

## *NOSTROMO* IN *T.P.'S WEEKLY*

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I know nothing so fragrant of the past as old magazines. They are little contemporary records in prose and verse, and to them attaches, in a way, the value of history. To possess a copy of "A Tale of Two Cities" is surely not so stimulating as to possess a copy of "All the Year Round," in which it appeared, along with a miscellany of other writers. In a magazine more truly than in a single novel is the taste of a period reflected [...].

Marriott Watson in *T.P.'s Weekly*, 1904<sup>1</sup>

Conrad termed *Nostramo* "my biggest creative effort", and it is widely regarded as his greatest novel.<sup>2</sup> Most critical discussions of *Nostramo* give the impression (or appear to assume) that the novel exists in only one form: namely, the book which the critic happens to have available and likes to use. *Nostramo*, however, exists in diverse forms, and the critical consequences of this diversity have not yet been fully examined. Eventually, they should be. That title, *Nostramo*, presides over far more textual material and interpretative possibilities than most readers recognise.

In the ensuing pages, I discuss the novel's serialisation in the magazine *T.P.'s Weekly* (in Volumes III and IV, between 29 January and 7 October 1904).<sup>3</sup> I also em-

<sup>1</sup> H.B. Marriott Watson. "Old Magazines." *T.P.'s Weekly*. Vol. III (22 April 1904), 546.

<sup>2</sup> *CLJC* 6, 233. Scott Fitzgerald said: "I'd rather have written Conrad's *Nostramo* than any other novel" (*F. Scott Fitzgerald on Authorship*, 87); and Albert Guerard called *Nostramo* "without question Conrad's greatest achievement" (*Conrad the Novelist*, 178). Nevertheless, Conrad told André Gide: "I have a sort of tenderness for that vast contrivance. But it does not work." (*CLJC* 5, 79)

<sup>3</sup> The variations between the different texts of the novel have been discussed by me in several locations, notably *Joseph Conrad: A Literary Life*, 96–103, my "Penguin Critical Studies" book, *Joseph Conrad: "Nostramo"*, 52–58, and the "Note on the Text" of the 1995 Everyman edition of *Nostramo*. While drawing on that material, I modify and augment it here. I have also been aided by Xavier Brice's excellent doctoral thesis, "'There's Many a Slip': The Writing of *Nostramo*" (University of Kent, 2002), and am grateful to Dr Brice for permission to use and quote it. In this article, when making textual com-

phasise three distinct forms of *Nostramo*: the serial; the first British edition, published by Harper & Brothers on 14 October 1904; and the second British edition, published by Dent in 1918. When serialisation began, less than half the novel was written. The serial, though longer in Parts I and II, has been estimated to be some 10,000 words shorter than the 1904 book, which held about 167,000 words.<sup>4</sup> Before publication by *T.P.'s Weekly*, some cuts were made to the material both by the magazine's editorial office and by Conrad. For the first book edition, Conrad made numerous revisions and provided additional material for Part III, while making substantial cuts in Parts I and II. For the 1918 edition, Conrad revised the text, again making various cuts.<sup>5</sup> The serial thus contains important material absent from the first edition; the first edition contains important material absent from the second; and, since the second edition seems to have provided a model for most subsequent editions, present-day readers are usually seeing the shortest text and may be unaware of the riches it excludes. (Conrad's excisions were sometimes unwise. A 59-year-old is not necessarily a better judge than a 46-year-old.)

Furthermore, extant texts are haunted by some errors which are exposed by contrast with correct phrasing in *T.P.'s Weekly*. For instance, the editions of *Nostramo* published by Dent (in the Collected Edition, 1947), Penguin (1983), Oxford World's Classics (1984), Broadview (1997) and Wordsworth Classics (2000) all contain, in Part II, Chapter 8, the erroneous comparison of a sail to "a square block of dense snow", when, as the serial tells us, the reading should be "a square block of dense shadow". The phrasing in *T.P.'s Weekly* is clearly correct, for the narrator soon refers to the sail as "the square blotch of darkness" (III, 721). Exceptionally, a new edition of *Nostramo* published by Everyman Orion in 1995 enabled me to restore the 1904 text, correct numerous errors (particularly in the non-English vocabulary), and use the serial text to effect various emendations.

The serialisation of *Nostramo*, secured by Conrad's agent, J.B. Pinker, marked an important stage in the commercialisation and social dissemination of Conrad's output. Previously, Conrad (given the choice) had worked with publishers and editors of journals that he admired: for example, with William Blackwood, proprietor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, or with W.E. Henley, editor of *The New Review*. In this case, however, Conrad acquiesced, for the sake of the money he so urgently needed, in publication in the down-market (but respectably didactic) periodical, *T.P.'s Weekly*, which he privately called "T P's horror".<sup>6</sup> Its editor and proprietor was Thomas Power

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parisons, I cite the volumes of *T.P.'s Weekly* held by the Library of the University of Sussex, the British first edition of *Nostramo* (London: Harper & Brothers, October 1904), and the British second of *Nostramo* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1918).

<sup>4</sup> Brice, 1.

<sup>5</sup> On 8 October 1917, for instance, when preparing the second edition, Conrad wrote to Hugh R. Dent (*CLJC* 6, 131): "The beginning of Chap. VIII got into the 1st Ed<sup>on</sup> without being corr<sup>d</sup> and pruned by me at the time. The 1st ed<sup>on</sup> was most unsatisfactory. You'll find several passages deleted bodily."

<sup>6</sup> *CLJC* 3, 167.

O'Connor (1848–1929), journalist, biographer, advocate of Irish Home Rule, and staunch Liberal; originally, he informed his readers, a penniless youth from the squalid streets of Dublin.<sup>7</sup> For more than forty years, he was the Member of Parliament for the Scotland division of Liverpool. His other magazines, the *Star* and the *Sun*, supported radical Liberalism and Irish Nationalism. *T.P.'s Weekly* (which cost only one penny per issue, being twopence cheaper than *The Times*) addressed a broad lower-middle-class readership, and particularly young men who wished to better themselves in their careers and in their cultural grasp. It was the kind of journal which might have been read by E.M. Forster's shabby but aspirational clerk, Leonard Bast (of *Howards End*), for it specialised in articles which would give such people an entry to the culture of their seniors. Of course, some readers were female: a few of the advertisements aimed at women, and the bound set of *T.P.'s Weekly* on my desk was once owned by E. Millicent Pool.

Typical items included advice on acquiring critical judgement by sampling "touchstones" of great literature, and on how to file newspaper clippings; there were short poems, extracts from the classics, book reviews, literary gossip ("T.P. in His Anecdoteage"), travel notes, and correspondence. Ironically, the final instalment of *Nostramo*, in which Mrs Gould is told that her husband's silver-mine "shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back", was accompanied by an article entitled "How to Become a Mining Engineer" (IV, 470), which explains that "a mining engineer should be something of a ruler of men [...]. So he must be ready enough, but not too ready, with the shooting-irons and the sjambok [...]". To some readers, such material might appear to ambush *Nostramo*; to others, it might appear that *Nostramo* subverts such material. Presumably both the serial and the other items contributed to a mobile and highly variable salmagundi of information and impressions to be diversely coordinated, used or neglected by the diverse readers.

Unlike the more staid and ponderous literary periodicals, *T.P.'s Weekly* provided a varied, easy-to-read sequence of predominantly short items accompanied by an abundance of advertisements. Some advertisers offered correspondence courses on "Hypnotism, Magnetic Healing, Clairvoyance, Personal Magnetism"; the makers of "Scrub's Preparation" declared that it would cleanse the hair, restore colour to carpets, polish plate and ensure a refreshing Turkish bath; the inventor of "Patent Nose Machines" undertook to "improve ugly noses of all kinds"; the obese were assured that "Antipon permanently cures obesity"; addicts learnt of the "Alcoholic Excess and Drug habit permanently cured...by the recognized Turvey Treatment"; Bovril promised to help "raise an Imperial Race"; the debilitated (and future editors of *Madame Bovary* and *The Secret Agent*) were offered "The Pulvermacher Electric

<sup>7</sup> "Books That Have Influenced Me." *T.P.'s Weekly*. Vol. III (29 July 1904), 141.

Belt”;<sup>8</sup> while asthmatics were informed, perhaps lethally, that “Zematone Cigarettes” would provide “INSTANT RELIEF and CURE”. In such hucksters’ company appeared Conrad’s critical analysis of “material interests” and economic imperialism. One is reminded of the remarks (about a product resembling Bovril) by the narrator of Conrad’s tale “An Anarchist”:

I have never swallowed its advertisements. Perhaps they have not gone far enough. As far as I can remember, they make no promise of everlasting youth..., nor yet have they claimed the power of raising the dead for their estimable products. Why this austere reserve, I wonder!<sup>9</sup>

Familiarity with *T.P.’s Weekly* may have encouraged Conrad to criticise later (not only in “An Anarchist” but also in “The Partner” and *Chance*) the apparently unbridled power of advertising.

T.P. O’Connor, having read *Almayer’s Folly* “with rapture”, had proclaimed the author’s genius in the “Book of the Month” columns of the *Weekly Sun* (9 June 1895). He was thus one of the earliest and most enthusiastic advocates of Conrad. Such praise, at the literary *début*, was crucial in establishing Conrad’s new career. Later, associated advocacy ensued. In Vol. III (1 January 1904, 10), *T.P.’s Weekly* praised *Romance*. A fortnight before the serialisation of *Nostramo* began, the magazine offered a tribute to Conrad’s tale “Youth” from its regular columnist, “John o’London” (Wilfred Whitten, 81). In the following week (22 January 1904, 102), a column headed “Our New Serial” quoted praise of Conrad from nine sources, while on p. 113 an anonymous full-page article entitled “Joseph Conrad. The Author of Our Next Serial.” surveyed the author’s life and creative career, stressing his romantic adventurousness and the powerful originality of the works, their English being “so vivid, so cut off from our traditions, so unliterary, and so alive”. (In lectures at Cambridge in the 1950s, the influential critic F.R. Leavis would similarly deem ‘literary’ a pejorative term.) On 5 February 1904, a letter from “M.K.S.” of Enfield declared that “since Stevenson no writer has been able, save Conrad, to thrill one’s innermost emotions in a few words” and that even Kipling could not have written “Youth”; and, on 18 March, “C.M.” of Wallington said that a student of English Literature should include Conrad in the reading-list. Later (19 August, 234), a reviewer praised Conrad’s preface to Maupassant’s *Yvette*. A contributor to the magazine was Arnold Bennett, who would later assure Conrad privately that *Nostramo* was “the Higueroa among novels”: “the finest novel of this generation (bar none)”.<sup>10</sup> His series of polemical essays,

<sup>8</sup> The Pulvermacher Electric Belt promised to provide “a general reinforcement of the vital energy”. Flaubert’s Homais excites his wife at night by displaying “the Pulvermacher hydroelectric body-chain” which is wound round his body: “she felt a redoubling of her ardour”. (*Madame Bovary*. Transl. G. Wall. London: Penguin, 1992, 282.) The narrator of *The Secret Agent* includes “the sellers of invigorating electric belts” among “men who live on the vices, the follies, or the baser fears of mankind”. (*The Secret Agent*. Ed. Cedric Watts. London: Everyman Dent Orion, 1997, 12.)

<sup>9</sup> “An Anarchist”: *A Set of Six*, 136.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Conrad. 22 November 1912. *The Letters of Arnold Bennett*, 321.

“My Literary Heresies”, appeared in Vol. IV, 328, 364 and 392. In the third essay, Bennett says:

The men whom I admire, whose new novels I anticipate with eagerness more or less acute, are nine in number. I give them in alphabetical order: – Joseph Conrad, Murray Gilchrist, W.W. Jacobs, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, George Moore, Arthur Morrison, Eden Phillpotts, and H.G. Wells.

When “An Outpost of Progress” and “The Heart of Darkness” had been serialised (in *Cosmopolis* and *Blackwood's* respectively), Conrad had insisted on correcting proofs, and had complained that those tales were marred by their division into instalments. Recently, he had taken pains to compress *Romance* for serialisation, but those pains had been wasted, as no magazine had accepted that collaborative novel. Now, Conrad gave O'Connor a free hand to do as he wished with *Nostramo* in his magazine:

I have no objection to the compression of the story for the purposes of serial pub<sup>on</sup> in T.P.'s Weekly – as long as I am not called upon to do the compressing myself. I am willing to trust in that matter Mr O'Connor's judgment, the skill of his staff and, most of all, *his supervision* of the process. I would stipulate also that no proofs be sent to me. On those conditions I am ready to let Mr O'Connor have an absolutely free hand in making the story acceptable to his large public.

I work as I can. Not very intelligently perhaps, but I trust I have enough intelligence to understand his point of view, and frankly, looking at the conditions of publication (short instal<sup>ts</sup> and so on) it seems to me wise generally and of advantage even to myself. There's nothing I desire less than to appear as a portentous bore before so many readers.<sup>11</sup>

This contrasted completely with his attitude to the prospective book version, to be published in London and New York by the American firm of Harper & Brothers:

Whatever happens I *must* have proofs of the book. They can't do better than send them out to me from N. York. I can't let a book of mine go out into the world without a careful personal revision. Let them pull off galley slips in the US – or else here if they are going to set it up here. And I *will not* put up with the American spelling in the *English* edition. I would rather – and I will too – fling the whole thing into the fire.<sup>12</sup>

The logic of the contrast seems evident. The serial is for the immediate and ephemeral readership, and – in the case of *Nostramo* – is not the author's prime concern. The book, however, is directed at a more selective, scrutinising and long-term readership: its range includes a posterity which may perhaps extend over centuries. Even if Conrad disliked the serialisation and the extensive associated publicity, it helped to extend his fame, and may thus have helped to create the conditions for his eventual

<sup>11</sup> *CLJC* 3, 91–92.

<sup>12</sup> *CLJC* 3, 92. The London text did use English spelling, but disappointed Conrad: see *CLJC* 3, 171–172. The American first edition, which appeared somewhat later (on 23 November) than the British first edition, was more tidily produced and had fewer misprints.

accession, around 1914, to popularity and financial success. The patrician author, however, felt demeaned. With customary exaggeration, Ford Madox Ford (who claimed a share of *Nostramo*)<sup>13</sup> stated that, thanks to *T.P.'s Weekly*, "Conrad's name appeared on every hoarding in London", adding that Conrad imagined himself "for ever dishonoured" by "pandering to popularity".<sup>14</sup> *T.P.'s Weekly*, meanwhile, took obvious risks in starting to serialise a novel which was far from completion, and (as in the case of *Blackwood's* with *Lord Jim*) the publishers were subsequently "placed in a position of some difficulty by the unexpectedly long continuance of [Conrad's] excellent story".<sup>15</sup>

When seen in the context of the magazine, *Nostramo* is markedly different from the same novel in book form. First, Conrad's attack on "material interests" and on the ways in which ideals may be corrupted by commercial considerations takes on a particularly ironic force when it is found in the pages of *T.P.'s Weekly*. As has been indicated, the serial is close to advertisements for a diversity of wares. Thus, immediately following the poignant ending of the novel, we find, in the same column of p. 457, after a thin horizontal line:

MONEY SAVED on Linen. Buy from Ireland at Factory Prices. Collars, 4s. 11d. doz.; Nursery Diaper, 4½d. yd.; Ladies' Handkerchiefs, 2s. 3d. doz. Samples, post free. – HUTTON'S, Room 92, Larne, Ireland.

The effect, for readers moved by *Nostramo*'s conclusion, may be as jarring as a derisory snigger at the end of a symphony. Again, the novel sounds the sombre theme that ideals inevitably become degraded when put into action: "There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea."<sup>16</sup> An idealistic reader may feel that the "successful action" of serialising the novel entailed some "moral degradation". Conrad's masterpiece contributes to a journalistic commercial venture, and commerce jostles the instalments, Conrad's voice being just one among the vociferations of less urbane salesmen. (Since Conrad lived by selling his wares, it is valid, though only part of the truth, to term him, too, a salesman.) *Nostramo* incorporated the most intelligent fictional analysis of international capitalism and of economic imperialism ever written; but its appearance in the pages of *T.P.'s Weekly* revealed graphically the novel's intricate involvement with those forces. The serialised novel was helping to attract the public to those advertisements which helped to pay Conrad's fee for serialisation. To see *Nostramo* in its

<sup>13</sup> Ford Madox Ford. *Return to Yesterday*, 33. After a thorough examination of the evidence, Xavier Brice (196) finds that the material in Ford's handwriting (sixteen holograph pages plus ten lines on a separate leaf, respectively at Yale and the Rosenbach Foundation) was probably "taken down from Conrad's dictation and not composed by Ford".

<sup>14</sup> Ford Madox Ford. *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*, 212.

<sup>15</sup> Written to Conrad. 15 August 1904: *A Portrait in Letters*, 44.

<sup>16</sup> *Nostramo* (Harper, 1904), 443. The statement does not appear in the serial. The book amplifies Mrs Gould's sense of disillusionment.

original context is to be reminded that Conrad made his living as an entertainer: not as a moralist, politician, preacher or theorist, but as a writer who succeeded in proportion to his ability to provide entertainment. This need not be regarded as a reductive statement. At his best, as in *Nostramo*, he provided remarkably intelligent entertainment; and hence the durability of the work. Academic critics, perhaps partly inclined to enhance their own prestige, often concentrate on the imputed ideological or philosophical implications of his works, and thus neglect what might be termed the dynamics of the diversely entertaining.

Conrad inscribed thus the flyleaf of one copy of the book:

Serialized in England by TP's Weekly to the special annoyance of its readers who wrote many letters complaining of so much space being taken by utterly unreadable stuff. Fell flat on publication in book form.<sup>17</sup>

“Unreadable”? Well, serialisation would obviously have made this elaborately complex novel harder to follow. When we read it in book form, we may turn back through numerous pages to refresh our memories; when we read a serial, we seldom have previous instalments at hand. To make matters more difficult for the periodical readers, the instalments of *Nostramo* were not illustrated, nor were they introduced (as often happened in magazines) by synopses of “the story so far”. Certainly, a minority of subscribers to *T.P.'s Weekly* (librarians, for instance) would have purchased the issues in bound volumes, as surviving tomes testify. Vol. IV, 263, states that Vol. III, bound in cloth gilt, “is now ready” and costs four shillings and sixpence. Most subscribers, however, like regular readers of a magazine today, would have jettisoned each issue after reading it. To co-ordinate in memory fictional complexities which extend over eight months is amply taxing.

When Conrad was writing *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, he envisaged its eventual publication in W.E. Henley's *The New Review*, and that novel appears to be ideologically inflected to harmonise with Henley's right-wing opinions.<sup>18</sup> The publication of *Nostramo* in *T.P.'s Weekly*, on the other hand, was not an event that Conrad relished, and it is unlikely that any deference to O'Connor's opinions influenced the writing, though O'Connor, as an Irish nationalist, naturally regarded sympathetically Poland's “tragic” and “forlorn” nationalism.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Decoud's desire that Sulaco should cast off centuries of exploitation by becoming an independent republic chimes with the ambitions of Irish nationalists; but the novel criticises Decoud's idealism in this respect by showing that Sulaco's secession is ensured by a U.S. warship, emphasising that Sulaco (like the historic Panama) has been brought more firmly within the area of U.S. economic and political dominance. The story of Sulaco does not end

<sup>17</sup> Holograph inscription in T.J. Wise's copy of *Nostramo*. British Library: Ashley, 463.

<sup>18</sup> See Cedric Watts. *Joseph Conrad: A Literary Life*, 65–73.

<sup>19</sup> “For of all the forlorn hopes in the world the cause of Poland is the most tragic and the most appalling:” *T.P.'s Weekly*, Vol. III, 113. One recalls Conrad's friendship with R.B. Cunningham Graham, an advocate since the 1880s of Irish and Scottish independence from England.

there; but it is nevertheless not one to offer encouragement to nationalists. (Today, ironically, the Irish Republic is subordinated to the European Union and subsidised by English taxpayers.) Nevertheless, O'Connor would have appreciated *Nostramo's* sceptical insights into international power-politics and its sense that while the ordinary people toil on, exploitative overlords export wealth to reassure investors. Conrad's awareness, as he wrote the later part of the novel, that it was being published in *T.P.'s Weekly* may perhaps have accentuated some of the themes: for instance, the theme of the degradation of ideals when they are put into practice can be related to Conrad's chagrin on seeing the great novel serialised; but Gould's relevant reflection "It was impossible to disentangle one's activity from its debasing contacts" appears in the 1904 book and not in the serial.<sup>20</sup>

There are thousands of differences between the serial text and the text of the first book edition. Many are petty, but some are substantial and significant. The most obvious difference is that, for the book version, Conrad greatly expanded the account of Nostromo's love-relationship with Giselle Viola; indeed, Conrad seized numerous opportunities to expand the material of Part III. Since the book version represents Conrad's "second thoughts", one would expect it to be consistently superior, but it is not. The direct rendering of Nostromo's courtship of Giselle, in which the descriptions and dialogue have a derivative, "magazine-ish" quality, appears not in the magazine but in the book. In the first third of the novel, on the other hand, where the serial text is often longer, the serial sometimes contains excellent material which is absent from the book. Indeed, a few of the omitted passages clarify what, in extant book versions, remains obscure.

*T.P.'s Weekly*, III, 270, contains a long passage which enriches the description of the Occidental Province and its problems. Mrs Gould, exploring the region, is troubled by the scale of its poverty. She sees "the ragged poor sleeping in the shade", "the beggars on the steps of the churches besieging the doors of the house of God", "old hags, ragged men, women with hopeless faces, and thin, naked children". These reflections follow:

Was the remedy for that, too, in the development of material interests? Charles seemed to hug that belief in his taciturn and observing reserve. He was looking for workmen, and that was proof enough of his theory.

We encounter a familiar technical phenomenon of this novel: Conrad's phrasing ambiguously blends tacitly-reported thought or speech with narratorial observation.<sup>21</sup> In the brief sample quoted here, the first two sentences seem to report Emilia's reflections, while the third sentence seems partly to report Gould's response to an enquiry of hers and partly to be an ironic narratorial reportage of Gould's activity. This whole

<sup>20</sup> *Nostramo*, 303.

<sup>21</sup> Tacitly-reported or implicitly-reported speech or thought occurs when a narrator presents in reported form the speech or thought of a character or characters, but omits customary guides to the procedure (e.g. such guides as "He said that" or "She thought that").



descriptive passage valuably augments the social and geographical panorama. Less obviously, it helps to counterbalance the novel's concluding emphasis on the oppressiveness of "material interests" by making clear that, among other achievements, the mine has solved a massive problem of unemployment and poverty in Sulaco.

Another regrettable omission from the book is a sequence (III, 370–371) which deals with "the proclamation of the so-called Mandate law of Don Vincente's Dictatorship". It explains that Ribiera's policies have been devised by Avellanos and Gould, and it clarifies (as follows) the nature of the dictatorship.

The Señor Administrador of the Gould concession was pleased with the wording of the Five-year Mandate, which suspended the fundamental laws of the estate, but at the same time aimed at keeping private ambitions from interfering in the work of economical reconstruction. Peace at home and credit abroad! Nothing could be more sane. This was not politics; it was the common-sense watchword of material interests which, once established, would safeguard the honest working of these political institutions which, sound in themselves, had been the shield of plundering demagogues. For it is the fate of institutions to be ever at the mercy of men [...].<sup>22</sup>

By making clear that the Ribiera régime "suspended the fundamental laws" of Costaguana, this account accentuates the irony that Gould's quest to secure the mine and thereby inaugurate an era of law, order and progress has involved him in an intrigue to establish yet another dictatorship – a venture which will fail. The phrase "This was not politics" is another instance of implicitly-reported thought surrounded by narratorial irony. Gould may rationalise his manipulations as simple "common sense" only, but the passage indicates the amply political extent of his involvement.

Evidence that the cutting of the text (here almost certainly Conrad's cutting) could introduce obscurity occurs in the dialogue between Hirsch and Gould. The 1904 book (170) offers this:

"It is a great, great foolishness, Don Carlos, all this. The price of hides in Hamburg is gone up – up. Of course the Ribierist Government will do away with all that – when it gets established firmly. Meantime –"

He sighed.

"Yes, meantime," repeated Charles Gould inscrutably.

The obscurity is evident. It lies in the transition from "The price of hides in Hamburg is gone up – up." to "Of course the Ribierist Government will do away with all that". The book's reader will be unable to understand how the Ribierist régime can possibly "do away with" a matter which seems to be far away, in Europe, and which should, in any case, delight a hide-merchant like Hirsch: surely an increase in prices will mean an increase in his profits? The full version, in *T.P.'s Weekly* (III, 530), provides the necessary clarification:

<sup>22</sup> In this quotation, the noun "estate" is probably a Conradian Gallicism (*état*, state). The serial of *Nostramo* is liberally sprinkled with Gallicisms, e.g. "the lecture of the letters" and "their hats...made like one disc"; and plenty remain in the book versions.

“It is a great, great foolishness, Don Carlos, all this. The prince of hides in Hamburg is gone up – up.”

The way the Señor Adminstrador of the Gould Concession bent his gaze upon him would have been enough to make pause a man less profoundly moved; but the adventurous Israelite from Esmeralda continued dolefully:

“And I have managed to make a confidential arrangement with the Collector of Customs. You are aware, Don Carlos, that no honest man can afford to pay the preposterous export duties in full and continue in business. So I’ve made a confidential arrangement with the Señor Collector, a most amiable man, and it is the usual thing in this country,” Hirsh [*sic*] murmured, grasping deferentially Charles’s extended hand. “You know that as well as I do, Don Carlos. Of course, the Ribierist government will do away with all that – when it gets firm – firm. Meantime –”

“Yes, meantime?” interrupted Charles Gould, inscrutably.

The serial version makes full sense. What Ribiera’s government is expected to “do away with” is nothing in Europe but, on the contrary, the widespread corruption in Costaguana, of which the required bribery of the Customs’ official is so characteristic an example. The book version is obscure because the textual excision has been clumsily effected.

Even in matters of punctuation, the 1904 book is, on occasions, inferior to the serial. The punctuation in the book’s text is usually somewhat heavier and fuller; and this often serves to clarify the logic. Nevertheless, there is at times a loss of fluency, various errors are introduced, and occasionally the tone is coarsened.<sup>23</sup> In the serial (IV, 70), Dr Monygham’s account of Teresa Viola’s death is rendered thus:

The soldier, no less startled, up with his rifle and pulled the trigger, deafening and singeing the engineer, but in his flurry missing him completely. But, look what happens! At the noise of the report the sleeping woman sat up, as if moved by a spring, with a shriek, “The children, Gian’ Battista! Save the children.” I have it in my ears now. It was the truest cry of distress I ever heard. I stood as if paralysed, but the old husband ran across to the bedside stretching out his hands. She clung to them. I could see her eyes go glazed; the old fellow lowered her down on the pillows and then looked at me. She was dead.<sup>24</sup>

The version in the 1904 book (286) is considerably more exclamatory. “Save the children.” becomes “Save the children!”; “She clung to them.” becomes “She clung to them!”; and “She was dead.” becomes “She was dead!”. The effect is to make the description seem less restrained and relatively melodramatic.

<sup>23</sup> A comparison with the surviving manuscripts of *Nostramo* shows that the punctuation as rendered by publishers’ “house styling” tended to be heavier than the punctuation used by Conrad in his holographs. Nevertheless, Conrad expected and generally accepted the publishers’ punctuation. He did not complain about it, nor did he eliminate it from proofs. In short, the heavier style, which often reduces the fluency but improves the logical clarity and the euphony of the prose, is arguably more Conradian than Conrad’s “personal” style.

<sup>24</sup> In line 1, “up with” is no error but a contemporaneous idiom meaning “raised”. (Cf. “The cook up with a ladle” in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.)

Another instance of the superiority, in some areas, of the serial text is provided by its version of the awakening of *Nostromo*. In standard editions, this passage is so fine that it has rightly attracted considerable attention from commentators, but the serial version is demonstrably superior, mainly because it contains a sentence which provides a logical bridge between the statement that Nostromo has a “lost air” and the subsequent description of his confident stretching. Here is the serial text (IV, 262):

At last the conflagration of sea and sky lying embraced and asleep in a flaming contact upon the edge of the world, went out. The red sparks in the water vanished together with the stains of blood in the black mantle draping the sombre head of the Placid Gulf; and a fresh puff of breeze rose, rustling heavily the thick growth of bushes on the ruined earthworks of the fort, and died out with a long souging stir in the branches of crooked dwarf trees growing upon the rock-like creviced face of a bastion. Nostromo woke up from a fourteen hours' sleep, and arose full length from his lair in the long grass. He stood knee deep among the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world. But quickly the look of recognition came into his eyes. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a forced frown, appeared the man.

Among other changes, the 1904 book (347) omits the sentence “But quickly the look of recognition came into his eyes.”, resulting in the following abrupt and illogical contrast:

He stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth [...].

The omission of Nostromo's phase of recognition results in an illogically abrupt transition from the state of feeling like a lost newcomer to the state of feeling relaxed and confident. The *T.P.'s Weekly* version shows that Nostromo overcomes the initial feeling of bewilderment by recognising his situation as a survivor in familiar terrain. (The next stage, after the confident stretching, will be his recognition of not only his dangerous plight as a foe of the victors but also the problem of what to do about Decoud: hence the frown.)

Certainly, the 1904 Harper text of *Nostromo* is, by and large, superior to the serial text, as one might expect. In the book, the final sequence becomes much fuller and has stronger thematic emphases. (The 4,000 words of the last chapter in the serial were superseded by more than 14,000 words.) Furthermore, the Harper version of the whole eliminates various inconsistencies and petty errors. It is nevertheless true that the serial contains much valuable descriptive and narrative material which did not survive in subsequent versions; and, for every ten variants in which the book version

is superior, there are perhaps three or four in which the *T.P.'s Weekly* version is preferable.

Some critical appraisals of the novel are unhistorical, for they are based on a text which differs in many details from that of the first trade edition. While talking of the 1904 context, many critics use a post-1904 text. The following passage appeared in the serial (IV, 263), and it had a close counterpart in the 1904 Harper volume; but (at the time of writing in 2004) it is absent from such editions as those by Penguin, Broadview and Wordsworth.<sup>25</sup>

In this harbour at the foot of immense mountains that outlined their shadowy peaks amongst the kindled swarm of stars, on this smooth, half-wild sheet of black water serene in its loneliness, whose future of crowded prosperity was being settled not so much by the industry as by the fears and necessities and crimes of men, short-sighted in good and evil, the two solitary foreign ships had hoisted their riding-lights according to rule. But Nostromo gave no second look to the harbour. Those two ships were present enough to his mind. Either would have been a refuge. It would have been no feat for him to swim off to them. One of them was an Italian barque which had brought a cargo of timber from Puget Sound for the railway. He knew her men; in his quality as foreman of all the work done in the harbour he had been able to oblige her captain in some small matter relating to the filling of his water tanks. Bronzed, black-whiskered, and stately, with the impressive gravity of a man too powerful to unbend in a smile, he had been invited more than once to drink a glass of Italian vermouth in her cabin. It was well known amongst ship-masters trading along the seaboard that as a matter of sound policy the Capataz of Cargadores in Sulaco should be propitiated by small civilities, which, as a matter of fact, he seemed to expect as his due. For in truth, being implicitly trusted by Captain Mitchell, he had, as somebody said, the whole harbour in his pocket. For the rest, an excellent fellow, quite straightforward, everybody agreed.

After 1904, editions of the novel retained the subsequent paragraph, which says that Nostromo contemplated escaping from Sulaco and returning to Italy; but they lacked this detailed formulation of the plan of escape. Thereby, they lacked the important thematic material which begins this quoted paragraph. The statement that the country's future prosperity "was being settled not so much by the industry as by the fears, necessities and crimes of men, short-sighted in good and evil" specifies one of the major historical ironies which the novel copiously illustrates. Even more importantly: in the "Author's Note" which he provided for the 1918 edition by Dent, Conrad cited, as a crucial phrase, words from this very passage which was no longer to be found in the text. He said that he had envisioned a story of events flowing from the passions "of men short-sighted in good and evil".<sup>26</sup> That theme has local precipitation in various features: for example, the silver-framed spectacles which Mrs Gould gives to

<sup>25</sup> Keith Carabine's Oxford "World's Classics" edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 586) states that Conrad "wisely cut" this passage. Exceptionally, the Random House edition, New York, 1951, using the 1904 text, retained it.

<sup>26</sup> P. ix. The 1904 book had no comma after "men".

Giorgio Viola, and which he forgets to wear when, seeing a blurred figure in the night, he mistakenly shoots Nostromo.

The number and intricacy of the changes in the text can be indicated by the evolution of the following passage, taken from the end of the first paragraph of the serial's final chapter. It describes Nostromo's obsession with the stolen silver. *T.P.'s Weekly* (IV, 455) gives:

Sometimes during a week's stay, or more, he could only manage one visit – no more. He suffered through his fears as much as through his prudence. To do things by stealth humiliated him. And he suffered most from the concentration of his thought upon the treasure as thought becomes concentrated upon a vision of horror and pain. Never did his unblemished reputation appear more vividly as a matter of life and death.

In the 1904 book (444) it appears thus:

Sometimes during a week's stay, or more, he could only manage one visit to the treasure. And that was all. A couple of ingots. He suffered through his fears as much as through his prudence. To do things by stealth humiliated him. And he suffered most from the concentration of his thought upon the treasure; as thought becomes concentrated, his unblemished reputation appear more vividly as a matter of pain and death.

This version eliminates the awkward repetition of "more", and is initially more specific; but, in the last four lines, the omission of nine words has garbled the sense. In the 1918 Dent edition (454), the garbled lines have vanished:

Sometimes during a week's stay, or more, he could only manage one visit to the treasure. And that was all. A couple of ingots. He suffered through his fears as much as through his prudence. To do things by stealth humiliated him. And he suffered most from the concentration of his thought upon the treasure.

A problem has thus been solved by a further cut; and the 1918 version has had a long life, extending into the 21<sup>st</sup> century via such editions as the Broadview and the Wordsworth.

The novel's last paragraph illustrates the rule that, although the 1904 book text was often better than that of the serial, the changes entailed some definite losses. The first quotation is from *T.P.'s Weekly*, IV, 457:

From the deep head of the gulf, full of black vapour, and walled by immense mountains from Punta Mala round to the west of Aznexa, where the obscure gringos, dead in life and living in death, guard the legendary treasure, out upon the ocean with a bright line marking the illusory edge of the world, where a great white cloud hung brighter than a mass of silver in the moonlight, in that cry of a longing heart sending its never-ceasing vibration into a sky empty of stars, the genius of the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores dominated the place.

The 1904 book concludes thus:

Dr. Monygham, pulling round in the police-galley, heard the name pass over his head. It was another of Nostromo's successes, the greater, the most enviable, the most sinister of all. In that true cry of love and grief that seemed to ring aloud from Punta Mala to Azuera and away to the bright line of the horizon, overhung by a big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver, the genius of the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores dominated the dark Gulf containing his conquests of treasure and love.

Each version contains a misreading: the former has "Aznexa" for "Azuera", the latter has "greater" for "greatest".<sup>27</sup> Both versions vigorously recapitulate important themes and leit-motifs. Conrad pointed out that he had deliberately put "silver", one of the main co-ordinating terms of the novel, into that closing description.<sup>28</sup> Both passages echo the work's opening account of the coastal landscape, of Punta Mala and Azuera. Both remind us that, nocturnally, the Golfo Plácido is uncannily dark, as though impenetrable by the eye of God: a narrative feature which, stressed in the opening pages, had lent plausibility and symbolic resonance to the account of the voyage of the silver-laden lighter bearing Hirsch, Decoud and Nostromo to their respective dooms: Hirsch to be tortured and shot, Decoud to commit suicide, Nostromo to become a thief who will be shot while returning to the treasure. Visually, then, the paragraphs recapitulate the novel's light-amid-darkness motif which was exploited in so many scenes, as when the lighthouse's lamp "glittered and sparkled like a dome-shaped shrine of diamonds [...], dominating the Sea". (Conrad's essay "Autocracy and War" refers to personal and national extinction as "the great darkness before us".<sup>29</sup>)

The second version is rhythmically more euphonious and conclusive: the final majestic dactylic roll sounds much better than the first version's descent to the rather bathetic "dominated the place". The second is also more proficiently punctuated, and (partly as a consequence) is grammatically clearer than the first; and it is subtler in various respects. By letting the initial sentence specify Dr. Monygham as auditor, it raises the possibility that the following sentence could be regarded as his tacitly-reported thought, expressing his characteristic envy and distrust of Nostromo. (Previously that night, he had recognised "the victory of Nostromo's genius over his own".) The third sentence, however, seems to be directly narratorial; but that does not make it fully reliable. We have already learnt, while reading *Nostromo*, that this narrator has a habit of making explicit claims which the wider narrative implicitly challenges. Here, the phrase "his conquests of treasure and love" is invested contextually with amply irony. Linda may voice her love, but Giselle was the main object of Nostromo's passion: his desire for one sister entailed treachery to the other; and a powerful theme of the novel was that, in human affairs, loyalty and treachery are ironically intertwined: Charles Gould, Giorgio Viola, Nostromo, Monygham, López,

<sup>27</sup> In the 1918 edition, "successes" became "triumphs".

<sup>28</sup> *CLJC* 8, 37.

<sup>29</sup> "Autocracy and War". *Notes on Life and Letters*, 109. In view of Virginia Woolf's knowledge of Conrad's works, the "light amid darkness" imagery of *Nostromo* may have influenced that of *To the Lighthouse*.

Hernández, General Montero and Colonel Sotillo offer variously subtler and starker variations on this theme.

One distinct thematic loss occurs when the book version of the paragraph eliminates the gringos who haunt the location of treasure. By including them, the first version recapitulates part of the novel's opening, sustaining a motif and a theme which have been explicitly recurrent in the text (e.g. when Decoud is marooned and when Nostromo returns to the treasure) and which blend with the adjacent theme that wealth possesses a dehumanising allure. Another thematic loss occurs when the book eliminates "the bright line marking the illusory edge of the world"; for "illusion" has been one of the key-terms in the novel's discussion of human endeavours, and the notion that humans are deluded by goals that may prove unattainable is recalled by that concluding image of the bright but unreachable edge.

The second version's romantic phrase, "that true cry of love and grief", seems no better than "that cry of a longing heart". The elimination of the "never-ceasing vibration" is perhaps a gain, though Conrad could defend the adjective "never-ceasing" by citing the first law of thermodynamics. The book's "big white cloud shining like a mass of solid silver" is slightly more vivid than the serial's "great white cloud hung brighter than a mass of silver".

In whichever edition we read it, *Nostromo* remains a magnificent novel. Like Proteus, *Nostromo* retains a vigorous identity in different manifestations; but, again like Proteus, *Nostromo* has proved capable of deceptive metamorphoses. The text was never fixed and finished; it retained, during Conrad's lifetime, a capacity for change. Even Conrad's death did not finalise the text, for editors and printers introduced, from time to time, their minor modifications: corrections to spelling or accentuation, perhaps, or a revision of punctuation, or the infliction of new errors. And the work's nature is incessantly modified as the cultural context changes. Passages which might once have seemed movingly romantic may now seem sentimental; some of its racial generalisations may now give offence rather than gratification; observations which once appeared cynical may now seem accurate. Conrad's general view of history, which, by the standards of 1904 was remarkably sceptical, has been vindicated by subsequent historical knowledge and events.

Critics have been slow to perceive that the textual multiplicity of *Nostromo* amplifies its modernistic multivocality and magnifies its postmodernistic indeterminacy. In franker English: the conclusions of too many critical discussions of the novel have been ambushed by the textual differences which those discussions ignore. Albert Guerard grumbled that the book was too long; perhaps he should have read the serial instead.<sup>30</sup> Followers of transtextualities may care to argue that the *Nostromo* of *T.P.'s Weekly* is less significant but more convincing than is his namesake in the first edition of the book, and this namesake is thematically more potent than his later counterpart in, say, the Collected Edition by J.M. Dent & Sons. You can imagine an honest and

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<sup>30</sup> *Conrad the Novelist*, 203.

fruitful edition of *Nostramo* (probably electronic) which would take as its model *The Three-Text Hamlet*.<sup>31</sup> On very wide pages, it would present in the left half of the left-hand page the *T.P.'s Weekly* text; on the right half of that page, the text of the 1904 (London) edition by Harper; on the left half of the right-hand page the text of the 1918 (London) edition by Dent; and on the right half of it material from one of those versions which has been transferred from its sequential location to facilitate comparison. The texts would be reproduced “warts and all”, with no editorial emendation. Obviously, this procedure would not exhaust the textual possibilities; but it would be a start, and would democratically permit each reader to construct in imagination a new *Nostramo* based on a wide range of historical textual matter rather than on a narrow range selected and modified by challengeable editorial judgements.

The procedure would make clear that, as *Nostramo* evolved, there were losses as well as gains; and it would enable us to retrieve and utilise the temporarily lost material. Like *Nostramo* himself, we could exhume the buried treasure.

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