

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**Conrad, Freud and the 'Female Spectre': A Comparative Analysis of Women
in the Life and Works of Joseph Conrad and Sigmund Freud**

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in the University of Hull

by

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‘One of the surest signs of Conrad’s genius is that women dislike his books’

- George Orwell -

‘If he isn’t crazy now, he will be by the time those guys get through psycho-analysing him’

- Howard Hawks, *His Girl Friday* -

Spectre: French ^{Spectrum} _{from} Latin. 1 An apparition, a ghost, *esp.* one of a terrifying nature or aspect. b In Epicurean philosophy, an image supposed to emanate from a corporeal thing.

2 b A person resembling a ghost in appearance.

- *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* -

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This thesis is dedicated with love to grand-dad George, my grandmothers, Uncle Ted and Bob-cat, all of whom are welcome to haunt me.

CHRONOLOGY

Titles in **red type** are key works by Joseph Conrad. Dates of publication refer to the collected editions. original

Titles in **blue type** are key works by Sigmund Freud. Dates of publication refer to the original publication in German.

Plain type refers to significant events in the lives of Conrad and Freud.

Bold type refers to important cultural or political events.

1856 - Freud born in Freiburg, Moravia.

1857 - Conrad born in Berdyczów, Ukraine.

1861 - Martha Bernays born.

1862 - Conrad goes into Russian exile with his parents.

1865 - Evelina Korzeniowska dies in Chernikhov.

1869 - Apollo Korzeniowski dies in Cracow.

1873 - Jessie George born.

1874 - Conrad leaves Poland for Marseilles; begins a twenty-year career at sea.

1882 - Freud becomes engaged to Martha Bernays.

1885 - Freud goes to Paris, researches at the Salpêtrière.

1886 - Conrad becomes a British subject. Freud leaves Paris and marries Martha Bernays. Sets up private practice in Vienna.

1889 - Conrad becomes master of the *Otago*, his only command.

1889 - Conrad begins *Almayer's Folly*.

1890 - Conrad meets Marguerite Poradowska on his way to visit Tadeusz Bobrowski in Poland. Takes up appointment in the Belgian Congo.

1894 - Tadeusz Bobrowski dies. Conrad retires from the sea, settles in England and meets Jessie George.

1895 - *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River*. *Studies on Hysteria* (in collaboration with Josef Breuer). Anna Freud born.

1896 - *An Outcast of the Islands*. Conrad marries Jessie George. Freud coins term 'psychoanalysis'.

- 1897 - *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. **Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.**
- 1898 - *Tales of Unrest*. Borys Conrad born.
- 1900 - *Lord Jim: A Tale*. *The Interpretation of Dreams*.
- 1901 - *The Inheritors* (in collaboration with Ford). 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life'. **Queen Victoria dies.**
- 1902 - *Youth*, including 'Heart of Darkness', 'The End of the Tether'.
- 1903 - *Typhoon and Other Stories*, including 'Amy Foster', 'Falk', 'To-morrow'. *Romance* (in collaboration with Ford).
- 1904 - *Nostramo: A Tale of the Seaboard*.
- 1905 - 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'.
- 1906 - *The Mirror of the Sea: Memories and Impressions*. John Conrad born.
- 1907 - *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale*. 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*'.
- 1908 - *A Set of Six*, including 'Gaspar Ruiz: A Romantic Tale', 'The Brute: An Indignant Tale', 'The Duel: A Military Tale'. 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', "'Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness'. **1st International Meeting of Psychoanalysts (in Salzburg).**
- 1909 - Conrad quarrels with Ford Madox Ford. Freud and Jung visit USA.
- 1910 - Conrad suffers breakdown.
- 1911 - *Under Western Eyes*.
- 1912 - *'Twixt Land and Sea*, including 'A Smile of Fortune', 'The Secret Sharer', 'Freya of the Seven Isles'; *A Personal Record*.
- 1913 - *Chance: A Tale in Two Parts*. 'The Theme of the Three Caskets'.
- 1914 - **Start of World War I.**
- 1915 - *Victory: An Island Tale; Within the Tides*, including 'The Planter of Malata', 'Because of the Dollars'.
- 1916 - *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (Parts I & II: 'Parapraxes' and 'Dreams'). Conrad meets Jane Anderson.
- 1917 - 'The Shadow-Line: A Confession'. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (Part III: 'General Theory of the Neuroses'). **Russian Revolutions.**
- 1918 - **Armistice. Polish Republic restored.**

- 1919 - *The Arrow of Gold*.
- 1920 - *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows*. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'.
- 1921 - *Notes on Life and Letters*.
- 1922 - **Mussolini comes to power in Italy.**
- 1923 - *The Rover*. 'The Ego and the Id'. Conrad visits USA. Onset of Freud's cancer.
- 1924 - 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex'. Conrad dies.
- 1925 - *Tales of Hearsay*. *Suspense* (incomplete). 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes'.
- 1926 - *Last Essays*. 'Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety'. 'The Question of Lay-Analysis'.
- 1927 - 'The Future of an Illusion'.
- 1928 - 'Dostoevsky and Parricide'.
- 1930 - 'Civilization and its Discontents'. Freud's mother Amalia dies aged 95.
- 1931 - 'Female Sexuality'.
- 1933 - *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (including 'Femininity'). **Hitler comes to power in Germany. Freud's books publicly burnt in Berlin.**
- 1936 - Jessie Conrad dies.
- 1938 - Freud flees Vienna for London.
- 1939 - Freud dies in London.

GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS

CONRAD

PRIMARY SOURCES:

<i>AF: Almayer's Folly</i>	<i>S: Suspense</i>
<i>AG: The Arrow of Gold</i>	<i>SA: The Secret Agent</i>
<i>APR: A Personal Record</i>	<i>SOS: A Set of Six</i>
<i>C: Chance</i>	<i>TLS: 'Twixt Land and Sea Tales</i>
<i>LE: Last Essays</i>	<i>'TOH: Tales of Hearsay</i>
<i>LJ: Lord Jim</i>	<i>TOS: Typhoon and Other Stories</i>
<i>MS: The Mirror of the Sea</i>	<i>TU: Tales of Unrest</i>
<i>NLL: Notes on Life and Letters</i>	<i>UWE: Under Western Eyes</i>
<i>NN: The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>	<i>V: Victory</i>
<i>OI: An Outcast of the Islands</i>	<i>WT: Within the Tides</i>
<i>R: The Rover</i>	<i>Y: Youth</i>

SECONDARY SOURCES:

- APIL: A Portrait in Letters* (Ed. Stape and Knowles).
- CL: The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, Vol 1-6 (Ed. Karl and Davies).
- JCC: Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* (Najder).
- CPB: Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends* (Ed. Najder).
- CUFE: Conrad under Familial Eyes* (Ed. Najder).
- LL: Life and Letters Vol I-II* (Ed. Jean-Aubry).

FREUD

PRIMARY SOURCES:

'Civilization': 'Civilization and Its Discontents'.

'"Civilized" Sexual Morality': '"Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness'.

'Creative Writers': 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming'.

'Delusions and Dreams': 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*'.

'Five Lectures': 'Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis'.

'Inhibitions': 'Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety'.

'Lay Analysis': 'The Question of Lay Analysis'.

'Three Essays': 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'.

'Some Psychological Consequences': 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes'.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

CLSFWF: The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess.

LSF: Letters of Sigmund Freud.

LSFAZ: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Many thanks to the Conrad and Freud families and
the following collections.

Between pages 81-82

Joseph Conrad in 1904 (Keating Collection, Yale)

Evelina Korzeniowska (Jagiellonian Library, Cracow)

Jessie Conrad in 1896 (Keating Collection, Yale)

Jane Anderson in 1910 (Janet Copeland)

Joseph, Jessie, Borys and John Conrad c. 1908 (University of Birmingham, UK,
from the Galsworthy Collection)

Between pages 193-194

Sigmund Freud c. 1885. (A.W. Freud *et al*, Sigmund Freud Copyrights Ltd., London)

Sigmund and Amalia Freud c.1872 (*ibid*)

Martha Bernays, wedding photograph, 1886 (*ibid*)

Sigmund and Anna Freud in the Dolomites, 1913 (*ibid*)

NOTE ON TEXT

Due to the large number of primary texts, titles, not dates, will be cited as references. However, full titles and dates will only be provided the first time a work is cited and abbreviated thereafter (as advised).

In the case of short stories or novellas, dates given are those of their first publication/serialisation in English. Dates of publication in collected editions are provided in the chronology.

References to secondary sources are also provided in the text and use the author-date system of citation.

Complete references are provided in the bibliography.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We had never seen the box before. His hands hovered above it; and he talked to us ironically, but his face became as grave as though he were pronouncing a powerful incantation over the things inside.

“Every one of us,” he said, with pauses that somehow were more offensive than his words - *“every one of us, you’ll admit, has been haunted by some woman [...].”*

Hollis rummaged in the box.

And it seemed to me, during that moment of waiting, that the cabin of the schooner was becoming filled with a stir invisible and living as of subtle breaths. (‘Karain’ [1897], *TU*: 47-8, emphasis added)

In Greek mythology the infamous tale of ‘Pandora’s Box’, as recorded by Hesiod, represents a thinly veiled attack on women. It tells of Pandora, the beautiful but foolish wife of Epimetheus, who misguidedly opens her husband’s forbidden casket and unleashes the spirits of Madness, Sickness, Old Age, Vice, Passion and Delusive Hope upon the world. Yet there is an earlier, lesser-known version of the myth that, according to Robert Graves, represents ‘a warning to men who pry into women’s mysteries, rather than contrariwise’ (1955, 2: 352). This story concerns the Athenian Demophon who, on his victorious return from Troy, stopped at Thrace and married the princess Phyllis. His longing for adventure, however, became so great that he made excuses for leaving to his wife, who presented him with a casket containing an object sanctified by the Earth-goddess Rhea - also known as Pandora - instructing him to open it only when he had abandoned all hope of returning to her. One year later, Phyllis took her life, and at this same moment Demophon decided to open the box. What he saw drove him mad and, as he rode wildly away, his horse stumbled and he was impaled

upon his own sword. Significantly, in both of these versions, women are a danger to be kept at a distance, capable of unleashing terrible and devastating forces, whether intentionally or not. Joseph Conrad's early tale 'Karain' seems both to evoke and invert these two myths as the eponymous hero, already beset by the spirits of Pandora's box and tortured by guilt for having betrayed and killed his best friend Pata Matara, appears one night to seek help on board the narrator's schooner. As he relates his story to the three British gun-smugglers, we discover that his shooting of Matara was provoked by an obsession with the intended victim, Matara's own sister, who had brought shame on her family by running away with a Dutchman. The image of this entrancing woman had absorbed his mind, undermined his sense of identity and purpose, almost driven him mad, so that, confronted with a choice, he shot his friend to save her. After the shooting, however, the female spectre vanishes, to be replaced by the dead Matara. As Karain enters the narrator's cabin, seeking respite and relief from this mental torture, he places his kriss in a dangerous 'hilt inwards' (22) position on the table, suggesting that he is at risk of becoming another Demophon. The box Hollis uses in a pretend ritual, intended to assuage Karain's suffering, also evokes a sense of superstitious dread, whilst the phrase 'every one of us' (47) indicates a mythic universality. Yet in this story the box is opened by a man, amongst a group of men, to reveal a collection of keepsakes: some dried flowers, the photograph of an unidentified woman, a glove, and a sixpenny coin bearing the portrait of Queen Victoria, that together form a protective talisman for the haunted Karain. In Conrad's story, female images both destroy and protect, yet despite their pervasive influence no woman is ever physically present. Even in Karain's narrative, Matara's sister is only glimpsed from afar. In contrast to Greek mythology, women seem only indirectly to blame for the psychological torment they inflict. Thus the female 'danger' for Conrad appears to reside less in actual women than in the male mind itself - the as-yet-unexplored realms of the psyche, the Freudian

unconscious.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud writes that 'Boxes, cases, chests, cupboards and ovens represent the uterus' (V: 354) and are symbolic of the maternal. The act of opening a box would thereby imply a kind of rebirth, unleashing memories of the mother and of the chaos before the development of language and the ego - in effect, releasing the rebellious instinctual impulses of the primitive id.¹ In 'Karain', the 'subtle breaths' released by the box are also memories. Likewise, the narrator, having heard Karain's story, feels uncomfortable with, and even unreasonably offended by 'pauses' in language, implying a fear of the id. In fact, the text lends itself readily to a Freudian interpretation. The title, 'Karain: A Memory', evokes the psychoanalytic stress on past trauma, whilst the narrative structure, as Karain tells his story within the narrator's, recalls the supposedly cathartic Freudian 'talking cure', with the narrator serving as analyst. Tellingly, Conrad needed assistance from Edward Garnett (a secondary analyst) in completing the tale, perhaps indicating a sense of identification with the haunted Karain and an attempt to exorcise his own fears through language. Meanwhile, in the tale itself, attention is constantly drawn to Karain's unstable and weary aspect, resulting from his 'possession of a burdensome secret of existence' (5). We learn that

¹ Freud's three-part model of the mind is outlined in 'The Ego and the Id' (1923), which develops upon his earlier model of the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. The ego and id are both part of the conscious mind: the id developing first and representing the disruptive, instinctive, pleasure-seeking impulses; the ego emerging around age two and representing reason: 'a coherent organization of mental processes' (XIX: 17). The repression (the force of the unconscious) that weighs down upon the ego is a part of the id, through which it obliquely communicates. Meanwhile, 'the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id' (25). Although inextricably bound together, the two forces have an unstable relationship, constantly seeking to usurp each other in a struggle for psychological dominance. Since both are inherently selfish and self-serving, they are also monitored by the superego: the conscience that develops with the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Paradoxically, the superego is both a 'residue of the earliest object-choices of the id' and 'an energetic reaction-formation against those choices' (34), standing in contrast to the ego-ideal. Consequently, the ego, id and superego maintain a precarious balance that, if disturbed, can lead to neurosis and psychosis.

his fears had been briefly allayed by the presence of a mysterious and silent bodyguard, suggesting a process of transference and an unmistakable air of the Freudian 'Uncanny', but that upon the bodyguard's death, his guilt had returned in the form of 'invisible voices' (24), a classic symptom of obsessional neurosis, as well as schizophrenia. The ghost of Matara might even represent the personification of the conscience or superego. Moreover, it is significant that Karain's situation is reminiscent of that facing numerous Conradian heroes. The following extract seems applicable not only to Karain, but to Kurtz, Jim, Razumov and others:

[H]is face showed another kind of fatigue, the tormented weariness, the anger and the fear of a struggle against a thought, an idea - against something that cannot be grappled, that never rests - a shadow, a nothing, unconquerable and immortal, that preys upon life.

(23)

Conrad, like Freud, appears fascinated with abnormal states of mind, focusing on the character study of a particular type. Like so many protagonists before and after him, however, Karain is 'betrayed by his dream, spurned by his illusion' (40), words closely akin to Freudian terminology.

'Karain' also repeatedly stresses the powerful influence of Matara's sister, both in the Dutchman's elopement with her - 'He departed [...] left all - for her! She had ravished his heart!' (30) - and in Karain's obsession: 'At last in every woman's face I thought I could see hers' (33). Yet there is another important female figure, Karain's mother, a Malay Queen who 'mingled somehow in his mind with the image he tried to form for himself of the far-off Queen whom he called Great, Invincible, Pious, and Fortunate' (13). This parallel with Queen Victoria highlights both the dominance of the maternal in this story - a distinctly Freudian emphasis - and allows Karain's mother to be

identified with the figurehead on the coin. Consequently, she becomes a part of the talisman alongside the more lover-like mementoes of the ribbon and glove. Matara's sister and Karain's mother unite as both cause and cure of Karain's decline. Moreover, since the talisman appears only to repress Karain's fears, Conrad implies that female influence cannot be entirely overcome. We might even suspect that Karain's obsession is traceable to some kind of unresolved - possibly unresolvable - Oedipal conflict, with Conrad's tale evoking a powerful psychological reality existing alongside the physical world, one in which spectral female presences are capable of undermining and - partially and conditionally - reconstructing male identity. However, though the substance of the dream/illusion may be female, it remains a product of the male mind. At the end of the story, Jackson now in England, tells the narrator that Karain's tale seems more real to him than his own everyday life. The text's psychological dimension effectively usurps the physical - a distinctly Freudian idea, recalling the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious, the rational ego and the irrational id. Thus this early tale points to the possibility that two writers, often jointly charged with misogyny, can be fruitfully studied within the context of a shared endeavour to understand and, more disturbingly, to exorcise the 'female spectre' inhabiting the male psyche.

- I -

Biographically, there are a number of similarities between Conrad and Freud. The most obvious connection lies in their close birth-dates, as Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski was born on 3 December 1857, just a year and seven months after Sigismund Schlomo Freud on 6 May 1856. Both were brought up in lands dominated by one of the great European Empires, Conrad in Berdyczów, part of the Russian Empire (now the Ukraine), Freud in Freiburg, Moravia, part of the Austrian Empire (now Příbor in the Czech Republic). Both suffered from a sense of political oppression

within these Empires, the patriotic Conrad from the policy of Russification designed to eradicate the annexed Polish identity, the Jewish Freud from widespread anti-Semitism. Other biographical coincidences include the fact that Freud's paternal grandfather settled in the Austro-Hungarian area of Galicia; that Freiburg/Príbor is less than a hundred miles from Cracow, where Conrad moved in 1869; and that both men finally settled in England. In short, both geographically and culturally, there is far less distance than we might expect between two men generally associated with areas other than their birthplaces; Conrad with the south-east of England, Africa and the Far East, Freud with Vienna and, later, London.

Conversely, differences in their respective backgrounds and familial expectations can be traced in their names. Conrad's, for example, is generally taken to represent his father's traditional, patriotic idealism. Józef was the name of his paternal grandfather (and conveniently unpopular in Russia), Teodor that of his maternal grandfather, and Nałęcz his *szlachta* name. The name Konrad, meanwhile, was that borne by the patriotic heroes of Adam Mickiewicz's famous poems 'Konrad Wallenrod' (1828) and 'Forefather's Eve' (1832). For this reason, Conrad's name seems laden with nationalist expectations, enforcing allegiance to Poland and plotting his future as a Polish 'son'. Freud's, on the other hand, was a combination of the traditional and progressive; Sigismund being derived from the German word *Sieg*, meaning 'victory', emphasising allegiance to the Austrian Empire, and Schlomo being an old Hebrew name (Solomon in English) inherited from his Jewish grandfather. Both Conrad and Freud, however, experienced restless and traumatic childhoods, being uprooted intermittently according to their fathers' changing fortunes. By the age of five Conrad had moved from Berdyczów to Derebczynka, to Warsaw and to exile in Vologda. Similarly, when Freud was three, he was forced to leave Freiburg for Vienna in a move that scattered other

members of his previously close-knit extended family as far away as Manchester. Yet whilst Conrad was to leave Poland in October 1874 when he was just sixteen, Freud only fled Austria under the threat of Nazism in 1938. Whereas Freud felt a sense of belonging, Conrad was a restless traveller, visiting all five continents during twenty years at sea. Moreover, the evidence of various ships' logs reveal that he was constantly experimenting with his name, indicating an attempt to efface his identity and start anew (evidenced also by his anglicised literary title, Joseph Conrad).² Whereas one man studied the early formation of identity, the other appears to have been preoccupied with ways to expand and reshape it.

Significantly, the turbulent events of both men's childhoods were precipitated by the business failures of their fathers, Apollo Korzeniowski (1820-69) as an estate manager, Kallamon Jacob Freud (1815-1896) as a wool merchant. Yet whereas Freud considered his father a failure, Conrad's was regaled as a Polish hero, even being honoured with a state funeral through Cracow. In actual fact, Apollo's political activities were even less successful than his other careers: he was arrested for pamphleteering just one month after becoming leader of the militant and uncompromising political faction 'Committee of Action of the Red' in 1861 and sentenced alongside his wife Evelina (1832-65) to exile in north-east Russia, where his four-year-old son (who developed pneumonia on the journey) accompanied them. Ironically, although Apollo's conviction was largely due to the evidence of his wife's letters, had he *not* been banished, he would almost undoubtedly have taken part in the failed 1863 insurrection and possibly been killed, along with other family members. Paradoxically, it was Conrad's mother who indirectly both condemned and saved her

² Since he continued to sign letters Korzeniowski, however, this seems a largely practical attempt to appeal to a wider British audience.

family, ultimately at the cost of her own life as she died from tuberculosis soon afterwards. In contrast, Freud's mother Amalia Nathanson (1835-1930) lived to the great age of ninety-five, exerting an emotional pressure on her firstborn - whom she allegedly referred to as her 'golden Sigi' - that Freud's biographer Louis Breger describes as 'insensitive and dominating', ominously adding: '[she] was not a safe person to become intimate with' (2000: 29). In different ways, therefore, both men's lives were overshadowed by the figures of long-suffering, self-sacrificing women.

- II -

In stark contrast to Freud, Conrad was famously resistant to theory, claiming that 'a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion' (*CL6*: 210-1), and mockingly telling Garnett: 'I don't know what my philosophy [of life] is. I was not even aware I had it [...] Shall I die of it do you think?' (*CL3*: 276). He regarded any attempt to deconstruct his characters - or their author - as a brutal, barbaric occupation, as he told Edward Noble as early as 1895:

I do not want you to drag out for public inspection the very entrails of your characters. Lay bare your own heart and people will listen to you for that - and only that is interesting [...] That's my view of life - a view that rejects all formulas dogmas and principles of other people's making. These are only a web of illusions. We are too varied. Another man's truth is only a dismal lie to me. (*CL1*: 253)

In the essay 'Books' (1905) he added that any correlation between writing and human nature was only transitory:

[T]he formulas of art are dependent on things variable, unstable and untrustworthy; on human sympathies, on prejudices, on likes and

dislikes, on the sense of virtue and the sense of propriety, on beliefs and theories that, indestructible in themselves, always change their form - often in the lifetime of one fleeting generation. (*NLL*: 5-6)

Such an extreme form of philosophical relativism appears incompatible with any theory that attempts a general overview of mental development. Indeed, unlike Freud, who sought to develop a universal grand theory, Conrad made no great claims to fundamental, lasting insight. The effect of art, he argued, was simultaneously brief and enduring, obscure and significant, a transitory flash of recognition, 'not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion' (Preface, *NV* [1897]: xi). Consequently, his writing remains deliberately ambiguous and obscure, as Curle summarises:

To be absolutely sure of Conrad's meaning was, as I have said before, very difficult, and it was frequently a case of putting two and two together as best as one could, and of judging as much by what was left unsaid as by any definitive statement. (1928: 79)

Whereas the effusive Freud adopted an authoritative, prescriptive approach, Conrad remained resolutely indeterminate and evasive.

According to the French playwright H.-R. Lenormand, an avid supporter of psychoanalysis whom Conrad met on Corsica in 1921, he absolutely refused to read Freud, dismissing his theories with 'scornful irony' (cited in Stallman 1960: 7) and rebuffing attempts at analysis so definitely that Lenormand claimed: 'I dared sometimes to wonder if he hadn't managed to deceive himself, voluntarily or not, on the true motives of his heroes' (6). Apparently in rebuttal, Conrad encouraged Lenormand to write a novel on 'the decline of men who had arrived at certainty' (7), an implicit attack that not only questioned Freud's theories, but evoked a worldly and more pragmatic sense of superiority and intellectual freedom. Indeed, an element of personal pride - or

defensiveness - regarding his own active life at sea (as opposed to the stationary academic existence of Freud) can also be detected in 'Books':

It is in the impartial practice of life, if anywhere, that the promise of perfection for his [the writer's] art can be found, rather than in the absurd formulas trying to prescribe this or that particular method of technique or conception. (*NLL*: 10)

Any attempt to write, let alone interpret, according to psychoanalytic principles was dismissed as both foolish and pointless.

At the turn of the century, however, Conrad shared the majority view in being suspicious of, and mocking psychoanalysis. Psychology itself was a comparatively new, revolutionary practice as mental disorders had previously been placed under the collective, inadequate heading of 'neurasthenia'.³ Psychoanalysis, meanwhile, developed out of the phenomenological tradition and school of structuralism, as Freud sought to develop an overarching theory of the mind, abandoning a promising career in Neurology about 1896.⁴ During its earliest phase in the 1890s - when Josef Breuer began using hypnosis on neurotic patients - psychoanalysis was consistently dismissed in the fields of both psychiatry and medicine and branded unscientific, self-indulgent, sex-obsessed and disreputable. In the early 1900s the Viennese Medical Society even staged a satirical play based upon Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid* (1673), in which a young psychoanalyst expounds his personal philosophy:

³ The first laboratory for human behaviour was founded by Wilhelm Wundt - whose use of introspection provoked the same criticisms of subjectivity voiced by Conrad - in Leipzig in 1889, only eight years before Freud engaged in his first pivotal self-analysis.

⁴ Freud sought to unite the early psychological schools of Structuralism, which rejected applied psychology and focused on the elemental structure of the brain (as practised by Edward Titchener), and Functionalism, which studied the way the brain functions (as practised by William James, who adopted the term 'stream of consciousness').

If the patient loved his mother, it is the reason for his neurosis; and if he hated her, it is the reason for his neurosis. Whatever the disease, the cause is the same. And whatever the cause, the disease is the same. And so is the cure: twenty one-hour sessions at fifty kronen each [...] (Cited in Schwartz 1999: 4)

Typical charges against psychoanalysis included greed, opportunism, exploitation, and professional incompetence. Arguably in response, Freud admitted that the public would feel an 'instinctive opposition' ('Parapraxes' [1916], XV: 16) to his ideas, attributable in part to the audacity of asserting firstly, the existence of an active unconscious and secondly, the importance of the libido.⁵ In his study of Conrad and psychological medicine Martin Bock proposes that Freud's ideas were too radical for his time - 'untenable because his work is based on the concept of the unconscious, which had no empirical basis in the medical reality of the day, that is, in the human body' (2002: 4) - and adds that the prejudiced, reactionary response of the art-world might be attributed to cynical motives, specifically a fear of competition. Nonetheless, there are numerous practical problems with Freud's work, such as the fact that his patients were predominantly of the same colour and class, that he made no notes during a session (fearing that this would break his connection with the patient) and kept no transcripts of what they actually said, with the result that there are no documents with which to challenge his interpretations. Furthermore, although the modern reader is generally prepared to accept, and even take for granted many psychoanalytic terms and precepts - such as transference, sublimation, the Freudian slip and the cathartic benefits of the 'talking cure' - Freud's theories have been extended, superseded and made less

⁵ However, he adamantly insisted that ideas from the unconscious could not find their way directly into consciousness. Rather, the preconscious safely disguised repressed ideas. Hence the term 'subconscious' is distinctly un-Freudian.

offensive by subsequent analysts. Overall, therefore, it seems hardly surprising that such a controversial theory should have aroused Conrad's conservative antagonism, and made him such an unlikely author for comparison.

Given this context, it is an ironic coincidence that two seminal texts of the twentieth century, *Lord Jim* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*, were both published in 1900. Despite the apparent incongruity of an alliance between Conrad and Freud, they share the distinction of being precursors to two of the most important and controversial socio-cultural movements of the last century, Conrad to Modernism, Freud to psychoanalysis (a term he coined in 1896). Although neither can take full credit for these developments - even Freud admitted that the foundations of psychoanalysis were laid by his teacher Josef Breuer and his (Breuer's) patient-collaborator Bertha Pappenheim/'Anna O'⁶ - their works have had far-reaching social and political consequences. Conrad prefigured key Modernist themes of fragmented identity and isolation, influencing generations of diverse writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and Margaret Atwood, whilst Freud forced a revision of contemporary psychological practices (somewhat egotistically ranking his influence alongside Copernicus and Darwin). Indeed, both men wished to serve humanity, Conrad by appealing 'to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts' (Preface, *NV*: viii) and to the 'general formula expressing the moral state of humanity' (*Nostramo* [1904]: 246), Freud by encouraging a more sympathetic perception of psychological illness. In 'General theory of the Neurosis' (1917) he challenged the label of 'degenerate' previously applied to

⁶ His first work on psychoanalysis, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), was co-written with Breuer. Meanwhile, it was Bertha who allegedly coined the term 'talking cure', as she compared the psychoanalytic procedure to a 'chimney-sweeping' of her mind.

neurotics, calling it 'a condemnation instead of an explanation' (XVI: 260); whilst in 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937) he described a 'normal ego' as 'an ideal fiction' (XXIII: 235). Consequently, although there is no direct evidence in Conrad's works, or Freud's theoretical volumes, or in the vast bulk of their respective correspondence to indicate that either of these contemporaries ever read the other, they share a position as radicals, focusing on the psychological sphere, on issues of identity, isolation and individuality, questioning and breaking away from traditional modes of expression, opening the way for postmodernism and - albeit indirectly and probably unintentionally - feminism. As Paul Kirschner summarises: 'Any influence of psychoanalytic theories on Conrad during his major phase (1894-1909) seems unlikely. But in his intense awareness of the way in which repressed feelings might determine irrational conduct, Conrad shared the fundamental insight of Freud and Breuer' (1968: 277).

- III -

Before attempting a comparative analysis or interpretation of Conrad and Freud, it is necessary to note the overlap between the act of writing literature and the practice of psychoanalysis, most obviously in their unscientific-ness and the assumption that words are powerful, necessary and even recuperative. The patient's act of reliving, recounting and rearranging his/her life story through a process of abreaction and catharsis, as well as various defensive practices - such as transference when approaching difficult subjects - and the guidance of the analyst, all lend psychoanalysis a fictionalising, subjective aspect akin to the manner in which a writer refashions his/her experiences of the world. Freud frequently refers to fictional works by authors such as Goethe and Hoffmann for evidential support, even deferring to their authority in 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928): 'Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms' (XXI: 177). Meanwhile, in 'Delusions and Dreams in

Jensen's *Gradiva* (1907), he compares the analyst to the author:

Our procedure consists in the conscious observation of abnormal mental processes in other people so as to be able to elicit and announce their laws. The author [...] directs his attention to the unconscious in his own mind, he listens to its possible developments and lends them artistic expression instead of suppressing them by conscious criticism. (IX: 92)

The analyst and the author seem natural companions, reaching the same conclusions by different routes, one observational, one imaginative. Paradoxically, however, Freud also associates the artist with the patient, implying that fiction requires additional, secondary analysis. Admittedly, if the force of repression keeps certain memories and ideas necessarily disassociated from language - itself a construct of the conscious mind - then creative writing would seem only an obscure, indirect mode of expressing the unconscious, prone to subjective displacements and denial. Since Freud further implies that the motive forces of the artist correspond to those of the dreamer, he makes him/her/Conrad a prime candidate for psychoanalysis. Tellingly, in one of the most famous of all psychoanalytic statements - 'The interpretation of dreams is in fact the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious' ('Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis' [1910], XI: 33) - the interpreter is privileged over the dreamer-storyteller. 'Delusions and Dreams' appears increasingly ambiguous, as Freud implicitly challenges the artist-rival:

There is far less freedom and arbitrariness in mental life [...] than we are inclined to assume - there may even be none at all. What we call chance in the world outside can, as is well known, be resolved into laws. So, too, what we call arbitrariness in the mind rests upon laws, which we are only now beginning dimly to suspect. (IX: 9)

By insinuating that neurotic dreams and art spring from the same unconscious 'laws', Freud undermines the artist's creative authority. According to this logic, Conrad's novels are reducible to a number of set formulas focusing on childhood sexual fantasies. Thus we are confronted with an intellectual tug-of-war, as Freud attempts to exert rather than share control.

Ironically, Conrad actually admitted the influence and power of the unconscious, describing the writing process to E.L. Sanderson with a combination of bewilderment and fear:

It is strange. The unreality of it seems to enter one's real life, penetrate into the bones, make the very heart beats pulsate illusions through the arteries. One's will becomes the slave of hallucinations, responds only to shadowy impulses, waits on imagination alone. A strange state, a trying experience, a kind of fiery trial of untruthfulness. (*CL2*: 205)

Writing even seems a kind of unconscious compulsion - 'The artist in his calling of interpreter creates (the clearest form of demonstration) because he must' ('Henry James' [1905], *NLL*: 14) - as Conrad evokes a recurrent sense of self-division, a typical feature of his protagonists. The word 'interpreter', meanwhile, establishes a self-assertive parallel with the analyst. For Conrad, the artist occupies a privileged position, one both unique and painful wherein he 'descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal' (Preface, *NN*: viii). Whereas Freud assumes authority, Conrad tentatively articulates his experience in an 'appeal' that speaks to, and serves humanity:

It is rescue work, this snatching of vanishing phrases of turbulence, disguised in fair words, out of the native obscurity into a light where

the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values - the permanence of memory. And the multitude feels it obscurely too; since the demand of the individual to the artist is, in effect, the cry "Take me out of myself!" ('Henry James', *NLL*: 13)

In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska he describes this compulsion not as a neurosis to be analysed, but as a valuable gift:

Man must drag the ball and chain of his individuality to the very end. It is the [price] one pays for the infernal and divine privilege of thought; consequently, it is only the elect who are convicts in this life - the glorious company of those who understand and who lament [...]

Which do you prefer - idiot or convict? (*CL1*: 162-3)

Psychological anguish becomes a precondition of great art, torturing and driving on the artist. Conrad's literary authority is further defended by a modern psychocritic, Joseph Dobrinsky, who takes it as a 'working hypotheses' that while 'the unconscious drives of an imaginative writer [...] are apt to be singularly strong, the practice of the calling wards off neurosis since it must rest on an exceptional ability to lay down one's anxieties' (1989: x).⁷ Hence Conrad, the daydreamer, asserts his equality with the analyst by internalising the interactive process of psychoanalysis - a dual function often transposed onto his stories as one narrator listens, typically without interference, to the tale of another.

The issue of control also represents one of the main points of difference between the two writers. Whereas Freud carefully cultivated the image of a wise master and father-

⁷ In Freud's defence, he expresses admiration for this artistic faculty in 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming' (1908).

figure, Conrad constantly deprecated his own creative abilities, bemoaning writer's-block - 'the black disease of writers' (*CL2*: 19) - in his letters, describing himself as 'nothing but a storyteller' (cited in Stallman 1960: 6) and welcoming offers of help from other writers such as Edward Garnett, John Galsworthy and Ford Madox Ford. The difference is highlighted in 'Karain', as Conrad evokes, amidst the gathering of men, a mutually beneficial idea of analysis:

No man will speak to his master; but to a wanderer and a friend, to him who does not come to teach or to rule, to him who asks for nothing and accepts all things, words are spoken by the camp-fires [...] words are spoken that take no account of race or colour. One heart speaks - another one listens; and the earth, the sea, the sky, the passing wind and the stirring leaf, hear also the futile tale of the burden of life. (26)

Since psychoanalysis is based largely upon Western cultural assumptions, Conrad's words - 'no account of race or colour' - indicate that his method is more democratic and universal. Certainly his years at sea must have provided a wealth of insight into human nature, in contrast to Freud who dealt mainly with rich, upper-class Viennese clients. Conrad's narrative voice is not the controlling, ordering, authoritative voice of the psychoanalyst. Like Freud, his narrators are observers of human nature, interpreting their subjects both through what they say and what they don't say (their amnesias, errors, exaggerations and omissions), yet they rarely reach a conclusion, often serving only to discompose and confuse. As readers we can only empathise, just as Marlow listens powerlessly to the guilt-ridden Jim:

He was not speaking to me, he was only speaking before me, in a dispute with an invisible personality, an antagonistic and inseparable partner of his existence - another possessor of his soul. These were

issues beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life, and did not want a judge. (*LJ*: 93)

With his emphasis on isolation and duality, Conrad appears equally determined to wrench authority from the judgmental Freud.

On occasion, Conrad's novels even seem to represent warnings to the complacent analyst, as his narrators are frequently scarred by contact with more unstable characters. Jackson's unease at the end of 'Karain', for example, is echoed in 'Heart of Darkness' (1899) as Marlow feels alienated from English society and allows his narrative merely to trail away, apparently unable to form or articulate a conclusion ('It would have been too dark - too dark altogether....' [*YOS*: 162]). In Conrad's mind, Freud's attempts to construct a universal psychological theory would be not only redundant, but psychologically dangerous in so far as the analyst may unwittingly become the patient. In *Chance* (1913), the narrator claims that: 'I cannot conceive the uses of an incurious mind. It would be like a chamber perpetually locked up' (40), yet his curious companion Marlow is an alienated man, an analyst of everyone but himself, variously following Fyne, Powell and Flora in pursuit of their stories, though unable to formulate a new tale of his own. The analyst, Conrad implies, can become too involved in his work. Hanns Sachs'⁸ claim that Freud 'was dominated by one despotic idea' (cited in Breger 2000: 178) thereby recalls Conrad's warning in *Nostromo* that a 'man haunted by a fixed idea is insane' (379), allowing us to reverse their positions as patient and analyst. However, *both* men displayed classic signs of neurosis, sharing a temperamental propensity to indulge in childish sulks and outbursts, a tendency to

⁸ A lawyer who became one of the first psychoanalysts after reading *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

'forget' distressing events in their pasts, and an intense craving for prestige and praise (both wished to secure the Nobel Prize). Conrad also suffered from depression and possibly epilepsy that led to hypochondria and a fear of insanity, while Freud exhibited agoraphobia, an extreme travel phobia, a fear of mediocrity, and a 'tremendous capacity for hatred' (Natenberg 1955: 95) towards critics and former friends. Not only was Freud notoriously tenacious in holding on to his ideas, ostracising - and even attempting to ruin - those who contradicted him, but he demanded authority over both patients and pupils, insisting on having the final word at meetings and severing life-long friendships at the first hint of disagreement. Moreover, despite his claims of success, very few patients were ever completely cured by the 'talking cure' of psychoanalysis; in many cases the symptoms were only temporarily dispersed. His claims to the contrary, therefore, indicate a strong sense of denial and delusion in which the desire to be authoritatively 'right' outweighed the real needs of his patients. After all, the fatalistic Conrad might prove to be the more open-minded, less patriarchal therapist, warning against the very introspection that Freud encouraged.

- IV -

Ironically, allegations of misogyny provide the strongest basis for a comparison between Conrad and Freud as 'female spectres' prove a destabilising influence in both their works. Conrad, for example, is frequently pigeonholed as a writer for, and about, men whose novels fall simplistically into the 'male' genres of adventure and maritime literature. When he is not attacked for belittling women, it is suggested that he is afraid of them. Freud, on the other hand, stands accused of reducing women to the passive status of failed men, subordinate to them and suffering from a more or less pronounced sense of penis envy. Both are criticised for - allegedly - setting up an impossible ideal of femininity. Certainly there is evidence to support such claims. Conrad's novels are

noticeably short of women - although specific female characters are referred to in nearly all of his works - and those who do appear seem generally to represent appendages to more important male characters. In describing his novels, Conrad sometimes dismisses the women, for example calling 'An Outpost of Progress' (1897) a work in which '[t]here is no love interest [...] and no woman - only incidentally' (CL1: 294), and sometimes singles them out as the protagonists, as when he complimented Garnett for recognising Mrs Verloc's mother as the most important character in *The Secret Agent* (1907). His letters also reveal a string of contradictory assertions, ranging from admiration and respect ('I think only women have true courage' [CL1: 191]; 'Women have a curious insight sometimes' [CL2: 56]) to a kind of contempt as he coolly describes 'the desire for self-sacrifice - for returning good for evil - this mysterious urge toward abnegation and suffering which governs feminine feeling' (CL1: 107).

Freud, meanwhile, employs predominantly male examples to illustrate his theories on both male and female psychology. Sympathy for the plight of his female patients, for example with the victimised teenager Ida Bauer/'Dora' in 'An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (1905), is outweighed by patriarchal arrogance and suspicion, in this case through the assumption that she was excited by the lascivious attentions of the older, married Herr K. Ernest Jones describes the contradictory impulses in Freud's 'old-fashioned' ideas about women, calling them 'more consistent' than those about men, yet admitting that, despite his perception of women as 'finer and ethically nobler' (1955, 2: 468), he considered their place to be in the home. Thus both Conrad and Freud prove distinctly ambiguous regarding women, capable of seeming both flippant and serious. Their comments can often be simultaneously interpreted as complimentary and insulting, as for example, in Freud's letter to Emil Fluss of 1873: 'How wise our educators that they pester the beautiful sex so little with scientific knowledge!...Women

have come into the world for something better than to become wise' (cited in Breger 2000: 330-1). These particular words echo Marlow's in 'Heart of Darkness': 'It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether' (*YOS*: 59). In both cases, patronising condescension mingles with jealous admiration.

Marlow's words, on the other hand, are not necessarily Conrad's own. Indeed, the outrageousness of Marlow's later comments in *Chance*, coupled with the scandalised protestations of the narrator, suggest parody and a deliberate attempt to provoke discussion:

"As to honour - you know - it's a very fine mediaeval inheritance which women never got hold of [...] 'Sensation at any cost,' is their secret device. All the virtues are not enough for them; they want also all the crimes for their own. And why? Because in such completeness there is power - the kind of thrill they love most...."

"Do you expect me to agree with all this?" I interrupted. (63)

Conrad also maintained personal contact with a number of intellectual women, including Ada Galsworthy and Constance Garnett, and signed the Writer's Memorial Petition encouraging a Woman's Suffrage Bill in 1910, writing to Laurence Housman: 'I want the women to have the vote and generally their own way in anything and everything under heaven. It will please them and certainly it won't hurt me' (*CL4*: 344). Nonetheless, Conrad has taken the blame for his characters' comments, whilst Freud has been protected by famous female clients such as Emma Eckstein, Helene Deutsch, Joan Riviere and Princess Marie Bonaparte, all of whom went on to become psychoanalysts. In Freud's defence, however, his early research focused on hysteria, then presumed a specifically female disease, thereby indicating a genuine desire to help

female patients.⁹ Though he remained adamant regarding his theory of bisexuality, Freud also showed himself willing to review and adapt other ideas on female psychology, recognising, for example, the importance of the previously neglected mother-daughter bond in late essays such as ‘Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes’ (1925), ‘Female Sexuality’ (1931) and Lecture 33 in the *New Introductory Lectures*, ‘Femininity’ (1933). Finally, Freud partially escapes the charge of misogyny by default, through his self-confessed confusion, as he described ‘the sexual life of adult women’ as ‘a “dark continent” for psychology’ (‘The Question of Lay Analysis’ [1926], XX: 212), and claimed: ‘Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity’ (‘Femininity’, XXII: 113). Although purporting to understand the female spectres of the male mind, Freud tacitly recognised his limited comprehension of femininity itself. In a famous remark to Marie Bonaparte, recorded by Jones, he admitted: ‘The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is “What does a woman want?”’ (1955, 2: 468). His conclusion to ‘Femininity’, therefore, seems a final admission of his limitations: ‘That is all I had to say to you about femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly’ (XXII: 135).

In the 1920s psychoanalysis was also one of the few professions open to women, and counted Hermine Hug-Hellmuth, Helene Deutsch and Anna Freud amongst its key representatives. The British Psycho-Analytical Society, founded in 1919, also had strong suffragette leanings and attracted such influential figures as Mina Searl, Susan Isaacs, Alix Strachey and Virginia Woolf, the latter two (in the respective capacities of

⁹ In which he was inspired by Hyppolite Bergheim, a French neurologist, whose ‘medical’ use of hypnosis appears to have appealed more than the cold analytical practices of Jean-Martin Charcot.

translator and publisher) being largely responsible for the first English translations of Freud's works. More recently, pivotal developments in female psychology have been made by object relations theorists such as Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, D.W. Winnicott and Nancy Chodorow (with their emphasis on the neglected mother-daughter bond), and French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva (who have extended Jacques Lacan's linguistic re-reading of Freud to demonstrate the liberating language [*écriture féminine*] of the Freudian pre-Oedipal/Lacanian Imaginary). Despite a backlash of feminist resentment in the 1950s and 60s, in which Freud's ideas about women were largely dismissed as offensive male fantasies, Freudian psychoanalysis has been rescued by feminist writers such as Juliet Mitchell, who charts the development of Freudian thought in relation to the women's movement and identifies a 'descending scale of opposition' (1974: 297) due partly to the widely divergent responses to Freud in different countries. Although Mitchell acknowledges the inadequacy of early psychoanalysis - 'psychoanalysts just begged to differ and femininity went its inadequately analysed way' (122) - she also evaluates the detrimental dilution of Freudian ideas, as well as the usefulness of modern feminist re-interpretations by, for example, Eva Figes, Shulamith Firestone and Kate Millett. Overall, however, many feminists remain torn between applauding Freud for his liberating emphasis on female sexuality, and condemning his restrictive concept of femininity, as for example, in Rosalind Minsky's belief that: 'Freud's apparent misogyny exists in intermittent moments in a theory which, taken as a whole, is profoundly liberating for women in many ways' (1998: 62) - an ambiguous standpoint that might profitably be adopted in relation to Conrad.

Up until comparatively recent studies, the majority of Conrad critics refer only fleetingly to the women in both his life and fiction. Many even argue that his love stories - and by

association his women - are barely worth mentioning alongside his more successful depictions of male failure. Arthur Symons established a negative tone with his claim that 'unlike every other great novelist, his women are for the most part nameless shadows' (1925: 8). The idea of 'shadows' - or spectres - has proved a popular one, as for example in Gustav Morf's sweeping summary: 'Most critics of Conrad have remarked that his women have always something unfinished, something shadowy, something elusive about them' (1930: 41). Later critics have remained equally sceptical. F.R. Leavis writes condescendingly: 'About his attitude towards women there is perceptible, all the way through his literary career, something of the gallant simple sailor' (1948: 211). Cedric Watts identifies five 'recurrent types' of female character, clones which 'variously express male observations, beliefs, hopes, fears and fantasies, and sometimes provide a basis for criticism of masculine limitations' (1982: 177). Interest in these women resides less in their individual characters than in their relationships with men. Arguably the most common assumption about Conrad, however, is that in attempting to write about women he merely overstretched himself. Frederick Karl, for example, hints that in *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) ambition outweighed ability:

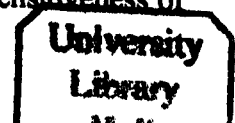
His wish to measure passion against reason and spent sensuality against regret for a lost past is a potentially tragic theme. But Willems cringes, Aïssa is undeveloped as a female character, and Joanna is pitiful - scale precludes the intention. (1979: 360)

Perceived misogyny has also contributed to several feminist attacks. Joyce Carol Oates claims that Conrad's idea of a heroine is 'a truly "feminine" female [...] she who effaces herself completely, who is eager to sacrifice herself in an ecstasy of love for her man' (1981: 84), while Nina Pelikan Straus bluntly states that any attempt by a woman reader to identify with Conrad's characters in 'Heart of Darkness' is 'to court self-

degradation' (1996: 57). Fortunately, a more sympathetic feminist text, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land: Sexchanges*, redresses the balance, even providing a rare comparison of Conrad and Freud, claiming that 'Heart of Darkness' marks a distinct psychological progression as it 'penetrates more ironically and thus more inquiringly into the dark core of otherness that had so disturbed the patriarchal, the imperialist, and the psychoanalytic imaginations' (1989: 44). Susan Jones further argues that prejudice resides not with Conrad, but with his critics: 'We hear far more, from both male and female critics, of what *they* felt about women than of how Conrad actually presented them' (1999: 18). Overall, criticism appears to have been less than objective, making it necessary to summarise and evaluate the main critical arguments revolving around Conrad's much-beleaguered fictional treatment of women.

One of the first and most sympathetic assessments, Richard Curle's *Joseph Conrad: A Study* (1914), devotes a whole chapter to 'Conrad's Women' (an extremely rare occurrence), which opens with the provocative statement: 'To say, as it is sometimes said, that Conrad does not understand women is an observation revealing blindness' (145). Since it is likely that Conrad read and approved of this book, such words indicate that he was himself aware of the criticism. Curle, meanwhile, attempts a defence: 'the reason for its being said arises, probably, from the fact that Conrad does not make love the centre theme of all his stories and from the fact that his finest women are *good* women' (*ibid*). Significantly, he goes on to identify this goodness with maternalism, isolating Emilia Gould and Winnie Verloc as examples of fine women:

In these childless women the might of their compassionate love has wrapped the husband and the brother in the invincible bonds of a maternal affection. They belong to the very choicest natures - the natures of devotion, singleness of heart, and exquisite sensitiveness of



perception. And what is so wonderful about them both is their stillness. (145-6)

This 'stillness' is just one example of Curle's repeated emphasis on the visual impact of Conrad's 'finest' women. These idealised mother-figures, he argues, are complete in themselves and have no need to speak (to exceed their spectral limitations). Moreover, he regards Emilia, the perfect wife, and Winnie, the self-sacrificing 'mother', as two sides of the same character: 'the one dark, of a full build, with a steadfast expression, the other very fair, very slight, and with a face of active and tactful sympathy - so alike, somehow, in all their dissimilarity' (150). For Curle, the 'female spectre' is a benevolent, maternal one, a conclusion that Conrad did not apparently contradict.

The longest-standing and most influential theory regarding Conrad's writing is that of its 'decline', dating back to his contemporaries, John Galsworthy, Edward Garnett and Virginia Woolf, and famously expanded in Thomas C. Moser's *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*. Though focusing upon Conrad's faults as a writer, Moser actually makes a sympathetic attempt to explain the - supposedly - inferior work post-1912, arguing that his 'decline' can be directly attributed, alongside contributing factors such as weariness, complacency and illness, to the attempt to 'write about a subject which he did not understand' (1957: 130), love, and by association (since Moser only examines heterosexual relationships) women. Moser even devotes a whole chapter to 'love' - 'The Uncongenial Subject' - a label that has been irritatingly overused. As a criticism, 'uncongenial' sounds markedly polite and diplomatic, suggesting an unfortunate lapse rather than plain bad writing, thereby diminishing the importance of the subject. Yet Moser is useful not only because he attempts to analyse, rather than merely assume a decline, but because he gives significance, albeit of a negative kind, to Conrad's women. Moreover, he is not universally condemnatory, as he defends the

women of the 'middle phase', specifically the married ones, claiming that since their romances are in the past and love is taken for granted, Conrad avoids the necessity for clichéd, amateurish sentimentality. Moreover, like Curle and almost every other critic, Moser isolates Emilia Gould as Conrad's one distinct female triumph:

[W]e must pay homage to Conrad's triumph with Mrs. Gould. Of all of his women, Emilia Gould alone is admitted to the moral hierarchy. Her quiet, unobtrusive life follows a path of moral involvement and disillusionment similar to that of the male characters. (87-8)

Similarly, Winnie Verloc is admitted as a lesser 'triumph' because she resembles a Conradian hero: 'Winnie succeeds as a character [...] by eliciting Conrad's ever ready sympathy for the lonely, beleaguered outcast' (91). Moser's main assault is reserved for the women of the later period and Conrad's relapse into the so-called amateurism of early novels such as *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands*, in which love represents the least interesting, least convincing theme. Meanwhile, he casually dismisses later heroines such as Flora, Lena, Rita and Arlette as mere damsels-in-distress. Unfortunately, Moser sets a precedent in which individual female characters are diminished by over-simplistic generalisations.

Fortunately, Moser is aware of the problems inherent in his argument:

We may wonder why Conrad, rather than subordinating women and love in the full-length novels, did not cut them out altogether and produce only perfect works like *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and "The Secret Sharer." One can only assume that the subject seemed to him a necessary condition of painting on a canvas broader than that of a short novel. (*Ibid*: 99)

He adds: 'we must remember that Conrad, however unwisely, sincerely wished, from

the beginning of his career, to write about women and love' (103). Yet he does not sufficiently explain *why* Conrad wished to focus on the very themes that are supposed to have caused him so much worry and effort in early unfinished works such as *The Sisters*, preferring to cite economic need and a desire for popular recognition. However, whilst condemning Conrad's writing abilities, he implicitly suggests a more complex psychological motive:

Even during the halcyon years we have been considering, the presence of certain distinctly inferior works about love suggests that Conrad had the subject just barely under control, that at any moment it might break down his defences and destroy him. (99)

The implication of psychological strain and defensiveness indicates a deeply felt, perhaps unconscious compulsion to write these 'love' stories in despite of critical opinion, perhaps even against his own better judgement. The idea of an ever-present threat to Conrad's mental stability is further compounded by Moser's association of women with jungle imagery: 'the vegetation imagery means much more than female menace; it means the truth, the darkness, the evil, the death which lie within us, which we must recognize in order to be truly alive' (80). Women seem inextricably linked to these dark qualities in the male mind, making them a necessary 'evil' to be confronted. Yet Moser identifies a corresponding attempt at denial, suggesting that Conrad was afraid to confront the dangerous potential of his own heroines and surrendered to cliché. Sentimentality becomes a defence-mechanism rather than a case of plain bad writing. Moreover, since the decline theory necessarily implies some kind of development (albeit negative), Moser highlights the less threatening, less destructive nature of the later heroines. Rather than viewing this development as an overcoming of fear, Moser interprets it as the repression of an incurable pessimism that finds expression in melodramatic and unrealistic love stories which Conrad could never truly

have believed in: 'Conrad could not possibly reconcile so dark a view with a belief in the panacea of love, wife, home, and family' (127). Despite his tactful attempts to avoid a bleak conclusion, Moser regards the later works as failures and Conrad himself as a defeated writer.

Many prominent psychoanalytical investigations have embraced Moser's theory wholeheartedly, most famously Albert J. Guerard's *Conrad the Novelist*, in which *Achievement and Decline* is hailed as 'the subtlest and most persuasive psychological critique of Conrad yet written' (1958: 54). Unfortunately, Guerard's appreciation makes him content merely to summarise Moser's ideas on love and women rather than attempt too many of his own. He even belittles those who might disagree: 'Moser's book, [is] hardly a welcome one to sentimentalists' (55). Guerard himself does not attribute any real significance, negative or otherwise, to Conrad's women, repeatedly failing to notice them, both in fiction and in fact, referring only briefly to one woman (the Intended) out of a possible five in 'Heart of Darkness', and making no reference at all to Conrad's actual mother, yet two to his father and seven to his uncle. Guerard focuses on Freud's model of the mind to the exclusion of all else, examining the symptoms rather than the cause of these - now specifically sexual - fears: 'What concerns us are the forms of clumsiness and evasion displayed in approaching the subject of sexual attraction. And, to be sure, Conrad's curious presentation and valuation of the experience itself' (51). As a result, he has no qualms about accusing Conrad of outright misogyny, bordering on vulgarity. He too regards the later novels as false and over-idealised, ominously pronouncing that the 'betrayed imagination will collapse' (55). For both Moser and Guerard, Conrad finally succumbed to his fears and fulfilled the warnings of his own novels: 'Conrad shrewdly recognized [...] that deception is most sinister when it becomes self-deception' (1958: 35). Ironically,

however, their shared emphasis on retreat only intensifies the psychological significance of the female spectre in Conrad's imagination.

Despite the psychoanalytic emphasis on the 'threat' of femininity, few critics have focused on this aspect of Conrad's women. Those few, however, have often gone too far, as for example Robert Kimbrough, whose literal Freudian interpretation of 'Heart of Darkness' is almost comical: 'the river is a phallus within the vulva of Africa [...]. But the river itself is a vulva, open to the sea, inviting the sexually excited scavenger birds of Europe' (1963: 411). Bernard Meyer's 'ostensibly' (Nadelhaft 1991: 38) psychoanalytical biography, which interprets Conrad's novels as reworkings of his childhood anxieties, is also distinctly melodramatic regarding the women, describing his fictional world as 'an apiary ruled by a succession of queen bees, who, luring their drones into the vertiginous and rarefied hazards of the nuptial flight, disembowel them in mid-air' (1967: 231). Meyer further divides these women into the monolithic and the sensuous, with the former indirectly associated with the mother, 'an all-powerful androgynous woman who, untouched and untouchable, elicits from her lover not desire, but awe' (47). He claims that Conrad's interest in exogamy and incest, combined with an unusually intense fear of castration, inevitably turned his women into destructive figures, many of whom 'possess attributes generally ascribed to fire-breathing dragons or devouring witches' (174). He even blames a woman, Conrad's wife Jessie, for the 'patent deterioration of his artistry' (4). Arguably the main problem with these investigations is that they emphasise either the power *or* the passivity of women in psychoanalysis - apparently unable to combine the two - turning Conrad's women into weak victims or crazed harpies. Ruth's Nadelhaft feminist revision draws attention to the extremely speculative nature of many such studies:

Because critics, especially psychoanalytically-oriented ones, took their

departure from historically incomplete or incorrect portraits of Ewa and Apollo Korzeniowski, their confident attributions of Conrad's attitudes towards idealistic women to his doomed mother badly need revision and new understanding. (1991: 82)

Nadelhaft highlights the dubious patriarchal approach of both traditional Conrad criticism and Freudian analysis, as well as the problematic blurring of distinctions between the author and his text. Since psychoanalysis should only interpret what the patient him/herself reveals, in Conrad's case we already know too much (biographical detail) *and* too little (from reliable sources). Consequently, most psychoanalytical investigations - including this one - are already compromised.

A later critic, Susan Lundvall Brodie, attacks the 'bifurcated vision' of Moser and Guerard in her essay 'Conrad's Feminine Perspective' as she highlights the 'critical inclination either to see his [Conrad's] interest as primarily masculine, dismissing his feminine creations as secondary and generally ineffective, or to judge his fictional women by masculine standards' (1984: 141). Brodie argues that Conrad's women are no less characters than his men and quotes Jocelyn Baines's claim that 'the significance of the characters', for Conrad, 'lies in what they reveal within the context of a certain predicament, not in what they are' (1960: 439). Conrad's women, therefore, are untested, not incapable. In this case, the title of *Chance* suggests that a woman, Flora, is finally given the opportunity to prove herself (and succeeds far better than most of Conrad's men). Similarly, whilst Brodie agrees with the accusation of sentimentality, she challenges the notion of female destructiveness by showing that the threat works both ways, with Conrad's men being equally capable of harming women. However, the fundamental difference between Conrad's men and women, for Brodie, is egotism. Comparing Jim of *Lord Jim* to Natalia in *Under Western Eyes* (1911), she shows how

the latter's 'unselfish commitment to others' (1984: 144) represents the distinguishing feature between Conrad's male and female characters. Brodie usurps Gordon Thompson's idea of irreconcilable conflict between male scepticism and female idealism, in which the latter destroys men, and reverses it. Consequently, it is the male inability to accept female idealism - the male distortion of the female spectre - that destroys them. Moser's 'uncongenial subject' becomes Brodie's central conceit:

[A] notion that Conrad explores throughout his writing [... is] that in feminine hands love itself can be a powerful ideal, one which, despite its illusions, inspires acts of courage and heightens sympathetic understanding of others [... H]e seeks to demonstrate that love offers a valid means of exploring life because it can serve both to define the self and to foster solidarity with others. (145-6)

The subject of love might then represent a strand of continuity between Conrad's works. Any change is in male characters who learn to accept this love and, in doing so, survive. Moser's 'defeat' is Brodie's 'victory': 'Throughout Conrad's writing, it is this feminine perspective, this life-affirming force that serves to counter the destructive elements so often found in masculine egoism, nihilism and withdrawal' (151). Consequently, Brodie offers the vision that Conrad might finally have been reconciled with the female spectre.

Susan Jones's extended study *Joseph Conrad and Women* highlights the need for a practical historical revision of Conrad criticism, arguing that the early marketing of his works as those of a Polish landowner and sailor, combined with his contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine*, 'a literary journal suffused with the character of the gentleman's club' (1999: 6), might have created an early and lasting stereotype. In

demonstrating that - contrary to the oft-quoted Eliza Orzeszkowa¹⁰ - Polish criticism has frequently applauded Conrad's women, Jones suggests that his style might be more akin to Polish Romanticism than the traditional classic realism of the English novel, going so far as to state: 'I believe Conrad borrowed the striking, somewhat gothic image of the silent woman [...] directly from the Polish romantics' (21). Conrad's women might then merely be the victims of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Indeed, Jones claims that the process of constructing and defining femininity is a recurrent preoccupation for Conrad, whose first definitive Conradian female character arrives in the shape of Flora de Barral in *Chance*, a character usually ignored by early critics. Like Brodie, therefore, Jones challenges the narrow scope of traditional criticism - much of which ignores works written after 1913 - arguing that Conrad's so-called 'decline' was rather evidence of experimentation in both style and subject: 'Conrad continually exploited and questioned the popular traditions throughout his fiction, showing a strong relationship to the genres of the adventure story, detective fiction, and the female sensation novel' (222).

Jones has also done much to calm the sensationalist tendencies of several critics regarding the women in Conrad's life. Whereas numerous writers attempt to find scandal in Conrad's long-standing friendship with his Polish cousin-in-law Marguerite Poradowska - many speculating a marriage proposal and rejection - Jones focuses instead, and at length, on the valuable literary aspect of their friendship: 'Her novels stimulated his interest in the plots and situations of romance [...] and provide evidence of a considerable creative impact' (71). For Jones, Poradowska's influence might even

¹⁰ In the essay 'The Emigration of Talent' in 1899, she famously accused Conrad of betraying his homeland, stating that he 'almost caused me a nervous breakdown. My gorge rises when I read about him' (*CUFE*: 187).

have created the 'female spectre', provoking the questions that were to germinate in Conrad's unconscious over twenty years, finally finding cathartic expression in his later romances. Indeed, Jones regards Poradowska as instrumental not only in Conrad's decision to write, but to write in English, making her a pivotal influence in his life: 'The meeting occurred at a moment when Conrad was struggling with a sense of isolation and lack of direction' (72). Marguerite's treatment by the critics, however, is typical of the reductionism endemic in studies of Conrad's women. His mother Evelina is routinely sidelined in favour of his father Apollo; his maternal grandmother Teofila Bobrowska, with whom he lived after his mother's death, is rarely mentioned; and his wife Jessie is widely vilified. Meanwhile, the American journalist Jane Anderson (seized upon with relish by critics such as Jeffrey Meyers, who devotes a whole chapter and two appendixes to her and the question of whether or not she was Conrad's mistress) takes precedence over less glamorous figures such as Lilian Hallowes, Conrad's secretary for some twenty years. Thus, in biography, as much as in criticism, Conrad's women have been neglected and their identities either imposed or ignored.

Most recently, Andrew Michael Roberts's *Conrad and Masculinity* adopts a feminist perspective to address Conrad's investment in, and sceptical deconstruction of, an 'essential' idea of masculinity. Identifying Conrad's interest in male bonding as a defence against the threatening 'otherness' of femininity and imperialism, he draws attention to the 'gendered circulation of knowledge' (2000: 137) in which women represent truth and are yet excluded from it. Lissa Schneider's *Conrad's Narratives of Difference: Not Exactly Tales for Boys* also leaves aside the question of achievement-and-decline, claiming instead that Conrad employed femininity as an organising, structuring principle: 'a thematic of gender suffuses Conrad's narrative strategies and calls out for analysis' (2003: 3). According to Schneider, Conrad uses gender, race and

class as destabilising influences in complex, experimental texts that refuse an 'easy affirmation of the dominant social order; crucially, feminine characters and romance plots often become the principal sites of this resistance' (122). Conrad's tales then become subversive, even feminist investigations of society, clearing 'a space for a modern revisioning of difference' (7) and rejecting 'narrative closure [...] in favor of acute yet inherently equivocal investigations of femininity' (123). As Conrad is increasingly accepted as a proto-feminist, therefore, it is interesting to wonder how far he might also be re-categorised as a reluctant proto-Freudian.

- V -

In the 'Preface to "The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad"', published in the posthumous collection *Last Essays* (1926), Conrad defends the structural arrangement of his stories - 'let neither friend nor enemy look for the development of the writer's literary faculty in this collection [...] The unity of purpose lies elsewhere' (144) - indicating that an underlying, even premeditated, thematic 'purpose' outweighs chronological progression. This thesis adopts a similar approach, separating Conrad's women into provisional groups that illustrate various possible interpretations of their meanings and functions, whilst demonstrating a psychological interconnectedness that allows these groups to overlap and develop. Chapters investigating maternal influence as a catalyst to Conrad's fiction, daughters as a possible relief from the maternal and the family as a source of solace thus become variations of an overall 'purpose'. Moreover, I address the possibility that Conrad's general resistance to theory obscured a more specific ambivalence towards personal analysis, as hinted at by Curle: 'It was not that he was vague, it was simply that he did not often care to speak seriously about what was so close to him' (1928: 79). Thus I speculatively introduce biography into fiction, seeking out possible models and prototypes of the 'female spectre' from his

own experiences. Ultimately, I hope to revise the standard biographical emphasis upon men, highlighting the importance of women in Conrad's life and their impact on his fiction, whilst enlarging the psychological possibilities of their continued presence.

Biographies of Conrad have typically given precedence to his father Apollo Korzeniowski over his mother Evelina, largely due to her early death and the noticeable absence of mothers in his writing. Numerous critics have also interpreted Conrad's preoccupation with isolated wanderers purely as evidence of guilt for having betrayed his father's ideals, barely mentioning Evelina. Conversely, I argue that the early loss of his mother, far from leading to feelings of admiration for his grief-stricken father, as is generally accepted (an assumption that presupposes a successful resolution of the Oedipus complex) might instead have resulted in feelings of anger and betrayal that were compounded by his being left an orphan at the age of eleven and finally led to his self-imposed exile. Chapter 2 addresses Conrad's early relationship with his parents and the psychological disruption of his mother's death, as expressed in the pseudo-biographical *A Personal Record* (1912); the importance of mothers and surrogate mothers in works such as *Nostramo*, *Chance* and *The Rover* (1923); as well as the ways in which his ideas of the paternal and maternal were confused by his sense of Poland as a Motherland, and by his uncle-guardian Tadeusz Bobrowski as a surrogate, and very different, father. From a Freudian perspective, I also suggest that Conrad's disrupted Oedipus complex led to a confused fear of the pre-Oedipal mother, as expressed in short stories such as 'The Idiots' (1896) and 'Amy Foster' (1903), and a desire for reconciliation, one that found expression in the death drive of his lonely protagonists.

If mothers and sons are rare in Conrad's writing, instances of fathers and daughters outweigh any other blood-relation. Indeed, the bond between Almayer and Nina

dominates the plot-line of Conrad's first novel *Almayer's Folly* and even, arguably, his second, *An Outcast of the Islands*, a kind of prologue in which Nina is still a dependent child. Moreover, the relationship between Aïssa and her father Omar in this second novel is given far more dramatic intensity (as she is forced to unarm and defy him) than that between Willems and his abandoned son. Chapter 3 examines the significance of this relationship for Conrad, possibly as an expression of desire for an alternative male-female relationship, one in which the female is bound by powerful emotional ties and subordinate to a stronger male figure. This desire reinforces the notion of an unresolved Oedipal conflict as Conrad seems to compensate for his own dependency on the mother by projecting himself into the role of the father. At the same time, I question whether he might not actually be identifying with these daughters - revealing a sense of emasculation - perhaps wondering how his relationship with his own father might have differed, or using them as a screen behind which he might indirectly express his resentment at being torn between Apollo Korzeniowski's legacy and his own ambitions. Hence I investigate the significance of characters such as Almayer, Cornelius in *Lord Jim* and de Barral in *Chance*, men whose unhealthy obsessions and emotional dependencies on their daughters suggest that Conrad was both drawn to, and afraid of this relationship. Ultimately, I propose that, regarding this relationship at least, Conrad was able to claim more objectivity than Freud, whose closeness to his daughters Sophie and Anna appears to have biased his theories.

The next chapter addresses a completely new 'type' of female: the tempestuous sea which seems to mirror the changeable spectre. Conrad's description of a great 'love story' (x) in the Author's Note to *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906) hints at an obsessive relationship, one that

went on unreasoning and invincible, surviving the test of disillusion,

defying the disenchantment that lurks in every day of a strenuous life; went on full of love's delight and love's anguish, facing them in open-eyed exultation, without bitterness and without repining, from the first hour to the last. (ix-x)

The obsession was sparked by his voracious childhood reading, an appetite shared by Freud, who was inspired to enter science through reading Goethe. Indeed, both men appear to have compensated for lonely childhoods by immersing themselves in the worlds of the imagination. Yet whereas Freud was to use literature practically to support his theories, Conrad allowed imagination to become ambition and actuality. Chapter 4 addresses the possibility that in leaving Poland, Conrad was attempting to create another alternative male-female relationship in the bond between the seafarer and the sea, as idealised in literature, attempting to live out the dream fantasies that Freud, in turn, dissected. By examining the recurrent feminisation of both the sea and ship, as well as the consequent tensions between male and female in primarily Edwardian works such as 'Falk' (1903), *The Mirror*, 'The Brute' (1906) and *'Twiixt Land and Sea* (1912), I examine how far Conrad's own maritime literature conforms to, or challenges a controlling patriarchal tradition.

Chapter 5 moves on to investigate the peculiar significance of marriage, since Conrad's own has provoked surprising levels of vitriol in a critical tradition that prefers to stress his male friendships. Notably, both Conrad and Freud developed powerful emotional bonds with men, Conrad with fellow writers and publishers such as John Galsworthy, Stephen Crane, Ford Madox Ford, J.B. Pinker, Richard Curle, Edward Garnett, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, and G. Jean-Aubry; Freud with (almost exclusively) fellow psychoanalysts such as Josef Breuer, Wilhelm Fliess, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, Sándor Ferenczi, Otto Rank, Hanns Sachs and Max Eitingon. In a letter to Fliess, Freud

himself relegated his wife Martha to a subordinate position: 'In my life, as you know, woman has never replaced the comrade, the friend' (*CLSFWF*: 447). Chapter 5 reverses this emphasis on alternative male 'marriages', challenging the traditionally reductive treatment of Martha Freud (née Bernays, 1861-1951) and Jessie Conrad (née George, 1873-1936) as mere silent partners. By examining the several examples of unhappy marriages in, for example, *The Secret Agent*, 'The Return' (1898), 'Amy Foster' and *Nostramo* - often used as evidence against Jessie - I suggest that Conrad actually articulated his own sense of inadequacy as a partner by making the husbands of these stories as much, if not more, to blame than the wives. I also re-examine Jessie's own writing alongside that of her more extreme detractors and, by comparing Conrad's original manuscripts to those bearing her corrections, explore the question of control versus collaboration. Finally, I take one example of an unusual love-triangle, that between Conrad, Jessie and Ford, to determine, as far as possible, with whom Conrad's divided loyalties really resided.

Chapter 6 summarises the developing argument through an investigation of *Under Western Eyes*, a novel Conrad referred to as 'the most deeply meditated [...] that came from under my pen' (*CL5*: 695), and which largely contributed to his mental and physical breakdown in 1910. As such, it might be regarded as the culmination of his anxieties, introducing a homeless exile as protagonist and combining desire for the mother with fear of the daughter; two figures who become interchangeable in the characters of Natalia and Mrs Haldin. Moreover, the emphasis on feminism, combined with the wide variety of potential mother figures - Razumov's lost parent, the mournful Mrs Haldin, the revolutionary Sophia Antonovna, the sinister Madame S- and the devoted, self-sacrificing Tekla - suggest that women represent Conrad's main concern in this pivotal middle work. Consequently, I employ Freudian ideas on neurosis,

compulsion and the Uncanny to analyse the paranoia and fear that surround male perceptions of women in this novel, and investigate how far Razumov's confession might be, for Conrad, a form of psychological catharsis and therapy.

Lastly, Chapter 7 addresses Conrad's late, unexpected emphasis on romance. Joseph Retinger records Conrad's more usual reticence:

Once I questioned him about the love affairs of his youth, which he must have had, and pointed out that in his writings the love motif played no fundamental part. Conrad assented with a sharp nod - and thus the conversation ended. (1941: 65-6)

Nonetheless, the later novels evoke a strong desire to re-examine and rework the earlier stories since, after *Victory* in 1915, the majority of Conrad's male characters survive their ordeals, in contrast to the unfortunate ends of Almayer, Willems, Kurtz, Jim and Verloc. It seems possible, therefore, that Conrad actually conquered his fears and overcame his neuroses, breaking his fatalistic cycle, though - according to numerous critics - at the cost of the psychological complexity of his novels. Thus I investigate the significance of transitional phase stories, such as *Chance* and 'The Planter of Malata' (1914), in which the problems of analysis and female identity are increasingly emphasised and problematised, implying a greater sense of psychological awareness, as Jones attests: 'Flora's evasion of a schematic role at the centre of the text [*Chance*] suggests the novel's modernism, where Flora is alienated from the other characters in the tale, endlessly debating the question 'who is she?'" (1999: 105). I also examine *Victory*, in which Lena gradually develops from a daughter to a mother-figure, sacrificing herself for Heyst at the tragic denouement of the tale and creating the discomfiting sense that male empowerment depends on female suppression. Moreover, by focusing on the recurrent psychoanalytic imagery of this novel, set on an

isolated island under a kind of siege by three mysterious strangers, I address the possibility that, after his breakdown, Conrad was increasingly receptive to areas opened up by psychoanalysis, if not necessarily Freudian.¹¹ Finally, I discuss *The Arrow of Gold* (1919) as an expression of Conrad's late interest in romance and nostalgia, as well as in weapons, as Rita gives the Monsieur George the arrow from her hair - just as Lena gives Heyst Ricardo's knife in *Victory* - once again implying the restoration of masculinity at the cost of female identity. Consequently, I examine whose, and how effective, Conrad's 'victory' truly was.

- VI -

In *Conrad in Perspective*, Zładisław Najder, author of the major 1983 biography *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, resolutely separates criticism from biography, claiming not only that the latter is of 'secondary importance' (1997: 5), but that it offers only speculative, and often damaging, hints as to the author's motives. He even states: 'If the author's biography is not a part of the text, then mixing textual and biographical analysis is a sin (at the least, the sin of conceit in showing off one's privileged information)' (6). That a purely factual biography can be written testifies to the rich and interesting diversity of Conrad's experiences, as does the sheer volume of biographies, by Gustav Morf, Bernard Meyer, John Batchelor, Jocelyn Baines and Frederick R. Karl, to name a few. A number of earlier, more subjective, articles and books were also published by Conrad's friends, including Richard Curle, Ford Madox Ford, John Galsworthy and Edward Garnett. Even Jessie Conrad wrote two books of biography with his permission (on condition they were published after his death).

¹¹ Significantly, in a letter to his agent J.B. Pinker in April 1917 (CL6: 80), Conrad specifically requested a copy of Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1916), a text that was later included in the posthumous auction of his library.

Moreover, Conrad actually appointed his own biographer, G. Jean-Aubry, a fact that undermines his earlier claims of disinterest, as does Retinger's recollection of Conrad's preoccupation with the genre: 'he liked to probe the psychology of people, known or even unknown to him, just as he liked best to read diaries and memoirs, infinitely more than fiction or history' (1941: 66). Meanwhile, the marked manipulation and evasiveness of his own pseudo-autobiographical works *A Personal Record* and *The Mirror of the Sea* suggest a deliberate blurring between biography and fiction, as Conrad experimented with the genre in a precarious attempt both to assert his individuality and evade the dangers of naked confession. His letters also reveal the often traumatic overlap between his real and fictional lives, one that cannot be ignored, as Edward W. Said argues: 'The abundant difficulties with which the letters teem are [...] the difficulties of Conrad's spiritual life, so that critics are almost forced to associate the problems of his life with the problems of his fiction' (1966: 5). More simplistically, the predominant use of the first-person in Conrad's writing serves to emphasise the importance of the character, be it himself or Marlow, behind the voice. Since none of Conrad's stories is narrated by a woman, however, the critic is necessarily limited to an investigation of the ways in which the female spectre is presented and the significance of the persona - both real and fictional - involved in the presenting.

To merely apply Freudian psychoanalytical theory to an author's texts seems to presume that the former somehow outweighs the latter, to assume that an applied theory can teach us more than original art. As a result, although I attempt a Freudian analysis of Conrad, I do not intend merely to fit his novels into pre-conceived patterns, but rather to use Freudian methodology, where appropriate, to show the ways in which he conforms to, enlarges upon or challenges these psychological precepts. I follow

Germaine Greer's recommendation in *The Female Eunuch*: 'The best approach to Freud's assumptions about women is probably [...] that of psychoanalysing Freud himself' (1970: 104). Hence, I regard Freud as a contemporary to, not an authority on Conrad, and subject both to psychoanalysis. Moreover, I treat Conrad's and Freud's writing as a combination of fiction, autobiography and theory and, since they are themselves problematic and ambiguous, suggest several potential ways of interpreting their 'female spectres'. Although I give dominance to Conrad, my study is also a comparison of his and Freud's various ideas on, and representations of, women; both in terms of the real women who haunt them and the ideals they imagine and project into their writing. Along the way, I hope also to find the possible origin(s) of their 'female spectres' and to discover whether they are friendly ghosts or ones capable of being exorcised. Unfortunately, Conrad would probably have objected to such theorising as much as he did to psychoanalysis, as implied in a letter to Curle of 1922:

I knew what I was doing in leaving the facts of my life and even of my tales in the background [...] Explicitness, my dear fellow, is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion [...] nothing is more clear than the utter insignificance of explicit statement and also its power to call attention away from things that matter in the region of art. (Ed. Curle 1928: 142)

Consequently, I do not intend to make any 'explicit', definitive statements, but to respect Conrad's artistic beliefs by identifying, probing and complicating the various 'female spectres' that haunt both him and his literature.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABSENT MOTHER:

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX TO THE DEATH DRIVE

Arguably the biggest difference between Conrad and Freud lies in their relations to, and reflections of, the mother. Whereas Conrad's thirty-two-year-old mother died when he was just seven, Freud's very nearly outlived him, surviving to the age of ninety-five, when he was seventy-one. Probably as a result, mother-son relationships are noticeably scarce in Conrad's writing, with the few exceptions appearing either in disturbing, violent short stories such as 'Amy Foster' and 'The Idiots', or in novels whose subplots include parental abandonment and self-destruction, as in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. Conversely, the dominant influence of Freud's mother is clearly evident in his writing, most famously in his pivotal theory of the Oedipus complex. Yet despite her apparent importance, the role of the maternal in Freudian psychology is mostly implied, recessive and passive, emphasis being given to male development. By contrast, although the mother's role in Conrad's writing appears marginal, her infrequent appearances are striking, violent and active. Thus the maternal evokes a sense of loss in both writers: Conrad in his reluctant, and hence sporadic and problematic attempts, to address this painful relationship; Freud in his apparent desire to efface it. This chapter investigates these significant 'absences' of the mother, the Freudian implications of her active and passive influence, her spectral re-appearance in surrogate figures, and the extent to which the supposedly universal Oedipus theory agrees with, or is challenged by, Conrad's life and writing.

- I -

Overwhelmingly, the most elusive 'female spectre' in either writing by, or about

Conrad is his mother, Evelina Korzeniowska. Appearing only briefly in the pseudo-autobiographical *A Personal Record*, she is remembered in the first chapter as a 'loving, wide-browed, silent, protecting presence, whose eyes had a sort of commanding sweetness' (24). The rare references to her in his correspondence imply an intense need for privacy, as Jessie explained:

He would declare that he could not bear to show his wounds to all and sundry, who would feel nothing but idle curiosity as to their fears, without troubling in the least to understand the pain and discomfort they had given. (1935: 50)

Conrad's reticence, combined with the paucity of other evidence, has led to a critical underestimation of the 'absent' Evelina. Morf's claim that '[w]hen his mother died, the young Conrad could not feel her loss much' (1930: 48) highlights a traditional emphasis on his father's influence. Kirschner even writes that his father's 'death was probably a greater catastrophe for Conrad than his mother's' (1968: 7). Many critics prefer to focus upon Evelina's second-oldest and 'favourite' brother Tadeusz (1829-94) - the man who 'was to take the place for me [Conrad] of both my parents' (*APR*: 24), 'extending over me a paternal care and affection' (31) - and the patriarchal tensions and jealousies between him, the conservative landowner, and Conrad's revolutionary father, relegating her to the position of pawn. Since she was just sixteen when she met her future husband, Evelina is often dismissed as a romantic and passive victim who adopted her partner's political ideas without conviction, and whose foolish love-letters led to their exile. Vague and speculative biographical portraits of Evelina have even been taken as evidence in themselves, for example by Morf:

Most critics of Conrad have remarked that his women have always something unfinished, something shadowy, something elusive about them. It is, indeed, as if the memory of her that flitted like a shadow

through his infant life prevented him from drawing his women with the same sure stroke which characterizes his portraits of men. (1930: 41)

Nonetheless, Morf implies a direct correlation between the 'absent' mother and Conrad's female characters, indicating a significant, albeit reductive, formative influence.

Fortunately, Evelina is not without defenders. Najder - whose collections of letters and family documents in *Conrad's Polish Background* and *Conrad under familial eyes* provide the most comprehensive and authoritative portrait of Conrad's Polish life - repeatedly attacks such ill-founded assumptions: 'one cannot refrain from expressing surprise and regret that so many critics have ventured in this field unhampered by even a rudimentary knowledge of facts' (*CUFE*: xii). He challenges the stereotype with a thorough study of Evelina's own and other surviving family letters, claiming that 'all evidence shows her as a spontaneous and enthusiastic ally' of her husband and that '[t]here is every reason to consider her marriage a very happy one; all misfortunes came from outside' (xiv). Tadeusz's memoirs also depict her as a noble, self-sacrificing patriot - 'winning the respect and admiration of her relatives as well as of strangers [...] and representing the ideals of Polish womanhood' (cited in Szczypien 1984: 84)¹ - although his high estimation has contributed to the other extreme, evidently biasing Conrad's perception (suspiciously, the description of her in *A Personal Record* is lifted almost entirely from one of Tadeusz's letters) and, correspondingly, that of his biographer G. Jean-Aubry, who draws a distinctly idealised portrait:

She was very beautiful; her education was superior to that of most

¹ Since Tadeusz's memoirs are not available in English translation, it is necessary to quote from a different source.

women of her time: she was eager-minded and seemed to expect much from life. But, even then, her health was not very robust, and an agitating and absorbing love affair certainly did not help to improve it. (1927, I: 3)

Where Conrad's 'absent' mother *is* recognised as an influence, she is over-romanticised and implicitly compared to Shakespeare's tragic heroine Juliet, being twelve years younger than her husband yet prematurely aged by her - unofficial and opposed - eight-year engagement and tempestuous nine-year marriage: 'tortured by scruples and contradictory impulses' (Aubry 1927, I: 3-4) due to 'a basic difference in outlook between the two families' (Najder 1983 [JCC]: 5).

According to Najder, Tadeusz Bobrowski, in his readiness 'to sacrifice truth for the sake of a family mythology' (CPB: 18), also withheld information concerning Evelina's role in the 1863 Polish insurrection from Conrad, allowing him to think that she chose exile voluntarily, whereas she was actually sentenced alongside her husband. Indeed, Evelina may have been more of a spectre than Conrad himself realised, as an imaginatively enhanced construct appears to have usurped - to a neurotic extent - the place of the real remembered mother. In a letter to Garnett of 1900, an awareness of bias - 'There was an extraordinary Sister-Cult in that family' - is undercut by a familiar idealising tendency:

[M]y mother certainly was no ordinary woman. Her correspondence with my father and with her brothers which in the year 1890 I have read and afterwards destroyed was a revelation to me; I shall never forget my delight, admiration and unutterable regret at my loss, (before I could appreciate her) which only then I fully understood.

(CL2: 245)²

According to this account, Conrad was not properly introduced to his mother until he was already in his thirties. Meanwhile, the year 1890 is significant, coinciding with the early stages of his literary career (he began *Almayer's Folly* in 1889). In reading Evelina's personal letters - and appropriating them to himself by destroying them - the motherless Conrad might have experienced a sense of renewed connection and re-birth that encouraged the forging of a new identity as an author and established the recurrent themes of motherless isolation and loss in his fiction, as Jones writes: 'At the turning-point in his life, as he initiated the transformation from seaman to writer, he directly relived, through his mother's letters, the events preceding his painful loss' (1999: 47). The underestimated, often unacknowledged, only half-known Evelina thus proves an inspirational and compelling spectre.

In terms of personal reserve, Conrad was matched by Freud, who was almost obsessively private, infrequently purging his letters deliberately to thwart prying biographers. Nonetheless, a biography was finally written by his close friend and fellow-psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, although, suspiciously, this work contains very few references to Amalia Freud, limiting its admiration of her 'lively personality [...] gaiety, alertness, and sharp-witted intelligence' (1953, 1: 3) to a few brief pages in the first chapter (an evasiveness also found in *A Personal Record*), suggesting either the tactful avoidance of a delicate subject or familial interference. However, since the cultural influence of psychoanalysis has contributed to a dominant critical emphasis on the maternal, Freud has been undone by his own theories as recent, more objective biographers have explicitly attributed his success to his mother, as for example Peter

² However, it is possible that Tadeusz was selective with these letters.

Gay: 'it would be his doting, energetic, and domineering mother, far more than his pleasant but somewhat shiftless father, who equipped him for a life of intrepid investigation, elusive fame, and halting success' (1988: 11). Ironically, most critics now typically focus on the young, striking Amalia (aged twenty-one when Freud was born), in order to stress the importance of his role as her oldest child (his father had two sons from an earlier marriage) and only surviving son out of seven children until the arrival of Alexander, her last, when he was ten.³ Instances of his preferential treatment and patriarchal role in the household are numerous: a private room in which to study; the removal of a piano because music disturbed him; even the censorship of his sisters' reading material, specifically of Balzac and Dumas. Such favouritism, however, also entailed a high degree of emotional pressure, as Martin Freud revealed in a biography of his father, describing Amalia as a 'tornado', and wavering between admiration – 'She had great vitality and much impatience for life and an indomitable spirit' (1958: 11) - and criticism of her frequently obsessive, dependent behaviour, particularly at family gatherings in her apartment:

My father always came to these gatherings - I know of no occasion when he disappointed her - but his working day was a long one and he always came much later than any one else. Amalia knew this, but perhaps it was a reality she could never accept. Soon she would be seen running anxiously to the door and out to the landing to stare down the staircase. Was he coming? Where was he? [...] And my father would always come at very much his usual time, but never at a moment when Amalia was waiting for him on the landing. (12)

³ Five daughters were born in a row: Anna, Rosa, Marie, Adolfine and Pauline. Freud also chose the name Alexander for his male successor, usurping his father's role and assuming dominance over his brother.

That Freud never arrived whilst she was 'on the landing' hints at a repressed resentment that could only be expressed through absence. His curiosity regarding his father's two previous wives also indicates a perverse questioning of his own maternity.⁴ Hence his extreme public reserve regarding Amalia hints at denial of her influence and a means of punishing her (in either case implicitly admitting her dominance). For both Conrad and Freud, therefore, the relationship with the mother proved to be intensely problematic and changeable: Conrad was burdened by an absent, idealised spectre, Freud by her opposite, a very active, forceful maternal presence who, at official functions, would allegedly introduce herself simply as 'the mother'.

- II -

In Freudian psychology the mother is simultaneously pivotal and passive, a keystone and an obstacle in developmental theory. Her initial role in the psychological drama appears to have been either accidental or contrived, developing out of Freud's failed 'seduction theory' in which, by employing the controversial technique of free association, he claimed to identify repressed memories of childhood abuse. Though clinging obstinately to this theory for four years, Freud became increasingly uncomfortable, not only with apparently endemic levels of abuse, but with the implications against his own parents - since he identified signs of hysteria in his siblings (significantly not himself) - and with the dominant role it potentially allowed the mother, complicating his determined notion of female passivity.⁵ His solution was to

⁴ Although Jacob Freud was married to Sally Kanner for over twenty years, until her death in 1852, his second marriage to Rebecca (her name being almost all that is known about her) must have been brief as he married Amalia in 1855. Freud also described the question of paternity as one of the questions by which obsessive neurotics are tortured, though he appears to have experienced the opposite.

⁵ In the late essay 'Femininity', however, he revised some of his earlier assumptions, refusing to ally passivity simplistically with femininity and claiming that it was a socially enforced, not natural attribute.

abandon the seduction theory altogether, betraying his patients with a complete turnaround, cruelly accusing them of fantasising abuse in order to vindicate his own parents. A replacement theory - later to take shape as the Oedipus complex - was outlined in a letter to Fliess in 1897 in which Freud described a train journey taken with his mother some time between the ages of two and two-and-a-half (in fact he was four) during which, he speculated, he first became aware of her naked. The mother is thus an inadvertent focus for neurosis, an unconscious abuser (also through her kissing, stroking and washing of the child), who not only releases the father from responsibility, but is herself excused through her passive ignorance, as described in 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: III' (1905): 'A mother would probably be horrified if she were made aware that all her marks of affection were rousing her child's sexual instinct and preparing for its later intensity' (VII: 223). Freud defended the process as natural - 'She is only fulfilling her task in teaching the child to love' - though in a telling contradiction, he further suggested that 'an excess of parental affection' (*ibid*) could prematurely awaken the child's sexual instincts, making both child and mother neurotically co-dependent. Moreover, his insistence on the mother's ignorance seems inevitably to entrap her in a state of slavish passivity since any burgeoning awareness of her influence would either implicate her in a new seduction theory or engender 'horrified' self-recriminations. As a result, the very foundations of the Oedipus complex - that which succeeds the oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital stages of psychosexual development - rest on the necessary suppression of maternal psychological potential.

Freud's first reference to the Oedipus complex - 'one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful, psychical achievements' ('Three Essays: III', VII: 227) - appeared in the 1910 essay 'A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men'. In

analysing the attraction of a specific type - an already attached, sexually provocative woman, who engenders strong feelings of jealousy and loyalty, as well as rescue fantasies - Freud identified an extreme example of libidinal desire for the mother. However, though expanded in the longer work *Totem and Taboo* (1913) - in which he theorized upon the development of the incest barrier and castration complex in Eastern societies - the Oedipus complex only became an integral, universal stage of psychological development during the middle phase of his career, in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916-17). The professed emphasis is on 'rivalry in love' ('Dreams' [1916], XV: 207) as the boy forms an incestuous attachment towards his mother and, *vice versa*, the girl to her father, each jealously regarding the other parent as a love-rival. Yet by naming his theory after the Greek myth made famous by Sophocles - in which Oedipus, king of Thebes, unwittingly killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta (who subsequently committed suicide) before blinding and exiling himself - Freud stressed both the dominance of the mother-son relationship over the father-son bond, and the overwhelming, inevitable and extremely violent nature of these emotions, as well as the psychological danger of failing to overcome them. The repression of the mother is then a conveniently necessary evil, protecting both her and her son from themselves.

According to Freud in 'Three Essays: III', the libidinal attachment of the Oedipus complex can only be overcome by the castration complex, the threat of a dominant father, 'a process that alone makes possible the opposition, which is so important for the progress of civilization, between the new generation and the old' (VII: 227), and which in turn leads to the development of the superego and the construction of a gendered identity. Only by repressing incestuous desire for his mother and submitting before the greater power of his father can the boy hope to function 'normally' in

society. However, since girls are already effectively 'castrated', the theory turns upon an imbalance and leads to an inevitable impasse, in that there is no reason for girls to repress the father.⁶ As a psychological hypothesis, meanwhile, the Oedipus complex has been effectively discredited, not least in Richard Webster's lengthy *Why Freud Was Wrong*, which highlights both the lack of empirical evidence behind Freud's findings and the constructed nature of a theory that rests on his other - also speculative - ideas regarding the unconscious. Webster finally dismisses the theory altogether as the product of a mind deluded by its own arrogant self-importance: 'the Oedipus complex [...] for all its resonance and its superficial congruence with one or two of the observed facts of human behaviour, actually runs counter to the mass of evidence which is available' (1995: 257). Consequently, both feminist critics - who condemn the Oedipus complex as phallogentric and prejudiced - and later psychoanalysts have challenged Freud, as in the case of the second generation psychoanalyst and object-relations theorist Karen Horney, who tactfully attempts to modify Freud's theory by identifying similar processes whilst questioning his 'presuppositions' (1939: 80) of biological inevitability and exclusively sexual motivation. Ultimately, however, criticism of the Oedipus complex detracts from the - arguably more useful - issue of Freud's personal investment and prejudice as, the extreme nature of the boy's incestuous desire notwithstanding, the undermining of female influence, and privileging of male development, reinforces a pervasive idea of maternal victimisation and patriarchal self-assertion.

The biographical basis of Freud's emphasis on the maternal is evidenced in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess from 1897: 'I have found, in my own case too, [the phenomenon of]

⁶ This paradox is examined in Chapter 3.

being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood' (*CLSFWF*: 272). Although he largely ignores the psychology of the mother during the Oedipus complex - claiming that since he could not represent her as an object of transference for his patients, neither could he properly evaluate her responses - several revelatory comments distinctly recall Amalia, and expose the pressure and tenacity of her hold over him, as well as his own self-regard:

A mother is only brought unlimited satisfaction by her relation to a son; this is altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships. A mother can transfer to her son the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself, and she can expect from him the satisfaction of all that has been left over in her of her masculinity complex. ('Femininity', XXII: 133).

According to this estimation, the mother is most happy whilst her son remains in the Oedipus complex, in which phase she is dominant. Yet Freud's treatment of the complex as a mere hurdle in development, one necessarily surmountable, belittles this natural bond and reduces maternal attachment to the status of unrequited love. In an inevitable conflict of interests, the mother's happiness depends on a son who must ultimately reject her. Possibly in an attempt to make up for his own detachment, therefore, Freud sporadically admits admiration, gratitude and love in relation to the mother, describing the mother-son bond as one of 'the purest examples of an unchangeable affection, unimpaired by any egoistic considerations' ('Dreams', XV: 206). Elsewhere, he even seems to admit Amalia's role as a driving force:

[P]eople who know that they are preferred or favoured by their mother give evidence in their lives of a peculiar self-reliance and an unshakeable optimism which often seem like heroic attributes and bring actual success to their possessors (*The Interpretation of*

Dreams, V: 398n.)

Like his critics, Freud implicitly attributed his success to the repressed, not forgotten, mother.

Gay attempts to explain this duality, claiming that Freud 'never fully worked through the meaning of his passionate unconscious ties to that commanding maternal figure' and adding that his professed confusion regarding female psychology was 'most likely [...] self-protective in origin' (1988: 11). Likewise, Breger speculates that Freud felt the need to transform and 'normalise' his own intense Oedipal emotions by constructing a protective theory: 'it made him into a warrior, a young Oedipus, in combat with a powerful king-like father. It also did away with actual traumas, sexual or any other kind, and gave primary emphasis to drives and fantasies' (2000: 137). Webster agrees:

Freud's [...] career was in many respects an extraordinarily determined and prolonged attempt to reconstruct the 'kingdom' of his childhood in the adult world and to do so in terms which would finally free him from any dependence on the intense but wounding love of his own family. (1995: 40)

In fact, Freud's interest in, and identification with Oedipus long predated his medical training, as he made a thorough study of the play for his school *Matura* exam. Hence his choice of Oedipus as a universal model appears not only premeditated - even forced - but disturbingly close to wish-fulfilment, Oedipus having achieved the desired union with the mother. Breger, however, posits another theory: that the sense of heroic power provided by the Oedipus complex obscured Freud's childhood guilt over the death of his younger, eight-month-old brother Julius (born immediately after him) from an intestinal infection, as admitted in a letter to Fliess: 'I greeted my one-year-younger brother (who died after a few months) with adverse wishes and genuine childhood

jealousy [...] his death left the germ of [self-]reproaches in me' (*CLSFWF*: 268). The complex may also have obscured a deeper, fearful association of the mother with loss, since Amalia's grief over Julius, as well as her brother - Sigmund's namesake, who died from tuberculosis when Freud was almost two years old - may have caused a lasting fear of losing, or being lost to her. In self-analysis he distinctly recalled his childhood panic at her sudden unexplained absence (due to confinement), following shortly after the loss of his nursemaid Monika Zajic (who had been arrested for stealing), as well as a desperate searching through cupboards; while in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he describes a dream of her death, which he associates with the repression of dangerous sexual desire. Consequently, the Oedipus theory might be regarded as a fictional reworking of Freud's own personal traumas and fears, a private agenda disguised as a universal theory.

- III -

Although Freud writes in 'Lay Analysis': 'It is hardly to be believed what goes on in a child of four or five years old' (XX: 215), he makes little provision for the psychology of orphans such as the young, deprived Conrad. On the other hand, his claim that 'the sexual life of children usually emerges in a form accessible to observation round about the third or fourth year of life' ('Three Essays: II', VII: 176-7) underscores the fact that Conrad lost his mother just as he was becoming aware of her as an object of Oedipal desire, though before he could effectively repress her. In *A Personal Record* Evelina is predominantly associated with negative connotations of illness, loss and political injustice (extreme alternative forms of repression), as Conrad's affectionate memories are undermined by a retrospective awareness of her suffering in Siberia:

There were no signs of invalidism about her - but I think that already they had pronounced her doom unless perhaps the change to a

southern climate could re-establish her declining strength. For me it seems the very happiest period of my existence. (24)

The juxtaposition of happy ignorance and belated sadness here indicates a combination of guilt and helplessness that encroaches backwards through the memory. Meyer speculates that Conrad might even have felt responsible for his mother's tuberculosis, which followed immediately after her nursing him through pneumonia:

[I]t is natural to ask whether, unencumbered by the care of a small and sick child, Evelina might have better endured the arduous hardships which had befallen her. If such thoughts occurred as well to Conrad, it might go far to explain his haunting obsession with the theme of remorse. (1967: 68)

Such guilt may have caused a sense of indebtedness that made it not only difficult, but actually ungrateful, to repress her. Indeed, rather than repressing the mother, Conrad most likely desired her return. Yet if he did feel partially to blame for her loss, and if as Freud claims, 'the Oedipus complex may be looked upon as one of the most important sources of the sense of guilt by which neurotics are so often tormented' ('General Theory of the Neuroses', XVI: 331-2), then Conrad might plausibly have remained trapped in an emotional stalemate, with the mother frozen as an unresolved spectre in his psyche, impossible to confront or repress through her very absence. It is an idea poignantly expressed in *Under Western Eyes*, when the orphaned Razumov - who first neurotically avoids, then desperately lies to Mrs Haldin - admits to Natalia: 'I was afraid of your mother. I never knew mine. I've never known any kind of love. There is something in the mere word' (360).

In 'Three Essays: III' Freud acknowledges and examines the various ways in which a child's development can go wrong, from hereditary neurosis to accidental trauma (both

of which might apply to Conrad). Tellingly, he describes sublimation - in which libidinal energy is redirected into different areas - as both the result of 'an abnormal constitutional disposition', and 'one of the origins of artistic activity' (VII: 238). That Conrad sublimated his neurosis, specifically his residual feelings of isolation and guilt, into his fiction is indicated by the fact that he keeps the majority of his fictional heroines - Nina, Aïssa, Jewel, Emilia (whose name resembles both Amalia and Evelina), Flora, Lena, Edith, Rita and Adèle - childless, arguably protecting them from potentially dangerous sons. Even a brief survey reveals the mother to be the most 'absent' family member in Conrad's fiction, as mothers and sons feature either as outsiders to the main events of their novels, like Joanna and her son in *An Outcast of the Islands*, or appear separately, like Viktor and Mrs Haldin in *Under Western Eyes*. An idea of danger is dramatised in 'Because of the Dollars' (1914), whose title not only echoes that of Apollo Korzeniowski's play 'Because of the Money' (1858), but recalls Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), in which Little Father Time hangs himself and his siblings because of their parents' poverty: '*because we are too merry*' (336). Money is a key theme in Conrad's short story, as Laughing Anne takes up with Bamtz, the last in a string of men, to support her son Tony, as she tells her old friend Davidson: 'It's for the kid, Davy - it's for the kid. Isn't he a bright little chap?' (WT: 185). Conrad's portrait of Anne is sympathetic and sorrowful as he emphasises her persistent good nature in the face of male abuse, to the extent of her adamantly remaining friends with the men by whom she is casually dropped. Living in the jungle, she is also able to conceal her wayward past from her son, who is the focus of her loving attention. Meanwhile, her inherent goodness compels her to warn Davidson of a plot against him and his cargo of dollars, at great risk to herself and even though she is preoccupied with her sick son. As the conspirators realise their plans have been foiled, she escapes, only to return for Tony. In the dark, however, she is tripped and beaten by the villainous Frenchman, to

be discovered too late by Davidson. The mother is brutalised because of the dollars and because of her love for her son who, unlike Little Father Time, is too young to understand his mother's devotion and sacrifice. Knowing that he might have prevented this waste, Davidson lamentably compares Anne with his cold-hearted wife who, suspecting him of being the natural father - and whose heart is, as the narrator always suspected, 'about the size of a parched pea' (207) - leaves for England, abandoning both husband and child.

Nonetheless, the lost, self-sacrificing mother is a significant spectre in Conrad's fiction. The most famous example is in *The Secret Agent*, as the aged, disabled mother abandons Stevie to Winnie's care in an 'unscrupulous' gesture of self-sacrifice, forsaking her own happiness for, she thinks, his future security: 'the heroic old woman resolved on going away from her children as an act of devotion and as a move of deep policy' (162). Such instances of selfless maternal attachment, combined with the maternal craving of, for example, the lonely Emilia in *Nostramo*, imply an attempt by Conrad to vindicate himself *and* his mother, as he asserts her right to motherhood and his right to be born, whilst emphasising his admiration and gratitude. Moreover, male protagonists such as Razumov, Heyst and Peyrol seem either in desperate need of, or haunted by the memory of a mother. Developmentally stunted, they are neither fully dependent on, nor independent of the maternal. Schwarz's claim that the 'search for a restored family is an underlying motif in Conrad's fiction' (1980: 154) might be replaced and refined by an emphasis upon the more specific search for a restored mother or maternal surrogate. The problematic romances of Conrad's protagonists might then denote a rejection of any other (inferior) woman's love. Finally, the neurotic insecurity of these protagonists recalls Freud's distinction between narcissistic and anaclitic love, the former being associated with the early transitional phase from auto-

eroticism to objects, in which the mother occupies a safe middle-ground between the child and the external world. As expressions of absence, therefore, Conrad's stories reflect an ambiguously guilty and defiant search for surrogate mothers.

Any tentative attempts by Conrad to repress the mother must also inevitably have been thwarted by his father and uncle who, rarely in agreement elsewhere, were united in their love for Evelina. In a letter to Kazimierz Kaszewski less than two months after Evelina's death in 1865, Apollo wrote:

Although I am writing this myself, we are writing together - she from her grave and I without it, above her. We write together whether in her or my hand - as we always used to do in her lifetime. Oh! I have not parted with her: I just cannot see or hear her. (*CUFE*: 95)

Such language might actually have evoked the female spectre for the young, impressionable Conrad. Tekla Wojakowska, a distant cousin who visited the Korzeniowskis' apartment in Cracow, reinforces the notion of psychological damage in her remembered image of the father

sitting motionless in front of his wife's portrait. He never stirred on seeing us and Konradek who was accompanying me put his finger to his lips and said: "[...] Father spends every anniversary of Mother's death sitting all day and looking at her portrait; he does not speak or eat." (*CUFE*: 136)

Such obsessive love is reflected in Conrad's (albeit somewhat rare) romances, as for example, in the short stories 'Gaspar Ruiz' (1906) and 'Prince Roman' (1908). Yet in appearing to give priority to his dead wife, Conrad's father might have caused a double sense of rejection and inadequacy for his son. Apollo's passivity also reverses the Freudian model of male dominance, causing a role-reversal in which the child acted as

father-figure, thereby undermining the castration threat and giving power to the maternal spectre.⁷ Ultimately, both Conrad's father and uncle seem to have transferred their love for, and expectations of, the mother onto her son, as Apollo wrote: 'I want whatever of hers that remains on this earth to bear proper testimony to her in the eyes of those who will never forget her' (*CUF*: 95). Not only was Conrad expected to internalise the maternal spectre, but actually to compensate for Evelina's absence.

Notably, the process of internalisation appears to have been reversed in regard to Conrad's father, as Tadeusz repeatedly criticised the idle, irresponsible, impractical Korzeniowski streak:

You always, my dear boy, made me impatient - and still make me impatient by your disorder and the easy way you take things - in which you remind me of the Korzeniowski family - spoiling and wasting everything - and not my dear Sister, your Mother, who was careful about everything. (*CPB*: 37)

Tadeusz's worst criticism was in calling Conrad a Korzeniowski, complicating the castration complex to the extent that Ford claimed 'it really pained him [Conrad] to think that his father had been a revolutionary' (1924: 75), and leading Guerard to define him not in relation, but in opposition to his father: 'this conservative satirist of revolution and critic of social-democrat visionaries was the son of Apollo Korzeniowski, leader of the Red faction in the Polish uprising of 1863' (1958: 4). Significantly, in *A Personal Record* Conrad's parents never appear together, indicating a sense of divided loyalty. The trend is also evident in his fiction, in which married couples with children (of either sex) serve mainly as peripheral characters or,

⁷ Some Freudian theorists (though not Freud himself) even argue that this kind of situation, with a weak father and absent mother, can lead to homosexuality.

paradoxically, as warnings against the very family-life that Conrad sought.

Conversely, there are a number of fathers with sons, almost all of whom have an oppressive effect, arguably reflecting Conrad's trained ambivalence towards his father (and perhaps some resentment towards his strict uncle). For example, both Carleon Anthony in *Chance* and Heyst Snr in *Victory* make their sons psychologically unstable and passive. In the latter novel Heyst Snr - whose very name implies premature development - drains the energy from his son: 'Three years of such companionship at that plastic and impressionable age were bound to leave in the boy a profound mistrust of life' (91). The damage inflicted by Heyst Snr even seems to fulfil Apollo's own fears for Conrad, as expressed in a letter: 'he looks at the decrepitude of my sadness and who knows if that sight does not make his young heart wrinkled or his awakening soul grizzled' (*CUF*: 98). Perhaps in acknowledgement of this bond, however, *Victory* evokes respect and sympathy for, as well as alienation from, the father: 'One could not refuse him a measure of greatness, for he was unhappy in a way unknown to mediocre souls' (91). Even so, the 'cold blasts of the father's *analysis*' (92, emphasis added) have an irreversible effect, as Heyst decides to 'drift [...] with a sort of inward consciousness that for the son of his father there was no other worthy alternative' (92). Heyst's situation also recalls Freud's argument in 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1915), that the loss of a close friend or relative can lead to a psychotic state of depression that actually disguises repressed feelings of hatred for the loved one, feelings that subsequently find expression in a twisted, self-loathing identification. Paradoxically, sons who rebel against their fathers in Conrad's fiction fare no better - Charles Gould in *Nostramo* ignores his father's warnings about the mine and suffers the same enslavement; Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* betrays, and is subsequently abandoned by his surrogate father Lingard - indicating that, despite his uncle, Conrad

remained aware of the castration complex. Nonetheless, without a mother, his fictional sons cannot seem to succeed and feel emasculated, even castrated by her loss (recalling Freud's claim about a mother's favourite). Meanwhile, the absent mothers of *Chance* and *Victory* are excused with mitigating circumstances: both have run away from psychologically abusive husbands. Like Freud, Conrad avoids direct criticism of the mother, repressing any resentment and channelling it, as recommended by Tadeusz, onto the father.

An additional complication in Conrad's perception of the maternal can be found in his relation to the Motherland of Poland. Once again, Conrad's father forced this maternal influence upon him, as demonstrated in a poem he wrote to celebrate his son's Christening, entitled 'To my son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression'. The patriotic emphasis hardly needs emphasising: 'Be a *Pole!* Though foes / May spread before you / A web of happiness / Renounce it all: love your poverty. / Hushaby, my baby son!' (*CUFE*: 32). Thus Conrad's notion of the maternal seems inevitably to include a political dimension⁸ as, in essays such as 'Autocracy and War' (1905) and 'The Crime of Partition' (1919), he dwells upon the masculine qualities of the Germanic and Russian Empires that oppress the Motherland. Yet after leaving Poland for Marseilles in 1874 he returned only three times (although until 1886, when he became a British citizen, he ran the risk of being conscripted into the Russian army). His purported reasons for leaving were also typically vague: in *A Personal Record* he merely cites 'childish audacity' (13), curiosity and the spirit of adventure. A letter to Kazimierz Waliszewski of 1903, however, hints at deep-seated feelings of displacement

⁸ The best example of this is found in *Under Western Eyes* and is addressed in Chapter 6.

and division - 'Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning' (CPB: 240)⁹ - of being torn between two parents, even between two mothers. Since his father's political ideals equated to those of Polish nationalism, the castration complex actually encouraged an attachment to this other metaphorical mother. Yet since Conrad lost his natural mother to the nationalist cause, he might plausibly have resented Poland both as the reason for his loss and as a usurping step-mother. This confusion is reflected in his professed discomfort in writing about Poland as, according to E.A. Bojarski, Poland is referred to in only three of his works before his visit in 1914, in 'Autocracy and War', *A Personal Record* and 'Prince Roman'. Bojarski also attributes the cooling of his friendship with the Welsh-born Joseph Spiridion Kliszczewski to the latter's suggestion that he should write about Poland (also proposed earlier by Tadeusz). Conrad's agitated refusal includes a degree of hysteria: 'This plea greatly upset Conrad [...] He could not live by his pen, he said, if he were to make a propaganda instrument of it. It was a complete impossibility that he should ever write about Poland' (cited in Bojarski 1977: 110). The very word 'propaganda' evokes negative connotations and, in particular, a sense of wariness or cynicism regarding his parents - specifically his father's - political activities.

On the other hand, Conrad makes a distinction between Poland as a nation and Polishness as an identity, considering himself distinct from one, though inextricably bound to the other. In a 1914 interview with Marian Dąbrowski, he described Polishness as an inherited cultural identity, almost a mother's milk:

English critics - and after all I am an English writer - whenever they

⁹ Since the 1930s, criticism has attempted to integrate the idea of *homo duplex* by re-categorising Conrad as an Anglo-Pole, placing him among great Polish writers such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński.

speaking of me they add that there is in me something incomprehensible, inconceivable, elusive. Only you can grasp this elusiveness, and comprehend what is incomprehensible. *That is Polishness.*

Polishness which I took from Mickiewicz and Słowacki. (*CUFE*: 199)

Another letter to Garnett stressed the ingrained, inherent nature of his 'Polishness' in opposition to his adopted Englishness: 'you seem to forget that I am a Pole. You forget that we have been used to go to battle without illusions. It's you Britishers that "go in to win" only' (*CL3*: 492). Tellingly, Ford claimed that Conrad considered 'the Polish national spirit [to have] been kept alive by such women as his mother' (1924: 76), thereby making Polishness, not Poland the nation, his mother's legacy. Indeed, the oppressed, absent identity of Polishness - theoretically eradicated by the partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 and the insidious process of 'russification'¹⁰ - appears to have strengthened Conrad's mournful perception of the absent Evelina. As an orphan, Conrad might have experienced the Polish dilemma more acutely, resulting in an intensely contradictory sense of identity. Norman Davies' description of Polish National sentiment could even be adopted as a metaphorical reflection of his confusion: "'Poland" was just an idea - a memory from the past or a hope for the future' (1984: 159). Unsurprisingly, Conrad remained torn between two conflicting conceptions of nationhood, deliberately estranging himself from one whilst refusing complete assimilation into the other: a geographical and political stalemate that reflects his psychological entrapment.

- IV -

In 'Femininity', Freud's belated attempt to redress his ideas on female

¹⁰ In 1795, the 800-year-old Polish nation was replaced with sectors controlled by the Russian, Prussian and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

psychology, he obliquely admits to, and confronts the disruptive spectre of his developmental theory, the pre-Oedipal mother, whose primary, irrepressible influence lies at the root of the maternal problem:

We knew, of course, that there had been a preliminary stage of attachment to the mother, but we did not know that it could be so rich in content and so long-lasting, and could leave behind so many opportunities for fixations and dispositions. (XXII: 119)

Freud even appears to concede defeat, admitting the enduring nature of this early attachment: 'A boy's mother is the first object of his love, and she remains so too during the formation of his Oedipus complex and, in essence, all through his life' (118). Yet frustratingly, he largely ignores this point to focus (for once) on female psychology, giving the unfortunate impression that the pre-Oedipal mother is a mere device through which to justify the differences between male and female development, specifically the girl's hostile relationship with the mother and substitution of the father as a love object.¹¹ In so doing, however, he identifies the pre-Oedipal mother as the first source of the castration threat, since the child must inevitably withdraw from the breast (which supposedly leads to a fear of being poisoned) and recognise a rival parent. Thus the phallic pre-Oedipal mother awakens tempestuous emotions of disappointment, estrangement and jealousy, hinting at a capacity for violence only vaguely acknowledged by Freud (although his assumption of a weaker superego in women implies less restraint). The pre-Oedipal mother would then seem to usurp the father as a site of danger. As a fantasy and threat, a carnivalesque disruptive force, she represents a problematic 'absence' in psychoanalysis, as identified by later analysts, most famously Melanie Klein. Madelon Sprengnether, in the aptly titled *The Spectral Mother*,

¹¹ This is addressed further in Chapter 3.

summarises:

Her functions are, in Freud's texts, marginalized, divided, suppressed, or transcended, yet always problematic and thus in need of continuous reformulation. As an object of both fascination and dread, she is the specter that drives him forth and that compels his return. (1990: 39-40)

The pre-Oedipal mother might represent the underlying reality of, and reason behind, Freud's otherwise sanitised version of the maternal: a volatile 'spectre' he sought desperately to repress. Whereas Freud retreats from the implications of the pre-Oedipal, however, Conrad exceeds the narrow confines of the phallogentric Oedipus complex, reaching out to this dangerous mother.

Despite the noticeably short supply of mothers in his fiction, Conrad's first short story, 'The Idiots', actually features a violent pre-Oedipal mother. The story starkly articulates the tensions between youth and age, pre-Oedipal attachment and 'normal' adult repression, as the young husband Jean-Pierre Bacadous, having presumably long overcome his own Oedipus complex, feels ready to begin the cycle again with his own children, whilst his parents recognise their redundancy: 'the old folks felt a shadow - precursor of the grave - fall upon them finally. The world is to the young' (*TU*: 60). Yet as his wife Susan gives birth to four simple children, the new parents find themselves caught in an early stage of psychological development, in which the mother remains dominant. Jean-Pierre's assault on Susan might then reflect his latent fear of the pre-Oedipal mother, apparently justifiably as she fights him off with a pair of scissors. Indeed, Susan is just the first in a succession of wife-mothers who challenge their husbands, arguably reflecting Conrad's desire for a pre-Oedipal alliance with his own mother. In *The Secret Agent*, Winnie Verloc, surrogate-mother to her simple

brother, attacks her husband with a butcher's knife after he causes Stevie's accidental death in an anarchist plot. The description of her emotional turmoil, as 'waves of air [...] lapped against Mrs. Verloc's head as if it had been a head of stone' (260), recalls Susan's desperate cry: 'Do you think I am made of stone?' (75). Similarly, Winnie's 'pale face, in which the two eyes seemed like two black holes' (83) evokes the other woman: '[Susan's] eyes seemed to become glowing coals that burned deep into her brain' (21). Both are overwhelmed by a primitive, pre-Oedipal madness, which leads both to ambiguously jump or fall into the sea. Indeed, for a story Conrad wrote in a 'sardonic' humour, and for which he had 'an unreasonable contempt' (Jessie Conrad 1926: 38), 'The Idiots' is uncannily close to a practice-run for *The Secret Agent*. Thus Conrad displays a seemingly instinctive understanding of the violence of the pre-Oedipal, acknowledging - far more explicitly than Freud - the potential danger, even to the mother herself.

A less violent, though effectively as dangerous mother is also found in the short story 'Amy Foster', in which a new baby disrupts the relationship between his parents Yanko and Amy. Perceiving the sick and raving Yanko as a danger to their son, Amy is forced to choose between them and runs away. In so doing, she reaffirms the notion of a primary mother-son alliance that usurps all other familial relations: 'There was nothing in her now but the maternal instinct and that unaccountable fear' (139). Jürgen Kramer, however, suggests that it is Amy's jealousy of her husband, as he tries to overcome his narcissistic resentment¹² and accept his son, that causes her to react possessively, 'by unwittingly replacing Yanko by the baby in her affections' (2003: 3). During the

¹² In 'Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood' (1910) Freud claims: 'In the happiest young marriage the father is aware that the baby, especially if he is a baby son, has become his rival' (XI: 117).

problematic Oedipal transformation of the 'mother-child-dyad into a triad or a triangle' (*ibid*), she struggles to maintain a primary bond with her son, resisting the role of repressed mother, and rebelling against the 'small patriarchally constructed family' (5). That the pre-Oedipal mother directs her aggression, not onto her child, but onto her husband, implies both an assertion of the maternal bond and a rebellion against the repression Freud perceives as necessary. The story also concludes on an alarming note, as Johnny appears caught in the same trap as his father, implying a cycle of male entrapment that echoes Freud's implicit idea of emotional enslavement to the mother:

I have seen her hanging over the boy's cot in a very passion of maternal tenderness. The little fellow was lying on his back, a little frightened at me, but very still, with his big black eyes, with his fluttered air of a bird in a snare. (142)

Yet Amy, like Susan and Winnie, is provoked. Yanko's threatening aspect is undeniable, as he shouts incomprehensibly in 'a terrible voice' (140); as are Verloc's betrayal and Jean-Pierre's attempted rape. Moreover - as Kramer hints at in his criticism of the Doctor's biased narration in 'Amy Foster'¹³ - the unsympathetic portrayal of the community in which each of these women lives, places Conrad's sympathy firmly with his isolated, vulnerable mothers, for whom pre-Oedipal madness becomes the only means of expression. Nevertheless, Conrad's identification with these husbands (most obviously with the Polish Yanko), combined with his own dual role as son and father, inevitably causes parallel tensions in his depiction of marriage.¹⁴

In contrast to Amalia Freud, Evelina must have seemed destined to remain forever in

¹³ Kramer's condemnation of Doctor Kennedy who, he claims, 'lacks the necessary imagination to comprehend and, perhaps, intervene' (8) and whose 'diagnosis is significant in its general lack of meaning' (9), might also extend to Freud.

¹⁴ Chapter 5 re-examines the question of maternal versus marital in each of these texts.

the 'pre-Oedipal' phase, apparently giving Conrad a greater understanding of 'her' disruptive influence. In 'Heart of Darkness', Marlow's journey upriver into an unknown continent metaphorically suggests a psychological regression back to the inscrutable, imponderable pre-Oedipal phase. His kindly aunt (perhaps a representative of the safe, repressed mother) sends him into the hands of two contrasting company women, one old and one young, 'one fat and the other slim [...] knitting black wool' (55). Not only do they resemble witches (one has a cat 'on her lap' and 'a wart on one cheek' [56]), but their activity evokes spiders, a Freudian symbol (attributed to Abraham [1922]) of the pre-Oedipal mother: 'a spider in dreams is a symbol of the mother, but of the *phallic* mother, of whom we are afraid; so that the fear of spiders expresses dread of mother-incest and horror of the female genitals' ('Revision of the Theory of Dreams' [1933], XXII: 24).¹⁵ Their silence and unconcerned calmness further recall the pre-linguistic, chaotic realm of the pre-Oedipal, as well as an uncanny idea of female intuition, as they seem already to know and understand Marlow, destabilising his confidence: 'An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful' (57). In entering through 'the door of Darkness' (57), he goes beyond a conventional rite of passage and through another metaphorical birthing process, with Africa representing a new world, Freud's 'dark continent'¹⁶ of female psychology. The silent and striking, 'savage and superb' (135) African woman with whom he is finally confronted might then be regarded as another representative of the pre-Oedipal mother, the sight of whom has a Medusa-like effect (another Freudian metaphor), emotionally petrifying the men who see her. Tellingly, in the essay 'Medusa's Head' (1940), Freud

¹⁵ In 'Femininity' Freud also notes that spiders reverse the stereotypical association of femininity with passivity: 'in some classes of animals the females are the stronger and more aggressive [...] This is so, for instance, with the spiders' (XXII: 115).

¹⁶ Ironically, this phrase is derived from the travel book *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) by Henry Morton Stanley, an explorer and adventurer who would initially seem to have more in common with Conrad than with Freud.

describes the sight of Medusa as a metaphor for male horror at perceiving the apparent castration of the mother. Yet the petrifying effect simultaneously reinforces masculinity, by causing 'stiffening' (XVIII: 273). The pre-Oedipal mother simultaneously scares and consoles men, provoking a test of manhood (that Conrad's heroes repeatedly fail). Accordingly, like Freud, Conrad articulates the dangerous psychological consequences of regression, as Marlow flees in horror, afraid of joining Kurtz in his madness.

In 'Heart of Darkness' Conrad also undoes the notion of an alliance between the mother and son, replacing it with another castration threat, as the mother proves capable of turning against her own child. This process is demonstrated only indirectly, however, through maternal surrogates or displaced representatives, as if Conrad proved unable to confront the possibility directly. In *Nostramo*, the eponymous orphaned hero is adopted by Teresa Viola, to the extent that she plans his marriage to one of her daughters. Yet her maternal demands are too high: 'There was between them an intimacy of antagonism as close in its way as the intimacy of accord and affection [...] She had wanted to annex that apparently quiet and steady young man' (253). She expects him to abandon his duty as a soldier to protect her family ('Duty! What of the woman who has been like a mother to him' [17]) and repeatedly tests the strength of his filial devotion. Thus in her last illness, his divided loyalties lead to mutual recrimination: 'What angry nonsense are you talking, mother? [...] You have been angry with me for everything I did for years; ever since you first spoke to me, in secret from old Giorgio, about your Linda' (256-7). In 'despairing indignation' (256) Teresa eventually denounces him as he privileges his own reputation over her last moments, an event that haunts *Nostramo* throughout the novel and undermines his sense of security to the extent that he becomes afraid of Linda, who has Teresa's voice. *Nostramo* cannot help internalising the mother, feeling bound to make amends. Yet Teresa's need

for Nostromo's attention also implies a dissatisfaction with her own marriage and an incestuous attachment, as emphasised by their secret discussions and her fear of losing his attention: 'She was growing jealous of his success' (254). Moreover, the controversial ending, as Nostromo is inadvertently shot by Teresa's husband Giorgio (arguably in another example of the castration complex), reinforces Teresa's overwhelming maternal influence, as she finally seems to take revenge. In *Nostromo*, the mother begins a process of corruption in the once strong *capataz*, evoking the uncanny idea that the pre-Oedipal mother can refuse to be repressed.

A more sinister twist is added in *Chance*, where the vindictive governess/surrogate-mother and her vulnerable charge Flora might tentatively be regarded as displaced representatives, through which Conrad could safely articulate a sense of the dangerous pre-Oedipal. Thwarted in her original plan to acquire de Barral's money by marrying Flora to her partner/'nephew' Charley, this 'mother' sets out deliberately to cause psychological damage through a vicious verbal tirade. Marlow's analysis is distinctly Freudian, as he emphasises Flora's innocence, her '*unconsciousness* of danger, of pain, of humiliation, of bitterness, of falsehood' (99, emphasis added) and describes what should be a 'normal' process of psychological development: 'An unconsciousness which in the case of other beings like herself is removed by a gradual process of experience and information, often only partial at that, with saving reserves, softening doubts, veiling theories' (ibid). Hence the governess's assault is both dramatic and devastating - 'It made her lose all her hold on reality' (118) - as Marlow explains in analytical fashion:

Even a small child lives, plays and suffers in terms of its conception of its own existence. Imagine, if you can, a fact coming in suddenly with a force capable of shattering that very conception itself. It was only because of the girl being still so much of a child that she escaped

mental destruction; that, in other words, she got over it. (117)

Tellingly, Marlow considers youth a protection, possibly implying that Conrad attributed his own psychological survival after the loss of his parents to his age. Nonetheless, the scar is permanent as Flora becomes an archetypal hysteric: 'It was always felt; it remained like a mark on her soul, a sort of mystic wound, to be contemplated, to be meditated over' (118-9). Irreparably damaged by contact with this violent pre-Oedipal mother, by whom she is 'affected exactly as if she had seen Medusa's head with serpentine locks' (118), Flora becomes increasingly introverted and self-destructive. Meanwhile, her second surrogate-mother, Mrs. Fyne, has little better effect, compounding her isolation with an extreme form of self-centred feminism.

Despite her deliberate violation of Flora, the mean-spirited, bitter governess of *Chance* attracts some sympathy from Marlow: 'She had suffered in her life [...] from constant self-repression' (104). Her identity is oppressed to the extent that Marlow cannot even remember her name (later revealed as Eliza), although Chapter Four - 'The Governess' - is named after her, emphasising the devastating effects of her self-assertion. Her 'self-repression' also recalls Freud's idea of female masochism in 'Femininity':

The suppression of women's aggressiveness which is prescribed for them constitutionally and imposed on them socially favours the development of powerful masochistic impulses, which succeed, as we know, in binding erotically the destructive trends which have been diverted inwards. Thus masochism, as people say, is truly feminine.

(XXII: 116)

In Conrad's writing, repression spills out into violence. The governess rebels against her role as surrogate mother, actively harming her own child. On the other hand, Marlow attributes the governess's actions to jealousy over Charley, who evokes her

maternal defensiveness:

[T]here is hardly a woman in the world, no matter how hard, depraved or frantic, in whom something of the maternal instinct does not survive, unconsumed like a salamander, in the fires of the most abandoned passion. Yes, there might have been that sentiment for him too. (105)

In a particularly Freudian gesture, the governess privileges her male child over her female. Moreover, Conrad once again suggests an incestuous attachment on the part of the mother, arguably transposing his own wish-fulfilling craving for the pre-Oedipal mother to assert her influence over him. Consequently, the threatening aspect of the pre-Oedipal mother is finally outweighed by filial sympathy and longing.

- V -

In 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' (1913) Freud describes the three incarnations of the mother in a man's life:

[T]he three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman - the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him [...] they are the three forms taken by the figure of the mother in the course of a man's life - the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more. (XII: 301)

The mother is the site of origin and of return, an inevitable and dangerous companion through life. Indeed, whilst the split from the mother is a necessary process, enforced by the reality principle, the child/adult still indulges the pleasure principle by fantasising a return to a state of peaceful, undisrupted union with the mother; although as Freud sadly admits: 'it is in vain that an old man yearns for the love of woman as he had it first

from his mother' (*ibid*). However, in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), Freud's purportedly biological investigation into the forces capable of overcoming the Pleasure Principle, he identifies the more extreme death instinct, wherein organic matter strives to regress to an '*old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return' (XVIII: 38): an early state of inorganic-ness and inertia, a return to 'Mother Earth'. The ego becomes masochistic as, beset by the combined forces of the rampant id, the stern superego, and the repression demanded by an overly repressive society (the dangers of which Freud examines in 'The Future of an Illusion' [1927]), it yearns to escape to a site of safety. Fortunately, regression is hindered by the powerful psychological barriers that restrain the weight of repressed instinct. The psyche is forced to develop since it has 'no alternative but to advance in the direction in which growth is still free' (XVIII: 42). Hence the mind is dominated by the forces of Eros and Thanatos, Life (the sexual and aggressive energies) and Death, each struggling for dominance.

The notion of a desired return to the mother fundamentally undermines Freud's patriarchal theory of development, revealing inconsistencies and contradictions that he was finally unable to contain. He was also doubly thwarted by Amalia, whose long life (she survived six years after Conrad's death) provoked morbid concerns lest she should outlive him and reverse the natural order (as the loss of his daughter Sophie in 1920 must have seemed to do), as he revealed after her death in a letter to Ferenczi:

It has affected me in a peculiar way, this great event. No pain, no grief, which probably can be explained by the special circumstances - her great age, my pity for her helplessness towards the end; at the same time a feeling of liberation, of release, which I think I also understand. I was not free to die as long as she was alive, and now I

am. (*LSF*: 400)

The letter even suggests that Freud was afraid lest he should regress *before* his mother, without whom he could not experience a return to the calm of the womb. Moreover, it is noticeable that both 'Femininity' and 'Female Sexuality' were written after her death, thereby suggesting a new sense of freedom to confront finally and honestly the maternal spectre.

The unhappy, haunting associations of Conrad's family are more obvious. *A Personal Record* partly records the death toll, whilst a letter to Hugh Walpole recalling the playmates of his youth ponders: 'Are those gracious shades of my memory to turn into blood-stained spectres?' (*CL6*: 93). Both his paternal grandfather and uncle were captured during the 1863 insurrection whilst, with the exceptions of Kazimierz and Tadeusz, none of Evelina's seven siblings, or their children, survived into old age. In leaving Poland, Conrad appears to have fled this tragic legacy, although, according to Ford, he kept a photograph of his mother's lonely grave beside him throughout his life, an image - of a stone, not a face - that heightens the eerie association of the mother with a spectre, haunting her son from beyond the grave. Indeed, in dying outside of Poland like Evelina, he seems to have embraced a bond of exile from the Motherland, one evoked in Mickiewicz's Crimean Sonnet 'The Grave of the Countess Potocki':

O Polish maid! I die an exile too;
 Let some kind hand throw on me friendly mold!
 Here travelers gathering often talk of you
 And I shall hear the speech I knew of old,
 And he who sings your praise will also view
 My grave near by, and I shall be consoled.

(<http://daisy.htmlplanet.com/amick.htm>)

Although Conrad's grave is in Canterbury, far away from Evelina's in Chernikhov in the Ukraine, he appears to have taken pride in their shared exile, perhaps even regarding his estrangement from Poland as a tribute. Ultimately, the far-away Polish mother is the only companion he craves, providing both validation and consolation for her lonely son.

The haunting call of the mother in Conrad's fiction, however, is more disturbing, as Meyer describes:

[A]lmost without exception Conrad's heroes are motherless wanderers, postponing through momentary bursts of action their long-awaited return to a mother, whose untimely death has sown the seeds of longing and remorse, and whose voice, whispered from beyond the grave, utters her insistent claim upon her son's return.

(1967: 69)

Conrad's heroes appear wilfully self-destructive, a fact that accounts for the high number of suicides/surrenders. Never experiencing a normal Oedipal repression of the mother, their desire to regress to the pre-Oedipal appears even more extreme. In *Nostromo*, the call of the mother and the death drive are evident in the decline of the two main protagonists. Associating his moral collapse and shooting with Teresa's predictions, Nostromo's desire to be reconciled with the mother is transferred onto the maternal figure of Sulaco, Emilia Gould. His final scene parallels that of Teresa as he calls, not for a doctor, but for this other mother, with whom he shares a sense of shameful kinship, a secret alliance: 'Remind her that I have done some-thing to keep a roof over her head' (556-7). Her appearance in 'a grey cloak with a deep hood' (558) suggests a portentous figure, as he seeks to unburden his shame, ruing the pointless waste and calling himself 'Nostromo the thief' (558). Conrad also draws attention to what Nostromo cannot say, as he is unable to solve the mystery of Decoud's

disappearance and finally keeps the secret of the hidden treasure to himself, at her instruction: 'Let it be lost forever' (560). Thus Nostromo pays the price for his dereliction of duty and honour, whilst the mother simultaneously accepts and declines the burden of knowledge. A more oblique example is suggested by Decoud's suicide, which is specifically linked to his sense of inner absence, as his cynical nature is unable to withstand the enforced introspection of solitude, after he is left alone on the island. Though the spoiled favourite of his family, he comes to recognise his superficiality and moral redundancy in the course of having to experience 'a bizarre sense of unreality' (302): 'the solitude appeared like a great void, and the silence of the gulf like a tense, thin cord to which he hung suspended by both hands' (498). As the cord becomes clear, all else, including his beloved Antonia, becomes spectral. Moreover, the cord suggests an umbilical cord, one that evokes the pre-Oedipal as it vibrates 'with senseless phrases' (499) and lures Decoud towards madness. Although it keeps him alive, he wishes the cord would snap: 'And that would be the end of him' (499). Realising that it cannot snap on the island, however, he decides to let it lower him into the ocean, a metaphorical womb. Rowing out into the void, he weighs down his pockets with silver and shoots himself, falling into the maternal waters, finding a sense of purpose in a return to absence.

The death drive is also immediately apparent in the epigraph to Conrad's final finished novel *The Rover* (1920), taken from Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (1590), 'Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please'; a reflection that was later inscribed on Conrad's own tombstone. In the novel itself, the early loss of the mother is explicitly more important to the aged pirate Peyrol than that of his father: 'The notion of a father was absent from his mentality. What he remembered of his parents was a tall, lean, brown woman in rags, who was his mother'

(6-7). Peyrol's memory even seems to begin with his mother, causing his return home after fifty years of wandering to re-evolve the painful recognition of, and flight from loss:

And it was on a bundle of straw that his mother had tossed ill for two days and had died in the night. In the darkness, her silence, her cold face had given him an awful scare. He supposed they had buried her but he didn't know, because he had rushed out terror-struck, and never stopped till he got as far as a little place by the sea called Almanarre, where he hid himself on board a tartare that was lying there with no one on board. (7)

The mother remains unburied/unrepressed, an active spectre in Peyrol's mind, one he feels compelled finally to confront (a compulsion that might also explain Conrad's perilous trip to Poland in 1914) and redress, hinting at a pun on his name ('pay-roll' implying debt). In his absence, however, the horror of his youth has festered: the farm at Escampobar is haunted by dark memories of bloodshed and violence, containing within it another orphan, Arlette, whose awful history makes her a very embodiment of the Revolution. Peyrol's initial inactivity, as he spends the first few months wandering lazily around the Brittany coast, articulates the problem of reconciliation with the mother, who appears in surrogate form as Catherine, Arlette's protective aunt. Her night-time confrontation with Réal lends her a particularly uncanny, pre-oedipal aspect:

[A]t the foot of his bed stood a figure in dark garments with a dark shawl over its head, with a fleshless predatory face and dark hollows for its eyes, silent, expectant, implacable...."Is this death?" he asked himself, staring at it terrified. It resembled Catherine [...] whatever it was, spectre or old woman [...] (225)

Catherine is a disturbed, twisted mother, trapped in the past, unable to overcome her

anxiety for her surrogate daughter Arlette. Peyrol's last act, therefore, is to liberate them both, as he kidnaps the abusive Scevola and rescues Réal, surrendering himself to break the cycle of violence and despair. Thus, whilst the impetus of Peyrol's story is towards death - reinforcing Freud's concept of the death-drive - his purpose is less self-centred than selfless. Conrad reworks the Freudian instinct, hinting that the son's self-destruction is a tribute, not a regression to the mother. The conclusion becomes an affirmation of the son's life as, in confronting the past, he proves himself 'not a bad Frenchman [...a] man of dark deeds, but of large heart' (286), a loyal, if jaded, son.

For Conrad and Freud, the relationship with the mother was fraught with contradictory desires and impulses. 'She' proved both a driving force and a hindrance, compelling her son to seek alternative relationships, yet preventing him from sustaining them. Ironically, in Conrad's case, the very lack of mother-son examples has somewhat limited the scope of this chapter into an investigation of significant 'absences' and surrogates. Whilst Freud pre/de-scribes a 'normal' process of development, Conrad avoids 'normal' familial relations. Nowhere in his writing do we find a son whose relationship with his mother is not disrupted by violence or loss. In consequence, however, he is better placed to examine disruptions and dangers in the mother-son relationship, admitting his insufficiencies and bias whereas Freud attempts to evade and disguise them. Subsequent chapters may justifiably be regarded as variations on a search for substitutes, as the female spectre for Conrad is provoked by, and appears to end with the mother. As Freud concluded in 'A Special Choice of Object Made by Men':

We have learnt from psycho-analysis in other examples that the notion of something irreplaceable, when it is active in the unconscious, frequently appears as broken up into an endless series: endless for the

reason that every surrogate nevertheless fails to provide the desired satisfaction. (XI: 169)

As an active spectre, the mother forces her way into the writings of these two different sons, whether invited or not.



Clockwise from top: Joseph Conrad, Jessie George and Evelina Korzeniowska.



From top: Jane Anderson and the Conrads (Jessie, Joseph, Borys and John [left]).

CHAPTER 3

**THE 'PASSION OF PATERNITY': FATHERS, DAUGHTERS
AND THE FREUDIAN PARADOX**

And an immense and fierce impulse, the very passion of paternity, flamed up with
all the unquenched vigour of his worthless life in a desire to see her face.

(Y : 320)

In July 1902, Conrad wrote to Ford Madox Ford bemoaning the laborious development of 'The End of the Tether': 'I am most desperately unhappy and harrowed by the awful task of trying to get the *mood*' (CL2: 435). Though much akin to his usual protestations of frustration and self-doubt, the emphasis on '*mood*' hints at a sense of discomfort with the morally dubious paternal dilemma at the heart of this text. The 'awful grind' (CL3: 16) appears to have been more severe than usual, compounded by the necessity of rewriting the second half after the original was destroyed when a lamp exploded. Ironically, fire is a dominant metaphor in the above quotation, as Captain Whalley's inflamed paternal passion edges ever closer to self-destruction. By concealing a debilitating blindness from his crew, he knowingly endangers both them and his ship, imperilling his soul and undermining years of honest service: 'All his spotless life had fallen into the abyss' (319). Yet in so doing he protects a five-hundred-pound investment-inheritance for his far-off daughter Ivy, who provides both meaning and justification for his lonely, dishonoured existence: 'Rather than give her up I set myself to deceive you all' (301). Later on, having inadvertently beached his vessel, he drowns himself, less to avoid the shame of exposure than to save his legacy, thereby keeping Ivy from poverty. The introductory quotation also highlights several recurrent elements in Conrad's depictions of father-daughter relationships, including an emphasis on faulty or failing sight, a sense of paternal failure, and a need for the

daughter's physical presence that hints at a pseudo-incestuous desire for possession. Paradoxically, Whalley projects a sense of transcendence onto Ivy - negating his individual responsibility by using her as an excuse - even whilst he conceives of her as a passive sufferer, against whom he defines himself and his masculinity. Moreover, the absence of the actual daughter up until the final pages introduces the notion of a spectre - a nostalgic ideal - shaping the actions of the father from afar. The disturbing stillness of the conclusion further suggests an unwitting influence and a tragic sense of alienation between the real daughter and her father: 'Life had been too hard, for all the efforts of his love. It had silenced her emotions' (338-9). Amid other familial concerns, Whalley's suffering and sacrifice are appreciated almost solely in financial terms, easing 'the carking care of poverty' (339). Yet Ivy is finally redeemed by a brief, ghostly moment of reunion: 'it was her father's face alone that she saw, as though he had come to see her, always quiet and big, as she had seen him last, but with something more august and tender in his aspect' (*ibid*). Echoing Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Conrad concludes with the words: 'There had been whole days when she had not thought of him at all - had no time. But she had loved him, she felt she had loved him after all' (*ibid*). The daughter proves an ambiguous character, a careworn figure who, though failing to live up to her father's idealised memory, evokes a strong sense of sympathy and, in her final admission, produces the desired affirmation of his life. The present chapter investigates Conrad's enduring interest in this close blood-relationship, his several dubious depictions of the problematic 'passion of paternity', in which Whalley represents one of the more sympathetic examples, and the extent to which he considered it a fair burden or one that might be alleviated - for father or daughter.

You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me.

I return those duties back as are right fit -

Obeys you, love you, and most honour you.

Why have my sisters husbands if they say

They love you all? (I.i.86-91)

King Lear adapts a literary tradition dating back to the Medieval chronicles in which a good daughter challenges dictatorial paternal authority and is denounced and renounced by her foolish father. In Shakespeare's play, the demanding Lear, having rejected the honest Cordelia, is thereafter ruined by two other duplicitous and ungrateful daughters, Regan and Goneril, so that bad daughters serve to prove the father's folly whilst the good suffers for it. Neither good or bad, however, gives genuinely unconditional affection to their demanding father. Long pre-empting Freud - who in a comparison of *Lear*, *Cinderella* and Greek mythology wrote: 'Anyone who cared to make a wider survey of the material would undoubtedly discover many other versions of the same theme preserving the same essential features' ('The Theme of the Three Caskets', XII: 293) - this storytelling tradition remained influential in Conrad's day and after, as for example in Ivan Turgenev's *Lear of the Steppes* (1870), a tale one contemporary critic explicitly linked to 'The End of the Tether'. Conrad himself was drawn to the cynicism of French novels such as Balzac's *Old Goriot* (*Le Père Goriot* [1835]),¹ in which two well-married, well-off daughters reduce their father to a beggar, committing an 'elegant parricide' (271) in order to maintain their extravagant, dissolute

¹ That Conrad read this novel is evidenced by an explicit reference in 'An Outpost of Progress', as noted by J.H. Stape in a comparison of Conrad and Balzac. Stape argues that Balzac's influence was more 'a case of shared thematic concern than of verbal borrowings or stylistic echoes' (105), and highlights similarities between *Le Père Goriot*, *Le Cousin Pons* (1847) and 'The End of the Tether', identifying shared tropes of 'unbridled egotism, lack of self-awareness, obsession [...] and an abiding interest in family drama' (109).

lifestyles. The connection with *King Lear* is made explicit in Goriot's claim that if 'they had wanted to put out my eyes, I would have told them to do it' (288),² yet in Balzac's version there is no third, sympathetic daughter. The father's willingness to be a victim also implies further degradation, even culpability as he indulges and spoils his daughters, ironically stating: 'I live in their pleasure. Every man loves in his own fashion; mine does no harm to anyone' (139). Like Lear, Goriot finally admits his fault: 'I loved them too much for them to have much love for me' (284); yet his daughters are not completely corrupt, as Delphine eventually reveals a sense of shame: 'Anastasie and I between us have bled him white' (167). Nonetheless, the characters of *Old Goriot* are mutually destructive, demanding too much from each other whilst thinking too much of themselves. Conrad's interest, therefore, forms part of a longer literary tradition investigating the fitting boundaries of the father-daughter relationship.

After the birth of his first son Borys in 1898, Conrad told Garnett: 'I do not mind owning I wished for a daughter. I can't help feeling she would have resembled me more and would have been perhaps easier to understand' (*CL2*: 173). However, given his apprehensiveness regarding the very idea of children, it seems doubtful that either sex would have pleased the reluctant father. This comment, sometimes interpreted as evidence of empathy and identification with women, might then represent just another example of perverse ego-gratification. Whether truth or exaggeration, the majority of critics seem determined to ignore it and to interpret Conrad's fictional daughters as representatives of someone else. Jones, for example, suggests (in the context of *Almayer's Folly*) that the significance of the daughter might reflect Conrad's 'desire to reinvent his mother's life in his fiction' (1999: 48). Like Apollo Korzeniowski, Nina's

² The motif of blinding recalls Lear's self-delusion, as well as Gloucester's torture at the hands of his illegitimate son Edmund.

lover Dain is a rebel, implying an attempt on Conrad's part to vindicate his parent's romance, one that was opposed by his maternal grandfather. Certainly his interest in, and sympathy for, his mother's emotional crisis as a daughter is evidenced in *A Personal Record*:

Unable to bring herself to disregard that cherished memory and that judgment she had always respected and trusted, and, on the other hand, feeling the impossibility to resist a sentiment so deep and so true, she could not have been expected to preserve her mental and moral balance. (28-9)

Yet by placing his mother in the role of fictional daughter, Conrad - as author - would seem to become another father-figure to her, thereby creating a distinctly Freudian tangle in which he condemns himself as an overbearing interference. Meyer, on the other hand, interprets Conrad's preoccupation with fathers and daughters as a form of unconscious displacement: 'the admitted fascination with the theme of father and daughter may be viewed as signifying an equal albeit undeclared interest in its opposite: the relationship between mother and son' (1967: 114). Baines too calls the daughter a 'disguised expression' (1960: 155), but differs on the object of concealment, claiming that it was Conrad's relationship with his father that he could not directly address. Karl also suggests an identification with the daughter: 'The relationship of Nina - a child who has grown up apart from her parents - to Almayer and his wife is an obvious parallel to Conrad's own former situation' (1979: 348), whilst Nadelhaft claims that Conrad's fictional daughters' 'sense of exclusion from the central narratives of men often match Conrad's self-confessed feelings of dislocation and despair' (1991: 8). According to Freudian logic, however, 'the essential determining condition of displacement is a purely psychological one: something in the nature of a *motive*' ('On Dreams', V: 671). The unconscious displaces that which it does not want the

conscious mind to recognise onto a decoy object. If we tentatively regard fiction as an outlet for dreams, then the daughter - whose significance would thus be lost on Conrad - might represent any number of confused, uncertain impulses. Moreover, the idea of displacement ultimately relegates the daughter to the position of a mere substitute. Since Conrad had no actual biological daughters, his fictional ones are also unfairly and presumptuously denied their independence.

In an interview with H.R. Lenormand, Conrad proved reluctant to explore his evident interest in the father-daughter bond:

[H]e said to me, "My whole life, I've been obsessed by the relationship of father to daughter." [...] I asked him if he had not had some intention of suggesting that Almayer's eclipse and fall were to be attributed to an unconscious feeling of the exile for his daughter, an incestuous passion hidden behind a paternal affection. He protested against the existence of such an emotion in his hero [...] Conrad was silent, obviously annoyed; then he changed the subject.

(Cited in Stallman 1960: 6)

Nonetheless, his earlier comment to Garnett hints at the desire to forge a new kind of relationship with a woman. For the orphaned Conrad, the daughter might have represented a symbolic break from the female spectres of the past, a new sense of responsibility and futurity, perhaps even a rebirth for the father, hinted at in 'she would have resembled me more'. Yet these words also uncomfortably imply that the daughter represents a mere extension and possession of the father's ego, thereby diminishing her individual identity. On the other hand, the numerous examples of irresponsible fathers in his novels indicate that Conrad was all too personally aware of the dangers inherent in an egotistical attempt to live through another. His evident

distaste for controlling fathers such as the dependent Almayer (*Almayer's Folly*), the possessive Cornelius (*Lord Jim*) and the jealous de Barral (*Chance*) indicates a heightened sense of self-awareness and a strong sense of how *not* to be a father, how *not* to confuse the daughter with the mother. Hence it may be his critics, not Conrad himself, who are engaged in unconscious acts of displacement, refusing to recognise the daughter's psychological significance as a symbol of hope and regeneration. Alternatively, Conrad's attraction to much younger women *does* imply an identification with Almayer et al. After the mysterious breakdown of his relationship with Marguerite Poradowska (eleven years his senior) and his rejection by Eugénie Renouf (only five years his junior), Conrad appears to have addressed his attentions exclusively to younger women, the twenty-year-old Émilie Briquel whom he met in Switzerland on holiday with her mother and brother (*not* her father) in 1895, and Jessie George (whose father was already deceased) whom he married in the following year when she was twenty-one and he thirty-seven. Having been humiliated by the flirtatious Eugénie, to whom he intended to propose (unaware of her engagement to another man), it seems possible that Conrad was subsequently attracted to less threatening, less experienced younger women who would, as Lear expected, give unquestioning devotion. In this case, his literary preoccupation with fathers and daughters, and typical siding and sympathy with the latter, suggests both self-criticism and a tribute to Jessie's forbearance. Though repeatedly warning against both possessiveness and complacency in his novels, therefore, Conrad appears nonetheless to have indulged - and channelled - his desire for a young, supportive daughter-figure by making her into his wife. Consequently, a letter to Curle describing Jane Anderson - with whom Conrad is suspected of having had an extra-marital liaison in 1916 - becomes doubly revealing: 'She is seeking to get herself adopted as our big daughter and is succeeding fairly' (CL5: 637).

Before addressing Conrad's various fictional incarnations of the daughter, it is necessary first to unravel the Freudian implications of his recurring interest. In Freudian psychology, much is made of a young girl's attachment to, and desire for, her father; desire implying, 'all that we understand by sensual satisfaction - so far, that it, as the child's powers of imagination allow' ('Lay-Analysis', XX: 213). Conversely, and in stark contrast to Conrad, little is made of a father's feelings for his daughter. Even in Freud's early studies on the causes of hysteria - where seduction was proven to be a common factor - he refrained from ever specifically naming the father as seducer.³ In later essays he was more severe, accusing these daughters of fantasising actual abuse to obscure their guilt over the auto-erotic period:

In the period in which the main interest was directed to discovering infantile sexual traumas, almost all my women patients told me that they had been seduced by their father. I was driven to recognize in the end that these reports were untrue and so came to understand that hysterical symptoms are derived from phantasies and not from real occurrences. ('Femininity', XXII: 120)

On this issue Freud remained adamant, even occasionally, and irresponsibly, diagnosing young female patients by correspondence alone. Yet he falls into occasional contradictions, as for example, in 'Dreams':

[C]hildren often react in their Oedipus attitude to a stimulus coming from their parents, who are frequently led in their preferences by difference of sex, so that the father will choose his daughter and the

³ In a footnote to 'Femininity' he even admitted to having twice 'suppressed the fact of the father's responsibility' (XXII: 121n).

mother her son as a favourite, or, in case of a cooling-off in the marriage, as a substitute for a love-object that has lost its value. (XV: 207)

Thus the parent *can* be held responsible for the strength of the child's attachment. Captain Whalley even seems a case in point as he redirects his attentions onto Ivy after the death of his wife. For a dismissive Freud, however, any glitches in the father-daughter relationship are invariably the fault of the latter.

In Freud's 'General Theory of the Neuroses', the female Oedipus complex is a mere appendage to the male: 'Things happen in just the same way with little girls, with the necessary changes' (XVI: 333). The 'coquetry' of the girl towards her father is described as a 'charming picture' (*ibid*), albeit invested with potential problems. Freud even claims: 'a little girl's being in love like this with her father is something so common and so frequently surmounted that the term "traumatic" applied to it would lose all its meaning' (275). The girl's Oedipus complex - being evidently so less important than a boy's - would seem barely to constitute one at all. Meanwhile, Freud repeatedly emphasises female powerlessness and negativity, arguing that, whilst the boy learns to repress his desire for the mother through a fear of castration, the girl redirects her attention onto the father purely out of resentment for her mother, whom she blames for not having provided her with a penis (a lack which leads to the development of a masculinity complex). Yet the girl's development would appear to entail an additional stage - undermining Freud's parallel theory - since the castration complex demands her return to the mother, the original love-object for both boys and girls. Freud's solution to this flaw, when he finally addressed it, was to suggest that girls feel no need to repress their incestuous desire, since they are already effectively 'castrated'. Instead they become their mother's rival, and seek a penis-substitute in the shape of their

father's baby. Hence for girls, '[t]he castration complex prepares for the Oedipus complex instead of destroying it' ('Femininity', XXII: 129). Girls never escape the Oedipus complex despite 'inevitable disappointments' (130) from the father, thereby remaining in a constant state of neurosis. Yet in the early work 'Three Essays: III' Freud applied the label of neurotic only to 'some':

[T]here are some who have never got over their parents' authority and have withdrawn their affection from them either very incompletely or not at all. They are mostly girls, who, to the delight of their parents, have persisted in all their childish love far beyond puberty. It is most instructive to find that it is precisely these girls who in their later marriage lack the capacity to give their husbands what is due to them; they make cold wives and remain sexually anaesthetic. (VII: 227)

Leaving aside the misogynistic provocation of 'what is due to them', this analysis contradicts, and denotes a degree of contrivance in, his later claims, since it implies that the girl-child must, like the boy, repress her Oedipal desires in order to progress into healthy adult relationships.

On the other hand, Freud's original definition of the girl's Oedipus complex as simpler than the boy's is finally countered by his admission that: 'the development of a little girl into a normal woman is more difficult and more complicated' ('Femininity', XXII: 117). In his later investigations, the pre-Oedipal phase - in which the mother represents the dominant love-object - gradually takes centre stage. In 'Female Sexuality' Freud even claims that the girl's attachment to her father 'merely takes over the heritage of an equally strong attachment to her mother' (XXI: 227), one so strong that it seems 'as if it had succumbed to an especially inexorable repression' (226). The girl's traumatic

recognition of her 'lack', he argues, causes her to take refuge in the Oedipus complex, thus making it a solution rather than a problem in itself. Accordingly, for girls, the castration complex takes psychological precedence over the Oedipus complex. Either way, however, the process through which girls develop beyond the Oedipal phase remains a mystery, as Freud merely speculates as to the depressing possible after effects of the girl's neurosis and suggests, for example, that antagonism towards the mother might eventually extend to the father and the husband chosen after him, or that the birth of a son might lead to a renewed identification with the mother, again disrupting the relationship with the husband. Having spent her early years engaged in a struggle with her mother, the daughter might spend the rest of her life struggling with her husband, the replacement object first of desire, then of antagonism. In one way or another, therefore, the daughter remains forever trapped in the Oedipus complex; a situation that Freud appears to have found acceptable, as summarised in the late work *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940): 'It does little harm to a woman if she remains in her feminine Oedipus attitude' (XXIII: 194).

Charges of unfairness and inequality, however, pale beside the more disturbing implications of Freud's refusal to allow girls to progress beyond the Oedipal phase. In 'Some Psychological Consequences', he claims:

In girls the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking [...] I cannot evade the notion [...] that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. (XIX: 257)

If the super-ego is the heir to the Oedipus complex, then Freud not only denies women the power of moral discrimination, but places them in an inherently subordinate

intellectual position. Moreover, even if we ignore Freud's contradictions and accept his misogynistic theory, we are left with a number of problems. How might parental interference sabotage the development of the Oedipus complex? What happens if a girl is not disappointed in her father's affections (a question Freud effectively repressed)? And how might development be affected by the loss of the mother? Even a brief review of Conrad's first few novels shows him to be confronting, and attempting to answer these questions as, in *Almayer's Folly* - in a rare third-person narrative - he provides a detailed insight into the minds of both father and daughter.

Nina Almayer is introduced in just the second paragraph of *Almayer's Folly* and identified, beyond anything else in this novel, as a daughter. Indeed, the centrality of the father-daughter relationship in his first full-length work implies that the subject held a special interest for Conrad even at the beginning of his literary career. First appearing at night from behind a curtain - indicating access into the unknown - apparently summoned by the loud footsteps of her father, Nina is spectre-like in both appearance and manner:

She stood there all in white, straight, flexible, graceful, unconscious of herself, her low but broad forehead crowned with a shining mass of long black hair that fell in heavy tresses over her shoulders, and made her pale olive complexion look paler still by the contrast of its coal-black hue. (17)

Her appearance - white dress and black hair - is the model for the majority of Conrad's heroines, many of whom are also young women dominated by older men. The original female spectre, therefore, is a daughter, one that Conrad seems - like Almayer - half-obsessed with and unable to let go. Moreover, Nina is not typically subservient Victorian daughter, but one who defines her father rather than *vice versa*, as Almayer -

like Captain Whalley - invests all his hopes of happiness in the dream of a shared and prosperous future:

They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. Witnessing her triumphs he would grow young again. (3-4)

His dependence on Nina suggests a marriage, one with decidedly sexual undertones: 'He caught hold of his daughter's hand and pressed it to his face, while Nina with the other hand smoothed his rumpled grey hair' (141). The daughter is inspiring and rejuvenating, yet rather than accepting Nina for herself, Almayer plans to reshape her as a white woman, an extension of himself, not his wife, seemingly ashamed of the latter's ethnic origins. Whether concerned for its reflection on himself or for Nina feelings, he takes no account of her desires as he seeks to mould her as his own ideal, revealing a neurotic detachment from reality. Since Nina's habitual stillness - her 'calm impassiveness', 'solemn eyes' (31), and 'wonderful equanimity' (33) - makes her an easy canvas for such projections, an illusion - a spectre - replaces the real daughter. Hence Almayer fails to notice her growing rebelliousness, as evidenced by his out-of-place reply to her outburst against the English soldiers sent to capture Dain. Nina's 'I hate the sight of your white faces' (140) prompts the bizarre whisper: 'You are a good girl' (141). The father only recognises the collapse of his plans in his confrontation with the runaway lovers by the river, as Nina reveals the real disjunction between them: 'No two human beings understand each other. They can understand but their own voices. You wanted me to dream your dreams, to see your own visions [...] But while you spoke I listened to the voice of my own self' (179). Almayer's real folly, Nina claims, is his inability - or refusal - to perceive the real woman behind his spectre. Thus Conrad reverses the Freudian model, exposing the father's unnatural desire and the

daughter's clear-sightedness.

Although Conrad draws attention to the excessive and selfish nature of Almayer's 'passion of paternity' in the text, the word 'Folly' in the title also hints that his situation was preventable. Indeed, this possibility is highlighted in Almayer's agonising choice - his last chance of happiness - at the riverside:

What if he should suddenly take her to his heart, forget his shame, and pain, and anger, and - follow her! [...] His heart yearned for her.

What if he should say that his love for her was greater than...

"I will never forgive you, Nina!" he shouted, leaping up madly in the sudden fear of his dream. (192)

Almayer is unable to relinquish the assumption of dominance, exposing the selfish, egotistical nature of his 'love'. The sudden shock of reality leaves him unable to distinguish possible dreams from impossible delusions. Hence he retreats into psychosis, paranoia and denial, smoothing away Nina's footprints and even replacing the present spectre with an earlier one, the adult Nina with Nina the child:

[W]herever he went, whichever way he turned, he saw the small figure of a little maiden with pretty olive face, with long black hair, her little pink robe slipping off her shoulders, her big eyes looking up at him in the tender trustfulness of a petted child. (201-2)

That Almayer is his own worst enemy - a father desperately in need of therapy - is literally and ironically proven by the fact that it is his potential rescuer Dain who steals Nina from him.

The conflict between Almayer and his Malay wife also creates a direct parallel with Freudian psychology, as Nina is forced to choose between her parents. Indeed, Conrad

heightens the Oedipal drama, adding undertones of violence: 'She [Mrs Almayer] was jealous of the little girl's evident preference for the father, and Almayer felt he was not safe with that woman in the house' (26). In keeping with Freudian theory, the daughter allies herself with the father, yet conversely it is he who attempts to prevent her developing beyond this attachment. Nina herself finally displays an insight of which Freud would not consider her capable, defying the hypocrisy of the imperialist white people who reject her to embrace her mother's heritage. Her eventual siding with Mrs Almayer not only defies Freud, but is a distinctly feminist statement, as she demands recognition of the mother from the father:

I have listened to your voice and to her voice. Then I saw that you could not understand me; for was I not part of that woman? Of her who was the regret and shame of your life? I had to choose - I hesitated. (191)

Again, 'hesitated' implies that Almayer might have salvaged their relationship. Though outwardly affectionate towards her father, therefore, Nina resents his unnatural dependence and selfish delusions:

For years she had stood between her mother and her father, the one so strong in her weakness, the other so weak where he could have been strong. Between those two beings so dissimilar, so antagonistic, she stood with mute heart wondering and angry at the fact of her own existence. (151)

Ultimately, Conrad's sympathies are with her, struggling both to extricate herself from paternal pressure and to develop a role beyond that of daughter. *Almayer's Folly* might even be regarded as Nina's story: hers is the growing self-awareness, the ability to span and judge two cultures, and finally the self-will and strength to choose between them, as well as between her father and lover. In effect, the Conradian daughter is allowed to

develop beyond the patriarchal restrictions of Freudian psychology:

[S]he felt herself irresistibly fascinated, and saw with vague surprise the narrow mantle of civilized morality, in which good-meaning people had wrapped her young soul, fall away and leave her shivering and helpless as if on the edge of some deep and unknown abyss. Strangest of all, this abyss did not frighten her when she was under the influence of the witch-like being she called her mother. (42)

The 'abyss' in this case suggests the wild swell of the id as Nina begins to redefine herself, asserting an independence and embracing a pre-Oedipal maternal alliance that Conrad, unlike Freud, seems instinctively to understand and respect as a mysterious, primal force: 'the savage ravings of her mother chanced to strike a responsive chord' (151). Consequently, it is the mother who - in a distinctly un-Freudian moment - claims victory: 'You were his daughter then; you are my daughter now' (150).

Peter D. O'Connor's essay on 'The Function of Nina in *Almayer's Folly*' stresses the liberating nature of Nina's development:

While Almayer is moving from light to darkness, Nina is moving from darkness to light. What we discover through Nina, however, is that the darkness of nature has within it the potentiality for the light of life, whereas Almayer's visions of light, being artificial and irrelevant, are in reality thrusts towards stasis, the stasis that he achieves only in the darkness of a trance that is worse than death. (1975: 232)

It is a pattern of imagery, O'Connor claims, that 'establishes her [Nina] as a moral and psychological norm' (225). Whereas Almayer chooses to wallow in self-pity, as he languishes in an opium-induced psychosis, Nina escapes the Oedipus complex and becomes the moral centre of the text. A. James M. Johnson also emphasises the natural

associations surrounding Dain and Nina's relationship, one 'founded on passion itself: a passion that, in its "desperate" intensity, offers a powerful alternative to the dysfunction of the European protagonist' (2001: 76-7). Thus Conrad evokes a Freudian sense of 'dysfunction' even whilst he challenges Freud's limited conclusions. Schwarz, on the other hand, suggests that 'Conrad proposes family and personal relationships as an alternative to the greed and hypocrisy that dominate Sambir life' (1980: 4); a finding that casts Nina in the light of a treacherous daughter. Other critics have attacked Nina more directly, blaming her for Almayer's decline, as for example Moser, who claims: 'her farewell [...] has all the characteristics of a coquette being sweet to one of her faithful but unacceptable suitors. The scene thus becomes a sympathetic defense of Almayer, the betrayed lover' (1957: 53). Ian Watt also identifies a double-standard and dismisses Nina as a conventional representative of the romance genre: 'the fantasies which are mocked in Almayer are used uncritically in the case of Nina; Conrad's presentation of his heroine asks us to luxuriate in that very immunity from reality which is the defining essence of her father's folly' (1980: 47). Criticism overall adheres to the logic of Freudian theory, apparently outraged at the audacity of the runaway daughter.

- III -

The number of dependent fathers in Conrad's novels indicates that, contrary to Freud, he regarded the paternal role as the more inherently unstable; prone to possessiveness, jealousy and even violence. Moreover, since his fathers typically turn to their daughters in response to some other trauma, he emphasises the tenacity of their transference. Yet in *A Personal Record* he appears sympathetic to the plight of the father, describing Almayer's suffering as 'the very anguish of paternity' (88). In his second novel *An Outcast of the Islands*, he even seems to empathise with him, exhibiting a distinctly Almayer-ish inability to relinquish his literary daughter by

revisiting the same characters at an earlier period. Conversely, Conrad is equally determined to vindicate Nina, the victim of an even more arrogant and attentive Almayr, who deliberately twists her mind against her mother, as he proudly tells Lingard: 'She does not care for her mother though - I am glad to say. How pretty she is - and so sharp. My very image! (193). Such contrived emotional sabotage severs the last link with Freudian psychology as it contradicts the notion of a natural separation from the mother. The words 'My very image!', meanwhile, suggest a dangerous element of hubris and complacency as Conrad seems determined to underline Almayr's folly. Moreover, the latter's gloating cannot conceal his real stultifying dependency on Nina, making him the very antithesis of the powerful Freudian father: 'he found courage and consolation in his unreasoning and fierce affection for his daughter - in the impenetrable mantle of selfishness he wrapped round both their lives: round himself, and that young life that was also his' (300). In fact, this novel represents a more extensive study of fathers and daughters, containing two other unconventional and often overlooked examples of the relationship. The antagonistic bond between the orphaned Mrs Almayr and her adopted father Lingard, the man who killed her natural parents, serves as an ironic - and ignored - warning against the assumption of patriarchal superiority. The bond between Omar and Aïssa, on the other hand, is pseudo-mythical: 'They talk of [...] the strong woman who carried her blind father through the surf under the fire of the warship from the north' (54). Since rescue from the water is a Freudian dream-symbol for rebirth, Aïssa might even represent a surrogate mother-protectress to her weaker father. Significantly, in all three cases, the father expects too much, believing - as is typically fatal for Conrad's heroes - in being loved and respected for himself. With his imagination inspired by tales of 'paternal anguish' and 'passion', therefore, Conrad seems to have become increasingly determined to dramatise a dangerous lack of fatherly understanding. However, the

absence of the mother in these cases, and indeed in the majority of his novels, complicates and unbalances a Freudian reading, one that typically presupposes the presence of both parents. Thus Conrad, like Shakespeare, Balzac and Turgenev, addresses a side-issue effectively ignored by Freud, that of the psychological consequences of losing the mother (on both child and father) and the disturbing possibilities of transference and dependency.

The typically possessive and delusional state of Conrad's fictional fathers is accompanied, more often than not, by a tendency towards violence against potential sons-in-law. Almayer aims his gun at Dain, Omar tries to stab Willems, Cornelius in *Lord Jim* sends men to attack Jim and colludes with the pirate Brown, whilst de Barral in *Chance* attempts to poison Anthony. Predictably, in Freudian symbolism, weapons represent the phallus: 'in general, weapons and tools always stand for what is male' ('Dreams', XV: 167). Accordingly, these paternal attacks indicate a desperate need to defy a threat to their dominant masculinity. Even in 'The End of the Tether' Whalley's resentment of his son-in-law is abated only when the latter is confined to a wheelchair. These self-deluding fathers also claim to be acting in their ^{respective} daughter-s' best interest: Almayer, for example, fails to recognise his hypocrisy as he tells Nina: 'Do you know that you shall be at first his plaything and then a scorned slave, a drudge, and a servant of some new fancy of that man?' (AF: 178); whilst de Barral's attempts to reason with Powell expose the extent of his psychosis:

She wouldn't listen to me. Frightened? Silly? I had to think of some way to get her out of this. Did *you* think she cared for him? No! Would anybody have thought so? No! She pretended it was for my sake. She couldn't understand that if I hadn't been an old man I would have flown at his throat months ago. As it was I was tempted

every time he looked at her. My girl. Ough! (C: 432)

Both fathers present themselves as more suitable partners. Yet in several cases, the father's suspicions are justified. In *An Outcast*, for example, Willems's infatuation with Aïssa turns to hatred and betrayal as he plots to run away with his estranged wife Joanna. In shooting him, Aïssa is merely fulfilling her father's earlier intentions. Thus Conrad complicates the father's resentment of the son-in-law-rival as, on occasion, such antagonism appears justified.

In *Nostromo*, Giorgio Viola's reasonable desire to defend the honour of his beautiful younger daughter Giselle ('The child had to be protected' [565]) leads to his fatal shooting of Nostromo, whom he mistakes for another suitor, Ramirez. Yet ironically, Nostromo *is* the real threat, engaged to one daughter whilst planning to elope with the other. That Giorgio is innocent of the incestuous desires controlling Almayer is stressed both by his willingness to give 'his best-loved daughter' (532) Linda in marriage, and by the fact that Nostromo is not a rival, but a beloved surrogate for his own lost son. On the other hand, Giorgio is a changed man after the loss of Teresa, as his early sense of detachment from, becomes dependence on, his daughters. The move from Sulaco to the isolated, lonely lighthouse, combined with his extreme dislike of Ramirez ('the object of his profound aversion' [529]) and his haste in uniting Linda and Nostromo - assuming rather than waiting for the latter's choice of bride - further complicates his seemingly honourable conscious motives. In his fierce desire to protect Giselle, the father ruins the potential happiness of both his children and retreats into denial: 'He would never understand what he had done' (564). The line between the desire to protect and the desire to possess, Conrad suggests, is a thin and ambivalent one.

Arguably the most sinister of all Conrad's fictional fathers are Cornelius of *Lord Jim* and de Barral of *Chance*, two skeletal figures whose ingrained malevolence seems to spring from their greater sense of disempowerment. Cornelius is not Jewel's natural father, a fact he repeatedly flings in her face, demanding respect as he 'nurseries the aggrieved sense of his legal paternity' (282). The notorious convict de Barral also considers himself a victim, refusing to accept any blame for his financial collapse and demanding that Flora support both him and his delusions. The extent of their combined cowardice and paranoia is revealed in the indirect nature of their attacks, Cornelius sending others to stab Jim in his sleep, de Barral resorting to poison. The greater the feeling of disempowerment (neither picks up a weapon), the more dangerous the father. That neither has any apparent redeeming features also serves to emphasise the single-mindedness of his paternal passion. Cornelius, variously described as a beetle, a cat and a fish, is dismissed as 'remind[ing] one of everything that is unsavoury' (285). A 'much-disappointed man' (289), he vents his frustration on Jewel, abusing her dead mother to her face, trying desperately to displace her loyalties yet - like Almayer - demanding too much. His final solution is to betray Jim and the encampment, leading Brown's pirates upriver to attack. The father in *Lord Jim* is an underrated danger who, once threatened, proves capable of avenging himself on both his rival and his adopted daughter: 'He has his place neither in the background nor in the foreground of the story; he is simply seen skulking on its outskirts, enigmatical and unclean, tainting the fragrance of its youth and of its naiveness' (286). Even so, the father's betrayal ultimately exposes the 'false' (414) nature of the son-rival as Jim abandons Jewel to embrace his sought-after punishment, at 'the call of his exalted egoism' (416). To prove himself right, Cornelius destroys his daughter's happiness, exposing the horrifying extent of his embittered and jealous egotism.

Lord Jim illustrates a vicious circle in which Jewel is passed from one adopted father to another. Marlow's imagination is also captured by the melancholic figure of her dead mother - 'I am convinced that she was no ordinary woman' - and by the mother-daughter bond itself: 'Through her whole life the wife of the unspeakable Cornelius had no other companion, confidant, and friend but her daughter' (276). The mother turns Jewel against Cornelius (and possibly also her natural father, whose absence remains a mystery), warning her (like Mrs Almayer) against her own disappointments, trying to prevent an Oedipal attachment: 'I am sure she [Jewel] understood much - not everything - the fear mostly' (277). Yet these warnings also distort Jewel's possessive romance with her rescuer Jim, heightening her fear of desertion. Ironically, Jim does fail her, repeating the cycle of male betrayal as he abandons her to another surrogate father, Stein, whose interest in butterfly collecting establishes another ironic parallel with Lear, who tells Cordelia in prison that they will 'laugh at gilded butterflies' (V.iii.13). Even when forewarned, the daughter becomes a victim, as Padmini Mongia summarises: 'Attaching itself to this spectral presence [the mother] is the figure of Jewel, the daughter who repeats her mother's history so completely that, at the end of the story, she becomes another spectre' (1993: 1).

Marlow's sympathy for the daughter in *Lord Jim* is expanded in *Chance*, in which two very different daughters represent opposite ends of a spectrum illustrating the potentially devastating psychological effects of paternal 'passion'. The melodramatic style of the novel - seemingly inspired by the sensation novels of Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood (as Jones convincingly argues) - allows Conrad to both evoke and subvert Victorian sentimentality. Mrs Fyne's father Carleon Anthony, for example, is a parody of Coventry Patmore, author of 'The Angel in the House' (1854-63). Though outwardly charming, Anthony is a tyrant, 'a savage sentimentalist who

had his own decided views of his paternal prerogatives' (38), whose children both run away. The awkward but implacable de Barral and the meek Flora, on the other hand, are more Dickensian characters, evoking the other failed financier Murdle in *Little Dorrit* (1857) and the self-sacrificing Dorrit herself. Through Marlow, Conrad actually makes an explicit comparison:

I remembered what Mrs. Fyne had told me before of the view she had years ago of de Barral clinging to the child at the side of his wife's grave and later on of these two walking hand in hand the observed of all eyes by the sea. Figures from Dickens - pregnant with pathos.

(162)

This image also evokes the reconciliation at the end of *Dombey and Son* (1848), after Florence saves her father from suicide: 'Autumn days are shining, and on the sea-beach there are often a young lady, and a white-haired gentleman' (833). In *Chance*, however, Mrs Fyne abandons her father to save herself, whilst Flora not only fails to save her father, but actually considers her own suicide. Whereas Mrs Fyne rebels and develops an uncompromising, resolutely independent demeanour - 'That woman was flint' (52) - Flora becomes increasingly enmeshed in depression, duty and de Barral's emotional manipulation. Their psychological scars belie the carefree title *Chance* as both identities have been deliberately, and often maliciously, moulded. More significantly, neither is able to follow an independent line of action - both require another man to help them.

Mrs Fyne is frequently patronised by Marlow as the unfeminine product of a cruel upbringing: 'she had adopted that cool, detached manner to meet her gifted father's out-breaks of selfish temper. It had now become a second nature' (51). Certainly, her appearance is masculine - '[she] wore blouses with a starched front like a man's shirt, a

stand-up collar and a long necktie' (39) - yet Marlow seems determined to belittle and confound her, even regarding her three daughters as representative of a stubborn feminist streak. Her string of female admirers also hints at a lesbian community, one that Marlow wishes to disband, thereby revealing the patriarchal tendencies of his own narrative. Despite his prejudice, however, Marlow's condemnation of Mrs Fyne appears justified since she hypocritically rejects Flora for eloping just as she did. Unable to perceive the damaging consequences of her upbringing, dangerously ignorant of her own influence and 'as guileless of consequences as any determinist philosopher' (63), Mrs Fyne resents Flora's marriage to her brother Roderick Anthony, perhaps due to Flora's defence that she acted in the self-interested fashion Mrs Fyne encouraged, or perhaps enraged at the reminder that she needed Mr Fyne to escape her own father. In either case, the victimisation of daughters in this novel is compounded by their eventual alienation from each other.

If Mrs Fyne represents the hard voice of reason, Flora is an almost quintessentially Freudian daughter who even appears to have grown into her neurotic role: 'She looked unhappy. And - I don't know how to say it - well - it suited her. The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glance! A victim' (45-6). Pale and forlorn, her extreme attachment to her father is emphasised by the governess's verbal attack as, having tolerated abuse of her own self, she refuses to hear accusations against him, later begging Mrs Fyne to defend, not herself, but him: 'But how can I forget? she called my father a cheat and a swindler! Do tell me, Mrs. Fyne, that it isn't true. It can't be true' (140). Conrad further reinforces the Freudian tangle by making explicit the sexual undertones of de Barral's obsession with her, as for example when she tells him of her marriage on his release from prison:

A jealous rage affected his brain like the fumes of wine, rising from

some secret depths of his being so long deprived of all emotions [...]

'And I did nothing but think of you!' he exclaimed under his breath, contemptuously. 'Think of you! You haunted me, I tell you.' (360)

Even her given name - like Ivy and Jewel - is provocative, as plants and treasures represent female genitalia in Freudian dream symbolism. Consequently, de Barral's persistent emotional blackmail and threatened use of force - for example, juxtaposing 'You are in love with him' and 'I would like to break his neck' (363) - recall a jealous lover, albeit one made ludicrous by his physical frailty and delusive pride. With a daughter desperate for affection, however, the father of *Chance* manipulates the Oedipus complex to his own selfish advantage.

De Barral's eventual admission of defeat is triggered by the sight of Flora throwing her arms around Anthony: 'I ask you - have you seen? Who would have believed it? with her arms round his neck [...] You did see! Didn't you? It wasn't a delusion - was it?' (432). This emphasis on sight, followed by the taking of his own poison, suggests a deliberate blinding, a recurrent metaphor for castration, as evidenced in other Victorian novels such as *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *The Return of the Native* (1878). In fact, there is a notably high occurrence of blind fathers in Conrad's fiction - for example Whalley, Omar in *An Outcast*, and Carvil in 'To-Morrow' (1903). The metaphor is particularly ironic from a Freudian perspective as it evokes the blind king Oedipus, usually the Freudian model for the child's - not the father's - incestuous desire. Since Oedipus blinded himself as punishment not only for the murder of his father and marriage to his mother, but for his unnatural paternity - becoming father to his own half-brothers and half-sisters - the metaphor of blindness suggests a corresponding sense of deviance and fault in the father as well as the son. However, in Greek mythology Oedipus's exile was shared by his loyal daughter Antigone. Blindness, therefore, is ambiguous, being

both a punishment and another means of ensnaring the daughter. In Conrad's novels it also represents denial - for example in fathers who refuse to see, such as Almayer, who adopts 'the blank expression of those who live in that hopeless calm which sightless eyes only can give' (*AF*: 194), or find their vision obscured, like Giorgio as he shoots Nostromo in the dark. These several possibilities are illustrated in the short story 'To-Morrow', in which the meek, kindly Bessie Carvil is tormented by not one, but two father-figures - her blind and vindictive natural parent as well a delusional neighbour-landlord who promises to make her his daughter-in-law on the return of his long-lost sailor son 'to-morrow'. Whereas one is naturally blind, the other is delusional: 'that idea [...] blinded his mind to truth and probability, just as the other old man in the other cottage had been made blind, by another disease, to the light and beauty of the world' (*TOS*: 255). Both abuse Bessie: her natural father vents his frustration upon her, crushing her physically - 'He weighed heavily on her arm' (254) - and emotionally, turning his blindness to his own selfish advantage - 'He had made himself helpless beyond his affliction, to enslave her better' (258) - whilst the other is no less cruel in encouraging false hopes of a brighter future. Yet when the long-lost son finally does return, his father refuses to recognise him, hiding in his house, seemingly afraid of the breakdown of his comfortable delusions. The callous son first mocks, then kisses Bessie, begging her for money before abandoning her, his freedom to walk away juxtaposed cruelly with her position, duty-bound to one father, conscientiously tied to the other. When all else fails, blindness becomes the father's last and cruellest weapon. Only the beleaguered daughter, Conrad suggests, is capable of (in)sight, albeit of a tragic and despairing kind.

Since there are so few families in Conrad's fiction, it is impossible to know how

far he contradicted or agreed with Freud's Oedipal theory of development. Even so, the clear-sightedness of his fictional daughters effectively challenges Freud's idea of the Electra complex (a term coined by Jung in 1913), in which the daughter remains emotionally bound to her father.⁴ Various afraid (Jewel), oppressed (Flora) and pitying (Linda), Conrad's daughters are emotionally estranged from their fathers, remaining with them out of filial duty and because, like so many of Conrad's protagonists, they have nowhere else to go. Moreover, instances of paternal blindness, whether real or delusional, are counteracted by the daughter's ability to make the father see, for example as Nina challenges Almayer: 'Why were you so blind?' (*AF*: 191). This forced recognition is reflected in several cases of daughters disarming, and thus disempowering their fathers, as for example, Nina blocking Almayer's shot at Dain, Aïssa wrestling the kriss from Omar, and Jewel guarding Jim. Hence daughters are both the focus and the expositors of paternal blindness, fulfilling Conrad's own professed literary endeavour: 'to make you see' ('Preface', *NN*: x).

Nonetheless, in every case, these daughters require another man - a 'rescuer' - to usurp the father, Dain replacing Almayer, Willems challenging Omar, Jim defying Cornelius, *Nostromo* replacing Giorgio, Anthony usurping de Barral. Conrad's daughters are less rebellious than dependent Antigones, being reliant upon other men to liberate them. Without a knight-in-shining-armor, as in the case of Bessie, there is no escape. In other cases, however, these knights themselves are flawed, as with Jaspar and Decoud, both of whom abandon the women they love. On still other occasions, the fathers cunningly manipulate these suitors, as for example in 'A Smile of Fortune', where the

⁴ Freud's backtracking on female development may even have been inspired by a sense of competition with Jung as, in 'Female Sexuality', he admitted: '[W]hat we have said about the Oedipus complex applies with complete strictness to the male child only' (*XXI*: 228-9).

persistent Jacobus - with his deceptively sleepy, hooded eyes - uses his daughter Alice as bait to ensnare the captain-narrator as a client. Her gothic prison-courtyard evokes fairytales such as *The Princess in the Tower* and *Cinderella* (an association made explicit by the loss of her slipper), yet it seems also to represent the psychological prison of the Oedipus complex, from which she cannot escape alone. Her cowardly rescuer proves no match for Jacobus, who implicitly allows him to trade her in for a shipment of potatoes (apparently his plan all along). Despite her clear-sightedness, therefore, the daughter remains a valuable commodity to be fought over - a point most effectively illustrated in 'Gaspar Ruiz', as the Republican General Santierra appropriates Gaspar and Erminia's daughter, proudly introducing her as his own.

Conrad's penultimate novel *The Rover* attempts to redress this balance as a surrogate father-figure saves the wild orphan Arlette, one of the most spectral and disturbing of all Nina's descendants. In this instance, the pale and dark-haired girl is the repressed hysteric, chilling even the old pirate Peyrol: 'She made no sign, uttered no sound, behaved exactly as if there had been nobody in the room; and Peyrol suddenly averted his eyes from that mute and unconscious face with its roaming eyes' (29). She evokes a superstitious dread, roaming the cliffs silently at night, at once a shadow, a ghost and a vampire, a twisted victim of her violent past, capable of seeming 'the incarnation of pale fury' (248). Her searching eyes even compel men to look away, temporarily to blind themselves, effecting a kind of Medusa-like emasculation. Arlette's aged aunt Catherine even explicitly associates her with death as her parents were killed in their attempt to rescue her: 'Death seems to cling to her skirts' (170). The daughter is dangerous, yet she also attracts the aged rover:

For a moment Peyrol lost his tongue and even all power of motion
[....] having lowered her eyelids, all her life seemed to have gone into

her coral lips, vivid and without a quiver in the perfection of their design, and Peyrol, giving up the conversation with an upward fling of his arm, hurried up the path without looking behind him. (49-50)

He resents his rival Réal ('It was quite time that this confounded lieutenant went back to Toulon' [103]), yet takes possession of Arlette's parents' old tartane, ambiguously hinting at both a lover-like jealousy and a desire to usurp the parental role. His talks with Catherine reflect this dichotomy, revealing a combination of sadness and pride: 'She did take to me. She learned to talk to - the old man [...] She talked like a child' (169). She too appears to feel the ambiguity of their relationship, begging Peyrol not to 'break my heart' (176). Moreover, Arlette has another, more typically Conradian father, the bloodthirsty, sadistic 'patriot' Scevola who keeps her as both prisoner and prize, as Catherine tells Peyrol: 'He told me more than once he was sure to have Arlette for his own' (167), adding ominously (and recalling Cornelius and de Barral) 'don't you know, Peyrol, that there may be jealousy without love?' (171). Though more physically dangerous than *Almayer*, Scevola represents his literary descendant and Peyrol his nemesis, the newer, self-aware Conradian father. As Arlette chooses Réal, Peyrol takes over the paternal role and sacrifices himself to protect the younger man and destroy Scevola, usurping Réal's mission by taking the tartane out to sea with its false papers to be captured by an English warship. As he kisses the unconscious Arlette's forehead before leaving, this last representative of the Conradian father takes the burden of blame away from the daughter and onto himself, proving the selfless nature of his paternal 'passion'. In Conrad's psychological drama - unlike Freud's - the father finally allows the daughter to escape the Oedipus complex.

A possible reason for Freud's continued inability to liberate the daughter is revealed in the short essay, 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' (1913), in which he diminishes the

significance of the father-daughter bond in *King Lear*, identifying a conveniently reshaped common trope: 'Lear is an old man. It is for this reason [...] that the three sisters appear as his daughters' (XII: 301). Ignoring both the traditional basis of the play and the opportunity for a psychological analysis, he reduces the daughter to a mere practical device. Appignanesi and Forrester challenge his dismissal, interpreting the essay as an expression of denial and defensiveness over the approaching marriage of his second (and favourite) daughter Sophie, as well as 'his entry, at the age of fifty-six, into old age' (1992: 11). Thus Freud seems rather to identify with the unnaturally demanding Lear, feeling rejected and ridiculous at once. Tellingly, the essay also attributes the daughter with the capacity to 'make you *see*':

Lear carries Cordelia's dead body on to the stage. Cordelia is death.

If we reverse the situation it becomes intelligible and familiar to us
 [...] Eternal wisdom, clothed in the primaeval myth, bids the old man
 renounce love, choose death and make friends with the necessity of
 dying. (XII: 301)

Although Conrad typically gives emphasis to the father's neuroses and Freud to the daughter's, the two writers finally unite in recognition of the futility of paternal desire. Yet in Freud's case the tragic image of Cordelia became all too personal as Sophie died at the youthful age of twenty-seven during the influenza epidemic of 1920. As he turned increasingly to his youngest daughter Anna for support, therefore, Freud appears finally to have accepted old age, mortality and decline.

Ironically, Freud's theoretical indifference to daughters stands in stark contrast to his devotion and dependency upon Anna, his third and final girl after Mathilde and Sophie, an attachment that exposes him as Conrad's worst diagnosis of a father. Apparently unwanted by her mother (tired after five successive pregnancies), Anna the child

withdrew into daydreams and obsessive compulsions, behaviour that might suggest an early ambition to be her father's patient. If so, the ambition was fulfilled by Freud who, blinded by his own theories, constructed an Oedipal interpretation that encouraged repression and centralised their relationship. He encouraged her to enter psychoanalysis as both patient and practitioner, selecting her as his heir apparent.⁵ An early letter to Fliess even associates Anna's birth with his work, suggesting a premeditated partnership: 'The child, we like to think, has brought an increase of my practice, doubling what it usually is' (*CLSFWF*: 154). The essay 'A Child is Being Beaten' (1919), was even based on Anna's childhood trauma. That the relationship was dubious, to say the least, is evidenced by their early discussions of Anna's sexual impulses, his repeated interference in her personal affairs (allegedly dissuading her from marrying either Hans Lampl or Ernest Jones),⁶ and the fact that he irresponsibly carried out her three-and-a-half-year training analysis himself, rejecting claims of possible transference and counter-transference (although he eventually asked Lou Andreas Salomé for a secondary opinion). Finally, in 1938, after resolutely refusing to abandon Austria, he was persuaded to leave only after Anna was briefly taken away by the Gestapo for questioning.

Anna-Antigone-Electra became a pioneer of child analysis, founding a kindergarten for poor children in Vienna and the Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic in London (although she was largely motivated by her rivalry with Melanie Klein, who sought to usurp her as

⁵ Freud refused to let his sons enter medicine, let alone psychoanalysis, apparently fearing an Oedipal challenge. That he became increasingly paranoid regarding possible rivalry is also evidenced by the establishment of a secret society, 'the Committee', proposed by Jones in 1912, to protect his theories from the Vienna Society.

⁶ However, Jones' dedication to Freud's biography emphasises his primary interest in her as Freud's daughter: 'To ANNA FREUD
true daughter
of an immortal sire'.

Freud's favourite 'daughter'). Freud himself became increasingly dependent upon Anna during the last fifteen years of his life, particularly after the loss of Sophie and his diagnosis with throat cancer in 1923. In Oedipal terms, therefore, Anna's attempts to usurp her mother were not only successful, but actually encouraged by her father. Indeed, since Martha dismissed her husband's work as pornography, psychoanalysis itself might be regarded as Anna's child with Freud. She became his closest confidante, secretary and consolation in old age, as he wrote to his fellow psychoanalyst Arnold Zweig in 1934: 'it cannot have remained concealed from you that fate has granted me as compensation for much that has been denied me the possession of a daughter who, in tragic circumstances, would not have fallen short of Antigone' (*LSFAZ*: 66). In Freud's last illness she was the only person he trusted with the changing of his facial prosthesis and to administer his last (fatal) morphine. A letter to Zweig in 1935 finally summarises the extent of Freud's 'passion of paternity':

I see a cloud of disaster passing over the world, even over my own little world. I must remind myself of the one bright spot, and that is that my daughter Anna is making such excellent analytic discoveries just now and - they all tell me - is delivering masterly lectures on them (*LSFAZ*: 101-2).

After all, it appears both ironic and tragic that Freud's own daughter never escaped the Oedipus complex. His inability to discover an escape-route for girls might even reflect his own unconscious vested interests, as Appignanesi and Forrester claim: 'Freud was as addicted to his youngest daughter as he was to his cigars' (1992: 277). Like Conrad's, therefore, Freud's investigations might ultimately reveal more about the neuroses of the father than the daughter.

Since Conrad never had a daughter - and resented the critical tendency to collate fiction

and biography - it seems possible that he used the father-daughter bond as a safe example through which to expose negative impulses of oppression, possessiveness and jealousy in male-female relationships. Nonetheless, his sympathy with the plight of his original daughter Nina expands throughout his writing, as both fathers and daughters become increasingly neurotic and pitiable, destroying each other like Balzac's unsavoury characters. Unlike Freud, Conrad does not accept unconscious motivation as an excuse, but rather champions the daughter's clear-sighted perception of the Oedipal dilemma, even as he determinedly condemns the blind, neurotic abuser of paternal authority. Like Freud, however, he reaches a depressing conclusion. His daughters rarely achieve any real or lasting independence, as they remain trapped in a heartless, hopeless travesty of the Oedipus complex. When confronted with the truth, his fathers are unable, or refuse to understand their daughters. Nonetheless, in his final, unfinished novel *Suspense* (1925), the ambiguous relationship between Sir Charles Latham, the Marquis d'Armand and Adèle demonstrates a continued struggle with the question of paternity. The implication that Sir Charles is Adèle's real father, as emphasised by his extreme filial affection and jealous resentment of her marriage, is juxtaposed with the Count de Monteverso's relationship with his ferocious, hysterical daughter Clelia. Cosmo's infatuation with Adèle, and Clelia's of him, incestuously reworks his father's own affair with her mother, in a Freudian tangle that proves not only the dominance of domestic drama in Conrad's imagination, but suggests a determined effort to overcome it.

CHAPTER 4

SIRENS, SHIPS AND SEA BUSINESS

In 1912, Joseph Conrad wrote to Edward Garnett describing 'The Secret Sharer' with rare enthusiasm: 'No damned tricks with girls there. Eh? Every word fits and there's not a single uncertain note' (CL5: 128). The flippant tone encourages the stereotype of Conrad as a misogynistic writer of maritime literature for and about men, a characterization he objected to, resenting this narrow classification and writing angrily to Richard Curle in 1923: 'This damned sea business keeps off as many people as it gathers in' (LLII: 321). Yet the sea features in all of Conrad's novels, even if only indirectly - Winnie Verloc's leap into the English Channel in *The Secret Agent* or, more briefly, Peter Ivanovitch's escape from Russia in *Under Western Eyes*. Nonetheless, Conrad's annoyance at being categorized as a 'sea-writer' suggests that whatever the pervasive presence of the sea in his work, he did not consider it his central conceit. With respect to his female characters the emphasis is reversed: despite the complaint that women characters feature infrequently in Conrad's writing, 'The Secret Sharer' (1912) is his only story not to introduce one. Though attributing the tale's artistic success to its exclusively male concerns, Conrad nonetheless admitted 'tricks with girls' into his other stories, including those set almost exclusively onboard working ships, such as *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*.¹ He even asked ^{Paradowska} : 'Do you think one can make something interesting without any women?!' (CL1: 171). The question implies that however reluctant Conrad was to write about women, he did so not merely for the sake of popularity but out of conviction. Thus his description of 'The Secret Sharer' is either a deliberate attempt to deflect and confuse or an admission that women represent

¹ The women who appear at the end of this novella, such as the master's wife, emphasise the contrast between sea and shore: 'A lady appeared suddenly [...] She looked extremely elegant in the midst of us, and as strange as if she had fallen there from the sky' (165).

one of his most problematic concerns. Against this background, the present chapter examines the undervalued importance of women and female influence in Conrad's sea fiction, the extent to which they undermine the traditional notion that his writing conforms to a monolithic, possibly misogynistic male mythology, the Freudian implications of their presence, and the likelihood that they are, after all, the underlying, submerged spectre of the so-called 'sea stuff' (ed. Curle 1928: 148).

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Whatever Conrad's objections, it would be negligent *not* to consider his role as a writer of, and about the sea. Unfortunately, Freud is particularly unhelpful on this subject, making very few references either to travel, sailing or water in general. Conrad would appear to have chosen a distinctly un-neurotic, practical career, the analysis of which might easily seem superfluous. On the other hand, his choice had apparently less to do with practicality than with imaginative desire, since he freely acknowledged the formative influence of sea literature in his youth. Somewhat unexpectedly, Freud supports such fantasising in 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming' (1908), as he admires the cathartic and inspirational effects of literature - the 'liberation of tensions in our minds [...] enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame' (IX: 153)² - and applauds the author's ability to establish a protective barrier between individual egos that allows for the exposure of universal fantasies that would otherwise cause repulsion. Indeed, far from being 'repulsed', Conrad was actively motivated by his literary heroes and pays tribute to two of them, Captain Marryat and James Fenimore Cooper, in the early essay 'Tales of the Sea'

² As Conrad more poetically puts it, art is an appeal 'to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity' (Preface, *NV*: viii).

(1898):

Perhaps no two authors of fiction influenced so many lives and gave to so many the initial impulse towards a glorious or a useful career. Through the distances of space and time those two men of another race have shaped also the life of the writer of this appreciation. (*NLL*: 56)

Marryat in particular was an 'enslaver of youth', a provider of escapist fantasies - in which the sea represented a space for quest and adventure ('To his young heroes the beginning of life is a splendid and warlike lark' [53]), whose appeal was reinforced by Conrad's avid interest in maps and travel literature, such as the Polish magazine *Wedrowiec*.³ In *The Mirror of the Sea*, he openly admits an adolescent ambition to experience 'my own obscure Odyssey' (154), viewing the Mediterranean, home of the ancient Greek and Roman Empires, as a kind of spiritual sanctuary, as well as a testing-ground for creeds of fidelity, courage and endurance:

The dark and fearful sea of the subtle Ulysses' wanderings [...] claims the veneration of every seaman as the historical home of that spirit of open defiance against the great waters of the earth which is the very soul of his calling. (151-2)

The sea provided a connection to the seafarers and explorers of the past - a surrogate family of figures including Tasman, Cook and Livingstone - whose inspirational influence and ghostly presence Conrad records in 'Geography and Some Explorers' (1923). Thus, with no experience beyond a few brief glimpses of the sea, Conrad's first

³ Freud further divides authors into two categories: those who draw from 'ready-made and familiar material', that of 'the popular treasure-house of myths, legends and fairy-tales' ('Creative Writers': 152), and those who imagine their own world. Conrad was drawn to both since, if Marryat stirred his adventurous spirit, Fenimore Cooper provoked a deeper, more enduring interest in the psychological basis of man's connection with the sea: 'In his sea tales the sea inter-penetrates with life; it is in a subtle way a factor in the problem of existence' (*NLL*: 55).

career was based largely upon a fantasy, one powerful enough to overcome his family's surprise and understandably stern opposition ('a storm of blame from every quarter' ['A Familiar Preface', *APR*: xvi]).

Since Conrad's own youth was far from 'splendid', he took refuge in the imagination, the 'supreme master of art as of life' (*APR*: 25), leading his tutor (who was instructed to rid his charge of this sea fixation) to refer to him as 'an incorrigible, hopeless Don Quixote' (*ibid*: 44). After his mother's death, the seven-year-old Conrad also assisted Apollo in his work by reading aloud the proofs for his translation of Victor Hugo's *The Toilers of the Sea* (*Les travailleurs de la mer* [1866]), a temporary relief from mourning that - alongside his reading of Marryat and Cooper - might plausibly have created a lasting psychological association of the 'desired sea of my dreams' (*APR*: 43) with escape, respite and perhaps even the fantasy of a restored mother. Such intense fantasising implies a neurotic detachment from reality, one Freud warns against in 'Creative Writers': 'a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one' (IX: 146). Yet Freud is ambiguous, simultaneously describing fantasy as a natural progression from innocent childhood games: 'the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of *playing*, he now *phantasies* [...] I believe that most people construct phantasies at times in their lives' (*ibid*: 145). In 'Civilization and its Discontents' (1930), he even defends the imagination as an important source of 'pleasure and consolation' (XXI: 81):

[S]atisfaction is obtained from illusions, which are recognized as such without the discrepancy between them and reality being allowed to interfere with enjoyment [...]. At the head of these satisfactions through phantasy stands the enjoyment of works of art [...] (80)

Nonetheless, in 'Creative Writers', he makes a distinction between imagination and

fantasy, identifying a dangerous lack of reality-testing in the latter. Accordingly, fantasies are associated with wish-fulfilment and a neurotic desire to reshape unsatisfactory reality, evoking negative connotations of shame and secrecy. Freud's claim that in 'young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones' ('Creative Writers', IX: 147) also allies Conrad's fantasy of going to sea with a desire to prove himself as a man and - as in *Lord Jim* - a hero. Thus Freud articulates both the inevitability of fantasy and the danger of attempting to live inside it:

[O]ne can try to re-create the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one's own wishes. But whoever, in desperate defiance, sets out upon this path to happiness will as a rule attain nothing. ('Civilization', XXI: 81)

On the other hand, Conrad considered himself less a neurotic than a hermit, one who 'turns his back on the world and will have no truck with it' (*ibid*): '[F]or twenty years I had lived like a hermit with my passion! Beyond the line of the sea horizon the world for me did not exist' ('Author's Note', *MS*: x). Fantasy in this case was likely sustained by very necessity, to avert the psychological dangers of introspection and isolation. Furthermore, the disassociation of sea life denotes a compromise between fantasy and reality, a state of self-imposed neurotic detachment: 'where a man indeed must live alone but need not give up all hope of holding converse with his kind' (*ibid*).

Although Conrad appears to have embraced his fantasy, reaching the rank of Master Mariner at the youthful age of twenty-eight and briefly commanding his own vessel, the *Otago*, from 1888-9, he could be an abrasive seaman, quarrelling with his captains and frequently changing ship (serving on at least eleven over a twenty-year period). He

even lied regarding his time at sea on an application for promotion to Second Mate. Likewise, the noticeable omissions in his memoirs - regarding, for example, his failed maritime examinations - might be perceived as an untrustworthy manipulation of facts and a desperate clinging to fantasy. In the somewhat contradictory *The Mirror of the Sea* he finally admits his disillusionment:

I looked with other eyes upon the sea. I knew it capable of betraying the generous ardour of youth as implacably as, indifferent to evil and good, it would have betrayed the basest greed or the noblest heroism.

My conception of its magnanimous greatness was gone. (148)

The psychological danger of this recognition is emphasised in *Lord Jim*: 'Trust a boat on the high seas to bring out the Irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion' (121). As reality began to encroach upon fantasy, however, Conrad found comfort in a different fantasy - that of joining his heroes Marryat and Cooper as a writer. *A Personal Record* documents the overlap, as the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* follows Conrad around the world and becomes the focus of conversation amongst passengers such as Jacques. According to Freud, the transformation from fantasist into creative writer might actually have saved Conrad from psychosis, as it reinforced a sense of boundaries: 'The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously - that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion - while separating it sharply from reality' ('Creative Writers', IX: 144). Writing became a compromise and a means of escape, as it allowed Conrad to develop beyond, rather than completely reject his chosen career.

In 'Creative Writers' Freud claims: 'it is extremely probable that myths [...] are distorted vestiges of the wishful phantasies of whole nations, the *secular dreams* of

youthful humanity' (IX: 152). The notion of a national fantasy is particularly pertinent to the sea-faring nation of Britain, one which Conrad - as an outsider within, having joined the British Merchant Service in 1878 - was perfectly placed to embrace and investigate. The influence of this national mythology can be traced back even to the seventh century and the Anglo-Saxon poem 'The Seafarer'. Capturing a heroic mythology of endurance and strength in adversity, the poem evokes a primordial connection between man and the elements:

Moaneth always my mind's lust

That I fare forth, that I afar hence

Seek out a foreign fastness.

For this there's no mood-lofty man over earth's midst

[...] But shall have his sorrow for sea-fare. (Pound: 208, lines 37-43)

The 'self song's truth' (207, line 1) of the seafarer combines almost unbearable suffering with defiant and courageous resolution. 'Bitter breast-cares' (207, line 4) of loneliness and fear are overcome by an irresistible, heartfelt 'longing [...] to fare forth on the water' (208, line 48). Sea-faring is worth its 'sorrow'. Ezra Pound's translation in 1912 also locates the poem in a Modernist tradition that aspired to revivify older mythologies as a means of revitalising a technologically expanding, post-Darwinian culture. Yet in his late essay 'Legends', posthumously published in *Last Essays* in 1926, Conrad sceptically described such mythologies - the 'imaginative recognition of the past' (44) - as 'disfigured by touches of fatuity of which no legend is wholly free, because I suspect that those who record its tales as picked out on the lips of men are doing it in a spirit of love' (44). Nostalgia and bias taint the memory, but such 'fatuity' also paradoxically affirms love. Since 'love is uncritical' (44), however, there is a genuine danger of the subjective overwhelming the objective, thereby creating a misleading mythology that, if adopted as a model to live by, must invariably lead to

disillusion, as Conrad demonstrates in *Lord Jim* and Freud concludes in 'Creative Writers': 'If phantasies become over-luxuriant and over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis' (IX: 148). Hence Conrad arrives at another compromise: 'The facts of a legend need not be literally true. But they ought to be credible and they must be in a sort of fundamental accord with the nature of the life they record' (LE: 46). Accordingly, in his sea stories Conrad tempers nostalgia with acute self-awareness, emphasising the tensions between his own early idealism and painful reality, implicitly questioning a traditional male fantasy of selfless, stolid devotion to the sea.

Conrad's heightened awareness of these tensions is further demonstrated in the fictionalising of his own eventful voyage in the ill-fated *Palestine* in 1881-2 in 'Youth' (1898). The narrator's description of Marlow's tale as a 'chronicle' (3), combined with the all-male company and the age-old practice of storytelling itself, evokes a parallel with Viking or, as the mahogany table indicates, Arthurian legend. Yet the dual narrative, as the older, pessimistic Marlow recounts the words and deeds of his younger self with mixed irony and regret, decidedly undermines the notion of a single, stable 'mythology'. The young Marlow lives by his ship's motto of 'Do or Die', refusing to allow three near-disasters to dampen his enthusiasm for the journey Eastwards or his new position as second mate. The young Marlow's over-investment in traditional mythologies of, for example, the voyage as a rite of passage, the East as an exotic adventure, and youth as an unlimited privilege, seems to have made him unfit for the sea in later life. His disillusion and sorrow are so great as to be debilitating. A narrative that wavers between hyperbole, mock-heroic irony and regret undermines any naïve enthusiasm and idealism. The older, experienced Marlow, a jaded, introspective figure, constantly stresses the unbridgeable disjunction between past and present:

O youth! The strength of it, the faith of it, the imagination of it! To me she [the *Judea*] was not an old rattle-trap carting about the world a lot of coal for a freight - to me she was the endeavour, the test, the trial of life. (12)

The feminised ship is a measure against which to judge and be judged. Yet the older Marlow feels alienated from the carefree and fearless mythologies of youth. From his overarching perspective, courage and dedication no longer necessarily lead to victory or reward:

You fellows know there are those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence. You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself, sometimes do kill yourself, trying to accomplish something - and you can't. (3-4)

A short story such as 'Youth' poses important general questions: which aspects of traditional mythology are destabilised in Conrad's sea literature and in what ways? And, most importantly, how does the female spectre - so far largely ignored - encroach upon, and undermine the fantasy?

- II -

In Freud's writing, sporadic references to water are inevitably associated with the mother, for example in the *Interpretation of Dreams*:

A large number of dreams, often accompanied by anxiety and having as their content such subjects as passing through narrow spaces or being in water, are based upon phantasies of intra-uterine life, of existence in the womb and of the act of birth. (V: 399)

In 'Dreams', Freud defends the association, explaining that 'every individual mammal, every human being, spent the first phase of its existence in water - namely as an embryo

in the amniotic fluid in its mother's uterus, and came out of that water when it was born' (XV: 160). Dreams of being rescued from water similarly reflect the mother-child relationship, whilst '[i]f one rescues someone from the water in a dream, one is making oneself into his mother, or simply into a mother' (161). Water becomes a universal signifier, metaphorically symbolising the maternal. Tellingly, Conrad's description of sea-life in 'Ocean Travel' (1923) recalls the calm detachment of the womb:

The silence of the universe would lie very close to the sailing ship, with her freight of lives from which the daily stresses and anxieties had been removed, as if the circle of the horizon had been a magic ring laid on the sea. (*LE*: 38)

Words such as 'close', 'circle' and 'ring' all reinforce the maternal metaphor. Yet Freud also identifies a more explicit Oedipal significance, identifying the widespread fantasy of returning to the water/womb as a displaced desire for coitus with the mother. Moreover, he claims: 'In myths about the birth of heroes [...] a predominant part is played by exposure in the water and rescue from the water' ('Dreams', XV: 160-1). Hence Conrad's choice of career variously indicates a yearning to regress to the early peace of the womb, a strong libidinal attachment to the mother, or a desire to be reborn as a modern Odysseus. Since, in Freudian dream symbolism, journeys - and thus voyages - also represent dying, Freud would seem to imply the latter, diagnosing a desire for rebirth. Conrad runs simultaneously to and from the maternal, escaping his past by attaching himself to another surrogate. Whether a form of regression or a means of seeking a fresh start, however, the return to water inescapably implies another dangerous Oedipal challenge.

Although Conrad's feminisation of the sea is far from atypical, the notion of an Oedipal

struggle is reinforced by his tendency - evident usually in moments of anger or resentment - to identify the sea with a terrifying Freudian father-figure:

The ocean has the conscienceless temper of a savage autocrat spoiled by much adulation. He cannot brook the slightest appearance of defiance, and has remained the irreconcilable enemy of ships and men ever since ships and men had the unheard-of audacity to go afloat together in the face of his frown. (*MS*: 137)

The sarcastic, challenging tone here suggests a struggle with an overbearing father, whilst the metaphor of eating - evoking the myth of Kronos, used as evidence by Freud - implies a reassertion of the castration complex. Indeed, a fear of angering the sea recurs throughout Conrad's writing, creating the discomfiting notion of a tangled love/hate relationship. The sea appears to represent both Oedipal influences at once, being variably calm and violent. Yet whereas the sea is a 'master' in the original manuscript of 'Heart of Darkness', the final printed version revises it to 'mistress' (48), denoting a final affiliation with the female. The ambiguity of this latter word implies both a long-standing love-affair and a sense of slavish subordination, either an incestuous bond with the mother or an admission of her dominant, inescapable influence - intertwined meanings that are entirely pervasive in Conrad's writing. Inevitably, due to the sea's split personality - and the tensions of the Oedipal relationship with the mother - the relationship is prone to waver, as Conrad reveals distinct signs of bitterness and even a sense of having been tricked and trapped by 'the subtle poison of a love-potion' (*MS*: 145), perhaps the amniotic fluid itself. Indeed, in choosing the sea life, Conrad actually trapped himself within the love/hate relationship of the Oedipus complex, being unable or unwilling to repress the maternal. As he ominously admits in *The Mirror*: 'To love it [the sea] is not well' (148) - words that distinctly evoke the Freudian dilemma.

An added complication arises in Freud's claim that hollow objects, including ships and vessels, are *also* symbolic of the uterus.⁴ In Conrad's writing too, the meanings attributed to the sea and ship occasionally echo and overlap, creating the impression of a single female presence who demands a combination of devotion, respect and circumspection:

[Y]our ship wants to be humoured with knowledge. You must treat with an understanding consideration the mysteries of her feminine nature, and then she will stand by you faithfully in the unceasing struggle with forces wherein defeat is no shame. It is a serious relation, that in which a man stands to his ship. (*MS*: 56)

Since the sailor has more control over the ship than the sea, however, Oedipal feelings can be more effectively repressed. Accordingly, whilst the maternal sea is transformed into a volatile 'mistress', the ship becomes the mother-wife. *The Mirror* even resembles a kind of marital guide-book, documenting the various female personalities of different ships whilst warning against negligence and complacency: 'Of all the living creatures upon land and sea, it is ships alone that cannot be taken in by barren pretences' (35). Thus the ship represents another testing ground for fidelity, protecting the sailor (provisionally) from the jealous sea. The traditional basis of this idea is evidenced by the dominant use of female figureheads in the nineteenth-century (apparently derived from the Greek belief, recorded by Pliny the Elder, that a half-clothed or naked female could calm storms), a practice demonstrating a traditionally combative use of female symbolism. Nonetheless, the ship - like the sea - remains untameable, being both a protective and dangerous entity.

⁴ In analysing the significance of dream symbolism, he further points out that the German word 'Schiff' (ship) also means an earthenware vessel, which is alternatively called a 'Schaff', meaning 'tub', again evoking the womb.

Arguably as a consequence, in his sea stories Conrad is preoccupied with the question of, and possible solution to, divided male loyalties. In 'Falk: A Reminiscence' he addresses the potential clash between man and ship, exploring the definition and safe limits of masculinity. The male name of Falk's first ship honours its builder, *Borgmeister Dahl*, in an imposition of masculinity that implies an arrogant repression of the mother.⁵ The ship is considered a great achievement, the pride of its hometown, yet once at sea it soon deteriorates, fulfilling the narrator's ominous warning: 'A misunderstanding between a man and his ship [...] is bound to end in trouble for the man' (*TOS*: 189). The loss of the rudder suggests emasculation - a reassertion of female power - that leaves the crew vulnerable (the mother-wife in this case wielding the castration threat); her drifting into Arctic waters, combined with the crew's isolation, echoing the situation of the Ancient Mariner. The ensuing cannibalism seems to represent a series of metaphorical rapes, with Falk becoming the dominant predator. Significantly, Conrad re-uses this trope later when the captain-narrator describes Falk's towing of Hermann's ship as a cruel violation of the female: 'I could not have believed that a simple towing operation could suggest so plainly the idea of abduction, of rape' (170). The insulted mother-wife becomes a primal battle-ground, and Falk - as implied by his name - a dehumanised creature of instinct: 'He wanted to live. He had always wanted to live. So we all do - but in us the instinct serves a complex conception, and in him this instinct existed alone' (223). The ship, as well as the sea, proves capable of destroying the sailor as, without a protective bond, the sailor loses his sense of identity and humanity. The word 'alone' finally emphasises Falk's ostracism and isolation from the rest of society as the male community of the *Borgmeister Dahl* destroys itself.

⁵ Although it is notable that certain boats had traditionally masculine names, such as a man-of-war or a 'merchantman'.

Significantly, although the narrator proves a useful mediator, the only character capable of helping Falk is Hermann's silent niece, precisely because she has the same physical qualities as his previous ship, as the narrator marvels: 'All I know is that she was built on a magnificent scale. Built is the only word. She was constructed, she was erected, as it were, with a regal lavishness' (151). The absence of her name and voice emphasises her statuesque appearance and mythological associations; her sewing, for example, evokes the Fates. Indeed, her silence seems to make her a mere figurehead of romance, contrasting vividly with Falk's desperate desire to speak and confess, again suggesting female power over an unstable male mythology. She even appears to represent an antidote to Falk's death instinct, serving as the embodiment of some life-force:

[S]he could have stood for an allegoric statue of the Earth. I don't mean the worn-out earth of our possession, but a young Earth, a virginal planet undisturbed by the vision of a future teeming with the monstrous forms of life, clamorous with the cruel battles of hunger and thought. (152)

The name of Hermann's ship, the *Diana*, also creates an association with the Roman goddess of hunting, suggesting a significant parallel with Falk. The niece seems to represent another instinctual being, but conversely, one of sympathy and feeling, as Conrad evokes the stereotypical primal natures of male and female. Hermann's niece becomes a surrogate mother, highlighting male dependency on a protective maternal figure. Female influences in this story, therefore, prove capable of both destroying and reconstructing the male psyche, not through words, but through their mere presence, undermining the illusion of control and forcing an admission of weakness. Only another female, apparently, can reverse the effects of the female sea/ship, and the male narrator consequently remains uneasy with Falk's new alliance. His final glimpse of the couple

reveals Falk in a pose of submission and dependence:

He held her hands and looked down at them, and she looked up at him with her candid and unseeing glance. It seemed to me they had come together as if attracted, drawn and guided to each other by a mysterious influence. They were a complete couple. In her gray frock, palpitating with life, generous of form, olympian and simple, she was indeed the siren to fascinate that dark navigator, this ruthless lover of the five senses. (239)

If the sea is a ruthless siren, Hermann's niece is merely a different kind. A romantic resolution is undercut by a discomfiting sense of the primal as Falk is less cured than controlled and spellbound.

The emotions of paranoia and fear in 'Falk' are further sensationalised in Conrad's short story 'The Brute', in which repressed desire forms a prelude to rampant neuroses. Indeed, this tale may be seen to offer an ironic view of ways in which the son seeks to repress the mother, control the wife and vindicate himself. The opening page is specifically designed to shock as an anonymous voice declares: 'That fellow Wilmot fairly dashed her brains out, and a good job, too!' (*SOS*: 105). This defiant triumphalism indicates a grim satisfaction in the destruction of 'her', whom we later discover to be a ship, the *Apse Family*, otherwise infamously known as 'the brute'. She is a ship, as the unidentified internal narrator reveals, who resists, often violently, all attempts at control:

You could never be sure what she would be up to next. There are ships difficult to handle, but generally you can depend on them behaving rationally. With *that* ship, whatever you did with her you never knew how it would end. She was a wicked beast. Or, perhaps,

she was only just insane. (111-2)

Whereas the *Borgmeister Dahl* seemed only passively malevolent, the *Apse Family* is unmistakably active. Whether mad or malicious, the ship is consistently perceived as female, and her often fatal attacks presented as purely vitriolic and vindictive (by implication qualities peculiarly feminine). She is compared to 'a big hearse' (115) - again suggesting the enclosed space of the womb - as her reputation for murder increasingly arouses an uncanny sense of superstition and dread. Yet just as Freud claims that sons are drawn to their mothers, so the temperamental 'Brute' seems perversely to attract men. The relationship between man and ship in the story proves to be disturbing, even morbid, in its evocation of the incest taboo. To serve and survive in the brute-ship represents manhood's ultimate test, one to which the narrator is drawn despite his protests. His supposed reason for joining the crew - a reluctance to offend the ship's owners - is hardly reasonable in the face of his father's natural disinclination against having two sons in the same ship. In fact, the narrator's professed hatred for the brute seems part of a male conspiracy intended to deceive and mislead the reader into accepting its 'myth' of events. From a point of hindsight, even the aforementioned introduction appears contrived to destabilize the reader's sense of judgement. As the story subsequently attempts to justify its controversial opening, the narrative actively seeks to challenge moral preconceptions, a daunting task that coerces the reader merely to accept the male version as established by the four men in the parlour. Consequently, this short story has often been interpreted as another example of Conrad's alleged misogyny, though it was published two years after *The Mirror*, in which Conrad proclaimed the apparently opposite sentiment: 'No ship is wholly bad [...] there can be no harm in affirming that in these vanished generations of willing servants there never

has been one utterly unredeemable soul' (119-20).⁶

The most obvious inconsistency in the persistent feminisation of the brute is that the ship's name is gender neutral, encompassing both male and female members of the Apse family. The name's inclusiveness even indicates that it is the clash and conflict between the sexes that has created the monster. Moreover, the only other ship referred to in the story, the *Lucy Apse*, is portrayed as idyllic by comparison, implying that it may be less the brute's feminine side that is to blame than the male, as reinforced by the masculine connotations of the word 'brute'. The company's desire to build a superior vessel, using only the finest materials, evokes 'heroic' notions of competition and power, but also implies a dangerous arrogance, with Conrad condemning a male attempt at control. The *Apsy Family*, built, like the *Borgmester Dahl*, to represent the company's power and wealth, is invested with a surplus of male mythology, disrupting the precarious relationship between the ship and her crew (the mother-wife and her son-husbands), and so creating an internal rebellion. The brute herself becomes a victim, a misunderstood freak, constructed yet disavowed by man, an idealised though ultimately rejected female influence.

The story's emphasis on senseless and tragic events is also designed to manipulate the reader's prejudice against the brute. Maggie's drowning, as she is dragged into the sea by a loose anchor, emerges as a jealous attack by an avenging mistress. Yet in *The Mirror*, Conrad not only refers to the anchor as 'a symbol of hope' (15), but specifically links it to the first mate, the actual position of Maggie's husband Charley in 'The Brute'. Charley's failure fully to understand the nature of the *Apsy Family* and to

⁶ In 'The *Torrans*: A Personal Tribute' (1923), Conrad also provides a loving counter-example: 'Her fascinations and virtues have made their marks on the hearts of men' (*LE*: 27).

protect Maggie from the ship seems to make him as much to blame as the vessel itself. Moreover, their marriage is hinted at only obliquely, suggesting an attempt to obscure this relationship and outwit the ship, foolishly tempting fate, as indeed does the narrator with his premature and misguided cry: 'You've tamed her' (122). The brute subsequently undermines the illusion of control as the men onboard prove unable to protect the women, as emphasised by the crazed words of the pilot: 'Killing women, now! Killing women, now!' (124). Once again the horrific description of Maggie's death and Charley's despair arguably serve to obscure male mistakes. In effect, the brute becomes a scapegoat as male culpability is disguised in attacks on female nature.

Significantly, the male narrator initially attributes the ship's final destruction to a man, the night-watchman Wilmot, yet the actual narrative lays stress on the 'green-eyed governess, or nurse' (127) with whom Wilmot is infatuated (the term 'green-eyed' reinforcing jealousy as the dominant emotion of the story). Furthermore, the actual wrecking is depicted as an attempt at murder gone wrong, though in reality it is the result of Wilmot's negligence:

She had overreached herself in her last little game. Her time had come - the hour, the man, the black night, the treacherous gust of wind - the right woman to put an end to her. The brute deserved nothing better. Strange are the instruments of Providence. There's a sort of poetical justice. (130)

The ship and governess become inextricably linked as the narrator describes their fates in parallel, the one crashing against the shore as the other is knocked under the table. Yet the condemnation - she 'deserved nothing better' - also implies a misogynistic idea of ignominy at having been finally destroyed by a woman. The story-teller cannot relinquish his hatred of the ship and, by extension, of women, perhaps recognising his

own powerlessness and failure. Nonetheless, these attacks on the brute as a female entity ultimately mean that female mythology is able to claim the combined physical and supernatural power of the story and eclipse the male. The governess finally puts an end to the destructive cycle as, once again, female overcomes female. Moreover, there is another, often overlooked, woman in the story, Miss Blank, the barmaid of the Three Crows, an impassive figure who, by both opening and closing the narrative, frames the whole with a female influence. She is also the only woman who actually speaks, though significantly it is outside the internal narrator's story. Her name then appears to represent a sly joke, emphasising how identity can be imposed - often unfairly and ill-advisedly - from without.

As if to emphasise the complexity of the sailor's relationship with his ship, Conrad's last sea story, 'The Shadow-Line' (1917) - a novella based upon his own single experience of command on the *Otago*, twenty-eight years earlier - goes to the other extreme, in so far as the captain-narrator is initially willing to embrace his new ship as maternal-wife. His first reaction is one of awe and pride:

I knew that, like some rare women, she was one of those creatures whose mere existence is enough to awaken an unselfish delight. One feels that it is good to be in the world in which she has her being. (49)

Yet these words evoke an unsettling combination of hyperbole and condescension: the patronising simile, 'like some rare women', reveals a complacent sense of male superiority whilst implying a distinction between the 'she' of the ship and 'she' as a general demarcation of gender. The ship is an ideal of femininity, a 'creature' who transcends the implied faults of her sex and complements her male crew. Indeed, the word 'unselfish' is particularly ironic since the narrator invests the ship with his own male conception of female perfection, placing her on a pedestal whilst simultaneously

eradicating her original identity. The ship gives him fresh energy and purpose, a change described in terms that seem deliberately to evoke the courtly romance genre: 'She was mine, more absolutely mine for possession and care than anything in the world; an object of responsibility and devotion' (40). However, the supposedly chaste relationship is complicated by distinctly sensuous undertones, as when, for example, he first steps onboard: 'I received the feeling of deep physical satisfaction. Nothing could equal the fullness of that moment, the ideal completeness of that emotional experience' (50).⁷ The ship's becalming in 'The Shadow-Line' might then be interpreted as a form of punishment, albeit of a less violent kind, for the imposition of Oedipal desire and patriarchal possessiveness. The captain specifically is made to learn a lesson as his crew, like that of the Mariner, collapses around him. Once again, therefore, the Oedipal drama demands a precarious balance of sensitivity and respect, with Conrad reinforcing his warnings against both repression and attachment.

Ultimately, Conrad reverses the traditional preconception of male dominance in the maritime sphere by suggesting that fear of the sea and unswerving loyalty to the ship are both natural and fitting. He advocates a Victorian work ethic as idleness and distraction are shown to be the sailor's true enemies. He even implicitly agrees with Freud in 'The Future of an Illusion': 'every civilization rests on a compulsion to work and a renunciation of instinct'; a compulsion necessary to curb 'the rebelliousness and destructive mania of the participants in civilization' (XXI: 10). Meanwhile, Conrad remained a stalwart defender of sail in the great debate about steam precisely because of its more feminine, ethereal, difficult qualities, in contrast to the cold impersonality of

⁷ It is a sensuousness to which Conrad was not immune, as *The Mirror* testifies: 'Such is the intimacy with which a seaman had to live with his ship of yesterday that his senses were like her senses, that the stress upon his body made him judge of the strain upon the ship's masts' (38). John Conrad also records his father's extreme loyalty to the ship: 'Captain Hope once said to me with a laugh, "The ship is more important to your father than his safety or his life"' (1981: 191).

steam:

The sailing-ship, with her unthrobbing body, seemed to lead mysteriously a sort of unearthly existence, bordering upon the magic of the invisible forces, sustained by the inspiration of life-giving and death-dealing winds [...] The machinery, the steel, the fire, the steam have stepped in between the man and the sea. (*MS*: 64, 72)

The Mirror's epitaph (from Boethius) suggests a lament for the age of sail, already past its height on the wheel of fortune. On the other hand, the idea of a passing era reinforces Conrad's sense of being 'chosen' ('Whatever craft he handles with skill, the seaman of the future shall be not our descendant, but only our successor' [73]) and allows him to prove the 'heroic' qualities of fidelity and loyalty in the face of defeat. Consequently, Conrad rails less against progress than at the loss of a valuable rite of passage, the physical and psychological test of the sea. In 'Ocean Travel' he regrets that 'a marvellous achievement [...] may render life more tame than perhaps it should be', sadly adding: 'The whole psychology of sea travel is changed' (*LE*: 35). Life at sea becomes a metaphor, exaggerating the trials and consequences of the Oedipal drama. Unlike Freud, however, Conrad does not seek to repress or control the mother, but rather to co-exist with the maternal influences of ship and sea, preserving his own identity alongside theirs.

- III -

Conrad criticism has traditionally considered the 'real' female characters of the sea stories as unnecessary, unsubstantial, and artless concessions to public taste. Indeed, the issue appears to have polarized criticism from the start. One reviewer commended *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* because there was 'not a petticoat in all Mr

Conrad's pages' (cited in Knowles and Moore 2000: 109); on the other hand, the *Daily Mail's* reviewer lamented that 'the only female in the book is the ship herself' (cited in Jones 1999: 11). Some critics even admire Conrad's sea literature *because* of the relative marginalization of women characters, considering it a noble artistic refusal to submit to popular pressures. Yet such criticism ignores the fact that in writing about the sea Conrad was actively seeking commercial success and reward, apparently with little respect for the genre, as he wrote to H.G. Wells:

I've started a series of sea sketches [...] I've discovered that I can dictate that sort of bosh without effort at the rate of 3000 words in four hours. Fact! The only thing now is to sell it to a paper and then make a book of the rubbish. (CL3: 112)

In 1908 he also received a visit from a Captain Carlos M. Marris, an admirer from the East, who advised him to return to his literary roots with more Eastern tales. After his breakdown in 1910 and the commercial failures of *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, it seems likely that Conrad felt the need for change, as well as being inspired by the idea of potentially lucrative sales. Despite a return to the sea, however, the stories of the Edwardian period differ distinctly from their predecessors; the main change - so often ignored - being the increased importance of woman characters. Ironically, although women and the sea belong to the same 'popular' literary category, the latter subject is generally considered the more 'artistic', with writing about women condemned to the separate, less respectable genre of 'romance'. For Conrad, however, the 'pot-boiler', a format evoking few expectations of originality and depth, appears to have allowed greater freedom for experimentation, as his artful manipulation of the genre causes a sense of awkwardness in the 'serious' reader that reflects the awkwardness of the subject matter. Additionally, these stories, wearing the disguise of 'sea' tales, might possibly have represented flirtatious deviations away from the major

novels, allowing Conrad to explore more sexually ambivalent themes, such as the dangerous consequences of voyeurism upon both men and women, as well as encouraging a temporary release of repressed voyeuristic impulse, leading to the development of a new and striking kind of heroine. Hence Conrad both manipulates and subverts the conventions of 'popular' literature by using women characters to dominate the action and undermine male mythologies in more sensational ways. Nonetheless, little has been written about the possible connections between 'petticoats' and 'sea business', particularly in 'Falk', and the two last stories in *Twixt Land and Sea Tales*: 'A Smile of Fortune' and 'Freya of the Seven Isles'.

Conrad's presentation of the sailor's precarious relationship with the sea and ship is further complicated by his inclusion of dangerous figurative and mythological presences - the spectres of sea lore - in the form of such females as sirens, nymphs and mermaids. Their power, associated with that of the temptress who complicates the Oedipal balance by distracting the sailor from both the maternal sea *and* the mother-wife ship, tends to grow in direct proportion to failing male strength. In Freudian psychoanalysis, however, sirens make remarkably few appearances. Indeed, since male-female relationships are all based on the original bond with the mother, other women merely represent secondary interlopers. In contrast, Conrad's sirens are generally more powerful, glamorous, and erotic than their counterparts in the novels, holding an explicit physical power over men. All are memorable, as the narrator of 'Freya of the Seven Isles' declares: 'Freya Nelson (or Nielsen) was the kind of a girl one remembers' (149); all are painted in one dominant colour, Hermann's niece in 'precious metals' (151), Alice in amber and Freya in white; and all are distinguished by a heavy head of hair. Hermann's niece's 'tawny' hair reaches 'down to her waist' (151), Alice's abundant black hair gives 'an impression of magnificently cynical untidiness' (44), while

Freya has a 'wealth' of 'glossy' and 'golden' (150) hair. This shared attribute is noted by Meyer, who describes hair as 'one of Conrad's favorite fetishistic objects' (1967: 302), and 'the one most certain to be included in Conrad's description' (294). He interprets this fetishistic object as representative of 'not only a highly prized illusory female phallus but also an emblem of its dangerous power [...] capable of arousing fear and recoil as well as awe and love' (297). Indeed, the distinct physical appearances of these women, combined (in the cases of Hermann's niece and Alice) with their overall silence, lend these tales an uncanny, mythical aspect and the women an ambiguous, threatening allure. Hermann's niece resembles an amazon, whilst the blond Freya evokes ancient Norse myths: 'On the biggest boulder there stood Freya, all in white and, in her helmet, like a feminine and martial statue' (164). The languid Alice, meanwhile, recalls Tennyson's *Lady of Shallott* or a Pre-Raphaelite heroine: 'she seemed to be staring at her own lonely image, in some far-off mirror hidden from my sight amongst the trees' (63). These haunting women become the focal point of their stories, usurping both sea and ship. Consequently, the discovery of a photograph of 'an awful, mature, white female with rapacious nostrils' (59) among the belongings of the malicious former captain of 'The Shadow-Line' implicitly reveals the original source and spectre of his madness.

As in Conrad's novels, male relationships with these spectres rarely succeed, and are frequently tarnished by money, as is that between Alice and the narrator of 'A Smile of Fortune'. The latter feels bound to accept her father, Jacobus, as ship's chandler, and finally exchanges her for a shipment of, what turn out to be, highly lucrative potatoes. Similarly, the eponymous Freya refuses to marry Jaspas before he makes his fortune. Women and money represent the two main contaminating shore influences, severing the bond between sailor and sea and destabilising a traditional masculinist mythology of toil

and reward. Such disruption might also represent Conrad's displaced sense of himself as an artist, feeling his integrity compromised by desire and material need and finding metaphors for the tensions of his writing career in his prior maritime experience. Consequently, his sea stories are obsessed with dangerous influences, and he was apparently drawn to *femmes fatales*, even sardonically and perhaps self-critically enjoying the spectacle of imperilled male characters.⁸ Accordingly, the women of these short sea tales introduce elements of beauty, mystery, sadness and danger that disrupt the sailor's sense of identity, challenging the mother's dominance over her sons in distinctly un-Freudian fashion, and exposing male fears, inadequacies and confusion that undercut the generic expectations of romance.

In the ironically-entitled 'A Smile of Fortune', the narrator is also the main character, a rare occurrence as Conrad generally chose a more distanced narrative voice. The captain-narrator's personal involvement immediately hints at an autobiographical context, and several critics have noted the likely connections between the story's sultry Alice Jacobus, Eugénie Renouf, the French woman who encouraged and spurned Conrad on Mauritius in 1888, and Alice Shaw, the real-life shipping agent's seventeen-year-old daughter on that same island. The change in the captain-narrator's perception of the island, as it develops from a 'pearl'⁹ into a psychological prison, probably echoes Conrad's own earlier disillusionment.¹⁰ His masochistic enjoyment in reliving his own

⁸ His favourite opera, which he saw repeatedly in Marseilles, was Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), originally published as a novel in 1845 by Prosper Mérimée.

⁹ In describing the island as a pearl, Conrad uses the name of the illegitimate daughter of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a writer Merrill Harvey Goldwyn regards as a formative influence: 'both shared an intense preoccupation with the theme of the apparently civilized individual's latent capacity for primitive reversion and evil' (77). The courtyard of 'A Smile of Fortune' also evokes Hawthorne's unhappy short story 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1846).

¹⁰ That Alice and Freya dwell on islands with their fathers recalls Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, emphasising the fantastical element of romance.

unhappy experiences in this viciously ironic black comedy variously suggests a cathartic need to admit his mistakes, a desire to rebuild his damaged relationship with the sea, or, less laudably, an act of revenge on the women who, he felt, had previously betrayed him.

'A Smile' is a story of self-betrayal and degradation as the confident captain-narrator is lured, despite repeated warnings, into the company of Alice, the petulant, ungracious daughter of the mysterious ship's chandler Jacobus. His resulting obsession with the seemingly indifferent girl reworks Jacobus's own scandalous infatuation with Alice's mother, an exotic circus performer, of whose story the narrator is ironically aware. She is located always in a garden courtyard (again suggesting the womb), surrounded by flowers, Freudian symbols for female sexual organs and virginity. Engulfed by mysterious, perverse forces beyond his control - as the instinctive (and pre-Oedipal) pleasure-seeking id appears to overcome the ego - the narrator's all-consuming desire for Alice finally leads to the collapse of his self-control and dignity. As he brutally forces kisses on her, the passive girl metamorphoses into a mermaid-like figure, sliding beyond his grasp:

Instead of trying to tear my hands apart, she flung herself upon my breast and with a downward, undulating, serpentine motion, a quick sliding dive, she got away from me smoothly. It was all very swift; I saw her pick up the tail of her wrapper and run for the door at the end of the verandah not very gracefully. (70)

The references to diving and a tail, combined with an apparent lack of ease on land, all reinforce the mermaid image, whilst the word 'serpentine' transforms Alice into a sinister, even intentionally malicious temptress, whose destructive 'spell' produces an overwhelming male self-disgust: 'It was like being the slave of some depraved habit'

(59). She severs the narrator's connection with the sea: 'I wanted to stay for one more experience of that strange provoking sensation and of indefinite desire, the habit of which had made me - me of all people! - dread the prospect of going to sea' (73). Conversely, the mermaid parallel makes her an agent of the sea-mother, playing with, testing, even victimising one of its own. The thriving of Jacobus's potatoes, purchased out of guilt, reinforces this alliance as the ship and sea nurture the narrator's shame. Thus the mermaid enchantress turns the narrator into another kind of liminal being, devoted to the sea yet unable to live upon it. Handing in his resignation in despair, the pressure of the superego keeps the narrator trapped in a tortuous mental state of perpetual dissatisfaction and regret.

Just as the 'brute' is incapable of speech, however, so there is no entry into Alice's feelings. She exists, apparently, to torment and cause a rift between the captain and 'the ship I had learned to love' (88), but it is Jacobus who actually invites and encourages the narrator in a typical circulation of female energy among males. Alice herself might be regarded as another victim of a male mythology that imposes the identity of temptress upon her. The mermaid becomes another convenient scapegoat for a male crisis of confidence. Unsurprisingly, these powerful images of femininity appear when male characters fail to live up to their ideals of honour, courage and strength. Throughout the story we find the narrator projecting his imaginative fantasies:

I had a conception of Jacobus and his daughter existing, a lonely pair of castaways, on a desert island; the girl sheltering in the house as if it were a cavern in a cliff, and Jacobus going out to pick up a living for both on the beach - exactly like two ship-wrecked people who always hope for some rescuer to bring them back at last into touch with the rest of mankind. (39)

He imagines himself in the role of rescuer, becoming fascinated by the house 'where no respectable person had put foot for ever so many years' (49) and the fairy-tale maiden concealed there. His first glimpse of Alice reinforces the idea of constructed perception or a tableau: 'I saw her in exact profile like a figure in a tapestry' (evoking Medieval and chivalric connotations). So determined is the narrator in his role of knight that he ignores her pleas for him to leave, finding mystery and charm in all her looks, teasingly calling her 'Miss Don't Care' (53), and claiming that her 'stony, petulant sullenness had an obscurely tragic flavour' (50). Similarly, he justifies her rude, monosyllabic retorts: 'how could it have been otherwise? [...] She did not know how men behaved' (51). Neither does he recognise his own danger, finding Jacobus's life-story almost humorous: 'I listened rather open-mouthed to the tale as old as the world, a tale which had been the subject of legend, of moral fables, of poems, but which so ludicrously failed to fit the personality' (36). Deciding that Jacobus 'had not the strength of mind to shake himself free' (36), he fails to recognise his own vulnerability and falls in the same way for Alice who, until the very end of the story, does nothing to encourage him.

In his attempts to attract Alice's attention, the narrator also uncovers an apparent plot against her. Typically, the villain is another woman, Alice's governess-companion, variously described as a grotesquely malevolent figure, a 'stumpy old woman' (45), an 'apparition' (45) and an 'Old sorceress'(48), who makes the narrator feel positively threatened: 'She was, I perceived, armed with a knitting-needle; and as she raised her hand her intention seemed to be to throw it at me like a dart' (48). The needle resembles a phallic symbol, turning the old protectress into a dominant mother-figure, ambiguously warning him away. Yet he regards her as a witch, casting a spell over Jacobus and, through him, controlling Alice: 'I was astonished that she should dare before Jacobus. Yet what could he have done to repress her? He needed her too

much' (55).¹¹ The narrator aims both to rescue and tame Alice, establishing himself as a challenger and finally dispelling the companion by threatening her in return. Having defied the mother, he asks Alice to trust him and finally frees her with the words: 'He [Jacobus] can't make me do anything' (68). Yet Alice's potential liberation is short-lived as, having won her over, the narrator feels angry, as though 'cheated in some rather complicated deal into which I had entered against my better judgment' (68). Rather than offering protection, he attacks her: 'the first kiss I planted on her closed lips was vicious enough to have been a bite' (69). Having attained his end, he feels only the 'lost illusion of vague desire' (78). Betrayed, Alice's only recourse is to run away, her lost shoe making a mockery of the Cinderella fairy-tale. Though regarding himself as a 'thief' (79) and persistently questioning himself 'as to the nature of facts and sensations connected with her person and with my conduct' (82), the narrator nonetheless abandons Alice to her prison courtyard. Conrad's heroine proves less of a siren than a spurned maiden, used and abandoned by the sailor who must in turn estrange himself, arguably for his own safety, from his first lover and mother, the sea.

The notion of male blame is further developed in 'Freya of the Seven Isles', the concluding tale of *'Twixt Land and Sea*, wherein the beautiful young heroine is abandoned by her lover, Jaspar. Freya is blond, 'self-reliant' (179), and capable whereas Alice is dark, vulnerable and ethereal, but they share the same ability to capture and enslave. The story follows a familiar path of fantasy and disillusionment: Freya's secret betrothed becomes too confident and defiant in his love for both her and the brig that is to be their home, the *Bonito*, and is wrecked by his rival-in-love Van Heemskirk,

¹¹ Anne Luyat also identifies Conrad's interest in menacing female grotesques, who are typically accompanied by sinister male supporters, and who threaten the younger, innocent women of their stories. Alice's companion, however, both protects and oppresses her charge (an ambiguity echoed in Winnie's mother in *The Secret Agent* and Catherine in *The Rover*). Thus she might represent the pre-Oedipal mother, simultaneously warning and threatening the narrator with the castration complex.

both figuratively and literally, as the vessel is led onto a reef and he is left a broken man. Freya's siren-status is confirmed both by her isolated island home and her musical talent, as her piano-playing seems to control - or harmonise with - the waters:¹²

Freya would sit down to the piano and play fierce Wagner music in the flicker of blinding flashes, with thunderbolts falling all round, enough to make your hair stand on end; and Jasper would remain stock still on the verandah, adoring the back view of her supple, swaying figure, the miraculous sheen of her fair head, the rapid hands on the keys, the white nape of her neck - while the brig, down at the point there, surged at her cables within a hundred yards of nasty, shiny, black rock-heads. (152)

However, the brig's dangerous position makes her behaviour ambiguous, suggesting both a dance with, and an attack on, the ship. The narrator implies the former, wondering whether she was born at sea and admiring her abilities as a sailor. Moreover, Jasper's attachment is intricately bound up in his love for the brig, resulting in a fusion of female influences: 'His feelings for the brig and for the girl were as indissolubly united in his heart as you may fuse two precious metals together in one crucible. And the flame was pretty hot, I can assure you' (158). Yet the narrator, glad not to feel this flame, recognises the dangers inherent in over-romanticising this bond, as the 'flame' indicates an elemental challenge to the sea. Indeed, the narrator seems to function as a Greek tragic Chorus, constantly warning Freya against Jasper's impulsive, unstable and overconfident nature:

"I don't think Jasper will ever get sobered down till he has carried you off from this island. You don't see him when he is away from

¹² In 'The Shadow-Line' the siren in the captain's photograph holds a violin. The narrator even speculates whether music (siren-song) is 'the secret of her sortilege' (59).

you, as I do. He's in a state of perpetual elation which almost frightens me."

At this she smiled again, and then looked serious. For it could not be unpleasant to her to be told of her power, and she had some sense of her responsibility. (162-3)

On the other hand, Freya herself is not blameless, since her feelings for Jasper have disrupted her own relationship with the sea. In one telling scene, she pretends to punish him for leaving the brig too close to shore by refusing to meet him for an hour, but succumbs after ten minutes, apparently sharing his complacency. Together they become too careless, disregarding or ignoring their precarious position, opposed by her father, defying the castration threat later embodied in the Dutch captain (who has the support of her father), and surrounded by the volatile, jealous, maternal waters.

Whereas Alice is restrained by her courtyard and guardian (possibly for the other characters' safety), Freya has no instructive female influence and is thus free to exert her influence on the men who visit her father, Nielson. Nonetheless, she is unconscious of her influence and unprepared for the devastating consequences that follow her taunting of the jealous Van Heemskirk. Her violent piano-playing, with its distinctly sensual overtones of Wagnerian rapture and fulfilment, represents an instinctual - even primal - moment of madness: 'She was excited, she tingled all over, she had tasted blood!' (205). The power of the siren-song seems to overwhelm even her as her father's voice is 'nearly drowned by the piano' (206). She also comes to regret her impulsiveness: 'she bowed her fair head, feeling a sudden discontent, a nervous lassitude, as though she had passed through some exhausting crisis' (207). Van Heemskirk wrecks the brig in spite and revenge, using the sea as a weapon, destroying the lovers' hopes so drastically that, like the narrator of 'A Smile', Jaspas becomes

estranged from the sea, unable to live up to Freya's or his own ideals. Paradoxically, Freya too declines, her fatal pneumonia even seeming a punishment for her abuse of power, as she mournfully tells her father: 'Draw the curtain, papa. Shut the sea out. It reproaches me with my folly' (238). Finally, the narrator's sympathies lie with the tragic, unwittingly powerful Freya, who, whatever her culpability, is finally destroyed by the petty jealousies of the men around her: 'vanquished in her struggle with three men's absurdities [...] coming at last to doubt her own self' (238). The narrator's sadness represents the final stage in a cycle as the relationship between man, woman and sea gradually develops from defiance and counter-attack to resentment, guilt, alienation and regret. As Jaspas finally watches his brig being towed away, his indistinguishable dependence on the vessel and on Freya emphasises his ineffectiveness: the brig,

his cherished possession, animated by something of his Freya's soul, [is] the only foothold of two lives on the wide earth, the security of his passion, the companion of adventure, the power to snatch the calm, adorable Freya to his breast, and carry her off to the end of the world. (218)

In his arrogant, unthinking desire to possess both ship and girl, Jaspas destroys both.

A longer study of disruption can be found in the notoriously problematic *The Rescue* (1920). Conrad's involvement with this novel lasted even longer than his time at sea, as he returned to it intermittently between 1896 and 1919. Like most of his sea stories, it opens with a display of fidelity to the ship, the *Lightning*, by the young captain Tom Lingard, in his third, though chronologically first, appearance:

To him she was as full of life as the great world [...] To him she was always precious - like old love; always desirable - like a strange

woman; always tender - like a mother; always faithful - like the favourite daughter of a man's heart. (10)

The *Lightning* seems to embody all of Conrad's female spectres at once, indicating a balance of possessiveness and dependence. Yet Lingard's unexpected run-in with some European travellers, whose yacht is stranded upon a mud bank, causes a rift in his fidelity. In particular, he is drawn to Edith Travers, the neglected wife of a small-minded diplomat, towards whom he feels an instinctive sense of sympathy and kinship, to the extent that he tells her of his secret obligation to help restore the exiled Hassim to power in Borneo. After Travers and his friend D'Alcacer are kidnapped by pirates, however, Lingard is forced to choose not only between his ship and the woman, but between his old Malay friends and the new Europeans. His failed attempts to resolve both situations - as he temporarily abandons his ship to effect a rescue and delay his obligations to Hassim - are juxtaposed with the actions of his first mate Carter: 'The fellow had acted like a seaman' (329). Although Edith watches his internal conflict with pity - 'she was worn out with watching the passionate conflict within the man who was both so desperately reckless and so rigidly restrained in the very ardour of his heart and the greatness of his soul' (282) - she ruins Lingard to save her husband, failing to deliver the ring entrusted to her - a sign that Hassim and his sister Immada have been captured, as well as a symbol of marriage - and finally throws it into the sea. Once again, the siren overthrows the sailor. Tom's knowledge of culpability in having failed to save his Malay friends, combined with his bitter refusal to allow Edith the blame, evokes a bleak sense of estrangement from the sea and his vessel, as he explains: 'Mrs. Travers, do you see that I am nothing now. Just nothing' (328). Tellingly, in 'later' appearances in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast*, Lingard remains a bachelor.

In Conrad's stories, sirens can leave the sailor, like the lover, irreparably heartbroken.

Femininity becomes a metaphor for all that disrupts a patriarchal attempt at dominance, while female characters emphasise the weakness and culpability of Conrad's 'heroes'. 'Petticoats' prove a necessary foil for male complacency. The sense of pervasive failure in these stories is also reminiscent of Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1834) in which confinement on land is a punishment, enforced by the siren-like 'Life-in-Death':

Her lips were red, her looks were free,

Her locks were yellow as gold:

Her skin was as white as leprosy,

The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,

Who thicks man's blood with cold. (73, lines 190-94)

Like the Ancient Mariner, the protagonist of 'Falk' cannot repress his tortured memories on his own; in 'A Smile', the narrator's resentment at having been tricked is finally outweighed by an awareness of his own cruelty; whilst in 'Freya', Jasper can only stare listlessly out to sea, his blood 'thickened' with cold. The latter two also resemble the later, land-bound Marlow of *Chance*: 'lingering on shore, [he] was to me an object of incredulous commiseration like a bird, which, secretly, should have lost its faith in the high virtue of flying' (34). The confident Marlow of the early stories appears, in this later novel, to have been damaged by his encounters with sirens such as the Intended - to whom he lies - and the African woman - from whom he flees - in 'Heart of Darkness'. Hence Conrad's admiration is reserved for less vocal characters, as for example the loyal seamen remembered and honoured in *A Mirror*, including an old captain who responds to his questions with 'a faint smile of pathetic indulgence':

This smile of the worthy descendant of the most ancient sea-folk whose audacity and hardihood had left no trace of greatness and glory upon the waters, completed the cycle of my initiation. There was an

infinite depth of hereditary wisdom in its pitying sadness. (*MS*: 147)

Since the sailor *can* survive the Oedipal tempest, neither the sea, ship, nor siren is to blame for his personal failures. As Singleton proclaims in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* - in words almost identical to those uttered by an 'elderly, respectable seaman' (131) in *The Mirror* - 'Ships are all right. It is the men in them!' (24).

In Pierre Loti's 1886 novel *Iceland Fishermen (Pêcheurs d'Islande)*, one of Conrad's own favourites, a misguided early promise of marriage to the sea by the arrogant sailor Yann dooms his later marriage to the tragic Gaud:

He never returned. One night in August, in the waters of sombre Iceland, amid a great fury of sound, his wedding with the sea had been celebrated. With the sea which formerly had also been his nurse; she it was who had rocked him, who had reared him tall and strong - and in the end she had taken him, in the glory of his manhood, for her own. (242)

Perhaps heeding this warning, Conrad appears actively to have avoided commitments at sea, demonstrating a restlessness that suggests either impulsiveness, fickleness or a fear of attachments. In consequence, his marriage in 1896 also signalled his retirement from the sea, arguably in an attempt to protect himself from Oedipal complications, although Jessie records that: 'The sea called with an insistent voice' (1935: 59). An array of Conrad's dramatised seamen also carries a warning about the incompatibility of marriage with life at sea. In 'Youth' Captain Beard, having briefly abandoned his ship to protect his wife, warns Marlow against family ties: 'A sailor has no business with a wife - I say. There I was, out of the ship. Well, no harm done this time' (9). Meanwhile in *Chance*, Anthony's marriage generates a flood of paranoia and resentment amongst his crew, particularly in the first mate Franklin, who reminisces to

Powell:

[Y]ou haven't known the ship as she used to be. She was more than a home to a man. She was not like any other ship; and Captain Anthony was not like any other master to sail with. Neither is she now. But before one never had a care in the world as to her - and as to him. (215)

Franklin seems afraid of the disruption in the relationship between man and ship. The latter, apparently, does not tolerate a rival (Anthony finally sinks with his ship). Conrad's persistent illnesses during his extended honeymoon in Brittany might then be interpreted as evidence of fear or guilt for having betrayed his first love. Yet his literary preoccupation with the sea and ship also indicates a continuing infatuation even after his marriage, an almost morbid fascination with female presences he was by then both in awe and afraid of. Conrad the sailor and Conrad the writer ultimately found themselves committed to very different allegiances. Accordingly, the next chapter analyses the disruptive and productive effects of marriage.

CHAPTER 5

'A WIFE MUST BE....'?

JESSIE, MARTHA AND THE MARRIAGE DEBATE

Great men belong to their creations [...] They become incomprehensible to the majority, which is composed, as we know, of the foolish, the envious, the ignorant, and the superficial. Do you now understand a woman's function in the life of one of these impressive, exceptional beings? A wife must be both what Lisbeth had been for five years and, in addition, give love, a humble, discreet love, always available, always smiling. (225)

In *Cousin Bette* (1846) Honoré de Balzac, one of Conrad's favourite novelists, asserts the necessity of a sensible marriage for the volatile artistic temperament. Lisbeth in this case is the eponymous Bette, a manipulative and vengeful poor relation of the Hulot family who rescues, supports and adores Wenceslas Steinbock, a Polish refugee sculptor. Her financial assistance and encouragement help to establish his early success and reputation, both of which are swiftly undermined by his treacherous marriage to her beautiful, spoilt second-cousin Hortense. In this vicious social satire, romance and the charms of an heiress damage and degrade the artist, causing idleness and complacency. Yet Bette too is possessive and demanding, overwhelming rather than inspiring affection. Hence Balzac's ironic recommendation of a selfless, supportive spouse, one willing to efface herself for her partner, provokes both pity for, and fear of, the rejected Bette, as well as condemnation of the dependent artist. Overall, the novel paints a decidedly bleak picture of marriage, in which both partners are disillusioned or compromised. Tellingly, Conrad's own problematic depictions of marriage - typically rife with miscommunications and misunderstandings - are closer to the cynical,

pessimistic French tradition of Balzac, Flaubert and Anatole France than to the English domestic dramas of Dickens or Trollope. As another Polish artist abroad, Conrad might also have found Balzac's 'suggestion' particularly pertinent, since he cautiously took his practical, middle-class, twenty-one-year-old typist Jessie Emmeline George as his wife when he was thirty-eight. Their marriage on 24 March 1896 baffles many critics, who regard Jessie as the spectre behind Conrad's (predominantly) negative fictional wives - Mrs Almayer, Joanna, Mrs Hervey, Amy Foster, Winnie Verloc, Mrs Fyne and Mrs Schomberg - comparing her either to the passive, character-less 'always available, always smiling' domestic drudge or to the controlling, thwarted 'type' represented by cousin Bette. In this chapter, I compare these negative perceptions of Jessie to those of Freud's wife Martha Bernays, as well as the ways in which the spectre of the wife has been incorporated into their husbands' writings. I also re-open and redress the question of Jessie's role in Conrad's life and works, adopting a predominantly biographical perspective to examine how far his fictional husbands' antagonism towards their wives represent attacks on, or sympathetic exposés of, domestic oppression. To begin with, however, I confront the most notorious of all Conrad's literary wives, the Clytemnestra-like figure to whom Jessie is so often and inevitably compared, the enigmatically silent Winnie Verloc.

- I -

The story most frequently held up as the prime, even clichéd, example of Conrad's alleged antipathy towards, and fear of the wife is *The Secret Agent*. Set in the underworld of London, Conrad combines domestic drama with political intrigue and detective fiction, investigating 'the very fabric of British home life' (Schneider 2003: 93) as well as its place in a wider political infrastructure, in this tale of a murderous wife and her unsuspecting husband. The housewife Winnie and the political double-agent

Verloc belong to different spheres, with their different priorities and perspectives, thereby hinting at an inherent conflict of interests. Their seven-year marriage is bolstered only by a superficial connection: 'It was a tacit accord, congenial to Mrs. Verloc's incuriosity and to Mr. Verloc's habits of mind, which were indolent and secret' (245). Indeed, the novel repeatedly warns against marriage, as for example through the Assistant Commissioner, who considers his own 'useful' marriage to have ruined his peace of mind: 'he took his long leave, and got married rather impulsively [...] It was an excellent match. But he did not like the work he had to do now' (99). The Assistant Commissioner is trapped both domestically - married to 'a woman devoured by all sorts of small selfishnesses, small envies, small jealousies' (112) - and politically, knowing that he cannot arrest Michaelis without estranging the lady patroness. Yet he understands his position as Verloc does not. A double agent twice over, Verloc attempts to live in both worlds as well as to work for both the English and Russian governments, ignoring explicit warnings by, for example, Mr. Vladimir: 'Anarchists don't marry. It's well known. They can't [...] you must have discredited yourself completely in your own world by your marriage' (36). Despite an earlier betrayal by a Frenchwoman, Verloc is arrogant and complacent, underestimating his wife, considering himself loved and in control: 'Mr. Verloc loved his wife as a wife should be loved - that is, maritally, with the regard one has for one's chief possession' (179). Thus he fails to appreciate the danger of bringing anarchist activities into the wife's domestic arena, introducing elements of explosive and violent surprise into an already potentially dangerous domestic situation. Ironically, Winnie even describes taking the butcher's knife (her own later weapon) from Stevie after he overhears the anarchists talking. Meanwhile, her repetition in Chapter 8 of Verloc's question at the end of Chapter 3 - 'Shall I put out the light now?' (60) - hints at the spousal violence and mutual destruction of *Othello*. The structure of surveillance suggested by the title

of the novel seems decidedly, and dangerously lacking in the marriage of the secret agent himself. Furthermore, Verloc's physical and spiritual stagnation makes him ultimately redundant to the plot, negating his role as the central protagonist and handing it to his wife. In the 'Author's Note', Conrad describes his novel as 'the story of Winnie Verloc' (xii), not of her effaced husband.

Paradoxically, for a novel supposed to articulate its author's fear of marriage, *The Secret Agent* focuses primarily on Winnie's enigmatic, abnormally closed mind, arguably indicating that Conrad used fiction to articulate and overcome his anxieties regarding Jessie's mindset (rather than to explore his own), as well as to understand and thus pre-empt the female psyche. Like Freud, therefore, Conrad emphasises the wife's psychology in relation to marriage, yet whereas he takes one extreme example, allowing the psychological consequences of the Verlocs' inappropriate pairing to unravel themselves violently, Freud adopts a more generalising, prescriptive, neutral approach. Identifying marriage as the societal ambition of a woman's life and warning against the consequent burden of expectation, particularly in those 'entered into when they [women] were most passionately in love', Freud suggests inevitable disillusionment: 'the attitude of love probably comes to grief from the disappointments that are unavoidable and from the accumulation of occasions for aggression' ('Female Sexuality', XXI: 234). In "'Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness' (1908), he particularly emphasises physical expectations, questioning monogamy and 'whether sexual intercourse in legal marriage can offer full compensation for the restrictions imposed before marriage' (IX: 194), restrictions he considers particularly limiting for women. Though neither of these statements seems particularly pertinent to Winnie, they do explicitly associate marriage with psychological instability in women. Indeed, Freud claims that when a bride is not satisfied (a situation he considers to be

widespread), her desire is channelled into either neurosis or sublimation. Countering the traditional notion of the wandering womb, he challenges the idea of marriage as a solution for female hysterics who,

when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of severe neuroses which permanently darken their lives. Under the cultural conditions of to-day, marriage has long ceased to be a panacea for the nervous troubles of women [...] (195)

In Freudian psychology, as in *The Secret Agent*, marriage is presented as less of a romantic alliance than a trigger for debilitating neurosis; a burden for the wife rather than the husband.

Contrary to Freud's overview, Winnie seems initially to accept her empty relationship with Verloc, the sterility of which is emphasised at the end of Chapter Three when, with 'all the placidity of an experienced wife', she gets 'into bed in a calm, businesslike manner which made him feel hopelessly lonely in the world' (57). Indeed, it is Verloc who appears most dissatisfied, repeatedly attempting to make small-talk as a clock ticks heavily in the background. The situation is echoed at the end of Chapter 8 as, once again retiring to bed, Verloc tries and fails to get his wife's attention. He is intimidated by her, restrained by 'love, timidity, and indolence' (180). Their physical separation evokes Freud's description of apparently inevitable estrangement:

After [...] three, four or five years, the marriage becomes a failure in so far as it has promised the satisfaction of sexual needs [...] Fear of the consequences of sexual intercourse first brings the married couple's physical affection to an end; and then, as a remoter result, it usually puts a stop as well to the mental sympathy between them, which should have been the successor to their original passionate

love. (“Civilized” Sexual Morality’, IX: 194)

However, from a Freudian perspective the Verlocs’ marriage appears quite reasonable, simplified as it is by the wife’s low emotional and physical expectations (she does not want a child who might supersede Stevie). Nonetheless, frequent references to Winnie’s ‘unfathomable reserve’ (6), her unquestioning placidity, and her ‘instinctive conviction that things don’t bear looking into very much’ (180), suggest that her apparent placidity conceals a deep-seated repression and neurotic detachment. In the very first chapter Conrad hints at Winnie’s practical rather than romantic decision to marry Verloc, emphasising the longstanding extent of her repression by identifying another, preferred yet impractical, suitor: ‘There had been a steady young fellow, only son of a butcher in the next street, helping his father in business, with whom Winnie had been walking out with obvious gusto’ (40). Notably, the word ‘gusto’ implies a suppressed element of sexual vitality. Thus, disappointed and dissatisfied even before her marriage to Verloc, Winnie seems to have early on sublimated her affection onto her brother Stevie,¹ repressing her feelings so completely as to confuse even her mother, whose ironic reflections underscore the pervasive atmosphere of emotional isolation: ‘She had never really understood why Winnie had married Mr Verloc. It was very sensible of her, and evidently had turned out for the best’ (40).

In ‘Femininity’, Freud examines potential reasons for a woman’s choice of spouse, including that ‘made in accordance with the narcissistic ideal of the man whom the girl had wished to become’ (XXII: 132), and the husband chosen ‘according to the paternal type’ (133). As Winnie’s choice is based on her desire to protect her younger brother

¹ In fact, Freud suggests that a woman’s capacity for sublimation is smaller than a man’s and limited to a suckling infant, not a growing child. Since Winnie’s affection remains focused on Stevie, Conrad evokes a stronger attachment, privileging women with more profound emotional responses.

(and surrogate son) Stevie, Verloc would seem to represent the 'paternal type'. Her proud reflection - 'Mr. Verloc was as much of a father as poor Stevie ever had in his life. She was aware also that it was her work' (187) - even represents the culmination of her marital ambition. Moreover, since Freud claims that in such cases the wife's feelings for her husband often equate to those for her mother rather than her father (the pre-Oedipal attachment eventually superseding the Oedipal), then Winnie's negative relationship with her mother, also tainted with misunderstanding and an unwarranted sense of betrayal (notably after her mother has left), compounds her later resentment of Verloc, who really does betray Stevie. On the other hand, Winnie's recollection of her father's abuse belies the notion of a 'paternal' choice, thereby casting *her* in the role of the masculine female (it is she who challenges her father) and Verloc, ironically, in that of her 'narcissistic ideal', that of a protector. Yet Winnie's feelings also occasionally border on the incestuous, as Stevie recalls ('when as a child he cowered in a dark corner scared, wretched, sore, and miserable with the black, black misery of the soul, his sister Winnie used to come along, and carry him off to bed with her' [167]), demonstrating her ability to transfer affection away from, and unbeknownst to, her husband. Stevie is her motivation and her consolation, 'connected with what there was of the salt of passion in her tasteless life' (174). Only conversations about him animate her in the bedroom, whilst one rare gesture of intimacy, a kiss on the back of Verloc's neck, is a ploy to persuade him of Stevie's usefulness. If Freud articulates the danger of high physical expectations in marriage, therefore, Conrad stresses the opposite, depicting the husband as a practical compromise, a potentially vulnerable, emasculated and unloved domestic interloper.

Verloc's main marital mistake lies in not understanding his wife or her expectations, in not recognising her as another 'secret agent'. In darkly humorous fashion Conrad hints

that it is his failing, not his fault: 'it was impossible for him to understand it without ceasing to be himself' (233). Psychologically limited, Verloc cannot conceive of the phenomenon of repression, let alone the danger of its sudden release. For Winnie, the news of Stevie's fatal accident, as he trips over a tree stump whilst carrying a detonator for Verloc, undermines her carefully constructed identity. Yet she is as much preoccupied with Verloc's betrayal of the terms - as she perceives them - of their marriage as with the news itself, resenting his complacent assumption of her continued attachment: 'He would want to keep her for nothing' (256). Stunned, she recognises herself as 'a free woman' (251), but, long repressed, does not know what to do with herself. Winnie is overwhelmed by the sudden tumult of emotion, placing her fingers on her forehead 'as though the skin had been a mask which she was ready to tear off violently' (212), symbolically attempting to renounce her identity as a wife. Verloc's complacency makes him blind to the 'writing on the wall' (240), heaping indiscretion upon insult as he magnanimously 'nourishe[s] no resentment' (236), though pointedly blaming her for 'shoving' (257) Stevie upon him and for sewing his name in his coat. Parodying Jane Austen's novel about marriage-choice, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Conrad mocks Verloc's underestimation of his wife: 'It is universally understood that, as if it were nothing more substantial than vapour floating in the sky, every emotion of a woman is bound to end in a shower' (241). The final insult arrives in his calling to Winnie in 'an accent of marital authority [...] intimately known to Mrs. Verloc as the note of wooing' (261-2). Winnie's stabbing thereby seems as much an attempt to liberate herself from the marriage-bond as an act of revenge. Obsessed by a fixed idea - that of Verloc's betrayal - she acts instinctively, primitively and psychotically, to relieve 'the pent-up agony of shrieks strangled in her throat, of tears dried up in her hot eyes, of the maddening and indignant rage at the atrocious part played by that man' (267). Significantly, Conrad mocks the insufficiency of analysis in this emergency scenario:

Anybody could have noted the subtle change on her features, in the stare of her eyes, giving her a new and startling expression; an expression seldom observed by competent persons under the conditions of leisure and security demanded for thorough analysis, but whose meaning could not be mistaken at a glance. (260-1)

Considering the consequences only after her attack, the non-introspective Winnie is finally 'compelled to look' (267), only to become obsessed with the threat of punishment: 'It came with a cruel burning pain into her head, as if the words "The drop given was fourteen feet" had been scratched on her brain with a hot needle' (268). Ironically, in escaping marital confinement, she becomes a fugitive, immediately relinquishing her newfound freedom. Finally, that she drowns, apparently jumping from the ferry *after* she has made her escape, tends to support Freud's association of marriage with devastating neurosis and irreparable psychosis.

As Winnie leaves her wedding-ring behind on her ferry chair, Conrad not only emphasises the centrality of marriage in the novel, but implies 'the formal closing of the transaction' (259), revealing his sympathy with the imprisoned, oppressed Edwardian wife. That Conrad allows her to stab her - far from blameless - husband *and* escape the authorities even seems a more dramatic literary gesture than Helen's slamming of her bedroom door in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), Isabel's flight from Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), or Tess's attack on Alec in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). By contrast, *The Secret Agent* is closer to a polemic, socially-oriented tale, boldly challenging the conditions that force Winnie to prostitute herself to protect her brother, whilst articulating a need for female roles outside the domestic sphere to minimise the potential for abuse and misunderstanding (Winnie is tricked, robbed and abandoned by Ossipon as soon as she leaves the house). In his 'Author's Note' of

1920, responding to criticism of the novel's 'ugly' subject matter, Conrad explicitly articulates a moral purpose: '[in] telling Winnie Verloc's story to its anarchistic end of utter desolation, madness and despair, and telling it as I have told it here, I have not intended to commit a gratuitous outrage on the feelings of mankind' (xv). Nonetheless, *The Secret Agent* is routinely considered less feminist than misogynistic, with many critics considering this controversial wife too basic a character to warrant extended attention, as in the cases of Batchelor, who claims that Conrad 'looks down on Winnie [...] from an intellectual and social height which seems neither to waver nor to cause him embarrassment' (1994: 154), and Stine, who argues that Conrad's 'misogynous treatment of Winnie [...] deprives this beleaguered outcast of any sympathy' (130). Unsurprisingly, too, numerous critics use this fictional wife as a stick to beat the real one, deliberately blending fiction and biography, and identifying a parallel between Winnie and Jessie Conrad that perpetuates the dislike and dismissal of both. Hence criticism urgently requires a revision of that most beleaguered of all Conrad's wives: his own.

- II -

Both Conrad and Freud are noticeably reticent regarding their marriages, lasting twenty-eight and fifty-three years respectively. In correspondence to friends, Conrad typically limits himself to a description of Jessie's health and sends her compliments, whilst Freud is even more restrained, as Jones notes: 'Everything points to a remarkable concealment in Freud's love life' (1953, 1: 137). On the other hand, several thousand of Freud's early love letters survive, whilst Conrad insisted that Jessie destroy all those he wrote during their courtship.² Thus we know more about Freud's mindset during his

² In an interesting parallel, Freud demanded that male correspondents with whom he fell out - such as

engagement than his actual marriage, and *vice versa* with Conrad, who appears to have been less assiduous with later letters. The surviving correspondence, however, belies their shared 'unromantic' stereotype. Conrad's are typically addressed to 'Chica' or 'Dearest Girl' (*CL6*: 238); a gallantry matched in Freud's letters to Martha with 'My precious, most beloved girl' and 'My sweet Marty' (*LSF*: 7, 22). Yet whereas Conrad playfully and submissively signs 'Your Most loving Boy' (*CL6*: 238), Freud takes a more dominant, demanding stance as 'your knight errant' and 'Your blissful lover' (*LSF*: 15, 17), evoking a chivalric romance, reinforced by the pet-name 'Princess' (Jones 1953, 1: 115). Whereas Conrad tempers sentiment with practicality, describing Jessie to Karol Zagórski as: 'a small, not at all striking-looking person (to tell the truth alas - rather plain!) who nevertheless is very dear to me' (*CL1*: 265), Freud adopts the opposite approach, determinedly romanticising his long engagement (during which Martha moved to Hamburg with her mother), and even priding himself on the challenge of financial adversity: 'we shall serve as a model for future generations of lovers, and only because we had the courage to get fond of each other without asking anyone's permission' (cited in Appignanesi and Forrester 1992: 37). Such a melodramatic stance denotes a craving for opposition and drama that evokes the romance of the Korzeniowskis, a model that Conrad seems deliberately to have avoided. Nonetheless, Conrad's correspondence implicitly reveals real affection for Jessie, persistent concerns for her health, and admiration of her bravery, as for example, in his telling Sir Sidney Colvin: 'I saw her just now creep painfully across the room and could have cried' (*CL6*: 74). Overall, his letters provoke the image of a somewhat detached, bemused yet playful family man - telling Maisie Gibbon: 'That woman Jessie is full of wiles [...]

there! She has boxed my ears. She's been looking over my shoulder' (CL4: 257) - grateful for his wife's patience and practicality, most obviously during their sons' illnesses:

Jessie is wholly admirable sharing herself between the two boys with the utmost serenity. She does everything for both. Borys who had been always so considerate is very exacting now. Nothing is right, good, or even possible unless his mother is there. (CL3: 416)

Finally, his dependence is emphasised by the romantic, as well as practical, tone of a letter written en route to America: 'I wish I could see and hear your voice. Thanks no end for the beautiful packing. I found everything to hand. You are a treasure! [...] Your own property' (cited in Jessie Conrad 1926: xii-xiii).

Neither Conrad nor Freud is presumed to have had much romantic experience prior to their marriages despite, in Conrad's case, at least one earlier dalliance. Correspondingly, both appear to have been reluctant to marry - although, in contrast to Conrad's year-long absence after meeting Jessie, Freud proposed after just two months and was involuntarily forced into a four-and-a-half-year engagement - exhibiting defensiveness, neurosis and even resentment; Freud admitting as much to his fiancée and Conrad warning Jessie that he had only a short while to live and did not want a family. Many biographers cling to the idea of Conrad's fundamental unsuitability for marriage, first articulated by Garnett: 'his ultra-nervous organization appeared to make matrimony extremely hazardous' (cited in Knowles and Moore 2000: 74). Indeed, Conrad's response to his friend's objections can hardly have been reassuring:

When once the truth is grasped that one's own personality is only a ridiculous and aimless masquerade of something hopelessly unknown the attainment of serenity is not very far off. Then there remains

nothing but the surrender to one's impulses, the fidelity to passing emotions which is perhaps a nearer approach to truth than any other philosophy of life. (CL1: 267-8)

Despite the vagueness of this uncharacteristic claim to spontaneity, the words express a sense of lack (of identity and stability), a need for grounding and an instinctive feeling of psychological compatibility with Jessie. Conversely, even her account of his proposal in *Joseph Conrad and his Circle* admits his panic, neurotic trepidation, 'gloomy determination' and brusque manner. She quotes: "Look here, my dear, we had better get married and out of this. Look at the weather. We will get married at once and get over to France. How soon can you be ready? In a week - a fortnight?" (1935: 12). Unembarrassed, Jessie even mentions the ironic, arguably psychosomatic epilogue to this unromantic event, when their outing was curtailed by an attack of food poisoning: 'I was desperately ill for days. Meanwhile no word or sign had come to me from my fellow-sufferer [...] Was this sudden illness a preliminary to our great adventure together?' (13). In fact, sudden illness proved a recurrent feature of their marriage, as Conrad was seasick on their honeymoon and succumbed almost immediately to prolonged fits of gout and malaria. Significantly, Freud claims that 'unhappy marriages and physical infirmity are the two things that most often supersede a neurosis' ('Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy' [1919], XVII: 163), identifying an inappropriate, even masochistic pairing as an unconscious form of self-punishment in the run-up to a breakdown (which Conrad experienced in 1910). Such a position lends weight to the arguments of Jessie's detractors, who tend to identify her as a symptom, or even as the underlying cause of Conrad's neurosis.

Whereas Conrad's hasty marriage indicates an impulsive, neurotic desire to be settled, Freud's swift proposal suggests possessiveness and suspicion, as indicated by the

jealous tone of his letters. He tells Martha that she must be like 'a guest in [her] family, like a jewel that I have pawned and that I am going to redeem as soon as I am rich', even adding obsessively: 'no matter how much they love you, I will not leave you to anyone, and no one deserves you; no one else's love compares with mine' (*LSF*: 23).³ Unsettlingly combining compliment and criticism, Freud's letters to Martha reveal a fear of not living up to expectations (both his own and hers), a desire to pre-empt any future regret and even a warning against change:

A part of the happiness Martha renounced in the hour of our engagement we will make up for later. My girl must promise to keep young and fresh as long as possible, and even after nine years to be so charmingly surprised by everything new and beautiful as she is now.
(*LSF*: 12)

On another occasion, he informed his bride that it was her duty to stay well and to love him. Meanwhile, a more threatening tone emerges in his criticism of her friendship with another man, Fritz Wahle: 'it would be a ghastly loss for us both if I were compelled to decide to love you as a dear girl, yet not as an equal' (*LSF*: 30). Freud's (oft repeated) claims of frankness and confidentiality cannot conceal a bullying tone, or a need for control, not unlike the symptoms of his own obsessive patients. Even Jones appears uncomfortable on this subject: 'He [...] admitted that it was boring if one could find nothing wrong in the other person to put right' (1953, 1: 136). It seems possible,

³ Like Conrad, he was particularly antagonistic towards his mother-in-law, whom he perceived as a threat. He even appears to justify his dislike in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) - an investigation of cultural and marital traditions in countries as diverse as Australia, Melanesia, Fiji, Sumatra and South Africa - in which the mother-in-law is identified as the familial relation towards whom there is 'the most widespread and strictest avoidance' (XIII: 12). He alleges that the mother-in-law can - through an over-identification with her daughter - actually fall in love with the husband: 'it very frequently happens that a mother-in-law is subject to an *impulse* to fall in love in this way' (*ibid*: 15). To be fair, however, he also accepts that the husband can become confused by her resemblance to the bride, and that the complex relationship with his own mother can complicate that with his in-law. According to Borys Conrad, meanwhile, Mrs George 'habitually wore an expression of disgust and disapproval' (13), so that Conrad was extremely reluctant to have her visit. On one occasion he even mistook her for a burglar and chased her around the house with a shotgun in the middle of the night.

however, that Freud was actually testing Martha and her emotional stability, a process implicitly suggested in “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality’, in which he ‘urgently advise[d ...] male patients not to marry any girl who has had nervous trouble before marriage’ (IX: 195). Ironically, Conrad appears to have unwittingly followed this advice, himself adopting the role of patient whilst Freud remained resolute in that of analyst.

Since biographers have naturally focused on the husbands in these partnerships, both marriages are typically regarded as unequal; the most common shared charge being that of the wife’s mental inferiority and incompatibility. Yet although criticism prefers to focus on friendships with more intellectual women - Conrad, for example, with Marguerite Poradowska, Constance Garnett and Ada Galsworthy; Freud with Martha’s sister Minna, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Joan Riviere and Princess Marie Bonaparte - their respective choices of Jessie and Martha point to the prioritising of other, more practical attributes in marriage. Indeed, since neither husband could be described as easy-going, Jessie and Martha must have been either incredibly passive or incredibly tolerant. Interestingly, Baines’s description of Jessie is markedly similar to, even interchangeable with, Breger’s of Martha:

She seems to have been a simple, straightforward girl, and her even temperament, good nature and competence - she was an excellent cook - provided Conrad with the emotional and material anchorage for which his mercurial nature yearned. But her mind was too undeveloped for her ever to be able to give Conrad full companionship and she could not prevent his cries of loneliness. (1960: 171)

Freud’s marriage provided him with a safe haven; he effaced Martha’s individuality and made her into the woman who attended to all his

outer needs. She was the mother of his large brood, efficient housekeeper-manager, and uncomplaining wife-companion. Still, his inner turmoil did not abate and, in fact, his anxiety, depression, and physical complaints got worse in the years after he was married.

(2000: 96)

However, unlike Martha, who took little interest in psychoanalysis, and effaced herself in the domestic sphere, Jessie proof-read and typed Conrad's manuscripts almost exclusively until his hiring of Lilian Hallows in 1904. Perhaps in consequence, many biographers consider Jessie too controlling and Martha too submissive, reserving active contempt for one and sympathy for the other.⁴ Whilst Martha is allowed to epitomise Freud's small, delicate, unobtrusive ideal of womanhood, Jessie is considered a convenient compromise.

Another noticeably sparse area of information concerns their sexual relations in marriage. In Conrad's case, his usual practice of writing late into the night suggests a practical barrier to intimacy, whilst in his literature, romantic plots are typically subverted by more sordid interests, as Schwarz writes: 'Conrad's idealisation of heterosexual love is undermined by his obsessive treatment of Victorian sexual taboos: miscegenation, incest, and adultery' (1980: 7). Conrad's inability to write conventionally about romance may even imply that the subject failed to excite him; a suggestion that casts an even more practical light on his marriage to Jessie. In contrast, Freud's interest in frigidity, 'which no tender efforts on the part of the husband can

⁴ In contrast to Jessie, little is known about Martha Freud. Her correspondence is kept in the restricted access Freud vault of Yale Library, whilst the very first biography of her life - *Martha Freud: Die Frau des Genies* - by Katja Behling was only published in November 2002 by Aufbau Taschenbuch, and is exclusively available in German. As Paul Ferris summarises: 'There is too little biographical information about her to indicate what exactly her character ran to, apart from her talent for household management and her deference to Sigmund' (99).

overcome' ('The Taboo of Virginitv' [1918], XI: 201), and repeated emphasis on the potential for female disappointment in marriage, hint at his own dissatisfaction. In describing male 'psychical impotence' he is particularly revealing:

There are only a very few educated people in whom the two currents of affection and sensuality have become properly fused; the man almost always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexual activity, and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object. ('On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love' [1912], XI: 185)

A man can only, apparently, be happy in love when he has 'surmounted his respect for women and have come to terms with the idea of incest with his mother and sister' (186). Unsurprisingly, Freud had extreme difficulty reconciling his idealised image of Martha with a sexualised version. Breger claims that he was 'terrified about what would happen if he gave way to [...] desire', but repressed this inner conflict, with the effect that he 'did not gain a vital and intimate partnership' (2000: 95). The eventual need for celibacy, enforced by a fear of pregnancy (Martha had six children in nine years), appears to have brought their physical relationship to an end (although Freud's awareness of contraceptive methods is evidenced by his prescriptions). Typically, Freud sublimated the sexual failure of his marriage into his writing, wondering whether the sexual instinct was actually incompatible with the possibility of satisfaction, and even arguing that the removal of prohibitions reduced the value of the desired object. In 'The Taboo of Virginitv' (which suggests several reasons for frigidity, including an inherent jealousy of men!), he further described the restrictions of civilization as necessary to prevent a collective indulgence in the pleasure principle, proposing an inherent and necessary conflict between egoistical and sexual demands.

Nonetheless, the Conrad marriage has been more comprehensively attacked, with Batchelor voicing a collective bewilderment: 'All commentators have legitimately asked how it was that this middle-aged Polish literary intellectual came to marry a simple upper-working-class London girl in her early twenties' (1994: 55). Suggestions have ranged from the desire for a free typist and housekeeper; a spontaneous impulse after the death of Tadeusz, his last close relative; a rebound reaction to rejection by Émilie Briquel (the very first mention of Conrad's engagement is in the last line of a letter to her mother); a desire to reinforce his new English identity; even pregnancy. Conrad is supposed either to have misunderstood the class system or - being alienated from his landed Polish background - to have felt a sense of social inferiority. The most unromantic notion of all is Karl's: 'With Conrad, it hardly seems a question of "love conquers all," but of a willful decision that he should marry, and Jessie was available' (1979: 352). If we follow suit in the search for ulterior marital motives, however, then arguably the most plausible explanation for Conrad's choice of bride is provided by Freud in 'Three Essays: III': 'A man, especially, looks for someone who can represent his picture of his mother, as it has dominated his mind from his earliest childhood' (VII: 228). Despite the repression demanded by the castration complex, a son seems unconsciously to seek out a mother-replacement; a role to which the wife readily conforms, thereby establishing a mutual emphasis on the maternal: 'a marriage is not made secure until the wife has succeeded in making her husband her child as well and in acting as a mother to him' ('Femininity', XXII: 133-4). The rumour that Conrad proposed to his older second cousin-in-law, the Polish-born exile (like Evelina) and authoress Marguerite Poradowska, certainly evokes an intense maternal craving. Yet the breakdown of their correspondence between 1895-1900 hints either at rejection or that Conrad became aware of his incestuous desire and redirected his attention onto the

younger, safer Jessie.⁵ Meyer identifies a desire to renounce the past and begin afresh, spurred on by literary success:

Conrad evidently strove to establish an exogamous "distance" between childhood attachments and adult sexual objects. In turning from her [Marguerite Poradowska], a considerably older woman into whose lap he had once begged to be placed, to a girl in her twenties, Conrad may also have been seeking to eliminate from his adult sexual life any hint of an attachment between a "mother" and "son." (1967: 115)

In marrying Jessie, however, Conrad was either deluded or hardly sincere in his resistance to the maternal. In her memoirs Jessie records his need for attention and her 'maternal feeling for that lonely man who had hardly known anything of a mother's care, and had no experience of any sort of home life' (1924: 8). Elsewhere, she writes: 'In a very short time all my maternal instincts were centred upon the man I was to marry, he became to me as much a son as a husband. And this state of accord lasted all our married life' (1935: 16). In a letter to Edmund Blunden as late as 1934, she further defended her maternal role: 'Many wives become mothers, especially to an artist' (*APIL*: 255). Consciously or not, Conrad chose to marry a mother-substitute; the fact of which both he and Jessie appear to have been aware.

This Freudian interpretation strengthens the case for critics who regard *The Secret Agent* as an expression of Conrad's resentment towards Jessie - inspired by the news of her second pregnancy - as her attention became increasingly divided between her

⁵ However, Conrad's letters fail to support any idea of rivalry between Marguerite and Jessie. Rather they suggest mutual affection: 'Jess has told me to send you an abundance of kisses' (*CL2*: 264), to the extent that Marguerite contributed financially to the education of Jessie's sisters.

husband and her 'real' children. Conrad's original claim that he did not want children might then be regarded in a new, more paranoid light, indicating a neurotic desire to keep Jessie's maternal attention exclusively to himself (Meyer identifies an 'apparent unappeasable yearning to be a mother's only child' [1967: 201]) and a fear of losing a second maternal figure. Stine cites an instance from 1906 when the intolerant father threw a package of John's clothes from a train, claiming that the 'action speaks [...] to Conrad's "secret" resentment toward his son' (1981: 125). This apparent fear of being replaced has elicited numerous comparisons of Jessie with the destructive wife-mother Winnie; making Conrad's wedding announcement to Zagórska somewhat ironic: 'I have to avow that my betrothed does not give the impression of being at all dangerous' (CL1: 265). Besides obvious superficial similarities - 'youth', a 'full, rounded form' and a 'clear complexion' (SA: 6) - Jessie shared Winnie's determinedly calm demeanour, as recorded by her first son Borys: 'Complete imperturbability and apparent lack of emotion under any circumstances, in spite of all almost constant pain and physical discomfort [...] This unassailable placidity was almost frightening at times' (18). In becoming a mother to Borys in 1898, therefore, Jessie might feasibly have inspired the character of Winnie, whose 'maternal vigilance' (10) for Stevie, the 'object of her quasi-maternal affection' (8), proves the overwhelming emotional force of her story.

That the husband in *The Secret Agent* does 'not understand either the nature or the whole extent of that sentiment' (233) hints at Conrad's own anxiety regarding the extent and possibly violent nature of Jessie's maternal attachment. Meyer also suggests fear of a potential Oedipal challenge from Borys (noting that at the moment of Verloc's stabbing, Winnie's appearance becomes almost identical to Stevie's), an idea reinforced by Jessie's claim that Conrad 'would allow no argument in his family circle' (1926: 17).

Finally, as a foreigner whose night-time writing labours kept him largely disassociated from his household, Conrad might actually have identified with Verloc. Whilst writing the novel he made an implicit comparison, evoking Verloc's defining characteristic as he condemned his unproductiveness in a letter to Galsworthy: 'Is it indolence, - which in my case would be nothing short of baseness, - or what?' (CL3: 328). That Verloc is eventually undone by his cowardly abuse of the paternal role seems to justify Conrad's paranoia even as it implies condemnation and self-reproach. For Conrad, therefore, the spectre of the mother inevitably encroaches upon, and becomes entangled with, that of the wife, undermining the stability of marriage and reawakening old insecurities in both his own and his characters' lives.

- III -

Conrad's male characters are markedly reluctant to marry, whilst those who do find that affection turns rapidly to antipathy. *An Outcast of the Islands*, *Lord Jim*, 'Heart of Darkness', 'A Smile of Fortune' and 'Freya of the Seven Isles' are all tales of broken promises, whilst actual marriages in *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast* (again), 'Amy Foster', 'The Return', *Nostramo*, *The Secret Agent*, *Chance* and *Victory* are marred by physical and psychological antagonism, estrangement and violence. It is noticeable too that none of Conrad's 'heroes' - Jim, Marlow, Razumov, Nostromo, Heyst, Peyrol - ever marries, this role being served by less sympathetic protagonists such as Almayer, Willems, Verloc and Anthony. Hence, whereas Freud attempts to minimise, even normalise, aggression in marriage - claiming that, like 'almost every intimate emotional relation between two people which lasts for some time - marriage [...] leaves a sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility, which only escapes perception as a result of repression' ('Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' [1921], XVIII: 101) - Conrad focuses upon the violent potentiality of marriage, articulating at the very start of

his career the possibility of antagonism and resentment between husband and wife. *Almayer's Folly* establishes a bleak precedent as marital misunderstanding and dislike breed mutual contempt and distrust: 'Almayer felt he was not safe with that woman in the house' (26). In the prequel/sequel *An Outcast of the Islands*, Conrad retraces another negative relationship in Willems' cynical commercial marriage to Joanna, building up to the husband's 'stunned' (27) recognition of his wife's contempt - 'this hate that had lived stealthily so near him for years' (27) - equal to his for her. Willems is shocked not merely by the bleakness of his marriage, but by his wife's ability to keep secrets, both of her hatred and the fact of her illegitimate parentage by Hudig.⁶ Deceived by his own superior opinion of himself, Willems recognises his entrapment and self-deception too late: 'he would have to drag that limp weight on and on through the darkness of a spoiled life' (24).⁷ Meanwhile, the cultural and racial differences between Almayer, Willems and their respective wives emphasise feelings of disorientation and confusion which heighten the possibilities of misunderstanding and secrecy. Notably, the majority of Conrad's husbands are foreigners in an alien world: Almayer and Willems are Dutch traders in the Malay Peninsula, Yanko Goorall is a shipwrecked Pole, Verloc is a French double-agent living in London, whilst Charles Gould and Schomberg - though the same nationality as their wives - both live abroad. None of these husbands ever returns to his homeland, so emphasizing the fact that marriage entails an irreparable break with the past. Thus the position of the husband as a 'foreigner' might represent a metaphor for a failure in communication between the sexes, with marriage serving as a new culture, in which Conrad's characters are once

⁶ That Joanna eventually returns to Willems, however, supports Freud's theory of the wife's inherent emotional instability, caused by the changeability of the girl's affections during the Oedipal period.

⁷ This quotation is frequently used to illustrate Conrad's fear of marriage, echoing a warning from his uncle Tadeusz in regard to Marguerite: 'A worn-out female [...] It would be a stone round your neck for you - and for her as well' (CPB: 148).

again outsiders.

Fortunately for Jessie, Mrs Almayer pre-dates her involvement with Conrad, saving the former from full responsibility as the spectre behind Conrad's negative wives. Unfortunately, neither does her arrival seem to have helped, as Conrad began *An Outcast of the Islands* around the time they met, and it was published, coincidentally, 'only a day or so before our wedding' (Jessie Conrad 1926: 103). Moreover, the first story written during their honeymoon in Brittany, 'The Idiots', immediately highlights Conrad's fear of the wife as a potential mother. In contrast to Conrad and Verloc, the husband of this story wants children, as Jean-Pierre marries Susan specifically to beget an heir for his farm. Hence the birth of four retarded children undermines their already insubstantial relationship, to the extent that Susan, fighting off his advances and simultaneously fuelled and scared by her position as a mother, stabs him with a pair of scissors. The situation evokes that described by Freud in 'On the Sexual Theories of Children' (1908): 'In many marriages the wife does in fact recoil from her husband's embraces, which bring her no pleasure, but the risk of a fresh pregnancy' (IX: 221). 'The Idiots' is thus the first of Conrad's stories to articulate the threat of rejection and emasculation (like Winnie, Susan stabs her husband with a Freudian phallic symbol) by a violent maternal wife who, contrary to male domestic expectations, asserts her own identity and wishes against her husband's.

Another dangerously maternal wife is the eponymous heroine of 'Amy Foster', originally entitled 'The Husband' (CL2: 330). The structure is almost identical to that of 'The Idiots' (and borrows from Maupassant), each beginning with a stranger-narrator who, noticing a character or characters on the road, is told their story by the driver of his cart. The stolid, non-introspective Amy has been inevitably compared to

Winnie and Jessie, although with her soft-hearted love for animals, and pity for the shipwrecked Yanko, she seems more akin to Stevie. Unlike Winnie, Amy displays no ulterior motive or repression in her marriage to Yanko, who defends her to the doctor-narrator (arguably implying that Conrad was aware of criticism of Jessie): 'tilting his head knowingly, he tapped his breastbone to indicate that she had a good heart: not hard, not fierce, open to compassion, charitable to the poor!' (*TOS*: 137). Nonetheless, marriage diminishes this husband, as the narrator records: 'To me he appeared to have grown less springy of step, heavier in body, less keen of eye. Imagination, no doubt; but it seems to me now as if the net of fate had been drawn closer round him already' (137). As in 'The Idiots', a child comes between them, their son Johnny; whose name is both an anglicised version of Yanko and that of Conrad's second son, born three years later. Once again, Conrad warns against the husband's dependency and the wife's potential metamorphosis into a mother as, when Yanko falls ill, she runs away to protect Johnny, abandoning the other to be discovered - too late - the next morning. The biographical basis of this story is evidenced, besides the obvious significance of Yanko's nationality, by Jessie's description of Conrad's illness during their honeymoon, as he too ranted deliriously in Polish, 'a habit he kept up every time any illness had him in its grip' (1935: 26). In 'Amy Foster' the paranoid Conrad even seems unhealthily to speculate upon whether Jessie, as a mother, might eventually change like Amy.

Ironically, the marriage story of which Conrad was most afraid, that of the 'cautious conspirators' (*TU*: 123), the Herveys, in 'The Return' (1898), contains no children, though it was written just after the news of Jessie's first pregnancy. Rather than addressing the wife as a mother, it examines a relationship in which a dissatisfied wife refuses to take even the first Freudian step, that of becoming a mother-figure to her spiritually indolent husband, let alone have children of her own. Conrad evokes a

discomforting atmosphere of betrayal, disillusionment and despair, one that seems to have filtered into his own life (or *vice versa*): 'I have a physical horror of that story. I simply won't look at it any more. It has embittered five months of my life. I hate it' (CL1: 386). Alvan Hervey's unexpected discovery of a letter from his wife stating that she is leaving him for another man undermines his arrogant self-confidence and triggers a re-evaluation of his ordered life. Thus her change of mind and defiant return lead not to reconciliation but to a stark confrontation in which he reveals a heavily repressed nature ('Self-restraint is everything in life, you know. It's happiness, it's dignity ... it's everything' [155]), a need to conform to bourgeois values, and a barely concealed misogyny: 'Do you care for no one's opinion - is there no restraining influence in the world for you - women?' (148). Mrs Hervey exposes the emotional emptiness of their marriage, demanding to know why he married her and denying his professions of love: 'You are deceiving yourself. You never loved me. You wanted a wife - some woman - any woman that would think, speak, and behave in a certain way - in a way you approved. You loved yourself' (177). Her challenge forces him to see her in a new light, simultaneously blinding and revealing ('[h]e felt the need not to see' [178]), as the glowing coals and multitude of candelabra illuminate her true identity. In turn, Alvan's desire to avoid scandal and be reconciled is undermined by insecurity: 'What did she think? [...] He must find out...And yet how could he get to know? She had been false to him, to that man, to herself; she was ready to be false - for him. Always false' (171-2). The wife's rebellious refusal either to repress her dissatisfaction or to sublimate it onto another (her resigned return admits the inevitability of her situation, in contrast to Freud, who suggests adultery as a solution) illustrates her capacity to undermine the husband's self and social identity by introducing him to the real domestic sphere, whilst also expressing 'the difficulties faced by a young woman of intelligence and drive limited to marriage as a means of expressing her self' (Nadelhaft 1991: 70). Conrad

combines sympathy for the dissatisfied wife, confronting the bleakness of a marriage entered into out of rebelliousness and curiosity instead of romance, and for the husband, unable now to trust either his wife or his own instincts. Envisioning the horror of a loveless marriage and the years of hypocrisy and loneliness ahead, Alvan desperately screams: 'Can you stand it?' (185). As both he and the reader know, her return already answers in the affirmative.

Conrad's ambition, 'to produce the effect of insincerity, of artificiality' in Alvan's dialogue, thence to make the reader 'shudder' (CL1: 387), implies a desire to challenge contemporary marital culture, as he articulates the psychological underestimation of the wife contemporaneously to Freud. As in *The Secret Agent*, the shock comes after several (five) years of marriage, in which '[the Herveys] skimmed over the surface of life hand in hand [...] disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound and unfrozen' (123). In a distinctly Freudian metaphor, Conrad warns against a dismissal of the pulsating instincts, or id, demonstrating the inevitable collapse of denial. Yet he was also uncertain about how to conclude this tale, possibly unsure of the husband's ability to change, thereby making Alvan's escape through a series of rooms - a Freudian dream symbol, attributed to Sachs (1914), for marriage (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, V: 354) - like a desperate gasping for air. The pervasive atmosphere of claustrophobia and entrapment, heightened by numerous references to doors, seems to overwhelm Conrad as well as Hervey, making the ending both ambiguous and unsatisfactory. The husband does not know how to respond to his wife's challenge and so hysterically chooses to flee in panic, possibly saving himself from the alternative suffered by Verloc and Jean-Pierre. This fascinating, if unsatisfactory short story might then be regarded as a best-case scenario, one lacking overt violence or insanity, but pervaded by alienation, mutual

loathing and regret.

Even so, it seems no coincidence that the character most often held up as the perfect model of Conradian wife and heroine is the first lady of Sulaco, the conspicuously childless Emilia Gould. Without a child to compromise her, Emilia represents the perfect model of a wife, everything Jessie was allegedly not: ladylike, beautiful, intelligent and discreet. Karl even champions her as the first distinguished Modernist 'wife', one who transcends her husband's failings:

[T]he first in a line of sensitive and feeling twentieth-century women who are the opposites of their materialistic husbands; she foreruns, for example, Mrs. Ramsay (*To the Lighthouse*), Lady Chatterley, Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Moore (*A Passage to India*), and Mrs Wilcox (*Howard's End*), without manifesting their non-intellectual smugness.

(1960: 158)

The orphan Emilia, uninterested in either wealth or position, apparently provides the moral centre of *Nostramo*, as Garnett wrote in the *Speaker* on 12 November 1904: 'she serves as the gleam of light against the sombre and threatening horizon' (cited in Cox 1981: 38). Yet her 'successful match' (72) with Charles Gould - based initially upon respect and equality as, in the first flush of romance, they decide together to restore his family honour, 'when the woman's instinct of devotion and the man's instinct of activity receive[d] from the strongest of illusions their most powerful impulse' (74) - is gradually unbalanced by his callous egocentrism. She watches his growing obsession with the mine helplessly: 'It had been an idea. She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight' (221). Not only do these words evoke Tadeusz's earlier description of Marguerite, casting the mine as a lover with whom Charles commits a 'subtle conjugal

infidelity' (365), but they represent the mine as Charles's 'growing' child, placing Emilia in the role of the excluded Conradian husband (ironically, many critics, such as Moser, admire Emilia precisely because her life follows a pattern of disillusionment similar to that of Conrad's male protagonists).⁸ Emilia in turn becomes a maternal figure to her husband, smoothing 'his cheek with a light touch, as if he were a little boy' (208). Indeed, without a real child to interfere, Charles is able to maintain an Oedipal fantasy of the wife as mother indefinitely, leaving her to sublimate her attentions elsewhere, onto the school and hospital. Thus Emilia represents an alternative to Conrad's disruptive wives, as she neither escapes nor emasculates, but is entrapped and neglected by her husband: 'wealthy beyond great dreams of wealth, considered, loved, respected, honoured', she is 'as solitary as any human being had ever been, perhaps, on this earth' (555), bitterly telling Giselle: 'I have been loved, too' (561). Emilia's unhappiness is set against Charles's intensifying megalomania and 'sentimental unfaithfulness' (245), as Conrad highlights their irreconcilable desires and reinforces an already negative portrait of marriage as an inevitable struggle for dominance and psychological survival.

Conversely, Emilia's uncomplaining immersion in stereotypically domestic, lady-like activities implies that she is *too* conventional and submissive. Despite periods of bitterness and despair, she rarely challenges or confronts her husband, preferring to give him ambiguously silent support. Her failure in this respect also allows Conrad to avoid any prolonged, intimate investigation of their marriage. Nonetheless, Charles's early compliment, 'The best of my feelings are in your keeping, my dear' (72), becomes

⁸ Decoud also describes Charles in a manner more typically used by Conrad's narrators to describe the idealising tendencies of women: 'He could not believe his own motives if he did not make them first a part of some fairy tale' (215).

horribly ironic as, whilst he becomes increasingly disassociated from his better feelings, she is left to suffer the shock of this division. Similarly, her early confident belief that 'no one could know her Charles - really know him for what he was but herself' (73) contributes to a later sense of weariness, as she is forced to know him too well. By plotting behind his back with Decoud, she also effectively concedes defeat by admitting her lack of influence. Nadelhaft, too, counters the commonly accepted notion that Conrad idealised Emilia (and by association Evelina, as several critics imply) by suggesting that his emphasis on her oppression might reflect an indirect defence of Jessie:

[O]ne might rather value Jessie Conrad's freedom from illusion, freedom from the compelling desire, so wearying to Emilia Gould, so briefly attained by Evelina Korzeniowska, to live out a relationship with a man founded on a joint and equal political and moral commitment to social and economic justice. (1991: 85-6)

Finally, Emilia is contrasted (and compared, as both leave Italy to follow their husbands) with another wife, the feisty Teresa Viola, whose emotional estrangement from her staunch Republican husband is emphasised by the difference in their ages, his early indifference to their daughters, and her interest in Nostromo. Indeed, Emilia's calm fortitude brings her closer to Winnie and her superficial, uninquiring nature. It is significant, therefore, that *Nostromo* immediately precedes *The Secret Agent* in the chronology of Conrad's writing, arguably suggesting that frustration with the husband in one novel was carried through to, and out on, the husband in the next. Winnie becomes the immediate successor to, perhaps even the result of, Emilia and her predicament.

Ultimately, Conrad appears hardly capable of envisaging a happy marital union. The

only safe marriages are those of sailors where the wife remains at a distance. There are, however, a few exceptions, such as 'Prince Roman', in which the Prince's marriage seems the end of a fairy-tale:

I could not know that he had been happy in the felicity of an ideal marriage uniting two young hearts, two great names and two great fortunes; happy with a happiness which, as in fairy tales, seemed destined to last for ever.... (TOH: 35)

Yet the narrative begins long after the fairy-tale has proved illusory, from the perspective of a boy who meets the aged, half-deaf Prince in his uncle's house. Through the uncle, he learns the real sad conclusion to the marriage, as the broken-hearted Prince loses his wife and young daughter within two years of marriage. For Conrad, marital happiness, though possible, is transitory and elusive (a fear that might explain his telling Jessie he had only a brief while to live). The case of Prince Roman also echoes that of the widowed Stein in *Lord Jim* and Whalley in 'The End of the Tether' (both of whom have daughters, reinforcing the Oedipal notion that marital happiness is incompatible with having a son), establishing another stock Conradian character, the lonely widower, possibly representing Conrad's own father. Indeed, the unlikely (despised) Russian setting of 'Prince Roman' suggests a re-telling of Conrad's parents' own romance in enforced exile. The love-story might be regarded as a tribute, as Prince Roman's 'glances, his bearing, his whole person expressed his absolute devotion to the woman of his choice, a devotion which she returned in her own frank and fascinating manner' (31). The boy-narrator would therefore represent Conrad himself, unable to understand his parents' suffering until years later, yet unwilling - as both his life and writing attest - to emulate their traumatic love story.

As with so much else, however, Conrad's attitude towards marriage changed around

1912. Although the examples in *Chance* are hardly idealised, the eccentric Mr Fyne appears content to be dominated by his overbearing wife, whilst Anthony happily marries Flora despite her treatment of him as a practical expedient. That a marriage actually takes place within this novel also marks a new direction for Conrad, whose nuptials typically occur before or after a story, or in flashback, as with the Goulds. Not only have the mutual recrimination and violence of the early stories receded, but the later novels further reinforce the husband's defeat. Yet neither are these later husbands more sympathetic than their earlier counterparts. One of the most unappealing examples, the brutish gossip-monger Schomberg of *Victory*, treats his wife like a slave, so that she, in turn, resembles a 'waxwork figure' (43), maintaining an uncanny passivity that recalls Winnie. Nonetheless, she proves capable of thwarting her husband, keeping secrets from, and even conspiring against him, as she helps Lena escape. The Schombergs might then represent a grotesque parody of reconciliation in marriage, in which one or both partners succumbs to suspicion and concealment in an attempt to maintain control. Consequently, it seems hardly surprising that Conrad wished to protect so many of his characters from marriage. Most famously, he changed the original plot of *Under Western Eyes*, as outlined in a letter to Galsworthy:

The psychological developments leading to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin, to his confession of the fact to his wife and to the death of these people (brought about mainly by the resemblance of their child to the late Haldin) form the real subject of the story. (CL4: 9)

In altering his plans, Conrad rescued Natalia from Razumov (or *vice versa*, since they were to have a son). Moreover, the almost-bride is a recurrent character, as for example in the case of Antonia and Linda in *Nostramo*, Freya in 'Freya of the Seven Isles', and most famously of all, in the Miss Havisham-like figure of the Intended in 'Heart of Darkness'. These intimidating women overwhelm their suitors, inspiring

feelings of deficiency, admiration and fear. Indeed, in depicting marriage, Conrad was himself divided between these responses, identifying with the husband and his Oedipal desire for, and fear of, the wife-as-mother, yet simultaneously empathising with the oppressed wife. In discussing his own marriage and the extent to which he regretted his decision, however, it seems only fair to examine the other side of the story, that provided by Jessie.

- IV -

Jessie Conrad has attracted a disproportionate amount of personal criticism, a trend started by her husband's own friends and contemporaries. Virginia Woolf famously described her as 'a lump of a wife' (1978: 49), whilst Lady Ottoline Morrell dismissively claimed:

She seemed a nice and good-looking fat creature, an excellent cook, as Henry James said, and was indeed a good and reposeful mattress for this hyper-sensitive, nerve-wrecked man, who did not ask from his wife high intelligence, only an assuagement of life's vibrations. (1963: 241)

In a letter to Cunninghame Graham, Garnett was particularly vicious:

Jessie ought to have been the manageress of a fourth-rate hotel or home for Barmails. I knew that from the first & Conrad having no knowledge of the social shades of Englishwomen & wanting a Housekeeper has had to pay at long last, for his experiment. (Cited in Meyers 1991: 135-6)

Ironically, Jessie appears to have been largely ignorant of these opinions, feeling universally accepted: 'One of the most satisfactory memories of the past is that all his friends accepted me on indisputable terms [...] I never had the slightest doubt about the

sincerity of their feelings towards me' (1926: 44). Only after Conrad's death and the publication of her second memoir (not read and approved by him) did such long-restrained dislike become apparent. Garnett's was evident in his criticism:

I think it the most detestable book ever written by a wife about her husband. You have exposed Conrad & yourself to ridicule by your petty vindictiveness [...] In publishing this detestable book you have betrayed Conrad's trust in you. I judge that no friend of his will wish to see you again. (*APIL*: 256)

His words even demonstrate relief at finding an excuse to reject her. Rather than apologising or grovelling, however, Jessie's response was self-assertive and distinctly catty: 'I can claim to have been a complete success as *his* wife, a task that many more intelligent and better educated wives have been unable to accomplish in their married life' (*APIL*: 257).⁹ Although proudly reinforcing her position as '*his* wife', Jessie implicitly admits a sense of competition with Conrad's friends and their 'better educated' spouses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the majority of them deserted her, with the exceptions of Richard Curle and Joseph Retinger, who provides a rare defence in describing her as: 'without exception the best and most perfect woman I have ever had the good fortune to know' (1941: 58).

Recent criticism has maintained a tradition of siding against Jessie, even becoming increasingly personal. The continuous pain of a knee injury dating back to her childhood, aggravated by a fall in 1904 that required numerous, largely unsuccessful operations, has, for example, met with an alarming lack of sympathy, expressed most offensively by Meyers:

⁹ This may also be a dig at Garnett, who kept his mistress (Nelly Heath) in London and his wife in the country.

Jessie compensated for her immobility and pain with quantities of rich cakes, numerous boxes of chocolates and bottles of liquor, and her heavy drinking sometimes led to embarrassing scenes. As she became increasingly heavy, her features, like raisins in a pudding, seemed to sink into her pudgy face. (1991: 212)

Noting that she visited a doctor for heart palpitations shortly before her accident, the psychoanalytic critic Meyer even wonders whether 'the fall in the street which ushered in her chronic invalidism was unconsciously motivated' (1967: 187n), a defence mechanism, along with overeating, against the dislike of Conrad's friends. Her psychological decline after Conrad's death has also been used as evidence against her: widowed by the age of fifty-one and neglected by former companions, she drank and gambled heavily, caused family disputes by selling Conrad's manuscripts and demanded recognition by writing indignant letters to the newspapers. Katherine Clemens, a visitor in 1930, remembers the 'vein of disappointment and half-restrained bitterness [that] ran through her conversation' (cited in Walt 1976: 259). Yet this pitiful portrait of a broken woman has been considered justification enough for a complete dismissal of her writing, with the result that her memoirs are allowed only slightly more relevance than her cookery books. Leo Gurko claims that her works 'tell us little about Conrad and even less about herself' (1965: 78); and nearly every critic echoes Nadjer in questioning her accuracy: 'the whole of her book [*JCAHC*], abounds in dramatic and grotesque incidents, and since she contradicts herself it is all the more difficult to accept her recollections as trustworthy' (1983 [*JCC*]: 192-3). Meyer even claims that her writing contains

a sufficient wealth of uncomplimentary innuendos and reports to raise the suspicion that she used her books on Conrad as a means of discharging a generous supply of resentment and anger [...] her

books reflect her feeling of having been exploited. (1967: 187n)

Certainly Jessie's three memoirs of Conrad are unreliable, prone to contradiction, repetition, self-justification and self-promotion (in particular an unfortunate tendency to laud her 'overdeveloped sense of humour' [1935: 47]), yet criticism's preoccupation with petty inaccuracies unjustly excludes her personal perspective, revealing its own prejudices alongside her own.

The critical mauling of Jessie's memoirs also suggests a gesture of solidarity with Conrad's professed dislike of her writing; although this animus appears to have been motivated less by her independence than by her desire to write about him. In fact, Conrad encouraged her domestic guidebooks, championing the genre in a specially written introduction to *A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House* (1923): 'Its object can conceivably be no other than to increase the happiness of mankind' (*LE*: 146). This somewhat hyperbolic, ironic addition seems nonetheless to be a sincere tribute to Jessie: 'I come forward modestly but gratefully as a Living Example of her practice' (*ibid*), and her practicality: 'We owe much to the fruitful meditations of our sages, but a sane view of life is, after all, elaborated mainly in the kitchen' (147-8). Regarding her memoirs, however, he was less kind, as Jessie herself admitted, recalling a need for secrecy and a fear of his locking away her writing:

I think the days when I had been guilty of writing were the only ones when we were both acutely conscious that there was something hidden between us. I must have betrayed myself by a feeling of exultation I always found it so difficult to hide. (1926: 147-8)

This admission casts new light on secretive wives in Conrad's fiction, hinting at anxiety

regarding the spouse's ability to reveal intimate details.¹⁰ Still Jessie attempts to defend herself, asserting her identity against his and revealing a poignant, if vaguely melodramatic, desire for self-expression. She offers a variety of excuses for her writing, including the desire to defend Conrad - telling Edmund Blunden in 1934 that: 'I have been a good deal distressed by the unnecessary efforts that have been made by one or two men, who in spite of a long personal acquaintance, persist in presenting to the world an almost unique monster' (*APIL*: 255)¹¹ - and to re-inspire the reading public: 'The success of this book will certainly revive the works of the man who inspires these pages' (1935: 278). In protesting so much, however, Jessie eventually undermines her own assertions, revealing an extreme sense of defensiveness and resentment.

In contrast to the violent domestic arenas of her husband's novels, Jessie's writing revolves firmly around a happy, eccentric family sphere. She is particularly emphatic regarding the stability of her marriage:

By no stretch of imagination could either of us picture some other person as our life partners. We were as much one as a single person. I can claim the most intimate acquaintance with that complex mind of any person who knew him and he would declare that he knew me through and through - with just one little reservation, but what that was he would never tell me. (1935: 230)

The admission of 'one little reservation', however, recalls Conrad's caution regarding the domestic sphere, unintentionally contradicting her claim of an 'intimate acquaintance'. Nevertheless, Jessie determinedly casts herself as Conrad's closest

¹⁰ This fear might have been realised by Jessie's concealment of Borys's marriage to Joan King, which she discovered in May 1923 and hid from Conrad until he returned from America a month later.

¹¹ 'One or two men' likely referring to Ford Madox Ford, H.G. Wells and Arthur Symons.

companion, unveiling a strong sense of possessiveness in the long list of pet-names in *Joseph Conrad and his Circle* alone: 'my husband', 'my strange husband', 'my charge', 'my lord and master', 'my unusual man', 'my property', 'my dear ostrich' (1935: 36, 42, 45, 47, 57, 77, 114). She also humorously reveals strange, as well as negative, characteristics about Conrad the husband, such as his childish petulance, his intolerance - for example, in the 'look of disgust that my crutches always brought forth' (224) -, an impractical desire to be always moving house, 'a habit of doing the very thing you would - quite reasonably - wish him not to do' (188), and 'a curious habit of annexing anything that was given to me personally, to his own use, if anyhow possible' (154). As a result, Jessie's memoirs have been condemned as self-serving attempts to promote her personal interests at the cost of Conrad's reputation. After all, by misjudging her audience and their respect for Conrad, Jessie effectively sabotaged her own chances of critical acceptance.

Despite her indiscretions, exaggerations and extravagances, however, Jessie's memoirs are not wildly fictional. She provides a balance to the portrait of the intense, isolated neurotic that is corroborated by Retinger, who describes Conrad's 'at times unmanageable [...] behaviour towards her' (1941: 61), and the affectionate memoirs of her sons. From a practical perspective, meanwhile, Jessie proved an invaluable asset as both typist and proof-reader, a role Conrad satirises in *Under Western Eyes*. Though often interpreted as a caricature of Tolstoy, Peter Ivanovitch seems additionally to represent a negative self-portrait as he abuses his long-suffering typist Tekla, forcing her to work long hours in the cold and to sit motionlessly facing the wall. Tekla describes the process to Natalia: 'He can walk up and down his rooms for hours. I used to get so stiff and numb that I was afraid I would lose my balance and fall off the

chair all at once' (105).¹² Jessie's involvement in the writing-process was such that she even referred to Conrad's manuscripts as 'so many children' (1926: 100) and - in a largely unappreciated gesture - protected them from his destructive tempers: 'All my married life I tried to protect the manuscripts against the consequences of his contemptuous indifference' (36). The loyal Retinger aptly summarises her contribution to literature: 'A man of [Conrad's] nervous temperament, his irritability, his lack of practical sense, would never have been able to produce the work he did had it not been for the devoted co-operation of his wife and her constant maternal care of him' (1941: 42). Jones agrees: 'Biographers have been swift to cast Jessie in a pejorative role in relation to Conrad's creativity. But they never really address the issue of what might have become of him *without* her' (1999: 33). Finally, the sentiment echoes Jessie's own in her rebuttal to the disapproving Garnett: 'He has made his mark, and made it my dear Edward with no *inconsiderable* help from me' (*APIL*: 257).

Nonetheless, criticism has chosen to stress the negative side of Jessie's literary assistance. Most alarmingly, she is accused of bowdlerizing and even editing Conrad's manuscripts, the most significant example being her likely tampering with the character of Alice's guardian - who keeps the hero away from younger, prettier women - in 'A Smile of Fortune', omitting passages that she thought to reflect negatively upon herself.¹³ Marion Michael and Wilkes Berry investigate the extent of Jessie's interference in 'Heart of Darkness', showing - in her defence - that she left spaces where instructed and that Conrad himself went over and re-corrected her proofs. They

¹² However, Lilian Hallows - with her 'ability to sit quite silent and motionless in front of her machine, hands resting tranquilly in her lap, for long periods' (Borys Conrad: 14) - also takes some credit as Conrad's secretary during the writing of this particular novel.

¹³ However, since the published text describes this character as having a 'cylindrical' figure, a 'face like a large wrinkled lemon' and 'beady eyes' (45), the original must have been truly offensive.

also note the faultiness of Jessie's typewriter, with its broken exclamation-point key (which forced her to use periods), and which

was evidently not equipped with any kind of margin release [...] because she could not accurately judge line spacing, she frequently omitted letters from words typed at the end of a line or failed to type a hyphen for end-line word division. (1980: 151-2)

Other corrections, however, have a more ambiguous status as, 'at several points, because of faulty typing or the inability to decipher a word, Jessie Conrad created in the typescript new substantives which changed Conrad's meaning' (151). In some cases, her influence was permanent, as Conrad occasionally missed her alterations, leading him to make 'substantive revisions that he otherwise would not have made' (*ibid*). Other changes occasionally led to a second revision, as Conrad re-corrected Jessie's changes with some new variation, often 'losing the more poignant and [...] textually sound holograph reading' (*ibid*). Thus, although the majority of her 'mistakes' seem accidental and impulsive rather than contrived, Jessie appears once again to interfere with, and to impart her authority upon, Conrad and his writing.

Jessie's harshest critic, however, was also her main rival for the role of Conrad's chief collaborator and biographer, the writer Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939). She admits the mutual antipathy between herself and the 'condescending' and 'supercilious' (1935: 114) author, the only family friend she explicitly criticises in her memoirs, even accusing him of taking too much credit in his three collaborations with Conrad, *Romance* (1903), *The Inheritors* (1901) and *The Nature of a Crime* (1909); although, ironically, since all three were critical and commercial failures, Ford's reviews in relation to Conrad were almost as bad as her own. Ford himself omitted her completely from *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (1924), an erasure that appears to have influenced later

biographers. In response, Jessie wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement*, asking 'to correct a few of the most fantastic statements regarding my husband made in Ford Madox Hueffer's book' (*APIL*: 250). Ford's fictional collaborations with Conrad, meanwhile, revolved chiefly around beautiful women - Seraphina *et al* - arguably suggesting that Ford (who engaged in numerous extra-marital liaisons and whose domestic position with a young disabled wife was markedly similar to Conrad's) encouraged him to look beyond Jessie. Meanwhile, as a kindred spirit, Ford proved a rival in more than just literature. Meyer gleefully describes Conrad and Ford's 'literary and spiritual collaboration' as 'a far more rewarding emotional experience than were certain aspects of their respective marriages' (1967: 201). Jessie and Ford's struggle for dominance is further illustrated by their dispute over the origins of 'Amy Foster', as Ford claimed to have provided the model in *The Cinque Ports* (1900), and Jessie insisted that it was based on a former servant. In either case, Conrad explicitly acknowledged Ford's influence on another marriage tale, *The Secret Agent*, effectively admitting that at least one of the two key stories generally considered to reflect his fear of Jessie was encouraged by her rival.

If Conrad and Ford's relationship was based partially upon a desire to escape the domestic sphere, it seems ironic that other women were to prove the catalyst for their estrangement. Elsie Ford's somewhat misplaced attack on Conrad after the discovery of her husband's liaison with the journalist Violet Hunt contributed to a sense of affront and perhaps disappointment, as Conrad wrote to Pinker: 'She upset my wife and spoiled my day for me completely' (*CL4*: 266). The scandal that arose from Elsie's legal demand for recognition as Mrs Hueffer after Violet misappropriated the title appears to have aggravated Conrad's conservative disapproval, whilst Ford's criticism of the '[r]agged condition' (*ibid*: 263) of his submission to the *English Review* may

have proved the last straw. Explicit complaints, however, were reserved for other correspondents, for example Pinker:

His conduct is *impossible* [...] A fierce and exasperated vanity is hidden under his calm manner which misleads people [...] In short he has quarrelled with every decent friend he had; has nearly made mischief between me and some of my best friends, and is, from all accounts, having a most miserable time himself [...] (*Ibid*: 265-6)

Whether jealous or simply desirous to avoid scandal, Conrad avoided Ford for almost two years, an action that cast him, for once, in a similar light to the notoriously hard-hearted Freud.¹⁴

The immediate result of estrangement was Ford's satirical *roman à clef*, *The Simple Life Limited* (1911), published under the pseudonym Daniel Chaucer. In it, Ford portrayed Conrad - renamed Simon Bransdon, an anglicised version of Simeon Brandetski - as indolent, irascible and obese, 'physically one of the laziest men that ever breathed' (73), who takes up writing largely as an excuse to sit down. A particularly personal jibe finds expression in the claim: 'He wrote lazy articles for the monthly reviews' (75). Bransdon's relationships with women are similarly marked by a sordid laziness:

He lived, as a rule, in surroundings of squalor and gloom, but at times his natural desire for gilding and flashiness overcame him, and he would spend a week at the most modern hotel he could find in Brighton with a female companion. He cared, however, comparatively little for women. (75-6)

¹⁴ Generally speaking, however, and with the notable exceptions of Ford and Norman Douglas (who was arrested in 1916 for indecent assault upon a young boy), Conrad was a loyal, life-long friend.

Jessie makes a thinly disguised entrance as a secretary who, '[Bransdon's] habit of writing late into the night and lying on his back conducing to it, [...] became in course of time his mistress' (76). Their marriage is a shotgun affair (fuel to Jessie's critics), forced upon them by the secretary's outraged family. Ford gives full rein to his snobbish attitude towards Jessie, as he describes her counterpart's lack of character and class ('[she] never had any spirit to call her own. She sighed for the days when they had lived in the dark and untidy Bloomsbury lodgings' [83]) and mocks her standards: 'She missed - how extremely she missed! - the chance to push into one of the cheap drapers in Oxford Street and to buy a soiled blouse [...] when the remnant sales were on' (84). Furthermore, he dispatches her early on in the novel when, overhearing a revolutionary speech about liberty, she runs away and develops lung disease. Bransdon's lack of interest in either her abandonment or her passing ultimately seems the harshest critique of the Conrads' marriage. Despite such vitriolic sarcasm, however, the effect of the novel upon the Conrads remains unknown since, making little impression upon the press or public, it is far from certain that the intended victims ever actually read it.

Although Jessie won the struggle (albeit largely by default) with Ford, the Conrads' marriage, like the Freuds', was far from perfect. A biographical emphasis on the husbands has obscured the fact that marriage proved somewhat detrimental to the health of the wives: Jessie drinking heavily (perhaps due to feelings of neglect), Martha displaying neuroses of her own, such as preoccupations with hygiene, order and time-keeping (likely brought on by the strain of repeated childbirths). Moreover, whilst Conrad is alleged to have begun an extra-marital affair in 1916 with the American journalist Jane Anderson - an allegation that finds partial support in Jessie's claim: 'our

fair American friend had been amusing herself at my expense' (1935: 207)¹⁵ - Freud is presumed to have channelled his energies into writing, as well as intellectual relationships with Anna and her friends. Jones even described him as 'quite peculiarly monogamous' (1955, 2: 469). Both men escape largely unscathed from biographical trawls for scandal, maintaining their shared image of respectable Edwardian gentlemen. Conrad and Freud, therefore, appear to have made 'safe' marriages, successfully avoiding the fearful wife-mother-spectre. Accordingly, and despite critical scepticism, it seems fitting to conclude with Conrad's own dedication, 'To My Wife', from the beginning of *Youth*, and its accompanying quotation, derived from *Grimm's Tales*:

...but the dwarf answered:

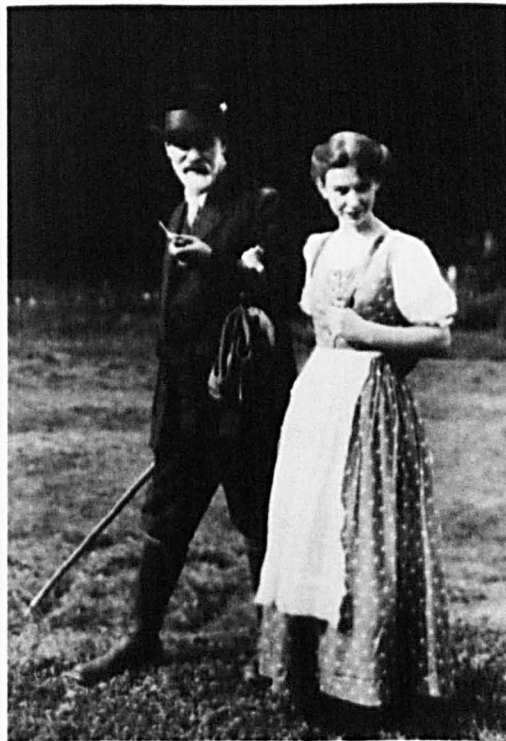
'No, something human is dearer

to me than the wealth of the world.

¹⁵ Although Jane is one of Jessie's champions, describing her to a friend, Kitty Crawford, as 'one of the great women of this earth [... she] is always smiling. I loved her then. The spell of Conrad's genius lives in that house but the soul of Jessie Conrad lies behind that genius' (cited in Meyers 1991: 301).



From top: Sigmund Freud and Freud with his mother Amalia.



From top: Martha Bernays and Freud with his daughter Anna.

CHAPTER 6

**'HE THOUGHT ABOUT HER': CONFRONTING THE SPECTRE
IN *UNDER WESTERN EYES***

He [Raskolnikov] thought about her. He recalled the way he had constantly tormented her, preying upon the emotions of her heart; he remembered her pale, thin little face, but now these memories caused him hardly any pain: he was aware of the infinite love with which he would make up for those sufferings now. (629)

In Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1865-6) the prisoner Raskolnikov attains a sense of peace in his love for Sonya, who follows him to Siberia. In Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* - 'long [...] considered the most "Dostoevskian" of his works' (Knowles and Moore 2000: 385) - the free man Razumov not only alienates and loses his love, Natalia, but is deafened, maimed and finally sent back to Russia without her. In both novels, young women - whose relationships with the protagonists represent a 'sizeable area of comparison' (Adams 1974: 113) - are idealised as loving, reforming influences, yet whereas Sophia listens to Raskolnikov's confession and accepts him, Natalia rejects Razumov. Since Razumov is far from the violent criminal Raskolnikov is, being rather a victim of misunderstanding and chance, it seems initially odd that Conrad punishes his protagonist to such an extreme degree, apparently taking a perverse pleasure in thwarting his personal relationships, and ironically making the object of his affections the betrayed Haldin's sister. This familial connection marks another significant difference between the two novels: not only is Raskolnikov close to his mother and sister (like Haldin) whilst Razumov has no-one, but Raskolnikov finds a friend in Razumikhin, who is thus able to marry his sister Dunya. The contrast serves to emphasise the comparative injustice of Razumov's situation, particularly in regard to his

unnatural isolation. Indeed, whilst Dostoevsky makes women both a source of guilt and redemption, Conrad substitutes a man as the reason for Razumov's decline, reinforcing his early estrangement from women. Whilst several female characters are referred to in Part One, as for example, Princess K-, Razumov's half-sisters and Natalia, the only one with any active involvement is the landlady. Yet in Part Two, Razumov, like Raskolnikov, is surrounded by women, as *Under Western Eyes* contains more female characters than any other of Conrad's novels. Hence both authors articulate an idea of powerful, penetrating femininity, as they 'use the female characters to manipulate their male protagonists and to propel the action of the story' (Adams 1974: 123). Finding isolation unbearable, the two men are drawn desperately and dangerously towards these perceptive, insightful women, yet whilst Raskolnikov finds hope in Sonya, Razumov repeatedly sabotages his relationships, feeling unworthy and resentful, as Conrad articulates a bleak sense of inevitable suffering for his motherless, morally-estranged protagonist. Moreover, Conrad denies us the exact wording of Razumov's confrontation with Mrs Haldin, makes his admission to Natalia obscure and keeps Sophia and Tekla away from the decisive revolutionary gathering, apparently determined to keep women thematically central yet narratively peripheral. His unwillingness, or inability, to dramatise key scenes even hints at psychological avoidances and an intense emotional investment that might have contributed to the nervous breakdown that succeeded his first draft. Thus Conrad simultaneously encourages, and shies away from thinking 'about her' as he edges his protagonist and himself ever closer to psychological collapse. How then might we explain the uneven treatment of women in *Under Western Eyes*? And how far are female influences implicated in the processes of psychological decline and recovery?

To begin with, the divergent treatment of female characters illustrates Conrad's

personal argument with Dostoyevsky, whom he considered to be not only immoral but, apparently worse, typically Russian (he once controversially claimed that 'Russians [...] are born rotten' [CL6: 147]). In evoking the other novel by addressing the same themes of guilt, redemption and neurotic collapse, whilst altering the ending by depriving Razumov of Natalia, Conrad seems deliberately to contrast his moral code with Dostoyevsky's, sacrificing his character's happiness to a sense of rivalry (echoing his revolutionary father's claims of Polish superiority). On the other hand, the unexpected emulation of his despised nemesis might imply a failed attempt to recreate the more hopeful ending of *Crime and Punishment*, in which memories of the beloved are restorative, causing 'hardly any pain'.¹ Despite his prejudice, Conrad was profoundly affected by uncanny echoes of his own psychological traumas in the writings of Dostoyevsky - as Keith Carabine describes: 'Conrad confronted not only grimacing versions of his father's deepest beliefs, but versions of his own disavowals and disinheritances' (1996: 95) - arguably perceiving in the other a potential solution to his own problems, including those related to women. In delving into the dark psychological terrain of Dostoyevsky, therefore, the begrudgingly inspired Conrad may have been taking a final chance to confront and transform his own neurosis, the 'dark continent' of femininity that seems metaphorically presented in the dark shadow of his own past - the 'spectre that had haunted his childhood' (Knowles and Moore 2000: 382) - the character of Mother Russia herself.

Conrad's dislike of Dostoyevsky might plausibly be linked to his dislike of Freud. The Austrian theorist proudly regarded the Russian author as a predecessor, telling Zweig that the other could not be understood without psychoanalysis because his novels were

¹ Although the outline of his original plan, as described to Galsworthy (see page 181) challenges this theory.

already practical illustrations of its principles.² In contrast to the antagonistic Conrad, Freud greatly admired Dostoyevsky, placing *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) - which Conrad, who likely read it in French translation, ambiguously described as 'terrifically bad and impressive and exasperating' (CL5: 70) - alongside *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex* (all of which conveniently illustrate the Oedipus Complex) as 'three of the masterpieces of the literature of all time' in the 1928 essay 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (XXI: 188). This analysis directly addresses the author's psychological darkness, not presuming to understand his 'unanalysable artistic gift' (179), but probing other facets of his personality, those of 'the neurotic, the moralist and the sinner' (177) positing a diagnosis of neurosis and hystero-epilepsy.³ Although largely ignoring Dostoyevsky's women, Freud's description of his protagonist as one 'who alternately sins and then in his remorse erects high moral standards', and who 'has not achieved the essence of morality, renunciation, for the moral conduct of life is a practical human interest' (177), strikingly anticipates Razumov, who retains an air of sadistic menace for most of *Under Western Eyes*. Yet Freud also suggests that the masochistic and sadistic impulses of Dostoyevsky's novels point to 'the existence of similar tendencies within himself' (178), arguing that the loss of his violent father (a loss Adams compares to Conrad's) led to a neurotic invasion of Oedipal guilt, as fantasy seemed to become reality. Although hinting at a strong inclination towards bisexuality - as the desire to replace the father, necessarily repressed through fear of castration, turned into its opposite, a desire to usurp the mother's place (though this too implies castration) - Freud identified an intense, even paralysing neurosis, one compounded by the influence of an identification

² Although he also admitted that 'I don't really like Dostoevsky in spite of all my admiration for his intensity and superiority. This is because my patience with pathological natures is drained away in actual analysis' (Jones 1957, 3: 458). Ironically, Freud's favourite authors - France and Flaubert - were also Conrad's.

³ Now thought to have been temporal-lobe epilepsy.

with the father upon the strict superego. Thus in Freud's opinion, Dostoyevsky used 'the primal criminal, the parricide' to make 'his confession' (190), embracing art to articulate his Oedipal trauma. Tellingly, Conrad's response to Constance Garnett's English translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* arrived at a similar conclusion, as he too obliquely identified the 'pre-Oedipal': 'It sounds to me like some fierce mouthings from prehistoric ages' (CL5: 70).⁴

Nonetheless, as 'exact contemporaries' who were both 'intensely nationalistic' (Carabine 1996: 64) and preoccupied with the dark recesses of the psyche, it seems likely that Conrad might have ranked alongside Dostoyevsky in Freud's estimation (although Bock speculates that it was Lenormand's suggestion of this link that antagonised Conrad [see page 9]). In both *Crime and Punishment* and *Under Western Eyes*, the protagonists presume themselves to be in control of their psyches, even wilfully testing their capacities for guilt and evil. Both commit a crime, although Razumov's status as a criminal is questionable since, whilst he violates a fundamental notion of brotherhood, he technically obeys the law by turning in a more violent criminal. Both crimes also lead to the criminal's psychological and physical breakdown, but while Dostoyevsky takes almost a hundred pages to follow Raskolnikov's premeditation of his brutal crime, Conrad accelerates the pace of Part One, using the bulk of the novel to investigate Razumov's indignant, though debilitating, guilt. Moreover, whereas the impulse of Conrad's novel is towards confession, catharsis and a restoration of sanity, Dostoyevsky's appears rather to revel in the sinister machinations of its protagonist's megalomaniacal, twisted thought-processes. Whereas

⁴ This description also ambiguously evokes his own words in *The Secret Agent*: 'Into that plunging blow [...] Mrs. Verloc had put all the inheritance of her immemorial and obscure descent, the simple ferocity of the age of caverns, and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms' (263).

Raskolnikov is a self-contained, psychotically introverted villain who becomes obsessed with his own theory of ordinary and extraordinary personalities, Razumov is an inherently rational, hard-working, normal character, whose mind is undone by the interference of others. Conrad repeatedly retreats from the more extreme Freudian-Dostoyevskyan possibilities of his novel. Paradoxically, he also goes further since, although both protagonists finally achieve a sense of catharsis, Razumov is permanently scarred by the double-agent Nekator while Raskolnikov is given a temporary prison sentence. Hence Conrad articulates a more extreme scepticism regarding the possibility of a complete cure for psychological trauma, as Razumov's mental suffering is merely displaced onto his physical body. On the other hand, this scepticism is itself ambiguous, since Razumov's maiming follows *after* his self-imposed break with Natalia, who in her stunned, barely conscious state is given no time to respond. The revolutionary matriarch Sophia is also noticeably absent from this penultimate section of the novel, whilst the maid-servant Tekla perceives Razumov, but fails to catch his attention, just before he is hit by the tram; all of which instances argue that female influences could, after all, have combined to save him. Conrad's scepticism might then represent a veil (metaphorically represented by that in which Razumov wraps his confession to Natalia) behind which he yearned not only for his protagonist's recovery, but for Natalia to become, and to be accepted as, another Sonya.

- I -

Under Western Eyes represents Conrad's culminating investigation into, and representation of psychological trauma. Written between late 1907 and early 1910 it coincides with the period in which Freud began increasingly to call for more specific definitions of psychological disturbances, as articulated in the 1909 essay 'On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia'. Throughout his

long career Freud laboured to distinguish hysteria from neurosis and psychosis; distinctions that can only be summarily described here. In an interesting anticipation of events in *Under Western Eyes*, however, he made an analogy between the hysteric and the criminal in 'Psycho-Analysis and the Establishment of the Facts in Legal Proceedings' (1906): 'In both we are concerned with a secret, with something hidden'. Neither the criminal nor the hysteric wants his secret brought into the open, yet whereas, '[i]n the case of the criminal it is a secret which he knows and hides from you [...] in the case of the hysteric it is a secret which he himself does not know either, which is hidden even from himself'. Unravelling the truth about the criminal is necessary for the health of society; unravelling that of the hysteric is necessary for the individual since, 'from this repressed psychical material (these 'complexes') are generated the somatic and psychical symptoms which plague the patient in just the same way as a guilty conscience does' (IX: 108). In hysteria, the root of trauma is overtaken by amnesia, causing it to find indirect expression in physical symptoms with no apparent medical explanation - in Razumov's case, in his repeatedly emphasised 'arid handshake' (179), tireless walking and raspy voice. Yet since Razumov is all too aware of his 'crime', he is more closely associated with the criminal, despite the ethical conundrum of his situation and his early, half-hearted attempt to organise Haldin's escape. Razumov's 'guilty conscience' is also far from simple, being diluted by resentment and self-justification, thereby making his mental anguish more akin to neurosis, in which condition the sufferer is tortured, even against his will, by obsessive ideas and habits. Significantly, since neurotics have no immediately obvious physical symptoms, they are both harder to recognise - presenting 'themselves far less frequently for analytic treatment than hysterical patients' ('Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis' [1909], X: 157) - and, like Conrad's secretive protagonist, harder to understand.

In the extended study 'Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis', in which Freud examined the notorious case of the Rat-Man - a university student prone to lengthy prohibitions and violent compulsions, and so-called because he was tortured by obsessive fears of a sadistic Eastern punishment involving rats - the cause of neurosis was traced back to childhood and a sense of competition with the father. At the same time, Freud identified common traits of the neurotic mindset, including the dominant impulses of displacement, compulsion and doubt, and a close inter-relationship between love and hate; all of which are evident in Razumov's tortured attempts to communicate, in particular with Natalia. In 'General Theory of the Neuroses' Freud further described the neurotic as one who remains aware of the external world, being able to meet the demands of reality-testing (unlike the detached psychotic) even whilst his trauma causes tortuous, even painful mental activity that keeps him disassociated from society. The neurotic is unable to forget or repress his trauma, becoming increasingly preoccupied with his own inner thought-processes. The root of trauma is not forgotten, but necessarily detached from emotion as the neurotic 'is obliged against his will to brood and speculate as though it were a question of his most important vital problems' (XVI: 258).

On the other hand, Razumov's brooding is itself a vital problem since he must live a lie amongst the revolutionary community in Geneva. Moreover, Freud's supposition - that the neurotic impulses tempting the neurotic to commit crimes never actually find their way into action - seems effectively contradicted by Razumov's betrayal of Haldin. It is noticeable, however, that Razumov's psychological decline begins only *after* Haldin arrives at his lodgings, thereby recalling Freud's distinction between two types of neurosis, 'the constitutional and the accidental' ('The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis' [1913], XII: 317): those caused during the development of the libido, and

those forced upon the patient. The sudden mental tumult caused by Haldin's misplaced political assumptions causes Razumov to go temporarily insane, as he psychotically vents his sense of victimisation upon the drunken Ziemianitch and hallucinates the other man lying in the snow. His real neurotic collapse follows only after his betrayal, when he retreats to his room and lapses into a day-long state of emotionless torpor. Hence Razumov's condition appears more akin to accidental or traumatic neurosis, in which fixation upon a particular event triggers a powerful psychological illness that prevents repression and overcomes the pleasure principle. Indeed, in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), Freud associated traumatic neurosis with the shell-shock of the First World War, in which 'motor symptoms' akin to those of hysteria were surpassed by 'strongly marked signs of subjective ailment [...and] a far more comprehensive general enfeeblement and disturbance of the mental capacities' (XVIII: 12).⁵

Amongst such a tangle of neurotic categories, it becomes clear that Conrad's protagonist does not belong simplistically to any one type. Rather, Razumov displays both hysterical and neurotic symptoms, lapsing sporadically from cynical detachment into panic, as when he first meets Natalia: 'He positively reeled' (172). Nonetheless, Freud's claim that neurosis could develop alongside, and even come to supersede hysteria (which is derived from a different source), seems particularly pertinent, implying that Razumov might have a pre-existing condition and that Haldin's arrival merely overwhelms his precarious stability. Freud also argued that a neurotic disposition (caused by problems in the development of the libido) could be awakened by the frustrations of reality - in this case as Haldin's intrusion frustrates Razumov's already unlikely ambitions - in which the patient 'falls ill of his attempt to adapt himself

⁵ Although in this case the patient is concerned with *not* thinking about the source of neurosis, which in turn returns to haunt his/her dreams.

to reality' ('Types of Onset of Neurosis' [1912], XII: 233). Finally, Freud's suggestion that the hysteric's secret is hidden from himself highlights the possibility that the 'secret' of Razumov's betrayal (initially shared only by Prince K- and Mikulin) might merely be a symptom of, or even a defence against, another repressed 'secret' in his unconscious. Since Freud argued that the cause of hysteria - as indeed for all kinds of neurasthenia (one of his more controversial assumptions) - was specifically sexual, the root of Razumov's problem might reside, not with Haldin, but in the frustrated, guilty desires of his unconscious. Finally, if the real 'crime' of the novel is not Haldin's controversial betrayal, but that which Razumov proposes against Natalia, and finally confesses to her ('do you know what I said to myself? I shall steal his sister's soul from her [...] he himself by talking of her trusting eyes has delivered her into my hands!' [359]) - then his neurosis is specifically associated with women. By diagnosing Razumov as a neurotic we may thus begin to understand the connection in Conrad's mind between neurosis and female influence. With its range of female characters, *Under Western Eyes* might be regarded as a prolonged investigation into the association between male psychological instability and different 'types' of women - those already investigated in previous chapters - as Conrad confronts, at the risk of his own mental well-being, the tumultuous relationship with the spectre.

- II -

Though motherless, like the majority of Conrad's protagonists, Razumov begins the novel a normal youth, not a wanderer. He is 'liked [...] for his amiability and for his quiet readiness to oblige his comrades even at the cost of personal inconvenience' (6). He displays friendly feelings towards his younger, wealthy, legitimate half-sisters, feeling 'a glow of warm friendliness towards these girls who would never know of his existence' (13), having worked out his own path towards independence and

respectability: 'Distinction would convert the label Razumov into an honoured name' (13-4). In the absence of his real mother, the only maternal presence is that of Mother Russia: 'His closest parentage was defined in the statement that he was a Russian' (10-11). Fulfilling the ideals of the state even seems a way of making up for his illegitimacy, given that his 'desire of safety, of an ordered life' (71) is abnormally strong. Yet he also retreats from confronting the divisions in his homeland, so avoiding any Oedipal allegiance: 'This immense parentage suffered from the throes of internal dissensions, and he shrank mentally from the fray as a good-natured man may shrink from taking definite sides in a violent family quarrel' (11). Haldin's upheaval of Razumov's ordered existence disrupts both his plans and his security, forcing him to recognise his isolation, defencelessness and expendability. The other's pointed, tactless reminder - 'It occurred to me that you - you have no one belonging to you - no ties, no one to suffer for it if this came out by some means' (19) - reawakens repressed feelings of isolation that haunt Razumov throughout the novel and finally find expression in his appeal to Natalia: 'Do you conceive the desolation of the thought - no one - to - go - to?' (354). Indeed, Conrad explicitly links his isolation with his subsequent actions: 'The peculiar circumstance of Razumov's parentage, or rather of his lack of parentage, should be taken into the account of his thoughts' (26). Inadvertently provoked by Haldin, the lonely student is in no right mind to think, let alone act - being beset by 'a tumult of thoughts' (24) - making his betrayal not the cause, but rather a symptom of neurosis.

In Part One Conrad brings his protagonist perilously close to insanity, emphasising the accelerated rush of events that makes self-analysis both impossible and impossibly risky:

Who knows what true loneliness is - not the conventional word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask. The most miserable outcast hugs some memory or some illusion. Now

and then a fatal conjunction of events may lift the veil for an instant.

For an instant only. No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad. (39)

Venturing out into the night, Razumov walks over the apparently impersonal, self-absorbed Mother Russia - 'the hard ground of Russia, inanimate, cold, inert, like a sullen and tragic mother hiding her face under a winding-sheet - his native soil!' (32-3) - before turning Haldin's words ('you have no one') against him, using the situation as a means to be reconciled with his natural father Prince K-, surrendering to the castration-complex out of fear and a need for loving consolation. Only after the embarrassed Prince colludes with the political agent Mikulin to send him into exile as a spy, does Razumov understand his double rejection and recognise the difference between Russia as a country and as a political entity, forcibly learning that 'she' is governed by a brutal and arbitrary patriarchal regime that he has helped to reinforce. Hence his 'indulgent contempt' (52) for the Prince is set against a sense of having betrayed - of having been tricked into repressing - the mother. His subsequent interrogation shows that he is already effectively castrated, as Mikulin - echoing Haldin - cruelly stresses his isolation, softly asking where he thinks he can go: 'Where to?' (99). Razumov's sense of guilt thereby seems less to do with the effect of an identification with the father upon the superego, than with that of the oppressed mother. Thus he becomes increasingly neurotic, desperately seeking to re-establish a bond with the mother - 'Russia *can't* disown me. She cannot!' (209) - turning the remainder of the novel into yet another search for surrogates.

Ironically, Razumov's betrayal brings the recognition he craves, as the narrator observes of his new fame in the revolutionary community: 'He was nothing but a name, you will say. Exactly! A name!' (165). Since his identity is false, however, he begins

to lose hold of reality, demonstrating increasingly suicidal tendencies that suggest a desire to return to the pre-Oedipal mother. Razumov's sense of nightmarish alienation (even from himself, as he listens fearfully to his own provocative statements, his 'disease of perversity' [253]) also recalls the Freudian notion of the Uncanny, in which imagination and reality become blurred. He experiences an overwhelming sense of the 'Unheimlich' (literally meaning 'unhomely'), itself 'nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' ('The "Uncanny"' [1919], XVII: 241), again recalling the pre-Oedipal mother. According to Freud, 'an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed' (249). Haldin's reawakening of Razumov's repressed memories of his absent mother might explain such a disassociation. An unsettling combination of the unknown and familiar, the uncanny defies rationality and challenges the ego, echoing Razumov's own description of his situation as a 'comedy of errors, phantoms, and suspicions' (99). Dominant aspects include repetition, doubles, reflections and shadows, all of which become increasingly real to Razumov, who not only remains trapped in the same negative thought-cycle, but hallucinates Haldin lying in the snow, before imagining him as a silent, haunting shadow: 'he had made for himself a mental atmosphere of gloomy and sardonic reverie, a sort of murky medium through which the event appeared like a featureless shadow having vaguely the shape of a man' (246).⁶ This kind of irrational fear is also linked to phobias, obsessions and compulsions, all expressions of the unconscious, many of which are immediately obvious in *Under*

⁶ The idea of an uncanny companion is also found in the contemporaneous short story, 'The Secret Sharer', in which the captain-narrator rescues and liberates his 'double', the criminal Legatt, though endangering his crew. This story might then be considered the 'double' of *Under Western Eyes*, investigating Razumov's alternatives.

Western Eyes:

Listen to all the things that can become the object or content of a phobia: darkness, open air, open spaces, cats, spiders, caterpillars, snakes, mice, thunderstorms, sharp points, blood, enclosed spaces, crowds, solitude, crossing bridges, sea voyages and railway journeys, etc., etc. ('General Theory of the Neurosis', XVI: 398-9)

Razumov leaves Russia by train; he walks alone through an open park; he goes out at night in a storm. The uncanny becomes an almost palpable reality, as he walks with '[t]he expression of a somnambulist struggling with the very dream which drives him forth to wander in dangerous places' (317). Enveloped in his own neurosis, Razumov is thereafter confronted with a number of mother-substitutes, in gothic fairy-tale fashion, all of whom bring him closer to psychosis, as Adams writes: 'The mother, usually a symbol of creative force, is [...] a destructive element' (Adams 1974: 120-1), both to herself and her son.

The first mother is also the most uncanny and sinister, Madame de S-, the wealthy, embittered, self-centred patron of Peter Ivanovitch, and Miss Havisham-like resident of the Château Borel. Peter's description of her 'inspired penetration, this true light of femininity' evokes an instinctive repulsion and panicky paranoia in Razumov: "Penetration? Light," he stammered out. "Do you mean some sort of thought-reading?" (213). Razumov's sense of the uncanny is further increased by the obscurity of her appearance in the darkened room/womb, with her painted face and 'black lace scarf' (221). Her description, in which she is compared to a figure 'out of some Hoffman's Tale' (215), even makes a coincidental link with Freud. Moreover, she provokes one of the dominant aspects of the uncanny (identified by Jentsch and confirmed by Freud): uncertainty as to whether or not she is alive. Her figure is almost

doll-like, resembling

a wooden or plaster figure of a repulsive kind. She moved no more than if she were such a figure; even her eyes, whose unwinking stare plunged into his own, though shining, were lifeless, as though they were as artificial as her teeth. (225)

Dismissed as 'avaricious, greedy, and unscrupulous' (161) early on by the narrator, Madame de S- nonetheless begins to break through Razumov's defences, as he comes perilously close to admitting the truth:

"I myself have had an experience," he stammered out, as if compelled.

"I've seen a phantom once." [...] "I hated him."

"Ah! It was not a woman, then?"

"A woman! repeated Razumov, his eyes looking straight into the eyes of Madame de S-. "Why should it have been a woman? And why this conclusion? Why should I not have been able to hate a woman?" (225)

Razumov protests too much. The idea of hating a woman appears both a shocking new thought and a resonant one, highlighting the source of his neurosis. Alternatively, Madame de S-'s confident belief in the impossibility of hating a woman reinforces Razumov's unwilling love-hate relationship with the spectre. Ironically, however, Madame de S-'s corruption prevents her from perceiving Razumov's guilt, as he, with a sense of horror, runs determinedly away.

The second mother, Tekla, also belongs to a Dickensian brand of the uncanny. An old woman with an incongruously girlish body, she lurks in corners wearing an 'invariably scared expression' (231) and is typically accompanied by a feline companion. Yet this down-trodden *dame de compagnie* inspires sympathy instead of fear. As she appears

unexpectedly - spectrally - before Razumov, he is confused but not alarmed ('how she came there he had not the slightest idea'), marvelling at his own apparent disassociation from reality: "I have been unconscious as I walked, it's a positive fact," said Razumov to himself in wonder' (231). She is the emotive, selfless and caring mother-figure, who neither intimidates nor threatens, and whose previous role as nurse to another guilt-ridden traitor (Andrei) immediately highlights her as the perfect mother-substitute. She also has the most in common with Razumov, having had her good nature abused and her identity corroded: 'No one is told my name. No one cares. No one talks to me, no one writes to me [...] I have no use for a name, and I have almost forgotten it myself' (235). He is the only character who knows her name; she is the only one he tells to call him Kirylo. They are united in their isolation; her desire to care - being unfit 'for an independent existence' (236) - fitting perfectly with his need to be cared for.⁷ Even her words echo his as she challenges Natalia: 'Do you understand how frightful that is - nothing to look forward to!' (150). Yet her offer of assistance comes too easily since, in contrast to her heated discussions with Natalia, she does not ask Razumov himself any questions regarding Haldin. In perverse retaliation, he projects his own bitterness, plotting to use her for information; seeking to perpetuate her oppression by betraying her naïve trust.

The third mother is Sophia, whose name means 'wisdom', though chronologically she is the first to meet Razumov (in Zürich, an event referred to only briefly). Like Madame de S-, she alarms Razumov with her 'black, penetrating gaze' (241), yet he remains drawn to her: 'he could not despise her as he despised all the others' (242). Like Tekla,

⁷ Her innocent girlishness also recalls Katerina Ivanovna in *Crime and Punishment*, as described by Sonya: 'She's looking for justice and truth [...] She herself simply isn't aware that it's impossible for there to be justice and truth among people, and she gets upset. Like a child, like a child! She's so, so truthful!' (376).

she recognises his needs ('What you want is to be taken in hand by some woman' [243]), yet unlike her, she has no time for them. She is also the most difficult mother to deceive: 'Stripped of rhetoric, mysticism, and theories, she was the true spirit of destructive revolution. And she was the personal adversary he had to meet' (261). The revolutionary - the defiant representative of Mother Russia⁸ - is both a new 'type' of Conradian heroine and the admired, enigmatical mother Razumov seeks to convince. She also comes closest to understanding him, making uncannily accurate remarks: 'perhaps, you are only playing a part' (251). Yet her false validation, as she is convinced by an anonymous letter, also disappoints Razumov. Finally, she reveals what each of the three mother-substitutes has in common: a primary desire for Haldin, or his displaced representative Natalia. Sophia's abrupt question as they walk through the grounds of the Château - 'What was *he* like?' (246) - prompts Razumov to withdraw into sarcasm and causes a decisive, bitter rift. Consequently, Razumov's final exposure implies both a need for punishment and a desire to be recognised, even as a traitor, as himself.

Razumov's inability to accept these mother-substitutes finally implies that the only mother he wants is the one he cannot have: Haldin's own. The extreme extent of her maternal affection is summarised by the narrator: 'I have an idea that Mrs. Haldin, at her son's wish, would have set fire to her house and emigrated to the moon without any sign of surprise or apprehension' (100).⁹ Yet the narrator's early admiration of her

⁸ She might also be based on Sofya Perovskaya, a revolutionary who was involved in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.

⁹ Jones suggests that Mrs Haldin is another tribute to Conrad's mother, 'whose letters to Apollo expressed so intensely her agony of uncertainty during their separation in the days of his political activity in Warsaw' (1999: 60). Since Mrs Haldin is waiting for her son, not her husband, however, Razumov's jealousy might reflect Conrad's guilty desire to usurp his own father.

beauty gradually turns to an uncanny dread of the 'almost lifeless beauty of her face' (106) and her rigid immobility, a physical aspect representing 'the dreadful aloofness of suffering without remedy' (339). Razumov's spontaneous desire to meet this modern Niobe is the last test of his ability to deceive, as he decides to deliver the news of Sophia's letter himself. Yet he remains torn between jealousy, desire for revenge, and yearning:

And was it not something like enviousness which gripped his heart, as if of a privilege denied to him alone of all the men that had ever passed through this world? It was the other [Haldin] who had attained to repose and yet continued to exist in the affection of that mourning old woman, in the thoughts of all these people posing for lovers of humanity. (341)

Haldin's mother represents the unattainable maternal spectre: 'He could not shake off the poignant impression of that silent, quiet, white-haired woman' (340). She also seems strikingly akin to Razumov, waiting alone, having 'given way to most awful imaginings, to most fantastic and cruel suspicions' (324), and even fantasising her own spectre of Haldin. Though he says 'all he had to say to her' (340), their meeting is unsatisfactory: Razumov runs away from her impenetrable silence, suspecting that she intuits the truth. In so doing, he admits a permanent, irrevocable separation from the mother, as his last chance to confess and be reconciled fails. The meeting is like 'the revenge of the unknown' (340), encapsulating the anguish, and inadequacy of, his long-desired confrontation with the absent mother. As he subsequently tells Natalia, admitting his inappropriateness for the role of surrogate son: 'In order to speak fittingly to a mother of her lost son one must have had some experience of the filial relation' (344). Thus denial ('Mothers did not matter' [340]) turns to self-awareness, as he admits the source of his neurosis and 'crime' to Natalia, finally relinquishing his dream

of reconciliation.

Razumov's problematic relations with these mothers is also linked to the fact that he perceives the revolutionary community as another oppressive patriarchal order. Conrad determinedly heightens an atmosphere of cynicism - the Château Borel, for example, is 'overshadowed by an un-European despotism' (319) - from which these fictional mothers need rescuing. In the Preface, he condemns the inevitability of oppression for Mother Russia, uncannily predicting the horror of impending revolution. Moreover, he articulates similar ideas through the narrator who, as an English outsider, recognises the dark side of Russian identity: 'I saw the gigantic shadow of Russian life deepening around her [Natalia] like the darkness of an advancing night. It would devour her presently' (202). As the narrator watches Razumov and Natalia, he recognises their tragic kinship in 'the sombre horizon of Russian problems, the boundary of their eyes, of their feelings - the prison of their souls' (345). Conrad's claim, 'I think that I am trying to capture the very soul of things Russian' (*CL4*: 8), thereby implies that the novel represents a tribute to Mother Russia (an oppressed Sister-land to Poland),¹⁰ metaphorically represented by the character of Mrs Haldin, who pointedly separates herself from politics and is 'struck at through her children [...] bound to suffer afresh from the past, and to feel the anguish of the future' (318). Mrs Haldin/Mother Russia keeps 'a dreadful, tormenting vigil under the evil spell of an arbitrary rule: a victim of tyranny and revolution' (335), whilst her/their children remain trapped in a violent, ongoing Oedipal struggle. Razumov's confession to Laspara's revolutionary gathering finally challenges this other patriarchal order, inviting castration (again) both as a punishment (since castration renders him harmless as an Oedipal rival) and as an

¹⁰ This uncharacteristically sympathetic treatment of Russia is also found in the short story, 'The Warrior's Soul' (1917).

expression of alliance with the mother. That he is deafened by Nekator, a double-agent, seems to express his double castration, as he asserts himself against both fathers and claims a painful independence. Maimed, he is also able to accept a compromise, as, in a return to Russia with Tekla, he 'achieves that blissful sweet repose in the arms of a loving maternal woman that appears to be the ultimate goal and the final salvation of so many of Conrad's heroes' (Meyer 1967: 205).

- III -

The preponderance of mother-figures in *Under Western Eyes* argues that, by this point in his literary career, Conrad was relatively accustomed to, and comfortable with the prospect of addressing the maternal spectre. Indeed, the character with whom he experienced the most trouble was not a maternal figure at all, but the romantic interest, Natalia Haldin. He was even forced to cut substantial portions of her original role as he found it impossible to reconcile her admiration for her brother with her political idealism whilst maintaining a 'single mood' (CLA: 490). His dissatisfaction with her development is evidenced in a letter to Olivia Garnett of 1911: 'I need not have made Miss Haldin a mere peg as I am sorry to admit she is' (*ibid*). Carabine's lengthy study of *Under Western Eyes* investigates how Conrad 'greatly attenuated' her role 'in successive revisions', concluding that his reasons were 'at once fictional and psychological' (1996: 131). Examining the reasons behind this change of direction, Carabine claims that Conrad was afraid of her disruptive potential, as she interfered with his ideas about female compassion and domesticity. The original Natalia was too 'witty, shrewd, intelligent, and forceful' (146), implying that, whilst the conservative Conrad was drawn to intellectual women, he was unable to write about them. In abbreviating her role, he put his protagonist (and arguably himself) first, feeling that he had to temper Natalia's intelligent involvement and to make her more 'pathetic and

helpless' (134), even into a 'dupe' (147), so that she would be 'better qualified to educate the narrator' (155) about Russia. Carabine further argues that Natalia's duality might reflect Conrad's attitude towards his mother, who evoked a similarly discomfiting combination of admiration and political mistrust: 'this ideal model of the noble, suffering woman and patriot provides one way of understanding Conrad's reshaping of Natalia' (148).¹¹ Despite this, vestiges of the original, more assertive Natalia remain, as for example, in her early suspiciousness: 'There are several reasons why I am very anxious to know how it is he [Haldin] failed to escape' (157) - a question she noticeably fails to ask Razumov. Thus it seems to have been Natalia's psyche, not Razumov's, that ultimately proved too challenging for Conrad, arguably making her the culminating, and overwhelming, representative of the spectre.

If Mrs Haldin represents the 'absent mother', then Natalia is another of Conrad's idealised daughters. Yet she is also a potential wife for Razumov (reinforcing the Conradian overlap between the filial and the romantic). She provokes both paternal and romantic desire, courtly and possessive love, as demonstrated by the narrator, who serves at once as an instructive father-figure - without whose company '[s]he would have had no one to whom she could give a glimpse of her idealistic faith, of her great heart, and of her simple emotions' (Preface: ix) - and as a defensive older lover: 'I became aware, notwithstanding my years, of how attractive physically her personality could be' (102). As a parental figure he is also joined by Tekla, who raves about Razumov to Natalia and warns him, in turn, to keep her away from the Château Borel: 'Listen to me; you had better tie a stone round her neck and throw her into the lake'

¹¹ Several other critics, including the psycho-critic Dobrinsky, make this association, emphasising the importance with which Evelina Korzeniowska is increasingly credited in Conrad's writing.

(232).¹² The combined efforts of these two eccentric parents actually push the couple together (Razumov being regarded as a safer option than Peter Ivanovitch), although the narrator still rues his exclusion from their romance: 'I knew that next time they met I would not be there, either remembered or forgotten' (347). Even so, Razumov's initial interest in Natalia is familial, as Meyer, who emphasises Conrad's fascination with brother-sister relationships, suggests: 'in falling in love with Nathalie, Razumov sought to replace the brother he had betrayed' (1967: 204).¹³ Alternatively, since Haldin is a surrogate father-figure to Natalia, being her older brother and only apparent male relation, Razumov's attack might represent an Oedipal challenge, an attempt to usurp the paternal role and possess both Mrs Haldin as wife-mother and Natalia as daughter.

The idea of romance is actually planted in Razumov's mind by Haldin, who first speaks about Natalia in relation to marriage: 'She will marry well, I hope' (22). In addition, he writes about Razumov to her, so that his name becomes 'a sort of legacy' (190). For these potential lovers, the spectre of the brother is accompanied by a latent awareness of each other, causing an incestuous overlap. For Razumov, the spectre also gradually reshapes itself as Natalia: 'Every word uttered by Haldin lived in Razumov's memory. They were like haunting shapes [...] The most vivid amongst them was the mention of the sister' (167). Her influence comes to supersede Haldin's, as Razumov finally acknowledges when he meets her accidentally in the corridor after fleeing from her mother: 'It was she who had been haunting him now' (342). Whereas thoughts of Haldin inspire disgust and resentment, Natalia's innocence appeals to Razumov's sense

¹² These words recall Tadeusz's description of Marguerite Poradowska (see p. 172 n.), though they also indicate a role-reversal, with the man serving as a degrading influence.

¹³ The sister may then represent another variation of the spectre, as suggested in the unfinished *The Sisters*, *Nostramo* (Decoud's sister), *The Secret Agent* (Winnie) and *Suspense* (Henrietta). Freud, however, makes very few references to sisters, despite having five of his own.

of morality, as well as his untapped affection. As a moral touchstone, however, she simultaneously highlights his inadequacies and unworthiness. Thus Razumov recognises the inextricable connection between the 'spectre' in his mind and the real woman, realising that he cannot exorcise the one without admitting the truth and losing the other. His proposed plan to ruin her seems merely an attempt to negotiate a way around this paradox. Ultimately, the possibility of romance arrives 'too late', as Razumov finally admits: 'No one has ever expected such a thing from me before. No one whom my tenderness would have been of any use to. And now you come. You! Now! No, Natalia Victorovna. It's too late' (344). For Conrad, the idealised daughter-lover in literature, as perhaps in life, arrived too late, demanding re-evaluations and revisions beyond both him and his protagonist.

As another uncomplaining, innocent victim, Natalia is also the closest heroine to Emilia Gould, serving as a guiding light for Razumov in the novel. Commendations are similar, for example, by Garnett [see page 177]: 'With almost uncanny adriotness, Mr Conrad has both relieved and increased the blackness of his picture by the rare, precious figure of Natalia' (cited in Cox 1981: 41-2). Yet Razumov's psychological development is the reverse of Charles Gould's, in that he regards Natalia first as a victim, then as his heroine (as several critics note, her surname is markedly close to 'Heldin', the German word for 'heroine'). His behaviour is variously malicious, uncomfortable and slavish, yet, as Guerard writes, in Razumov's final letter he 'claims to have been a much more cynical person in his relationship with Nathalie Haldin, than we have had any reason to suspect' (240). On the other hand, we do not know how far Razumov intended to carry out the sinister plan he admits in his letter. Since the earlier episodes are retold by the interfering narrator, we have no way to judge their accuracy. Razumov's real story may then be even darker than we have had reason to suspect. Yet in the crucial scene -

one of Roberts's 'moments of crisis' (2000: 138), amongst which he includes Marlow's lie to the Intended - Razumov finally admits the truth to Natalia. Their confrontation returns to Marlow's dilemma and changes the answer, as Razumov disabuses Natalia of her self-protective illusions, simultaneously liberating and oppressing her. Instead of reconciling the question of idealised innocence versus tainted awareness, Conrad complicates it further.

That Razumov *does* disabuse Natalia, however, is a significant progression beyond Conrad's previous novels, in which men typically seek to keep women from knowledge. Natalia does not inadvertently discover the truth like Winnie, or gradually discover it like Emilia, but confronts it directly. Meanwhile, Razumov's written confession to Natalia (since their meeting, like that with Mrs Haldin, is unsatisfactory) serves as the only truly authoritative section of the novel, being quoted directly by the narrator. It is an address to the female spectre, as embodied in Natalia, the only person to whom Razumov feels he *must* confess. A combination of defiance and self-justification, the letter is also a declaration of love and gratitude: 'You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace' (358). Natalia even unwittingly serves the purpose of an analyst, by provoking a dangerous test of Razumov's psychological limitations: 'To save me, your trustful eyes had to entice my thought to the very edge of the blackest treachery' (359). Although Mrs Haldin's influence now seems defunct besides Natalia's, Razumov finally recognises the inadequacy of merely transferring spectral associations onto another.

Having spent the bulk of the novel preoccupied with the male psyche and the damaging effects of the female spectre, Conrad now turns his attention to a parallel process within the female psyche. The shift marks a recurrent pattern in Conrad's fiction: male self-

obsession and introversion first undermine the protagonist's relationship with the heroine, before causing her own deterioration. Time and again, Conrad's women are left broken victims, as in the cases of Aïssa, Jewel, Freya, Alice and Winnie. In *Under Western Eyes*, however, Conrad posits a catch-22 situation, as Natalia's burgeoning love for Razumov is not only based upon misunderstanding, but implicates her in his crime against her brother, being yet another betrayal of Haldin. It is also she who persistently seeks Razumov out, even going to his lodgings at night, thereby reducing the charge of premeditation. Moreover, her uncanny transformation begins as soon as she feels the first effects of Razumov, as the narrator observes the effect of the news of Haldin's arrest: 'I did not imagine that a number of the *Standard* could have the effect of Medusa's head. Her face went stony in a moment - her eyes - her limbs' (111). Thus her interest in Razumov seems yet another example of displacement, as she merely channels her love for her brother onto his 'friend'. The brutality of Razumov's confession may then be a reflection of this fact, as his emphasis upon injustices against *him*, not Haldin, highlights his sense of victimisation by her family.

Nonetheless, in retreating from his own darkness, Razumov leads Natalia into hers, as the 'great tension' (112) feared by the narrator finally snaps. Razumov even seems selfishly to find peace through gazing at her stricken face, appropriating her peace of mind:

It was as though he were coming to himself in the awakened consciousness of that marvellous harmony of feature, of lines, of glances, of voice, which made of the girl before him a being so rare, outside, and, as it were, above the common notion of beauty. (342-3)

Since this process occurs parallel to her deterioration, he seems almost vampiric,

withdrawing her life-force.¹⁴ Paralysed by shock, she appears to be poisoned, as the narrator observes: 'She raised her grey eyes slowly. Shadows seemed to come and go in them as if the steady flame of her soul had been made to vacillate' (356); whilst her final words ('I feel my heart becoming like ice' [356]) imply a new cold-bloodedness. Yet her collapse also darkly satirises her earlier statement (used as introductory epigraph): 'I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch at a piece of bread' (135). Instead of 'snatching', Natalia exhibits typically Freudian symptoms, reacting in disgust and shame at the recognition of her own desires. In becoming another Tekla ('she had completely ceased to think of herself' [375]) she also becomes a model of the repressed, self-sacrificing (as opposed to rebellious) Freudian hysteric, her acts of charity being undercut by a ruthless hard streak as she refuses to see the crippled Razumov. Although Conrad may have altered the original plot, therefore, he still 'ruins' Natalia, who belongs in a gothic rather than political novel. Thus *Under Western Eyes* charts the development of female as well as male neurosis, as the narrator recognises ('the obscure depths had been stirred' [373]), challenging Conrad's own claim that the 'girl does not move' (CL4: 489). Conrad's abbreviation of Natalia's role might then express his inability to cope with two neurotics (in a letter to Olivia Garnett he described her marginalisation as the result of 'over caution' [CL4: 490]). Nonetheless, the increased significance of female self-awareness in this middle-phase novel indicates a burgeoning interest that was to find further and dramatic expression in the later works.

¹⁴ The idea of vampires is also articulated by Sophia in regard to Russia ('One lies there lapped up in evils, watched over by beings that are worse than ogres, ghouls, and vampires' [254]), thereby allying Razumov with the autocratic Russian regime. However, numerous other characters resemble vampires, as for example, Madame de S- in her dark room, Peter with his sunlight-obscuring glasses (described as a 'Dracula-like figure' [8] by Luyat) and Julius Laspara's uncanny daughters.

Despite such psychological avoidances, Conrad's protagonist is in a worse position at the end of the novel than he was at the beginning. Without the saving hope of official recognition, and without Natalia in its place, he has merely moved from one state of isolation to another. He has a surrogate mother, but not the one he wants. He has his independence, but cannot make use of it. Thus Conrad articulates an extreme sense of scepticism regarding Razumov's entrance into the social and political universe. Relationships in this novel are damaging, family is a burden, politics are corrosive, and the female spectre is unveiled as an unattainable, intangible, unrealistic ideal. Such scepticism reflects negatively on Conrad, who deliberately isolated himself from the literary world of London, preferring to dwell in the country with his small family. A letter to Galsworthy reinforces this notion of psychological autobiography, as Conrad records his intense personal absorption in the novel:

I sit 12 hours at the table, sleep six, and worry the rest of [the] time, feeling the age creeping on and looking at those I love. For two years I havent seen a picture heard a note of music, hadn't a moment of ease in human intercourse. (CL4: 305)

The novel's complexity reflects this creative effort in its embrace of both East and West - geographically, politically and psychologically - moving from St. Petersburg to Geneva, from autocracy to democracy, where Razumov's diary is interpreted by an English teacher of languages.

Conrad was also working simultaneously on his reminiscences, later published as *A Personal Record*, reliving painful scenes from his past even as he delved into Razumov's tortured psyche. Hence the optimistic mood conveyed to Galsworthy in December 1909 ('*Raz* is really nearing the end [...] I am aware of a marked mental

improvement' [CL4: 294]), descended into frustration and self-pitying despair:

The novel hangs on the last 12000 words but there's neither inspiration nor hope in my work. It's mere hard labour for life - with this difference that the life-convict is at any rate out of harm's way - and may consider the account with his conscience closed; and this is not the case with me. (CL4: 309)

The emphasis on conscience implies shame and self-punishment, as Conrad investigated emotions so painful that Jessie suspected that 'he regretted having begun at all' (1926: 56). Creative difficulties were further compounded by practical concerns - including a quarrel with Pinker regarding both the tardiness of the manuscript and a £2,500 debt; the collapse of his friendship with Ford; the poor public response to *The Secret Agent*; the emotional trauma of his sons' measles, Jessie's knee operations and his own recurrent attacks of gout; and a sense of compromising art for mercenary gain, as Arthur Symons recalled: 'He said [...] It sickens me when I have to sit down to the desk and write so many thousand words for a short story - for money' (APIL: 75).¹⁵ Conrad specifically resented the financial pressure of this novel, telling Pinker: 'I wrote it for the very purpose of easing the strain' (CL4: 303); though from a Freudian perspective these words are ambiguous, implying psychological as well as monetary strain and a consequent need for catharsis. Thus external pressures aggravated an already volatile situation, impeding Conrad's progress and provoking a self-destructive, childish wilfulness, as for example, in his professed desire to throw the manuscript into the fire, and perhaps also a psychological recklessness in finishing the text.

In addition to these stresses, Conrad was continuously battling his long-term nemesis:

¹⁵ The novel was originally conceived as a short-story, 'Razumov'.

his own neurosis. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska as early as 1894 he described his illness in anguished terms: 'My nervous disorder tortures me, makes me wretched, and paralyses action, thought, everything! [...] It is a frightful condition' (CL1: 163-4). Bock points out that Conrad's problems were more akin to hysteria, then presumed to be a predominantly female ailment, than the 'male' illnesses of hypochondria and melancholia; a fact he uses to explain both the notable absence of references to the condition in Conrad's letters (in contrast to his many complaints about gout), and criticism's use of the more general, non gender-specific term 'neurasthenia'. Indeed, Conrad's disavowal of Freud may partially be linked to the implications of the other's sexual emphasis upon his own hysteria. Yet in directly tackling the issue of male psychological illness in his novel, as well as the insufficiency of help - 'amongst eighty millions of his kith and kin, [Razumov] had no heart to which he could open himself' (39) - Conrad joined Freud in arguing with the medical establishment, which still demanded physiological proof of illness. His personal distrust of doctors was evidenced also by a bizarre tendency to hire several at once and to play each off against the others by throwing away their medicines. Bock finally summarises his fittingness as a challenger to Edwardian medical practice: 'Conrad enter[ed] this complex medical arena as a Europe-born Englishman, diagnosed as neurasthenic by a German national, and in 1891 by a Swiss physician who was a student and follower of Charcot' (2002: 17). *Under Western Eyes* then becomes a double expression of neurosis, capturing both Conrad's theory, and experience of psychological trauma. Najder describes it as 'perhaps the one [novel] that caused him more anguish than anything else he ever wrote' (1983 [JCC]: 356), whilst Stine calls it an 'agitated confession', a censored yet intensely personal work that reveals 'a far more tortured and compromised mind than we might have guessed' (1981: 123).

Despite his professed antipathy towards Freud, therefore, Conrad continued to explore psychology through his fiction; his stories being often inspired by random glimpses or descriptions of character, as acknowledged in Prefaces that pay tribute to the original models. As Jessie wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement*: 'A concrete plot, or detailed statement of fact, no matter how interesting, would never have been the least use to my husband' (*APIL*: 251). *Under Western Eyes* might then be regarded as a dialogue with contemporary psychological practice, and by association psychoanalysis, in which the title immediately evokes the watchful gaze of an analyst, even a sense of being on the infamous Freudian couch itself. The specificity of 'Western' reinforces the distinction between the watcher and the watched, one heightened by a narrative in which the Russian 'patient' Razumov's story is interpreted and retold by the staid and intrusive English teacher of languages. Conrad appears simultaneously to ally himself with the 'patient' Razumov and with the older 'man of words', examining neurosis from two different perspectives, one cynical, one sanitising. The division is further reflected in Razumov himself: 'He felt, bizarre as it may seem, as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed' (230). Tellingly, Freud admires this narrative technique in 'Creative Writers':

The psychological novel in general no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes. (IX: 150)

The dual perspective also allows for a comparison of self versus external analysis, in which the narrator-interpreter goes on trial as a representative of the latter.

The nameless narrator's introductory self-portrait, in which he describes himself as a

man 'who believes in the psychological value of facts' (293) associates him with a scientist or old-fashioned doctor. His famous description of words as 'the great foes of reality' - the result of having been too long a teacher of languages (too long an analyst) - also emphasises his estrangement from 'imagination, observation, and insight' (3), implying that he is set in his ways, even bored with them. Thus Conrad warns against an easy acceptance of the narrator's interpretation, directing us at the very beginning to take careful notice of Razumov's 'documentary evidence' (3), emphasising the importance of the patient alongside the analyst. The narrator's presumptuous and somewhat inconsistent storytelling is a dispassionate, self-absorbed attempt at analysis, as he attempts to probe beneath the surface: 'I looked at him rather hard. Was there a hidden and inexplicable sneer in this retort? No. It was not that. It might have been resentment. Yes. But what had he to resent?' (183). In an attempt to summarise the 'eastern' perspective, he occasionally ventures a diagnosis:

I said to myself: "He puts on the callousness of a stern revolutionist, the insensibility to common emotions of a man devoted to a destructive idea. He is young, and his sincerity assumes a pose before a stranger, a foreigner, an old man." (189-90)

Conrad mocks the analyst's procedures and motives as his opinion is neither sought out by, nor matters to, Razumov. Indeed, the narrator only learns the truth by reading Razumov's letter to Natalia. Moreover, Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's identification of an 'unconscious doubling process which underlies the narrator's relationship with the protagonist' - as they frequently share the same cynical opinions and are both drawn to Natalia, towards whom they have an 'unacknowledged rivalry' (1991: 125) - indicates an unprofessional identification with Razumov. The collapse of the narrator's control in Part III, as he seems unable to separate himself any longer from Razumov's narrative, implies an overlap, a 'sudden dissolution of the structural border-lines' (126) that

ultimately undermines the authority of his analysis.

On the other hand, the narrator is emphatically *not* a psychoanalyst. His inability to understand the cathartic effect of words - 'What sort of peace [...] Razumov expected to find in the writing up of his record it passeth my understanding to guess' (5) - combined with his intention to destroy/repress Razumov's letter, emphasises his disassociation from the predominantly language-based practice of psychoanalysis. Moreover, in Freudian psychoanalysis, 'eyes' - western or otherwise - are taken out of the equation, as described in 'Parapraxes':

In medical training you are accustomed to *see* things [...] In psychoanalysis, alas, everything is different. Nothing takes place [...] but an interchange of words between the patient and the analyst. The patient talks, tells of his past experiences and present impressions, complains, confesses to his wishes and his emotional impulses. (XV: 16-17)

Although Razumov is noticeably unforthcoming to the narrator, he is in desperate need of a sympathetic ear: 'I want to be understood' (39). The narrator, for all his professed curiosity, is not prepared to listen:

What vision of all the horrors that can be seen in his hopeless country had come suddenly to haunt his brain? If it were anything connected with the fate of Victor Haldin, then I hoped earnestly he would keep it to himself for ever. (196)

Without an analyst, Razumov acts independently, revealing the truth at Laspara's revolutionary gathering in semi-deranged fashion. The consequences of this cathartic process are far less optimistic than Freud's, as the 'talking cure' leads not to acceptance, but to a brutal maiming. With no one to go to, Razumov destroys himself. That he not only embraces his maiming, but is subsequently hit by a tram, seems finally

to parody the medical demand for physical symptoms. Likewise, that he is accepted as an individual only after he is differentiated as an invalid, makes a mockery of the humanistic claims of both Autocratic and Revolutionary Russia.

Razumov's collapse was echoed by Conrad's own in 1910, when he suffered a complete physical and mental breakdown, diagnosed by Meyer as Infection-Exhaustion Psychosis. The psychological impact was summarised by Jessie in a letter to David Meldrum of 1910:

The novel is finished, but the penalty has to be paid. Months of nervous strain have ended in a complete nervous breakdown [...]
There is the MS complete but uncorrected and his fierce refusal to let even I touch it. It lays on a table at the foot of his bed and he lives mixed up in the scenes and holds converse with the characters [...]
he, who is usually so depressed by illness, maintains he is not ill, and accuses the Dr and I of trying to put him into an asylum. (Cited in Cox 1981: 40)

Although her words describe a recurrent pattern of psychological achievement and decline, they also imply a new psychotic detachment, as the fictional world usurped the real. Meanwhile, in her role of nurse, Jessie strikingly resembles Tekla, whom Conrad finally selected as Razumov's companion. An unlikely coincidence, the parallel indicates either that Conrad became too involved in his work, letting reality mimic art, or *vice versa*, that art absorbed elements from his own life. The choice of a maternal companion in this particular novel (in contrast to his more romantically-oriented other works) thereby reinforces his own choice of Jessie. As he told Galsworthy during the writing of the novel: 'If it wasn't for dear Jess - well I don't know' (CL4: 306). Thus Conrad appears to have made the same choices as his protagonist: rejecting any

political involvement, defiantly claiming his independence, and isolating himself in the country with his maternal surrogate. Such a cosy domestic conclusion, however, is undercut by the fact that Conrad revised the original draft, arguably suggesting that he self-consciously altered the novel. Ironically, the reader is only allowed access to the narrator's censored version of the 'real' story. It seems possible then that Conrad wanted to tell - and maybe experience - a different story: the darker Dostoyevskian version he described to Galsworthy, which seems to have remained largely intact in the male-dominated Part One. Nonetheless, *Under Western Eyes* represents the last of Conrad's great introspective novels, the culmination of his major phase, after which he is supposed to have recognised his psychological limitations, both in fiction and in life.

- V -

One of the most critically overlooked yet striking themes of *Under Western Eyes* lies in the number of controversial claims made for, and about women. From the narrator's 'no woman is an absolute fool [...] It is my belief that no woman is ever completely deceived. Those that are lost leap into the abyss with their eyes open, if all the truth were known' (185) to Sophia's 'we can't be bribed off so easily as you men' (250), Conrad seems determined to spark a feminist debate. Yet many critics, apparently accepting the misogynist stereotype, regard these comments more in the light of comic interludes than serious observations. Maureen Fries suggests that 'perhaps because of its occurrence in the generally less admired and consequently less analysed parts of the novel, Conrad's treatment of feminism in *Under Western Eyes* has been considered peripherally and somewhat uncritically' (1973: 56). This neglect might also be explained by the hyperbolic effusiveness and hypocrisy of Peter Ivanovitch - 'Europe's greatest feminist' (205) and 'awful despot' (232) - and his patronising statements. Another hindrance might be the narrator, whose stuffy interference

conceals his perceptive, sympathetic appraisal of Natalia and Mrs Haldin's situation: 'They had only that son, that brother, for a link with the wider world, with the future' (190). However, for the most part, Conrad's women live up to the hyperbolic claims made for them, as Jones writes: 'Throughout *Under Western Eyes* the image of the self-sacrifice of three women, of Mrs Haldin, Natalia, and Tekla, is set against the single act of Razumov's betrayal of Haldin' (1999: 64). Moreover, the novel is dedicated to a woman, Agnes Tobin,¹⁶ and the introductory epigraph draws upon a speech of Natalia's, both of which instances emphasise the centrality of women. Conrad also draws on a woman from his past, Tekla, the daughter of his relative Antony Syrocynski (whose boarding house he stayed at in Lwów in 1873), whose influence is divided as her patronymic is applied to Sophia. Finally, Conrad's defensiveness regarding his fictional women is emphasised by his response to a letter from Garnett, condemning his anti-Russian bias:

[I]t is hard after lavishing "a wealth of tenderness" on Tekla and Sophia, to be charged with the rather low trick of putting one's hate into a novel. If You seriously think that I have done that then my dear fellow let me tell you that you don't know what the accent of hate is. (CL4: 488-9)

The 'accent of hate' in this case is emphatically *not* directed against women.

At the same time, Conrad appears to have avoided *any* kind of political allegiance. Rather than championing feminism, therefore, *Under Western Eyes* articulates an opposing idea of misplaced feminism, as Peter Ivanovitch hypocritically idealises women whilst abusing one of their weaker representatives. Revealingly, Peter's

¹⁶ An American poet and translator who introduced Conrad to the wealthy collector John Quinn.

description of his escape from Siberia, aided by different women, strongly evokes an idea of the spectre: 'There are in his book whole pages of self-analysis whence emerges like a white figure from a dark confused sea the conviction of woman's spiritual superiority' (121). Yet his extreme sense of gratitude and indebtedness to his female rescuers has caused an idealised spectre of femininity to usurp the place of real women, producing a disassociation between the imagined and the actual and a consequent inability to understand the real values of Tekla and Madame de S-. After all, his idealisations prove potentially as dangerous as Razumov's deceit, as he too intends to appropriate Natalia. Razumov's self-knowledge is thereby set against the false awareness of Peter. Hence in breaking with the women he cares about, Razumov saves them too from being usurped by his spectral ideas. That he finally sacrifices his love to save Natalia is evidenced by the fact that she survives the novel (in contrast to the original plan). Furthermore, she survives to deliver an after-word as, in her goodbye to the narrator, her protestation of innocence ('please remember that I *was* defenceless') simultaneously admits a sense of culpability, as she reminds him not for herself, but for Razumov: 'In justice to the man' (376).

The final words of the novel, however, are delivered by a feminist, Sophia, 'the most attractive and least exploited woman in the book' (Fries 1973: 58). Her meeting with Natalia provides a genuinely moving moment as, refraining from criticism, she ~~gently~~ supports her, saying: 'It is good for you to believe in love' (331). Her unfailing optimism in the future - 'Everything is bound to come right in the end' (245) - also makes her appearance at the end a suggestion of hope. Moreover, it is she who finally restores Razumov's identity and 'character', telling the narrator:

It was just when he believed himself safe and more - infinitely more -
when the possibility of being loved by that admirable girl first dawned

upon him, that he discovered that his bitterest railings, the worst wickedness [...] could never cover up the ignominy of the existence before him. There's character in such a discovery. (380)

Finally, she concludes the novel with the bizarre, seemingly out-of-place words: 'Peter Ivanovitch is an inspired man' (382). Since Peter's new happiness with a peasant girl is juxtaposed with Razumov's new life with Tekla, her words imply that both men - like Dostoyevsky's criminal - have found peace away from the political world with a loving woman, overcoming their confrontations with the spectre.

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS, ROMANCE AND REMORSE IN THE LATER PHASE

After the strain of the major novels, Conrad significantly changed direction, increasingly emphasising female characters and the subject of romantic love - elements that have generally been considered the main reasons for his so-called 'decline'. Indeed, many critics attempt to defend Conrad against his own later work. Moser writes: 'in 1913 either a new Conrad was born or else the old Conrad began to write love stories, the intended meanings of which ran counter to the deepest impulses of his being' (1957: 107). Guerard too claims: 'Love and even passionate love between the sexes now replace the old preoccupation with loyalty to the community, to the brother, to one's self. But Conrad could not [...] take seriously these new values' (1958: 257). A letter from Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell in 1913 is frequently quoted as proof of self-conscious deterioration: '[Conrad] said he had grown to wish he could live on the surface and write differently, that he had grown frightened' (cited in Knowles 1990: 142). Consequently, the more dominant female characters of the later novels - Flora de Barral, Felicia Moorsom, Lena, Rita da Lastaola and Edith Travers - are routinely labelled one-dimensional and clichéd, with many critics seeming both to resent the new centrality of women and to blame them for Conrad's 'decline'. The female spectre is finally, though negatively, identified as the typical product of an overwrought mind. Yet Russell's letter continued: 'he said he was weary of writing & felt he had done enough, but had to go on & say it again' (*ibid*). That Conrad was undeterred by his breakdown indicates a degree of continuity in his writing and a continued desire to confront, not merely to console himself with, the female spectre. Ironically, however, 'she' has been even further repressed as criticism has neglected and under-analysed the later works because,⁶⁵ rather than in spite of the female characters. Such critical blindness ignores the significant developments in Conrad's writing which arrive when

women protagonists and love stories begin, for the first time, to take precedence over the plight of lost, alienated men, marking a shift from the introverted emphasis of the previous twenty years towards a broader analytical perspective. In the early and middle period love (or obsession) turns to resentment. In the later, it survives, albeit not without complication and resistance, implying some kind of resolution to, and liberation from, the woman problem. This chapter addresses these developments, the extent to which they represent a new, less painful method of self and external analysis, the ways in which they echo Freud's own late interest in female psychology, and whether they signal a redefining, a reinforcing, or a release of/from the spectre.

The 'old' intractable Freud lagged almost a decade behind the 'new' Conrad, finally returning to the long-evaded issue of female psychology in the 1920s and 30s (inspired by an interchange of ideas with Karl Abraham). Even so, Freud clung steadfastly to certain ideas, most notably penis envy and the castration complex, adamantly refusing to relinquish his notion of an inherent female sense of inferiority and debasement (paradoxically, making women simultaneously under- and over-interpreted). Whilst Conrad has been charged with decline, however, Freud's reputation has apparently served as justification enough for an underdeveloped theory of female psychology that, by his own admission in 'Femininity', 'brings forward nothing but observed facts' (XXII: 113). Yet he did concede a few points, as in his belated recognition of the importance of anatomical difference, formerly dismissed as irrelevant and disruptive to his idea of bisexuality (although he still defiantly claimed that, while anatomy does play a factor in early development, 'what constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of' [*ibid.*: 114]). More damagingly, in revising the castration complex for girls - 'we can hardly speak with propriety of castration *anxiety* where castration has already taken place' ('Inhibitions', XX: 123) -

he merely added dependency and fear to an already substantial list of female complaints:

All we need to do is to make a slight modification in our description of their [girls'] determinant of anxiety, in the sense that it is no longer a matter of feeling the want of, or actually losing the object itself, but of losing the object's love. (*Ibid*: 143)

He is even more explicit in 'Femininity': 'to be loved is a stronger need for them [women] than to love' (XXII: 132). Nonetheless, Freud became increasingly aware of the problems in establishing an interconnected, symmetrical theory of development: 'We have, after all, long given up any expectation of a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development' ('Female Sexuality', XXI: 226). Finally, as we have seen in previous chapters, he made two highly significant revisions: in recognizing the intensity of the mother-daughter bond, as well as the long-lasting influence of the pre-Oedipal phase.

Freud's late lectures - his last attempts to conquer the 'dark continent' - ultimately contradict any notion of proto-feminism. Despite his liberal views on divorce and homosexuality, his awareness of political movements such as the Viennese Women's Democratic Association (founded in 1848) and his large acquaintance of female analysts, Freud's opinions remained rooted in Victorian ideals of female domesticity. Whereas Conrad was generally ambivalent towards feminism, Freud openly criticised it, considering it of benefit only to the minority and arguing that women were too burdened with the trials of childbirth to enter the working world. Hence his writing appears simultaneously innovative and outdated, as Breger summarises: 'By the 1920s, Freud was not openly espousing his old beliefs about the physiological or intellectual inferiority of women, but the essence of these ideas persisted in his theories in a new guise' (2000: 337). A key reason, Breger suggests, was that '[h]e did not keep up with

developments in other scientific fields once he left physiological research for psychoanalysis' (*ibid*). Yet in 'Femininity' Freud implicitly conceded defeat, as he finally defined male/female psychological difference as a question beyond his understanding: 'If you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information' (XXII: 135). In consequence, this final chapter turns to art and Conrad, looking to his fiction to move beyond the limitations of Freudian psychoanalysis.

- I -

The beginning of Conrad's 'decline' has generally been attributed to *Chance*, a novel that inspires widely divergent responses. The *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad* describes it as 'complex even by Conradian standards', adding that 'there is no agreement among critics as to its proper place in his canon' (2000: 58). Although typically fragmented and meandering, it marks a somewhat radical departure for Conrad, containing not only his first female protagonist, but even conforming to a traditional, Victorian marriage-plot. It is also considered his most shrewdly populist novel, a romance written to attract an expanding and lucrative female audience. In a letter to Pinker (to whom he was deeply in debt) he seems to admit as much, dismissively calling it 'the sort of stuff that *may* have a chance with the public. All of it about a girl and with a steady run of references to women in general all along [...] it ought to go down' (CL5: 208). The use of the word 'chance' in this context may indicate that Conrad considered himself to be taking a commercial 'chance'; whilst the character of de Barral might represent an uncomfortable sense of defrauding his longstanding readership. Numerous critics identify a relaxing of artistic integrity as Conrad appears content to accept inconsistencies and imbalances in his text, as for

example, the complete absence of the Fynes in Part II. Yet *Chance* is not restricted to the romance genre, but hints at an experimental attempt to emulate both the introspection of Henry James and the detective format, popularised by writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle at the turn of the century. These associations not only complicate the perception of an exclusively female readership, but suggest that Conrad's inconsistencies might reflect a new, deliberately hybrid, style. In his essay 'Chance: the Affair of the Purloined Brother', Robert Hampson - who identifies a 'literary self-consciousness' (1980: 6) in *Chance* - notes similarities with both Conan Doyle and Edgar Allen Poe. Indeed, the title of his essay derives from Marlow's own words, themselves evocative (as Hampson argues) of Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' (1844), a connection reinforced by the mysterious contents of Flora's letter regarding the 'purloined brother' in *Chance*. The detective genre might also be regarded as the literary equivalent of psychoanalysis as, having developed contemporaneously, they both seek to decode abnormalities, such as slips and parapraxes, in language. In selecting a heroine/hysteric as his protagonist, Conrad himself made an association between women and detection/analysis, making *Chance* a consistent example of this conjunction.

Chance also represents the fourth and final appearance of Conrad's most famous narrator, Marlow, now a retired seaman engaged, at the beginning of the novel, in conversation with the first, framing narrator and their chance companion, Powell. The tone is immediately familiar, as Marlow and Powell compare memories of life at sea, leading the reader to suspect another male-oriented maritime tale. The first chapter, which describes Powell's master mariner examination, even stands on its own, complete as a short story. At the beginning of *Chance*, therefore, both Marlow and Conrad appear content to indulge in tales of the past, apparently unconcerned with women.

Yet the direction changes abruptly in the second chapter as Marlow, picking up on the name of Powell's ship, the *Ferndale*, and identifying the captain as one Anthony, launches into a description of this man's familial background, focussing specifically on his sister and her husband, the enthusiastic rambler Mr Fyne. Even the narrator is perplexed by Marlow's sudden interest in this connection ('if I remember rightly, you said you didn't know Captain Anthony' [41]), the reason for which is quickly explained in Marlow's relation of an earlier event, his meeting with 'a transient, phantom-like girl' (50) - an explicitly spectral female - Flora de Barral, later Flora Anthony, during a summer stay near the Fynes. The whole of Part I is thereafter taken up with Marlow's memories and observations of Flora, the troubled daughter of the ruined financier de Barral. *Chance* might then be considered representative of a new psychological freedom for Conrad, particularly in relation to women, as Flora comes explicitly to dominate the narrative: 'Having confronted the ghosts of his Polish life and the loss of his mother, Conrad produced the first novel in which a woman finally achieves the status of the mysterious and "unknowable" Conradian hero' (Jones 1999: 68).

Marlow's sudden interest in Anthony and Flora recalls the psychoanalytic stress on memories and the past, with Powell's story uncovering some repressed emotions, as the narrator observes: 'This chance meeting with a man who had sailed with Captain Anthony had revived it [Marlow's curiosity]' (40). Yet Marlow's controlling narrative seems rather to place him in the position of analyst. He defends his interest in Powell to the narrator as 'curiosity [...] the most respectable faculty of the human mind' (40), although his psychological investigations sometimes border on gossip. Whilst smoking a cigar (Freud's habit!) he even claims that his story is 'not vanity; it is analysis' (145). Hence his narrative purports to be a prolonged analysis of female psychology, with the unusual Flora serving as a model of the hysteric. Yet Marlow's tone is controversial,

presumptuous, and misogynistic, as evidenced by the description of his first meeting with Flora, in which he dwells largely upon his own shocked, confused and dismissive reactions. Disturbingly, he seems to enjoy the weakness and passivity of his patient: 'She looked unhappy. And - I don't know how to say it - well - it suited her. The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glance! A victim' (45-6). Worse still, instead of helping, he forgets the situation entirely, leaving for London and returning to the country only after Flora has eloped with Anthony. Later, he even admits to Fyne that he had no suspicion of suicidal tendencies. Thereafter, and despite his persistently confident tone, he is nowhere near Flora during the main events of the novel. Accordingly, Marlow's narrative resembles a kind of patchwork as he attempts to piece together her story through the memories of other characters, irresponsibly analysing her at second-hand. Such indirect analysis also implies that he is less interested in Flora herself than in appeasing the spectre of her in his own mind. Ironically, having dismissed Flora so early, he spends the remainder of the novel attempting to glean information about, and have another conversation with her (meeting her face-to-face on only two further occasions). That he cannot get at her, as Flora persistently evades analysis, emphasises the limitations of his understanding. Hence Marlow's complacent early interpretation illustrates both an underestimation of female influence and the potential fallibility and bias of the analyst. His increasingly obsessive need to reconstruct her story indicates an attempt to reassure himself - again, not her - in the face of his failure and ignorance. Marlow, not Flora, proves to be the real neurotic patient of *Chance*.

Marlow's meeting with Flora prior to her embarkation on the *Ferndale* signals the end of his experience and the beginning of Powell's. Yet Part II is narrated by Powell only indirectly as Marlow maintains narrative/analytical control, retelling the story to the

narrator. He hints that Powell is suffering from repression: 'Powell was friendly but elusive. I don't think he ever wanted to avoid me. But it is a fact that he used to disappear out of the river in a very mysterious manner sometimes' (257-8). In tracking him upriver, he evokes a journey through the mind, a metaphorical analysis: 'I chased the mystery of the vanishing Powell dreamily' (258). Yet the narrative implies that Powell is deliberately hiding from Marlow, thereby exposing the intrusiveness of the - in this case, unwanted - analyst. The idea of tracking further suggests a frontiersman/pioneer, as the narrator comments - 'This is like one of those Redskin stories where the noble savages carry off a girl and the honest backwoodsman with his incomparable knowledge follows the track' (311)¹ - although Marlow's sense of serious tracking/analysis is undermined by his initial discovery, not of Powell, but of a cow. Furthermore, his monopolising narrative is made more discomfiting by a tendency to embellish events, as when he 'repeats' conversations which Powell could not possibly have overheard: for example, that between Anthony and Flora immediately after their wedding. Nonetheless, Marlow seems proud of himself:

I haven't failed. I own though that for a time I was puzzled [...] I'll admit that for some time the old-maiden-lady-like occupation of putting two and two together failed to procure a coherent theory. I am speaking now as an investigator - a man of deductions. (325-6)

Marlow's egotistical 'curiosity' as 'an investigator' results only in a series of speculations. Psychological reasoning in *Chance* has lost all sense of objectivity, as the analyst cannot properly discriminate between bias, conjecture and truth.

¹ Hampson identifies this allusion as another example of Conrad's literary self-consciousness, recalling the favoured Fenimore Cooper 'Leatherstocking' novels of his youth. He also identifies a parallel between the adventure and detective genres: 'The obvious connection [...] is that each involves a hero who can follow tracks and read signs - in short, a hero who can interpret' (9).

On the other hand, Marlow's obsessive interest in Flora is not unusual, as nearly all the characters in the novel vie for control over her. Although her name, like that of Jewel in *Lord Jim*, evokes connotations of femininity in Freudian dream-symbolism, such as flowering and growth, she is a late bloomer, stunted by the traumatic effects of her childhood. Resembling a spectre in both her wasted appearance and sullen, forlorn manner, she stirs the preconscious of others, awakening repressed desires. Hence she becomes a focus for neurosis and displacement, as other characters attempt to shape her into their own versions of the spectre. De Barral demands the attention he ignored in her childhood, Mrs Fyne seeks to mould her into a paragon of feminism, whilst Anthony proves worryingly akin to Marlow, sharing the same disturbing reaction to her pale unhappiness: 'When he saw the white-faced restless Flora drifting like a lost thing along the road he put his pipe in his pocket and called out "Good morning, Miss Smith" in a tone of amazing happiness' (223). Disturbingly, Anthony's attraction is described as 'spontaneous, perverse and exciting' (224). He not only persistently misinterprets Flora, but does not even ask about her feelings towards him, forcing her into further psychological isolation. Jones identifies a 'vast structure of surveillance' (1999: 118) that threatens to imprison Flora, whilst Nadelhaft condemns the endemic male hypocrisy: 'Each [man] is portrayed, or portrays himself, as wholly devoted to the welfare of Flora, while among them they virtually torture her with reminders of her neediness, her dependency and her fragility' (1991: 110). Indeed, Conrad's evocation of other writers - such as Charles Dickens (de Barral seeming a descendent of Murdle in *Little Dorrit* [1857]),² Wilkie Collins (Flora evoking the eponymous heroine of *The Woman in White* [1868]) and Coventry Patmore (Carleon Anthony paralleling the author of 'The Angel in the House') - reinforces the notion of a universal desire to

² Popular interest in ruined financiers is also evidenced by Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1874-5) and the tyrannical character of Melmotte.

control Flora's story, deny her individuality and even enact psychological experiments.

Marlow's authority is further complicated by the unnamed presiding narrator, who serves as an alternative representative of the analyst. He is distanced from both Marlow and Powell: 'They kept up a lively exchange of reminiscences while I listened' (4). We know neither his name nor his relation to Marlow, but he claims to understand the other man, as for example when he recognises the bond between him and his fellow-sailor: 'I had discovered the fact of their mutual liking before either of them' (257). He also hints that something has alienated Marlow from the sea, 'remembering the subtly provisional character of [...his] long sojourn' (33). Thus it is Marlow who is under scrutiny, not Flora, making her story itself less important than the way in which it is told. Yet the narrator also challenges the activity of analysis, wondering how far complex psychological situations can be truly understood. His question to Marlow, 'How do you know all this?' (264), merely evinces the defensive reply: 'You shall see by and by' (265). He even questions Marlow's motives:

"But we, my dear Marlow, have the inestimable advantage of understanding what is happening to others," I struck in. "Or at least some of us seem to. Is that too a provision of nature? And what is it for? Is it that we may amuse ourselves gossiping about each other's affairs? [...]" (117)

The narrative repeatedly undermines Marlow's credibility, calling attention to his defensiveness and prejudice. In turn, Marlow adopts a superior attitude: 'It's true too that nothing lays itself open to the charge of exaggeration more than the language of naked truth' (80). Nonetheless, his obsessive desire to analyse Flora indicates a neurotic need for control, as do his bizarre, intermittent comments about women, for example:

Nothing can beat a true woman for a clear vision of reality; I would say a cynical vision if I were not afraid of wounding your chivalrous feelings - for which, by the by, women are not so grateful as you may think, to fellows of your kind... (281)

The secondary narrator illustrates the problem of bias and the ways in which the analyst can deliberately blind himself (an ironic twist to the Oedipus tale), refusing to acknowledge his own neurosis. Conversely, 'fellows of your kind' suggests a distinction between Marlow and the gentlemanly narrator, arguably implying that it is the latter group who, in persistently idealising and defending women, simultaneously confine them.

If Marlow's misogyny indicates the source of his neurosis, it would seem instructive to compare the female influences of his other stories, in particular, those of *Lord Jim* and 'Heart of Darkness'.³ In the former, Marlow is another outside observer, this time of a man. His voice is less generalising and more tolerant, as he recognises the unreliability of other characters' observations: 'I don't pretend I understood him [Jim]' (76). Yet in Freudian fashion, he still wants Jim to be 'normalised' - to return to 'civilised' society - considering that he has suffered enough for his impulsive dereliction of duty. His analytical confidence is shaken, however, by Jewel, whose manner, 'a curious combination of shyness and audacity' (282), provokes disturbing reflections. As she confronts him at night, asking him to protect Jim and describing her own experiences with Cornelius, Marlow is forced out of his role as observer and made to empathise. He retreats in horror: 'I went back into my shell directly. One *must* - don't you know?

³ Although 'Heart of Darkness' was published first in *Blackwoods* in 1899, it was not published in book form until 1902 in *Youth and Other Stories*, after *Lord Jim* in 1900. Since Conrad also began *Lord Jim* first (though delaying it for a year in 1898) I shall begin with this novel.

- though I seemed to have lost all my words in the chaos of dark thoughts I had contemplated for a second or two beyond the pale' (313). Nonetheless, Jewel's disturbing influence on Marlow is re-emphasised at the end of the novel, as the concluding image of her, 'leading a sort of soundless, inert life in Stein's house' (416-7), undermines his defence of Jim.

In 'Heart of Darkness', Marlow is sent into Africa primarily to observe and rescue another man, Kurtz. As in *Lord Jim*, psychological analysis proves overwhelming; whilst another prototype of Flora, the Intended, refuses to provide the consolation he craves. Like Miss Havisham in Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) the Intended is trapped in her past, re-evoking the horror for Marlow. Her influence is apparent early on in the narrative as, two thirds of the way through, Marlow comes to himself after a long silence with the words: 'Girl! What? Did I mention a girl?' (YOS: 115). Their meeting at the end of the novella even resembles a possessive tug-of-war over Kurtz, as the Intended claims: 'no one knew him so well as I! I had all his noble confidence. I knew him best' (158). Her words become increasingly melodramatic and demanding ('I loved him - I loved him - I loved him' [161]), turning Marlow's curiosity to resentment, pity and dismay. Unable to repeat Kurtz's final nihilistic words, he lies, saying that he spoke her name. Like Jim, Marlow fails to live up to his own high standards of honesty and flees. The 'eloquent phantom' of Kurtz is thereafter accompanied by two others, those of the Intended and the African woman who mirrors her: 'I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also' (160). Consequently, we might surmise that both Marlow and Conrad recognised the female spectre long before they reached *Chance*.

Each of these three works employs the device of an external narrator listening to

Marlow, thereby framing the narrative with another analytical perspective. Yet these earlier narrators are relatively unobtrusive and impersonal, for example, characterising 'Heart of Darkness' as 'one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences' (YOS: 51). Indeed, whereas the narrator of this novella comments upon Marlow's impressionistic rendering - 'to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze' (48) - the narrator of *Chance* incredulously highlights Marlow's more outrageous generalisations. The difference lies not in the narrator, but in Marlow, as Meyer notes: 'By 1912 [...] Marlow had been transformed into a stuffy, cantankerous, and opinionated man, given to sweeping generalizations and particularly to intemperate misogyny' (1967: 235). If 'Heart of Darkness' charts Marlow's recognition of the female spectre, *Chance* opens with a sense of repression and denial. Only the sudden shock sighting of Flora jolts the spectre back into consciousness. Female influences, after all, are at the 'heart' of Marlow's 'darkness' - his unconscious - making his obsession with Flora a symptom of a deeper, longstanding neurosis. Finally, whereas Marlow's lie to the Intended is defended as an honourable attempt to protect her - 'women [...] - are out of it - should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse' (115) - his pursuit of Flora has no such saving illusions. On the contrary, intermittent flashes of fear in *Chance* reveal the opposite: 'We could not stand women speaking the truth. We could not bear it' (144).

The conclusion of *Chance* is made somewhat disturbing by Marlow's re-enactment of his scene with the Intended, in this instance as he omits to tell Flora about de Barral's plot to poison Anthony onboard the *Ferndale*. His interfering encouragement of Powell's suit also seems another example of denial as his description of the other man's alienation from the sea reflects his own (significantly, and in an unlikely coincidence,

they - and the governess's nephew - share a first name, Charlie):

“‘He is fond of the sea,’ I remarked. ‘He loves it.’

“‘He seems to have given it up,’ she murmured.

“‘I wonder why?’

“‘She remained silent. ‘Perhaps it is because he loves something else better,’ I went on. ‘Come, Mrs. Anthony, don’t let me carry away from here the idea that you are a selfish person [....]’

[....] She detained my hand for a moment and then [spoke] in the very voice of the Flora of old days, with the exact intonation, showing the old mistrust, the old doubt of herself, the old scar of the blow received in childhood [...] (445-6)

The pronounced emphasis on the ‘old’ Flora, combined with a sense of emotional pressure, implies another attempt to control her story. Significantly, at the end of the novel she is not yet married, thereby implying the possibility of escape. Indeed, Flora proves surprisingly resistant to coercion throughout the novel, repeatedly and resignedly losing homes and jobs as she refuses to fulfil expectations. Not only does she marry Anthony on her own terms, without waiting for her father’s permission, but it is she who finally proclaims her love for him as he, in yet another act of male egotism, prepares to let her go. Thus *Chance* illustrates the clash between Marlow’s ‘spectre’ and the real woman, as Conrad finally allows his heroine to assert and redefine herself. In so doing, he demonstrates the pressure, not only of social expectations, but of invasive psychological analyses.

Marlow’s patchwork interpretation and dictatorial treatment of Flora ultimately highlights the misdirection of his analysis. Whereas he should be looking inwards, he looks outwards in an attempt to control his spectre by controlling Flora. Moreover, his

biased interpretation runs counter to a tale of female liberation; a duality reflected in the novel's two parts: 'The Damsel' and 'The Knight'. Marlow's analysis proves another story in itself, demonstrating that Conrad's interest in isolated, disturbed loners was displaced rather than forgotten, evident at second rather than first-hand. Robert Hampson also identifies a dual structure, as he notes the similarity, once again, with detective fiction and quotes Tzvetan Todorov's description of the leading generic feature of detective fiction: '[it] contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation' (1980: 11). Conrad's novel suggests an attempt to reconcile male and female perspectives (making Flora's impending marriage a symbol of newfound unity), just as Marlow argues that 'light literature' might be reconciled with psychological investigation: 'We are the creatures of our light literature much more than is generally suspected in a world which prides itself on being scientific and practical, and in possession of incontrovertible theories' (261). Using 'light literature' to satirise and dramatise the Freudian debate over female identity, however, Conrad ultimately comes out in favour of the over-analysed subject.

- II -

If *Chance* is an analysis of a male analysis of a woman, with Marlow serving as much as a patient as a narrator, then Conrad's later works demonstrate a further shift in emphasis away from the depiction of traumatic and scarring events to an investigation of how, and how far, pre-existing neurosis can be analysed and overcome. The later novels are more concerned with the possibility of psychological catharsis and normality than the events and emotions that predicate a breakdown. It is also notable that the older, jaded, highly analytical protagonists of these novels are typically confronted and tested, not by an event, but by a woman, thereby implying a resurgence of Oedipal trauma. Meanwhile, Conrad started experimenting with another genre, the ghost story,

popularised by Victorian sensation novelists such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Henry James in, for example, 'The Turn of the Screw' (1898).⁴ This new approach is evident in stories such as 'The Inn of the Two Witches' (1913) and 'The Planter of Malata' (1914), in which Conrad's female spectre becomes increasingly, and explicitly, spectral. Owen Knowles compares 'The Planter of Malata' with Prosper Mérimée's 'La Vénus d'Ille' (1837), which 'offers [...] a highly polished fusion of supernatural mystery, love-complication and suggestively insinuated mythical implication' (1979: 179). This French-based story describes the discovery, and negative influence, of a statue, with whom the son of its discoverer becomes obsessed. Seemingly determined to heighten the association between the female and spectral, Conrad makes his own heroine, Felicia Moorsom, statuesque and intimidating so that, as in Mérimée, the man cannot withstand his obsession. Knowles argues: "'The Planter of Malata' has some claim to be considered as an aggressive ghost-story written for an age which has sentimentally or rationally explained away the ghosts of the past' (184).

Although the narrative of 'The Planter' reverts to the third-person, it focuses almost exclusively upon the feelings and perceptions of the anti-social 'planter' Renouard, thereby giving an impression of the first-person (another potential Marlow). Renouard opens the story a cool, confident analyst of mainland life, apparently disillusioned with society, measuring psychological decline and corruption even in the face of his friend, a newspaper editor:

He detected a degrading quality in the touches of age which every day adds to a human countenance. They moved and disturbed him, like the signs of a horrible inward travail which was frightfully apparent to

⁴ Significantly, the young girl of this novella is also called Flora.

the fresh eye he had brought from his isolation in Malata [...] (*WT*: 5)

Like Marlow, Renouard's self-imposed isolation makes him highly perceptive, though at the cost of his psychological stability. His alienation from society seems a metaphor for repression, as his meeting with the striking Felicia Moorsom is - like Marlow's sighting of Flora - a disruptive shock to his self-control. His first glimpse of her also suggests a solitary spectre: 'He saw her suddenly all by herself coming towards him along the dimly lighted terrace, quite from a distance' (9). Another allegorically and ironically named heroine - recalling the Latin word for 'happiness' - Felicia rarely speaks and frequently takes on more of an imagined identity: 'When he saw her approaching he always had a moment of hallucination. She was a misty and fair creature, fitted for invisible music, for the shadows of love, for the murmurs of waters' (34-5). As with Flora and Marlow, Felicia appears to embody a spectre of Renouard's psyche, forcing the long-repressed instinctive impulses of his id into consciousness: 'It was rather startling like the discovery of a new faculty in himself' (12). In this tale of unrequited love, Conrad investigates the safe limits of self-discovery, with Renouard, like Marlow, switching suddenly from analyst to patient.

Renouard's confrontation with the spectre leads to a sense of division, akin to Marlow's restlessness, as he is torn between his desire to be near Felicia and the knowledge that she is seeking her former, wrongfully disgraced, fiancé with the intention of marrying him. As in 'A Smile of Fortune', obsession clashes with rationality as he tries desperately to retain his sanity: 'Being sane he had to be constantly on his guard against falling into adoring silences or breaking out into wild speeches' (35). Conrad repeatedly stresses this duality, as for example when Renouard describes his meeting with Felicia to the Editor: 'no emotions, but mere facts conveyed in a deliberate voice and in uninspired words' (10). Renouard's refusal to appeal even

to his friend highlights the lack of an outlet for his feelings. Moreover, he becomes neurotically afraid of sleep, dreading the self-knowledge it might bring. When he does sleep, Conrad - in distinctly Freudian fashion - draws attention to the influence of his unconscious as he awakens (in the first instance) with the sense of a ghostly presence:

The effect on his senses had been so penetrating that in the middle of the night, rousing up suddenly, wide-eyed in the darkness of his cabin, he did not create a faint mental vision of her person for himself, but, more intimately affected, he scented distinctly the faint perfume she used [... He] sat up listening in the dark for a time, then sighed and lay down again [...] oppressed by the sensation of something that had happened to him and could not be undone. (23)

The sense of a *fait accompli* recalls Freud's distinction between the preconscious and conscious, and his claim that ideas, having once been recognised, cannot again be repressed. The second time, Renouard wakes from a highly symbolic dream of being led down 'endless galleries [...] lofty halls, innumerable doors' (31) to a statue (recalling Mérimée) of Felicia which crumbles before him. In an apparent attempt to restore himself to the role of controlling analyst, he attempts to interpret this dream:⁵

Very quiet, he set himself to review this dream. The lamp, of course, he connected with the search for a man [...]. In the deserted palace he recognised a sinister adaptation by his brain of the long corridors with many doors, in the great building in which his friend's newspaper was lodged on the first floor. (32)

Unlike Freud, however, he is more disturbed than reassured by his analysis: 'all this

⁵ In 'Delusions and Dreams', Freud describes 'the class of dreams that have never been dreamt at all - dreams created by imaginative writers' (IX: 7), using fiction to reinforce his emphasis on the importance of dreams as the key to the unconscious.

rational explanation of the fantastic made it only more mysterious and weird' (32). Analysis proves insufficient since the 'female spectre' only grows in strength and potency (paralleling Freud's late discovery of defiant tensions in female psychology).

Once again, there is another analyst in the story, arguably a model of Freud himself, Felicia's Professor father, whose lectures are described as 'a European event' (37). Initially, Renouard regards him favourably and admires his support for Felicia. Yet as the story progresses the Professor reveals a hard side, speaking out against the former fiancé and asking Renouard to persuade his daughter against him. Ironically, both men misinterpret each other, Renouard underestimating the other's critical mind - 'Renouard guessed in him a man whom an incurable habit of investigation and *analysis* had made gentle and indulgent' (29, emphasis added) - the Professor failing to perceive Renouard's love for Felicia. The Professor also analyses his daughter, identifying her as a hysteric and criticising her social circle (perhaps a model of Viennese society):

There thoughts, sentiments, opinions, feelings, actions too, are nothing but agitation in empty space - to amuse life - a sort of superior debauchery, exciting and fatiguing, meaning nothing, leading nowhere. She is the creature of that circle. (41)

His diagnosis is scathing: 'Intellectual debauchery in the froth of existence! Froth and fraud!' (45). He also disassociates himself from this society, as though non-complicit in his daughter's upbringing. Significantly, the word 'fraud' - implying an element of hypocrisy - suspiciously resembles the name Freud (perhaps acknowledging the fact that Freud's living relied on other people's psychological trauma). Nonetheless, the Professor twice compares himself to the younger man - 'Like me' (42) - denoting an overlap of character and reinforcing Renouard's dual role as analyst and patient. Thus Conrad identifies a problem of communication between the academic and the patient,

evoking a distinct lack of human understanding. Consequently, he hints that the 'froth and fraud' of modern academic - arguably psychoanalytic - society has dehumanised personal relations, negating the possibility of mutual understanding and catharsis.

'The Planter' stands as a kind of companion-piece to its contemporary, *Victory*. Notably, Conrad often wrote shorter accompaniments to his novels, investigating alternative possibilities of the same themes. Meyer also wonders whether Felicia is another representative of Eugénie Renouf - more usually associated with Alice Jacobus in 'A Smile of Fortune' - noting the similarity between the names Renouard and Renouf, and proposing a prime example of parapraxes: 'the original manuscript reveals that Conrad experienced some difficulty in committing the former name to paper, for on a number of occasions [...] he wrote the first two syllables without hesitation, only to stumble on the last' (1967: 78). Yet 'The Planter' reverses 'A Smile of Fortune' as in this case the woman leaves the man. The seemingly cold-hearted Felicia proves stubbornly determined to marry her former fiancé, if only to make amends for the earlier break-up of their engagement. Privileging her misguided sense of self-pride she fails to appreciate Renouard's love and abandons him. Like Flora she is rebellious, refusing to accept the constraints of male expectations. Whilst these heroines refuse to conform to spectral ideals, however, their heroes become increasingly wasted and spectral. Both 'A Smile of Fortune' and 'The Planter' thereby combine feelings of recrimination and self-loathing in the protagonist with a sense of resentment for the heroine. Indeed, it seems possible that having articulated his ideas on analysis in *Chance*, Conrad returned to his own psychological dilemmas in 'The Planter', revising the past once more, romanticising his attachment and even revelling in self-pity, as Renouard is finally presumed to have drowned. That Renouard is haunted by the ghost of Miss Moorsom's former love might also reflect Conrad's sense of his own past self,

as it returns to haunt his memory. Moreover, it seems possible that by overcoming his residual emotions in this story, Conrad not only protected himself against another breakdown, but was finally liberated to write a novel about love and forgiveness, one in which a woman is allowed to prove herself and her love. The uncharacteristically optimistic title *Victory* might then represent a triumph for the female spectre both in Conrad's mind and his writing.

- III -

If the otherwise intrusive Marlow does not attempt enough self-analysis, and Renouard goes from one extreme to the other, then Conrad's next protagonist, the middle-aged wanderer Heyst of *Victory*, is positively weighed down by introspection. In keeping with Bertrand Russell's revealing letter, Conrad's later novels articulate a need for moderation, as he uses egocentric neurotic characters to express his own self-mocking sense of over-analysis. Moreover, his protagonists are themselves largely to blame for their problematic relationships with women, reinforcing the notion of a male-made spectre. Flora actively discourages Marlow's interest, Felicia never conceals her intentions from Renouard, and Lena does not notice Heyst until he speaks to her. *Victory* seems the culmination of Conrad's many novels of analysis, as Heyst serves as a textbook model both of a neurotic and an extreme analyst, once again articulating the problems of self and - through the tenacious though repeatedly rejected Captain Davidson - external analysis, perhaps reflecting Conrad's own sense of duality. Thus the novel investigates the safe limits of psychological detachment and involvement (with the 'feral' Ricardo providing an alternative warning against the non-introspective instincts), the extent to which the female spectre can be safely reconciled within the male psyche, and the possibility that a 'real' woman might finally escape the imposition of male neurosis and become an analyst herself (like so many of Freud's patients).

That *Victory* is a self-consciously psychological novel is indicated by the highly specific description that opens the novel:

An island is but the top of a mountain. Axel Heyst, perched on it immovably, was surrounded, instead of the imponderable stormy and transparent ocean of air merging into infinity, by a tepid, shallow sea; a passionless offshoot of the great waters which embrace the continents of this globe. His most frequent visitors were shadows, the shadows of clouds, relieving the monotony of the inanimate, brooding sunshine of the tropics. (4)

A common metaphor for psychoanalysis is that of mapping the uncharted territory of the mind. *Victory* is particularly geographically distinct, though Heyst's place within it is precarious. 'Perched' implies discomfort, whilst 'immovably' adds a sense of tension. Since the calm waters around him are 'tepid' and 'shallow', however, his pose appears psychological, not physical, implying a fear of movement and change, even of thought. The 'offshoot' reflects his self-imposed estrangement from the vitality and excitement of the oceans (arguably representing his emotions and the id) whilst the 'shadows' suggest the moods and memories that contribute to his heavy, 'brooding' state of mind. Heyst's immovability thus implies a dubious control of his mental balance. The nearby 'indolent' volcano represents an unknown, spontaneous quality - perhaps the preconscious itself - one that is 'company to him [Heyst] in the shades of the night' (4), yet capable of disrupting his balance. Notably, Conrad deliberately denies the charge of insanity - 'Neither was he ever tempted by the silence to address any casual remarks to the companion glow of the volcano. He was not mad' (*ibid*) - although, by repeatedly stressing Heyst's isolation and discomfort, he implicitly highlights the potential for later psychosis.

Like Renouard, Heyst is vulnerable to assault, as Knowles observes: 'At odds with themselves and the world, both island-dwellers are lured into making a "tie" which shows their stance of detached isolation to be ultimately destructive' (1975: 178). Likewise, Heyst resembles Razumov, being completely alone: 'Not a single soul belonging to him lived anywhere on earth' (66). Yet whereas Razumov is in some measure guilty, Heyst is innocent of the charges the malicious Schomberg levels against him regarding Morrison. Ironically, the result is the same, as Heyst condemns himself despite his best intentions, choosing to remain amid the scene of their failed coal business. The very name Axel evokes the axle of a wheel, ironically associating the stationary Heyst with movement and progression (as does his surname, resembling 'haste'). Alternatively, the wheel implies entrapment in a repetitive, circular pattern, perhaps paralleling the oppressive thought-processes that recall his father and Morrison. The circle metaphor is finally reinforced by his limited sphere:

Roughly speaking, a circle with a radius of eight hundred miles drawn round a point in North Borneo was in Heyst's case a magic circle. It just touched Manila, and he had been seen there. It just touched Saigon, and he was likewise seen there once. Perhaps these were his attempts to break out. If so, they were failures. (7)

Again, the geographical reflects the psychological, with the words 'break out' evoking a prison.

Nonetheless, Heyst *does* attempt to escape. That these rebellions are failures, however, argues that his attempts at self-analysis are either insufficient, ineffectual, or have actually made matters worse. The beginning of *Victory* presents the reader with a psychological stalemate, reinforced by the confused narration, sometimes third-person, sometimes Davidson. On one occasion Heyst even seems specifically to challenge

Freudian psychology, rejecting an investigation into the unconscious ('Dreams are madness [...] It's things that happen in the waking world, while one is asleep, that one would be glad to know the meaning of' [253]), though since it is unclear whether he has already attempted this psychoanalytical method of escape, Conrad is ambiguous as to Freud's usefulness. Moreover, Heyst's brand of detachment and analysis is less inspired by Freud than by his fictional father's pessimistic philosophy, one that evokes another negative thinker, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Indeed, Schopenhauer's influence is widely recognised in Conrad's work by critics such as Paul Kirschner and Cedric Watts, an influence most obviously reflected in the culminating vision of horror in 'Heart of Darkness'. Heyst is debilitated by his own negativity, repeatedly rejecting Davidson's friendship and the implied offers of help and analysis (that Davidson's narration is incomplete suggests that he does not have enough time or information for proper analysis). Yet Heyst is not Schopenhauer, as he is torn between optimism and negativity. In the case of Lena, attraction is tinged with suspicion, recalling Schopenhauer's highly misogynistic essay 'On Women' (1851), in which the entire female sex is dismissed as being childish, vain, silly, immature, short-sighted and cunning manipulators who trap men into marriage and cause a lifetime of regret (a situation Schopenhauer considers might be solved through polygamy). In similar vein, a book written by Heyst's father states: 'Of the stratagems of life the most cruel is the consolation of love' (219) - a depressing statement that might well be responsible for Heyst's suspicious treatment of Lena, evident even at their first meeting when, after telling her to quell suspicions by smiling, he is hypocritically amazed at her ability to dissimulate. Thus Heyst is restrained by the philosophies of others, exhibiting the debilitating effects of a deep-seated social misogyny. Knowles writes: 'it may be suggested that in his novel Conrad can be found wrestling agitatedly with Schopenhauerian misogyny and sexual disgust, these latter feelings partially evident in

the debilitated Heyst but fully obvious in Mr Jones' (1975: 4). Jones in particular is shown to be obsessively neurotic around women. Upon learning of the recent presence in Schomberg's hotel of the female orchestra, '[he] looked about as if the walls around him and the whole house had been infected with plague' (116). Yet Jones is also repeatedly described as having a spectral aspect, being a 'disturbing and unlawful apparition' (121). His paranoid misogyny is reductive as he actually appears to waste away on the island. Significantly, therefore, it is Jones with whom Heyst finally unites to confront Ricardo and Lena, implying the internal triumph of Schopenhauerian prejudice, not Freudian catharsis.

On the other hand, the impassive Mrs Schomberg seems initially to confirm Schopenhauer's negative stereotype of women - 'Her bodily presence was bitterly offensive, because of its contrast with a very different feminine image' (120) - helping Lena to escape and communicating in secret with Davidson. Yet Conrad defends her through his portrayal of her mean-spirited husband, whose surname implies he is a parody of Schopenhauer (both are Germanic and share a first syllable). Notably it is he who sends Jones, Ricardo and Pedro to the island, a malicious action that reflects Schopenhauer's psychological assault on Heyst's mind. Moreover, Heyst's Schopenhauerian suspicions in regard to Lena, though apparently justified as she displays a certain amount of instinctive cunning in her struggle with and manipulation of Ricardo, ignore the motivation behind her actions, inspired by love rather than self-interest. Lena herself turns Schopenhauer's criticisms, for example an alleged lack of imagination, into advantages, as she (not Heyst) perceives their danger and devises a plan to separate Jones and Ricardo. Knowles defends her, claiming that she is 'reacting in self-defence and with the force of instinct common to all decisive actions', and concluding: 'She has a fine instinct for heroism - which, one suspects, might be a

contradiction in terms to Schopenhauer' (1975: 6).

Describing the novel to H.S. Canby in 1924, Conrad claimed: 'It is a book in which I have tried to grasp at more "life-stuff" than perhaps in any other of my works' (LLII: 342). Indeed, Lena herself seems to represent a type of life-instinct. Just as Flora reawakens forgotten emotions in Marlow, Lena's voice penetrates into and invigorates Heyst's unconscious:

That inelegant phrase, by the mere vibrating, warm nobility of sound, found its way into Heyst's heart. His mind, cool, alert, watched it sink there with a sort of vague concern at the absurdity of the occupation, till it rested at the bottom, deep down, where our unexpressed longings lie. (75)

Unlike Schopenhauer, Conrad is also keen to stress her innocence: 'She was clearly unaware of her voice' (74). Indeed, Lena benefits Heyst with a new sense of self:

The girl he had come across, of whom he had possessed himself, to whose presence he was not yet accustomed, with whom he did not yet know how to live; that human being so near and still so strange, gave him a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life. (200)

In Conrad's worldview at this stage a woman proves capable of overcoming Schopenhauerian boundaries by displaying a selfless, instinctive love that stands in stark contrast to Heyst's suspicious reserve. Yet Heyst's oppressive state of mind denies him either her or his own happiness: 'the whisper in his ear, the kiss on his lips, might have been the unsubstantial sensations of a dream invading the reality of waking life; a sort of charming mirage in the barren aridity of his thoughts' (319). He repeatedly sabotages his own chances of happiness, apparently unable to accept Lena's love, becoming too

demanding, deliberately misinterpreting and suspecting her, and recognising his folly too late. Without her, therefore, the last chapter regresses back to Schopenhauerian pessimism and culminates in the final word 'Nothing!' (412), perhaps a direct association, as Cedric Watts observes: 'Like *Victory*, Book IV of Schopenhauer's masterwork, *The World as Will and Idea* (1818), ends with resonant emphasis on the word 'nothing'' (1994: xvi).⁶ As in *Chance*, Conrad indicates that a woman might have reversed the development of male neurosis (a feminist rather than Freudian suggestion).

Heyst's attempts to integrate Lena into his life - his isolated island existence as well as his confused consciousness - echo Freud's problematic process of assimilating women into his Oedipus theory (undermined, as we have already seen, by subversive elements such as the pre-Oedipal mother and the emotionally unstable wife). Lena herself, who 'like a concealed magnet [...] exercised her attraction' (285), represents a challenge to analysis and interpretation. Her eyes are repeatedly described as blank and grey, reflecting an inexplicable, indefinable allure that Heyst is drawn to: 'He forgot himself in the contemplation of those passive arms, of these defenceless lips, and - yes, one had to go back to them - of these wide-open eyes' (220). Throughout Part IV, Heyst bombards her with questions, seeking out proof - or disproof - of her love for him. Yet whereas Heyst and Freud remain rooted in a male perspective, constantly attempting to define and control (Roberts notes a heavy emphasis on sight, as Lena increasingly becomes a prisoner of Heyst's vision), Conrad examines the quintessential natures of man and woman, investigating the very psychology of gender. As the female outsider, Lena is the most observant character, articulating the very problem of interpretation as

⁶ On the other hand, a letter to Noble from 1895 suggests that 'nothing' is a relief and a success for Conrad: 'at the end of your day's work you should feel exhausted, emptied of every sensation and every thought, with a blank mind and an aching heart, with the notion that there is nothing - nothing left in you' (CL1: 252).

she tells Heyst: 'I can only be what you think I am' (187). She proves adaptable to circumstance, withstanding Ricardo's assault and laying her own plans independently of the psychologically-paralysed Heyst. She undergoes a distinct transformation, metamorphosing from damsel-in-distress into an assertive maternal surrogate, capable of thwarting male conspiracies and plans. Her adaptability is further emphasised by the various connotations of her name. Lena suggests Helen of Troy and Mary Magdalen. Her original name, moreover, is Alma, meaning 'soul' in Latin and Spanish. Thus the woman is the most psychologically adaptable, an underestimated element both on the island and in Freudian theory.

Heyst's maddening passivity following the arrival of Jones, Ricardo and Pedro stands in marked contrast to Lena's active plotting. Yet Lena's desire to prove herself to Heyst is similarly frustrating as Conrad emphasises her lack of resistance to his oppressive regime, blaming 'a woman's vanity in self-sacrifice' (314). She proves as much to blame for events as Heyst, as, in seeking love, she becomes equally demanding:

A great vagueness enveloped her impressions, but all her energy was concentrated on the struggle that she wanted to take upon herself, in a great exaltation of love and self-sacrifice, which is woman's sublime faculty [...] leaving him nothing, not even the knowledge of what she did, if that were possible. (317)

The repetition of 'nothing' as the last word in the novel ominously implies that she does indeed take everything from Heyst. Conversely, as Lena becomes increasingly maternal, there is a disturbing sense that she is being manipulated into this role by Heyst. Roberts claims that the ending of the novel

lends itself readily to a Freudian reading. The 'sacred' white breast, both sexual and idealized, suggests that fantasy body of the mother,

the perfect, the unattainable object of desire, while the small black hole, unmarred by blood, suggests the female genitals, fearfully associated with death and castration. (2000: 187)

At the climax of the novel, Lena surrenders herself for Heyst, taking the bullet intended for him, finally reversing the cycle of female violence begun in *An Outcast*. By handing Heyst Ricardo's knife she symbolically restores his masculinity, adopting the role of the repressed mother. The word 'victory' is attributed to her, not him, as she overcomes his castration complex. Yet Heyst's subsequent suicide negates any optimistic conclusion. The fire might represent a purging of the past, but it simultaneously shows that Lena's shooting was in vain. Haunted by his prejudices, Heyst can only differentiate between the real and the spectral by destroying the real. Thus his words, 'Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love - and to put its trust in life!' (410), imply self-condemnation, understanding through abnegation, and a warning against introspection. Tellingly, Curle called *Victory* 'a great favourite with Conrad', adding that, 'never did he feel more assured that he had done what he had set himself to do' (1928: 93). Consequently, this atypical novel might represent Conrad's final expression and release of the female spectre.

- IV -

In the otherwise underwhelming *The Arrow of Gold*, Conrad further dramatises the conflict between the real and the spectral, as the young smuggler Monsieur George survives his tempestuous relationship with the glamorous Rita to regain his sanity and begin a process of retrospective analysis. The centrality of a female character in this novel apparently makes it a successor to *Chance* rather than *Victory*. Both Marlow and George are swept up in their obsessions with women, yet whereas the former was only a peripheral character, the latter is an actively involved narrator. The secondary

narrator of *The Arrow* serves a merely practical purpose and is quickly dismissed, vanishing after the explanatory 'First Note', in which we learn that the (predominantly) first-person narrative is supposed to derive from George's letter to a long-lost childhood friend. Moreover, whereas *Chance*, 'The Planter' and *Victory* investigate the consequences of a long-standing, deeply ingrained neurosis on the protagonists' relationships with women, *The Arrow* rewinds to the beginning to chart the psychological history of a relatively well-adjusted, sociable youth. Whereas the others are pushed over the edge of pre-existing psychological conditions, George is affected exclusively by a woman, the renowned beauty Rita, who recruits him to the legitimist cause, and with whom he swiftly becomes infatuated. Meanwhile, the story is written for a woman - 'The pages which follow have been extracted from a pile of manuscript which was apparently meant for the eye of one woman only' (3) - and is predominantly about a woman, to the extent that Monsieur George's identity - including his background and real name - are effectively supplanted by those of the heroine. Even the title of the novel focuses on Rita, as do the early experimental titles *L'Amie du Roi*, *The Goatherd*, *Two Sisters*, *Mme de Lastaola* and *The Heiress* (CL6: 185). Hence the narrative not only underscores the importance of a woman in the protagonist's psychological development, but indicates that it is aimed at a female audience (that carried over from *Chance*).

Despite his new emphasis, Conrad was dubious about *The Arrow*, describing it as having '[n]o colour, no relief, no tonality' and condemning it as 'the thinnest possible squeaky babble' (CL6: 164). Indeed, *The Arrow* has few defenders; common criticisms include such charges as a lack of emotional intensity, a clichéd use of romantic language and a resort to stereotypical characterisation. Najder dismisses it as Conrad's 'weakest novel' (1983: 48), whilst Baines adds insult to injury, hinting at authorial complacency

and weary compromise:

Conrad wrote or dictated *The Arrow of Gold* quite quickly and was perhaps ready to accept the first words that occurred to him, instead of searching for the *mot juste*. Then in an attempt to cover this weakness he resorted to set pieces, or lapsed into overwriting and melodrama [...] (1960: 411)

Having articulated a sense of sympathy for women as victims of male perception and neurosis in *Victory*, Conrad might be presumed to have done his best work and to have surrendered to popular taste. Allan Simmons identifies a critical tendency to adopt Moser's theory of achievement-and-decline - 'The critical status of Conrad's late works is mirrored in the fact that they are usually discussed as a group' (1999: 253) - although he also notes the significance of several full-length studies, such as Gary Geddes' *Conrad's Later Novels* (1980), thereby indicating the possibility of reassessment. Hampson and Roberts, meanwhile, propose a change of perspective rather than a loss of creativity, emphasising the new psychological significance of the male gaze, whilst Kirschner wonders whether the belated dominance of female characters might represent a distancing device, a way for Conrad to acknowledge his 'unlawful phantoms' (1968: 157) without incriminating himself (although he also dismisses *The Arrow* for its 'textbook psychology' [166n]). Thus *The Arrow* may be more progressive, experimental and feminist than is typically accounted for, as Conrad himself implies in his hurt reaction to reviews, which he regarded as 'the penalty for having produced something unexpected' (CL6: 465).

Ironically, both Conrad and Freud are presumed to have changed direction in response to female influence; in Conrad's case due^{to} an alleged mid-life crisis and amorous friendship with the American war-reporter Jane Anderson in 1916, the year he began

The Arrow. With the same colouring - tawny hair and blue eyes - and influential political connections as Rita, Jane is presumed to be the prototype for Conrad's late, romanticised ideal of femininity, reshaping the image of the spectre into a more sensual, provocative form. In his later years Freud too substituted the close male friendships of the past for new bonds with women, becoming increasingly attached to Anna and her circle. To old female friends such as Marie Bonaparte and Helene Deutsch were added Lou Andreas-Salomé, Ruth Mack Brunswick, Eva Rosenfeld, Dorothy Burlingham and the American poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle). These women - like his male friends - were often analysts themselves, thereby inevitably drawing his attention to the question of femininity, as Appignanesi and Forrester argue: 'Little wonder that under the impetus of these women, Freud in his last decades [...] ventured increasingly into a terrain which had previously only been of peripheral interest: the specificities of female sexuality' (1992: 373). Indeed, Freud's later writing not only addresses femininity, but is complemented and challenged by works by these same female analysts - for example, Helene Deutsch, who opposes the idea of penis envy as a 'normal' phase of female development, and Karen Horney, who takes issue with Freud's assumption of an inherent female sense of inferiority and suggests that the boy is afraid of the girl's envy and jealous of her reproductive capacity - making it the first area of psychoanalysis in which his ideas were not dominant. In 'Female Sexuality', Freud even acknowledged Jeanne Lampl-de-Groot and Deutsch for their work on maternal attachment, though he tempered recognition with defensiveness: 'clearly [...] they were helped in dealing with those under their treatment by the transference to a suitable mother-substitute' (XXI: 227). In 'Femininity' he was more effusive, crediting 'a few of the women who have made valuable contributions to this investigation' (XXII: 130), adding Ruth Mack Brunswick to the list. Finally, it is noticeable that the gradual split over female psychology into the London and Vienna based schools of thought was far less

aggressive than previous debates, as Freud, uncharacteristically, accepted criticism on the subject he had so long ignored.

Whilst Freud allowed the question of femininity to be taken out of his hands, Conrad became increasingly introverted. *The Arrow* is arguably the most explicitly autobiographical of all his novels, as he wrote in the 'Author's Note': 'The subject of this book I had been carrying about with me for many years, not so much a possession of my memory as an inherent part of myself' (vii-iii). There are numerous biographical parallels: the south of France setting, the narrator's youth, the shared nickname 'young Ulysses', the shooting, and the dubious maritime adventures already documented (as Conrad ironically points out in his Preface) in *The Mirror of the Sea*. The hero also uses a pseudonym - playfully implying that he *is* the author - in which the surname George, another of Conrad's nicknames, seems also an ironic reference to Jessie's maiden name. George's correspondence with his childhood friend even echoes Conrad's own renewed friendship with Aniela Zagórska, whom he met by chance on his return to Poland in 1914. Yet Conrad simultaneously plays down his self-mythologizing, indicating a reluctance to reveal personal memories even as he implies a coming together of ideas and a readiness finally to address the female spectre of his own past: 'If I took it up so late in life it is because the right moment had not arrived till then' (viii). He even pre-empts the criticism that his autobiographical tone is a mask ('I have detected here and there a note, as it were, of suspicion. Suspicion of facts concealed, of explanations held back, of inadequate motives' [ix]), claiming that he can only explain what he understands; a defensiveness implying trauma and repression. The 'Author's Note', on the other hand, adds a complicating element of nostalgia - 'In plucking the fruit of memory one runs the risk of spoiling its bloom' (viii) - hinting that he was reluctant to over-analyse and spoil happy memories. Thus this elaborate tale of

love and adventure appears incomplete, evasive and over-romanticised, further obscuring the mysterious years 1877-8, during which Conrad is supposed either to have fought a duel, attempted suicide, or faked an attempt in order to obtain money from his uncle to cover gambling debts. Moreover, in a 'First Note' that is a mere appendage to the 'Author's Note', the narrator shamelessly appeals to the reader's sentimentality:

If anything, it is perhaps a little sympathy that the writer expects for his buried youth, as he lives it over again at the end of his insignificant course on this earth. Strange persons - yet perhaps not so very different from ourselves. (4-5)

Analysis in *The Arrow* is complicated by a desire for admiration and 'sympathy'. Yet this appeal might also represent Conrad's emotional vulnerability regarding the female spectre. In a letter to Sidney Colvin he wrote that 'there are some of these 42 year old episodes of which I cannot think now without a slight tightness of the chest - un petit serrement de Coeur' (CL6: 451). The heart is a recurrent association, for example, in another letter to André Gide: 'I hold this book of my sixtieth year very close to my heart' (CL6: 536).

Despite the similarities between Jane Anderson and Rita de Lastaola, the heroine of *The Arrow* can be traced back even further. In fact, this novel marks Rita's third appearance, after the abandoned *The Sisters* and *The Mirror of the Sea*. Although her true identity remains a mystery, Jerry Allen suggests that she is based on the Hungarian actress Paula de Somogyi - Don Carlos's actual mistress - and includes a photograph of de Somogyi wearing an arrow-shaped ornament in her biography *The Thunder and the Sunshine* (1958). Baroness de Somogyi, meanwhile, was supposedly the adopted title of Paula Horváth, a chorus girl discovered by Don Carlos in Pést. In any case, her effect on Conrad's psyche was likely to have been profound since female influence in

this novel is emphatically linked to neurosis and insanity. George is acutely aware of psychological decline - 'I wasn't mad. I was only convinced that I soon would be' (241) - yet he is not the only patient in the story. Almost every man who comes into contact with Rita - from the American soldier Blunt to the old sailor Dominic - is entranced by her beauty. George even fearfully recognises the shared obsession in Ortega: 'We were haunted by the same image. But I was sane! I was sane!' (274). Seemingly, women are not immune to Rita's effect; both Blunt's mother and Léonora admit their admiration, whilst Rita's sister Therese, who looks after her town house, is dangerously obsessed. Rita captivates everyone around her, heightening Monsieur George's awareness of neurosis and potential madness in himself and others. He recalls overhearing a young doctor claim that the majority of people in the world were half-mad. More importantly, he remembers with fear the same doctor's response to the question of his own subjectivity:

When asked whether he considered himself as belonging to the majority, he said frankly that he didn't think so; unless the folly of voicing this view in a company, so utterly unable to appreciate all its horror, could be regarded as the first symptom of his own fate. (273)

In telling his story, George implies, he too displays the 'first symptom'. Consequently, *The Arrow* becomes another retrospective self-analysis, with George serving once again as both patient and analyst, investigating his younger self, as well as the formation and effects of the female spectre.

After all, however, it is extremely unlikely that Conrad was actually involved with the 'original' Rita. Meyer agrees, calling the novel 'a wish-fulfilling fantasy, befitting the daydreams of a man of advancing years, who is unable or unwilling to shake from his thoughts the haunting memory of an unrequited love' (1967: 44). Rita is thus a

Carmen-esque ideal, a fantasy that might better have remained private. Yet Conrad also acknowledges this discrepancy in the text, as Rita has more of an imagined than real identity. She begins to affect George even before he meets her, through the provocative conversation of Mills and Blunt: 'these two men had *seen* her, while to me she was only being "presented," elusively, in vanishing words, in the shifting tones of an unfamiliar voice' (31). His comment, 'I had never heard before a woman spoken about in that way, a real live woman that is [...] For this was no poetry and yet it seemed to put her in the category of visions' (34), places her between reality and imagination/fact and fiction. Rita is a spectre - a romanticised ideal - in George's mind before she is ever introduced. Moreover, she faces persistent attempts - from the artist Allègre (whom Jones compares to Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* [1881]) to George - to entrap her as an object in an art collection.⁷ George repeatedly marvels at her elegant, statuesque demeanour, implicitly associating her with Hermione in the tragicomic *A Winter's Tale*, a Titian painting, even the Mona Lisa: 'She paused with an inscrutable smile that a painter might have put on the face of some symbolic figure for the speculation and wonder of many generations' (211). The emphasis on her appearance is heightened by a vivid attention to detail, as when George notices each item of clothing and makes repeated references to her hair. Thus Rita occupies an ambiguous position, as she herself recognises in a conversation with George:

"I don't exist," she said.

"That's easy to say. But I will go as if you didn't exist - yet only because you do exist. You exist in me. I don't know where I end and you begin. You have got into my heart and into my veins and into my brain [...]" (224)

⁷ Conrad's interest in women as works of art is evidenced by his own sketches of chorus girls and can-can dancers (reprinted in Meyer's biography), which he explicitly withheld from Jessie's sight.

Often cited as an embarrassing example of Conrad's late stilted romantic dialogue, these words also demonstrate the dominance of the spectre in the male psyche. Even as George attempts to protect and revivify Rita he selfishly appropriates her to himself, imposing upon her the identity of a troublesome spectre. Moreover, his words, 'You won't crumble into dust' (104) - though seeming to evoke and challenge Renouard's dream in 'The Planter' - hint that he *does* perceive her as a statue, only of a more durable kind. Later on, delirious at their sudden shock meeting after a long estrangement, he privileges the imagined woman over the real: 'I see you now lying on this couch but that is only the insensible phantom of the real you that is in me' (296). The real person is dismissed as 'a cold illusion' (297).

In Conrad's later works, aesthetics and the act of viewing replace life and living.⁸ Having begun his literary career during the 1890s, with its radical, French-inspired agenda of 'art for art's sake', Conrad appears increasingly to have turned his attention towards the morality of aesthetics, questioning his own celebrated ambition, 'to make you *see!*' Indeed, his portraits of women in *Chance*, *Victory*, *The Arrow*, *The Rover* and *Suspense* are derived largely from the Romantics and pre-Raphaelites (whom he professed to loathe), two movements whose own artistic overlap is demonstrated by the number of shared subjects, as for example, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (made into a poem by Keats and into paintings by Cowper, Dicksee and Waterhouse).⁹ Like the knight of this poem, Conrad's protagonists are emasculated by their obsessive, voyeuristic gazing. Yet there is also a new idea of culpability, as Conrad simultaneously evokes the sinister voices of Browning's oppressive male 'watchers' in

⁸ Jones suggests that Conrad's interest in aesthetics might also be linked to the memory of his father's obsessive gazing at Evelina's portrait.

⁹ Conrad actually read Sidney Colvin's *John Keats: His Life and Poetry* (1917) immediately before writing *The Arrow*, possibly absorbing the poet's ideas on aesthetic essentialism.

poems such as 'My Last Duchess' and 'Porphyria's Lover' (1842). The comparison is particularly fitting for Carleon Anthony in *Chance*, who 'wore out two women without any satisfaction to himself, because they did not come up to his super-refined standard of the delicacy which is so perceptible in his verses' (244). As Conrad's women become increasingly fantasised, so his male characters turn correspondingly obsessive and start regarding these same women as puppets (with which Conrad was fascinated) that they wish not merely to perceive, but to control. Hence female resistance inspires both yearning and loathing, an ambiguity that seems to be the impetus behind Conrad's psychologically abnormal characters, those borderline psychotics - including de Barral, Jones, Ortega, Scevola and the Count de Monteverso (*Suspense*) - whose instability is specifically related to women. Each is more concerned with hurting the object of his perverse affection than with possessing her: Jones shoots Lena, Ricardo attempts to rape her, Ortega comes armed with medieval weaponry to break down Rita's door, Scevola jealously guards Arlette, whilst the Count is determined to punish Adèle for not loving him. The later novels evince a schizophrenic attitude towards women as idealistic protagonists such as George are set against mad, misogynistic villains such as Ortega, allowing Conrad self-consciously to vent his frustrations whilst apologising for them. Consequently, in his late novels, Conrad attempts to come to terms not only with 'the gap between what a woman "is" and how she is represented' (Jones 1999: 49),¹⁰ but with the consciousness that seeks to entrap her. Rather than turning his back on morality - as Moser famously suggested - Conrad begins a process of re-evaluation, attempting to revise his own damaging depictions of women.

¹⁰ Jones also takes this argument further, suggesting that Conrad's interest in perspective developed to include 'the framing device itself', as well as 'the containment of identity within the frame' (1999: 183). She proposes that, in playing with sight and expectations of sight, Conrad's later narratives undermine conventional interpretations, challenging our preconceptions of gender and highlighting the ways in which women are perceived.

The difference between Conrad's early and late investigations into femininity is best illustrated through the contrast between pictures of women in the early novella 'Heart of Darkness' and his last (unfinished) novel *Suspense*. In the former, Marlow discovers a painting of the Intended half-way up-river:

[A] small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was almost sombre - almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight upon the face was sinister. (76)

The image is confusing as, whilst light suggests clarity, hope and truth, the blindfold variously implies confusion and imprisonment, or even a game. Paradoxically, the woman is blind, whilst being an object of sight. Marlow's choice not to dispel the Intended's ignorance - her metaphorical blindfold - at the end of the novella thus makes him complicit in Kurtz's ambiguous painting, ironically reinforcing her estrangement from a world in which she is a symbol of truth. In *Suspense*, meanwhile, a painting - 'some picture he had seen in Latham Hall' - is recalled to Cosmo's mind as he recognises the horror of Adèle's situation, as she is imprisoned and spied upon by her suspicious, vindictive husband:

A luminous face on the dark background - the noble full-length woman, stepping out of the narrow frame with long draperies held by jewelled clasps and girdle, with pearls [...] and yes! He saw it plainly [...] with her left breast pierced by a dagger. He saw it there plainly as if the blow had been struck before his eyes. (215)

The spectre of his preconscious overlaps with the real woman. Whereas the Intended is blind, this woman is aware of her attack: 'The released hilt seemed to vibrate yet, while the eyes looked straight at him [Cosmo], profound, unconscious, in miraculous tranquillity' (215-6). In looking at Cosmo, she seems to imply his own culpability and

guilt, stunning him 'as if at the discovery of a crime' (216). Thus in his last novel, Conrad inverts Marlow's dilemma in 'Heart of Darkness' by allowing his heroine to become self-aware, bringing the 'horror' (216) forcefully home to his protagonist who, like Marlow, runs away.

After all, despite the several examples of male neurosis, the real patient of *The Arrow* is a woman, the financially independent Rita herself. Yet her neurosis is not inherent, but forced upon her by a variety of male characters who - as with Flora - attempt to shape and control her. George himself observes the damaging effects of male attention upon the real woman: 'I took her hand and was raising it naturally, without premeditation, when I felt suddenly the arm to which it belonged become insensible, passive, like a stuffed limb, and the whole woman go inanimate all over!' (93). There is here a reversal of the Pygmalion story as, in a gesture of 'self-defence' (93), Rita becomes a statue in the face of human contact, indicating an element of masochism. Nadelhaft also identifies the negative effects of George's 'tender' love for Rita, 'in his serene appropriation of her female humanity' (1991: 121). Conrad appears to side and sympathise with his heroine, pre-empting Virginia's Woolf's idea of Shakespeare's sister in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) through the words of the domineering Mrs Blunt: 'Such women [Rita] are not born often. Most of them lack opportunities. They never develop. They end obscurely. Here and there one survives to make her mark - even in history' (181-2). Thus he draws attention to the 'real' Rita, calling his novel 'the Study of a woman who might have been a very brilliant phenomenon but has remained obscure [...] What it deals with is her private life: her sense of her own position, her sentiments and her fears' (CL6: 185-6). Although the word 'Study' reinforces the notion of a portrait, the emphasis on 'her sense', 'her sentiments' and 'her fears' suggests that Conrad's intention is more psychological than superficial: to

reveal the effects of the imposition of the spectre on the woman, juxtaposing the 'real' with the work of art.

Consequently, *The Arrow* becomes a tug-of-war between the real and the spectral as, after Blunt's selective introduction, Conrad allows Rita to retell her story to George, describing her chance discovery by the artist Henry Allègre - who adopts her as his muse and model whilst enforcing a state of near isolation, cruelly devoid of emotion (a situation that echoes that of Heyst and his father) - and her new position as his wealthy heiress, beset and blackmailed by various admirers and political supporters. Moreover, in a markedly feminist appeal, Rita describes her own impossible situation, one brought about by men - in this case Blunt - who wish to possess only her beauty, not her or her past:

I told him plainly that to want a woman formed in mind and body, mistress of herself, free in her choice, independent in her thoughts; to love her apparently for what she is and at the same time to demand from her the candour and the innocence that could be only a shocking pretence; to know her such as life had made her and at the same time to despise her secretly for every touch with which her life had fashioned her - that was neither generous nor high-minded. (210-11)

Although her past makes her 'tainted', her beauty and wealth make her desirable and unattainable, challenging male complacency whilst, paradoxically, reinforcing her spectral associations. Rita also recognises her influence, voicing some overtly feminist ideas: 'I begin to suspect that men are rather conceited about their powers. They think they dominate us [...] Yet for the most part they can only do it because women choose more or less consciously to let them do so' (215). In George's final analysis, sympathy for Rita outweighs his own heart-ache. Conrad too empathises more with his heroine

than his hero. Nadelhaft points out that the heroines of *Victory*, *Chance* and *The Arrow* are all motherless, typically a feature of Conrad's heroes - 'The lost mother, so often a feature of the male protagonist's experience, now finally becomes the distinguishing mark of the woman at the heart of the novel' (1991: 119) - a fact that alienates them (like Conrad) from female relationships. Rita's plea for female companionship might then parallel Conrad's appeal to a female readership he did not understand. As Jones notes, even 'M. George's woman reader remains an elusive mystery' (1999: 173). Thus *The Arrow* articulates a sense of sympathy for women forced into unreal identities, prescribed by the spectres of the male psyche.

Yet Rita is not completely defenceless. A dominant image is of her arrow-shaped hair ornament, which associates her in Freudian dream symbolism with the phallus and masculinity. In Freudian terms, Rita has not submitted to the castration complex. Defying Freud's theory of female development, she challenges the men in the novel, who seem emasculated beside her (George frequently adopts a submissive pose). Rita's rebellion thereby suggests the capacity for female empowerment, yet she is constantly beset by male attempts at control. Even George desires her to give him the arrow, the symbol of her power, as a mere keepsake. He remarks on the dream significance of this weapon:

[I]t haunted me - mostly at night. I dreamed of you sometimes as a huntress nymph gleaming white through the foliage and throwing this arrow like a dart straight at my heart. But it never reached it. It always fell at my feet as I woke up. The huntress never meant to strike down that particular quarry. (332)

In a significant overlap with Freud, dreams are recognised as an integral element of male neurosis. Meanwhile, George's words seem to vindicate Rita, acknowledging her

unintentional role in his psychological decline. Yet Rita is generous, sacrificing her weapon for the man she loves, in contrast to the early novels where Aïssa and Winnie attack. For George, this symbol of the 'spectre' restores his psychological balance - 'tell her that now at last [...] the arrow has found its mark. There will be no more dreaming' (350) - although Rita's influence is undone. Indeed, whether women attack or surrender, their power is undermined: Aïssa is unbalanced and alone, Winnie commits suicide, Lena is shot and Rita vanishes obscurely. Women, it seems, cannot hold weapons and escape unharmed as society demands their punishment and ostracism. Thus Conrad's romance is tinged with sadness and cynicism as male happiness and stability appear to rely on female oppression - a telling parallel with Freud and the Oedipus complex. To the aging narrator, the arrow represents a symbol of maturity, making the romance plot - again like the Oedipus complex - a mere rite of passage. In a last rebellious gesture, however, Conrad allows the arrow to be lost in a shipwreck. The female sea absorbs its power, suggesting a sense of endurance and revivifying potential.

Ultimately, George's liberation from Rita appears only to cause problems in female development, as in Freudian psychology. Neither Conrad nor Freud is able to formulate a solution, observing the ways in which women are repressed, not the means by which to release them. Conrad adopts a world-weary male perspective, whilst Freud seems to regard oppression as inherent in society. However, whereas Conrad at last favours his heroines, Freud is contradictory, condemning society for forcing women into passive roles and emphasising negative effects such as masochism, whilst simultaneously admitting no way out of the oppressive Oedipus complex. Whereas Conrad uses fiction to express an ironic, self-mocking sense of fantasy, folly and failure, Freud appears unable to relinquish an ingrained sense of analytical self-importance and supposed

detachment. Consequently, Conrad's writing, being openly tinged with adulation, desire and guilt, proves the more honest, open analysis of the female spectre in the male psyche. Conrad's *The Arrow* ultimately seems a tribute to the oppressed women behind the female spectre, as well as a self-critical analysis of his own relationships with 'her'. The novel thus charts his own romance with the spectre and is implicitly dedicated to Rita, a character both real and fictional, with 'an indefinable quality of charm *beyond all analysis*' (66, emphasis mine).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The governing aim of this dissertation has been to revise a traditional critical emphasis on the men in Conrad's life and fiction, and to relocate attention in a new way onto his women. Hence I take issue with the stereotype of his male protagonists as isolated loners and place them in the context of neurotic dependents, whose relationships with women variously define and undo them. I also argue for a greater interconnectedness with contemporary psychology, specifically Freudian, and a more intense absorption in the question of female influence, whether good or bad, on the male psyche. I suggest that a heightened personal awareness of the female spectre is a point of commonality between Conrad and Freud, whose divergent attempts at analysis have contributed to a perceived misogyny that has, in turn, resulted in reductive secondary analyses of their spectral representations. For both men, the fearful recognition of antagonistic, often violent impulses in male-female relationships, followed by varied and ingenious attempts to control an ambiguously threatening and alluring female spectre, finally gave way to a tentative recognition of the potentially damaging, oppressive effects of their analyses upon real women, and, in Conrad's case, himself. Consequently, it is Conrad who I identify as the more feminist, because more honest, courageous and self-critical, writer.

The term 'spectre' has proven increasingly problematic, as my own interpretation and usage - referring to a spectral image in the male psyche - has been complicated by Conrad's divergent applications of the word (one of his favourites), which he uses predominantly to describe an uncanny character or disturbing emotion. Moreover, since I approach the spectre mainly in terms of 'her' effect on the male psyche, it has

been necessary to divide this study into types of male-female relationships, thereby placing women into somewhat reductive and stereotypical categories. Consequently, there are also a number of notable absences, as for example, Antonia Avallenos of *Nostromo*, who does not fit easily into, or sufficiently illustrate, any one category. Likewise, the need to maintain a comparison with Freud has caused the omission of several interesting themes, such as Conrad's emphasis upon inter-racial relationships in the early novels. The 'categories' of mother, daughter, wife and lover are thus intended to represent typical projections of female identity, ones that have hopefully been undercut and challenged by my investigation. Finally, although I adopt a Freudian emphasis on biography, I reverse the psychoanalytical procedure, beginning with real female influences and applying their possible influence to the texts rather than *vice versa*. Indeed, to be psychoanalytically accurate, it may have been more appropriate to have begun at the end, with Conrad's later novels, and retraced the origins of neurosis to his earlier works.

Although Conrad and Freud never met, and may never have read each other's writing, their complex relationship, as presented in this thesis, recalls the rich and subtle interplay between opposites in Conrad's writing. The several examples of secret sharers, for example, the captain-narrator and Legatt in the 1910 short story, Marlow and Kurtz, Razumov and Haldin *et al*, share typical features of similarity with difference, agreement with challenge, and individuality with a common legacy - oppositions which inevitably evoke that between male and female. The very ambiguity of the term 'secret sharer' - in which 'secret' might represent either an adjective or a compound noun - echoes the tensions in Conrad and Freud's 'secret' relationship. Although both sought independent expression, their common awareness of a 'secret' female spectre, combined with a shared interest in abnormal psychological states and

atypical relationships, resulted in an unconscious kinship, as 'her' haunting presence contributed to notable overlaps in their writing.

These tensions might finally be summarised through a brief examination of the short story 'The Duel' (1908), the title of which suggests a pun on 'dual', as Conrad expresses a sense of his own split personality, as well as of the potential conflict with an opposite. The sixteen-year feud between two Napoleonic officers, D'Hubert and Feraud, 'both lieutenants in a regiment of hussars, but not in the same regiment' (*SOS*: 165), as they are promoted from lieutenants to generals whilst sporadically duelling (five times altogether), might be used to summarise the antagonistic interplay between two writers whose careers developed in parallel. If we tentatively attribute D'Hubert's thoughtful, dutiful temperament to Conrad and (the conveniently named) Feraud's hot-headed belligerence to Freud, then the tale itself might represent a microcosm of this thesis, in which Freud's often obtuse ideas repeatedly interfere with, and cause a confrontation with, Conrad's. Just as Freud forced his ideas upon others and antagonised his opponents, Feraud is obsessive and 'extremely outspoken in his dislike of "intriguing fellows [...]"' (210). D'Hubert, meanwhile, is drawn into the feud against his will, just as Conrad was reluctantly forced to confront developments in psychology, burdened by 'an atrocious absurdity imposed upon him by this man's savage caprice' (256). Sometimes one man wins the duel, sometimes the other. On one occasion they even tie. Yet despite D'Hubert's willingness to settle, and even a brief period of reconciliation during the retreat from Moscow, the two soldiers remain inextricably bound together in an ongoing, apparently irreconcilable dispute. Significantly, however, their psychological bond is eventually undone by a woman, Adele, whose love for D'Hubert empowers him to break free of the feud and retire in peace. Consequently, although Conrad's later works are less exciting, less complex,

and less psychologically challenging, they demonstrate his personal victory over the 'female spectre', as well as 'her' victory for femininity.

APPENDIX: A CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS C. MOSER

Arguably the most important literary study in relation to Conrad and women is Thomas C. Moser's *Achievement and Decline* (1957), a text almost half a century old that has nonetheless set the agenda and maintained the tone of later studies. As I completed my dissertation I was necessarily forced to address Professor Moser's ideas on Conrad's inability to write convincingly about, or to judge relationships between the sexes; his identification of recurrent patterns of behaviour and character relationships, including Conrad's repeated tendency to throw 'obstacles' in the way of marriage, as well as the typical use of two rival suitors; his investigations into the failure of masculinity in Conrad's novels; his suggestion that Conrad could not understand or interest himself in sexual relations; and his notion that the depressed, delusive and desperate older author could not truly accept his own love stories. In particular it was impossible to ignore, and hard to argue with, the claim that the character of Conrad's writing changed roundabout 1912, declining dramatically in artistic merit. In my attempts to prove some psychological value in the later texts I therefore wrote to Professor Moser hoping to discuss how far his ideas had changed over the subsequent years and whether he considered his work to have been misinterpreted.

On Friday, 26 March 2004, I met Professor Moser for lunch at Stanford University. I was hopeful that, as a self-proclaimed 'Freudian enthusiast' (8),¹ he would be sympathetic to my comparison of Conrad and Freud. In particular, I was inspired by his assertion that: 'Perhaps a full psychoanalytical biography could find sources in the life of the historical Conrad for the evasiveness which the writer Conrad reveals when dealing with sexual situations' (5). In fact, Professor Moser was very supportive, not

¹ Page numbers refer to *Achievement and Decline*. Quotations without references are comments made either in conversation or in private correspondence with Professor Moser.

only of the Freudian element, but of the overall revision of Conrad's women, including Jessie (although he also felt that Bernard Meyer was generally sympathetic towards her). He explained that at the time of writing his own thesis, little biographical material regarding Conrad was available and that he was necessarily bound to a purely literary analysis. Yet he also noted that he did not read Freud until *after* completing his work, claiming that his often Freudian-sounding comments were initially inspired by his mentor and friend Albert J. Guerard. Fittingly, therefore, when asked whether he considered Freud to have overtly affected Conrad, he claimed that he presumed the influence to have been unconscious.

Although Professor Moser admitted that he had not read the Conrad canon for a long while, he retained *Lord Jim* as his favourite novel and Emilia Gould as his favourite heroine, whilst also reiterating the 'wooden nature' of Conrad's romance characters. Having recently read *Victory*, he reaffirmed his view of the Heyst-Lena relationship as 'boring' and Lena herself as 'over-simplified', yet defended the characterization of Jones, agreeing that he might represent a parody of Conrad's own misogyny, just as Marlow in *Chance* satirises his sentimentalising of women. Moreover, although he acknowledged that bad writing occurred throughout Conrad's canon, he particularly disliked the later melodramatic love stories such as *The Arrow of Gold*, in which he felt Rita was unconvincing and the characters overall somewhat tired. Notably, however, he remarked that Guerard had discovered some good passages in *Suspense* and wondered whether he might have been too rigid in his earlier ideas.

Most interesting of all were Professor Moser's stories about his meetings with Richard Curle and John Conrad and his friendships with Guerard, David Garnett, Bernard Meyer and Jeffrey Meyers (who, he believes, has offered insufficient evidence for his

allegations about Conrad's 'affair' with Jane Anderson). These stories were particularly useful in regard to Jessie who, he tentatively claims, became obnoxious to Curle only in later life, after her decline into gambling and alcoholism. He recounted John's hostile feelings towards his mother after she attempted to sell Conrad's writing-desk, yet also provided a defence of her in an anecdote about her warm, hospitable welcome to two young naval officers who came to meet the standoffish Conrad. Questioned about the Jessie-Ford rivalry, however, he reiterated Jessie's extreme dislike of Ford and suggested that it was based partly on the attractiveness to Conrad of Ford's wife Elsie Martindale. He further noted the friendship between Conrad and Constance Garnett and remarked upon Constance's love for her Russian teacher Sergey Stepniak, later discovered to be a political assassin, who was eventually run over by a train; arguably providing Conrad with inspiration for the ending of *Under Western Eyes*.

Professor Moser admitted that his ideas, originally published as a thesis entitled 'Joseph Conrad's Surrender: Some Sources and Characteristics of the Decline of his Creative Powers' (of which approximately a third was cut for publication), developed out of his sense of disappointment with Conrad's writing from *Chance* onwards, in which love seemed to represent a key weakness. He also claimed that, although he could not discount an element of recklessness in condemning Conrad's women, he stood largely by his original ideas. Overall, however, he was sympathetic, if not to the actual depictions of, then to the positions of these female characters, noting that their exclusion from the moral drama was of Conrad's making, and not a matter of inherent female weakness. Finally, he mentioned that his famous title was actually selected by Harvard University Press from a list drawn up by himself and Guerard. The concept of *Achievement and Decline*, therefore, was not pre-conceived, but a somewhat belated, considered summation.

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