

## REVIEW

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### The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad, *Twixt Land and Sea*  
Edited by J. A. Berthoud, Laura L. Davis, and S. W. Reid  
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#### LOST IN COMPLICATION: A REVIEW-ESSAY

THIS RECENT CONRAD edition under the Cambridge University imprint consists of three short stories written *after* Conrad had produced *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* *Lord Jim*, *Youth*, *Nostramo*, and *The Secret Agent*. These stories are the product of the years 1909 to 1912, a period during which *Under Western Eyes* was also being gestated. They might be thought of as comparatively minor writings: "A Smile of Fortune," "The Secret Sharer," and "Freya of the Seven Isles," but as Conrad pointed out in his "Author's Note": "of all my volumes of short stories this was the one for which there was the greatest immediate demand" (7.20-22).

This edition is a weighty volume, but the stories themselves are quite slight, taking up a mere 176 pages in the midst of the whole, which is 659 pages long. The tales are preceded by an 89-page Introduction (with preliminaries: Contents, Chronology, Abbreviations, etc., adding an initial thirty pages), and they are succeeded by thirteen pages of illustrations taken from manuscripts and printed editions, after which follow five sections: "The Texts: An Essay" (107 pages), an "Apparatus" of textual variants (117 pages), nine "Appendices" largely devoted to textual matters (34 pages), "Notes" (64 pages), and, finally, ten pages of diagrams, MS fragments, and maps. As you hold the book in your hands and start to search through it, the stories seem like a small piece of land surrounded by a sea of textual minutiae – and quite a choppy sea it is!

The strategies adopted for presenting this wealth of supporting material are born of complexity and spawn in turn massive repetition.

Surprised to be asked to review this major work of scholarship, I assumed that my brief was not to pretend to be a Conrad expert, but to approach the work as another humble editor with experience of working for a Cambridge edition, having edited D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and *Paul Morel*. In the circumstances the best I can offer is that of an interested (even geekishly fascinated) textual editor who comes to this wealth of material as a novice. I have no background in Conrad textual niceties, but I was eager to get to grips with this fascinating and complicated editorial project. Accordingly, I started reading the first tale, "A Smile of Fortune." On the story's third page, I was intrigued by Conrad's description of the island of Mauritius:

It was a pear-shaped pearl of an island, distilling much sweetness upon the world.

It is but a fanciful manner of telling you that first-rate sugar-cane is cultivated there. (15.23-27)

My sense of English is that "It is" would more idiomatically be "That is" or "This is," and, interestingly, during a perusal of the Cambridge *A Personal Record* (2008), I noticed that Conrad sometimes had problems with demonstrative articles ("this," "that," "these," "those"), and so decided to search the list of textual variants to see if any other of the surviving documents had a different reading here.

The "Apparatus" extends from page 311 to page 428 and is divided into two sections, "Emendation and Variation," which deals with changes in words (or "substantive" variants) and "Emendations of Accidentals" (or "punctuation"). Unfortunately, the running heads for all these hundred and twenty-odd pages are simply "Apparatus." Why did the press not make these pages more user-friendly by nominating the subdivision on one side of the opening: "Apparatus | Substantives" and "Apparatus | Accidentals"? It must have greatly added to editorial labour to conduct this separation of variants, and at the same time, it begs the question as to whether punctuation changes can occasionally be meaning-bearing. However, the list of substantive variants appears *prima facie* to give the reader a much clearer view of Conrad's revisions.

But before one can search among the variants, one needs to know what surviving documents constitute the basis for the edition. Accordingly, I found this:

### A Smile of Fortune

- MS** holograph manuscript (Berg)  
**TS1** typescript (Yale, Berg)  
**TS1t** typewritten (unrevised) text of **TS** superseded by revision  
**TS1r** revised text of **TS** (incorporating Conrad's alterations): copy-text  
**TS2** typescript, partial (Berg)  
**S** *London Magazine* (February 1911), pp. 801-36

(313)

Being a bit of an enthusiast for “Explanatory Notes,” I had also browsed in that section, and was amazed to find the same list printed at the head of the “Notes.” Why the duplication? Surely, if a reader finds a note that refers to different states of the text, it is conventional to assume the list of sigla will be in the Apparatus section. Do editors of Conrad not have an interest in economy of presentation? This list had already occurred a second time in the Apparatus, before the list of accidentals (412).

Whatever the case, the list itself baffled me. What is the difference between a “typescript” and a “typewritten” text? More importantly, both an “unrevised” and a “revised text of TS” are puzzling since there *is* no TS in this list, only TS1. Surely “a revised text incorporating Conrad’s alterations” must mean a new typescript, i.e., TS2? I was completely baffled and could not read the list of variants in this situation, so there was nothing for it but to abandon reading the tale itself, stop treading around the beach, and tackle the nearer sea: “The Texts: An Essay” (pages 203-310).

And, Hallo! In this section, the tales are treated in an order *different* from that in the volume itself. Here, we have first, “The Secret Sharer,” then “A Smile of Fortune” and then “Freya of the Seven Isles,” because discussion of the textual history of each tale is “best conducted in the order of their composition rather than of their eventual appearance” in the first English edition (205). This is also true of the Introduction, incidentally, except for the “Reception” section, where the tales are treated in the order of their publication. All this is fully faithful to the inherent complexity of the task; however, the editors might have at least have shown this complex subdivision in the running heads of the volume’s pages, or decided upon one simple order: composition *or* publication. Since they did not do so, the strategy for presentation chosen for “The Texts: An Essay” is complex in the extreme and leads to an enormous amount of repetition.

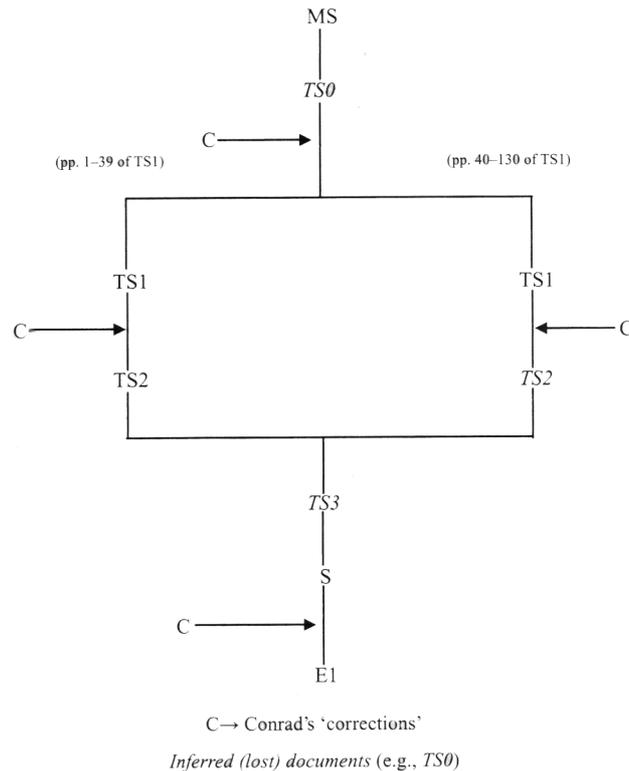
The degree of complication is not precisely replicated on the “Contents” page. First the surviving documents are described in subsections, such as, “Manuscript,” “Typescript,” “Serialization,” “First English Edition,” taking each tale in turn, in the order: “The Secret Sharer,” “A Smile of Fortune,” “Freya.” Then, after a brief section on “Book Editions,” the editors revert again to a tale by tale account of “Copy-texts” (288), this time in the order: “Smile,” “Sharer,” “Freya.” Then follows a section on “Emendation,” in which, again, each tale is dealt with in turn, in the latter order. This makes repetition unavoidable: I found myself *repeatedly* saying, “I’ve read this before – at least once.”

I wonder if consideration was ever given to the possibility of dividing the whole essay up into three parts and giving the whole account of each tale on its own, so that the narrative of the writing history, followed by the description of the surviving artefacts, naturally culminated in a justification and explanation of the editorial decisions: the choice of copy-text and rules for emending it.

It is very unfortunate that the running head of both *recto* and *verso* in these hundred-plus pages of Textual Essay is solely: “The Texts,” whereas if those on the left indicated the subsection and those on the right gave the title of the tale under discussion, it would greatly improve ease of consultation. For these are not pages to be read straight through from beginning to end. They are, in effect, a reference work. They are also extremely hard to read: they require decoding and at least a second reading: by the third page of the twenty-four on the surviving and lost texts of “A Smile of Fortune,” I was constrained to start sketching a stemma.

This toughness is chiefly because the state of Conrad’s surviving artefacts is fiendishly complicated, a situation compounded by the complexity of his compositional methods and by the loss of intermediate documents. The editors write with a loving attention to every detail, but this leaves the reader with a feeling that the editors are somewhat mesmerized by the complication. It seems to me that in a situation as complex as this, brutal clarity is required. The reader needs to be told about the copy-text at the outset – that it is the first surviving typescript (TS1), which bears Conrad’s handwritten alterations, and which now survives in two parts located in two libraries: pages 1-39 are in the Beinecke at Yale, and pages 40-130 are in the Berg Collection in New York. Without a preliminary clarification of the problem, the reader is ill-equipped to wade through page after page of minute, technical, bibliographical descriptions of manuscripts and typescripts.

I had initially thought it would have helped if the reader were directed to the diagram on page 247 from the outset:



However, although this diagram provides some clarity there are problems with it. It is a sort of square stemma, which follows the routes of the two sections of *TS1*, but everything would be much clearer if, instead of “*TS1*” on each side, it read “*TS1* pp.1-39 Berg” on the left and “*TS1* pp. 40-130 Beinecke” on the right. In fact it seems strange that the brackets containing the page-numbers are hovering at the top corners of the box. Furthermore, the typescript that is thought to have existed between the manuscript and *TS1* is described in the diagram as *TS0*, whereas in the textual essay it is *TS $\emptyset$* . It is not made clear in the essay what this “*o/0*” stands for: at first I thought it meant “omitted” (i.e., lost), but from the annotation of this diagram it seems it must mean “zero,” as coming before “1.” The editors seem to be lost in the complication between the

first typescript in historical terms and the first among the survivors. And surely a designation “typescript zero” is *nonsense!* The editors have no problem labelling other lost typescripts in italics, such as “*TS3*,” so surely the historically first should be *TS1*, and the copy-text should be labelled TS2. The explanation cannot, either, be that the editors are uncertain that this intermediary typescript existed. They are not uncertain. In the textual essay, especially in the “Copy-text” and “Emendation” sections, they make assertions about details of the lost documents with a tone of alarming certainty.

Also, in the diagram, Conrad’s revisions are labelled “corrections” whereas in the list of surviving documents at the head of the “Apparatus” they are “alterations.” Surely there is a difference: alterations come in two types: revisions (designed to improve the text), and corrections (which remove error made either by typists or the author himself). The variation of terminology here is a failure to be fiercely logical, and this increases the impression of a kind of revelling in complication.

For example, here are the opening sentences describing the surviving sections of *TS1* (italics added). The situation is mildly complicated and requires severely simplified explanation:

The document now in Yale’s Beinecke Library consists of thirty-eight leaves of typescript revised by Conrad in ink, *together with three leaves of manuscript* also in ink. (227)

The document in the Berg Collection is actually two different typescripts which comprise 128 pages of text (*including two holograph pages*)... (228)

Is a distinction of meaning intended between “manuscript” and “holograph,” or are they interchangeable? There is, strictly, moreover, a difference between “leaves” and “pages,” but is such a distinction to be taken seriously here? In a passage teeming with numbers, in which each sequence of page numbers is listed, as typed, in ink, in pencil or revised, and so forth, what is the value of varying the way these two collections are described as a total number exclusive and then a total number inclusive of handwritten pages? The variation “together with” and “including” seems unnecessary and confusing. This essay certainly does not require gestural elegance, but the sort of technical accuracy that is reflected in consistency and transparency of terminology.

It turns out that the “two different typescripts” in the Berg are pages 40-130 of *TS1*, and pages 1-31 of *TS2*. This came about because Conrad

sent off the first thirty-nine pages of TS1 to his agent Pinker, for re-typing, so that he could have a new typescript that *incorporated* his handwritten alterations, or as Conrad put it, “‘first half of story, ready for clean copy’” (229). The resulting typescript (TS2) ended up in the Berg Collection, where it was placed before the rest of TS1, as if it was simply the beginning of the same draft.

However, the editors have decided not to let us in on the secret at first, preferring it all slowly and painstakingly to emerge from a bibliographically minute and detailed description of each library holding. This leads to considerable repetition of page-numbers, dates, and biographical details. For example, that “clean copy” also occurs on page lxxiv of the Introduction, on page 238 of the “Textual Essay” and in a footnote on page 235. It is not merely repetition that is a problem, but much of the discussion of the process of composition is extremely hard to follow, partly because “Conrad had adopted a method for writing ‘A Smile of Fortune’ that was unusually complex even for him” (234), partly because of the division of this edition’s supplementary material into sections (discussed above), but also because sometimes the writing is opaque:

Indeed, when recounting the results of Jacobus’ second on-board visit, Conrad referred in the manuscript to Burns’s “serious illness” (32.29a *n*); that phrase he would later replace in *TS0* with “deadly fever” to make it conform to the typescript version of the prologue. This remnant of the draft version of the prologue at the end of the second section of the MS confirms that Conrad had not begun to revise the initial typescript at this point, and it supports the view that he would not do so until he was half way through the fourth, in the second week of July. (233-34)

I spent a long time trying to decode this. “A Smile of Fortune” consists of six sections headed with roman numerals, but the opening five-and-a-half pages have no such heading and may be presumed to constitute a prologue. (Did Conrad ever call it this?) Jacobus’ second visit occurs at the end of “II,” and there, in MS, is the expression “serious illness,” which is recorded in the Apparatus (32.29). But how do we know what changes Conrad made in *TS0*, if it is lost? Well, the surviving typescript, TS1, contains so very many differences from MS that the editors deduce that a previous, *first*, typed copy of MS was made (*TS0*), which was then heavily revised by Conrad, and therefore, all the differences between the manuscript and the first *surviving* typescript (TS1) must represent Conrad’s previous round of alterations (unless

some were blunders by the typist). Since the first surviving typescript (TS1) contains the variant from MS here, “deadly fever,” we must presume Conrad made the alteration in the now lost first typescript (TS0). So far, so good.

I cannot, after long pondering understand: “This remnant of the draft version of the prologue at the end of the second section of MS.” (Why is no page/line reference given to this passage about Burns’s illness in the prologue?) The “prologue” is pages 13 to 18 in this edition. Of Burns the author writes “He was ashore with a bad fever in the hospital” (13.26). This is the reading in TS1r, and TS2, that is, Conrad’s (surviving) handwritten alteration in the typescript, which was faithfully reproduced when a fair copy typescript was made (TS2). What Conrad was altering was the TS1t reading: “He was in the hospital,” as can be seen in the Apparatus (314/13.26). No manuscript reading is given here, so, at first, I (erroneously) concluded that the TS1t represents the manuscript text at this point. However, on page 234, there is a long footnote: “For the manuscript’s version, which does not appear in this edition’s critical text and is not reflected in the apparatus keyed to it, see Appendix F.” Appendix F can be found on pages 449-56, after the “Apparatus” and before the “Notes.” Here we are told: “The serial version of the prologue, which was based on *the paragraphs* in his original manuscript, was so different from Conrad’s revised typescript version that the variants cannot be clearly represented in this volume’s main apparatus. (See the discussion in “The Texts”, *pp.* 243-4.)” I italicize here because, first, I wonder what distinction is being nuanced by “the paragraphs in his ... manuscript” rather than simply “in his manuscript” and, secondly, because this discussion is ten pages *after* the passage I have been trying to understand!

I clearly needed to have read the textual essay with greater care, although it is so dense with detail that one cannot always see the wood for the trees. I learn that, “The typescript version of the prologue, as preserved in TS1, quadruples that in MS, so that some 600 words became almost 2,400” (236). Then, “This process of wholesale revision he carried forward in the second – that is, extant – typescript [please add (TS1) for clarity!] ... revising words and phrases, cancelling large chunks of material, and interlining new material” (236-37). This explains to me why the copy-text TS1r version of the prologue is very different from MS, but not why the MS readings are excluded from the Apparatus. However, three sentences later all is clear (I think): “Despite the salvaging of some MS bits, *the typescript version* [my italics: TS1r, I

believe?] represents a new beginning that must be dated no earlier than mid-July. The revision and retyping of it ... consumed the latter part of July" (237). No, I was wrong: *the typescript version was TS0!*

The textual narrative at the top of page 237 concerned the radically revised extant typescript version of the prologue, the racy language, "large chunks," "salvaging ... bits," presumably an attempt to lighten the reading experience. But in the next paragraph the theme has changed from the textual relationship of MS and TS1, to the chronologies and dates of composition, and we are reminded (for the umpteenth time) that Conrad moved from Aldington to Capel House. So, it appears that although we thought we had progressed through the process of composition to the crucially interesting copy-text TS1r, we are thrust back to the speculative TS0, but no labels-in-brackets are included to help us out. This kind of strange circling round the complex textual terrain, which in my view bedevils this massive tome, is like a bird of prey rotating continuously over, and scanning with sharp vision, the minute details of his familiar landscape.

This is the only explanation I can think of as to why the editors fail to give the manuscript reading referred to in the sentence cited above (repetitively by me!): "This remnant of the draft version of the prologue." Perforce, I turn back again to Appendix F. Can I find the reading in MS regarding Burns's illness? The Appendix is, apparently, necessitated by the fact that the manuscript text of the prologue and of the contemporary printed versions are so different that they cannot be housed in the main apparatus, therefore: "Below are critical texts, based on MS, of the prologue and of the ending that represent the texts created by Conrad's revisions for S [the *London Magazine*] and the book editions" (449).

By contrast, in small print at the end of the headnote to the "Emendation and Variation" section, the editors announce that

for that prologue (13.2-18.4) and a portion of the ending (77.25-8) the list [i.e., the Apparatus] reports the readings of the extant typescript(s) only. (See the discussion in 'The Texts', pp. 229-30; Appendix F provides critical texts of the serial version of these passages and reports the variant readings of the manuscript and the early printed texts.) (312)

Well, the relevant discussion is *not* found on pp. 229-30, and Appendix F does *not* offer critical texts of S but a collation using MS as copy-text. Or

does it? Why the discrepancy in reporting? All should be clarified by a return to the “Copy-text” and “Emendation” sections.

Under “Copy-texts” the total account of this issue is as follows:

the choice of copy-text is rather straightforward, though the different versions of the opening and closing pose a special problem.  
(289)

The serial version, based on the once rejected and superseded MS version, is the one Conrad revised for E1 and in this sense represents his final text; the text of the pages Conrad sent, on or about 25 November, to replace the opening and closing pages of the Pinker typescript would have to be reconstructed, to the very limited extent possible, from S’s text because Conrad revised the text in those lost pages, though basing it on his earlier MS draft. However, the serial version of the prologue is not the one Conrad wished to see printed when he was most deeply involved in its creation, nor indeed after he had made the cuts in order to get it published in the *London Magazine*.  
(289-90)

There is total confusion here between the choice of manuscript or first magazine publication, but there is a more worrying subtext. A radical anxiety emerges between the choice of copy-texts for the main edition. Obviously the typescript revised by Conrad (TS1r) has been chosen, but *here* there is some resistance or rebellion among the editors in favour of the changes Conrad made for the serial publication. There is no real confrontation with this problem, but a footnote (n. 2) on page 296 and another opaque account in the notes (32.29/474).

Although Appendix F is not discussed in the main editorial essays, but referred to only in footnotes, it is clearly an important editorial decision. With regards to Appendix F itself, I’m afraid I think it is an *absolute error* to present this material in the form of a *critical text*. This textual material can only be *ancillary support* for the edition proper and not a rival edition, therefore it should be offered in the form of MS text accompanied by variants from the printed texts in succession, so that the line of transmission is crystal clear.

Be that as it may, reading across from text to facing apparatus, one can deduce (I think!) that the manuscript read: “I would not have put up with his [Burns’s] humours if it had not been that at one time I had nursed him through a desperate illness at sea.” So, what it boils down to is an argument that, if Conrad wrote in MS at the end of Section II

(32.29), “serious illness,” which tallies with the prologue’s MS reading “desperate illness,” he cannot yet have started revising the prologue, because when he did he changed the reading to “bad fever,” which tallies with his revision in Section II, “deadly fever.” No, I am probably wrong again, because according to the note on 32.29, Conrad did not resolve the discrepancy.

The lack of clear textual specificity seems to have arisen, again, because the focus on textual transmission has been diverted into using the evidence of the variants to produce slightly speculative material for dating phases of writing and revision.

Speculation. A great amount of print is expended on speculation of various kinds, particularly with regard to documents that no longer exist, for example, the long passage of second-guessing Jessie Conrad’s typing errors on the lost *TS0*, despite the fact that Conrad’s revisions in that document are lost with it:

In several cases ... her changes concerned details ... about which she seems to have been particularly uncomfortable.

More than a dozen other readings in *TS1t* look suspiciously like these sorts of errors but might represent revisions Conrad had made in *TS0* and then reversed in *TS1r* or later. (239-40)

Is it really worth taking up space with this sort of musing in such an overweight volume? And yet, as one reads through the detail in the textual essay, the amount of educated guesswork on the likelihood that certain errors were made by Jessie Conrad, and certain alterations were made by Conrad and others by printers, leaves one with the sincere (if frail) hope that the resulting set of choices in the edited text do go as far as is possible to the representation of Conrad’s intentions.

Ultimately, all my questioning and tracking down of detail has borne fruit. Remember that “pear-shaped pearl of an island, distilling much sweetness upon the world” followed by, “It is but a fanciful manner of telling you that first-rate sugar-cane is cultivated here,” and my enquiry as to whether “It is” occurred in any other artefacts in the more idiomatic form, “That is” or “This is”? Well, thanks to Appendix F, I find that the *London Magazine* (S) and all subsequent English and American book versions read: “This is only a way of telling you...” (450/1:15). I’m afraid that fact further supports my scepticism about the editors’ decision to exclude from the Apparatus the readings in MS and S in this part of the tale.

I hope my horrible worrying at the bone of contention has also borne the fruit of alerting scholars who acquire this book, that it is intensely thorough, leaves no stone unturned, is so long on detail, so divided up into sections and so opaquely expressed in parts, that it requires extremely careful attention.

The worrying continues: with regards the Apparatus, I return again to the list of sigla on page 313, to suggest that this would have been far easier to understand if presented in a clearer way:

- MS**      holograph manuscript (Berg)  
            N. B. No readings in Apparatus 13.2-18.4, 77.25-8
- TS1**      typescript (Beinecke, Berg)
- TS1t**    the typed text only of **TS1**
- TS1r**    Conrad's alterations in **TS1t** (copy-text)
- TS2**      typescript (1-31) fair copy of **TS1r** pp.1-39
- S**         serialization: *London Magazine*, February 1911  
            N. B. No readings in Apparatus 13.2-18.4, 77.25-8

As the Preface acknowledges, “the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Notes’ are written primarily for an audience of non-specialists, whereas the textual essay, apparatus, and appendices are intended for the scholar and specialist” (xvi). This must be the justification for a twenty-two page section on the “Composition” of the three tales in the Introduction, much of which is repeated in the textual essay. The Introduction is written in a lucid, flowing, thoughtful, and even elegant style, which is bound to be accessible to the general reader. It opens with a fluent, economical account of Conrad’s circumstances when he began to write these three tales, highlighting a visit from a merchant sea-captain from Indonesia, C. M. Marris, who told Conrad how enormously his earlier sea narratives were appreciated by mariners in the East. (Alas, however, Penang, Indonesia, never existed, and Marris, contrary to the first footnote, was born not in New Zealand but in Aston, Warwickshire, as the late Martin Ray discovered: see *The Conradian* 33.2 [2008]: 129.)

The topic immediately becomes: Does Marris qualify as a *source* for these tales? We are launched into the minefield of “life into art,” a debate that for years reduced much D. H. Lawrence criticism to banality: he wrote about it because it happened to him! But one has to concede that during the early twentieth century many fiction writers used their own experiences, their friends, and acquaintances as material. Aldous Huxley, is another example.

Here, the danger of banality seems to haunt the editor, who resists it with determined thoughtfulness, even high-mindedness. The anxiety surfaces at once. On page xxxii, a marvellous quotation from a philosopher is used to raise the level of seriousness: “When, for example, John Locke invokes the ‘Source of Ideas’ that ‘every Man has wholly in himself’, he invites us to seek the origins of a text in the creative energy that brings it into existence.” This is very reassuring; the “Introduction” will treat this subject with sustained critical finesse. It is curiously dispiriting, however, that five sentences later, on the facing page, that quotation is used again, differently punctuated: “Conrad’s talent – that ‘Source of Ideas that every Man has wholly in himself.’” This excessive pressure on a telling quotation suggests to me a degree of unease, or perhaps that the origins of the essay lay in a lecture, but in either case a copy-editor should have sorted out the word “that”. Was it part of Locke’s sentence or not? Quibbling apart, the Introduction is a delight to read, and ends with the following exhortation (the second set of italics are added):

The reception of *Twixt Land and Sea* is marked by an extraordinary disjunction between the prestige of “The Secret Sharer” ... and the neglect in which “A Smile of Fortune” and “Freya of the Seven Isles” have languished as a result ... In general, readers of both tales *should try harder* to absorb them comprehensively, and to treat them as responsive to the world in which they were written. (cxx)

In response to this command, I turn to the “Notes” section, which I supposed would embed the tales in their contemporary context. It turns out that the “Notes” concentrate on nautical and historical matters and have a large quantity of textual items as well. These textual entries are significant in a disturbing way: they display the extent to which the editors pick and choose between variants. Here is one example: in “A Smile of Fortune,” Alfred Jacobus, on his first visit to the captain-narrator on his ship invited him to visit his “store,” adding that “He had a smoking room for captains there” (24.25). It is obvious that Jacobus wishes to entice any or all of the captains currently in port: *captains*, plural. However, when the narrator visits or mentions the store, the editors give us, three times, “the captain’s room” (35.35-36, 43.22-23, 58.23). *This is completely wrong*. Which captain? The room was for the many captains who happened to be in the harbour at any one time. It must be plural. However the note reads:

35.35 **captain's]** TS1 captains MS captains' S— When not ambiguous as here, MS is uniform in using the singular in this context ... S's forms here and later ... represent an editorial attempt, not altogether successful, to regularize the form. (475)

This is baffling. No, it is, in fact, nonsense. First, the list of documents that precedes the Apparatus informs us that TS1 is divided into TS1t and TS1r, so in which does this reading occur? Then, more importantly, the MS reading is, apparently, without punctuation, and the serial publication is grammatically *correct*. But the editors' way of putting it is worrying: "an editorial attempt, not altogether successful." The text and the meaning of the context demand that the reading should be "captains' room," that is, the room for the various and sundry *captains*. Compare the editors' treatment of "owners" (19.27/469) where the issue is again one of owners – singular or plural – and the editors decide that the changes to "owners'," plural in S, "appear correct." There are so many examples in the Notes where the editors seem to be doing a similar "pick and mix" among the variants, based on dubious judgemental claims, that one is rendered insecure about the text offered in this edition.

It is incomprehensible to me that the editors have made this mistake: there was a correct reading in S, a document from which they have selected many preferred readings. But there is another instance of wrong-headed emendation: the narrator is nudged by Jacobus to attend the funeral of Captain H's baby. We are given his reply, as: "'Do you think I ought to,' I asked shrinkingly" (22.40). Interestingly, the list of substantive variants (322) tells us that whereas the manuscript and the revisions to the surviving typescript have "asked," the typist had actually put "said." And when we look at the apparatus of punctuation (413) we find that there was no punctuation of any kind after the words "I ought to." The comma inserted is the work of the present editors. Why, when Conrad had clearly insisted upon the word "asked," did they not see fit to supply a question mark?

In Chapter II of "A Smile of Fortune," the captain-narrator meets the captain of the *Hilda*: "Did I know, he asked anxiously, that he had lost his figure-head?" (28.8) The note (473) tells us that the manuscript reading which has been chosen, was "his figure-head," whereas the text of the first surviving typescript, TS1t reads "the figure-head," and Conrad's revision on that typescript (TS1r) was: "the figure-head of his ship." The editors chose the manuscript reading, *despite TS1r being their copy-text*; and their justification?

When Conrad added the phrase “of his ship” in TS1, he was attempting to correct one of Jessie Conrad’s typical graphic errors ... but the phrase failed to recover fully the sense of personal identification, potential in the symbol and essential to the episode, that he had captured in MS... (473)

The typescript read: “the figure-head” (28.8c/328). We have no way of knowing whether that was a typing error by Jessie Conrad or a change made by Conrad on the preceding lost typescript (*TS0*), and yet so sure are the editors of their judgement, that they can claim to *know* that Conrad was correcting one of her errors, and therefore justified in going *back* to the manuscript reading. This is wilfully eclectic. It could equally be argued that “the figure-head of his ship” made better sense in context – “he had lost his figure-head” is potentially bathetic, and smile-provoking. (After all, he had lost his baby!) All this gives a sceptical textual editor the fear that judgements are being made on a case-by-case basis and on the grounds of second-guessing the author’s intentions (using Jessie Conrad as Aunt Sally).

Nautical technicalities are largely given full and detailed attention, but the description of Jasper Allen’s boat in “Freya” contains a word not glossed and not immediately comprehensible: “A narrow gilt moulding defined her elegant sheer as she sat on the water” (130.33-34). What is a “sheer”? The *OED* (1971) gives: “The fore-and-aft upward curvature or rise of the deck or bulwarks of a vessel.”

The chaotic remnants of Conrad’s texts may well give textual scholars a headache, but he was above all a creative writer who read and absorbed other writers’ works. His context is also the literature of his time and the shared literary knowledge of his audience. It might even be argued that in these comparatively small stories, which gave him relief from his major works, he was all the more inclined to exploit, celebrate, or make off-hand, even playful, references to his wide literary reading.

When Conrad describes Freya as coming out to live with her father, he puts it in the following terms: she came out to “be a sort of Lady of the Isles.” In 1910–11, when Conrad was writing this, the massive Victorian success of Walter Scott’s “Lady of the Lake” (1810) rendered it still popular reading. (This enchanting verse narrative also contains a rivalry between the highly civilized Fitz-James, and the burly Highland chieftain, Roderick Dhu, which might, at a distance, be thought to map that between Jasper and Heemskirk.) It is an oblique allusion, but I have a sense that Conrad spattered the short novellas with such sly references

for the cognoscenti, rather like the light-hearted scattering of silver threepenny pieces in a Christmas pudding.

Here is another. Conrad wrote: “as if the magic of his passion had the power to float a ship on a drop of dew or sail her through the eye of a needle” (138.17). Neither the reference to Marvell’s poem “On a drop of Dew,” nor the New Testament reference to “the eye of a needle” are apparently worth noting. Are we missing a thread of literary playfulness on Conrad’s part?

Instead of these literary side-glances, which could reasonably be annotated, the editors give massive attention to the following generalizations: “The grotesque image of a fat, pushing shipchandler enslaved by an unholy love-spell ... the tale as old as the world ... the subject of legend, of moral fables, of poems” (40.37-40). The thirteen-line long note on this suggests various major works of literature through the ages (from Homer to H. G. Wells) which “The Captain is probably alluding to” but concludes that “the reference to ‘moral fables’ is unclear” (478). Well, one could suggest Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which was subjected by the Church to a reinvention as *Ovid moralisé* in the Middle Ages, but what would be the point? Conrad is deliberately vague, inviting readers to refer to their own experience or reading of bathetic romantic illusion. Again, we have a waste of space in speculation and a failure to notice small, precise, literary allusions.

It may be that in future editions the strategy for annotation will need to be revised. When, in “Freya of the Seven Isles,” Conrad writes: “I don’t mean to say that Heemskirk was a typical Dutch naval officer. I have seen enough of them not to fall into that absurd mistake (132.15-17), is it not questionable that the editors feel the need for a note: “The narrator discourages a nationalist or ethnic view of the tale as a struggle between the English and the Dutch” (516). This is despite the fact that four paragraphs later, the narrator asserts, “I haven’t yet met a genial Dutch man out here” (133.11), and, indeed, despite the note to 138.27, to the effect that “Conrad ... associates Germans either with bullying arrogance ... or with impotent scrupulousness” (517).

This rescue package for Conrad as a racist in “Freya” is in amusing contrast with the silence by the annotators when he makes sexist remarks: “Here you have the sanity of feminine outlook and the frankness of feminine reasoning. And for the rest Miss Freya could read ‘poor dear Papa’ in the way a woman reads a man, like an open book” (137.13-16). The editors are on the horns of another dilemma: How to reconcile the effort “to treat” these tales “as responsive to the world in which they

were written” with the fact that attitudes in the early twentieth century were very different on many topics than those now espoused.

Conrad’s wealth of literary engagement is a fascinating subject, and it is remarkable to read in the Introduction that he used a tale by Maupassant to help himself construct the house and character of Alice Jacobus. On page xlix we are told that there are “twenty-four significant verbal borrowings” from Maupassant’s *Les Sœurs Rondoli*. Some are briefly mentioned and, in a footnote, Conrad’s use of Baudelaire’s “*Harmonie du soir*” for descriptions of Jacobus’s garden is mentioned. None of this is replicated in the Notes, except a really strangely oblique comment on the expression, “nothing but to look at,” in which the writer of the Notes grudgingly concedes: “A Gallicism, perhaps induced by the episode’s dependence on Maupassant (see xlvi–xlix).” So the reader is left to find out what the “twenty-four significant verbal borrowings” from Maupassant’s naughty tale are! It seems very much like the right hand not knowing what the left is doing.

Similarly, in “A Smile of Fortune,” Conrad writes of the narrator’s ship, “She was an unconscionable time in losing her way” (17.28). Although the word “unconscionable” appears frequently in the *OED*, it only occurs together with the word “time” in Macaulay’s account of Charles II’s death-speech: “He had been, he said, an unconscionable time dying; but he hoped that they would excuse it” (*History of England*, 1849, I, 4). Would it not greatly enhance this major edition for these small literary/cultural notations, albeit of a teasing nature, to be provided for the readership to ponder?

With regard to “A Smile of Fortune,” one expression that arrested me was: “As a Jacobus on his native heath what a mere skipper chose to say could not touch him” (69.13–15) I was puzzled. It seemed to mean “he was on his own patch,” but I had no impression that there were “heaths” on Mauritius. Was it a reference to Thomas Hardy – the Return of the Native to Edgong heath? I consulted Owen Knowles, and he replied: “the possibility emerges that ‘native heath’ was a common (but now defunct) figure of speech. See *Don Quixote*, chapter 2: ‘Which tells of his first sally from his native heath,’ or *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1899: ‘In short, I spent Christmas on my native heath – a not improper word ... for a region so largely grown up to huckleberry bushes’ or Galsworthy’s use of ‘The Native Heath’ as a title to a chapter in *The Forsyte Saga*.”

Finally, Conrad gives a magically evoked description in “A Smile of Fortune” of the island of Mauritius appearing on the horizon to the narrator’s approaching ship when it was 700 miles away. His comment,

“this rare phenomenon which is even mentioned in the sailing Directions in their own prosaic style” (16.28-29), sent me immediately to the Notes to see what the Sailing Directions read, to see what Conrad would call a “prosaic style.” The note was informative and disappointing: “The publications titled ‘Sailing Directions’, commonly known as ‘Pilots’, were a source of world-wide coastal information that supplemented charts. Each covered a particular area of the coast (for example, ‘China Sea Pilot’) ... *Ships and the Sea*” (468). The editors have gone to their usual reference work and no further. Why on earth do they think “for example, ‘China Sea Pilot’” tells the reader anything? In the British Library Catalogue, they could have found: *Indian Ocean Sailing Directions for Mauritius and the islands included in its government* (Hydrographic Office, 1884) – perfect, since Conrad’s trip was in 1888. I went to the British Library and waited the statutory seventy minutes only to be told that the volume was not on the shelf and presumed lost. Frustrating. It would have been nice to see the sentences that Conrad described as “their own prosaic style.”

It is difficult to offer a conclusion to this rambling and critical review. Certainly Conrad has attracted a flotilla of devoted scholars and critics, committed to serving their captain and ensuring that his works survive in good order. Perhaps some members of the crew are focussed on editorial work, and others have keen literary antennæ. Perhaps they should talk to each other more. I understand that the good ship Conrad Editions is looking again at its “Sailing Directions,” and would suggest that the revised version urge editors to be extremely economical, avoid repetition, and think very deeply about their audience.