

them whilst they were still commoners, before their translation to ducal status.

STEPHEN DERRY

University of Wales, Lampeter

HARDY'S REVISION OF FACT AND FICTION

IN a recent issue of *Notes and Queries*, Martin Ray published two articles on Hardy and revision which came to contradictory conclusions. In the first of these, 'Hardy's "The Lady Icenway": A Note on the Wessex Edition of *A Group of Noble Dames*',¹ Mr Ray pointed out that Hardy had changed a reference to crossing the Equator on a voyage from England to Paramaribo, found in earlier versions of the story, because he must have discovered, in preparing the Wessex edition of 1912, that Paramaribo was actually north of the Equator. Mr Ray felt that Hardy 'must have consulted an atlas', although a geographical 'howler' of this sort might equally have been drawn to his attention by a reader. But however Hardy gained the information, he took the trouble to alter his story to fit the facts, which would seem to justify Mr Ray's comment that this 'shows yet again Hardy's meticulous preparation of the Wessex edition'. However, in the second, following, note, 'Hardy's "The First Countess of Wessex": A Textual Anomaly',² Mr Ray draws attention to a failure on Hardy's part.

In the original, 1889, version of this story, the father of one of the main characters, Phelipson, is described as 'deceased'. But in the revised version, published in 1891 and republished, unchanged in this detail, in the Wessex edition, Phelipson is later described as having 'parents' – so his father, dead earlier in the story, is now alive. What this suggests is that Hardy was not quite as meticulous as Mr Ray previously asserted, when it came to preparing the Wessex edition. Obviously this is a minor anomaly, which seems to have taken more than eighty years in its Wessex edition form, and more than one hundred years overall, to have been noticed and recorded. But it does contradict Mr Ray's previous conclusion, in a way that neither he nor the editors of *Notes and*

Queries presumably noticed. Mr Ray might have done better to have run the two notes into one, and discussed whether Hardy was more alert to errors of fact than to mistakes in fiction. From the evidence, it would seem that Hardy, in revising *A Group of Noble Dames* for the Wessex edition, was fairly scrupulous in checking matters of fact, and revising where necessary. On the other hand, he does not seem to have been so concerned, or at any rate so eagle-eyed, about possible errors in the fictional content of his stories: perhaps he assumed (wrongly, in at least one case, as has been shown) that he had already eliminated mistakes in revisions for earlier editions. It might be suggested that checking facts is actually easier for authors than laboriously re-reading their own earlier work for possible discrepancies in their plots. This distinction between Hardy's attitude to fact and fiction in this particular collection of short stories seems worth making.

STEPHEN DERRY

University of Wales, Lampeter

JOSEPH CONRAD AND WILLIAM MATHIE PARKER: THREE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM CONRAD¹

THREE previously unpublished letters from Joseph Conrad have recently come to light and are reproduced below. These letters were written to the Scottish critic and journalist, William Mathie Parker, between September 1919 and January 1920. They concern Conrad's novel, *The Arrow of Gold*, first published in book form in April 1919.² Along with one letter in *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. 5, these letters are only extant correspondence between Conrad and Parker. They did meet, however, on board the *Tuscania* in April 1923, during Conrad's trip to America. Parker was in

¹ In preparing this article I am grateful to the editors of *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* and Cambridge University Press, acting on behalf of the Conrad estate, for agreeing to the publication of these letters. Thanks are also due to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to publish Conrad's letters, and to Mr John Scott, Editor of the *Evening Times*, Caledonian Newspapers Ltd., for permission to reproduce part of Parker's article.

² It appeared in serialized form in *Lloyd's Magazine* from December 1918 to February 1920.

¹ *N&Q*, cxcxl (1995), 205.

² *Ibid.*

charge of the ship's 'High Seas Bookshop',³ and recalls his interview with Conrad in 'At Sea with Conrad', an article for the *Evening Times*⁴ on 6 August 1924. Parker records how Conrad, on seeing *The Arrow of Gold* on the bookshelf, said with a wistful expression: 'Ah! I remember – the writing of this – the ache and the heart-searching! I have a great affection for it.' Whether or not they discussed their correspondence, however, is not mentioned.

Born in 1891, Parker was an aspiring critic who contacted some of the leading literary figures of his time. The National Library of Scotland holds a collection of his letters, the earliest being from A. C. Bradley on 7 February 1912.⁵ From 1915 onward Parker's correspondents include J. M. Barrie, Edward Garnett, Edmund Gosse, William Archer, and R. B. Cunninghame Graham. Although much of his work concentrates on Scottish writers, Parker also wrote journal articles on Conrad and Thomas Hardy.⁶ One of these was a review, 'A Good Novel: "Conrad's Arrow of Gold"', for the *Glasgow Citizen* on 15 January 1920, which describes Conrad's novel as the literary 'event of the year'.

By the time this review was published Parker had already been in correspondence with Conrad about *The Arrow of Gold*, as evidenced by the first two letters below. Of the three letters, the first, written in Conrad's own hand, is by far the friendliest; and Parker responded swiftly with a request for 'inside information' on the novel's production.⁷ It

may be that Conrad's reference to Parker's 'sympathetic understanding' of his purpose prompted the young critic to be hasty in his pursuit of the writer. In any case, although not openly rude, in his second letter, which is typewritten, Conrad is evidently taken aback. The last letter, also typewritten, in response to Parker's review, is dutiful but aloof, and there is, as yet, no evidence that Parker wrote to Conrad again. However, the existing correspondence reproduced here tells a fascinating story of the attempt by an eager young critic to establish himself by eliciting personal details from a famous author who was notoriously reluctant to discuss his artistic processes.

Letter 1

Spring Grove,⁸
Wye
2.9.19

Dear Mr Parker,

I've just received your letter and I want to thank you for the friendly impulse which prompted you to write. The appreciation of a fellow-craftsman is always a great pleasure – and all the greater when expressed with sympathetic understanding of what one has tried to do.

This book,⁹ I don't mind telling it to you, is very near my heart and I accept eagerly your prophecy [*sic*] of its taking a high place – some day. Meantime the reception, though friendly, has been somewhat mixed.

Believe me
very sincerely yours
Joseph Conrad

Letter 2

Kent.
Sept. 13th. 1919.

Dear Mr Parker.¹⁰

The first thing that occurs to me on receipt

had been asked to provide similar information. Parker had asked for 'personal sidelights', and Archer had replied that he could not supply anything of so general a nature but would be happy to answer specific questions. (NLS: ACC 5892 fo. 1.)

⁸ NLS: ACC 5892 no. 6. All three letters are contained within this accession in the National Library of Scotland.

⁹ At this point a pencilled asterisk has been inserted and at the bottom of the page Parker, presumably, has written, 'His novel *The Arrow of Gold*'.

¹⁰ Words deleted in pen are indicated in the text within

³ This was the ship's bookshop which Parker says was an idea that 'had originated in the fertile brain of the ship's commander, Captain (later Sir David) Bone . . .'. See 'Memories of Conrad: Talk in the "High Seas Bookshop"' in *The Scotsman*, 25 July 1957.

⁴ This is a Glasgow newspaper. Parker also writes about this bookshop in 'The High Seas Bookshop', *John O'London's Weekly*, 12 April 1924, and 'The High Seas Bookshop', *Sea Breezes*, January 1964.

⁵ National Library of Scotland: ACC 5892 fo. 3. Bradley is responding to a request that he offer advice on Parker's writing.

⁶ For example, he was the Assistant Editor of the Centenary Edition of the *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols (1932–7). For further information on his writings see *Scottish Biographies 1938* (London, 1938), 606. His bibliography in the National Library of Scotland is headed 'W. M. Parker M.B.E. Hon. M.A. (Edinburgh)'. See NLS: ACC 4048.

⁷ This was not the first time Parker had contacted a leading literary figure on such matters. In his letter to Parker of September 1917 William Archer implies that he

of your letter is this: – that most of the newspapers of any standing in the U.K. have pronounced on the *Arrow of Gold* and that you may be losing your time in coming in with a study, however able, when the book, as things go now-a-days, is no longer an actuality. The monthlies and the quarterlies have their own contributors, even if they thought that the book deserves their especial notice; and generally in [any] (the) serious order (of criticism) the acceptance of an article so purely literary would depend on the intrinsic value of what you wrote rather than on any special information.

Therefore, I very much doubt whether the sort of information which you have in [your] your mind would help you really [o] (i) n your [way] (ambition) to [acquire] (win) the standing of a literary critic. That sort of [thing] (success) can only proceed from what the critic can find in himself to say about [a] (any) work of art which, in its essence, is open to everybody's investigation and comment. [?] [t] (T) he form in which you put your request – which I do not consider presumptuous in the least – [?] forces me to put these considerations before you.

Believe me that it is with the utmost friendliness that I ask (you) whether you have really reflected upon what you are asking me to do(?) Even before my intimates I would feel reluctant to lay bare the springs of my activities and the sources of my inspiration. The very qualities that you recognise in this book, (in which some critics have [recognised] (perceived) a restraint of emotional discretion)¹¹ make it impossible for me to say anything that would be significant and touch upon the deeper motives

which induced me to write *this*¹² after so many other [of my] books. Mere facts, such as when it was begun and ended, under what conditions it was written of health or discomfort, freedom or worry of mind, would be (of) no use to you from a critical point of view; and I feel it would be a rather ridiculous proceeding for me to enlarge upon (them). [?] But if there ever comes the time for deeper disclosures to be made, you will see perfectly well, I think, that they cannot fittingly be made by anybody but myself.

Believe me
Faithfully yours,
J. Conrad.

Letter 3

Oswalds,
Bishopsbourne,
Kent
Jan. 20th. 1920.

Dear Sir

I have to thank you for sending me the cutting from the Glasgow Evening Citizen containing your contribution on 'The Arrow of Gold'. I need not tell you that your appreciation and your letter have given me great pleasure.

Yours J. Conrad

In fact, *The Arrow of Gold* has never received much critical acclaim; Parker's 'prophecy' of its 'taking a high place – some day' springs from over-zealousness rather than genuine critical insight. Rita de Lastaola is hardly the perfect female creation described by Parker in his review: 'To match the consummate, finished character of Dona Rita we have to turn to the women of Meredith, Hardy, or James, for we can recall no female character-creation of later fiction that comes near her in breadth of conception, in the subtle nuances of the feminine mind, in the hundred and one significant touches that illuminate this enchanting woman, mysterious and alluring' ('A Good Novel'). Few, if any, critics would now regard the novel as Conrad's 'greatest achievement' and 'a landmark in the world of letters' ('A Good Novel'). However, this lavish praise may

square brackets. Additions to the text in pen are indicated by round brackets. Where possible I have included the deleted word but as some are indecipherable a question mark stands in their place. Other corrections and omissions have been added in pen by Conrad: these are mainly typing errors; I have not included these. The typewritten script gives an air of formality compared to the handwriting of the previous letter. It would be tempting to assume that Conrad chose to type this letter to create the distance required for his response, but Hans van Marle has informed me that Conrad, in his later life, would, due to gout, dictate his letters and correct them by hand. It may thus be misleading to presume that the typescript is a deliberate attempt at formality.

¹¹ These brackets have been added in pen.

¹² The underlining here is added in pen.

well have been Parker's attempt to recover from an awkward situation.

Parker probably had in mind Conrad's comment about the critics' perception of 'a lack of emotional restraint' in the book when he came to write his review. On the emotional atmosphere of the novel he says: 'In mastery of emotional effect Mr Conrad has never excelled these half-lit scenes between the two protagonists of the novel. The intense, restrained handling is incomparably fine'. And 'restraint' is applied to his artistic technique: 'The planning and intrigue of the Carlist movement is reflected in Mr Conrad's pages with the restraint of an undoubted artist' ('A Good Novel'). Thus Parker's admiration of Conrad's emotional and technical control may be an oblique reference to his letter, a reference he intended Conrad to notice.

The 'qualities' Parker recognizes in *The Arrow of Gold* are probably what he describes in his review as its 'distinctive' and 'predominant' features: 'It is an abiding atmosphere of half-lights, continuous and consistently maintained throughout . . .' ('A Good Novel'). The half-light indicates things half-hidden, and things half-seen, which would be consistent with Conrad's assertion that these are the 'very qualities' that prevent him from enlarging upon the 'deeper motives' behind the book. Parker's review is highly flattering to Conrad, and not wholly wanting in merit, but it does display a lack of real critical insight. The sentimental and melodramatic aspects of the novel that have caused most recent critics to regard it as evidence either of Conrad's failing powers or lack of artistic rigour are, for Parker, the very elements that make this book 'rank as his greatest achievement' ('A Good Novel').¹³

These letters are interesting in that they provide further proof of Conrad's determination not to 'lay bare the springs of [his] activities and the sources of [his] inspiration', or, as Allan Hunter puts it, 'Conrad's characteristic reluctance to explain his work to anyone'.¹⁴ And,

when he says that a work of art 'in its essence, is open to everybody's investigation and comment', Conrad is pointing to the possibility of multiple interpretations of meaning. Thus, although these newly discovered letters give us no further insight into *The Arrow of Gold*, they do help to clarify Conrad's position on the public nature of the text, and the private nature of Conrad, the artist.

LINDA DRYDEN

Napier University

make an exception in the case of Richard Curle. I am grateful to Robert Hampson for pointing this out to me.

CONRAD'S *LORD JIM*: THE SOURCE OF THE *SEPHORA* INCIDENT

IN Conrad's novel, Marlow recalls the courageous death of Little Bob Stanton, the chief mate who was drowned 'trying to save a lady's-maid in the *Sephora* disaster' off the Spanish coast (ch. 13):

All the passengers had been packed tidily into the boats and shoved clear of the ship when Bob sheered alongside again and scrambled back on deck to fetch that girl. How she had been left behind I can't make out; anyhow, she had gone completely crazy – wouldn't leave the ship – held to the rail like grim death. The wrestling-match could be seen plainly from the boats.

Both Bob and the maid were drowned.

The *Sephora* incident is based on the sinking of RMS *Douro* in 1882, which Conrad discussed in his essay, 'Some Reflections on the Loss of the *Titanic*' (1912).¹ RMS *Douro* was a steamer of 2847 tons, built in 1865. She was sailing in clear weather on Saturday 1 April 1882, from Lisbon to Southampton, on the final leg of a voyage from Brazil, when she was in collision with another steamer, the *Yourac Bat*, about 40 miles off Cape Finisterre in the Bay of Biscay. The time of the collision was 10.50 p.m. (in *Lord Jim*, the accident happens on a 'hazy morning'); the *Yourac Bat* sank in 15 minutes, and the *Douro* stayed afloat for half an hour.

¹³ See, for example, J. Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography* (London, 1960), 411. Baines regards the 'failure of imagination' in *The Arrow of Gold* as 'probably due to a lack of concentrated care'.

¹⁴ A. Hunter, 'An Unpublished Letter from Conrad', *Notes and Queries*, ccxxix (1984), 505. In fact, however, although Conrad was reluctant to discuss his work, he did

¹ Rpt. in *Notes on Life and Letters* (London, 1949), 213–28.