

Post your excellent paragraphs of insight, essential information, articles, websites, and such here on the subject of **Narrative Movement (Structure, Plot, Conflict)** in Joseph O'Connor's novel.

Wiki Master Document Update: We're going to be creating two separate documents (UNL will create theirs and CC will create theirs--2 pages, single-spaced) and we will be posting the finished products by Saturday, 21 April 2012 by 6:00 pm.

Lindsey Hofer, UNL:

The conflict in this book is infinite. Every main character is tied in some how with the others and we end up with this entanglement. It's like a soap opera. Focusing more closely on Pius Mulvey and the conflicts he has brought upon himself over the years. He abandoned his family and the girl he 'loved', took advantage of countless people, and has killed several people without any remorse. His lack of internal conflict within himself is what really makes me dislike him as a character. He continues to manipulate his surroundings to fit only his need regardless of the people he may leave dead or wounded and still believes he is entitled to it all.

Luke McLaughlin, UNL:

A lot of the details and stuff I'd like to read I feel like I can't pause for because of the pacing of this story. I feel like something important is about to happen next at all times and I just don't want to pause sometimes. The funny thing about that is I happen to catch most of the stuff I feel like I've skimmed over too. Or I just left it up to my imagination as I was thinking back on what I read. It's odd how this story appears to be very open with its characters, but there is still so much left to the imagination of the reader. I have a hard time creating that depth in my story. I realized this when we were in class. It is kind of like subliminal messaging in a way to me. I picked up a message about the crew or a comment made and I don't realize its significance until I was done reading the text. I also found myself laughing quite a bit too. I have no idea how humor could be incorporated into this tragic story, but it works really well. I'm amazed that O'Connor even had the time to sit down and think of some sarcastic little joke for his character to blurt out during a very serious situation.

How is the humor still believable?

Parker Bliss, UNL:

Thus far the story has a differing degree of conflict. We know that The Lord and the American do not get along, but very little back story is given of either character. However, with the American's article we find that he is actually quite articulate and well informed. On the otherhand, the Lord has had a rough upbringing making it easy to sympathize with him. There is also conflict within the relationship of the servant girl and the Lord. This mixture of loathing and sympathy for the Lord makes him a complex character that you love to hate. I think this story is pretty brilliant so far.

Bailey Corcoran, UNL:

An aspect that I found reoccurring in chapters twenty and twenty-one, especially, was how the dreamlike atmosphere of the narration carried throughout the chapters. We were first introduced to it through the rumors in the newspapers and around town from "Fredrick Hall, the Monster of Newgate." All of the unrealistic accounts and the secrecy of the truth contribute to the story in a way that seems as if it never really happened. Because Mulvey actually escaped, and almost effortlessly never got caught, it seconds the notion that it "never really happened." It becomes in a sense an entirely different person's story, and he's hearing new bits and pieces just like everyone else.

In addition to having something great happen to Mulvey (like his escape from prison), we are introduced to more fond memories that he encounters—working with the traveling circus. Things were great, as clearly mentioned, though it's ripped away from him. I find O'Connor playing with this character. Mulvey has gone through so much in the chapters we have read, and we have experienced what he has more than any other character thus far. What I mean by playing with the character is that he continuously gives him what he wants, and then takes it right out from underneath him. Nevertheless, he often deserves it, but it contributes to the never ending cycle of this dream-like quality that he endures.

In 252, we often talk about finding what a character wants most in the world--and then not giving it to them. Or sometimes we find what a character wants most in the world and when they get it, they discover it's not what they expected it to be. How does this tactic happen in any other character's development? Dixon? Mary? Laura Merridith?

Kayla Nesler, CC:

One thing that really struck me while reading the first 10 chapters of the novel was the numerous shifts in point of view. Almost every chapter so far has its own narrator and therefore a varying perspective which puts a unique spin on the story as a whole. These shifting points of view add to the structure of the novel because the reader doesn't hear just one perspective, but many, and is therefore allowed get inside the mind of whichever character is thinking. As such, the reader can build a perception of the events based on varying opinions and world that O'Connor is painting for the reader becomes extensive and complex. The reader is no longer able to build perceptions based on one character or narrator's perspective and assume that whatever that character or narrator thinks is true. The shifting viewpoints force the reader to determine what is important and who to trust.

Ellen Mueller, CC:

O'Conner's narration is somewhat effective in creating a mysterious feel to each of the characters on the ship, but I see the continuous shifts in narration as a flaw. It is almost as if O'Conner does not believe he can hold the reader's attention long enough with the actions on the ship and political-social undertones of the Irish famine, so he decides to flip-flop the action from one minor character to the next. Instead of maintaining a continuous narration that builds events on top of each other, O'Conner chooses to layer the choppy levels of split narrations that offer only snippets of the plot at one time. This is a very teasing style of narration that definitely works for modern readers who are used to clicking on several tabs on their computer screens, but it leaves me disappointed and unable to connect with any particular character. There are simply too many narrations and too many time periods for this novel to work immediately, and I am waiting to read what will happen in the next chapters. O'Conner has my attention for now, but if he continues to open up plot lines and tries to juggle too many things at the same time, he may lose my interest.

I like this viewpoint: anybody else want to weigh in here? Has O'Connor overreached himself as a writer, been too ambitious on the craft side, and lost readers as a result?

Rachel Lindgren, CC:

I too observed O'conner's shifts between the different characters and their individual perspectives. I feel like the novel's central plot hasn't fully revealed itself as of yet but the multitude of attitudes of frustration amongst the classes and nations and the exploration of the fear and hate that is borne is enough to keep me more than satisfied. I agree with Luke regarding the feeling of something just about to happen in the story. Even though we're being shown backstory, I always feel like I'm on the edge of some discovery or everything will be involved in some revelation in the next chapter. The layers of characters are hinted at in early chapters and then peeled back and fleshed out later on. The author's storytelling and narrating is deftly written and shows us the connections between chapters so well without haranguing us with it. For example, in chapter six we are introduced to a document recording the last thoughts of the "wretched Husband of Mary Duane." The end of the document is simply signed "N." Also in this chapter, I found myself underlining the paragraph beginning with, "There are so many kinds of love in the world." Then in chapter nine a very familiar line appears, "So many kinds of love existed in the world; surely she had one kind for him," said by one Noel Hilliard who had unsuccessfully tried to court Mary Duane. I love this for its delicate storytelling and faith in the intelligence of the reader to make the connections throughout the narration. Even though we drift through different perspectives and I don't know the whole story yet, I don't feel frustrated by the currently unrevealed details, I feel I am more safe in the hands of the author, and as Luke said, just on the edge of some revelation within the story.

And we get the discussion between David Merridith and his father about love being about doing one's duty, always?

Laura de Rosier, CC:

O'Connor's narrative structure is one that does not continue in a straight path, allowing the reader to foresee the upcoming events, but rather, it is one that forces the reader to expect the unexpected in order to understand the strange ways each aspect of this story lends itself to the others. A key aspect to this narrative structure is uncertainty. The people aboard *Star of the Sea* are uncertain of whether they will live to see America and of whether they will have enough food to survive on. Pius Mulvey is uncertain of why he must be the one to kill David Merridith, but he knows his life depends on him fulfilling his mission. Countless people are uncertain of whether to blame the English or the Irish upper class. The uncertainty provides continuous tension between the characters and the events of the story. I feel O'Connor does this in order to force the reader to find his or her own answers as the story continues. For example, early in the novel we are expected to feel hatred toward David Merridith because of his involvement with the famine, as a landlord. However, as we later learn through Mary Duane's perspective, Merridith is not a cold-hearted man. He has compassion for others, but resides in a difficult position at this time.

Kayla Nesler, CC:

As we read further into the novel, I'm continually struck by the interwoven background of some of the characters. The way the novel is set up in the beginning, we assume that the characters are all dependent beings apart from familial or work relations and present location on the ship. But as we learn more about each character, we get little snapshots of their relationship with each other before boarding the ship. Mary Duane is a perfect example of this as she had relationships with at least two of the other passengers on the ship. She was very much in love with David Merridith when they were much younger but they were forced to separate. She later becomes involved with Pius Mulvey but he also leaves her. We're slowly learning more about each character's background and their relationships with one another in the past, but so far haven't received any update on those relationships in the present. Why does Mary Duane decide to work for David Merridith after he broke her heart when they were younger? Are they simply ignoring their past together and trying to move forward? On the other hand, do Mulvey and Mary Duane know that the other is on the ship? If they do, how are they behaving towards one another? These present details have not really been presented as yet in the novel and I think the mystery of it is quite intriguing because it keeps offering subtle hints and surprises of these relationships that happened in the past, but have a chance to be revisited and explored while on the ship.

Rachel Lindgren, CC:

Regarding the narrative and plot, I liked the description of the stench becoming worse on the ship. It seems that the more we learn of the characters and the more that is revealed about the state of the world and people during this time period, the more we are uncovering something foul. The more we learn, the harder it is to ignore the reek of something, it soon must be confronted I feel. I like the slow build up in the story and plot. It allows time for this mood to fester, for the reader to become acclimatized to the time period and become wholly empathetic with the impoverished characters until the reveal of whatever is to happen on the ship. The relationships between the individual characters has proven to be far more complicated than initially thought, but I'm very curious for more introspective thought from the different characters in the present day (the ship) of the novel. The narrative goes through the histories of several characters but I'm still waiting for the moment of relevance or epiphany upon the ship. There has been such a strong buildup that I feel some action there will be the moment of revelation.

Laura de Rosier, CC:

One interesting aspect of O'Connor's narrative structure is the non-linear format and its effect on the conflicts slowly coming out of the woodworks. One conflict beginning to emerge is Mulvey's internal conflict with how he identifies himself. I believe having a brother who sees following God's word as the right path forced Mulvey to search for where he belonged in a completely different setting. He began to visit the pubs often and became accustomed to doing as he wanted, rather than as Nicholas felt he should. Even after learning of his child that Mary Duane is carrying, Pius leaves his home and the woman he impregnated, rather than marrying and caring for his new family as most would have done at that time. As the story continues, we learn of the multitude of names that Pius adopts on his journeys, as well as the various jobs he does to earn enough to survive. His fascination with the many words for stealing shows his lack of ethics. While in prison, Mulvey learns how to manipulate people in order to eventually gain his freedom. Although his actions continuously support that Mulvey is an unethical low-life, these actions are

contrasted with his love of learning and his distant support of Mary Duane by sending her money. It has been said that his objective is to kill Merridith, but his inner conflict may lead to a path other than the one expected. As the narrative continues, I assume the conflicts will take further shape and lend themselves to the central conflict as it arrives.

Parker Bliss, UNL:

Now that it is clear what the flashbacks are trying to tell the reader the story has taken on a more cohesive and comprehensive tone. I felt that in the beginning it was a bit confusing trying to stick with all the characters and trying to gather all the information that makes them up. I enjoy how the narrative jumps around from past to present, and how the author uses the flashbacks to inform the reader of how all the characters paths have crossed.

Ethan Nichols, UNL:

One simple thing that once caught my attention was how O'Connor slowly introduced Mulvey into Merridith's consciousness. The way he does this is also in the most eerie of ways. Firstly, on page 143, Merridith's son tells him that his brother "says a man came into his cabin early yesterday morning." Then a few pages later, Merridith spots "the kind of mark that might have been made by a greasy glove." This combination of clues was a pretty clever thing that I think O'Connor does a lot in many other places in the novel. It's what creates the overall suspense.

Libby Evans, UNL:

This week, we read Chapter 27 in *Star of the Sea*. In earlier chapters, the reader has seen vessel registers, letters to and from different characters, as well as simple narratives. But in this chapter, it is a prayer. At first, the reader is unsure of what the prayer even means. Not only is it interesting that the whole chapter is a "random" prayer, but it is also laid out on the page in an interesting way; it was later pointed out to me that it was to look like a ship. In class we discussed that all of the names mentioned in the prayer are ancient names for Mary. While discussing the impact this had on the story but more importantly the reader and the correlation it has to specific themes in the book, my eyes really opened to how fascinating of a writer O'Connor really is.

Parker Bliss, UNL:

I have now taken on this affinity for accents in my reading as well. Trying to create the characters as separate from my regular reading voice is all a part of the fun, but I do not normally try to do this mostly because it can be a little tiresome. However, I found with this author that his characters are so well developed with back story and adjectives that it is only fair to give them the voice written down on paper. I may not have the best Irish accent, but my love for the accent has grown much over the last couple of weeks. I suppose what I am trying to say is that the author showed me how important it is to make the characters separate from imagination. I know this sounds silly, but it is important to make them as real as possible because without that then the world the reader is creating can easily crumble. The foundation needs to be tight and the author has shown me that in order for the meat of the story to be good it first needs to stick to the bone.

Parker Bliss

I learned so much from O'Connor. I started this class with the previous held beliefs of an analyst. Now I have been able to read the story as writer might approach something. I have learned how to develop characters better and how to utilize flashbacks in order to do so. O'Connor showed me that confusing your reader initially is not that bad as long as you make it clear what is happening in the end. I have learned that trying to write a book that you need to read twice in order to be fulfilled is an aim a writer should always try to strive for.

Jacy Marmaduke, UNL:

What I Learned From O'Connor

"Star of the Sea" taught me that narrative moment must be thought out and pre-determined. Every twist of plot should be foreshadowed so that when the reader discovers the twist he is appropriately surprised but still finds the event or discovery to be believable. Ultimately, surprise is not necessary to plot, but it does add something special and make the narrative unique -- it's also an excellent way to keep the reader's

attention, as long as the effect is not overdone or used purely for shock. The narrative should be an intricately woven stream of events.

Kayla Nesler, CC:

Grantley Dixon's confession in the epilogue appears to be sincere, and he does reveal to the reader that he was the person who murdered David Merridith. What is interesting about that, though, is that he doesn't explicitly come out and say that it was him. He first takes the readers on a clue hunt to narrow down the possibilities from the information we have already received in the novel in order to fully understand his confession. He refers to the murderer in the ambiguous term "he" and never names him outright, even after the reader would have learned who the murderer is. In addition, he clearly feels guilt for his actions—otherwise he would not have kept the secret for so long—but he seems to pass off his guilt by claiming that everyone has the capacity to hate, and hatred can lead us to action.