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Masculinity, Modernism and Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim*

SAH Henretty  
M.A. (Research)  
2013  
The University of Sydney
To Vanna
Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate the factors that contributed to Conrad's influential understanding of masculinity within modernism. In doing so, this thesis seeks to offer a reappraisal and extension of the established, yet tentative explorations regarding the utilisation and representation of masculinity in Conrad's work. From this, insights into the intrinsic correlation between masculinity and the forces of modernism will be offered and considered for factors of textual authority, historical influence and literary significance. An evaluation of Conrad's instigation of the modernist confrontation of complete and traditional entities, such as the enigmatic and socio-psychological perpetuity of the patriarchal or heroic ideal, reveals that masculinity within modernism is resplendent with manifest layers of tension, anxiety and consciousness. Furthermore, the central friction of modernity, being the corrosive interplay between a judgemental society and the conscious individual is shown to contribute to Conrad's contemporary understanding of the performance and appraisal of gender. The aesthetic and historical influences that trigger these archetypically modernist senses conspire to construct an entity identified as the 'flaccid phallus' of modernist masculinity, a definition distilled from research into prevailing theories of masculinity. Conrad's assumed position as a traditionalist and moral conservative is also evaluated, with his understanding of his own literary significance and underlying moral and conceptual subversiveness influencing the representations of gender observed within the later modernists.
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Joseph Conrad's prolific creative output has been evaluated by differing cultural and literary entities that have attempted to exert influence over the critical reception of his texts. These academic conflicts are substantiated by an array of diverse critical assumptions, motivated by differing milieus. Conrad's position as an esteemed figure and focal point for the complex web of 'Twentieth Century and beyond' literary criticism was assured by Leavis' compliment that spawned a form of worshipful critical analysis that became increasingly destructive to Conrad's critical legacy. Subsequent criticisms subverted the celebrated morality and aesthetic of Conrad by acknowledging his skill in writing whilst questioning his values. In these modes of analysis, the 'silent' voices of Conrad became tantamount, with his novels read for their unsympathetic representation of the marginalised, according to the contemporary positioning of the critic. These competing approaches between aesthetic significance and moral alienation have characterised the overwhelming majority of post-modern criticism of Conrad.

Nonetheless, it is possible to merge these two competing approaches. An acknowledgement of Conrad's literary and critical esteem can be combined with the reading of the meaning offered by his marginalised characters. This mediated view reveals that the problematic morality of Conrad's texts functions as a poignant insight into the factors informing the anxiety of contemporary political and social spheres. Moreover, the multi-faceted ostracism of the 'present', as opposed to the 'absent', voices in Conrad exposes a quality in the novelist that affirms his morality as a tentative combination of cautious, concerned, sensitive and ambivalent. Furthermore, Conrad's position at the genesis of literary modernism demands that the reader must consider his role in innovating highly influential modes of writing and fields of discourse, as well as Conrad's other associated social and philosophical areas of concern.
The typical features of modernism, its anxiety, consciousness and nihilist pathos explored within an oppressive urban world, are driven by the larger fact that the purpose of modernism was to expose the fractures of assumed complete entities embedded in contemporary social and historical discourses. Of these, the central complete entity that can be shown to motivate Conrad regards masculinity. The entrenched and contemporary perception of masculine idealism created multiple levels of discourse that penetrated social and political worlds, serving to reify the nebulous entity of archetypal masculinity. As a modernist, Conrad sought to assault the ongoing adherence to a traditional mode of understanding that had the implicit complete entity of masculinity as its foundation. To do so, Conrad considered the interplay between the individual and their world to illustrate the destructiveness inherent to the fiction of complete masculinity within the catastrophe of modernism. This conflict between unobtainable tradition and unstable reality drives the tragedy within Conrad's novels, as well as modernist tragedy at large. Finally, it can be shown that over time, the suffering state of masculinity delineated by Conrad becomes a defining feature of modernist literature, with its influence permeating the works of the later modernists.
Chapter I: Masculinity, modernism and Conrad

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The underlying truth regarding Joseph Conrad is that he was a modernist author at the epicentre of the movement's aesthetic and philosophical maturation. Therefore, to undertake the effort to evaluate the interdependent relationship between Conrad and the construction and representation of masculinity within modernism is to pursue the modernist sense of masculinity in a broader sense. Problematically, the areas of concern relating to modernism and masculinity evoke competing concordant and specific issues of gender identification that feed into complex problems of authorial intention and inspiration. Moreover, these complexities invite considerations of the enduring principles and further legacy of Conrad's version of masculinity. Subsequently, a justifiable appraisal of Conrad's position on modernism, as well as an evaluation of masculinity as an archetype and the differentiation that is the modernist masculine entity can be obtained through a reading of two of Conrad's novels that deal explicitly with these issues; the opus Nostromo and the richly political, yet highly personal Lord Jim.

Reading a text for its masculinities, especially novels written by an author frequently maligned for his alienation of various 'others', is fraught with two chief difficulties. The problem of justifying the
general approach and associated issues that can cause potential offence, either socio-politically or within discourses of literary criticism, can be overcome through a clarification of the methodology utilised in the reading. Moreover, the inevitable issues of authorial intention encountered within readings of the economies and connotations of masculinities can be tempered through the utilisation of historicist models that provide firmer foundations for conclusions relating to Conrad’s position on masculinity. In this regard, an identification of the events and philosophies of modernism that served to inform modernism’s specific masculine identity is a necessity. Conclusively, the privileged position that masculinity maintains throughout Conrad’s two novels, as well as within modernism in a broader sense, is not a consequence of the author’s unyielding application of a gender archetype. Alternatively, it is in the multifaceted anxious pathos of modernism and its subsequent capacity to impact on the understood, such as gender, that the fractured position of masculinity can be considered. This paper will contend that this anxious, fractured, fatalistic, nihilistic and inert modernist masculine form gains a contemporary hegemonic status competing with the historically entrenched, archetypal, aspirational and implied form. Subsequently, I contend that the modernist construction of masculinity, the ‘flaccid phallus’- a state of paradoxical masculine being defined by the valorised position of patriarchal significance tempered by the sever anxiety typical of modernism- is informed by the contemporary oppression of its prodigal relation, being the inevitably hegemonic archetypal masculine ideal. Subsequently, there are correlations with feminist theory in terms of the evaluation of gender identity in relation to dominant or normative measures.

A final consideration of the authenticity and thorough intention of Conrad in creating this new moral and aesthetic entity is problematic, although it is plausible that Conrad, as a modernist interested in the enduring process of aesthetic and moral renewal, resented his creation- the spiritually and psychologically emasculated man. In order to evaluate this question, it is imperative to detail the current understanding of masculinity, the central fiction of the prevailing archetype and the external areas of influence that contribute to contemporary manifestations of gender.
The study of masculinity

Any attempt to explore issues of masculinity, regardless of the field of analysis, requires an acknowledgement of the theoretical and political complexities that resonate through the field. The primary dilemma occurs in the acknowledgment that these issues are still experiencing the process of being tested. This is evident to the extent that no truly seminal, universally acknowledged authoritative work exists as the foundation for all future discourse within the field of masculinities. Primarily, this is because the existing scholarship relating to the field of masculinity studies has struggled against a variety of challenges to the legitimacy of the school and its overall relevance within a present day context. Primary feminist disputes contest that masculinity studies owes its genesis to a politically competitive and highly reactionary stance that serves to degrade the calibre of discourse in terms of the compiled activist gains of feminism. Effectively, this position constructs all manifestations of the burgeoning masculinity studies school as inherently misanthropic. Further arguments that the dynamic of the essential masculine entity has already been established and studied to exhaustion are put forward as criticisms regarding consequence and relevance. The underlying assumption informing this position is that the archetypal masculine form is always the point of discussion, due to its uniformly enforced hegemonic status.

The difficulty of unanimously defining archetypal masculinity, the 'true male entity' that will inform all future discussion, also spawns further scholarly dilemmas. This lack of conceptual foundation causes issues because an understanding of the central model of masculinity must be used as the basis for relativist arguments regarding complex materialisations of the gender, including differentiations and power dynamics incorporating sexual preference, context, ethnicity and class. Perspectives that fail to delineate the central fiction of masculinity implicitly argue that the inferred, almost cerebral understanding of archetypal masculinity is always subjective and fluid, therefore, there is a lack of a principally homogenous form. This position is taken whilst also acknowledging
that the masculine maintains a concurrent oppressive significance against a disempowered 'other'.

The paradox of power and identity within the aforementioned position reinforces the idea that a universally understood fiction of masculinity exists and is therefore definable, with this construct possessing certain recurring key aspects at the nucleus that are given shape by paradigms that are influenced by time and place. Consequently, new versions of contextualised 'maleness' are created repeatedly and require persistent relative consideration against the elusive central model.

It is significant to acknowledge that the process of identifying and evaluating masculinity is inherently ambivalent. The appraisal of masculinity should not be an assault on the feminine. Specifically, the utilisation of the established feminist reading codes is beneficial in terms of conceptualising the dichotomies and pluralities of masculinity. Conclusively, the study of masculinity is not an experience of intense self-pity or self-loathing, despite the fact that this notion is a recurrent feature of modernist masculinity. Instead, the interrogation of masculinity is the act of deconstructing and configuring the paradox of the nebulous, yet understood.

The archetype of masculinity

The problem of completely identifying the central archetype of masculinity has been undertaken within numerous disciplines. For the purpose of this study, the central archetypal model demands definition if it is to be determined that Conrad’s modernist masculine construct was a relative form, informed by the political, philosophical and artistic markers of modernity. Subsequent debates regarding the evolving hegemonic or influential status of this temporary entity can therefore take place, as can the overall plausibility of the modernist trope of the 'flaccid phallus' in characterising varying states of 'maleness' within texts. Inevitably, the attempt to weave the views of differing disciplines into one tangible model is a task burdened by the inexorable discomfort of prejudice,
nevertheless, there are key features of the archetypal form that can be shown to have specifically interested the modernists.

The evaluation of masculinity is an attempt at reconciling the less than amiable dialogue between the entrenched and the fluid. Consequently, this paper argues that an understanding of the continual presence of a psychic and political economy of gender is imperative as this determines various masculinities in a relative sense. Contrastingly, Stecopoulos et. al. contend that this categorisation of 'masculinities' is not meant to provide a stable consolidation of historically specific subject-positions or to function as a collective term for masculinity. Rather, Stecopoulos et. al. argues that the semantic of 'masculinities' functions as a polysemy that denies the autonomy and stability of archetypal male identity. This is because the privileged position of masculinity has been undermined by the continual splintering undertaken by various theorists and social progresses, obfuscating the central construct. To counter this confusion, one could contest that the cerebral understanding of idealised masculinity still contains enough universally understood features that inevitably served to trigger the contemplative anxiety of the modernist writer. Therefore, Stecopoulous et. al’s position is one that implicitly concedes the canon of masculine identity whilst attributing the fracturing to what Foucault would call a series of discursive practices motivated by social, historical and layered moralities or sexual identity paradigms. The similar issue with these positions is that they are arguing for implied and contemporary understandings without truly contesting a defined object. This clearly conflicts with the indisputable utilisation of a patriarchal form that has subtly informed relativist discussions of gender.

The position of the universally ingrained archetype of masculinity is clearly understood within fields of study that consider the visual forms and texts. The underlying authoritative value of the empowered and subjective gaze as a defining parameter of masculinity is treated as a given within

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this subject area. The construction of this subjective gaze is evident in Silverman's argument that the male voice in film is authoritative as it is identified with metafictional origins outside the diegesis. By extension, it can be argued that the male narrator of the modern novel is culturally coded as a subjective authority, empowered by the combination of subjectivity and a clear morality. Within modernism, the execution of this position subconsciously expresses an impotence or inferiority. The core notion of an empowered monolithic entity consisting of a self-determined and confident authority that is universally understood and socially empowered is also illustrated in Dyer's White, which seeks to illustrate how the aesthetic or intellectual ideal of 'whiteness' influences differing positions. The established stance for this text's thesis is that the hegemonic entity, in this case 'white people' as opposed to 'masculine', is not symbolically 'white'. Rather, it requires a rigorous effort to seek a definition of the assumptions that exist at the nucleus of the assumed and empowered. In effect, the 'white' racial group takes up the position of ordinariness in both academic and popular discourse and is therefore proven to be a universally understood construct, a concept that informs Dyer's evaluation of difference and representation. Fundamentally 'whiteness' becomes 'the human race' or, at the least, an aesthetic epitome. The analogous correlation with the position of privilege inherent to masculinity is transparent, as is the silent empowerment of a dominant cultural point of difference.

This consideration of partiality ascribed to a historically dominant identity invites further classification of its characteristics. Grosz argues that the phallus, in both the literal and metaphoric form, becomes the valorised signifier around which both men and women define themselves. Subsequently, it is in this position of phallocentric privilege that masculine 'normalcy' gives rise to varying codes of social etiquettes and the associated assertions of power that are expressed in

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5 Importantly, one must consider the overwhelming significance of the political and social value of the combination of 'white' and 'male' within Conrad's anthology and the ways that the diverse understandings of these two notions can unite in terms of narrative function and the underlying morality of the text
6 Dyer, *White*, p. 3
differing forms. Grosz's position underlines much feminist discourse, reinforcing the notion of a complete paradigm of masculinity that operates as a central means of illustrating a differentiated 'non-phallic other'. Subsequently, the implicit mastery and psychic sense of tradition and reverence implied by Grosz is a key factor in determining the central masculine model than any political marker of deliberate belligerence or subjugation.

Beyond the position of psychic phallocentric dominance, other factors can be shown to comprise the central masculine construct. A possible definition can be obtained from Freud in terms of appreciating an inherent form of masculinity that is universally acknowledged and can be clearly identified as recurrent, ideal and archetypal. Freud argues that the resolutions to the Oedipal complex serve to create 'man', an entity stemming from the development of the 'boy/child' that expresses desires beyond the family unit. Consequently, Freud contends that it is in the unconscious genesis of independence and the aggression stemming from a latent drive for self-determination that masculine gender identity is formed in an innate and normative sense. Despite these claims, Freud struggles with the impact that external forces have on the construction of masculinity, noting that psychic structures of gender are susceptible to extrinsic motivators without detailed elaboration beyond the confines of family. Nonetheless, Freud's attempts to identify the defining parameters of masculinity through a rudimentary erotic and its resolution does reinforce the view that masculinity contains both an inherently motivated, inherited or unconscious component with a contextually influenced parameter. Subsequently, expressions of fierce independence can be argued to be inherently masculine and a component of the idealised archetype. In literature, this autonomy is frequently expressed in the desirable trait of Classical martial superiority that informs many representations of the central masculine model. Effectively, the parameter of Freudian aggressive self-determination grants a degree of universal understanding that allows for the fracturing or shaping of a specific era.

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In terms of the notion of measuring the masculinity of an individual, a spectrum of agency and subjectivity clarifies positions in relation to the centralised ideal. This is particularly relevant in terms of sexuality and identity, where dichotomies of passivity and agency clearly delineate the relative position of the individual within an economy of masculinity. Nonetheless, an issue arises with the utilisation of such a spectrum of masculinity in that the elusiveness of the higher end, the 'masculine hero ideal', is as difficult to define as its antithetical 'anti-phallic other'. Nonetheless, the stigma attached with proximity with this bottom end of the scale can be argued to evoke a sense of the terror of judgement that rules all male actions and their relationships. Subsequent distancing or performative conceits are understood in terms of the agency of *machismo*, taking the form of any contextualised expressions of specific masculinity that are attempts at climbing the spectrum. Geertz argues that these actions are any publically expressed or heavily codified exploration of masculinity that function as an extended metaphor for the integral notion of individualised and active masculinity. Conversely, passivity is shown to be redundant in terms of the social hierarchy. From this, it can be determined that the definition of individual masculinity requires external validation, whilst existing concurrently as an assumed position. Subsequently, a great significance is ascribed to the clear sense of collective consciousness regarding the position of an individual within the *machismo* spectrum. The divergent suggestion is that all individuals attain a certain degree of social agency in evaluating and subconsciously reifying a masculine archetype that is parochially entrenched in tradition. Consequently, the dominant masculine position is of supreme importance due to the utmost aspiration attached to its paradigms, informing discursive usage within other socio-political entities.

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10 C. Geertz, 'Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 420. For better or worse it is significant that Geertz claims the implied anthropologist's imperative within his study. That is, Geertz claims the reflected position of 'civilisation' through the observation of the supposedly un tarnished experiences of the 'uncivilised' in order to draw conclusions about a 'rudimentary' state of humanity.
Further authoritative definitions of masculinity within literature can be observed in Sedgwick’s notion of women as intermediaries for relationships between men.\textsuperscript{11} According to her argument, a defining aspect of masculinity in its archetypal form is the representation of women as conduits for male homosocial desire within the Western literary tradition. In essence, women are utilised as vehicles to ensure the heterosexual character of men, illustrating the central importance of the erotic in terms of affirming virility as well as reinforcing notions of a socially constructed dynamic of masculinity. Moreover, Sedgwick's\textsuperscript{12} associated notion of the patriarchal desire to repress the female erotic is also worth considering in terms of understanding the ways that masculinity is expressed and understood in specific relation to the feminine. Specifically, the expression of the patriarchal subjugation of female libido is shown to be an admirable trait of masculinity that can be argued to be part of the ingrained masculine archetype.\textsuperscript{13} Conclusively, the concepts of an erotic traffic and interrelationship with women, as well as the notion of a contextually understood and socially determined scale of \textit{machismo} manifesting in ritualised expressions of masculinity, are central to an understanding of representations of masculinity because they serve to reinforce the implied and psychic structure of the absolute. Recurrently, masculinity is characterised as differing forms of subjugation and discrimination, as well as being layers that are either aspirational or instructive.

Further conflicts that serve to illustrate the idealised form of masculinity that transcend the clash between the private or innate and the social or extrinsic are played out in the definitions and desirability of certain roles. It can be argued that modernist conflicts of masculinity are expressed through the appropriation of archetypal feminine roles and the subsequent transformation of gender identity that is evaluated by the collective psychic entity. To this end, benevolent attributes such as compassion, tenderness, intuition, interpersonal skills and gentleness\textsuperscript{14} inevitably attain a stigma as they are removed from the entrenched model of archetypal masculine desirability. This is

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid}, p. 12
\textsuperscript{13} D. M. Halperin, \textit{One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and other Essays on Greek Love}, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 84
primarily because these archetypal feminine features conflict with notions of stoicism and aloofness towards intimacy that have been shown to be traits of masculine primacy. In effect, the argument is that archetypal masculinity, despite being plausibly multifaceted, is still institutionalised and reified through collective practice whilst concurrently being almost entirely innate. Mitchell\(^{15}\) describes this phenomenon as the patriarchal law speaking to and through each person in their unconscious. Consequently, the study of literary representations and movements is relevant. After all, the enduring action of attempting to fulfil the requirements of the idealised masculine form is inherently comical, tragic or easily satirised.

Importantly, the example of feminism and its utilisation of the idea of multiple forms of femininity correspond with the attempts to understand masculinity. There are a number of almost universally understood components of the centralised fiction that function as the canvas for all contemporary manifestations of gender. The phallus as the valorised signifier that defines both the 'masculine' and 'anti-masculine' is a valuable principle due to the simplicity of the central construction; being that the empowered possess the phallus. Nevertheless, this is problematic to the extent that the phallus is predominantly a biological given possessing a fluid metaphoric coinage that can be paradoxically dominant and 'flaccid'. In other words, the usage of the abstract phallus as an ongoing point of reference in feminist discourse assumes the evident dominance of normative patriarchy yet it excludes various states of contextual interpretation. Specifically, this can be shown to be the case within modernism. Moreover, the idea of aggressive self-determination central to the resolution of Oedipal guilt is relevant as it correlates with constructs of agency and subjectivity that are frequently attributed to the central dominant masculine form. Furthermore, the paradox of masculine reason and its extreme expression as stoicism and other forms of moral masochism that do not correlate with other dominant structures of masculine virility and sexuality serve to illustrate the inherent burden of conflicting codes that inform the aspirational masculine form. Finally, the function of women as intermediaries for the maintenance of powerful homosocial relations, expressed through

implicit roles of patron and paternal protector is significant. Through the utilisation of these constructs, the concept of the economy of masculinity is relevant, with a spectrum that is understood as a means of evaluating the 'ideal masculinity' of males in differing realms according to the understood elements of what comprises the hegemonic fiction. \(^{16}\) The significance to the study of masculinity is the understanding of two central tenets, that of the hegemonic masculine model- the 'hero', the aspirational, the oppressor, the archetypal and the altogether elusive- and identifying the purpose of its recurrent manifestation in terms of informing other divergent, yet not necessarily enfeebled, forms.

**Later modernist representations of masculinity**

It is at this suitable level of understanding regarding the composition of the archetypal model of masculinity that the task of identifying the contextual aspects that influenced contemporary representations of gendered identity can occur. In terms of modernism, historical movements and forces can be shown to have contributed to the construction of the contemporary 'flaccid phallus' form. The later modernists' unswerving dedication to this model of characterisation and moral dilemma is significant evidence of its existence, inviting a consideration of the influence of earlier writers of considerable contemporary esteem, such as Conrad. In effect, the later modernists' dedicated usage of the 'flaccid phallus' in constructing male characters is evidence of the influential aspect of a revered father of literary modernism. For example, an apparent example of the modernist dilemma and solution for dealing with the complexities of the social and psychic

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\(^{16}\) Admittedly, the rites and rituals of masculinity do not belong solely to physiological men. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study and the works of Conrad the pursuit of the masculine ideal is almost solely expressed within the world of physiological men. This is not to say that Halberstam's (J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) observation that physiological difference does not necessarily exclude the individual from the entrenched pursuit of the masculine ideal is incorrect.
hegemony of the empowered masculine model can be seen in Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*.\textsuperscript{17}

Within the novel, the impotent Jake displays a moral masochism that operates in conflict with his archetypal masculine desire to pursue and possess. His extreme anxiety serves to heighten the impact of his destroyed agency, his irrecoverable lack of virility and the eventual destruction of homosocial bonds. Despite this, Jake maintains the privileged position of masculinity within the narrative, with his characterisation evoking unique sentiment within the reader, sympathy tempered with frustration. Through Jake and his relationships with other characters, Hemingway presents the form of modernist masculinity, illustrating the endpoint of transforming modernist sensibilities represented in eternally frustrated constructions that draw on the complexities of gender.

Effectively, Hemingway establishes the physically and metaphysically incapacitated male that is altogether victim to the rites, traditions and expectations of masculinity as a consequence of the events and conventions of his time. The fatalism of Jake’s suffering is ensured by the cyclical aspect of the narrative, ensuring the permanence of modernist nihilism.

Similar suffering is also depicted within Eliot’s Prufrock in the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Within the internal monologue of the poem’s narrative, the persona affirms his incapacity to take action, effectively incapable of committing acts of minor acts of daring in order to attain minor social accomplishments. Specifically, Prufrock’s antithetical masculine position explicitly relates to the agency characteristic that is central to the dominant masculine archetype. By the poem’s conclusion, Prufrock ends as the pathetic dreamer dooming humanity to share the experience of his failure. This is observed in his final lamentation:

"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/ By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/ Till human voices wake us, and we drown."\textsuperscript{18}

In this, Prufrock’s demise is that of the collective; that is, himself, the romanticised ideal of masculinity and his society. The ignoble and passive destruction of the individual caused by the

\textsuperscript{17} First published 1926. New York: Scribner’s

nihilism of modernist anxiety is shown to be secure in the fiction of the later modernists. A further example of the issue of clearly understanding modernist masculinity can be seen in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*\(^\text{19}\) where the four male characters of significance are all conscious versions of masculinity devoid of the prevailing idealised archetype of 'maleness'. The consciousness of the text in regards to masculinity is driven by the understanding of both the force and oppressiveness of universal masculinity. For example, Carraway's lack of agency, illustrated through the fact that both his relationships and every decision he makes within the text are instigated by the influence of others, reveals Fitzgerald's underlying intention to frame his characterisation through relative substructure of the archetypal masculine form. Furthermore, Tom's brutality and arrogance, which is eventually tested and reasserted through an act of moral cowardice, invites further approbation by an audience that identifies the dilemmas with his stringent pursuit of his interpretation of a Dionysian masculine ideal, affirmed in Tom's virile and eternally physical supreme concept of self. Wilson's lack of virility and social consequence is juxtaposed with Gatsby, the almost Byronic fraud who functions as the problematic hero of the novel. The implied psychological and anxious plight of Fitzgerald's characters in relation to an archetypal set of masculine expectations is the true informer of masculinity's enduring significance within modernism. Conclusively, this 'trinity' of later modernists affirms that the moral, artistic and aesthetic prevalence of the representation of the dislocation of the masculine ideal and the construction of a literary modernist masculine entity. This construct paradoxically maintains positions of narrative and social privilege whilst concurrently being emasculated by extrinsic and intrinsic forces. Therefore, the presence of this recurrent dilemma within the work of the later modernists is evidence of its entrenched position.

\(^{19}\) First published 1925 in New York by Scribner's
Modernist philosophy and masculinity

Nevertheless, to observe this literary phenomenon within the isolation of its later texts is insufficient as it excludes a consideration of the factors that influenced the construction of the ‘flaccid phallus’, as well as Conrad’s sympathies and interests in creating this entity. In terms of classifying modernist writing, it is imperative to consider the underlying obsession with consciousness that typifies works of the era.\(^{20}\) Furthermore, representations of the time are argued to be borne of a nihilist anxiety that is unique to the zeitgeist. Rainey\(^{21}\) argues that artistic modernisms operated as a point of resistance to the instrumentality and alienation of contemporary life and culture that required a compensatory aesthetic for historical trauma and transition. Despite bordering on hyperbole, the conceptual layers concerning the significance of the aesthetic and the sense of catharsis offered by the experience of modernist creation, as well as the inevitable sense of trepidation regarding change and destruction central to a movement that witnessed and drove the passage through the temporal, moral, economic and political fin de siècle are relevant and indicate a correlation between modernism and the situations inherent to anxious masculinity. The suggested atmosphere of suffering subsequently invites the critical reader to question historical and cultural forms, as well as to consider the capacity of literary representation to express the era itself.

It is therefore indisputable that the modern novel had to negotiate between literary conventions expressed through character sustaining traditions, such as the archetypal masculine form, and the principles of the external structures that attacked them, coming from a variety of historical phenomena. Conclusively, the struggle between character and form is the key to understanding the history and place of the modern novel. In this vein, Levenson argues that the most precise understanding of any element within modernism requires reconciling the struggle of Nineteenth

Century characters looking to find a place in rapidly evolving Twentieth Century forms and worlds. Essentially, this conflict is witnessed in the constraint that fictional characters experience as a consequence of the multi-layered webs of contemporary society. This pressure manifests itself in forms of external judgment, shame or expectation that impact on the innate aspect of the individual. These concepts have further associations with concepts of masculinity in its primal or ingrained archetypal state due to the indisputable resonance of an effort to establish a figure of individuality from within the rigid confines of community, despite the pyrrhic nature of this pursuit, a typical feature of the fatalism present within modernist works. In effect, the modern novel is one that represents the individual's effort to wrest an image of autonomous subjectivity away from intractable social norms. Consequently, the motif of exile becomes a conspicuous expression of the desirability of independence within modernism and serves to inform masculinity in all its fractured states.

In terms of the philosophical genesis of modernism, Nietzsche’s influence is expressed most poignantly through his associated theories and works that inform his position on the nihilism that had significant influence on contemporary intellectuals. Nietzsche’s enduring position of challenging established theories of certainty within the civilised world, such as that of the fiction of a pure masculine hegemony within fiction, can be shown to have informed the modern novel. The inherent pessimism of Nietzsche’s philosophy is underscored by his appropriation of Schopenhauer’s construct of unrealised will that is argued to transcend all psychological, political and metaphysical constructs. In effect, Nietzsche argues that this leads to an overt rationalisation of destruction, expressed in the nihilist’s overwhelming capacity to contemplate their own world and the fatalistic sense of inevitable destruction. This spiritual pessimism is usually expressed within modernism as either the climax of obliteration or the more frequent psychological and physical maelstrom that leads to a fatalistic and unsatisfying end. Specifically, the lack of redemptive or satisfying conclusions

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22 M. Levenson, Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form from Conrad to Woolf, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. xii
offered by the modernists instils a sense of morbid perpetuity. This understanding was argued by Nietzsche to be the underlying *amor fati* of humanity. Of specific consideration is the underlying conception of anxiety as a multifaceted force and the subsequent influence this construct has on the contemporary adaptation of the masculine archetype.

The nihilist position is clarified in Nietzsche’s * Also Sprach Zarathustra*, wherein the underlying given of any pessimistic position, the death of God, is reinforced and understood to be an inherent component of the dynamic of the modernist’s world with the associated fear of the escalation of existential meaninglessness. Specifically, as Nietszche argues in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, it is the destiny of humanity to endow value on a world without value. This position defined modernism as the effort to engage with the problems of groundlessness, specifically in relation to previously understood philosophical and social constructs. The implications of this philosophical groundswell in relation to notions of gender is felt through the inevitable bind of the archetypically determined effort of the male to forge an independent identity that is informed by existing truths that, according to modernist sentiment, are concurrently redundant and interminably valued. Subsequently, Nietzsche’s construct of the *Übermensch* and its subsequent allusions to individual primacy and power as the ultimate ambition of humanity can be argued to be a key component informing the understanding of gender within modernity. Subsequently, it can be argued that the intellectual and literary phenomena of the ‘flaccid phallus’ within Conrad’s modernist writing is intrinsically linked with Nietzsche’s philosophy. The decline in masculine significance observed in modernist literature is symptomatic of Nietzsche’s observations regarding the conflict between aspirations for traditionally significant value systems and the realisations of unattainability informing contemporary nihilism. Nietzsche’s influence on contemporary literary interpretations of gender are intrinsically informed by his determinations regarding society’s malcontent with convention. Therefore,

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24 *Ibid, Section I*


28 F. W. Nietzsche, (trans. M. Jesinghausen, and D. Burnham) *Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Third section*
representations of anxious masculinity within modernism are vital to the persistent questioning of contemporary philosophy.

Furthermore, the Nietzschean notion of perspectivism that argues the subjectivity of truth is also a cause for consideration within Conrad’s work. This is because both Nostromo and Lord Jim argue for the burdensome influence of a subconsciously desirable sense of self suffering from the expectations of differing circles of society that are defined by apparent truths. It can be argued that Conrad’s utilisation and subsequent questioning of the ideal position of a certain truth, such as that of the hegemonic masculine ideal, is indicative of the influence of Nietzsche’s principles. One could also expand this argument to consider that the tragedy present in both texts is evidence not only of modernist fatalism, but occurs as a consequence of the anxiety that stems from the enduring clash between the perpetual over-rationalisation of the individual against the impulsive and instinctual. This conflict inevitably feeds a latent insecurity that is expressed in the self-consciousness and anxiety of the modernist narrative and its associated voices. To utilise Nietzsche’s constructs, this tragic dispute is the clash between the Apollonian and Dionysian; the positions of completion and satisfaction inherent in the mental and physical states of humanity. This tragedy is also inherent in the Oedipal resolution, wherein the desire for fierce independence can only come through yokes of responsibility, reflection, projection, expectation and shame. Therefore, the constellation of tragedies that comprise Conrad’s male characters requires evaluation through a consideration of the modernist’s appraisal of Nietzsche’s poignant ideological constructs.

Admittedly, the relationship between Nietzsche and Conrad is hypothetical at best, with no explicit evidence existing within the archives to suggest causation. Nonetheless, the inevitable affinity between the two as central figures of the larger modernist project demands consideration, especially if one is to consider the implications of masculinity as an established truth undergoing a contemporary crisis of re-evaluation. Moreover, it is significant to consider Conrad’s occasional opposition to Nietzsche as symptomatic of Conrad’s elusiveness and sense of irony that functions as the underlying factor of his enigmatic appeal. It is, as Butte argues, significant to consider that
"Conrad’s relation to Nietzsche... is not simply that of clay to its mould; this tangled relation involves annoyance and antagonism, as well as sympathy." ²⁹ In effect, to read for the complexity of masculinities within Conrad and his subequent position within this project of constructing a new artistic hegemonic entity of gender requires a consideration of the contemporary philosophical factors that inspired his sculptor’s hand in forging the aesthetics of both modernism and the modernist masculinity.

**Historical influences on representations of gender**

The theoretical and philosophical considerations that relate to modernism demand a contemplation of the specific historical forces that can be argued to have further informed modernist masculinity, as well as the inevitable connections to the key concepts underpinning modernity, chiefly anxiety in its innumerable manifestations. These issues included ‘the problem of women’ caused by affronts to male socio-political hegemony that were expressed through the emancipation and suffragette movements. The historical view offered by this reactionary backlash correlates with the masculinities theory that espouses the panicked subjugation of the feminine or homosexual as a socially conscious masculine state. Historically, this was observed in the Wilde case and its societal consequences, along with the continuing steadfast maintenance of varying masculine institutions and behaviours despite the potential for social cost. A further example of gender politics can be observed in the 'New Woman' novels and dramas of the era that can be argued to have inspired a collective psychology of unity regarding the anxious state of the patriarchy. This resonance informs the newly hegemonic construct of the panicked, confused and altogether paradoxical modernist male.

Moreover, the resonance of the fraternal idea within modernist civil society, as contested by Pateman\(^{30}\), represents another masculine demand that served to exclude women politically. This can be extrapolated as further evidence of severe masculine anxiety expressed within the social and political spheres of modernity. A further historicised view of the varying political impacts on the representations of modernism can be obtained through the consideration of the steady process of decolonisation that typified the era, a canvas of significance for Conrad. It can be reasoned that this political stance evoked a reflection on the justification of the assertion and performance of patriarchy and invited positions of doubt. Associated points of historical interest include the impact of regional warfare and rudimentary forms of international capitalism, as well as the importance of an entrepreneurial culture and workplaces of commercial capitalism that institutionalised new masculinities within the era.\(^{31}\) Within this atmosphere, threats to previously established patriarchies, such as the historical growth of the liberal state and its underlying reliance on notions of citizenship were entrenched in newer equalities and provided scope for analogous interpretation by contemporary authors.

Additionally, Connell\(^{32}\) observes that the modernist era witnessed the rise of mass elementary schooling and the introduction of State universities and secondary schooling. Consequently, a dilution of previously hegemonic bourgeois or gentry authority occurs within the epoch as education and employment become increasingly available, confronting and diminishing the aura of established institutions. It is in this challenge to patriarchal tradition and the assault on previous assumptions of superiority that problems of hegemony become valid for contemporary authors. Moreover, apart from the recurrent theme of masculine rhetoric shaping the artistic conscience and aesthetic, the primary cause of modernist masculine anxieties concerned vocational identity.\(^{33}\) This can be observed in a recent study into the gender semantics and politics that were the key to German

\(^{32}\) Ibid, p. 78
\(^{33}\) M. Nowlin, "The World's Rarest Work": Modernism and Masculinity in Fitzgerald's "Tender Is the Night", *College Literature* Volume 25 Number 2 (Spring, 1998), p. 58
attempts at nation and empire building during historical modernism, specifically within the navy and merchant marine. Dennis and Beyerchen\textsuperscript{34} observe that during the modernist era, state authorities, liberal intellectuals, social reform organizations and nautical professionals deployed middle-class constructions of masculinity in their attempts to reform civilian sailors' portside leisure and shipboard labour for the nation. They observe that a broader 'crisis of masculinity' around 1900 informed this focus on mariners' bodies, sexualities, comportment and character. This was expressed by reform groups that portrayed their efforts to mould model seamen as essential to the success of German overseas expansion and \textit{Weltpolitik}. These groups created highly-gendered programs designed to channel mariners' transnational mobility into steady flows of national power, capital and culture around the world. Conclusions can be drawn regarding the by-product of this politically aggressive action concerning the social sense of self-evaluation regarding the masculine archetype and its ideal status. Similarly, Middleton\textsuperscript{35}, in his reading of Conrad's \textit{The Nigger of the Narcissus}, contends that through a mimicry of the ambivalence of colonial discourses in the arena of masculinity, Conrad transformed a straight tale of homosocial solidarity in the face of hardship and dissent into a far more troubling account of the tensions inherent in imperialist accounts of male identity in the late Nineteenth Century. Subsequently, one can conclude that the discourses of masculinity are an encompassing component of the social consciousness of modernity and were frequently triggered by the recurrent clash with the symptoms of Victorian perspectives of superiority and repression.

Subsequently, it is within the sentiments of all-encompassing dissatisfaction and subsequent anxiety that the modernist movement shaped its distinguishing façade. Specifically, this meant the creation of a new gender aesthetic driven by the complex aspects of the era. A fictional example of the understanding of these complexities of modernist masculinity that capitalises on the benefits of

\textsuperscript{34} D. Dennis and A. Beyerchen, \textit{Mariners and Masculinities: Gendering Work, Leisure and Nation in the German-Atlantic Trade, 1884—1914}, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 2011, pp. 1-3

\textsuperscript{35} T. Middleton, 'From Mimicry to Menace' in Holden and Ruppel (eds.) \textit{Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexuality and Colonial Literature}, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 2003, p. 135
historical reflection can be found within Barker’s *Regeneration*. By fictionalising the experiences of Siegfried Sassoon and utilising the canvas of war—a key marker of modernist history relevant to the construction of masculinity—Barker reveals a more intense aspect to the fracturing of masculinity that occur as a consequence of modernism’s historical context. The character focus on the conscientious objector as a marker of the divided nature of modernist masculinity gives access to a variety of flaws within the archetypal male construct that in turn characterised modernist masculinity. Poignantly, through the characterisation of Sassoon, Barker is able to provide insights into divergent aspects of modernism, especially those relating to the blurring of gender definitions in terms of roles and expectations. Moreover, the thematic exploration of the impact of institutionalised brackets of society; family, community, class and rank; on the individual illustrates that self-consciousness, anxiety and doubt are justifiably key markers of modernist masculinity that differentiate it from the tradition of the stable and aspirational form.

The notion of flaneurial authority as a symptom of masculine anxiety within modernism is another poignant informer of the ‘flaccid phallus’ position. Specifically, the flaneur is defined as the urban gentleman who witnesses the modernisation of their world, yet lacks agency. It can be argued that the infiltration of urbane softness and associated sensibilities typify the flaneur. This artistic trope is also one that infiltrates modernist literature as the flaneur frequently functions as an extended metaphor for the dilemmas of gender identity within modernism. In effect, the flaneur becomes the impotent, yet politically and physiologically empowered observer. This issue is illustrated in the associated recent study by O’Connell that utilises the non-fiction writing of fin de siècle aesthetes to illustrate the phenomenon of retreat. O’Connell’s central argument is that writers developed exile as a mode through which the marginalized, in terms of gender and sexuality, could acquire resources for creativity and survival. In terms of this study, the predominantly passive or retreating stance

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observed in these non-fiction accounts is indicative of a desire to attain innate significance in response to affronts to an individual's sense of masculine identity. Subsequently, the 'flaccid phallus' observation regarding paradoxical states of empowered passivity is reinforced as a key element of modernist fiction.

The challenge to this sense of modernist masculine discomfort in a state of diminished agency is also found in other late Nineteenth century writers that saw it as their task to apparently make a self-conscious effort to 'masculinise' a culture gradually becoming overrun by the genteel. An example can be witnessed in the intense contemporary publication of 'boys' own' fiction. In terms of exploring ideas of aspirational masculinity, boys' adventure fiction is useful as it is both gender exclusive and didactic, providing its readership with ambitions that give rise to an unflinching and devoted social sense of desirable masculine traits. Specifically, from the late Nineteenth Century a concerted movement amongst conservatives moulded adventure literature to depoliticise and universalise a set of masculine values. Within the wider purpose of the adventure narrative as a text that either teaches or provokes a cathartic experience for the reader, the genre incorporates specific details relating to rites of initiation, encounters with the 'other', the sacrifice of individual achievement for the operation and apparatus of the imperial state, as well as erotic relationships, all elements of the idealised masculine form. The historicised understanding of the function of adventure literature within modernism gives rise to observations regarding Conrad's appropriation of the genre in order to subvert its moralities, a feature of Conrad's modernist ethos. In effect, Conrad's work belongs to a newer body of fiction that viewed the imperial mission with suspicion, effectively forging a new undertaking that detached itself from the naivety of the 'boys' own' model by creating sceptical and interrogative colonial novels that capitalised on 'mobilised' settings to provide relativist observations on societal institutions, such as patriarchy and normative gender constructs.

41 J. Kestner, *British Adventure Fiction, introduction*
Effectively, an identifiable dialectic of masculinity exists wherein the pressures of traditional and modernist value systems impacted on the novelist and informed their representations. This assisted in constructing the underlying notion of a new masculinity that may be then resisted or complicity accepted by contemporary authors. It is reasonable that the sense of 'modernist masculinity', informed by its oppressions and deficits, became a dominant literary archetype within the movement. Nonetheless, the tensions of modernism are plausibly satirised, along with the established hegemonic form of masculinity. Therefore, an argument must be made regarding the intent of modernist writers to explicitly deal with the fractured state of masculinity and their overall role in constructing or challenging future constructs. This argument is dependent on the perception of modernist masculinity stemming from a deployment of an antithetical representation that is threatened by the hegemonic and archetypal.

Conrad's usage of masculinity

The study of Conrad’s position regarding masculinities and modernism has been lacking, with recent focuses on his modernist aesthetic or post-colonial interpretations of his texts taking precedence. This is with the exception of Roberts’ *Conrad and Masculinity*[^42] that predominantly deals with the psychoanalytical dilemmas of the author at the cost of a historicist consideration of modernism. The treatment of Conrad in the present day as an author that operates to the exclusion of a female readership or, as Achebe would argue, a talented author who lets himself down by expressing a set of stale sensibilities[^43], is indicative of his problematic nature. Nonetheless, the obsession regarding the complexity and contradictory nature of the human condition within modernism that is transmitted through the integrity of the aesthetic form of the contemporary novel is a defining

feature of Conrad's authorship. Consequently, an appreciation of Conrad's merits in terms of his position within this mission of artistic sophistication with its accompanying mimesis must be considered for its overall correlation with issues of masculinity, as should Conrad’s use of aspects of social and cultural modernity as subject matter.

Undoubtedly, the experiences of Conrad's life, especially the exile of his family and partial pariah status within England, fuelled his interest in representations of alienation and isolation\textsuperscript{44} that also correlated with the modernist literary milieu. Conrad’s heroes were related to his perception that the world was governed by political and economic forces that were impersonal and morally neutral.\textsuperscript{45} In effect, this observation constructs Conrad as an individual observing the underlying power and political structures of his texts' genesis as a threat to the individual humanity of his characters. To this end, London\textsuperscript{46} argues that Conrad possessed liberal humanist intentions that have been subjugated by the classical modernist theories of the political disinterestedness and aesthetic immediacy of contemporary writers. The implication is that Conrad's narrative voices are richly personal and express his yearning to have his political morality heard. Nonetheless, this conclusion of apparent political transparency in Conrad’s writing is countered by the issue that much of Conrad's characterisation borders on caricature. This is reflected in Conrad’s capacity to be archetypal in some sequences and uniquely ambivalent in others, suggestive of an individual dissatisfied with the desire for categorisation that fuelled the discourses of his own world.

The personal experiences of Conrad, as evidenced in the Collected Letters and other archival sources, give further suggestions of his oftentimes didactic intentions as a writer. Conrad’s earlier, politically charged correspondence expressed dissatisfaction with "newly enfranchised idiots,"\textsuperscript{47} expressing a virulent conservatism that conflicted with contemporary desires for reform. Therefore,

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{44} Roberts, \textit{Conrad and Masculinity}, p. 3
\end{footnotes}
it is clear that Conrad ascribes significance to the politics of modernism. Moreover, in his 'An Observer in Malaya,' Conrad provides a glowing review of a friend and colonial governor named Clifford and his work *At the Heels of the White Man*. The resonance of Conrad's discussion of Clifford in regards to perspectives of masculinity and modernism stems from his admiration of Clifford's underlying benevolence in his patriarchal role, as well as the frankness and honesty of Clifford's writing. This serves to reveal Conrad's own perspectives on masculinity as it was assaulted within modernism. Concerning the atmosphere of modernism more specifically, Conrad's letters to Cunninghame Graham express the rich philosophical fatalistic nihilism of the *zeitgeist* that had infiltrated the *oeuvre* of Conrad. In the earlier years of their correspondence, Conrad describes self-consciousness as an extenuating burden on the thinking classes, reinforcing a sense of Conrad's social Darwinism in terms of his sense of hierarchies that trigger rich psychological trauma.

Nonetheless, it is plausible that these sentiments and their radiating pessimism are the expression of a certain level of irony that undermines assumptions of Conrad's supposed "fashionable melancholy". Frustratingly, it is in this position of elusiveness and richly implied meanings made up of scattered voices that Conrad operates.

Beyond the political circumstances, Conrad's interest in masculinity is revealed not only in his fiction but within his correspondence. In a letter to E.L. Sanderson, his understanding of the psychic aspects and dualities of masculinity within modernism are revealed when he says:

"It seems to me you are just now a lot of worries and are thinking of lifting a tolerable sackful of work... It is more *manful* to recognise one's own limitations than to ignore them."  

The understanding of the codes of masculinity and the hierarchical or aspirational position are both reinforced and criticised here. The metaphoric and literal implications of physical labour are countered by the ambiguous tone laced with subtle ironies that suggest a byplay between the

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individual's reality and aspirational identity. Conrad's insights undoubtedly stemmed from his appraisal of the Victorian cult of masculinity that rationalised imperial rule by equating it to an aggressive, muscular and chivalric model of manliness with racial, cultural and moral superiority—understood through the nomenclature of 'work'. These chivalric codes manifested themselves within recurrent notions of power dichotomies with associated archetypal understandings, especially those relating to gender (lady/knight), class (vassal/ruler) and religion (pagan/Christian). In effect, the imperial and colonial issue within Conrad's modernism elaborated not only a stricter demarcation between the sexes but also a systematic 'unmanning' of minorities as an expression and celebration of the supposedly pure original form. The often utilised realm for Conrad, the transcontinental sea voyage and the microcosmic ship or threatening exotic locale reinforces both martial and physical ideals whilst allowing access to the innate politic of hierarchy that supports institutionalised masculinity.

The significance of the byplay between colonisation and masculinities within Conrad is illustrated in terms of a specific modernist racism that gave rise to the notion that a man could be consumed by the 'primitive' and deny his true, European character, an offensive oversimplification that is both utilised and subverted by Conrad. Effectively, the understanding was that an individual could become infected by the corruption of an outer temptation, reinforcing the modernist problem of an archetype or tradition requiring parochial defence to withstand assaults from contemporary pressure. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn regarding Conrad's utilisation of tropes of masculinity that allow him to present imperialist dogma and associated issues of benevolence and destruction. A dualism that also affirms Conrad's modernist version of masculinity can also be accessed in these analogies. Through the utilisation of these aspects, Conrad attempts to negotiate between his appreciation of literary tradition and his desire to forge a position within the evolving elite of modernist writers. In effect, Conrad is forever problematic due to the fact that he is a particularly evocative, aspirational male voice that is operating within a sphere where this entity is

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under attack from new social conceits. Subsequently, a reading of Conrad requires attention regarding his position within the modernist movement and the implications of his role in creating the modernist masculine construct.

Conclusively, Conrad's famous letter to the New York Times\(^\text{53}\) argues that:

"Fiction, at the point of development at which it has arrived, demands from the writer a spirit of scrupulous abnegation. The only legitimate basis of creative work lies in the courageous recognition of all the irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life..."

The key to the observation is the pertinent sense of confrontation and the impossibility of meaning that Conrad celebrates. It is within these environments that the antithetical construct of modernist masculinity becomes another version of an essentialist and hegemonic gender identity. The temporary nature of this construction radiates to the extent that its influence is the foundation for further gender constructs, entrenching Conrad's modernist masculinity as a feature of the later modernists. Nonetheless, this leaves the reader to consider Conrad's purpose in resolving the modernist conundrum of masculinity. Specifically, the problem of whether he subscribes to the previously established hegemony of masculinity in a broader sense, manifesting in accounts of oppression, agency, power and glory or whether he subscribes to the anxious, objective, nihilistic and fatalistic 'flaccid phallus' form.

Undeniably, Conrad's understanding and representation of masculinity was gleaned from the philosophical and social dynamics that informed his era. These were enhanced by his powerful aesthetic and cemented by the later writers of modernism. Nevertheless, it is plausible that he may have played a less than substantial role in the creation of the enduring trope of the 'flaccid phallus' of modernist masculinity. Alternatively, there is evidence within Conrad's fiction that he was conscious of his creation of a uniquely modernist masculinity. In this construction, Conrad does not necessarily provide moral support for the traditional hero construct, nor does he fully gratify a

flaneurial and passive masculinity. Instead, he stays true to his modernist credentials, accessed through his narratives of multi-layered meaning that are derived from a poignant social milieu whilst remaining obsessed with the modernist cause célèbre to 'make it new'. It is in the effort to understand Conrad’s utilisation of masculinity that the following investigations into the novels Lord Jim and Nostromo will take place.
Chapter II: Nostromo- Masculine aspiration and modernist damnation

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The patriarchal tradition within colonialism and its politics of masculinity

In exploring the dilemmas of masculinity central to Conrad’s narrative, the implications embedded in
the relationship between colonialism and patriarchal ideals demand consideration. Within his letter
to the New York Times’ ‘Saturday Review’ in 1901, Conrad affirms his dedication to representing the
downfall of the hero from the 'romances' by illustrating the abject dangers stemming from the
pursuit of a culturally reified heroic ideal. Conrad’s maintains that:

"(t)he only legitimate basis of creative work lies in the courageous recognition of all the
irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life so enigmatic, so burdensome, so fascinating (and) so
dangerous". ⁵⁴

His position reveals the underlying philosophy and potential didacticism that informs his anthology.

Subsequently, the setting and politics of Nostromo, much vaunted for the strain they placed on

Cambridge, 2003, p. 122
Conrad during the lengthy process of composition, are secondary to the moral dilemmas that inform the social and psychological antagonisms of masculinity posed by the novel's three protagonists. These competing aspects of morality and identity are established through the opening sequences of the novel where Conrad establishes the political and social frames of reference that inform his contemplation of contemporary masculinity. From here, Conrad pursues interconnected narrative strands that explore the plight of normative masculinity within modernism.

In order to illustrate his own perspective on the fiction of a complete and eternally viable dominant masculine archetype, Conrad employs the key features of the modern novel to assert his representation. These conventions correlate with a perspective of masculinity that is anxious and disordered, a significant position for a writer attempting to explore the "irreconcilable antagonism" that typifies a modernist's fracturing of historically valued constructs. For instance, the non-linear history of the experiences represented within Nostromo function as a literary means of reinforcing the rupturing of a cogent and coherent social ideal. Moreover, the ongoing modulation within the novel's chief narrative voice creates the illusion of the reader's privileged exposure to the mediated voice of a narrator that fails to resist the intrusive political voice of the author. These instabilities effectively empower the reader due to the fracturing of total authorial control, creating a metafictional cognisance that reinforces the schisms that underpin the moral dilemmas of Nostromo.

An example of the utilisation of the 'unreliable' narrator and the inherent interrelatedness with aspects of modernist anxiety occurs early in the novel where Conrad establishes his conceptual focus on dilemmas of masculinity by foreshadowing the metaphoric worth of the silver of Sulaco through a platitude regarding the psychological anxiety and manifest jealousy of the mean villagers. Conrad's narrator argues that:

55 Ibid, p. 122
"The poor, associating by an obscure instinct of consolation the ideas of evil and wealth, will tell you that it (the silver) is deadly."\textsuperscript{57}

The cynicism of the narrative voice within this statement is an affirmation of the modernist observation of recurrent cycles of power that allow anxiety and judgement to impact on individual consciousness. This initial experience of tension is further illustrated in the masculine anxiety of the isolated "negro fisherman('s sensation of) envy, incredulity and awe"\textsuperscript{58} in witnessing the defiant smoke let off by the \textit{gringo} adventurers during their pursuit of the mystical treasure. The staticity of the fisherman is Conrad's vehicle for revealing conflicting masculine emotions, inspired by observations of the self-destructive agency of others. In effect, Conrad utilises the phallocentric "upright spiral"\textsuperscript{59} of the \textit{gringos} fire as a means of illustrating the subtle experience of emasculation experienced caused by a position of passivity in the face of agency. Subsequently, the action of the treasure hunting \textit{gringos} in pursuing an archetypal masculine form through their 'hero quest' grants them a perpetual presence as "tenacious \textit{gringo} ghosts"\textsuperscript{60}. The suggestion by Conrad is that the pursuit of a masculine ideal is persistent, even if it is problematic. In effect, the fable-like aspect of the initial chapters of the novel function as Conrad's means of establishing his conceptual and ideological focus. That is, the impact of modernist anxiety on masculinity is shown to be central to the textual dynamic, outstripping other contemporary political, aesthetic or philosophical constructs.

In terms of typically modernist literary analysis, \textit{Nostromo}'s objective correlative is the silver, with the pursuit of this mineral figuratively loaded as a doomed effort to claim patriarchal significance.

Conrad's recurrent allusions towards decline within \textit{Nostromo} conflicts with dominant contemporary value systems that maintain the enduring ideal of normative patriarchal masculinity. The prevalence of heroic masculinity can be witnessed within contemporary adventure narratives wherein protagonists immortalise themselves through acts of heroism. Poignantly, these competing texts

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid}, p. 8  
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid}, p. 8  
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid}, p. 9
exist in uncomfortable symbiosis with the antithetical positions of burgeoning modernist fiction. Accessing this artistic tension by associating Conrad with writers of popular or 'boys' own', Middleton argues that Conrad's novels are an example of a brand of virile fiction promoted by contemporary arch-conservatives. Conversely, it is plausible that the Conrad utilises established frames of reference, such as the adventure novel, in order to subvert traditional morality and its associated celebration of the fiction of masculine completeness. Conrad shows these desires to be menacing in Nostromo, reinforcing the view of Conrad's modernist perspective regarding the irrelevance of intractable cultural norms. Effectively, Conrad's modernist sensibilities demand that the true markers of history are moments of cataclysm or renewal. Subsequently, the volatility and vulnerability offered by the characterisation within Nostromo affirms Conrad's perspective on the complex reality of modernist masculinity. In effect, the novel dramatises the remorselessness of history as a means of transfixing a fundamental reversal of the governing attitudes of humanity.

Subsequently, the interplay of politics, time and fate ensure an eternally nihilistic conclusion for all of Conrad's masculine protagonists within Nostromo. The philosophical subtext that integrates notions of gender ensures that Conrad's novel exists beyond the propagandistic sphere suggested by Middleton.

Nonetheless, Conrad does utilise the uncomplicated morality of the 'boy's own' as a means of positioning the reader in terms of the novel's antagonists, with these characters depicted conducting acts of cruelty, cowardice or transparent abuses of power that ensure an essential 'villain' status. Conrad's traditionalism in concrete representations for explicitly antithetical characters operates in unison with a blurring of moral distinctions offered by the modernist vehicle of shifting narrative voices in exploring the protagonists, as well as the slow exposure of character foibles that are increasingly exposed by external influences that trigger variations of pathetic psychological destruction. Subsequently, the inescapable consciousness of the three central men in the novel delineates a modernist sense of inevitability regarding the futile pursuit of the masculine ideal.

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61 T. Middleton, 'From Mimicry to Menace', 2003, p. 138
Therefore, Conrad offers a perspective of the inevitable fallibility of the hero in a manner typical of modernist fatalism and nihilism. This is best understood in the dissatisfaction that is experienced by the reader when the moral and spiritual vacuousness of the heroes is gradually and unrelentingly revealed. In effect, the stereotypical aspect of the novel's protagonists in their illusory forms is indicative of the modernist insight into the corruption, absurdity and unattainability of the archetype of masculinity. This is observed as the three characters strive for doomed autonomy, driven by Conrad's prejudice regarding the socio-political binds that forever engender destruction and disappointment that ultimately lead to an intense sense of crippling anxiety.

The novel's most significant conflict that is explored in terms of masculinity is expressed through the political paradigms concerning empire and patriarchy. The historical tensions arising from these forces inform Conrad's questioning of the traditional masculine form, leading to multifaceted embodiments of the 'flaccid phallus'. For instance, if the reader was to extrapolate the conditions set out in the opening of the novel to consider imperial Spain as analogous to a hegemonic patriarchal entity, the anxiety of Sulaco as a colonial entity and 'lesser male' is assured and correlates with contemporary understandings regarding the colonial position. This is highlighted by the inherent assumption of a patriarchal norm that conflicts with the budding independence of the port town, revealed through the mystical aspect of its geographical seclusion and primitiveness. In effect, the ambition of patriotic self-determination that courses through the plot of Nostromo is foreshadowed through Conrad's allusions to constructs of colonial tension, understood through codes and semantics of masculinity. Both Sulaco and Costaguana have at their heart a dysfunction born of a desire to construct an independent hero myth. By interrelating contemporary gender and political issues, Conrad is able to reaffirm that modernist anxiety stems from post-colonial and post-Victorian senses of calamity. Therefore, the representation of colonial issues is intrinsically linked to discourses of masculinity, enhancing the significance of gendered discourse within modernism.

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63 J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 7
byplay between the two creates a position of symbiosis that triggers socio-political tension, explored through the focus on the individual consciousness central to modernism.

Further contemporary colonial issues associated with masculinity manifest within the text. Conrad's utilisation of the paradigm of British supremacy functions as either a trigger for jealousy or a marker of desirable association. This paradigm, stemming from pervasive Victorian sentiments of cultural hegemony, is explored utilising the rhetoric and psychic structures of gender differentiation, along with the implicit social scale of *machismo*. Within these gendered representations of British superiority, the tension of masculine traditionalism and its psychological impact on the individual is given further emphasis as a means of blurring the political and individual. For example, the *Signori Inglesi* that Giorgio is forced to maternally attend as part of his employment as innkeeper provokes his own ready criticism of the emasculation of marriage as the time after martial heroism:

"The *Signori Inglese* would require their midday meal presently. He had been one of the immortal and invincible band of liberators who had made the mercenaries of tyranny fly like chaff before a hurricane... But that was before he was married and had children."\(^{64}\)

In this, Conrad utilises a variety of touchstones- independence, agency and the fulfilment of roles- to establish Giorgio's conscious evaluation of his 'unmanning' within the *machismo* spectrum. The tension of the relative patriarchal idealism of British superiority is further evaluated by Teresa, with Conrad employing her penetrating criticism of masculine institutions as a means of criticising the ambition of Nostromo to be "first with the English".\(^{65}\) Effectively, Conrad acknowledges certain contemporary assumptions of British dominance by illustrating these constructs in terms of the politics of masculinity, showing that colonial imperatives inspire relative self-evaluation.

The interrelationship between cultural dominance and masculine phallocentric significance is expanded as the truth of Giorgio's fighting experiences with Garibaldi structure the Italian leader- and the British- as patriarchal superiors under which he serves as field chef. In particular, the

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\(^{64}\) J. Conrad, *Nostromo*, p. 27

\(^{65}\) Ibid, p. 25
mythology of Garibaldi provides Giorgio with a sense of masculine privilege that he readily fosters in the constant retelling of his experiences, informed by the emphasis of nostalgia and his own latent anxious purpose to fulfil a sense of dominant 'socio-masculine' expectation. This self-aggrandisement is illustrated in unison with the narratorial irony that foreshadows Giorgio's gradual descent into senility. By doing so, Conrad emphasises the key notion of inherited masculine significance as a key marker for individual aspiration. Subsequently, the anxiety of modernism that stems from the challenge to the traditional is inherently a consequence of the interplay of history, politics and the associated rhetoric of masculinity.

The colonial problem and its correlation with conceptions of masculinity is further affirmed during the later conflict between Monygham and the Cardinal-Archbishop. During this sequence, the Cardinal-Archbishop's desire to start anew by dismissing the acts of influence originating with his colonial masters again correlates with the masculine archetype of independence. In arguing his position of encumbrance, the Cardinal-Archbishop is refuted by Monygham who adopts a position of reverence, stating "... without them you are nothing." This moment affirms Conrad's perspective regarding the inevitability of the crippling anxiety caused by the dualities central to the modernist masculine position. Essentially, all attempted acts of independence are hampered or defined by a parochial traditionalism that values the established order. In turn, the penetrating nature of societal judgement undermines the individual's sense of self-worth in pursuing newer definitions of masculine significance. Within this action of self-questioning comes a reaffirmation of an ideal entwined with the transparency of its unattainability, effectively creating a nihilistic maelstrom of inevitability. Therefore, modernist nihilism is reaffirmed as both a personal and political reality through the perpetual consciousness of masculine anxiety. The pursuit of the masculine ideal is shown to be a destructive delusion whilst its ongoing relevance and significance is a consequence of an indestructible hegemonic tradition. At its core, this conflict is the richest vein of inspiration for the novelist, comprising the clash between the individual and their society.

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66 see S. Freud, ‘Some Psychological Consequences’ in E. Jones (ed.), Sigmund Freud, p. 19
67 J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 462
Therefore, the correlation between the political anxieties represented in Conrad’s South American nation and the anxieties of modernist masculinity, with its embedded codes of honour and expectation are linked through Nostromo’s frames of reference. In particular, Conrad deploys stereotypes of gender and race as a component of the novel’s critique of false consciousness and the associated deconstruction of certain illusions of masculinity and cultural primacy. Specifically, Gould and Nostromo are characters that draw upon two stereotypical versions of normative masculinity, Anglo-Saxon and Latin.\(^{68}\) The obsession with Nostromo’s Italian heritage, as opposed to his South American, is primarily based on the novel’s politics that side with the South American *Nouveau Aristocracy* by demonising the ‘savage’ Monterists. It is a means for Conrad to highlight the significance of traditional patriarchies in constructing the heroic individual. Nostromo’s status as a European is also emphasised in order to distinguish the tradition of European popular revolution. These movements are signified as the replacement of a previous code of masculinity with a newer version that retains at its core the key conceits of the ingrained fiction, particularly principles of patriarchal moral leadership. Therefore, there is a clear mark within the novel distinguishing the genuinely European revolutionary impulse, such as that expressed by Decoud, from the indigenous variety and its chaos and immorality.\(^{69}\) Subsequently, Conrad is able to utilise and subvert a notion of patriarchal significance by exposing a persistent, yet flawed, political discourse that serves to maintain a tradition of masculine superiority.

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\(^{68}\) A. M. Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 94

Patriarchies and masculine ambition

The aforementioned political perspectives relating to both colonisation and masculinity are informed by Conrad's conceptual focus on the conflict between internalised individuality and externalised expectation. This clash is effectively the catalyst for the gendered dilemmas encountered by Gould, Decoud and Nostromo within the novel. The tragic impact of masculine aspiration is illustrated in the novel's masculine personalities, allowing Conrad to illustrate the irrelevance and absurdity of his society's dedication to an outmoded patriarchal ideal. For instance, the pomposity of the older masculine order, embodied in ongoing references to the leonine aspect of Giorgio that becomes increasingly less flattering as the novel progresses:

"Old Giorgio Viola, a Genoese with a shaggy white leonine head... the 'respectable married friend'..."^70

"A concentrated glare fell upon the leonine white head of old Giorgio against the black fire-place — showed him leaning forward in a chair in staring immobility, surrounded, overhung, by great masses of shadow, his legs crossed, his cheek in his hand, an empty pipe in the corner of his mouth."^71

This is further asserted through Giorgio's superciliousness in an earlier episode where he considers the protection of his own property during a previous political upheaval. The contemplation that the defence of his life and property against a cadre of thieves- or revolutionaries- was "a sort of degradation"^72 is indicative of a sense of inherited mastery and privilege, as well as an embedded hierarchy of machismo that draws heavily from a class tradition. Giorgio's arrogant reflection that he possesses a monopoly on constructs of liberty within the colonial microcosm of Sulaco, based on his personal history with successful European revolution and the borderline absurd, yet haunting

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^70 J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 19
^71 Ibid, p. 424
^72 Ibid, p. 22
presence of "the coloured lithograph of Garibaldi... (with its) bersaglierie hat with cock's feather,"\textsuperscript{73} becomes an indicator of Giorgio's own aspirational anxiety caused by the unrealised pursuit of a patriarchal ideal. The poignant gesture Giorgio finding comfort in the gaze of his old master Garibaldi, as opposed to at the shoulder of his wife, becomes a confirmation of the tragically oppressive aspect of masculine aspiration.

"In the moment of relief from the apprehension of the greatest danger... he had turned to the picture of his old chief, first and only..."\textsuperscript{74}

Just as Garibaldi functions as an unattainable ideal informing the self-ideal of his loyal chef, Giorgio's significance for Nostromo as the individual that ingrains masculine ambition can be understood figuratively as the ever-repeating struggle of the individual seeking to shed the spectre of conservative codes of idealised masculinity. This conflict between an idealised traditionalism and the fatally dire pursuit of this ideal informs Conrad's representation of the 'flaccid phallus'.

Conrad's initial focus on Giorgio serves a clear function in terms of both plot and characterisation. Indisputably, Giorgio is the figure that informs the latent aspirational anxieties of Nostromo. This relationship comes to embody much of Conrad's perspective regarding the detrimental byplay between conservatism and the realities of the modern world, understood through entrenched codes of patriarchy. Giorgio is revealed to be a character of metaphysical esteem, possessing a set of clearly delineated sensibilities regarding the differences between conventional 'rational' masculinity and all other manner of spirituality, embodied by the irrational or 'feminine'. His tolerance of "superstition in women"\textsuperscript{75} marks his position as a beacon of masculine political significance. Nonetheless, the hypocrisy of Giorgio is illustrated in his duplicity regarding the beneficial status of religion. His argument for the patriarchal significance of God as a key informer of notions of liberty against tyranny conflicts with his prejudiced assertion that "religion (was) for women".\textsuperscript{76} The divided

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p. 24
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, p. 22
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, p. 18
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p. 31
stance adopted by Giorgio is indicative of conflicting understandings of masculine significance, informed by commonly held premises of masculine rationality, supremacy and benevolence. Giorgio's own subconscious anxiety is dismissed through his sexism. Effectively, Giorgio is constructed as a character from an older world, oblivious to his masculine anxiety.

The machismo conceits expressed by the novel's male characters are a consequence of the burdensome pairing of impossible ambition, usually represented in a mythologised role model, with the subconscious realisation of a divided sense of self. Essentially, male characters aspire toward the corrosive fiction whilst concurrently glorifying or jealously criticising the masculine airs of others. Giorgio's title, being "the Garibaldino as Mohammedans are called after their prophet,"77 is testament to the enduring significance of these codes of masculinity. As the novel progresses, his pseudo-patronymic, like his physicality, becomes increasingly pitiable. Giorgio's reverence for Garibaldi festers as an unrealistic and burdensome aspiration within the frame of revolutionary Sulaco. In broader terms, the perceivable veneer of European heritage that pervades the landscape of Sulaco is a means for Conrad to illustrate the collective compulsion for patriarchal traditionalism and associated notions of aspiration. Effectively, the mythology of these revered fathers delineates aspirational figures that distort the individual self-perception of characters to the extent of the knights' tales of Quixote. It is this dilemma relating to relativist self-appraisal leading to unresolvable masculine anxiety that underscores much of the representation of masculinity within Nostromo.

A further empowered patriarch within the text that implicitly contributes to the fatalistic decline of a protagonist can be observed in Holroyd, the capitalist that funds the silver venture in Sulaco. Holroyd is given a specific reverence by Gould, functioning as a means of contrasting the wealth and power held by the Costaguanans whilst contributing to Conrad's enduring perspective of the inherited motivational aspect intrinsic to the problem of contemporary masculinity. The simple fact that Holroyd has the means to treat the enterprise of Gould's revenge as a hobby and the joy he

77 Ibid, p. 18
takes in realising that he was not controlling a business but rather "running a man" serves to reveal further factors informing the anxieties of modernist masculinity. Through Holroyd, the experiences of Gould can be accounted as a series of futile gestures wherein he is measured and controlled by agents of a paradoxically arbitrary destiny. Poignantly, the detached position of superiority and political apathy expressed by Holroyd becomes symptomatic of the dilemmas underpinning the contemporary colonial question. Holroyd's interests stem from a subconscious desire for power, existing beyond the assumed morality of benevolent interest in Costaguana. Subsequently, the modernist nihilistic impulse is affirmed through contemporary economic and political constructs that are informed by perceptions of masculinity that are inspired by flawed patriarchies. Nonetheless, Holroyd retains his powerful mystique throughout the novel. His significance is assured by contemporary values stemming from his nationality and his economic hegemony. Effectively, Holroyd functions as a clear personification of colonial and economic power. Nonetheless, the schism existing between these two spheres means that Holroyd remains a disinterested and aloof figure, retaining an unobtainable air. His physical absence effectively contributes to the sense of masculine Honour that drives Gould's determination to succeed with the silver mine. Subsequently, Gould is inspired by not only the desire for vengeance regarding his father's demise but also a businessman's need to be worthy in the eyes of his investor. The dramatic anxiety and trauma stemming from these burdens define Gould's ambitions, effectively preventing the hero potential of Gould. Moreover, Holroyd's fleeting presence is symptomatic of contemporary aspects of masculine detachment and the changing nature of masculine empowerment. During all sequences where he is referenced, Holroyd conveys a lack of affection for others, a stereotypical businessman's imperative that removes him from the emotions that encircle the anxious contemplations of modernist masculinity.

Effectively, the security offered by the patriarchy and the protection that its associated mythology offers is countered by the simple fact that the fathers of the text—whether genetic, surrogate or

\[78 \text{Ibid, p. 77}\]
colonial- are the trigger for the eventual demise of the individual. Conrad illustrates the flaws inherent to the adherence and glorification of the previous system of masculinity whilst conceding its inescapable significance by embedding codes of masculinity within political, social and psychological frames of reference. Throughout the novel, Conrad’s characters strive for an autonomy that allows the author to present his perspective on the socio-political binds that engender individual destruction and disappointment. These factors inform the modernist sense of intense anxiety that can be understood as the 'flaccid phallus' when it comes to the contemplation of masculinity. Nonetheless, Conrad retains a position of absolute significance for the 'male condition' through his narrative focus on Nostromo, Gould and Decoud. It is through these three characters that Conrad can emphasise the infiltrating aspect of traditional masculinity that contribute to his construction of a new modernist archetype, the 'flaccid phallus'. This conscious and suffering male character is symptomatic of the diverse and intense layers of pressure that inform characterisation within modernism.

Each male character within the narrative possesses a duality of masculinity that serves to provoke the novel's moral complexity. Gould functions as an idealist and benevolent capitalist at face value, yet he also associates with criminals and delegates the patriarchal element of power onto the feminine care of his wife. Decoud plays the romantic lover, pursuing a satisfying ideal. Nonetheless, he is also a nihilist in terms of the politics of the text. His cynicism and pessimism irretrievably triggers his self-destruction because he can never truly be fulfilled. Nostromo acts out the impervious and socially desirable physical specimen whilst also being a conniving thief. Subsequently, the reader's dissatisfaction is driven by the duplicitousness of characters that exist within an apparent 'hero' narrative. Therefore, the dilemma offered by contemporary and traditional understandings of patriarchy are utilised by Conrad in order to access the impact of independence, aspiration and expectation on the three central characters. In most cases, patriarchy is criticised in a typically modernist fashion as being a form of stagnancy, expressed as the eternal love of self and the ongoing pursuit of similar relations.
The mythic Nostromo

The experience of the character of Nostromo is dependent on Conrad's modernist imperative to fracture the fiction of masculine significance. In the author's note that functioned as the preface to the 1917 edition of the novel, Conrad emphasises that Nostromo is the "Man of the People". Nonetheless, Nostromo's status as the hero and champion of the world of his experience, resplendent with its microcosms of family, complex modes of employment and politics, is exposed as fraudulent and destructive as the novel develops. For the population of Sulaco, Nostromo takes on a position of phallocentric significance, understood through the collective social consciousness that affixes him to the top of their machismo spectrum. Conrad shows that the ongoing conceits enacted by Nostromo are indisputably efforts at maintaining a position of socio-masculine prominence that is measured implicitly by both the collective consciousness of Sulaco and the man himself. Through this representation, Conrad is able to show the erosion of the assumed complete element of masculinity, constructing a typically modern anti-hero. For the majority of the novel, Nostromo is a force that transcends political upheaval because he is universally mythologised as impenetrable. Therefore, the eventual corruption and degradation of Nostromo comprises the tragedy of self-delusion. The underlying question in Nostromo's characterisation concerns Conrad's confrontation of the contemporary glorification of the masculine, especially the individual that comprises an almost visceral enigma. Inevitably, it is the self-perpetuating façade of supremacy and the unrelenting appraisal by others that stand to benefit by association that catalyses Nostromo's decline. For Conrad, the desire to place implicit faith in an enigmatic superior is highly destructive.

Comparatively, Conrad's earlier letter to Cunninghame Grahame is poignant as it reveals the novelist's sensibilities on Nostromo during the writing of the text:
"I don’t defend Nostromo himself. Fact is, he does not take my fancy either... N(ostromo) is nothing at all- a fiction- embodied vanity of the sailor kind."\(^{79}\)

The imperative aspect of Conrad’s critique reveals his resentment of the masculine ideal echoed in Nostromo. The insinuation in the letter is that Conrad enjoyed corrupting and destroying his ‘perfect’ creation, suggestive of a stronger set of sympathies towards Decoud and Gould. The implied dissatisfaction of Cunninghame Grahame is indicative of the general sentiment of the reader towards Nostromo by the novel’s conclusion. Nostromo initially elicits a type of homosocial admiration or potent vicariousness that is reminiscent of the pathos afforded to the adventure narrative’s hero. The crushing of his mythic stature, catalysed by an act of moral cowardice, triggers a strong sense of resentment regarding the feebleness of the repeatedly foreshadowed fatalistic accident of Nostromo’s death. Specifically, the silver and all it embodies functions as the key to understanding the pressures that trigger the conscious and unconscious degradation of the individual’s perceived masculine significance.

Within the narrative, Nostromo is predominantly identified through his physical significance- the ‘alpha’ amongst an assembly of potential ‘alphas’. It is in this position that the psychic aspect of his authority is embedded into the collective psyche. This metaphysical significance is accessed through various glimpses into minor characters or the general populace, affirming the enigma of physical masculinity. For instance, Mitchell operates as a point of comparison and becomes an effective means for Conrad to emphasise the concurrent economic and political values of the text that are informed by an adherence to the traditional and glorified codes of masculinity. These constructs are emphasised through the utilisation of prisms of masculinity as points of emphasis that give prominence to issues relating to the anxiety of self-consciousness and identity. Specifically, when Mitchell perceives Nostromo to be "one of those invaluable subordinates whom to possess is a

legitimate cause of boasting,” *80* Conrad effectively delineates notions of cultural supremacy and latent class antagonism through the narrative focus on the understood archetype of idealised masculinity as a performative and socially understood construct. The gesture of Mitchell’s "lending (of) my Capataz de Cargadores,” *81* provides Mitchell with a socially understood expression of superiority that serves to illustrate his own subconscious anxiety regarding the pervasive perception of Nostromo’s masculine hegemony. In sum, by governing Nostromo, Mitchell publically dominates him and replenishes any personal sense of psychological masculine deficit. These conflicts that are played out within the subconscious allow Conrad to suggest comparisons with the experiences of his own world and its issues of consciousness and political hierarchy that ultimately inform contemporary masculine anxiety.

Moreover, Conrad presents the expected celebration of dominant masculine norms through the novel’s shifting and mostly compliant male narrative voices. These voices express layers of modernist masculine anxiety through attempts at affiliation with the assumed embodiment of the masculine apex, represented by Nostromo, or through relative attempts at aggrandisement. Conrad’s ability to reveal the impact of masculine anxiety and its capacity to trigger subtle *maschismo* conceits, witnessed through his utilisation of differing layers of diegesis, allows for a focus on the mutually detrimental relationship between archetypal and contemporary masculinity. For example, during Mitchell’s early narrative concerning Nostromo’s efforts at protecting fleeing authorities, Mitchell argues for the metaphysical resonance of archetypal masculinity within his dramatic crescendo: "They quailed before him, sir. That’s what the force of character will do for you.” *82* In this moment, the permeating and mythic register of masculine significance granted to Nostromo by Mitchell allows the author to present the forces that serve to erode this façade as key sequences informing the plot. Mitchell’s attempts at synthesising an internalised sense of masculine potency is confirmed when he immediately transitions from praise for Nostromo to melodramatic self-aggrandisement, as

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*80* J. Conrad, *Nostromo*, p. 44

*81* Ibid, p. 44

*82* Ibid, p. 16
witnessed in the aforementioned immodest discussion of his power over Nostromo. The self-conscious anxiety that Mitchell attempts to compensate for through his narrative of martial and social elitism is reinforced through Conrad’s initial characterisation that reveals a thick, pompous and elderly man. Ultimately, Mitchell’s narrative of self-aggrandisement and intense homosocial desire effectively functions as subconscious recognition of his position of comparative enfeeblement, whilst the dominant status of his male voice maintains a true position of privilege. In effect, the paradox of the ’flaccid phallus’ of modernist masculinity is played out within the layered discourses available through Mitchell. This is particularly pointed as it occurs through a relative appraisal of assumed masculine idealism represented by Nostromo. In terms of Conrad’s broader social and political purpose, Mitchell’s officiousness in character and insignificant physical aspect mark him as something of a caricature of the sensibilities of the British officer. Mitchell’s unreliable and implicitly anxious voice contributes to the enigmatic imprint of Nostromo. This construction of primacy is revealed in the conclusion to the sub-plot where the worshipful and bewitched Mitchell observes that:

"He was 'much of a man', their Capataz was, they said, too scornful in his temper ever to utter abuse, a tireless task-master, and the more to be feared because of his aloofness. And behold! there he was that day, at their head, condescending to make jocular remarks to this man or the other."  

In this final description, Mitchell re-expresses the fiction of masculine hegemony by granting Nostromo a position of enigmatic prominence, understood through the paradox of the homosocially desirable 'everyman' that is revered, yet distant. This resultant deconstruction of Nostromo’s assumed completeness occurs gradually through the exposure to one of Nostromo’s initial failings, admittedly borne of his martial heroism: "Nostromo... was pushing them too hard then". Overall, the enduring enigma of masculinity is established in the relationship between Mitchell and Nostromo. This enigma is reinforced by Nostromo’s comparative exclusion, if one considers the

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83 Ibid, p. 15  
84 Ibid, p. 17  
85 Ibid, p. 17
manifest presence of Decoud and Gould throughout the first half of the novel. Effectively, Conrad is able to synthesise a sense of homosocial allure for the reader regarding Nostromo that is built on the rumour and innuendo of Sulaco. This narrative strategy ultimately enables Conrad’s underlying observation regarding the significance of externalised judgement that is central to the detriment of individual masculinities.

Nostromo’s comparative absence, coupled with the multiple protagonists and evocative, almost Victorian exoticism in the setting of the novel invites a consideration of Conrad’s decision to entitle his text after the Italian cargo handler. Effectively, the exaggerated quality of Nostromo’s masculine identity justifies his position as the titular character, as does the fable-like quality of his physical demise. Nostromo’s Byronic aspect becomes the conduit for the reader’s consideration of modernist anxieties. His character is granted complexity beyond potential accusations of simple caricature or plagiaristic appropriation. Effectively, Nostromo’s characterisation also serves to provide a moralising edge to Conrad’s narrative that pointedly targets masculine hubris. The grandiosity of the enigma of Nostromo correlates with the fiction of masculinity that contends that masculine primacy is a socially ingrained and wholly psychic structure. This construct is reinforced through Teresa’s initial maternal faith in the abilities of her surrogate son, confirmed by the cynicism of the narrator that declares that "she too was under the spell of that reputation the Capataz de Cargadores had made for himself...".  

The subtle critique offered by Conrad’s subjective narrator is one that foreshadows the deathbed conflict between the two.

The rich vein of antagonism existing between Nostromo and Teresa is a means for Conrad to utilise the Freudian construct of the unfulfilled Oedipal bond to convey the inevitability of Nostromo’s demise. Nostromo’s incapacity to become the man that Teresa desired when she took him as a "steady young man, affectionate and pliable, an orphan from his tenderest age" becomes a manifest psychological burden for the hero. In their conflict, Conrad posits a modernist form of

86 Ibid, p. 31
87 Ibid, p. 231- 232
masculinity embraced by the later modernists in their utilisation of the ‘flaccid phallus’. Specifically, the later modernist version is driven by the unrelenting judgement of the feminine. Within Conrad, a destructive layer of Nostromo’s anxiety is driven by a realisation stemming from his surrogate matriarch. In effect, Teresa becomes a Delilah, with her act of mutilation being an assault on the consciousness of Nostromo that erodes his sense of moral completeness. In turn, this sentiment inspires Nostromo’s subsequent jealousy and desire, triggering a series of attempted compensatory actions in the face of the epiphany gained in his later solitude as a fugitive. Effectively, Conrad utilises Teresa as central to the gender dynamics that inform both characterisation and plot. Despite her relative insignificance, both in terms of physical presence within the narrative and her predominantly archetypal passive feminine role, Teresa takes on a key antagonist quality by triggering the tragic demise of Nostromo by enabling thefatalistic subplot. The mockery of Teresa mortifies and frustrates the reader as they feel that her lack of maternal softness is incongruent in the face of the masculine hardness of her adopted son. Her failure to fully glorify Nostromo becomes a curse for the hero, the seed of masculine self-doubt that leads to self-conscious realisation and destruction created by Conrad’s utilisation of a pertinent sense of modernist fatalism. For instance she declare: "It is what I say. You have no heart—and you have no conscience, Gian’ Battista." Nonetheless, Teresa is not a villain or femme fatale. Alternatively, her bitterness, similar to that of Mrs. Gould, is borne of a perceptiveness regarding the narcissism of self-obsessive and highly internalised Übermensch desire, as well as the pressures of the patriarchy that she firmly understands through the practicalities of her experiences. Her role is a means for Conrad to ensure a sharp focus on self-perception and masculine conceit by providing a conduit for self-appraisal.

Ultimately, Nostromo is envied or admired by aspirational others. In turn, Nostromo aspires to a masculine form informed by the expectations of Giorgio, the primary patriarch who is placed within a further yoke of aspiration. Subsequently, the feminine role within Conrad’s narrative of masculine identity is to provide more than just a passive counter or object for desire. Rather, women possess a

88 Ibid, p. 25
penetrating evaluative insight that plagues the male characters in their pursuit of the masculine ideal. From this, it can be suggested that this characteristic is a contemporary representation of the new woman as frustrated, yet manifestly relevant. The individual difficulty experienced by the male characters of *Nostromo*, particularly Nostromo himself, is undoubtedly a consequence of the pervasiveness of the masculine ideal and its complementary substructures of panic stemming from the increasing political and social relevance of the feminine.

In terms of representing diminishing masculine significance, Conrad explores an anxious emasculation by utilising simpler archetypes of passivity and intimidation in the face of women. For instance, even the apparently virile Nostromo lacks the courage to openly declare his romantic preference in the final sequences of the novel. His hesitancy and figurative impotence is confirmed in Giselle's unmanning of him by cutting silver buttons from his coat. Nostromo's inaction is foreshadowed by the tempered masculinity offered in his confiding to Decoud that his courtship of women is normally driven by a public expectation of virility. Subsequently, Conrad argues for the influence of the performance of masculine ritual as a defining feature of the traditional masculine archetype. The understanding of reputation displayed by the text's protagonists serves to illustrate the pursuit of masculinity as a necessary indulgence, driven by a psychological understanding of an encoded idealism. Subsequently, the temptation of duty and approval coaxes Nostromo away from his true place at Teresa's side when she is suffering through a heavily emphasised death bed demise. This is because the mission of the silver is shown to provide an external sense of significance and internalised gratification due to the *machismo* investment of the performance and its retelling. Conrad's repeated utilisation of the valorised and empowering act of storytelling is shown to be central to the construction of esteemed masculine identity.

In the face of pressure, Nostromo's frequently supercilious demeanour is laced with the language of a pragmatic form of existentialism that illustrates Conrad's view of contemporary heroic masculinity.

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For instance, Nostromo's proclamation that his effects will "look well enough on the next lover she gets"\textsuperscript{90} is indicative of a penetrating form of anxious modernist masculinity. The statement, which triggers a series of resentful comments and gestures from Monygham, is a powerful moment indicating the indisputable presence of the 'flaccid phallus' construct. During this sequence, Nostromo expresses an aggressive sense of his completeness, inspired by a sense of his own erotic and homosocial desirability. Nonetheless, the moment is fuelled by a Conrad's obsession with the subconscious anxiety festering within Nostromo. In his statement concerning the lover, Nostromo effectively acknowledges his fallibility, revealing an absolute demand for external approval. His comment regarding the "next lover" taking his wardrobe is tantamount to accepting that he is replaceable and functions as a dramatic cue for a compliment. Subsequently, the reader is able to appreciate the significance Conrad grants to the absolute demand for social recognition that paradoxically infiltrates the masculine archetype of independence. For instance, Monygham's ongoing jealous appraisal of Nostromo:

"But Dr. Monygham had no mind to quarrel with Nostromo. At this supremely critical point of Sulaco's fortunes it was borne upon him at last that this man was really indispensable, more indispensable than ever the infatuation of Captain Mitchell, his proud discoverer, could conceive; far beyond what Decoud's best dry raillery about 'my illustrious friend, the unique Capataz de Cargadores,' had ever intended. The fellow was unique. He was not 'one in a thousand.' He was absolutely the only one. The doctor surrendered. There was something in the genius of that Genoese seaman which dominated the destinies of great enterprises and of many people, the fortunes of Charles Gould, the fate of an admirable woman. At this last thought the doctor had to clear his throat before he could speak."\textsuperscript{91}

This sequence reveals Nostromo's avoidance of political significance, whilst retains overwhelming popular power in comparison to all others. Indeed, Nostromo's satisfaction with the fiction of his

\textsuperscript{90} J. Conrad, \textit{Nostromo}, p. 236
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid}, p. 412
enigma, as opposed to the practicality of his achievements, is an integral component informing the pathetic aspect of his decline.

Within these interspersed theatrical moments of the novel that contribute to an understanding of the performative aspect of masculinity, Conrad invites the reader to consider the fraudulence of the traditional heroic masculine character. Conrad’s writing is coded in a dense layer of shifting narrative voices and tones, primarily focused on a modernist’s exploration of the individual’s perspective of self and their position within their world in relation to traditional mores. Nonetheless, caricature in characterisation and melodrama in dialogue s obfuscate Conrad’s understated didactic intention. It is only through the accumulation of gradual effects that are illustrated within Nostromo that the reader gains a potent sense of the cost for the aspirational individual and the layers of externally shaped expectation entwined within their endeavours. Therefore, criticisms concerning Conrad’s supposed prejudice and canonical insignificance stemming from his appropriation of modes located within adventure or boys’ fiction are incomplete as they disregard Conrad’s utilisation of ambiguous and complex frames of reference. It is when Conrad shifts to what appears to be more obvious systems of morality that his sense of irony and moral purpose are revealed. For example, an issue potentially arises in Conrad’s obsession with a physical form of idealised masculinity that is expressed in the many descriptions of Nostromo that detail an enigmatic heroism, tinged with a narrative voice that borders on homoerotic desire in the intensity of its admiration. In one sequence, Nostromo is described as emerging from:

"... a bright light... the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores, stepping noiselessly in soft leather sandals, bushy whiskered, his muscular neck and bronzed chest bare in the open check shirt, resembled a Mediterranean sailor just come ashore from some wine or fruit laden felucca... broad shouldered, narrow hipped, and supple, looking at the large white bed."\(^92\)

\(^{92}\) Ibid, pp. 230-231
In this sequence, the masculine desirability of Nostromo clearly enters the realm of caricature, effectively reaffirming Conrad's less sympathetic sensibilities as delineated in the aforementioned letter to Cunninghame Graham. For Conrad, these moments initially function as opportunities for Nostromo to become an admirable figure for the male reader by exposing them to the collective understanding of the populace of Sulaco. By doing so, Conrad can heighten the magnitude of his decline, driven by conventions typical of modernist precepts of fatalism and nihilism. Conrad's dedication to representing Nostromo's supreme physicality allows him to access a specific focus of criticism, being the psychological cost of the delusion of masculine primacy and the tragic consequences of its enduring significance. A further illustration can be observed within the sequence where Nostromo swims from the resting place of the silver back to Sulaco, his supreme physicality takes on the aspect of the unspoilt and revered, in contrast with the deformed aspect of Monyham who holds much of the preceding narrative focus.

"He stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast."  

Nostromo returns as the virile warrior hero, with Conrad's description of his nakedness and aesthetic again bordering on the homoerotic. His awakening on the shore functions as a dramatic experience reminiscent of Odysseus. Nonetheless, Conrad's particular characterisation of Nostromo as a Dionysian ideal allows for him to unlock the modernist sense of the burden of consciousness. Nostromo's eventual realisation that he has become a tool of the hombres finos:

"'Was it for an unconsidered and foolish whim that they came to me, then?' he interrupted suddenly. 'Had I not done enough for them to be of some account, por Dios? Is it that the hombres..."

93 Ibid, pp. 375-376
finos—the gentlemen—need not think as long as there is a man of the people ready to risk his body and soul? Or, perhaps, we have no souls—like dogs? 94

exposes a shift from the masculine situation of self-idealisation to the disempowered modernist masculine predicament of layers of anonymous duty and a destructive frustration borne of consciousness. The epiphany is triggered by solitude and reflection, a version of pure consciousness that provokes Nostromo’s destabilising anxiety. Therefore, the reader’s exhilaration in the melodramatic moment where Nostromo eyeballs a nearby vulture and turns to the heavens stating "I am not dead yet" 95 is cancelled by Conrad’s revelation that "(t)he last act he had performed in Sulaco was in complete harmony with his vanity… (it) was in strict keeping with his reputation," 96 revealing the egoistic dependence that fuels Nostromo’s masculine disposition, a bastion that is under attack from both external and internal forces. The subsequent mixture of excitement, admiration and judgemental spite experienced by the reader is completely unsettling and invites questions of blame regarding the addictive compulsion central to the masculine ideal.

Conrad’s continual critique of this absolute dedication to an insidious masculine ideal is also witnessed in the overall attraction to the redemptive aspect of self-destruction that infiltrates Nostromo within the silver escapade. His fixation on sinking the boat in order to prevent the silver from entering the hands of the revolutionaries is reasoned by Decoud to be suicidal, as shown when he concludes that: "... there would be plenty of time to sink this treasure tied up round his neck." 97 Within this moment, Conrad shows that both men are motivated by the conceit of their self-destructive tendencies and the resultant benefit of perpetual masculine significance within a society that would retell their glorious story. The line of reasoning is that the more spectacular and suicidal the gesture, the greater the rewards in terms of the scale of machismo. The illogicality of this position and its underlying invitation for deceit through hyperbole creates another means for Conrad

94 Ibid, p. 397  
95 Ibid, p. 377  
96 Ibid, p. 378  
97 Ibid, p. 257
to illustrate the corruption embedded in the pursuit of the masculine ideal through his utilisation of a recurrent feature of fiction, the mythologised heroic resistance of the damned. Nostromo's possibility for glory is erased during the moment where he fears the body of Hirsch hanging in his place of execution:

"The man, whoever he was, did not darken the lighted doorway... he saw only the distorted shadow of broad shoulders and bowed head. He was doing apparently nothing, and stirred not from the spot, as though he were meditating—or, perhaps, reading a paper. And not a sound issued from the room. Once more the Capataz stepped back... he dreaded to show himself." 98

This is a climactic episode that functions as Conrad's means of affirming Nostromo's masculine decline. Nostromo's physical cowardice in this moment correlates with his subsequent moral cowardice, expressed in his desire to withhold knowledge of the silver. Conrad affirms the fiction of the archetypal form of masculinity with his judgement regarding this moment, revealed later in the novel when he indulges in a narratorial intrusion to argue that:

"there is no credulity so eager and blind as the credulity of covetousness, which, in its universal extent, measures the moral misery and the intellectual destitution of mankind." 99

Although this judgement is clearly directed at Nostromo, the correlation with the variant forms of covetousness expressed by Gould and Decoud is apparent. Moreover, the significance of Conrad's view on the unswerving yearning for masculine supremacy as an act of self-destructive covetousness is suggested.

With this premise in mind, Roberts contends that the novel's unsatisfying conclusion is an attempt at restoring Nostromo's heroic status by martyring him. 100 Conversely, it can be argued that the novel ends with Conrad's utilisation of the modernist sense of the cyclical nature of being, represented in the enduring presence of another enigmatic and mystical treasure that will inevitably inspire the

98 Ibid, p. 311
99 Ibid, p. 410
100 A. M. Roberts, Conrad and Masculinity, p. 102
self-destructive behaviour of other men. In this example, the mythical treasure is not only the silver hidden in the Isabela, it is also the ultimate ambition represented in the mythologised masculinity of Nostromo which ignores the suffering that came with his enigmatic esteem. By constructing this problem, Conrad reaffirms his view on masculinity as being incapable of reifying the individual’s covetous pursuit of significance and completeness. Moreover, the proclamation of Nostromo’s "genius"\textsuperscript{101} is left to the reader’s consideration after seeing the feeble, avoidable and totally 'unheroic' nature of his death. The genius of Nostromo is his persistent and enigmatic brilliance as understood by his world. Inevitably, his glorification will be enshrined in the mythology of masculinity that endures within Conrad’s Costaguanan universe. The reality of the greed of Nostromo will never be known by those that aspire to his level of masculine grandeur and will therefore corrupt their own pursuit of Nostromo’s physical and enigmatic masculine ideal.

Subsequently, the modernist philosophy of enduring nihilism is authenticated by the text’s obsession with masculinity and suggests a far more insidious aspect to the ‘flaccid phallus’ construct.

Ultimately, Nostromo’s chief flaw occurs in the conflict between the competing narratives of his public significance and his moral corruption in the face of the evocative silver. The fracturing caused by these competing aspects becomes a means through which Conrad can illustrate the delusion of masculine primacy. Nostromo is bound by increasing layers of shame and expectation, sparking his desire to forge a feeble escape that closely resembles a state of exile. Through this characterisation the reader is able to witness the importance of the masculine dilemma in informing the morality and philosophy of the modern novelist. This is because masculinity operates as a point of moral and aesthetic resistance. Nostromo functions as a version of the masculine Dionysian ideal, with his Apollonian reasoning represented in his growing consciousness that ultimately triggers the tragedy of his fall. Conrad constructs a conflicted character that elicits little sympathy in his decline, symptomatic of the condition of masculinity within modernism. His enduring presence and social significance grants him a phallocentric authority whilst his consciousness and the political dynamic of

\textsuperscript{101} J. Conrad, \textit{Nostromo}, p. 512
his context contribute to his crippling anxiety. Subsequently, Nostromo's position as a tragic hero of modernism is assured. He becomes an embodiment of the 'flaccid phallus', an enfeebled and unsympathetic representation of a nihilistic realisation regarding masculine traditions. The caricature element of his characterisation functions as a means for Conrad to access the absurdity and fallibility of the masculine ideal without distraction. It is this subversiveness, dressed in the early stages of the novel's diversions relating to the assumed morality of the patriarchy and coupled with an accompanying aesthetic that typifies Conrad's position as instigator of the transition into modern literary forms that ultimately inspires the later representations of masculinity within modernism.

Decoud the flaneur

In establishing the initial codes of masculine traditionalism that are contrasted through the novel's later interrogations, urban pomposity, or any form of overt scholarliness or artistry, is decried or diminished as 'anti-masculine'. The agency of creativity or affection is shown to be secondary to the primeval capacity of the individual to assert both a physical and enigmatic sense of mastery. Thus, Decoud comes to embody the plight of the modern man in a world that maintains a certain determination to reinforce masculine traditions and patriarchal norms. Decoud's flaneurial status becomes a conduit for Conrad to express an anxiety regarding the conflict between the increasing 'soft' civility and politics of Europe and America and the 'hard' instability and revolution of the colonies.\textsuperscript{102} It is altogether plausible that Conrad's own tensions regarding his dual masculine personas, specifically the clash between the physical seaman and intellectual writer, are explored in

\textsuperscript{102} This dichotomy is explored in J. Malcolm's 'Hard women, hard modernism: Gendering modernist difficulty' (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2009). Malcolm's evaluation of representations of femininity within modernism can be extrapolated to consider the experience of any individual diminished in terms of the patriarchal norm, such as Decoud. Physiological gender is only an informing factor, not a defining one.
terms of Decoud's classic gender dichotomy of agency and passivity. Inescapably, Decoud possesses all of the traits of the preliminary version of an evolving archetype of masculinity. Specifically, his own version of jealous aspiration triggers the actions that enable the intensely nihilistic and notably fatalistic action of his suicide. Therefore, the larger problem lies in evaluating the level of sympathy that Conrad fosters for Decoud. After all, the diminishment of the 'authentic experience' of physical masculinity is a consequence of a contemporary political and technological revolution. Therefore, the phenomena of modernity, social dependence and urbanisation can be argued to have led to the creation of compensatory 'romantic man' of contemporary fiction. It is this entity that Conrad considers through Decoud, dichotomously reinforcing and undermining the stereotype in order to interrogate alternate versions of heroic masculinity.

The first instance of this tension between physical and intellectual layers of significance can be observed in the introduction of Decoud. This moment is laced with a stereotypical mistrust of the continental and urbane that typifies the British adventure narrative. Suspicion directed at the popularly held Costaguanan enigma regarding the talented young man moving in the higher spheres of society is established when Conrad describes him in the purest terms of the flaneur, drawing on many prejudicial contemporary stereotypes:

"He was an idle boulevardier... welcomed in the pleasure haunts... (a life of) dreary superficiality covered by the glitter of the universal blague... induc(ing) in him a Frenchified cosmopolitanism (that was) mere barren indifferentism posing as intellectual superiority". 104

The initial attack on Decoud's character by Conrad's essentially hermeneutic narrator is sustained throughout these earlier descriptions, such as the further cynical description of him "imagin(ing) himself Parisian to the tips of his fingers" 105 whilst offering a pointed suggestion of his further role within the narrative: "he was in danger of remaining a sort of nondescript dilettante all his life.” 106

104 J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 141
105 Ibid, p. 142
106 Ibid, p. 142
This initial narrative assault on Decoud's character does not relent until he pursues his love interest, granting the character a sense of masculine respectability in the eyes of the narrator that is inspired by a rudimentary virility. Subsequently, the reader is granted an insight into the nature of Nostromo's least characterised narrator. Apart from the pontificating philosopher loaded with Conrad's own biases and the individual character voices, Conrad's 'other' narrator is a Late Victorian 'everyman' possessing a commonly held set of principles that reaffirm the assumptions that underpin the status quo whilst providing the reader with a level of perspective when it comes to the evaluation of character.

Conrad utilises Decoud's letter to his sister in Paris as a means of furthering the supreme heroism of Nostromo and as a marker for relative explorations of the individual's sense of their position within the machismo spectrum. This state of overwhelming consciousness, revealed through gestures of self-evaluation and self-awareness, informs Conrad's appraisal of masculinity within modernism. Within the correspondence, the rampant sarcasm of Decoud becomes a means through which Conrad can insinuate the jealous admiration of Decoud toward Nostromo whilst also maintaining Nostromo's mythical and uncorrupted significance up to this early point in the narrative. For instance, Decoud's statement that "(Nostromo) seems to have a particular talent for being on the spot whenever there is something picturesque to be done" suggests a transparency to the performance of Nostromo's machismo conceits. Subsequently, a reasonable inference could be that Decoud is aware that Nostromo is vain, corruptible and altogether beneath Decoud's own self-perception within a contemporary machismo spectrum. Nonetheless, Decoud's aspiration and envy is revealed in his incapacity to immediately accompany Nostromo in a dashing rescue mission: "I ran out, too, but was too late to follow them and help in the rescue of the stranger." Within this sequence, the reader is provided with variant versions of modernist masculine anxiety. The supposed masculine perfection and homosocial desirability of Nostromo is insightfully appraised by Decoud as mere conceit, despite the apparent blinding spite of Decoud's judgement. Moreover, the

107 Ibid, p. 206
108 Ibid, p. 207
sense of anxiety experienced by Decoud in failing to meet the physical masculine standard of his counterpart during the rescue can be contested to trigger his later affiliation in the silver episode. Subsequently, Decoud’s redemption desire becomes the ultimate expression of consciousness that fatalistically drives him towards death. Therefore, there is a consistency in Conrad’s appraisal of the spectre of the traditional masculine archetype as a healthy contributor to the nihilism of modernism.

Moreover, Decoud’s sister functions as an embodiment of the urbane world of comfort and supercilious superiority that infuses the consciousness of Decoud. This state is shown to be corrupting, borne of a world possessing evolving sensibilities. The initial ‘feminising’ of Decoud is a reveals Conrad’s own prejudice towards his urbane and increasingly passive world, embodied in the form of Decoud’s sister: “It occurred to him that no one could understand him so well as his sister.”109 The internalised dissatisfaction that this diminished independence provides for Decoud is confirmed by the images of frustration and impotence utilised by Conrad: “In the intimacy of that intercourse he could not keep out his weariness, his great fatigue, the close touch of his bodily sensations... (he was) very hungry.”110 Subsequently, the ‘flaccid phallus’ paradigm is asserted through Decoud due to his characterisation comprising modernist consciousness laden with complex psychological tension. Decoud’s disempowerment is coupled with a position of absolute narrative significance that has at its foundation the fatalistic pursuit of the unattainable, specifically, the absolute embodiment of the fiction of the idealised masculine archetype that exists despite his conscious desire to mock this entity.

Moreover, Decoud’s later flattery of Avellanos reveals a further capacity for the discourse of idealised masculinity to be richly entwined with politics and identity. Decoud invokes Caesar-“Lucklily, Montero is not Caesar”111- as a means of inspiring the separatists of Sulaco in their opposition to Montero. Decoud proclaims that Montero could not hope to attain a standard that

109 Ibid, p. 211
110 Ibid, p. 211
111 Ibid, pp. 155- 156
compares to the *vir Romanus*\textsuperscript{112} embodied in Avellanos. Decoud’s propaganda is richly infused with constructs of masculinity that contest the desirability of association, intensifying the idealisation of the established masculine archetype. The insinuation is that the incompetence and fluidity of Montero can be countered by the rigidity and eloquence of the greater man that aspires towards the historical significance of another great man. Subsequently, the contemporary discourses of masculinity and politics are shown to be fuelled by the collective understanding that an individual’s capacity to attain a position of esteem is dependent upon their position on a political masculinity spectrum, as determined by the mythology of historical example. Within *Nostromo*, an individual such as Decoud that possesses a significant capacity to influence through his utilisation of the discreet codes of masculinity reinforces the perception that public discourse is dominated by entrenched understandings of gender. Subsequently, it is fair to conclude that the enigmatic brilliance of the aspirational form, such as that of Caesar, Garibaldi or Cortez, engenders an intense sentiment of self-loathing and anxiety within the increasingly conscious modern male. The cultural authenticity of the mythologised masculine narrative and its utilisation in coercing individuals towards socially desirable gendered traits becomes the unattainable burden compelling modern man to the failure of urbane passivity. Furthermore, Conrad observes a crisis of masculine identity driven by the increased intensity of these discourses as a means of reinforcing problematic political hegemony.

Conrad’s depiction of the heavily political conflicts between Antonia and Decoud that function as a courtship ritual are also informed by the internalised conflicts of masculinity characterising Decoud. By conflating his latent anxieties regarding the subjugation of his *flaneurial* calibre by the pursuit of the primacy of masculine virility, Decoud’s political conceits become entwined with his *amor*. This interrelationship enables Conrad to explore the impact of the individual’s internalised masculine identity, informed by prevailing societal perspectives, on political aspiration. Within Decoud’s dialogue, he reveals a position of modernist masculine anxiety regarding the external evaluation of

\textsuperscript{112} *Ibid*, p. 156
positions of counter-intuitiveness and intellectual dignity that are not a traditional component of the masculine archetype. Subsequently, Decoud’s experience of masculine panic sparks a display of idealised masculine conceits which serve to re-establish his position on the machismo spectrum. This effort occurs later in the interchange with Antonia when Decoud, sensing Antonia’s gradual expression of political significance, asserts himself with a coloniser’s contempt by dismissing the political history of her father:

"Oh, yes, I know it's contrary to the doctrine laid down in the 'History of Fifty Years' Misrule. I am only trying to be sensible. But my sense seems always to give you cause for offence."\(^{113}\)

In this action, Decoud is able to express a position of political pragmatism in patronising masculine terms, which in turn triggers an epiphany in Antonia regarding the conviction of her patriotism and political idealism. At this juncture, Conrad pauses the dialogue and the narrative, utilising a sequence of subtle sexual metaphors.

"They leaned side by side on the rail of the little balcony, very friendly... giving themselves up to the silent feeling of their nearness... the glowing coals in the brazeros of the market women cooking their evening meal gleamed red along the edge of the pavement... a horseman walked his soft-stepping mount, gleaming silver-grey abreast each lamp under the dark shape of the rider."\(^{114}\)

These allusions operate as a means of allowing the reader to reconsider the underlying meaning of the interchange whilst reinforcing the latent, yet unrealised desire between the two. Subsequently, a pathos of frustration and incompleteness is evoked that reinforces the position of Decoud’s flaneurial identity as containing little hope of masculine completeness. Therefore, Decoud’s political convictions can be argued to be driven by his irrepressible desire for masculine significance. Through the problems of Decoud, Conrad considers phallocentric dominance within the social and political spheres as being driven by a sentiment of jealous determination in attaining socio-psychological significance in terms of an impossible masculine standard. The melodramatic cost of this trauma is

\(^{113}\) *Ibid*, p. 170
\(^{114}\) *Ibid*, p. 170-171
played out for Decoud through a series of conspiring fatalistic forces, allowing Conrad to evoke a penetrating nihilism.

Moreover, Decoud expresses a sense of uniquely modernist anxiety stemming from his emasculating consciousness. This is conclusively depicted in Conrad's representation of solitude as a metaphysical experience. The 'flaccid phalus' construct is clearly represented in Decoud's supercilious statement that his isolation is "... because I am the only man with a definite idea in his head...". Decoud’s intellect is compared to the physical action and lack of foresight in the engineers within Costaguana:

"All the engineers are out, and have been for two days, looking after the property of the National Central Railway, of that great Costaguana undertaking which is to put money into the pockets of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Americans, Germans, and God knows who else." 

In his exhortations, Decoud grants himself a dominant voice, sterilised by the civility of his 'soft' continental experiences and intellectualism. Within the novel, such key dichotomies relating to the clashes between the Dionysian and Apollonian versions of masculinity are expressed in terms of the genteel European and roguish colonial. Underlying this unresolvable crisis of identity is the conflict between the unattainable, yet idealised masculine position and the inescapability of the modernist masculine construct.

The resultant dichotomy of the colonial and physical masculinity of Nostromo and the urbane flaneurial authority of Decoud is illustrated in the early stages of the silver conspiracy. An example of this clash occurs when Conrad depicts Nostromo's absolute understanding of the operation of the lighter, represented through his authority and agency in setting off. This action is indirectly countered by Decoud's feeble attempt at a grand address to a small audience on the wharf and the softer gesture of the "breath of wind fann(ing) Decoud's cheek." At this juncture in the novel, Conrad's sympathies still appear to be with Nostromo, a consequence of his capable seamanship and

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115 Ibid, p. 212
116 Ibid, p. 212
117 Ibid, p. 238

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the assumed association of physical competence with masculine idealism and the echoes of the reading codes demanded within the adventure narrative. However, Conrad does begin to insinuate that the masculine brilliance of Nostromo has attained its pinnacle. Specifically, Nostromo's subsequent behaviours possess tangible traits of insecurity that invite a re-evaluation of his earlier characterisation. It is in this process of re-appraisal that the reader is also invited to reconsider the earlier representation of Decoud, with Conrad effectively inviting new sympathies. Consequentially, the reader's evaluation of Decoud's demise is comparatively more sympathetic due to the series of injustices that predicate his suicide.

Throughout the silver episode, Decoud still retains the elements of the previously established jealous flaneur. His passive judgment regarding Nostromo is laced with a certain modicum of spite, borne of a manifest recognition of their conflicting masculine codes. Conrad merges archetypal conflicts in order to interrogate newer gender problems. For instance, Conrad's shifting narrative voice reveals that for Decoud:

"(t)here remained only one thing he was certain of, and that was the overweening vanity of his companion. It was direct, uncomplicated, naïve, and effectual."\(^{118}\)

A particular point of interest is that both men never establish a dialogue regarding the construction of their own personalities and perceptions of the masculine ideal. The taboo nature of this topic affirms that the conflicts inherent to the pursuit of the masculine ideal are unresolvable, further illustrating Conrad's perspective that modernist masculinity is inherently tragic.

As the silver episode escalates, Decoud's masculine anxiety, which had previously been constructed through a representation of urbane influence bordering on effeminacy, becomes more the embodiment of a self-destructive Byronic ideal. Conrad illustrates a transition in Decoud's own consciousness wherein he embraces his abject nervousness and fear that he will drown, as seen when Decoud imagines "the lighter sinking to the bottom with an extraordinary shudder of

\(^{118}\) \textit{Ibid}, p. 252
Despite the foreshadowing, Conrad begins to allude to a transitional state within contemporary masculinity. Faced with inevitable demise, the individual is shown to embrace their martyrdom as a means of alleviating both internalised and societal sentiments of masculine inadequacy. The suggestion is that only through a heroic end can traditional masculine codes be ascribed to the individual. Subsequently, Decoud’s apparent joy at realising the potential for self-destruction reveals a true anxiety relating to the absurdity of the masculine fiction. The simple notion that glorious death brings relevance is illogical and based on an outmoded sense of heroic sacrifice underpinning the narratives of history and mythology. Through Decoud, Conrad is able to provide a multifaceted interpretation of the corruption of perceived insignificance and anxiety on the individual’s sense of masculine identity. This tension drives both historical and contemporary discourses of heroism, a poignant marker of popular social philosophy. Subsequently, any argument that asserts Conrad’s dedication to traditional morality can be countered by the simple reality that Conrad identifies the inevitable corruption of these paradigms of idealised and conventional gender constructs within the prism of the historical fin de siècle. Conrad’s imperative is to employ his critical morality through utilising the revolutionary aesthetic of modernism.

As Nostromo and Decoud forge the silver pact through heroic word and deed, Nostromo’s characterisation becomes increasingly simplistic. Contrastingly, Conrad’s development of Decoud becomes more complex. Decoud employs the established means of expressing masculine significance, specifically virility in taking action ”(f)or the ladies” as a means of asserting his control over the simpler motives and instincts of Nostromo. By doing so, Conrad can reveal the splintered ego of Nostromo, a consequence of his realisation regarding his absolute dependence on Decoud within the conspiracy and the subsequent diminishment that this association places on his perception of independence and masculine significance. This anxiety is expressed through the conclusive bitterness of ”I wanted no one with me, Señor.” The inversion of both the narrator’s

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119 Ibid, p. 243
120 Ibid, p. 274
121 Ibid, p. 275
and the reader's sympathies regarding both characters is finally affirmed by Conrad in Decoud's assertion that "(Nostromo) was a man... that seemed as though he would have preferred to die rather than deface the perfect form of his egoism." Within this moment, Conrad reveals the abject anxiety of Nostromo, with the fantasy of his self-perception inherently linked to the addictive rewards incumbent upon the pyrrhic aspect of performative masculinity. The subsequent demise of Decoud is far more intense in terms of its tragic circumstances as it prevents him from detailing his insight regarding the fraudulence of idealised masculinity to a broader public forum. For Conrad, the correlation with notions of the delusional and inconsequential value of a masculine ideal within his own world is apparent.

Nonetheless, as the supposed intellectual within the masculine triumvirate that comprises the novel's plot and dynamic, Decoud remains susceptible to the camouflage of masculine charms of Nostromo. During an early discussion with Nostromo, recounted in the aforementioned letter to his sister, Decoud comments that he is aware of the peculiar talents of Nostromo to assert his potent physical agency "when anything striking to the imagination has to be done." The underlying tone of Decoud's sarcasm grants him a jealous significance. This is held with contempt by Nostromo who, for the first time in the novel, expresses dissatisfaction in his own role by asking "...how much do I get for that Señor?" Here, a bond of understanding is expressed, reaffirmed by Decoud's epiphany that "... it dawned upon me that perhaps this man's vanity has been satiated by the adulation of the common people and the confidence of his superiors!" For Conrad, this moment possesses numerous narrative and conceptual implications. The letter in itself grants access to a specific mode of modernist consciousness due to its content and form, specifically a series of lamentations. Moreover, the moment of cognitive conciliation experienced by Decoud within his insight validates the bond that he and Nostromo share in the later silver escapade. Nonetheless, the obviousness of Decoud's understanding regarding Nostromo's resolve for social approval is

122 Ibid, p. 275
121 Ibid, p. 208
124 Ibid, p. 208
125 Ibid, p. 208
problematic. Conrad effectively explicates that the corrupted masculine form, such as that seen in Decoud’s irreversible stain of urbanity, inevitably triggers a blinding and jealous passivity.

It is fair to contest that Decoud, despite all of his sarcasm and apparent envy, is the male character most capable of appraising his world and the delusion of its conceits. Nevertheless, the poignancy of his insight into the foundational institutions of society and human nature are shown to be internally corrosive. In many ways, the clash between both Nostromo and Decoud becomes a means for Conrad to represent the duality of his own perception of self as he transitions into a far more accomplished era of his own writing. Specifically, the seafaring masculine ideal of Nostromo becomes increasingly irrelevant in the face of the passivity, yet penetrating and cynical insight of Decoud. Nonetheless, Conrad is able to deflect from an understanding of his narrative being a reflection of his authorial presence through the melodrama of both character's deaths. These demises shift the focus away from the author towards a modernist focus on consciousness and self-perception, as well as the text's 'true' protagonist- Gould. Intriguingly, Decoud's ongoing criticism of Gould's idealistic blindfold that prevents him from truly recognising his own exploitation remains pertinent as it expresses both a material jealousy and insight into the fraudulent nature of patriarchal delusion. Overall, the predominant negativity in the narrator's early representations of Decoud could be argued to be an effort by Conrad to invite the reader to reflectively defend his position due to the simple understanding that he was 'misunderstood'. Contrastingly, Guerard argues that Conrad may be condemning Decoud for his withdrawal and scepticism as a means of self-approbation. The key to the interrelationship between Decoud and Conrad is identifying the balance between the author's use of character as an act of personal catharsis or as a psychological study and specific contemplation of the forces driving masculine anxiety.

Conclusively, Decoud's scepticism is expressed through a paradox of Conrad's creation, revealing a particularly poignant position of thinly veiled contempt for the understood position of perpetually

126 S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 79
unrealised will that typifies the problem of masculinity within modernism. Specifically, his argument that man has no capacity to take action without the appropriate inspiration and support of an illusory ideal is drawn out through his ruminations. It is in the modernist’s reality relating to the delusion of the ideal that the individual is corrupted, a complete process of erosion that leads to fatalistic destruction. The recurrence of this concept of the illusory ideal within Nostromo and Lord Jim reinforces the view that Conrad's modernist sensibilities inform his perspective on the fiction of agency, a primary element of the archetypal fiction of masculinity. As the novel develops, the effect is one of pointed contrast, wherein the gallant and courageous Decoud that Nostromo sincerely depends on during the silver escapades is shown to be vastly different to the cynical and passive individual of earlier descriptions. Subsequently, his eventual demise becomes intensely catastrophic as it is ironically the decline of the antithesis of the French stereotype and flaneur. Overall, Decoud is the site for much consideration regarding representations of masculine anxiety. He is far less tainted by the oppressive sets of expectations manifest in the novel’s other heroes, undertaking processes of discovery and significance driven by his own desire for independence. At the point of suicide, the reader is left to consider whether Decoud would have been far better served to maintain his cosmopolitan flaneurial authority and remained disassociated from the adventures of Gould and Nostromo, even if it was to mean risking becoming another version of Monygham or Hirsch. In terms of the question of masculinity within modernism, Conrad maintains his established position, being that the dilemmas of masculine self-perception are relevant and expose a paralysing anxiety that informs contemporary fiction.
Gould's tragic vendetta

The key masculine dilemma embodied in Gould is one present within the two other protagonists. Specifically, Conrad's narrative structure is embedded with aspects that trigger a fatalistic spiral. The fatalism of modernism operates an anathema to masculinity and its inherent substructures of independence. Subsequently, the delusion of agency experienced by Gould in his multifaceted political and social endeavours is a means through which Conrad can revise the set of patriarchal expectations that inform the morality of Western fiction. Gould's naïve self-delusion is enabled by his jealous desire for vengeance on a world that destroyed his father, inviting a poignant psychoanalytical evaluation of his anxieties. Moreover, for the Gould dynasty, the delusion of colonial, cultural and racial importance takes on further significance as these expressions of hegemony are entwined with individual representations of gender drawn from established paradigms. Subsequently, in seeking to supervise the destiny of Costaguana, Gould shows little understanding for the role he inevitably plays in the complex and bewildering forces that have dictated the region's historical narrative. Instead, he takes on the role of the detached coloniser that views the history of the region as beginning with Western influence. Moreover, his perceptions of benevolence are limited to the intelligent handling of resources and control over industry. Subsequently, the masculinity of Gould is initially idealised for the external observer. It is through the erosion of the aura of Gould's righteousness and perfection that Conrad is able to present a further version of the fractured masculine entity.

The initial character portraits of Gould are tempered by the male characters that plague his ancestral memory and existence. For instance, the caricature aspect of Gould's physical 'Englishness', resplendent with:

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128 S. Raval, The Art of Failure, p. 78
"flaming moustache, a neat chin, clear blue eyes, auburn hair, and a thin, fresh, red face... (looking) more English... than anybody out of the hunting-field pictures in the numbers of *Punch*" \(^{129}\)

is interrupted by a lengthy description of the mystical aspect and brutality of Guzman Bento whose decimation of Sulaco included the execution of Gould's uncle, a cause of anxiety for Gould as a recurring "cruel memory". \(^{130}\) In effect, the influence of a tortured historical memory on Gould can be shown to motivate the revenge impulse that inspires much of his action throughout the narrative. Succinctly, Gould is defined by his inherited torment, leading him to focus on his economic and social position. The public element of these endeavours correlates with Conrad's continual appraisal of the performativity of masculinity.

Gould's revenge impulse, itself a vehicle of the romances that Conrad wishes to exploit, has at its core varying influences relating to the transition from conservative heroic adventure fiction to modernist writing resplendent with controversial masculine anxiety. The particular influence of Gould's father on Gould's psyche is paramount to modernist fiction as it reinforces a broader perspective of inherited paradigms that are destructive to the individual. Mr. Gould's suffering at the hands of the politically corrupt and his own recognition of his sense of impotence triggers an intense suffering that is the catalyst for the pressurising influence he retains over his son's future existence. Perhaps most intensely, the disputes between men that occur as a key aspect of Mr. Gould's eventual decline are tempered by the realities of the modernist world. He is incapable of rectifying affronts through the overtly masculine duel, conversely, Mr. Gould is eroded by an exploitative world of language and intrigue where the lawyer and politician emasculate in an implicit, corrosive and permanent sense.

Therefore, the political anxiety of Mr. Gould becomes a product of the modernist condition, informing a sense of masculine anxiety driven by corrupt layers of society. This is especially evident when he implores that his son should never seek to claim his inheritance due to the diabolical taint.

\(^{129}\) J. Conrad, *Nostromo*, pp. 46-47
\(^{130}\) *Ibid*, p. 47
of the concession, concluding with the demand that his son should "forget that America existed."\footnote{Ibid, p. 55}

Through a rapid series of narrative transitions, Conrad presents Mr. Gould's demise as a grotesque of hauntings and fantastic delusion:

"Afterwards, with advancing wisdom, he managed to clear the plain truth of the business from the fantastic intrusions of the Old Man of the Sea, vampires, and ghouls, which had lent to his father's correspondence the flavour of a gruesome Arabian Nights tale."\footnote{Ibid, p. 56}

The feebleness of Mr. Gould's demise completes the trope-like fatalistic spiral of the male with agency and significance. He exists within a colonial sphere, descending into an existential corruption that evokes intense pity within the observer. This fatalistic decline becomes embedded as it shown to become hereditary. As the inheritor of this suffering, Gould's own heroic desire for vengeance, political distinction and economic supremacy become vehicles for his masculine disintegration. To this end, Rieselbach\footnote{H. Rieselbach, Conrad's Rebels, p. 3} argues that \emph{Nostromo} emphasises the fact that devotion to an ideology deforms by impairing the individual's ability to form close personal relationships. The primary argument is that ideology is most often inherited, leaving parents as the agents most responsible for psychic wounds. The psychoanalytical perspective offered here is valid in terms of reading Gould and, to a lesser extent, Nostromo. Nonetheless, this view is problematic as it is to the detriment of Conrad's protestations regarding the corrosive influence of societal expectations on individual self-perception. Therefore, it is plausible that Gould's determination is not solely to give meaning to his father's suffering. It is to also prove his superiority over his father on a subconscious level.\footnote{Ibid, p. 12}

Nonetheless, Gould benefits from his enigma, with the title of "King of Sulaco"\footnote{J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 87} ascribed to him as a by-product of local rumour. His benevolence, as well as his skilled combination of explicit and discreet displays of power, allows him to initially deal with issues relating to labour disputes and employee welfare. The grandiose image of the \emph{Señor Administrador}, as Gould becomes once the

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Ibid, p. 55}
\item \footnote{Ibid, p. 56}
\item \footnote{H. Rieselbach, Conrad's Rebels, p. 3}
\item \footnote{Ibid, p. 12}
\item \footnote{J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 87}
\end{itemize}
enigma of divine power is eroded, still serves to present diverse concepts of masculine empowerment incorporating martial significance, agency and leadership. Conrad utilises the traditional metaphor of the horse as a marker of phallocentric significance. "the solitary English figure of the Senor Administrador riding far ahead in the lead"\textsuperscript{136} to reinforce Gould’s masculine eminence in line with the other cultural and racial assumptions associated with his characterisation. The delusion of untainted patriarchy is expressed in Gould’s maintenance of the colonial fantasy of the moral purity of the English male that correlates with a contemporary fixation with racial hegemony. During a time of political upheaval, Gould’s intimate circle displays a tendency to reinforce and maintain the significance of their masculine identity in contrast with the locals. This triggers a version of exploitative behaviour dressed as moral and ethical supremacy, encoded with structures of masculine tradition that inform colonial discourse.\textsuperscript{137} Consequently, with Gould’s position of supposed completion established, Conrad can provide the means for the gradual disintegration of his masculine character. This allows for Gould’s early position as a beacon of masculine identity to be reconsidered through his paradoxical position as politically apathetic, yet active within the sphere. This is seen in his support of Federation that is evaluated as an apolitical act fuelled by a benevolent instinct to defend the "social order out of pure love for rational liberty and from his hate of oppression."\textsuperscript{138} Effectively, Gould’s political sensibilities are driven by an internalised moral principle that manifests in particular conceits relevant to his status. In turn, these behaviours conspire to facilitate the fatalistic conflicts relating to the self-idealisation of masculinity.

This assumption of completeness is destroyed in a far more cynical and degrading fashion than that experienced in the narrative strands of Decoud or Nostromo. Problematically, Gould remains unaware of his decline, with intense reactions of contempt serving to fully destroy the initial enigma whilst illustrating that his hamartia is an abject delusion driven by dedication to a futile agenda. The foreshadowing of this decline occurs when Conrad’s narrator provides a sense of the flawed aspect

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid, p. 106
\textsuperscript{137} M. Roberts, Conrad and Masculinity, p. 100
\textsuperscript{138} J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 62
in Gould's status as a hegemonic masculine archetype by commenting on the impulsive desire for vengeance fuelling Gould as "... closely affecting his own identity, fill(ing) his own breast with a mournful and angry desire for action."\(^{139}\) The hermeneutic narrator indulges in a moment of philosophy, revealing the self-destructive obsession that plagues Gould by moralising: "Action is consolatory. It is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions."\(^{140}\) Effectively, the conscious narrator is able to undermine the assumed agency of revenge as a conceit of self-deception that forges a toxic imbalance between rationality and emotion. Therefore, Conrad is able to re-evaluate a series of narrative archetypes through his modification of the traditional British hero within his version of the contemporary adventure narrative. By doing this, he can undermine conventions that inform fiction.

Although the other two key characters are clearly informed by their relationships with women that contribute to their downfall,\(^{141}\) the relationship between Gould and his wife shows Conrad's reconfiguration and subversion of established gender codes. Through the erosion of the aura of Gould's perfection, Conrad is able to complete his version of the fractured masculine entity through Mrs. Gould's denouncement that provides the novel with an unsatisfying conclusion - "'No, Capataz,' she said. 'No one misses it now. Let it be lost forever.'"\(^{142}\) By doing so, Conrad completes the cycle in terms of the archetypal correlation between masculinity and virility that begins with his representations of the significance of youth. This allows for the modernist device of the cruelty of time to effectively destroy earlier characterisations, effectively diminishing established notions of phallocentric power. For example, Gould's acquisition of the mine is described by Conrad with severe optimism as being a "magic formula (for) hope, vigour and self-confidence."\(^{143}\) This positivity can be juxtaposed with the gradual moral degradation of Gould, influenced by external forces.

\(^{139}\) Ibid, p. 63
\(^{140}\) Ibid, p. 63
\(^{141}\) The representation of women in Conrad is still problematic. It is highly plausible that Conrad utilises his female characters without overt creativity or challenge to status quo as their experience of archetypal displacement dressed as purity and significance correlates with his realisation of the intense anxiety and consciousness of an increasingly emasculated version of masculinity within historical modernism
\(^{142}\) Ibid, p. 506
\(^{143}\) Ibid, p. 57
incorporating the passage of time and the richly metaphoric silver. It is in this transition that Conrad is capable of representing the experience of modernist masculinity as a process of fatalistic suffering and disempowerment, especially if one considers the emasculating potential of the increasing social and political significance of Gould's wife. Nonetheless, even at the endpoint of Gould's decline he still maintains a position of narrative supremacy, reinforcing the underlying modernist 'flaccid phallus' construct as a key contemporary narrative device.

The complex force that is Mrs. Gould receives various enigmatic attentions wherein she is presented as the object of the masculine desire to repress and control erotic transactions in women. She is also presented as a politically frustrated entity operating within the binds of matriarchal social obligations. Similarly, Conrad's narrator reveals that the collective psychic structure that leads to masculine admiration has its parallels in glorifying a commonly held set of feminine values. This is seen when the narrator equates "true tenderness" to "true virility (in) man." As the narrative progresses, Gould's exponentially increasing involvement with his enterprise inversely impacts on his relationship with his wife. Conrad accesses Mrs. Gould on occasion as a conduit for illustrating the impact of masculine aspiration on supposedly impenetrable bonds, such as marriage. Her compassionate sentiments and actions become compensatory and thus are an expression of incompleteness. This is illustrated in the juxtaposition of Gould "alone within a circumvallation of precious metal" and Mrs. Gould "with her school, her hospital, the sick mothers and the feeble old men, mere insignificant vestiges of the initial inspiration." The sense of dissatisfaction implied by the intensity of application in both characters suggests that the idealised sense of self that informs masculine behaviour is ultimately significant. This is because Conrad shows that the single-minded pursuit of hegemony and identity inevitably impacts on other idealisms. In effect, the basic plot element of revenge that underpins Gould's narrative is distorted by the uniquely modernist dilemma.

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144 D. M. Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and other Essays on Greek Love, New York: Routledge, 1990
145 J. Conrad, Nostromo, p. 64
146 Ibid, p. 204
147 Ibid, p. 204
of asserting social significance through the pursuit of capital. Subsequently, the degradation of the masculine, understood as the 'flaccid phallus' notion, becomes literal in Gould's display of an impotence that transforms the desires of Mrs. Gould. This is illustrated quite conclusively in the fact that the mine serves as Gould's mistress, fertile where his wife is barren. Subsequently, Gould's masculine obligations are subconsciously reinforced despite the apparent irony of disloyalty and irrational passion.

Nonetheless, the repetition of Gould's struggle for significance is represented by Conrad with a certain modicum of sympathy. The recognition of Gould's capacity to delegate and empower the native population is offset by the overwhelming conclusion that:

"(f)or the rest, his shoulders alone sustained the whole weight of the 'Imperium in imperio,' the great Gould Concession whose mere shadow had been enough to crush the life out of his father."\textsuperscript{148}

The fatalism of Gould's endeavours, insinuated through the references to both his father and the hyperbole of the Latin inspires a dual sense of pity and awe from the reader. Nonetheless, the narrative is not restricted to the suffering of one man and comes to transcribe these burdens, whether social or psychological, as responsible for the degradation and pessimistic outlook of the male within the modern world. Therefore, the dilemma experienced by the three 'heroes' of the text elicits waves of frustration due to the delusions of agency and independence that are exposed by the novel's fatalism. Subsequently, through his narrative intrusions, Conrad is able to reveal his sentiments regarding Gould's version of single-minded masculinity. Conrad reveals his sympathy for Gould, arguably the 'best man' of the novel due to his sense of honour and integrity in expressing power. Nonetheless, Conrad exposes the curse in the sense of a masculine perfection, incorporating the reader by arguing that: "(t)o him, as to all of us, the compromises with his conscience appeared uglier than ever in the light of failure."\textsuperscript{149} Subsequently, an underlying didacticism stemming from a modernist pessimism is revealed by Conrad. His argument is for a personal reappraisal of masculine

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, p. 138
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, p. 332
sensibilities in line with the evolving morality of the contemporary world and its series of corrupting influences that have contributed to making the masculine ideal unattainable.

**Conclusion**

Conrad's *Nostromo* is a narrative laden with a diverse array of characters and narrative voices set within an intricate fictional world that inevitably invites comparison with his the author's world. The complexity of the novel's divergent narrative paths and its politics contrasts with the underlying moral problem relating to modernist masculinity. The novel's three potential heroes border on caricature or stereotype in their initial representations. The notable deviations from the expected in characterisation allows Conrad to highlight his own perspectives and modernist philosophies, especially those regarding gender. *Nostromo* is ultimately a novel concerned with the tragic fall of differing versions of the great man. Through the novel, Conrad ultimately exposes the fallacy of the popularly embedded understanding of a complete version of masculinity. Therefore, the desirability of this construct enables Conrad to deploy a set of modernist devices that have at their core a re-evaluation of the traditions of Western literature and ways of thinking. The treatment of masculinity by Conrad is such that it expresses a poignantly nihilistic view, resplendent with a modernist's appraisal of the anxiety and fracturing of all hegemonic or complete entities. The subsequent panic of masculinity reveals a social impotence that is also impacted by other discreet forces, such as time. Nonetheless, the significance of the masculine within the narrative is maintained. Ultimately, this paradox of the absolute significance of masculine *insignificance* becomes a key marker for the characterisation of future modernist writers as it embodies the 'flaccid phallus'.

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Chapter III: Lord Jim- Webs of modernist consciousness and the masculine self

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The externally determined dilemma and Conrad’s metafiction

The previous chapter’s focus on Nostromo illustrated Conrad’s focused perspective on the sources that underpinned modernist masculine anxiety. A particular focus was the causes underpinning society’s ongoing protection of the codified hierarchies implied in gender identity. Conrad’s earlier novel, Lord Jim, deals more explicitly with the consequences of modernist masculine anxiety.

Through the novel’s interrogations, Conrad delineates a subtle set of auxiliary sources for masculine anxiety, including the inherited burden of masculine expectation. In Lord Jim, Conrad utilises narrative lines that ensure that the fable-like tragedy of naivety works at a level where the plot becomes neither a mere celebration of Jim nor an account of his failure. Conversely, the novel is a critique of the underlying values that serve to forge a community’s reflective vision of impermeable paradigms. The individual’s internalisation of these externally determined agendas informs

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150 S. Raval, The Art of Failure, p. 45
Conrad's modernism in terms of masculinity. The upheaval of masculinity expressed within *Lord Jim* allows Conrad to explore contemporary gender panic and the hyperbole of contemporary adventure fiction. By extension, Conrad considers the gender politics that underpin late-Victorian conservatism and traditionalism.

The influence of late nineteenth century adventure fiction on Conrad's novel is a significant component of the text's dynamic. Specifically, *Lord Jim* is evidence of Conrad's conscious shift between utilising and criticising the conventions of the 'Boys' Own'. His byplay with adventure fiction functions as a form of pointed criticism that expands beyond the sphere of literature, effectively criticising social conventions reified through the popular genre and its exponents. White\(^{151}\) argues that Conrad's need to demythologise a genre that had undoubtedly influenced him stemmed from his public and personal awareness that the possibilities for great aspirations and noble deeds were closing down, a particularly modernist sentiment. Effectively, the novel subverts the conventions of adventure fiction as a means of criticising its style and morality. Regarding the questions of modernism and masculinity, this provides Conrad with the means of subverting the patriarchal and traditional.

Therefore, in terms of reading *Lord Jim* for the modernist anxieties embedded within the multiple layers of problematic masculinity that inform its textual dynamic, the reader is required to be alert to the overwhelming authorial tension explored by Conrad regarding the contemporary significance of the adventure narrative. Conrad's largely oppositional stance manifests itself within the characterisation of Jim, as well as the text's structural elements. Specifically, *Lord Jim* possesses a metafictive component that criticises the romantic adventure narrative and its inherent tropes of masculinity. As an alternative to the adventure fiction 'tradition' and its representations of an archetypal masculinity that is swathed in the glory of empire and associated concrete moral dichotomies, Conrad's novel shows how the myth of male hegemony fades as a consequence of the isolation of empire. In turn, this provokes the subsequent questioning of entrenched value systems.

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Conrad's exoticism triggers a consideration of his capacity to utilise the 'external realm' as a canvas for his moral didacticism and as a less subtle microcosm of his 'civilised' world, especially in terms of the representation of the dynamics of gender. Subsequently, it can be argued that Conrad's authorial intention in Lord Jim was to explore the interplay of patriarchy and masculinity as both a personal and social paradigm whilst traversing modernist literary agendas, such as the overall challenge to the aesthetic of the novel as form. By doing so, Conrad draws out fundamental issues with both the artistic and political spheres of his world in terms of the myth of masculine completeness and patriarchal supremacy. A specific area of concern stemmed from the fact that the cult of masculine adventure fiction had transformed the heroic virtues of the greater adventure stories of earlier literature into the public and middle class virtues of an urbane fin de siecle society.\(^{152}\) The inherent conservatism within these value systems empowers Conrad's oppositional position as he constructs a narrative that is shaped less by a sense of paternal perfection and more by a realistic appraisal of universal imperfection.

To this end, Sherry\(^{153}\) argues that:

"there is no question... that Conrad was attempting to take the typical character (Jim) and the typical sea adventure of light literature (the man rescued from the perils of the deep) in order to transform the convention... Conrad (was) not only testing man's quality in face of events but the quality of romantic writers in (the) face of their craft."

The implication is that Conrad, notorious for his own sense of literary significance, was looking to revitalise the genre from which he drew certain inspiration through a double-pronged approach that challenged its conventions. Subsequently, the metafictional component of Lord Jim is such that the text actively criticises the traditions of the modes whilst echoing the sentiment of adventure fiction by navigating a philosophically didactic course. The difference between his work and the genre at large lies in intention. Conrad's novel ultimately functions as a critique of the inflexibility and

dangers inherent in traditional masculinity, as opposed to the virtues of the archetypal masculine form. Therefore, the key to Lord Jim is that it does not provide the catharsis of aspiration for the reader. Alternatively, the novel provides a steady and particularly modernist criticism of the embedded discourses and influences of masculinity by showing them to be corrupting and outmoded. Essentially, Lord Jim shows that Conrad possesses little concern for enriching the cult of masculinity or empire. Rather, his position as a novelist is to interrogate the human condition and the impact of the socio-political and personal realms on the psychology of the individual. This is affirmed in the ironic honorific within the novel's title, illustrating the dislocation Jim experiences in his desire to attain the heroism that his race, youth and occupation demands. The title is clearly not to be considered as the type of glorification of masculinity suggested by contemporary titles such as Rudyard Kipling's Captains Courageous or the plight successfully endured, suggested by Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped.

Nonetheless, Lord Jim is read as Victorian adventure romance existing within the same paradigm as Treasure Island by Deane, who contends that Jim exists as part of an evolving British bildungsroman tradition, resplendent with imperialist sensibilities such as the redemption of the protagonist and a maturing perspective on colonialism defined as a highly developed morality driven by a racial imperative. Deane's reading of Conrad's novel is meaningful in terms of its understanding of the colonial discourses that are propagated in certain episodes by various minor characters, nonetheless, Deane's perspective requires a consideration of the problematic forces of masculinity that inform both the semantics and ideologies of imperialism, as well as the social forces that underpin the Late Victorian colonial project. Moreover, the subversive aspect of Conrad's authorship in terms of this narrative is evident in his apparent circumvention of the motifs of the bildungsroman. Jim's failed passage through a series of trials is Conrad's vehicle for the study of the impact of societal and institutionalised expectations on the mental state of the individual and the subsequent implications that are felt within future embodiments of masculinity within literature.

Therefore, Jim's eventual destruction is not meant to be read as an act of petulant modernist nihilism by Conrad. Rather, Conrad's purpose is to represent:

"The incomplete joy, the incomplete sorrow, the incomplete rascality or heroism— the incomplete suffering (of existence)... only in a boy's book of adventures do events occur otherwise."  

The tribulations of modernist masculinity and its problematic capacity to hold dichotomous or conflicting idealisations of self is shown to be inevitable in Lord Jim. Conrad illustrates the absolute significance of a gendered type of modernist anxiety borne of the individual's incapacity to attain a standard of patriarchal hegemony. The associated affront to traditional modes of status foregrounds the destabilisation of masculinity within modernism. Subsequently, Jim's life is the product of the combined British and Continental export of the cult of masculinity. It is inspired by the popular literature of imperial exoticism and the inspirational didacticism of the 'Boy's Own'. The rudimentary globalisation of this manifestly moral and cultural imperative is shown by Conrad to have been made possible by the existence of shipping lanes of militarism and commerce.  

Within the novel, the evidence of an imperialised ideal manifests itself in Jim's tenuous relationship with his birthplace and his national identity, constructs that are shown to be absolutely central to Jim's ego ideal. Through this, Conrad expands the codes of masculinity by considering differing classifications of patriarchy and dominance, such as that offered by the imperialism and capitalism, as well as the prevailing significance of racial identification. Within this framing, economies of masculinity inspired by systems of exchange and substitution are culturally encoded. The resultant perpetuity of the spectrum of machismo becomes a vehicle for Conrad's reconfiguration of the 'tragic hero' within the novel. Conrad's heroism is subsequently a subversive reimagining of Haggard's version of masculinity. Haggard imagines a rediscovery of a triumphant and primitive form through the 'exoticising' adventure that critiques and dismisses a 'home' that has lost its masculine vigour.

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156 M. Roberts, Conrad and Masculinity, p. 59
Haggard's oversimplification of the modernist masculine dilemma is transformed into the fatalistic destruction manifest in *Lord Jim*, driven by the burden of unattainable glory and the conflict between the conscious individual and their unconsciously brutal society. In effect, an absolute significance is granted to the perfection of the imagined 'other' in terms of its capacity to assault individual ego, leading to modernist states of metaphysical decay and physical destruction. This is exacerbated by the key modernist dilemma of the influence of the external on the individual, embodied in the approbation and judgement of society and its corrosive impact on the individual. Conclusively, the novel is distinguished by the complex politics informing its narrative that summarily dismisses redemptive assertions by alluding to the danger posed by evocative, jingoistic and propagandistic fiction marketed towards a world that has become defensive of its fading traditions.

Stein and the foreshadowing of Jim's demise

Central to the reader's understanding of the corrosive nature of socially constructed aspiration is the characterisation of the novel's 'other Jim', Stein. Within Stein, the nostalgia for a more heroic past is mixed with the realistic appraisal of universal imperfection. Underlying the simple plot and complex narrative voices of *Lord Jim* is this embodiment of a precise form of modernist masculine suffering. Although a relatively minor character, Stein functions as a touchstone for the melodrama of the decline of Jim and the subtler anxiety contained within the conflicted psyche of Marlow. Stein's enduring existence within the novel is shown to be a consequence of the tribulations afforded to the flawed individual, operating within a world dominated by the rhetoric of perfect masculinity and the cult of social approbation. Ultimately, *Lord Jim* illustrates that these two precepts are key components of the codes of duty that underpin the seaman's implicit and concrete

158 J. White, *Adventure Tradition*, p. 108
codes of accountability and obligation. The strict codification of these convention of masculine duty are subsequently glorified by a world that has become increasingly conscious of masculine failure.

The *flaneurial* passivity of Stein becomes a marker of a state of inescapable, yet intensely insightful, modernist masculinity. He contends that:

"A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea... The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet make the deep, deep sea keep you up..."\(^{159}\)

Stein expresses an absolute position of penetrating nihilism within his melodramatic ambiguity. Essentially, he argues that existence is ultimately destructive and hostile towards humanity. The extended metaphor of relating to the ocean contends that the enduring concept of the struggle is individually evoked due to the human capacity for generating ideals and aspirations. This enables the individual to transform the hostility of existence into a means for the realisation of goals. Stein's imperative embodies an absolutely romantic exhortation, specifically, that ideals and aspiration grant purpose. Subsequently, the pertinent nihilistic aspect of Stein's insight is driven by the tragic component of the novel as a whole. Essentially, the struggle for significance, the action of 'pushing oneself out of the ocean', or continually trying to reassert oneself in increasingly exotic realms, is one that fatalistically guides the individual toward eventual corruption. In terms of idealised masculinity, Conrad effectively contends that this modernist precept is a component of pyrrhic gestures of agency or the conceits that comprise attempts to shift positions within the *machismo* spectrum.

As the novel continues, Stein's existence becomes increasingly passive, asexual and insular. This is made most poignant in the novel's conclusion where Stein is shown to:

"... (have) aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is 'preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave...' while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies."\(^{160}\)

\(^{159}\) J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, pp. 192-193

\(^{160}\)
Poignantly, Stein’s age allows him to function as the personification of an older order assaulted by newer paradigms of masculinity. Inevitably, these are shaped by the philosophical and psychological conflicts informing modernist masculine epitomes of anxiety, impotence and suffering. Stein’s form of lucid insanity, expressed through his dreaming and his pastime of capturing butterflies, becomes a means of showing the absolute fracturing of consciousness. His lengthy absences within the novel and the enigma of the path that led to his reclusiveness serves to heighten the fatalism and tragedy of Jim’s demise. This is true to the extent that the similarities between the two in terms of the self-actualised burden of masculine expectation are transparent. Within these paralleled characters, Conrad suggests that the panic of masculinity spawning in the political and social dilemmas of the late Victorian era contributed to a destructive shift within the individual’s aspirational consciousness. Through the Jim/ Stein pairing, the conflict between traditional masculinity and the modern flaneur is shown to cause intense psychological turmoil, morphing into a state of anxious delusion. In exploring a similar notion, Roberts argues that the crisis of masculinity at home operated on the unconscious of the imperial novel, leading to the construction of new and increasingly problematic gender binaries that could not be understood through traditional masculine/ feminine dichotomies. Instead, contextualised masculinities are understood as an evolving paradigm that are expressed through levels of political significance.

The evidence of the kinship between Jim and Stein is paramount to Conrad’s capacity to explore masculinity within modernism. Long before Jim’s socially and psychologically conceived ideals reveal their destructive aspect, Stein has partaken of a similar experience and arrived at his endpoint. Stein’s meditations and his absurd collection of butterflies offer little distraction for his consciousness, in the same way that Jim’s endeavours on various ships after the Patna hold no redemptive power. In a defining episode, Stein confesses his own conscious state of failure that leads to his own experience of isolation when he declares that his life’s ambition was “to follow the

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160 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 374
161 M. Roberts, Conrad and Masculinity, p. 61
dream, and again to follow the dream." In this, Conrad exposes the modernist sense of the maelstrom of unfulfilled ambition and the subsequent experience of existential suffering. The evidence of this can be seen in the fact that Stein remains haunted by his ambitions, ignorant to the forces that served to shape their construction and to the unpalatable reality that potential satisfaction is located within a society rife with its own insecurities and anxieties. For Stein, this creates a further maelstrom of psychological dissatisfaction that immortalises itself in his dreams. Moreover, Stein's own sense of masculine insecurity is perhaps a consequence of the pure fact that he never explicitly delineates his ambitions to his world, supposing them to comprise the adversarial aspirations of others. This dilemma reinforces the notion of comparison and implicit combat within the scale of *machismo*, a state that clearly assaults the wellbeing of Conrad's characters and their intense anxieties whilst serving to further illustrate the qualities of the 'flaccid phallus'.

Conclusively, *Lord Jim* functions as a critique of various assumptions of authority and self. In effect, the novel operates as Conrad's argument that his contemporary world is incapable of structuring a set of pervasive values that can be perceived as both unquestionable and realistically attainable for all. In a fashion typical of modernist frustration, both *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim* critique life without culminating in the optimistic or heroic presentation of viable and alternative models. The reader is left questioning whether Conrad's modernism, as expressed in *Lord Jim*, is a product of modern fiction's supposed fascination with the radically problematic or estranging aspects of experience. Alternatively, the novel is possibly the expression of something powerfully 'anti-apocalyptic', articulating a more reserved *momento mori* of the "irremediable life of the earth as it is." In other words, the idea of an ultimate form of heroism presents itself as something artificial, a plot in a book or a myth of social order. Ultimately, during the moments where conventional heroism becomes suspect, the reader moves towards the imagination of Conrad and can conceptualise the author's understanding of the dynamic interplay of masculinity and modernism.

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163 S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 57
Jim: Caricature and false redemption

Conrad's modernism, expressed through his capacity to oppose supposedly intractable social norms, is dependent upon the underlying meaning made available through the characterisation of his protagonists. As has been previously established, the metafictional component of Lord Jim is expressed through the subversion of the traditional narrative elements of the hero's 'quest', as well as the elements of caricature that contribute to the construction of the protagonist. Within these facets, Conrad is able to access and entrench a potent sense of modernist anxiety to construct a tragic hero that straddles paradoxical realms of realism and hyperbole. Specifically, the impact of socially determined paths of ambition on Jim's psyche and self-ideal operate to create the key conceptual dichotomy that informs the eventual complexity of his character. Acknowledging this density in character is significant because Jim possesses the potential to be understood solely as parody or caricature due to his rough association with the 'boys' own' hero in terms of his physical aspect and externally constructed will. Within the political and psychological complexity of Jim, Conrad's potent sense of nihilism guarantees the destructiveness of Jim's end and functions as an approbation of institutionalised gender mores, and an allegorical means of questioning extended states of patriarchy. This clash can be shown to inform the characterisation of Jim, an 'everyman' protagonist divided as a consequence of the incongruous ideals that assault rationality and self-perception. In the end, his importance in terms of narrative emphasises his corruption and eventual insignificance. Subsequently, he becomes a superlative embodiment of the 'flaccid phallus' of Conrad's modernism.

In terms of interrelationship, Jim's characterisation corresponds with that of the three protagonists in Nostromo. Conrad emphasises the pathos of modernist masculinity within Jim as being a state of intense emotional flux and anxiety through the absence of the politically aspirational aspect observed in both Gould and Decoud. Specifically, Conrad represents a modernist view of the psychologically corrosive impact of society by appraising the destructive capacity of traditional
archetypes of masculinity. With this consideration, the reader is encouraged to extrapolate and consider the magnitude of Jim as a means for Conrad to interrogate the overall significance of contemporary adventure fiction and its capacity to reify destructive value systems. Due to this, a consideration of Jim's relationship with the heroes of contemporary adventure fiction is necessary. It is trite to consider the Jim of Conrad's creation to be created and named deliberately to suggest the Jim of Treasure Island and the overbearing infiltration of the codes of masculine ambition that are entrenched in Stevenson's canonical 'boys' own'. Nonetheless, if one is to accept the merits of this possibility then it would be fair to understand Conrad's effective function to be that of Cervantes' Barber and Priest, desperately destroying Quixote's library in order to ward off an inevitable insanity caused by the encoding of moralities and behaviours embedded within popular literary forms. Essentially, the implicit influence of the glorified adventure narrative on Jim is a means for Conrad to establish his narrative with a discourse of approbation, expressed through an implicit form of didacticism. The fracturing of the masculine fiction is assured through the employment of a variety of anxious and self-conscious voices, a central feature of modern fiction. The representation of Jim as a modernist 'everyman' affirms Conrad's perspective that visionary aspirations towards outmoded traditions constitute the destructive element of the individual. This concept is confirmed by the fact that throughout the narrative, Jim can neither live without aspiration, nor make these desires a natural component of the world in which he must live. Therefore, the conflict within Jim is the dilemma of masculinity within modernism. It is a bind of inevitability inspired by the pursuit of a fraudulent dream. a central focus of the later modernists.

The early descriptions of Jim's life function as indicators of the encompassing plight of masculine identity that underpins the plot. In these opening sequences, Conrad grounds a narrative feature

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165 S. Raval, The Art of Failure, p. 53
that further exposes itself within later modernist writers - the exile desiring refuge from both their sins and their judgemental society. 166

To this end, Jim cultivates an enigmatic gendered identity that eventually contributes to their later inescapable metaphoric imprisonment, seen in: "When all men flinched, then—he felt sure—he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas." 167 This situation is catalysed by Jim as he surrounds and protects the cultural gender ideal that he has conceived for himself, providing himself with a claustrophobic and catastrophic state of anxiety. This yoke of unattainable masculine significance is shown to plague his consciousness. In depicting this, Conrad is able to criticise the cultural imperatives and institutions of the West that have continued to glorify the masculine tradition. A further example of this encoding is observed in the allusions to contemporary adventure narratives - "... the earnestness in the anger of the sea... is not so often made apparent as people might think" 168 - and the aggrandisement central to the oral history of seaman's tales that have indubitably shaped Jim's ego ideal.

Jim's emasculation is established by Conrad in a lengthy description of Jim's incapacity to maintain "his incognito, which had as many holes as a sieve," 169 driving him further East away from the cultural imperatives of the patriarchal values underpinning the 'civilised' West. Moreover, the flashbacks that comprise the Classical narrative structure contribute to the novel's overwhelming fatalism. The associated pessimism is achieved by introducing the plight of Jim, before shifting to the traditional masculine and authoritative voice of Marlow. Jameson 170 defines this procedure by identifying the first component of the narrative of Lord Jim as the intricate and prototextual search for the truth, whilst the second half comprises a linear paradigm of romance.

166 A modern motif presented with distinctive underlying differences. The experience of exile that offers an opportunity for freedom experienced by Dedalus in Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man differs from the sense of isolation prevalent in Eliot's The Waste Land. It is significant that both fictional worlds offer a view of society that is oppositional to the experience of the individual.

167 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 12
168 Ibid, p. 13
169 Ibid, p. 8
Through these factors that serve to contribute to the characterisation of Jim, Conrad strikes a balance between potentially disharmonious precepts, the modernist's imperative to forge divergent aesthetics and observations by utilising a framework that utilises an overexposed tradition. In effect, masculinity is explored directly through the approbation of Jim offered by disconnected narrators that usurp the potential authorial control of a protagonist supposedly undertaking the redemptive hero quest. Subsequently, these voices that evaluate and judge Jim are granted authority, yet invite further consideration.

The imbalance represented within Jim's incapacity to rationalise and stabilise his perception of self is driven by the influence of an impervious and socially determined code of masculine. Central to this is a series of tests of courage and enterprise, including Jim's training as a mercantile officer, the Malayan village and the *Patna* episode. In isolation, each event could have been extracted from the contemporary 'boy's own' due to underlying assumptions of the public performance of martial heroism, courage and ingenuity that operate as the basis of the performative aspect of aspirational masculinity. Conversely, the set of concrete expectations associated with each episode erode Jim's masculine self when he is incapable of attaining the standard established in fiction. An example can be observed on the training ship where Jim acquires a rival in the form of the boy who succeeds in rescuing two men from drowning. Jim's jealous contempt is exposed in sexist stereotype:

"Nevertheless he brooded apart that evening while the bowman of the cutter—a boy with a face like a girl's and big grey eyes—was the hero of the lower deck."\(^{171}\)

After this event, Jim denies the rivalry and his desire to emulate the boy, deluding himself into a sense of contempt for the very quality of masculine vanity that he continually seeks to strengthen within himself.\(^{172}\) This is evident in:

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\(^{171}\) J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 11

\(^{172}\) M. Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity*, p. 63
"He had enlarged his knowledge more than those who had done the work. When all men flinched, then—he felt sure—he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas... he exulted with fresh certitude in his avidity for adventure, and in a sense of many-sided courage."

This episode reveals that the machismo demands on Jim are heavily internalised, making it plausible that the ensuing judgements passed over him by society are driven more by concrete constructs of duty, rather than implicit conceits of masculine courage. Nonetheless, it is the masculine anxiety of Jim that transfigures this social approbation into a corrupt sense of self. Conrad's utilisation of these events as a means of depicting the enduring plight of Jim is an attempt at questioning the cultural imprinting caused by contemporary ways of thinking. The recurrent allusions to Jim's conscience being branded with codes of expected behaviour stemming from the mythic codes of masculinity is proven by Conrad to be destructive and ultimately incongruous with the true experience of contemporary masculinity, even within the traditional realm of the merchant marine.

Subsequently, the episodic aspect of the narrative possesses a specific symbolic resonance. Within each episode, Jim's ultimate act of cowardice is a morally ambiguous act. For instance, the Patna was apparently sinking after a collision with a phantom ship (admittedly, this ship does not exist), a storm was approaching and there were insufficient lifeboats. These problems are coupled with the fact that Jim's crude associates contributed to his confusion. At worst, Jim's decision to abandon ship was one impulsive decision in the temporary absence of all restraints, essentially a moment occurring within a moral vacuum. After the incident, both the reader and the society of the novel is subsequently confronted by a complex array of issues that are reaffirmed by Marlow's insistence that there is a special kind of courage expressed by Jim "facing it out like he does," suggesting that the mythology of masculinity and its auxiliary remnant of individual responsibility and unquestionable agency retains an imperative significance. Conrad's narrative focus exposes the reader to the cost of this dedication.

173 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 12
174 M. Jones, A Paradise Lost, p. 85
175 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 67
During the initial inquisition of Jim, Marlow's internalised and socially affirmed perception of masculine supremacy contrasts with Jim's steadfast determination to represent himself as an adventurous hero of exotic exploits. In these moments, Jim asserts a quixotic aspect to his characterisation as a continuation of his earlier expressed desires to partake in some memorably heroic act. The parallel is apparent: Jim, like Cervantes' *Quixote*, seeks to ultimately see himself and to be socially perceived as something he is not. Therefore, the reader is left questioning the cause of Jim's delusional impulses, balancing measures of innate tragic flaw, social stigma and the burden of expectation on the individual's psyche. Central to all three aspects is Conrad's desire to depict unresolvable anxiety as symptomatic of the modernist masculine constitution, a conflict that ultimately generates a permeating sense of nihilism. Subsequently, *Lord Jim* suggests that only through acts of publically witnessed and acknowledged heroism is a man able to have his sense of masculine worth affirmed.

Conrad's extrapolation of the *Patna* incident is played out through a series of associated narrative focuses, resplendent with their own comments on the nature of masculinity as a socially reified construct. For example, when questioned regarding actions that appear heroic in comparison to the other Europeans aboard the *Patna*, the French lieutenant reflects that:

"Man is born a coward... It is a difficulty- *parbleu*. It would be too easy otherwise. But habit- habit- necessity- do you see?- the eyes of others- *voila*!"\(^{176}\)

In effect, the French lieutenant is arguing that courage is grounded in repetition and obligation-effectively a series of discursive practices learned in the community of other men. Masculine courage is not contested to be the result of either conscious reflection or deliberate preparedness. Rather, the French lieutenant contests that masculine courage is manifested in obedience. The lieutenant's insight does not infer the elimination of an 'anti-masculine' sentiment of fear, alternatively, it implies a restraint on fear through the practical exercises of duty-bound daily life. In

\(^{176}\) J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 134
other words, the *maschismo* conceit that underlies public displays of courage are actions generated by tradition, training and the moral dictates of relentlessly judgemental community. This adversarial dynamic ensures that the interplay between masculine self-identity and community is inescapable. Within a similar understanding, Raval argues that masculine courage brings the individual honour and contributes to the stability and health of society because courage is a manifestation of ingrained and accepted modes of practice. Ultimately, the French lieutenant's success should not undermine Jim's perception of his own masculine identity. Nonetheless, the issue of courage, as with all *machismo* conceits, serves to provide a means for the evaluation of the individual within frames of societal expectation. Effectively, the code of masculine courage is shown to possess a transcendental and ontological status. Through the French lieutenant and his relationship with Jim, Conrad argues that the dichotomy of the glorified figure and the antithetical emasculated pariah is ultimately driven by a dedication to codes of craft and profession. Subsequently, Conrad's utilisation of the dynamics of the naval situation becomes reflective of society as a whole. The inherent rigidness of codes of masculine expectation and aspiration within this occupation are shown to be analogous to the situation manifesting itself within an increasingly anxious and panicked *zeitgeist*. Like in society, men are meant to act like other men and are meant to painlessly aspire to be great men, or wilfully fulfil their duty by assisting and glorifying men who are afforded greatness.

Consequently, although possessing an undeniable pessimism in its emphasis on the human capacity for self-deception and self-betrayal, *Lord Jim* is still predicated by a code of behaviour that provides a standard for men to measure their own and other's actions. When the protagonist fails his tests, he knows that he has violated a concrete moral imperative, the seaman's duty to his post. At the same time, this becomes a violation of an implicit social code regarding the absolute significance of the integrity of masculine behaviour. In his failure, Jim's desertion of an imperilled humanity effectively exposes the fraudulence of the sustaining partnership of shared solitude between sailors

177 S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 51
that is, for Marlow, one of the few simple notions "you must cling too." Specifically, Jim's act of betrayal is far more tangible in comparison to the ambiguous morality of Nostromo's appropriation of the silver because it contains no element of heroism and it is a shattering of explicit and implicit codes of expectation. In comparison to Lord Jim, the external standards and pressures of expected behaviours in Nostromo contain less traction, perhaps a consequence of Conrad's development as a writer in terms of his capacity to construct complex, yet authentic worlds where political discourses are enriched and outweigh personal prejudices regarding the social construction of gender.

Subsequently, the level of masculine self-doubt explored through Jim contains a sharper set of considerations for the reader.

Conrad's representation of Jim is one that is externally valid, possessing all of the features central to a compelling masculine identity. Nonetheless, it is the consciousness of Jim and his repetition of processes of denial, approbation and appraisal that grants him the paradoxical significance of an empowered, yet emasculated form of masculinity. Jim experiences a pertinent state of arrested development, incapable of intellectualising his consciousness beyond a set of socially determined mores. Consequently, Jim thoroughly equates morality with his perception of self. He cannot perceive that moral action is helped or hindered by others. Subsequently, the mythology of idealised masculine independence and the importance of self-appraisal is stripped bare by Conrad. In his troubled state, Jim's anxiety manifests in a set of debilitating psychological traumas, resplendent with hallucinations and paralysis. In the end, everything that equips the heroic journey - the externals of culture, the constructs of language and the temporally progressive plot of the journey itself - serve only to further distance the hero from an imaginable, yet intangible ideal. Subsequently, Jim's state of unstable self-worth is utilised by Conrad to figuratively appraise the plight of the socially conditioned aspirational and anxious masculine entity of modernity.

178 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 45
179 H. Rieslebach, Conrad's Rebels, p. 1
180 M. Jones, A Paradise Lost, p. 42
Through these representations of the influence of socially determined codes of masculinity on the individual’s perceptions of self, Conrad is able to explore the modernist sense of the corruption and failure of the masculine ‘dream’. By doing so, Conrad presents analogous notions that effectively comments on colonial paternalism as a further state of delusional patriarchy. Subsequently, Conrad’s representation of associated cultural and racial ideals is overwhelmingly critical, diverting from the morality associated with the Victorian adventure narrative tradition. An example of this can be witnessed in Jim’s action of cutting free the lifeboats, a feeble act of responsibility. This gesture receives no later recognition during the court proceedings or other discussions, affirming that Jim’s crime is not one of a lack of duty. Alternatively, he is guilty of a lack of judgement and courage, key markers of the archetypal masculine form. This shame is exacerbated by the actions of the abandoned passengers on the hajj that successfully steer the Patna to safety with the assistance of an assorted cadre of unexpected and predominantly unacknowledged men of duty. Nonetheless, Jim’s punishment by law stemming from this event is insignificant. In presenting social judgement as overwhelming, Conrad can heighten the anxious self-evaluation of Jim whilst emphasising the rapid spread of rumour regarding Jim’s misdeeds. In terms of Jim conduct, the major crime that has been committed is the affront to standards of hegemony, especially the colonial and Victorian conceits of supremacy stemming from race, culture, patriarchy and gender. The protection offered by Jim’s imagination that predicts his own heroism in conducting this final gesture of freeing the lifeboats is shown to be completely delusional in the aftermath. Conclusively, the recurring motif of corruption stemming from an individual’s desire for masculine significance and appraisal functions as one of Conrad’s key criticisms regarding the dilemma of the prevailing masculine archetype.

Jim’s characterisation asserts that masculine spontaneity is a universalised dogma wherein the individual is undermined by processes of imitation and rehearsal. Subsequently, Jim possesses a contemptuous and disbelieving jealousy for the success of others in positions demanding immediacy in action. The fragile masculinity of Jim leads him to be eventually consumed by a death drive, as opposed to possessing a heroic will. This state of being can be witnessed in Jim’s enriched
confidence in himself during the Patusan third of the novel where Jim's repeated declaration of self-assurance is proven to be pyrrhic:

"He confessed to me that he often watched these tiny warm gleams go out one by one, that he loved to see people go to sleep under his eyes, confident in the security of to-morrow... there was a deep meaning in the words that followed. "Look at these houses; there's not one where I am not trusted." 181

Jim's subsequent failure is driven by the inevitability that his capacity as a statesman is to the exclusion of valued Eurocentric modes of evaluation. By creating a geographical and cultural bind for Jim, Conrad illustrates that the processes of social evaluation that grant a man a sense of masculine significance are tempered by contemporary forces, especially European cultural supremacy. Therefore, Jim's suicidal fearlessness towards the end of the novel is shown to be a distortion of the true human self, since the 'Western' community perceives masculine identity through implicit dichotomies of fear and courage. In Patusan, Jim assumes an identity that has no social or political connection with 'home', within which the codes of masculinity have explicit meaning and value. 182 Therefore, Conrad has utilised Jim's exploits in Patusan as a means of expressing the confining and destructive aspect of the delusion of patriarchal significance in relation to both gender and colonialism.

Nonetheless, Jim's success in deposing Sherif Ali 183 is ultimately rewarded in traditional style in the form of the love of the lady. The potential affirmation of Jim's masculinity offered in this transaction and his subsequent experience of self-satisfaction is ultimately shown to be meaningless by the narrative's conclusion. The inevitability of this dismal position can be observed in the fact that the relationship between Jim and Jewel contains no hint of the torridness of a taboo erotic that may potentially grant Jim some modicum of masculine significance. Throughout the Patusan episodes, the couple appear as good friends or as an elderly couple. This is confirmed through Marlow's

181 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 222
182 S. Raval, The Art of Failure, p. 65
183 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, chapter 28
account of their relationship being a site marked by the overwhelmingly absence of smouldering passion.\textsuperscript{184} Therefore, it would be fair to conclude that the near-romantic relationship between Jim and Jewel contains the qualities of the traditional representation of the colonial master fantasy. In this representation, Jim's masculinity is not the rudimentary, physical and overt form understood in the ideal. Instead, he offers a desirable form of protection and validation that is antithetical to the physical ideal of the coloniser's contemporary fiction of masculinity. The evidence of the dependant relationship dynamic between Jim and Jewel is asserted when Jewel states: "He has left me... You always leave us- for your own ends."\textsuperscript{185} Jim's abandonment transfigures itself politically and spiritually, with him taking the form of an ambitious governor- "he became the virtual ruler of the land."\textsuperscript{186} In this moment, Conrad draws a distinction between a masculinity of soft paternalism and the desirable archetypal form of an entrenched, virile and glorious form of masculinity.

Within the final third of the novel, Conrad illustrates that divergence from the masculine norm, as dictated by constructs of race, class, nationality and occupation, are ultimately irredeemable. The underlying premise is that the collective psychology of culture demands a rabid demonization of deviancy, despite the cost for the individual and the lack of true legal offence. Conrad's underlying criticism concerns a lack of empathy within a contemporary population that demands certain behaviours without ever experiencing an intense testing of these principles. Subsequently, the hamartia of society is its dedication to an outmoded masculine sensibility that constantly defines individual masculine egoism without actualising it as an impossible and toxic ambition. In presenting this, Conrad utilises a tragic conclusion similar to that of Nostromo, resplendent with Jim's own fatalistic dedication to his gender ideals that grant him a perverse sense of honour in his execution. Jim's final act of surrendering his life is heroic, although it is also exhibitionist and useless.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{185} J. Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, p. 312
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Ibid}, p. 246
"The crowd, which had fallen apart behind Jim as soon as Doramin had raised his hand, rushed tumultuously forward after the shot. They say that the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance. Then with his hand over his lips he fell forward, dead." 188

The morbidity of the realisation regarding the irredeemable nature of life affirms the didactic element of the narrative in terms of its observations relating to the delusion of the masculine dream and its overwhelming individual cost.

Conclusively, Jim's failure embodies a contextual existential crisis. This conceptual focus is typically modernist and is fuelled by dilemmas relating to masculinity. Specifically, the influence of external pressures on the individual's perception of self is paramount. Contributing to this notion is Conrad's representation of the traditions of society, particularly the conceits of masculinity, as lacking any redemptive qualities. The subsidiary notions of paternalism and its associated connotations relating to colonialism also become relevant to Conrad's exploration of outdated moralities. Ultimately, the reader is left searching for the aspects located within Jim and the case of the Patna that have such a profound effect on a succession of adult men, including Marlow, Brierly and Stein. It is in these masculine bonds of patriarchy and homosociality that Conrad asserts his philosophy of modernist masculinity as one that is intensely paradoxical and fatalistic.

Marlow: The anxiety of authority

Whereas Jim transparently embodies a youthful form of masculinity assaulted by the clashing forces of traditionalism and modernity, Marlow occupies a world of unquestioned stability in terms of

188 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 374
masculine identity. Utilising this assumption, Conrad is able to present a sequence of subtler dichotomies through the characterisation and voice that compose Marlow’s narratorial authority. This contributes to the novel’s overall focus on masculinity as a contemporary moral dilemma. In particular, Marlow’s multifaceted role as the eminent bastion for a set of traditional masculine values must be considered in light of the element of caricature within his characterisation. This quality ultimately serves to magnify the degree of Conrad’s modernist imperative to re-evaluate established conventions of gender identity and symbolic codes of patriarchy. The problem of authority manifests itself within Marlow most poignantly in the questions arising from his unreliability as a narrator. These elements expose a layer of unexpected masculine anxiety that manifests itself within the supposed champion of these values.

Within *Lord Jim*, the principal male bond evoked is explicitly a professional code in an idealised form, identified by Marlow when he claims Jim as "one of us."\(^\text{189}\) This bond is sanctified by moments of male intimacy that transcend professionalism and reach uneasily for the metaphysical.\(^\text{190}\) In these representations of kinship, Conrad contests that close male friendship functions as a component of conventional Victorian masculinity. This is because it is driven by models of companionship that contrast with the crisis of modern, urban, and middle class masculinity.\(^\text{191}\) A specific example of this conflict is conveyed by the complex connection between Marlow and Jim, resplendent with its implicit hierarchies, personal anxieties and tensions. When Marlow’s sympathetic response to Jim turns the community around from its position of judgmental authority to that of self-defence, the novel as a whole, which initially appeared to have been driven simply by an inquiry into Jim’s conduct,\(^\text{192}\) shifts and becomes an inquiry into contemporary society’s relationship with the ideals that it claims to cherish. Therefore, Marlow acts as both a moral detective and a pastoral poet in relating his volume of tales that function as a means for interpreting action and modes of courage.\(^\text{193}\)

\(^{189}\) There are nine usages of this phrase within the novel, all spoken by Marlow.  
\(^{190}\) M. Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity*, p. 58  
\(^{191}\) Ibid, p. 49  
\(^{192}\) S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 60  
\(^{193}\) M. Jones, *A Paradise Lost*, p. 83
In fulfilling this role, Marlow maintains a position of absolute masculine significance. Nonetheless, Conrad slowly exposes true states of vulnerability as the narration progresses. In presenting this instability, Conrad shows Marlow to be a member of an entrenched order, comfortable in authority yet exposed to the gradual erosion of the masculine ideal. Conrad emphasises this notion by utilising the diegetic listeners for Marlow as models of a comfortable 'masculine class', to the extent that they implicitly possess the codes of morality, expectation and approbation relating to masculinity that inform both the unswerving morality and indulgent gossip of Marlow's narrative. The public championing of idealised notions of masculinity suggested by Marlow's diegetic discourse is indicative of a society silently confronted by shifting gender paradigms. In the end, Marlow's relationship with both of his audiences, being the diegetic and the reader, changes crucially as he becomes less certain of himself as Jim's defender and as he realises he must challenge public standards of heroism and behaviour in following Jim's destiny.\(^1\) An example can be seen in:

"The time was coming when I should see him loved, trusted, admired, with a legend of strength and prowess forming round his name as though he had been the stuff of a hero. It's true—I assure you; as true as I'm sitting here talking about him in vain."\(^2\)

Throughout the text, Marlow is essentially the perpetual observer, a witness incapable of looking away. Moreover, he profits from the experience of another's suffering in various abstract fashions. Nonetheless, as the supposed beacon of masculine significance Marlow still possesses a passivity and consciousness that effectively exposes points of vulnerability. This notion is central to Conrad's modernism and the 'flaccid phallus'.

Marlow plays the role of moral arbiter, blessed with the significance of his position as a sanctified member of the masculine hierarchy. He particularly fulfils this position in the power dynamic comprising his homosocial relationship with Jim, with Marlow operates as a mentor and staunch

\(^1\) Ibid, p. 90
\(^2\) J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. 158
traditionalist. Therefore, Harpham's argument relating to the possibility of homoerotic tension between Marlow and Jim is largely irrelevant to an appraisal of Conrad's utilisation of the social paradigms of modernist masculinity. Within Harpham's framework, a reading of Conrad's novel for its silences is problematic when the contextual factors informing the text's focus is clear. In terms of Jim and Marlow, it is far more beneficial to consider the relationship for its qualities of patriarchal responsibility, psychological anxiety or platonic kinship. The homosocial aspect is clearly defined and the subsequent panic triggered by homoerotic tension between the older man and his younger interest would ultimately serve to derail the text's moral and political purpose.

Within his authoritative role, Marlow ultimately perceives society to be a sham, yet he never forgets that his purpose is to attain approval for Jim. The duality of Marlow is such that he demands reverence and detachment from a world that validates his self-ideal. His membership to this world is one of the patron, expressed through codes of masculine grandeur and dominance, confirmed by his imperative position as story teller. The maelstrom-like aspect of modernist nihilism is structurally affirmed through the pessimism in the narration and the fatalism of the narrative. Moreover, the intense pathos of Marlow's voice invites the reader to question his underlying motivations for recounting the narrative. His energies sit somewhere in a multifaceted scope incorporating personal insecurity, approbation, gossip and the seafarer's tradition. His position of hegemonic masculine supremacy informed along the lines of cultural demarcation is acknowledged by Conrad in his Author's Note published with the 1917 edition. Within his justification for the evolution of the narrative from a short story to serial to the finished novel, Conrad denies the claims that Marlow lacked credibility. His defence is based on a contemporary criticism that "no man could have been expected to talk all that time, and other men to listen so long." In countering, Conrad argues for the position of masculine significance afforded to the sagacious Marlow at length, whilst alluding to the contemporary fascination with deviancy from the expected masculine form within the specific

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197 M. Jones, A Paradise Lost, p. 97
198 J. Conrad, Lord Jim, p. xxxii
cultural and occupational environment embodied by the narrative. By extension, Conrad declares the significance of masculine identity whilst reaffirming a panicked curiosity for difference. This position is expressed in the general sense of alarm and approbation that informs both the novel’s society and potentially its contemporary readership.

Therefore, Marlow functions as evidence of the prevailing archetype of masculinity that Conrad utilises in order to explore the evolving modernist position. The traditionalism of Marlow is affirmed thorough his weathered physicality, coupled with his set of disparate and often prejudicial values. Subsequently, Marlow appears as an antithetical conduit for the anxiety of the authentic modernist masculine experience. His status as the aging hero of adventures from the 'boy's own' is granted significance by the control he exerts over his own narrative. Nonetheless, Conrad’s representation of Marlow as a narrator exposes a susceptibility to hyperbole and self-aggrandisement, granting Marlow large elements of caricature that manifest in all of his appearances in Conrad’s anthology. Nonetheless, Marlow is given complexity as an unreliable narrator of modernism due to his possession of subconsciously realised anxiety regarding his diminished political and physical significance, a state of consciousness that exists in unison with his revered status as an ideological patriarch. Marlow reinforces this position subconsciously through numerous over-dramatisations that expose his vulnerability and desire to perpetuate an image of classical masculine grandeur. An example can be seen when Jim and Marlow separate on the shores of Patusan:

"'Will you be home again soon?' asked Jim, just as I swung my leg over the gunwale. 'In a year or so if I live,' I said."\(^{199}\)

A further instance where Marlow’s subconscious realisation of his fading significance occurs in Marlow's unrestrained and immodest gratitude regarding Jim’s good opinion:

"I felt a gratitude, an affection, for that straggler whose eyes had singled me out, keeping my place in the ranks of an insignificant multitude."\(^{200}\)

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199 J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 301 (*my emphasis*)
This position of supposed self-worth is exposed as fraudulent by Marlow's moment of reflection where the simple metaphor of a fading sun and the immense expanse of the ocean\textsuperscript{201} affirms Marlow's realisation that his own existence entails the enduring struggle for significance.

Subsequently, through Conrad's use of Marlow the 'flaccid phallus' is presented beyond the realm of the urbane \textit{flaneur} and can be seen to permeate all masculine entities.

According to Grosz theory of phallocentric privilege\textsuperscript{202} and Silverman's notion of masculine diegetic significance,\textsuperscript{203} Marlow's role as the focal point of all masculine exchanges is assured due to his authority as narrator. The significance of this position is entrenched in a tradition of storytelling that overlaps with the idealised masculine archetype. In creating a situation of masculine anxiety and gender panic in the plot focus on Jim, Conrad is able to distort the assumptions of masculine hegemony driven by narration. Consequently, a modernist fracturing of the assumption of masculine supremacy can take place. The key is the unreliability of Marlow's narration, a position that slowly exposes itself. As the novel reaches its conclusion, the modernist vehicle of the subjective narrator becomes a vehicle for exposing further issues in the monolith of masculine identity. Conrad's employment of Marlow as both narrator and character enriches the novel's focus on the elements that undermine comfortable bastions of masculine tradition. The alienation of the reader as a consequence of Marlow's unreliability authenticates Conrad's attempt to pose Marlow and his associated set of social mores as problematic. In his narration, Marlow maintains a façade of moral neutrality that had been previously desired in \textit{Heart of Darkness}.\textsuperscript{204} Nonetheless, he remains as self-aggrandising a narrator as the others of later modernism in his capacities to embellish and provide layers of disjointed focus. Along with Marlow's desire to reinforce his own perception of masculinity, he also betrays a desire to retain the privileged position of sole observer and philosopher of his world, seen in his patronising assertion that:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item J. Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, p. 300
\item J. Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, p. 301
\item E. Grosz, \textit{Jacques Lacan}
\item K. Silverman, \textit{The Acoustic Mirror}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
"It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts. Perhaps it's just as well; and it may be that it is this very dullness that makes life to the incalculable majority so supportable and so welcome." 

Conrad reveals an almost reflexive take on the privileged masculine voice and its dominance over history and narrative. His modernist take on this position invites a consideration of the biases informing the construction of Marlow's narrative, posing the problem of Marlow's own masculine anxiety that manifests despite his absolute authority over and within the narrative. Effectively, the unease in *fin de siècle* masculinity leads Conrad towards the creation of a masculine textual economy based around the act of narration.

Therefore, Marlow is apparently utilised by Conrad to provide a principle of authority that enables a perspective on Jim and the larger world that Jim moves within. However, the structure and narrative of *Lord Jim* does not sustain this principle of authority. Rather, the overall transfiguration of time, place and perspective within the novel distorts reality. Subsequently, Marlow's desire to seek an explanation and to provide a justification for Jim's history is driven by his desire to seek objective contentment and to reclaim objective significance. Moreover, Marlow is driven by a desire to communicate this position to his listeners. This is confirmed in:

"With these words Marlow had ended his narrative, and his audience had broken up forthwith, under his abstract, pensive gaze. Men drifted off the verandah in pairs or alone without loss of time, without offering a remark, as if the last image of that incomplete story, its incompleteness itself, and the very tone of the speaker, had made discussion in vain and comment impossible." 

Marlow's position as an embodiment of the 'flaccid phallus' of masculinity is assured. He is empowered through tradition and role whilst his role as an 'unreliable narrator' is pervasive as it is informed by new understandings of masculine anxiety.

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205 J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 130  
206 M. Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity*, p. 44  
207 S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 49  
208 J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 303
This anxiety can be shown to infiltrate Marlow in a figurative sense, manifesting in an increasingly anxious consciousness that becomes gradually susceptible to the ideological movements underlying modernism. Marlow counters this anxiety during certain occasions within the narrative by expressing a certainty regarding his own sense of hegemony, expressed through codes of tradition and patriarchy. For example, Marlow's last sighting of Jim on leaving Patusan as "only a speck, a tiny white speck that seemed to catch all the light in a darkened world," is contrasted with the "two half-naked fishermen... pouring the plaint of their trifling, miserable, oppressed lives into the ears of the white lord."\textsuperscript{209} The sense of racial and masculine 'othering' within this sequence is transparent, as is the moment's emotional intensity that gives rise to the profound intimacy felt by the patriarchal Marlow towards his exiled ward. The retelling of this moment is encoded with layers of ascendancy that benefit Marlow. Therefore, Marlow's supremacy is in tune with general contemporary assumptions. An analysis of his moments of weakness, such as the sarcasm in describing Brierly in the following terms:

"He seemed consumedly bored by the honour thrust upon him. He had never in his life made a mistake, never had an accident, never a mishap, never a check in his steady rise, and he seemed to be one of those lucky fellows who know nothing of indecision, much less of self-mistrust."\textsuperscript{210} grants the reader an insight into subconscious sense of failure existing within Marlow in regards to his principles of masculine identity. These foundations eventually manifest themselves in traditional constructs, encoded in layers of contemporary popular discourse. When Marlow sees these assumptions exposed for their flaws that he reverts to safer constructs of racial supremacy or grants himself periods of distance and silence within the narrative.

Marlow's primary concern stems from the level of reflection that Jim provokes, a key experience that informs Conrad's purpose in constructing his novel. Simply put, Conrad uses Marlow as a prompt for audience response and reflection. Marlow's experience in \textit{Heart of Darkness} concerning

\textsuperscript{209} J. Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, p. 302
\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Ibid}, p. 54
the complexity of imperialist idealism opened a reflection on the nature of self and its foundations in the broader community. It is this state of reflection that Marlow probes more directly in Lord Jim. Specifically, if Kurtz had surrendered himself to base passions, Jim surrenders himself to an impossible ideal of self. Marlow’s systematic repression of this transparent observation is a means of maintaining both the façade of the masculine archetype in a global sense, whilst also attempting to protect his own perception of self. To this end, Marlow allegorises a world driven by discourses of masculinity, allowing Conrad to illustrate a poignant irony regarding the hypocrisy manifest in conservative embodiments of masculinity within his own context.

Subsequently, Marlow’s interest in the moral ambivalence of Jim’s desire to abandon ship derives from the moral ambivalence of his own realisation regarding the nature of both his younger and present self. Marlow’s fascination with this episode is reflective of the continual interest of society, affirming the most revealing aspect of masculinity and psychological anxiety within the text. This version of intense consciousness conflicts with the brilliance of the delusion of a supreme masculine self. Subsequently, Marlow’s actions and judgements within the text need to be considered in light of this internalised conflict. His experience of anxiety is typically modern due to his diegetic authority, his conflicting perspectives of self and his struggle to maintain a level of social significance, evident through the embellishment, emphasis and melodrama of much of his narration. Ultimately, the examination of heroism in Lord Jim takes on a private dimension for Marlow and he must question his own assumptions of the heroic self. For Conrad’s reader, this dilemma of consciousness provokes a consideration of the consequence of masculinity within modernity.

The perspective offered by Jim’s failure on the Patna grants Marlow a perspective on masculinity that conflicts with everything that he can be observed to defend. Notions of naval integrity, courage and racial supremacy that were previously impenetrable are shown to be vulnerable. The aforementioned plausibility of Jim’s actions can be shown to trigger the anxiety of Marlow. In the

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211 S. Raval, The Art of Failure, p. 45
212 G. G. Harpham, One of Us, p. 128
end, Jim represents for Marlow a potential self. His identification of Jim as "one of us" is ultimately subconscious recognition of his own state of absolute consciousness and anxiety. Therefore, the conditions that serve to create Jim's defective ego ideal can be shown to be pervasive, a fatalistic notion that affirms Conrad’s modernism. The comparative aspect that heavily impacts on Jim is an inevitability that also impacts on the consciousness of Marlow, further fracturing his authority and leaving him in a position of anxious defence. Therefore, plausible alternatives for Marlow can be shown to influence his own externally validated masculine ego in the same way that idealisations plague and inform Jim. For instance, Brierly's role as a man of absolute masculine significance is assured in his role as arbitrator in Jim's case. His esteem is manifest in his physicality and reputation, reinforced by his supposed contempt for the gallery during the hearing. Brierly's socially validated masculine importance is shown to be felt most pointedly by Marlow, who is enfeebled in comparison. Therefore, Brierly's suicide in the aftermath of Jim's case demands consideration. There are numerous probable causes for Conrad's inclusion of this particular character that represents the apex of the *machismo* spectrum. Brierly's authoritative position as moral arbiter of Jim inevitably triggers apprehension and self-evaluation in the same way Marlow's adjudication of Jim is the catalyst for an internalised gender panic. This recurring fixation is inferred to have consumed Brierly in moments of dark reflection. Moreover, the absolute necessity of a complete masculine character such as Brierly to fulfil the role of adjudicator of the case becomes instantly problematic for Conrad as it plausibly asserts the existence of a complete masculine entity. This is the state that Conrad wishes to deny. Subsequently, the flippant way that Marlow declares that "(h)e (Brierly) committed suicide very soon after" becomes a means through which Marlow can express his own subtle discoursé of jealous anxiety regarding his own sense of comparative emasculation, as well as being a means through which Conrad can poignantly illustrate the flawed fiction of the complete masculine archetype. Simply put, for Conrad to allow Brierly to continue existing within his narrative frame would be a hypocritical declaration that the aspirational masculine archetype is relevant and

obtainable. Subsequently, his suicide and the associated implications and questions arising are an absolute necessity as they reassert the problem of significance.

Conclusively, Conrad illustrates that all of Marlow's public models of heroism are ultimately successful as they are resplendent in styles that issue from public conventions.\textsuperscript{214} As both a model and arbiter of idealised masculinity, Marlow becomes increasingly unreliable. His supposed moral independence is a exposed as a myth, triggering his own anxiety that assures the association with Jim. The demise of Jim is represented by Marlow through his pervasive cognitive dissonance, itself a marker of a fractured state of masculinity. Regarding Jim's death, he seeks to persuade his audience that:

"(they) must admit that it is romantic beyond the wildest dreams of boyhood and yet there is to my mind a sort of profound and terrifying logic to it.\textsuperscript{215}"

The conflict identified by Marlow is a prime example of the dilemma of masculine heroism within modernism. This problem can be shown to interrupt typical exchanges within homosocial relations. For example, Marlow introduces what he deems to be the "love story" between Jim and Jewel as a narrative which reminds him of a "knight and maiden meeting to exchange vows amongst haunted ruins."\textsuperscript{216} This is seemingly an attempt to duplicate and evoke English romance as a means of creating an environment for acceptable constructs of masculinity. In this instance, this particular "love story" is one that Marlow fidgets over, saying that to recount it is "by no means as easy as it should be were the ordinary standpoint adequate.\textsuperscript{217}" In this declaration, the lack of certainty and subsequent panic that Jim evokes can be shown to coincide with a general contemporary malaise stemming from deviancy in terms of gendered norms. The relationship between Jim and Jewel becomes another means for Conrad to explore masculinity. There is no 'erotic traffic\textsuperscript{218} between Jim and Marlow, therefore, a tension must inherently exist in this relationship as there is little

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{214} M. Jones, Michael, \textit{A Paradise Lost}, p. 89
  \item\textsuperscript{215} J. Conrad, \textit{Lord Jim}, p. 308
  \item\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Ibid}, p. 281
  \item\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Ibid}, p. 248
  \item\textsuperscript{218} E. K. Sedgwick, \textit{Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire}
\end{itemize}
affirmation of masculine supremacy. Moreover, the suggestion that the relationship between Jim and Jewel is unconsummated serves to reaffirm the original suspicions of Jim's own impotent masculinity. During the final interchange between Marlow and Jewel, Marlow shifts from the popular process of denunciation of a relationship fostered without the moral guidance of the Eurocentric establishment to a sense of incompetence in the face of the faithful Jewel. Marlow's incapacity to persuade the socially disempowered, younger and darker woman\textsuperscript{219} is reflected upon by Marlow in relevant terms: "I chafed silently at my impotence."\textsuperscript{220} In this moment, Marlow experiences a shattering of his authoritative consciousness, an experience that requires a further moment of time and distance to allow the aged patriarch to compose himself. It is in such a moment where the character of least social consequence is able to assault the masculine ego ideal of a valorised individual such as Marlow that Conrad produces poignant conclusions relating to the anxiety of masculinity within modernism.

**Conclusion**

The representations of masculinity within *Lord Jim* are powered by intense layering of social anxieties that typify Conrad's modernism. His contemporary fixation on the adventure narrative as a popular literary and discursive form can be observed in the formulaic aspects of the narration, resplendent with its exoticism. Further trope include the undercurrent of Western supremacy and the representation of trials of courage and ingenuity. Conrad's subversion of the adventure hero manifests itself in the intensely tragic Jim, a character possessing a potent sense of fatalism that is enabled by a steadfast dedication to a socially reified ego ideal. The problem of consciousness and its impact on masculinity within modernism eventually destroys the vulnerable Jim, with Conrad

\textsuperscript{219} S. Raval, *The Art of Failure*, p. 56
\textsuperscript{220} J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 285
apportioning a sizeable element of blame on a society that maintains a steadfast dedication to a problematic principle- the collective consciousness of the machismo spectrum. Conrad supplements this dilemma of masculinity with a further fracturing of the masculine archetype, utilising Marlow as an unexpected embodiment of the 'flaccid phallus' of modernism. Marlow's status can be observed in his continual position as the valorised voice central to the narrative, coupled with the overall passivity that comes from his flaneurial authority that underpins his subconsciously anxious characterisation. Through the combination of these elements, Conrad constructs a novel that is highly influential on the later modernists in terms of the central premise of its conflict, the individual's internalised clash between an impossible ideal and the values of their society, that steadfastly maintains the myth of an ideal's existence. For Conrad, such a mythic ideal was located in the archetype of masculinity.
Conclusion

To approach any study of literary modernism is to submit to the forces of an uncompromising artistic movement, resplendent with political subversiveness and intellectual radicalism that encountered perpetual states of renewal. Fundamentally, a dislocation between ingrained cultural imperatives and the shifting artistic establishment drove newer discourses that destabilised established literary conventions. Therefore, the attempt to resolve the incessant conflicts and paradoxes of modernism is an inherently complex task. The distinguishing façade of modernism is located within sentiments of encompassing dissatisfaction that fractured aesthetic and moral precepts, sharpening the areas of focus. Subsequently, the fact that modernism is shaped by essential challenges to entrenched positions of completion validates the study of contemporary understandings of masculinity.

A recurrent reference in much of the discussion of masculinity considers the notion of an ingrained archetype that is informed by external factors that manifest within a specific time and place. Therefore, the modernist challenge to masculinity is not particularly unique and similar literary expressions of dissatisfaction with the archetypal form of masculinity can be shown to have manifested in other moments of historical trauma, including Civil War in Europe and America. Nonetheless, the foundations of the specifically modernist version of masculinity is traceable. As a revered father of modernism, Conrad is the genesis point for a specific version of masculinity that has been described as the 'flaccid phallus' of modernism. Overwhelmingly, the evaluation of the representation of masculinity within modernism provokes an appraisal of the historical and political forces that influence the collective psyche and the subsequent impact of these factors on the creation and construction of literary archetypes.

This study of Nostromo and Lord Jim has shown that within Conrad's fiction exists a contest between the fiction of patriarchal masculinity and the contemporary modernist version of masculinity. Therefore, criticisms of Conrad's supposed traditionalism omit his role as a writer challenging
prevailing aesthetic constructs, as well as hegemonic moral and political conceits as part of the larger modernist project. Conrad's appraisal of masculinity has been shown to be driven by two potent forces: his sense of psychological turmoil relating to his conflicting states of being and the larger issue of gender panic radiating within the zeitgeist. Additionally, the focus on masculinity provides further evidence of Conrad's philosophy on writing. Specifically, Conrad's novels are structured around a principle of negation. The lack of legal challenge offered by the fictional worlds of the texts heightens Conrad's capacity to concentrate on the psychological impact of society's mores on the individual. There is no dispensation of justice as codified and understood by the world of the reader, meaning that the society, and by extension the reader, are left to measure and dispense justice. In order to provoke this type of reading, Conrad utilises a manifest dilemma of his own world in the form of the conflict between competing idealisations of masculinity.

The study of both Nostromo and Lord Jim has also shown that Conrad is not disparaging when it comes to positions of divergence. Instead, he depicts versions of weakness and insecurity within a cultural milieu that actively rejects any act of gender deviancy. Subsequently, the modernist tropes of consciousness, nihilism and rejection are encapsulated within contemporary masculinity. This means that explorations of gender are a key force underpinning the conceptual subversiveness of the literary modernist project. Conrad has explored the forces that trigger a fatalistic version of masculinity. This construct effectively combines paradoxical notions of dominance and enfeeblement in order to contribute to the overwhelming anxiety of modernity in the broader sense.

Conrad's gestures towards didacticism and parody are only part of the larger vehicles of appropriation and social commentary that fuel his anthology. Subsequently, the representation of falling masculinity is represented without sympathy. Instead, the inevitability of this position is constructed by Conrad through his utilisation of multi-linear narration and other conventions of literary modernism. The recurrent allusions to fracturing reinforces the image of Conrad as an author attempting to balance the worlds of masculine intellectualism and the spontaneity of the physical aspect of masculinity. The incapacity to position both of these elements within the surreal
hero narratives of the literary tradition allows Conrad to explore the conscious reality of modernity and the consequent impact on representations of gender. This examination guarantees that both novels present similar narratives that have at their nucleus the burdensome influence of a subconsciously desirable sense of self and the encircling expectations of society.

Conrad’s utilisation and subsequent questioning of the ideal position of a certain truth, such as that of the hegemonic masculine ideal, is indicative of the influence of Nietzsche’s principles of perspectivism. The connections with Nietzsche can be expanded to consider the tragedy inherent in both texts that serves as evidence of not only modernist fatalism. They are also a consequence of the anxiety stemming from the enduring clash between the rational and impulsive, mind and body, intellectual and physical, or Apollonian and Dionysian. These are also conflicts inherent in the Oedipal resolution, wherein fierce independence can only come through yokes of responsibility, reflection, projection, expectation and shame. Therefore, the tragedy of Conrad’s male characters requires evaluation through a consideration of modernist appraisals of larger existential notions. Without a consideration of the larger philosophical and social forces encircling and informing Conrad’s novels, particularly those relating to existentialism, nihilism and colonial instability, Conrad’s narratives and male characters would simply be apolitical versions of the heroes of Romanticism. Inevitably, the state of consciousness provoked in this pursuit of the true state of the protagonist foregrounds the anxiety that is the foundation for Conrad’s characterisation.

The analysis of two of Conrad’s novels reinforces the Foucauldian perspective of the construction of gender and sexuality as a series of discursive practices drawn from a series of contemporary influences. The specific construction of masculinity within modernism is ultimately informed by the incumbency of the idealised archetype and its value in contemporary representations. The influence of the potent philosophy and pathos of modernity triggers the anxious, doomed and conscious version of masculinity that ultimately shatters the essentialist position of the fiction. Conclusively, the paradox of the ‘flaccid phallus’ functions as a means of understanding the revered,

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221 See Foucault, Michel, The History of Sexuality: Volume II
yet enfeebled characteristic of masculinity within modernism. Conrad's role in constructing this contemporary archetype can be traced through the versions represented in novels that have perspectives of heroism and masculine hierarchies at their core. The enduring influence of Conrad can be observed in the steadfast dedication of later modernists in their construction of texts that are centred on versions of the 'flaccid phallus' that would not be out of place in *Nostromo* or *Lord Jim*. 
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