THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF
THE WORKS OF
JOSEPH CONRAD

A SET OF SIX

EDITED BY
ALLAN H. SIMMONS AND
MICHAEL FOSTER
WITH
OWEN KNOWLES

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INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
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GENERAL EDITOR'S 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 a critical text of Conrad's collection of short stories *A Set of Six* and its prefatory statements. The Cambridge text of these stories is based on original documents where these survive, and where they do not on an authoritative printed text. The copy-texts are emended to incorporate authorial revisions drawn from earlier and later authoritative documents as well as editorial emendations to correct errors.

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 Text' traces the textual history of the volume, examines the sources of its individual texts and explains the policies followed in editing them. The 'Apparatus' records basic textual evidence, documenting the discussion of genealogy and authority laid out 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. Glossaries explain nautical terms and foreign words and phrases. 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 glossaries are intended primarily for a non-specialist audience.

The support of the institutions listed on p. xi 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 Editor 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.

THE GENERAL EDITOR

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Archive (www.conradfirst.net) made the English and American serializations of Conrad's stories readily accessible; and to Don Shewan for his work on the maps.

John G. Peters variously contributed to the work on this volume, including on-site readings and providing bibliographical information, and we owe him a debt of gratitude. Special thanks are also due to the School of Arts and Humanities, St Mary's University, Twickenham, London, for defraying costs for the verification of the English and American book texts.

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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 writer of critical esteem (1895–1914); as 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, unless otherwise specified.

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
1875		Apprentice in *Mont-Blanc* (to Caribbean)
1876–7		In *Saint-Antoine* (to Caribbean)
1878	late February or early March	Possibly 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)
1888–9		Captain of barque *Otago* (Bangkok to Australia and Mauritius)
1889	autumn	Begins *Almayer's Folly* in London
1890	February–April	In Poland for first time since 1874
	May–December	In the Congo. 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*
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*
	early November	Plans and writes part of 'Benavides' cycle, later reshaped as 'Gaspar Ruiz'
1905	mid-January–mid-May	On Capri, friendly with writer Norman Douglas and with Count Zygmunt Szembek, part model for 'Il Conde'; becomes familiar with Naples
	June	*One Day More* staged in London
	mid-October	Finishes 'Gaspar Ruiz'
	December	Writes 'An Anarchist' and begins 'An Informer'
1906	January	Finishes 'An Informer'
	February	In Montpellier, finishes 'The Brute'
	July	'Gaspar Ruiz' in *Saturday Evening Post* (concludes August); begins

		in *Pall Mall Magazine* (concludes October)
	August	John Alexander Conrad born
		'An Anarchist' in *Harper's Magazine*
	October	*The Mirror of the Sea*
	late November	Begins 'Il Conde' (finished 4 December)
	December	'The Informer' in *Harper's Magazine*
	December 5	'The Brute' in *Daily Chronicle Xmas Number*
1907	January–April	In Montpellier, composes 'The Duel'
	September	*The Secret Agent*. Moves to Someries, Luton, Bedfordshire
	October	Actively plans volume of collected short stories
1908	January	'The Duel' begins in *Pall Mall Magazine* (concludes May)
	early (?) May	Receives proofs for *A Set of Six* from Methuen's
	July	'The Duel' published as *The Point of Honor* in *Forum* (concludes October)
	August	'Il Conde' in *Cassell's Magazine*
	August 6	*A Set of Six* published in England by Methuen and Company
	September 19	'The Duel' published as *The Point of Honor: A Military Tale* by McClure Company (New York)
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 25	Departs for Austrian Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War
	November 3	Arrives back in England (via Vienna and Genoa) from Continent
	mid–late November	Writes 'Note to the First American Edition'
1915	January 15	*A Set of Six* published in America by Doubleday, Page and Company
	February	*Within the Tides*
	March	*Victory*
1917	March	*The Shadow-Line*
1919	August	*The Arrow of Gold*
	October	Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent
1920	April	Writes 'Author's Note' for the collected editions of *A Set of Six*
	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*
1922	November	*The Secret Agent* staged in London
1923	May–June	Visits America, guest of F. N. Doubleday
	November	*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*

ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

Abbreviations

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

Bibliography	William R. Cagle, 'A Bibliography of Joseph Conrad'. Typescript, unpublished
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
CWW	Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Western World*, Cambridge University Press, 1971
Documents	*Conrad between the Lines: Documents in a Life*, ed. Gene M. Moore, Allan H. Simmons and J. H. Stape. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000
Extracts	Captain Basil Hall, *Extracts from a Journal Written on the Coasts of Chili, Peru, Mexico in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822*. 2 vols. Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824
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
Register	Gene M. Moore, comp. 'A Descriptive Location Register of Joseph Conrad's Literary Manuscripts'. *The Conradian*, 27, no. 2 (2002), 1–93

Locations of Unpublished Documents

Columbia	Paul Revere Reynolds Papers 1899–1980, Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University
Dartmouth	Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
Huntington	Huntington Library, San Marino, California
NYPL	Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library
NYU	Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University
Philadelphia	Free Library of Philadelphia
Princeton	Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
Rosenbach	Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia
Yale	Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

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, for the sake of convenience, references are 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.

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Conrad's *A Set of Six* (1908) brings together stories composed between the completion of *Nostromo* in late 1904 and the publication of *The Secret Agent* in 1907, a period during which, as he himself recalled, his 'sense of the truth of things was attended by a very intense imaginative and emotional readiness'.[1] It was also a period when Conrad, suffering severe financial hardship, turned to the composition of short stories and regular magazine publication as a way of rescuing his finances. These endeavours resulted in the tales collected in *A Set of Six* – 'Gaspar Ruiz', 'The Informer', 'The Brute', 'An Anarchist', 'The Duel' and 'Il Conde'.

Conrad's own description to his publisher of the volume's contents – 'No monotony is to be feared either in feeling or incident'[2] – does them less than justice. In fact, *A Set of Six* is one of his most varied and versatile collections. Its contents embrace diverse interests and settings (South American, Napoleonic, Neapolitan, maritime and political), multiple tonal qualities (as signified in their teasing subtitles) and a medley of short story forms (ranging from the novella in 'The Duel' – first published in the United States in a separate volume entitled *The Point of Honor* (1908) – to the anecdotal tale in 'The Informer'). Also in evidence are Conrad's famously 'varied effects of perspective',[3] which in this 'set' of largely oral tales derive from the transactions between personalized narrators and their listeners. But the distinctive kind of variety they offer is an intertextual one, stemming from Conrad's often open and playful involvement with the conventional formulas, genres and tropes of magazine fiction: at one extreme is a story like 'The Brute' whose simplified characters, narrative pacing and sensational ending illustrate how adeptly Conrad could master the arts of the magazine story-teller; at another, tales like 'Il Conde' or 'The Informer' show him to be adapting magazine formulas for his own ends and in the process dallying with the reader's expectations. 'I consider this a

[1] 'Author's Note', *The Secret Agent*, ed. Bruce Harkness and S. W. Reid (1990), p. 4.23–5.
[2] Conrad to Algernon Methuen, 26 January 1908 (*Letters*, IV, 29–30).
[3] Conrad to Richard Curle, 14 July 1923 (*Letters*, VIII, 131).

volume of no mean tricks,' he wrote – with justifiable pride in his own virtuosity – on the title page of a presentation copy to a friend.

The volume's epigraph – a French nursery rhyme that in translated form reads, 'The little puppets / Do, do, do / Three little turns / And then they're gone' – stands as an expressive rubric for the collection's underlying spirit of clever professional performance. Like the hidden puppeteer, Conrad is everywhere felt but nowhere seen; or rather, he can only be detected indirectly through the voices and gestures allowed to the puppets/characters. In turning upon kinds of behaviour that enact unthinking routines, rituals and gestures – the recurring duels in 'The Duel', the revolutionary postures in 'The Informer' and the Count's regular visits to Naples to 'make a little music' for himself in 'Il Conde' (213.5)[1] – the stories often evoke the limited 'little turns' of puppetry. At the end of the collection, with many of his characters now dead and his function fulfilled, the puppeteer is only left with the task of packing away the ephemeral show. The epigraph carries a further expressive point. It is almost certain that Conrad found the rhyme in an essay by Anatole France in which the latter sees it as a perfect summary of Guy de Maupassant's drily ironic view of life: by enlisting the rhyme as his epigraph, Conrad tacitly acknowledges the French master of the short story as a tutelary spirit.[2]

Although Conrad may have regarded *A Set of Six* as a commercial diversion from his main creative efforts, it turns out from a point of hindsight to be surprisingly central to his overall development. The first story, 'Gaspar Ruiz', looks back to *Nostromo* and, while recapitulating many of its political themes in a minor key, also stands as Conrad's farewell to South American history and epic narrative. The maritime subject of 'The Brute' links with Conrad's work-in-progress at the time – that is, with the seaman's reminiscences eventually to be collected in *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906). By contrast, two of the short stories, 'The Informer' and 'An Anarchist', seem decidedly forward-looking, the first anticipating *The Secret Agent* and its London setting, interest in anarchism and ironic method; and the second, with its central figure's anguished cry, 'It was an impossible existence! … I did not belong to myself any more' (121.17–19), foreshadowing the human tragedy of *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Finally, 'The Duel', regarded by Conrad as his first exercise in historical fiction, may be regarded as a dry run for

[1] References to the texts of the present edition, along with others to Cambridge Edition volumes, employ both page and line numbers (e.g. 38.16–17).

[2] See also explanatory notes 1.2–6.

the Napoleonic fiction of Conrad's final phase, *The Rover* (1923) and the unfinished *Suspense* (1925).

ORIGINS

A Set of Six was initially born out of Conrad's severe financial difficulties. Since the very beginning of his literary career, he had learnt to live with the unwelcome fact that sales of his fiction never matched the high estimate of contemporary reviewers. As Henry James observed, his works were 'of the sort greeted more by the expert & the critic than (as people say,) by the man in the street'.[1] But if Conrad was no stranger to financial hardship, his financial position dramatically worsened after 1900, when, now a family man and fully committed to the literary life, he began falling into severe debt. A first crisis point arrived in 1902, when he spent weeks negotiating loans on the strength of life insurance policies and selling the copyrights of his fiction to several of his publishers in order to yield ready funds. The prolonged composition of *Nostromo* during 1903–4 (and its poor sales) meant further struggling, with a financial collapse only prevented by advances from his agent J. B. Pinker, gifts from his friend John Galsworthy and loans from his collaborator Ford Madox Ford. In January 1904, Conrad's bank failed, leaving him with a substantial overdraft to settle, and an accident sustained by his wife to her leg in the same year began to involve large medical bills. In both 1903 and 1905, his friends successfully petitioned for him to receive public grants, the second an award of £500 from the Royal Bounty Special Fund. Yet awards of this kind rarely effected any decisive rescue – they merely enabled him to pay off some of the larger debts that had accrued over previous years. In 1905, Conrad finally suffered the ultimate indignity – that of having some of his finances administered by two trustees appointed by the Royal Bounty Special Fund: the whole affair, he complained bitterly, had 'the appearance of "Conrad having to be saved from himself"'.[2]

As part of a deliberate policy to rescue his finances by bringing in more regular income, Conrad's post-*Nostromo* period had involved him in a medley of shorter, more occasional projects – *The Mirror of the Sea* reminiscences, journalism and reviews. An even more important step followed in mid-May 1905, when he extended that policy to his

[1] Henry James to Edmund Gosse, 26 June 1902 (*A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad*, ed. J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles (1996), p. 36).
[2] Conrad to Edmund Gosse, 16 May 1905 (*Letters*, III, 247).

creative work. Thus, while writing the first of the tales that would be included in *A Set of Six*, he declared to Pinker: 'Short stories – is the watchword now.'[1] For the next year, the marketplace became a defining force in his creative life as he regularly sent his agent finished short pieces and also peppered him with suggestions for yet more tales.[2] He found that he could write such pieces relatively quickly and thereby was able to respond more promptly to requests from magazine editors. Thus, when Conrad became aware of possible publishing outlets for his stories in late 1905, he wrote three stories – 'An Anarchist', 'The Informer' and 'The Brute' – over a remarkably short period between December 1905 and late January 1906.

The prime reason for Conrad's new policy was, of course, to tap into the lucrative Edwardian magazine market, as he confessed to John Galsworthy: 'I write these stories because they bring in more money than the [*Mirror of the Sea*] … papers.'[3] In the early 1900s Conrad's growing reputation as a recognizable guarantee of artistic worth meant that he was becoming a sought-after 'name' for many magazine editors. In 1903, for example, the American firm of Harper and Brothers approached him with the promise that 'we would like to have anything you can send in the short story … and we pay the biggest prices for such work as yours';[4] and true to its word, the firm generously rewarded Conrad for publication of 'The Informer' and 'An Anarchist' in *Harper's Magazine*. In fact, the payments for any one story were multiple, with Conrad normally receiving remuneration for magazine publication in both Britain and America, but also further sums and royalties when the stories were published as a collected volume. Thus, for example, 'Gaspar Ruiz' brought in 120 guineas for its British serialization, $800 for its American magazine appearance and £120 for British book publication of the six stories (with further payments in 1915 for the American book edition).

What kind of short story did this period yield? Conrad himself attempted to answer the question for his publisher's benefit just before publication of *A Set of Six*:

[1] 12 May 1905 (*Letters*, III, 243).

[2] E.g. ibid.: 'What do you think (as idea for a series of short stories) of extracts from *private* letters of a war correspondent. Imagine him writing to his girl – the inner truth of his feelings – things that *don't* go into his war corresp[on]*dence* – that *can't* go into it.'

[3] 29 December 1905 (*Letters*, III, 300). In this same letter he expressed fears that the intense pressure to publish might inevitably affect the quality of his work: 'What cuts me to the quick is the forced deterioration of my work produced hastily, carelessly in a temper of desperation.'

[4] *A Portrait in Letters*, p. 38.

It's difficult to find a general definition of the stories. They are varied. No monotony is to be feared either in feeling or incident. There is the story of a South American Bandit. 'The Strong Man,' warlike in its feeling. There is 'The Duel, A Military Story' – an attempt to realize the spirit of the Napoleonic Era. These two are long, 4 chap[te]rs each.

Two Anarchist stories, 'The Anarchist' (dealing with an escape from a French penal settlement) and 'The Informer' (discovery of a plot – in London) are slightly shorter, 3 & 2 chap[te]rs respectively. The two shortest: 'The Brute: A Piece of Invective' (sea subject) and 'Il Conde' (Story of an Adventure in Naples) complete the contents of the volume.

All the stories are stories of incident – action – not of analysis. All are dramatic in a measure but by no means of a gloomy sort. All, but two, draw their significance from the love interest – though of course they are not love stories in the conventional meaning. They are not studies – they touch no problem. They are just stories in which I've tried my best to be *simply entertaining*.

… I may mention that in that collection I aimed at a certain *virtuosity* of style for its 'Master quality.'[1]

The intention here is clearly to underline for Methuen the ways in which the tales would appeal to a popular market: they are 'varied' stories of 'incident – action – not of analysis' and designed to be '*simply entertaining*'. Supporting this proposal, the author's decision to provide each story with its own subtitle, identifying each with a particular 'tone' (*Letters*, IV, 58), ensured that the collection presented itself as an eye-catching 'set' of the recognizable moods and themes of popular fiction: romantic, ironic, indignant, desperate, military and pathetic. As one contemporary reviewer put it, '[h]ere are stories for every man's taste' (*CR*, II, 508).

But the harder Conrad tries to convince Methuen of the volume's popular appeal, the more insistent appear his reservations: these tales are 'dramatic in a measure but by no means of a gloomy sort'; and while containing 'love interest' they are 'not love stories in the conventional meaning'. These are certainly tales of 'incident', where plot might be said to dominate, but other pressures are felt too: for instance, 'The Brute', initially published under the subtitle 'Tale of a Bloodthirsty Brig',[2] both panders to and emulates the uncanny horror story of popular fiction; 'Gaspar Ruiz' combines the popular forms of romance and heroism, adapting them to the demands of a tale shaped by the historical facts about South American wars of independence; and for its part, 'The Informer', a tale about betrayal in an

[1] Conrad to Algernon Methuen, 26 January 1908 (*Letters*, IV, 29–30).
[2] See 'The Texts: An Essay', p. 264n.1.

anarchist cell, tonally subverts the seriousness of the subject and leaves the reader, like the narrator, puzzling over what exactly constitutes Mr X's 'little joke' (86.16). Despite Conrad's assurances to Methuen, the tales in *A Set of Six* are motivated by impulses that refuse to be bound by recognizable categories and stereotypes of magazine fiction. Nor would Conrad's claim that these were 'stories of incident – action – not of analysis' have persuaded his first readers. One early reviewer noted that they 'bear a heavy weight of experience, of observation and of reflection' and another that Conrad 'brings us in close touch not so much with human action, as with the soul and the motives from which such action comes' (*CR*, II, 493, 513).

In his 'Author's Note' of 1920, Conrad claimed that the six stories were 'the result of some three or four years of occasional work' (7.3), describing their origins as 'various' and adding that '[n]one of them are connected directly with personal experiences' (7.4–5). Shared elements and themes confirm that these tales originate in the recurring Conradian preoccupations of this period. For instance, all of the stories contain, and respond to, forms of violence, often of a cross-cultural sort, leading one early reviewer to describe their characteristic mode as 'brutal realism' and another to suggest that Conrad belonged to the 'modern school of violence' (*CR*, II, 459, 454). As an extension of this interest, a further theme is that of anarchism. Developing *Nostromo*'s preoccupation with different forms of government and, by its conclusion, the prospect of anarchy, the stories address the topic of anarchism in its various forms – including the use of the ship as an anarchic force in 'The Brute' – and the kinds of order and rule needed to keep barbarism at bay. Through such shared interests there exist continuities between the stories and the longer works that bookend them, *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*. More specifically, the South American setting and twinned themes of revolution and love in 'Gaspar Ruiz' recall *Nostromo*, while the subject matter of 'An Anarchist' and 'The Informer' provides a premonition of the depiction of anarchism in *The Secret Agent*.

But these creative affinities tell only part of the story of origins. For, despite Conrad's protestations, the stories certainly owe something to biographical contexts, whether to his working holidays in Capri, in early 1905, and Montpellier, in 1906 and 1907, or, more generally, to his earlier life as a sailor. The use of detailed local topography in 'Il Conde' depends upon knowledge gained during his visits to Naples when holidaying in Capri; and 'The Duel', begun in Montpellier in

early 1906, seems indebted to this visit for its French spirit. For its part, 'The Brute' not only derives its nautical flavour and its familiarity with the Thames estuary from Conrad's general experience as a sailor but also originates, more specifically, in his service as second officer under Captain Edwin Blake in 1885–6 (8.29–30). At the time he was writing stories for *A Set of Six*, Conrad was also producing the semi-autobiographical essays that would be gathered in *The Mirror of the Sea*; the fictional and reminiscent material overlap. In his 'Author's Note', Conrad records that he 'sketched in [Captain Blake's] personality, without mentioning his name, in the first paper in *The Mirror of the Sea*'.[1]

Conrad's account of the beginnings of the tale that became 'The Brute' provides a fascinating insight into how the subject of 'origins' inextricably links with his discovery of a narrating voice. In his 'Author's Note' he claims that the tale rests 'on a suggestion gathered on warm human lips' (8.26–27), insisting upon the fruitful relationship between teller and listener that features in of all of the tales except 'The Duel', which relies upon the objective third-person narration typical of the historical chronicle. Conrad follows this claim with a revelation about the importance of narrating voice to his creative method: 'In his young days he [Captain Blake] had had a personal experience of the brute and it is perhaps for that reason that I have put the story into the mouth of a young man and made of it what the reader will see' (8.34–36). This attempt to recreate the plain-speaking voice in which the tale was originally told to him – that of Captain Blake as a young man – indicates a concern with narrating tone and the intricate aesthetic relationship between *how* a story is told and *what* it is about, and, by extension, how to recapture the tone in which the story was first heard. Subtle reminders of the importance of narrative tone are everywhere, alerting the reader to the role of emphasis and inflection in narration. For example, the Count's description of his ordeal as 'abominable' forcibly strikes the frame narrator, who remarks, 'The energy of the epithet was sufficiently startling in that man of moderate feelings and toned-down vocabulary' (215.16–17). Similarly, the romantic appeal of 'Gaspar Ruiz' owes much to the voice in which the story is recounted: 'there was in the tone the mel-

[1] 'Author's Note', 8.32–33. In his 'Author's Note', Conrad wrongly recalls the year of service under Captain Blake as 1884. In fact, his service in the *Tilkhurst* lasted from April 1885, when she left Hull bound for Singapore and Indian ports, until June 1886, when she arrived in Dundee.

ancholy natural to a man profoundly humane at heart who from duty, from conviction, and from necessity, had played his part in scenes of ruthless violence' (29.39–30.2). Even when their origins cannot be traced back to such a personal voice as that of Captain Blake, the tales testify to Conrad's preoccupation with ways of telling as crucial to the full realization of his subject. Thus, the sources for 'Gaspar Ruiz' may well lie in Conrad's reading and research into the political history of South America, but, as he makes clear in his 'Author's Note', the tale relies for its origin and authenticity upon the voice of the embedded fictional narrator, General Santierra: 'The manner for the most part is that of General Santierra and that old warrior, I note with satisfaction, is very true to himself all through. … It is he, an old man talking of the days of his youth, who characterises the whole narrative and gives it an air of actuality which I doubt whether I could have achieved without his help' (7.31–8.4).

For 'The Brute', Conrad turned to one of his favourite methods, that of frame narration: an unnamed ex-crew member of the *Apse Family*, 'the talkative stranger in tweeds … a few years over thirty' (90.17–19), reminisces to fellow sailors, one of whom, as frame narrator, introduces the subject and offers occasional detached commentary. In this manner, Conrad dramatizes the role of the audience listening to the tale – and, in the process, insinuates the presence of the reader into the text. This method is often accomplished by incidental reflections and judgements that stimulate tangential lines of reception, as when the narrator observes of the Count in 'Il Conde' that 'he was a good European – he spoke four languages to my certain knowledge' (213.22–23). The process of 'framing' an embedded narrative calls attention to the act of narrating and, in *A Set of Six*, also subtly recreates the conditions in which the tales originated. For example, Conrad claimed that 'Il Conde' consists of 'an almost verbatim transcript of the tale told me by a very charming old gentleman whom I met in Italy' (7.9–11). Similarly, while he professes to have 'found' the anarchist tales 'within my mind' (9.9), critics have identified the narrator's friend in 'An Informer' with the writer's collaborator, Ford Madox Ford, from whom Conrad *heard* much about anarchists and anarchism (see the subsection 'Sources' below). Conrad employs frame narration, a formal strategy he probably adopted from Guy de Maupassant, to some degree in all of the tales in the volume except 'The Duel'.

Ultimately, Conrad's compact with the conventions of magazine fiction in *A Set of Six* is a complex and changing one. Although its

stories are not, as Conrad puts it to his publisher, '*simply entertaining*', they are nevertheless skilful and intriguing entertainments in which characteristic Conradian themes are enacted in popular story-telling forms. One or two of the tales ('The Brute' and 'Gaspar Ruiz') make unashamed concessions to the literary marketplace – with their uncomplicated narrators, strong plotting, simplified character types and resolute endings. But elsewhere the stories are closer to being probing metafictions, in which Conrad both embraces *and* dismantles the conventions of Edwardian magazine fiction: stories like 'The Informer' and 'Il Conde' are not without high melodrama, but Conrad's treatment draws attention to the ambiguously hidden stories often masked by melodramatic conventions; devoid of overt 'analysis' these tales may be, but the author's unconventional handling of the oral tale always encourages a keen interest in the reliability of his chosen story-tellers and the kinds of compact they make with their listeners.

SOURCES

THE SOURCES FOR the volume's tales are wide-ranging and diverse, as might be expected from fictions whose settings include, in Europe, the vast sweep of the Napoleonic Empire and the southern Italian city of Naples; in Britain, the lower reaches of the Thames and metropolitan London; in Australia, the Sydney quayside; and, in South America, revolutionary Chile and Argentina, and, at the other end of the continent, the Îles du Salut off the coast of French Guiana. To facilitate such variety, Conrad drew upon a wealth of personal experiences. These included his two decades of service as a merchant sailor in French and British ships and his family holidays on the Continent. Typically, such experience was complemented by his wide reading – most obviously in South American and Napoleonic history – by information gleaned from conversations with friends like Ford Madox Ford, and from chance meetings with strangers, such as Count Zygmunt Szembek. All was grist to the creative mill of this master story-teller.

Despite the fact that the volume's sources are varied and, generally, unique to a particular tale, the recurrent fascination with violence and anarchism in its broadest sense provides a unifying thread. Complementing the novels completed during these years, the six stories witness to Conrad's increasing interest in, and disillusion with, political

systems. For instance, in 1904, the year that saw the publication of *Nostromo* and the beginning of the story that would become 'Gaspar Ruiz', he wrote in his essay 'Anatole France' that 'political institutions whether instituted by the wisdom of the few or the ignorance of the many are incapable of securing the happiness of mankind'.[1] The significance of Conrad's preoccupation with politics at this moment is all the more apparent when one remembers the historical context: the Edwardian era. The years between the death of Queen Victoria (in 1901) and the outbreak of the First World War are often regarded as a sunlit period of calm between the old and new orders, personified, and presided over, by the genial, somewhat self-indulgent figure of Edward VII. With their political concerns and themes of anarchism and violence, Conrad's writings during this period provide an ominous counterpoint to the period's optimism and a prescient sense of foreboding.

We now turn to the individual stories, which are discussed in order of their composition rather than the order they take in the book versions.

'GASPAR RUIZ'

'Gaspar Ruiz' is set in South America, a locale it shares with *Nostromo* (1904) and, though less strikingly, with 'An Anarchist'. While not simply a shard from *Nostromo*, 'Gaspar Ruiz' certainly reprises many of the novel's plot lines and themes. For example, both are tales of revolution, involving fluctuating political loyalties, betrayal and love, with local colour provided by descriptions of landscape and the indigenous populations. Set in Chile, the short story's general historical and political backdrop draws upon the war for independence from Spanish rule. This war began in 1810 and lasted until 1821, when Royalist forces were defeated by José de San Martín, although it wasn't until 1826 that the last Spanish troops surrendered and the Chiloé Archipelago was incorporated into the Chilean republic. Historical figures like Vincente Benavides, Lord Thomas Cochrane, José Miguel Carrera and San Martín himself appear in the tale.

More specific sources can be traced to Conrad's general reading about South America for *Nostromo* and carried into his reading for 'Gaspar Ruiz'. In his 'Author's Note' to *A Set of Six*, Conrad claims

[1] *Notes on Life and Letters*, ed. J. H. Stape (2004), p.30.29–31.

to have found the 'hint for Gaspar Ruiz the man' (8.6) in Captain Basil Hall's *Extracts from a Journal, Written on the Coasts of Chili, Peru, and Mexico in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822* (1824).[1] Two years later he repeated that he had found 'the seed' for the tale in Hall's *Extracts* and that 'The original of G. Ruiz is a man called Benavides, a free-lance on the southern frontier of Chile during the wars of the revolution. Hall gives him a page or two – mostly hearsay. I had to invent all his story, find the motives for his change of sides – and the scenery of the tale.'[2]

'Gaspar Ruiz' was originally conceived as a 'Benavides cycle' of tales (*Letters*, III, 181). It is unclear when Conrad altered the name of his hero to Gaspar Ruiz, but one instance of the name 'Benavides' did pass into print in the serial texts.[3] Typically, Conrad took the germ of an idea from Hall, found in his depiction of 'Benavides the Pirate', and creatively altered it to suit his own artistic purposes. As Norman Sherry notes, 'Hall's narrative represents Benavides as a rogue with no good reason for changing sides … There is no suggestion here of the character Conrad gives to Ruiz – that of a humble, innocent, good-hearted man caught up in movements beyond his control' (*CWW*, pp. 138–9). At times, Conrad keeps close to details in the source, as when both Benavides and Gaspar are subject to execution by firing squad, both miraculously survive and feign death, and both are then slashed across the neck by a sergeant. On the other hand, Ruiz's love story with Erminia, the daughter of an aristocrat, and incidents such as his rescue of her during the earthquake are not found in the *Extracts* and are inventions of Conrad's. None the less, Hall remained the source for the central elements in Ruiz's career as a Royalist bandit: the 'Massacre of the Islands' (46.2); the abduction of foreign vessels; his contact with the Spanish governor; and his life in 'A sort of military barbaric state' (47.12–13).[4]

Hall's *Extracts* was not the only source for Gaspar Ruiz. For example, John Miller's *Memoirs of General Miller in the Service of the Republic of Peru* (1829; 2 vols.) provides an account of his soldier-brother William Miller's participation in various South American revolutions including his service under San Martín in Chile and participation in the

[1] See Appendix A for relevant extracts from Hall.
[2] Conrad to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 30 March 1923 (*Letters*, VIII, 65).
[3] See 'Apparatus: Emendation and Variation' 15.18, and, for a discussion of the 'Benavides cycle', 'The Texts: An Essay'.
[4] For a discussion of Conrad's use of Hall as the source for these and other elements in 'Gaspar Ruiz', see *CWW*, pp. 141–4.

decisive Battle of Maipú. These *Memoirs* supplied further details about the adventures of Benavides.[1] Thus, while Conrad clearly drew upon the experiences of Benavides described in Hall for Ruiz's secret meeting with San Martín and his recruitment to the Republican cause, his subsequent 'Quarrels' (44.34) with the Civil Governor can be traced to Miller (*Memoirs*, I, 261).

Conrad's description of the attack on the Pequeña fort by the Indian chief Peneleo and his warriors illustrates how his use of multiple sources works in practice. The description of the chief in the tale is striking: 'Peneleo, the Indian chief, sat by our fire folded in his ample mantle of guanaco skins. He was an athletic savage, with an enormous square shock head of hair resembling a straw beehive in shape and size, and with grave, surly, much-lined features' (53.38–54.1). The details, including the racial inflections, descend directly from Hall:

> A more finished picture of a savage cannot be conceived. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man; with a prodigiously large head, and a square-shaped bloated face; from which peeped out two very small eyes, partly hid by an immense superfluity of black, coarse, oily straight hair, covering his cheeks, and hanging over his shoulders, rendering his head somewhat of the size and shape of a beehive. Over his shoulders was thrown a poncho of coarse blanket-stuff. (*Extracts*, I, 360–61)

While retaining Hall's essential details and tone, Conrad's reworking is at once more concise and direct. He describes with dramatic precision the attack on the fort by Peneleo's warriors, but this set piece is absent from Hall's *Extracts*. Here is the climactic moment as presented in 'Gaspar Ruiz':

> They crowded right up to the very stakes, flourishing their broad knives. But this palisade was not fastened together with hide lashings in the usual way, but with long iron nails, which they could not cut. Dismayed at the failure of their usual method of forcing an entrance, the heathen, who had marched so steadily against the musketry fire, broke and fled under the volleys of the besieged. (53.18–24)

Conrad found the source for this attack in Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. 'Beagle' round the World* (1845), where the account of an Indian attack on an 'estancia' at the mouth of the Rio Negro includes this detail:

> The Indians, with great steadiness, came to the very fence of the corral: but to their surprise they found the posts fastened together by iron nails instead of

[1] See especially vol. I, ch. XII.

leather thongs, and, of course, in vain attempted to cut them with their knives. This saved the lives of the Christians: many of the wounded Indians were carried away by their companions; and at last one of the under caciques being wounded, the bugle sounded a retreat. (1878 [1845], p. 64)

As demonstrated by such details as Peneleo's 'beehive' hair or the Indians frustrated by 'iron nails', drawn from Hall and Darwin respectively, 'Gaspar Ruiz' combines multiple sources that reflect Conrad's varied background reading.

Tantalizingly, some sources remain elusive. Most obvious among these is the prototype for Gaspar Ruiz as human gun-carriage, when, in an effort to liberate his wife, he orders that the barrel of a cannon that has lost its mount be strapped to his back so that the fort in which she is being held can be fired on. In his 'Author's Note' (1920) Conrad recalls receiving a letter 'of a biting and ironic kind' from a friend 'passing certain strictures upon "the gentleman with the gun on his back"' (8.17–19).[1] He used his note to respond: 'the gun episode did really happen, or at least I am bound to believe it because I remember it, described in an extremely matter-of-fact tone, in some book I read in my boyhood' (8.20–23). Later that year Conrad returned to this 'reminiscence of my boyhood's reading', saying: 'Much later in life I heard of it again as an undoubted fact. I am assured that, supposing the gun an old brass four-pounder, considering the exceptional physique of Gaspar Ruiz and the use of such a comparatively mild explosive as the gunpowder of that time, it is not impossible.'[2] Efforts to locate this source in Conrad's boyhood reading have thus far proved unsuccessful.

'AN ANARCHIST' AND 'THE INFORMER'

Conrad was far less forthcoming about his sources for his two anarchist stories, saying in his 'Author's Note': 'Of "The Informer" and "An Anarchist" I will say next to nothing. The pedigree of these tales is hopelessly complicated and not worth disentangling at this distance of time. … The discriminating reader will guess that I have found them within my mind; but how they or their elements came in there I have forgotten for the most part' (9.5–10). Undeterred, assiduous scholars have traced their 'pedigree' to a range of sources – literary,

[1] See explanatory notes 8.18 and 8.20.
[2] 'Author's Note' to *Youth and Gaspar Ruiz* (see Appendix C).

historical and biographical. Of course, Conrad's own work provides sources: in 'An Anarchist', the narrator, with a faint echo of Stein in *Lord Jim*, is a lepidopterist; he is visiting the Marañón estate in South America, a setting that, again faintly, associates the story with *Nostromo* and 'Gaspar Ruiz'.

Literary critics quickly detected connections between 'An Anarchist' and Anatole France's story 'Crainquebille', which Conrad had reviewed at the request of Edward Garnett in July 1904 while completing *Nostromo*.[1] In 1939, Ernest Baker dubbed Conrad's tale '[a] Conradian pendant to "Crainquebille"'; Jocelyn Baines described it as 'a savage, almost mad story about a man who becomes a victim of society in rather the same way as does Anatole France's Crainquebille'.[2] To Avrom Fleishman, as well as resemblances of 'circumstantial plot and ironic tone', the tales share 'a vision of the destructiveness of modern society as a whole'.[3]

The first part of 'An Anarchist', set in France and leading up to Paul's imprisonment on Île Saint-Joseph in the arrondissement of Cayenne, French Guiana, bears sufficient resemblances to 'Crainquebille' to suggest the latter as a possible influence: both protagonists are simple law-abiding members of society, Crainquebille being a street hawker and Paul a mechanic; both are implicated in the judicial system – Crainquebille through a policeman's intransigence and the inebriated Paul when, encouraged by two strangers, he stands on a table shouting '*Vive l'anarchie!*'; both are poorly served by the judicial system, with Crainquebille not listened to when he tries to explain that he did not shout '*Mort aux vaches*' and Paul's assurance that he is not an anarchist going unheeded; both are described as innocent victims, '*Crainquebille est l'enfant naturel d'une marchande ambulante, perdue d'inconduite et de boisson, il est né alcoolique. Vous le voyez ici abruti par soixante ans de misère*',[4] while Paul 'was represented at the trial as the victim of society and his drunken shoutings as the expression of infinite suffering' (120.15–17); both have eloquent lawyers who fail to win their cases, and so both are imprisoned; both emerge from prison to

[1] Conrad to Garnett, 6 July 1904 (*Letters*, III, 150–51). For Conrad's review, the first of two on Anatole France, see 'Anatole France: I. "Crainquebille"', *Notes on Life and Letters*, ed. J. H. Stape (2004), pp. 30–36.

[2] Ernest Baker, *The History of the English Novel* (1939), X, 36; Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography* (1960), p. 323.

[3] Avrom Fleishman, *Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (1967), p. 139.

[4] Anatole France, *Œuvres complètes illustrées*, 25 vols. (1925–35), XIV, 29.

find themselves ostracized, Crainquebille being snubbed by his former customers and Paul laid off by his former *patron*; both take to drink and experience further social decline, in essence destroyed by their own societies.[1] Arguing that the treatment of anarchism in 'An Anarchist' and 'Crainquebille' is different, Paul Kirschner detected the germ of Conrad's story in yet another tale by Anatole France, *Le Lys rouge*, in which the writer, Paul Vence, asked to provide the synopsis of his new novel, says that it will be about a young workman who, encountering the suffering of the people, stabs the socialist deputy of his arrondissement, with a chisel while shouting '*Vive l'anarchie!*'[2]

Norman Sherry's indefatigable research identified Conrad's historical sources for the convict mutiny. In *Conrad's Western World* (1971), he examines two accounts of the mutiny in the penal settlement on Île Saint-Joseph on the night of 20–21 October 1894, discovering that 'Conrad kept unusually close to the original' account (*CWW*, p. 220). Sherry compares 'An Anarchist' with an official government source – the confidential report to the Director of Prisons – and a colourful rendering of the event in *Souvenirs du bagne* (1903) by Auguste Liard-Courtois, a labour activist and anarchist who was himself imprisoned on Cayenne, whose account Sherry describes as 'a florid piece of anarchist special pleading' (*CWW*, p. 220). Sherry suggests that Conrad probably came upon references to the mutiny when reading anarchist literature in preparation for writing *The Secret Agent*, noting that accounts appeared in the *Torch* (1894) and the *Anarchist* (1895), the first of which was started by Ford Madox Ford's cousins, the Rossettis, and is one of the 'obscure newspapers, badly printed, with … rousing titles' that is sold in Adolf Verloc's shop.[3]

Conrad adheres to the general facts surrounding the mutiny, from the geographical description of the inaccessibility of Île Saint-Joseph and the schedule of contact with the island by boat to the convicts' plans for escape. Like the actual mutiny, that in 'An Anarchist' involves a 'warder hunt' followed by a 'convict hunt'. The fictional warder hunt is more bloody: only two of the warders were actually killed whereas in Conrad's tale the convicts kill the chief warder and at least five of his men. In reality, the chief warder had been tipped off by an informer. Conrad does, however, include the part played by

[1] For further discussion, see Yves Hervouet, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad* (1990), pp. 95–7.
[2] Paul Kirschner, *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist* (1968), pp. 235–8.
[3] *The Secret Agent*, ed. Bruce Harkness and S. W. Reid (1990), 9.22–23.

a wife of one of the warders in raising the alarm, although he ascribes this role to the chief warder's wife in his tale. The detail appears in the *Anarchist* of 20 January 1895, which reported that 'the wife of a warder gave the alarm, a revolver in one hand, a lantern in the other' (*CWW*, p. 225). Conrad also appears to have drawn upon the part played by a convict named Lôle, who assisted the warder's wife in sending the signal to the Île Royale. Although Paul does not actively assist the chief warder's wife, he does stand guard over her, albeit unnoticed (*CWW*, p. 225).

Conrad, typically, inflected and altered his sources to suit his own artistic needs. In reality, there were, for instance, no escapees, and the reprisals against the mutineers were severe: they were either shot or beheaded. This omission ensures that the sympathy awakened for the warders in the tale is not redirected towards the convicts, and that Paul's condemnation of anarchists is maintained. What strikes one, however, is how embedded are Conrad's sources in 'An Anarchist'. For example, as Sherry discovered, the odd name 'Simon, called also Biscuit' (122.20) has its origins in factual documents. The official report identifies convict 25607 as 'Simon dit Biscuit' (*CWW*, p. 223). Subsequent sleuthing by J. H. Stape identified the source as one Charles-Achille Simon (1873–94), and his nickname as French prison slang, for 'nothing to be done', which also appears in Hugo's *Les Misérables*.[1]

It is quite possible that Conrad's general sources for 'An Anarchist' also include the affair of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. In December 1894, Dreyfus, a French artillery officer, was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly communicating French military secrets to the Imperial German military. He was imprisoned on Devil's Island in French Guiana,[2] where he spent nearly five years. Almost immediately, evidence came to light that Dreyfus had been wrongly convicted, but it wasn't until 1899 that he was returned to France for another trial. Although this later trial resulted in another conviction, Dreyfus was pardoned and released. In 1906 he was finally exonerated and reinstated as a major in the French army. The so-called Dreyfus Affair divided the Third French Republic and was widely reported in the national and foreign press. Both the miscarriage of justice and the place of imprisonment may have informed Conrad's presentation of Paul.

[1] J. H. Stape, 'Conrad's "An Anarchist": Footnotes to Norman Sherry', *The Conradian*, 41, no. 1 (2016), 127–9.

[2] See explanatory note 112.12.

Like 'An Anarchist', 'The Informer' is a double narrative, typical of the manner of Guy de Maupassant, with Mr X's narrative embedded within the frame narrative of the collector-narrator. The sources for the tale are few and are less literary than biographical and topographical. As Sherry was the first to point out, the origins for the story's locale and anarchists can be traced to Conrad's knowledge of Ford Madox Ford's family.[1] Conrad was in regular contact with Ford during the writing of his anarchist stories, describing him to H. G. Wells as 'a sort of lifelong habit of which I am not ashamed' (*Letters*, III, 287).

In his 'Author's Note' to *The Secret Agent* (1907), Conrad traced the subject for the novel to 'a few words uttered by a friend in a casual conversation about anarchists or rather anarchist activities' (4.38–40). He proceeds to refer to his friend's 'characteristically casual and omniscient manner' (5.18–19) and attributes this authority to his wide and eclectic range of informants: 'He was however a man who liked to talk with all sorts of people and he may have gathered those illuminating facts at second or third hand, from a crossing sweeper, from a retired police officer, from some vague man in his club, or even perhaps from a Minister of State met at some public or private reception' (5.26–31.) In 'The Informer' the narrator is introduced to Mr X by a Parisian friend whom he describes as 'a collector': 'He collects acquaintances. It is delicate work. He brings to it the patience, the passion, the determination of a true collector of curiosities' (65.10–12). To Sherry, this identifies Ford with the narrator's friend, both of whom open doors to the world of anarchists and anarchism.

Mr X's story concerns a group of anarchists and is set in the fictional house in Hermione Street, 'the property of a distinguished government official' (70.25–26), where, unbeknown to the owner and behind the respectable guise of an Italian Restaurant on the ground floor and a Variety Artists' Agency on the first floor, explosives are being manufactured on the second floor and, in 'the basement, or in the cellar at the back, rather, two printing presses were established' for the dissemination of 'revolutionary literature of the most inflammatory kind' (72.15–18). This multifaceted house has its source in the family house of Ford's uncle, William Rossetti, at 3 St Edmund's Terrace, London NW8 (just north of Regent's Park), where Rossetti's three precocious teenage children, Olive, Arthur and Helen, not only published anarchist literature on a printing press set up in

[1] See *CWW*, pp. 205–15.

the basement but also experimented with explosives. Founded and printed at their home, *The Torch: A Revolutionary Journal of Anarchist Communism* was then sold by the children in Hyde Park and at railway stations. Ford described the premises, before Rossetti, a 'prominent servant of the Crown', put an end to the activities of his children:

> Why my aunt permitted them to run in her basement a printing press that produced militant anarchist propaganda I never quite knew. … In any case the world was presented with the extraordinary spectacle of the abode of Her Majesty's Secretary to the Inland Revenue so beset with English detectives, French police spies and Russian *agents provocateurs* that to go along the sidewalk of that respectable terrace was to feel that one ran the gauntlet of innumerable gimlets.[1]

Sherry argues that the young lady anarchist in 'The Informer' is based upon Helen Rossetti, who recalled meeting Conrad on two occasions and established that he had never met her siblings.[2] It is equally probable that the character of the Professor – a precursor to his namesake in *The Secret Agent* – was modelled on Arthur Rossetti, whose interest in, and mishaps with, explosives are well documented.[3] As Sherry argues, Ford and the Rossettis 'probably suggested the subject of anarchism to … Conrad and probably provided him, in one way and another, with ideas for situations, characters, and attitudes to the subject' (*CWW*, 218). Among other attempts to identify sources for the tale may be mentioned Renato Prinzhofer's suggestion that Mr X owes something to the French novelist and anarchist Georges Darien (Georges-Hippolyte Adrien).[4]

'THE BRUTE'

In the volume's 'Author's Note', Conrad explains that this 'indignant tale' combines suggestions from two discrete sources. The first – an anecdote about a 'criminal' ship and her 'homicidal habits' told to him by Captain Edwin John Blake (1838–86), under whom he had

[1] Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (1931), p. 108. According to Ford, it was as a result of Rossetti terminating his children's activities that the printing of the *Torch* 'removed itself to Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road – a locality as grim as its name' (pp. 108–9).

[2] *CWW*, p. 213. Sherry identifies Helen Rossetti as the source for Conrad's young lady anarchist through her appearance and temperament: see *CWW*, pp. 213–14.

[3] See *CWW*, p. 215; Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, 2 vols. (1996), I, 77–8.

[4] 'Il signor X e il delatore: un'ipotesi e una fonte per "The Informer"', *Joseph Conrad Society Newsletter (Italy)*, 5 (1977), 8–12.

served in the *Tilkhurst* in 1885–6 – proved to be important in two ways: it helped to determine the story's form as an oral delivery and to shape its narrative about a rogue ship that violently killed at least one person on each of her voyages (8.25–9.4). The 'Author's Note' remains silent on the identity of the 'criminal' ship of Captain Blake's telling, but it has been suggested that it may have been *The Bates Family* (built in 1859),[1] in which Blake served as first mate during the period 1860–61. Little detailed evidence has been found to support this suggestion, though one or two obvious links exist between the historical and the fictional ships. *The Bates Family* was one of 130 vessels owned by a Liverpool family presided over by the business magnate and politician Edward Bates (1816–96; 1st baronet 1880), who not only attached the family name to one of his ships 'with the ultimate vulgarity of an appropriate group figurehead depicting nine members of his family',[2] but also went on to name several other vessels after individual family members. Likewise, in 'The Brute' the 'great firm of Apse & Sons, shipowners' has celebrated its family dynasty through the *Apse Family*, with numerous other ships named after its various members ('Every brother, sister, aunt, cousin, wife – and grandmother too, for all I know – of the firm had a ship named after them' (92.32–34)). More revealing intimations of the 'criminal' might have been communicated to Conrad if Blake had broached the subject of Edward Bates's general reputation as a shipowner. 'Bully Bates', as he was nicknamed, was, in fact, notorious for his fleet of unseaworthy vessels that many seamen avoided as being 'coffin ships': he lost six ships at sea in one year; was thrice investigated for scurvy among his crews; implicated in a case of cannibalism on one of his ships; and repeatedly exposed by Samuel Plimsoll for his malpractices. Bates's notoriety was finally sealed when he became the model for the villainous shipowner Richard Hilliard with 'the habit of sending rotten ships to sea' in a novel by Lille Peck, *The Voice from the Sea; Or, The Wreck of the Eglantine* (1876).[3]

In developing the sensational climax of the story, Conrad turned elsewhere for material. As he describes it in his 'Author's Note', the shipwrecking of 'another ship, of great beauty of form and of blameless character' (8.39–40) provided the model for the *Apse Family*'s

[1] An early Conrad biographer, Jocelyn Baines, was the first to make this connection: see *Conrad*, p. 355.

[2] A. W. Brian Simpson, *Cannibalism and the Common Law: A Victorian Yachting Tragedy* (1984), p. 129.

[3] For further details of Bates's career and business reputation, see Nicolette Jones, *The Plimsoll Sensation* (2006), ch. 4.

final destruction. Again, he doesn't disclose the vessel's name, but the likeliest candidate is a ship in which Conrad himself had served in 1878–9, the *Duke of Sutherland*, whose 'violent death' is mentioned in *The Mirror of the Sea* (p. 122). Built in 1865, the *Duke* was wrecked while loading grain off Timaru, New Zealand, on 2 May 1882. Like the *Apse Family*, she was anchored close to the coast in an unsheltered roadway, but, with the onset of unusually heavy seas, struck bottom, developed a leak and was abandoned as she filled with water, with all of her crew reaching shore safely. The next day she was hauled off to prevent her from being a danger to shipping and broken up.

In the case of a tale so attentive to the conventions of the popular magazine market, generic debts and influences are probably more important than individual sources. Indeed, 'The Brute' presents itself openly – and playfully – as being indebted to many of the standard tropes, types and tricks of Edwardian magazine fiction.[1] For example, the story makes no bones about employing characters as functional ciphers who are there to serve the needs of a swift, sensational narrative. It begins perfunctorily with a cheekily offhand reference to a 'Miss Blank', the barmaid, and ends just as perfunctorily with another reference to her. Other females in the story would have provided its first readers in the *Daily Chronicle* with the pleasures of instant recognition: there is Maggie, a 'blue-eyed jolly girl of the very best sort' (99.35), who, in this kind of story, is doomed to a violent end; the unnamed governess, a 'confounded green-eyed girl' (106.15), who is just as predictably an agent of mischance; and Mrs Colchester who, with her large bosom, false teeth and repeated 'Stuff and nonsense!' is the story's equivalent of the pantomime dame. Again, 'The Brute' opens with a conventional piece of plot trickery of the whodunnit kind: its first page anticipates the ending ('That fellow Wilmot fairly dashed her brains out – and a good job too!' (89.15)) but does so in a way that dallies for several pages with the reader's curiosity. Who is the aggressor Wilmot? To whom or what does 'her' refer? Is Wilmot's victim a woman or a ship?

As the story in *A Set of Six* closest to a genre-piece, 'The Brute' also conforms to the more specific conventions of a popular subgenre of

[1] Carl Hovey, editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine* (NY), would appeal to Pinker in late 1913, 'If we could have from Mr. Conrad another short story like "The Brute" we would reach our public with all the certainty in the world' (*Letters*, v, 322n.2). For a detailed account of popular elements in 'The Brute', see Stephen Donovan, *Joseph Conrad and Popular Culture* (2005), pp. 182–90.

maritime fiction – namely, a type of uncanny horror story in which ships themselves turn rogue and murderously assault their crews, with the result that their decks increasingly resemble a setting for Grand Guignol bloodshed. Thus, the *Daily Chronicle*'s subtitle for 'The Brute' – a 'Tale of a Bloodthirsty Brig' – cleverly places it in a line of maritime horror stories extending from Edgar Allan Poe (in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838)), through Victor Hugo's 'A Fight with a Cannon' (1870), to Edwardian writers such as William Hope Hodgson and Edward Noble.[1] Hugo set the pattern for later writers in a short story in which, as a result of negligence, a cannon breaks from its carriage aboard a naval warship but then uncannily transmutes into a 'strange, supernatural beast' and a 'living chariot of the Apocalypse' as it careers violently around the decks and crushes to death several crew members: 'It was its own master and master of the ship.' There are especially interesting parallels between the Hugo and Conrad stories. In both, material objects become unpredictable 'lunatic' presences and emulate the sustained murderousness of serial killers: thus, Hugo's loose cannon and the loose anchor that drags Maggie to her death tap into a similar source of horror – a material object suddenly becomes animate as a 'ravening beast' (104.34) and savagely takes revenge on its human victim. On a larger scale, both narratives are dominated by their respective 'brutes', with their trajectories determined by a mounting violence that climaxes only when evil overreaches itself and self-destructs.

In finally returning the reader from the tale to its frame, 'The Brute' provides a point of comfort and secure dry land after macabre horror at sea. We end where we began – with the narrator and listeners in the snug bar of an inn called the Three Crows. Though otherwise unidentified, the inn has its source in Conrad's local knowledge of the Lower Hope Reach section of the River Thames and proves to have a real-life counterpart in Gravesend, the home of the Thames pilotage.[2] For more experienced Conrad readers, the tale's frame also signals an example of how the author borrows Thames-side settings and types from his own earlier works: in particular, the North Sea pilot Jermyn, who had appeared in 'Youth', is carried across into 'The Brute',

[1] 'The Brute' was turned down by William Blackwood in the following terms: 'The idea of the story is very much the same as that used in "The Edge of Circumstance" by Mr Edward Noble, which I published a short time ago which for me at all events takes away from the freshness of the sketch' (*Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*, ed. William Blackburn (1958), pp. 188–9).

[2] See explanatory note 89.3.

bringing with him – a nice comic self-borrowing, this – his 'red and lamentable nose' (104.33), and a damp handkerchief that he dries in front of the stove. Additionally, the River Thames, its traditions and local colour were present to Conrad's imagination through *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906), which he was tidying up for publication at the time of composing 'The Brute'.[1] If not a direct source, 'The Faithful River' section of *The Mirror* must have struck Conrad as suggestively contiguous with the local colour and topography of his short story.

'IL CONDE'

THE MAIN SOURCES for 'Il Conde' derive from things seen and people encountered during the writer's stay on Capri from mid-January to mid-May 1905, a visit planned as a working holiday but which turned out to be largely unproductive. There were, however, some compensatory gains. While there, Conrad read widely into Neapolitan history in the library of a local man-of-letters, Dr Ignazio Cerio, professing to have found the subject of a 'Mediterranean novel', a 'book treating of the bay of Naples, Capri, Sorrento etc[.] – places visited every year by the English and Am[eri]*can* tourists';[2] he also made contact with Capri's expatriate community, a large proportion of which was colourfully libertine and which notably included Norman Douglas, a budding writer who would later benefit from Conrad's mentorship; and he spent about a week or so in Naples, lodging at the Hotel Isotta e de Genève, in the heart of the city.

The literary outcome of this visit was not the 'Mediterranean novel' but 'Il Conde: A Pathetic Tale', drafted in late 1906, eighteen months after Conrad had returned home. Memories of that Italian visit remained fresh and, after the completion of *The Secret Agent*, were activated in 'Il Conde'. In particular, Conrad's first-hand visual and aural recollections of Naples – including the National Museum, the Villa Nazionale and the Galleria Umberto – undoubtedly contributed to a story rich in its sense of place and turning upon the drama of *seeing* into the city: '*Vedi Napoli!* . . . He [Il Conde] had seen it!' (225.28).

In his 'Author's Note', Conrad described the story as originating from a single source – that is, an account shared with him by 'a very charming gentleman' on Capri of an 'abominable adventure' that

[1] For points of contact between 'The Brute' and *The Mirror*, see explanatory notes 8.29, 8.39–40 and 90.12–13.

[2] Conrad to J. B. Pinker, 23 February 1905 (*Letters*, III, 219).

had befallen him during a stay in Naples. The 'gentleman', Count Zygmunt Szembek (1844–1907), was an elegant, cultured Pole who regularly spent the winter months in southern Italy and with whom Conrad would keep up a short correspondence when he returned home. The manner in which the author originally received Szembek's narrative – as a spoken anecdote – obviously helped to determine the story's form as an oral delivery by the fictional Count to an attentive and sympathetic listener (who is also often the co-narrator of events).

So much is clear; but in the case of such an enigmatic short work as 'Il Conde' nothing is quite what it seems. When, in his 'Author's Note', Conrad addresses the story's source and genesis, his account becomes so cryptic as to border on riddling conundrum:

> 'Il Conde' … is an almost verbatim transcript of the tale told me by a very charming gentleman whom I met in Italy. I don't mean to say that it is only that. Anybody can see that it is something more than a verbatim report, but where he left off and where I began must be left to the acute discrimination of the reader who may be interested in the problem. I don't mean to say that the problem is worth the trouble. What I am certain of, however, is that it is not to be solved, for I am not at all clear about it myself by this time. All I can say is that the personality of the narrator was extremely suggestive quite apart from the story he was telling me. I heard a few years ago that he had died far away from his beloved Naples[1] where that 'abominable adventure' did really happen to him. (7.8–21)

The apparently straightforward opening sentence is complicated by Conrad's description of the Count's narration as a 'tale' (an odd word to use of personal testimony). Almost immediately, the sense of puzzle deepens with the assertion that, after all, the story is 'something more' than a simple transcript and poses the 'problem' of where the Count's contribution to it ends and Conrad's begins. But the relationship between the source and its transmission is more complex than is implied here, since Conrad, not overtly present in the tale himself, seemingly transfers narrative control to the Count and his listener, allowing both to shape the tale as they wish. How, then, to judge where Conrad's contribution starts and finishes? The solution to this question, Conrad avers, must be left to the reader's 'acute discrimination', but then in a sudden *volte face* he wonders whether, after all, the 'problem' is worth the trouble, before – in another sudden swerve – going on to assert that it may even be insoluble. The penultimate sentence is the most disconcerting of all: in implying some form of disconnect or distance between the teller and his tale, it appears to suggest that the true source

[1] See explanatory notes 7.19–20 for details of Szembek's death in 1907.

of 'Il Conde' may not lie in the Count's tale at all, but in his personality that stands 'apart from', or is at least only imperfectly revealed by, the tale. When Conrad concludes 'Thus the genealogy of "Il Conde" is simple' (7.22), we may well feel ourselves to be hapless victims of a conjuror's smoke-and-mirrors trick. How reliable, then, are the story's narrators? Is 'Il Conde' ultimately a palimpsestic text in which there is a covert, repressed or buried story that has not fully emerged? How possible is it to identify *any* originating 'sources' for the story?

It is by no means the case that the Count's telling of his 'abominable adventure' lacks its own discernible secondary sources. Rather, the problem for many readers is that the sources he draws upon are so rooted in the popular traditions of Neapolitan villainy and orchestrated so melodramatically that the surface story seems 'a deucedly queer' fabrication (220.8), tending, if anything, to obscure the events of a single evening in Naples. This element of orchestrated performance dominates the Count's early narration. At two points, he is described as giving a 'pantomimic rendering' of events (220.28; 222.11–12) and at another as performing a 'dumb show' of the robbery (221.2), as if to imply that an element of staged rehearsal underlies all these enactments. His narration of what took place in the Villa Nazionale illustrates how he quite literally appears to orchestrate the narrative. Recreating the stages that led up to the moment when he felt the knife against his chest, he asks his listener to believe that they tallied with the rise, crescendo and fall of the Villa's musical concert and that he was sufficiently composed to notice their synchronization. At this point, the Count emerges as a ubiquitous stage manager: in effect, he is a mime artist, a speaking actor, arranger of background effects *and* director of performance.

The Count's tendency to present himself not simply as having suffered a commonplace mugging, but (more melodramatically) as a scarred victim of a shameful crime, means that the city of Naples emerges as a compendium of long-held superstitions, representations of villainy and lifeways that any tourist might glean from – for example – the period's Baedeker guidebooks.[1] One of these urban *données* – the long-standing association of Naples with random street crime – was always highlighted for the attention of unguarded tourists. In the Count's hands, this phenomenon immediately feeds into

[1] For example, *Baedeker's Italy from the Alps to Naples: Handbook for Traveller's* (1904) refers to most of these superstitions (ch. 32), also including the adage, 'Vedi Napoli e poi muori!' (p. 337).

his own 'abominable adventure' and translates into the presence of a 'type' of menacing young Neapolitan criminal: 'that creature rolled its eyes and gnashed its teeth hissing at me with the greatest ferocity … He enlarged upon the abominably savage way in which that young man rolled his glistening eyes and gnashed his white teeth' (219.16–17; 220.17–19). When the Count again meets his assailant at the Café Umberto, the urban villainy seems to spread alarmingly, leading him to envision the city as teeming with the same criminal 'type' (223.15–18). Another Neapolitan superstition seemingly at play in the Count's 'ordeal' is that of the evil eye (or *maloccio*), involving individuals (again, usually villains) who have the power to exert a malign influence upon the unguarded by a piercing stare: the meeting of eyes is important in the story (218.5; 220.28; 223.5–6; 224.2–3) and particularly so at its conclusion when the Count's sense of being a helplessly 'marked man' coincides with the 'fiendishness of … expression' and the 'vicious glance' directed at him by the young man (224.37; 224.28). This sense of being fatefully marked out reaches its rather predictable climax when the Count discovers that the 'young *Cavaliere* from Bari' (224.29) belongs to – indeed, is no less than a local chief of – the Camorra, a secret society originating in Naples and associated with smuggling, blackmail and robbery.

It is unsurprising that some readers have felt the Count's account of his 'abominable adventure' to be inadequate as an explanation of his exaggerated sense of shame and have sought to base their readings on other, less obvious frames of reference. The most compelling of these arrived in the mid-1970s with an essay that, focusing on the tale's uneasy ambiguities and exploring the possibility that the Count is an unreliable narrator, claimed that under the 'elaborate fabrication' of his story lies a hidden or recessive truth: namely, that the Count's perambulations around night-time Naples – a city well known at the time as a site for casual homosexual encounters – are motivated by an attraction for handsome young Italian men and that he leaves himself open to violence and possible scandal when, after having three times approached the languid Camorrista (218.30) in the Villa Nazionale, he is threatened and robbed by the young man whom he has attempted to pick up.[1]

[1] Douglas A. Hughes, 'Conrad's "Il Conde": "A Deucedly Queer Story"', *Conradiana*, 7 (1975), 17–25; see also Theo Steinmann, 'Il Conde's Uncensored Story', *Conradiana*, 7 (1975), 83–6, and Jeremy Hawthorn, *Sexuality and the Erotic in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (2007), ch. 1.

In March 1981, Szembek's grandson, Count Zygmunt Mycielski (1907–87), the accomplished Polish composer and music critic, responded by letter to an invitation to comment on Conrad's portrait of his grandfather in 'Il Conde'.[1] He confirmed the strong similarities between the historical and the fictional figure: they were both 'charming men' and widowers in their sixties, who for some of the year lived in Italy; both were cultured, socially correct and elegant in appearance; and both were accomplished pianists. But Mycielski went much further: openly homosexual himself, he confirmed that his grandfather was also an active homosexual and that 'Il Conde' was modelled on Count Szembek's habitual sexual adventurism, his predilection for 'walking along the dark alleys of Naples and Sorrento'. He continues:

> Quite clearly il conte accosted the boy in one of the dark alleys of the Chiaja gardens. Moreover, the entire set-up on Capri, which since the time of Tyberius was a 'paradise' of this kind, the early morning angling and the manner in which he tells the story, trying to reduce the whole affair to a 'simple criminal assault,' and finally Conrad's modulated irony – it all fits in! The great writer takes an interest in everything. He is fascinated by the illustrious nobleman whom he has met, by his upbringing and manners, by his fear of scandal, by the perfunctory and yet quite authentic culture – inborn – instilled through upbringing, by his social 'polish,' by the discreet elegance of his clothes, and ABOVE all this is a homosexual 'adventure'! …
>
> He was a charming man, 'the nicest man imaginable' according to my father. … But my grandfather, like his own father Jozef (who had squandered his wife's enormous fortune …) was a spendthrift who preferred living on Capri, playing the piano and … walking along the dark alleys of Naples and Sorrento.[2]

Given the 'extremely suggestive' and singular appeal of Count Szembek's personality to Conrad in his devising of 'Il Conde', there is perhaps more than usual justification for investigative source study. But might this appeal also have been based upon Conrad's perception of a distinct similarity between Szembek and *himself*? For in some respects both can be regarded as having provided a common source

[1] The letter eventually passed to Zdzisław Najder, Conrad's biographer, who has commented that Szembek was 'homosexual without a doubt' (*Życie Josepha Conrada Korzeniowskiego* (2014), II, 626); a translated version of it was acquired by Keith Carabine, who printed generous extracts in '"A Very Charming Old Gentleman": Conrad, Count Szembek, and "Il Conde"', *Conradiana*, 37 (2005), 57–77.

[2] Quoted in Keith Carabine, '"A Very Charming Old Gentleman": Conrad, Count Szembek, and "Il Conde"', *Conradiana*, 37 (2005)', 58–9.

for the story's silences and reticences. Szembek is unwilling or unable to speak the name of his attraction for young Neapolitan men; but equally, Conrad, in some sense his biographer, could not and would not risk offending an Edwardian audience by speaking out on his behalf. Whether Count Szembek ever realized it or not, he and Conrad may have shared something: a secret and a virtual silence.

THE DUEL

IT SEEMS ESPECIALLY fitting that 'The Duel' should have had its immediate roots in one of Conrad's stays in France, during the early months of 1907. Having settled in Montpellier with his family, he enjoyed periods of relaxed reading – returning to his favourite French authors, Guy de Maupassant, Alphonse Daudet and Anatole France – and immersed himself in the town's local culture. He also undertook research for a future Napoleonic novel in the municipal library. It is little surprise, then, that when he turned to composition in late January he should have essayed a first exercise in historical fiction and that it would turn out to be a Napoleonic tale. In his own words, he immediately felt 'at home' with a subject that had a meaningful place in his Polish ancestry: 'I admit to a weakness for this little contraption ['The Duel'] wherein I have tried to instill a little of the military spirit of the epoch. I have two of Napoleon's officers among my ancestors. My maternal great-uncle and my paternal grandfather. Thus it is a family affair, as one might say.'[1] The subject was just as deeply and firmly rooted in the history of his reading: 'All his life Conrad was a student of the Napoleonic era. He had absorbed the history, the memoirs, the campaigns of that period with immense assiduity and unflagging interest.'[2]

In his 'Author's Note', Conrad claimed that the catalyst for his 'military tale' was a brief item in a French newspaper referring to 'the well-known fact' of two officers in Napoleon's Grande Armée having fought an obsessive and seemingly motiveless series of duels over the course of many years (9.23). But when he went on to explore further – as he surely must have done – to which urtexts did he have access? By the 1930s the search was underway to discover the versions of the story

[1] Conrad to H.-D. Davray, 14 March 1908, *Letters*, IV, 58.

[2] Richard Curle, 'Introduction' to *Suspense* (1925), p. vi. For a detailed account of Conrad's reading of French political and historical works, see Yves Hervouet, *The French Face of Joseph Conrad* (1990), pp. 253–6.

available to him and to determine which, if any, might have acted as his source. Since then, assiduous detective work has uncovered some fifteen versions of varying lengths and in several languages, all now collected in a single volume.[1] Its editors conclude that, although the account passing into Conrad's hands cannot be identified with complete certainty, it is most likely that the first and longest, by Alfred d'Almbert in *Physiologie du duel* (1853), whose phrasing is sometimes echoed in Conrad's text, acted as his main source.[2]

This version – which is also the basis of most of the later accounts – sets out the stages of what at the time was popularly regarded as the strangest and most mysterious duel in history. It describes how two French cavalry officers in Napoleon's Grand Army named Fournier and Dupont, both historical figures and both ending up as generals,[3] fought a series of duels, possibly over twenty in number, extending over nineteen years. After a first, seemingly motiveless duel in Strasbourg in 1794, the pair committed themselves to an oath of silence and made a binding covenant to continue the duels wherever and whenever their army duties allowed. Years later, the confrontations ended in a combat with pistols in which Dupont, then in his forties and engaged to be married, spared Fournier's life in return for a promise to end the hostility between them.

Even though d'Almbert's account of the duel is the longest of the ur-versions (at four thousand words), it is still only a rudimentary, sketchy and incident-heavy scenario, and there is little wonder that Conrad felt the need to be freely recreative with its content and shape. Such is the implication of his confession to his friend and mentor

[1] *Conrad's 'The Duel': Sources/Text*, ed. J. H. Stape and John G. Peters (2015).

[2] A translated version (1855) of d'Almbert's text can be found in Appendix B. Compare, for example, the following two extracts, the first from 'The Duel' (197.20–26), the second from d'Almbert (Appendix B, p. 473):

> He [d'Hubert] stepped out at once between the trunks, exposing himself freely – then, quick as lightning, leaped back. It had been a risky move but it succeeded in its object. Almost simultaneously with the pop of a shot a small piece of bark chipped off by the bullet stung his ear painfully. General Feraud, with one shot expended, was getting cautious.
>
> … he [Dupont] advanced his left shoulder a little beyond the trunk where his coat had been, and drew it back swiftly: it was just in time, for on the instant a ball stripped a large fragment of bark from the tree, exactly where the shoulder had been shown. Fournier had lost one shot.

[3] Their full names were François-Louis Fourniez-Sarlovèze (1775–1827) and Pierre-Dupont de l'Étang (1765–1840). For further biographical details of Dupont and Fournier, and the versions of their story, see Hans van Marle to J. H. Stape, 19 October 1987, *The Conradian*, 30, no. 2 (2005), 97–9.

Edward Garnett: 'I did conscientiously try to put in as much of Napoleonic feeling as the subject could hold. This has been missed by all the reviewers, every single one being made blind by the mere tale.'[1] Nevertheless, he did attend carefully to the mechanics of his 'mere tale', and it is here that his debt to his source is most evident. Notably, Conrad retained much of the duel's sequential history as outlined in d'Almbert's version, including details of the various types of combat – that is, whether with swords, sabres, pistols, on horseback or on foot (sometimes with, and sometimes without seconds); he also followed the urtext's history of victors and losers, as well as of the wounds sustained and the periods of recuperation needed after them; and additionally, he retained the complications to the series of duels caused by the successive promotions of the two men. Of all the stories in *A Set of Six*, 'The Duel' stands out for its use of a single source to provide an overall narrative blueprint of this kind.

Conrad's debt to his source is most marked in his handling of the first and last duels. Despite making small changes, he largely follows d'Almbert's version of how the first duel originated. In that text, Dupont, an aide-de-camp, is enlisted by his superior officer to seek out Fournier for having killed a civilian in a duel and to confine him to his quarters. In an impulsive fit of pique at having been removed by Dupont from a social gathering, the hot-headed Fournier demands that they immediately engage in a formal duel, with the result that he is the first to be injured. Similarly in the last duel, d'Hubert and Feraud enact many of the rituals undertaken by their earlier counterparts in what d'Almbert describes as 'a sort of little Indian warfare' in a local wood.[2] In this final combat, both men use pistols, as agreed by one of the duellists to the surprise of the other who is an infinitely better shot. The two men enter the wood from different sides and slowly creep between the trees towards each other. Its climax turns upon a clever stratagem, with one of the duellists hiding behind a tree and tricking his assailant into firing his allotted shots precipitately. Thus claiming victory and control over his adversary's fate, the Dupont–d'Hubert character refuses to take his life and allows him freedom on condition that he never seeks to renew their quarrel.

These modest narrative debts apart, 'The Duel' witnesses to the process by which, in Conrad's hands, an episodic anecdote often headlined

[1] 21 August 1908, *Letters*, IV, 107.
[2] Appendix B, p. 473.

as a 'Curiosity of French Duelling' transmutes into a rounded, textured and evocative portrait of a historical epoch. During this process, Conrad may well have come to regard his urtext as, in effect, little more than a tentative working summary, a repository of possibilities, hints and alternatives that promised at most to offer him starting points, with some of them prompting small adjustments, and others urging the need for large-scale reconfiguration or outright reinvention.

Certain of these small adjustments, particularly as they concern temporal and spatial limits, can have large consequences. Thus, while Conrad's novella emulates all the ur-versions in having a wide temporal sweep, it also introduces telling inflections. The period from 1794 to 1813 that figures in most of them is replaced by one from about 1801[1] to 1815 in order to enforce the bold analogy between the warlike personal duel and the Napoleonic campaign, envisaged as 'a duel against the whole of Europe' (133.3–4), an analogy running, implicitly and explicitly, throughout the novella. The terminal date of 1815 allows for the inclusion of the First Restoration, the Hundred Days, and the Second Restoration, thereby strengthening the sense of an epochal ending, as the Napoleonic gives way to a post-Empire ethos. Similarly, Conrad's novella emulates the wide geographical range of his source, initially following it in locating the opening duel in Strasbourg, but then significantly repositioning the main duels so that they more strikingly parallel the major Napoleonic battles – of Austerlitz (December 1805), Jena (October 1806) and Waterloo (June 1815) – with another change of setting for the final duel from Neuilly to d'Hubert's new home in the Midi.

To the limited extent that Conrad was engaged with, and committed to, his source, he seems generally to have valued it, not in and for itself but for what it might suggest of possible alternatives and changed points of focus, these involving choices of two contrasting kinds: the first shows a writer decisively resisting constraints, declining to follow a crucial event or direction in his source – and through that negative decision seeming to discover richly fruitful alternatives; the second kind involves the typically Conradian habit of appropriating mere hints or undeveloped possibilities in his source and using them creatively for his own ends.

As an instance of the first kind, Conrad made the crucial decision

[1] As established in the text (176.29). Conrad's typescript gives a slightly different start date, describing events as beginning just after 'the peace following upon the treaty of Amiens' in 1802 (page 8).