Reckoning with Vietnam

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A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

A Publication of the Claremont Institute
PRICE: $6.95
IN CANADA: $8.95
Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) remains the greatest English language novelist since Charles Dickens, and many of the best writers of the 20th century, including H.L. Mencken, Ernest Hemingway, and T.S. Eliot, paid homage to his excellence or came under his influence. And as one learns from the Harvard historian Maya Jasanoff's new book, *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World*, Conrad was a hero to William Faulkner, André Gide, and Thomas Mann. What's more, "He has turned up in the pages of Latin American writers from Jorge Luis Borges to Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez. He's been cited as an influence by Robert Stone, Joan Didion, Philip Roth, and Ann Patchett; by W.G. Sebald and John le Carré."

A Pole by birth, for 20 years a merchant seaman by profession, a late-blooming novelist for whom English was his third language (after French and his native Polish), a spinner of yarns about seafaring ordeals and romances with dusky beauties, Conrad has been thought of by some as an exotic, a mere curiosity. Virginia Woolf denigrated his claims to high seriousness and—equally important in her snobbish milieu—to Englishness: his principal appeal was to "boys and young people," he couldn't properly speak the language he wrote in, and he had the "air of mystery" of the perpetual exile, a person of no fixed address. But what Conrad really possessed was an imagination of global reach, a far departure from Woolf's Bloomsbury insularity. His mind roved from the Congo in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where a representative of pan-European moral genius encounters primitive savagery and discovers the darkness in his own heart, to Java and Borneo in *Lord Jim* (1900), where an English country parson's son flees disgrace and finds a second chance at fantastic heroism; from a South American country of the author's own invention in *Nostromo* (1904), where a native-born Costaguano entrepreneur of English heritage, together with a San Francisco financier, a Parisian boulevardier, and an Italian stevedore fall under the fateful influence of a silver mine seemingly inexhaustible in its wealth and malevolence, to a seedy shop in the imperial city of London in *The Secret Agent* (1907), where idiot anarchists and socialists meet to plot their assault on civilization; from comfortable bourgeois Geneva in *Under Western Eyes* (1911), where an English expatriate struggles to understand the alien sensibilities of Russian expatriates connected to a political assassination in explosive St. Petersburg, and back again to Java in *Victory* (1915), where an itinerant Swedish businessman with a taste for fashionable nihilism believes he has found earthly salvation in a romantic misalliance with a traveling musician but runs up against incarnate evil. Wherever the plot takes Conrad, the imagined world remains always distinctively his own: a place of darkness penetrated intermittently by shafts of heroic light, which tend to be extinguished in the end, for irony and tragedy set the terms of existence here, and any brighter spirits can last only briefly in this sti-
fling atmosphere. The sculptor Jacob Epstein, whose 1924 bronze bust is the iconic rendering of Conrad, saw in his subject a tragic figure with a moral resemblance to his fictional heroes: "Conrad gave me a feeling of defeat; but defeat met with courage." That is the best one can customarily hope for in Conrad's world, the closest one comes to victory.

History and Romance

Conrad's bleakness was his birthright; his courage was earned over a lifetime. (For the facts of Conrad's life I have relied on Jasanoff's book—strong on biography, lackluster as literary criticism—and on Jeffrey Meyers's 1991 *Joseph Conrad: A Biography.*) Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, in Berdychiv, Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire (plus ça change...), he was welcomed into this world by a poem his father wrote, "To my son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression":

Baby, son, tell yourself,
You are without land, without love,
Without country, without people,
While Poland—your Mother—is in her grave.

Thus metaphorically orphaned and dispossessed at birth, Konrad, as everyone would call him, was blessed and cursed with a name resonant of nationalist exaltation and sorrow. The Polish Romantic arch-poet Adam Mickiewicz, in the 1828 poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, sings of a Lithuanian knight's vengeance on Teutonic oppressors, and in Mickiewicz's play *Dziady* another Konrad beholds Poland "as a son would gaze / Upon his father broken upon the wheel." So young Korzeniowski was thrust into the great world of history and political romance without asking for the privilege. He would dwell there, not exactly willingly, all his days.

His father, Apollo, a proud member of the Polish nobility, the szlachta—numerous as Saudi princes but not nearly as prosperous—felt duty-bound to lend his talents to the Polish independence movement. His talents were chiefly literary, and in 1861 he became editor of a Warsaw journal of politics and culture. But the national liberation underground allured him, and he joined the most radical revolutionary faction. Late one night came the inevitable knock on the door, and Apollo was frog-marched to the jail for political prisoners. Six months later, without trial, a military tribunal sentenced the insurrectionist and his family to exile. The fabled hospitality of Russia's northeastern provinces awaited them.

Konrad fell frightfully ill on the road, but the authorities kept them on the move despite the danger to the boy, with the encouraging reflection that "children are born to die."

Desperate times ensued: the Russians beat down an ambitious Polish uprising in 1863, and both sides of Konrad's family were raged by history's violent imposition—a host of uncles and aunts killed or imprisoned or exiled. Unable to man the barricades, Apollo wrote in a torrential rage against tsarist autocracy that his son would inherit: "We [Poles] have perished by their sabres, bayonets, and guns. We are familiar with their truncheons, knouts, and nooses." Despair gnawed at Conrad's mother, Ewa, and there was little enough left of her by the time she died in 1865. Apollo sent Konrad to live with his uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, the prudent member of the family, who had kept clear of the political tumult and was getting on nicely in Ukraine. A year later, the moribund Apollo, who had been granted a visa to leave the Russian Empire, took

To London

Tadeusz Bobrowski became Conrad's guardian, and set about trying to eradicate the feckless self-destructive dreaminess that he saw as Apollo's legacy to his son. The uncle's not exactly avuncular moralizing met with resistance. Reading sea stories, beginning with Apollo's translation of Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, provoked the youth's maritime wanderlust. When he informed Tadeusz of his intention to become a sailor, his guardian went all out to dissuade him. But at 17 Konrad went to Marseille and thence to sea. He shipped out happily on three voyages to the West Indies and was certain he had found his life. In 1877, however, with Russia at war with Turkey, the previously lenient Marseille port inspector cracked down on the 19-year-old for lacking the Russian consul's approval to sail on a French ship; no such approval could be expected, for Mother Russia coveted Conrad as cannon fodder. He needed to find a ship under another flag, or to renounce his Russian citizenship and find a more congenial homeland. The most enticing prospect to his mind was the British merchant fleet; but he didn't speak English, and anyway Uncle Tadeusz was dead set against that option. Ready to give up all hope of the seafaring life, Konrad idled and fell into serious debt; and after he blew a friend's large loan gambling at Monte Carlo, he tried to commit suicide by shooting himself in the chest. Responding to an urgent telegram, Tadeusz came to Marseille and found the hardy Konrad already on the mend. Return to Krakow, Tadeusz insisted, and give up this preposterous adolescent romance. Once Konrad was well enough, though, he shipped out aboard a British steamer. He got on badly with the captain and crew, left the ship in Norfolk, and made for London.

Passionate reading, in Polish translation, had introduced Konrad to the London of Dickens's incomparable imagination, which proved to be the London of wondrous fact. Jasanoff quotes judiciously from his subject's essay "Poland Revisited" in *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921): "He stumbled out of Liverpool Street Station to discover his shipping agent in a Dickensian nook, perched in a 'Dickensian' office, eating a mutton chop bought 'from some Dickensian eating-house around the corner.' The storm-driven wanderer knew he had come home. In an 1885 letter to a Polish acquaintance he wrote, 'In a free and hospitable land even the most persecuted of our race may find relative peace and a certain amount of happiness.'" In 1886, at age 28, Konrad became a naturalized

Books discussed in this essay:


*Joseph Conrad: A Biography*, by Jeffrey Meyers. Scribner, 428 pages, $27.50 (cloth), $18.95 (paper)
British citizen. "He never lived more than an hour or two away from London again," observes Jasanoff.

That did not mean he did not rove far and wide. Britannia ruled the waves, and to Conrad the seven seas were as comfortably English as the home counties. As Jasanoff writes, "He learned to speak English on British ships." Now going by the Anglicized "Conrad," he wrote in A Personal Record, "I had thought to myself that if I was to be a seaman, then I would be a British seaman and no other." From 1878 to 1894 Conrad sailed on a dozen ships of the British merchant marine, rounding both Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope, seeing Southeast Asia, and even venturing up the Congo River aboard a Belgian steamer; he thereby collected abundant matter for his second career.

His first novel was Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River (1895), and the folly of this Dutch trader in the wilds of Borneo is that he thinks too well of himself for simply being a white man. Kaspar Almayer had bitten back his racial pride and married a Malay woman, the adopted daughter of Captain Thomas Lingard, who had saved her from pirates and had seduced Almayer with the prospect of an immense inheritance. Lingard's promise of riches falls through, and Almayer is burdened with a wife he despises for her half-savage ways; but he dreams of a glorious future for his daughter, Nina, a beauty for whom he intends a suitable husband—which is to say a white one. When Nina runs off with a Malay instead, Almayer is devastated. He had placed his faith in her, and now "only one idea remained clear and definite—not to forgive her; only one vivid desire—to forget her.... That was his idea of his duty to himself—to his race—to his respectable connections; to the whole universe unsettled and shaken by this frightful catastrophe of his life." Almayer's warped racial fidelity, a gross parody of honorable devotion, consumes him, and he kills himself.

Savagery and Subtlety

Fear and the utter perversion of honorable devotion are of the essence in Heart of Darkness, Conrad's fourth novel and the work by which he is best known today. His sardonic virtuosity is nowhere more evident than in the slowly gathering menace of the thousand-mile journey up the Congo River to the trading station of Mr. Kurtz—the universal genius, poet, painter, orator, emissary of civilizations sacred light, who has the rich blood of several European nations flowing through his veins, and from whom the Company expects great things. The novella unrolls as a story within a story: an unnamed narrator, one of a handful of friends, representatives of English commercial power and address, on a pleasure cruise on the Thames one evening, retails the Congo misadventure that Charles Marlow, an uncommonly meditative sailor who has seen most everything the world holds, recounts with a prolonged shudder.

Their England too, Marlow says, "has been one of the dark places of the earth." Nineteen hundred years earlier there, the conquering Romans "grabbed what they could get and for the sake of what was to be got." These ancient imperialists were unabashedly out for plunder; modern imperialists propose a nobler rationale.

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.... [Conrad's ellipsis.]

Marlow takes very seriously the redeeming idea of empire. But there can be no redemption for the imperial enterprise he sees in the Congo; there the idea, the eloquent profession of benevolence, of bearing light to the benighted savage, is unforgivably corrupt at the root. Naked greed, violent injustice, flagrant self-deception: these are the idols of the Company, the ostensible agent of imperial progress, named with an ironic Kafkasque brevity.

The word "ivory" rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.

As T.S. Eliot recognized, Mr. Kurtz is a hollow man. The wilderness searches his emptiness and fills it with monstrosity. He has collected a vast trove of the coveted ivory, the Company's real reason for being. His vaunted eloquence in the name of the civilizing mission proves a useless lie. He is helpless against "the fascination of the abomination"—and he becomes the abomination. Primitive tribesmen worship him and do his fearsome bidding, Shrunken heads on stakes adorn the exterior of his dwelling. A native beauty, "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent," mourns her dying white lover and lord. As Mr. Kurtz dies in agony, his last words are the summation of his wholesale moral collapse, the primeval malignity of the wilderness human and inhuman, and the terror of extinction: "The horror! The horror!" Marlow, who cannot abide a lie, goes to the unnamed imperial city like a whited sepulcher (it is Brussels) and calls on Kurtz's lovely and innocent Intended; she is more convinced than ever before of her late fiancé's moral splendor, and Marlow cannot bring himself to disabuse her: when she asks him for Kurtz's last word, he tells her it was her name. "She knew. She was sure."

Jasanoff reads Conrad as preparing a comprehensive indictment of so-called civilization: "While Kurtz's stockade evoked head-hunting, the archetypal 'savage' practice of Borneo, when Conrad later wrote a story ('Falk') about the archetypal 'savage' practice of Congo—cannibalism—he set it in Asia. In both stories, the savages were white." Evidently at Harvard civilization has reached such a pass that head-hunting and cannibalism cannot straightforwardly be called savage, unless white men are practicing them. Fortunately Conrad was not so sensitive and subtle as the postmodern professoriate. Jasanoff goes on, By nesting Marlow's experience in Africa inside the telling of his story in England, Conrad warned his readers against any complacent notion that savagery was as far from civilization as there was from here. What happened there and what happened here were fundamentally connected. Anyone could be savage. Everywhere could go dark.

It is true enough that European civilization in the 20th century saw appalling darkness and savagery; and the Final Solution and the Soviet terror state may well have been more appalling than, say, reciprocal tribal genocide practiced with clubs and machetes in Rwanda, precisely because the nations that had produced Goethe and Tolstoy were now the brutes. Conrad, however, does not make his story bear quite as onerous a weight as Jasanoff would have it. Marlow does not make his story bear quite as onerous a weight as Jasanoff would have it. Marlow, who oversaw a notorious virtual slave colony
“Amity and Prosperity exposes the terrible human cost of fracking, but it’s about much more. It’s a morally complex and beautifully written story of Appalachia, of family, of resources we all use. It’s about what binds and tears apart a community and a country. Griswold’s dedication and clear-eyed empathy glow on every page.” —George Packer, author of The Unwinding, winner of the National Book Award

“Varoufakis . . . explain[s] inflation, deflation and interest rates, in terms any teenager—or adult—will understand.” —Anna Minton, The Guardian
for his personal aggrandizement—and the red portion, where the British were the colonists—
"good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there." Marlow, the man who has seen everything, remains convinced of British imperial rectitude, which has not disgraced the redeeming idea of empire as other nations have; and Marlow himself is a man of moral substance, quite unlike the empty shell, Mr. Kurzt. Conrad sets the real thing against the gimcrack simulacrum of the civilized man; and there is no suggestion that upstanding Britain is in danger of falling once again into the primitive darkness two millennia in the past.

Put to the Test

**Lord Jim** is Conrad’s most romantic tale, and it trembles with the seismic perils of the rather too romantic imagination for Jim had dreamed of a seafaring life, not merely of honorable devotion, but of heroic magnificence on the order of the most outlandish swashbuckling adventure stories for unduly impressionable boys of all ages. When put to the test, he fails abjectly. He is chief mate of the Patna, an old rust-bucket carrying eight hundred Muslim pilgrims on their way to Mecca, when the hull scrapes bottom in the midst of a fierce storm and the bulkhead appears about to burst. With the derelict German captain and the rest of the unsavory crew, he abandons ship and leaves the passengers to drown. However, the Patna is found still afloat some days later, and the cowardly sailors are now infamous. Marlow, Conrad’s alter ego, reappears in this novel, as he will again in *Chance* (1914); he narrates much of *Lord Jim* as an oft-told after-dinner story and in letters. Marlow attends a public hearing on the incident where Jim is testifying, and although Jim’s unpardonable fiasco repulses him, he is drawn to the young man and comes eventually to befriend him.

Jim drifts from one humble job to another, until the merchant Stein, a fellow romantic obsessed with exotic butterflies, offers him the chance to begin again, in the remote jungle settlement of Parusan, where no one has heard of his humiliation and dishonor. Imprisoned upon arrival by the rajah, a local warlord protective of his business interests, Jim makes a daring escape and finds shelter with the rival chieftain, Doramin, a peaceable man suffering the rajah’s predations. With pluck, muscle, and ingenuity, Jim mounts a host of cannon rescued from desuetude on a strategic hill, and leads a successful war party to drive the rajah’s henchman Sherif Ali out of the country. Adventure, friendship, popular adulation, honor apparently restored, and love with the mixed-race beauty he calls Jewel: at last redemption and a life worthy of Jim’s romantic dreams are his. He is the illustrious Tuan Jim: Lord Jim, said to be invincible, and the most revered man in Parusan, which is an anagram of *Patna* plus *us*.

Yet the knowledge that he is where he is because he is a catastrophic failure exiled from the world he really belongs to haunts Jim, and Undo him. The “latter-day buccaneer” Gentleman Brown, reputed perhaps to be the son of a baronet, and his crew of gun-running robobrers wash up in Parusan, and there is mayhem, with dead and wounded on both sides. The desperadoes are outnumbered 200 to one, and Brown parleys with Jim to gain safe passage back to their schooner. Marlow hears this part of the story from Brown, who with his “satanic gift of finding out the best and the weakest spot in his victims” senses Jim’s discomposure. “These were the emissaries with whom the world [Jim] had renounced was pursuing him in his retreat. White men from ‘out there’ where he did not think himself good enough to live.” Brown with his uncanny cunning “took care to show himself as a man confronting without dismay ill-luck, censure, and disaster,” and Marlow thus suggests that Jim feels Brown to be a man as good as himself or better, and therefore treats him more honorably than he deserves. To Doramin, who is dubious about letting the enemies go free, Jim promises to forfeit his life should anything go wrong. Things go seriously wrong, the departing scoundrels open fire from their canoe, and Dain Waris, Doramin’s son and Jim’s best friend, is killed. Jewel entreats her beloved to go back to the world he had come from, “because he is not good enough to live.” Brown with his uncanny cunning

The tragedy of *Lord Jim* was that what passed for “civilization” was coming for Parusan. The steamship edged out the sailing ship. Hypocrisy, selfishness, and greed triumphed over honesty and hard work. Communities fractured. People broke promises.

But the real reason Jim is destroyed lies in his own legitimate sense of guilt and of shame, which leads him to treat Gentleman Brown like the gentleman he is not. Jewel had asked Marlow why he was so sure Jim would never leave her and go back to the world he had come from, the world of white men. Not wanting to answer but pressed to exasperation, Marlow had exclaimed: “Because he is not good enough.” She answered that Jim had told her the very same thing; she refused to believe either of them. They were right, however. Conrad knew there are some moral failures that mark a man indelibly. The tragedy of *Lord Jim* is that dishonor, like hell, is everlasting.

**Imperialism without Empire**

**Nostromo** is Conrad’s most ambitious novel, the most extensive in scale, but also the most tendentious, in a manner that makes it most pleasing to readers eager to think the worst of gringo imperialists whose idols are “material interests.” The strength of the novel rides on the unsurprising depiction of a South American nation crushed under the blood-soaked history in which a new tyranny has always superseded the old one. Costaguana—the redolence of bird dung is pungent—suffers from the endemic disorder and danger that bespeak generations of masters whose ruling passions are power and greed: it was “as though the government of the country had been a struggle of lust between bands of absurd devils let loose upon the land with sabres and uniforms and grandiloquent phrases.” Officialdom amounts to the “nightmarish parody of administration without law, without security, and without justice.” When there is a “military revolt in the name of national honour,” Conrad means that the forces of native avarice are gathering under the banner of expropriating the gringo expropriators. A familiar picture, true as ever.

Familiar, too, is the contemptuous treatment of the English and American representatives of material interests who effectively become the new rulers. Charles Gould, owner of the San Tomé silver mine, believes that his money-making concern will be the foundation of a sound political order:

What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Anyone can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the condi-
and Conrad agree, is the American financier Mr. Holroyd, whose sinister expansion of manifest destiny projects an entire world corroded by the imposition of Yankee “industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion.” Conrad, she writes, “anticipated the ascent of an American-led consortium of material interests.” ‘Material interests’ would dictate the futures of new nations. They would make imperialism continue to thrive whether or not it had the word ‘empire’ attached to it.” Imperialism without empire; that too sounds familiar. Jasanoff cites with approbation the relevant definition of imperialism as “the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations.” That definition is Lenin’s. Conrad, Jasanoff allows, would have been appalled by any suggestion of comradeship with this revolutionary founding father; she evidently cherishes it.

Most Ardent of Revolutionaries

With suave irony Conrad delivers his opinion of revolutionaries in The Secret Agent: “in their own way the most ardent of revolutionaries are doing no more but seeking for peace in common with the rest of mankind—the peace of soothed vanity, of satisfied appetites, or perhaps of appeased conscience.” This choice mockery of high-minded revolutionary aspiration comes in a description of the Professor, who roams the London streets with his hand in his pocket and on the detonator of the explosive he always carries with him; “miserable and undersized,” driven by “vengeful bitterness.” In his willingness to kill and die “procuring for himself the appearances of power and personal prestige,” he is the classic man of resentment whom Friedrich Nietzsche etched in acid—the man for whom the world is not good enough because he is not good enough for the world. And the Professor is the least contemptible specimen of the revolutionary character in Conrad’s novel.

The other socialists and anarchists of several nationalities, who meet in Mr. Verloc’s apartment behind his shop that sells revolutionary literature beside pornography, are variously paragons of incapacity or self-seeking or “underhand malevolence.” And they are as well-fed as the most voracious capitalist: these are fat men, apostles of supposedly noble, aus-
ter ideas whose physiques display their purely material interests.

Mr. Verloc, who has been a police informant because he needed the money, undertakes to blow up the Greenwich Observatory because he is afraid of losing the favor of his meal ticket, Mr. Vladimir, official of an unnamed embassy that is clearly Russian. But Verloc entrusts the delivery of the bomb to his mentally retarded brother-in-law, Stevie, who stumbles on the way and blows himself to pieces. Fecklessness and viciousness pull in tandem to propel Conrad’s plot, and the author manages to be at once sorrowing and blackly amused as he tells his tale, one of his best.

Turning from the novel’s concern with alien revolutionaries to Conrad’s biography and the temper of his time, Jasanoff flies off into the anti-immigrant fever of 1907:

An “alien invasion” was consuming London, warned anti-immigration activists. They claimed (contrary to statistics) that immigrants lowered wages, raised rents, and introduced vice and crime. When you think a foreigner might take your job, you protest. When you think a foreigner might kill you, you panic. No amount of policing would keep Britain safe, detectives warned, while people of “very unsafe tendencies” were allowed “to land on our shores practically with no questions asked.”

Pity the poor immigrant Conrad: “There’s no place that’s home,” Jasanoff laments. All this ironic boilerplate is of course the familiar progressive electioneering for more compassion. But Jasanoff in her long plot summary of The Secret Agent fails to remark that Stevie’s boundless compassion is feeble-minded folly that makes him susceptible to Verloc’s murderous program. The suffering of a poor horse drawing a cab and being beaten by the driver, and the suffering of the cabman himself who complains to Stevie that he too is a poor beast, raise Stevie to the threshold of higher political consciousness: “Bad world for poor people.” Stevie’s sensitivity and fury make him an embryonic revolutionary. “In the face of anything which affected directly or indirectly his morbid dread of pain, Stevie ended by turning vicious…. The anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded by the pain of an innocent but pitiless rage.” The mental defective whipped into a frenzy of compassion becomes the pliable tool of revolutionary violence. That is Conrad’s teaching in this savage story.

Jasanoff’s strained attempts to claim Conrad as a prototype for the real modern literary hero—the globally aware intellectual with the correct political disposition—tend to misread his novels, or to ignore them in the pursuit of deeper truths that the novelist was apparently too obtuse to recognize. The Dawn Watch is the kind of book that garners accolades from all the right people and wins the choicest prizes; and it surely deserves them.

Joseph Conrad will survive the ministrations of the professors, and will endure as the modern master of the tragic sense of life. Having searched the world and found moral confusion everywhere, he spares but a select few his bitter yet savory irony, and those few are the ones who live by the several simple ideas that hardly seem like ideas at all to those who are proudest of being thought serious thinkers: honor, courage, fidelity, attention to the work at hand. Without these life is nothing at all; and Conrad knows the perils of looking too long into nothing.

Algis Valiunas is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a contributing editor of the New Atlantis.

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