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## The Joseph Conrad Collection at Syracuse University

J. H. Stape

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# The Joseph Conrad Collection at Syracuse University

BY J. H. STAPE

The collection and preservation of Joseph Conrad's work in America has a long history. John Quinn, a wealthy New York lawyer who began collecting Conrad manuscripts in 1911, was the first and exclusive purchaser of Conrad's original documents until 1918, when Conrad on the sly began to sell manuscripts to Thomas J. Wise, the famous bibliographer and—as later revealed—notorious forger. Quinn, who had undertaken to keep his collection intact, in turn broke his word, and the sale of his collection in New York brought prices unmatched even today. Conrad could quite rightly launch his ironic query: "Did any of the bidders faint? Did the auctioneer's head swell visibly?"<sup>1</sup> Quinn's sale allowed A. S. W. Rosenbach, the renowned Philadelphia book dealer, and George T. Keating to form the nucleus of their important collections, the former still in Philadelphia at Rosenbach's home (now the Rosenbach Museum and Library) and the latter in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Diverse in origin, Syracuse University's collection of Conradiana, housed in the George Arents Research Library, has more printed than manuscript materials.

## FIRST EDITIONS

Syracuse University holds all of Conrad's novels from *Almayer's Folly* (1895) to *The Rover* (1923) in either first English or first American editions and, similarly, complete collections of the six short-fiction titles and five non-fiction prose works. Among these are presentation copies of *Youth* (first English, 1902) inscribed for Sir Edmund Gosse and *The Arrow of Gold* (first American, 1919) presented

1. Conrad to F. N. Doubleday, 20 November 1923, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, ed. G. Jean-Aubry (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1927), 2:324.

to a Mrs. Demerest. Conrad's collaborations with Ford Madox Ford—*The Inheritors* (1901), *Romance* (1903), and *The Nature of a Crime* (1924)—are also represented by first editions.

#### PRIVATELY PRINTED AND LIMITED EDITIONS

Although Syracuse University holds only one pamphlet—*London's River* (1919)—of the six privately printed by Clement K. Shorter and none of the twenty pamphlets privately printed in two series (1919 and 1919–20) by Thomas J. Wise, the collection is particularly strong in limited and privately printed editions issued after 1920. It contains copies of the dramatization of *The Secret Agent* (1921), *The Dover Patrol: A Tribute* (1922), and *John Galsworthy: An Appreciation* (1922) printed by H. J. Goulden. The dramatized version of *The Secret Agent* is also here in a private printing of 1923 by T. Werner Laurie. Strangeway & Sons private printings include *Geography and Some Explorers* (one of thirty signed copies) and Richard Curle's edition of Conrad's "Congo Diary" (1926). Also enriching the collection are the 1902 private issue of the preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* printed by J. Lovick, the private printing of Conrad's preface to his wife's *Simple Cooking Precepts for a Little House* (1921), the first separate printing of Conrad's first story, "The Black Mate" (Edinburgh: The Dunedin Press, 1922), and Jerome Kern's 1925 private printing of *The Admiralty Paper*.

Of particular interest are two copies of the "privately printed" issue of *Notes on Life and Letters* (London: Dent, 1921) distributed to reviewers and to friends of the publisher. This "private printing"—in fact identical with the trade issue aside from the certificate on the verso of the title page, its olive (rather than dark green) binding, and lighter paper—was unauthorized by Conrad, and his forcefully expressed displeasure led Dent to destroy a number of copies. Thus, it appears that of the thirty-six copies so issued only sixteen survive.

The collection also contains a signed copy of Conrad's collected prefaces, *Notes on My Books* (1921), one of 250 copies issued under the Heinemann imprint. (Doubleday, Page of New York, which also issued 250 copies, in fact printed the whole run.) Two limited editions of *One Day More*, Conrad's dramatized version of his 1902 short story "To-morrow", are held: two copies printed in 1919 by the



Joseph Conrad with a visitor at "Oswalds", his home near Canterbury, 1924  
(From a snapshot in the Syracuse University Library).

Beaumont Press, London (an edition limited to 274 copies) and a signed copy of the first American edition (limited to 377 copies) issued in New York by Doubleday, Page in 1920. The posthumously published works, *Suspense* (1925) and *The Sisters* (1928), are at Syracuse in American limited editions. Conrad's play *Laughing Anne*, based on his short story "Because of the Dollars", is also held in a signed limited edition (London: Morland Press, 1923).

#### LETTERS

Among the more significant Conrad holdings in the Syracuse University collection are nine items, in holograph or typescript, of correspondence from Conrad to business connections, acquaintances,

and friends.<sup>2</sup> The earliest letter, that of 14 January 1898, to T. Fisher Unwin, his first publisher, concerns a possible separate American publication of the short story "The Return". A letter of 19 April 1898 addressed to the editor of *The Academy* (Charles Lewis Hind) evidently accompanied proofs of Conrad's review of Hugh Clifford's book of Malay tales *Studies in Brown Humanity* (published in *The Academy* on 23 April 1898). Letters to friends include that to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, addressed as "Très cher ami", thanking him for books, and a letter of 18 December 1915 to Sydney Colvin, a friend who directed *One Day More* in 1905. There are also: a note of 6 May 1909 to an unidentified recipient to whom Conrad sent a holograph leaf of *A Personal Record*, and a letter of 12 April 1916 that pledges support to the poet Edward Thomas in his application for a Civil List pension. Two letters of 1918 are of particular interest—that of 11 June to Sir Edmund Gosse, the well-known man of letters, offering a defense of *Nostromo*, and that of 2 July to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Dummett, Cunninghame Graham's companion, accompanying a signed presentation copy of the second English edition of *Nostromo* (London: Dent, 1918).<sup>3</sup> The latest letter—6 October 1920—is to Captain J. G. Sutherland, commander of the HMS *Ready*, a Q-boat in which Conrad had made an expedition in 1916.

The collection also includes three letters from Mrs. Jessie Conrad: to [Christopher] Sandeman dated 13 August 1924; to Peter F. Somerville dated 16 July 1928; and to a Mr. Partridge dated 28 June 1936.

2. The following letters have been published: to Unwin in *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); to Hind in J. H. Stape, "Conrad and *The Academy*: An Unpublished Letter", *Conradiana* 20 (1988), in press; to Cunninghame Graham in *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham*, ed. Cedric T. Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969); to an unidentified recipient in J. Szczypien, "New Light on the Composition of Joseph Conrad's *A Personal Record*", *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 34 (March 1987): 50–51; to Gosse and Dummett in George M. Barringer, "Joseph Conrad and *Nostromo*: Two Letters", *Thoth* 10 (Spring 1969): 20–24.

3. On Mrs. Dummett, see Cedric T. Watts and Laurence Davies, *Cunninghame Graham: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 258–59.

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perhaps nor such an unconditional <sup>meaner</sup> yes  
all that. I will make bold to say  
that neither at sea nor ashore  
I have ever lost my sense of  
responsibility. There is <sup>more</sup>  
than one sort of intoxication. Even  
before the most seductive reveries  
I have <sup>remained</sup> ~~been~~ <sup>been</sup> mindful of ~~that~~  
~~the~~ ~~importance~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~idea~~  
sobriety of interior life, that asceticism  
of sentiment in which alone the  
naked form of truth such as one conceives  
it, such as one feels it can  
be rendered without shame. It is  
but a mandarin, and indecent  
verity that comes out through  
my strength of wine. I have  
tried to be ~~with~~ a sober worker all my  
life - all my two lives. I did  
so from taste, no doubt, having an  
instinctive horror of losing my sense  
of full self-possession, but also  
from artistic conviction. Yet there  
are so many pitfalls on each side  
of the ~~unavoidable~~ true path that

Unique manuscript page from "Some Reminiscences" (1908-09), later A Personal Record, Chapter VI. Joseph Conrad Collection, Syracuse University Library.

#### MANUSCRIPT AND TYPESCRIPT MATERIALS

In addition to the letters mentioned above, the most important items in the Syracuse University Conrad collection are a holograph leaf of A Personal Record and a forty-five-page typescript of the essay



“Autocracy and War”, the latter the gift of William Pearson Tolley.

The leaf from *A Personal Record*, an autobiographical work originally published in *The English Review* from December 1908 to July 1909 as “Some Reminiscences” and first issued in book form under that title, is the only known evidence of the existence of an original manuscript and as such provides essential information for the textual critic.

Similarly, the typescript of “Autocracy and War”, Conrad’s 1905 essay on the Russo-Japanese War written while he was on a working holiday in Capri, is all that survives of his original work on this piece. The Syracuse typescript appears to be the copy marked by an editor for the essay’s printing in *The North American Review* in July 1905. (The essay also appeared in London in *The Fortnightly Review* in the same month.) The typescript bears the epigraph “Sine ira et studio” (Without anger or partiality—Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1), which appears only in the American serial printing and is corrected in pencil for a printer. The placement of the by-line “Joseph Conrad” is indicated on the first page, and an end-signature—in the same hand—is added on the last. While none of the changes or corrections are in Conrad’s hand, the typescript is nonetheless an important document in establishing the text’s transmission. It is preserved with a copy of the July 1905 number of *The North American Review*.

#### MISCELLANEA

The Conrad collection also contains a few photographs and first editions of various collections of letters as well as some related works. Among the more interesting items belonging to this group are: a presentation copy from Jessie Conrad to Richard Curle of Conrad’s and Ford’s *The Nature of a Crime*; an inscribed copy of Curle’s edition of Conrad’s letters, *Conrad to a Friend: 150 Selected Letters* (1928); and two copies of Curle’s *Into the East, Notes on Burma and Malaya* (1923), for which Conrad wrote a preface. Of the last, one copy is an inscribed presentation copy and the other bears a note in Curle’s hand. A rare item is a privately printed letter—*Joseph Conrad on Stephen Crane* (Yselta, Texas, 1932)—one of thirty copies, this with a manuscript note attached by Vincent Starrett, one of Crane’s early bibliographers.