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THE  
CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF  
THE WORKS OF  
JOSEPH CONRAD

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JOSEPH CONRAD

SUSPENSE

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of  
HANS VAN MARLE  
1922–2001

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## GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

**J**OSEPH 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 reprinting 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 posthumously published *Suspense*. The Cambridge text is based on the revised typescript held in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, the most authoritative among the extant texts.

The 'Introduction' provides a literary history of the work focused on its genesis and reception, including its place in Conrad's life and art, and examines Conrad's sources. The essay on 'The Text' traces its textual history, examines the sources of the texts and explains the policies followed in editing them. The 'Apparatus' records basic textual evidence, documenting the discussion of genealogy and authority in 'The Text: An Essay' as well as other editorial decisions, and the 'Textual Notes' deal with cruxes and textual issues specific in nature. The 'Explanatory Notes' comment on specific readings that require glosses, dealing with sources, identifying real-life place-names and related matters, while the 'Glossary' explains foreign words and phrases. Supplementing this material are a map and illustrations, with

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PREFACE

Richard Curle's introduction to the novel included as an Appendix, along with notes from Conrad's research on Napoleonic history, extracts from the *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne* and three rejected drafts published here for the first time.

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

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

THE GENERAL EDITORS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**T**HANKS ARE DUE to the following institutions and individuals for facilitating access to manuscripts and unpublished materials: the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, and Philip Milito and Isaac Gewirtz, and the Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; the British Library Department of Manuscripts; the Everett Needham Case Library, Colgate University; the Lilly Library, Indiana University; and the Martha Stackhouse Grafton Library, Mary Baldwin College.

For a decade Hans van Marle and I worked at resurrecting one of Conrad's most neglected and misunderstood novels. We located all but one of the typescripts and manuscripts known to have been used by Richard Curle in preparing the novel for posthumous publication, and we 'discovered' the English serial version, which was unrecorded in any Conrad bibliography. Our work on this critical edition had reached the final stages when Hans passed away in July 2001. My deepest gratitude is to him for his tireless work as this volume's co-editor, and more especially for the example of his unwavering devotion to the highest ideals of scholarship. To work with him was a rare privilege.

Very special thanks are due also to Mario Curreli, whose support for this edition of Conrad's 'most Italian' novel has been energetic and constant; for years he has been in the habit of sending us relevant and precise information about Genoa, its history and language. Others to whom I am grateful for help with questions about the history and topography of Genoa include Giovanni Assereto, Liz Battaglia, Benedetto Cataldi, Marina Coslovi, Luciana Finelli, Francesco Francis and Sema Postacioglu-Banon.

J. H. Stape also deserves sincere thanks for his unflinching support and his ready willingness to lend a critical eye to drafts of various kinds, and for sharing with us the benefit of his experience in editing *Notes on Life and Letters* and *A Personal Record* for the Cambridge Edition. The editorial materials prepared for the *Suspense* volume in Ugo Mursia's 1977 Italian edition of Conrad have made our task much easier, as

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have the footnotes prepared by the late Sylvère Monod for the 1992 French edition of *L'Attente* in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.

For their generous assistance in matters great and small, we wish also to express our gratitude to Mary Burgoyne, Rebecca Campbell Cape, Simon Coble, Laurence Davies, Robin Davies, Alexandre Fachard, Robert Goldman, Ton Hoenselaars, Susan Jones, Peter McDonald, Wilhelm Meusberger, Carl Peterson, William C. Pollard, the late S. W. Reid, Candida Ridler, Donald W. Rude, Naomi Saito, Joseph Salerno, Robert Sims, Robert Spadoni, Harold Ray Stevens, Robert W. Trogon, Priscilla Walton, Mark Wollaeger and Karen Zouaoui. Gratitude is also expressed to Linda Bree at Cambridge University Press for her steadfast support and sound advice, to Maartje Scheltens and Liz Davey for assistance during production and to Leigh Mueller for useful comments during copy-editing.

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The facsimiles preceding the textual essay are reproduced by courtesy of the British Library, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

CHRONOLOGY

JOSEPH CONRAD’S life may be seen as having several distinct stages: in the Ukraine, in Russian exile and in Austrian Poland before his father’s death (1857–69); in Austrian Poland and the south of France as the ward of his maternal uncle (1870–78); in the British merchant service, mainly as a junior officer sailing in the Far East and Australia (1879 – early 1890s); after a transitional period (early 1890s), as a writer of critical esteem (1895–1914); as an acclaimed writer, although perhaps with his greatest work behind him (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 editions, except for those of the present volume.

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

xx	CHRONOLOGY
1875	Apprentice in <i>Mont-Blanc</i> (to Caribbean)
1876–7	In <i>Saint-Antoine</i> (to Caribbean)
1878 late February or early March	Attempts suicide
April	Leaves Marseilles in British steamer <i>Mavis</i> (Mediterranean waters)
June	Lands at Lowestoft, Suffolk; first time in England
July–September	Sails as ordinary seaman in <i>Skimmer of the Sea</i> (North Sea)
1878–80	In <i>Duke of Sutherland</i> (to Sydney), <i>Europa</i> (Mediterranean waters)
1880	Meets G. F. W. Hope and Adolf Krieger
June	Passes examination for second mate
1880–81	Third mate in <i>Loch Etive</i> (to Sydney)
1881–4	Second mate in <i>Palestine</i> , <i>Riversdale</i> , <i>Narcissus</i> (Eastern seas)
1884 December	Passes examination for first mate
1885–6	Second mate in <i>Tilkhurst</i> (to Singapore and India)
1886	Submits ‘The Black Mate’, perhaps his first story, to <i>Tit-Bits</i> competition
August	Becomes a British subject
November	Passes examination for master and receives ‘Certificate of Competency’
1886–7	Second mate in <i>Falconhurst</i> (British waters)
1887–8	First mate in <i>Highland Forest</i> , <i>Vidar</i> (Eastern seas)
1888–9	Captain of barque <i>Otago</i> (Bangkok to Australia and Mauritius)
1889 autumn	Begins <i>Almayer’s Folly</i> in London
1890 February–April	In Poland and Ukraine for first time since 1874
May–December	In the Congo. Second-in-command, then temporarily captain, of <i>Roi des Belges</i>
1891	Manages warehouse of Barr, Moering in London
1891–3	First mate in <i>Torrens</i> (London and Plymouth to Adelaide)



	CHRONOLOGY	xxi
1893	Meets John Galsworthy and Edward L. ('Ted') Sanderson (passengers on <i>Torrens</i> )	
autumn	Visits Bobrowski in the Ukraine	
November	Signs on as second mate in <i>Adowa</i> , which sails only to Rouen and back	
1894 January	Signs off <i>Adowa</i> , ending career as seaman	
February	Bobrowski dies	
autumn	Meets Edward Garnett and Jessie George	
1895 April	<i>Almayer's Folly</i>	
1896 March	<i>An Outcast of the Islands</i> . 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	<i>The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>	
1898	Meets Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford and H. G. Wells	
January	Alfred Borys Leo Conrad born	
April	<i>Tales of Unrest</i>	
October	Moves to Pent Farm, Postling nr Hythe, Kent, sub-let from Ford	
1899 February–April	'The Heart of Darkness' in <i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i>	
1900 September	Begins association with literary agent J. B. Pinker	
October	<i>Lord Jim</i>	
1901 June	<i>The Inheritors</i> (with Ford)	
1902 June 5	First mention of a 'Mediterranean novel' to publisher William Blackwood	
November	<i>Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories</i>	
1903 April	<i>Typhoon and Other Stories</i>	
October	<i>Romance</i> (with Ford)	
1904 March 29	Believes he 'owes' a Mediterranean novel to Harper & Brothers	
September 3	Writes to Garnett, enclosing a (now lost) 'sketch of a Mediterranean subject'	
October	<i>Nostromo</i>	

xxii	CHRONOLOGY
1905 January–May	Sojourns on Capri with his family. Meets Norman Douglas.
February	Informs Pinker his Mediterranean novel will treat ‘the struggle for Capri in 1808 between the French and the English’
June	<i>One Day More</i> staged in London
1906 August	John Alexander Conrad born
October	<i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>
1907 January	In Montpellier. First mentions a novel about Elba
September	<i>The Secret Agent</i> . Moves to Someries, Luton, Bedfordshire
1908 August	<i>A Set of Six</i>
1909	Moves to Aldington, Kent
1910	Moves to Capel House, Orlestone, Kent
1911 March	Expresses hope of beginning a Mediterranean novel after finishing <i>Chance</i>
October	<i>Under Western Eyes</i>
1912 January	<i>Some Reminiscences</i> (as <i>A Personal Record</i> in America)
October	<i>Twixt Land and Sea</i> . Informs Harper & Brothers he will soon begin a novel about Napoleon on Elba
1913 September	<i>Chance</i> , with ‘main’ publication date of January 1914
1914 July–November	Visits Austrian Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War; returns via Vienna and Genoa
1915 February	<i>Within the Tides</i>
September	<i>Victory</i>
1917 March	<i>The Shadow-Line</i>
1918 December	Contemplates the ‘Napoleonic novel’ and wishes to visit Elba and Corsica
1919 March	Moves to Spring Grove, near Wye, Kent. Dramatic version of <i>Victory</i> opens in London. Promises publisher J. M. Dent <i>The Rescue</i> and the ‘Napoleonic book’

April 30	Promises to dedicate the ‘Napoleonic novel’ to American lawyer and Conrad collector John Quinn
August	<i>The Arrow of Gold</i> . Describes the Napoleonic novel to André Gide
October	Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent
1920 June 7	Consults books about Napoleon on Elba at the British Museum Reading Room
June 20	Begins dictating ‘The Island of Rest’ (later <i>Suspense</i> )
June 24	<i>The Rescue</i>
July 18	Hugh Walpole and T. E. Lawrence visit at Oswalds. Walpole reads ‘some of the second chapter’ of <i>Suspense</i>
August 18	In its third chapter, the novel ‘All very lame and unsatisfactory’
September	Holidays in Deal, Kent, with family
1921 January–April	Visits Corsica. Collected editions begin publication in England (Heinemann) and in America (Doubleday)
February	<i>Notes on Life and Letters</i>
May 24	At work on last chapter of Part I of <i>Suspense</i>
mid-August	Plans to serialize the ‘Mediterranean novel’ in <i>Cosmopolitan</i> (New York); sends Pinker two chapters
September 30	Part II of <i>Suspense</i> finished
autumn	Begins new Mediterranean short story, eventually <i>The Rover</i>
November 17	Sends first batch of typescript of the ‘Mediterranean novel’ to T. J. Wise
1922 January 2	Receives offer from Cecil Roberts to serialize the ‘Mediterranean novel’ in <i>Westminster Gazette</i>
January 28	Pinker takes 239-page typescript to New York
February 8	Pinker dies
July	Finishes revision of <i>The Rover</i>
November	<i>The Secret Agent</i> staged in London
December 8	First mentions ‘The Suspense’ as title

xxiv	CHRONOLOGY
1923 January	Resumes work on <i>Suspense</i>
early March	Reports finishing Part III (original version without chapter 3)
March 15	Sends second batch of typescript to Wise; promises F. N. Doubleday that he will finish the novel by 'September or October of this year'
May	Visits America, guest of Doubleday
July 9	Sends third and final instalment of typescript to Wise
December	<i>The Rover</i>
1924 February	Resumes work on <i>Suspense</i> , rearranging last two chapters
May	Declines knighthood
August 3	Dies at Oswalds. Roman Catholic funeral and burial, Canterbury
September	<i>The Nature of a Crime</i> (with Ford)
October	<i>The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad</i>
1925 January	<i>Tales of Hearsay</i>
February–August	<i>Suspense!</i> serialized monthly in <i>Hutchinson's Magazine</i> (London)
June–September	<i>Suspense</i> serialized in weekly <i>Saturday Review of Literature</i> (New York)
July 3	<i>Suspense</i> published in de luxe limited edition by Doubleday (New York)
September	<i>Suspense</i> published in trade editions by Dent (London) and Doubleday
October	<i>Suspense</i> published by Tauchnitz (Leipzig)
1926 March	<i>Last Essays</i>
1927	<i>Suspense</i> included in the Heinemann edition
1928 June	<i>The Sisters</i>

ABBREVIATIONS  
AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

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

Boigne	<i>Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne</i> , ed. Charles Nicoullaud. 2 vols. Heinemann, 1907
Conrad's Cities	<i>Conrad's Cities: Essays for Hans van Marle</i> , ed. Gene M. Moore. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992
Documents	<i>Conrad between the Lines: Documents in a Life</i> , ed. Gene M. Moore, Allan Simmons and J. H. Stape. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000; also published as <i>The Conradian</i> , 25, no. 2 (2000)
Jean-Aubry	G. Jean-Aubry, 'The Inner History of Conrad's <i>Suspense</i> : Notes and Extracts from Letters', <i>The Bookman's Journal</i> , 13 (October 1925), 3–10
Letters	<i>The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad</i> . 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
LTY	Richard Curle, <i>The Last Twelve Years of Joseph Conrad</i> . Sampson Low, Marston, 1928
Portrait in Letters	<i>A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad</i> , ed. J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996

LOCATIONS OF UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

Baldwin	Martha Stackhouse Grafton Library, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia
Berg	Berg Collection, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, New York Public Library

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xxvi      ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON EDITIONS

BL	British Library
Colgate	Everett Needham Case Library, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York
Lilly	Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
National Archives	National Archives of the United Kingdom
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, references are, for the sake of convenience, to Dent’s Collected Edition, 1946–55, whose pagination is identical with that of the various ‘editions’ published by Doubleday throughout the 1920s. References to the Cambridge Edition take the following form: title (year of publication), whereas publication dates are not provided for citations from Dent’s Collected Edition.

Citations from critical and other works are to author, title and date of publication.

## INTRODUCTION

SET IN GENOA during three tense days in February 1815, just before Napoleon's return from exile on Elba, *Suspense* was published in the year following Joseph Conrad's death in August 1924. The legacy of the 'Man of Destiny' whose image dominated the nineteenth century gave Conrad an opportunity in this tightly plotted 'Mediterranean novel' to bring together elements spanning his entire lifetime, from his childhood reading of the Napoleonic sea-novels of Captain Frederick Marryat (1792–1848) to his own adventures in the late 1870s as a young 'brother of the coast' embarking upon a maritime career in Marseilles. Fictionally, it gave him a sustained chance to come to terms with his own complex sense of the importance of Napoleon in relation to political power, the development of nation-states and the fates of nations. The political history of Europe in the nineteenth century was largely defined by Napoleon's spectacular career and his ultimate defeat at Waterloo, and the Emperor's influence as both a political icon and a literary model can hardly be exaggerated. For Italians and Poles alike, Napoleon became emblematic of the desire for nationhood. Despite the nepotism and chauvinism of his reign, he succeeded in internationalizing the democratic and egalitarian spirit of the French Revolution. For Conrad this complicated legacy found expression in several essays and memoirs, in the short stories 'The Duel' (1908) and 'The Warrior's Soul' (1917), and in *The Rover* (1923).

The adventures of stalwart young Englishmen in the gallant world of Napoleonic combat constitute a popular sub-genre of fiction that begins with Marryat and continues through the eleven 'Hornblower' novels (1937–67) of C. S. Forester to the twenty-one novels in the Aubrey–Maturin series by Patrick O'Brian (1969–2004). But Conrad's timing proved unfortunate: by the time *Suspense* was published, early twentieth-century readers who had survived recent wars and pandemics could no longer be expected to appreciate fleeting allusions to remote historical figures like the Duke of Wellington and Talleyrand,

and still less to distant political events like the restoration of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia.

The historical novel was popularized in the nineteenth century by ‘serious’ British authors like Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, while on the Continent, Napoleonic fiction was defined by works like Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830) or Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1869). In the post-war world of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, interest in this genre was waning, as Conrad discovered on the appearance of *The Rover*, set in Revolutionary France and the early period of the Empire. Conceived as his major contribution to the genre, *Suspense* was marketed as an unfinished fragment and appeared to its first readers as a tragically incomplete ‘torso’, the last, posthumous work of an author whose writings could now be evaluated as a whole, making it virtually impossible for critics and reviewers to comment with confidence upon its structure or its author’s final intentions. Several factors, not least the demands it makes on the historical knowledge of readers, have continued to militate against its appreciation.

### ORIGINS

IN *THE MIRROR OF THE SEA*, Conrad declared that ‘The charm of the Mediterranean dwells in the unforgettable flavour of my early days, and to this hour this sea . . . has kept for me the fascination of youthful romance’ (p. 152). The Mediterranean – the ancient ‘centre of the earth’ – was never very far from the focus of his attention, and provides a backdrop for three of his late novels (*The Arrow of Gold*, *The Rover* and *Suspense*), the ‘Tremolino’ sections of *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906), the Neapolitan story ‘Il Conde’ (1907) and *A Personal Record* (1908), which links Napoleon to Conrad’s family history and tells of a Marseilles pilot who witnessed the Emperor’s return to France from Elba.

Conrad claims to have caught his first glimpse of the Mediterranean from ‘the outer shore of Lido’ in Venice while on a schoolboy holiday in the spring of 1873.<sup>1</sup> In October the following year, the sixteen-year-old Conrad arrived in Marseilles to begin his sailing career, and for more than three years the ancient Mediterranean port was his home between voyages along the coast and three extended trips to

<sup>1</sup> *A Personal Record*, ed. Zdzisław Najder and J. H. Stape (2008), p. 49.26–7.



the French Antilles. It is not inconceivable that one of the young man's motives in seeking to become a Mediterranean sailor was to re-live in his own person the adventures he had read about as a boy. In his essay 'Tales of the Sea', written in 1898 just as he was about to begin *Lord Jim*, he praised the sea-novels of Marryat and of the American novelist James Fenimore Cooper, which had strengthened the orphan's resolve to leave his troubled homeland and seek what he would later describe in *The Rescue* as 'the incomparable freedom of the seas' (p. 10).

Long after he had retired from those seas, the picturesque islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean drew him back for extended springtime visits: he spent four months on Capri in 1905 and three months on Corsica in 1921, and in 1906–7 he and his family wintered in Montpellier, not far from Marseilles and the scenes of his youth. Conrad seemed fully to share the deep enjoyment of the Mediterranean scenery which he evoked in the opening chapters of *The Rover*, and which enchants Cosmo Latham, the protagonist of *Suspense*: 'for a moment he was fascinated by the notion of a steady gliding progress in company of three or four bronzed sailors over a blue sea in sight of a picturesque coast of rocks and hills crowded with pines, with opening valleys, with white villages, and purple promontories of lovely shape'.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a 'Mediterranean novel' first appears in Conrad's correspondence in a letter to his publisher, William Blackwood, of 5 June 1902, at a time when he was trying to finish 'The End of the Tether'. Conrad envisioned his Mediterranean opus as 'a story of about 80000 words for which I shall allow myself a year'.<sup>2</sup> He expected to begin work that autumn, as soon as he had finished *The Rescue* (completed, in fact, only in 1919): 'It'll be a novel of intrigue with the Mediterranean coast and sea, for the scene' (*Letters*, II, 423). In the event, his next major project proved to be *Nostromo*, set not on the Mediterranean but on the shores of the imaginary Golfo Placido in a fictional South America, yet suffused nonetheless with Mediterranean sun and sea, drawing on the region's history and temperament for its title-character, the heroic 'man of the people', and for his friend, Giorgio Viola, both of whom are immigrants from the Italian coast near Genoa.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 134.5–9. Subsequent references to the texts of the present edition appear in the text in round brackets.

<sup>2</sup> The typescript (Berg) that provides the copy-text for the present edition contains slightly more than 81,000 words.

Giuseppe Garibaldi's vivid legacy lives on in South America, and the novel contains, in the way of local colour, not only Spanish terms – as might be expected – but also a number of Italian words and phrases.

In late August 1903, Conrad sent his literary agent, J. B. Pinker, the first instalment of *Nostromo* with a letter expressing his worries: 'I have never worked so hard before – with so much anxiety.'<sup>1</sup> He painted a bleak picture of his finances, concluding that 'there will be nothing for it but to start at once on the Mediterranean story which is contracted for'. Conrad apparently understood that his arrangement with Harper & Brothers in New York specified such a novel, but without a definite deadline for its delivery. He told Pinker that he had a Mediterranean story up his sleeve, but wanted to revisit two or three places along the coast before writing it.<sup>2</sup>

There is no documentary evidence that Conrad ever thought of the 'Mediterranean novel' as a collaboration with Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford), but the close and active friendship between the two writers during this period – so close that Conrad twice suggested that Ford could, if necessary, bring *Nostromo* to completion<sup>3</sup> – lends support to Ford's claim that he and Conrad had originally planned to collaborate on a novel about the fate of Marshal Ney (1769–1815), the 'bravest of the brave' among Napoleon's commanders, who had led the rearguard on the disastrous retreat from Moscow in the winter of 1812.<sup>4</sup> After Conrad's death, Ford took up the task himself, publishing in 1928 a curious sequel to *Suspense* entitled *A Little Less Than Gods*.

From Capri, where he and his family had gone to winter in early 1905, Conrad announced to his agent: 'I've found here the subject of my Mediterranean novel – or indeed rather the subject has found me. It is the struggle for Capri in 1808 between the French and the English' (*Letters*, III, 219).<sup>5</sup> Conrad understood that considerable research would be necessary for a historical novel concerning what, in the end, is a minor event in the Napoleonic period and one unremembered by his English readership: 'I have access here to the collection of books and MS belonging to Dr Cerio. There are letters – songs –

<sup>1</sup> Conrad to J. B. Pinker, 22 August 1903 (*Letters*, III, 55–6).

<sup>2</sup> Conrad to Pinker, 29 March 1904 (*Letters*, III, 126–7).

<sup>3</sup> Conrad to Pinker, [6] February 1903 and 22 August 1903 (*Letters*, III, 16, 55).

<sup>4</sup> *Return to Yesterday* (1932), pp. 193–4.

<sup>5</sup> In citations from *Letters* Conrad's spellings of 'Mediterranean' with a double 't' or lower case 'm' have been altered throughout for ease of reading.

pamphlets and so on relating to that time.’<sup>1</sup> He also had access to fellow-writer and Capri resident Norman Douglas, who was well versed in the island’s history and who, like Conrad himself, would write an essay on the centenary of Trafalgar, taking advantage of public interest in the event that year.<sup>2</sup>

On holiday in Montpellier nearly two years later, Conrad informed his agent that he had visited the town library with the object of ‘reading up all I can discover there about Napoleon in *Elba*. It seems that there he was surrounded by spies, menaced by murderers and threatened by revengeful Spaniards and Corsicans. I think I’ve got a theme for a Mediterranean novel with historical interest, intrigue and adventure.’<sup>3</sup> Conrad was struck by the dramatic potential of Napoleon’s precarious situation after his fall from power: ‘As a matter of fact Louis XVIII was approached with proposals to have the Emperor killed; and the Great powers were not averse to a project of kidnapping him (by some Spaniards) in the hope – I fancy – of him getting a knock on the head in the scuffle.’ A ‘Mediterranean novel’ about the struggle for Capri in 1808 thus began to give way to a more manageable and dramatic tale about Napoleon in Elba in 1814–15; as Conrad told Pinker, ‘All I want now is to discover the moral pivot – and the thing will be done.’<sup>4</sup>

Finding that pivot was not easy, and the idea of the ‘Mediterranean novel’ figures only occasionally in Conrad’s correspondence from 1911 to 1914. In 1911, he twice asked Pinker to check if his long-standing contract with Harper & Brothers was still in effect. If so, he wanted to begin work on the Mediterranean novel immediately upon completing *Chance* (*Letters*, IV, 501). The novel’s time-frame was also growing beyond 1808: ‘I would want to read up the epoch (1808–10)

<sup>1</sup> On the Cerio family, see Rein van der Wiel, *Laetitia: Een verlangen en Capri* (1997). Van der Wiel notes that Capri’s library was established in the Palazzo Cerio by Don Ignazio Cerio’s English wife, Elisabeth (née Grimmer, d. 1902); in addition to works in Greek and Latin, it contained Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens and volumes from the Christ Church Library and the Sailors’ Home in Naples. The Palazzo Cerio is now the Centro Caprese Ignazio Cerio.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad’s essay appeared in the *London Standard* on 21 October 1905 (p. 13), and in revised form as the final section of *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906) under the title ‘The Heroic Age’. Despite Conrad’s ardent support, Douglas’s essay remained unpublished until 1913; see J. H. Stape, ‘“Intimate Friends”: Norman Douglas and Joseph Conrad’, *The Conradian*, 34, no. 1 (2009), 144–62.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jean-Aubry, at that time the Montpellier City Library contained only one volume on this subject, Paul Gruyer’s *Napoléon, roi de l’île d’Elbe*, published in 1906 (*Joseph Conrad: Life & Letters* (1927), vol. II, p. 41, n. 2).

<sup>4</sup> Conrad to Pinker, 25 January 1907 (*Letters*, III, 409).

in which I was thinking of placing it' (*Letters*, iv, 420). This reading might have occurred during a period of quiet gestation, for, at the beginning of 1912, the novel again became a topic of discussion: 'I have the *story* itself. The question is of the setting. I hesitate between the occupation of Toulon by the fleet – the Siege of Genoa – or Napoleon's escape from Elba.'<sup>1</sup> As it happened, the latter two settings are involved in *Suspense*, while the first figures in *The Rover*. A few months later, Conrad was 'still in doubt about the form. Whether a narrative in the first person or a tale in the third', he announced; 'It's going to be done round Napoleon in Elba and it may turn out a biggish thing.'<sup>2</sup>

In late May 1912, Conrad was invited by Frederick Watson (1885–1935), an author of books for boys, to collaborate on an adventure story; Conrad declined, explaining that he was 'going presently to begin a novel, the scene of which will be the Mediterranean about 100 years ago'.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the summer of 1912 Conrad remained eager to start on the novel as soon as he finished the ever-expanding 'Dollars', a project that would, in due course, engender both the short story 'Because of the Dollars' and *Victory*. On 3 September, he reported somewhat ambiguously to Pinker that he had 'begun formally the novel', but added 'that doesn't mean much. Still it will be something to catch on to when this story ['Dollars'] is finished' (*Letters*, v, 105). 'Formally' suggests the possibility of actual writing, but later in the year Conrad admitted to the American tax lawyer John Quinn, then in the early stages of amassing his collection of the writer's manuscripts, that 'As regards the *Elba* novel the first word of that *is not yet written*.'<sup>4</sup> At most, Conrad was again declaring that the novel was second on his list of projects, but the earliest surviving drafts of what in the end became *Suspense* date from 1920. The reference to Quinn does indicate, however, that by 1912 the 'Elba novel' had both a definite location and time-frame. In the event, work on the novel was repeatedly deferred in favour of the rapidly growing 'Dollars', and, as he confided to Pinker, it was already beginning to resemble a recurrent daydream: 'the long novel simmers in my head. This is the only possible way to go on, tho' of course it would have been better if I had been able to get away to

<sup>1</sup> Conrad to Pinker, [24] January 1912 (*Letters*, v, 10).

<sup>2</sup> Conrad to Pinker, [11 May 1912] (*Letters*, v, 64).

<sup>3</sup> Conrad to Watson, 24 May 1912 (*Letters*, v, 70).

<sup>4</sup> Conrad to Quinn, 12 November 1912 (*Letters*, v, 134).

the Mediterranean for a month of musing and looking at the scene' (*Letters*, v, 106).

By September, it was clear that in Pinker's view the contract with Harper & Brothers was still in effect, and, in October, Conrad promised the firm to devote the following year to providing 'a long novel laid in the Mediterranean', adding that 'As the action will be round Napoleon in Elba if it is published in 1914 it will just come pat for the centenary of the great man's exile to that Island. A good coincidence' (*Letters*, v, 120). In an attempt to interest his publisher, he was careful to mention the marketing possibilities: 'I shall try to make it suitable for serial publication to the best of my ability.' In preparation for actual writing, Conrad mentioned to Pinker that Norman Douglas was 'sending me a whole stack of books about the Mediterranean'.<sup>1</sup> This assistance is confirmed by the dedication copy of Valéry Larbaud's novel *A. O. Barnabooth* inscribed to Conrad, to which Douglas added an inscription of his own: 'Kept! Because Conrad has 4 valuable books on Elba of mine, which he never disgorged ND (for his novel on Napoleon).'<sup>2</sup>

Conrad's letters to Pinker and Quinn mention the 'Elba novel' regularly until mid-November, and then not again until April 1913, when he summarizes his various activities to H.-D. Davray (who had translated 'Karain' and *The Secret Agent* into French) and concludes with a first reference to his own mortality: 'I am going to start a long maritime piece whose action will take place around the island of Elba in the shadow of the Emperor – for He will not appear, or only for a moment. After that, I do not know. The deluge, the grave. Burial would not vex me, for I begin to feel tired' (*Letters*, v, 207). The Elban idea preoccupied him throughout 1913, and he felt a 'natural impatience to get at the Mediterranean novel' (*Letters*, v, 282), as complications with *Victory* disrupted an overly optimistic schedule. On the other hand, the unexpected success of *Chance* gave Conrad some relief from his financial worries, and he assured Pinker in May: 'By the time the Mediterranean novel is written we would have left the "bad times" well behind' (*Letters*, v, 222).

<sup>1</sup> Conrad to Pinker, [31 October? 1912] (*Letters*, v, 123).

<sup>2</sup> This volume is among the books from Douglas's library held in the Norman Douglas Forschungsstelle at the Vorarlberger Landesbibliothek, Bregenz. The catalogue of Conrad's library auctioned by Messrs Hodgson & Co. (London) on 13 March 1925 mentions Conrad's signatures or initials as selling points, but makes no mention of inscriptions by Douglas.

By 1914, the long struggle with *Victory* was nearing its close, and Conrad anticipated an easier task with the next novel. As he told his agent on 19 February, 'That tale [*Victory*] is the very devil to manage. It has too many possibilities. It won't be so with the next novel which I have been thinking out for five years at odd times' (*Letters*, v, 356). But just when Conrad had managed to clear his back-log of previous commitments and was at last free to begin the long-deferred novel, international events intervened to preclude the possibility of working holidays in the Mediterranean. Instead, a family visit to Cracow, begun at the end of July 1914, ended with a scramble to avoid being detained behind enemy lines when the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires found themselves suddenly at war and the border between them lay just to the north of the city.

Although Conrad had been unable to return to the Mediterranean for 'a month of musing and looking at the scene', as he had been hoping to do for at least two years, the family's improvised return home by way of Vienna and Milan included an unscheduled three-day stopover in Genoa, where they waited to board the Dutch steamer *Vondel* that would take them home. Where Conrad and his family lodged in Genoa is unknown, but the enforced respite, as *Suspense* testifies, afforded an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with its harbour and the 'maze of narrow streets' (15.25) surrounding its eastern side.<sup>1</sup> He had last seen the 'Superb City' (its traditional nickname) thirty-five years earlier, in December 1879, as an able-bodied seaman in the *Europa*, which also called at Livorno and Naples, and he may have paid other unrecorded visits during his Marseilles period.

Despite this brief encounter with the city that would be its setting, Conrad did not return to his Mediterranean project until after the Armistice, now thinking that it would take more than a year to write and, as before, involve travel abroad: 'The Napoleonic novel may take 18 months in writing. I would like too to have a look at Elba and Corsica before I get too deep into the tale – say next winter' (*Letters*, vi, 322).<sup>2</sup> More evidence of long preparation is found two months later, when he told his agent that he was overdrawn at his bank because he had bought books mostly 'connected with the subject of the Napoleonic

<sup>1</sup> For Conrad's use of Genoese topography, see Ugo Mursia, 'Notes on Conrad's Italian Novel: *Suspense*', rev. and tr. Mario Curreli, *Conrad's Cities*, pp. 269–81.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, Conrad did not manage to visit Corsica until January 1921 (staying until early April), some six months after he had begun work on *Suspense*.