Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
pp. 225-246, No. 3, November 2001
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Feng Chia University

Silence and Secrets in Joseph Conrad's *Victory*

Robert Hampson[*]

Abstract

The essay begins with silence, proceeds through the unspeakable, and ends with secrets. The approach to these topics comes from two directions. The first derives from postcolonialism; the second from gender studies. The overall approach is historically based.

Victory is a novel full of voices—in particular, there is the oral community of Europeans who gossip about Heyst. Thus it might seem perverse to talk of silence. The first part of the essay is concerned with those who are silenced, those who are marginalised by the European discourse whose circulation constitutes the novel, the disregarded local people and the disregarded Chinese. The second part of the essay starts from censorship and addresses the treatment of sexuality (and particularly homosexuality) in the novel. The third part addresses what is apparent and what is concealed in the text. It then discusses a particular textual secret: the novel's relation to the 'Jack the Ripper' case.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, silence, secret

[*]Professor, Department of English, Royal Holloway, University of London.

The essay that follows begins with silence, proceeds through the unspeakable, and ends with secrets. The approach to these topics comes from two directions. The first derives from postcolonialism; the second from gender studies. The overall approach is historically based.

I. Silence:

In *The Tempest* (Act III, Scene ii), Caliban observes that 'the isle is full of noises'. *Victory: An Island Tale*, which is Conrad's version of *The Tempest*, is a novel full of voices. At the outset it establishes the oral community of Europeans within which Heyst has taken refuge, and it establishes this community through their own voices. Part I is presented by an unnamed narrator, who invokes the group ('We "out there"') to which he belongs.[1] He reports on Heyst's observable characteristics and recycles various attempts to interpret Heyst's behaviour made by this community. He notes that 'from the first there was some difficulty in making him out' (*V*, 6). This difficulty is demonstrated by the succession of labels that are attached to him ('Enchanted Heyst', 'Hard facts', 'Heyst the Spider', 'Heyst the Enemy'), each of which memorializes some incident or utterance. In the first part of *Victory*, as in the first part of *Nostromo*, various labels and public identities, produced by the discourse of the local community, circulate around an absence.

As the novel proceeds, Schomberg becomes the most important of these voices. It is Schomberg who keeps Heyst's name current in island gossip. He is Conrad's anatomy of gossip: 'asking everybody about everything, and arranging the information into the most scandalous shape his imagination could invent' (V, 30).[2] Part I ends with Schomberg's narrative of Heyst, in which Heyst's actions are interpreted in line with this rule (*V*, 61). Heyst's rescue of Lena gives Schomberg an even stronger motive to make Heyst the object of his gossip. As a result, Part II describes how it became 'a recognised entertainment to go and hear his abuse of Heyst' (*V*, 95). It also records how it is Schomburg's version of Heyst—'a Heyst fattened by years of private and public rapines, the murderer of Morrison, the swindler of many shareholders' (*V*, 156)—which circulates and will direct Ricardo

---

[1] Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (1915; London: J.M.Dent, 1923), p.3; hereafter cited in the text as *V*.

[2] As Patricia Meyer Spacks puts it, 'At one extreme, gossip manifests itself as distilled malice. It plays with reputations, circulating truths and half-truths and falsehoods,' *Gossip* (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p.6; hereafter cited in the text as *Gossip*.

and Jones to Heyst's island in Part III.[3]

Even in the privacy and isolation of Samburan, the voices of this oral community reach out and catch up with Heyst: first, through Lena; subsequently, through Jones and Ricardo. Thus, when Lena reveals to Heyst that she had heard talk about his partner, Heyst is forced to realize that he is not 'above the level of island gossip' (*V*, 206), as he had imagined. Similarly, when Jones and Ricardo arrive on the island, Heyst hears from Jones that he is 'a much talked—about man' (*V*, 377). The awareness of these 'ugly lies' (*V*, 381) has an impact on Heyst's ability to defend himself against Ricardo and Jones. He even writes his own possible responses to their presence into the Schombergian script: he imagines his actions as reported by these other voices. Thus he explains to Lena how, 'after luring my friend and partner to his death from mere greed of money', he would now be said to have 'murdered these unoffending shipwrecked strangers from mere funk' (*V*, 361).

In the context of all these voices, it might seem perverse to want to talk about silence in *Victory*. What I am interested in, in *Victory* as in *Heart of Darkness*, is those who are silenced—those who are marginalised by the European discourse whose circulation constitutes the novel.[4] I am referring, in the case of *Victory*, to the disregarded local people and the disregarded Chinese.[5] Thus, when Schomburg and Ricardo are considering obstacles in the way of a visit to Samburan, both agree that 'native craft' can be ignored:

> Both these white men looked on native life as a mere play of shadows. A play of shadows the dominant race could walk through unaffected and disregarded in the pursuit of its incomprehensible aims and needs. (*V*, 167)

---

[3] Earlier gossip by Schomberg has brought Jones and Ricardo down on him. They tell him of someone they met in Manila who gave them his name: 'He said you set a lot of scandal going about him once' (*V*, 101). As Spacks observes: 'rarely can one locate with precision the damage gossip causes, yet the chance of damage always remains' (*Gossip*, 51). In this case, the damage Schomburg caused by circulating gossip about another has been repaid by the circulation of gossip about him to Jones and Ricardo.

[4] See Robert Hampson, "*Heart of Darkness* and 'The Speech that Cannot be Silenced'", *English*, 163 (Spring 1990), 15-32.

[5] The pioneering work in this area is Heliena Krenn's article, "China and the Chinese in the Works of Joseph Conrad", *Conradiana*, 27: (Summer 1995), 83-96. See also Teng Hong-Shu, *Conrad and Conspiracy*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of London (1999), which draws attention to the Chinese presence and the central role of Wang in *Victory*. I am grateful to Dr. Teng for drawing my attention to this aspect of the novel.

A similar attitude is displayed by Heyst. It might be argued that, for Heyst, all human life is 'a mere play of shadows'. However, there is a particular nuance to his relations with Wang that fits in here. This is Heyst's general tendency to disregard Wang: Heyst is represented (and represents himself) as living alone on Samburan. Lena shares this attitude: 'There is no one here to think any thing of us good or bad' (*V*, 188). Wang is like the invisible servants in Jane Austen novels.[6] But, in *Victory*, this is not just an issue of class. Chapter 20 of *Lord Jim* provides an instructive comparison. Here Marlow is guided to Stein's study by a Javanese servant who, after throwing open the study door, 'vanished in a mysterious way as though he had been a ghost only moment arily embodied for that particular service'.[7] This figure of the ghostly, disembodied servant that appears briefly as an embellishment in *Lord Jim* is built into *Victory* as one of its constituent parts. Conrad's translation of *The Tempest* to the archipelago casts Wang in the role of Ariel, and, if Conrad does not make much space for their voices, he at least makes visible the invisibility of servants and subject peoples.[8]

Although the colonial encounter is kept in the background—and the cross—cultural encounter that is foregrounded in *Victory* is between different English cultures rather than European and non—European cultures—this background gradually comes to the fore as the novel proceeds. To begin with, English attitudes towards colonised peoples are thematised. Thus, Ricardo and Jones agree that Wang can safely be disregarded: 'a Chink was neither here nor there' (*V*, 268). In addition to the manifestation of these racist attitudes, the idea of 'race' itself is explicitly articulated in the narrative. For Mr Jones, racism is not casual but a conscious ideology. He asks Heyst 'Do you believe in racial superiority, Mr Heyst?' and, without waiting for a reply, adds 'I do, firmly' (*V*, 382).

Wang, for obvious reasons, becomes the focus of English attitudes towards non—Europeans. Wang, first of all, represents the Chinese community of the

---

[6] Consider, for example, Mrs Norris (in *Mansfield Park*) who also 'lives alone'.

[7] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900; London: J.M.Dent, 1923), p.204; all subsequent references are to this edition.

[8] Women also fall into this category. Note Davidson's surprise when he engages Mrs Schomberg in conversation: 'one was inclined to think of her as an It - an automaton, a very plain dummy, with an arrangement for bowing the head at times and smiling stupidly now and then' (*V*, 40). Silenced by her husband, she nevertheless shows that she has a voice. She also acts: she helps Lena to escape (and perhaps also tries to kill Jones and company by giving them saltwater for their voyage).

archipelago, making visible this group which is glimpsed at the edges of Conrad's Malay world. They are most prominent in the form of the Chinese coolies on board the *Nan—Shan* in 'Typhoon'. They are pervasive in the Macassar of *An Outcast* as servants in the Sunda Hotel; billiard markers; tellers in Hudig's office; shipowners; serangs and pirates. They are also present as the shopkeepers in Patusan; as Davidson's shipowners in *Victory*; as the silent servants in Schomberg's hotels in *Lord Jim* and *Victory*. As Queeny Chang observes:

> The Chinese in Indonesia, because of their willingness to work, their initiative and business acumen, had established themselves firmly into the economy.[9]

Wang's own career also produces a catalogue of Chinese roles in the archipelago through his transition from miner to cultivator, from coolie labour to entrepreneur, as he cultivates his patch of ground and markets his produce to Heyst.[10] Where Ariel's magic powers perhaps explain Wang's mysterious ability to appear and disappear, Ariel's invisibility becomes the 'invisibility' of servants and the colonised. Wang as a version of Ariel foregrounds the notion of invisible agency, of work which is done 'magically'—in other words, the mystification and occlusion of labour by class and imperial ideologies. (Consider, for example, who produced the Celebes 'hand—woven' sarong worn by Lena.) At the same time, through the narrative, Wang also asserts his agency. Wang, in a noticeable reversal of colonial positions, 'annexes' both Heyst's keys and his gun (*V*, 180, 314). Wang similarly annexes the ground next to his hut and turns it over to cultivation (*V*, 181). More significantly, Wang is disregarded by Jones and Ricardo, but is instrumental in their defeat: he shoots Pedro and shoves off their boat.

The Alfuros have a similar narrative trajectory. Consider, for a moment, the Tropical Belt Coal Company prospectus and map—with the island as the centre of a web of commercial connections:

> On it Samburan was represented as the central spot of the Eastern

[9] Queeny Chang, *Memories of a Nonya* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1981), 12. I am grateful to Yau Chin Yee for drawing my attention to this work.

[10] Thus Queeny Chang's father, Tjong A Fie, left mainland China in 1880 for Labuhan on the east coast of Sumatra, where, through the kind of patronage that 'Lord Jim' receives, he began work in a sundry shop; thirty years later, he was the owner of rubber, coconut, and tea plantations in Sumatra.

> Hemisphere ... Heavy lines radiated from it in all directions through the tropics ... (*V*, 23)

This map is obviously not a neutral and objective representation but an expression of value.[11] More important, as Christopher GoGwilt observes, the 'ironic failure of this map to represent a corresponding power' graphically registers the gap between 'representation and reality' (IW, 67).[12] One instance of the gap between the representation and the reality of power in Samburan is provided in Part IV Chapter 8. Having found Wang's hut empty, Heyst and Lena follow the path he has taken 'towards the upper limit of the forest' (*V*, 343). However, the path is blocked by 'a barricade of felled trees', which Heyst ironically describes as 'a barrier against the march of civilisation' (*V*, 344). The Alfuros are visible only as spear—blades poking through the barricade. This incident echoes the first reference to the Alfuros in the novel: in Part III Chapter 1, we are told that Wang had married one of the Alfuro women from the Alfuro village 'on the west shore of the island, beyond the central ridge', although the Alfuros, taking fright at the arrival of so many Chinese coolies for the coal mine, 'had blocked the path over the ridge by felling a few trees' (*V*, 179). The Alfuros are neither seen nor heard. Yet they represent a fully functioning small society with seasons for fishing and seasons for trading. And their territory is in effect an exclusion zone beyond the barrier they have erected. As Douglas Kerr puts it, their part of the island is a 'blind spot' in the European panoptical map.[13] Finally, when all the Europeans are dead, it is Wang and his Alfuro wife who remain in possession of the Diamond Bay settlement. Davidson's reference to the Achin war in the novel's final chapter becomes significant in this context. In March 1873, the Dutch government in Batavia declared war against the Achinese in northern Sumatra. After heavy losses, Achin fell to the Dutch in January 1874, although resistance continued, in the form of a guerilla war, through to 1878 and again from 1881 through to 1905. The actions of the Achinese, the Alfuros, and Wang express various forms of resistance to European domination and arguably anticipate the independence struggles of the twentieth century.

---

[11] See J. B. Hartley, "Maps, knowledge, and power" in D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 277-312.

[12] Christopher GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford: California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.67. The image of radiating lines centred on Samburan also resonates with the earlier name given to Heyst by the island gossip: 'the Spider'.

[13] Douglas Kerr, private correspondence with the author.

II. The Unspeakable:

Part III, Chapter 4 of *Victory* ends as follows:

> Before she could make a movement, or even turn her head his way, 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. The girl glanced round, moved suddenly away, and averted her face. With her hand she signed imperiously to him to leave her alone—a command which Heyst did not obey. (*V*, 172)

The next chapter begins:

> When she opened her eyes at last and sat up, Heyst scrambled quickly to his feet and went to pick up her cork helmet, which had rolled a little way off. Meanwhile she busied herself in doing up her hair, plaited on the top of her head in two heavy, dark tresses, which had come loose. (*V*, 173)

Something has clearly happened between Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, and it is something which Conrad can't—or is not allowed—to describe. A similar use of the chapter end is made by Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* between the final chapter of Part 1 ('The Maiden') and the start of Part 2 ('Maiden No More'). In Hardy's case, the gap between the two parts stands in for the period during which Tess is Alec's mistress. The initial sexual encounter is undescribed as are their subsequent sexual relations: the reader is allowed to miss the sexual encounter, to believe that there was only a single, enforced sexual encounter in order to excuse Tess, or to accept that Tess becomes Alec's mistress—and then deal with that.

In both *Tess* and *Victory*, the 'unspeakable' is of course sexual behaviour. We might recall that Leslie Stephen, the editor of the *Graphic*, the journal in which *Tess* first appeared, insisted on certain changes to the text. These included Angel's being made to carry the milkmaids across the flooded lane not in his arms but in a wheelbarrow.[14] In *Victory*, Conrad resorts to reticence or even silence, as in the white

[14] See Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.307.

space between those two chapters. Thus the reader is left to make what they will of Zangiacomo's Ladies Orchestra—given that Zangiacomo is not an Italian, none of the women are ladies, and 'orchestra' would seem to require some talent for music. Lena describes herself as 'not what they call a good girl' (*V*, 198), but the imprecision of this self—description by negatives leaves a lot of interpretative freedom. Does she mean simply that she is not a virgin or that she has had a lot of sexual experience? Schomberg is much more precise: 'He shot out an infamous word which made Davidson start. That's what the girl was ...' (*V*, 47). The word is presumably 'whore', but that is a presumption. And, if that is the word he used, it isn't necessarily true: in Mandy Rice Davis's words, 'he would say that, wouldn't he'. Schomberg's evaluation of Lena is obviously coloured by his disappointment. Either way, we are left to choose between Lena's imprecise negative description of herself and Schomberg's precise (but unprintable) positive assertion.

In his correspondence with Macdonald Hastings about the stage—adaptation of *Victory*, Conrad suggested that, for the row with Zangiacomo, Schomberg might accuse him of having 'sold' Lena 'to that swindling baron', Heyst (CL5, 643).[15] This again would introduce the idea of prostitution into our thoughts about Lena and the Ladies Orchestra. In 'Because of the Dollars', a story Conrad wrote while writing *Victory*, a story that is dependent on and reconfigures elements of the novel, Conrad is more explicit about prostitution.[16] In the character of 'Laughing Ann', Conrad presents what Lena might have become if she had spent more years in the archipelago: after being dropped by 'Pearler Harry', the man she lived with, Ann has passed through a series of relationships and, as her conversation with Davidson records, has had a time of 'paints and dyes' (*WT*, 183) and 'professional, gay, European feathers' (*WT*, 192). ('Gay ladies', we might note, was a nineteenth—century euphemism for prostitutes.) Through Ann—as with Lena and the Zangiacomo Ladies Orchestra — (but less ambiguously), Conrad gestures towards one aspect of the sexual life of his European expatriate community. More specifically, he registers for the first time in his fiction the world of European women adventurers in the archipelago, a concealed history of impermanent sexual relationships, fear of desertion, and prostitution.

In his correspondence with Macdonald Hastings about the stage adaptation of

---

[15] Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, Volume 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 643; hereafter cited in the text as *CL5*.

[16] Joseph Conrad, "Because of the Dollars", *Within the Tides* (1915; London: J.M.Dent, 1923); hereafter cited in the text as *WT*.

Victory, Conrad was also concerned that it should be clear to the audience that Heyst and Lena had a sexual relationship, although, because of stage censorship, this would have to be indicated indirectly. The gap between Chapters 4 and 5 in Part III seems to have a similar function. Apart from that moment, the reader is left to draw their own conclusions from the domestic arrangements of Lena and Heyst—they obviously share a bedroom, from which we can perhaps deduce that they are living as man and wife. Jeffrey Meyers, on the other hand, reads the gap in terms of 'an apparently unsatisfactory sexual encounter'.[17] He argues that the encounter is prompted, not by love or passion, but by Heyst's 'resolute desire to overcome his feelings of inadequacy' (*HL*, 83). And, he goes on, 'it is clear from their subsequent dialogue that Heyst's inept sexual advances have failed to satisfy Lena and merely heightened her belief that he does not love her' (*HL*, 86). In Meyer's reading, Heyst is physically impotent, and, apart from this failed encounter, there is no sex in his relationship with Lena. I am not so much concerned with arguing the relative value of these different interpretations as with noting the fact of widely divergent readings. This is obviously a function of the text's strategies of reticence, silence, and ambiguity. It also raises the question I want to move on to—that of what is clear and obvious in the text. If certain things in the text are to be considered 'secrets', then there needs to be some sense of what is apparent—and to whom.

I want to approach this through an historical digression. At the same time as there was this censorship of magazines, books, and the theatre, there are estimated to have been some 120,000 female prostitutes walking the streets of London in the 1880s. In his autobiography, *Something of Myself*, Kipling gives an account of London in 1889 when he arrived back in England and was living near Charing Cross. He notes what he calls the 'shifting, shouting brotheldom' of the Strand and Piccadilly, and describes the 'pious British householder and his family' making their way back from the theatre through this throng 'eyes—front and fixed, as though not seeing'.[18] The business of 'not seeing' has an obvious relevance to the question of what is apparent and what is concealed.

Kipling doesn't mention this, but the West End was also patrolled by male prostitutes. H. S. Ashbee, the Victorian pornographer, writing in 1887, referred

---

[17] Jeffrey Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature 1890-1930* (London: Athlone Press, 1977), p.83; hereafter cited in the text as *HL*.

[18] Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* , ed. Robert Hampson (1936; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 85.

(disapprovingly) to an upsurge of homosexual activity in London in the 1880s: 'it would be easy to name men of the very highest positions in diplomacy, literature and the army who at the present day indulge in these idiosyncrasies'.[19] The naming of names became an issue two years later with the Cleveland Street affair. The questioning of a 15 year—old messenger boy by the Post Office police uncovered a male brothel at 19 Cleveland Street, where a number of young postal workers were moonlighting as rentboys. When the police raided the premises, the manager of the brothel, Charles Hammond, had already packed and fled to Gravesend for a boat to France. Two of the post—office workers, a messenger called Henry Newlove and a telegraphist called George Veck, were charged with procuring the other three and were discreetly tried and sentenced. Meanwhile, there was considerable effort at the highest levels—from the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and the Prince of Wales, no less — to prevent the boys from naming their clients in open court. The most prominent of those named by the boys in their depositions was Lord Arthur Somerset, the son of the Duke of Beaufort, a major in the Guards and Superintendent of the Royal Stables. In August 1889, Lord Arthur took four months leave of absence from his regiment and took off for the continent. Like Hammond, apart from the disgrace of being named and imprisoned, he faced the possibility of a maximum sentence of life imprisonment (because of the involvement of minors). The naming of names again became an issue in 1895 with the Wilde trial. Frank Harris reported, no doubt with some exaggeration, that after Wilde's arrest, 'every train to Dover was crowded; every steamer to Calais was thronged with members of the aristocratic and leisure classes'.[20] These occasions provide a suggestive context for Mr Jones's 'pier—head jump' (*V*, 104).

Andrew Michael Roberts, in his recent book *Conrad and Masculinity*, has observed that *Victory* is 'unusual in making relatively overt reference to homosexuality'.[21] On the other hand, Meyers, in his book *Homosexuality and Literature 1890—1930*, argued that Conrad was 'forced to treat this theme in a covert manner' (*HL*, 16). It is from the conflict between these two statements that the next stage of my argument takes off.[22] In support of his case, Roberts notes Jones's 'hatred

---

[19] Quoted in Colin Simpson, Lewis Chester, David Leitch, *The Cleveland Street Affair* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1976), p.6. I am indebted to this work for the rest of this paragraph.

[20] Quoted by Meyers.

[21] Andrew Michael Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 201; hereafter cited in the text as *CM*.

[22] One should notice, however, how Roberts's use of the words 'relatively' and 'fairly' significantly qualify 'overt' and 'obvious'.

and fear of women' and his 'murderous jealousy when Ricardo pursues Lena' as 'fairly obvious indicators' (*CM*, 201)—indicators, that is, within what Roberts's specifies as a distorted, homophobic and stereotyped version of homosexuality. Roberts might also have pointed to Jones's introduction of Ricardo as his 'secretary'—and Jones's specification that Ricardo should have the room next to his in Schomberg's hotel (*V*, 82). Schomberg's reflection that there was 'nothing secretarial about him' (*V*, 84) certainly encourages us to speculate about Ricardo's role and function. Roberts might additionally have pointed to Jones's 'long, feminine eyelashes' (*V*, 85); his 'waspish eyebrows' (*V*, 267); his air of 'depraved distinction' (*V*,85) as further possible 'indicators'. Emma Fox has argued for the existence of a more concealed coding in the text.[23] She draws attention, for example, to the 'gorgeous blue silk dressing—gown' (*V*, 294) in which Jones receives Heyst in Part IV Chapter 11. Ford Madox Ford's account of Henry James's meeting with D. G. Rossetti in his studio—when James mistook Rossetti's painting—smock for a dressing—gown—provides us with a guide to the possibly disreputable connotations of receiving company in one's dressing—gown. As Ford puts it, in his memoir *Return to Yesterday*:

> For Mr James the wearing of a dressing—gown implied a moral obloquy that might end who knows where? And he deduced from the fact that Rossetti received him at tea—time in what he took to be such a garment that he was disgusting in his habits, never took baths, and was insupportably lecherous.24
> However, Emma Fox's interest is in the word 'gorgeous', which she argues was part of a specifically 'gay' code, where words in ordinary use would have a secondary meaning within this specific sub—culture or, as in this case, would function as markers of this sub—culture.

Whether Fox is right or wrong about the existence of such a code, her argument would apply to only one specific sub—group of readers, a community of 'insiders'. I want to consider what would seem overt or apparent to readers outside that sub—group—which is the focus also of both Meyers and Roberts. Ricardo's role as 'secretary' and the request for adjoining rooms could be read simply in terms of their criminal partnership—without implying any sexual dimension to their relationship.

[23] Emma Fox, *Conrad and Masculinity*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1994.
[24] Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), p. 15.

Even Jones's fear and hatred of women could be read, I guess, as hysteria or neurasthenia—or as, at least, within the scope of the English gentleman's eccentricity (consider Mr Fairlie in Wilkie Collins's novel, *The Woman in White*)—rather than as signs of a particular sexual orientation.[25] Conrad himself, in his correspondence with Macdonald Hastings, offers a desexualised reading of what he terms Jones's 'woman—hate':

> Mr Jones *may* be afraid of women for himself but he is afraid of women for Ricardo. The trio ... depend on each other for their lawless career. ... Woman ... is an impediment to lawlessness an inducement to disloyalty and so on—a sackful of psychological herbs from which you must distil a glassful of drama. (CL5, 653)

Conrad directs Hastings towards Jones's fear of losing Ricardo to women and to the effect such a development would have on their 'lawless career'. What Conrad carefully brackets out of consideration here is what Jones's fear of women 'for himself' might imply. Elsewhere in their correspondence he insists merely that Jones is 'crazy' (CL5, 653). Conrad was, however, very conscious of the restrictions imposed on the theatre—both by the censor and the audience. He observes to Hastings about the stage adaptation of *Victory*: 'Whatever comes of it, I know it will be a piece of work as honest as the exigencies of the public will allow' (CL5, 658). At the same time, he has a sense of the play as already pushing at the boundaries of acceptability, even while accepting 'the exigencies of the public'. He goes on: 'Perhaps they may have to sit up a bit to take it in'. From the continuation of the letter, it is clear that he has in mind here the figures of Lena and Jones (CL5, 659).

The clearest 'indicators' of homosexuality in the text are not mentioned by Roberts—perhaps because they are discussed by Meyers. In the extended dialogue between Schomberg and Ricardo at the end of Part II, Ricardo brings up Jones's fear of women in relation to the (unspoken) notion of homosexuality but only to deny the connection:

---

[25] Mrs Belloc Lowndes's novel, *The Lodger* (London: Methuen, 1913), provides an interesting comparison: Sleuth's hatred of women is directed against prostitutes and alcohol-drinkers. He has a friendly relationship with the strict Mrs Bunting; an admiring relationship with her step-daughter, the innocent Daisy; and he rewards a teetotal barmaid with a sovereign. His hatred of women is put down to 'religious mania', an over-attachment to the more misogynstic statements in the Bible; there is no sense of a sexual element to the killings.

> 'The girls there would ask me if the English *caballero* in the *posada* was a monk in disguise, or if he had taken a vow to the *santisima madre* not to speak to a woman, or whether—You can imagine what fairly free-spoken girls will ask when they come to the point of not caring what they say; and it used to vex me.' (*V*, 128-9)

Again, nothing is stated: the reader is invited to imagine what 'free-spoken girls' might have said. However, in Part III, the narrator is more explicit: he refers there to Jones as 'the outcast of his vices' (*V*, 214). This is reinforced, in Part IV, when Heyst reports Jones's description of himself as having been ejected 'from his proper sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions' (*V*, 250). And, in the extended dialogue between Jones and Heyst at the end of Part IV, Jones suggests to Heyst that something had 'driven' him out as well: 'the originality of your ideas, perhaps. Or your tastes' (*V*, 296). Nevertheless, nothing, in all of this, really amounts to more than hints. In the final example, however, we have Jones presenting himself to Heyst as his 'secret sharer'—much as Gentleman Brown had done with Jim. Meyers, who uses the term 'secret sharer' in relation to this encounter, reads Jones as claiming a bond with Heyst by recognizing 'the homosexual element in Heyst, that has led to his fear of women, his guilt and his impotence' (*HL*, 87).

However, as Roberts argues, it is not in the end a matter of identifying Jones or Heyst as 'homosexual'; what is important, rather, is the way that introducing the issue of homosexuality unsettles the homosocial world of the novel (*CM*, 206).[26] From the opening image of coal and diamonds, as Roberts notes, the novel sets up the idea of sameness and difference, which it explores through the relations of Jones and Ricardo, Ricardo and Schomberg, Jones and Heyst (*CM*, 203). Ricardo and Schomberg, for example, are linked by their assertion of masculinity through a violent approach to Lena. The idea of sameness and difference is also explored through Heyst's successive rescues of Morrison and Lena (*CM*, 204). As Roberts suggests, it is enough to ask the question 'What is the nature of Heyst's relationship with Morrison?' to destabilise the homosocial world and to interrogate its construction of masculinity.

---

[26] The notion of 'the homosexual' is, anyway doubly anachronistic. It has been argued that the idea of a 'homosexual' identity was not available in the nineteenth century. More recently, it has been argued that there is no homosexual identity (as a kind of essence) only the performance of homosexual acts. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp.174-5.

III. Secrets:

In Part II Chapter 6, after asking Schomberg whether he knows the West India Docks, the docks between Limehouse and Blackwall in London's East End, Ricardo indulges in reminiscences of his life in London:

> 'There ain't much to me, except that I have never been tame, even when walking the pavement or cracking jokes and standing drinks to chums—ay, and strangers, too. I would watch them lifting elbows at my expense, or splitting their sides at my fun ... I would watch them and think: "You boys don't know who I am. If you did—!" With girls, too. Once I was courting a girl. I used to kiss her behind the ear and say to myself: "If you only knew who's kissing you, my dear, you would scream and bolt!" Ha, ha!' (*V*, 105)

The passage seems to be gesturing towards some kind of secret knowledge which the text withholds from us. The question it raises is 'Who is Martin Ricardo?' However, as Peter Bagnall has demonstrated, the novel also provides lots of clues that point towards an answer.[27] Thus, in the following chapter, Ricardo reveals to Schomberg the knife that he carries strapped to his leg. He tells how he and Mr Jones met up, when he was mate on a schooner out of London; how they robbed the schooner in the Gulf of Mexico; and then began working together 'in Nicaragua first' (*V*, 110); he refers to Mr Jones (among other terms) as 'the boss' (*V*, 112); and impresses on Schomberg his readiness to 'rip' him up (*V*, 109). Later on, in Part IV Chapter 1, as he approaches Heyst's house, Ricardo's head is swimming with 'the repressed desire of violence' (*V*, 226), the desire 'for what he called a "ripping up"' (*V*, 225), and, when he discovers Lena, 'exposed and defenceless—and tempting', the nature of the temptation is made explicit: 'Ravish or kill—it was all one to him' (*V*, 228).

The novel seems to be set in the early 1890s. Schomberg 'came out East directly after the Franco—Prussian War' in 1870, and he is now forty—five. This provides the *terminus ad quem* for dating purposes. If Schomberg were twenty at the time of the Franco—Prussian War, this would give us a date of 1895 for the action of the novel.

[27] Peter Bagnall, *Joseph Conrad and Jack the Ripper*, Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1999.

He is unlikely to have been much younger than 20, and he could indeed have been older—which would bring the date earlier into the 1890s. On the other hand, Schomberg, in *Lord Jim*, was still in Bangkok when he directed Marlow to Gentleman Brown, a meeting that Dwight Purdy's chronology would date to 1889—90.[28] This provides the *terminus a quo*. Mr Jones's observation that he and Ricardo 'haven't had time to be dull for the last three years' (*V*, 91) would thus suggest an 1889—90 start for their partnership. If Mr Jones's 'pier—head jump' might be related, for example, to such events as the Cleveland Street raid of 1889, Ricardo's story is perhaps to be related (as Bagnall has convincingly argued) to another event of the late 1880s, what Conrad referred to, in 'A Smile of Fortune' (1910) as 'a series of crimes in the East End of London'.[29]

As Bagnall notes, Conrad is probably referring here to the series of murders which took place in Whitechapel between 31 August and 9 November 1888.[30] When the series of murders ended, it was thought that the murderer had committed suicide at the end of 1888, or had been locked up (perhaps in an asylum), or had emigrated. Another suggestion was that he might have been a sailor. Thus the *Gazette* (18 February 1889) made the following report:

> We now learn that at the beginning of January similar atrocities were taking place in Nicaragua, and that about the end of December equally barbarous mutilations are reported from Jamaica.
>
> It would be interesting to know whether any steamer left the Thames

---

[28] Dwight Purdy, :The Chronology of *Lord Jim*", *Conradiana*, VIII.1, 81-2. Purdy, following Tony Tanner, notes that Stein was 'at threescore' (*LJ*, 202), when he consulted him about Jim, and that he had 'taken an active part in the revolutionary movement of 1848' when he was 'a youth of twenty-two' (*LJ*, 205). If, as Purdy argues, 'at threescore' means exactly sixty, then Marlow confers with Stein about Jim in 1886. Since Jim has been in Patusan for three years when Gentleman Brown appears (*LJ*, 367), Purdy gives the date of Jim's death as 1889. Marlow hears of Jim's death 'eight months before' his own meeting with Brown. See Tony Tanner, "The Chronology and Enigmatic End of *Lord Jim*", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (March 1967), 369-80. (All references are to *Lord Jim*, London: J.M. Dent, 1923.)

[29] *'Twixt Land and Sea* (London: J.M. Dent, 1923), p.61. The narrator refers to these crimes as being reported in the newspapers. Conrad was in Mauritius from 30 September to 21 November 1888, exactly in the period of the Ripper murders. Note that the young captain subsequently tells Miss Jacobus: 'As to objectionable old women, they are first strangled quietly, then cut up into small pieces and thrown away, a bit here and a bit there' (TLS, 62).

[30] Richard Whittington-Egan, *A Casebook on Jack the Ripper* (London: Wildy & Sons, 1975), suggests (without providing any evidence) that some of the victims used the public house on the corner opposite the Royal Mint. In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, the crew at the end of the voyage are seen 'on the broad flagstones before the Mint ... bound for the Black Horse' (London: J.M. Dent, 1923, p.171).

> after the 9th of November, and after calling at Jamaica in December proceeded to Central America. If such a steamer exists, there seems a strong probability that the murderer will be found among her crew.

The *New York Sun* (February 1889) had reported the brutal murder of six prostitutes in Nicaragua in an article dated 'Managua, Jan 24'. The *Gazette* was also picking up on an earlier story that the killer was a Malay sailor.

This proposed solution was inconsistent with some of the other evidence in the case—in particular, the letter and postcard, apparently from the killer, which were widely publicized in the press and were used by the police in a handbill and poster campaign. These two documents (probably written by a journalist) also introduced the name by which the killer was subsequently known: they changed it from the original nickname associated with the crimes, 'Leather Apron', to the name used in the letter 'Jack the Ripper'. The letters were striking for their jocular character. They referred to 'my funny little games', and expressed amusement at various aspects of the investigation: 'They say I am a doctor now *ha ha*' and 'The joke about Leather Apron gave me real fits'. The writer famously addressed the chief of police as 'Dear Boss'—an Americanism—and referred to 'being on the right track'. He also promised: 'I shan't quit ripping them'. What I am suggesting, then, are various echoes of this letter in Ricardo's speech in the novel.

Why would Conrad be harking back to these murders of the 1880s? In his Author's Note to the *The Secret Agent*, Conrad refers to one of his sources for that novel: 'the rather summary recollections of an Assistant Commissioner of Police'.[31] The Assistant Commissioner was Dr Robert Anderson and the 'recollections' have been identified as *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement* (London 1906). Anderson was a 'political adviser' to the British Government on Irish Nationalism with confidential access to the Home Secretary. In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad picks up on his management of a secret agent, 'Major Carron', who was involved in the forgery of letters allegedly by Parnell, which were published in *The Times*. These were designed to link the Irish MP to bombing campaigns and the Phoenix Park assassinations and hence discredit him.[32] However, when the Parnell Commission was set up to

[31] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (Lonndon: J,M. Dent, 1923), xi.

[32] In 1896 'Le Caron' declared himself a secret agent to the Parnell Commission and revealed that he had worked under Anderson's guidance for 21 years. See Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Western World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.311. Anderson, like Parnell, was a member of the

investigate the forgeries, Anderson changed jobs: in late 1888, he ceased to be a 'political adviser' and became Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and thus in charge of the investigation into the Ripper murders.

Anderson wrote a number of volumes of recollections, in which he gave teasing glimpses of the case. In *Criminals and Crime* (1907), he observed that the killer was 'safely caged in an asylum'. In *The Lighter Side of My Official Life* (1910), he observed:

> I am almost tempted to disclose the identity of the murderer ... But no public benefit would result from such a course, and the traditions of my old department would suffer ...

In an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* (March 1910), Anderson made clear, without actually providing a name, that the individual he had in mind was what he called 'a low—class Polish Jew'. Elsewhere, he indicated that the killer was 'very likely Polish'. This is the man whose name began with 'K' and ended with 'ski' for whom various identities have been suggested. [33] (Conrad Korzeniowski was, fortunately, out of the country throughout the period of the murders.)

There was also renewed interest in the case, at the time when Conrad was writing *Victory*, as a result of Mrs Belloc Lowndes best—seller, *The Lodger* (1913).[34] This novel was published by Methuen in their 'Popular Novels' series—a series which included Conrad's novel *Chance*.[35] Indeed, *Chance* is advertised in the end—papers to *The Lodger*. In these end—papers, *The Lodger* is described as suggesting a 'solution' to 'the most dreadful and baffling of all the unsolved murder mysteries in English criminal annals' (TL, 6). Joe Chandler, Mrs Belloc Lowndes' young detective,

---

Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy: he regarded Parnel's support for Home Rule as betrayal.

[33] Chief Detective Inspector Frederick Abberline, who was involved in the investigations, identified the killer with the Borough poisoner, George Chapman - a Pole, whose real name was Severin Klosowski. More recently, Martin Fido, following Macnachten's private memorandum in which he lists three main suspects, including a Polish Jew, 'a known lunatic with homicidal tendencies', identified him as Nathan Kaminsky (and suggested that the police confused him with Aaron Kosminski, another 23 year old Polish Jew from Whitechapel also hospitalised in Colney Hatch in 1888/1889.) See Martin Fido, *The Crimes, Detection and Death of Jack the Ripper* (1987; London: Orion, 1993).

[34] Conrad started work on what became *Victory* in May 1912.

[35] In a letter of 11 October 1913, Conrad tells Pinker about his distrust of Methuen in relation to the delayed publication of *Chance*: 'The strike (I have noticed) did not prevent them from putting out a good many books - novels and others. I have been watching their ads: lately' (CL5, 289).

covers some of the proposed solutions: 'Sometimes I think it's a sailor—the foreigner they talks about ... Then, again, I says to myself that it's a butcher ...' (TL, 285). Belloc Lowndes own solution is the 'religious maniac' (TL, 306). The lodger is a neurasthenic gentleman who displays 'a queer kind of fear and dislike of women' (TL, 48) and goes out late at night for walks.[36] With Ricardo, as Peter Bagnall argues, Conrad seems to be offering his own interpretation of the case. In this version, the murders stop because the killer has left the country—and has ended his life in the Malay archipelago. It is also interesting that, where the *Gazette* was trying to link these barbaric murders to a Malay sailor — and Robert Anderson (like *The Times*) was keen to find the killer among the Polish Jewish community of Whitechapel, Conrad's candidate is a working—class Englishman. We see here again that double—mapping of Empire that GoGwilt has described: where the West is constructed in opposition to an East that is both South—east Asia and the eastern end of Europe. For Conrad, however, in *Victory* as in *Heart of Darkness*, barbarism is not encountered in the Other but is identified at the heart of Empire.

Thus, it could be argued that those marginalised and excluded from speech in the colonial context of *Victory* suddenly become visible in the metropolitan fears stirred up by the Ripper case. At the same time, the silences about sexuality in the dominant culture contrast with the pornography of sexual violence in the reports of the murders. Peter Bagnall has very usefully brought together *Victory* and the Ripper case. Perhaps most important, the juxtaposition prompts an exploration of the sexuality of Ricardo. Ricardo seems to be involved in homosexual activity with Jones, yet he also seems to identify himself as heterosexual. He certainly has an interest in women, although it is not clear whether he wants to have sex with women or kill them. His claim to Schomberg, 'Take 'em by the throat or chuck 'em under the chin is all one to me—almost' (*V*, 166)—like the assertion 'Ravish or kill—it was all one to him' (*V*, 228)—becomes less a boast of masculine 'force of character' (*V*, 130) and more a confession of confusion. Indeed, 'all one to me' suggests an actual indifference to sex. Meyers reads Ricardo as engaging in furtive 'flings' (*V*, 306) with women in order to 'confirm his masculinity': more accurately, he sees him as 'making sexual overtures to women, like Lena, whom he threatens with violence but is actually afraid to sleep with' (*HL*, 87). Certainly, the tone of his relations with women seems characterised by violence. At the same time, when he is alone with Lena at the end of the novel, his expressed

[36] He turns out to be a homicidal madmen, who has escaped from an asylum. Interestingly, during his escape he managed 'to annex a considerable sum of money in gold' (TL, 299). I have already discussed Conrad's use of the word 'annex' in relation to Wang.

desire is to be dominated by her: 'What you want is a man, a master that will let you put the heel of your shoe on his neck' (*V*, 309). The two encounters between them consist of, in one case, a violent struggle, apparently an attempted rape, and, in the other, self—abasement and foot—fetishism. For Meyer, this places Ricardo alongside Heyst as sexually impotent. As with Jones and Heyst, however, in the end, it is perhaps not important to place a label on Ricardo. His polymorphous sexuality, again, questions the construction of masculinity. He is characterised by a violence and a mobility of desire that calls into question more conventional notions of masculinity.

Bibliography

Bagnall, Peter. *Joseph Conrad and Jack the Ripper.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1999.

Conrad, Joseph. *The Collected Works of Joseph Conrad*. Uniform Edition. London: J. M. Dent, 1923.

Chang, Queeny. *Memories of a Nonya.* Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1981.

Cosgrove, D. and S. Daniels (eds). *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Fido, Martin. *The Crimes, Detection and Death of Jack the Ripper.* London: Orion, 1993.

Ford, Ford Madox. *Return to Yesterday.* London: Victor Gollancz, 1931.

Fox, Emma. *Conrad and Masculinity.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1994.

GoGwilt, Christopher. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire.* California: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Hampson, Robert. "*Heart of Darkness* and 'The Speech that Cannot be Silence.'" *English* 163 (Spring 1990): 15-32.

Karl, Frederick and Laurence Davies (eds). *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 5.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Something of Myself.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.

Krenn, Heliena. "China and the Chinese in the Works of Joseph Conrad." *Conradiana* 27 (Summer 1995): 83-96.

Lowndes, Belloc. *The Lodger.* London: Methuen, 1913.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and Literature 1890-1930.* London: Athlone Press, 1977.

Millgate, Michael. *Thomas Hardy: A Biography.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Purdy, Dwight. "The Chronology of *Lord Jim*," *Conradiana* VIII.1, 81-2.

Roberts, Andrew Michael. *Conrad and Masculinity.* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Sherry, Norman. *Conrad's Western World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Simpson, Colin et al. *The Cleveland Street Affair.* Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1976.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Gossip.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Tanner, Tony. "The Chronology and Enigmatic End of *Lord Jim*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (1967), 369-80.

Teng, Hong-Shu. *Joseph Conrad and Conspiracy*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1999.

Whittington-Egan, Richard. *A Casebook on Jack the Ripper*. London: Wildy & Sons. 1975.

逢甲人文社會學報第 3 期
第 225-246 頁 2001 年 11 月
逢甲大學人文社會學院

康拉德小說《勝利》裏之沉默與秘密

Robert Hampson[*]

摘 要

本文將從《勝利》之沉默談及其中之不可告人之事，最後並以該作品所藏之秘密結尾。 方法學除採後殖民主義與性別研究之理論外，諸多討論以歷史研究為主。

《勝利》是部充斥著聲音的小說—主角海斯特深受歐洲同胞散佈之流言所苦。 因此要論及其中之沉默，似乎有所突兀。 不過，本文將探討故事裏沉默的一群，那些被歐式言說邊緣化的原住民與華人。 第二部份將討論故事裏被刪除的同性戀議題。 論文第三部份將處理《勝利》中之明顯情節與隱藏情節的問題。 本文最後將探究《勝利》隱藏之秘密:「開膛手傑克」事件與其之關聯。

關鍵詞: .康拉德、沈默、秘密

[*]倫敦大學皇家賀洛威學院 (Royal Holloway, University of London) 英文系現代文學教授，倫敦大學文學博士。