“The Duel”:

_Ur-Versions, 1858–1903_

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_For Hans van Marle, in memory_

The search for sources for “The Duel” (1907) began as long ago as the 1930s. In 1935, J. DeLancey Ferguson revealed that the American monthly _Harper’s New Monthly Magazine_ for September 1858 carried a version of a story of two officers who fought a duel stretching over nearly nineteen years, from the heady days of the French Revolution to 1813, towards the close of the Napoleonic period. In 1968, Donald Cross revealed the existence of three sources that antedated the version of the story printed in _Harper’s_: one by Colombey (1861) in a general anecdotic discussion of duelling and derived from _L’Audience_ (1858), and what in effect is an unacknowledged translation of Colombey by Steinmetz (1868).

By the end of the 1980s, the late Hans van Marle had turned up a discussion of the duel by the military historian General Thoumas in his biographical account of Fournier-Sarlovère, the historical figure involved in the purported duel in _Journal de cavalerie_ (1889) and four versions that, theoretically at least, Conrad could have come across in January 1907 in Montpellier, when he began to work on “The Duel.” The versions discovered by van Marle are as follows:¹

(1) A version in Alfred d’Almbert’s _Physiologie du duel_ (1853)
(2) A retelling by Major Ben C. Truman’s _The Field of Honor: Being_

¹ See Hans van Marle to J. H. Stape, 19 October 1987 in Moore, ed. (2005: 97-99). Van Marle also discovered later versions dating from 1912–81; these are not of interest here, nor are other later retellings.
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_A Complete and Comprehensive History of Duelling in All Countries_ (1884)

(3) A German translation published in Berlin’s _Der Hausfreund_ by A. de Nève (1895)

(4) A retelling in Jean-Joseph Escande’s _Histoire de Sarlat_ (1903).

No fewer than twelve further versions, including a translation into Spanish, may now be added to the list of versions in print by 1907, and a further version published in early 1908, the original of which was certainly in print prior to the turn of that year:

(1) A translation of D’Almbert (1853) by Charles Desmarais Gardette in _Graham’s Popular American Monthly_ (1855)

(2) A translation in Charles Dickens’s _Household Words_ for 17 July 1858

(3) Gardette’s translation (1855), unattributed, as “The French ‘Code Of Honour’ in 1794” in _Stories for Single Gentleman_, London: Groombridge & Sons, 1858, pp. 12-17. (The title-page of this book indicates that it was also distributed in Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin by other publishers.)

(4) A recapitulation in the September 1861 number of _Colburn’s New Monthly Magazine_²

(5) _The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art_ (Philadelphia), November 1861: 378-79, reprinting _Colburn’s New Monthly_ 

(6) A recounting in _Chambers’s Journal_ (Edinburgh) in August 1867

(7) A journeyman retelling in a popular American magazine (Shanks 1869)

(8) Colombey (1861) reprinted as “Duel prolongé” in Guérard (1872: I: 357-59)

(9) A synopsis in Gabriel Letainturier-Fradin, _L’honneur et le duel_ (Paris: Flammarion, 1897, pp. 66-68), based on a recounting by Émile André

(10) Spanish translation of Colombey as _Historia anecdótica de el duelo en todas las épocas y en todos los países_ by Luis de Terán (Madrid: La España Moderna, [1900?])

(11) A retelling in the January 1901 issue of _The English Illustrated Magazine_.

(12) A version in the _Washington Herald_ (23 February 1908), which

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² The article in which this appears is partly a review-essay on Colombey.