

Egoism and Altruism: A Psycho-Textual Reading of Conrad's *Victory*

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Egoism, which is the moving force of the world, and altruism, which is its morality, these two contradictory instincts of which one is so plain and the other so mysterious, cannot serve us unless in the incomprehensible alliance of their irreconcilable antagonism. (Conrad, 2 August 1901)

In this letter of August 1901 to the *New York Times*, quoted from Zdzislaw Najder's *Joseph Conrad: A Life*, Conrad identifies what he believes to be the two great motivating forces of humanity, egoism and altruism. Egoism, the "plain" pattern of behaviour, is readily understandable. Humanity reacts according to what it desires and needs, and seeks to overcome those who would prevent this. The other, altruism, remains "mysterious." From what source does selfless concern issue? Conrad's letter suggests it is a shadowy doppelgänger of self-interest. Placed side-by-side they, through their contrast, draw greater attention to the other. And yet, according to Conrad, they work together in "incomprehensible" alliance to "serve us."

In *Victory* many of the main characters are directed by egoism. From the Portuguese officials who, it seems, desire the possession of Morrison's brig, to Mr. Jones, Ricardo and Pedro who move around the world, grazing off humanity. Their desires and needs are satisfied using that part of their psychology, ingenuity, force, power, authority call it what you will, to feed that part constantly in a state of hunger. It is this consuming and re-nourishing that is the prime mover to their existence. The mere surface sense of domination and authority, so well exemplified by

Ricardo's long conversation or disquisition with Schomberg, is an adroit but superficial display of supremacy meant to aid this end. The will to power, so to speak, is not dominion for its own sake. Behind it lie the ethics of self-interest and the paradoxically shared goals of Mr. Jones and Ricardo in achieving safety, security and dominion.

Heyst mainly embodies those qualities associated with altruism. His seemingly spontaneous acts of selflessness accord well with what we know of his character and background. His feeling of doing things that are right allows him to live harmoniously with himself, even if it removes him from a sense of splendid isolation created by his father and encapsulated as "Look on—make no sound" (175). These acts of generosity are expressions of outward concern, yet they afford Heyst a sense of inner concord. He empathizes with Morrison, stuck in a difficult situation hemmed in by the arbitrary bureaucracy of a couple of customs officials, and with Lena, far from home and powerless against the sexual passion of Schomberg and the visceral aggression of Mrs. Zangiaco. However, as the narrator explains, Heyst understands he lives in a world with people who chiefly concern themselves with the affairs of others, either through rumour or gossip. Heyst does not wish to look foolish in society, or have private information revealed. He knows he has a public image to maintain and through this we understand his sense of egoism. This also involves not getting into a fight over the release of Lena from the Zangiacomos and with her attractiveness to other fellows he suddenly feels in competition for her. Through these two scenes, the first in the "wine-shop" (12) in Delli expressing his compassion for Morrison's predicament, the second "into the grounds at the side of [Schomberg's] house" (83) indicating a common sensation of masculine uncertainty, we discover deeper psychological aspects of Heyst.

Morrison exhibits those characteristics, which present a transition between egoism and altruism. He appears the victim of his own generosity, in that he cannot help but be the benefactor to the inhabitants

of various up-river villages. Yet, he desires something in return by exploiting the very people he helps. In this relatively minor character, we see Heystian and Jonesian elements struggling for domination. Morrison appears confused, in that he easily idealizes, for example, Heyst's intervention in regaining his brig, but is also drawn to the anti-romantic life of hard-facts embodied in his pocket book detailing what he is owed by the up-river people and his involvement with the T.B.C.C. His death on a visit to England conveniently removes him from the world of hazard, yet denies the plot an eloquently declarative presence on Heyst's island.

This extended preface serves as an introduction to some of the issues facing the main characters in *Victory*. I propose to develop the discussion of egoism and altruism in the context of a study of Jacques Lacan's essay, originally a lecture, entitled "The insistence of the letter in the unconscious." This, with reference to work by Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan and Catherine Belsey, will I hope yield an insightful analysis of Conrad's pronouncement on egoism and altruism.

Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* states "Lacan [...] regards the unconscious as structured like a language. This is not only because it works by metaphor and metonymy: it is also because, like language itself for the post-structuralists, it is composed less of *signs* – stable meanings – than of *signifiers*" (146). Eagleton goes on: "The unconscious is just a continual movement and activity of signifiers, whose signifieds are often inaccessible to us because they are *repressed*. This is why Lacan speaks of the unconscious as a 'sliding of the signified beneath the signifier', as a constant fading and evaporation of meaning, a bizarre 'modernist' text which is almost unreadable and which will certainly never yield up its final secrets to interpretation" (146). In explaining the work of the signifier and the signified and that of metaphor and metonymy with reference to Lacan, Eagleton here accentuates the connection between psychoanalysis and modernist literature.

Catherine Belsey in *Critical Practice* highlights the importance of

ideology in understanding the transformation of a text from readerly to writerly: “Literature is an irreducible form of discourse, but the language which constitutes the raw material of the text is the language of ideology” (107). In his lecture, “The insistence of the letter in the unconscious,” Jacques Lacan wishes to discover “in the unconscious [...] the whole structure of language” (82). Section II of “The insistence of the letter in the unconscious” is entitled *The letter in the unconscious*. Here Lacan refers to Freud’s work on dreams and precedes his reference with the dramatic assertion:

Of course, as it is said the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life. We can’t help but agree, having had to pay homage elsewhere to the noble victim of the error of seeking the spirit in the letter; but we should like to know, also, how the spirit could live without the letter. Even so, the claims of the spirit would remain unassailable if the letter had not in fact shown us that it can produce all the effects of truth in man without involving the spirit at all. (91)

We have here it seems, a reversal or deconstruction of the “spirit”/“letter” hierarchy in rather parodic terms: “killeth”/“giveth.” This reversal precedes Lacan’s reference to Freud’s work, which “begins to open the royal road to the unconscious” (91). According to Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan in the essay “Some Millennial Footnotes on *Heart of Darkness*”:

We can understand the eruption of the textual unconscious through an extended Freudian detour. *Heart of Darkness* can be read both as a prototype of Freud’s conception of the Uncanny, and as fictional precursor of Freud’s metapsychological speculation on culture. (60)

In the quotation from Conrad at the beginning of this paper, altruism is expressed as the “mysterious” partner in its binary relationship with egoism. We can equate this, altruism, with the inaccessible realm of the psychic structure. Lacan’s insistence upon the letter in the unconscious

can be observed in the egoism / altruism dichotomy in Conrad's statement, in that Lacan is willing, as it were, to discover or have the letter occupy the unconscious; that elusive part of human psychology. With Lacan's parodic "killeth"/"giveth" references there appears to be (as Catherine Belsey suggests of language itself) an ideology behind Lacan's assertion. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's suggestion that *Heart of Darkness* initiated those investigations of metapsychology, later pursued and made famous by Freud, draws a connection between the textual heart of Conrad's works and the development of psychoanalytic and critical theory. If this is the case, a connection can be traced between Jones and company as the ego letter of Lacan's theory and Heyst as the "rebus" (91) or "mysterious [...] antagonism" in the tale, or the egoism and altruism of Conrad's assertion.

We can consider in this context in *Victory* the wandering of certain characters. This in Lacanian terms would correspond to metonymy, or the displacement (movement) of signifiers in the dream process, to represent more than one problematic aspect of neurotic symptom. That this aspect [activity; mobility] contributes to the solitary and unstable nature of existence where home is the next port of call and people leave behind barely the memory of their presence relates to Lacan's "equation of [...] desire with metonymy" (80). There is here, "In the case of *Verschiebung*, displacement [activity/mobility], the German term is closer to the idea to that veering off of meaning that we see in metonymy" (92). Meaning is displaced. Characters depart. Solitude heightens the feeling that they will not be missed or remembered. In this, egoism appears to be the main driving force behind human nature. It may in Conrad's novel supply the energy that propels the narrative. A settled, calm and harmonious existence does not make interesting reading. Yet a combination of activity and inactivity and egoism and altruism, is necessary, one to emphasize the other. Characters like Wang, who are established relatively far from their homeland and are cultivators, present a foil to wider roving hunter

gatherers like the demonic trio of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro. Heyst, once an active venture capitalist, is now dormant like his neighbour the volcano, cultivating only shadows and reminiscences. If, on the first page of the novel, the narrator refers to the strange science of evaporation preceding liquidation, then egoism and altruism act, in psychoanalytic terms like displacement and condensation, metaphor/condensation being the “superimposition of signifiers [...] connatural with the mechanism of poetry” (92), metonymy equating with the displacement of signifiers or characters in the dream process.

At the beginning of the novel we read of Heyst on the move, travelling between islands in South East Asia. The effect of all this is to leave his personality a mystery to those he contacts. Inscrutability surrounds his actions, as he offers no definite explanation for helping Morrison retrieve his ship. This laconicism adds to this enigma not least of all regarding where he earns his money:

To him, as to all of us in the islands, this wandering Heyst, who didn't toil or spin visibly, seemed the very last person to be the agent of Providence in an affair concerned with money. (16)

Conrad here presents one aspect of the problematic nature of the Heyst, Morrison association. Lacan, in establishing his thesis, identifies the problematic relationship between the signifier and signified. He rages against the suggestion of “the signifier answer[ing] to the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatever” (84). In the relationship between Heyst and Morrison, that is of saviour and saved, such a hierarchy is set up in that Heyst becomes the essential meaning of Morrison's life. Heyst is the signifier to Morrison's signified in that he, Morrison, sees Heyst's part in being able to continue his way of life. Morrison invokes the presence or intervention of God. Similarly, in Lacan,

“the word” (81) is invoked in the “realm of truth.” The biblical connotations here cannot be ignored, in that there is a correlation between John’s gospel, “In the beginning was the Word” (King James Bible) and Lacan’s belief in the awesome significance of “the word” present in the initial understanding of self-consciousness, without which a “text” is a series of “meaningless bagatelles” (4). For both Morrison and Lacan a transcendental signifier or absolute totem (authority) represents their centre of meaning.

Also, that he (Heyst) inadvertently confirms Morrison’s beliefs in the efficacy of a supernatural being appears ironic in the context of Heyst’s father’s lack of religious faith. That Morrison identifies Heyst as an instrument of divine intervention suggests more about Heyst’s constant state of mobility and the difficulty of pinning down his character. This also suggests the desire to explain the unusual or the bizarre. In doing this, Conrad is presenting the fluidity of thought and ideas in the context of continuous physical movement. Nothing appears stable in a world without family, friends or foundation. Characters can therefore freely apply their own explanations for what they consider unexpected events. This detachment through mobility makes for further complications between character and opinion.¹

Heyst’s mobility and Morrison’s inability to entertain other possible explanations for his rescue are later reflected in the names other characters attribute to Heyst: “Hard facts” (7); “Heyst the Spider” (21); “Heyst the Enemy,” “enchanted Heyst”² (24). The very mobility Heyst seeks presents him as a *tabula rasa*, in character terms a personality no one can explain. This in turn reflects his initial intention after his father’s death to “drift” (92). The apparent aimlessness of this intention both fulfills his father’s council, “Look on—make no sound” (175), yet also allows him to drift into firstly saving Morrison from the Portuguese officials and then Alma/Lena from Schomberg and the Zangiacomos. The very character of his mobility allows Heyst to become a heroic and

altruistic figure or an instrument of “Providence.” This both subjectifies and objectifies Heyst, in that he is at once appreciated for the assistance he renders and so is allotted a personality by others who would otherwise not know him. However, it objectifies Heyst through the displacement of his character to some ultimate influence, some ultimate signifier barring him from being defined as egoistic. The hero in this context cannot have too immediate a character. To do so, would present him as all too human and so make his origin and reason to act understandable, for those who wish to see only a mysterious representative of divine good or absolute evil. Morrison ironically deliberates on such a motivation: “Forgive me, Heyst. You must have been sent by God in answer to my prayer. But I have been nearly off my chump for three days with worry; and it suddenly struck me: ‘What if it’s the Devil who has sent him?’” (17). This anticipates the distortion of the story by Schomberg, who interprets Heyst’s act of generosity as an act of deceit³ and is later taken up by Mr. Jones, in an attempt to draw a diabolic comparison between his motivations to cheat and rob with those similar acts he believes Heyst is capable of: “I am he who is—” (317); “‘It’s obvious that we belong to the same—social sphere’, began Mr. Jones with languid irony” (378).

Morrison deliberates on which wields the most power good or evil, in this case altruistic generosity or egoistic self-interest. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan in her essay, “Some Millennial Footnotes on *Heart of Darkness*,” considers the Freudian dichotomy of “Desire vs. the Law” (63) explaining “but Lacan later recognizes the symbiotic and paradoxical relationship, insisting on the ‘tight bond between desire and the Law’ that contributes to what ‘might be called patriarchal civility’” (63). Both Morrison and Jones, it seems, seek to invoke the name of the father, or “the Name-of-the-Father” (63), Morrison in accounting on the unforeseen generosity of Heyst, and Jones on promoting the depths of his own malevolence. Both pivot on the “dialectic relationship between desire and the Law” (Lacan from Erdinast-Vulcan 63). Through the paradigm of

restraint and licence characters attempt to explain the actions of others.

From this we can see that mobility and stability in concomitance with egoism and altruism are important factors in establishing identity, especially when others attribute it. Heyst is considered not important enough to talk about until he performs an act of kindness and takes up with Morrison in the T.B.C.C. He therefore remains until that moment anonymous. At this point, egoism and altruism appear in conflict. An act of generosity in one direction provokes an act of hostility from another. There is a sense of resettling a balance between two aspects of human psychology. Just as Heyst takes Lena to his island, Schomberg sends revenge in the form of Jones et al. Lacan suggests in “The insistence of the letter in the unconscious”:

between the signifier in the form of the proper name of a man, and the signifier which metaphorically abolishes him [...] the poetic spark is produced, and it is in this case all the more effective in realizing the meaning of paternity in that it reproduces the mythic event in terms of which Freud reconstructed the progress, in the individual unconscious, of the mystery of the father. (90)

The many epithets applied to Heyst, “Hard facts,” “Heyst the Spider,” “Heyst the Enemy,” “enchanted Heyst,” abolish his identity (in Lacanian terms) and create a Heystian mythological aura. That Heyst takes Lena and goes against the advice “Look on—make no sound” connects two paternal figures in the tale, Jones and Heyst’s father. Heyst’s transgression “realiz[es] the meaning of paternity” in that these two figures, Jones and Heyst’s father, symbolically linked through the image of the “old but gorgeous blue silk dressing-gown” (376) signify the return of the father to punish the son. The symbolic and mythological come together in the encounter between Jones and Heyst. Egoism and altruism, in this context, bear out their “irreconcilable antagonism.”

Similarly in attracting attention or otherwise, Heyst’s father is ignored

by all until his death, which could be considered by his critics as the end of a lifetime of disregarded criticism of society. Heyst's father's advice appears good in relation to the Schombergs of the world, but having not taken it himself seems a last resort for one destined to drift and not experience fellowship or love.

The mobility of the other main characters can be seen in a similar way to Heyst's transformation from hero to antagonist. For example, the changing name of Lena from Alma to Magdalen and then to Lena illustrates in a similar way, how a character can be considered in the context of differing identities:

“Upon my word,” he said before they separated, “I don't even know your name.”

“Don't you? They call me Alma. I don't know why. Silly name! Magdalen too. It doesn't matter; you can call me by whatever name you choose. Yes, you give me a name. Think of one you would like the sound of—something quite new. How I should like to forget everything that has gone before, as one forgets a dream that's done with, fright and all! I would try.” (88)

The power of a name is illustrated here in its ability to gloss over a frightful past. Heyst's name, Lena, suggests either the awakening from a nightmare or falling into a dream.

Her peregrinations with the Zangiacomos entrap her into a life that makes her a virtual slave. Her worse than friendless situation (she was hated by Mrs. Zangiacomo) and the necessity of her to join the other women in the audience during the musical breaks turns her into little more than a possession:

For he [Schomberg] had little doubt of his personal fascination, and still less of his power to get hold of the girl, who seemed too ignorant to know how to help herself, and who was worse than friendless, since she had for some reason incurred the animosity of Mrs. Zangiocomo, a woman with no

conscience. (93)

Here, she is an object to be fought over and apparently a person so desolate that she will accept almost any alternative to life with Mrs. Zangiaco. Her next move is either to go with Schomberg to Bangkok or with Heyst to Samburan. Being a character more acted upon than acting, she is given few alternatives. Her social background and lack of financial independence offer her few opportunities and certainly not the luxury of drifting. Her dependence on initially her father, then Mr. Zangiaco, Schomberg and Heyst and finally Ricardo, sees her movement from Europe to Asia mainly according to male influence. She is confined to those spheres of activity that bring her into contact with men, and so cannot break free from her dependence on male help.⁴ Any form of heroism on her part must be expressed against a male dominated background, therefore must be suppressed either beneath an act of passivity or be interpreted as something supine. However, in her earnest appeal to Heyst, “*You do something! You are a gentleman*” (80), we see an early example of her yearning for freedom and self-determination.

Her anger at the memory of Schomberg and her dislike of the open sea reminds her of the weakness and loneliness she felt before her life on Samburan: “That empty space was to her the abomination of desolation” (190). This is closely associated with the feeling that heroic acts can only be performed if one has someone in support. Wide-open spaces and close relationships, especially with those one does not like, are no place for grand expressions of heroism. Her nomadic life with the other musicians makes her vulnerable to any man who becomes interested in her: “I will tell you straight that I have been worried and pestered by fellows like this before. I don’t know what comes to them—” (84). And her life in Schomberg’s house singles her out for particular attention.

Removed from her home environment, Lena must struggle with the unfamiliar. Like Heyst, Mr. Jones and Ricardo, Lena must exercise in the

process of survival what instinct and ability she has. However, whatever weaknesses she feels, she seems oblivious of the strength she has to inspire others, not least of all Schomberg.⁵ It is this strategy that Lena does not exploit to better her own situation, until it is too late. In a similar way to Heyst, she has left her father to travel the world with very little to shore up her personality against adversity. Like Heyst, she is looking for a safe haven; unlike Heyst, her feelings of vulnerability, possibly her femininity too, prevent her from asserting the positive qualities of her personality. That is until she gets to Samburan and begins to leave behind her European identity and be more assertive in the manner of the Alfuro woman (Wang's wife). This shows her ever strengthening character and self-confidence.

Having explained all this, it would seem that Lena fulfills the role of the Dickensian heroine, emblematic of the pitiful Victorian woman fallen on hard times.⁶ In Lacanian terms, Lena's further interpolation in the plot represents a shift from metonymy to metaphor in that her name Alma/Magdalene/Lena attributes identity, yet at first we most identify her as a member of the orchestra, in the form of the white dress she wears. She becomes the white dress. Later the metonymic identity returns in the black dress. Her metaphoric identity, in which Heyst replaces one name for another, can be described from a Lacanian standpoint as the "imminent lapse into the mirage of narcissistic altruism" (90); that is, her partial portrayal as the Victorian heroine fallen on hard times opens her place in the novel to paternalistic re-identification. Altruism, though apparently derided in the Lacan quotation, completes what is described as "the mystery of the father" (90). As Lacan explains:

The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the conjunction of two images, that is of two signifiers equally actualized. It springs from two signifiers, one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the hidden signifier then remaining present through its (metonymic) relation

to the rest of the chain (89).

Heyst's altruism actualizes the metonymic/metaphoric process, transforming Lena into an independent woman with a direction in life.

Evil, as represented in the novel by Mr. Jones, Martin Ricardo and Pedro, appears to be ever on the move and in search of more "tame" people to live off. It happens to be Schomberg's unfortunate experience to have them as customers in his hotel. Their mobility is more a process of exploiting the moral beliefs of others through confidence tricks and gambling. Their strength lies in their total detachment from any moral guide and depending upon the prospect of their victims, adhering firmly to a set of moral principles; the better to trick them.

The reader is first introduced to these three as a tourist, a secretary and a servant. These names appear euphemistic or, from a Lacanian perspective, metaphorical of their true roles. The "hidden" (89) metonymic relation of their real identities allows them entry into a "tame" society. Thereafter, once the quarry is identified their true purpose is revealed. Mr. Jones describes their travels as a never-ending progress: "Are you coming from Columbia, then?" "Yes, but I [Mr. Jones] have been coming for a long time. I come from a good many places. I am travelling west, you see" (100). The vague origin of these characters and their customary dress disguises the true history of their movements throughout the world: "Both he [Ricardo] and his long, lank principal wore the usual white suit of the tropics, cork helmets, pipe-clayed white shoes—all correct" (100).

Erdinast-Vulcan, in her essay "Some Millennial Footnotes on *Heart of Darkness*," revisits her thoughts on Marlow's failure of language "to name the horror of his [Kurtz's] metaphysical desire" (57) and express the truth of Kurtz's "atrocities" (57). This "failure" (56) offers an approach to the "textual unconscious" (58) and a "psycho-textual" (56) reading. Similarly, in *Victory* for Schomberg there is a failure of language.

However, his failure does not involve a search for the truth; quite the opposite, it involves a search for falsehood. At the centre of this is scandal. In his introduction to the Oxford World's Classic edition of *Victory*, Tony Tanner examines the origin of the word scandal: "Scandal' is another key word in the book—as it derives from *scandere*, to climb, and *skandalon*, a stumbling block—it appropriately conflates the ideas of ascent and fall" (xi). Stories have a tendency to direct Mr. Jones and his companions. In Manila, they are first introduced to Schomberg, in tones similar to those expounded by Schomberg on Heyst. These detail a meeting in Bangkok:

"You spoke to me first," said Schomberg in his manly tones. "You were acquainted with my name. Where did you hear of me, gentlemen, may I ask?"

"In Manila," answered the gentleman at large, readily. "From a man with whom I had a game a cards one evening in the Hotel Castille."

"What man? I've no friends in Manila that I know of," wondered Schomberg with a severe frown.

"I can't tell you his name. I've clean forgotten it; but don't worry. He was anything but a friend of yours. He called you all the names he could think of. He said you set a lot of scandal going about him once, somewhere—in Bangkok, I think. Yes, that's it. You were running a table d'hôte in Bangkok at one time, weren't you?" (100-101)

This story directs Mr. Jones from Manila to Sourabaya, in an apparent act of revenge by the anonymous victim of Schomberg's scandal. It is an ironic instance of Tony Tanner's conflation of rise and fall. Schomberg's rise through the propagation of rumour is ultimately his fall at the arrival of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro.

So much is left unsaid about Mr. Jones' aversion to women. Both the narrator and Ricardo circle this question, yet cryptically leave the reader to scrutinize it in the manner of a "glow bring[ing] out a haze" (Erdinast-Vulcan 57).⁷ Jones aversion would seem to be in direct

opposition to Schomberg's great desire for Lena. However, if we appraise the relationship between Schomberg and Jones' according to a "psycho-textual" reading, we see that Jones' arrival at the hotel signals in Lacanian terms, "that derangement of the instincts that comes from being caught on the rails—eternally stretching forth towards the desire for something else—of metonymy" (97). As I explained earlier, Lena is interpolated in metonymic terms through the white dress she wears.⁸ Schomberg appears to be the victim of Tony Tanner's second appraisal of the word scandal. Mr. Jones' arrival represents the return of Lacanian metaphor, in that one sign, Lena, replaces another in the context of Jones' extreme aversion to women: "The double-triggered mechanism of metaphor is in fact the very mechanism by which the symptom, in the analytic sense, is determined. Between the enigmatic signifier of a sexual trauma and its substitute term [...]" (97). Schomberg's "sexual trauma," therefore, is encapsulated in Jones' presence. He, through his self-corruption—"It's funny,' he [Davidson] said, 'but I fancy there's some gambling going on in the evening at Schomberg's place'" (62)—invites disaster (Jones et al) in an unconscious attempt to deal with thwarted desire. Unconscious? I believe so. In that, Schomberg's pretensions are masked by the propriety of "narrow strips of paper, with proper bill-heads stating the name of his hotel.—'W. Schomberg, proprietor,'" his initial identification of Mr. Jones as a "possible 'account'" (98) and Mr. Jones' assertion "Ah, I see you want to make a success of it" (115), suggesting he sees his partnership with Mr. Jones' gambling concern as an entrepreneurial exploit. This, therefore, indicates, in "psycho-textual" terms, the return. Quite opposed to Erdinast-Vulcan's failure of language "to name the horror," Schomberg's horror, in the presence of Jones et al, is all too real. However, Ricardo's pronouncement, "He's no more Mr. Jones than you are" (125), leaves Schomberg's "horror" faceless.

As we can see, there is rather more to Conrad's inscrutable

announcement on the forces of egoism and altruism. From a Belseyian standpoint, ideology cannot be ignored in the struggle for supremacy of these two forces. From a Lacanian standpoint, the Freudian struggle to overthrow the father is key to understanding the origins of neurosis and discovering a more efficacious treatment for neurotic and psychotic disorders, when “the moving force of the world” conflicts with “its morality.” Key, also in this context, is taking further control of the psychoanalytic realm, through discovering the letter in the unconscious; an extension of the hegemonic control of the source of psychic malady. Erdinast-Vulcan, in the conclusion to her essay, wonders what “we bow down to in the Name-of-the-Father” (65), as she, in Lacanian fashion, metaphorically replaces the “Oedipal paradigm” (65) with one yet to be determined, but one more relevant in the twentieth century. For Conrad, as described in the “Author’s Preface” to *Victory*, in his “Jack-ashore spirit,” dropping “a five-franc piece into the sauceboat” (xl) of the young woman who would become Lena [“dreamy innocence” (xli)], conflates both an act of egoism and altruism, in his attraction to and appreciation of the girl’s beauty. However, both forces, it seems, were tempered by the presence of “the little man with the beard who conducted, and who might for all I know have been her father” (xl), yet again emphasizing paternalist restraint and “Desire vs. the Law” (63).

Notes

¹ “its [Modernism’s] tendency to aim at detachment, at the perfectly encapsulating and ‘objective’ image [...] and at displaying personae and narrative intricacy to provide a multiplicity of viewpoints that will conceal the artist yet express his view—his sceptical view—of the world’s lack of fixed meaning.” Kenneth Graham, “Conrad and Modernism” 207.

² “These different perspectives on Heyst both encourage the reader to penetrate his appearances and suggest the impossibility of any such attempt. They establish his shifting identity-for-other, but provide no clue to his

- identity-for-self.” Robert Hampson, *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity* 232.
- ³ “In *Victory*, Schomberg’s inability to move past the human subject as physical object accounts for the difference between his treatment of people and Heyst’s [...] Heyst on the other hand moves beyond the mere perception of human beings as physical objects and gains some understanding of their subjectivity.” John G. Peters, *Conrad and Impressionism* 62-63.
- ⁴ The pose of female passivity was partially reversed in later years by emphasising the role of heroines in adventure plots: “He reversed the patterns of his formerly passive heroines, to some extent liberating his female protagonists from the constraints of inactivity and stasis on the periphery of the text.” Susan Jones, *Conrad and Women* 24.
- ⁵ “he has mistreated her [Mrs. Schomberg] in order to establish a ‘manly’ and superior image of himself. But this strategy has worked against himself [...]. And when Jones and Ricardo challenge the false identity that he asserts, he feels the need for a woman’s passionate response to reassure him of his manliness.” Hampson, *Betrayal* 237.
- ⁶ “she [Little Nell] is reduced to penury and even destitution.” Norman Page, Introduction to *The Old Curiosity Shop* xviii.
- ⁷ “the ‘truth’ of the text should, then, be approached through the narrative act—not like a kernel within the shell of a cracked nut, i.e., that which is inside, already there, waiting to be uncovered, but ‘outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine’.” Erdinast-Vulcan 57.
- ⁸ “Lena’s change of dress registers her new life in Samburan. It suggests her attempt to find a new identity for herself outside of European models.” Robert Hampson, *Cross-cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad’s Malay Fiction* 159.

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