Skepticism, Action, and Ideas: Dr. Monygham as a Key to *Nostromo*

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Keywords: Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo*, Dr. Monygham, narrative structure

Introduction

This paper asserts that Dr. Monygham is the key to unravel the narrative structure of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904). He is the counterpart of the title character, Nostromo, and the two characters' parallel representation untangles the theme of the novel: limitation of people's detachment from their ideas. The novel shows that people cannot become completely free from their obsession with their own ideas.

While regarded as Conrad's best work, *Nostromo* perplexes readers because of its highly complicated narrative structure. This perplexity is attributed to the novel's "bewildering mobility": "constant shifts in perspective: [...] from person to person, from area to area, from one time to another" (Watts 68). This "bewilderment" is intensified by the number of characters: apparently, "over twenty protagonists" (Najder 330) have "[p]oly-monologic" relationships (Erdinast-Vulcan 189) that bind each of them to their subjectivity.

This "poly-monologic" feature results in the novel's parallel treatment of each character. This treatment prevents the novel from focusing particularly on the eponymous character, Nostromo. I intend to show that this prevention provokes a question: whether Nostromo is the protagonist or not. As Hiroji Sugiura summarizes (63-65), Nostromo changes his personality in the novel's latter part. At first, he is highly estimated by the upper class as an "invaluable fellow" [1] or "a perfectly incorruptible fellow" (94; pt. 1, ch. 8). Later, however, Nostromo's incorruptibility changes into the "slave" (375; pt. 3, ch. 12) of the silver that he has been required by the wealthy society to convey and hide from the San Tomé

mine. Watching the collapse of that society which has admired him, Nostromo realizes his inability to retain his reputation despite the success of his mission. This frustration evokes his sense of being "betrayed" (301; pt. 3, ch. 8), and he becomes the "slave" of the silver and thus misappropriates it.

Nostromo's change provokes divided evaluations. On the one hand, though praising the description of "Nostromo in the early stages of his career," an anonymous review in the *Daily Telegraph* refers to his change as "strange, unexpected" (Rev. of *Nostromo* 168). Nostromo is also little commented on by two prominent Conradians, F. R. Leavis and Douglas Hewitt. Leavis accurately notes that Nostromo "has no ideal purpose" despite his reputation, but he focuses on Nostromo only in one paragraph in which he sums up Nostromo's process to be "tempted by silver" (192). Hewitt piercingly comments that there is "nearly always a hint of the deflating at the end of the most luxuriant passages [about Nostromo] which prevents them [the most luxuriant passages] from cloying" (50). Nonetheless, Hewitt pays only slight attention to Nostromo's enmity to Dr. Monygham which, as I claim below, is the key to Nostromo's "change"; Hewitt only thinks that Nostromo's view of Monygham has "some justice" (64). On the other hand, as is written below, Jacques Berthoud and Benita Parry pay attention to his role in the novel.

Ⅰ. Skepticism, Action, and Ideas: Dr. Monygham as a Key Role

As for the intricate structure of the novel, we should reconsider Robert Penn Warren's classical but still piercing opinion on Conrad's works. According to Warren, they show that it "is not some, but all, men who must serve the 'idea,'" and that this "notion appears over and over again in Conrad's fiction" (579). In *Nostromo*, the novel's many characters' devotion to "material interests" exemplifies a kind of "idea." They worship the "material interests" of the San Tomé mine that allow them hegemony of the fictive country, Costaguana. The people's obsession with the "material interests" triggers a rebellion in that country.

Considering the importance of Warren's claim, we should pay attention to the monologue of Charles Gould, who is the owner of the San

Tomé mine and is accordingly one of the key characters. Defining his commitment to the management of the silver mine, he reflects: "Action is consolatory. It is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions. Only in the conduct of our action can we find the sense of mastery over the Fates" (50; pt. 1, ch. 6). This monologue exemplifies a conflict between two elements: one element is actions to manage the mine, which inspire Mr. Gould. This element prevents the harm of the second element: people's adherence to "thought" and "ideas." However, the first factor, the concreteness of actions, can also spoil people because of its "friend"; people who stick to "[a]ction" can be flattered so much that they will be overly conceited. Mr. Gould's monologue therefore implies that we should maintain a balance between "[a]ction" and "ideas."

Despite the apparently competitive relationship between "action" and "ideas," I contend that the novel puts more emphasis on the harm of "ideas." More precisely, *Nostromo* aims to represent people's inability to be detached from their obsession with their own ideas, which are their self-created illusions. My claim is that Conrad, in *Nostromo*, contrives its intricate narrative structure and vast world so that the novel can impress the reader with this inability. To substantiate this, I will focus on Dr. Monygham, who retains the two elements — action and detachment from ideas — in a more well-balanced way than other characters in the novel. Here he is compared with other characters, among whom Nostromo stands out. Conrad thereby structures the novel in such a way that these two characters are contrasted. Notwithstanding his achievement of the two elements, even Monygham cannot completely distance himself from his own "idea": his blind devotion to Mrs. Gould. By paying attention to the doctor's failure in his detachment, I would assert that he is the key to both the structure and the theme of *Nostromo*.

In considering the limitation of Monygham's detachment, it is of use to consider divided critiques of him which his many-sidedness provokes. On the one hand, Fredric Jameson does not value Monygham's role enough. Jameson thinks that Monygham is only a coinage of Conrad's "narrative afterthought": he statically positions Monygham as a "nonaction" character in comparison with Nostromo and others. Nevertheless,

Monygham becomes a key person suddenly after his appearance in the novel so that *Nostromo* retains "narrative unity" (255-56). On the other hand, Monygham is emphasized by Suresh Raval. Raval thinks that Monygham is the only character in the novel that manages to "retain his detachment" from the political situation in the narrative world (90).

We should not forget, however, that these polarized evaluations of Monygham are commonly induced by the narrative structure that forges the two characters as counterparts: Monygham, the character of detachment and "nonaction"; and Nostromo, who, despite the high evaluation on his heroic activities, degenerates into the silver's "slave." I believe that the two characters' contrast is the key to understanding the limitation of Monygham's detachment. When stating this claim, I would elucidate three points. Firstly, the narrative structure serves to compare Monygham and Nostromo from the early part of the novel. This contrast clarifies why Nostromo "changes," and Monygham is not a "narrative afterthought." Secondly, the narrative structure represents Monygham's achievement both in action and in detachment. Finally, notwithstanding his achievement, these two points stress the limitation of Monygham's detachment.

Hereafter, this paper is organized as follows: section II will explore the novel's contrastive representation of Dr. Monygham, who is cynical and disliked in high society, and Nostromo, who is the active "invaluable fellow". The novel meticulously juxtaposes these two characters, and the consideration of this juxtaposition allows us to unravel the reason for Nostromo's "change." Whereas section II will deal with Nostromo's preoccupation with his idea or reputation, sections III and IV will focus on the relationship between Dr. Monygham's actions and his "idea." Section III will argue that despite his sardonic character that "changes" Nostromo, Dr. Monygham maintains both of the two factors more successfully than other characters: "actions" and detachment from people's "ideas." Section IV, however, claims that Monygham's detachment has limitation: his intense devotion to Mrs. Gould. The conclusion will re-emphasize that Monygham is an essential character in *Nostromo*.

Ⅱ. Dr. Monygham as a Key to Nostromo's "Change"

The novel represents the two main characters, Monygham and Nostromo, as distinct opposites. Nostromo is admired as an "invaluable fellow" by virtue of his excellent action as a chief of stevedores. He himself is proud of his reputation as the "man of the people" (217; pt. 2, ch. 8). Monygham is sarcastic enough to declare that he puts "no spiritual value into my [Monygham's] desires, or my opinions, or my actions" (229; pt. 3, ch. 1). He is accordingly scorned by in the upper class in Sulaco. Nevertheless, Monygham himself does not care about his reputation that is partly confirmed by the upper-class people's dislike of his appearance: "limping about the streets in a check shirt and native sandals with a water-melon under his arm" (345; pt. 3, ch. 10).

I would, however, assert that these opposite characters are scrupulously compared in the narrative structure, and that consequently Nostromo's "change" is not sudden. It is noteworthy that the two men's contrast begins when rumors about the doctor first appear in the novel. There Monygham is depicted as follows: "He [Monygham] was taciturn when at his best. At his worst people feared the open scornfulness of his tongue." At the same time, the doctor's character is alluded to as "eccentric," and he may go so far as to cast a "doubt on" Nostromo's praise from Captain Mitchell, Nostromo's superior at the O.S.N. company. On the other hand, just before these evaluations on Monygham, Nostromo is praised by Mitchell as "a prodigy of efficiency" (35; pt. 1, ch. 6).

We should not disregard this synchronicity of the two characters' entrances into the narrative; because of this simultaneity, their oppositeness is more reinforced when their subjectivity is clarified. Nostromo has been valued as "a sort of universal factotum" (35; pt. 1, ch. 6) by upper society. His own will, however, is not illuminated until it is referred to by Martin Decoud, who works as a journalist for the San Tomé mine. When Decoud writes his sister in Europe a letter about the beginning of the rebellion, he notes down Nostromo's words that, if the "invaluable fellow" will manage to save Mr. Gould's silver, the "reward" he wants is "to be well spoken of" (179; pt. 2, ch. 7). Nostromo's words

embody his desire for reputation; and if he cannot attain his fame despite his hard work, he would feel "betrayed" by the rich. As to Monygham, he himself is not invited into the world of the novel until he starts caring about people hurt in the rebellion (181; pt 2, ch. 7). There are two important points about the appearance of Nostromo's and Monygham's "true" selves. First, they synchronically appear, within three pages: pp. 179-81. Second, the two men's personalities do not emerge until the middle of the novel, which contains approximately 400 pages in the Oxford edition 2007. These two reasons prove the novel's detailed and contrastive representation of the two men.

Moreover, as soon as they meet after their "true" appearances, they clash. This paper argues that, owing to the narrative structure in which the two men are consequently compared, their conflict leaves a deep impression on the reader. Because of his reputation as an "incorruptible" fellow, Nostromo is ordered by upper-class people in Sulaco to carry the silver from the San Tomé mine and to hide it. Nostromo, however, frowns at this order, and he goes so far as to wish that there would be "any other man ready and fit for such business." When seeing this timidity of Nostromo's, Monygham, "with sly simplicity," makes fun of Nostromo's inability to "say 'no'" to such a request. Monygham also points out that Nostromo thereby "gamble[s] too much" in order "to make a fortune" (187; pt. 2, ch. 7).

We should not ignore these two opposing personalities because, in Jacques Berthoud's words, they somehow come to resolve the "major political and military crisis" in Costaguana. The two uncongenial men's cooperation surprises the reader; but I argue that the "crisis" can only be resolved by "the two men who have become incapable of understanding each other" (Berthoud 121). This is because the two men's antagonism during the rebellion justifies the change from "incorruptible" Nostromo into the "slave" of the silver. Though at first Nostromo has hesitated accepting the "business" to carry the silver on a lighter at night with Decoud, he manages to hide it on an island, the Great Isabel. After his return to Sulaco, however, Nostromo feels "betrayed" and wanders in the city, meeting Monygham as his only acquaintance. Nostromo has

accomplished the desperate business: his lighter has crashed against a ship of the rebellious party, and he has been risked drowning. Nostromo is accordingly eager for greater reputation than he has had; but the doctor does not care about Nostromo's feeling, because Monygham is preoccupied with the safety of the San Tomé mine and Sulaco; and Sulaco is now under control of the rebellious army led by Sotillo. Monygham is thus busy searching for a "possible messenger" who can safely go out of Sulaco to Cayta, where General Barrios's government army has gone; Barrios's army has missed catching and suppressing the rebellious party. Here the doctor comes up with the solution that he makes the "invaluable fellow" the messenger to the army. Hence, though Monygham is the only acquaintance that Nostromo can find in Sulaco, the doctor does not "think of him [Nostromo] humanely" (311; pt. 2, ch. 8).

Thus it is Monygham's lack of humanity towards Nostromo that decisively corrupts the "incorruptible" man into the silver's "slave," and it consolidates Nostromo's frustration and resentment towards the silver mine. More importantly, Monygham's lack of feeling towards Nostromo leaves a strong impression on the reader because of the novel's contrastive treatment of them. Nostromo's "change," as Benita Parry says, synchronizes with conflicts between two social classes which follow the rebellion and the "Separation" (341; pt. 3, ch. 10) of the Occidental Republic. One class is the "workers" concerned with the mine. Their "consciousness" and "labour unrest" collide with the other class: the upper class which represents "capitalism" and "imperialism." Whereas Nostromo is admired by the upper class, he is merely one of the "workers": a chief of stevedores. In this course of the story, his "change" and his obsession with the hidden silver embody "incipient class consciousness" in which the workers pursue their benefits (Parry 123-24). Since this "change" of Nostromo's into the silver's "slave" is solidified by his discord with the doctor, Monygham is thus important to both the plot and the theme of the novel.

Ⅲ. Monygham and His Compatibility of Action and Skepticism

Nevertheless, Monygham's role is not merely to change Nostromo into the silver's "slave." This paper contends that he keeps a balance between action and skepticism, and that his balancing is his unique quality.

First of all, Monygham is not inherently sarcastic. He had worked for the late tyrant, Guzman Bento, in Costaguana, and he had been involved in a false charge of conspiracy against the dictator. Though Monygham had not been afraid of death during the torture, he had betrayed his friends to Bento. This betrayal is Monygham's trauma. Thus he is not "sure of" himself (223; pt. 3, ch. 1), and he becomes cynical to everyone except Mrs. Emilia Gould, who has hospitably received him as a doctor at the San Tomé mine and whom alone he trusts. To Monygham, who has "a great fund of loyalty" in his "nature" and who has "settled it [loyalty] all Mrs. Gould's head" (269; pt. 3, ch. 4), his devotion to her becomes his raison d'être. Under these circumstances, the rebellion occurs and challenges his days at the mine. He accordingly decides to act for the silver mine on which Mrs. Gould, the wife of its owner, depends.

My contention is that, though Monygham's decision makes him "inhumane" to Nostromo, its desperateness also impresses the "invaluable fellow." When persuading Nostromo to be a messenger to General Barrios, Monygham declares his decision to work as a decoy to one of the rebellious leaders, Sottilo, in order to gain time so that General Barrios's government army will come back to Sulaco. Monygham's resolute decision reminds Nostromo of his desperate action in the past: he had escorted an aristocrat from the United Kingdom, Sir John, who had come to Costaguana in order to check a plan to build railroads there. At that time, when Sir John had been almost attacked by thieves, he had been saved by Nostromo, who, in order to protect Sir John, had pretended to become a member of the outlaws "at the risk of my [Nostromo's] life." This past evokes Nostromo's recognition that he himself has acted "[j]ust as you [Monygham] are doing with Sotillo" (329; pt. 3, ch. 9). This familiarity between them contributes to Nostromo's decision to become a messenger to Cayta, where Barrios is staying, and the army succeeds in suppressing

the rebellious party. In short, Monygham's decision prompts Nostromo's desperate mission. I would hence like to assert the synchronicity of the two men's desperate resolutions and their actions.

In fact, Monygham's decision and his activeness are also described in other ways. When acting as a decoy to Sotillo, the doctor is about to be hanged with "the rope already round his neck" on Sotillo's ship. Sotillo is irritated because he has obeyed Monygham and searched for the silver in the sea in vain. Just then "the first of Barrios' transports" arrives there. The soldiers on board, however, do not attend to the doctor and "open[s] a small-arm fire," despite Monygham's cry to Sotillo: "Hoist a white flag! Hoist a white flag!" (347-48; pt. 3, ch. 10). In this scene Monygham's danger is doubly represented: Sotillo's attempt to execute him, and the careless "fire" by the doctor's allied army. Monygham survives by chance, and the novel emphasizes his predicament as a willed decoy. *Nostromo* thus depicts the doctor's actions, which are sustained by his decision. Hence Monygham cannot be, contrary to Fredric Jameson's idea, criticized as a "nonaction" person in comparison with Nostromo.

Monygham is not only active: his skepticism allows him to detach himself from the political situations in the narrative. After the "Sulaco Revolution," Monygham and Emilia Gould talk about it and the continuous political unrest in the Occidental Republic. The doctor is afraid that "the secret societies amongst immigrants and natives" will "raise the country with the new cry of the wealth for" them (365-66; pt. 3, ch. 11). When Mrs. Gould asks Monygham whether there will be "never any peace" in the country or not, he argues:

> "There is no peace and rest in the development of material interests. They have their law and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back [caused by the late Guzman Bento]." (366; pt. 3, ch. 11)

These words embody Monygham's distance from other people's worship of the "material interests" of the silver mine that have not only caused the Revolution but also attracted imperial enterprises from foreign countries. The doctor's cynicism certainly adds negative characteristics to him; yet it also allows him to analyze the political confusion. Thus Monygham's sardonic character cannot be easily denied; it consolidates his skepticism, and he manages to detach himself from the politics.

This paper therefore stresses Monygham's compatibility of action and skepticism, something which no other characters attain. Concerning the notion of activeness, Nostromo and Charles Gould are worthy of notice. Nostromo cannot resist the silver's charm, and while secretly visiting the Great Isabel in order to misappropriate the hidden silver, he is mistakenly shot by Giorgio Viola, who is a man like Nostromo's stepfather and who takes Nostromo for Ramírez, an invader to his home (403; pt. 3, ch. 13). Nostromo's death thus alludes to his inability to be detached from the silver's material interests. As for Mr. Gould, though he is clever enough to notice the consolation of "action" and the harm of "thought," he is intellectually afflicted by his silver mine. He perceives that "the Gould Concession" has "insidiously corrupted his judgement," and that "this weapon of wealth [of the mine], double-edged with the cupidity and misery of mankind, steep[s] in all the vices of self-indulgence" (261; pt. 3, ch. 4). Mr. Gould is, however, incapable of transferring this intellectual awareness of the moral dangers of the silver mine into his actual life. Though having experienced the confusion caused by the silver's "material interests" during the Revolution, he still clings to his "action": his administration of the San Tomé mine. Even after he returns to the Occidental Republic from Europe with Mrs. Gould, he takes care neither of himself nor of her, and he will be "off early, to the mine" (362; pt. 3, ch. 11).

Concerning skepticism, Martin Decoud also keeps his distance from the politics in Costaguana. Decoud's skepticism is represented in his ironical insight into the history of Costaguana and its people, on whom "a curse of futility" is put. He specifies what the "curse" is like: "Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in

every form of corruption" (124; pt. 2, ch. 4). Nevertheless, his skepticism and intelligence compel him to commit suicide. While he solitarily watches the silver on the Great Isabel after its desperate carriage with Nostromo, there is no action which suppresses his acute intellectual faculties; and Decoud's "intelligence" and "sceptical mind" annoy him. Decoud becomes haunted by the idea that "the universe" is "a succession of incomprehensive images." As a result, he cannot endure his "solitude" that causes his "melancholy," and he shoots himself (357-59; pt. 3, ch. 10).[2] The representation of his suicide suggests that his death is brought about by harm that is caused by his losing control of great intelligence and skepticism, both of which he could restrain by "[a]ction." This is because, as Mr. Gould says to himself, "[a]ction" is "an enemy of thought" (50; pt. 1, ch. 6). Interestingly, Decoud's death contrasts with Monygham's survival; the doctor is surrounded by Sotillo's army, but has to face them all by himself. In this sense, Monygham's task is also lonely, and it is more dangerous than Decoud's guarding the silver.

Ⅳ. The Limitation of Monygham's Detachment from His Idea

Despite Dr. Monygham's attributes of action and skepticism, on which the novel focuses, it is his defect that is noteworthy. His detachment, so important to him, is limited by his own adherent idea: his devotion to Mrs. Gould. Nonetheless, this limitation clarifies both the importance of his role in the novel and the danger of "ideas."

Regarding Monygham's limitation, emphasis should be placed on Mrs. Gould's subjectivity and her distance from the "material interests." The novel depicts her capability to deliberate on the flow of Costaguana's history. As is said above, Mrs. Gould talks with Monygham about "the Sulaco Revolution." Soon after she begins talking, "it seem[s] strange to Mrs. Gould that people who ha[ve] taken part in it [the Revolution] [seem] to forget its memory and its lesson" (363; pt. 3, ch. 11). This ability "to see accurately" (Said 107) enables her to reconsider Mr. Gould's attachment to the silver mine. After talking with Monygham, she regrets that the love between her and Mr. Gould is "only a short moment of forgetfulness, a short intoxication." Subsequently, as for her husband and the prosperity

of his silver mine, she concludes that there is "something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carrie[s] with it the moral degradation of the idea" (373; pt. 3, ch. 11). More importantly, the novel depicts Mrs. Gould's perspective and charity to "accept people" (Said 107), and they even allow her to attract Monygham, who is disliked in high society. Her historical view is significant because *Nostromo* uses so many time-shifts that the reader is made to think that "nothing is ever achieved" in it (Baines 301). Mrs. Gould, who attends to the flow of Costaguana's history, is thus sagacious enough to notice its vain circulation; and she comes to notice that the silver mine is people's "fetish" (160; pt. 2, ch. 6).

Hence Mrs. Gould's perceptive insights serve to illuminate other characters' adherence to their ideas, and Monygham is also included among them. Here *Nostromo* does not unreservedly favor Monygham, though he ensures the compatibility of action and skepticism best in the novel. The novel discloses Monygham's limitation through the representation of Mrs. Gould especially at the ending. There the dying Nostromo confesses to Mrs. Gould that he has clandestinely profited from the silver that people think had sunk into the sea during the confusion of the Sulaco Revolution. Nostromo almost goes so far as to confess where he has hidden it. Nevertheless, conscious of dangers of the silver's "material interests," Mrs. Gould says: "No one misses it [the hidden silver] now. Let it be lost for ever." Soon after leaving Nostromo behind, she is asked by Monygham "almost brutally in his impatience" what they have talked about; yet, as if scenting the doctor's unfitness for this topic because of his near "impatience," Mrs. Gould answers, "He [Nostromo] told me nothing." This reply frustrates Monygham, but his loyalty to her makes Monygham accept "her denial like an inexplicable fatality affirming the victory of Nostromo's genius over his own" (401; pt. 3, ch. 13). The doctor is haunted by his "temperamental enmity to Nostromo" too much to reflect on the reason Mrs. Gould tells him nothing. Instead, Monygham is jealous of "the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores [Nostromo]," whose "genius," from the doctor's viewpoint, Mrs. Gould trusts more than Monygham.

In fact, Mrs. Gould's silence to Monygham is a key to judging the limit of his detachment from his own idea; this scene of the dying

Nostromo indicates that she does not trust Monygham enough to tell him the secret of the silver, whose materialism she fears. The doctor's lack of her trust accordingly alludes both to the bondage of his own idea and to his limit of detachment from the social discourse in the world of *Nostromo*. First of all, Monygham has "an *ideal* conception of his disgrace" (269; pt. 3, ch. 4; italics mine), and he concretizes this conception in the form of his loyalty to Mrs. Gould. The doctor's devotion to her is, therefore, not altruistic love for her, but an "idea" for two reasons. Firstly, he is devoted to her in order to retain his self-confidence that he had lost when involved in the false charge of conspiracy against Guzman Bento. Secondly, Monygham's fierce loyalty to Mrs. Gould obsessively binds him up in the same way that "material interests" compel people's greed. The novel delineates Monygham's intense fidelity, particularly at his meeting with Mrs. Gould after her return to the Occidental Republic from overseas. Then they accept guests, Antonia Avellanos and Father Corbelán, but Monygham "dislike[s] heartily everybody who approache[s] Mrs. Gould with any intimacy" (364; pt. 3, ch. 11). This scene exemplifies the doctor's narrow-mindedness concerning Mrs. Gould. It is also owing to this narrow-mindedness that he does not think of Nostromo "humanely" for the sake of the silver mine, on which Mrs. Gould depends, and that the mine presents itself to the doctor's "eyes in the shape of a little woman [Mrs. Gould]" (310; pt. 3, ch. 8).

Nonetheless, I would like to claim that it is this intolerance of Monygham's that unravels both the theme and the structure of *Nostromo*. Monygham is contrasted with the eponymous hero in the narrative structure, and he attains both action and skepticism better than anyone; yet even this character is haunted by his own idea: his devotion to Mrs. Gould. His extraordinary loyalty to Mrs. Gould is noteworthy because of the novel's representation of Mrs. Gould. She is often referred to as "a fairy": for instance, "a fairy" (40; pt. 1, ch. 6), "fairy-like" (84; pt. 1, ch. 8), or "a good fairy" (372; pt. 3, ch. 11). This metaphor indicates that it is only her unreal subjectivity which can put Costaguana's history into perspective. The novel thus shows that Monygham, one of the worldly people, cannot distance himself from his own ideal.

Conclusion: "An Essential Conradian Story"

In this paper, I have asserted that Monygham is a key to unravel the novel's structure and theme. His story is regarded as "an essential Conradian story" by Albert J. Guerard, one of the most prominent Conradians. He attends to Monygham's story in which he "betrayed his friends under torture, spent years in self-destructive isolation and remorse, and found redemption at last." Nevertheless, Guerard also insists: "we are not asked to become intimately involved in his [Monygham's] story, nor even allowed to look at it closely" (176). Monygham's role is, however, actually important because the novel contrasts him with Nostromo, and because, despite his attainment both of action and skepticism, even he cannot detach himself from his devotion to Mrs. Gould. Thus, Monygham is more "essential" to *Nostromo* than Guerard thinks.

Notes

A version of this paper was presented at the 81st general meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan at Tokyo University, Tokyo, on 31 May, 2009.

1) Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, ed. Jacques Berthoud and Mara Kalnins (1904; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 11; pt. 1, ch. 2. All references to the novel are from this edition, and page numbers are shown in parentheses.

2) As for Decoud's solitude and his loneliness, Jakob Lothe points out that they are repeatedly referred to in the novel (191; 219). For instance, in his letter to his sister that he writes shutting himself at Giorgio Viola's hotel at the beginning of the rebellion, Decoud writes: "I have the feeling of a great solitude around me" (167; pt. 2, ch. 7).

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SUMMARY

Skepticism, Action, Ideas:
Dr. Monygham as a Key to *Nostromo*

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Notwithstanding its acclaim as Joseph Conrad's best novel, *Nostromo* has bewildered readers because of its highly complex narrative structure. This bewilderment leads to a structural question: whether Nostromo, the title character, is the protagonist or not. This question is raised by the apparently sudden change of Nostromo's personality in the middle of the novel. He is proud of his reputation as "a perfectly incorruptible fellow" among the upper-class people. In the confusion of the Revolution, however, their downfall frustrates Nostromo, who now cannot retain his fame despite his success in transporting and hiding the silver. In the end, his sense of being "betrayed" leads to his transformation into the "slave" of the silver that he himself has hidden.

In order to unravel the novel's narrative structure and its theme, I would like to argue that Dr. Monygham is the key to both of them, though Fredric Jameson thinks the doctor comes to play an important role suddenly in the middle of the novel in accordance with Conrad's "narrative afterthought." I would assert three reasons for Monygham's important role in the novel. Firstly, the narrative structure serves to compare Dr. Monygham and Nostromo from the early part of the novel. This contrast clarifies why Nostromo "changes," and why Monygham is not a "narrative afterthought." Secondly, in this meticulous structure the novel represents Monygham's achievement of both action and detachment. Monygham attains both of them in a more well-balanced way than other characters. Finally, these two points stress the limitation of Monygham's detachment, notwithstanding his attainment of activeness and skepticism.