Moral Narrativity and Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*

Dominic Graham

Abstract

The article makes the case for a theory of 'Moral Narrativity' in relation to Joseph Conrad's novel *Nostromo* and in contrast to secular literary criticism. Analysis of *Nostromo* reveals a work in which the moral and ethical is held up for consideration through temporospatial narrativization, an approach which also conversely weakens moral realism and its presentation of theological implications. Historical and recent critical reception of the novel, however, reveals significant failures to address the narrative's content and structure in moral and ethical terms. This, it is argued, is due to the problems of secular, poststructural theories and assumptions, which can be traced back to Enlightenment errors. Moral narrativity is outlined rather, as an understanding of the moral and theological being at the core of cognition and narrative perception, and as a way forward for literary study.

Introduction

Joseph Conrad wrote conspicuously moral narratives, of characters upon sea and river, within island and city, facing ethical decisions and consequences. In his 1904 novel, *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, set in the fictional South American country of Costaguana, the moral focus is assembled through a complex and at times disorientating structure.[1] The narrative moves temporally and spatially, telling of the young nation's turmoil and the necessary rescue of its silver from incoming revolutionary forces. The cargo is entrusted to Nostromo, an enigmatic, egotistical, but dependable figure, and to Martin Decoud, a Parisian journalist who theorizes a political future for the country. After a narrow escape they hide the silver on the Isabel, a nearby island, but when Decoud commits suicide, it remains for Nostromo to decide the use of the concealed treasure. This he does to his own advantage in the years to come, with tragic consequences for not only himself, but the family of Giorgio Viola, a man he has long respected. This central plot emerges from a detailed portrayal of characters and situations that traverses time and place quite dexterously; it is a narrative tapestry of moral and ethical discussion, action, and consequence. And yet criticism, of this and Conrad's other works, has often left moral and ethical narrativity as unrendered background. When it has been noted to the fore, analysis has lacked a route by which it might be appreciated and evaluated. Frequently, from the latter twentieth century onwards, academic criticism has reframed, diminished, and distorted the moral, viewing narrative meaning through ideological lenses. These postmodern readings have been dependent on an underlying Enlightenment paradigm, which misunderstands truth and reason, and hence morality.

In a discussion of morality and ethics in Conradian study, Andrew Michael Roberts identifies – though not in critique of secularity – that criticism had tended to ask how texts "encoded, represented, and propagated schemes of moral value," before in a postmodern stance asking how "the text, or the processes of reading, open up, and challenge questions of ethical value in a way that goes beyond or exceeds rules, schemes, or codes of behavior."[2] He mentions

F. R. Leavis as a critic of the former method, an influential figure in scholarship and education who deemed Conrad one of the several great novelists of English literature.[3] Leavis describes Joseph Conrad as having an intense belief through experience of "tradition, discipline and moral ideal," but also a sense of the "frailty" and "absurdity or unreality … of such achievement."[4] He writes concerning *Nostromo* of the "vivid reality" of "Conrad's study of motives, and of the relation between the material and the spiritual."[5] For Leavis, the "moral pattern"[6] of *Nostromo* is an important feature and yet lacks definition and further investigation, its existence of a presupposed quality, a serious and very necessary attribute. In contrast, postmodern criticism of later decades decried the moral as supposed superficial codification, a social and cultural outcome made 'normative,' and thus something impermanent and always relative. Set against this redefinition, 'ethics' – a term that had once described the discipline that studies morality – has been cut adrift from the moral, deployed without anchor as a readily adaptable postmodern term of little descriptive power.

The idea that morality has a natural basis in the human experience of reality and narrative has typically not been given due consideration. In other fields, like Theology, discussion of morality and ethics has of course been wider ranging and ongoing – though these ideas are rarely broached by the secular academy. Sean Lau gives an account of the relation between theology and ethics in church history, in which morality is rooted in theology and in the theological reality of Christian life; the question has then been how to think in practice of Christian Ethics/Moral Theology (Protestant/Catholic) and whether a practical distinction between theology and ethics should exist at all.[7] Lau gives Oliver O'Donovan's three volume work, *Ethics as Theology,* as a contemporary example that recognizes a distinction between theology and ethics, but also an interconnectedness.[8] O'Donovan writes that "moral experience is not constructed or achieved out of non-moral experience; it is woken up to as experience that has accompanied other experience, present from the beginning and distinct in kind." With reference to St. Paul's writings, he highlights how our understanding of morality is in relation to God's Spirit,[9] and that Christian ethics "must have God's revelation on its mind, must think in reference to it and in obedience to the canonical Scriptures that attest it."[10] As he later writes, Ethics is reflection upon "the conditions of good moral *thinking*."[11]

In Philosophy, Paul Ricouer, with some degree of overlap, has repurposed 'ethics' as the aim towards the good, and 'morality' as the shape given to society and institutions towards that aim. He uses the terms in reference to objective reality and guided by community – the self and others.[12] While literary scholarship has shown respect for a thinker such as Ricouer, and his ideas on metaphor, time, or narrative may be considered informative, it would be rare to find his philosophy comprehensively framing an argument. Rather, in the postmodern orthodoxy of the humanities, and almost wholesale in English Literature criticism, the methodologies that hold sway view 'the other' relativistically and presume a normative morality. This preclusion of genuine, substantiative moral meaning is indicative of a poststructuralist view of narrative as something untrustworthy, a carrier of power and hierarchy to be questioned and reinterpreted. The result has been that in a text like *Nostromo*, discussion of the narrative's moral content has been incomplete, and furthermore that the moral form, conception, and reception of text itself has been significantly overlooked.

Through analysis of *Nostromo* and its reception, the aim here is to reveal how criticism has too often missed the moral, and to propose a refreshed understanding of morality in literature. 'The moral' will be understood primarily to be a reflection of natural law, of theologically Christian reality; where normative moral constructs occur – and they frequently do in culture and literature – they are derivations based on, and/or in contrast to this unalterable moral reality. 'Ethical' will then describe the quality of action aimed towards the natural moral truth. It will be argued that when we engage with a text the moral is in fact at the bedrock of narrativization and semantic understanding, and that theories of literary creation and reception can but be wide of the mark when they miss this. Narrative cognition is essentially moral value cognition in theological reality. The 'moral narrativity' to be described hence is not a reductive conception, but a reference to this foundational experience of narrative through moral perception.

In this sense, Conrad's narratives are no more moral than any other, but in their considerable moral realism and the literary techniques that variously mediate it they can make interesting and revealing case studies. Analysis of *Nostromo* reveals an author, who through a particular temporal narrativization directed attention to the moral implications of thought and action, though one who time and again would stop short of answering the theological questions that moral reality calls for.

Temporality and Narrative

A tendency to misinterpret *Nostromo's* moral form and content can be seen from its initial reviews upon publication, often hand in hand with uncertainty about how exactly to make sense of plot and characterization set within a then quite unusual temporal structure. An anonymous reviewer in 1904 noted the centrality of the character of Nostromo, but with a reduced description of the moral aspect as "another of Mr Conrad's studies in self-respect." Of the structure he commented that "in order to introduce us to Nostromo's case [Conrad] should not have to ask us to accompany him backwards and forwards through such a labyrinth of South American politics and into the careers of so many persons."[13] Similar sentiments about the non-chronological plotting were found in the *British Weekly* and *Manchester Guardian,*[14] the latter writing of an "arbitrary and baffling design."[15] *The Daily Telegraph* failed to grasp the character of Nostromo's narrative and ethical importance: "the story which held us by its vigour, its wide human interest, becomes narrowed to some small personal issue; the spell is broken."[16] Conrad's friend Edward Garnett wrote an expectedly positive review, yet stated that "the book's theme is not, indeed, the life and death of Nostromo, El Capataz de Cargadores, as Mr Conrad no doubt originally conceived it … [but] the great mirage he has conjured up of the life and nature of the Costaguanan territory."[17]

It is not hard to see how these reviewers, reading what is now viewed as an early modernist novel, could be 'baffled' by its treatment of time, space, and the coming and going of characters; indeed, to read *Nostromo* now, especially for the first time, is to experience something of a puzzle of narrative. It is one that begins though, with a clear outlining of the stage and its chief scenery, reforming South American descriptions from Edward B. Eastwick's *Venezuela,* and other works.[18] It is notable that as a writer known for tales set across distant

seas, on jungle islands and in foreign lands, Conrad wrote quite spatially rooted narratives: *Lord Jim's* island of Patusan;[19] *Almayer's Folly's* confining river settlement;[20] *Heart of Darkness'* steamer between river banks;[21] even *The Secret Agent's* condensed London.[22] So too in *Nostromo,* the gulf and the Isabels, the port, Giorgio's inn, the Goulds' home and silver mine become well known spatial locations and boundaries, helping to ground the temporally moving narrative.

From the initial description of setting and historical background, the narrative begins to locate its timeframe in Part First, Chapter II, in what will later emerge to have been in media res. Captain Mitchell – the port superintendent – is introduced by the narrator, but with a distance maintained, as to what "he would pursue" and "he would say."[23] Thus, his dialogue is delivered amidst narratorial control, with the reader descending near enough to ground and moment in time to witness briefly a characteristic example, before feet scuffing the dirt they are whisked up. The narrative tells with fairly broad sweeps a background sketch about a recent riot, and in this way the reader first hears, by report, of Nostromo's bravery and leadership.[24] Chapter III is with Giorgio in his inn, an enclosed space amidst the riot, and what had just been recounted as a recently historic event begins to feel more present.[25] By Chapter IV the narrator is telling the more immediate story of Nostromo securing Giorgio and Teresa's inn, and the sense of history has been somewhat left behind;[26] yet the second half of the chapter leaves the inn and recounts Giorgio's history and character formation. Into Chapter V and both 'the present' of the riot and the Italian past of Giorgio have been left behind, for "eighteen months before" and a dinner onboard the Juno,[27] where a new sense of present asserts, Costaguanan politics and the Goulds – Charles and Emilia – are discussed, and latterly a man deemed reliable, Nostromo, (again somewhat held on the periphery) is given the task of escorting railway man, Sir John, to Sulaco.[28] These quite challenging transitions in narratorial perspective, the push and pull of moment and scene, are the collage of which *Nostromo* is made.

This is a temporospatiality built from the level of syntax, through chapter, and whole, and it is worth considering in greater detail how it functions from the smaller scale, notably through tense, to give moral and ethical meaning. Chapter VI continues: "At that time Nostromo had been already long enough in the country to raise to the highest pitch Captain Mitchell's opinion of the extraordinary value of his discovery."[29] The reader is here returned to the superintendent earlier in the chronology of events than Chapter II's initial characterizations. Then in the next paragraph direct reported speech is given concerning Nostromo: "'The fellow is devoted to me body and soul!' Captain Mitchell *was given* to affirm"[30] (italics mine). What appears as present tense quotation is promptly qualified with the narrator's omniscience as representative speech and moved into the past – a recurring technique in *Nostromo*. The narrator goes on to state the likely doubt of the local doctor, Monygham, on Mitchell's opinion, and to say, again with narrative omniscience: "Only Mrs. Gould could keep his [Monygham's] belief in men's motives within due bounds; but even to her … he had said once, 'Really, it is most unreasonable to demand that a man should think of other people so much better than he is able to think of himself.'"[31] The reader is here told of the typical influence of Mrs. Gould upon the doctor, covering an imprecise passage of time; then follows a past perfect – "had" – already completed in the past, yet delivering dialogue quoted so as to become momentarily

'present.' After a further paragraph concerning the doctor, the narrator overviews Emilia and Charles Gould in Costaguana and their responses toward the country's political methods:

> She saw in them a comedy of naïve pretences, but hardly anything genuine, except her own appalled indignation. Charles, very quiet and twisting his long moustaches, would decline to discuss them at all. Once however, he observed to her gently— 'My dear you seem to forget that I was born here.' These few words made her pause as if they had been a sudden revelation. Perhaps the mere fact of being born in a country did make a difference.[32]

Following simple past description of Emila's opinion, the narrator here tells of Charles' mannerisms in present continuous tense – 'twisting' – before reframing with "would" – the preterite form of 'will' – and communicating a sense of futurity and foreknowledge about a common occurrence in the past. It is a sudden – and very brief – drop to the present, to sudden pull-back to a narratorial distance, which may leave a reader viewing from one or both perspectives. Yet, the next sentence then alters the focus to a single instance, with "Once," before dropping abruptly to the simple past. The transition occurs quickly, and the reader is next in the 'present' of the referenced moment with direct reported speech. The succeeding sentence gives the simple past of "made," seemingly letting the reader continue in Emilia's direct 'present' reaction; but then the conditional and past perfect subjunctive of "as if they had been" gives narratorial reference to an unreal past requiring imagination. The final sentence then takes the reader deeper into the 'present' moment being experienced and thought by Emilia, through free-indirect speech. The following sentences proceed to describe Emilia's thoughts about Charles, but with the voice of the narrator again clearly heard, through a quick succession of past simple, past perfect continuous, and past perfect tenses: "She had a great confidence in her husband; it had always been very great. He had struck her imagination from the first by his unsentimentalism."[33]

Later, the chapter goes on to describe the history of the mine in relation to Charles' father – 'Mr. Gould' – now years into the past, relative to the events just narrated: "Mr. Gould knew that very well, and, armed with resignation, had waited for better times."[34] The past perfect that ends the sentence is now in relation to the new simple past 'present' of "knew," though this present seem to be the history of what had just been described. Important to realize of such narrativization is that as time and place are moved through, the ethical presentation of relationship and action takes a somewhat different shape.

Such is the form and style of Nostromo's Part First and, with some amendments, of the parts that follow. Temporospatial location is variously distanced, established and real, and soon transitioning to other time, place, or perspective. Such an idiosyncratic composition appears one of purpose, but may to a degree bear evidence of Conrad's multilingual approach to grammar and having only become fluent in English as an adult.[35] Gordon Lindstrand has commented that the changes made to *Nostromo's* first edition by the author, post-serialization, were even more so than for most of his other works – Conrad having been aware of the challenges that English presented him.[36] It may be the case that Conrad interchanged tenses

where a native English speaker may not have thought to, yet in *Nostromo*, and Conrad's other works, the composition suggests clear and sustained aims and authorial intent.[37]

For the reader the temporospatial effect can be disorientating, as glimpses are assembled and about characters and relationships still largely unfamiliar. Regarding 'ellipsis' – to apply Genette's structuralist terms – it is possible the reader may feel they have missed events, or that 'ellipsis' is 'implicit'[38] – unannounced and passed by – or 'hypothetical' – "impossible to localize"[39] – but it may rather appear, and more so as the effect repeats, that it is the scale, the height of narrative that is changing. Correspondingly, 'duration'[40] is hard to decide upon: is the event the mere moment glimpsed, or is it part of a longer portion of time, and where does it begin, or continue, or end? And when spatial location is uncertain, is it correct to say that years of past narrative events have been passed through at great speed, or to say that the narrative has remained located in the 'present' at the Gould's home? Genette did acknowledge some limits to his criteria,[41] which here highlight a complex temporospatial narrative organization, much noticed by critics:

As Cedric Watt's describes, "The time-shifts boldly juxtapose and interweave the past, present and future; and the shifts in viewpoint also multiply perspectives, offering now a diminishing view from the skies, now a magnifying close-up, so that humans are dwarfed or loom large."[42] John G. Peters' reads the construction as concerned with "a gap between objectivity and subjectivity," writing that "human time" and "mechanical time" cannot be organized "as an actual representation of the workings of time."[43] Though Conrad's work does show interest with the nature and experience of time itself, what is happening narratively within that experience needs to be weighed. J. M. Kertzer notes importantly that "Human time, on the other hand, is charged with value, a condition which explains the moral concern that permeates Conrad's fiction. Man requires a sense of direction and duration in his life. He needs to feel that there is a purpose or principle guiding it and making it intelligible."[44] Kertzer writes of time for Conrad being where key moral virtues are displayed,[45] and of the decisive moment "that changes irrevocably" characters' lives.[46] It is this relation of the moral to temporal malleability of which more needs to be understood. Postmodern analyses of various achronological narratives have gone on to describe temporal frames occurring simultaneously, or crisscrossing, beyond the classical paradigm,[47] and time seen in relation to technological change and scientific views[48] – though these interpretations tend to also reflect postmodern assumptions. Yet, in understanding the effect of anachrony it should be simply realized that time is that in which moral thought and action occur. An amended experience of time should be considered as an amended experience of morality and ethics in time. Even to the level of sentence tense, when Conrad's narrative moves a reader between past and present the experience of moral meaning is being pulled, stretched, or contorted and condensed. When Charles and Emilia Gould talk and think across an experience of time, the ethics of their past and present relationship – the promises, kindnesses, failings, neglect, loyalty, and more – join and thread with those burgeoning around Costaguana's future. When Nostromo is told and retold of, transient in narrative time, before arriving with present immediacy, it is a particular moral portrayal: where ethical responsibility may seem at first vague and disconnected, it becomes momentarily sharp. The cumulative effect of such narrativization is in part one of holding up

moral decision and action, of framing, then reframing from fresh and then repeated perspectives; of delay and witness, of an unwillingness to let time and its moral meanings settle. However, there is here an implicit contradiction that cannot be avoided: for morality is of substance, of firmness, not of maybe and transition; and ethics is likewise of action and real consequence. As will be discussed, to deny temporal rigidity to excess may ultimately be counterproductive to moral realism.

Moral and Ethical Narrative in *Nostromo*

In Part Second the crisis facing Costaguana and its characters continues to unfold through temporospatial narrativization. The central plot point of Nostromo and Decoud's rescue of the silver eventually arrives through the device of epistolary narrativization. Decoud is writing to his sister, summarizing events and the plan that has been formed, while sitting in Giorgio's inn.[49] There, his 'present' dialogue with Linda Viola is quoted – again on the distanced and spoken of character of Nostromo. There has been discussion of Decoud's voice as being, of all the characters, of a politics and viewpoint closest to that of the author,[50] yet Conrad later removes Decoud through suicide, the character's proud secularity ending in tragic hopelessness. Conrad moves Nostromo to the fore, the man on whom morality and consequence, sin and guilt, and theological need will be read.

When Nostromo himself arrives at the inn in the 'present' he goes to speak with the dying padrona, Teresa. When Nostromo refuses to bring her a priest – an event with great moral implications for his character and the story – Teresa's utterances cut to the core: "She felt a despairing indignation. The supreme test had failed. Standing above her, Nostromo did not see the distorted features of her face, distorted by a paroxysm of pain and anger"; and "She laughed feebly. 'Get riches at least for once you indispensable, admired Gian Battista, to whom the peace of a dying woman is less than the praise of people who have given you a silly name – and nothing besides – in exchange for body and soul.'"[51] Her words contain much of the moral and ethical reality facing Nostromo – choices concerning avarice, self-worth and vanity, and greater meaning. This is a narrative not chiefly about the silver, but about the souls of those who dispose of it, chief among them, Nostromo.

A couple of short paragraphs after having arrived at the dock, Nostromo and Decoud are unceremoniously away in the lighter into the stillness of the gulf. This pivotal scene is notably 'present,' with narrative description and quoted dialogue producing a reading 'duration' comparable to that experienced by the waiting characters.[52] Nostromo speaks of what happened with Teresa and says that he, like Decoud, does not believe in priests. He continues: "She died thinking I deprived her of Paradise, I suppose. It shall be the most desperate affair of my life."[53] He has only just attributed this sentiment, with bluster, to the rescue of the silver;[54] here, it would seem to carry genuine moral weight and pain.

With inadvertent stowaway Hirsch discovered on the lighter, in Chapter VIII the narrative recounts his past arrival, then continues the 'present,' with a steamer heard in the darkness: Nostromo threatens Hirsch's life if he makes a noise; Decoud's thoughts jump to events before leaving; Nostromo lowers the sail; they discuss their plan, and the danger of Hirsch giving them away.[55] It is a portrayal of men under intense pressure, grippingly told, of

panic and helplessness, bravery, duty, and callousness. It is a stark, shocking confrontation between characters, morality, and implications of action or inaction, reminiscent of other pivotal moments in Conrad's works. There is no ethical commentary however, for the narrative viewpoint then moves to Sotillo aboard the incoming steamer. With familiar form, we are told of past events, including 'present' quoted dialogue, before arriving closer to the recent 'present.' When the lighter is struck by the larger boat, the event is immediately replayed to recount Hirsch's surprising transfer and capture aboard the steamer.[56] Time is thus rewound some moments and from a different perspective, before we return to Nostromo and Decoud's trip to the Isabel, their moral near-miss exposed, and huge ethical questions remaining.

It is important to look further at how such temporal presentation may be received by readers. I have interpreted Conrad's intent as one of witness, of holding moral and ethical moments up across time to be viewed more fully, but we should ask if this does not result in a distortion of moral authenticity. We of course, do not experience moral moments across time as *Nostromo* presents, though our present is unfolding, and we review temporally in memory and consider future consequences. Our moral and ethical moments are heavy in the present, and we cannot escape this, though we may sometimes desire to. What then of the reader's relation to a narrative which insistently refuses to stay present? Jocelyn Baines has written "that time is almost abolished in Nostromo. In fact it seems to have been Conrad's aim to approach the simultaneity of visual experience which a painting offers. The elimination of progress from one event to another also has the effect of implying that nothing is ever achieved."[57] The slowing and obscuring of cause and effect may have notable repercussions in terms of moral recognition. It may at times reveal the scale of the tapestry, but where tableau-like depictions of narrative event form in excess, a nihilism could be engendered – for if ethics is the taking of moral action, and action seems not to be possible, or becomes detached from its origin, then the sense of moral realism and purpose may suffer. Additionally, as Nostromo steps to the fore in narrative importance there is a growing sense that the complex, interconnected ethical threads of various characters in part await their conclusion in his end. His decision in Part Third to continue the falsehood that the treasure has sunk bears on many other moral and ethical decisions; a judgement on the rightness or wrongness of past decisions seems forestalled, as the narrative chain waits for conclusion in what Nostromo will do with the hidden silver. There is a danger in narrativization in general – and especially in Modernist and Postmodernist texts where achronological ordering disrupts cause and effect – that the vitality of the moral and ethical present moment is lost, or diluted.

Such deleterious effect of temporal changes upon the narrative 'present' can be considered in Part Third, in which revolutionary forces seize Sulaco and many characters are confronted with severely testing moral and ethical moments.[58] Chapter VII commences with Charles Gould declaring total noncompliance to Pedro Montero – who wants the benefits of the silver mine – having already arranged for the mine to be blown up by dynamite if necessary. The narrator gives an abrupt summary of Gould's words: "The Gould Concession could not be resumed. His father had not desired it. The son would never surrender it. He would never surrender it alive. And once dead, where was the power capable of resuscitating such an enterprise in all its vigour and wealth out of the ashes and ruin of destruction?"[59] This flurry of

conviction slows and descends in the next paragraph, which describes the scene and Montero's thoughts, moving between past tenses; then, transitioning from past perfect to a direct present: "Charles Gould had repeated: 'The government can certainly bring about the destruction of the San Tomé mine if it likes; but without me it can do nothing else.'"[60] The account continues, in overview, referring to Pedro's past in Paris, and with brief direct quotes, described thought, and summary.[61] Time, location, and perspective is altered variously, and though the reader witnesses the present moment in a manner – sudden and dropped-in-upon, pulled, abbreviated, immediate – it is rarely still; it is rarely reminiscent of their own experience of an ethically profound moment. This relatively brief scene is a moment of huge ethical import, whether of Charles' bravery, resoluteness, or stubbornness, which sets a stance and direction for not just the Goulds, but the nation. However, it may be perceived narratively as hard to grasp and contextualize. Is not fortitude of decision rather dispersed by such narrativization? Where an expansive view of time is achieved, is not the effect sometimes that ethical and moral realism is rendered lightweight, airborne, and lesser than it ought to be?

During these events Nostromo has been presumed drowned and it is only at the end of Chapter VII that he wakes from a three-day sleep that followed his swim to shore.[62] Brian Richardson – though with overall emphasis on the role of silver – highlights interesting connotations between Nostromo and Jesus Christ, following from the work of Dwight Purdy:[63] "Conrad's use of the story of Christ is intermittent rather than systematic, and with as many variations as repetitions."[64] Richardson notes that when Nostromo reappears he is unrecognized – drawing on Mary Magdelen's reaction on meeting the risen Jesus[65] – and connections between attitudes to the silver and Christ's words about "treasure."[66] Nostromo fails to follow Jesus' teaching and is a literary example of the tragedy that comes from relying on a store of earthly treasure. Also, Nostromo's real name, 'Gian Battista' is in Italian, John the Baptist,[67] while his family name 'Fidanza' means 'trust' and relates to marriage. Conrad's incorporation of biblical elements is intriguing, seeming insistent, but being variously sacrilegious, or morally and ethically profound.

It is in Chapter XIII, with Giorgio and daughters now living on the Isabel in a new lighthouse, that the reader witnesses the fate of Nostromo and his course – and his failure to live up to the references just mentioned. Conrad's original ending in the serial publication was significantly expanded for the published novel: where the serial ending leaves some events out of sight, to be surmised in retrospect, the novel ending emphasizes the effects of Nostromo's duplicitous moral actions upon the Viola sisters, with the narrator's voice connecting simple past narrativization.[68] In the serial, first knowledge of the fatal event comes via Doctor Monygham who tells Emilia Gould – what he has himself been told – of men finding the aftermath on the Great Isabel post-shooting of Nostromo.[69] In the published novel the narrative is of Linda's pained free-indirect discourse, before she runs downstairs to find her father, and is halted by the gunshot, unwitnessed, only heard.[70] The following scene is then very similar to that of the serial, of Doctor Monygham telling Mrs. Gould. In effect, in the published novel Conrad replays part of the shooting: in both scenes we are degrees distanced from the pivotal event, kept in suspense as knowledge is delayed – first delayed by seconds; next, delayed by many minutes. In the second scene we also hear from a different perspective, as reported by

the Doctor: "they found Linda Viola waiting for them. They followed her: she led them under a tree not far from the cottage."[71] The overlaying of narrative upon narrative leads the reader to piece together a fuller picture and feel the trauma caused from a fresh viewpoint. It also, in the movement of time and space, at once distances us from it, bringing us out toward the narrator's position. The scene continues – alike in both endings, though with some notable differences – with Mrs. Gould's final conversation with the dying Nostromo:

> "I die betrayed—betrayed by—"
> But he did not say by whom or by what he was dying betrayed.[72]

Nostromo searches for a candidate to fit the role of betrayer and lands on Decoud's taking of the four silver ingots. He appears a man desperate to blame another and find excuse, refusing to see his moral failings – which we have witnessed. He decries pathetically, "The silver has killed me. It has held me. It holds me yet."[73] When he asks Mrs. Gould if he should tell her where the silver lies, the serial tells of Mrs. Gould's reluctance to know, in "dread" and "pity";[74] but in the novel she recognizes Nostromo's "pained involuntary reluctance," and then averts "her glance from the miserable subjection of the dying man, appalled, wishing to hear no more of the silver."[75] It is a subtle difference, but of significance. The final novel makes plainer Nostromo is unable to truly begin to confess or repent. Mrs. Gould replies, with the middle sentence extra to the novel: "No, Capataz. No one misses it now. Let it be lost forever."[76] Where Teresa had no priest to confess to, at Nostromo's own death the very need for repentance, and for forgiveness, is denied; yet the narrative points us to it.

Nostromo is a complex and well-crafted work, designed through temporospatial form at the syntactic and the scenic level to present a push-and-pull of unsettled viewpoint, of history and present. Its detailed tapestry of moral and ethical import moves from a circumspect to an increasing focus upon Nostromo. To read the novel is a kind of witnessing of action and thought, as to the moral truth by which all ethical action is measured; and yet the distancing, the lack of a still present, and conversely the artificial stillness of cause and effect that seems unwilling to resolve, presents a somewhat distorted moral vision. Conrad's narrative thus hides from moral reality even as it witnesses, and avoids acknowledgement of the ultimate moral source.

Recognizing *Nostromo's* Moral Narrative

Although *Nostromo's* moral content has often been discussed, it has seldom been in these terms. By mid-century the academic paradigm for Conradian study had begun to take shape.[77] Thomas Moser, when analysing Conrad's love stories, wrote of Nostromo and the novel's end: "these pages tell us nothing new about Nostromo (his damnation has been completed with his decision to 'grow rich very slowly')."[78] He also ascribed the symbolism of Nostromo's death as being political "at the hands of the true Republican, the Garibaldino, on Great Isabel, scene of Decoud's destruction," and as economic, "with the lighthouse shining over the buried silver."[79] By the later twentieth century, a level of discontent with the narrative remained, with readings often finding a flawed structure – albeit in a work widely described as Conrad's greatest achievement.[80] Critics tended to arrive at discussion of Nostromo lastly, having first

dealt with other characters,[81] and questions of moral purpose remained limited.[82] Ideological emphases became common concerning economics and post-colonialism. [83] As C. B. Cox summarized in 1981, "the main disagreement over Nostromo concerns how far it should be interpreted as a political novel."[84] As a more recent example, Zdzislaw Najder has analyzed Nostromo's character in terms of losing "self-respect" due to judging "his own inner worth by the standards of external appearances," an ethical analysis that is adjacent to, or subsumed within an economic-political reading of the novel: "Silver as I have mentioned is the central subject of the novel. It figures prominently in its imagery, but its main role consists in standing for capital in general."[85] Conrad himself wrote in a letter to Swedish Professor, Ernst Bendz – though almost two decades after the novel's composition: "I will take the liberty to point out that Nostromo has never been intended for the hero of the Tale of the Seaboard. Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale."[86] That Nostromo is not a hero seems apt to say, but the seeming downplaying of the character's central moral role might suggest an author not fully aware of the narrative crafted. Silver may be a 'pivot,' but it is an object, a symbol, useful as a device by which to witness characters' moral experiences. Jocelyn Baines has commented that, "although the silver is the thread which binds the book together it has only a superficial or formal connexion with some of the most important moral events."[87]

Much of the writing concerning Conrad's works, and literature in general, from the last five decades, shows influence from a poststructuralist milieu of neo-Marxist historicisms focused on language. Critical Theory and New Historicism, 'discourse analysis,' and 'deconstruction' have had lasting effects upon methodologies across the humanities, denigrating the coherence and validity of narratives and truth claims, while simultaneously, and hypocritically, claiming the correctness and primacy of postmodern re-narrativizations. This framework invariably dismisses morality as a construct and recasts it in postmodern terms. Josiane Paccaud-Huguet makes abstract the moral and personal when she describes the character of Nostromo as being freed by Conrad from family ties, a character of absence, so as to "expose the romantic myth of the self-authorized subject confronted by the fragmentation of modern experience."[88] Rather than a primary concern with a 'fragmentation of modernity,' *Nostromo's* narrative is concerned with the prevalence of something morally true irrespective of modernity.

The 2021 collection of essays, *Joseph Conrad and Ethics,* although containing some interesting work, as in a piece on Conrad's presentation of Christianity,[89] often takes the postmodern paradigm as the norm, with a view of ethics, which "means relating responsibly to the Other, in his/her universality and radical difference." Amar Acheraïou, one of the book's editors, continues, in reference to Emmanuel Levinas' ideas:[90] "It entails movement from the self to this Other's existence and well-being and, above all, to the implementation of the good for the others with whom the self interacts or enters into ethical dialogue."[91] This is a view of ethics, with 'good' and 'responsibly' undefined, but fundamentally determined in relation to 'the other' – familiar in postmodern parlance as implying non-binary difference, cultural relativity, and moral relativity. In this outworking, the 'moral' thought or action tends to be that which leaves 'the other's' ethics undefined and unevaluated; it in effect precludes the idea of

substantiative morality. The volume thus considers how Conrad articulates his ethics when there is no "permanent basis for ethical responsibility."[92]

While the full extent of the problem is rarely acknowledged in the academy, 'Post-theory' work has attempted to move away from the "hermeneutics of suspicion."[93] But where literary-sociological methods or 'descriptive reading[94] are applied, the text and its meanings are distant; in other cases the underlying secular model tends to remain. Jesse Rosenthal's and Andrew Miller's respective writings, though raising interesting aspects of Victorian engagement with literature, have considered morality and ethics as an experiential effect of reading, not as substantive beyond it. [95] Dorothy Hale has written of Henry James' theory of the novel as "Social Formalism" and of its connection to 'new ethical theory.'[96] This is an ethics defined again in relation to "alterity" or "otherness."[97]

Post-theory in fact bases its evaluations on the same historical critical foundations from which other literary theories have derived. In relation to a different ethics, Alexia Hannis has argued that an Aristotelian reading of Conrad highlights his "moderate voice and outlook on "incertitude" or chance, risk, and accident."[98] However, this reading does not always fit: characters often do not emerge from tragedy with a clarifying realization, in the Greek formula,[99] and Hannis' use of 'catharsis' amends that of Aristotle.[100] The book suggests Conrad would have encountered Aristotelian ideas,[101] but its presentation is postmodern, as another 'reading,' not a discussion of influence. Were a possible Aristotelian influence to be evaluated, it would need to be in the context of Victorian society and broad Christian understandings. The provenance and extent of potential ethical correlations requires careful attribution, something that poststructural and relativistic interpretation cannot support. Theological readings of cultural texts have had different challenges regarding observed correlations: where biblical ethics, themes, or content have been identified – which is often of value – they may remain surface observations without a coherent interpretative theory. Under a secular model these findings risk being turned upside down as normative reflections of hierarchy, unethical even. What is sorely needed is a theory of the text and reading that interprets and weighs ethical and other observations as part of the theological reality of narrative.

Moral Narrativity

H. Porter Abbot has defined "narrative as the representation of an event or a series of events, consisting of *story* and *narrative discourse*." [102] From a filmic perspective, David Bordwell has written that "Instead of treating the narrative as a message to be decoded, I take it to be a representation that offers the occasion for inferential elaboration."[103] How exactly narrative comprehension occurs has been much discussed, [104] with terms like 'representation' and 'inference' themselves needing definition. Cognitive ideas of an evolutionary-based 'theory of mind' have been proposed as the route by which a reader recognizes emotion in the other[105] and hence comprehends narrative; yet, problems have been identified with this application, as by Marissa Bortolussi, who highlights the distinction between recognizing the emotion of a real person and of a character through a text.[106] However, whether of real life or text, such theories are descriptive of the experience of recognition; they posit a modified structural route

by which 'representation' occurs and lack explanatory ability. Furthermore, in the secular, evolutionary insistence of cognitive theories, they rule out the moral as causal, predetermining it to be a later construct. This unfounded dismissal has been to the detriment of cognitive and narrative understanding.

It is a dismissal with origins that can be traced to the Enlightenment at least. In his excellent book on the cosmological model found in medieval literature, C. S. Lewis makes the profound observation that prior to the eighteenth-century reason had been "the organ of morality,"[107] but that the understanding of the word changed with "a revolt against the doctrine that moral judgements are wholly, or primarily, or at all, rational." As illustration he gives Dr. Johnson's definition of reason as "the power by which man deduces one proposition from another,"[108] which Johnson follows with the example – quoting Hooker; here given in full – of reason being "the director of man's will, discovering in action what is good; for the laws of well-doing are the dictates of right *reason.*"[109] As Lewis points out, there is "a startling discrepancy" between the two statements – the first being of the new understanding of reason, and the latter still of "that which was older and larger,"[110] concerned with the right and good. Alisdair MacIntyre gives a very revealing account of this change, though more weight needs to be given to the original source of Hebrew and Christian morality, and its distinctiveness. He describes a classical theist "moral scheme" as having been "three-fold," comprised of an understanding of human nature, of "human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-telos," and moral and ethical reasoning as that which moved one "from the former state to the latter."[111] He argues that the "secular rejection of both Protestant and Catholic theology" and the "philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism," eliminated "any notion of essential human nature" and "telos."[112] Morality and ethics had described what 'ought' to be, but when Hume said reason could only deal with what 'is,'[113] and when Kant, Kierkegaard and others tried to derive what were Christian moral positions with reason alone and from a changed view of human nature,[114] they were misunderstanding the entire basis for moral reasoning that had preceded them. It was an "inevitably unsuccessful project."[115] Importantly, a Christian 'telos' is of now-and-not-yet, sanctification through the Holy Spirit, and the person of Christ, and so much more can be said; but MacIntyre's frame does astutely picture how an era lost sight of the purpose of reason. Centuries later, western – and world – cultures still reverberate with the results. They permeated academic, secular discourse, with the moral frequently outcast as a social and cultural product, and ethics left arbitrarily relativist – both only obliquely reminiscent of their original definitions.

The moral needs to be put back in the foundational place that it actually occupies in human thought and experience. In terms of narrative and literature it is this that Moral Narrativity seeks to do, by understanding moral valuing as being vital to textual formation and reception. To illustrate, let us take a sentence from toward the end of *Nostromo*: "Nostromo had been growing rich very slowly."[116] As demonstrated earlier, tense has narrative moral affect; this occurs in relation to a composition of other moral meanings. To start with 'Nostromo:' as subject the name can only be conceptualized of via a moral sense, a valuing of a possible identity – whether positive, suspicious, hopeful, etc. – which will be influenced by a plethora of other gathered meanings at this stage in the story. Yet, even if this line were read for the first

time, the moral sense would be involved – be its verdicts more hesitant or fluctuating. Then follows a valuing of what it is to be rich, to grow rich, to do so slowly, or of slowness in general; modifiers may amend and contextualize in or out of sequence; at the clause's end there may be reflection or reinterpretation. Is it right, beneficial, exciting, frustrating, dangerous? The valuing may be experienced with focus upon the character, relating to other characters or themes, to narrative memories, or potentials, or extrapolated to the reader's own moral life. The words are individually and together understood through moral meaning – and importantly, they cannot be understood apart from it. It is of note that there is no objective moment of awareness, of cognition, separate from moral understanding, no gap discernible between knowing and morally valuing. As far as can be ascertained, they are simultaneous. To understand that Nostromo is growing rich and how, is to have already evaluated morally and ethically. Moral understanding is either so closely involved with perception and cognition that understanding happens *through* it, or it is 'the organ' of understanding *by* which perception occurs.

Modern philosophy has tended to assume false premises, with moral philosophy considered somewhat of its own category, when it is also at the heart of epistemology and ontology. All cognition is essentially of the 'goodness' or 'badness' of something. Whether it is taste, brightness, smell, usefulness, appropriateness, sanctity, or any other discernment, to be cognizant of, to understand, is to weigh the rightness or wrongness, to morally value. Semantic understanding, across all scales of narrative, is moral because human perception is a moral act.

As clause follows clause the text will direct moral meaning more precisely, clarifying, expanding and developing. Theme, plot, or characterization may be distinguished through the accumulation of narrativized moral meanings: economic or political themes – as in *Nostromo* – are actually collected moral and ethical meanings ascertained to be in relation to those topics. Texts will give varying room for interpretation, but in an honest reading understanding is located around the purposed narrative.[117] Yet, there can, and often will be degrees of disparity between moral meaning narrated, perceived, and morality as actually is. A narrative may, for example, construct a story-world of varying moral meaning, in which cause and effect do not accurately reflect reality, where within its confines immorality is portrayed to appear beneficial. Interior logic of a story-world can attempt to pervert moral meaning; however, it cannot pervert the ultimate referent for moral meaning. As such, narratives may construe or misconstrue morality variously and readers may likewise interpret them with a greater or lesser degree of comparative accuracy to the ultimate moral truth; but all are defined in the context of that truth.

Here is an understanding of morality and perception that speaks theologically. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the early Christians in Rome, "God's invisible qualities" are "clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse,"[118] and as he went on to explain, people without the Jewish law, yet who follow it, "show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts."[119] Thomas Aquinas, with the same logic would later write that "it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends."[120] Scholars such as John Finnis, Germain Grisez,[121] and David Boucher[122] have written of 'natural law,' with Finnis describing how "the standards or norms of natural law," are, through conscience – or practical reason – the "norms whose initial

constraints, disciplines and demands upon me relate directly to the good of truth and knowledge of it. They tell me, directively, what I need to do, must do, with honesty and care, honourably, to reach the truth."[123]

When considering moral narrativity it is such a theologically rooted view that can best unveil what is happening between author, text, and reader. It is in this direction that narrative research should travel, and with interdisciplinary partnership welcome. For instance, Catherine Pickstock has described our identity as involving repetition across time, of consistency in relation to real signs,[124] in "an account of 'thinghood' that is grounded in the doctrine of God."[125] How may ideas of moral perception fit with such discussion? How may they also reimagine and redefine a theory of the novel, poetics, or film?

Conclusion

There remains a great deal more that could be said about what can here only be an outline of a narrative theory, an attempt to return to a sound understanding of what happens in the act of writing and reading literature. At the heart of the literary experience, I have argued, is a moral narrativity, a moral valuing, by which narrative is perceived at every level. Although helpful in reminding of the nature of a text, the term should not become a limiting description; for if a narrative is moral, it is only because it, and existence itself, is theological. All moral value points to its source, not to a passing cultural meaning, nor a relativized, fluctuating ethics, but to goodness itself, to the divine. This is not to say that culture and society are not important considerations in narrative meaning. Though there has been little time to weigh them in this analysis, there are interesting questions to be asked about Joseph Conrad's place within a broadly Christianized culture undergoing secular pressures.[126] How did this atmosphere, Conrad's particular background, and his own beliefs affect his narratives – which in many ways lay bare a significantly Christian moral reality? In *Nostromo*, Conrad builds detailed moral pictures from the semantic ground up, of choices, actions, and consequences, with narrative techniques holding up character and cause and effect to be witnessed; yet conversely, the temporospatial transitions and the delays of resolution can also render the moral and ethical obtuse. *Nostromo's* narrative shows the desperate need for redemption, but it is a narrative conclusion that Conrad will not face in full.

When much literary criticism cannot speak of a text like *Nostromo* in these moral and ethical terms, the problems of secular theories and assumptions can be revealed, and a better approach proposed. Yet, where Conrad's writings have substantial aims toward ethical realism, those narratives that do not should be understood no less in moral terms. With the moral and ethical recognized as fundamental to the theory of literature, all manner of narratives can be more profoundly understood. For moral valuing is vital to the act of knowing, of discerning, of narrativizing. Few people write or read fiction to bring to life a social, or temporary construct; we ought to read and write to experience something morally real, true, and lasting. Literary analysis should appreciate texts on a similar basis.

Endnotes

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[2] Andrew Michael Roberts, "Conrad and the Territory of Ethics," *Conradiana,* 37, no. 1/2 (2005): 134, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24635211.
[3] F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 2nd ed. (George W. Stewart, Publisher, 1950).
[4] Leavis, *Great Tradition*, 200.
[5] Leavis, 196.
[6] Leavis, 199.
[7] Sean Lau, "The Distinction Between Theology and Ethics: A Critical History," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 52, no. 2 (2024): 209-30, https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12468.
[8] Oliver, O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1,* (Eerdmans, 2013).
[9] O'Donovan, 4-5.
[10] O'Donovan, x.
[11] O'Donovan, 72.
[12] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 172.
[13] Anonymous reviewer, "Nostromo," in C. B. Cox, ed. *Conrad: Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes,* 4th ed. (MacMillan Education, 1987), 33.
[14] Cedric Watts, *Joseph Conrad*, (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), 27.
[15] Frederick R. Karl, *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 570.
[16] Karl, *Joseph Conrad,* 570.
[17] Cox, *Conrad*, 37.
[18] Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad* (Weidenfeld, 1993), 295-7; Conrad, *Nostromo*, Part First, Chapters I-III, 5-19.
[19] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Wordsworth Classics, 1994).
[20] Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1915; Project Gutenberg, 2006).
[21] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer* (Signet, 2008).
[22] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (Penguin Classics, 2007).
[23] Conrad, *Nostromo*, Part First, Chap. II, 11, 12.
[24] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 11-14.
[25] A reference to the 'present' here and elsewhere will often be to that which the reader would understand to be the currently occurring narrated event, even though, as with many novels, the telling will be in simple past tense.
[26] Nostromo's character is kept both unrealized and yet central for a significant portion of the book. Indeed, it could be argued that even to the book's end, his motivations remain elusive, even unto himself, much as the moral narrativization is held up to be viewed, with conclusions delayed: Conrad, *Nostromo*, Chapters II-IV, 9-28.
[27] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Part First, Chap. V, 28.
[28] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chapters II-V. 9-36.
[29] Conrad, *Nostromo*, Chap. VI, 36.
[30] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 36.
[31] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 37.
[32] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 40.
[33] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 41.
[34] Conrad, *Nostromo*, 46.
[35] Marcus Wheeler has observed 'Polonisms' in *Lord Jim*: Marcus Wheeler, "Polonisms in Conrad's 'Lord Jim,'" *The Journal of The Joseph Conrad Society (U.K.)* 2, no. 3 (1976): 6-8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20870452.
[36] Gordon Lindstrand, "Joseph Conrad's Nostromo: The Transmission of the Text," PhD. Diss. (University of Illinois, 1968), 174. In the expanded final scenes in the published book, in comparison to the serialised text, there is evidence of a mistake with English tense being corrected: John, Dozier, Gordan, *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist* (Oxford University Press, 1941), 217, https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674282087 For the serial ending, see: Conrad, *Nostromo (The Serial Ending)*, 464.
[37] Jakob Lothe argues that Conrad's narratives are designed to clearly communicate the voice of the implied author. Jakob Lothe, "From Narrator to Narratee and from Author to Reader: Conrad and his Audience." *Yearbook of Conrad Studies* 3 (2007): 15-29, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26424122.
[38] Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane, E. Lewin (Cornell University Press, 1983), 108.
[39] Genette, 109.
[40] Genette, 86-112.

[41] Genette, 109.
[42] Cedric Watts, *Joseph Conrad* (Northcote House, 1994), 26.
[43] John, G. Peters, "Joseph Conrad's 'Sudden Holes' in Time: The Epistemology of Temporality." *Studies in the Novel* 32, no. 4 (2000): 420, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533413.
[44] J. M Kertzer, "Joseph Conrad and the Metaphysics of Time," *Studies in the Novel* 11, no. 3 (1979): 304, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29531983.
[45] Kertzer, "Joseph Conrad and the Metaphysics of Time," 307.
[46] Kertzer, 311.
[47] Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, 2nd ed. (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 282-3.
[48] Elana Gomel, *Narrative Space and Time: Representing Impossible Topologies in Literature* (Routledge, 2014).
[49] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chap. VII, 176-214.
[50] Martin Ray, "Conrad and Decoud," *The Polish Review* 29, no. 3 (1984): 53–64, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25778075.
[51] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chap. VII, 202.
[52] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chap. VII, 203-14
[53] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 212.
[54] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 209.
[55] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chap VIII, 216-225.
[56] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 225-33.
[57] Baines, *Joseph Conrad*, 301.
[58] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Part Third, Chaps. I-VI, 241-447.
[59] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Chap. VII, 315-16.
[60] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 316.
[61] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 316-19.
[62] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 325.
[63] Dwight, Purdy, *Joseph Conrad's Bible*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).
[64] Brian, Richardson, "Sex, Silver, and Biblical Analogues: Thematic and Intertextual Resolutions at the End of 'Nostromo,'" *Conradiana* 40, no. 3 (2008): 304, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24635171.
[65] John 20:14 (NIV).
[66] Matt. 6:19-20 (NIV).
[67] Richardson, "Sex, Silver, and Biblical Analogues," 304.
[68] Conrad, *Nostromo (The Serial Ending),* 456-65.
[69] Conrad, *Nostromo (The Serial Ending),* 460.
[70] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Part Third, Chap. XIII, 436.
[71] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 436.
[72] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 441.
[73] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 441.
[74] Conrad, *Nostromo (The Serial Ending),* 463.
[75] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Part Third, Chap. XIII, 442.
[76] Conrad, *Nostromo,* 442.
[77] Robert Hampson, *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*, (Palgrave Macmillan,1992), 1.
[78] Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline,* (Harvard University Press, 1957), 87.
[79] Moser, *Joseph Conrad*, 87.
[80] Watts, *Joseph Conrad*, 24.
[81] David R. Smith, "Nostromo and the Three Sisters," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 2, no. 4 (1962): 498.
[82] See for example: R. A. Gekoski, *Conrad.* (Elek Books, 1978), 108.
[83] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Pantheon Books, 1978); Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *The Massachusetts Review* 57, no. 1 (2016): 14-27, https://doi.org/10.1353/mar.2016.0003.
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[85] Zdzislaw Najder, "A Century of 'Nostromo.'" *Conradiana* 40, no. 3 (2008): 236, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24635168.
[86] David R. Smith, "Nostromo and the Three Sisters," 499.
[87] Baines, *Joseph Conrad*, 301.
[88] Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, "Nostromo: Conrad's Man of no Parentage," *The Conradian,* 18, no. 2 (1994): 65–76, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20874057.

[89] The chapter discusses Conrad's representation – and omission – of the Christian cross: Harold Ray Stevens, "The Cross of Christ as Afterthought: Killing the Christian Ethic at "An Outpost of Progress,"" in *Joseph Conrad and Ethics*, Amar Acheraïou and Laëtitia Crémona, eds. (Maria Curie-Sklodowska University Press, 2021), 291-306.
[90] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,* Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Kluwer, 1981).
[91] Amar Acheraïou, "Introduction," in *Joseph Conrad and Ethics*, eds. Amar and Crémona, 5.
[92] Acheraïou, 3.
[93] Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (2010): 382, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40983827; Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (Yale University Press, 1970), 32-3.
[94] Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep," 382.
[95] Jesse Rosenthal, *Good Form: The Ethical Experience of the Novel* (Princeton University Press, 2017); Andrew H. Miller, *The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7z5m3.
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[97] Timothy Bewes, review of *The Novel and the New Ethics*, by Dorothy J. Hale, *Modern Philology* 119, no. 3 (2022): E136, https://doi.org/10.1086/718132.
[98] Alexia Hannis, *The Discerning Narrator: Conrad, Aristotle, and Modernity,* (University of Toronto Press, 2023), 7.
[99] Hannis, *The Discerning Narrator*, 39.
[100] Hannis, 104.
[101] Hannis, 5-9.
[102] H. Porter Abbot, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.
[103] David Bordwell, "Three Dimensions of Film Narrative" in *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, 2007), Chap. 3, 9. http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/poetics_03narrative.pdf
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[105] Lisa Zunshine, "Theory of Mind and Fictions of Embodied Transparency," *Narrative* 16, no. 1 (2008): 65–92. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30219272.
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[112] Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54-5.
[113] MacIntyre, 49, 56.
[114] MacIntyre, 52.
[115] MacIntyre, 55.
[116] Conrad, *Nostromo,* Part Third, Chap. XII, 413.
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[124] Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

[125] Oliver James Keenan, "Review of Repetition and Identity," *New Blackfriars,* 96, no. 1063 (2015): 373-75, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24766309.

[126] Philip Davis says the Victorian realist novel "was the holding ground, the meeting point for the overlapping claims of secularization and belief held together in a version of common life." It is interesting to consider the depth of Christendom influence on these narratives. Philip Davis, *The Oxford English Literary History: 1830-1880 The Victorians,* Vol 8 (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (外话教学写研究出版社), 2007), 144.