Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
Departamento de Língua e Literatura Estrangeiras

WHOSE VICTORY?

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PHILOSOPHICAL SCEPTICISM AND BELIEF IN CONRAD'S VICTORY

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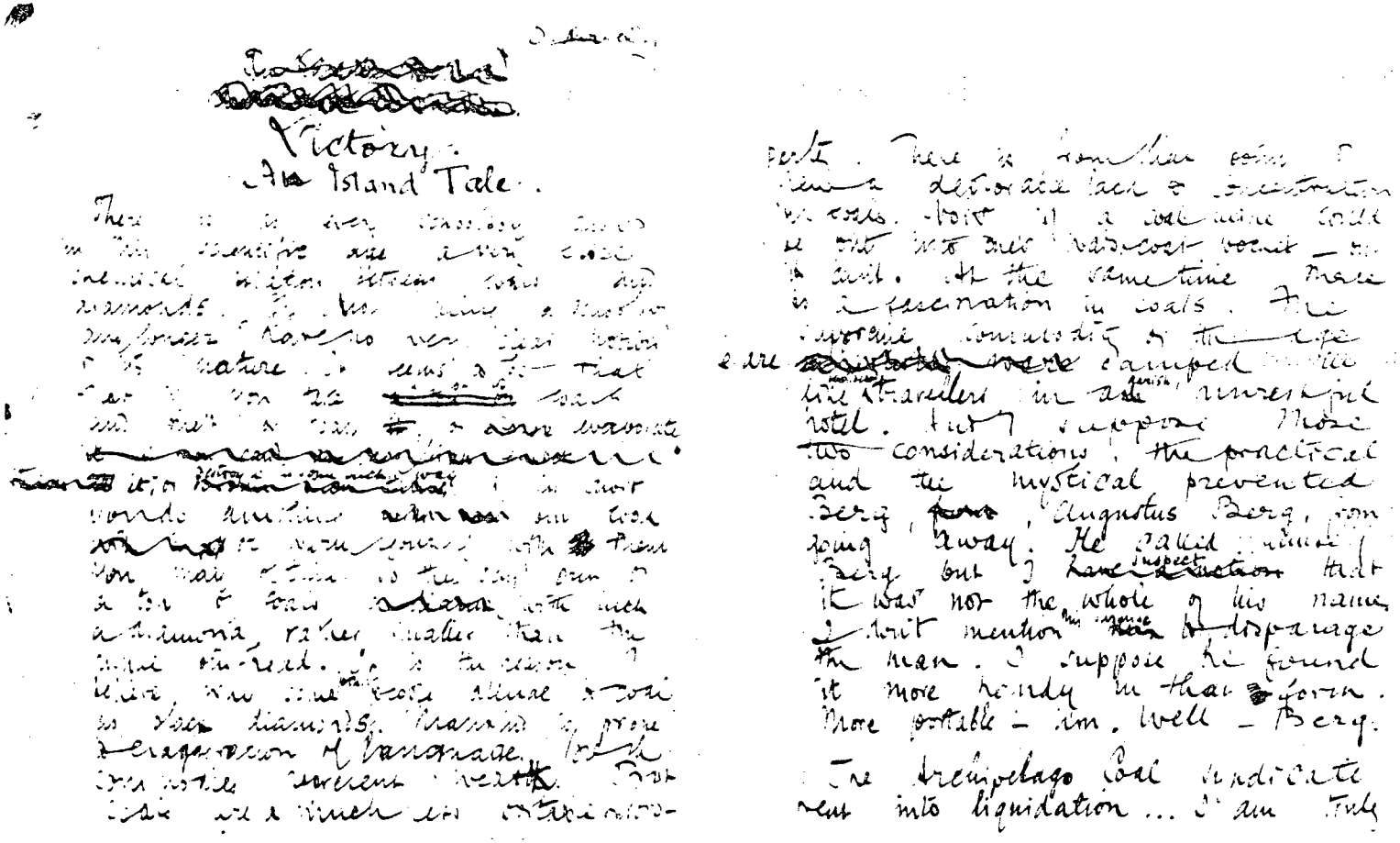

Victory.
An Island Tale.

The first four pages of the *Victory* manuscript

ABSTRACT

The novel Victory, by Joseph Conrad, seems to be imbued with Gestalt properties, for, depending on the angle of the reader's focus, at one moment it is a negative, critical world view which predominates, and the next moment there emerges a striving against just such a view and a proclaiming of the necessity of belief as the only way of maintaining a hold on life. If, on the one hand, the omniscient voice of the author comments that "the use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices and follies, and also our fears",[1] on the other hand, he affirms that "every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end."[2]

Bearing in mind this underlying polarity, we have set out to analyze the psychological metamorphoses of the protagonist, Axel Heyst, in his relationship to the other characters and the decisive happenings in his life.

Axel is heir to a conviction of deep scepticism, inculcated in him by his deceased father.

> "Thinker, stylist and man of the world in his time, the elder Heyst (...) had dragged on this painful earth of ours the most weary,

> the most uneasy soul that civilisation had ever fashioned to its ends of desillusion and regret."[3]

The elder Heyst's philosophy of life, curiously similar to that of the great Schopenhauer, advocated non-involvement with the world, inert isolation, and meditation and "that form of contempt which is called pity"[4], as the only way of liberation that avoids suffering.

Axel Heyst tries to put into practise the philosophy of non-involvement, but is always tortured by the permanent inner conflict between the two opposite poles of his personality: the withdrawn hermit of intellectual isolation (acquired from his father) and his emotional and instinctive self, constantly impelling him toward social interaction, due to his "temperamentally sympathetic"[5] nature. This inner conflict continually brings him into disharmony with the outer world.

Oscillating rhythmically between situations of incomplete commitment and incomplete withdrawal, Heyst Junior gradually reaches an awareness of his incapacity, as a human being, to continue in isolation, and at the same time recognizes the necessity of belief in the positive values which preserve life in an aesthetic and ethical form. His last words to Davidson are a forceful but plaintive affirmation of life: "Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart had not learned while young to hope, to love —and to put its trust in life."[6] Yet his very incapacity to believe leads him to suicide.

From the fundamental tone of pessimism throughout the novel, contrasting with other author's apparent intention of cri-

ticizing the philosophical scepticism of his time, by exposing its inherent dangers, the predominant attitude of the author toward the dilemma of intellectuallly-based doubt versus emotionally-based belief was one of an ambivalence.

NOTES ON

ABSTRACT

1 - Victory, p. 268

2 - Ibid., p. 78

3 - Ibid., p. 75

4 - Ibid., p. 174

5 - Ibid., p. 171

6 - Ibid., pp. 338-9

RESUMO

O romance Victory, de Joseph Conrad, parece estar imbuído de propriedades gestálticas, pois dependendo dos ângulos focalizados pelo leitor, assim emana dele ora uma visão cética e negativa do mundo, ora uma atitude crítica dessa mesma visão em que precisamente é proclamada a necessidade de Acreditar como única forma de sobrevivência.

A incidência de personagens e comentários claramente céticos, aliada ao final catastrófico do romance, pesam de tal forma no espectro de Victory, que surge então a questão inevitável de se seria ou não intenção do autor transmitir uma imagem de absoluta negação. As múltiplas posturas de descrença em Victory no mínimo sugerem uma marcada influência da mentalidade pessimista de fins do século XIX, começos do século XX. É inegável a evidência de inúmeros paralelos entre aspectos do romance e o pensamento dos grandes filósofos do Pessimismo.

O protagonista, Axel Heyst, é herdeiro do pensamento de seu defunto pai, que, numa atitude muito próxima da de Schopenhauer, preconizara o não-envolvimento como forma de libertação. Axel tenta pôr em prática a teoria de seu pai, mas se tortura em permanente conflito interior entre os dois pólos opostos de sua

personalidade: a tendência egocêntrica para o heremitismo adquirida de seu pai, e sua natureza instintivamente solidária e emocional que o empurra para os seus semelhantes. Oscilando ritmicamente entre situações de incompleto afastamento e incompleto envolvimento, Heyst Júnior vive em constante desarmonia com o mundo que o cerca.

Tendo em vista esta polaridade fundamental, busca este trabalho uma análise das metamorfoses psicológicas do protagonista Axel Heyst em relação com os outros personagens e os acontecimentos decisivos de sua vida.

É Victory um lamento que ecoa a Dúvida de base intelectual, ou antes um pregão da necessidade de Acreditar instintiva e emocionalmente?

O tom de pessimismo fundamental que rege o romance em constraste com a aparente intenção do autor de criticar o ceticismo filosófico do seu tempo, leva-nos a concluir que a sua é uma atitude de predominante ambivalência.

Joseph Conrad

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of Problem

On reading Victory, one is struck by the Gestalt quality of its message. At one moment we are impressed by the perception of a certain view of the world, but soon it is veiled by another completely opposite and apparently contradictory one. No sooner does a complex image of absolute nihilism take form, than suddenly an emphatic assertion of life itself replaces it before our mind.

The protagonist, Axel Heyst, lives in conflict with himself and the outer world. In fact, he is simultaneously the inert, hermit-like herald of a sceptical, life-negating view of the world (instilled in him by his late father), and the involuntary actor of his instinctive tendencies to act and to be emotionally involved with his fellowmen. His father's thought, which predominantly weighs on Axel's mind, seems to have been inspired by the philosophical scepticism of great Schopenhauer. Besides, it seems paradoxical the fact that while, generally, the narrator seems to

condemn sceptical detachment, there are times when he himself apparently endorses the philosophy of Heyst's father, as it is evidenced by his own words:

> "... the use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices and follies and also our fear".[1]

Or still "... every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end."[2] How seriously does the narrator take the philosophy of Heyst's father? Whose victory is this so loudly proclaimed by the title? The victory of Death? Of Life? Of Heyst's father? Of Lena? Is Conrad consciously alluding to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, as it appears? Does the author follow or repudiate the philosopher's pessimism? — Is his attitude toward Schopenhauer critical, favorable or rather both? How does Conrad's attitude toward the philosopher reveal the conflict between scepticism, on the one hand, and the moralistic impulse to assert the value of a positive code, on the other? How does Schopenhauer illuminate the balance between activity and passivity we find in Victory's characters? How does the book reflect evolutionary thinking of late 19th century in general, especially concepts of man driven by the will, who uses his mind merely to rationalize instincts? How does Schopenhauer relate to the problem of withdrawal versus engagement in society?

Is Heyst's "fall" a fall from sceptical thought into action and involvement — or is sceptical thought the cause of a "fall" from a Paradise or unreflecting, instinctive action?

In short, the main problem we address is the conflict

in Victory (and probably in the author's soul) between Doubt and Belief, not primarily the belief that means "faith" in a religious sense, but also something like trust in a finite code of honor, what we call the work-ethic.

If Conrad sees Heyst as victim of dark forces outside himself, rather than a man brought to tragedy by his own flaws, then he will seemmingly be writing a melodrama based on a philosophy of withdrawal. But if Conrad is really criticizing Heyst's solipcism and withdrawal, he seems to be criticizing the philosopher.

The attempt to answer to these general problems will lead us to ask related, and more specific questions: for example, is Heyst a round or a flat character, ironically or melodramatically presented? Does he recognize his flaws at the end? Is evil merely external to him? Is his suicide a simple Schopenhauerean pursuit of Nirvana or an active way of rejecting his unchangeable sceptical mind? Does Heyst, unlike Lord Jim, reach the "Augenblick", the full recognition of his particular imbalance in relation to the Universe? To what degree does Conrad identify, sentimentally with, or conversely remain ironically detached from Axel Heyst?

We are, thus, seeking to establish a comparison between Schopenhauerean philosophy and Victory's sceptical insights into human nature and the world. But we must assure the reader as to the fact that we are using Schopenhauer to illuminate Conrad and his treatment of Heyst rather than using the novel to prove a point about the philosopher.

/ICTORY

JOSEPH
CONRAD

In this new story Mr. Conrad returns to the manner of his famous early romance "*An Outcast of the Islands*." The principal character, a lawless adventurer called "Enchanted Heyst" is one of the great figures in Mr Conrad's gallery: the scene is laid in and about the tropical island of Samburan: and the theme is love and jealousy.

6/-

METHUEN

Jacket for Methuen's edition of *Victory* in 1915

1.2.1. Review of Criticism (Unfavourable Critical Reaction)

After the publication of Victory in 1915, the novel was widely acclaimed by critics of the time, and continued to be considered Conrad's greatest novel for some time since then. It was hailed mainly for Conrad's "power, his imagination and his insight into the bizarre and the eccentric"[3] but these early critics failed to see its mythic, social and political implications. However, Virginia Woolf and John Galsworthy, in Castles in Spain and Other Screeds (1926) and later Vernon Young in "Joseph Conrad; Outline for a Reconsideration", Hudson Review, II, 8-15 (Spring 1949), express strong reservations about the plot and rhetoric of Victory and the whole later period of Conrad's writing, considering it of lesser merit than many of his earlier novels, thus anticipating negative currents of criticism that were to come later.

There came a strong critical reaction against Victory, considering it a commercial success with little literary value resembling a popular magazine romance. Even Leavis, a basically favorable critic, while considering Victory Conrad's last novel of classic standing, ranks it as greatly inferior to Nostromo (which the critic believes to be Conrad's great masterpiece, although at the time it was written it never received popular or critical acclaim).

The idea of decline was first suggested in Douglas Hewitt's Conrad: A Reassessment (1952), receiving its chief impetus from Thomas Moser in 1957 and Albert Guerard in 1958, then finally buttressed by Bernard Meyer in 1967 and mildly reaffirmed

by Lawrence Graver in 1969. (Joseph A. Palmer, "Achievement and Decline: A Bibliographical Note" in Joseph Conrad — a Collection of Criticism, ed. Frederick Karl, McGraw-Hill Co, NY.1957, page 139).

All of these authors, agree that, around 1910, there seems to be a marked decline in Conrad's plot, characterization, imagination and power of language.

Hewitt notes that towards the end of 1909 (The Secret Sharer) there was an apparent suppression of his earlier sensibity, obscuring many valuable qualities found in his former works, in which he always showed an awareness of human complexity. In this later phase there seemed to be a growing evasion of

> "the darker side of even our good feelings." ..."There seems to have been within him a continual war between the recognition of the 'Heart of Darkness' and the desire to rest securely on unquestioned values."[4]

In all of his later works except The Shadow Line he resolves this conflict to the detriment of his art.

Moser believes that this deterioration resulted from Conrad's excessive concern with commercial success, and his insistence on dealing with the theme of love between the sexes, an uncongenial subject that Conrad had previously either avoided or subordinated to larger themes. (Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline, page 109). Guerard believed it was a consequence of financial worries compounded with physical and mental fatigue from the extreme exertion during his intensely creative period (1894-1903). (Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, page 256). Meyer thinks that Conrad's artistic decline was directly linked to his mental breakdown in 1910, which caused him to project his inner

doubts and suffering to the outer world. According to Meyer, this was his attempted solution to "intolerable inner contradictions", enabling him to attain "a relative conflict-stability" (although a precarious one), which provided him with "conforting certainties" to protect him from his "unsettling doubts", resulting in a curbing of his questioning introspection and imagination along with an over-simplified black and white view of the world in which people are reduced to stereotypes and "the turmoil of life to a set of formulas". By advocating unquestioning duty and fidelity, he managed to quiet his former doubts. This "freezing of imagination" leads to stereotyping of characters and artificiality of plot.[5]

All the major critics who subscribe to the "decline" theory seem to agree that from Chance on, Conrad's focus shifted from individual human failure to chance as a force moving human action, and that this shift in focus brought about impoverishment in his art. Moser lists some of the pernicious consequences of this externalization:

1 - Blurring of moral responsability, due to denial of individual guilt.

2 - Flatness of character, destroying his early heirarchy of characters (there is no longer the "perceptive hero", but rather the popular hero versus the villain).

"The protagonists are 'figures of purity' afflicted by an external evil", who "lose themselves in a love that will blot out all awareness of the world and bring the semblance of death".[6]

3 - Plot resolution hinging on a series of accidental

happenings. Moser believes that Conrad's excessive concern with commercial success and consequently with the external shape of the plot result in moral melodrama, in which his conscious purposes are in constant conflict with his deep impulses. He cites many examples of the contradiction which result from such conflicts:

- The author's conscious intention to have Heyst saved by his love for Lena is denied by the incredible resolution of the plot;

- The women are symbols of sexual power and life-force, but when they embark on a plan of action, Conrad destroys them;

- In spite of his assertions of action and violence, Ricardo is presented as a voyeur or spectator;

- Lena's death seems forced and contrived, which suggests that Conrad did not really believe in it. Moser contrasts Lena's death and Schomberg's survival with Jewel's survival and Cornelius' death in Lord Jim;

- Conrad's intention to portray Lena as a symbol of divine purity contradicts his description of the "flash and fire in her mysterious eyes" - the "red-gleam in a white mist"[7] (when she seizes Ricardo's weapon), thus suggesting destructive female passion.

Guerard goes so far as to suggest that Victory, which he rates as "one of the worst novels for which high claims are made"[8], should be relegated to oblivion. Later critics such as David Daiches and R. M. Stallmen take a similar position.

Guerard also places Victory in the "anti-climax" phase of Conrad's artistic production, characterizing this period as

follows:

1 - Sentimental ethic, resulting from the exteriorization of the problem of evil and failure, replacing the sense of individual failure with "normalization"; love between the sexes replacing loyalty; heroines as victims of social oppression, but at the same time quite self-sufficient and even destructive; heroes who are innocent, uninteresting, immature, capable of passion, but not of significant action. The lie is now inverted. It is the men who must be protected from women's realism.

2 - Dull and innefective narration with the flabby and imprecise rhetoric of dull, commonplace narrators, and unnecessary shifts from omniscient narrator to other participating story-tellers.

3 - Failure of imaginative power and common sense, resulting in lack of plausibility and unjustifiable incongruities (eg. Ricardo as a masculine figure of animal sensuality, using childish, feminine rhetoric).

Lawrence Graver in his book, Conrad's Short Fiction, states his belief in Conrad's artistic evolution and later devolution. Like Guerard, he attributes this decline to his substitution of sexual conflict for the larger philosophic and moral issues of his earlier works. He classifies four kinds of egoists that pervade Conrad's writings:

1 - The natural and instinctive egoist;

2 - The simple-minded and unimaginative egoist;

3 - The egoist driven by longing for sex, money and power; and

4 - The man whose exalted conception of his own worth causes his rejection of society (in this last classification Heyst is included).

1.2.2. Recent Favorable Reassessment

By the sixties some critics tended to question the idea of a decline in Conrad's art, and once again to give Victory a more sympathetic treatment. Palmer suggests that Conrad's evaluation of his own artistry indicates that his work can be viewed as a growth within a

> "fixed frame of reference": "My writing extends... over... 23 years... and all that time has been a time of evolution... Some critics have found fault with me for not being constantly myself. But they are wrong... Certainly conclusions remain immovably fixed in my mind, but... my attitude to subjects and expressions, the angles of vision, my methods of composition will, within limits, be always changing—not because I am unstable and unprincipled but because I am free."[9]

In Conrad's later fiction, in which he states his concern with the 'ideal value of things, events and people'[10], there are more literary allusions, more philosophical and political passages, and the scepticism is more refined. According to Edward W. Said in Joseph Conrad and The Fiction of Autobiography (1966):

> "the intellectual and spiritual climax of the letters... coincides mainly with the fulfillment of his desire for self-discovery, but also with... the period of World War One"[11]...

which is to say, the period of Victory.

Zabel also refers to a "growing self-awareness"[12] on Conrad's part, as evidenced in his letters to Mme. Paradowska (1890-1900), which reveal a

> "groping for the means and courage to translate his experience into fictional form, to objectify them dramatically, and thus to come into an intelligent realization of their meaning: to save himself, 'from the madness which, after a certain point in life is reached, awaits those who refuse to master their sensations and bring into coherent form the mysteries of their lives."[13]

Zabel sees Conrad's career as "an outward growth from a germinal center to a sustained intellectual vision, and more ambitious subject-matter." He considers that "an ethical view of the universe and man's place in it" is the "conscious center" of Conrad's fiction, and that his art is a continuous progression in self-discovery through "commitment to human solidarity."[14]

In Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius (1941), Muriel Bradbrook points out a growing technical complexity in Conrad's later writings, and stresses the near-allegorical quality of Victory, for which she has a special predilection.

More recently Paul Wiley, in Conrad's Measure of Man, also affirms that there is "a principle of continuity in the development of Conrad's art..."[15] a definable vision of life which governs all his work. He divides Conrad's work into three periods, according to the central protagonist of each: "Man in the World", "Man in Society", and "Man in Eden". While Wiley agrees with the "achievement-decline" critics that romantic love predominated in his later fiction, he does not consider that this central concern detracts in any way from the value of Victory. He believes that

what gives the novel special importance is its ironic exposure of the absurdities and dangers of the theory of detachment, the wide universal significance of the allegory, with the background myth of the Garden of Eden, and the prophetic undertones of warning and premonition that pervade the story. He also calls special attention to the ambivalent portrayal of Heyst, as a blend of the "Eastern philosophy of negation" with the"Western spirit of action" --both knight and hermit,"[16] who is unable to allow his chivalrous conduct to develop into love.

In Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth, John Palmer challenges the notion of decline, affirming that there is a continuous development throughout Conrad's career. Different phases of his career differ not in quality, but in the problems confronted. The first period, ending with Lord Jim, consists of "pre-social dilemnas of private honor and individual fidelity".[17] The second period, from Nostromo to Under Western Eyes, is marked by "the individual in society and moral contradictions imposed by social idealism".[18] Finally in the third period, from Chance on (including Victory)he explores "the theoretical and metaphysical basis of any moral commitment".[19] Palmer believes that Conrad moves continuously from his earlier (individualistic) position toward the periphery of his total (world) vision and that he brings more and more of that vision into developed artistic form. He believes the novels of this latter phase possess a metaphysical and mythic dimension, which is found only sporadically achieved in Conrad's earlier fiction. Palmer especially esteems Victory as one of Conrad's outstanding accomplishments, stressing the ideological

basis for developing the relationship between the individual and "the powers that surround him"[20] --external conditions that can define the status of a moral agent. He believes that one great achievement as Victory is the use of symbol and allegory, which project contrasting ideas into characters and situations.

It is interesting to observe that there is a basic agreement among the majority of Conrad's critics (both favorable and unfavorable to Victory) as to the nature and existence both of its flaws and its strong points. Opinion is radically divided, however, when it comes to which outweighs the other, and consequently as to the overall effect of the novel. The more adverse critics, who tend judge the book by realistic standards, object to the melodrama, the sentimentalizing, apparently contrived plot coupled with a kind of allegorical flatness of character, but they do admit that there are several potentially rich themes, and some interesting fictional ideas, which are poorly exploited, and they feel that overall quality of Victory is marred by its flaws. Douglas Hewitt observes that there is a thematic interest in the novel "in isolation"... "so long as we are discussing only a paraphrase of the book," ... "an abstraction from the total effect of the work."[21] Even Guerard admits that there are a few good fictional ideas, occasional vivid scenes and characterizations, but he strongly affirms that they are too spare and isolated to really redeem the novel.

In contrast we have the more favorable critics whose position is exactly the reverse since they view the book as a symbolistic and allegorical novel. Jocelyn Baines believes that

Victory has a depth of suggestion that places it among the best of Conrad's novels, due to the subtlety of Heyst's consciousness, and his high degree of complexity. (Baines considers him the most interesting and the most complex character that Conrad ever created). In fact the character of Heyst is somehow strong enough to compensate for what the critic considers the unconvincing one-dimensional quality of all the other characters. He also affirms that the "melodramatic coincidence" that brings about Heyst's death has an underlying "psychological inevitability..."[22] which builds up to the final overwhelming sense of doom, consistent with the central character's dilemma.

Mc Dowell, in his review of recent Conrad criticism, expresses some disagreement with Palmer's enthusiastic praise of Victory, due to what he considers softness in style and a crudely simplified characterization, yet, he affirms,

> "the novel refuses to leave our minds, by virtue of Conrad's power to create the visually compelling scene, to project conflict into dramatically intense episodes, and to provide interesting and complex individuals in Heyst and Lena."[23]

Due to this happy combination of artistic elements. McDowell regards Victory as "a novel which rises above its demonstrable flaws".[24]

Much of the adverse criticism of Victory is refuted by Frederick Karl. Unlike those who maintain that Conrad has removed individual responsibility, by externalizing the source of all suffering, Karl affirms that "expression of personal responsibility" in Victory was the "sole note of survival in a world now heading

toward a major conflagration".[25] Indeed Karl considered that "the European battle-ground was curiously like the scene Conrad has described in Victory, the foreshadowing of the great conflict". Heyst represents "the best Europe can produce", but nevertheless, "brutally insufficient",[26] rendered helpless by the invasion of the diabolic and savage invaders.

He views Heyst as hero, of many mythic dimensions (Adam, Hamlet, Faust), which "gives greater historical range to Conrad's novel and moves Victory from a study of individuals solely to the study of an age"[27] (and a whole civilization). Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad . His many-faceted potentialities for action or inaction, for good or evil, are progressively revealed through his interrelations with the other figures of the narrative, each of whom "partakes of a psychological segment of Heyst himself."[28]

Karl affirms that in Victory Conrad had reached a culmination in depth of artistic imagination, and after that he could go no farther in fictional triumphs. In spite of the melodramatic action of what he considered "a hasty, unsatisfactory" ending, he rated Victory the "last of his major works... that endures, dignified and significant."[29] In Karl's judgment, (as well as Leavis') it is surface action that predominates in all of Conrad's subsequent works. (Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad).

In the article Conrad's "Victory": A Reassessment, Sharon Kaehele and Howard German analyze Conrad doubling technique, which reveals the varied and often paradoxical manifestations of character and personality. Through such a mirroring process the characters

acquire a rich complexity, not apparent when the doubling is not taken into account. These doubles are mentioned:

1. Heyst-Jones: Although one is apparently benevolent, and the other apparently malevolent, they share an aloof skepticism and a pity/contempt for mankind, leading one to incapacity for action, and the other to criminal plundering, since he feels no social responsability.

2. Heyst Sr.-Jones: Jones' ghostlike presence evokes the memory of Heyst's dead skeptic father, and Jones' villainous attitude reflects the potential danger of the father's ideas.

3. Heyst-Schomberg: Schomberg is Heyst's arch-enemy, but they both are 'victims of a belated passion'.

4. Heyst-Lena: Both are lonely wanderers, fond of solitude and silence, each trying to save the other. Lena's reliance on faith contrasts with Heyst's universal scorn and unbelief.

5. Lena-Morrison: Both are believers, who are rescued by Heyst, and who, in turn, arouse his more social inclinations.

6. Lena-Ricardo: Both are capable of faithfulness, on the one hand, and of betrayal, on the other, for different reasons.

The many sidedness of both Lena and Heyst, revealed through this study helps exonerate the novel from charges of oversimplified sentimentality.

In the essay, "The Current of Conrad's 'Victory'" reprinted in Joseph Conrad — A Collection of Criticism, R. W. B. Lewis presents a sensitive and completely sympathetic appreciation of the novel under study. He has tried to determine what led both Conrad himself and his critics to consider Victory and Nostromo

as his two main literary triumphs. In the case of Victory he would agree with Karl in considering it a culmination, in which he presented all the themes that interested him, "through the closely observed conduct of a tiny setting",[30] populated by a few eccentric individuals from many parts of the world.

According to Lewis, the novel is basically concerned with the pluralistic nature of truth and reality, with lies and illusion--a theme that is established in the opening sentences, which speak of the "surprising similarities between seeming contrasts."[31] Lewis sees this work as highly existentialist, with its oscilations between being and nothingness, existence and non-existence, modes of nihilism, leading to self-annihilation, and comes to the conclusion that Conrad is the "still insufficiently acknowledged grandfather of the most recent literary generation."[32]

The plot in Victory, Lewis affirms, far from being contrived and artificial, stems naturally from the interaction of different individuals. In fact, there is a certain thinness of plot because Conrad's attention was drawn to the people who were agents of the action, more than to the action itself. The individual characters meet in small combinations and join in actions which become "larger and more significant than any of them"[33]. The novel... then "begins to assume the defining quality of drama"[34]. Action always serves to shed light on the characters, even when accidental. Similar to the opinion of Jocelyn Baines, is Lewis' conception of chance happenings which are "literally accidental, but symbolically inevitable and dramatically appropriate"[35]. It had to be Jones, enemy of life and especially womanhood, that shot

Lena through the heart. Lena, in her desire for self-sacrifice, has drawn on herself the death that threatened Heyst. Since each character has his own private plan, there are a multiplicity of "irreconcilable plots"[36] that clash and bring about the final catastrophe. Lewis feels that the characters do not really grow in the novel, but through their mutual confrontations, "they grow more visible"[37]. Heyst moves from inaction towards existence and reality. Lena begins to feel an increasing "exaltation of love and self-sacrifice"[38] after Ricardo's attempted rape. The spectre-like Jones continually moves away from life, towards absence or nothingness. Human beings and events that in the beginning move their separate ways, finally converge in the holocaust at the end of the novel, and their gathering produces the effect of a "metaphysical tide", or the "active presence, the dangerous undertow of a metaphysical current"[39], giving the story its energy and direction.

Lewis considers Victory a

> "test of the nature of fiction: (...) of the ability of drama to move towards allegory while retaining intact its dramatic form and essence; (...) the ability of fiction to move towards drama while retaining its identity as a fictional narrative. It is a test of the way truth and reality can become the subject matter of a novel which hangs on to its novelistic nature. And the result, in my judgment, is indicated by the last word Conrad actually did write to this book... the single word of the title."[40]

1.2.3. The Controversy Between the Work-Ethic and Modernism

Parallel to Schopenhauerean and Nietzschean currents of individualistic non-involvment, there also existed, in contrast, the official code of Imperialist Victorian England, known as the "work-ethic", which was the basis for social principles such as duty, honor, and fidelity principles which give meaning to individual lives by binding them together in a common cause. It is the consensus of most critical opinion that Conrad straddles these two opposite currents. Those who criticize Victory for being to preponderately moralistic (Hewitt, Moser, Guerard, Meyer) consider the work-ethic to be predominant at the expense of Conrad's art, while the critics who tend to view Conrad as a symbolist writer give more emphasis to Conrad's total artistic vision of Heyst's inner conflict between his acquired sceptical detachment and his innate tendency for social involvement (Wiley, Palmer, Karl, Lewis). Watt neatly divides Conrad's art as modernistic only in its formal elements, but moralistic in content.(Watt, p. 169)

The work-ethic could be considered a secularized form of the Protestant glorification of work which tends to view non-utilitarian beauty as suspect. In this new "creed", belief in historical progress came to replace the belief in a rewarding and punishing God, controlling human destiny.

Thomas Carlyle in Sartor Resartus sets forth a social ethic of work, duty, and renunciation of personal gratification, which save the individual from the spiritual torment and despair of self-questionining, automatically absorbing him into his soci-

ety of which he becomes a useful member. The stoic renunciation implicit in this code helps save man from the "self-absorbed despair which resulted from the vain pursuit of (personal) happiness".[41]

Many of Conrad's ideas on Fidelity, expressed in his Preface to Heart of Darkness sound like echoes from Carlyle's writings:

> "From the hard work of men are born the sympathetic consciousness of a common destiny, the fidelity to right practice which makes great craftsmen, the sense of right conduct which we call honour, the devotion to our calling and the idealism which is not a misty, winged angel without eyes, but a divine figure of terrestrial aspect with clear glance and with its feet resting firmly on the earth on which it was born."
>
> "The mere love of adventure is no saving grace. It is no grace at all. It lays a man under no obligation of faithfulness to an idea and even to his own self."[42]

Regarding the two philosophic trends in Victory, Frederick Karl considers Heyst's inner conflict to be a dramatization of every artist in facing a life of social consciousness versus a life of pure art. The former is the Promethean element, represented by Western civilization, related to the active, simple life (e.g. Conrad's seamen). The latter, Orphean strain, represented by the Orient, is the self-conscious narcissistic, inward-oriented hero, with a cult of the personality, dedicated to meditation and contemplation. In his Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, attempting to bring the artist down from his ivory tower, where his art finds no echo, Conrad says: "In that uneasy solitude, (...) the supreme cry of Art for Art itself loses the

exciting ring of apparent immortality"[43]. Karl equates Heyst, as a man of philosophical detachment, with the pure artist, and reminds us that Heyst could not survive in the modern world.

1.2.4. The Nature of Conrad's Scepticism

Conrad's pessimism, scepticism, and even nihilism have been widely commented on by literary critics of all phases of Conradian criticism, because they so obviously pervade both Conrad's fiction and non-fiction. His disillusionment with both human beings and the universe that seemed so remote from human concerns was something Conrad probably absorbed from the spirit of his time, most clearly expressed scientifically in Darwin's Theory of Evolution and philosophically in the passive withdrawal of Schopenhauer and the amoral nihilism of Nietzsche, who were all his contemporaries. We have consulted Watt and Said to try to determine concretely the influence of these nineteenth century philosophers. Of every special help has been the recent article, "Conrad Between Sartre and Socrates" by Eloise Knapp Hay, which reviews recent studies of Conrad's existentialist tendencies, and also surprisingly enough, the author's own comparisons with none other than Socrates. This chronological stretching serves amplify the scope of Conrad's philosophical affinities, placing his world in a broader perspective. We also found of interest an article by Sharon Kahele and Howard German reassessing the importance of Victory, in which some important points are made regarding the bearings of Heyst's scepticism on his relationship with the other

characters in the novel.

Ian Watt, in his Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, states that Conrad, in his Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus could have been inspired by "memories of Schopenhauer"[44] or by the philosopher's many admirers, who included Maupassant, of whom "Conrad himself was also an admirer, and there is some general resemblance of attitude on a good many points"[45]. Watt considers that Schopenhauer also influenced Conrad "in grounding artistic genius on the capacity to achieve 'pure perception'"[46]. On the other hand Schopenhauerean escape from the dominion of will, apart from death, was in "the attitude of detached aesthetic contemplation"[47]. But this, the critic stresses, is the main point where Conrad radically diverges from Schopenhauer as well as from the Symbolists. Conrad, Watt maintains, could not completely believe in egocentric detachment but rather in human solidarity.

In his article "Conrad and Nietzsche", Edward Said makes a parallel between Conrad and Nietzsche, and compares them both with Schopenhauer. According to the critic, they both disapprove of Schopenhauer's proposal of "cowardly retreat from life by preaching stoic withdrawal"; although they were "disaffected and yet admiring students of his." Indeed, they both were "temperamentally in agreement"[48] with the philosopher's pessimism but were also critical of his arguments.

For Conrad as well as for Nietzsche, the result of intellectualizing is "the discovery of the inevitable antithesis everywhere to be found in human existence"[49] --a conflict between two opposed impulses: the man eager for knowledge, who "must again

and again abandon the terra firma where men live and venture to the uncertain", and "the impulse which desires life ... (and which) must again and again grope its way toward a more or less secure place where it can find a purchase".[50]

The critic also says that both Nietzsche and the novelist believed the world to be devoid of all but spectacular purposes, completely stripped of any Metaphysical value. To them, Said thinks, this is the only reality and one "cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it".[51]

Said stresses, then the similarity between Nietzsche's idea of the world as "a monster of energy" and Conrad's view of it as a "knitting machine".[52] Conrad seemed to agree with Nietzsche as the latter wrote:

> - "This, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying... without goal... this world is the will to power—and nothing besides!"[53]

Said maintains, then that Conrad, like Nietzsche, sees values as human creations and nothing beyond them.

In "Conrad Between Sartre and Socrates" Eloise Knapp Hay reviews the studies made by three recent critics--Bruce Johnson, Royal Roussel and Leon Seltzer--on Conrad's interest in the "intolerable reality",[54] which consistently appears in his fiction. These authors have considered him a "nihilist", because of the stress put on "defeat, betrayal, despair and suicide"[55] which Conrad's portagonists strove to resist "without demonstrable success".[56] Hay refers to Johnson's comparison of Conrad's heroes with Sartre's "model of mind", a valid comparison especially if

we bear in mind how far Conrad's work has influenced André Gide, and the French philosophers before the Second World War.

As to Leon Seltzer and Royal Roussel, they apparently conclude, like Forster and Leavis, that "Conrad had no creed and that the casket of his genius contains not even a vapor but a brooding on 'nothingness'".[56] Eloise Hay seems to disagree with these critics on their view of Conrad's imagery of darkness as the "negation in the face of all commonly held values" and "no perceptible outlines of evil, truth, ignorance, reality, sexual and cannibalistic depravity, creation, or apocalyptic end of the earth".[57]

Hay affirms that the view of Conrad as an atheistic existentialist blinds one to the complex deep meaning of his work, making it difficult to understand the "connections he wove, for instance, between Victorian convenctions of public fidelity" and the "rational and ferocious egoism which he said he practiced toward himself".[58]

But Hay shares Roussel's opinion that "Conrad had a metaphysic",[59] a belief in the "force that causes the waves"[60] and adds that from Conrad's passages quoted by Roussel, Johnson and Seltzer, "Conrad thought matter and consciousness antagonistic by nature".[61]

The critic cites Roussel, Johnson and Seltzer's stress on Conrad's affirmation that he wanted to be "severely scientific" and also that "reason tells man he is alien and victimized", but she refutes the three critics' disregard for Conrad's stress on "power of imagination", "heart", and "faith" to restore dismemberments that reason affects".[62]

Hay explains, then, that Seltzer sees in Conrad a choice of alternatives in life--"acting well by following an illusion" (...) or acting "dubiously under truth".[63] From here on, there comes the idea that the Conradian mind is closer to the existentialism of Augustine and Pascal than to the rationalism of Aristotle and Aquinas, yet he defends Conrad's idea that "egoism saves everything—absolutely everything—everything we hate, everything we love. And everything is bound together" by a positive "conserving power rather than nothing".[64]

All three of the books reviwed by Hay lead to the conclusion that there are no dependable truths or values in Conrad, that "multiple witness completely cancel out each other's values",[65] and that each person had a completely different view of reality. Hay, however, cites evidence that Conrad had more in common with older traditions than with nihilism and existentialism. Rather than Hegel's antithesis and alienation, Schopenhauer' pursuit of nirvana, Nietzsche's purifying nihilism, and the ego's nothingness of Heidegger and Sartre, Hey believes that his "gods" seem to be Socrates, Montaigne, Pascal, Turgenev. Like Pascal, when Conrad mentions God seriously, he is Pascal's "deus obsconditus", hidden from the world in the Garden of Eden. Like Pascal he foretold the nausea with the self that would follow the Cartesian separation of body and mind. "Yet, like Socrates, Conrad saw that reason and self-knowledge can end usefully in a dialogue without finality, submitted to an audience," unlike Hegelian dialectic, beginning "in negation and ending in a foreseen conclusion."[66] Like Socrates' interlocutors, "Conrad's narrators are truth figures,

who expose knowledgeable facts and commonly held values under seige." But like Socrates' talkers, Conrad's narrators leave elemental values standing amid the debris of many that their audience may have cherished."[67]

Sharon Kahele and Howard German, in their "Conrad's Victory: a Reassessment", defend the idea that Heyst's scepticism is so all-pervading that he doubts everyone, especially himself, feeling in the end that he has betrayed Morrison, Lena and himself:

> "But even by his own account of their relationship, Heyst has been guilty of a gross betrayal; obviously a man with an inventerable mistrust of life cannot bring a very genuine loyalty to a relationship which he initiates out of pity, his disguised form of contempt and continues from politeness and for the amusement it provides".[68]

But for Kahele and German, Heyst is a sceptic with a romantic nature, a "dreamy spectator" with an undisciplined imagination, and despite his mistrust of life, he can still believe in loyalty. The critics conclude then that Heyst's scepticism may make it more difficult for him to create and maintain a tie, "but cannot completely put down his basic socializing tendencies".[69]

1.2.5. Significance of Victory

From our study on Conrad's critics we find three possible interpretations as to the nature of the "victory":

1. The protagonists' death was a victory of the sceptic-

al negation of Heyst's father:

2. Their death was a clear victory of the vitality of Lena's blind belief; and

3. Finally that it was an ironic victory of life.

Moser affirms that the final holocaust is a victory of death and inertia over life and hope, consistent with the spirit of "infinite weariness" and "will to surrender"[70] that pervades the whole novel.

J. I. M. Stewart, however, in his book Eight Modern Writers sees it as clearly Lena's victory, due to Heyst's final acknowledgement of the necessity of "human relatedness and love."[71] Meyer, likewise considers it a victory of feminine strength and vitality over masculine weakness and inertia:

> "Although in the end Lena dies(...) it must not be supposed that this is a sign of weakness or defeat. On the contrary, the very title of the book symbolizes her triumph. She is possessed(...) of such prodigious, albeit improbable, strength that she overpowers the lust-ridden Ricardo when he tries to rape her."[72]

(This would be more than the individual victory of Lena over Heyst, of belief over doubt, but rather the generic victory of woman over man).

F. R. Leavis asserts that Lena's victory over Heyst's scepticism is an ironic victory (because Heyst's awakening to life came too late), but nevertheless was a victory. In a similar vein, Adam Gillion in his article, "Joseph Conrad and Shakespeare, Part Four: A Reinterpretation" states:

> "The quixotic self-sacrifice of Lena and the flaming death of Heyst are two more examples

> of Conrad's ironic vision of life. Both are defeated, yet their self destruction can be regarded as a symbolic affirmative act of faith."[73]

Karl also considers Heyst's dying acknowledgement of his flaw (like Faust's final realization) to be a sign of his ultimate redemption, and therefore of Lena's final triumph. "Heyst must be chastened into realization, just as Faust had to recognize the depth of his sin before Goethe allowed him to be redeemed."[74] A very similar idea is presented by Lewis: "If the victory of Lena's—if her end, as Conrad insisted, is triumphant—the major defeat recorded in the novel is that of Heyst",[75] but "Heyst, by ackowledging his failure and perceiving its cause, has in the literary manner of speaking been saved",[76] because he is now "in complete touch with truth."[77] Lewis goes on to say that the victory of Lena's simple, intuitive belief is a victory--not only over Heyst's arid intellectualism, but also over Jones' deathliness. Jones is seen as a life-extinguishing force, who dies by simply collapsing into nothingness. While Lena represents a life-giving force, and dies affirming life and hope. Since Lewis considers Lena, more than Heyst, to be the center of the last half of the book, it is his contention that Lena's triumph is also a triumph for the novel itself, which by the radical annihilation of the ending could be considered "a reproach to the fascination with death in modern fiction".[78]

1.3.1. Statement of Purpose

If we look at the victory of Victory under a Schopenhauerean prism, we could state that a negation is the winner, since Axel had escaped to death from all the suffering of life. It would be the victory of scepticism, of defeat, which would sound strangely paradoxical--the title of the novel would even assume a pseudo ironical meaning, almost nonsense. If it were to be so, the continuous chain of Lena's triumphs throughout the whole novel would abruptly sink into a meaningless absurdity. But perhaps absurdity was Conrad's proto-existentialist view of the world.

On the other hand, more plausible to us seems the possibility of Heyst's suicide seen as a Zoroastrean attitude of purification, a hope that Axel could, then, "die cured" (as Jones had ironically commented).*[79]

Later Heyst himself would agree with Nietzsche when he said that "to have to fight the instincts—that is the formula of decadence."[80]

Axel's suicide could be, then, his final Nietzschean assertion of all the sensual rythms of life, and his rejection of all Appolonian "music of the spheres"[81] which his father had chanted to him. As E. Said says in his "Conrad and Nietzsche",

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* Similarly Nietzsche said once: "O consumo nacional, como o individual tem de ter uma cura brutal." (Nietzsche—Filósofo da Cultura, p. 239)

> "what troubled Nietzsche about Schopenhauer was the latter's weakening before the amoral picture of the world he had drawn. Whereas Nietzsche acknowledged life's uncompromising and inescapable disdain for either man or morality, he felt that his once-revered teacher had devised a cowardly retreat from life by preaching stoic withdrawal. Nietzsche's repeated statements of this criticism are echoed by Conrad's treatment of Heyst in Victory, whose code of philosophic disengagement from life is articulated only to be violated by Lena, Schomberg, Mr Jones, and the others. These, plus a lifelong interest in Wagner, are part of a common cultural patrimony shared by Nietzsche and Conrad."[82]

However, we should clarify that the above assertion is more E. Said's opinion than our own hypothesis. Knowing later Heyst's and Conrad's hopeless view on man's imperfectability (despite their apparent belief in some sort of heirarchy) we may suspect that they could not have taken Nietzsche's idea of the future over-man very seriously. Furthermore, the blind attitude of heroic resistence based on a sort of work-ethic and individual belief apparently collide with Nietzsche's rejection of morality, pity* and Metaphysics.

Conrad, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche all agree that there was no real purpose in life. Like Schopenhauer, Conrad showed the weakness of Belief. However, unlike the Great Pessimist, he stressed its grandeur and its necessity. Like Nietzsche, Conrad attributed some value to life, but unlike the Great Nihilist he could

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* Nietzsche said in his Anti-Cristo:
"A piedade opõe-se às paixões tonificantes que realçam a energia do sentimento da vida: a sua ação é debilitante. Um homem perde o poder, quando se deixa possuir de compaixão." (Nietzsche—Filósofo da Cultura, p.128).

not believe in the possibility of a complete fulfilment in human life.

Thus, Conrad apparently suggests some ambivalence, something simultaneously noble and tragic in human existence--the Need for a blind assertion of Life, while the Schopenhauerean contradiction was still present: that the goal of life is death.

1.3.2. Hypothesis

In answer to the previous questions we expect, then, to find a pervasive but diffuse influence from Schopenhauer in the novel, an influence which is sometimes cited favorably by the sceptical side of the author, but which on the whole is criticized as something morbid and misleading.

In our work we are trying to evidence the complexity of Axel's character by making an analysis of his psychological metamorphoses, his guilt feeling and his final recognition, which account for the complexity of his character. We will consider the interaction of his two conflicting selves: on the one hand, his intellectual side dominated by a profound scepticism leading to voluntary, inert detachment; and on the other hand, the emotional self characterized by his innate tendency to evolve toward action and human relatedness. Axel's mind seems to shift from a Schopenhauerean scepticism, transmitted to him by his father, toward self-annihilation expressed by his suicide.

There is an apparent paradox in this idea, since a sui-

cide seems to be a pro-Schopenhauerean act and not a refutation of the philosopher. Heyst's regretful comment to Davidson sufficiently supports our view: "Ah Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love--and to put its trust in life!"[83]

And Davidson clearly confirms this idea by exclaiming on Axel's death that "fire purifies everything."[84]

Axel's suicide seems, thus, to imply an ambivalent view of the world both the negation of all negations, which means the recognition of the human need for a life-preserving belief, and a still-present impossibility of belief for man of thought. Hence, Axel's suicide is not the achievement of a Schopenhauerean Nirvana, but rather a sort of Nietzschean purification through nihilism.

The omniscient voice of the author, which replaces the narrator after the second part of the novel, appears to be partially identified with Heyst and his negations, since Conrad shows sympathy for his hero and even comes to make doubtful comments on human life, as has been stated in our Statement of Problem. The early narrator, the underdeveloped "Marlow" who vanishes and apparently fuses with the author, since he speaks as "we", implies that "gentlemen" ("we") always contain a chilvaric touch of romanticism and so he is like Heyst to some extent. Nevertheless he also seems to keep some distance from the protagonist, as well as from scepticism itself and possibily speaks for the author, he seems to be criticizing Heyst's hermit-like solipsism; in this sense he also seems to be criticizing Schopenhauer. This can be

proved by the narrator's words when he comments on Heyst's taking the girl with him to the island:

> "Davidson shared my suspicion that this was in its essence the rescue of a distressed human being. Not that we were too romantic, tingeing the world to the hue of our temperament, but that both of us had been acute enough to discover a long time ago that Heyst was."[85]

The conflict between Doubt and Belief, between scepticism and the moralists' assertion of a code for life, between withdrawal and engagement, between action and inertia is symbolically expressed simultaneously by the opposition and the parallel between the different characters facing Heyst and Heyst facing himself. Particularly Lena assumes a preponderant role in Heyst's initiation, for, she, no longer alone, symbolizes the illusions inherent in human truth, the instinctive claim for a human involvement morally supported by a positive belief. In fact, Lena relies upon faith--faith in God, in human relatedness, and in herself. If she involuntarily contributes to Heyst's and her own death, yet her claim is for Life. Conrad has apparently some prejudices against women, since he usually presents them as much less thoughtful creatures than men, if not exclusively intuitive. Nevertheless, he does not consider this a characteristic of inferiority; on the contrary, women to him seem to be the balanced elements of instinctive illusions. As Karl says in his Joseph Conrad: Three Lives,

> "these triumphs by women with symbolic names Alma, or Lena, or Magdalen; Flora or blossom; plus the presence of Mrs Fyne, a transparent name —would indicate Conrad's responsiveness to something very positive about women, both socially and

> fictionally. Rather than calling him a misogynist in this period, that is, by transfering Marlow's statements to him, we find Conrad trying to reflect sympathetically the current conflicts of women, who were then so much in the news as they sought the vote just before the war."[86]

This is especially convincing in the light of the fact that Heyst represents the ostensible chivalrous, virile man put to the test and found (like Othello) wanting. It is not woman who fails man, but man who fails woman.

Heyst's mistrust of woman, inculcated in him by his late father, is only a benign manifestation of Jones' vicious misogyny. Schopenhauer himself is known to be extremaly prejudiced against woman, considering her the "sexo sequior"[87], that is, the inferior sex. Thus, the reader should be reminded that the criticism of Heyst senior's, Axel's and Jones' misogyny is also a criticism of sceptical philosophy in general and Schopenhauer in particular.

Lena's challenge to Heyst's commitment is not wholly sucessful, for he was still inactive, ego-centred and sceptical, but his recognition of his own flaws and his self-denying suicide constitutes somehow her triumph, the triumph of an ideal of Life she had managed to transmit to him--a triumph of Illusions, but a triumph anyhow.

NOTES ON

CHAPTER I

1 - Victory, p.68

2 - Ibid., p. 78

3 - A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, p. 246

4 - "Achievement and Decline", p. 140 (Palmer)

5 - Joseph Conrad—A Psycho-Analytic Biography, p. 222

6 - "Achievement and Decline", p. 100 (quoted)

7 - Ibid., p. 125

8 - Ibid., p. 142

9 - Ibid., p. 143 (quoted)

10 - Ibid., p. 144

11 - Ibid., p. 143

12 - Ibid., p. 142 (quoted from "Jospeh Conrad: Chance and Recognition", by Zabel)

13 - Ibid., p. 142

14 - Ibid., p. 143

15 - Conrad's Measure of Man, p. 11

16 - Ibid., pp. 153-4

17 - Joseph Conrad: Current Criticism and The Achievement and Decline Question, p. 269 (quoted from Palmer)

18 - Ibid., p. 268

19 - Ibid., p. 270

20 - Ibid., p. 270

21 - Conrad, the Novelist, p. 273 (quoted form Hewitt)

22 - Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography, p. 397

23 - "Joseph Conrad: Current Criticism and The Achievement and Decline Question", p. 269

24 - Ibid., p. 269

25 - Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives, p. 731

26 - Ibid., p. 764

27 - A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, p. 263

28 - Ibid., p. 256

29 - Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives, pp. 764-65

30 - Joseph Conrad—A Collection of Criticism, p. 102 (from Lewis: The Current of Conrad's Victory)

31 - Ibid., p. 102

32 - Ibid., p. 102

33 - Ibid., p. 107

34 - Ibid., p. 107

35 - Ibid., p. 107

36 - Ibid., p. 109

37 - Ibid., p. 109

38 - Ibid., p. 114

39 - Ibid., p. 103

40 - Ibid., p. 104

41 - Sartor Resartus, pp. 149-54

42 - Heart of Darkness, p. 141

43 - Preface to The Nigger of the Narcisus, p. 13

44 - Conrad in the 19th Century, p. 86

45 - Ibid., p. 86

46 - Ibid., p. 86

47 - Ibid., p. 18

48 - "Conrad and Nietzsche", p. 65

49 - Ibid., p. 71

50 - Ibid., p. 71

51 - Ibid., p. 73

52 - Ibid., p. 73

53 - Ibid., p. 73

54 - "Conrad Between Sartre and Socrates", p. 85

55 - Ibid., p. 85

56 - Ibid., p. 85

57 - Ibid., p. 86

58 - Ibid., p. 86

59 - Ibid., p. 87

60 - Ibid., p. 87 (quoted)

61 - Ibid., p. 87

62 - Ibid., p. 88

63 - Ibid., p. 88

64 - Ibid., p. 91 (quoted)

65 - Ibid., p. 93

66 - Ibid., p. 95

67 - Ibid., p. 95

68 - Ibid., p. 64

69 - Ibid., p. 65

70 - Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (by Moser), p. 152

71 - Eight Modern Writers, p. 221

72 - Joseph Conrad, a Psychoanalitic Biography, p. 229

73 - "Joseph Conrad and Shakespeare. Part Four: A Reinterpretation", p. 75

74 - A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, p. 265

75 - "The Current of Conrad's Victory", p. 212

76 - Ibid., p. 212

77 - Ibid., p. 212

78 - Ibid., p. 78

79 - Victory, p. 322

80 - The Portrable Nietzsche, p. 479 (quoted)

81 - Victory, p. 54

82 - "Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration", p. 55

83 - Victory, pp. 338-39

84 - Ibid., p. 339

85 - Ibid., p. 42

86 - Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives, p. 743

87 - Vida de Schopenhauer, p. 155

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHICAL SKEPTICISM IN HEYST'S AND CONRAD'S BACKGROUND

2.1. Sleep after Toyle

> "That very night, he died in his bed, so quietly that they found him in his usual attitude of sleep, lying on his side, one hand under his cheek and his knees slightly bent. He had not even straightened."[1]

The curious posture of serenity in death, flagrantly contrasting with the disturbing philosophy of negation he assumed in life, links the character of Heyst's father to the eminent personality of great Schopenhauer, whom his father found

> "recostado no sofá, bem debaixo do retrato de Goethe, os olhos fechados, a fisionomia absolutamente serena, sem o menor vestígio de agonia, como se estivesse dormindo."[2]

It is already evident that our main concern in this chapter will be drawing a parallel between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Heyst's father attitude towards life. In fact, both thinkers had "claimed for mankind that right to absolute moral and intellectual liberty"[3]; each one a "destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs,"[4] who counseled "that form of contempt which

187[illegible] Holzschnitt nach der Photographie von Carl Müller, 185[illegible].

[illegible] Frau Schatersche Photographie vom April 1859.

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is called pity"[5]; both had stressed "o valor dos instintos anti-egoístas, os instintos de compaixão, da auto-negação e do auto-sacrifício"[6], for in fact

> "... para andar no mundo é útil levar consigo uma ampla provisão de circunspecção e de indulgência: a primeira nos garante contra os prejuízos e as perdas; a segunda nos põe a salvo de disputas e de querelas."[7]

Both Schopenhauer and old Heyst had left to their followers "a profound mistrust of life"[8]*

> "You still believe in something, then? ... You believe in flesh and blood, perhaps? A full and equable contempt would soon do away with that, too..."[9]

These words from father to son, pronounced in a wary, tired mood, were supported by the same sort of feeling that induced Schopenhauer to advise his reader: "Nem amar nem odiar; esta regra encerra metade de toda a sabedoria. Não dizer nada e não crer em nada: eis aqui a outra metade."[10]

All this sceptical attitude of the Schopenhauerean mind had a two-fold origin: purely philosophical from Kant's and Plato's concept of the objective world as idea (Vorstellung) and, on the other hand, the semi-scientific philosophy of Naturalism, whose origin was in Darwin's Struggle for Survival in which he stated that "Man, like every other animal, has no doubt advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence

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* Thinker, stylist and man of the world in his time, the elder Heyst had begun by coveting all the joys, those of the great and those of the humble, those of the fools and those of the sages. For more than sixty years he had dragged on this painful earth of ours the most weary, the most uneasy soul that civilisation had ever fashioned to its ends of disillusion and regret."[11]

consequent on his rapid multiplication."[12]

Besides, Schopenhauer reasoned similarly to one of Darwin's earliest supporters -- Alfred Russel Wallace, to whom matter was "essentially force, and nothing but force... and all force was probably 'will force'."[13] For

> "if... we traced one force, however minute, to an origin in our own will, while we have no knowledge of any other primary cause of force, it does not seem an improbable conclusion that all forces may be will force."[14]

Schopenhauer replaced, then, Kant's unknowable "thing-in-itself" by a primary element which he knew well--his own will --and projected this will into all of Nature, which he interpreted as "the manifestation, the objectivity of the one will to live"; for him the world was "only the mirror of this 'willing'".[15] Schopenhauer believed that the only reality was his own will and he was at the same time the "unreality" of many other wills, "another short dream of the endless spirit of nature, of the persistent will to live."[16]

The Schopenhauerean will was not, thus, conscious volition, but blind unconscious striving for the primary aim which was self-preservation, or "egoism, which is the form of will to live."[17]

Then, Schopenhauer traced the "objectification" of the will to the point where the necessity for movement finally called consciousness into being:

> "Till now mere will it becomes also idea, the object of the knowing subject. The will, which up to this point followed its tendency in the dark with unerring certainty,

has at this grade kindled for itself a light."[13]

For Schopenhauer, the human coexistence of will and idea inevitably resulted in conflict, since "the will is not conditioned by knowledge as has hitherto been universally assumed although knowledge is conditioned by the will."[19] His opinion was that Nature usually takes the last step (and since will was irrational, man only rationalized his desires); yet the desires were not even his, they were only ephemeral forms of the will to live, which, ever unsatisfied, manifested itself not through decisions of reason, but through ACTION: "Every true, genuine immediate act of will is also, at once, immediately, a visible act of the body." [20] *

In fact, the individual, instead of subordinating his actions to improving knowledge, was but learning more about himself through his actions "by spying upon them."[21]

So, the Darwinian struggle for survival was reformulated by Schopenhauer into a continuous struggle between different degrees of objectification of the one will to live; in Nature "every grade of the objectification of will fights for the matter, the space and the time of the others,"[22] and particularly human nature "reveals itself with most terrible distinctness this conflict, this variance with itself of the will and we find 'homo homini lupus'."[23] Pain, suffering and destruction were the im-

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* In Victory, the narrator also states that "... the use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices and follies, and also our fears."[24]

placable results of all this strife.

However, Schopenhauer (and old Heyst implicitly) believed that in Man alone does "a pure separation of knowing and willing take place."[25] Schopenhauer thought neutralization of will possible in some rare superior minds--the saints and the genius--who managed to live inert, either in ascetic or aesthetic contemplation, logically deepened into passive loneliness, completely absorbed in their Ideas--there could be a relief in the Idea--"the object of the knowing subject."* Schopenhauer explained, thus, that once a man is lifted out of willing by some external cause or inward disposition, when he is liberated from the ties of will, then he can watch the world "without personal interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively"[27] and consequently without suffering.

The feeling of relief Schopenhauer found in Arts is similar to the sense that made Henry James declare that "it is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance. I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its possession."[28]

However momentous, the process of aesthetic contemplation is similar to asceticism--in that they both allow one to be liberated by solitary observation.

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* Similarly Heyst's father had written in his book:"Men of tormented conscience, or of criminal imagination, are aware of much that minds of a peaceful, resigned cast do not even suspect."[26]

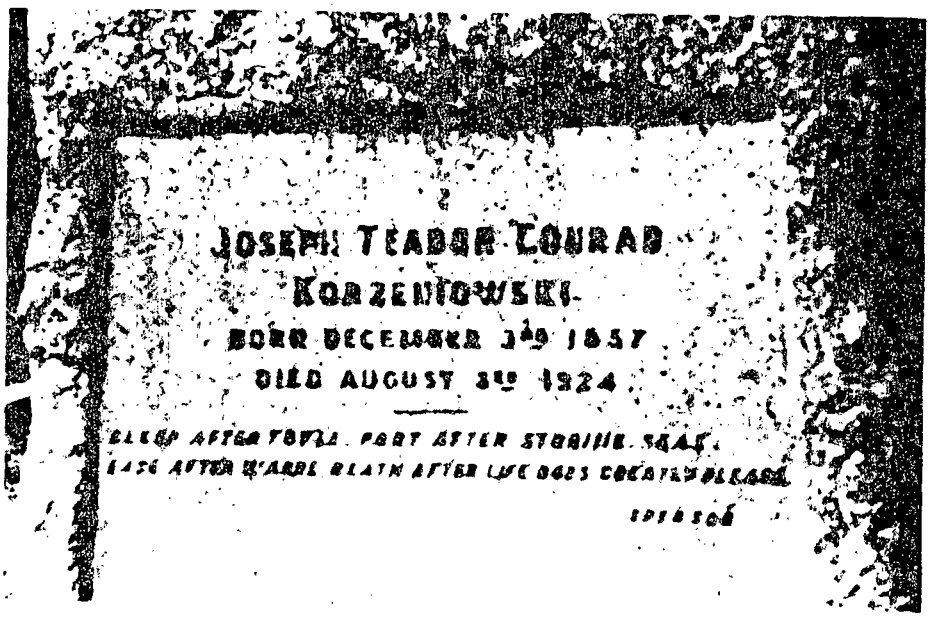
" Look on. Make no sound."[29] --had been Axel's father's advice, similar in tone to Schopenhauer's words:

> — ... "a prudência ordena abrir um abismo entre o pensamento e a palavra."[30]
> — ... "como a águia, os espíritos realmente superiores vagam pelas alturas solitárias."[31]
> — ... "a solidão é o patrimônio de todos os espíritos superiores; às vezes poderá ocorrer que se entristeçam, porém eles a escolheram como o menor dos males."[32]

Both philosophers believed that in inactive isolation the individual was given more chance to liberate himself from the natural forces of instinct, from the "warlike conditions of existence"[33], by assuming a contemplative mode of life; consciousness was freed from will and became "pure will-less subject of knowledge."[34]

Another and last possibility of definite liberation would be death, and in death both thinkers were finally resting in perfect harmony with the Universe, now liberated from the conflicting fatality of will overlaying all illusion of consciousness.

Like father Heyst, Schopenhauer left heirs to his philosophy. Joseph Conrad was somehow one. Not that we see Conrad as a "philosopher" committed to some consistent line of thought, but he seems to show certain dominant tendencies worthy of Schopenhauerean arguments. Heyst senior can be considered as a product of Conrad's sceptical temperament. Yet, from Axel's final denial of his father's values, it would seem logical to pose the hypothesis that Conrad could not believe, as Schopenhauer did, that man is really able to attain a perfect 'detachment' of idea from will.



Conrad's grave at Canterbury

However, we can frequently detect the same Schopenhauer's nihilistic view of the world, particularly in many of his private writings, like the following letter sent to his friend Graham in 1897:

> "There is—let us say—a machine. It evolved itself (I am severely scientific) out of a chaos of scraps or iron and behold!—it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider—but it goes on knitting. You come and say: 'This is all right; it's only a question of the right kind of oil. Let us use this—for instance—celestial oil and the machine shall embroider a most beautiful design in purple and gold' will it? Alas no. You cannot by any special lubrification make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without heart. It is a tragic accident —and it has happened. You can't interfere with it... It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions—and nothing matters. I'll admit however that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing."[35]

The epitaph on Conrad's tombstone at Canterbury (so similar to Schopenhauer's statements) is a final confirmation of his view of the world as a continuos aching strife:

> "Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas
> peace after warre, death after life does
> greatly please."[36]

2.2. The Spirit of the Time

Philosophical pessimism was a powerful force at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, largely

facilitated by the conflict of different ideologies and material interests which characterized that period. The demographic increase in Europe (population had more than doubled between 1815 and 1914)*, in connection with the Industrial Revolution and its resulting over-use of machines, brought serious consequences, such as poverty, chronic unemployment and terrible reductions in wages. The new economical, commercial, industrial and financial objectives of Imperialism joined the already existing ideological and religious convictions of territorial expansion and of "modernization" or westernization of remote cultures in Africa and Asia (an ideology which Kipling called "The white man's burden"). The words of King Leopold II of Belgium (1898) express perfectly the colonialist mentality of the times:

> "The mission which the agents of the State have to accomplish on the Congo is a noble one. They have to continue the development of civilisation in the centre of equatorial Africa, receiving their inspiration directly from Berlin and Brussels. Placed face by face with primitive barbarism, grappling with sanguinary customs that date back thousands of years, they are obliged to reduce these gradually."[38]
>
> ..."They will the more spare the blood of the natives, who will see in them the all powerful protectors of their lives and their property, benevolent teachers of whom they have so great a need."[39]

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* Darwin wrote in The Descent of Man:
"Man tends to increase at a greater rate than his means of subsistence, consequently he is occasionally subjected to a severe struggle for existence."[37]

Europeans longed for power and relief from the internal problems of their countries. Tension and conflict grew among the increasing colonial powers. In each country the conflict of four main ideologies expressed the opposition of the different mentalities of the time:

(1) Liberal movements (acting for freedom and against the offensive return of late regimes) wanted governments of élites;

(2) Democratic revolutions pressuposed universal suffrage, the government of the peoples;

(3) Socialist schools (still in the minority);

(4) Nationalistic movements, simultaneous with all the others.

Amid inssurections, civil wars, revolutionary impacts and attempts to master the whole world, minds rocked in insecurity, in longing for power and in fear. The struggle for material profits occurred in a climate of exploitation of the weakest by the most powerful. This was a process called by Darwin "The struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest", by Schopenhauer "The will to live", and by Nietzsche "The will to power", masked under the false appearance of Ideology.*

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* In The Secret Agent Conrad had declared that:
"the way of even the most justifiable revolutions is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds. (...) In their own way the most ardent of revolutionaries are perhaps doing nothing but seeking for peace in common with the rest of 'mankind'— the peace of soothed vanity, of satisfied appetites, or perhaps of appeased conscience."[40]

The way was cleared for the First World War; most people probably agreed with Schopenhauer who had stated in a very Darwinian way:

> ... "O mundo é mau; os selvagens se devoram entre si e os civilizados se enganam mutuamente e aqui está a significação daquilo que se chama 'a marcha do mundo'. Os estados com seus engenhosos mecanismos, dirigidos contra o exterior e o interior e com os seus meios de violência, não são senão medidas estabelecidas para traçar limites à iniquidade ilimitada dos homens. Não vemos na história inteira alguns reis, que consolidam e desfrutam de alguma prosperidade, aproveitar-se para cair com seu exército, como numa sortida de bandidos, sobre os Estados vizinhos? Não são no fundo todas as guerras atos de banditismo?... 'Dans toutes les guerres il ne s'agit que de voler', escreveu Voltaire."[41]

And Joseph Conrad was also fully aware that "the life-history of the earth must in the last instance be a history of a really very relentless warfare." [42]

In another letter to his friend Graham, Conrad wrote:

> "L'homme est un animal méchant. Sa méchanceté doit être organisée. Le crime est une condition necessaire de l'existence organisée. La societé est essenciellement criminelle,—ou elle n'existerait pas."[43]

Nietzsche developed a similar view to Schopenhauer's will to live; yet, it was somehow different. He assumed that all striving was an infinite <u>will to power</u>: "Apenas onde há vida há vontade; não a vontade de viver, mas a vontade de domínio."[44]

In <u>Zaratustra</u>, the hero could not help saying:

> "Your preachers of equality, the tyrannomania of impotence clamors thus out of you for equality: your most secret ambitions to be tyrants thus shroud themselves in words of virtue. Aggrieved conceit, repressed envy

NIETZSCHE

ASSIM FALAVA ZARATUSTRA

HEMUS

> —perhaps the conceit and envy of your fathers— erupt from you as a flame and as the frenzy of revenge."[45]

Conrad himself sounded very Nietzschien when he wrote to a Polish friend in 1885 about Poland's political affairs:

> "The destiny of this nation and of all nations is to be accomplished in darkness amidst much weeping and gnashing of teeth, to pass through robbery, equality, anarchy and misery under the iron rule of a militarism despotism... Socialism must inevitably end in Caesarism... the whole herd of idiotic humanity are moving in that direction at the bidding of unscrupulous rascals and a few sincere, but dangerous, lunatics. These things must be. It is a fatality."[46]

This state of mind was reflected in the works of various other thinkers and artists of Conrad's time, such as Bergson, Freud, Henry James, Thomas Mann, Richard Wagner, Anatole France and Guy de Maupassant. Even if Conrad had never read a line by Schopenhauer, simply by being steeped in the thinking of the time, specially that of Maupassant, he could not have failed to be impregnated with "l'immortelle pensée du plus grand sacageur de rêves qui ait passé sur la terre."[47]

> "Qu'on proteste et qu'on se fâche, qu'on s'indigne ou qu'on s'exalte. Schopenhauer a marqué l'humanité du sceau de son dédain et de son desenchantement. Jouisseur désabusé, il a renversé les croyances, les espoirs, les poesies, les chimeres, détruit les aspirations, ravagé le confiance des âmes, tué l'amour, abbatu le culte idéale de la femme, crevé les illusions des coeurs, accompli la plus gigantesque besogne de sceptique qui ait jamais été faite. Il a tout traversé de sa moquerie, et tout vidé. Et aujourd'hui même, ceux que l'execrent semblent porter, malgré eux, en leurs esprits des parcelles de sa pensée."[48]

It was, then, in such struggle of wills, in such setting of scepticism and latent hates, that Joseph Conrad lived

--an expatriate Pole, naturalized a British citizen. He had been a victim of nationalistic ideals of his father (whom he had followed in exile to the Ukraine). Orphan of father and mother when he was only a child, he also suffered from gout during all his life. Disillusioned with mankind (which he had the opportunity to know well either in France and England or in his innumerable journeys all over the world as a qualified sailor) he turned into a writer from necessity, both material and spiritual.--Indeed, he wrote to earn his living and simultaneously deepened into Art to escape the pains of his life, in the manner of Schopenhauer. Conrad had, then, all the dramatic requisites to become a pessimist.

Bertrand Russell, who had known Conrad in 1913, commented on his personality:

> "I felt... that he thought of civilized and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths."[49]

This sounds similar to Schopenhauer's statements that "all temporal happiness stands, and all prudence rests upon ground that is undermined."[50]

And in a letter to Graham written in 1897, Conrad himself had deplored the fact that the

> "mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence."[51]

2.3. Conrad, the Mediator

We have mentioned that Joseph Conrad presents certain dominant attitudes of pessimism, since he seems to see human existence as a heavy drama. Similarly to Schopenhauer, his pessimism leads him to stand for resignation and renunciation; this is well expressed when he declares that

> "all adventure, all love, every success is resumed in the Supreme energy of an act of renunciation—it is the uttermost limit of our power... No man or woman worthy of the name can pretend to anything more, to anything greater."[52]

Nevertheless, throughout his work, Conrad seems to suggest, unlike Schopenhauer, that the only way to avoid tragedy is living in accordance with instinct, but guided by the light of Ideas, that is, in restless activity (which in Conrad's concept is represented by work), yet restrained by the ethical and moral values of society. Indeed, the Promethean element (action oriented)--an essential characteristic of a Western (and Conrad's) ideal of life-- is opposed to Eastern death-like, liberating Orphism of Schopenhauer and Axel's father (who afterall is but the personification of Conrad's own occasional inclination to passivity and rest). Axel Heyst, the son, as a modern character, presents within himself the conflict of both tendencies, although a strong and acquired predominance of the last can be noticed.

In a letter to M^me^ Poradowska, his aunt, in 1892, Conrad expressed his opinion that

> "when one well understands that in oneself one is nothing and that a man is worth

> neither more nor less than the work he accomplishes with honesty of purpose and means, and within the strict limits of his duty toward society, only then is one the master of his conscience, with the right to call himself a man."[53]

Work was mainly a question of self-preservation: "A man is a worker. If he is not that he is nothing,"[54] that is, "DO or DIE!" As Darwin had stated, a man

> "must remain subject to a severe struggle. Otherwise he would sink into indolence, and the more gifted men would not be more successful in the battle of life than the less gifted."[55]

Again, when he was about forty, Conrad wrote this time to Garnett: "I feel like a man who can't move, in a dream. To move is vital—it's salvation—and I can't!... It's like being bewitched; it's like being in a cataleptic trance."[56]

Leonardo da Vinci had written once that "work is the law. Like iron that lying idle degenerates into a mass of useless rust. ... So without action the spirit of man turns to a death thing."[57]

Of da Vinci's statement, Conrad commented: "It has a simplicity and a truth which no amount of subtle comment can destroy."[58] Later Conrad explained:

> "... from the hard work of men are born the sympathetic consciousness of a common destiny, the fidelity to right practice which makes great craftsmen, the sense of right conduct which we may call honour, the devotion to our calling and the idealism..."[59]

Conrad thinks that from work there comes solidarity with all mankind--a social conscience--and the resulting fabrication

of Ideas, principles and beliefs, such as duty, honour, fidelity, in short the ethics of human existence. This typical concept in Conrad's time served as an argument in King Leopold II's words to justify Imperialism. He declared once that the agents of the State "must accustom the population to general laws, of which the most needful and the most salutary is assuredly that of work."[60]

Work was, for Conrad, the search for a realization of instinct, but a far-fetched realization--an organized one, guided by the light of the Idea--the idea as a product of belief, not of reason, for thinking was destructive, to Conrad. He wrote: "Thinking is the great enemy of perfection. The habit of profound reflection, I am compelled to say, is the most pernicious of all habits formed by the civilized man."[61] Indeed, Conrad claims that

> "what makes mankind tragic is not that they are victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well—but as soon as you know of your slavery the pain, the anger, the strife—the tragedy begins."[62] *

For Conrad, then, the best choice seems to be that of spending a life-time of restless activity, blended with the convinced unthinking acceptance of one's illusions, beliefs and individual faiths; in short, the acceptance of the unreal Idea that

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* Similarly Schopenhauer had commented on human tragedy: "The true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight, that it is not his own individual sins that the hero atones for, but original sin, i.e., the crime of existence itself:
"Pues el delito mayor del hombre
es haber nascido."[63]

comes from the solidarity in feelings with all mankind, and which ultimately constitutes part of human Reality--a complexity of ego-centred and social impulses pulling in opposite directions, yet smoothed and protected by the sweetness of illusions:

> "Neither his fellows nor his gods, nor his passions will leave a man alone. In virtue of these allies and enemies he holds his precarious dominion, he possesses his fleeting significance."[64]

To Conrad, Ideas, as the reasoned result of our perception of the objective world, have no substance in themselves, for they change as our biological constitution changes--they lead nowhere. But Ideas, that come from our necessity and tendency to believe (from our innate credulity, such as the idea of the supernatural) have a pragmatical and aesthetical function in human lives, and these are the significant and important ones, although they may be still illusions. Conrad's comment confirms it:

> "I am too firm in my consciousness of the marvelous to be ever fascinated by the mere supernatural, which (take it anyway you like) is but a manufactured article, the fabrication of minds insensitive to the intimate delicacies of our relation to the dead and to the living in their countless multitudes."[65]

Idealism seems to be only a fabrication of the mind; it only exists in man while he is living:

> "idealism... is not a misty, winged angel without eyes, but a divine figure of terrestrial aspect with a clear glance and with its feet resting firmly on the earth on which it was born."[66]

To the author of Victory, believing in something is keeping an illusion. In the same way, Schopenhauer stated that... "assim como o nosso corpo está envolto em suas roupas, assim tam-

bém o nosso espírito está revestido de mentiras."[67]

Nevertheless, illusions also have their own truth, since inherent to human nature. They are both armours of self-defense and ornaments to the ugliness of life--the willful instinct,

> "that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the whole resisting and hard qualities—like the vulnerable body within a steel armour."[68]

The value of ideas and beliefs seems to lie, for Conrad, not in their revelation of truth but in their usefulness to man--not the usefulness of immediate satisfaction of his desires, but the usefulness in getting through life or meeting a crisis.

For Conrad, there should be, then, a compromise between the satisfaction of immediate will and the restraining purpose of our ideals in the service of a further level of will: "What is needed is a sense of immediate duty, and a feeling of impalpable constraint."[69]

Heyst's last words, before committing suicide, constitute enough evidence of his understanding of man's imperious need of illusions and beliefs amidst the conflict, in a double-faced will, of the centrifugal forces of society against the centripetal impulses of egoism: "Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life."[70]

We can think of the Conradian Idea as a far-fetched device working pragmatically and aesthetically at the service of will; it seems to be only a surface self-restraint, looking for self-preservation and leading to ultimate self-satisfaction.

It seems that Conrad, unlike Schopenhauer, could not believe in the separation of will and idea, even in superior men. We will find, as he tries to suggest throughout his work, that no human being is able to attain such a stage of detachment, for it stands wholly against Nature. The most that man at his best is able to reach is an insight into the interactive duality in human nature: irrationality versus consciousness, egoism versus the sense of solidarity, Will versus Idea, I versus the others. Neither of these poles of the self--Conrad seems to think--can subsist alone or, if it can, the moral value of such detachment is rather dubious. This will be proved through the different stages of the hero's initiation. To Conrad, apparently, balance implies the co-existence of both, one or the other always being sacrificed, one or the other always restraining its opposite: "Whenever he stands, at the beginning or at the end of things, a man has to sacrifice his gods to his passions or his passions to his gods."[71]

After Lena's death, in the face of his absolute inability to act, to believe, that is, to face life, Heyst committed suicide by setting fire to her corpse, to his house (containing all his father's belongings) and to himself. This was his last and only way of <u>acting</u> and thus denying his father's philosophy of living,* Heyst's attitude is extremely significant, and we

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* For, as Conrad stated, "it is only when the catastrophy matches the natural obscurity of our fate that even the best representative of the race is liable to lose his detachment."[72]

can find in it still greater meaning if we think of Schopenhauer's well-known fear of fires. Indeed, Schopenhauer always used to sleep "em pavimentos térreos pelo temor de incêndios."[73]

Everything was ashes now. Nothing remained of the complexity of Axel Heyst. In spite of the urgency of his need for a belief in life, nothing more was left of it in death.

Conrad, like Schopenhauer, was aware of the aimlessness of the living process. He seems to think that life could be only fulfilled in itself, since, beyond it, there remained nothing: "The attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence."[74]

Victory and The World as Will and Idea end on the same word. Davidson, after relating Axel's self immolation, observes that there was nothing more to be done on Samburan, and repeats the word "NOTHING!"[75] with placid sadness.

Schopenhauer concludes his fourth and last book by observing:

> "What remains after the entire abolition of will is for all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky ways—is nothing."[76]

NOTES ON

CHAPTER II

1 - Victory, p. 143

2 - Vida de Schopenhauer, p. 174

3 - Victory, p. 75

4 - Ibid., p. 175

5 - Ibid., p. 174

6 - Nietzsche — Filósofo da Cultura, p. 219

7 - Sabedoria da Vida, p. 199

8 - Victory, p. 75

9 - Ibid., p. 142

10 - Sabedoria da Vida, p. 226

11 - Darwin, p. 275

13 - Ibid., p. 365

14 - Ibid., p. 368

15 - The World as Will and Idea I, p. 453

16 - Ibid., p. 218

17 - Ibid. I, p. 412

18 - Ibid., p. 196

19 - Ibid., p. 453

20 - Ibid., pp. 130-31

21 - Ibid. II, p. 421

22 - Ibid. I, pp. 101-04

23 - Ibid., pp. 101-104

24 - Victory, p. 68

25 - The World as Will and Idea II, p. 15

26 - Victory, p. 181

27 - The World as Will and Idea I, p. 254

28 - Heart of Darkness (ed. by Robert Kimbrough)

29 - Victory, p. 142

30 - Sabedoria da Vida, p. 225

31 - Ibid., p. 201

32 - Ibid., p. 178

33 - Heart of Darkness, p. 146

34 - The World as Will and Idea I, p. 253

35 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 400

36 - Ibid., p. 911

37 - Darwin, pp. 265-66

38 - Heart of Darkness (ed. by Robert Kimbrough), p. 86

39 - Heart of Darkness, pp. 93-3

40 - The Secret Agent, p. 74

41 - Sabedoria da Vida, pp. 213-14

42 - Heart of Darkness, p. 153

43 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 420

44 - Nietzsche — Filósofo da Cultura, p. 122 (quoted from Zarathustra)

45 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 227 (note)

46 - Ibid., pp. 226-27

47 - Oeuvres Posthumes I — Auprès d'un Mort, p. 142

48 - Ibid., p. 142

49 - Conrad and his World, p. 84

50 - The World as Will and Idea

51 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 400

52 - Heart of Darkness, p. 153

53 - Ibid., p. 142 (Conrad on Life and Art)

54 - Ibid., p. 142

55 - Darwin, p. 275

56 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 405

57 - Heart of Darkness, p. 140

58 - Ibid., p. 140

59 - Ibid., p. 140

60 - Ibid., p. 140

61 - Victory (author's note to Victory), p. X

62 - Conrad and his World, p. 97

63 - The World as Will and Idea I, p. 328

64 - Heart of Darkness, p. 153

65 - Ibid., p. 145

66 - Ibid., p. 140

67 - Sabedoria da Vida, p. 165

68 - Heart of Darkness ("Conrad on Life and Art"), p. 146

69 - Heart of Darkness, p. 142

70 - Victory, pp. 338-39

71 - Heart of Darkness, pp. 153-54

72 - Victory (Conrad's note to Victory) p. X

73 - Grandes Mestres do Pensamento I, p. 13

74 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 400

75 - Victory, p. 340

76 - The World as Will and Idea I, p. 532

CHAPTER III

AXEL'S COMPLEXITY

3.1. The Portable Form of Life Riches

> "There is, as every schoolboy knows in this scientific age, a very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds..."[1]

While Conrad ended Victory with a genuine Schopenhauerean conclusion revealing the complete nothingness of human death, he began it with a meaningful image expressing his view on the bipolarized wholeness of human life. In fact, his remark that there is a close chemical relation between coal and diamonds seems to have been inspired by an interesting thought by the romantic German whom Conrad greatly admired and who apparently had also influenced Schopenhauer--Novalis. The latter had written:

> "Le charbon et le diamant sont une même matière, et cependant, combient différents! Ne serait-ce pas le même cas pour l'homme et pour la femme? Nous sommes de l'argile et les femmes sont des pierres précieuses qui sont également formées d'argile."[2]

Novalis' comparison stating the same close chemical relation between coal and diamond, sets forth an explicit parallel

between this mineral pair and the human pair man-woman. Such a mataphorical relation seems to have been adopted by Conrad, who, we believe, extended it to a wider concept of the human duplicity --body-soul, matter-spirit, will-idea. Indeed, at the end of Victory only the emptiness of death is explicit, but the assertion of life as a two-fold totality is repeated throughout the whole novel. This affirmation, which is to be "viewed" rather than understood by the reader, was thus artistically stressed from the very beginning of the novel. In fact, Conrad seems to mean that both man and woman, matter and spirit, body and soul, will and idea constitute only aspects of the same reality, which also keep a close chemical relation to each other. Both are aspects of the same "matter"--human life. The simple fact that a close and important relationship between a man and a woman is developed in the novel sounds very much like a restatement of Novalis' thought. For Conrad, woman--"la pierre precieuse"--usually an active unthinking human believer, apparently represents the balanced association of will and idea; balanced because unthinking, unaware and mentally unclear. In Victory Conrad even declares: "it is not the clear sighted who lead the world. Great achievements are accomplished in a blessed, warm mental fog."[3]

To Conrad, the two elements hardly reconcile with each other in Man, because of his rationalizing character and consequent tendency to passivity. However, we must admit that few women in Conrad's works directly lead the world, and that some men (for example Wang and Singleton) are also unreflective. So, this balanced blend is not represented exclusively by women in

Victory. As a matter of fact, Axel's relationship with the girl, Lena, is, in a way, a repeated experience of his former friendship with a man--Morrison. Lena constitutes, somehow, the continuity of Morrison. When Heyst addresses Lena for the first time, the narrator even elucidates that: "It was the same sort of impulse which years ago had made him cross the sandy street of the abominable town of Delli in the island of Timor and accost Morrison..."[4]

Both active believers, Morrison and Lena had stimulated Heyst's social impulses of curiosity, pity and solidarity. Both caused Heyst to break out of his Schopenhauerean attitude of detachement acquired from his father. Both unwittingly brought "unarmed" Heyst inevitable troubles from society. The only difference between them was that Lena was a woman, and as a woman her influence on him went further by stimulating Heyst's agonizing social impulses to sex and love. There is an implied irony in the fact that Heyst was an imperfect hermit: idealistically seeking to save Lena he was also moved by animal impulses, which he did not understand very well. But above all, her moral strength had the powerful effect of making him view the whole truth of human existence --that the bright diamonds of human Belief and social integration are the easiest and most ethical way of getting through life.

Since the very beginning of the novel this idea is stressed by the author who even adds that coal, apparently the black recoil into the jungle of one's self, "is a much less portable form of property"[5] than diamonds. It is evident that Conrad is referring to some sort of pragmatic choice of carrying wealth,

as well as to some sort of pragmatic choice of enduring life. Yet, we think it is important to notice that, in opposition to Schopenhauer's view, Conrad's life view could probably be equated with some sort of wealth, afterall. Nevertheless, the diamonds of human existence--the moral, ethical and aesthetical values, mostly symbolized by women, controlling the animal impulses of a violent selfish society, seem to be for Conrad, a much more adequate form of shifting for oneself, a real source of life riches.

3.2. The Son of his Father

It has been mentioned above that, to Conrad, belief is a kind of knowledge incompatible with the thinking subject; it is only compatible with one's experience of solidarity through work.

Nevertheless, Axel Heyst, the son of such a pessimistic father, had learnt, from his early youth, to disbelieve and consequently to live passively in inactive meditation by avoiding any social attachment. As a matter of fact, in the last three years of his life, Axel's father had indoctrinated the son with his pessimistic philosophy:

> "Three years of such companionship at that plastic and impressionable age were bound to live in the boy a profound mistrust of life" ...The young man learned to reflect, which is destructive process a reckoning of the cost."[6]

Later, Axel would even tell Lena about the influence his father had exerted on him:

> "He is responsible for what my existence is, or rather has been. (...) I don't know how many minds he convinced. But my mind was very young then, and youth I suppose can be easily reduced—even by a negation. He was very ruthless and yet he was not without pity. He dominated me without difficulty. A heartless man could not have done so. (...) They read his books, but I have heard his living word. It was irresistable. It was as if that mind were taking me into its confidence, giving me a special insight into its mastery of despair..."[7]

The refusal to partake in the social struggle had been actually instilled into Heyst's mind: "... after listening to him, I could not take my soul down in the street to fight there."[8]

Therefore, since his father's death, Axel had promised to himself:

> "I'll drift. (...) This shall be my defence against life."[9]

In wandering detachment, he thought first, he would escape from suffering and achieve greatness. He imagined that

> "It was the very essence of his life to be solitary achievement accomplished not by a hermit-like withdrawal with its silence and immobility, but by a system of restless wondering by the detachment of an impermanent dweller amongst changing scenes. In this scene he had perceived the means of passing through life without suffering and almost without a single care in the world—invulnerable because elusive."[10]

This was the best he could conceive of life, his highest ideal of living. Thus, Axel tried to become "a waif and stray, austerely, from conviction."[11] He left his home and started travelling: "I started off to wander about, an independent spectator —if that is possible"[12], he would tell Lena.

Wandering from place to place was Axel's former active

way of evasion and detachment. Paradoxically as it may seem, in Victory the travelling action represents a meaning opposite to the working one--work being action, it is, however, the appropriate way of setting people at rest, because it gives them security and stability by binding them to common rules and common feelings. On the contrary, the action of travelling, since it unties one from any social roots, propitiates an isolated fluctuation which unbalances one's mind. To Conrad stability and security seem to be, therefore, a result of physical action attached to social interests, that is work, for this way the hard struggle of opposite wills can be fairly controlled and even sublimated into moral and aesthetical values--the diamonds of human existence. As Heyst was neither a traveller nor a fighter (or rather he was both), he fails in his travelling life. He tries, then, a hermit-like existence, by isolating himself on an island:

> "He was out of everybody's way, as if he were perched on the highest peak of the Himalayas, and in a sense as conspicuous. Every one in that part of the world knew him, dwelling on his little island...
> ... On the nights of full moon the silence around Samburan—the 'Round Island' of the charts—was dazzling; and in the flood of cold light Heyst could see his immediate surroundings, which had the aspect of an abandoned settlement invaded by the jungle."[13]

In fact, the round character of Heyst, symbolized by the "Round Island" of Samburan, was now immersed in the jungle of his inner self, under the intellectual control of his ideas: "I remain in possession here"[14], he commented to Captain Davidson in a very Schopenhauerean tone. But the idea of roundness here is ambiguous and hence ironic; it can mean both wholeness and inte-

gration, in a "Jungian" sense, and "platonic isolation", that is, the lack of wholeness.

Notwithstanding, such complete detachment from society would not last very long--Heyst was only under temporary self-control. Inside himself the lava of his almost extinct will was potentially ready for occasional and periodical explosions, like the

> "indolent volcano which smoked faintly all day (...) at night levelled at him (...) a dull red glow, expanding and collapsing spasmodically like the end of a gigantic cigar puffed at intermittently in the dark." [15]

The implied comparison between Heyst and his "nearest neighbour"--the "indolent volcano"--clearly expresses Heyst's latent tendency to spasmodic impulses towards the outer world: "Axel Heyst was also a smoker (...) he made in the night the same sort of glow and of the same size as that other one so many miles away." [16]

Indeed, throughout the whole novel Heyst rhythmically alternates between different attempts at flight and inevitable impulses to "enchanted" social attachment. From the constant movement of travelling first, through the complete inertia of isolation in Samburan later, to the final escape in death, Heyst goes through several stages of inner conflict in which he tries to fight first, and perhaps to fulfill afterwards, his latent social instincts and his innate tendency to be fascinated by and curious about the outer world.

3.3. The Enchanted Heyst

The first time we are told of Heyst's enchantement is when he arrives in the Eastern islands in North Borneo. "Roughly speaking a circle with a radius of eight hundred miles drawn around a point in North Borneo was in Heyst's case magic circle."[17]

In his essence, Heyst "was not a traveller. A traveller arrives and departs, goes on somewhere. Heyst did not depart."[18]

Unable to resist such fascination he stayed. "I am enchanted with these islands"[19], he said. His Attachement precisely to Eastern places significantly and paradoxically contrasts with his conscious wish to follow the (Eastern) philosophy of Detachment. Since those early times, the complexity of Axel Heyst was already too evident. Axel was human and, as such, he would hardly escape his own nature, his social instincts--his innate (Western) impulse to action, to curiosity and to feeling solidarity with his fellowmen, in spite of his acquired tendency to passivity and to recoil from society. For all these reasons we disagree with critics like Guerard, Meyer and Moser, who find Heyst 'flat' and unsatisfactory. In fact, we think Axel can be considered as a real modern character, the most complete realization among Conrad's protagonists.

In reality we witness Axel being pitilesssly pushed and pulled either by his ideas of detachment or by his inevitable will to social contact, or even by a set of fateful external circumstances. Again paradoxically, while he fails in his contemplative life because of his innate, yet weakened tendency to action

and social feelings, on the other hand he also fails in his social attachments precisely because of his early acquired inability to act, to fight and to feel enough. Nevertheless, two feelings seem to persist more deeply in him, like those of a Schopenhauerean saint: curiosity and pity. We can imagine that both his curiosity and his pity for the world were the basis for his enthusiastic interest in facts:

> - "Are you interested in -?"
> - "Facts", broke in Heyst in his courtly voice, "there is nothing worth knowing but facts. Hard facts: Facts alone, Mr Tesman"[20],

he had declared to the owner of a Sourabaya firm. This flat view, which saw the world purely as a sum or substraction of evidences, allowed Axel to dream of some sort of world improvement: "What he seemed mostly concerned for was the 'stride forward', as he expressed it, in the general organization of the universe, apparently".

Because of such interests and hopes, Axel was considered "a utopist",[21] a "pursuer of chimaera"[22]. As a matter of fact, Heyst's idealism is presented upside down in relation to the common concept of Idealism itself. In fact, Heyst was not an idealist in the same way as Lena, for example. Being an earthly girl, Lena very pragmatically believed in spirituality, in metaphysics, in immateriality, while he, being a dreamer, utopianly concerned with the concreteness of visible facts, with matter, with all in the world which was susceptible to objective and rational observation. To Conrad, Lena's was the sort of idealism which is implied in a realistic view of the world, for it is the human condition to be-

lieve in veiled, illusion-like, illogical concepts. In consequence, Heyst's "materialistic" hope as to the possibility of improving the world was to be considered as idealistically utopian.

Nevertheless, soon Heyst would understand, that facts alone constituted too poor a basis for living and for allowing one to pass a fair judgement on the world and human affairs. Fascinated by and attracted to a place, curious only about facts in pursuit of the ideal of a better world, Heyst would actually experience two of the bitterest facts in his life--the "earning" and the loss of a dear friend and the disappointment over the bankruptcy of the coal Company of which he was the manager.

3.4. Two disappointing Facts (The Morrison Episode)

Moved by pity and curisosity, Heyst happened to make the acquaintance of Morrison--"one of us", someone who "in his way was also an "enchanted man", "the English owner and master of the Capricorn, trading brig", who was "doing well with her, except for the drawback of too much altruism"[23]. Morrison was a good representative of the work-belief blend. Indeed, for Conrad, Morrison was the prototype of a Western attitude towards life by keeping himself always attached to the Christian mentality which proclaims work amidst charitable blind faith. He was someone who often risked his life through dangerous channels only to lend some rice to hungry people. "He would preach to them energy and indus-

try"[24], he would believe that either they would pay him someday or he would be able to collect their bills. The narrator even mentions and then stoutly denies (along with some friends of his) some rumors to the effect that Morrison had a wife in each place. He expresses their indignation at this hearsay for they thought "Morrison was a true humanitarian and rather ascetic than otherwise..."[25]

At the risk of over-interpreting this passage, we might say that we think this hearsay became meaningful in the metaphorical context of such an allegorical story: a woman, as we have already mentioned, apparently constitutes the Conradian symbol for belief in balance with the social instinct of action; so, we could easily understand why Morrison was supposed to leave a woman in each place, for in each place he left a charitable hope after the fulfilment of his work duties. In spite of being a trader, a worker, a fighter, he was, at the same time, an idealist and a believer.

At the precise moment when they met in Delli, Morrison was suffering very much for not having enough money to pay the fine for his brig arrested by the Portuguese authorities. Morrison

> "was walking along the street, his eyeglass tossed over his shoulder, his head down, with the hopeless aspect of those hardened tramps one sees on over roads trudging from workhouse to workhouse."[26]

Moved by Morrison's look, Axel invited him to have a drink. "I am to have my throat cut the day after tomorrow"[27], the poor man said, already in the wineshop. "... his elbows flauted on the table, his eyes bloodshot, his voice nearly gone... he looked already gone to bad past redemption."[28] Heyst's pity inevitably cropped out, in

spite of himself: "The sight was shocking to Heyst"[29], the narrator tells us. On the other hand, his compassion was reinforced by his respectful curiosity which was whetted by the simple fact that Morrison was a Believer: "This morning on board, in my cabin I went down on my knees and prayed for help. I went down on my knees!"[30], Morrison lamented.'"You are a believer, Morrison?"[31] asked Heyst with a distinct note of respect." "Surely I am not one infidel"'.[32]

Heyst's pity blended with a mixture of respect and curiosity impelled him to help the poor man. We think subconsciously Heyst wanted him to keep his belief. He lent him the money.

Such a gesture was immediately interpreted by Morrison as a miracle, a divine response to his prayers, and consequently Heyst became for him the messenger of Providence:

> -"It was as if he expected Heyst's usual white suit of the tropics to change into a shining garment flowing down to his toes, and a pair of great dazzling wings to sprout on the Swede's shoulders." ... — (...) "Miracles do happen", thought the awestruck Morrison"[33]; — "... You must have been sent by God in answer to my prayer."[34]

The tremendous pathos of the scene is due to the irony that it had been precisely Heyst, the absolute disbeliever, who by the force of fate, of human circunstances, or (who knows) of the Great Will, became for Morrison the divine answer to his own beliefs. Later, Lena would feel the same "faith in the man of her destiny and perhaps in the Heaven which had sent him so wonderfully to cross her path"[35]. It is interesting to notice the narrator's all-accepting attitude towards religious belief. We think

him identified with Conrad, as he admits both hypotheses--either of a divine interference or not: "And all this sprang from the meeting of the cornered Morrison and of the wandering Heyst, which may or may not have been the direct outcome of a prayer."[36]

However, the incredibility of such coincidence enhanced Axel's curiosity and enchantement. He would explain later to Lena:

> "What captivated my fancy was that I, Axel Heyst, the most detached of creatures in this earthly captivity, the veriest tramp on this earth, an indifferent stroller going through the world's bustle—that I should have been there to step into the situation of an agent of Providence, I, a man of universal scorn and unbelief..."[37]

Heyst's denials were useless: "I have no connection with the supernatural. Nobody has sent me. I just happened along"[38] ..

But Morrsion's belief was steady. The precious illusion of his life--the confidence and faith in those poor people and in himself--had been annihilated once and for all: "in the revulsion of his feelings he made his great renunciation. He cast off the abiding illusion of his existence"[39] .

However, Morrison managed to keep the source of his life riches--living with a new form of the same belief--the faith in God through Heyst. Axel understood it. Later, talking to Lena, he would explain that Morrison "would have preferred to be killed outright—that is, to have his soul despatched to another world, rather than to be robbed of his substance, his very insignificant substance..."[40]

The fact that Morrison saw Heyst as an angel may reflect ironically on the self--centeredness of the former's faith. But

Morrison was only a man and here Conrad could find an expressive way to stress the great abyss which separates God's absolute perfection from Man's powerless imperfection: the narrator explains that Morrison "thanked God with awed sincerity for his mercy, and he could not thank Heyst enough for the service rendered as between man and man"[41] . Goodness should be a quality implied in the concept of God Almighty; but being good as a man was certainly something very difficult and rarely found.

Axel and Morrison became close friends. Friendship had not certainly been included in Heyst's plans, yet he could not avoid its coming for it curiously resulted from his natural tendencies to be fascinated, to be curious, to be merciful and feel solidarity: in short, to be attached.

Meanwhile, such attachment exposed Heyst (the Baron, as he was called) to the slander of a hotel keeper, Schomberg, who disliked him chiefly because Heyst was not a regular customer; in fact, Schomberg "was a noxious ass and satisfied his lust for silly gossip at the cost of his customers"[42] , and as such he made up gossip about Axel, who, according to him, "had fastened himself on Morrison and was sucking him dry"[43] .

So, the simple fact that Heyst was initially exposed to the interference of the outer world helped to create the appropriate conditions for a coming deep sorrow. Indeed, his human action had unforeseen consequences. It took him into business with Morrison, who finally went to push the coal idea in London and got Heyst to be appointed manager of the Tropical Belt Coal Company. It was Heyst's chance to "stride forward". Thus, Axel became ac-

tually and efficiently an active and concrete worker:

> "He was very concrete, very visible now. He was rushing all over the Archipelago, jumping in and out of local mail—packets as if they had been tramcars, here, there, and everywhere—organizing with all his might. This was no mooning about. This was business."[44]

Heyst acted in such a (Western) way that he was not considered "a utopist" or a dreamer anymore. He was being successful in business and work. Yet, the human condition is that success gives rise to general hatred--he was immediately considered as "The Enemy", the destroyer of other people's little industries. Heyst had not counted at all on the human factor: the struggling envious will to survival and to power. When he was inertly dreaming of "chimaeras" nobody minded about him. "An inert body can do no harm to any one, provokes no hostility, is scarcely worth derision".[45] Nevertheless, as soon as he acted successfully, he became an obstacle to the others' fulfillment.

But suddenly the TBC CO went bankrupt and everybody washed their hands of it. In his logic, Heyst could probably not understand how "evaporation precedes liquidation. First the capital evaporates, and then the company goes into liquidation".[46] This was Heyst's first disappointment in facts, and the second immediately followed.

Curiously, Morrison's trip to England--the very fact which allowed the short term fulfilment of Heyst's dream of practical effort--also became the incontrollable circunstance that caused him a great grief and his second disappointment in facts --Morrison's death. He, who had been Morrison's saviour, became,

after all the involuntary cause of his death.

Left alone, terribly shocked and worried about the social opinion of himself "as if afraid someone would reproach him with the death of Morrison"[47], for he was sceptically aware of his human potentiality to commit a crime, he retreated to Samburan, to take up an inert hermit-like existence in the deserted ruins of his ill-fated business venture.

But the Morrison episode did not cause Heyst's withdrawal, but rather gave it a definite shape. Heyst had always been a hermit at heart--a travelling one, avoiding involvement with life.

After the disappointment in facts, there came the absolute rejection of them, by radical attempts to be detached from society. When Davidson met him for the first time after he had taken refuge on the island, Axel confided to his friend: "Oh! I am done with facts"[48].

This time, the round character, Heyst, had symbolically escaped into the "Round Island", Samburan, where he had intellectually entered in the jungle of his inner self. Inertly settling on an island was his pragmatic way of escaping the uncontrolability of the factual world.

However, his fascination with the world would sprout again, in spite of himself. "To see whether there were any letters for him at the Tesmans"[49] apparently became his excuse for going to the civilized world once more.

Such circumstances afforded him the opportunity to make the acquaintance of the poor orchestra girl, Lena, who would be

the new and definite flame to whom he would feel attracted, this time even more intensely (yet not enough). Through her, gradually, he would reach the final view that human reality also implies idealism and spirit amidst the ugliness of facts and matter.

3.5. Faust, Adam, Mankind and Christ all in Heyst

Like Faust, who, also fascinated, had sold his soul to the devil only to get to the essential truth, Heyst follows a Faustian process of Learning through the "cheated" satisfaction of his emprisoning curiosity. First, the Schopenhauerean "spectator" had been interested only in facts:

> "At the time I thought that intelligent observation of facts was the way of cheating the time which is allotted to us whether we want it or not..."[50]

he had said.

But soon he would become also curious as to other people's enduring belief in the existence of an objective idea leading the world. On the first meeting with Morrison, Heyst commented to Lena: "I saw that he believed in another world because, being concerned as I have told you, he went down on his knees and prayed."[51]

The attraction Axel felt for "cornered" people who still believed it was worthwhile to live, despite all suffering, must be his desperate quest into the way that others could find something that gave a meaningful sense to their lives. Referring to Heyst's

sudden interest in Lena, the narrator explains that "she had captured Heyst's awakened faculty of observation; he had the sensation of a new experience."[52]

Both Heyst and Faust subjected themselves to a similar process of initiation. However, there seems to exist an essential difference between their frames of mind: Faust voluntarily yielded to the intellectual choice of spiritual desintegration for the reward of concrete knowledge; Heyst, on the contrary, unwittingly yielded to his own devilish will to social knowledge, which finally led him to the view of the inevitable integration of the soul in the human being. But only from his father's point of view can social involvement be considered a "sell out". Yet, if it is a fall it seems to be a "Felix Culpa", from Conrad's point of view. In fact, Axel's father, or rather Axel's fatherly self, will apparently prove to be the real devil in the end. Nevertheless, at this time, Heyst still considered his father's theory as God's word. In this sense, Axel considered himself as Adam falling from Paradise: "There must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after-all"[53], he meditated after his disillusionment with the coal mine company. Throughout the whole novel, and despite himself, Heyst is repeatedly fascinated and attracted by actions, sounds, voices (particularly Lena's voice), smiles and people which would tie him and pull him to the contact of a struggling society. Once he had even complained to Lena about the disgusting experience of Morrison's friendship: "I had, in a moment of inadvertence, created for myself a tie... I only know that he who forms a tie is lost. The germ of corruption has entered into his soul."[54]

Corruption and sin were, then supposed to come, both to Adam and to Axel, as the punishing result of the son's disregard for his father's word. Axel's father's paradise had probably been conceived as Peace in Silence, Isolation, Detachment and Inertia--"The contemptuous negation of all effort".[55] To the old man, social instinct would certainly be the original sin itself; Adam's fall must have come from his strong impulse to act socially, for he was not alone.

> "Action—the first thought or perhaps the first impulse on earth! The barbed, hook, baited with the illusion of progress, to bring out of the lightless void the shoals of unnumbered generations"[56].

Heyst meditated sadly. Axel's multiple temptations happened for the same reason. After his bitter experience with the Tropical Belt Coal Company, Axel, the son of his father, reflected:

> "I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm since I allowed myself to be tempted into action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful. It is devilish. That is why this world is evil upon the whole."[57]

Thinking of Paradise lost, Axel regretted: "And I, the son of my father, have been caught too, like the silliest fish of them all."[58] In his Faustian initiation, Heyst was discovering that there was in himself, as in any other man, an innate tendency to the "original fall"--the social act, as conceived by his father:

> "He reflected too, with the sense of making a discovery that this primeval ancestor is not easily suppressed. The oldest voice in the world is just the one that never ceases to speak."[59]

Heyst's first fall occurred when, enchanted, he came to

those islands. His second, when, full of pity, enchanted and curious, he attached himself to a suffering man--Morrison. His third occurred when, hopeful, he entered the civilized world of industrial development. The fourth, when, curious, willful, enchanted, full of pity and hopeful, he aided an unhappy girl--Lena. However in Lena's case, "old Adam" implied not only the social impulse to help but also a sexual passion which would result in jealousy and misunderstanding of Lena (Eve). Heyst's father would prefer 'Adam' to have no Eve at all. The narrator seems to share a view similar to ours when he comments:

> "First, it was Morrison's partnership of mystery; then came the great sensation of the Tropical Belt Coal where indeed varied interests were involved: a real business matter. And then came this elopment, this incongruous phenomenon of self-assertion, the greatest wonder of all, astonishing and amusing."[60]

The Adam existing in Heyst was apparently acting mostly for self-assertion, even when he seemed to love; love for his father, was but the dreaming search for the satisfaction of one's desires. In this sense old Heyst had written once: "Of the stratagems of life the most cruel is the consolation of love—the most subtle, too; for the desire is the bed of dreams."[61]

Still because of his tendency to fall, Heyst, like Adam, can also be considered as a good representative for all Mankind, whom Alma, the human soul tries to save from destruction. As we have already mentioned, both the falling and the saving elements coexist in the concept of Mankind. However, the fall is commonly associated to the impulses of the body dominating the soul and redemption to the pressures of the moral soul on the human body.

This idea of human dualism is symbolically presented to us through the relationship Heyst-Alma.

"I've saved you!", agonizing Alma exclaimed to Axel, after having prevented him from being killed by Ricardo:

> ..."Who else could have done this for you?" She whispered gloriously.
> "No one in the world" he answered her in a murmur of unconcealed dispair.[62]

Lena succeeded in protecting Axel physically, but only while she lived. As alma, representing the human soul, and apparently to Conrad the human soul which may only exist in Man's mind while he lives* she was the only element able to protect Mankind from a complete physical destruction.

Once Alma, the human soul, stopped existing, Heyst, the human being, was also inevitably condemned to physical destruction. One of Davidson's last comments on Heyst's suicide is very elucidating. He said: "I suppose he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body."[63]

On the other hand, the atmosphere of quest reflected in Heyst's Faustian curiosity is an element which also makes us see in Axel the knight who is seeking the grail, that is, an object that may be worth living for. Yet, Heyst, the knight, is also moved by some sort of feeling close to love, when he saves "the enchanted princess"--Lena--from the claws of the social dragoon,

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* One day Lena had even exclaimed to Axel:
> "Do you know, it seems to me, somehow, that if you were to stop thinking of me I shouldn't be in the world at all."[64]

here symbolized by the woman of the piano. As Lena left him back to the orchestra, Axel watched her attentively:

> "There she paused, stumbled one pace forward, and stood still again, while the other —the escort, the dragoon, the coarse big woman of the piano—passed her roughly..."[65]

Such an interpretation is particularly close to the idea of Heyst as Christ. Curiously, simultaneous to all the other interpretations of Heyst's performance, the reader is likely to see in him the saving sacrifice of Christ. We dare even question whether Conrad did not choose Heyst's name on purpose because of the identical final sound of "Christ" (and Faust?!). It is also evident that Mr Jones is presented as a Lucifer figure in Heyst's description of him to Lena:

> "Having been ejected, he said, from his proper social sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual convenctions, he was a rebel now, and was coming and going up and down the earth."[66]

To strengthen such a hypothesis is the name of Heyst's woman, Lena, which is the shortening of Magdalen --the name of the sinner in Christ's times. Indeed, in the traditional concept of a prejudiced society at the dawn of the 20th century, Heyst's Magdalen was also a sinner for she was working as an orchestra girl, who was supposed to have given herself lifelessly to an imposed life of corruption. She had also given herself lawlessly to the love of a man, without any respect for social rules: "No doubt it had been a sin to throw herself into his arms."[67]

And the later intrusion of the criminal emissaries of the world would be interpreted by her as a punishment from Heaven:

"She wanted to know whether this trouble, this danger... was not a sort of punishment"[63]--a punishment for her sin--

> "It was the way they lived together (...) that wasn't right, was it? It was a guilty life. For she had not been forced into it, driven, scared into it. No, no—she had come to him of her own free will, with her whole soul yearning unlawfully."[69]

Lena's firm purpose to save him was strengthened by the hope that "someday you'll forgive me."[70]

Heyst himself would later suspect she was betraying him. Seeing her with Ricardo, Axel watched her

> "all black, down on her knees, with her head and arms flung on the foot of the bed—all black in the desolation of a mourning sinner. What was this? A suspiction that there were everywhere more things than he could understand crossed Heyst's mind."[71]

She was supposed to be Magdalen, but she acted, indeed, as Alma trying to save the Man.

Lena was being exploited by the demons for whom she worked, and Heyst--Christ--the knight, came pityingly and lovingly to save her. Looking at those orchestra women

> "Heyst felt a sudden pity for these beings, exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace, whose fate of cheerless dependence invested their coarse and joyless features with a touch of pathos".[72]

Those poor creatures, particularly Lena, were the very symbol for a whole hopeless mankind.

Later, when Heyst was already conscious of his human desintegration, Lena exclaimed: "You took me up from pity."[73]

Heyst denied it. He was lying only for the simple purpose of keeping on defending the idea of her existence, for he was

unable to offer her the promise of a Heaven after life. It was the same sort of lie Marlow told the Intended in Heart of Darkness--a lie to sustain Belief.

> "He considered himself a dead man already, yet forced to pretend that he was alive for her sake, for her defence. He regretted that he had no Heaven to which he could recommend this fair, palpitating handful of ashes and dust."[74]

Yet, Lena had also the other name--Alma. The Latin word for soul was the appropriate name for this poor suffering girl who was more a victim than a sinner. As to the narrator's descriptions, she was all spiritual, all light, symbolizing the beauty of blind belief, of harmony in life. Heyst, like Christ, finally sacrificed his own life for the salvation of Alma, the human soul, the ideal object of a common Belief.

We think Lena, like Axel, is an allegorical figure in herself. We can see her as a complex and even "realistic" figure at times, whom Heyst simply could not understand because of his misogynous mistrust of women, due to his sceptical idealism. Indeed, she constitutes a synthesis of Alma and Magdalen, the "diamonds" and the "coal". Her purity and her sensuality are asserted at once when we see her in her white gown crossed by a red ribbon.

NOTES ON

CHAPTER III

1 - Victory, p. 1

2 - Les Disciples à Sais et les Fragments de Novalis

3 - Victory, p. 76

4 - Ibid., p. 58

5 - Ibid., p. 1

6 - Ibid., p. 76

7 - Ibid., p. 161

8 - Ibid., p. 155

9 - Ibid., p. 76

10 - Ibid., p. 74

11 - Ibid., p. 76

12 - Ibid., 161

13 - Ibid., pp. 1-2

14 - Ibid., p. 22

15 - Ibid., p. 2

16 - Ibid., p. 2

17 - Ibid., p. 4

18 - Ibid., p. 4

19 - Ibid., p. 4

20 - Ibid., p. 5

21 - Ibid., p. 5

22 - Ibid., p. 6

23 - Ibid., p. 7

24 - Ibid., p. 8

25 - Ibid., p. 8

26 - Ibid., pp. 8-9

27 - Ibid., p. 9

28 - Ibid., p. 10

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CHAPTER IV

THE CALL TO LIFE IN AXEL

4.1. "It is Failure that makes a Man enter into Himself"[1]

Apparently, Heyst's former attitude of absolute indifference to society had resulted from his need to overcome the fact of his father's death, as his feelings after the funeral show:

> "He became aware of his eyes being wet. It was not that the man was his father. (...) No! It was because he had looked at him so long that he missed him so much. The dead man had kept him on the bank of his side. And now Heyst felt acutely that he was alone on the bank of the stream. In his pride he determined not to enter it."[2]

The loneliness resulting from the loss of his very dear father was an extremely painful circumstance aggravated by the human inability to overcome death. But more than that, Morrison's death and the bankruptcy of the coal mine company caused Heyst (as the "coward" jump out of the Patna had caused Jim) to suffer from thorough disenchantement as to his own potentialities towards the world:

> "Heyst was disenchanted with life as

> a whole. His scornful temperament beguiled into action, suffered from failure in a subtle way unknown to men accustomed to grapple with the realities of common human enterprise. It was like the gnawing pain of useless apostasy, a sort of shame before his own betrayed nature; and in addition, he also suffered from plain downright remorse. He deemed himself guilty of Morrison's death."[3]

This time Axel was being impelled not simply by the sense of being defenselessly,alone, by the pain of loosing someone very dear, by the memory of his father's words, by his disgusting awareness of his human incapacity to overcome death, but also, and specially by the discovery that the rumour Schomberg had circulated about him could be potentially true and also by the full conviction which arises from individual failure "for it is failure that makes a man enter into himself and reckon up his resources."[4]

Both his feelings and his reaction seem to be, to a certain extent, similar to those of Lord Jim after the latter failed to be the hero he had dreamed of being all his life. Indeed, both Jim's jump from the Patna and Axel's plunge into the outer world had been, in Schopenhauer's terms, pure acts of will triumphing momentarily over their idea of themselves--they both had seen the naked form of their will (Jim's will to live and Axel's will to social contact) without the garment of a fine idea. Their failures were complex enough, for they had failed in two senses. Jim's failure had been, at the level of attachment--in his inability to fulfil his egotistical dream of becoming a hero; and at the level of detachment--in his inability to forget completely the social ideals of the civilized world.

Similarly, Axel had failed at the level of attachment, in his inability to fulfill the ideal of his enchanted hope to improve the world; and at the level of his ideal detachment, in his incapacity to resist his own enchanted attraction to the outer world.

In such a state of emotional disturbance caused by his double failure, Heyst disappeared

> "He had become invisible as in those early days when he used to make a bolt clear out of sight in his attempts to break away from the enchantment of 'these isles'".[5]

Detached on the island, Axel had the impression of being liberated. He even commented to Davidson: "Isolation limits one's restraint."[6]

This time, he had not chosen to be a wanderer as the means of escaping social involvement. On the contrary, his detachment assumed the shape of inert isolation. Alone on Samburan, he could but see "his immediate surroundings which had the aspect of an abandoned settlement invaded by the jungle."[7] Axel became as if more and more "sunk into the living depth of the tropical vegetation which is more jealous of men's conquests than the ocean."[8] For that reason he was labelled as the "Hermit". Amidst such physical and psychological ruins of defeated civilization and surrounded by the returning wilderness, Heyst--though always a gentleman and civilly very neat and very polite--was deepening more and more into self-defensive alienation, this time both by physical and by intellectual recoil. "Strolling on the wharf"[9] and with "a book in his hand"[10], as usual, Axel confessed to

Captain Davidson: "I remain in possession here."[11]

4.2. Temperamentally Sympathetic

Apparently the idea that Heyst could be self-controlled on the island had never passed the narrator's and his friends' minds. On Heyst's disappearance, their common sense had only allowed them to question: "Had he at last broken the spell? Had he died?"[12]

The spell they were referring to might not be only Axel's fascination with those islands, but also Heyst's inherent tendency to be enchanted by and attracted to the outer world. From such questions we could probably infer another: Could Heyst break the spell while he was alive? It seems he could not, for "Heyst was not a hermit by temperament."[13]

The narrator even seems to think that Heyst was already being drawn towards social involvement from the very moment when he happened to open his heart to Davidson, who, significantly enough, was "interested not because the hints were exciting but because of that innate curiosity about our fellows which is a trait of human nature."[14]

In fact, to the narrator, Axel's confessions were apparently the result of his need for human relationship, as a consequence of his long isolation, as there is evidence in his words: "It looks as if the experience of hermit life had the power to loosen one's tongue."[15]

As a matter of fact. Axel proved to be psychologically unable to support his loneliness, for

> "though he made up his mind to retire from the world in hermit faschion, yet he was irrationally moved by this sense of loneliness which had come to him in the hour of renunciation." [16]

Ironically, it was the same sense of loneliness, which formerly had made him opt for not leaving "the bank of the stream", [17] that caused him to be more psychologically incapable of resisting his instinctive (yet faint) call to the contact of other people. In Victory, it seems that the narrator (unlike Schopenhauer) finds it impossible to detach in intellectual recoil without deepening into the wilderness of instinct. To a certain extent, this is symbolized by the growing jungle invading the ruins of civilization both on the human and on the geographical "islands". Heyst's alternate process of attachment-detachment would lead him progressively towards attitudes more and more instinctive, more and more emotional (yet not supported by any sort of Belief, since his intellect was more or less interfering). Later, when Heyst was already living alone with the girl on Samburan, the narrator would even make a symbolic and emphatic comment on the risk of Heyst becoming more and more dominated by his irrational side: "You say that he's mad. Schomberg tells us that he must be starving on his island; so he may end yet by eating her." [18]

But Heyst's self-defensive will to live was practically neutralized; it was the emotions inherent in the social and sexual instinct which were gradually dominating his being, till he finally would reach the absolute self-denying extreme of suicide. To a

certain extent, perhaps his process could be comparable with Kurtz's. Alone in their isolated jungles both deepened into emotional chaos, for they were both lacking any sort of belief, both consciously made their option for death. The main difference between the two characters seems to be that Kurtz's isolation caused him to be dominated chiefly by his egoistic will to pitiless, destructive power, while Heyst's slight will to power was only fulfilled through social impulses and sex. As a matter of fact, he was being drawn out of isolation both by his "chivalric" social impulses and his admittedly limited sexual attraction to Lena. In a sense the latter worked under the "screen" of the former. The rise of his sexual drive appeared in the shape of some sort of physical attraction, some fascination, some vulnerability of his senses, particularly hearing. It was probably the same irrational ecstasy which is felt when one is fascinated by a work of art.

In this way, Heyst could not afford either to fight against his own nature, or to acquire any sort of belief.

So, Axel reappeared in the civilized world of Sourabaya, although with his "kindly, sunken eyes on which there still rested the shadow of Morrison's death."[19]

Here, the narrator's voice appears to foresee the coming of inevitable troubles, and in this he seems to agree with old Heyst's philosophy when he comments that"his detachment from the world was not complete and incompleteness of any sort leads to trouble."[20]

His fascination with the world had prevailed once more, in spite of himself. Ironically, it seems that it was precisely

his ideological and sentimental link to the furniture and memory of his father that became his excuse for going to the civilized world once more, either "to see whether there were any letters for him at the Tesmans"[21] or to do any business related to the subject.

Such circumstances afforded him the opportunity to make the acquaintance of the poor orchestra girl, Lena, who would be the new and definite flame to whom he would feel attracted, this time still more thoroughly (yet not enough).

Once in Schomberg's hotel at Sourabaya, in such a conflict between his faint will to attachment and his intellectual choice of detachment, Heyst was suffering greatly, for "nothing is more painful than the shock of sharp contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings."[22]

In spite of himself, Axel entered the concert hall, simultaneously horrified by and attracted to the lights and sounds of that rhythmical world, of

> "the rasped, squeaked, scraped snatches of tunes pursuing him even to his hard couch, —an instrumental uproar, screaming, grunting, whining, sobbing, scraping, squeaking some kind of lively air."[23]

Throughout the whole novel the sound and light images (as well as the rhythm of words) constitute particularly important devices in that they allow the reader to become aware of Heyst's awakening sensory response to the outer world.

The use of musical metaphors is important, specially if we consider that both Nietzsche and Conrad had a lifelong interest in Wagner, who, in his turn, was an admirer of Schopenhauer.

But while Schopenhauer considered Music as the supreme manifestation of the human mind which was freed from all will, Nietzsche, on the contrary, saw Music endowed with the spirit of Nature and of Life. To Nietzsche, and probably to Conrad, the Schopenhauerean music was an Appolonian way of facing life--the way of Lifeless illusion, the silent music of the spheres a hermit might hear. Once under the dominion of an oppressive culture (which, in Heyst's case, was probably his father's philosophy), man tended to be mistaken in his feelings:

> "... dizem dar-lhes prazer aquilo que só lhes causa desgosto e assim continuam a preparar voluntariamente a sua própria condenação. Desta maneira se transformam em criaturas absoluta e completamente diferentes e ficam reduzidas ao estado de objetos escravos de um 'incorreto sentir'."[24]

To Nietzsche, and probably to Conrad, the Appolonian music of the spheres which a Schopenhauerean mind, like Heyst, would expect to hear was but the illusionary product of a mistaken feeling, while the sensual music which meant no restraint of instincts, no artificial isolation, no inertia, no lifeless illusion, but rather the Dionysian celebration of Nature and of life as it is, constituted a product of the right feeling.

Apparently, like the chorus of classic Greek tragedy, this orchestra was to represent the polis, the collective, the universal; its role was similarly amplified to a cosmic level. It was also to celebrate Dionysius--the God of the vital forces of Nature, also of Mask, and, by extension, of Metamorphosis. Nietzsche in his "Crepúsculo dos Ídolos" declarou:

> "O dizer sim à vida, incluindo mesmo os seus mais estranhos e terríveis problemas, o desejo da vida, rejubilando com a sua própria inexauribilidade no sacrifício dos mais elevados tipos—eis o que eu chamei Dionisíaco."[25]

This feminine orchestra was somehow playing its sensual, untuned hymns to Nature, to active life, that is, to Dionysian attachment. In the Greek tragedy that divine service usually led the chorus to a state of ecstacy and fascination, while the hero entered into conflict with the chorus. Heyst, the complex hero, went further than the Greek hero for he was being simultaneously fascinated and repelled by the sensuality of that life "ritual", for indeed the conflict was also within himself. The noisy, brutal agitation of the outer world--"something cruel, sensual and repulsive"[26] to which Axel was being inevitably pushed--was simbolically concentrated

> "in the quick time of that music, in the varied, fierce clamour of the strings, in the movements of the bare arms, in the low dresses, the coarse faces, the stony eyes of the executants"[27]

in that orchestra.

This sensual music Heyst was listening to at that moment, that "rude exhibition of vigour"[28], contrasted with the perfect 'music of the spheres' he had heard about from his father; in fact "like most dreamers, to whom it is given sometimes to hear the music of the spheres, Heyst, the wonderer of the Archipelago, had a taste for silence..."[29]

"This is awful"[30], Axel murmured to himself. Nevertheless, he stayed there, bewitched by the Dionysian rhythm of that

sensually vital energy, for "there is an unholy fascination in systematic noise."[31]

Furthermore, with the wrong feeling of horror Heyst also

> "felt a sudden pity for these beings, exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace, whose fate of cheerless dependence invested their coarse and joyless features with a touch of pathos."[32]

So, intellectual armour proved to be innefective, for Heyst was "temperamentally sympathetic"[33]. This trait prompted once more his intervention when he saw young Lena among the dejected elements of that orchestra.

First it was Lena's youthful and lifeless appearance which "captured Heyst's awakened faculty of observation".[34] Axel felt the Faustian "sensation of a new experience"[35].* The unknown experience of being attracted by a "feminine creature in that marked and exclusive fashion".[37]

Heyst's emotional sensibility was being gradually awakened, from the very moment when he felt the hard weight of his loneliness, to these moments in Schomberg's hotel when he was being easily impressed by sounds, lights and human rythms which expressed both a sexual appeal and the unhappy condition of human resignation. There had always been a natural propensity in Axel

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* And so did Lena:

> "The contrast of Heyst's quiet, polished manner gave her special delight and filled her with admiration(...) she was interested by it as by a very novel experience, not very intelligible, but distinctly pleasurable."[36]

in spite of himself, to be emotionally affected. And now the way was clear for his instincts towards involvement to take over; but it was this girl, Lena, who would cause him to start an accelerated process of irrational interference which, like a veil--the veil of Maya--was fogging his reason. Her triumph over his emotions was occurring by her appeal both to his curious pity for her young unhappiness and the blooming of some sort of physical attraction, for she "had more fineness than those of any other feminine countenance he had ever had the opportunity to observe so closely."[38]

Heyst's sensual attraction to her was due to her physical attributes, mainly her musical voice:

> "... her voice! It seduced Heyst by its amazing quality. It was a voice fit to utter the most exquisite things, a voice which would have made silly chatter supportable and the roughest talk fascinating."[39]

Axel was, thus, growing emotionally vulnerable to sounds, not sense. When he asked her if she sang as well as she played, Heyst was struck by her answer that she had never had reason to sing since she was little and "that inelegant phrase by the mere vibrating, warm nobility of sound found its way into Heyst's heart."[40]

Later, when she manifested to Axel her worry lest he lose interest in her, Axel answered: "Your voice is enough. I am in love with it, whatever it says."[41] This is the evidence that he was already so completely enjoying the physical pleasure of her voice, without any concern for intellectual considerations--the music of her voice was to Axel more expressive in communicating

her distressed manner, than the very sense of her words.

But it seems evident that Axel was drawn to Lena mainly by her distress. First, he had felt disturbed by the lifeless resignation of her youthful yet unhappy appearance:

> "Heyst had been interested by the girl's physiognomy... there was in it something miserable—because the temperament and the existence of that girl were reflected in it." [42]

Axel was aware of the "danger" of being involved. Yet, he could not avoid responding to the pitiful girl's call for help. After having asked her if she could not defend herself from that woman's mistreatment, she had answered him: "They are too many for me".* [43] From the plangent sound of her simple words, Heyst was stricken emotionally by some sort of a revelation of the human impossibility of fighting against the group. But still, such a revealing sensation had not reached him through intellectual means --it was purely emotional, resulting from the plaintive vibrations of her voice. Indeed, her "few words came out of the common experience of mankind; yet by virtue of her voice, they thrilled Heyst like a revelation."

Later, their nocturnal encounter near Schomberg's hotel would confirm the idea of Heyst being moved chiefly by her distressed manner:

> "He saw the white, phantomlike apparition again; and next moment all his doubts

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* Schomberg would say something similar to Jones and his friends, suggesting they could go after Heyst's treasure, while he could not: "I am not three men". [44]

> as to the state of her mind were laid at rest, because he felt her clinging to him after the manner of supplicants all the world over. (...) 'Calm yourself, calm yourself' he murmured in her ear returning her clasp at first mechanically, and afterwards with a growing appreciation of her distressed humanity."[45]

His pity for her would be enhanced when she told him all about her unhappy life--"It was never positive starvation and absolute rags, but it was the hopeless grip of poverty all the time."[46]

If he had wanted to, Conrad could have emphasized the erotic element here; he does so later on. But instead, he describes Lena as a "phantom-like apparition" and shows that Heyst did not respond, at least consciously, to her on her own female terms:

> "I know what sort of girl I am, but all the same I am not the sort that men turn their backs on—and you ought to know it, unless you aren't made like the others. Oh, forgive me! You aren't like the others; you are like no one in the world I ever spoke to. Don't you care for me? Don't you see?"[47]

What he saw was that, white and spectral, she was putting out her arms to him out of the black shadows "like an appealing ghost. He took her hands, and was affected, almost surprised, to find them so warm, so real, so firm, so living in his grasp."[48]

We call the reader's attention for the generally 'spectral' quality of Conrad's women, for example, the Intended in Heart of Darkness, who was also described by Marlow as a 'tragic shade':

> "She came forward, all in black, with a pale head floating towards me in the dusk."[49]

> ... "This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy alo from which the dark eyes looked out at me."[50]

However, this personal symbolism is also familiar as to some men. Mr Kurtz remained for Marlow an "eloquent phantom";[54] Jim sometimes seemed like "a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth."[51]

The above protagonists, like Lena, presented a potentially "dangerous" appeal to sympathetic feeling. But these people and the nature of the danger were very different. The coefficient of spectrality remained, but the figures (except the Intended) underwent a change and that change had direction. Kurtz, whose methods were 'unsound', challenged mankind's most fundamental and cherished ideas of itself. Jim, whose "subtle unsoundness"[53] did not escape Marlow, called more specifically in question the code of a particular calling.

As to Lena, some critics find her quite unconvincing and flat, precisely because of her spectrality. However we dare disagree. We think she is a much more complex character than the Intended, for example. Despite Lena's spectral appearance, the dangerous menace of the eternal feminine is given more flesh and blood in her. In fact, Lena is ambiguously presented as both pure and fallen, in her white and red uniform. Thus she is made to act upon a very complex character who, in indirect consequence, must confront a physically 'dangerous' situation. Furthermore, she herself also undergoes a psychological change.

But the main 'danger" is still emotional: Lena's challenge to Heyst's "system" for maintaining his self-idea inviolate:

> "Formerly in solitude and in silence, he had been used to think clearly and sometimes even profoundly, seeing life outside the flattering optical delusion of overlasting hope, of conventional self-deceptions, of an ever expected happiness. But now he was troubled; a light veil seemed to hang before his mental vision; the awakening of a tenderness, indistinct and confused as yet, towards an unknown woman."[54]

As a matter of fact, Axel was becoming increasingly unable to avoid the feeling of tenderness which was evading him, for "his sceptical mind was dominated by the fullness of his heart."[55]

Besides her distress and her physical appeals, Axel felt also touched by the warmth of her smile--a smile which she assumed as soon as she became hopeful someone did care for her. In spite of appearing false to him, yet her smile gave him the emotional strength to move once more towards another human involvement, that is, to take her with him to Samburan.

> '"I am not rich enough to buy you out", he went on, speaking with an extraordinary detached grin, "even if it were to be done; but I can always steal you."'[54]

Stealing implies, somehow, having to assume an attitude of pretence. For the first time, Heyst saw the need for an act of deception to overcome the sadness of reality. In fact, knowing that Schomberg was watching them, Axel advised Lena: "Try to smile as you go."

And she has done it "very readily"[57] and very effectively too. This simple act astonished him, as he concluded to himself, in the manner of Schopenhauer, that "women can deceive so completely. The faculty was inherent in them."[58] Indeed, Schopen-

hauer had also said, in his "Observações Psicológicas", that

> "... assim como a natureza dotou de dentes e garras o leão, de presas o elefante e o javali, de chifres o touro, de tinta a sibe que turva as águas a seu redor—dotou a mulher com a faculdade de dissimulação para ela, à sua maneira, poder defender-se e proteger-se. É um dom feminino que equivale à força da razão e ao vigor dos músculos do homem. A dissimulação é, por isso, uma faculdade inata, tanto na mais tola como na mais inteligente das mulheres. Assim como os animais acima citados empregam essas armas que lhes deu a natureza na eminência de um ataque, as mulheres usam de essa arma com a mesma naturalidade e sentem-se em seu pleno direito..."[59]

Later Axel would explain to Lena the reason why he has asked her to smile: "a smile is the best of masks."[60] Heyst's hermit-like mistrust of women would prove to be his lurking fear of betrayal which is the other side of his inexperience and idealism. It is rather like Othello, in fact.

Yet, Axel felt that he had got from such a "lie" an unknown stimuli to his own life, for "it had conveyed a sensation of warmth, had given him a sort of hardour to live which was very new to his experience."[61]

On receiving that sensation he would comment to Lena:

> "I felt as if I had never seen a smile before in my life. I thought of it after I left you. It made me restless...
> ... "If you had not smiled as you did, perhaps I should not have come out here tonight... It was your triumph."[62]

To Heyst, it was the triumph of a "lie", but the flame that had come from it, had given him the strength enough to defy his convinctions.

Nevertheless, the warmth he had received from her smile

had actually come from the truth of her recent Hope. Even when she was not hopeful yet, she had sincerely spoken "with a sort of unconscious cynicism inherent in the truth of the ugly conditions of poverty."[63]

But Axel could not understand that Lena had been sincere in her smile, as she explained:

> "Oh, I was ready enough to smile then. That's the truth. It was the first time for years I may say that I felt disposed to smile. I've not had many chances to smile in my life, I can tell you; especially of late."[64]

4.3. "The Body is the Unalterable Mask of the Soul..."[65]

Heyst's misunderstanding of her smile was probably a result of the nature of his own smiles. As a matter of fact, it was Heyst who apparently used to hide and protect himself behind the irony of a smile:

> "Heyst's smiles were rather melancholy, and accorded badly with his great moustaches, under which his mere playfulness lurked as comfortable as a shy bird in its native thicket."[66]

His sad smiles and grins seemed to be the polite masks to protect the natural freedom of his bird-like palyfulness against the outer bitterness of social involvement. They were part of his "unfortunate manner"[67] for it was his condition as a gentleman to carry on such products of civilization. Irony, kindness, isolation and freedom, together with politeness, civiliza-

tion, restraint and fear were the conflicting condictions which could be implied even in a good natured smile. Apparently to the narrator of Victory these concepts were inevitable products of a human existence in such a pitiless, competing era of industrial development. Heyst could not escape this duplicity even when he thought, as a sceptic, that he was wholly freed in the isolated wilderness either of his moustaches or of his island. Even when he kept on wearing the clothes, the smiles and the policy of a gentleman. The ties of civilization were too strongly bound to his fine temper, in spite of his voluntary attitudes of detachment. In Heyst, a smile was the compromise between the truth of his inherent good-nature and his wish to be detached--his illusion and his protection. In Lena, it was her inherent truth--her hope and her belief--the hope of a triumph--the triumph of appealing to Heyst's emotions.

With his emotions gradually dominating his mind, Heyst started assuming occasional attitudes of self-deception. As Schopenhauer had stressed, people only try to rationalize their own desires. In fact, in this novel, man's reason is portrayed as an instrument of his instinct. Heyst did not prove to be an exception, for, already in his bed, and in complete silence, his desire to take the girl with him to Samburan was worked out by his Schopenhauerean mind in such a way that it should appear reasonable enough:

> "He paced there to and fro a long time, a calm meditative ghost in his white drill suit, revolving in his head thoughts absolutely novel, disquieting and seductive;

> accustoming his mind to the contemplation of his purpose, in order that by being faced steadily it should appear praiseworthy and wise. For the use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices and follies, and also our fears."[68]

Fom this process of self-deception to the actual lie to Lena was only a short step. In the hotel garden, as they were embracing, Lena happened to tell him that she had been "worried and pestered"[69] by many mean fellows like Schomberg. The simple perspective of competition cooled the heart of Heyst, who "was not a fighter." He "removed his arms from her suddenly", and "recoiled a little"[70], for "in truth, Heyst had shrunk from the idea of competition with fellows unknown".[71]

Lena seemed worried and attributed his reaction of recoil to the possibility of his thinking that she could be morally guilty, that is, in the crudest terms, that she might have sold herself, as the other members of the 'orchestra' evidently do. So, he lied to her, so that she could be relieved. But he was also covering up his bad suspictions in a way that it is not so admirable: "I am afraid we have been detected. (...) I think I saw somebody on the path between the house and the bushes behind you",[72] he said. His lie contained in itself both his self-defensive and his honorable truth. As we have seen before, to many of Conrad's narrators, lies and illusions seem to be the truthful glamour of human life.

In Lord Jim, Marlow made the following comments to the reader on his understanding of Jim's attempt to justify his 'cowardly', instinctive jump out of the Patna: "I was made to look at

the convenction that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood."[73]

Heyst's head and heart were, then, intermittently pulling in opposite direction. This was the time for his heart. Lena had succeeded in changing him somehow. When Axel was back in his bedroom he felt his inmost self so metamorphized "that he could not resist the suspiction of his personal appearance having changed during the night."[74] He even felt as if surprised when he saw in the mirror the same face as before--"It was almost a disappointment—a belittling of his recent experience."[75] But he was immediately flabbbergasted and started meditating with an ironic smile that "the body is the unalterable mask of the soul, which even death itself changes but little, till it is put out of sight where no changes matter anymore."[76]

Next day the girl "managed to give him a glance of frank tenderness, quick as lightening, and leaving a profound impression, a secret touch on the heart."[77]

Through Lena, Axel was progressing towards the discovery of a human truth, which had nothing to do with the logical and material appearance of the world. So, emotionally 'infected' and rationally veiled, Heyst managed again to get away from the ties of that corrupted society, this time taking a woman to live with him on the wild solitude of Samburan.

We think important to stress they succeeded in their escape, for they could count on the help of Mrs Schomberg who was "a miracle of dissimulation."[78]

But Heyst's change had not reached the level of his

reason yet.

"You understand that this was a case of odious persecution, don't you?"[79], Axel would try later to justify before Davidson the apparent unsoundness of his attitude; for his Schopenhauerean idealism was still present as it is evident in his words: "The world is a bad dog. It will bite you if you give it a chance; but I think that here we can safely defy the fates."[80]

Heyst was rationalizing his attraction to Lena and his inability to resist the charms of sex; in that light, his chivalric social ideals appeared more ironic and still more selfish.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IV

1 - Victory, p. 54

2 - Ibid., p. 143

3 - Ibid., p. 53

4 - Ibid., p. 54

5 - Ibid., p. 21

6 - Ibid., p. 21

7 - Ibid., p. 2

8 - Ibid., p. 24

9 - Ibid., p. 22

10 - Ibid., p. 23

11 - Ibid., p. 22

12 - Ibid., p. 21

13 - Ibid., p. 26

14 - Ibid., p. 27

15 - Ibid., p. 27

16 - Ibid., p. 54

17 - Ibid., p. 143

18 - Ibid., p. 37

19 - Ibid., p. 26

20 - Ibid., p. 26

21 - Ibid., p. 26

22 - Ibid., p. 54

23 - Ibid., p. 55

24 - Nietzsche — Filósofo da Cultura, p. 80

25 - Ibid., pp. 97-8

26 - Victory, p. 56

27 - Ibid., p. 56

28 - Ibid., p. 56

29 - Ibid., p. 54

30 - Ibid., p. 56

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33 - Ibid., p. 57

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35 - Ibid., p. 58

36 - Ibid., p. 55

37 - Ibid., p. 58

38 - Ibid., p. 60

39 - Ibid., pp. 50-1

40 - Ibid., p. 61

41 - Ibid., p. 73

42 - Ibid., pp. 60-1

43 - Ibid., p. 62

44 - Ibid., p. 137

45 - Ibid., pp. 68-9

46 - Ibid., p. 64

47 - Ibid., p. 71

48 - Ibid., p. 71

49 - Heart of Darkness, p. 75

50 - Ibid., p. 76

51 - Ibid., p. 76

52 - Lord Jim, p. 87

53 - Ibid., p. 89

54 - Victory, pp. 67-8

55 - Ibid., p. 68

56 - Ibid., p. 72

57 - Ibid., p. 73

58 - Ibid., p. 66

59 - Vida de Schopenhauer, p. 154

60 - Victory, p. 73

61 - Ibid., p. 66

62 - Ibid., p. 73

63 - Ibid., pp. 63-4

64 - Ibid., p. 73

65 - Ibid., p. 74

66 - Ibid., p. 61

67 - Ibid., p. 61

68 - Ibid., p. 68

69 - Ibid., p. 69

70 - Ibid., p. 69

71 - Ibid., p. 70

72 - Ibid., p. 70

73 - Lord Jim, p. 72

74 - Victory, p. 74

75 - Ibid., p. 74

76 - Ibid., p. 74

77 - Ibid., p. 76

78 - Ibid., p. 48

79 - Ibid., p. 47

80 - Ibid., p. 47

CHAPTER V

EMOTIONAL GROWTH

5.1. "The Incalculable Consequences"...[1]

In his early days in Samburan with Lena, Heyst had not understood yet that there was no possible escape for him, since the main "threat" was actually within himself.

Once on the island, he continued the irreversible process of psychological change, which was, indeed, largely facilitated by Lena's challenging of his emotions. Although he regretted his metamorphosis deeply (for much of his father's disbelief still remained in him) yet he was not strong enough to avoid it. He only managed to be the curious spectator of his inner self:

> 'It was naturally difficult for Heyst to keep his mind from dwelling on the nature and consequences of this, his latest departure from the part of an unconcerned spectator. Yet he had restrained enough of his wrecked philosophy to prevent him from asking himself conciously how it could end... like the rest of us who act, all he could say to himself, with a somewhat affected grimness, was:
> "We shall see!"'[2]

In spite of his emotional commitment Heyst kept on assuming a self-deceiving attitude, looking "as calm in appearence as though he had never departed from the doctrine that this world, for the wise, is nothing but an amusing spectacle."[3]

In reality, Heyst was having tremendous difficulty in living with his permanent conflict, for he still reasoned in the manner of his father and yet, could not avoid yielding to the emotional pressure of his growing social and sexual instincts.

Schopenhauer had stressed that the immanent essence of all virtue was to be found in the formula that the idea should supress all will, but such an ability was not within the reach of ordinary men. Even among superior human beings such a phenomenon would only occur in very exceptional cases of genius. It may be that old Heyst could have succeded in being one of the privileged 'virtuous'; Axel could not, and the discovery of this simple fact disappointed him deeply. He even told Lena: "I was flattered to find myself among the elect".[4]

As a matter of fact, Axel had been only able to keep himself a spectator "perhaps a little naïve but (as he discovered with some surprise) not much more far sighted than the common run of men".[5] On his gradual loss of self-control he, then, commented to Lena:

> "I am not for nothing the son of my father... I am he, all but the genius. And there is even less in me than I make out, because the very scorn is falling away from me year after year."[6]

Axel's pride was hurt by the discovery of his weakness, of his original sin, that is, his action in the outer world:

"There must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after all."[7]

His father apparently had not been able to silence in him the "imperative echoes" of the "oldest voice in the world".[8] This seems to be the reason why he thought to himself bitterly:

> '"And I, the son of my father, have been caught too, like the silliest fish of them all", Heyst said to himself. He suffered. He was hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness."[9]

But Heyst's problem was not merely that he was enslaved to his father's philosophy or, conversely, by the vanity of his commitment to the world, but that he could not do one thing without being inhibited by the other possibility, and the conflict was destroying him. Heyst could not decide what he believed and was not able to act in consequence.

Lena's triumph, the triumph of life as a whole, depended on the absolute defeat of Axel's reasoning, life-negating self; but in her success, Lena could count on a very important ally: Axel's other self--the emotional, the instinctive, the social side of his being. From it, there had arisen his pity for cornered people and some sort of hypnosis life had always been exerting on him: first, his feelings of solidarity and the actions involved; now, his curiosity towards a veiled universal truth which Lena herself seemed to carry. As a matter of fact, in word and in personality, Lena also challenged him. Once he chided her with ironic superiority for thinking: "thought, action—so many snares! If you begin to think you will be unhappy".[10]

Heyst's position here seems rather paradoxical; yet it

may not be. Usually thought was sanctioned by Schopenhauer as a means of detachment, and seen as contrary to Darwinian-Nietzschean assertive action. Nevertheless, now both action and thought seemed to be "vanity of vanity"[11] to Heyst. Apparently, Heyst's speech here is still more nihilist than his father's, for Axel denies not only the Nietzschian assertion of active life, but also any possibility of a Schopenhauerean relief in thought.

However Lena scored with her reply:--'"I wasn't thinking of myself", she declared with a simplicity which took Heyst aback somehow'.[12] Here, the opposition between Lena's and Axel's concepts of 'thought' comes in support of the distinction we have made in Chapter II between Schopenhauer's reasoned, life-negating Idea and Conrad's instinctively believed, life-asserting Idea. But Heyst evaded her banteringly:

> '"On the lips of a moralist this would sound like a rebuke", he said, half seriously; "but I won't suspect you of being one. Moralists and I haven't been friends for many years."'[13]

Lena had spoken not as a moralist but as a woman--the balanced human creature Conrad had endowed with all spiritual "wisdom" of the believed Idea. Her way of seeing things seems to be for Conrad the expression of the feminine belief in a call "far more imperious and august"[14] than self-sufficiency--the call to Mankind's right to love and to be happy while it lives.

On the hill, where the couple had been talking of the possibility of a world destroyed, Lena made an allusion to the Biblical Deluge, and with that she very effectively challenged his nihilistic philosophy. In fact, she gave proof she was "in

possession of all the details"[15] of Biblical scenes, for she argued as a believer:

> -'"Would you be sorry for it (the destruction of the world)?", he asked her playfully.
> -"I should be sorry for the happy people in it", she said simply.
> His gaze travelled up her figure and reached her face, where he seemed to detect the veiled glow of intelligence, as one gets a glimpse of the sun through the clouds.
> "I should have thought it's they specially who ought to have been congratulated. Don't you?"
> -"Oh, yes—I understand what you mean; but there were forty days before it was all over."[16]

She seemed to have stressed that the perspective of enduring useless attempts to survive, even for a short period of time, would be an extremely painful circunstance. A Deluge would be more tragic for happy people, who, although longing for the Final Reward, could not help struggling for their lives in the fulfilment of their duty towards the metaphysical Idea od their Belief. As Heyst had said "it is difficult to rest where nothing matters"[17], but in the same way, it would also be difficult not to rest where everything mattered. Heyst did not seem to understand her or even to know what he felt toward her, and later he would project all his self-doubts into the suspiction that she was unfaithful. He was apparently moved by his feelings, his passion, rather than his understanding of her words, and this fact seems to be an ironic reflection on the "overthrow" of his philosophy. He had the feeling that his inevitable inclination to her was due only to the physical impression of her voice on him, which seemed to

carry her special insight into the hidden truth of human existence:

> "He thought that if she only could talk to him in some unknown tongue, she would enslave him altogether by the sheer beauty of the sound, suggesting infinite depths of wisdom and feeling."[18]

Lena's triumph over Heyst was being worked also by means of her personality, so that sometimes he wondered if her character was the result of blind stupidity or of illuminated intuition:

> "He felt intensely aware of her personality, as if this were the first moment of leisure he had found to look at her since they had come together. The peculiar timbre of her voice, with its modulations of audacity and sadness, would have given interest to the most inane chatter. But she was no chatterer (...) 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."[19]

Somehow, this seems to be Lena's most pertinent challenge; however, her victories were not to stop here. Another would be her breaking down of Axel's indifference to the world's estimate of him. When she had related Schomberg's slander about Heyst having caused Morrison's death, Axel had first resented Lena's worries about such mundane gossip. Then suddenly she was "the girl"-the woman, the carrier of what "everybody knows", with her common sense, her credulity, her instant mistrust of anything out of the ordinary. Lena's attempt to explain only disillusioned Heyst further:

> '"But, she went on", the name stuck

> in my head, it seems; and when you mentioned it—" "It broke the spell" muttered Heyst in angry disappointment, as if he had been deceived in some hope."' [20]

He had hoped both that Lena believed he was a superior man, incapable of a faux-pas, and that she might be as insulated from other people's opinions as he thought he was; he had expected that she might be une âme soeur with whom he could find communion without sacrificing his privacy. He had asked too much. "What more do you want from me?" She had questioned him. "The impossible, I suppose," [21] he had answered.

All that Lena could understand was that she had failed. In fact she longed to give Heyst "whatever it is you want" [22]; but he professed total ignorance of love, as well as of hatred: "No, I've never killed a man or loved a woman." [23]

He thought, and perhaps he was right, that Lena believed Schomberg's story, as it is evidenced in his words:

> "Not murder, you say! I should think not. But when you led me to talk just now, when the name turned up, when you understood that it was of me that these sayings have been said, you showed a strange emotion. I could see it". [24]

In fact, she could not trust him either:

> '"I was a bit startled" she said.
> "At the baseness of my conduct?" he asked.
> "I wouldn't judge you; not for nothing."
> "Really?"
> "I would be as if I dared to judge everything that there is." With her other hand she made a gesture that seemed to embrace in one movement the earth and the heaven. "I wouldn't do such a thing." [25]

Lena would not judge human nature, for in every man

there is a latent criminal. The above words of both protagonists imply that not only does he--'the hermit'--mistrust the woman, but that the woman mistrusts him too, that is, that one has to mistrust Man, the human being in general.

But Heyst could not see that Lena was also projecting her own fears of loosing him:

> "... Why shoudn't you get tired of that—or any other company? You aren't like anyone else and—and the thought of it made me unhappy suddenly; but indeed, I did not believe anything bad of you."[26]

His perception of her incapacity to pass a moral judgement on him shocked Heyst:

> '"Why your emotion? All you confess is that you wouldn't judge me" ... "you thought that there was no smoke without fire!" The playfulness of tone hardly concealed his irritation.'[27]

Instead of enjoying her complete surrender to him, he raged at her incapacity to see with his eyes. He felt somewhat like Jim speaking to Marlow after his leap from the Patna. In fact, Heyst could not help saying:

> "I feel a disgust at my own person, as if I had tumbled into some filthy hole. Pah! And you—all you can say is that you won't judge me."[28]

Although Lena had not wholly succeeded, yet she could not see that, in truth, she had rather scored another point, for Heyst had been <u>hurt</u> by her half-concern with Schomberg's tale that he had deserted and killed Morrison. In the beginning he had refused to accept the idea that such slander worried him; he had assumed an attitude of self-deception, this time not only by

distant, polite smile, but by actual, scornful, bitter laughter. However, as soon as he was called to reality by Lena, he immediately proved to be aware of his emotional weakness 'in facing social prejudices': "I never heard you laugh till today," she commented. "This is the second time."[29]

And he answered her rather nervously:

> "That's because, when one's heart has been broken in the way you have broken into mine, all sorts of weakness are free to enter—shame, anger, stupid indignations, stupid fears—stupid laughter, too."[30]

This way, Axel was forced to take his 'superior' soul "down in the street"[31]:

> '"Strange that it should hurt me!", mused Heyst to himself; "yet it does. I seem to be as much of a fool as those everybodies who know the story—and no doubt believe it."[32]

Heyst was not particularly angry about the content of such gossip--he though himself potentially able to murder a man. He was apparently convinced of the Darwinian theory that everybody was liable to do something, depending on the restraining circumstances of his life. What mainly disturbed him was his incapacity to remain detached and the idea of the inevitable determinism implicit in human life. So, from anger, Axel suddenly turned to desolated tenderness for Lena, since he felt that

> "his resentment was not against the girl, but agains life itself that commonest of snares, in which he felt himself caught, seeing clearly the plot of plots and unconsoled by the lucidity of his mind."[33]

The time for responding to another human call had come for him. Indeed, after he had lived with Lena for a while in the

victorious wilderness of his island, Heyst found in his humane action the force of his sexual impulses. We think important to call the reader's attention to the fact that, since the legend of Adam and Eve, man has emphasized the incompleteness of solitude. Woman is the other half. The coexistence of the two opposite elements--male and female, man and woman--would be, then the smallest social group capable of continuing their species. Sex is, thus, a bridge of self-satisfaction to link one ego to the other in such a way that, through procreation, it can guarantee group survival. The sexual drive is, then, intimately related to social instincts, and in Victory they both counteract Heyst's hermit-like condition.

So, sex was somehow a peak in Lena and Heyst's relationship.. Curiously Axel's feelings of tenderness, mixed up with pity, which came from the mere taste of tears on her lips, apparently turned into carnal desire. From sympathetic tenderness Heyst seems to have abruptly descended into his own desire:

> "He took her in his arms and kissed her lips. He tasted on them the bitterness of a tear fallen there. He had never seen her cry. It was like another appeal to his tenderness—a new seduction (...) with her hand she sighed imperiously to him to live her alone, a command which Heyst did not obey."[34]

Heyst's probable love-making was accomplished in the teeth of his resentment against the metaphysical meaning of his act. Love, for him, was not the song of songs, but the "plot of plots"[35]. His altruistic and dispassionate impulse to save Lena may be a "screen" for his instinctive, biological drives which he

had never been able to either satisfactorily repress , nor express.

It is evident that Heyst's voluntary attitude of inert isolation had an effect in total opposition to his intentions: instead of neutralizing his will, it was actually urging it on. After love-making, Axel and Lena returned home. There, self-disappointed, "tempted to spit on the floor, naïvely, in sheer unsophisticated disgust of the physical sensation,"[36] and surprised, for "he was not used to receiving his intellectual impressions in that way—reflected in movements of carnal emotions",[37] Heyst turned for aid to his father's book where he reread: "Of the stratagems of life the most cruel is the consolation of love—the most subtle too; for the desire is the bed of dreams."[38] *

In love, too, Lena would challenge Axel's emotions, but this was probably the greatest difficulty she would face though her love for him was her chief and only drive. Pathetically, while Heyst's scorn and disbelief was being reinforced by the reading of his father's words, simultaneously his emotions were intensely called back by Lena's challenge:

> "You should try to love me! .... It's you who have been good, helpful and tender to me. Perhaps you love me for that; or perhaps you love me for company, and because—well! But sometimes it seems to me that you can never love me for myself, only for myself, as people do love each other when it is to be for ever."[40]

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* "O Wohlust, O Hoelle!"—Oh sex! Oh hell![39]—had been the first words by which young Schopenhauer had started one of his poems.

She was apparently right. It seems he could not love her for herself only, without any concern for sexual power, the ego-centred, self-identifying feeling of solidarity--it was as if he saw himself reflected in the mirror of her distress.

However, he did feel moved by her words as Magdalen added an entreating: "Do try!"[41]

Once more, by means of her words, she had gone "straight to his heart—the sound of them more than the sense.... All his defenses were broken now. Life had him fairly by the throat."[42]

Lena disturbed him intensely, and yet he could not understand her, for he was completely ignorant as to love and women. Lena was for Axel "like a script in an unknown language, or even more simply mysterious:like any writing to the illiterate."[43] Her words had exerted on him again the emotional effect of a revealing sensation:

> "His mental attitude was that of a man looking this way and that on a piece of writing which he is unable to decipher, but which may be big with some revelation."[44]

Lena was asking too much of him. To the son of his father, love represented but a dream, an illusion born from carnal desire. Nevertheless, in spite of that, "all his cherished negations were falling off him one by one",[45] and although he could not feel real love, yet his emotional growth seems to constitute a challenging hope for the reader.

Anyway, Heyst was greatly disgusted with his own concern over the slanders about him from the outer world, and thus

he returned to his father's idealism, by asking Lena to "dismiss all thought of it"[46] (the slander), so that they could keep on detached and invulnerable:

> "...It is an unpleasant subject to me. I ought to be ashamed to confess it—but it is! Let us forget it...if we forget, there are no voices here to remind us[47] (...) Nothing can break in on us here."

Axel was deluded. He could not escape the "incalculable consequences"[48] of living in this world like everybody else. Ironically, precisely at the moment when he was enjoying the answering embrace which warmed him "more than closer caresses had done before",[49] Wang "made himself visible";[50] he entered to report there was a boat in the bay.

The irony of this scene resides in the fact that at the moment when Heyst arrogantly and innocently imagined they were alone, then the double or nemesis (Jones) actually appeared.

Davidson had been sceptical about defying the fates "by taking a woman in tow";[51] and apparently his scepticism, as well as Heyst's original premonition, were justified. In fact, it would be unforseen that, either from Heyst's attachment to Lena and her breaking in on his emotions or from his hope in solipsism, Axel would fatally be drawn into warfare "with fellows unknown"[52] --three bandits who would provide tangible grounds for the definite testing of "all his cherished negations".[53] Would Jones and his men represent the "falling off" of old Heyst's philosophy, or the proof of it?

NOTES ON
CHAPTER V

1 - Victory, p. 81
2 - Ibid., pp. 152-53
3 - Ibid., p. 145
4 - Ibid., p. 161
5 - Ibid., p. 161
6 - Ibid., p. 163
7 - Ibid., p. 141
8 - Ibid., p. 141
9 - Ibid., p. 142
10 - Ibid., p. 159
11 - Ibid., p. 22
12 - Ibid., p. 159
13 - Ibid., p. 159
14 - Ibid., p. 202
15 - Ibid., p. 157
16 - Ibid., p. 157
17 - Ibid., p. 166
18 - Ibid., p. 172
19 - Ibid., p. 158
20 - Ibid., p. 172

21 - Ibid., p. 173

22 - Ibid., p. 173

23 - Ibid., p. 174

24 - Ibid., p. 175

25 - Ibid., p. 175

26 - Ibid., p. 176

27 - Ibid., pp. 175-76

28 - Ibid., p. 176

29 - Ibid., p. 172

30 - Ibid., p. 172

31 - Ibid., p. 161

32 - Ibid., p. 171

33 - Ibid., p. 177

34 - Ibid., p. 177

35 - Ibid., p. 177

36 - Ibid., p. 180

37 - Ibid., p. 180

38 - Ibid., p. 180

39 - Vida de Schopenhauer, p. 39

40 - Victory, p. 182

41 - Ibid., p. 182

42 - Ibid., pp. 182-83

43 - Ibid., p. 183

44 - Ibid., p. 183

45 - Ibid., p. 184

46 - Ibid., p. 184

47 - Ibid., p. 184

48 - Ibid., p. 81

49 - Ibid., p. 184

50 - Ibid., p. 185

51 - Ibid., p. 47

52 - Ibid., p. 47

53 - Ibid., p. 47

CHAPTER VI

HEYST'S DOUBLES

6.1. "The Envoys of the Outer World"[1]

"It is the way of the world—gorge and disgorge"[2]

Instigated by fearful Schomberg's envious slander, the criminal group arrived on Samburan anxious for a new experience and excited by the prospect of Heyst's supposed riches.

Significantly enough, for the third time, Axel had seen himself in the position of helping strangers in difficulty. Such intervention would bring upon him, once more, the griefs and horrors of a willful world. Indeed, those men had arrived there in very precarious circumstances. After forty hours of drifting about with the currents and slaving at the oars, those lawless men could only behave like mere animals. As soon as Axel had seen them, he had kindly (yet distrustfully) helped them to land, given them water and lodged them in a bungalow near his own.

Nevertheless, it will be interesting to pause and notice the Darwinian-Schopenhauerean scene of their arrival, ob-

serving each one's bestial manners in their struggle for the satisfaction of primary physical needs, such as thirst--"thirst chokes one",[3] one of them, Ricardo, had exclaimed to Heyst. In fact, when Heyst helped by Wang, his Chinese servant, succeded in making the water spout out of a pipe, the three men struggled, each in his way, to quench their thirst. The first to succeded was Ricardo, "the wild animal of cat species",[4] the most impulsive of them all, to whom "life was not a matter of passive renunciation, but of a particularly active warfare",[5] of an enjoyable struggle of wills to survival and to power. However, soon, he was knocked out and replaced:

> "a dishevelled head coming on like a cannon-ball, took the man at the pipe in flank, with enough force to tear his grip loose and flinging him headlong into the stern-sheets."[6]

The dishevelled, hairy head was Pedro, a human bear who had "no restraint, no restraint at all."[7]

As a consequence of his attitude, Pedro was almost shot by Jones--"the man at the tiller put his hand back to his hip."[8] Jones was apparently the feeblest, very much like a corpse, whose eyes "were but two black patches" and showed a "death's head grin".[9] In fact, he was all brains, evil brains, as we will see below.

Ricardo prevented Jones from shooting Pedro, since he preferred to keep "the brute" as his slave, his watch-dog. Instead, he cruelly beat him:

> "Martin Ricardo flourished the heavy piece of wood, leaped forward with astonishing vigour and brought it down on Pedro's head

> with a crash that resounded all over the quiet sweep of Black Diamond Bay. A crimson patch appeared on the matted hair; red veins appeared in the water flowing all over his face, and it dripped in rosy drops off his head." [10]

Pedro reacted and the fight went on; Ricardo having finally won, bawled furiously at Pedro: "Aha, dog!... Next time I will rip you open from ruck to heel, you carrion eater! Esclavo!" [11]

The violence of such a scene is meant to represent the brutal struggle of opposite wills in an animal world without any principles.

As a matter of fact, the aggressive invaders of Heyst and Lena's loneliness, respectively 'the spectre', 'the cat' and 'the ape', apparently symbolize all the wilderness of the outer world, as Heyst knowingly whispered later to Lena:

> "Here they are, the envoys of the outer world. Here they are before you—evil intelligence, instinctive savagery, arm in arm. The brute force is at the back. A trio of fitting envoys perhaps..." [12]

The brute force was surely represented by the hairy Pedro, whose animal appearance was to stress all the bestiality of his mind:

> "the lower part of his physiognomy was over-developed; his narrow and low forehead, unintelligently furrowed by horizontal wrinkles, surmounted wildly hirsute cheeks and a flat nose with wide baboon—like nostrils." [13]

In his body, as in his mind, Pedro was but a human brute of "simian aspect" (...) "a creature caught in the woods and taught to walk on its hind legs". [14] As we have already mentioned, Pedro's role in the group was but that of a useful strong slave, "like a sort of dog" [15], in Ricardo's own words.

> "The instinctive savagery' was personified by Martin Ricardo, who had also been taken by Jones with the only purpose of saving 'the gentleman' trouble in various circumstances."[16]

As a matter of fact, Ricardo, who, like a child, could not stand any alcoholic drink and appreciated 'dulces' very much, was immature, essentially led by his impulses and childishly uncontrolled. In reality, "it was extremely difficult to resist when his blood was up"[17], for he "was not used to a prolonged effort of self-control".[18] It was probably for that reason that he appreciated so much the apparently self-controlled manners of his gentleman, and also that he had not reached self-knowledge enough. Once Jones asked him: "Are you going to turn pessimist?" and he answered: "Me turn? No Sir! I ain't of those that turn".[19] Ricardo considered himself a stiff, wild creature who despised those who fearfully followed the laws of civilization--those like Schomberg, who restrained himself from murdering his wife, despite his great will to do it.

Yet, it had never occurred to Ricardo that he himself was restrained enough as to be also subject to changes (of an emotional not intellectual character). Indeed, he was first imprisoned by his own self-protecting fidelity to Jones, and later he would be dominated by the sensual hypnosis Lena was to exert upon him--she would awaken in him his restrained, dormant sexuality. Before the girl...

> "the gleam of pitiless savagery went out of Ricardo's yellow eyes, and his physiognomy took on, for the first time that evening, the expression of a domestic cat which is being noticed."[20]

Lena would actually make Ricardo change so much as to cause, by his unfaithfulness to Jones, the collapse of the trio's criminal structure. The 'secretary' lacked the necessary sensitivity to foresee such consequences. He was always pursuing the objects of his blind will--first money and power, then sex (which was also impregnated by will to power). Power implied violence, and Ricardo was a real lover of all the violence of life, as conceived by the Schopenhauerean mind. Apparently, this was the reason why, when not actually fighting, he fulfilled his tendencies by participating in another sort of competition--gambling. Ricardo was fond of cards as a way of accomplishing his own love for survival of the fittest:

> "I suppose you are fond of cards", Schomberg had asked him once.
> '"What would you expect?", asked Ricardo in a philosophical tone. "It is likely I should not be?... Fond of cards? Ay, passionately!"', [21]

he answered; and the narrator specified that

> "the effect of this outburst was augmented by the quiet lowering of the eyelids, by a reserved pause as though this had been a confession of another kind of love". [22]

Gambling is, in a way, the concrete image of life's cheating rules. Ricardo's pseudo-Nietzschean assertion of life as a pleasurable, competitive game is in his own words:

> "It is my opinion that men will gamble as long as they have anything to put on a card. Gamble? That's nature what's life itself? You never know what may turn up. The worst of it is that you can never tell exactly what sort of cards you are holding yourself. What's trumps?—That is the question. See? Any man will gamble if only he's given a chance, for anything or

everything"...[23]

In his love of overcoming as well as in his complete amorality, Ricardo could be considered as Jones' double. As a matter of fact, all the three 'desperadoes' could be seen as doubles, both of one another and of Heyst. In fact, we have, in this novel, a set of doubles within doubles, all the characters potentially represented by Heyst's complexity. However, Jones and Ricardo deserve a special mention, for, to a certain extent, they were particularly similar to each other. Even their differences were there to complete each other.

Like Ricardo, Jones also thought, similarly to Schopenhauer, that the world was still "one great, wild jungle without law".[24] Later, during his final meeting with Axel, Jones would even make the comment: "It's the way of the world—gorge and disgorge!"[25]

As a consequence of his denials, Jones was always eager for the free excitement of a duel, but a duel of psychological nature, so that he could, thus, fulfil the emptiness of his existence, for "one must do something to kill time. Killing time was not forbidden."[26] Another way for him to kill time was also gambling. In reality, Jones was essentially led by the same sort of pleasure in defeating which also dominated Ricardo. Defeating others was their common way of overcoming their own weakness. Even Schomberg had understood how those two were "identical souls in different disguises."[27] The narrator even specified that

> "there was a similarity of mind between these two—one the outcast of his vices, the other inspired by a spirit of scornful defiance,

> the agressiveness of a beast of prey looking upon all the tame creatures of the earth as its natural victims."[28]

But while Ricardo was irrationally pulled toward life, the 'gentleman', on the contrary, seemed to be, like Heyst, almost annihilated in his physical being. His lifeless manners (unlike Axel) fitted his ghost-like appearance and even the emptiness of

> "his voice somehow matched his sunken eyes. It was hollow without being in the least mornful; it sounded distant, uninterested, as though he were speaking from the bottom of a well."[29]

His was, in opposition to Lena's voice, the expression of the intellectual distance of evil nihilism. Possibly Jones was a distorted version of Heyst's father, specially if we take into account Heyst's father's death and Jones' ghost-like appearance.

Ricardo was an enthusiastic devotee of physical conflict since he was well armed and protected by Pedro's brutality. Yet, he voluntarily half restrained the savage incontrollability of his instincts, by following the diabolic intelligence of his gentleman, who had taught him that "there is a proper way of doing things" for "unnecessary exertion... must be avoided."[30]

Jones, in his turn, was also sadistic, but his cruelty was of a psychological nature. He disguised behind the manners of a gentleman. Besides he sustained his intellectual force through the guarantee of being physically protected by Ricardo's faithfulness. When Jones was not involved in any sort of moral destruction and had already enough of his cards, then he became subject to "fits" of bored laziness. Defeating the others morally was his way

of trying to counterbalance his own limitations. In fact, Jones delighted himself in proving the powerlessness of his fellowmen.

In the same way that Schopenhauer had divided human beings into genius or saint and ordinary men, Heyst's father, in his book, had also classified them into two sorts: the elect, i.e., the clairvoyants, and the intellectually blind, resigned caste. However, old Heyst believed that, among the elect, there could be found either "men of tormented conscience" (like Axel) or "of a criminal imagination".[31] Among the latter we should include Mr Jones, the leader of such a sinister group.

As we have said above, Jones is apparently presented to us as Heyst's double. While Lena could be considered as Heyst's other double, exemplifying his tendency to be emotionally involved by the world and its laws--the side, in short, which tended to complete his somehow--Jones, on the contrary, incarnated Heyst's denying, wandering self, the part which made of him an outcast. As a matter of fact, both Axel and Jones belonged to the same "social sphere",[32] had the manners of a gentleman and shared a similar sort of philosophical denial, being sceptically convinced of the uselessness, the aimlessness of human life.

"Ah, Mr Heyst... you and I have much more in common than you think",[33] Jones had once told Heyst. In fact, they both saw the gambling aspect of life and were Faustian, amoral spectators of such arduous moves. Later, Jones would even tell Axel: "All my life I have been seeking new impressions".[34]

And once again: "We pursue the same ends... only perhaps I pursue them with more openess than you—with more simplicity."[35]

Heyst, like Jones, was the emptied, amoral product of absolute scepticism in such scientific, industrialized, violent times. "I date too late"[36] Axel explained to Lena after having commented: "I am so recent that I may call myself a man of the last hour".[37] Yet, in doubt that nihilism could not be the last and ultimate truth, and with the suspicion of another veiled truth, which Lena seemed to carry, Axel questioned: "- or is it the hour before the last? I have been out of it so long that I am not certain how far the hands of the clock had moved since—since—".[38] He had lost the notion of time, as well as of society and morality. Neither Jones nor Axel were concerned with the social concept of morality:

"Moralists and I haven't been friends for many years"[39] Axel had confessed to Lena. And later he would also ask her: "Are you conscious of sin?", and as she did not answer him, he would add: "For I am not".[40]

Jones, in his turn, certainly agreed with Ricardo when he said that "there was no such thing as conscience".[41] Indeed, Jones himself would comment to Axel later "that his presence there was no more reprehensible"[42] than Heyst. And when the crucial moment of finally confronting Axel came, Jones confessed to him:

> "This, Mr Heyst, is a soft age. It is also an age without prejudices. I've heard that you are free from them yourself. You mustn't be shocked if I tell you plainly that we are after your money."[43]

However, a great abyss separated their amoralities. Heyst's relied on his good nature, his sympathetic temperament, while Jones' was rather burdened by his inherent cruelity, his

perversity. While Heyst contemplated life with a Schopenhauerean sense of disgust supported on solidarity and pity, Jones, on the contrary, enjoyed watching it in a pseudo-Nietzschean way of complete pitilessness. As Jones very expressively specified, Heyst was "a man of the world", while he was "the world itself."[44] Jones personified the cruel determinism of the world, as seen by a sceptic; Heyst was different from the rest of the world, but still he lived in it, he was under the dominion of its rules.

It is curious to note that precisely the similarities which link Jones to Heyst, turn into the differences which separate them. For example, while Heyst was subject to occasional impulses towards social action, but intellectually wanted to escape into the inert detachment of isolation, Jones, on the contrary, was subject to occasional fits of inert laziness, although he wanted to escape into the intellectualized 'action' of emotional warfare. Inert isolation and emotional warfare were their converging attempts to be freed from social ties. In this way, if Jones had been bored at the hotel (for there was no exciting 'game' which could have compensated the fact that "nothing's worthwhile, nothing's good enough",[45] later, on the island, he felt acutely stimulated by the perspective of a psychological confrontation with a "very self-possessed man."[46] He wanted to spare his feelings",[47] as Ricardo had very expressively stated. On the subject, Jones euphorically explained to his secretary: "This thing, Martin, is not like our other tries. I have a peculiar feeling about this. It's a different thing. It's a sort of test".[48]

Such words even surprised Ricardo, since "for the first time a hint of passion could be detected in him."[49] As a matter of fact, Jones' aim was 'to have some sport out of him',[50] and the way he intended to corner and test Axel is clearly expressed in his own words to Ricardo:

> "Just try to imagine the atmosphere of the game—the fellow handling the cards—the agonising mockery of it! Oh, I shall appreciate this greatly... How enraged and humiliated he will be! I promise myself some exquisite moments while watching his play."[51]

Jones' special interest in Axel was based on the fact that he felt identified with him: "we are no match for the vile populace",[52] he would declare to Heyst. Lena and Ricardo were alike "common" to Jones. In fact both Jones and Heyst looked for freedom by living voluntarily apart from society. Yet, only Jones was an outlaw (along with his men), and here resided all the danger for Heyst's and Lena's defiance of fate; specially if we consider another important Schopenhauerean characteristic of Jones' temperament--his absolute dislike of women. There is a hint, the first time his pathological loathing of women is mentioned that it was Jones' psychological reaction resulting from his own femininity or even his homossexuality:*

> "I can't stand women near me. They give the horrors", declared (Mr Jones).

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* Possibly Jones was based on Oscar Wilde. Indeed, Wilde had been tried and condemned in 1895 for keeping an homosexual relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. In view of such scandal, Wilde was considered by London society a synonym of vice and abjection.

> "They are a perfect curse!" ... (Jones) closed his sunken eyes, as if exhausted, and leaned the back of his head against the stanchion of the awning. In this pose, his long, feminine eyelashes were very noticeable..."[53]

In view of such dislike, Ricardo had prudently concealed from Jones the fact that a woman was on the island, for Ricardo was heterossexual with a vengeance. His blend of violence and sexuality made him vulnerable to Lena. This simple fact would contribute to cause Jones to be shaken in his emotional security and the trio's criminal structure to tumble down.

Jones probably personifies Heyst's Darwinian potential to become a criminal. Once Axel had even declared to Lena, when the question arose of his having murdered Morrison: "It is possible that I may be really capable of that which they say I have done."[54]

And later, under the moral stress from the terror that those criminals could do any harm to Lena, Heyst almost wished to have the courage to kill them. He told her:

> "I wonder if I could find enough courage to creep among them in the night, with a knife, and cut their throats one after another, as they slept! I wonder."[54]

Nevertheless, murdering was but a potentiality in Heyst; he would never be able to act agressively towards his fellowman, even when the right moments came. The first time he could have acted thusly was when Jones discovered the presence of a woman on the island. A woman, Jones surmised, had certainly exerted such a fascination upon Ricardo that his fidelity to the 'gentleman' had been affected. This fact constituted enough reason for Jones to

have a "sudden and overwhelming sense of utter insecurity"[56] and revolt, so that he would end by shooting Ricardo himself. In his mistrust of Ricardo, too, Jones could be identified with Heyst, since the latter was also able to doubt Lena's fidelity.

Heyst's 'monkish' mistrust of women was a kind of analogue to Jones' more vicious type of misogyny. Jones had been disarmed in his great disappointment and "backed hard against the wall, he no longer watched Heyst. He had the air of a man who had seen an abyss yawning under his feet".[57]

In that precise moment Heyst was offered the opportunity to attack and defeat him: "If I want to kill him, this is my time"[58], he thought. Yet, as he had said to Lena once, killing was not in him. So, "he did not move".[59]

The second time he could have done it was some minutes later, when "by simply shouldering Mr Jones, he could have thrown him down and put himself by a couple of leaps beyond the certain aim of the revolver"[60]; but this time Axel "did not even think of that"[61]. He was simultaneously neutralized as to his defensive instincts ("his very will seemed dead of weariness"[62])* and willing to proceed morally, as Lena wanted him to do ("Don't you try to do such a thing! Don't you think of it!"[63], she had begged him).

There had been great chances for Jones to defeat Heyst.

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* One wanders whether Conrad saw some "Darwinian" parallel between sexual potency and aggressiveness: Heyst seems to lack both, while Ricardo does not.

However Jones did never expect that the test could have a boomerang effect; indeed, it was Jones who ironically ended by having his feelings spared and his life come to an end, for he was disarmed precisely by the moral obstinacy of a woman.

After his discovery of a woman on the island, and when Axel informed him that he was unarmed, Jones replied bitterly and philosophically to Heyst:

> "...Unarmed, eh? and I suppose that creature is of the commonest sort"

and then

> "Unarmed! It's a pity. I am in much greater danger than you are, or were."[64]

We can clearly detect the expressive difference in tone as well as in meaning between the two times the word "unarmed" was pronounced. The former, with a sarcastic astonishment, which meant Jones was contesting the idea of Heyst's being unarmed. To Jones a woman was armour enough to be feared: for an evil sceptic like him the worst of enemies was certainly the hopeful will of a woman. Lena represented to Heyst the same defensive usefulness that Ricardo had represented to Jones but much more effective. Jones regretted that they, "superior men", "must make use of the brutes",[64] including among the brutes the unknown woman in the next bungalow.

The tone of Heyst's second use of the term "unarmed" was of absolute disappointment as to the fact that he was actually unarmed, in the real sense of the word, for he carried no weapon at all with him. There is apparently the suggestion that, had Heyst been carrying some weapon, Jones would feel himself

much safer, for it would constitute a significant symptom of Heyst's moral weakness. But to Conrad, apparently, both Heyst and Jones were intrinsically unarmed, for they had no moral suppport. When Axel and Jones were watching Lena and Ricardo through the window, they stood very close together, as though one and the same person. "Mr Jones laid a hand on his arm"[64] and "the grip of Mr Jones' claw"[66] on Axel was followed by a sarcastic whisper: "Of course",[67] which conveyed a common mistrust of their partners. All these details strengthen the idea that Heyst accepts Jones' suggestion that Lena was betraying him as Ricardo was betraying Jones. And as Jones "stretched his neck to peer into the room... Heyst, too, made a step forward, under the slight impulse of that slender hand clasping his arm with a thin, bony grasp"[68] . The way Jones touched Heyst, the way he fired over Heyst's shoulder, the way only Heyst was seen by Ricardo "towering in the doorway",[69] making the latter think "that the beggar had started to prance",[70] all this implies that <u>in his mind</u> Heyst was also "killing" Lena by his lack of faith, by his "formless, hideous"[71] doubt. Both Heyst and Jones were temporarily protected by external armours--Ricardo's and Lena's faithfulness; yet, once deprived of their 'guardians', they were both condemned to end as suicides.

Nevertheless, their suicides were fundamentally opposed--Jones would die by water, Heyst by fire; apparently Jones followed his process of self-dissolution, while Heyst set fire to his sceptical being, probably as an act of purification. As Northrop Frye says in his <u>Anatomy of Criticism</u>, "Poetic symbolism usually puts fire just above man's life in his world, and water

just below it"[72]. Since in the classical mythology fire of lightning was associated with the god Zeus, Freye goes on to state that

> "heaven in the sense of sky, containing the fiery bodies of sun, moon, and stars, is usually identified with, or thought of as the passage to, the heaven of the apocalyptic world".[73]

Even the imagery of Sun and Thunder was used all along as an image of the objective truth that Heyst shades himself from. In contrast, Frye restates that

> "water (...) traditionally belongs to a realm of existence below human life, the state of chaos of dissolution which follows ordinary death, or the reduction to the inorganic. Hence, the soul frequently crosses water or sinks into it at death".[74]

Suicide is a Pagan act, one elected by Heyst in self-judgement. But if Heyst's suicide is to be considered a pagan act of purification, then, the sickness of his scepticism is implied in it. If, on the contrary, fire is to be held as a Christian symbol of hellish punishment, then the reader is to draw the same obvious conclusion: that Heyst's previous negations and definite disbelief were sinful, hence destructive.

Heyst's suicide by fire, and Jones' by water, would not assume a significant poetic meaning if evil were to be considered as existing only in external circumstances. In fact, we disagree with Moser in his Joseph Conrad—Achievment and Decline, when he says that "at the end Heyst blames himself for not putting his 'trust in life', but surely chance, not conscience is at fault",[75] adding that "the heroes and heroines of the later Conrad are sinned against, themselves unsinning".[76] Moser goes on by declaring

that in the later novels

> "Conrad no longer sees his characters as part of the world community of suffering and damned humanity; rather he sees them as figures of purity aflicted by an external evil".[77]

However, it is evident that Jones, the double, functions in just the way gentleman Brown does in Lord Jim. Rereading some passages on Brown in Lord Jim, once can easily confirm the closeness between the doubles Heyst-Jones and Jim-Brown. Both Jones and Brown represented "the secret sharer" of their doubles, and the similarities between the two criminals is undeniable: like Jones, Brown was also a "tortured skeleton of a man"[78] and to Marlow he also "seemed to have driven off the death waiting for him"[79]. Like Jones, Brown was also an outlaw, an "accomplice of the Dark Powers"[80] who was intellectually different from the mere 'brutes':

> "... what distinguished him from his contemporary brother ruffians... was the arrogant temper of his misdeeds and a vehement scorn for mankind at large and for his victims in particular (...) he seemed moved by some complex intention. He would rob a man as if only to demonstrate his poor opinion of the creature".[81]

Both Jones and Brown were able 'to guess' the mental state of the protagonist with an uncanny precision and both insinuated that they and the protagonists had commited similar crimes. In fact both saw themselves as a "scourge of God" sent to punish the "gentleman" and the "lord" for their hypocrisy.

As Jones challenged Heyst, so Brown defied Jim: "Ah! I promise you we shall give you some sport before you've done"[82]. In fact (like Jones), Brown also defied the protagonist's fundamental opinion of his own superiority, as it is evidenced in

Brown's telling Marlow about his talk with Jim: "Let us agree", Brown had said to Jim, "that we are both dead men, and let us talk on that basis, as equals. We are all equal before death".[83]

We might even say that the Heyst-Jones doubling is much more careful developed in Victory than in Lord Jim, since in the latter, Brown appears suddenly at the end as a "Deus ex machina", whereas Jones is developed in detail from Part II to the end.

Contrary to Moser's argument that Victory is a melodrama where the author presents Heyst as a sentimental victim, we can draw the conclusion, from the doubling of Heyst and Jones, that Heyst, like Jim is not merely a victim of external evil, but a man who carries the potentialities of Jones in himself, for he was, above all, egotistically self-centered yet limited in power like any other human being.

NOTES ON

CHAPTER VI

1 - Victory, p. 269

2 - Ibid., p. 316

3 - Ibid., p. 193

4 - Ibid., p. 135

5 - Ibid., p. 214

6 - Ibid., p. 190

7 - Ibid., p. 193

8 - Ibid., p. 190

9 - Ibid., p. 190

10 - Ibid., pp. 190-91

11 - Ibid., p. 191

12 - Ibid., p. 269

13 - Ibid., p. 82

14 - Ibid., p. 98

15 - Ibid., p. 118

16 - Ibid., p. 109

17 - Ibid., p. 231

18 - Ibid., p. 232

19 - Ibid., p. 220

20 - Ibid., p. 304

21 - Ibid., p. 103
22 - Ibid., p. 103
23 - Ibid., p. 121
24 - Ibid., p. 316
25 - Ibid., p. 316
26 - Ibid., p. 94
27 - Ibid., p. 108
28 - Ibid., p. 222
29 - Ibid., p. 92
30 - Ibid., p. 114
31 - Ibid., p. 181
32 - Ibid., p. 312
33 - Ibid., p. 263
34 - Ibid., p. 317
35 - Ibid., p. 262
36 - Ibid., p. 297
37 - Ibid., p. 296
38 - Ibid., p. 296
39 - Ibid., p. 159
40 - Ibid., p. 291
41 - Ibid., p. 217
42 - Ibid., p. 262
43 - Ibid., p. 313
44 - Ibid., p. 312
45 - Ibid., p. 214
46 - Ibid., p. 214
47 - Ibid., p. 275

48 - Ibid., pp. 274-75

49 - Ibid., p. 275

50 - Ibid., p. 276

51 - Ibid., p. 276

52 - Ibid., p. 323

53 - Ibid., p. 84

54 - Ibid., p. 184

55 - Ibid., p. 288

56 - Ibid., p. 319

57 - Ibid., p. 319

58 - Ibid., p. 319

59 - Ibid., p. 319

60 - Ibid., p. 322

61 - Ibid., p. 322

62 - Ibid., p. 322

63 - Ibid., p. 288

64 - Ibid., p. 320

65 - Ibid., p. 320

66 - Ibid., p. 322

67 - Ibid., p. 323

68 - Ibid., p. 324

69 - Ibid., p. 331

70 - Ibid., p. 331

71 - Ibid., p. 323

72 - Anatomy of Criticism, p. 145

73 - Ibid., p. 145

74 - Ibid., p. 145

75 - Joseph Conrad — Achievement and Decline, p. 141

76 - Ibid., p. 141

77 - Ibid., p. 143

78 - Lord Jim, p. 282

79 - Ibid., p. 283

80 - Ibid., p. 260

81 - Ibid., pp. 260-61

82 - Ibid., p. 282

83 - Ibid., p. 281

CHAPTER VII

DEATH—AN ASSERTION OF LIFE?

7.1. "Convinced of the Reality of her Victory over Death"[1]

Davidson had been sceptical about defying the fates by taking "a woman in tow"[2], and his scepticism proved to be justified. Heyst's fascination with and sympathy for Lena did bring upon him the intrusion of the world. In addition, he could no longer be so detached as he had been before since in reality he had changed much, as he himself recognized:

> "I am so anxious about you that I can't keep away from these infernal scoundrels. And only three months ago I would not have dared. I would have defied their scoundrelism as much as I have scorned all the other intrusions of life. But now I have you! You stole into my life, and..."[3]

Yet, his change had not been so complete as to allow him to become wholly involved with life. Axel had no serious chance of putting up a fight for he was disarmed, in double sense: disarmed, also because by the time the danger was apparent he had been robbed of his revolver by Wang; but disarmed mainly because

he was still a sceptic, he had been, in a way, castrated by his father in his capacity to love, to believe, as in his capacity to act. He was unable to believe, unlike Lena, in the outer realities of the world. The Platonic Schopenhauerean idealism still remained in him although he was becoming aware of the impracticability of such a view, as is evidenced by his words to Lena:

> "I have managed to refine everything away.
> I've said to the Earth that bore me: 'I am I and you are a shadow'. And, by Jove, it is so! But it appears that such words cannot be uttered with impunity. Here I am on a shadow inhabited by Shades. How helpless a man is against the Shades! How is one to intimidate, persuade, resist, assert oneself against them?
> I have lost all belief in realities..."[4]

There seems to be a pattern of hübris, nemesis and Augenblick in Heyst's words. In fact, they are the evidence of his pride, but also of recognition of his unbalance in life, which makes him, somehow, foresee his inevitable appropriate down.

His sense of being forlorn made him feel the need for a moral support which he surmised Lena could give him... "Lena, give me your hand"[5] had been his concrete request, but in the context, his need went beyond the literal sense.

Indeed, Lena, with her feminine, life-saving instincts, was not powerless. Alone with her, Axel had even felt helpless before the moral strength of her "deceiving femininity". His capacity to play Othello before the menace of her supposed duplicity, was already evident when

> "with his elbows spread out he was twisting the ends of his long moustaches, very masculine and perplexed, enveloped in the

> atmosphere of femininity as in a cloud, suspecting pitfalls, as if afraid to move".[6]

Since in Victory man is treated in terms of a loneliness-sociability antithesis, (that is, the dilema of either Adam alone or Adam and Eve), that antithesis also implies a masculine-feminine antagonism. The feminine self, strives, like the masculine, to assert power. Fearful before the idea of death,

> "she shook off the unworthy weakness. Such as she was, a fiddle-scraping girl picked up on the very threshold of infamy, she would try to rise above herself, triumphant and humble; and then happiness would burst on her like a torrent, flinging at her feet the man whom she loved".[7]

From one aspect, Lena's love was part of her survival instinct or even her will to power. Lena's desire to defend Axel could be considered as carrying with it a feminine pride in her own weapon--duplicity--that finally would prove fatal. Apparently the feminine assertion of power must act, according to Conrad, through the force of unconscious Nature (particularly social instincts, as love and sex) and not through the medium of intellect which could only hinder it. This force of Nature is perhaps a benign expression of the same force Conrad so often presented as an unsuspected and deadly threat which yet through feminine appeal works for man's good. Heyst, however, does not recognize this, and instinctively mistrusts it. Heyst's mistrust enfeebled him only morally, and his moral weakness prevented him from acting physically. To clear the reader's mind of all suspiction that Axel was physically impotent, the narrator goes to some trouble to leave no doubt of his masculinity (which flagrantly contrasted with Jones' ef-

feminate manners). Heyst is, thus, described as being "in the fulness of his physical development, of a broad martial presence"[8] . In Lena's presence he was "very masculine and perplexed"[9] . The narrator even stressed "the flattered vanity of his possession of this woman; for a man must feel that, unless he has ceased to be masculine"[10] . At one point the narrator seemed to stress Heyst's appearance to assert his masculinity and thus fabricate an image of physical power. But such emphasis was fundamental to establish the Conradian contrast between moral powerlessness before life, which is due to absolute scepticism (despite all physical strength) and the feminine capacity to resist and fight, consequent on the moral support of love and belief (despite all physically weak appearance).

Heyst, though "martial" in appearance, was very passive, sensitive and almost feminine; while Lena, like Mrs Schomberg, concealed strength under their apparent helplessness.

Heyst's paralysis, first felt before the problem of love, was repeated now in his fumbling efforts to cope with a physical menace. He was reacting the same way to the intruders, for "everything round him had become unreasonable, unsettled and vaguely urgent, laying him under an obligation, but giving him no line of action"[11] . His inert detachment, his denying mode of "dominating life" had rendered him powerless in combat as in love.

Heyst became gradually aware of his impotence, for such tests of power were being forced upon him. Once he exclaimed to Lena: '"No! he cried roughly, "All this is too unreal altogether. It isn't to be born! I can't protect you! I haven't any power!"[12]

And another time:

> "I feel very much like a child in my ignorance, in my powerlessness, in my want of resource, in everything except in the dreadful consciousness of some evil hanging over your head—yours!"[13]

As it had been noted in the last chapter, love and aggression seem to be related, inter-connected in a Darwinian manner. Heyst, who had not the power to love, also lacked the force to defend his lover: Heyst did seem doubly emasculated.

Even to Wang, Heyst's servant, (whose position on the island was in some ways a variation on Heyst's, for Wang was living in Adam-like isolation with a woman, but in harmony with her), Axel was "a man not only disarmed but already half vanquished"[14]. And Axel, at this point, seemed to share Wang's feelings, for "he considered(Heyst) a dead man already".[15]

Wang had not even cared about the risk Heyst was running, for he always acted instinctively:first, in his 'labour-saving way' and then with his self-protective attitude which was in harmony with his primitive woman. But Wang's instinctive procedure should be considered amoral, for, as Caudwell says in his Illusion and Reality, "In a primitive society where man is as yet undifferentiated, conscience and consciousness are similarly simple, direct and homogeneous..."

So, Heyst represents a late 'modern' Adam, while Wang is an elementary version of the same.

Face to face with his own inability to fight,

> "Heyst envied the chinaman's obedience to his instincts, the powerful simplicity of purpose which made his existence appear almost auto-

> matic in the mysterious precision of its facts".[17]

If duplicity were an exclusively feminine instinctive refuge, Wang, as Marlow in Heart of Darkness and even Heyst himself, would not display it. But they do. Marlow "mercifully" lied to the Intended; Wang stole Heyst's revolver and then took his leave with the polite excuse: "Me velly sick"[18] . Although Heyst had told him: "that isn't a proper man-talk at all"[19] , yet Axel himself had more and more felt the need to dissimulate. Alone with Lena, though he considered himself a dead man already, yet he was "forced to pretend that he was alive for her sake, for her defence".[20]

When Lena expressed once her absolute belief in God, Heyst manifested to her his suspicions that she represented an old, old human knowledge: "I wonder (...) whether you are just a child, or whether you represent something as old as the world".[21]

Axel was gradually perceiving the veiled human truth that a sceptic would name illusion--the innate human faith in the supernatural, in love, in all aspects of spirituality which Lena incarnated. In fact, it was her love and her faith which gave her firmness of purpose and moral strength to fight against those violent envoys of the world. As a matter of fact, she managed to repulse Ricardo's surprise attack, while Heyst was away talking to Jones and

> "she resisted without a moment of faltering, because she was no longer deprived of moral support; because she was a human being who counted; because she was no longer defending herself for herself alone; because of the faith that had been born in her—the faith

This sketch must have been done between the years of 1892 - 1894 They came into my possession at my marriage in 1896.

Joseph Conrad

DRAWING VI

> in the man of her destiny and perhaps in the Heaven which had sent him so wonderfully to cross her path".[22]

as It had apparently done with Morrison too.

We may infer the narrator's idea as to the motives which, he thinks, give one the moral strength to fight and resist the multiple strokes of life--altruism, love, faith, any sort of belief for life.

Having repelled Ricardo and gained his admiration, she seized the opportunity that was presented to use her 'natural feminine' weapon--dissimulation:

> "Womanlike, she felt the effect she had produced, the effect of knowing much and of keeping all her knowledge in reserve (...) Thus encouraged, directed in the way of duplicity, the refuge of the weak, she made a heroically conscious effort and forced her stiff, cold lips into a smile. Duplicity—the refuge of the weak and the cowardly, but of the disarmed too! (...) She was not ashamed of her duplicity".[23]

Lena kept the Ricardo incident a secret, and thus, she succeeded in two ways: first, because Ricardo did not have to face Axel, which could result in Heyst's violent death; and also since this way, Ricardo was 'tamed' by the conviction that she was on his side, that she was interested in him.

On the other hand, she felt she must deceive Heyst for she knew that he did not love her for herself, and his Othello-like egotism would not let her go on with her plan. Such an armour made her feel stronger than Heyst himself, for physical strength was useless without a moral support. While Heyst embraced her protectingly, she shuddered at the thought "that it was

she who would have to protect him, to be the defender of a man who was strong enough to lift her bodily"...[24]

The impulse which led Wang to steal Heyst's revolver and run away with it, was the same sort of instinct which led Lena to dissimulate before Ricardo and to conceal from Heyst her attitude and her purpose.

Lena had no logical plan, but putting together Ricardo's allusion to his deadly knife and Heyst's remark that he did not"possess anything bigger than a penknife"[25], she set herself the goal of stealing Ricardo's weapon.

She wanted to give Heyst his weapon, but her intention was the result of love--both a selfish and a generous impulse.

So, when in the evening, Heyst asked her protectingly to put on a black dress and make her way to the barricade to meet Wang, she made up her mind to deceive him and stay, in order to wait for Ricardo.

Seeing her "all black, down on her knees, with her head and arms flung on the foot of the bed"[26], Heyst had "a suspicion that there where everywhere more things than he could understand"[27]. Those things, he suspected, could be interpreted by the reader in two ways: either the possibility of her deceiving him, or the real existence, "everywhere", of a Metaphysical truth he could not understand, but which she was suggesting by her attitude of prayer.

With this scene, apparently Conrad is suggesting once more the possibility of the existence of a Truth which cannot be seen or understood, and yet can be believed. When Ricardo came,

Lena was all in black, like a statue with her white face and her serene pose under Heyst's father's picture; she was questioning herself "how to get hold of that knife"[28]. Although "she felt the anguish for her disobedience to her lover"[29], she had firmly decided to use her weapon to save him, and thus redeem herself, for "no doubt it had been a sin to throw herself into his arms".[30]

Lena could exercise her fascination to greater effect on instinctive Ricardo than on intellectual Heyst. Up to a point, she and the beast could be considered doubles, for both were acting instinctively--both were betraying somehow their gentlemen.

By working on this "subtle trait of masculinity"[31] Lena wholly conquered Ricardo where she had only partly subjugated Heyst (in whom this trait was intellectually guarded). In fact, she listened to and pretended to accept "the man's impassionate transports of terrible, eulogy and even more awful declarations of love"[32]. While Heyst's potential aggressiveness could only be manifested through sex, Ricardo's excessive aggressiveness had turned into a sort of sexual submission:

> "No nearer!" she had commanded. Immediately "he stopped with a smile of imbecile worship on his lips and with the delighted obedience of a man who could at any moment seize her in his hands and dash her to the ground".[33]

Thus, in his crawling adoration of Lena, Ricardo's sadism almost became a sort of masochism, as can be seen by his words to her:

> "I am dog-tired. (...) I went tired this morning, since I came in here and started talking to you—as tired as if I had been pouring my life-blood here on these planks for you to dabble your white feet".[34]

and also:

> "For you! For you I will throw away money, lives—all lives but mine! What you want is a man, a master that will let you put the heel of your shoe on his neck".[35]

Thinking of Heyst coming back to her, Ricardo even appeared "gloomy with the torment of his jealousy".[36]

When later Jones pointed out Lena sitting in a chair with Ricardo at her feet, Heyst made a new kind of doubt--"a formless, hideous"[37] entered him: the Othello-like idea that Lena was betraying him. This was the climactic scene which Jones ironically associated with the mythological legend of Acis, Galatea and Polyphemus. Such dreadful incertitude was projected into Nature by means of a tremendous storm: "Everything—the bungalow, the forest, the open ground—trembled incessantly; the earth, the sky itself, shivered all the time..."[38]

After Jones fired his shot at Ricardo, Heyst did not know first that Lena had been deadly wounded. He entered the candle-lit bungalow and seeing her victorious expression, he believed that she had betrayed him with Ricardo for the sake of his and her protection. Thus, he commented bitterly and suspiciously to her:

> "No doubt you acted from instinct women have been provided with their own weapon. I was a disarmed man, I have been a disarmed man all my life as I see it now. You may glory in your resourcefulness and your profound knowledge of yourself".[39]

But suddenly he understood she had been shot--"On her white neck her pale head dropped as in a cruel drought a withered flower dropps on its stalk"[40] . The metaphorical lyricism of her physical defeat even strengthened the idea of her moral victory. Thus, he started perceiving her truth with more distinctness, "he caught his breath, looked at her closely, and seemed to read some awful intelligence in her eyes."[41]

After laying Lena down on the bed, Axel left the room, looked for the light of the candle-stick and came back "tearing down with a furious jerk the curtain that swung stupidly in his way"[42] .Then, he "started tearing open the front of the girl's dress"[43] which was significantly black. His tearing of the curtain and of the veiling black dress symbolically represents the removal of the veil of Maya, which had prevented him from seeing her reality, and his own.

Heyst's reality had been a reality made up of dreams.* The advent of the bandits, Heyst's feeling of powerlessness before them, and this apparent treachery, had a dreamlike quality for him, because events had dramatized those doubts and fears inherent in his relationship with Lena. His feeling of being incompetent to love Lena for herself, his mental association of

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* As Nietzsche said once

> "Truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.... without a recognition of logical fictions, without a comparison of reality with the purely imagined world of the absolute and immutable, man could not live!..."

and then he added that we have to "recognise untruth as a condition of life"[44]

inexperience in love with inexperience in combat, his fear of competition "with fellows unknown"[45], his disappointment in Lena when she half-believed Schomberg's calumny--these were excellent physical materials out of which a dream such as this contest with desperadoes in which he was both helpless and betrayed, might have been fashioned. Lena, too, had had her doubts and fears about the future of her relationship with Heyst; and she turned them into a "painful dream of separation"[46] after the bandits' arrival. But once awake, she reacted realistically to events. Heyst was the opposite. He did not dream in the literal sense, but he had a tendency to make a dream out of the events of his life, while he was awake. In Lord Jim too the value to Patusan as reality lay in its closeness to the kind of dream Jim would be likely to have of his redemption. Heyst had given evidence of this mental habit already. In the beginning Lena had presented herself so physical (for she lacked love and moral support) that she appeared like a sinful Magdalen, and yet Axel had only seen her as an "appealing ghost"[47]. Throughout their relationship, she gradually became more and more soulful, for she had been given moral support, and in consequence, Axel tended to see her as more and more palpable, till finally in death she acquired for him definite and irresistable reality. After laying her down on the bed, he cleaned the wound she had received for Ricardo "round which there was hardly a trace of blood to mar the charm, the fascination of that mortal flesh".[48]

Happy, triumphant, "drowsily about, serene as if fatigued only by the exertions of her tremendous victory"[49] Lena

showed him Ricardo's knife and said: "For you... kill nobody".[50] "For you to defend yourself" were the words left out but implied in her last request.* As if matter and spirit had been tragically incompatible to Heyst, his doubt about her, which had been symbolized by the storm, resolved just as she ceased to exist: "Over Samburan the thunder had ceased to growl at last, and the world of material forms shuddered no more under the emerging stars".[51]

Lena's truth and her claim on Heyst's love and belief was so powerful that it drove him to suicide over his inability to respond whole heartedly to it. He finally saw the error of his lonely scepticism, as it is evidenced in his last words to Davidson:"Woe to the man whose heart had not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life!"[52]

Yet, Axel was unconverted, in spite of himself. Before the rotting of his mind and of her body, may be his inner condition was instinctively externalized at last by a Zaroastrean act of purification, as Davison's words suggest: "I suppose he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body—and fire purifies everything".[53]

Lena's and Axel's mutual dissimulation proved to be the means by which each attempted to protect the other: for it was the result of their moral strength.--Heyst could try to send Lena away to the Alfuro Village to give himself, he said, a freer

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* Lena died with the conviction of her triumph:
"The spirit of the girl which was passing away from under them clung to her triumph, convinced of the reality of her victory over death".[54]

hand, but what he actually aimed at was to protect her. Lena in her turn, tried to save Heyst from being murdered.

However their dissimulation was not effective enough to avoid their final destruction, precisely because of their implied mistrust--his mistrust in life, and, by extension in her feminity; her mistrust of his masculinity, for

> "already with the consciousness of her love for this man (...) 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".[55]

Indeed, they both were physically destroyed, but since Conrad's stress is placed on their moral experience, it should be added that they were physically destroyed because of their mistrust. Physical destruction was not pertinent; it could have been so, if Heyst had not commited suicide, but rather been murdered. Yet both Lena and Axel offered their lives disinterestedly for a believed (not reasoned) ideal: hers, the loving ideal of arming him at any cost; his, the ideal she had transmitted to him, of life as a balanced whole, the unthinking, self-protective obedience to one's instincts (with emphasis on the social and sexual, morally supported by love, hope and some sort of personal belief). But his death also illustrates the proof that his father's influence of despair is too powerful an element in him to ever allow him to reach this believed ideal and put it in practice.

To Conrad, Heyst's former reasoned ideal of detachment was platonic and unreal for it worked against life. Lena's emotionally believed ideal, on the contrary, came to terms with

reality, for, though it could be only an illusion, it was an illusion inherent in human truth--an illusion which was afterall the best armour against dullness and complete destruction.

Thus, one could perhaps conclude that Lena triumphed over Heyst the hermit, woman over man, belief over scepticism, human wholeness over human desintegration, but it must be born in mind that this is only a qualified optimism which is based on a distinction between the tragic level of action and the moral experience, that is mystically asserted to exist beyond it, on the level of eternity. Lena's antagonists had been, on the one hand, the melodramatic incarnation of violence; a reasoned, life negating, masculine scepticism. As to violence, her greater effectiveness was in her sheer feminine seduction of Ricardo, alienating him from his "governor", Mr Jones. The victory over violence brought a posthumous, pathetic victory over scepticism in that it deceisively raised the curtain, the veil which had always fogged Heyst's mind. It was essentially a victory of feeling over reason, of spirituality over physical force. Heyst's vigorous scepticism and the sublimated violence of his sceptical sarcasm and of his contemptuous smiles had been much more formidable antagonists for Lena than direct physical attack. But she triumphed over human violence in all its manifestations.

From some points of view, her victory may appear to be merely ironical, for, afterall, both she and Axel died: but this novel is an allegorical work--Conrad was essentially a symbolist and the romanticism of Victory is not expected to be evaluated according to the standards of realism (although many elements of

realism are presented in the novel). So, Lena's and Heyst's deaths were to sustain allegorically the need to be instinctively commited to life, which also implies to be supported by some sort of a positive Belief.

NOTES ON

CHAPTER VII

1 - *Victory*, p. 336

2 - *Ibid.*, p. 47

3 - *Ibid.*, p. 265

4 - *Ibid.*, pp. 287-88

5 - *Ibid.*, p. 288

6 - *Ibid.*, p. 288

7 - *Ibid.*, p. 290

8 - *Ibid.*, p. 6

9 - *Ibid.*, p. 6

10 - *Ibid.*, p. 165

11 - *Ibid.*, p. 165

12 - *Ibid.*, p. 285

13 - *Ibid.*, p. 285

14 - *Ibid.*, p. 237

15 - *Ibid.*, p. 291

16 - *Illusion and Reality*, p. 193

17 - *Victory*, p. 148

18 - *Ibid.*, p. 255

19 - *Ibid.*, p. 255

20 - *Ibid.*, p. 291

21 - Ibid., p. 296

22 - Ibid., p. 238

23 - Ibid., pp. 242-43

24 - Ibid., p. 252

25 - Ibid., p. 252

26 - Ibid., p. 308

27 - Ibid., p. 308

28 - Ibid., p. 326

29 - Ibid., p. 325

30 - Ibid., p. 325

31 - Ibid., p. 325

32 - Ibid., p. 326

33 - Ibid., p. 326

34 - Ibid., p. 327

35 - Ibid., p. 327

36 - Ibid., p. 329

37 - Ibid., p. 71

38 - Ibid., p. 323

39 - Ibid., p. 334

40 - Ibid., p. 334

41 - Ibid., p. 334

42 - Ibid., p. 334

43 - Ibid., p. 334

44 - Joseph Conrad in the 19th Century, p. 247

45 - Victory, p.334

46 - Ibid., p. 334

47 - Ibid., p. 71

48 - Ibid., p. 335

49 - Ibid., p. 335

50 - Ibid., p. 335

51 - Ibid., p. 335

52 - Ibid., pp. 338-39

53 - Ibid., p. 339

54 - Ibid., p. 336

55 - Ibid., p. 252

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

8.1. "There is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that there is God's plenty."[1]

A real literary work implies a multiplicity of viewpoints, in the same way that truth is a complexity of different and sometimes opposite perceptions.

To reinforce this idea there is Nietzsche's description of truth as

> "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and antropormophisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people."[2]

Similarly Conrad stated once that "a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion" (from a letter to Barret H. Clark, May 14, 1918; in G. Jean-Aubry, Life and Letters).[3]

The use of different narrators in Victory is an effective device in the presentation of multiple point of view and is apparently supported by Nietzsche's concept of language, as "the one seeing utterance as inevitably and endlessly leading to another"[4] what Nietzsche called the polyphony of effort, the idea that language can exceed communication, but it is not enough.

In the same way Criticism should be also open, as Northrop Frye said in his Anatomy of Criticism:'One's "definite position" is one's weakness, the source of one's liability to error and prejudice'.[5]

It is not our purpose to limit the critical scope of Victory's truth to a strict point of view, nor our pretention to clarify completely its communicative universe. We think it is reasonable only to defend our unilateral position as to the message of the novel, in order to contribute to a further criticism of it. As Baudelaire once declared in his Salon de 1814, "criticism should be partial, passionate and political, that is to say, written from an exclusive point of view, but the point of view that opens the most horizons."[6]

8.2. The incidence of characters and comments clearly sceptical and the catastrophic ending weigh heavily on the scale of Victory, so that one questions whether it is not Conrad's intention to sell the reader a human image of absolute negation. A strong Schopenhauerean influence is at least suggested by the many parallels in the novel with the philosopher's thought and attitude. For example Heyst's and his father's claim for detachment (by means of isolation and inertia) appears to be very close to Schopenhauer's relief in asceticism; even the figure of old Heyst appears to be vaguely suggestive of Schopenhauer himself, specially if the similarities of their deaths is taken into account; besides, both Victory and Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Idea end with the same word "nothing" which in itself is rather significant; there are evidences that Conrad's scepticism was not only the result of his unhappy early years with his ill-fated family but also of his reading books like those by Schopenhauer. In the book Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination, there is an article on "The Question of Suicide", where the author explains the reasons why Conrad once attempted suicide, where he says:

> "Although his childhood and his self-imposed exile must count as major sources for his depressions, just as important was his conscious philosophy, his personal response to what he considered as the absurdity of the universe. His suicidal tendencies were nourished by a nihilism derived from his reading of books (particularly Schopenhauer) and from the climate of thought in the late nineteenth century. His doubts about his own identity were linked to philosophical scepticism about the nature of reality."[7]

8.3. Since Axel Heyst is the backbone of Victory, his experiences, in interaction with the other characters and the plot itself, seem to be of great importance to the viewing of Victory's (and possibly Conrad's) "manifold and one"[8] truth.

If Heyst's suicide is to be considered a rejection of his father's philosophy of life, we could probably say that both Heyst, and the pair Kurtz-Marlow, seem to start from the blind acceptance of an idealism lacking reality, instilled in them from without (complete detachment from society in earlier Heyst; moral intention to put an end to human wilderness in earlier Kurtz), and then pass through the realization of the impossibility of such an ideal to finally reach the viewing of human reality which also includes some form of a belief in a positive code, however illusory it might be.

But such insight does not prevent Axel from mistrusting human relatedness. This makes him commit suicide as a way of rejecting himself, as well as all his disbelief.

Besides Heyst, there is much recurrence of characters who represent scepticism, namely Davidson (who carries the characteristics of the good-natured sceptic), and Jones together with Ricardo and Pedro, (who represent the extremes of the ruthless European pre-war nihilist, a product of the distortion of Nietzsche's ideas of the superman and the struggle for power).

8.4. — These latter characters do assume a melodramatic shape, but their significance is great if we consider their allegorical

role as Heyst's doubles. Although the novel has some elements of melodrama, yet it generally keeps the strength and density of a tragedy, mainly due the complexity of Heyst's character. As a matter of fact, Axel is not merely the innocent victim of dark forces outside himself, but chiefly a man brought to tragedy by his own flaws, the recognition of which he seemingly reaches before committing suicide, as is evidenced by his last words to Davidson: "Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life".[9]

As we have already suggested in Chapter IV, there is evidence that, from the parallel doubling Heyst-Jones and Jim-Brown, Heyst is a character of even richer complexity than Lord Jim.

Both Jim and later Heyst are the heralds of some sort of commitment, although Jim, unlike Heyst, never achieves self-knowlege. But while Jim's egoism, manifested through excessive commitment to a social code, was to be accepted, pitied and even admired, in Victory, on the contrary, the stress is put precisely on the sickness of Heyst's egoistic detachment from society. In fact, despite all similarities, there is a vast distance from Lord Jim to Victory. The former apparently transmits to the reader a message essentially individualistic and egocentred; in the last, Conrad seems to have shifted to a Wider and More Complete Concept of Man both as an individual and also as a social being.

8.5. Heyst's progressive change from detachment to involvement is artistically worked out by means of revealing first a foggy, remote idea of his character through the gossip of different story-tellers, and then increasingly making him so visible that the narrator's presence is no longer felt from the second part on, being then replaced by the omniscient author. In that sense, Conrad seems to be fused with the narrator. Hence, we maintain the thesis that the author is apparently half identified with and half critical of Axel's "the son of his father" side, as well as of Heyst senior and of Schopenhauer himself.

This apparently dual viewpoint leads us to conclude that, in Victory, Conrad, as an artist primarily concerned with his art, successfully presents the manifold contradictions of human reality, which philosophically he views with considerable scepticism, while as moralist proclaiming the necessity of a belief in an ehtical code of active human commitment to solidarity and love, if man is to endure.

In life Axel Heyst, the victim of such a Schopenhauerean father, is guilty precisely of having denied the call of life, and if he finally commits suicide, it is not mainly because he seeks a cowardly evasion of life, but specially because although neutralized in his inability to act and believe, he could at last understand the importance of believing, in his hard, inevitably willful life. His was actually an act of courage.

The reader is expected to "see" that this was a victory --"the shining and tragic goal of noble effort."[10] This was a victory of the role of Idea in life-time. It was neither the victory

of death over life, nor of life over death, but rather the victory of life as a whole, while it lasts.

Conrad could probably be considered as mediator between Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's philosophies. In opposition to the former, the latter had claimed that "to have to fight the instincts—that is the formula of decadence." In Nietzsche, life should be an assertion only of will; as long "as life is ascending, happiness equals instincts".[12] In Schopenhauer it should be an assertion only of Idea and renunciation of will; in Conrad it should be a fair renunciation and a fair assertion of both. However, Conrad's attitude towards man seems to be closer to Schopenhauer's (in spite of there being many similarities to Nietzsche in Conrad's psychological observation on man).

Once in a letter, Conrad declared that

> "mankind is delightful in its pride, its assurance, and its indomitable tenacity. It will spleep on the battlefield among its down deads, in the manner of an army having won a barren victory. It will not know when it is beaten. And perhaps it is right in that quality. The victories are not, perhaps so barren as it may appear from a purely strategical, utilitarian point of view."[13]

Cognizant of this view, we can look at dead Lena and "see"--"The spirit of the girl which was passing away from under them clung to her triumph, convinced of the reality of her victory over death."[14]

Even if hers was a barren victory for her who was dead, it should not be so barren for the reader who still lives... and needs to believe. It was clear from this viewpoint why Conrad

chose the title for his novel "Victory"--an assertion of the need for a ray of hope amidst the darkness of a coming world war:

> "Victory was the last word I had written in peace time. It was the last literary thought which had occurred to me before the doors of the Temple of Janus flying open with a crash shook the minds, the hearts, the consciences of men all over the world. Such coincidence could not be treated lightly. And I made up my mind to let the word stand, in the same hopeful spirit in which some citizen of Old Rome would have accepted the Omen."[15]

The words of the Colombian novelist, Gabriel García Márquez, the foremost revitalizer of the contemporary novel, unequivocally attest to the equally vitalizing influence of Conrad's art on future generations:

> "Creio que Conrad é o autor que leio com maior prazer: há um desejo de viver nessas páginas, que não sinto em nenhum outro autor. Assim, já estavam colocados os elementos básicos de minha formação literária."[16]

NOTES ON

CHAPTER VIII

1 - Practical Criticism ("Dryden on Canterbury Pilgrims"), p.17

2 - "Conrad and Nietzsche", p. 67

3 - Heart of Darkness, p. 154

4 - The Portable Nietzsche, p. 69

5 - Anatomy of Criticism, p. 19

6 - Le Salon de 1845, p. 82

7 - Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination, p. 8

8 - Heart of Darkness, p. 145 (Conrad on Life and Art)

9 - Victory, pp. 338-39

10 - Ibid., (note to the first edition) p. VII

11 - The Portable Nietzsche, p. 24

12 - Ibid., p. 522

13 - Joseph Conrad — The Three Lives, p. 415

14 - Victory, p. 26

15 - Ibid., p. (note to the first edition) p. VII

16 - Jornal "Leia Livros", p. 15 (entrevista extraída da revista Gaceta, do Instituto Colombiano de Cultura)

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