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Abstract
Victory: An Island Tale (1915), by Joseph Conrad, begins with a heavily ironic passage which implicates the male body with the economy of empire. The climax of the novel is a tableau of the male gaze, in which two men 'mournfully' contemplate the white breast of a dying young woman. And the novel ends with absence or nothingness: the very last word of the text is 'Nothing!'. The reading of the novel which I am going to offer centres on these three passages and the outline of my argument is as follows. The psychological drama within the novel is structured around the form of homosocial exchange analysed by Eve Sedgwick, in which male power is confirmed and relations between men negotiated by the use of a woman (or women) as object of desire, competition and exchange. This process, has also been studied by Gayle Rubin and Luce Irigaray, who stress the relevance of an economic model, of what Irigaray terms a 'traffic' in women.
Economies of Empire and Masculinity in Conrad’s *Victory*¹

*Victory: An Island Tale* (1915), by Joseph Conrad, begins with a heavily ironic passage which implicates the male body with the economy of empire. The climax of the novel is a tableau of the male gaze, in which two men ‘mournfully’ contemplate the white breast of a dying young woman. And the novel ends with absence or nothingness: the very last word of the text is ‘Nothing!’. The reading of the novel which I am going to offer centres on these three passages and the outline of my argument is as follows. The psychological drama within the novel is structured around the form of homosodal exchange analysed by Eve Sedgwick, in which male power is confirmed and relations between men negotiated by the use of a woman (or women) as object of desire, competition and exchange.² This process has also been studied by Gayle Rubin and Luce Irigaray, who stress the relevance of an economic model, of what Irigaray terms a ‘traffic’ in women.³ But the novel is also concerned with the economy of empire as such – the exploitation of resources, trade and modernisation – and with various forms of monetary exchange: lending, buying, stealing, gambling. These two economies, which I will term the economy of masculinity and the economy of empire respectively, are interwoven in Conrad’s plot and in his rhetoric. However, each is destabilized by the other, in a simultaneous failure of the projects of empire and of normative masculinity.

Conrad’s *Victory*, although a late work, returns to the imperial setting of his early novels, in the Malay archipelago. The protagonist, Axel Heyst, comes to the area as a wanderer, aiming to avoid human commitments as a result of the teaching of his father, a Schopenhauerian philosopher. But Heyst is drawn despite himself into two successive involvements. First he lends money to Morrison, a trading sea-captain in trouble, who in gratitude insists on Heyst going into business with him, so that Heyst becomes local manager of a coal mine on a remote island called Samburan. After the collapse of this enterprise, Heyst remains on the island, alone apart from a Chinese servant, Wang. But on a visit to the port of Sourabaya (on Java) he rescues a young woman called Lena from an all-female orchestra: she is being mistreated by the managers (Mr and Mrs Zangiacomo) and sexually harassed by a hotel-
keeper called Schomberg. Heyst takes Lena back to his island. But they are followed by three villainous desperadoes (Jones, Ricardo and Pedro), who have been egged on by the jealous hotel-keeper's talk of hidden treasure. A complex struggle of wills ensues, ending in the death of Lena (who is shot protecting Heyst), of Heyst (who then commits suicide) and of all three villains (who have fallen out).

In the penultimate chapter the reader is offered a tableau of the male gaze, bringing together sexuality, death and the female body. Lena lies dying from a bullet wound which Heyst has just discovered by tearing open the top of her dress. Heyst's friend, Davidson, has arrived on the island just too late to avert the tragedy, and stands by him:

They stood side by side, looking mournfully at the little black hole made by Mr Jones's bullet under the swelling breast of a dazzling and as it were sacred whiteness. It rose and fell slightly - so slightly that only the eyes of the lover could detect the faint stir of life. Heyst, calm and utterly unlike himself in the face, moving about noiselessly, prepared a wet cloth, and laid it on the insignificant wound, round which there was hardly a trace of blood to mar the charm, the fascination, of that mortal flesh. (p. 405)

This is only the culmination of a number of scenes in which Lena is presented as an aestheticized and sexualized object of contemplation. Throughout the novel looking has been crucial: desiring looks, threatening looks, blank and indecipherable looks, offering the reader a range of possible viewpoints and identifications. Earlier, in the developing relationship between Heyst and Lena, there have been looks of male mastery and possession, but also suggestions of a developing mutuality:

He looked fixedly at her, and with such grave eyes that she felt obliged to smile faintly at him, since she did not understand what he meant. Her smile was reflected, still fainter, on his lips. (p. 197)

Frequently, though, the woman's gaze is constructed or interpreted, not as an expression of her desire or need, but as a mark of her incomprehensibility and the occasion for the stimulation of male desire:

in the intimacy of their life her grey, unabashed gaze forced upon him the sensation of something inexplicable reposing within her; stupidity or inspiration, weakness or force - or simply an abysmal emptiness, reserving itself even in the moments of complete surrender. (p. 192)

Why should the Conradian rhetoric of the incomprehensible be brought into play, merely because a woman looks at a man without being 'abashed'? The incomprehension here seems to be Conrad's as much as Heyst's, judging by a certain stylistic awkwardness and incoherence: 'stupidity or inspiration' and 'weakness or force' are opposed qualities, but it is unclear why they should be termed 'inexplicable'. Heyst's sense
of an abyss within Lena would seem to express his need for her dependence; his need for her to remain the object of his desiring gaze, rather than the subject of her own desire. And the narrative of the novel might seem to endorse Heyst's desire by setting Lena up as an iconic sexual object and by ending in her death and the effacement of her subjectivity. In the death-bed scene Heyst and Davidson orient the look of narrator and reader towards her body. Even Lena, at the moment of her death, imagines herself as seen by a male Other: 'Exulting, she saw herself extended on the bed, in a black dress ... while ... he was ready to lift her up in his firm arms and take her into the sanctuary of her innermost heart' (p. 407). We are offered the possibility of identifying with Heyst's look, or of identifying with either Davidson or Lena, both of whom are themselves, in different ways, identifying with Heyst's look. Furthermore, we are invited to notice the faint movement of her breast, even while we are told that only 'the eyes of the lover' could detect it. Thus the reader, whether male or female, is offered a place in the normative homosocial economy. The story of the relationship between Heyst and Lena might seem, then, to reinforce a homosocial structure. It is within an economy of masculinity that Lena's role is worked out: the plot is fuelled by male relationships and desires: Schomberg's lust and jealousy; Ricardo's relationship with Jones; Heyst's maverick position in the society of European males. The tableau of her death is presented, not just to Heyst, but to Davidson and to the reader.

At this point I want to return to the opening passage of the novel, to show how the economy of empire parallels but also unsettles this normative heterosexual masculinity. The novel begins with materiality, commerce, sameness and difference: 'There is, as every schoolboy knows in this scientific age, a very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds' (p. 3). The fact that coal and diamonds are the same element was famously used by D.H. Lawrence as a metaphor for the transformation of the self, for the absence of the 'old stable ego' in his fiction. Might Conrad's opening bear on human as well as chemical relations? On the second page Heyst is assessed in terms of likeness and difference: 'He was not mad. Queer chap - yes, that may have been said, and in fact was said; but there is a tremendous difference between the two, you will allow' (p. 4). Later we are told again that Heyst was 'generally considered a "queer chap"' (p. 91) and in the final pages of the novel Davidson says that Heyst 'was a queer chap. I doubt if he himself knew how queer he was' (p. 408). Wayne Koestenbaum has noted the marked use of the word 'queer', with sexual connotations, in Conrad's collaborative novel with Ford Madox Ford, Romance. One should be cautious about reading in later usage: queer would not have meant homosexual to Conrad. On the other hand, within a regime of masculinity which combined widespread same-sex sexual activity with widespread denial and homophobia, homosexuality
Economies of Empire and Masculinity in Conrad's Victory was a likely form which being ‘queer’ might take, especially since we are told that Heyst ‘never talked of women, he never seemed to think of them, or to remember that they existed’ (p.42). The outward contrast and inner connection of coal and diamond might suggest that being a ‘queer chap’ and being an ordinary one are covertly connected. The opening passage, after alluding to the fascination and value of coal, or ‘black diamonds’, as possible reasons for Heyst’s attachment to his island, continues in a vein of ponderous Conradian irony:

The Tropical Belt Coal Company went into liquidation. The world of finance is a mysterious world in which, incredible as the fact may appear, evaporation precedes liquidation. First the capital evaporates, and then the company goes into liquidation. These are very unnatural physics, but they account for the persistent inertia of Heyst, at which we ‘out there’ used to laugh among ourselves – but not inimically. An inert body can do no harm to any one. (p. 3)

Heyst’s involvement with commerce had temporarily made him seem less different from the other European men ‘out there’, but after the death of Morrison and the collapse of the Company, an ‘unnatural’ process transforms him back into a passive ‘inert body’. As manager Heyst had been engaged in active, productive activity, working the material body of the earth, but ‘unnatural physics’ reduce him to a body himself. A subtext of gender and sexuality seems present in these ironic manoeuvres around the nature of a man who is seen as a queer, passive body, rather than an active will and mind.8 Irigaray describes the ideological formation that represents men as active and women as passive:

man is the procreator ... sexual production-reproduction is referable to his ‘activity’ alone, to his ‘pro-ject’ alone. Woman is nothing but the receptacle that passively receives his product, even if sometimes, by the display of her passively aimed instincts, she has pleaded, facilitated, even demanded that it be placed within her. Matrix – womb, earth, factory, bank – to which the seed capital is entrusted so that it may germinate, produce, grow fruitful, without woman being able to lay claim to either capital or interest since she has only submittted ‘passively’ to reproduction.9

The financial and cultural relationship embodied in Heyst’s work as manager of a mine parallels the gender relation described by Irigaray, since the European financial interests exploit the resources of the Malay Archipelago while retaining capital and profit for themselves. The transformation of Heyst, from observer to manager and back again is, however, only a shift between different forms of speculation, like different forms of the same element. The influence of his father’s philosophical ideas has given Heyst ‘a special insight’ (p. 196) and made him a spectator of life: ‘I could not take my soul down into the street to fight there. I started off to wander about, an independent spectator – if that is possible‘ (p. 196). Rejecting ‘the street’, Heyst nevertheless
becomes a sort of *flâneur* of the world in general. He sees his involvement with Lena as 'his latest departure from the part of an unconcerned spectator' (p. 185) but 'at the same time he could not help being temperamentally, from long habit and from set purpose, a spectator still' (p. 185). Furthermore, he intensively observes Lena. Thus while Heyst's previous detachment from the world had been a matter of philosophical observation and speculation, his involvements, with the mine and then with Lena, are matters of financial speculation and sexual observation. When the mining company collapses, Heyst tries to reconvert the commercial into the philosophical, staying on Samburan no longer as manager but as a hermit philosopher lounging on his lonely veranda. However, the two forms of speculation are re-enmeshed by the presence of a woman. Heyst's lone presence on the island was the subject only of idle speculation among the European community; not exactly philosophical speculation but without a profit-motive. However, once Lena is with him, the pair become the subject of malevolent and interested speculation. Schomberg invests his jealousy in the greed of Jones and Ricardo, inciting them to undertake a speculative journey to rob Heyst of his supposed wealth and of Lena. So the plot manifests the homology between a psychic economy of homosocial masculinity (with woman as the object of exchange) and the financial economy of imperial capitalism (in which money and commodities are exchanged). Lena figures as a treasure, competed for, but also as a coin, circulated; her identity hovers between that of the 'essence' of 'Woman', evoked in images of idealized femininity, and that of token of exchange in a contest of male desire, jealousy, revulsion and repression, involving Schomberg, Zangiacomo, Heyst, Ricardo, Jones and Davidson. And perhaps the (male) reader. Yet Heyst's ambiguous and problematic role within each economy reveals instabilities in their parallel structures.

Furthermore, Heyst's queer inertness and the failure of his business project are not the only threats to normative heterosexual masculinity in the novel. While homosocial exchanges structure many of Conrad's fictions, *Victory* is unusual in making relatively overt reference to homosexuality. The relationship between the novel's principal villains, 'Mr Jones' and Martin Ricardo, is a combination of criminal partnership, feudal master-servant bond and barely-denied sexual attachment. Jones's hatred and fear of women and his murderous jealousy when Ricardo pursues Lena are fairly obvious indicators of his homosexuality, though the portrait is much distorted by a homophobia which can represent same-sex desire among men only as misogyny and a male couple only as a criminal partnership. The word 'unnatural', as in the 'unnatural physics' of the Coal Company, is also applied to Jones's pathological hatred of women (p. 266). Jones and Heyst are linked in various ways: Jones's affected malevolent indifference functions as a sort of dark parody of Heyst's assumed philosophic
detachment and, as R.W.B. Lewis has noted, they are both ‘gentlemen’. The conventional connotations of the word ‘gentleman’ are undermined by its repeated application to Jones, just as the word ‘manly’ is unsettled by its repeated ironic application to the malevolent gossip of a hotel-keeper, Schomberg. Questions of same-sex desire appear with greater subtlety in the relationship of Heyst and Morrison, which attracts a sense of uncertainty: ‘Heyst became associated with Morrison on terms about which people were in doubt. Some said he was a partner, others said he was a sort of paying guest, but the real truth of the matter was more complex’ (p. 10). We learn that the relationship originated in Heyst’s financial rescue of Morrison and continued because of Heyst’s delicacy of feeling but we may suspect that this delicacy masked an unacknowledged need for company on the part of the isolated Heyst. This pattern is repeated with Heyst and Lena and the parallel creates a certain sexual ambiguity. Heyst’s concern for Morrison draws him into a potentially enriching though finally disastrous financial project – the coal mine. Heyst’s concern for Lena draws him into a sexual relationship which greatly enriches his life but is similarly short-lived, ending in the death of both him and Lena. Heyst’s father has not destroyed his son’s human needs, but has repressed his ability to acknowledge them; only the needs of others enable him to seek company, active employment, or emotional and sexual fulfilment. So while Heyst’s role of gallant rescuer in respect of Morrison and Lena is superficially in accord with conventional masculinity – indeed, in the latter case Heyst’s ‘long horizontal moustaches’ and injunction ‘Pray command me’ (p. 73) suggest a parodic chivalry – its underlying psychology is more akin to a conventional femininity as Irigaray describes it: to a ‘display of ... passively aimed instincts’ and a role as a seeming receptacle for the needs of others.

The connection between the two relationships is prefigured when Heyst and Lena first meet. On first seeing Lena, Heyst looks at her ‘as no man ever looks at another man’ (p. 71). Yet in the next paragraph, when he gets up to speak to her, we are told that: ‘It was the same sort of impulse which years ago had made him ... accost Morrison, practically a stranger to him then ... It was the same impulse. But he did not recognize it’ (pp. 71-72). Shortly afterwards the narrator adds:

It is very clear that Heyst was not indifferent. I won’t say to the girl, but to the girl’s fate. He was the same man who had plunged after the submerged Morrison ... But this was another sort of plunge altogether, and likely to lead to a very different kind of partnership. (p. 77)

The look is different, the ‘plunge’ is different, yet the impulse is of the same sort. This pattern, of similarity and difference, is repeated in Heyst’s account to Lena of his friendship with Morrison. Lena describes
her horror of Schomberg’s sexual harassment, and says that she was ‘cornered’. This is as much a literal as a metaphorical term, since we have earlier been told that Schomberg has ‘assailed her in quiet corners’ (p. 79). Heyst is quite clear what she is talking about, yet picks up her term in describing his relations with Morrison: ‘One day I met a cornered man. I use the word because it expresses the man’s situation exactly, and because you just used it yourself. You know what that means?’ (p. 197). Lena is startled by the idea Heyst has conjured up, of a sexually harassed sea-captain, and when Heyst explains that ‘I mean in his own way’, she responds ‘I knew very well it couldn’t be anything like that’ (p. 197). Heyst also refers to his friendship with Morrison, based on the fact that ‘one gets attached in a way to people one has done something for’ (p. 199), as constituting ‘a germ of corruption’ (p. 200). Lena is understandably upset, since this might equally apply to her relationship with Heyst.

Twice, then, the idea of a sexual element in Heyst’s relationship with Morrison is evoked and then put aside. Wayne Koestenbaum shows how Conrad and Ford present their collaboration on Romance as an illicit male activity. Heyst and Morrison are similarly described as sharing a secret intimacy, ‘like conspirators in a comic opera’ (p. 19) which issues in what the text identifies as a ‘romantic’ business project (p. 24). It might be argued that these are all unsurprising effects in a fiction about a social context where men lived and worked closely together, often without women, but where open homosexuality was taboo. However, Eve Sedgwick has shown that the ways in which homophobia has distorted and informed literary discourses is revealing both of the nature of those discourses and of the nature of their social context. Taking a lead from her I would suggest that the traces of homosexuality in Conrad’s work are important in part because of the pressure they exert on the homosocial structures which are of primary importance, both in terms of plot and in terms of structures of narration and interpretation. As Sedgwick points out, patriarchal homosocial structures are often homophobic as well: in her terms, ‘the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual’ is repressed or obscured within structures of power involving the exchange of women among men. The hints of homosexual feeling in Heyst’s relationship with Morrison disturb the homosocial structures present in plot and narrative, as do the suggestions of a feminisation of Heyst and the presence at certain moments between Heyst and Lena of a gaze of mutuality rather than of power. While the interaction of Heyst and Davidson in the penultimate chapter fits a pattern of homosocial exchange, notably in their contemplation of the dying Lena, the Morrison-Heyst-Lena triangle is not one in which the men exchange the woman or her image, but one in which a man (Heyst) relates in comparable ways to another man and to a woman. At certain stages of
the novel Lena is more a substitute for Morrison (or vice versa) than a token of exchange.

The doubling of characters for which Conrad, Henry James and R.L. Stevenson are particularly noted can render problematic not only individual identities but also collective forms of identity such as gender, ‘race’ and sexual orientation. As well as the doubling of Heyst and Jones, and of Morrison and Heyst, there is a doubling of Heyst and Wang, the Chinese ‘coolly’ who remains on the island, notionally as Heyst’s ‘boy’. Notionally because, from the moment when he accepts the job with an ‘unexpectedly … deprecatory expression’ (p. 178) Wang seems to get the upper hand, appropriating the keys to the storeroom and the revolver and outmanoeuvring both Heyst and the villains to survive, almost alone, the novel’s bloody climax. In the representation of both Heyst and Wang there is a play between the idea of Adamic or archetypal man, beginning afresh, and the role of entrepreneur and instrument of global modernity (a common linking in the discourse of colonialism, *Robinson Crusoe* being the classic instance). Heyst’s Coal Company is seen by the European traders as a threatening encroachment of what Chris Bongie has termed the ‘New Imperialism’ (modern, technological global capitalism) on their world of Old Imperialist individual adventure (*Victory*, p. 24).15 Wang initially appears as just a tool of this New Imperialist venture, one of the ‘imported Chinese labourers’ (p. 178). Yet it later occurs to Heyst to see him as a competitor for possession of the island (p. 257). Like Heyst, Wang acquires a woman (one of the indigenous Alfuro people) and begins to exploit the natural resources, taking seeds from the storeroom to grow vegetables, for which Heyst ‘in his own person represented the market’ (p. 181). He thus outdoes Heyst in what Irigaray calls the ‘project’ of masculinity: in a form of parody of colonial dispossession, Wang appropriates the property of the defunct Coal Company to produce commodities which he sells back to its ex-manager. Resembling Heyst in his taciturnity (p. 180) and his initial lack of human ties (p. 307), Wang seems the more successful of the two in fulfilling the masculine roles of making money, fighting and protecting his woman. Yet Wang’s actions, even as their effectiveness and rationality are acknowledged (p.307), are treated in racist terms as the result of ‘instinct’, ‘impulse’ and ‘a Chinaman’s ruling passion’ (p.181). Essentialized in racial terms yet also frequently seen as incomprehensible (pp. 268, 322-23), Wang is thus represented analogously to Lena: as Karl Miller observes, ‘women and foreigners were alike – unknown ground which might or might not bear fruit’.16 Yet Wang, who at one point appears ‘engaged in the young-ladyish occupation of picking flowers’ (p. 283), refuses to be the ground for European exploitation, and becomes himself a tiller of the ground of the island. At the same time the Alfuro, the indigenous people who retreat to the other half of the island and with whom only
Wang has contact, are at once the dispossessed Other of the colonial economy and the object of exoticist fantasy, firmly hidden behind their barrier in the novel's 'political unconscious'.

Thus Heyst, the white male European subject of modernity and the New Imperialism, who in mining days mouths its typical slogan of a 'great stride forward' (p. 6), is shadowed by Others of gender, 'race' and sexual orientation, his identity shifting in a series of role reversals and doublings. This unsettling of European masculine identity is reflected in the novel's conclusion, to which I now turn. 'There was nothing to be done there ... Nothing!' (p. 412). Heyst has become an 'inert body' for real and there is no more scope for masculine commercial activity to reinsert him into the homosocial order. In one sense this nothingness is the legacy of Heyst's father, who 'considered the universal nothingness' (p. 219). Heyst carries that abyss within him and when Lena is brought into his world she briefly rescues him from that nothingness by making him love her, though at the cost of her own life. R. W. B. Lewis writes of Jones that 'what becomes full and finally visible about him is a kind of absence, a nothingness'. Problems of masculinity expressed in terms of absence, loss and of 'nothing to see' fit readily, and perhaps too readily, an interpretation in terms of Freudian castration anxiety or Lacanian theories of lack and Symbolic castration. While acknowledging the productivity of such interpretations, I share the reservation expressed by Stephen Heath, Teresa de Lauretis and others, that Lacanian theory tends to perpetuate phallocentrism by ensuring that issues of desire, including a supposedly non gender-specific lack, continue to be discussed in terms of the presence or absence of a structure metaphorically named after the male organ.

The overt tone of Conrad's novel is elegiac, presenting the failure of masculine and financial speculation as existential tragedy. But, on the basis of the conflicts within the text, I want to read the ending in a more utopian spirit, by attending to the novel's explicit comments on masculinity. One of the most intense moments of Heyst's desiring look at Lena prompts an observation about the masculinity that accompanies and props up his pleasure in possessing and seeing her:

He was still under the fresh sortilege of their common life, the surprise of novelty, the flattered vanity of his possession of this woman; for a man must feel that, unless he has ceased to be masculine. (p. 201)

Here the abyss opens under the logic of the same: a woman serves to constitute and confirm a man's masculinity, but through a transparently tautologous logic: Heyst feels vanity because he is masculine and he is masculine because he feels vanity. Elsewhere in the novel even as masculine and feminine qualities are essentialized, they seem to seep into each other:
there was born in her a woman's innate mistrust of masculinity, of that seductive strength allied to an absurd, delicate shrinking from the recognition of the naked necessity of facts, which never yet frightened a woman worthy of the name ... Before this eminently masculine fussing she felt the woman's need to give way, the sweetness of surrender. (p. 308)

This passage, while drawing on familiar clichés of feminine pliancy, presents masculinity as delicate, shrinking, fussy and blind to facts.

Margaret Whitford defends Irigaray's utopianism on the grounds that 'imagining how things could be different is part of the process of transforming the present in the direction of a different future'. She quotes Irigaray's answer to someone who claimed not to understand the meaning of 'masculine discourse': 'Of course not, since there is no other. The problem is that of a possible alterity in masculine discourse - or in relation to masculine discourse'. Whitford comments:

Irigaray is trying to 'imagine the unimaginable' and it is in this light that we should understand her view that to aim for a state 'beyond sexual difference' without rearticulating our present organization of male and female would only maintain the deceptive universality of the male.

This combines the aspiration towards a presently unimaginable future with an imperative to rearticulate the social institutions of the present. Such a rearticulation must rest on an understanding of the history and development of those institutions. A re-examination of the work of Conrad in terms of how it represents and is shaped by the institution of masculinity, may contribute to that understanding and thus to the imagining of a different future. Perhaps we cannot at present imagine the absence of masculinity without evoking ideas of lack or loss, a formation which seems to lead only back to the phallus. I am writing a masculine discourse, in Irigaray's sense. When the male critic's act of seeing, examining, representing is so firmly trapped within the sexualization of the aesthetic, how can he claim to see, or try to reveal, an alterity in masculine discourse? At the risk, then, of what may seem a gesture of transcendence, I would like to offer an imagining of the Conradian abyss or nothingness, not as negation, death or loss, but as an alterity of the masculine, even if that alterity was for Conrad, and remains for many men today, unspeakable.

NOTES

1. This article is based on material to be published in my forthcoming book, *Conrad and Masculinity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).


5. My account of the narrowing of a range of possible identifications / looks into a single one is based, by analogy, on Steve Neale’s analysis of configurations of gender, power and looking in the cinema, involving the spectator’s look at the screen, the look of the camera and the look of the protagonist. See Steve Neale, ‘Masculinity As Spectacle’, in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, ed., Screen (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 277-87.

6. ‘You mustn’t look in my novel for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we’ve been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same singleradically unchanged element. (Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon ...)’ D.H. Lawrence, letter to Edward Garnett, 5th June 1914, in *D.H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed., Anthony Beal ([1956]; London: Mercury Books, 1961), p. 18.


8. Leslie Heywood makes a related point when she writes that ‘in Heyst’s “elusive” evasion of definition, he has placed himself in the position of Woman, the unreadable text’. Leslie Heywood, ‘The Unreadable Text: Conrad and “The Enigma of Woman” in *Victory*, *Conradiana*, 26,1 (Spring 1994), pp. 3-19.


17. The term is borrowed from Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* ([Methuen 1981]; London: Routledge, 1989). The marginalized Alfuro, who play a significant but negative role in the plot of the novel, exemplify the repressed presence of certain of the conditions of the colonial economy.
19. Stephen Heath, 'Difference', in *The Sexual Subject*, pp. 47-106 (pp. 49-50, 60). De Lauretis quotes Lacan as follows: 'the interdiction against autoerotism bearing on a particular organ, which for that reason acquires the value of an ultimate (or first) symbol of lack (manque), has the impact of pivotal experience'. She comments that 'desire and signification are defined ultimately as a process inscribed in the male body, since they are dependent on the initial - and pivotal - experiencing of one’s penis'. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 23.
22. In its conclusion, my argument converges with that of Leslie Heywood’s accomplished deconstruction of gender difference in *Victory*. She concludes: 'In *Victory* ... there is the tendency for each opposition to become so extreme ... that the opposition itself collapses. It becomes its opposite, clearing a space (perhaps Nietzsche’s “empty space”?) or instituting a blank within which some other logic than absolute difference begins to work itself out' (Heywood, p. 16).