



Joseph Conrad's *The Rover* (1923) as A Tale of Post-War Reconstruction

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(Re)constructing the Past/Reading the Present

Joseph Conrad's *The Rover* (1923) as A Tale of Post-War Reconstruction

*Les reconstructions à l'œuvre dans *The Rover* de Joseph Conrad*

CHRISTINE REYNIER

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Résumés

Français English

Contrairement à la vision répandue selon laquelle Conrad, romancier par excellence de l'indirection, aurait adopté une méthode plus simple dans *The Rover* (1923), cet article soutient que dans ce roman, la méthode indirecte prévaut toujours. À l'instar de Knowles et Moore, il montre que la source de ce roman réside dans l'expérience personnelle de l'auteur et ses lectures ; mais alors que ces critiques voient en Peyrol 'un auto-portrait de Conrad vieillissant faisant face à la fin de sa vie et de sa carrière' (320), le frère de la côte apparaît ici comme le portrait du Conrad de 1916. Plutôt que d'emprunter aux *Voyages, aventures et combats* (1853) de Louis Garneray et à l'histoire du corsaire français Robert Surcouf, comme le veulent Knowles et Moore, *The Rover* apparaît ici comme une reconstruction de *A Tale of Two Cities* de Dickens. En s'appuyant sur des faits biographiques et historiques, sur une analyse intertextuelle ainsi que sur les études du trauma et celle de Hampson, cet article montre également que *The Rover* est une reconstruction de l'expérience traumatique de la Première guerre mondiale de Conrad et de son fils Borys ; ce roman apparaît ainsi non pas tant comme un roman napoléonien que comme un récit de reconstruction d'après-guerre.

Although many critics have argued that 'Conrad, that most indirect of novelists, had become simplified' (Karl 902) with *The Rover* (1923), I argue that in his last completed novel, Conrad's method of indirection still prevails. Like Knowles and Moore, I show that the source of the novel is to be found in Conrad's reading and personal experience. But where they contend that the rover, Peyrol, is a 'self-portrait of the older Conrad himself, facing the closure of his career and life' (320), I show that he is a portrait of Conrad in 1916. And while they maintain that *The Rover* borrows from Louis Garneray's *Voyages, aventures et combats* (1853) and the history of the



French privateer Robert Surcouf, I go back to Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. Drawing on biographical and historical data, on an intertextual analysis as well as trauma studies and Hampson's study, I further contend that *The Rover* is an indirect reconstruction of Conrad's and his son Borys's traumatic experience of WWI and is not so much a Napoleonic novel as *A Tale of post-war reconstruction*.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : Conrad, *The Rover*, autobiographie, expérience de la guerre, trauma, Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, reconstruction d'après-guerre

Keywords: Conrad, *The Rover*, autobiography, war experience, trauma, Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, post-war reconstruction

Texte intégral

- 1 This article means to go back to a rather neglected novel of Conrad, *The Rover*, and to approach it from an interdisciplinary perspective, informed by biographical and historical research, trauma studies and intertextuality. *The Rover* was meant to be a short story and 'an interlude suggested by the longer story' (Conrad 1925, vi), *Suspense*, but turned out to be Conrad's last completed novel, finished in 1922 and published in 1923. What should have been a climactic moment in his writing career came as a disappointment: *The Rover* certainly sold well (Najder 618; Knowles and Moore 317) but met with the disapproval of the media.¹ Ever since it has known a changing fate, being now ignored, now criticized or more readily accepted but its defenders, like its critics, still have reservations about it and most consider it to be 'a problematic novel' (Busza xxvii) that occupies 'a precarious position in most critical assessments of the Conrad canon' (Jones 2009, 306).²
- 2 Although many critics have argued that 'Conrad, that most indirect of novelists, had become simplified' (Karl 902) with *The Rover*, a conventional 'throwback to an earlier kind of fiction' (Knowles and Moore 320), I would be tempted to argue differently and show that in his last novel, Conrad's method of indirection still prevails. Like Owen Knowles and Gene Moore, I will argue that the source of the novel is to be found in Conrad's reading and personal experience. But where they contend that '*The Rover* is crafted out of, and uses to effect, many of the same materials that he had at hand for *Suspense*' (319) and borrowed from Louis Garneray's *Voyages, aventures et combats* (1853) and the history of the French privateer Robert Surcouf, I shall go back to Charles Dickens. And while they maintain that the rover, Peyrol, is a 'finely shaded self-portrait of the older Conrad himself, facing the closure of his career and life' (320), I will be more specific. Confronting on the one hand Conrad's own experience and his son's in 1916, as related in his letters of the time, with on the other hand, the representation of trauma in *The Rover* (as analysed in depth by Hampson) and the intertextual echoes of Dickens's *A Tale of two Cities*, I will read Conrad's last novel as a post-war novel and *A Tale of reconstruction*.

A Personal Reconstruction

- 3 My first contention has to do with Peyrol, his character and final deeds, and will lead me to read *The Rover* as a personal reconstruction. *The Rover* is usually said to be one of the two Napoleonic novels of Conrad's, together with the unfinished *Suspense*. Indeed, the action is set in the early 19th century after Napoleon has been proclaimed consul for life and the peace settlement signed with the British has been broken, that is, in 1804, when Nelson was assigned to *HMS Victory* and joined the blockade of Toulon where part of the French fleet was located.

- 4 Peyrol, a former brother of the coast who had been away roaming the seas when the Revolution had broken out, comes back to Toulon and finds a resting place in the remote farm of Escampobar, at the very end of the Giens peninsula, his native place. For a few years, he lives in the farm run by a former revolutionary, Scevola, the young orphaned owner of the farm, Arlette, and her aunt, Catherine; he leads a quiet existence, trying to forget his past and to escape the enquiring gaze of the Navy. However, through his acquaintance with Lieutenant Réal, he becomes involved with the politics of the French Navy during the blockade. The former pirate spends days observing the British fleet's movements, especially those of *The Amelia*, and finally undertakes a mission meant to destabilize the British fleet that Lieutenant Réal had been entrusted with and should have carried out. In his tartan, Peyrol attempts to attract the attention of the British Navy so as to make them discover the secret missives the French Admirals have entrusted Réal with, a decoy meant to send the British Navy after the French fleet on a supposed expedition to Egypt and thus break the blockade.³ His success leads him to being shot by the British (and then buried with honours for his naval skills).
- 5 This complicated plot culminates in Peyrol's heroic self-sacrifice. He sacrifices his own life out of patriotism, atoning for his former lawless deeds. He also dies so that Réal can live, not that he has much sympathy for the lieutenant but because Réal is in love with Arlette just as she is with him. Peyrol sacrifices his own doomed and half-voiced love for her so that she can be happy, taking away in his boat Scevola, the only remaining threat to her happiness. Critics have praised this 'remarkable climax' (Geddes 182) where Peyrol's doubly heroic deeds take on mythical proportions; they have also read Peyrol's return to sea as an expression of the ageing Conrad's nostalgia for his seaman's days (Knowles 320; Karl 777).
- 6 If such an analysis cannot be discounted and if Peyrol appears indeed both as a hero performing an act of atonement and as a self-portrait of the older Conrad, I would suggest that the protagonist is more exactly a double of Conrad in 1916. At that time, Conrad was a 'prematurely ageing' man (Knowles and Moore 117), weakened by a breakdown he had suffered in 1910, but he was also a man deeply concerned with his own time. Although he was too old and ill to go to the front, as his son Borys had done, Conrad was keen to take part in the wartime effort. For two months, he was offered an opportunity to serve his adopted country. On September 14, 1916, he went to Lowestoft, then Grafton near Edinburgh and embarked on a boat the mission of which was to repair the anti-submarine nets; he then spent another twelve days on board HMS *Ready*, camouflaged as a merchant ship and armed to chase German submarines (Najder 539–540). Conrad's mission was that of an observer. In *The Rover*, Peyrol who spends hours observing the British fleet's movements, reads as a mirror-image of Conrad himself.
- 7 The way in which Conrad envisioned his mission is also comparable to the way Peyrol thinks about his. In his letters, Conrad mentions the danger the German submarines represent: 'the vessel has made three trips already and she may have been spotted' (Karl 791) and felt 'they were heading out into an unknown' (Karl 791). In a letter to Pinker, he indicates that he may never return. 'Should the ship fail to report herself for more than 10 days after the time fixed for her return (by wireless—at night) there will be no use hoping for her return', Conrad writes (Oct. 1916; ALS, Berg, qtd in Karl 791). Similarly, Peyrol thinks about his undertaking as a mission inevitably leading to his death, even if he is in control of the way and the time when it occurs.⁴
- 8 With a similar sense of duty and self-sacrificial impulse, Peyrol and Conrad are ready to die during their mission. By accepting this mission, Conrad not only reconnected with the sea and his seaman's years, as the former rover does, but also responded to his sense of guilt.⁵ While Peyrol atones for his past as a brother of the coast, Conrad atoned for his not being at the front, where his son was; and just as Peyrol acts out of love for Arlette, Conrad acted out of love for his son (and consequently came back from his mission feeling better and rejuvenated). On the whole, Peyrol's final deeds can be regarded as a reconstruction of Conrad's own war experience in 1916.

Reconstructing the impact of WWI

- 9 Such a reading of Peyrol's character throws a light in turn on the historical setting selected by the author. Set in the Napoleonic period, *The Rover* focuses, in the last chapters, on the blockade of Toulon by Nelson and how it hampers the movements of the French fleet, which clearly creates a wartime atmosphere. The period appears to be haunted by memories of the French Revolution and the characters themselves are not so much suffering from the current conflict as from the lasting impact of the French Revolution.
- 10 Little by little, through the various characters, we learn about the massacres the *sans-culottes* were responsible for in Toulon. Scevola, a *sans-culotte* nicknamed the 'blood-drinker' (26) who is now in charge of the farm, cut the throats of many aristocrats and particularly, of Arlette's parents during the Revolution of 1793; Réal, a lieutenant of aristocratic descent, lost his parents during the Revolution. As for Arlette, she is said to be tainted with the blood of the Revolution and to be mad. She is a silent ghost-like figure with a 'mute and unconscious face' and 'roaming eyes' (29) who seems to 'float' (29) rather than walk. All we know about her for the first half of the novel is that she is the daughter of the royalist farmers who owned Escampobar; she spent her childhood in a convent and when the Revolution broke out, was taken to Toulon by the nuns who meant to give her shelter there until her parents came. When her parents eventually managed to find her, they were murdered by Scevola and Arlette was, in spite of herself, dragged through the streets of Toulon for a few days and compelled to take part in the bloodshed, before being taken back to Escampobar by Scevola. As Geddes writes: 'in *The Rover* Conrad's main concern is not with the French Revolution but with the damage that has been wrought by such a manifestation of cruelty and violence' (Geddes 192).⁶
- 11 Arlette, whose character was first analysed as 'the kind of disastrous creature Conrad drew when he attempted to present women in his fiction' (Karl 902), now appears, in the light of trauma studies, as a victim of a traumatic experience: indeed, Arlette not only witnessed the murder of her parents but had to take part in the Revolutionary killings. The French Revolution reduced her to 'a person half asleep' (155), unable to feel and live, immured in silence and roaming at night. She exemplifies Cathy Caruth's theory, as developed in the wake of Freud in *Unclaimed Experience*, according to which trauma is an unassimilated event that repeatedly returns to haunt the survivor. Arlette only belatedly comes out of her catatonic state when she falls in love with Réal: love prompts her to talk and she chooses the newly reinstated village priest to do so.⁷ Her confession is harrowing, as well as efficient as an abreaction: 'I am awake now!', says Arlette to her aunt (146).
- 12 From then on, rather than reading as 'a coarse-grained study of feeble-minded and inarticulate people' (Guerard 284), *The Rover* reads as a convincing representation of trauma and its different stages, which Hampson has brilliantly analysed (Hampson 2012). Arlette, together with Peyrol who witnessed his mother's death in his early childhood, and Réal who suffered the traumatic loss of his parents during the Revolution, appears to be a casualty of the Revolution, itself represented by Conrad as a bloodshed, a slaughter, synonymous with injustice and arbitrariness.
- 13 I would argue that today, with hindsight, *The Rover* appears to be a narrative of its own time⁸: the characters' emotional numbing⁹ is also what soldiers who served in the First World War have been said to suffer from (Crocq, van der Kolk 1996). In that respect, Conrad's fictional characters are very close to some of his contemporaries', such as Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*.
- 14 Their traumatic experience is also very close to what Borys, Conrad's son, faced. Borys enrolled and became an officer in the 34th Brigade of heavy guns, stationed near Armentières (Karl 781). He took part in the dreadful battle of the Somme in 1916 and witnessed countless deaths. Conrad himself lived in daily anxiety about his son; he describes this worry as 'a continual wound and distraction' (Karl 799). He had no

illusion about the conflict and 'had devised a code using references disguised as chess moves' (Hampson 2012, 156) in his letters to Borys so that he could find out where his son was if he were killed. Conrad also knew at first hand what dangers lay in store for soldiers: he had received three letters from Ford relating how he was shell-shocked in the battle of the Somme (Hampson 2012, 164). On October 10th, 1918, one month before the Armistice, Borys was wounded.

15 Partially buried by a salvo of high explosive shells, he was incapacitated not by the explosions but by the gas in several of the shells. This ended his participation in the war and seriously undermined his health for several years thereafter. He was sent to a Red Cross Hospital in Rouen, where he was treated for gas and, later, for shellshock. For the latter condition, he was transferred to a neurological hospital in South London (Karl 813). He then suffered from melancholia and nightmares (Najder 564).

16 My contention is that Arlette's story is a reconstruction and transposition of Borys's war story.¹⁰ Arlette who may or may not have killed during the Revolution, has mainly been shattered by too many sights of horror. Borys saw many casualties too; many of his generation were killed, 'most young officers in the twenty-to-twenty-five range [...] were dead' (Karl 799). Through Arlette's story, Conrad suggests that Borys's so-called 'shell shock' is not simply or necessarily due to mechanical shock but to the mental effects of war experience, thus meeting what Freud explains about war neurosis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920, section II); Conrad understands 'shell shock'—a word he never uses in his correspondence (Hampson 2012, 164)—as post-traumatic stress disorder as some contemporary doctors were beginning to do in London, especially Mott, in the clinic where Borys was treated (Hampson 2012, 162).

17 Through Arlette' and Réal's story, through the Napoleonic war he sketches and through the centrality he grants the French Revolution, Conrad tries to capture the upheaval that WWI was. If, according to Karl, the Napoleonic era is in Conrad's later novels 'an archetype of all European wars' (Karl 797), the French Revolution reads in *The Rover* as an image of the slaughter WWI was. The distant historical period appears to be both a mask and a mirror-image of the war, its violence, its arbitrariness and injustice, its traumatic impact and the way it turned the world into a shadow of itself.

18 The choice Conrad made to describe the Mediterranean as a dark world then reads as a convincing metaphor of the traumatised post-war world. Far from being the idyllic postcard we are sold today, the Giens peninsula is depicted from the beginning as dark and threatening; it then appears as a spectral space haunted by spectral presences,¹¹ a world where human beings are half-alive or half-dead: the blood-drinker has become the ghost of himself (his face is 'like a mask' [26]; 'he wanders between the buildings like a lost soul' [40]); Catherine, Arlette's aunt, is repeatedly depicted as a statue and appears as a reified figure just like Peyrol whose face looks like a 'carving' and has 'a feeling of emptiness within himself' (201).¹² As for Arlette, she has not only taken to roaming at night but also dresses in the clothes of her mother who came from Arles, thus embodying the Arlésienne, the invisible ghost-like figure of Daudet's tale in *Les Lettres de mon moulin*;¹³ Réal's eyes are 'like the eyes of a dead man' (207) just as Catherine has 'a fleshless predatory face and dark hollows for its eyes' (225). The living have become shadows of themselves as in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* where 'He who was living is now dead' (l. 328).

19 On the whole, in *The Rover*, Conrad reconstructs by proxy his own experience of war as a crippling oppressive nightmare,¹⁴ his son's traumatic war experience, and more generally, the experience of war as an experience of horror. That Conrad should have written this a few years after the end of WWI is telling: as Bonikowski has shown, such narratives, because of their traumatic nature, couldn't be voiced right away by those who had been at the front, and those, we could add, who had been involved by proxy through their own relations, as Conrad had been through his son.

The Rover as a Reconstruction of Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities

20 We can therefore say that in the case of *The Rover*, the choice of distant historical times, the Napoleonic period and the French Revolution, does not simply stem from Conrad's taste for that period, as is generally assumed, but comes as a necessary way of distancing himself from a traumatic experience. But this was not sufficient. Conrad had to use a second form of distancing effect which consists, as I will show, in reconstructing Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* in his own novel.¹⁵

21 The French Revolution is indeed at the heart of *A Tale of Two Cities* just as it is in *The Rover*. Instead of presenting the French Revolution as a pursuit of an ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity, Dickens chooses to represent it as a bloodshed; Conrad retains such an approach of the Revolution as a time of violence, horror and arbitrariness. The Victorian novelist focuses on the Saint Antoine area in Paris and creates the frightful bloodthirsty figure of Mme Defarges who inexorably knits the fate of the aristocrats and constantly asks for more beheadings. In *The Rover*, Scevola, the 'blood-drinker' who murders blindly many *ci-devants* in Toulon, is strongly reminiscent of Mme Defarges. Dickens partly accounts for the political events of the time in terms of personal feelings and traumatic experiences. Mme Defarges confesses towards the end of the narrative that she was closely related to the newly married woman abused by the Evremonde brothers (who exerted their 'rights of the Nobles' and compelled her husband to 'lend' her to them), to the young man killed by their sword, and the man they harnessed to a plough like an ox and drove to his death. Her traumatic experience accounts for her boundless thirst for revenge (itself symbolized by the mirror-figure of her friend, La Vengeance). But the hero of *A Tale of Two Cities* is Dr Manette, the doctor who spent years in the Bastille prison for witnessing the plight of the Evremondes' victim. His own traumatic experience, loss of memory and obsession (he spends his days making shoes as he did in prison) are central to the narrative. Conrad displays a similar interest in trauma and places Arlette's traumatic experience and suffering at the heart of his novel, displacing Dr Manette's experience onto a young woman who also witnessed unspeakable horrors.¹⁶

22 What is also striking is that Conrad, like Dickens, foregrounds the power of love: Peyrol sacrifices his own life and saves Réal out of love for Arlette just as Sydney Carton walks to the guillotine of his own will and saves Evremonde's life out of love for Lucie Manette. Love is also presented as a possible cure for trauma. In *A Tale of two Cities*, Lucie Manette's constant attention to and love for her father manages to bring him back from his catatonic state; in *The Rover*, a passionate kiss from Réal on her hand makes Arlette recover her memory and vitality (152). Love clearly has a cathartic power for both novelists.

23 In the end, Conrad tells the story of WWI, of his own and his son's traumatic experience of war at two removes, through the filter of a distant historical setting and through a rewriting of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. This indirect method is interesting in several respects. First, the necessity for Conrad to put his son's and his own experience of war at a distance gives a measure of his suffering, the acuity of which couldn't be faced directly. Secondly, the choice of indirection conveys the difficulty a writer may face in approaching trauma and representing it: trauma cannot be depicted, as trauma theorists Cathy Caruth or Ernst van Alphen have shown; it can only be circled round, as is the case with Arlette. Conrad can only depict the results of her traumatic involvement in the Toulon events: her hair 'clotted with blood and her clothes all stained with it' (91), her absence of feeling and awareness. The different filters that he uses read as so many attempts at approaching trauma and failures to reach it; as such, they also read as metaphors of the traumatised subject's inability to capture the traumatic event.

24 However, the writing of *The Rover* proved cathartic for Conrad; it came as a release and relief: indeed, within the space of two months, in May and June 1922, he wrote the

last ten chapters of the novel and two days after writing the last word, he wrote to Richard Curle: 'The whole thing came on me at the last as through a broken dam' (29 June 1922).

25 Finally, the indirect method plays an aesthetic and ethical role. As Conrad shows in his essay 'Autocracy and War' (1905), the reader's sense of outrage at the horrors of war is blunted by repetition and 'remains strangely impervious to information' (34), to 'the inadequate words' (33) of 'the streams of reports appalling in their monotony' (34).¹⁷ By telling the story of WWI through the filter of another historical period and another novel, Conrad paradoxically revives the reader's sensitivity and reawakens his awareness—and distaste—of horror. Especially since, in the narrative, information about crucial events is eked out little by little, from different points of view and in analeptic segments. By devising a technique that constantly challenges the readers' own powers of reconstruction, Conrad compels him/her to retrace the steps of the fictional traumatized subjects and their own attempts at reconstruction.

26 Just as Virginia Woolf chooses to voice the fear that WWII raised in her by quoting in her diary her own novel *Between the Acts*,¹⁸ Conrad relates the traumatic experience of WWI through his own reconstruction of Dickens's novel and of the French Revolution and Napoleonic period. Through his favourite method of indirection that relies on the reader's reconstructive abilities, he writes a forceful plea against war, although a pessimistic one. Indeed, the return of the aristocrats and the new conflict with the British under Napoleon that the novel stages, point at the failure of the Revolution to solve problems: it gives an inkling of Conrad's general pessimism and of his specific pessimism about the outcome of WWI, the peace settlements and the attempts at Reconstruction in 1919 (Karl 815). For all these reasons, *The Rover*, which is usually referred to as a Mediterranean or Napoleonic novel, should also and mainly be referred to as A Tale of post-war reconstruction.

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Notes

1 'for the *Glasgow Evening News* reviewer *The Rover* was a "disappointment" [...] Raymond Mortimer writing in the *New Statesman* (15 December 1923), put it more bluntly: "Mr. Conrad's new book strikes me as downright bad" (Busza xxiv); *The Times Literary Supplement* was the kindest; [...] The reviewer [...] found various kinds of beauty in the characters' (Karl 902); 'All the reviewers were struck by the obvious: Conrad [...] had become simplified'; 'a twelve-year-old could enjoy it' (Karl 902).

2 For GUERARD and MOSER, *The Rover* points at Conrad's imaginative exhaustion while Fleishman praises its architecture and its visual qualities; Geddes praises its ending and visual descriptions; Epstein reads it as a post-sceptical novel about 'the indeterminacy of human deeds' (117). Recent criticism has focused on issues of gender and masculinity (Hampson 1996, 157); HAMPSON himself has provided an analysis of *The Rover* as a novel about reading and misreading (1996) and a thorough analysis of trauma in *The Rover* (2012). 'Nevertheless, even *The Rover's* most resolute defenders curb their enthusiasm a little now and then by means of measured reservations, as if one's response to the book demanded a touch of equivocation' (Busza xxvi).

3 Peyrol's success, which seems obvious at first (270), must be qualified though, since Nelson briefly voices some doubts about the authenticity of the missives (276). Claudine LESAGE suggests that Conrad may have borrowed the idea of the secret missives from Maxime Du Camp's *Souvenirs*, a book Conrad loved (Lesage 2003, 65). In any case, the French made several such attempts at breaking the blockade until Pierre-Charles Villeneuve succeeded in 1805, shortly before the battle of Trafalgar.

4 'Because her [the Amelia's] captain has got to obey what is in my mind', said Peyrol [...]. 'He will do it because no more than half a mile ahead of us is the spot where Peyrol will die!' (266).

5 In his biography of Joseph Conrad, Frederick R. KARL writes about Conrad's mission: 'He was connecting not only to Borys at the front but to his own youth' (791); in *The Rover*, Conrad connects to the two but priorities are reversed.

6 But GEDDES then reads the French Revolution as 'a metaphor of man's internal state' (192) and suggests the narrative could have been set in any other place.

7 To the priest's question, 'You want to tell me your story because you have fallen in love with a man?', Arlette answers: 'No, because that has brought me back to myself. Nothing else could have done it' (152).

8 BUSZA comes close to my reading when he remarks in passing that *The Rover* is 'a reflection on the effects of political violence and social upheaval on the individual and the community—a topic obviously relevant in the years immediately following the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution' (Busza xxviii). Similarly, Frederick R. KARL remarks briefly that: 'In a sense, Conrad's response to the war and to the cynical attempts at peace at Versailles comes in a novel like *The Rover* and in a character such as Peyrol' (Karl 865).

9 Arlette, who tells l'Abbé: 'when I got back to the farm all feeling had left me. [...] Something had gone out of me. [...] I felt light and empty' (155); in Réal's case, 'the unbridled passions and the clamouring falsehoods of revolution [...] seemed to have destroyed in him all capacity for the softer emotions' (209); as for Peyrol, his emotional detachment is conspicuous.

10 HAMPSON gives a valuable clinical analysis of Arlette's trauma and compares her suffering with battlefield experience, showing 'how Conrad's understanding of trauma is shaped by contemporary medical thinking about "shell-shock"' (26) but does not draw any further conclusion from this (Hampson 2012, 158–64, 172–5).

11 Leonard WOOLF had in a way an intuition of this when he wrote about Conrad's later novels that they 'are splendid shells [...] but there is no life in them' (Woolf 1927, 70) or MOSER did when he wrote that 'the characters lack substance' (180) and noted the 'pervading sense of weariness which infects all the characters' in *The Rover* (Moser 201).

12 See on this subject D. L. HIGDON's reading of *The Rover* as a variation on the myth of Galatea.

13 Conrad may have known Daudet's tale which was published in 1886, was taken up by Bizet in 1872 and became a film by Albert Capellani in 1908 and one by André Antoine in 1922.

14 See Conrad's wartime letters, in particular V, 439.

15 Although Conrad's work has often been compared with Charles Dickens's, and *Under Western Eyes* with *A Tale of Two Cities* (Busza 1993), *The Rover*, to my knowledge, has never been compared with *A Tale of Two Cities*.

16 As for Scevola, although Conrad hardly accounts for his deeds, he briefly mentions that he was an orphan, an 'extremely poor' boy (79) and 'the butt of all the girls' (92)—perhaps, we may infer, because of his first name which is either of Corsican or Italian origin—a situation of destitution and exclusion that may have led to his excesses.

17 The essay also shows Conrad's deep antipathy for Napoleon ('a vulture', 35) and the French Revolution, a 'degradation of the ideas of freedom and justice' (35).

18 'Scraps, orts and fragments as I said in P.H., which is now bubbling' (31 May 1940).

Pour citer cet article

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