe"(43). If a man so honest and strong as Jim can go wrong like that in front of wilderness traps by violating "the solidarity of the craft", he deprives everybody else of their sheltering lies, "robbed our common life of the last spark of its glamour" (131).If Jim failed, could he not be the beginning in an epidemic of failures? This is what Brierly fears.Marlow infers Brierly "was probably holding silent inquiry into his own case" but "he took the secret of the evidence with him in that leap into the sea" (50). Brierly denounces the publicity"Why are we tormenting that young chap?" Marlow thus deduces that"at bottom poor Brierly must have been thinking of himself" (55).Brierly cares only for professional trust:"We are trusted. . . the only thing that holds us together is just the name for that kind of decency."(56) In defending his "decency" Brierly reveals cynicism: the merchant marine make little difference between the passengers they transport and a cargo of "old rags in bales" and he tries to bribe Jim to clear out of town voicing his hidden cowardice. Jim is surrounded by a mesh of doubles: Brierly, Marlow, Stein, Dain Waris, Brown. Marlow has a vocation for friendship and mentorship. Marlow and Stein strive together to save Jim, condemned by social law. Both are friends and mentors by vocation: they spend time, use relationships to find employment for Jim, they empathize with him in foster parenthood. Marlow's analysis of Jim seems a psychologist detective's dilemma proposed to the readers for a solution.He confesses ignorance of his motives to find an answer about Jim "as a member of an obscure body of men held together . . .by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct" (43), who comes to show the unreliability of a fixed standard of conduct, and the failure of the sheltering illusions in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* that back it.In Catherine Rising's opinion, (as expressed in *Darkness at Heart: Fathers and Sons in Conrad*), Stein is a Laius-like foster father, who sends Jim to lethal trials in Patusan, providing him with poisoned gifts: the ring and the guns. Both Marlow, Brierly, Stein, Doramin and Cornelius suffer from the Laius complex, and Oedipal Jim finally falls prey to their concerted actions of annihilation.

In *Heart of Darkness*Marlow identifies to Kurtz after the latter's being burial in a "muddy hole" "they almost buried me."(*Heart of Darkness* 100) He repeats Kurtz's illness, but he survives, without any precious epiphany, as Kurtz had had." It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through"(101). But he seems doomed to bear Kurtz's obsessive memory for a year, and become a disdainer of ignorant urbanites. He accuses his listeners to be the mere creation of their social environment. He can escape the obsession of his double only by meeting the Intended, Kurtz's double, who becomes Marlow's own double in the interview. Only in the necessary lie to Kurtz's Intended does Marlow's story come to an end:"I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie"(69). Her gestures and her grief recall to him the black concubine, who thus becomes her double. Thus the mesh of doubles surrounding Kurtz's figure increases, and one can add to it his harlequin proselyte. Kurtz also identifies with Marlow, one side of his personality (the 'sheltering illusions', the super ego) identifies with the Intended, whereas the other (the wilderness, the id) identifies with the black woman. Also, there is identification between the Intended and Marlow. Marlow's doubles - captains on the Congo are ominously dead. The doubles die for Marlow "by proxy so that he can both witness and survive his own demise" (Meckier 74). The Swedish captain "hanged himself on the road" (*Heart of Darkness* 21) - nobody knows why, but they find it predictible, the Danish Fresleven was murdered by a native so Marlow steps "into his shoes" (9)."The glassy panel"

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reflecting Marlow's own face stares back with Kurtz's stare, as "Marlow's growing identification with what he feels is Kurtz's judgment." (Madden 177) After sharing vicariously in Kurtz's deathbed epiphany, Marlow's illness is the death of his old self, a secular rebirth. As an enlightened emissary, he brings back a warning truth. The frame narrator becomes his last double. Marlow does not tell a lie, he tells the truth about having told a lie once (Meckier 74).

He searches out Fresleven's corpse and finds a skeleton, grass growing through its ribs. The next dying by proxy is Kurtz, "the cage of his ribs all astir"(85), reduced to the condition of the starving natives in the grove of death, "bundles of acute angles."(25). When he appears from the winding sheet, he is the image of "poetic justice" (Stewart 113) as his head is an ivory ball - the trader looks like the commodity, a caricature of Midas, "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory" (85). Kurtz is now an "it" (an exhumed corpse) -"it could speak English to me": Kurtz was partly English, "the original Kurtz had been educated partly in England"(*Heart of Darkness* 71) "thus England is involved" (Stewart 113) .

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow tries to save Kurtz's life, Kurtz initiates Marlow in evil, so help is exchanged in a two-way partnership. Bruce Henricksen interprets Marlow and Kurtz's story as a gnostic myth where a second messenger of light (Marlow) travels to retrieve a fallen messenger of light (Kurtz)(Henricksen 1978). One can interpret *Lord Jim* in the same manner, replacing the fallen messenger of light with Jim. Looked upon in Henricksen's approach, the plots are similar:an imperfect messenger of light, condemned by circumstances to failure and possible annihilation, is followed by a more powerful second one, who travels to retrieve him.

Victory is a story of doubles, too. Axel Heyst comes to the aid of his double, his subsequent partner Morrison, with spontaneous disinterested good-will, he is also a double of Davidson, who ends the narrative. His lethal opponents, Mr Jones, Ricardo and Pedro, are pervert or feral evil doubles to one another in spite of their physical and intellectual dissimilarities.

"The Secret Sharer" is a circular story. Leggatt appears from the sea and leaves for the sea at the end. He wears the narrator's hat (signifying his ego) for a short time only. When the double departs, the captain imagines Leggatt as "a free man, a proud swimmer " ("The Secret Sharer" 143). The act of ramming his own captain hat on Leggatt's head is the moment of the triumph of the irrational. Leggatt is everything the captain is not allowed to be - a choleric outcast, his repressed half, the "secret self, " (35) his own subconscious. During the hiding days the captain wonders whether the crew doubts his sanity. He sacrifices them for his secret self, abdicating from authority. Throwing the hat symbolizing his conscious into the sea, the captain knows he will never regain it. When Leggatt was strangling the indisciplined sailor, "a bit of the forecastle head" struck him, "as if the sky had fallen on my head." (102). As Guerard remarked, *The Secret Sharer* is similar to *Heart of Darkness* as character doubles structure, only more condensed. Leggatt appears from the dark sea as an endangered double for the narrator to protect and abandon, a trial which teaches him both responsibilities to the other and to the ship: the novella is a brief Bildungsroman. Leggatt comes as a messenger to try the captain's ability to lead and his humanity, these features standing at cross purposes.Leggatt and the narrator are faceless, reified, the text has nameless characters and places. The double starts working as a mirror, the unhomely is produced by the insistence on the similarity between them. They are the same age and look like twins (discussed in detail by David Eggenschweiler in " *Narcissus* in'The Secret Sharer'"), the physical resemblance is insisted on, the narrator refers to Leggatt as "my double", my "other self"("The Secret Sharer"104). The physical coincidence is so perfect that one suspects that the story is a short psychotic episode.There is a conflict of loyalties, a double bind.The captain's future with his

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suspicious crew is not clear; only through good luck does he not strand his ship.In the narrator's identification with the fugitive, it is he who mimes the other's movements (Eggenschweiler 32). The double has to be known, because it is his id/ shadow and the ship, the crew and himself as a captain are "strange strangers" to the narrator. Therefore, agentive nature sends him his instinctual double so that he should discover himself better. After four days he frees himself from his id abandoning him in the wilderness, sending him either to freedom or to death, so the self captain can dedicate to his crew, obeying the super-ego and become fully united to his ship in ploioanthropism, Conrad's "manboatship".

In "Karain" Matara is Karain's double, and his killing transforms him in a haunting ghost. He asks Karain"Kill with a sure shot!" ("Karain"14).In anticlimax, Karain kills indeed with sure shot not Matara's sister, but Matara, his best friend. According to the Malay culture, he commits a murder. Antiracistically, he is right to protect the princess and her interracial marriage: "Matara leaped at her with uplifted arm. I pulled the trigger. . .I shouted at her,'Live and remember!'"(15)

In both "The Lagoon", "Karain" and *Under Western Eyes*, there is a fratricide. The 'logic of fratricide' supersedes the sameness of doubles. Conrad calls fraternity "the Abel and Cain business" where a double - a friend or a brother - is killed by his friend or sibling (*Life and Letters* 1, 269). The slain other is a superior version of the self. The biblical story thus contradicts Darwinism. The fittest is killed, the weakest kills. Conrad's stories are about an unresolved biological contradiction.

Conclusion

Conrad's most effective communities are the biomes of the crews, which he deals with repeatedly in his fiction. His nostalgia for the endangered species of brig sailors is as often expressed as his love for sailing ships.The ethical code of the crew proposed in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* is questioned in *Lord Jim*. Both conservative and romantic, Conrad cherishes the values of honour, fidelity, solidarity, duty, restraint.

Although extremely varied, ineffectual family relationships in his fiction have the features of an endangered human species approaching the apocalypse: hardly any children, fragile and conflictual marital relationships, Laius-complex stories, single heroes, widower fathers and widow fiancées.

His noble friendship stories narrate of loyalty, solidarity, empathy, unconditional help and devotion, in specific relationships such as mentorship, foster fatherhood, quasi-brotherhood. His heroes collect acquaintances and friends as specimens whose cultural and psychological affinities place them in pairs and groups of doubles, secret sharers.

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