JOSEPH CONRAD, AND ASPECTS OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT 1897-1911

by

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ABSTRACT

Joseph Conrad and Aspects of Scientific Thought 1897-1911

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This thesis is divided into six chapters with a synopsis, an introduction and a conclusion. It deals with Conrad's reaction during 1897-1911 to theories of evolution and what they suggested about the nature of human ethics. This approach provides new and revealing readings of Conrad.

The Introduction defines the term 'scientific' in relation to the extremely varied material Conrad is utilizing.

Chapter One. this takes Conrad's familiarity with the work of A.R. Wallace and his conception of a mechanistic universe and suggests how this gave an evolutionist's bias to his exploration of the wellsprings of conduct.

Chapter Two deals, first, with echoes found in Heart of Darkness of T.H. Huxley and Rider Haggard, and what Conrad adds to these authors. The second section pursues this argument with Lord Jim and its references to Darwin, and examines the key concept of altruistic 'sympathy'. Section three deals with the topic of inheritance. The novel of inheritance had been seriously altered after Darwin. I place Conrad in this tradition. This leads to a discussion of the nature of heroism.

Chapter Three in five sections, puts Conrad's views in the context of three major arguments on altruism and heroism current at this time. T.H. Huxley and H. Drummond, Carlyle and Spencer, Wallace and Darwin all appear to have been read in some detail by Conrad.

Chapter Four traces Conrad's discussion of heroism in Nostromo, and J.A. Hobson is examined as a source.

Chapter Five The Secret Agent is analysed and reasons put forward for the use of the ironic narrator and high incidence of verbal cross references. Lombroso is examined as a source, and I contend that Conrad had by now achieved his own comprehensive analytic view of the nature of man.

Chapter Six takes Under Western Eyes as Conrad's exploration of ethics in substantially his own terms.

Conclusion. in this brief section I state that Conrad seems to be well acquainted with most of the major contemporary speculations on the topic of ethics, and that during this period 1899-1911 his writing explored these arguments.

SYNOPSIS

This thesis is divided into six chapters, with an Introduction and a Conclusion. The Introduction presents a brief description of the four different types of information Conrad gained from his various scientific sources, and it explains why the term 'scientific' has been used to explain such heterogeneous material.

Chapter One is brief, and suggests that Conrad's preoccupations may be in directions hitherto unregarded. It establishes his use of A.R. Wallace as a source and how this evolutionary bias may affect the then fashionable view of a mechanistic universe.

Chapter Two is divided into three sections. Section One points out definite echoes in Heart of Darkness of T.H. Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics', and shows Conrad taking issue with Huxley's influential essay, redefining its concepts, and incidentally levelling harsh criticism at the less ethically aware literature of the time, in particular Rider Haggard's She (1885).

Section Two concentrates on Lord Jim, and using the internal references to animals, establishes Conrad's detailed knowledge not only of evolution but of Darwin's works, and current scientific opinion on Darwin's writings. Conrad takes issue with the contention of Huxley that the primary cohesive force behind human organization is 'sympathy'.

Section Three broadens the base of the argument in the preceding two sections by taking the topic of inheritance and examining it in its various facets. Inheritance is seen in its popular 'inheritance novel' form, and how Conrad considers

it not only in this form (Jim 'inherits' wealth from Stein) but also in terms of the white man's heritage of mental superiority, his heritage of technical superiority (Jim possesses one of the few repeating guns), and racial heritage. Jim is seen actually going back in evolutionary time, and 'evolving' from the mud he falls into after escaping from Tunku Allang, in an emblematic rebirth. The nature of heroism is discussed, and the problem is posed: how can heroism or altruism be inherited since they inevitably tend to the destruction of those who possess them?

Chapter Three is concerned to assess the arguments already raised, and resolves itself into five sections. The first places Conrad's attack on Huxley in the context of the 1894 argument between Henry Drummond's The Ascent of Man, and Huxley. The second deals with the pervasive influence of Herbert Spencer on the subject of ethics, and how it may have affected Conrad. The third section tackles the problem of Spencer's disagreements with Carlyle, and compares it to Conrad's own differences with Carlyle on the topic of heroism, and where Conrad stands in the Spencer-Carlyle conflict.

To put all this into context, all three are compared to E. Westermarck's Origin and Development of Moral Ideas (1906) and L.T. Hobhouse's Morals in Evolution (1906) who together represent an entirely different aspect of the discussion of ethics, and are not touched upon by Conrad. Section four makes tentative suggestions as to when Conrad might have read Huxley, Drummond, Spencer, Darwin, Wallace and others. The fifth section is brief since it raises the question as to what Conrad thought the central concern of ethics might be, since he rejects all the suggestions presented by any of the

writers mentioned.

Chapter Four is centred on Nostromo and is an examination of the process by which society creates its heroes. The process is seen to be based on the story-telling instincts of men that is often at variance with the true state of events. Various developments in the treatment of heroism are noted. The chief 'scientific' source is seen to be J.A. Hobson's Imperialism (1901), which gives evidence to support the general tendency of the novel to claim that wealth is what matters, not people.

Chapter Five: After a lengthy discussion of the highly patterned narrative, Lombroso and his doctrines are compared to ~~the novel~~ The Secret Agent. Winnie is revealed as an archetypal epileptic who produces something akin to a 'crime of passion'. Is such a deed altruistic? A detailed discussion of altruism is not, however, possible, since Conrad appears to have reached an ethical cul de sac. I argue that here Conrad is demonstrating his independence of contemporary scientific theories, in his discussion of female altruism.

Chapter Six takes this discussion to Under Western Eyes. Although traces of scientific learning are to be found, it is evident that Conrad is now exploring ethical problems in his own terms.

Conclusion. I conclude that Conrad uses many differing types of source material, which I discuss, in his movement towards independent self expression, and that he eventually gave up his search for an understanding of altruism, and concentrated upon the fact of its existence.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study I have confined myself to Conrad's 'major' period (1897-1911), since it is during this time that Conrad develops his theory of ethics.

In his letters Conrad always stressed the pre-eminent importance of his own, observed experience which lay behind each work. In my investigation of Conrad's use of source material, I have noted four definite areas from which information was gained. First, naturally enough, in his own knowledge gained as a sailor. Second is that area covered so carefully by scholars such as Norman Sherry - namely the debt to travel books. There are, however, two distinct uses of such material. One is the travelogue written to provide facts and raw data that may be of use or amusement to the reader at home. Distinct from this, there are those authors who in addition to collecting facts, approach their material endeavouring to make scientific surveys, or who later used such material in theorizing. Into this category A.R. Wallace and Charles Darwin fall firmly. Their travelogues (The Malay Archipelago, The Voyage of the Beagle) are the starting point for their evolutionary thinking in later years. It would have been impossible for anyone reading such works when Conrad was reading them to have been unaware of the basic theory behind each writer. Knowing the conclusions each writer had reached, each travelogue became for the late Victorian reader the story of a struggle towards a theory already publicly acclaimed, and thus the accuracy of the observations is guaranteed. Conrad had undoubtedly read Wallace and Darwin, and equally undoubtedly (for the reasons sketched above)

endorsed large amounts of their thinking. This is the area that I concentrate upon.

The third category arises naturally from this. It is my contention that Conrad knew in detail the contemporary speculative writing upon the problem of the provenance of ethics. Darwin had avoided the question altogether, as in fact had most of the major writers on evolutionary topics. But there were others. Carlyle had his own theories and his influence was enormous. Among the more scientific thinkers Herbert Spencer, T.H. Huxley and Henry Drummond each had their own ideas. I show Conrad as deliberately echoing these authors and taking issue with their conclusions, challenging their ways of seeing.

Out of this category in turn grows the fourth area of discussion. Conrad has a debt to the speculative writers of the time who were concerned to analyse the behaviour of the human race in specific ways. Into this section fall men as varied as C. Lombroso and J.A. Hobson. Hobson's views, I contend, were accepted by Conrad, with some modifications, and helped to shape his vision of humanity as a socially and economically guided organism. Lombroso, energetically rejected by Conrad, tended to the other extreme in that social behaviour was seen as being entirely dependent upon the shape of the cranium.

Within this schema of literary indebtedness it is possible to see Conrad's own theories beginning to develop and finding mature expression. Whilst in Heart of Darkness the method used is largely an attack directed against writers on the topic of evolution and ethics, by the time one reaches Under Western Eyes the attempt is no longer to put right other

scientific writers (although he is still waging a war against distortion of facts as presented by popular novelists), but rather he is exploring the problems of altruism and self-abnegation in his own terms.

Naturally enough these four categories that are so easily separated here, are not so easily distinguished when one is actually evaluating Conrad's borrowings from or disagreements with individual works. I present the reader with the evidence and ask him to evaluate it as he thinks best.

My concern has been, therefore, to discover debts Conrad owes to other authors and to show how he uses his considerable and eclectic reading, most of which is, not surprisingly, among the popularly acclaimed books of the time. By demonstrating where Conrad gains his material it is possible to reassess with a degree of confidence what he was actually attempting in each work.

Of course the term 'scientific' will necessarily beg the question as to just how 'scientific' writers such as Drummond, Lombroso and Carlyle are, and strictly speaking Hobson is an economist. However, I feel that even though the main area of discussion is centred upon the scientific appraisal of the origin and workings of ethics (or the reaction against the scientific approach as in Drummond's case, or against the relatively scientific criticism of Carlyle by Spencer) it would be misleading to use terms like 'ethics' or 'evolution'. But each of the areas covered is primarily based in more or less closely observed phenomena.

Lombroso, for example, is regarded as scarcely more than a crank in the field of criminology today, yet Hans Kurella entitled his book of 1911: Cesare Lombroso, A Modern Man of

Science. Spencer was regarded highly in his day yet Walter Houghton refers to him in the following terms:

> He wrote his Biology after reading only Carpenter's Comparative Physiology (and not the Origin of Species); his Sociology without knowing Comte or Tylor; and his Ethics without studying Kant or Mill or any moralist except perhaps portions of Sidgwick. He was, in short, innocent of book learning...[1]

Just as alchemy was a blend of primitive chemistry, herbalism and metaphysical philosophy, this turn of the century area of science is a blend of many things. Posterity has not yet managed either to create a new word to enable 'science' to be relegated to the sort of status 'alchemy' has achieved, or to invent a suitable term to describe it in its own right. 'Science', then it has to be.

In the course of this study, I build up a picture of Conrad as a widely, and somewhat eclectically, read personality. As the argument continues, however, it is possible to see Conrad taking issue with the main opposing areas of each topic he approaches. Thus Huxley and Drummond are in disagreement - Drummond's book actually being written as a reply to Huxley's professed views. Just similarly, Spencer feels he has to take issue with Carlyle on the topic of heroism, for Carlyle's influence is so great that he is all but unavoidable. Lombroso is pitted against Hobson, the former thinks men are dominated by the shape of their skulls, and the latter by the nature of their institutions. Both were major figures at the time, and both were much discussed very close to the time Conrad has recourse to them. Clearly, if Conrad was able to command a

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1. Walter Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (1957; rpt. New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p.139. Hereafter cited as V.F. of Mind.

knowledge of what effectively amounts to both sides of every major ethical discussion (outside establishment philosophy) that he approaches, his reading, although eclectic, is not merely an aggregation of miscellaneous facts. It is this which I endeavour to show.

CHAPTER 1

> Before we can go any further, you've got to make up your minds what this novel actually is about ... At first, as always, there is a blank silence. The class sits staring, as it were, at the semantically prodigious word. About. What is it about? Well, what does George want them to say it's about? They'll say it's about anything he likes, anything at all. For nearly all of them, despite their academic training, deep deep down still regard this about business as a tiresomely sophisticated game. As for the minority, who have cultivated the about approach until it has become second nature, who dream of writing an about book of their own one day, on Faulkner, James or Conrad, proving definitively that all previous about books on the subject are about nothing - they aren't going to say anything yet awhile.
>
> C. Isherwood, A Single Man, London: Methuen, 1965, p.54.

Conrad, in an essay that was not printed until after his death, writes with obvious annoyance about English Novelists, whom he regards as irresponsible.

> The national English novelist seldom regards his work - the exercise of his Art - as an achievement of active life by which he will produce certain definite effects upon the emotions of his readers, but simply as an instinctive, often unreasoned, outpouring of his own emotions. He does not go about building up his book with a precise intention and a steady mind. It never occurs to him that a book is a deed, that the writing of it is an enterprise as much as the conquest of a colony. He has no such clear conception of his craft.[1]

The comparison to the conquest of a colony is rather interesting here, since so much of Conrad's writing dealt with just such topics. Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostromo, the Malay novels - all were concerned with colonization, the confrontation of the civilized and the primitive and the effects each had upon the other. Furthermore, it also asserts Conrad's own view that if the English did not appear to have

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1. 'A glance at Two Books', in Last Essays (London, J.M. Dent Collected Edition, 1946), p.132. Hereafter cited as LE. Written in 1904, this essay was not published until 1925. All references to Conrad's works, unless otherwise stated, are to this 1946 edition.

anything to say, he had, and his work was an exploration of previously undiscovered territories. It was, ironically enough, his own fate to be treated in the same way as he had treated others:

> Mr. Conrad has no ideas, but he has a point of view, a 'world', it can hardly be defined, but it pervades his work and is unmistakable.[1]

Eliot seems to want both sides of the critical argument at the same time here. Whatever Conrad's 'ideas' are, they are not easily identified, although the presence of something else, a 'world' is to be noticed. Conrad himself is not much help on this topic. He continually re-assures the reader of his 'artistic conviction' and 'sense of responsibility'.[2]

> I think that all ambitions are lawful except those which climb upward on the miseries or credulities of mankind. All intellectual and artistic ambitions are permissible, up to and even beyond the limit of prudent sanity. They can hurt no one. If they are mad, then so much the worse for the artist ... Is it such a very sad presumption to believe in the sovereign part of one's art, to try for other means, for other ways of affirming this belief in the deeper appeal of one's work? To try to go deeper is not to be insensible.[3]

This is an intensely defensive piece of writing, and one that divides the writer into one with 'intellectual and artistic ambitions'. Conrad argues that if the ambitions on either side are unhealthy, 'mad', this will inevitably show in the art: 'so much the worse for the artist'. The work will therefore fail and hurt no one in the process. Conrad's idea of art here is rather loose, and seems to rest on the work

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1. T.S. Eliot, 'Kipling Redivivus' Athenaeum, 4645, 9 May 1919, 297.

2. A Personal Record, pp.111-112. Hereafter cited as PR.

3. Preface to PR, pp.xviii-xix.

being recognizable by the reader as 'truth of life'[1] and providing that 'glimpse of truth', for which one had'forgotten to ask'.[2] The reader vindicates the content by declaring it true or false, and one must use 'the sovereign power of one's art' in order to render the highest possible justice to this truth. For, as he was to say later, quoting Novalis:

> It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it, and what is a novel if not a conviction of our fellow-men's existence strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality?[3]

If another person endorses his view, it becomes valid. But once again Conrad has not told us what the 'truth' is, or (if that task is really too much to ask) in which direction to look for it.

This must lead to a consideration of what kind of novelist Conrad is. I shall argue throughout this thesis that the 'truth' that lies behind the surface reality of verisimilitude is a series of insights based upon scientific theorizing on the topic of ethics. Science necessarily draws its raw material, its data, from closely observed actuality. Using this evidence it formulates its theories. Conrad sees himself as a man with just such theories,testing them, exploring them and eventually re-writing some of them by comparing them to reality again. Each novel, as I shall argue, is a re-application of scientific theory to the 'real' world, rendered in the novel. In this way Conrad works towards a scientific understanding of the world.

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1. Preface, The Nigger of The 'Narcissus', p.x. Hereafter cited as Nigger.

2. Preface, Nigger, p.xii.

3. PR., p.15.

In his correspondence, Conrad often jokes about the bemusement of critics as to what his works may mean. Writing to Edward Garnett in 1905, he says: 'I don't know what my philosophy is. I wasn't even aware I had it ... Shall I die of it do you think?'[1] This I take to be a fairly clear indication that Conrad regarded himself as an artist whose doctrine could not be extracted and laid bare, independent of its method of presentation - that is why he has no 'philosophy', a word which would seem to suggest sterile theorizing. But such misunderstanding of his work evidently hurt Conrad deeply, since he regarded his work as the highest form of duty. This is made plain when he writes: 'a man who puts forth the secret of his imagination to the world accomplishes, as it were, a religious rite'.[2] Conrad's continual agonizing over his writing is surely allied to this, when he writes to Meldrum that he cannot write because'the belief, the conviction, the only thing needed to make put pen to paper' was missing.[3] It is my contention in this thesis that the difficulties Conrad had welding together the 'intellectual' and'artistic' sides of his thinking came partly from the unwieldly nature of the intellectual content. In this study I note direct debts of Conrad to most of the major writers on evolution in his day, and it is quite obvious that not only is Conrad using their findings, but also he is in most cases extending and re-writing their rather theoretical works.

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1. Letters from Conrad 1895-1924, ed. Edward Garnett (London: Nonsuch Press, 1928), p. 199. Hereafter referred to as Garnett.

2. G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1927), II, 89. Hereafter cited as L. and L.

3. Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum, ed. William Blackburn (North Carolina, Duke Univ. Press, 1958), p.27. Hereafter cited as Blackwood.

Conrad's explorations of the nature of humanity are firmly based on contemporary scientific and anthropological premises, and his overall concern is with that favourite problem of the Victorian age after Darwin. Where does morality come from? If we have all evolved over many millennia, has morality evolved too? I am concerned in this thesis to show the extent of Conrad's indebtedness, and how it can lead to a new assessment of his works and an understanding of his achievement.

For the purposes of this study it has not been necessary to survey all Conrad's works. I have, instead, confined myself to those works commonly described as his 'major' works - from Heart of Darkness to Under Western Eyes. This is, in any case, the most energetic period of Conrad's anthropological speculation, and there is a radical change in Conrad's work and inspiration from the writing of Heart of Darkness that continues until the completion of Under Western Eyes. In this way it is my hope to describe a stage in this author's development that is coherent in itself, and important for an understanding of his art. Conrad had certainly read one of the most influential of the evolutionary writers, Alfred Russel Wallace. Conrad's regard for Wallace was high. As Jocelyn Baines states:

> Wallace's Malay Archipelago, apparently one of his favourite books, supplied him with a number of details for Lord Jim, The Rescue and other novels; and Stein's physical appearance, his apprenticeship as watchmaker and his butterfly collecting are based on Wallace himself.[1]

Frederick Karl also mentions The Malay Archipelago,[2] as a source,

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1. Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (1960; rpt. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p.254. Hereafter cited as Baines. See also Florence Clemens, 'Conrad's Favourite Bedside Book', South Atlantic Quarterly, XXXVIII (1939), pp.305-15.

2. Frederick Karl, Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p.251. Hereafter cited as Karl.

and Norman Sherry quotes Richard Curle's statement from his article 'Joseph Conrad: Ten Years Later', Virginia Quarterly Review, X (1934), p.431.

> I think Wallace's Malay Archipelago was his favourite bedside book ... He had an intense admiration for those pioneer explorers - 'profoundly inspired men' as he called them - who have left us a record of their work; and of Wallace, above all, he never ceased to speak in terms of enthusiasm. Even in conversation he would amplify some remarks by observing, "Wallace says so-and-so," and The Malay Archipelago had been his intimate friend for many years.[1]

Norman Sherry goes on to note many debts to Wallace. The point can be taken further, I feel, since Wallace's opposition to some areas of Darwin's thought was notorious , and is vitally important for the discussion here. Wallace's work, Darwinism (1889) was provocatively named, since he endeavoured to distinguish between the shortcomings of what Darwin had actually written, and the ways in which it could be interpreted.[2]

Although it is hardly surprising that Conrad should have read one of the major writers in what was certainly the most energetic area of contention in his day, what I am concerned with in this thesis is Conrad's use of this reading for his novels and the possible relevance of this scientific reading as a method of approaching and understanding the novels.

To appreciate the disruptive force evolution had upon ethics, one can probably do no better than to quote from a philosophical writer attempting to assess the age in retrospect.

In 1925, A.E. Taylor, a metaphysical philosopher, assessed his predecessors who included T.H. Green, the Cairds, Nettleship, William Wallace, Adamson, Bosanquet, Bradley

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1. Norman Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), p.142. Hereafter CEW.

2. A.R. Wallace, Darwinism, An Exposition of the Theory of of Natural Selection (London: Macmillan, 1889). Hereafter cited as Darwinism.

and others. He wrote:

> The chief part of their united work was to continue the age-long war of believers in genuine morality and real obligation against every kind of naturalistic substitute.[1]

This school of philosophy is therefore in direct conflict with utilitarianism, which argued that ethics are those actions that bring the greatest good, and even, in a sense, in opposition to some areas of evolutionism, which tended in certain cases (particularly that of Henry Drummond's The Ascent of Man), to show ethics as inevitable.

> Naturalism was supposed to explain away ethics altogether by associating ethical concepts such as goodness or duty with non-ethical concepts such as pleasure or utility or the desire that society should be preserved. (ibid.)

Naturalism was, therefore, rather a dangerous area, since it resembled a scientifically updated version of utilitarianism, and was also rather blind to its own faults. Drummond's protestations, for example, deserve notice:

> It is sometimes charged against Evolution that it tries to explain everything, and rob the world of all its problems. There does not appear to be the shadow of a hope it is about to rob it of this. [2]

From this he goes on to see the root of all morality in maternal love and tenderness even in the 'self-sacrifice' of the amoeba. Yet Drummond does not seem to see his presumption, when other major writers stood well clear of the area. G.J. Romanes is obviously treading very carefully when he writes:

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1. 'The Freedom of Man', Contemporary British Philosophy, 2nd Series, Ed. J.H. Muirhead (London: Allen and Unwin, 1925), quoted Mary Warnock, Ethics since 1900 (1960; rpt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p.1.

2. Henry Drummond, The Ascent of Man (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), p.155. The work was originally presented as the Lowell Lectures. Hereafter cited as: Drummond.

> No-one can have a deeper respect for the problem of self-consciousness than I have; for no one can be more profoundly convinced than I am that the problem on this side does not admit of solution. In other words, so far as this aspect of the matter is concerned, I am in complete agreement with the most advanced idealist. I am as far as any one can be from throwing light upon the probable origin of that which I am endeavouring to trace.[1]

The sense behind this statement is surely that of conciliating concession in that he admits the 'most advanced idealist' is quite as likely as anyone else to be correct on this topic, that is to say he is also quite as likely as anyone else to be incorrect. In default of reliable scientific evidence, Romanes is willing to entertain idealist philosophy. The fact that the leading men of the age expressed themselves in such a careful fashion did not, of course, prevent the statutory number of fools rushing in. Darwin made his fear of treading clear on several occasions.

> In what manner the mental powers were first developed in the lowest organisms, is as hopeless an inquiry as how life itself first originated.[2]

Again, he denies any involvement with primary causes.

> I have nothing to do with the origin of the mental powers, any more than I have with that of life itself.[3]

For our purposes, however, these quotations highlight an important aspect of the discussion so far. Romanes and Darwin do not want to be drawn into a discussion of ethics, but then, to the observer, this must seem to be because the popular view of evolutionism at this time sees the world as a mechanism that denies humanity any redeeming ethical attributes. The silence of the great men seems to confirm the

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1. G.J. Romanes, Mental Evolution in Man The Origin of Human Faculty (London: Kegan Paul and Company, 1888), pp.194-195; emphasis added.
2. Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man, 2nd ed. 2 vols (1871; rpt. London: John Murray, 1891), p.66. Hereafter cited as Descent
3. Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (1859; rpt. London: John Murray, 1902), p.191. Hereafter cited as Origin of Species.

worst fears of those who were inclined to see an infernal machine, or some other sort of device, at work. Drummond's work, specifically, is set up in order to show God's will at work rather than 'the machine of evolution' (Drummond, p.258), Drummond deliberately blames Darwin's presentation for this, in particular the phrase, 'the struggle for Life', which he sees as deeply misleading, and a source of possible distress to the reading public.

> For the essential nature of the principle has been greatly obscured by the very name which Mr. Darwin gave it. Probably no other was possible, but the effect has been that men have emphasized the almost ethical substantive 'struggle' and ignored the biological term 'Life'. A secondary implication of the process has thus been elevated into the prime one; and this, exaggerated by the imagination, has led to Nature being conceived of as a vast murderous machine for the annihilation of the majority and the survival of the few. (Drummond, p.256)

This was the pervasive feeling on the topic of evolution at the time Conrad was writing, but it is useful to break down this attitude into several different responses. The men of pure science, Darwin and Romanes, were not prepared to comment upon the implications of the laws of nature they were concerned with uncovering. Drummond, on the other hand, represents the enthusiastic school of thought that was determined to see God in everything and good in all things, which leads him to the astonishing conclusion that a cell dividing is a demonstration of altruistic behaviour.

At a non-scientific level, the 'mechanism' of the universe was seen by many as inevitably debasing all human aspirations. It has been the common misconception that Conrad too regarded evolutionary thinking from the standpoint of the Decadence. Indeed, he seems to accept the idea of a mechanistic world, and the much-quoted letters to Cunninghame-Graham are usually cited to support this view. The image is of a knitting machine,

and it is used by Conrad, I believe, with a wry, satirical, emphasis. It is, incidentally, not merely a convenient image Conrad uses, he repeats it in a subsequent letter to Cunninghame-Graham, with, I feel, ironic insistence. Although this is a much worn critical point, I feel it can usefully be re-stated here:

> It knits us in, and it knits us out. It has knitted time space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions - and nothing matters. I'll admit however that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing. (L. and L. I, 215-216, 20.12.97.)

Here is another letter to Cunninghame-Graham with the same image:

> The machine is thinner than air and as evanescent as a flash of lightning. The attitude of cool unconcern is the only reasonable one. Of course reason is hateful - but why? Because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life, - utterly out of it. (L. and L. I, 212, 14.1.98.)

The same idea pervades his other writings at this time. Here is an article on Alphonse Daudet: it shares some interesting vocabularic similarities:

> He saw life around him with extreme clearness, and he felt it as it is - thinner than air and more elusive than a flash of lightning. He hastened to offer it his compassion, his indignation, his wonder, his sympathy, without giving a moment of thought to the momentous issues that are supposed to lurk in the logic of such sentiments.

The repeated phrase 'thinner than air' is what really gives the game away, and shows that the two visions are similar, except that Daudet did not realize the full implications of his. Notice, here, the strange implication that Daudet, far from being a fortunate innocent in not realizing the 'momentous issues' that affect him, is in fact seen as a lesser writer because of his failure to comprehend. It is, by suggestion

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1. 'Alphonse Daudet' Outlook, 9 April, 1898, Notes on Life and Letters, pp,23-24. Notes on Life and Letters, hereafter cited as NLL.

therefore, important to view this 'amusing' mechanism, but not, surely, so one can lapse into fashionable melancholy?

A.J.A. Symons, in his introduction to An Anthology of 'Nineties' Verse reviews the past century revealingly:

> In the twilit end of the nineteenth century there seemed no answer to a bleak materialism. Anthropology showed the moral code to be no more than a time-saving expedient; socialism emphasized the invincible inequalities of modern life; and physical science disproved divinity. Some doubters found salvation in the Fabian society, others in the Catholic Church; but a minority remained that, despairing of truth outside itself, looked inward to the only verities that had not seemed to crumble while it watched; the cultivation of the self, the consolation of art.[1]

The retreat from the emptiness of an evolutionary doctrine that seemed entirely to depend upon the vagaries of chance, consequently sets up art as a barrier from the emptiness of life, and in an age that seemed to deny individuality, to set a consequently higher stress on the worth of the individual's responses, whilst tacitly accepting his cosmic insignificance.

This is, of course, reminiscent of Pater, and Conrad certainly knew Marius the Epicurean (1885). Watt records that he received a copy of this work from Edward Garnett on 26 May 1897, 'and in any case Pater's ideas were very much in the air during the nineties'.[2] Watt goes on to point out that the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' has been read as a Pateresque statement of aesthetics that also owes something to Schopenhauer. But whereas Pater argued that one could only seize the passing moment, Conrad is interested in seizing that moment in order to draw attention to it and preserve it permanently. Marius believes that 'all that is real in our

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1. A.J.A. Symons, ed. An Anthology of 'Nineties' Verse (London: E. Matthews and Mariot, 1928), p.xviii.

2. Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), p.86. Hereafter cited as Watt.

experience [is] but a series of fleeting impressions'.[1] Conrad, however, regards (or comes to regard) his task as 'rescue work' upon 'varying phases of turbulence', which will then provide 'the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values - the permanence of memory'.[2] This is the point at which Conrad diverges from the school of Pater. However, art for its own sake was espoused by those who perceived only a grim and mechanistic universe, and they were not few in number.

A very similar statement to the one by Symons, above, can be seen coming from a quite different source, namely as an introduction to T.H. Green's Prologomena to Ethics, by an equally renowned philosopher, E. Caird:

> If man, like all the other objects of our empirical knowledge, is merely one part of the world of objects which act and react upon each other, according to fixed general laws, what room is left for the assertion of his moral freedom, or for any higher destiny which distinguishes him from the other creatures? [3]

That a statement such as this should be used as late as 1906 is interesting, since it tends to show how prevalent the despair at the 'fixed general laws' (the 'mechanism' of others) was thought to be in the decadence of the 1890s. Of course, Green's work intended to alter any such view in the reader, as he progressed. I dwell at such length on what must seem to be an overworked area, because I do not believe Conrad felt imprisoned, knitted in, in the way he seems to describe, but that he seized upon a readily available cliché, and is actually using it ironically. Why a 'knitting machine'

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1. Walter Pater, Marius the Epicurean, (1855; rev. ed. 1892;rpt. London: Methuen, 1939), p.110.

2. NLL., p.13.

3. T.H. Green, Prologomena to Ethics, 5th ed. (1883; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), p.v. The Preface is signed E. Caird and dated 1906.

after all? Possibly because it knits the thread of destinies, which the three fates were reputed to spin, figures who re-appear in a semi-parodic fashion - two in number - in Heart of Darkness, at the company's offices.

By the time Conrad writes of the knitting machine he is, as I shall show, involved in far more complex discussions of man's nature than these easy visions of despair. He had begun to exploreevolutionary thought in order to understand the mechanism, rather than lament its workings. For this reason I am inclined to feel that Conrad's letters to Cunninghame-Graham are consciously self-dramatizing. I can see no valid reason why the man who was busy preparing to write Lord Jim should find it necessary to break into French in his letter of 8.2.1899, except that French is the language of inter-nationalism.[1] It is, presumably, a method used to convince an incorrigible idealist of the validity of a less optimistic man's vision, an attempt to make the political campaigner re-think his views. So, although the tone of Conrad's correspondence has often been interpreted as depressive at this time, his literature reflects other attitudes. I shall endeavour to show that it is exploratory in intent, and that Conrad is taking the opportunity to examine what is commonly conceived of as a knitting machine. His investigation, I will argue, shares an outlook similar to Wallace's scepticism at the applicability of Darwin's doctrine to all aspects of life. Wallace's objections stemmed from his contention that the artistic response in man 'could not have been developed under the law of Natural Selection'.[2] This is not to say he wishes

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1. L. and L., I, 269.

2. Darwinism, p.469.

to subvert the whole theory, but Wallace doubts -

> that man's entire nature and all his faculties, whether moral, intellectual, or spiritual, have been derived from their rudiments in the lower animals in the manner and by the action of the same general laws as his physical structure has been derived. (Darwinism, p.461.)

It is precisely this point that I see Conrad pursuing. If egoism had ensured the survival of a species, how was one to account for aesthetic sensibility, self-abnegation, and altruism? Evidently some other law or laws were at work. Wallace, far from accepting the de-humanizing tendency generally thought to go hand in hand with an acceptance of evolutionism, was determined to examine the workings of Nature in order to understand better the spiritual attributes of man. I shall contend in this thesis that Conrad could see there were two contradictory tendencies in mankind, one selfish and the other self-denying. It was the conflict between the two that attracted his attention, and that in this lies at least part of his 'philosophy'. In order to establish the extent of Conrad's indebtness to evolutionary thinkers I shall now have to turn aside from these necessarily speculative considerations and plunge directly into the main body of his writing. Once the extent of Conrad's indebtedness has been established, I shall return to the question of the letters to Cunninghame-Graham and re-examine their importance.

CHAPTER 2

SECTION I

Lord Jim, and Heart of Darkness were written concurrently (during 1899-1901) and this chapter will deal first of all with Heart of Darkness, although much of what is mentioned here will be shown to have a great deal of relevance to Lord Jim. From the point of view of Conrad's use of evolutionary and scientific thinking they are the most complex works to discuss in his entire corpus. The reasons for this are quite specific, for Conrad was exploring areas of thought that were in the mainstream of scientific thinking at the time. What is remarkable about the extent of Conrad's debt to other authors is not that he has chosen particularly abstruse areas, but that he bases his arguments on certain extremely well known works and opinions. This thinking, as I shall show, is evidently not only grounded in what would have been regarded as information well-known to every thinking man at the time, but is actually recognizable as a re-writing of certain areas of this. Conrad's rigid empiricism and his sense of his duty to record the facts of his discussion accurately before writing his work, have placed Heart of Darkness firmly on three levels of reference. First: his own experiences in the Société Anonyme Belge, and the growing knowledge that the European public was beginning to receive about the atrocities perpetrated by that particular business organization; second, his enormous debt to T.H. Huxley's nationally famous public lecture 'Evolution and Ethics', later reprinted many times with its equally influential prolegomena in 1894;[1] third, his deliberate choice to parallel

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1. T.H. Huxley, Evolution and Ethics, vol.ix of Collected Essays. (London: Macmillan, 1894). Hereafter EE.

and even parody the best-selling Rider Haggard novel She (1887). There is a very powerful sense that in Heart of Darkness Conrad is putting the record right about a large number of what he identifies as popular fallacies.

Here it is worth making a major point that is nearly always missed in discussions of Heart of Darkness, and that is, that this is a murder story. It is, of course, much besides, but there is a distinct and heavy hint that the manager has been busy delaying the relief of Kurtz because he hopes this highly successful trader will die of fever. The hints are clearly there, but carefully muted, and they are worth following up carefully. The excited approach of a 'chap with black moustaches' is the first Marlow discovers of his importance, and he is told his boat has been sunk.

> They had started two days before in a sudden hurry up the river with the manager on board, in charge of some volunteer skipper, and before they had been out three hours, they tore the bottom out of her on stones, and she sank near the south bank (p.72-73, emphasis added).

The sudden panic of both the man with the moustache's explanation, and the manager's decision after such a long wait seem suspicious, and in the light of later circumstances we begin to suspect that the manager has deliberately wrecked the steamer, to hold up Kurtz' relief until he dies of fever. 'The affair was too stupid - when I think of it - to be altogether natural' (p.72) concludes Marlow. As we shall see, the word 'natural' will begin to have a ghastly resonance. The manager knows that Kurtz is ill (p.32), and needs relieving. The manager himself is 'never ill' (p.74), and the over-riding implication is that if the jungle is ruled by the laws of 'the survival of the fittest', then the manager is 'fit' in a strange

inversion of the word, and is *welcoming* his good fortune, and this concept of what is natural, in order to eliminate his business rivals. Although the plotting is not 'altogether natural', it seems to be a vicious extension of the doctrine of Natural Selection that includes murder by neglect. In this light the non-appearance of the rivets necessary for the repair of the steamer takes on a suspicious aspect, especially in view of the following: the manager concludes;

> 'Well, let us say three months before we can make a start. Yes, that ought to do the affair.' I flung out of his tent...he was a chattering idiot. Afterwards I took it back when it was borne in upon me startlingly with what extreme nicety he had estimated the time requisite for the 'affair'. (p.75)

It is Marlow's picking up of the word 'affair' here, for the third time, that raises our curiosity, and the implication is unpleasant. The social-Darwinism that has produced the Société Anonyme Belge and its rigorous oppression of the negroes, has been extended by the employees into a murderous game amid themselves. Kurtz' success threatens the manager's promotion expectations, and so he must be removed any convenient way. He is less physically 'fit', although ironically the mental attitude that makes him such an impressive ivory gatherer is anything but 'fit'. The manager has re-interpreted Herbert Spencer's famous catch phrase 'the survival of the fittest' (which was often falsely attributed to Darwin by most people to whom the name Darwin WAS evolution[1]) and used it as a law of

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1. Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), p.156, points out that Darwin later adopted the phrase as 'more accurate' than natural selection, and he cites as his authority The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin: A Variorum Text, ed. Morse Peckham (Philadelphia, 1959), p.145. Spencer's original statement occurred in 'The Development Hypothesis', Leader, 20.3.1852, reprinted in Collected Essays (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), I,97. All references to Spencer are to the Works,19 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861-1902) unless otherwise stated.

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business. We are faced with the chilling prospect of civilized men, in a jungle, implementing a 'law of the jungle' that is far more vicious than the original article. I say this because much of what was later pushed under the category of social Darwinism was based upon a number of conspicuously false premisses. Evolution was held to be synonymous with progress and improvement, whilst a learned body of men, headed by Max Nordau, put forward the claim that it could equally well mean degeneration (M. Nordau, Degeneration 1895). It was not, therefore, biologically inevitable that white men should rule the world because they were quite literally 'higher beings'. In addition, the 'survival of the fittest' did not mean the survival of only one fit individual, as the superlative form of the adjective suggested to so many. According to all genuine evolutionary thought it had to mean the survival of many variants who were fit, in enough quantity to ensure another generation. The manager sees the world as narrowing down to him as the supreme being, in a sort of megalomaniacal fantasy, whilst genuine evolutionists would see him as a useful variant only. Furthermore, no matter how nature works, nature is not really in question here, but society, and for this contingency T.H. Huxley had produced a different series of theories, namely that such brutal self-seeking within society was unlikely or 'It may be the destruction of the bonds which hold society together'. (Prolegomena to EE, sect.12, p.34). Huxley's theories were syntheses of generally established evolutionary attitudes, and widely accepted as orthodox. The whole of the manager's system is a terrifying parody of serious academic investigation, distorted either wilfully or out of blind ignorance into an inhuman code of conduct. Kurtz, starved of supplies with which to trade, (we remember the storehouse of

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calico burns down shortly after Marlow arrives - another plot to prevent him carrying on if he should by chance no longer be ill when contacted?) is quite literally forced to fight for survival, for he presumably faces starvation if unable to barter, and economic privation (the loss of his job and thus of his career) if he is unable to keep up shipments of ivory.

It is evident that part of the nightmare quality of the work unfolds to us only at the level of the omnipotent author. We, with him, see the popular mis-readings of contemporary evolutionary theory. It is ironic that they seem to depend upon punning distortions of words and phrases that are in themselves misleading. As we shall see, Huxley energetically had to re-interpret 'survival of the fittest' publicly since it was becoming obvious that it had been used as an excuse for rapine. The vision Conrad places before us is one in which we see civilized men taking to the jungle what their thinkers have announced as the laws of the jungle - they then re-interpret this amid themselves in the jungle, and what emerges is not only far more vicious than anything nature ever produced, but is defended by them as 'natural'.

This obviously evolutionist bias, taking us back with Marlow into 'primeval' time, is not left there, since Conrad is determined to question and extend the foremost theorists of his day. And he chooses Huxley first.

In 1893 T.H. Huxley delivered his famous Romanes lecture paper entitled 'Evolution and Ethics' at Oxford. In it he attempted to explain the emergence of ethics as a living and socially necessary force. He published it, and included it, with explanatory prolegomena in his collected works of 1894. To many, Huxley's articles in <u>The Nineteenth Century</u> Magazine were

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the most accessible, and most influential views on evolution of the last decade of the nineteenth century. For the purpose of general publication, the prolegomena were added, in order to explain the lecture more fully to the layman. In Heart of Darkness we see Conrad taking Huxley to task:- The first and most obvious echo is from the opening lines of the prolegomena, which are directly paralleled by Marlow's opening words:

> It may be assumed that, two thousand years ago, before Caesar set foot in Southern Britain, the whole countryside visible from the windows of the room in which I write was in what is called 'a state of nature'. (p.1)

Compare this to Heart of Darkness, chapter one, when Marlow starts with a similarly whimsical thought: 'I was thinking of very old times, when Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago - the other day ... darkness was here yesterday.' (p.49). The difference in intention immediately strikes us. Huxley is interested to point out that a 'state of nature' is a thing of the past that we can contemplate now in safety from the warm side of the window. It is something left, gratefully, far behind us. Marlow places the emphasis on precisely the point that Huxley is anxious to avoid, namely that the separation between savagery and civilization is in our own case only nineteen centuries - very little indeed on the evolutionary time-scale. Huxley prefers the rather more impressive and hyperbolic ring of 'two thousand years'.

This comparison of pre-Christian Britain and its nineteenth century counterpart is not an unusual one at this time, since it suggests not only the arrival of civilization in the form of the Romans, but also the corresponding sense of purpose, and, of course, the arrival of the established religion. W. Boyd Dawkins in his work Early Man in Britain and his Place in the Tertiary

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Period (Edinburgh: Macmillan: 1880, p.283), makes the same parallel, and he sees the ancient Britons as similar to

> The savages of Africa and many other parts of the world [who] resorted to their strongholds in times of danger, each man carrying with him his fuel, water and provisions sufficient to sustain him ... The population was large, but it was split up into small tribal communities normally at war with each other, like the Afghans, the Kaffirs, or the villages encountered by Mr Stanley in his voyage down the Congo. (my emphasis)

In each of these works there is a sense of displacement, a feeling that, just as Rome was the centre of the world, from which colonists emanated, now London is the centre and the imperialist urge is similar in magnitude and importance, bringing culture and Christianity. This reciprocating view of history also suggests a degree of inevitability - that just as the Romans had, eventually, to explore Britain and help to raise it to its present status, so the inevitable laws of development mean that this will happen to the Congo, too. The difference is that Marlow draws a portrait of a Roman colonist for us - broke and uncomfortable, 'too much dice, you know', (p.50) out to mend his fortunes, and this figure immediately brings the description into a different focus. All the passages relate us to the savages of Africa - Conrad's shows just how small the divide is.

As we can see, this verbal echo is by no means an outlandish one - none on board the Nellie listening to Marlow seem startled by it, either - but in his mouth it begins to take on a more precise, and threatening, aspect. None of the ready-made responses to ancient Rome and classical culture are assumed to exist and taken for granted. Julius Caesar, the great statesman, is no longer a determined conqueror of legendary fame, but a man surrounded by adventurers, in a series of rickety triremes - the same temporal power in whose name Christ was executed. This

sort of unpleasant resonance is avoided by Huxley, for he was an established and respectable authority, and as we read further in 'Evolution and Ethics' we become aware that he is doing a piece of public relations work for the evolutionists. He tries gallantly to divert our attention away from the several million years of Natural and Sexual selection in man and his ancestors[1] to the conventional figure of 'Caesar'. He, however, turns out to be little better than a bandit, exercising his superiority as one of the strongest and most ruthless. Huxley *avoids* this again by his rather homely image of a garden cultivated in a wilderness (p.9). To the persuasive quality of this figure of speech is added the assurance that living is no longer Herbert Spencer's idea of 'the survival of the fittest'.[2] In Huxley's view the struggle has changed, and is now concerned not with 'the fittest who got to the very top, but the great body of the moderately fit'. (p.42) The struggle is now rather gentler, it is 'the struggle ... for the means of enjoyment'. As we have seen, though, this struggle can be every bit as vicious as the fight to survive, and it is at its fiercest amid the colonists in the Congo trying to gain enough wealth to enjoy Europe. Conrad's vision is in ironic contrast to the following:

> Laws, sanctioned by the combined force of the colony, would restrain the self-assertion of each man within the limits required for the maintenance of peace. In other words the cosmic struggle for existence, as between man and man, would be rigorously suppressed, and selection by its means, would be completely excluded as it is from the garden. (EE, 6, p.18)

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1. The time period is now variously calculated at 6 million, 2 million, and 50,000 years, and then thought to be 20,000 years.

2. 'The Development Hypothesis', in Leader, 20.3.1852; rpt. Collected Essays (London: 1891), I, 97.

Huxley's image of the garden hardly takes us beyond suburbia,[1] and his reference to 'the colony' when he means a primitive village seems to suggest that he sees colonies as the first, inevitable, step forward by any people - whilst what they are meant to be 'colonizing' is, presumably, the jungle they have just emerged from. The linguistic imprecision avoids the most difficult areas of evolutionary thought. Man did not, quite suddenly, swing out of the trees, start building grass huts and cutting down those same trees. The word 'colonize' suggests that a sudden wave of civilization swept over our primitive forbearers in the same way that the Romans swept over Britain. The two are most certainly not inevitable, natural, or even connected in the way Huxley seems to suggest. Consciously or unconsciously, Huxley takes a great deal for granted.

It should come as no surprise, then, to realize that Huxley all but duplicates Darwin's arguments for the existence of good-will in Mankind, in what looks like a frantic job to pacify the world at large whilst falsifying science as little as possible. He uses the same argument that man is united by 'sympathy' of feeling, which is bred of a capacity for 'imitation'. This, he asserts, is present in lower animals and is therefore evolutionarily legitimate, and not God-given, especially to man. In humans this has evolved into altruism and a sense of right:

> None but himself can draw or model, none comes near him in the scope, variety and exactness of vocal imitation, none is such a master of gesture, while he seems impelled thus to imitate for the pure pleasure of it ... By a purely reflex operation of the mind, we take the hue of passion

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1. The image was not spurious, since many of Darwin's experiments recorded in The Effects of Domestication Upon Plants and Animals took place in his own back garden.

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> of those who are about us, or it may be the complementary colour. It is not by any conscious 'putting oneself in the place' of a joyful or a suffering person that the state of mind we call sympathy usually arises; indeed, it is often contrary to one's sense of right, and in spite of one's will. (EE, p.28-9)

It is evident that Huxley has merely embroidered upon Darwin:

> nor could we check our sympathy, even at the urging of hard reason, without deterioration of the noblest part of our nature.[1]

> The all-important emotion of sympathy is distinct from that of love. (Descent, I, 162)

Both sets of statements are rather feeble, and both men use the communal reference 'we' to describe us now, and thus to hint at the impossibility of anyone remaining untouched by sympathy; but this is not the point under discussion, it is the susceptibilities of our distant, savage ancestors that are in question, and whether they would naturally feel the same way is in considerable doubt. Both Huxley and Darwin give us a rather charming picture of humanity, which has evolved itself into a state of sympathy so powerful as to be against its best interests 'contrary to one's sense of right'. Here, we are on interesting ground, since logically too much kindness leads to immorality. Conrad sees this too, but differently. In Heart of Darkness what in fact happens is that Marlow finds so little that he can like in his fellow pilgrims that his 'sympathy' extends to the man who is simultaneously their victim and the embodiment of their 'method' of exploitation - Kurtz. And, as we shall see, Marlow does compromise his own morality, for he lies for Kurtz, against his own better impulses. Perhaps this is what is at the centre of the famous image of biting at something rotten - one bites into the best fruit life has to offer, sympathy, and finds that at the centre it is based on a lie, or a misrepresentation

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1. C. Darwin, The Descent of Man, 2 vols. revised and augmented (London: John Murray, 1891) I, 206-7. Hereafter cited as Descent.

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- Jim was 'one of us' but not at the core:- it is based on an absence - Haldin confesses to Razumov before Razumov can avoid it, and he has to help him or betray him.

For the purposes of Heart of Darkness it is enough to state that the idea is emerging at a more obviously learned level than the presentation in The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', which stated, as has been noticed by many commentators, the fact of the destructive power of charity, but not the implications behind it. Conrad, there can be little doubt, is deliberately writing against Huxley and Darwin, neither of whom wish to state that this feeling of 'sympathy' may well be rather less noble than they want to admit, and could be defined as enlightened self-interest.

Romanes, in his work Darwin and After Darwin felt the same difficulty, and was only prepared to state that:

> No species (has been) found to present a structure or an instinct having primary reference to the welfare of another species.[1]

This, however, also has interesting implications, since as species were originally merely varieties produced spontaneously, the logical extreme conclusion of this idea is to assert that each individual has evolved merely to propagate itself, since we are all incipient new species. Romanes makes, according to Richard Dawkins:

> the erroneous assumption that the important thing in evolution is the good of the species (or the group) rather than the good of the individual, (or the gene).[2]

This, however, was not an idea that many people found acceptable

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1. G.J. Romanes, Darwin and After Darwin, 2 vols. (London: Longman and Co. 1893-95) I, 288. Hereafter cited as Darwin and After Darwin.

2. Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p.2.

in 1976. Dawkins' purpose in producing his book was precisely this, to persuade us of the possibility of an unacceptable view of ourselves, and it is not surprising that Huxley gives us a much milder view of the world:

> We judge the acts of others by our own sympathies, and we judge our own acts by the sympathies of others ... we come to think in the acquired dialect of morals. (p.30)

(Notice the tell-tale 'we' and the use of the present tense. Idealism, it seems, has always been here, divinely delivered by the Romans at the right moment, waiting to be uncovered by men. One wonders where the Romans got their sympathetic capacity from ...)

> the ethical process is in opposition to the principles of the cosmic process and tends to the suppression of the qualities best fitted for success in that struggle. (p.30)

This is not quite what Darwin preached, and it is worth here following up the very heavily used word sympathy. In the Descent of Man, Darwin comes closer to Dawkins' viewpoint quoted above, but tactfully he limits his discussion to animals:

> With animals, sympathy is directed solely towards the members of the same community, and therefore towards known, and more or less beloved members, but not to all individuals of the same species. (I,163)

Rather slyly, 'beloved' has been slipped in here. We haven't yet explained sympathy, and yet here we have the highest form of altruism creeping in, namely love. Something evasive is definitely going on.

This evasiveness is all the more apparent when one reflects on the very ambivalent usage of 'beloved'. Love, considered carefully, is often as selfish as it is altruistic. Darwin is only making an observation that he is not intent upon examining closely.

Just how evasive this is becomes apparent when we look at

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this keyword - sympathy. The Oxford English Dictionary acknowledges the delicacy of the situation by stating that each definition is tempered 'with various shades of meaning'. What we have to realize is that this highly ambivalent word has specific meanings but that Huxley and Darwin are deliberately evading these. Huxley himself in Physiology (1872) uses the word in a very specific sense; he describes a dissection: 'The blushing and sweating which takes place when the sympathetic [nerve] in the neck is divided...' (vi.145)[1] He is referring to the sympathetic nerve, a specific feature of anatomy, and he would have been well aware of the nature of sympathetic cures and infections which were then thought of as physical actualities (the former, however, was reckoned to be based on superstition in its extreme forms). What, one wonders, is a man like this doing with a word like this in such circumstances? It looks a little as though the physical qualities inherent in the medical sense of the word, are being foisted upon us as mental attributes of a similarly incontrovertible sort. By this time, of course, sympathy was a very vague word outside the medical realm. The Daily News of 7th May 1897 mentions 'Corn [prices] recovered in sympathy with wheat' (p.6, col.2) and after 1901 the concept of the 'sympathetic strike' was common on posters and in newspapers. I dwell on this at such length because it is a topic Conrad returns to with vehemence in Lord Jim.

The last major debt to Huxley is one, I think, that can help us a great deal with an understanding of Conrad's narrative method, and his relation to science. In the actual lecture, and

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1. OED "sympathetic" B1.

the appended notes, Huxley refers to Buddhism:

> The doctrine of transmigration (of souls), whatever its origin, Brahminical and Buddhist speculation found, ready to hand, the means of constructing a plausible vindication of the ways of the cosmos to man. (EE, p.60)

The doctrine of re-incarnation and the Buddhist belief of the possibility of promotion to higher incarnations is here used as an argument to show 'primitive' appreciation of the nature of evolution. Huxley's note on this sentence is from Prof. Rhys Davids' 1881 Hibbert lectures, (note 4, p.93):

> One of the latest speculations now being put forward among ourselves would seek to explain each man's character, and even his outward condition in life, by the character he inherits from his ancestors, a character gradually formed during a practically endless series of past existences, modified only by the conditions into which he was born, those very conditions being also, in like manner, the last result of a practically endless series of past causes. Gotama's speculations might be stated in the same words ...

Huxley does not just hint, however, he goes on to make his point again: 'like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of trans-migration has its roots in the world of reality' (p.61). And he goes on: according to Gautama:

> Personality is a metaphysical fancy; and in very truth, not only we, but all things, in the worlds without end of the cosmic phantasmagoria are such stuff as dreams are made of. (p.67)

I can think of no better reason than this for Conrad's several times repeated description of Marlow seated on the Nellie: 'in the pose of a Buddha' (p.10), 'the palms of his hands outwards (he) resembled an idol' (p.6). But there is more to it than this. Buddhism's doctrine posits, if I may be brief with it, an ascent from animality to near Godhead possible through re-incarnation of worthy souls. Marlow describes himself as a thoughtless 'animal' before he went to the Congo, and indeed, he starts his tale with a description of himself as a schoolboy

with 'a passion for maps' (p.11). What is behind this is the idea that over the course of the novel we see him grow up, moving, as it were, from the thoughtless existence of his youth to the profound meditativeness of the 'idol'. The Buddha figure, and much of the tone of the novel, have been continual worries to critics who doubt, for instance, that a man interested in his steamer's mechanical failings the way Marlow is could fathom subtleties. The whole point is, to me, that Marlow is looking back on details of his long-past adventures and re-living them as they were in format, but tempered with later knowledge. We remember his contempt for the manager, 'I flung him out of his hut ... He was a chattering idiot. Afterwards I took it back ...' (p.75). 'Chattering idiot' has the ring of a phrase remembered and cherished as an acute appraisal at the time. It is only later, when Marlow realizes what is going on, that he changes his mind. The murder story is embedded in the text, and it emerges to confront us as slowly as Marlow's own realization of what has been done. Here lies the irony of the manager's servant and his brusque: 'Mistah Kurtz, he dead'. (p.150). Kurtz's death had been intended from the start, and the negro's callousness is a true reflection of the attitude of the manager, who, however, has to feign concern, and leaves to view the body.

This device of looking back upon events experienced by one-self when younger as if they were part of a previous life, allows the several layers of irony to work freely. Marlow, refusing to rush out and see the dead Kurtz, seems youthfully stubborn to us, and yet we can appreciate his integrity, whilst not seriously imagining that the Marlow who narrates the incident would have been so unsubtle. It is a device that continues to work outwards from the novel, since we suspect that the outer narrator, whoever

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he is, is able to see actually more than Marlow, and the author himself can see still more. Very few Victorian gentlemen sailors, I suspect, would be likely to see themselves as Buddhas, let alone deliberately act like one in order to stimulate their listeners' curiosity. No, this is, like the over-structure of Huxley's lecture, an added significance available only to the author and the very privileged reader. It raises the novel from the status of a tale to the level of a true story based on serious observation that co-ordinates perfectly with advanced, enlightened, deductive thought. It is as though we are invited to check someone's alibi when something extraordinary has been reported, and we find that he is right, and must be credited.

This scientific debt is, as I hope I have shown, essential for an understanding of an important part of the work. Critics have commented endlessly upon the way Conrad has exposed colonial rule, and how words like 'criminal' when applied to negro slaves have a nightmare quality of fabricated standards. What is often unrecognized is that Conrad's image is very precise and actually constructive in its criticism. Here it is worth quoting at length from J.W. Burrow's Evolution and Society[1] which confidently asserts that interest in primitive societies had reached its turning point well before the Congo expedition.

> It was the third quarter of the century which saw a revival, after half a century of relative neglect, of interest in primitive society. It was in the 'sixties of the nineteenth century that a systematic, well-documented comparative social anthropology was born, and an interest in the manners, customs, institutions and beliefs of primitive and oriental peoples ceased to be confined to travellers, antiquarians and satirists, and to take the study of them seriously became no longer merely a proof of eccentricity.

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1. J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society (Cambridge, 1966; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974). My emphasis. Hereafter cited as Burrow.

> As Herbert Spencer put it, 'Instead of passing over as of no account, or else regarding as purely mischievous, the superstitions of the primitive man, we must enquire what parts they play in social evolution.' (The Principles of Sociology (3 vols. 1876 -). Vol.11 (1882) p.230-1)
>
> E.B. Tylor referred to his own generation as one 'among whom there has sprung up a new knowledge of old times, and with it a new sympathy with old thoughts and feelings' (Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization (1865), p.10) ... 1865 ... also saw the publication of Sir John Lubbock's Prehistoric Times and J.F. McLennan's Primitive Marriage. Sir Henry Maine's Ancient Law had come out four years earlier, and Tylor's second and more ambitious work, Primitive Culture, was published in 1871. (p.80).

Given this, and we have no reason to suppose Burrow is falsifying his information, what, we may ask, is Kurtz doing in the Congo of the early 1890s writing pamphlets on the suppression of savage customs? Is he not hopelessly behind the times, or rather is Conrad perhaps beating the last out of an already familiar, sensational set of circumstances? Against Burrow's quotation we have only to place that of Edward von Hartmann, from The Philosophy of the Unconscious, printed in London in 1884. The rather strange English is as from the original.

> As little as a favour is done the dog whose tail is to be cut off, when one cuts it off gradually, inch by inch, so little is there humanity in artificially prolonging the death struggles of savages who are on the verge of extinction ... the true philanthropist, if he has comprehended the natural law of anthropological evolution, cannot avoid desiring an acceleration of the last convulsion, and labouring for that end. 1.

This astonishingly brutal attitude with its images of death-throes, dogs and mutilation represented a side of the argument that is still very much alive today, as the South American Indians machine-gunned by helicopters will realize in their own mute way. This viewpoint, of extermination, is exactly what Kurtz comes to adopt in his famous postcript 'exterminate all the brutes'. (p.118).

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1. E. von Hartmann, The Philosophy of the Unconscious (London: Kegan Paul and Co. 1884), II, 12.

The hint, then, becomes clear. Just as genocide can in no possible sense be regarded as merely an 'acceleration' of the natural laws of survival, neither can the manager's decision to let Kurtz die be regarded as anything less than murder. The manager has re-interpreted evolutionism for his own progress, to reach the top, whilst Kurtz has re-developed tribal life to make himself reach the top, too, as he declares himself a god. There can be little doubt that he has actually pushed the cultural level of his tribe back into degeneration.

Westermarck argues that cannibalism is a comparatively recent addition to primitive customs, and seems to have stemmed from 'further west'. He continues:

> For many reasons, then, it is an illegitimate supposition to regard the cannibalism of modern savages as a survival from the first infancy of mankind, or, more generally, from a stage through which the whole human race has passed.[1]

Although he is writing in 1906, Westermarck's authorities for this statement are dated firmly before Heart of Darkness. They are R. Burton, Two trips to Gorilla Land and the Cataracts of the Congo, 2 vols, (London: 1876), I, 214 and Guy Burrows' Land of the Pigmies (London: 1898) p.149, which is also about the Congo. It is worth considering that Conrad may have known these works, and may be suggesting that the slightly more capable natives of the steamer's crew learned their cannibalistic tendencies from some other 'god', some precursor of Kurtz who restructured their mythology in the distant past. The possibility is chilling because so muted. Had they, initially, been as blood-thirsty as he, he could not have traded with them in the

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1. E. Westermarck, The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas, 2 vols, (London: Macmillan, 1906) II, 580.

first instance. The severed heads are the anthropological pointer. In Conrad's Malay novels head hunters are regarded by Malays as 'treemen', the dyaks are as close to beasts as anyone can imagine. Malaya, itself, was seen by A.R. Wallace as an evolutionary backwater (The Malay Archipelago: Wallace was constantly praised by Conrad) and Darwin sums up current attitudes in The Descent of Man stating that the most primitive primates and forms of man can only survive;

> On islands such as Madagascar and the Malayan Archipelago, where they have not been exposed to so severe a competition as they would have been in well-stocked continents. (I, 243).

Head hunting was the extreme of barbarity and correspondingly rare. Could Conrad be hinting that Kurtz has actually added a series of barbarous habits to a jungle tribe? This, I feel, is what is behind Marlow's feeling 'a positive relief' when in the presence of 'uncomplicated savagery'. The remark is more than a passing observation, and 'uncomplicated' is suggestive.

In 1909 the agent of the Kasai Trading Company sent to the Torday and Hilton-Simpson Congo Expedition a photograph of a 'skull tree', a series of severed heads impaled upon poles by Bawongo and Bapindji tribesmen. This photograph, now the property of the Royal Institute of Anthropology and exhibited at the Photographers' Gallery London in March 1980, serves to make this point clear. As late as 1909 such sights were interesting enough to photograph and be recorded, and rare enough to inspire the agent with a sense of scientific duty.

The interest the Victorian and Edwardian world had in such ghoulish relics is also an important factor here, since evidently Kurtz shares it and merely goes one stage further by utilizing it for his own ends. Anthropologists had expressed their interest in primitive customs and left unacknowledged the

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intrinsic attractiveness these things held for them. Kurtz' severed heads face inwards, towards his house, for him to admire rather than as a warning to others. To the Bawongo tribes, skulls are placed in order to frighten adversaries. Kurtz seems to indulge the desire to frighten himself with his own power.

With regard to the company doctor's interest in skulls, it is worth noting that cranial types had been studied from as early as the mid-eighteenth century with the work of Pieter Camper (1722-89) and J.F. Blumenback (1752-1840). I think, however, that Conrad's point lies in the deliberate comparison of the 'scientific' man who wishes to collect skulls in order to prove the negro an inferior animal, and Kurtz, whose head trophies are an active demonstration of his superiority, and thus a forceful argument to show the negro he is inferior. Both men, although seemingly far apart in outlook, are headhunters, and both, surprisingly, pursue it as a task designed to produce roughly the same effect. It is a gently ironic point of Conrad's that under such circumstances these men can hardly be judged apart. A request for a skull or skulls presupposes that such objects are readily obtainable, that, in fact they have no human significance. Grave robbing and body snatching had long been illegal in Britain. The doctor at the Belgian company office by implication already sees African life as worthless - which is what Kurtz is guilty of.

Conrad is illustrating with poignancy, that whatever the learned classes in England were doing, and no matter how enlightened they were, there could be no guarantee either that their doctrines were read, or that they were understood. People like Kurtz with his desire to suppress savagery, and like Marlow intent on mending his fortunes, went out to the Congo unprepared.

is reversed. Both go to Tibet to retreat from the world of men.

As we immediately see, both books are journeys to the centre of Africa in search of a person, and in both works Leo and Marlow retreat into a Buddhist contemplative position. The young Roman of two thousand years ago has changed in to a young (and perfect) Greek. Greece was a more culturally inclined civilization than Rome, less obviously imperial, even though we conveniently have to evade the fact that Greece fifty years before Christ was a faded flower, a museum visited by young Romans.

There are, however, a large number of phrases that occur in She[1] which should jolt the memory of anyone who has read Heart of Darkness.

hard and sound at the core p.8
honest at the core p.130
evil to the core p.156
dead and rotten at the core p.220
hollow, dead sort of voice p.141
a bodiless voice p.184
dead heart of the rock p.116
pointed into the darkness p.83
horrible nightmare p.79
half-seen horror p.83,
yell of horror p.90
horror of horrors p.256
measureless desolation p.274
bottomless gulf p.238 Horrible gulf p.266
sepulchre for the dead p.78
inscrutible to me p.251
unutterable, too hideous for words p.251
surpass my powers of description p.145
no words of mine can convey p.147
brutes p.109

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1. H. Rider Haggard, She (1887; rpt. London: Longmans Green & Co. 1891). All quotations from this edition.

devilish and ferocious rites p.90 unholy rites p.47
the light went out like a lamp p.267
the heart of the darkness p.240
into the dead heart p.249

The seductive Ayesha at the heart of She re-appears as Kurtz' woman, briefly, and possibly again in the Intended: 'She was one of those creatures that are not the playthings of time. For her he had died only yesterday.' (p.157). This has an aspect in common with Marlow's opening words 'nineteen hundred years ago, the other day ...' (p.8) when we consider that Ayesha waited a similar length of time for Kallicrates.

I think that further analysis would bring out some similarities, but also some massive divergences of intention. Haggard's fantasy is being used as a rough pattern to refer to, and for Conrad to disagree with. Haggard knew Africa, worked there, and yet his stories of it are pure adventure. Just as the young Marlow gazed at the blank map and dreamed of adventure, so the grown Marlow realizes that reality is not like that at all. Conrad is writing an anti-adventure, an anti-She. The city of Kôr with its perfectly preserved mummified bodies, that seemed almost alive, is replaced by the grove of death where negroes already effectively dead await their final gasp - a rather different and less wholesome kind of life and death balance - and Kurtz, diseased and of superhuman stature, 'he looked at least seven feet long', finds godhead a horror.

There seem to be two conflicting directions of thought in this work, the one seems to be scientific, the other purely populist in approach. It is as though Conrad is re-writing both approaches to the subject. It is all too easy to see the story as Marlow going through the glamorous Burton/Livingstone expedition, or the fantastic adventures of Ludwig Holly, but the

expected story does not emerge. And in a sense, the expected story of the Rajah Brooke success story fails to occur in Lord Jim, and for very similar reasons.

SECTION II

> The special faculties we have been discussing, clearly point to the existence in man of something which he has not derived from his animal progenitors - something which we may best refer to as a being of a spiritual essence or nature, capable of progressive development under favourable conditions. On the hypothesis of this spiritual nature, super-added to the animal nature of man, we are able to understand much that is otherwise mysterious or unintelligible in regard to him, especially the enormous influence of ideas, principles, and beliefs over his whole life and action. Thus alone can we understand the constancy of the martyr, the unselfishness of the philanthropist, the devotion of the patriot, the enthusiasm of the artist, and the resolute and persevering search of the scientific worker after nature's secrets. Thus we may perceive that the love of truth, the delight in beauty, the passion for justice, and the thrill of exaltation with which we hear of any act of courageous self-sacrifice, are the workings within us of a higher nature which has not been developed by means of the struggle for material existence.
>
> A.R. Wallace, Darwinism, p.474.

> Duty! Wonderous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb however secretly they rebel; whence thy original? (E. Kant, Metaphysics of Ethics trans. J.W. Semple (Edinburgh: 1836), p.136.) Quoted by Darwin, The Descent of Man, I, 149.

'Whence thy original?' was the question that many were asking As we saw in the preceding chapter, Huxley suggested that primitive society did not function according to a social contract in which a certain amount of limitation was accepted by each member, in return for the security of a community, but rather according to a narrower concept of enlightened self-interest,

that did not demand the sort of advanced responsibility implied in ideas of the social contract.[1] Huxley calls this 'sympathy'. And here we realize Huxley is sitting firmly on the fence again. Darwin had seen community rather differently (Descent, I, p.201) when he stated that:

> ..each man would soon learn that if he aided his fellow-men, he would commonly receive aid in return. From this low motive...

If this is 'sympathy' it is sufficient for survival, but not for the sort of self-denial that characterizes the idealist virtues of heroism and self-sacrifice. Huxley is, we feel, trying to explain too much with too little.[2] In this chapter I shall

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1. cf. J. Burrow , Evolution and Society, p.104 ff.

2. Wallace never attempts to explain this idea of 'sympathy', and in common with the other writers on this topic seems to assume that the term in itself is adequate to deal with all the issues involved without the necessity of explaining the concepts. He argues that once sympathy exists it is undoubtedly useful for the community. He never asks how the community comes into being, or why it will be able to produce a quality it has not had before.

> Sympathy, which leads all in turn to assist each other; the sense of right...self-restraint...intelligent foresight...are all qualities that from their earliest appearance must have been for the benefit of each community, and would therefore, have become the subjects of natural selection.
>
> Thus they would live and maintain their numbers while others (societies) would decrease and finally succumb. (Natural Selection, p.174).

Wallace sees the social usefulness of sympathy, but his a priori case is that society already exists, and is in a condition to recognize the use and benefit of the emotion.

(All the above from A.R. Wallace, Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection (London: Macmillan,1870). Hereafter cited as Natural Selection.)

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explore Conrad's analysis of the nature of altruism, and show how radically innovative it proves to be.

In the Descent of Man Darwin makes two points that seem to lie at the centre of the problems defined in Lord Jim. The first he mutes by confining his statement, coyly, to animals.

> With animals, sympathy is directed solely towards the members of the same community, and therefore towards known, and more or less beloved members, but not to individuals of the same species. (I,163).

Some of the implications of this were discussed in the previous chapter but here it should be seen in conjunction with the following, since he goes on to state:

> If any desire or instinct leading to an action opposed to the good of others still appears, when recalled to mind, as strong as, or stronger than, the social instinct, a man will feel no keen regret at having followed it; but he will become conscious that if his conduct were known to his fellows it would meet with their disapprobation, and few are so destitute of sympathy as not to feel discomfort when this is realized. (I,177).

The points are precisely those under discussion in Lord Jim. Jim deserts the ship to save himself, but yet he feels as though it is his duty to face the trial. The pilgrims, in addition, are not part of the same 'community' - the captain regards them as 'cattle', as not of the same species - and, of course, Marlow in calling Jim 'one of us' is making the tacit assumption that the pilgrims are not like 'us'. Legally, however, the pilgrims are the equals of the white men, even though those same white men look down socially upon mixed racial marriages. Significantly, the first person the Patna's captain meets on his way to Captain Ellis' office is a half-caste clerk. There is a certain amount that hints at Jewel being a half-caste, and yet Jim marries her. Now, the Darwinist test of species is mutual sterility when breeding, or sterility of offspring. The fact that half-castes exist is proof that racial separation is not enormous, and we

recall that Almayer actually produces a child by his half-caste wife. Legally and scientifically the pilgrims are arguably of the same 'species', socially they are nothing approaching this. Wallace's rather tenuous description of species tends to bear this out: he describes species as:

> An assemblage of individuals which have become somewhat modified in structure, form and constitution, so as to adapt them to slightly different conditions of life; which can be differentiated from allied assemblages; which reproduce their like; which usually breed together; and perhaps, when crossed with their near allies, always produce offspring which are more or less sterile. (Darwinism, p.167)

This curious blend of vague statements and definite assertions: 'more or less', 'always', 'perhaps', representsthe genuine evaluative dilemma of the age. 'Species' as a concept was considerably weakened, naturally enough, by Darwin's great work The Origin of Species. Were we really so different from the savages encountered all over the globe? Our experience of Kurtz would seem to suggest that the similarities were closer than one cared to admit. The way around this dilemma was the doctrine of stages of development. J.W. Burrow depicts this situation clearly, and expresses the late Victorian rationalization as follows:-

> Mankind was one not because it was everywhere the same, but because the differences represented different stages in the same process. And by agreeing to call the process progress one could convert the social theory into a moral and political one.[1] (Burrow, pp.98-99)

Certain types of humanity were just a little further down the evolutionary ladder, that was all. This was not strictly logical since it presupposed that given time the orang-utang would develop into a human form, whereas modern science has it that

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1. This is, of course, an accurate summation of the general consideration of the doctrine of 'survivals'.

the apes have evolved as much as man, but in a different direction and in response to other stimuli. This was conveniently overlooked by the era of which we are talking, and we have no reason to suppose that Conrad was aware of this part of the evasion.

To return to the idea of 'sympathy', Conrad seems to have caught Jim in an ethical trap - he fails to feel the requisite 'sympathy' for the pilgrims, and he is therefore, one would argue, more likely to revert to basic self-oriented behaviour patterns. Darwin describes this state interestingly in The Expression of the Emotions:

> When movements, associated through habit with certain states of mind, are partially repressed by the will, the strictly involuntary muscles, or as well as those which are at least under the separate control of the will, are liable still to act; and their action is often highly expressive. Conversely, when the will is temporarily or permanently weakened, the voluntary muscles fail before the involuntary.[1]

I contend that in the light of this quotation it is possible to understand Jim's hesitation on his training ship, and his jump from the Patna. What the quotation means is that the will can withstand the desire to flee, for a while, even though that desire is so deep-rooted as to be a physiological fact vital to self-preservation. How this applies to Jim is in the fact that his paralysis aboard the training ship is merely the effect of the involuntary muscles acting so strongly as to over-ride the 'state of mind' produced by his 'course of light holiday literature' (p.5). When on the Patna, however, the circumstances reverse themselves: initially he does not abandon ship, he rather resigns himself to die - which I see as 'the will ... temporarily or permanently weakened'. This gives the involuntary muscles their opening, and without recourse to any mental activity, he

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1. C. Darwin, The Expression of the Emotion in Man and Animals (London: John Murray, 1872) p.48. Hereafter cited as Expression.

jumps. It is a sub-human part of himself that takes him over: 'I knew nothing about it till I looked up'. (p.111). Reflex actions, as we know them, were a source of considerable scientific conjecture since they represented a crisis between will and action. Obviously this could not be overlooked by any serious investigator of the evolution of moral sense, since reflexes tended to function in the interests of the survival of the individual, and thus be at variance with many high moral interests. Reflexes were, it was assumed, highly developed processes, since they functioned so efficiently in lower animals. It therefore demanded a correspondingly high level of control in the human being able to withstand the promptings of his 'lower', 'animal' nature. G.J. Romanes assessed the entire era's thinking coherently in his work Darwin and After Darwin, and it is worth considering his analysis in detail. Spencer and Broca, he states, considered reflex actions as being the product of:

> a very definite piece of machinery, consisting of many co-ordinated parts [which], must somehow or other be originated in a high degree of working efficiency, before it can be capable of answering its purpose in the prompt performance of a particular action, under particular circumstances of stimulation. (II, 70-71).

In Romanes' work I see a certain amount of evasiveness on the topic, since he goes on with his discussion as follows:

> The difficulty to which I allude is that of understanding how all the stages in the development of a reflex action can have been due to natural selection, seeing that, before the reflex action has been sufficiently elaborated to perform its function, it cannot have presented any degree of utility. (I,80).

As this statement follows immediately on from a discussion of decapitated frogs and their ability to maintain balance in that state (I,77 ff.) we can begin to understand Romanes' confusion.

He sees reflexes in the frogs and concludes that they: 'cannot conceivably have been of any use to any frog that was in the undisturbed possession of its brain'. (*I*,80). We will have cause to remember this discussion of frogs when we consider the Patna's engineer, the alcoholic whose head is 'gone' according to the doctor, and who sees toads, when he should see snakes.[1] Here, however, I suspect that Romanes is being evasive. Reflex actions, as almost anyone will tell you, are often what have preserved their lives in times of danger when the brain has no rational control. The man who leaps back from the kerb before the lorry thunders past is a commonplace of our dangerous times. Romanes is hinting, I think, that reflex actions are not as powerful or as important as they are currently seen today. If we are encouraged to see them as interesting anachronisms even in frogs, then they can hardly represent a serious threat to altruistic behaviour in humans. This is a gross over-simplification since Conrad points out that aspects of our 'lower' evolutionary nature have a habit of bubbling to the surface. The example of the frog is interesting in a number of ways, also, because it represents one of the earliest vertebrates equally at home on land or water, a living example of a primitive evolutionary type. Conrad is quite clearly stating that Jim's jump, although inexcusable ethically, is something that could happen to anyone who aspires to heroism and fidelity, but who is not quite good

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1. Compare this usage with an example from Henry James' The Princess Casamassima, (1886; rpt. London: Bodley Head, 1972) p.351. Captain Sholto speaks of the process: 'So far as the head's concerned the Princess is all there'. In Conrad's example the humour stems from the use of a colloquialism by a medical man, and in the clash of language registers. When a doctor describes a head as 'gone' one expects precise medical description as to the state of the corpse. In this case the doctor is merely being chatty. Still, we are left momentarily contemplating a headless Engineer and one still functioning; just similar to the frogs.

enough. The rest of the crew are merely cowards, one dies of heart-failure, he has not the 'heart', the courage, to do his duty, but Jim is subverted by the animal in him.

I am not at all sure that it is worth pursuing the reasons for Jim's jump any further than this within this context, since he himself can never understand just what has happened. I am not sure that Marlow does, either, although he comes very close indeed when he states:

> A certain readiness to perish is not so very rare, but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable armour of resolution, are ready to fight a losing battle to the last, the desire of peace waxes stronger as hope declines, till at last it conquers the very desire for life. (p.88).

Jim only jumps when he feels the Patna 'going down, down, head first under me', (p.110), when he knows the sea will be full of struggling men, and he can expect to perish. It is when he expects to die that his willpower, his sense of duty relaxes, and the involuntary muscles come into action. This is what is at the back of the 'do nothing heroics' of the Nan-Shan's crew when the typhoon strikes, and they cower below decks awaiting the worst, it is the refusal, or the inability, the lack of 'will' to continue a struggle that is hopeless. In their case the involuntary muscles can have no outlet of action. These men do not 'measure up' to the required standard. They are less than men, in common parlance: which brings us very neatly to a discussion of Jim's height.[1]

> He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet ... with ... a fixed form under stare that made you think of a charging bull ... his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion... (p.3).

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1. This, although a well-worn topic, needs a certain re-appraisal. Jim is described carefully, but he is one of the few characters in Conrad whose size is actually quantified with some precision.

This, in the opening paragraph of the novel, is little enough to go on, until we reflect that the classic height for a man who is also worthy of consideration, is six feet. Jim is just too short, and his conduct falls just short of the ideal, just short of the fully human, too. The two animal references are both faintly praiseworthy, and one, 'dogged', is embedded in a cliché usage. But, as we shall see, Conrad has given us these hints in order to build up a framework within which everyone in the novel is referred to in terms of animals. The sea cadets on Jim's training ship are 'young whelps' (p.8). The New South Wales German skipper of the Patna is referred to variously as a 'hound' (p.41) and a 'baby elephant' (p.37). Marlow describes Jim as a 'well-bred hound' (p.177) which seems complimentary; but slightly altered by the American captain visiting Egstrom's shop, this becomes rather different. The captain refers to the entire Patna crew as 'dogs' and 'skunks' (p.193). In turn, Jim's captain denies the humanity of the pilgrims he is carrying by calling them 'dese cattle', (p.15) Jim calls the crew 'three dirty owls' (p.123) when in the lifeboat, and even the engineer's assistant is the suggestively named Donkeyman (p.107). Everyone, it seems, sees everyone else as rather less than human. It is hardly necessary to give extended examples, since the text is riddled with them. On one page alone, Jim calls himself an ass, a brute, is compared to a puppet in 'jerky agitation, like one of those flat wooden figures that are worked by a string', and finally to 'a bird with a broken wing'. (p.184).

Conrad's clear hint seems to be that Jim's jump came from an area in him that was not only involuntary, but animalistic. The call from the crew in the lifeboat comes from a sub-human level: 'Then three voices together raised a yell. They came

to me separately: one bleated, another screamed, one howled'. (p.110). If we add to this the following quotation, we begin to see the nature of this appeal:

> I told you I jumped: but I tell you they were too much for any man. It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and pulled me over. Can't you see it? (p.123).[1]

Plainly, Jim responds to the howls at a sub-human level. Jim's distress when he realizes what he has done expresses itself in a similar way, indicating a kinship with the lower orders: 'If I had opened my lips just then, I would have simply howled like an animal'. (p.124). He has survived, but is manifestly not 'fit' to be a member of society since his act is a betrayal not only of the humankind on the ship, but a capitulation to an animalistic self-interest, a lapse into a lower moral world. The Engineer sees the pilgrims as members of a different species - he confuses them with the toads he sees in his fits of delirium tremens - but he is arguably sub-human himself. The doctor confides about him to Marlow: 'The head ah! The head, of course, gone'. Not only is the centre of conscience destroyed by drink, a conventional signifier of irresponsibility and as such readily acceptable anywhere, but also it is, I am inclined to think, a grimly playful borrowing from Darwin's The Expression of the Emotions (p.36) in which Darwin quotes Pfluger's experiments as he found them described by Maudsley, in Body and Mind (1870, p.8). The experiments concerned decapitating frogs, which despite this

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1. This is an ironic reversal of the episode on the training ship, when a cadet uses a boat-hook to pull a drowning sailor out of the waves, and nearly falls overboard himself in the attempt. This is an example of the mirror-image reversals Conrad uses elsewhere in this novel for contrast.

could perform:

> actions that have all the appearance of being guided by intelligence and instigated by will in an animal, the recognized organ of whose intelligence and will has been removed. (p.8).

This is reinforced by the fact that the Engineer sees toads, for, as the doctor says, 'Traditionally he ought to see snakes' (p.55). Conrad adds another grim echo when the Engineer, imagining himself back on the Patna, says, 'Bash in the head of the first that stirs'. This is exactly what Jim had already done, using the lantern.

This is the lowest that Jim is allowed to slip in parallelism, since Conrad takes care to state that Jim blushes. Conventionally this indicates enough delicacy of feeling to experience conscience. In Darwinist terms, it is a reassurance of his humanity: 'Blushing is the most peculiar and most human of all expressions' (Expression, p.310).[1] Jim also knows how to frown (p.223), a further reassurance, since Darwin maintained that monkeys could not frown:

> ..in comparison with man, their faces are inexpressive, chiefly owing to their not frowning under any emotion of mind - that is, as far as I have been able to observe, and I carefully attended to this point. (Expression , p.142-3).

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1. Jim's blushing is a peculiarly specific phenomenon, and is usefully illustrated by a reference to Wallace, Natural Selection, when he speaks of:

> Those striking characteristics of special modifications which still distinguish the chief races of mankind, the red, black, yellow or blushing white skin. (p.179).

The important emphasis here lies in the fact that blushing, by force of skin colour alone, can only be accorded to white men. That Jim blushes ensures that he is 'one of us' racially, to any white, Victorian observer, like Marlow. In contrast to this, and as a token of Jim's sense of conscience, we can quote from Lombroso's Criminal Anthropology, p.385. 'About forty per cent of even young criminals do not blush.'

This comparison of figures in the novel to different animals when they fall below a certain moral level takes place according to a strict scientific logic founded in embryology. We must now look briefly at embryology.

In support of this seemingly bizarre suggestion, I should first defend embryology as an important way of seeing evolution. First championed by Huxley, J.W. Burrow sums it up as follows:

> There were, in fact, three great parallels which influenced the development of the theory of evolution... the third was the relation between structural complexity and chronological sequence revealed by embryology. (Burrow, p.113)

Darwin quotes Huxley in the Descent of Man when he refers to Man's Place in Nature (1863), p.67, and agrees that it is:

> ..quite in the later stages of development that the young human being presents marked differences from the young ape, while the latter departs as much from the dog in its development as the man does. Startling as this assertion may appear to be, it is demonstrably true. (I, 12).

Later in the same work Darwin speaks of:

> ..the close resemblance of the embryo of man to that, for instance, of a dog - the construction of his skull, limbs and frame on the same plan with other mammals ... man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor. (II, 421).

The first comparison we can make when armed with this information is between Jim and his 'native dog', (the 'cur', p.70), and Brierly with his dog. Because of their closeness on a biological scale, men can be defined by their dogs, but they can also be shown up by them, for a dog's altruism is legendary, and exceptional. Darwin (Descent, I,105-6) quotes an expression noted by Dr Lander Lindsay in 'Physiology of Mind in the Lower Animals', Journal of Mental Science, April 1871, p.38: 'A dog is the only thing on this earth that luvs you more than he luvs himself' [sic]. Brierly's dog has to be shut in the chartroom to stop him

jumping after his master; again, in Chance, Flora de Barral does not jump down the quarry because she is afraid the dog will jump also. Jim's dog merely gets in everyone's way.[1]

Here things become a little more complicated, for Romanes, in explaining Darwinism in Darwin and After Darwin (1893) points to the lanugo, or hairy pelt acquired and then shed by the human foetus, (I,92), and states that it: 'appears to be useless for any purpose other than that of emphatically declaring man a child of the monkey'. This he reinforces in his discussion of 'comparative embryology' in which he uses the similarity of embryos to argue that this is 'evidence in favour of continuous descent' (I,155). The implication is as follows, humans are always going to be physically more like themselves than any other breed. They have, however, evolved in the same way; and, as embryos, pass through some of the actual stages of lower mammals. It is therefore arguable that the morally substandard are mentally comparable to the worst aspects of lower nature, namely hounds, curs and skunks. They fail to achieve fully moral status.

However, a dog is one of the few creatures that Conrad admits

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1. It may be worth noting, in passing, that the Fynes' dog in Chance, is a humorous reflection on this devotion. Seen through the eyes of Marlow, the animal's actions are ridiculous.

> Fyne was beginning to swear at him in low, sepulchral tones when I appeared. The dog became at once wildly demonstrative, half strangling himself in his collar, his eyes and tongue hanging out in the excess of his incomprehensible affection for me. This was before he caught sight of the cake in my hand. A series of vertical springs high up in the air followed, and then, when he got the cake, he instantly lost interest in everything else. (p.124).

This comic depiction of a dog's fidelity to food, and 'affection' for Marlow based on it, serves as an inverted assertion of the fidelity of the animal. It is possible to laugh at the greed of a dog who thinks only of his stomach only because we know, from experience, that dogs are very faithful. Mere greed or deception in an animal is not comic. But the self-indulgent idiosyncracies of a trusted, patronized, friend can be.

may be capable of true altruism. This is explained evolutionarily by the dog's total dependence upon man - thus a creature that does not need to fight to survive every day retains only a vestigial capacity for egoism. If all dogs were altruistic in a competitive world, they would all, sooner or later, die helping someone or something else, and there would soon be no dogs, let alone altruistic ones. As it is, their continued survival is assured. There can be very few human beings like that, therefore, and this ethic of fidelity is delicately hinted at in the stolidity of the Malay helmsman, and of old Singleton. It would hardly be seemly to call them dogs. The fidelity of dogs is not only legendary, but actually part of their name - for the standard name for a dog is Fido - Latin for 'I trust, I am faithful'. 'I shall be faithful' (p.334) Jim promises. Conrad's skill is in converting an open structure - namely life and the incidental word-play of living - into a closed structure, that is a work of art in which even such trivial incidental details have a value and a meaning that links to a scientifically valid theory. Conrad hints that eventually all we can ever do is to be faithful like dogs, despite our self-assertive urges. Jim is defined in the latter part of the novel by the devotion of Tamb' Itam who sleeps, doglike, on the verandah of his house, guarding Jim. Tamb' Itam is, in effect, the perfectly faithful human 'dog'.

Jim retreats towards the rising sun in the same way that the journey in Heart of Darkness takes Marlow back into primeval time, and Patusan is seen as: 'in the original dusk of [its] being' (p.219). This is evidently in close agreement with contemporary scientific thought which argued that the lowest primates, the lemuridae, could only have survived in their primitive state in

an evolutionary backwater. In the words of Darwin, (Descent, I, 243):

> Most of the remnants survive on islands such as Madagascar and the Malayan Archipelago, where they have not been exposed to so severe a competition as they would have been in well-stocked continents.

It is a view that Darwin had always held, and which was widely accepted as true, that islands, particularly the Malayan islands, harboured many species at a comparatively undeveloped level. For instance, in The Origin of Species, p.106-7, we read:

> On a small island, the race for life will have been less severe, and there will have been less modification and less extermination.

Again on page 300:

> I fully agree with Mr Godwin-Austen that the present condition of the Malay Archipelago, with its numerous large islands separated by wide and shallow seas, probably represents the former state of Europe, whilst most of our (geological) formations were accumulating.

When Jim arrives he finds the community not merely struggling to gain 'the means of enjoyment', but actually engaged in a life and death struggle for its survival.[1] Jim comes into his own at this primitive level of ethical development. It is as though Jim has to step down a moral rung geographically and go down the evolutionary level in order to find his correct ambiance. This places him in the situation of those species puzzled over by

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1. There is a hint as to the precise level of development Malays were commonly regarded as having attained, if one looks at Wallace's Malay Archipelago. He makes the observation that Malay houses are built on stilts, and continues:

> The view of the ancient lake-dwellers' village, given as the frontispiece of Sir Charles Lyell's 'Antiquity of Man' is chiefly founded on a sketch of this very village of Dorey. (p.496).

Present-day Dorey is at an equivalent developmental level to the late Stone-age Swiss lake-village, is the suggestion. Hereafter A.R. Wallace, The Malay Archipelago (1869; rpt.London: Macmillan, 1877), cited as Malay Archipelago.

evolutionary naturalists, that when transported to a different environment, flourish suddenly, and when examined several generations later seem to constitute a distinct species, rather than showing themselves as they are, namely, a regional adaptation. G.J. Romanes comments in Darwin and After Darwin, on this very problem.

> Where is the systematic zoologist who would take the trouble to transport what appears to be an obviously endemic species of animal from one country to another before venturing to give it a new specific name? (11, 238)

The question cannot be avoided - who would have known what Kurtz would be like had he stayed in Europe? And by the reverse process, who could have assessed Jim had he stayed a water-clerk? The two stories explore man and savagery, but in totally opposed directions.

Jim could be described as 'in his element', to use the cliché. In Patusan running away is the rule rather than the exception. Dain Waris, surprised by Gentleman Brown, leaps up, we must assume involuntarily, and is shot at the second salvo. The description of the event is by no means complimentary:

> A blind panic drove these men in a surging, swaying mob to and fro along the shore, like a herd of cattle afraid of the water. (p.404).

The image degrades them from human status. It also duplicates what the Patna's Captain says of the pilgrims 'look at dese cattle'. (p.15). Strangely enough, the assessments of the renegade New South Wales German and of Marlow seem to mesh here, although the one is contemptuous and the latter frankly pitying. The unifying point is made through an echo with the authorial voice - namely that we remember in both cases that water seems to threaten, and in each case a piece of treachery has been perpetrated by white men. The death of Dain Waris seems to be

an ironic reversal of the desertion of the Patna. Brown's 'lesson' in arranging this massacre is insane, but he sets himself up as a moral value that demands obedience. Jim was part of a moral standard that demanded complete obedience, too, even beyond the bounds of the sanity of self-preservation.

Conrad makes it quite clear that Jim and Dain Waris are at precisely the same level morally, as well as evolutionarily. The following quotations work equally well when seen in both lights, and this, I think, is one of Conrad's great technical achievements. Marlow describes what he observes and considers to be the case, whilst the authorial consciousness adds to it another dimension:

> Theirs was one of those strange, profound, rare friendships between brown and white, in which the very difference in race seems to draw two human beings close by some mystic element of sympathy ...his intelligent sympathy with Jim's aspirations appealed to me. I seemed to behold the very origin of friendship. ...(Dain Waris) had also a European mind. You meet them sometimes like that, and are surprised to discover unexpectedly a familiar turn of thought, an unobscured vision, a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism. (p.261-262, emphasis added.)

That Jim has found his true level here is obvious, and I think it is equally clear that Conrad can use this to explore 'the very origins of friendship'. At this point Marlow attributes this origin to 'sympathy'. As we shall see later Conrad had evolved a far more complex theory.

The prevalence of the idea of 'arrested development' in the primitive races observed by nineteenth century anthropologists is shown here in two quotations, both from influential Victorian writers. The first is H.L. Morgan writing in Ancient Society:

> The inferiority of savage man in the mental and moral scale, undeveloped, unexperienced and held down by his low animal appetites and passions, though reluctantly recognized, is, nevertheless, substantially demonstrated

> by the remains of ancient art ... Still further illustrated by the present conditions of tribes of savages in a low state of development left in isolated sections of the earth's monuments of the past...[1]

This is fully endorsed by E.B. Tylor, who was hailed by R.R. Marett and others as the 'Father of Anthropology'[2], who wrote in his influential work Primitive Culture:

> We may, I think, apply the often repeated comparison of savages to children as fairly to their moral as to their intellectual condition.... While the general tenor of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier, and that the barbarian stands between.[3]

The comparison to children is something we shall return to: what I am eager to establish here is that each writer is obviously referring to a corpus of opinion that is well known, as is witnessed by the phrases 'often repeated comparison' and the grudging, 'though reluctantly recognized' - this latter presupposing that it is only a matter of time before the doubters do their recognizing overtly. Evidently Conrad is here pursuing what is mainstream argument at the time, and Jim is clearly sent to the level of arrested development that agrees best with his abilities.

No matter what level Jim is reduced to, he is still very recognizably a white man - in that he dresses immaculately, down to his 'pipe clayed shoes'. Moreover, Jim is described as having a 'small moustache', and Conrad would have known from his voyages in the east that Malays do not have beards at all. Wallace describes Malays generally and comments 'the face is nearly destitute of beard' (Malay Archipelago, p.583). On the Isle of Lombock he notes 'my beard, too, was the subject of some admiration' (p.167) and the same thing occurs again in Dobbo (p.474). Jim may go back in time, but he does not

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1. H.L. Morgan, Ancient Society (New York: Holt, 1907) p.41.
2. Burrow, p.244.
3. E.B. Tylor, Primitive Culture (London: John Murray, 1871) p.31.

degenerate, as his clothing shows, and he never ceases to have all the characteristic marks of a white man.

Here it is important to be alert to what is happening, for Conrad is allowing the evolutionary argument to swing both ways. Jim is not a degenerate, but rather has failed to evolve fully, whilst Dain Waris is an 'advanced' savage whose 'European mind' brings him close to Jim. But if Jim is not fully evolved and Dain is merely better than his tribe, how can they be described as being at a 'European' level? Jim quite obviously was not fit to be in Europe, that's why he is in Patusan. But the rather embarrassing word, 'European', with all its tacitly assumed value judgements of imperialist superiority, is used only by Marlow. Marlow, at this point, tends to gloss over just how far Jim is from the modern man. His use of the imperialist cliché that must often have been used so high-handedly, is to the reader an embarrassingly obvious example of the limitations of Marlow's mind, and the extent of his subjective involvement with Jim. This is not a 'European' level, although both Jim and Marlow would like to think so.

Although Jim has retreated in evolutionary terms, he has not gone as far back as Kurtz, for the Bugis Malays are: 'intelligent, enterprising, revengeful, but with a more frank courage than other Malays' (p.316). This detail was gleaned from Major F. McNair's work Perak and the Malays: 'Sarong' and 'Kris' (London: 1878, p.131), who describes the Bugis Malays thus:

> They compare most favourably with the Malays proper, being intelligent, courageous and enterprising ... braver than a Malay, but not possessing the other's good points, being one who will lay his plans to obtain revenge on the offending party. (Quoted:Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World, p.157).

This level then is by no means contemptible, and the close

similarity of these quotations shows us that Conrad was not only exploring the well-springs of emotions, but also doing it with considerable care and a genuine effort at factual accuracy. The figures in the novel, however, content themselves with rather less than precise assessments of Jim. Stein calls him 'romantic'[1] and Cornelius calls him 'a little child'.

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1. For Stein, a German, to use the term 'romantic' is an implicit comment on his perspective, since the nineteenth century school of romantic thought was split between German and English thought.

In the Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics (Enlarged Edition, ed. Alex Preminger, (London and Basingstoke: 1974) rpt. 1979, p.717, 'Romanticism'.) it can be seen just how imprecise the terms 'romantic' and 'romanticism' were.

> The interpretation of this thoroughly controversial term (F.L. Lucas, in The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal 1948, counted 11,396 definitions of romanticism)...
> Opinions also differ as to the homogeneity of European romanticism ... The truth seems to be that romanticism
> (a) does not occur simultaneously in all European Literatures,
> (b) varies in its literary aspects from country to country, and
> (c) as a word, has not the same meaning everywhere. It started in Germany and England during the 1790s as a new mode of imagination and vision, which spread, with considerable modifications, throughout Europe, between 1800 and 1830.

The entry continues for several pages, and divides early Romanticism (1798-1805) from later, post-Napoleonic romanticism (1806 on). Stein, as an exiled revolutionary after 1848 would presumably sympathise with the 1798-1805 romanticism. The point, I feel, that Conrad is making here is that Stein's pronouncement on Jim 'he is a romantic' is both an insight and strangely an obfuscation. Stein, quite possibly is a romantic, and he certainly identifies Jim correctly in that he gives him the very chance he needs to redeem his otherwise wasted self. But the definition we are offered could mean entirely different things in Germany and England, and could mean even more varied things spoken by a German to an Englishman in Malaysia. Stein's definition is good enough to allow Marlow and he to salvage Jim, but for the reader interested in fathoming Jim, it is a term that begs definition, that has never been precise. Conrad emerges with these terms, like 'romantic' and 'sympathy' that demand exploration, and the work is in part precisely that exploration the reader finds himself wishing to pursue.

Ian Watt sidesteps the whole question when he writes that Stein is

Cornelius means he is harmless, but the continually repeated phrase obtrudes upon us: a child is not fully moral after all, or, if we remember the embryological tables, Jim is not fully 'human' in the highest sense. He has, indeed, a boyish optimism:

> 'I believe I am equal to my luck!' he had the gift of finding a special meaning in everything that happened to him (p.304)

We can't avoid the irony of this, because it forces upon us the fact of Jim fabricating his own dreams of success. His 'luck', when viewed objectively, depends heavily upon the chain of misfortunes that have dogged him since he joined the Merchant Service, until finally he reaches Patusan. He would not have reached Patusan either had it not been for Marlow's efforts. These same efforts are not evidence of the working of 'luck' but of a weakness in Marlow that makes him want to help Jim - something provisionally assessed as 'sympathy'.

Jim has the ability to see himself only in the most favourable light, and it starts whilst on board the cadet ship, when he rationalizes his failure to move quickly enough:

> He was rather glad he had not gone into the cutter, since a lower achievement had served the turn. He had enlarged his knowledge more than those who had done the work. (p.4)

This boyish ability to over-compensate for what is qualitatively a '<u>lower</u> achievement' stays with him when he faces the trial.

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1. (cont'd from previous page)

> an exile from the 1848 revolution, and thus a representative of German political liberalism; and there are his poetic quotations, which make him the spokesman of German Romantic literature. (<u>Conrad in the Nineteenth Century</u>, London: Macmillan, 1980, p.323.)

To reduce Stein to a 'representative ... spokesman' is hardly helpful, since the school of thought does not have a manifesto.

His tacit assertion to the court is that he knows something that is of greater import than mere desertion, which is manifest in his 'bullying' of Marlow to agree with him. Marlow can see more clearly - he notes carefully Jim's greeting to Jewel. ' "Hallo, girl! " he cried. "Hallo, boy! " she answered' (p.321). This level of innocence and straightforwardness is marred by several considerations. We recall, for instance, that the Manager's adult negro servant in Heart of Darkness is called a 'boy' - as was common practice during colonial rule - to suggest his subservient position and, more important, his inferior intellect. Jim, we can see, is still in a world of boys and adventures, which is quite correct for the schoolboy slang he tends to use. Marlow makes a telling comment when Jim relates how Jewel wakes him to face his assassins:

> He was weary of these attempts upon his life. He had had his fill of these alarms ... 'Do you know', he commented, profoundly, 'I rather think I was not quite myself for whole weeks on end about that time'. 'Oh, yes. You were though,' I couldn't help contradicting. (p.298).

This same weariness is best defined as the weariness of having to wait, alert, for the unexpected, as I suggested earlier, in the correct frame of mind. Jim's relaxation in Patusan could be fatal, just as his relaxation on the Patna caused him to make his irreversible jump. In both cases he has given up and is waiting for death. Luckily Jewel is with him, otherwise the two events would have paralleled, and he would have died. Like a boy reading an adventure story, Jim considers that the dangers only occur when expected, and end when the book is closed. Once roused to the problem in hand, Jim can prepare himself adequately. Life and literature diverge, in that life often has long periods of boring trivia, which Jim's course of 'light

holiday reading' does not account for.

Although Marlow is right - Jim <u>is</u> himself in Marlow's terms, in that he fails: 'to fight a losing battle to the last, the desire of peace wax[ing] strong as hope declines, till at last it conquers the very desire of life' (p.88). Yet, Marlow is wrong as well, since from this point onwards, Jim has already begun to live out his new reality as though it were an adventure story in which he <u>is</u> always on his guard. Jim has gone to a special place, perhaps a little like an adventure playground, where he can live out all his fantasies. And here, perhaps it is worth looking at the 'romantic' side of the story in the more confined sense of Jim's love life. Marlow comments on his relationship with Jewel:

> This, let me remind you again, is a love story; you can see it by the imbecility, not a repulsive imbecility, the exalted imbecility ... (p.299).
>
> There was nothing light-hearted in their romance, they came together under the shadow of life's disaster, like knight and maiden meeting to exchange vows amongst haunted ruins. (p.311-312).

The simile is apt since Marlow can see that they must eventually have a romance - there is no one else they can turn to, since Jim is a white man and Jewel (possibly) a half-caste. <u>The Lagoon</u> tells us how Malays responded to women who married white men. Mixed marriages were unacceptable to them, and demanded the death of the man. In their physical and mental isolation these two only have each other; their romance then, seems unavoidable, although to Jim there can be little doubt that he does not respond to it as a statistical inevitability, but as something exalted. The knight and maiden would be questionable, even in a European setting: in a Malay jungle the simile highlights itself, and we are encouraged to see the extent of Jim's wilful self-deception. Marlow sees, and sympathises, but he

cannot accept this attitude. His surprise when he hears Jewel explain herself, is evident: ' "I did not want to die weeping." I thought I had not heard aright. "You did not want to die weeping?" I repeated after her.' (p.312). This is the epitome of romantic despair, but Marlow's repetition of the dramatic phrase shows his reluctance to accept what seems to follow naturally enough from the gothic story values of the 'knight and maiden',[1] and Jewel's crusader-like all night vigil over Jim. As it happens, we cannot deny Jewel's assertion since she is not hysterical, and goes on 'in an imperturbable monotone' to describe her mother's death - who really did die weeping. (p.312-313). Jewel, surely, can know nothing of European romantic story-telling traditions. What she has witnessed has been enough. The knowledge shocks Marlow profoundly. ' For a moment I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder...' ' "He swore he would never leave me." ' (p.313). I maintain that this is a major turning point in the novel. Marlow sees that the world is chaotic, and he can perceive this only because he suddenly notices that for all his ironic comparisons to knights and maidens as a way of commenting upon how Jim and Jewel see themselves, they really do see reality this way. In Jim's case, literature has affected him. In Jewel's, however, we see her ordering her impressions and emerging with a sensibility surprisingly similar to that of a novel. The love story is seductively easy to believe, but we are dealing with something that genuinely shocks Marlow. An illustration may

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1. This looks forward to Chance, in which each part of the work reflects this pattern, Part I 'The Damsel', Part II 'The Knight'.

help here: Roland Barthes in Writing Degree Zero'[1] describes a similar inflation of language during the French Revolution, and he concludes:

> This writing which bears all the signs of inflation, was an exact writing; never was language more incredible, and yet never was it less spurious. This grandiloquence was not only form modelled on drama; it was also the awareness of it. Without this extravagant pose, typical of all the great revolutionaries, which enabled Gaudet, the Girondin, when arrested at Saint-Emilion, to declare without looking ridiculous, since he was about to die; "Yes, I am Gaudet. Executioner do your duty. Go take my head to the tyrants of my country. It has always turned them pale; once severed it will turn them paler still", the Revolution could not have been this mythical event which made history fruitful, along with all the future ideas on revolution. Revolutionary writing was, so to speak the entelechy of the revolutionary legend; it struck fear into men's hearts and imposed upon them a citizen's sacrament of Bloodshed.

Barthes has shown how the inflated language works, and its effects. What Conrad is interested in is not so much the political as the psychological causality. Both Gaudet and Jewel start with an image that is closely realized, and in the course of being re-expressed gains power. Jewel's mother died, and as she died, she wept. 'To die weeping', however, has a much more vatic ring to it, suggesting death caused as a result of too much weeping. Sorrow certainly hastened Jewel's mother's end, we assume, but the resonance of Jewel's language is almost mythic. Gaudet, too, starts from an image - that 'the tyrants' were afraid and turned pale at the sight of him which is perhaps a figurative expression that suggests his brainpower frightened them. Most people, confronted with a severed head probably would blanch - Gaudet uses this as a criticism of over-fine sensibilities and, more suggestively as a hint that his death will only excite further revolutionary

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1. Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, trans. Richard Miller (London: Wang and Hill, 1974), p.22.

fervour, and the tyrants will pale at the results of their deed. In each case a true observation has been imaginatively projected into the future as a possibility. In each case the deaths gain in significance. This is only possible because Jewel and Gaudet both cast themselves in the roles of observers at their own deaths, and they must, therefore, find some tragic significance in themselves. Marlow's shock could be said to stem from a recognition of the tragic response, the very sense of tragedy, that in 'civilized' men is so unfathomable, is at this level merely an extension of egoism.

Whilst Jim lives out his adventure story, Jewel is manufacturing her own rhetoric by which to live. It is Marlow's briefly caught glimpse of this that gives him the corresponding image of 'vast and dismal ... disorder', and he sees Jewel's effort as an extreme example of 'an arrangement of small conveniences'. This reminder comes at the right time. Whether or not Marlow fully understands it, we cannot be sure, but he has been busy satirising gently Jim's tendency to resort to literature, when suddenly the force of Jewel's statement hits him.[1] Perhaps we can see through Jim, but Jim's tendency is necessary, human and vital as a barrier against the chaos of the world. We have, like Jewel, to construct our reality out of our circumstances to fit our likely expectations. Man is a story-making animal. The story he most frequently makes has himself as hero.

To understand Jim's romanticism, we must first understand Stein, and what we are asked to accept when he appears. It is

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1. And she, we assume, has had no chance of resorting to literature.

all too tempting to regard him as a Holy man who sits in a circle of light, devoted to the pantheism of insects. True, he does provide an answer to Jim's dilemma, and becomes, in a way, Jim's father, just as he was adopted by old M'Neil: both follow similar careers by becoming powerful and befriending princes in isolated areas of Malaya. But what we are asked to accept in Stein is interesting. Stein is immensely wealthy as a result of his trade. He is defined, however, only through his insect collection. Yet this is every bit as much 'booty' and 'loot' as the ivory Kurtz amasses, in that he is fortunate enough to acquire a raw product, just as he collected rattans and guttah-percha, and turn it not to wealth, but to fame. Marlow, however, gives us mainly the semi-religious side of their significance, and partially obscures the problem.[1]

Happily, Stein is gazing at his prize specimen as Marlow enters. It is the memorial of a crowning moment in his past,

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1. The differences in the treatment of this 'loot' are the prime concern here, since Stein is not interested in the amassing of mere objects, and indeed seems ready to renounce the last remaining monument to his life's work. The last we see of him is in the last sentence of the work:

> Stein has 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. (p.417).

He has lost Jim, just as he lost his other personal ties ('friend, wife, child...') and no collection of insects can compensate for that, as his sad gesture implies. Kurtz, on the other hand, is not interested in ivory in itself, but in power, in the promise of promotion within the Society which he perverts into power over the natives. He achieves power but loses his humanity. Stein has a fine collection, but is powerless to save his loved ones, and Jim. Jim had found 'fame, love and success within the wall of forests fringed with white foam'. (p.415). Kurtz found fame and success, but had to deny love. Stein embraced love, but lost it and was left with his wealth and his insects, the products of his success and perpetuators of his fame respectively. His interest lies, however, not in the value of what he has, but the weight of emotional association, the memories of lost love, that these momentos carry.

when all his dreams came true, 'and even what I had once dreamed in my sleep had come into my hand, too!' (p.211). But <u>how</u> had these dreams come true? Stein had his shoot-out, and won, by using cunning in realizing the situation, 'this needs a little management'; and coolness, as he awaits the approach of the Malays, whereas they fired too soon and missed; and last, he uses technology. The revolver can repeat shots. Malay muskets are muzzle-loaders and cannot. The basis of this moment of emotional exaltation is pure pragmatism, and is reflected in the list he makes on his pinnacle of delight.

> I had greatly annoyed my principal enemy: I was young, strong; I had friendship, I had the love' (he said 'lof') 'of a woman, a child I had, to make my heart very full - and even what I had once dreamed in my sleep [the butterfly] had come into my hand, too! ' (p.211).

It is very difficult to read this: 'I had ... I had', without noticing the dominance of the idea of possession in 'my fingers .. in meinen Handen ... into my hand'. The man is evidently acquisitive; he lists his emotional ties thus: 'friend, wife, child' ... 'phoo! the match was blown out'. They are all lost now except the butterfly. This talisman is, for him, the same as Brierly's gold watch and nautical glasses, and will be conspicuously left behind by Stein, too, in the same way, when he dies: 'To my small native town this my collection I shall bequeath. Something of me. The best.' (p.205). It is not until the next chapter that we are reminded of Stein's status as a merchant, when the words 'mercantile ... commercial ... profit ...' (p.218-219) crowd on us as well as: 'He looked up at me with interested attention, as though I had been a rare insect'. (p.219). Stein's ability to objectify his human achievements in the physical reminder of the insects, seems to have taken over his entire being. He will send his collection

back to his town as a form of legacy, an assertion that he has achieved something. 'Something of me. The best.' This obscure desire to be assessed by European standards, no matter how far distant, is surely part of what prompts Jim's final submission to Doramin. Stein re‿ifies his achievements into prize butterflies. Jim re‿ifies his trustworthiness into an ideal of a 'word' that cannot be broken. The words of cheap novels are what he lives by, and within that, his honesty cannot be questioned.

The hint that Conrad is careful to obtrude upon us is that in order to live this way - collecting fame and insects, making one's name anew - one has to have certain physical advantages: money from trade in Stein's case, and technical superiority in Jim's.

Jim and Stein are very similar, indeed, in that they share the same sort of experiences. Jim too, is attacked; by the assassins of Sherif Ali and he shoots one. Again, he too has recourse to technology - he uses a revolver - and he utilizes coolness: 'He held his shot, he says deliberately'. (p.301).

Brown also uses technology in a grim parallel with this, since he uses his Yankee sharpshooter to kill one of the Malays at long distance when all believe him 'quite safe at that distance from the hill'. (p.371). What Jim gains, however, is not a butterfly, but the love of Jewel. He names her thus, and our sense of the spiritual quality of love, valued in terms of the monetary alerts us to the parallelisms with Stein. As a deliberate echo, Conrad details that Stein's wife had:

> A brown leather belt over her left shoulder with a revolver in it. 'She talked as women will talk', he said, 'telling me to be careful ... and what a great wickedness it was for me to go alone'. (p.209).

Jewel wakes Jim: 'at once she put into his hand a revolver ... "can you face four men with this?" ' (p.297). In Jim's case, when he finally leaves the stockade, having achieved the same status as Stein had done, he is walking not into an ambush that will redound to his credit, but to certain death at the hands of an enraged Doramin. Both men can only live their dreams because of the firm bases of their lives. A butterfly on its own is not very much to solace a man who has done nothing else. Yet Stein has had his dreams; and Jim, too, matures his plan to attack Sherif Ali whilst lying in bed at night. He moves in a waking dream. Both men, I stress, support their dreams through the reliance on superior firearms, just as Kurtz's 'thunder and lightning' made him a god.

Any consideration of the technical superiority of the white man in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim must surely take into consideration the lack of scientific awareness of the Malays and Congolese. We notice Kurtz's tribe are more afraid of the steamboat's hooter than of the pilgrims' guns. They do not cease their attack when confronted with gunfire, simply because they do not understand the nature of the weapons, the projectiles of which they cannot see. On the other hand the dissociation is completed by Marlow's incomprehension when he sees the poleman at the bow drop flat and the air filled with 'little sticks'. Several lines later comes the realization: 'Arrows by Jove! We were being shot at!' These sticks that he cannot immediately comprehend very soon make their effect felt since the helmsman is killed by a spear.

The white/men's weapons, like the seemingly ineffective bombardment by the French cruiser, seem to have no effect. 'Most of the shots went high' Marlow tells us. In fact the

rifles used (Winchesters for the pilgrims and a Martini-Henry for the helmsman), were neither of the most modern nor of the most effective at that time. They are both falling block rifles and as such quickly reloaded, but as early as 1868 the War Office Commission of Great Britain had described the weapon as 'of very inferior accuracy' (quoted from T.F. Freemantle, The Book of the Rifle, London: 1901, p.62).[1] Moreover the cartridges were particularly unsuitable for hot climates since they suffered from: 'A plug of beeswax behind the bullet ready to melt and run into the powder if overheated by the sun' (Ibid. p.63). As early as 1871 it was concluded that: 'It certainly did not represent the best knowledge and invention of its time' (Ibid. p.71). By 1873 all the major European armies had adopted bolt action weapons (p.72). However this may be, the first rifle considered capable of jungle use was the bolt-action Lee-Metford rifle, since it could ensure that the bullet managed to penetrate screens of leaves.

Leaving aside the feebleness of the weapons the pilgrims rely on, for all their rapid firing capability, their steamer is not impressive either, with its primitive upright boiler held together by strips of blanket. There can be no doubt they are poorly equipped, and even the technology they most revere, their rifles, are only a concession to the myth of firepower, without the content. Max Gluckmann comments tellingly in his Custom and Conflict in Africa:

> It was superior arms despite the smaller number of the colonists which counted ... I am not going to keep mentioning this point, which Hillaire Belloc summed up, 'Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim gun, and they have not".[2]

Once we have placed Jim in some sort of context, we can begin to understand what the novel is all about. Jim has to

1. T.F. Freemantle The Book of the Rifle (London: Macmillan, 1901).
2. Max Gluckmann, Custom and Conflict in Africa (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966) p.139.

be transported back in evolutionary time - to Malaya; back down an evolutionary level of moral ability - the Malayan morality; back in real time - to the days when Stein was young and these adventures were common; and back in his own time - to the land of boyhood schemes that work only in Patusan.

Can the questions asked at the beginning of the chapter be left like this? Is heroism merely a question of knowing how to use superior technology like revolvers, and cannons against Sherif Ali's camp, added to a capacity to believe oneself fortunate? In the penultimate paragraph of the work we are left with the much-quoted ambivalence, that hinges on how the reader stresses 'can':

> But we can see him, an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. (p.416, my emphases)

Jim's love, we remember, was 'exalted imbecility' (p.299) although he evidently believed in his constancy, and now that strong attachment must give way to an 'ideal of conduct'. Marlow suggests that this is directly due to his 'egoism' his view of himself as one who must be true to the dream / fantasy world he has created, and chosen to live. Is this what Stein means when he says a man must: 'follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so - ewig - usque ad finem...' (p.215)? For Jim, who cannot see that it is only a dream, this comes naturally, he has no doubt as to what he must do. But then, for such a man, the dream is enough. Perhaps it is enough even for Stein: he apprehends the problem with difficulty; he has to use three languages, and he does advocate following the dream even if he doubts its validity. Conrad explores what it is based upon through Marlow. It is Marlow who suggests that

Jim's final act may be based on egoism, and therefore by implication, Jim's entire life: And here it is worth following up some of Conrad's speculations in letters.

Writing to Marguerita Poradowska in 1892, he explores one aspect of altruism:

> Unfortunately ... in my opinion abnegation carried to an extreme ... is not only profoundly immoral but dangerous, in that it sharpens the appetite for evil and the malevolent, and develops (perhaps unconsciously) that latent human tendency towards hypocrisy in the ... let us say, benevolent.[1]

Although tempered with polite provisos such as 'in my opinion' and 'carried to the extreme' this is in fact a very brusque and incisive account of what Huxley describes as 'sympathy ... contrary to one's sense of right'. Conrad goes further and sees sympathy that produces abnegation as, paradoxically, self-inflating. I am sympathetic therefore I am good, and I want it known by everyone that I am good. Or, as the poet Henri Chopin said, 'Tout le monde sait que Chopin ne veut pas être celèbre'.[2] The crisis here is comic, it lies between 'the whole world' and the modesty he purports to experience. The latent egoism of charity, the self-gratulatory feeling after one has made a donation is not only hypocritical, but it encourages begging. Put more simply, although charity and abnegation are praise-worthy, yet they can be used to excuse the inexcusable - or in Darwinist terms the altruist will always suffer and be mis-treated by those he helps. Professionally, Jim is inexcusable. Yet everyone wants to pardon him.

Again, in a letter to Cunninghame-Graham of 8.2.89 (L. and L. II,269)- written after the completion of Heart of Darkness

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1. Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Poradowska, 1890-1920, edited by John A. Gee and Paul J. Sturm (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1940) p.42. Hereafter cited as Sturm and Gee.

2. Dr N. Zurbrügg. Reported conversation. 10.1.79.

and before the completion of Lord Jim, the phraseology is more forthright. Possibly this is a reflection upon the fiery nature of his correspondent, with whom he is disagreeing. His use of French tends to confirm this, since Conrad admired the emphatic 'crystalline' qualities of French:

> Abnegation - self-sacrifice. means nothing ... L'homme est un animal méchant. Sa méchancété doit être organisée. Le crime est une condition nécessaire de l'existence organisée. La société est essentiellement criminelle, ou elle n'existerait pas. C'est l'égoisme qui sauve tout ...

This was a view that Conrad was to perfect in The Secret Agent. What is meant at this point is that Conrad sees society as founded upon egoism, and he takes us back in evolutionary time to show us this. Jim lacks 'sympathy' when on the Patna, for he swings the lantern in the face of the pilgrim begging for water:

> 'The beggar clung to me like a drowning man,' he said, impressively. "Water, water!" What water did he mean? ... [He strikes him] I had half throttled him before I made out what he wanted. He wanted some water - water to drink.' (p.90).

Jim's panic is such that he can only think of the water in the fore-peak and of men drowning, and not of drinking water. This preoccupation with his own discoveries, his egoism, is here extended into a verbal slip 'like a drowning man' that hints just what his behaviour might have been like had the Patna sunk directly. In Patusan his egoism is what lets him shape reality, with himself in the title rôle of his own success story, and it is that which destroys him. We, personally, cannot believe that this illusion of his is enough. Jim is a good god-figure to the Malays and we are never sure if he sees, before death, the nature of the illusion he lives out, for he is: 'inscrutible at heart'. As if the verbal echoes were not enough in 'inscrutible' and 'heart', we recall Kurtz, who was a self-made

evil god. His cry before death, so lengthily argued over by all Conrad critics: 'the horror, the horror' is greeted by Marlow as a 'moral victory'. Whether or not it is a victory no one can ever truly know. What is important is Marlow's insistence upon wishing to see it as such. Marlow needs this strange death-bed confession to feed his own egoism. There is every possibility that Kurtz's cry is not a 'moral victory', but Marlow evidently needs to believe in this in the same way that the Intended needs to believe in Kurtz's devotion. Just as one needs a deathbed confession, and the other needs a marriage to grief, so the two coalesce to give us Jim's 'pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct' (p.416). There can be little doubt that Jim earnestly desires to see his death as a 'moral victory' over his past, and it is a deathbed confession and a 'wedding'. Egoism stands behind each of these characters, since each has reached the point where it becomes essential to shape the outside world to fit their own image of what it ought to be, and what they need to act upon, or risk living without idealism. Marlow's interpretation of Kurtz's words is the act of a man who needs to believe in conscience, and is determined to see it, even when it is possibly not there. This is his 'lie' - and he does not perceive it anymore than Jim or the Intended perceive theirs.

Egoism is vital. Jewel's egoism, as we have seen, helps her create order out of chaos, even if Marlow finds it unnerving to watch the process. Conrad, by letting us see this, seems to hint that this egoism that makes us live our dreams is essentially natural and inevitable, and terrifyingly double-edged.

Understanding this fact, however, is depicted as dangerous

by Conrad. Jim allows Gentleman Brown a chance to escape because his egoism is wounded, and his sympathy is aroused.

> And there ran through the rough talk a vein of suble reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience: a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts. (p.387).

To make matters worse for Jim, Brown is one of those to whom sympathy is due in Darwinist terms, for it is extended most readily 'towards the members of the same community'. (Descent II, 162). They are both white, and they have both experience of being in a circumstance in which they require a second chance. Furthermore, if egoism is in question, we can usefully quote Darwin again, for he postulates that:

> each man would soon learn that if he aided his fellow man, he would commonly receive aid in return. From this low motive ... (Descent I, 201)

The 'low motive' of egoism is at the basis of altruism, Darwin hints, but has not the courage to assert. Jim is predisposed to pardon the abominable Brown because he himself desires pardon. Conrad loads the dice further by suggesting the similarity of circumstances reflected in their names. 'Lord Jim' is properly no title at all, combining aristocracy and extreme casualness. Brown himself is rumoured to be descended from an aristocrat, and as it happens is a pirate, a vestige of a former era, even in Malaya. His name combines respectability and extreme ordinariness. Any telephone directory will indicate as much. 'Brown', also has overtones of 'brown humanity', and therefore of less advanced evolutionary development that meshes with Brown's buccaneer status. Both men, after all, came down the river to replenish something.

If this is 'sympathy', in the Huxleian sense, and 'benevolence' in the Conrad letter of 1892 sense, then it is

profoundly dangerous. But the scene moves outwards from the story to encompass Marlow and the river. Marlow helps Jim, and Brierly wishes to help him, both wishing to excuse his failings. To do so, however, they are both prepared to make concessions to their own established moral senses, and thus threaten to subvert their own integrity. The realization of this goes so far in Brierly's case that he kills himself. The French Lieutenant, on the other hand, cannot understand why Marlow wants to pursue the point. Even Marlow himself is uneasy as to the effect Jim is having upon him, he is alternately sarcastic and patient, and apt to snap back at Jim. "'There was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and wrong of this affair.' 'How much more did you want?' I asked." (p.130). It is not how close the miss is, but the fact that it is a miss and not a hit. Measuring its error is no help. Ironically, 'the sheet of paper' turns out to be Jim's certificate which is cancelled, and upon which his duty was written.

Sympathy with Jim is felt by many in this novel who do not rightly understand why. What it means to Marlow is that he has to excuse the inexcusable, he has to compromise his own morals and integrity. We, as readers, must do the same or fail to feel interest in Jim - in which case we stop reading. Once we have accepted Jim, once we have realised that egoism is the basis of altruism and that duty is the popular and convenient formulation of this, we can never act spontaneously again without that knowledge that we have been simply conditioned to act that way. In that sense none of us are 'good enough' except the unthinking, like Singleton. We must all pardon the unpardonable, it seems, and that is precisely what Marlow does

for Kurtz; he can see what Kurtz has done, but he begins to understand how it came about, and is thrust into complicity, eventually agreeing to lie for Kurtz, to cover up his crimes. He has to lie because he cannot agree to shatter the moral world of the Intended. Her world is based on love for Kurtz that shows itself in 'deepest mourning'a year later. Love is prima facie a generous emotion. The wait for him is self-abnegation, but is there not a hint of dramatic self-indulgence in the scene, in the egoism of having a hopeless cause to believe in?[1] Like the interview with Jewel, Marlow feels the world unsteady about him. The Intended, in a peculiar parallel of the scene demands Kurtz's last words:

> I want - want - something - something - to - to live with. (p.161). ... It seemed to me the house would collapse before I made my escape... (p.162). I could not tell her. (p.162).

Egoism to Conrad is, in itself, necessary and a respectable illusion producing the forms of duty and altruism. For Marlow the sense of a crumbling universe repeats itself when he becomes aware of how egoism works to produce such results, and how people like the Intended still live by a code he can fathom completely. To disillusion her would be to subject her (and Jewel) to an experience as chaotic as his momentary vision of the world. I say chaotic because it presupposes every animal working for himself in the anarchist sense.

Both Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim demand the reader's participation in the same way; each questions the deepest

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1. Eternal, unrequited love is, of course, a very pleasing evasion. Whilst it can bring no return it does have the compensating virtue that it can never be rejected. It is, then, the final safe self-indulgence of an originally altruistic emotion. It is as much an evasion as the 'hypocrisy' Conrad mentioned to Marguerite Poradowska.

impulses of action; and each demands of Marlow the un-nerving sacrifice of a rigid idea of conduct. One might say Kurtz is total self-indulgent egoism, and Jim is the indulgence of heroic/sacrificial egoism. They move in opposite directions.

But Conrad does not stop here and this marks a major (and unrecognised) contribution to the argument of the basis and nature of altruism. In Darwinist terms it is insoluble. Altruists are naturally the first of any community to be eliminated and so cannot perpetuate themselves. But we are given one example to consider: Little Bob Stanton dies in an example of courage and altruism that defies logic. The lady's maid he dies for does not want to be saved. The deed has the added poignancy of not appearing heroic. 'It was for all the world sir, like a naughty youngster fighting with his mother' (p.150). In this struggle the maid - 'as strong as a horse' we note - drowns Stanton who had declared earlier that shore life had undermined his standards of conduct: 'my immortal soul was shrivelled down to the size of a parched pea'. (p.151). There is still enough room for altruism, and the determination to face a squalid death. The contribution Conrad makes which over-rides Darwinism, is to suggest that an example like Stanton's is so memorable, and so much to be admired, that even if he leaves no descendants to inherit his abilities, the example of the ideal of conduct is immortal in the memories of men, urging them to a standard of excellence that is biologically, on the strict basis of Natural Selection, unnatural. This point was not explored until comparatively recently by geneticists. We have, for instance, Richard Dawkins' Selfish Gene:

> For example, the habit of celibacy is presumably not inherited genetically. A gene for celibacy is doomed

> to failure in the gene pool, except under very special circumstances such as we find in the social insects. But still, a meme (continuing idea handed to generations in the form of learning) for celibacy can be successful in a meme pool. (p.213).

It is not surprising that monks often feel the desire to sin, because they are descended from parents with, demonstrably, natural sexual urges. In that sense they, like Jim and all of us, can never be 'good enough'. This is the way ideals and illusions are created. The negative correlative to this event is the Russian 'harlequin' figure in Heart of Darkness, who claims Kurtz 'has enlarged my mind' (p.126) and 'he made me see things - things'. (p.127). We never discover what. For the Russian, Kurtz is a hero, the hint being he has shown the extent to which amorality can go. To the crew members who see Bob Stanton go down he is a hero, one who is admirable but almost beyond their understanding.

In a sense, Marlow is prepared to admit that it doesn't matter if you believe in duty or not, you still end up having to live by it, as Jim did.

> He felt confusedly but powerfully, the demand of some such truth or some such illusion - I don't care how you call it, there is so little difference, and the difference means so little. (p.222).

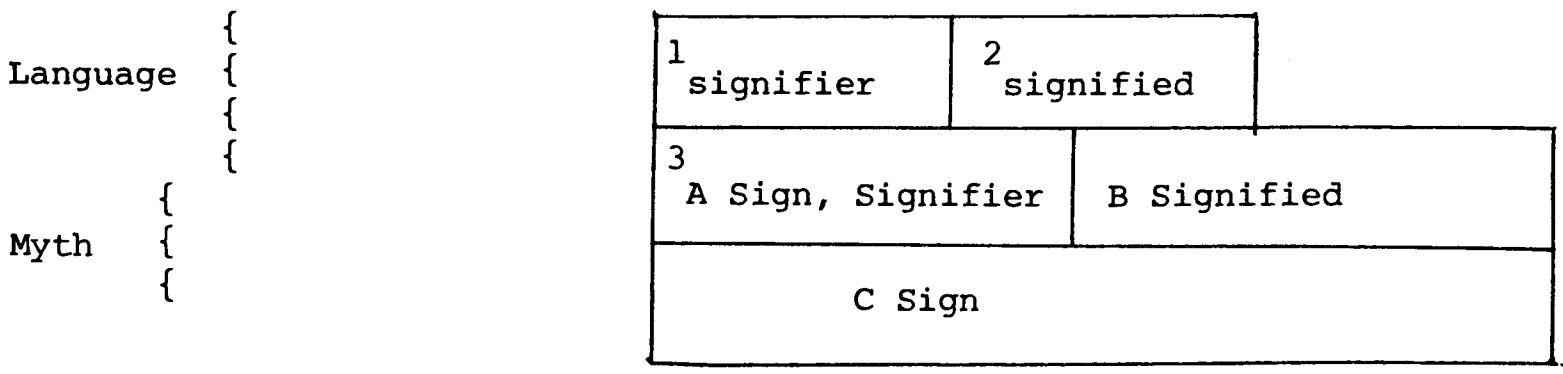
Conrad has explored 'sympathy' and its usefulness as a description of the roots of altruism. He rejected it in favour of egoism, as I have shown. However, he postulates a theory of the nature of immortal idealism as well, and leaves us at the end of Lord Jim with a choice. We can doubt Jim's action, and see him convinced by illusion, or we can see him as truly heroic responding to an ideal that is, in the nature of most acts of heroism, contra-logical. We admire it, in short, for its pointlessness, or we do not admire it at all. And if we

admire it and accept its pointlessness, then we must be moved in the same way as Bob Stanton's crew were by his action. And the effect upon us is roughly the same, in its end product of encouraging us to modulate our conduct accordingly.

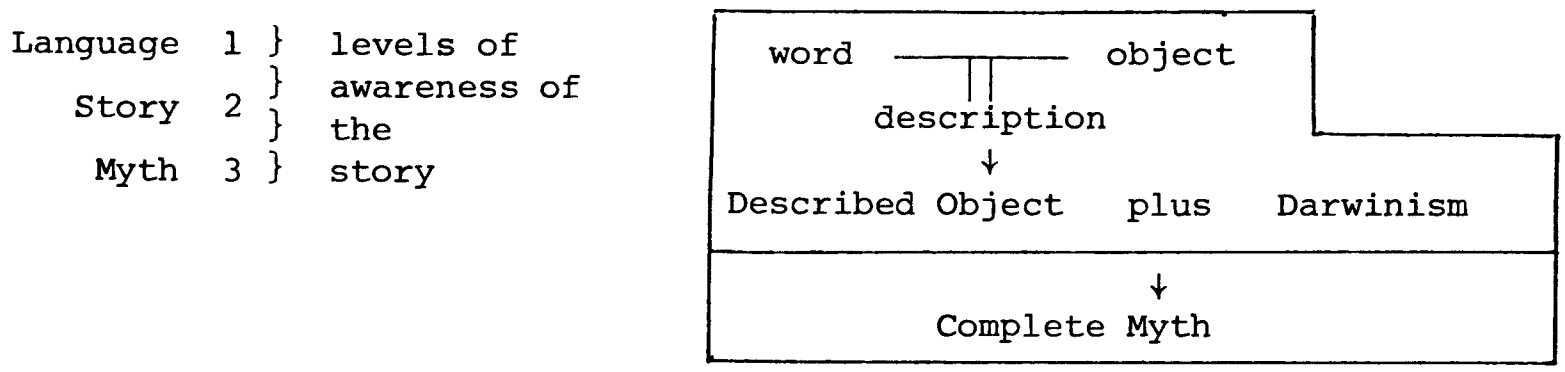
Both Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness explore the bases of heroism and altruism, and as I have shown, they move from the inadequate Huxleian postulate of 'sympathy' through Darwin's observations of the self-interest of animal types, and then base themselves on facts known by Conrad. Norman Sherry's excellent works of scholarship show just how great was Conrad's debt to factual circumstances. It is not my job here to analyse the precise similarities between Podmore Williams and Jim, or between The Congo Diaries and Heart of Darkness, for Norman Sherry has already done this better than ever I could. My point is rather different. What I have endeavoured to show is that the events of Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness are 'factual' in objective, literary biographical terms and 'factual' in the sense that we have to accept that Marlow is not merely inventing what he says. He sees it, however, a certain way, and it is a way he does not entirely comprehend in all its complexity. But the author, evidently, has researched his material biologically as well as historically, and a deeper significance begins to show through.

In writing a tale which in so many particulars of detail and wordplay, as well as in overall design, fits into an external theory of a highly developed sort, Conrad's work not only refers to life, but builds a mythology of it. It is perhaps easiest apprehended by reference to Roland Barthes' breakdown of the mythic process, which he builds into the

following diagram.[1]



Our example is best interpreted according to this pattern in the following way:



To explain: the Captain of the Patna is referred to as a 'hound' (word) which indicates him, the Captain (object). These two attributes present him as a Described Object, as details selected and memorised by Marlow begin to obtrude on our notice, which then links to the theme, and provides us with a frame of mythic reference into which the value of the tale must fit. Thus, a small area of experience becomes of wide-reaching importance, without ceasing to be individual and particular, and in this lies the magnetism of the tale.

We have already seen Jewel do this when she takes an image - her mother's death - and adds to it her natural romanticism to produce grandeur. That this process happens on the level of personal self-realisation in the characters, we have already

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1. Roland Barthes, Mythologies. Trans. Annette Lavers, (1973; rpt. St. Albans: Paladin, 1976) p.115.

noticed. It also happens at a level that is slightly higher, level 2, when we realise Marlow has seen how the diagram works. Finally, at level 3, when we see how the contemporary scientific speculation bears upon this, we become as omniscient as the author, as we begin to catch glimpses of what it is that makes men tell stories, and what it is that elevates those stories to mythic stature. As Marlow speaks he muses, and the content of what he says seems to resonate through the whole work:

> Indeed, this affair, I may notice in passing, had an extraordinary power of defying the shortness of memories and the length of time: it seemed to live, with a sort of uncanny vitality, in the minds of men, on the tips of their tongues. I've had the questionable pleasure of meeting it often, years afterwards, thousands of miles away, emerging from the remotest possible talk, coming to the surface of the most distant allusions. Has it not turned up tonight between us? (p.137).

I have insisted upon this point of myth because it shows a development from the preoccupations of the preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'. Conrad's artistic method here is so entirely different that comparison is merely misleading. By the time Conrad has written Lord Jim, one realizes that his later pronouncements upon art refer to Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness and his subsequent works but not with the same accuracy to The Nigger or the early novels. In the statements below, Conrad is still using terms such as 'truth' which occurred so puzzlingly in the 1897 preface, but if one accepts the 'truth' to be dependent upon a consideration of anthropological and evolutionary literature, and if one equates 'symbolic' with my use of mythic, these extracts tell their own tale.

> Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents,

> and the reading of print and handwriting - on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder of human experience. (NLL, p.17).
>
> A work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character. This statement may surprise you, who may imagine that I am alluding to the Symbolist School of poets or prose writers against which I have nothing to say. I am concerned here with something much larger. But no doubt you have meditated on this and kindred questions yourself. (L. and L. II, 204-5.)

Conrad, evasive as ever, does not say what 'truth' is, nor what the 'something much larger' is, but I would argue that part of it at least has to do with a description of the human condition in a precisely observed and scientifically considered manner. This reluctance of Conrad's to give hints as to his method of seeing is not mere reticence. Either a novelist is capable of producing 'human experience' or not, and if he is it must necessarily be accurate in order to be convincing. If it is accurate the fact that it is based on sociological and biological speculation is only a means to that end of accuracy and authenticity. Thus the insights it conveys through its art will be true in science and in art. It is this that lies behind Conrad's work.

SECTION III

Leaving aside for a moment considerations of the artistic method, it is worth considering a slightly different area in the light of Conrad's Darwinist bias, and that is his re-appraisal of the familiar genre of the novel of inheritance.

The hardiness of the type is almost legendary, and is certainly illustrated well by Phyllis Bentley's novel of 1932 called just Inheritance. Published by Gollancz in London, the dust cover proudly announces: 'we regard this as one of the finest novels we have published'. In order to understand this continued appeal, and how it bears upon Conrad, it is necessary to look briefly at far earlier works.

Inheritance was one of the central concerns of the novel from its earliest stages. Tom Jones, for example, revolves around the fact that the otherwise almost lawless Jones will inherit Mr Alworthy's[1] wealth. But whereas wealth makes Tom Jones into a respectable figure, Jane Austen's concern seems to be that those who have inherited wealth or are about to marry into such wealth should be intellectually worthy of it. Catherine Morland has a great deal to learn before she comes to terms with Northanger Abbey, and Emma, too, has to learn what she, and how she, must act. At this stage in the genre there is already a division between inheritance as merely the disposal of wealth and the donation of such wealth to those who will most be able to appreciate it.

Of course, inheritance is often used as a method of bringing tension to the plot, and resolving difficulties, by suddenly raising the financial and class status of a favoured figure. Bleak House revolves entirely around the machinations of monetary inheritance, Little Dorrit finds it a useful expedient, and Great Expectations takes the structure of the type in order to startle the reader by its reversal, when Magwitch appears. There, money had seemed to offer a rise in class status, security, esteem and sexual reward, in Estella. But

because Magwitch remains solidly in the ambivalent social class of enormously wealthy peasant, esteem and romance cannot be finally guaranteed, and neither can security, as Magwitch's wealth is impounded by the authorities. The point that needs to be made here is that there is an ever-widening distinction being made between inheritance as wealth and inheritance as personality. Pip refuses Magwitch's wealth because he does not wish to take on his personality as Magwitch's creation. This consideration is apparent in The Spoils of Poynton, for example, where Fleda becomes the spiritual heiress to Poynton, but feels she must refuse, and again in Howards End, where Margaret Schlegel actually does inherit Howards End from Mrs Wilcox, on the strength of her ability to understand the spiritual values of the house, and incidentally marries Mr Wilcox.

Another striking example of the type which has an added twist to it, thus allowing us a clearer view of what is at stake, is Felix Holt. There, the complex lives of misplaced infants are unravelled, but Esther finally refuses her inheritance. However, we have here the start of a problem, and that is the denoument between Harold Transome and Lawyer Jermyn that allows Harold to see them both in a mirror, and recognise his true father. Physical resemblance, it seems, is an adequate ground for proof of paternity, and we have already seen the two men mirror themselves elsewhere in the plot, but the news comes as a shock to all bystanders. George Eliot does represent one of the most advanced outposts of thought on inheritance (she and Lewes had read Darwin's The Origin of Species without particular surpise, the ideas being fairly widespread in their circle at the time). Yet she still allows an obvious

gaffe such as this to creep in. Her thinking on this matter, I suspect, does not rise much above the conventional middle-class expectations of familial resemblance. Despite what science thought, she had to write for such people as the Gleggs and Dodsons, and so she modified her approach accordingly.

In The Mill on the Floss, however, there is a new departure, since it is quite obvious that Maggie is betrayed as much as anything by her impulsive Tulliver blood - and that she is a Tulliver and not a Dodson is a fact her mother and aunts tut tut about for large portions of the novel. She is, of course, betrayed by her 'natural' response to nature, in particular the sound of water lapping, and its extension into the realms of music and the erotic 'fine bass voice' of Stephen Guest. She is led into temptation, and succumbs entirely on the strength of what she is, genetically, and how she is predisposed to respond. Here is a markedly different approach to the idea of personality inheritance.

Conrad, as already suggested, is deeply interested in the idea of inheritance, and I will argue that he takes the idea of the plot of inheritance to its logical conclusion. Inheritance, for Conrad, works in a number of ways. One can physically inherit various characteristics, abilities, and so on. One can inherit or bequeath property. Finally, in a more subtle fashion, Conrad's figures tend to want to bequeath to those whom they regard as being like themselves. The early 'Malay' novels are interested more in the exchange of property connected with the control of the river than with the problems of Darwinian inheritance. An exception, however, and one on whom a plot turns, is Nina Almayer. A half-caste herself, she

refuses Almayer's wishes for her to become a fine lady, and prefers the attentions of the fully Malay Dain Maroola, eventually running away with him. This is not merely romanticism on Conrad's behalf, since Nina would know as well as the Dain the difficulties of a Malay woman's life, as well as the social stigmatism of her parentage in white circles. It represents not only a genuine attachment but also a biological fact, that reveals once again a considerable reading of Darwin's the Descent of Man. Darwin argued that 'secondary sexual characters' in post-pubescent animals are 'transmitted through both sexes, though developed in one alone'. (I, 351). Darwin clearly defines his ground by insisting that 'transmission' of characteristics is distinct from the 'development' of them in one or other sex (I,352), and he makes this clearer still:

> The characters of the parents often, or even generally, tend to become developed in the offspring of the same sex...(I ,370).

Darwin's argument is based on the fact that males are generally ferocious, brightly coloured, and so on, whilst females are more protective, and duller, although a female is quite able to produce ferocious male offspring. These distinctive sexual differences do not become manifest, often, until maturity. This problem of uneven distribution of mature characteristics was a major and much discussed difficulty, for if inheritance was seen as a blending of parental qualities, then by rights a dull female and bright male would produce only mediocrely coloured offspring. And this is demonstrably not the case. This is precisely what happens to Nina Almayer. Her schooling is not enough to prevent this biological law from re-asserting itself, and she relates more closely to her mother than Almayer.

> Differences, acquired under domestication, are regularly transmitted to the same sex'. (I, 355).

Darwin is referring to mammals generally. When we reflect that Mrs Almayer has never been truly (or at all, it seems) 'domesticated' we begin to appreciate not only Conrad's fascination with the problem of reversion in heredity, but also the possibility that he had read extremely carefully on the subject.

This is reinforced by Darwin's 'principle of inheritance at corresponding ages' (Descent, I, 202 and 329), which again was formulated with reference to birds and mammals, and stated that:

> Variations occurring late in life tend to be transmitted exclusively to the same sex. (I, 215).

Again, with reference to such characteristics as greying of the hair, Darwin states:

> The old have their colours changed in the course of time, whilst the young have remained but little altered, and this has been affected by the principle of inheritance at corresponding ages. (I, 202).

It is this principle that can allow us to see the magnificent Aïssa at the end of An Outcast of the Islands, reduced to a 'doubled-up crone' (p.301) because, as Almayer says 'they age quickly here' (p.301). This rapid-aging is a racial characteristic, but because of Almayer's ignorance of the laws of inheritance we have just noticed, he is unable to realise that his Nina will be a victim to precisely the same process. Almayer can see, and state, the famous platitudes of colonialists, but lacks the insight to see how this can refer to him and his. The authorial irony works against him.

In addition, Almayer's desire to elevate his daughter by educating her is one that betrays his lack of understanding on a biological as well as a social plane, for he seems to think

that knowledge is equal to civilization, which will continue in its influence on generations of Almayer descendants. In this he falls victim to the Lamarckian idea of acquired characteristics becoming hereditary - a very out-dated idea in 1895. G.J. Romanes comments on Darwin's hankering after this idea, long discredited by Weismann:

> We have now considered the line of evidence on which Darwin chiefly relied on proof of the transmissibality of acquired characters and it must be allowed that this line of evidence is practically worthless.[1]

As early as 1875 Galton's 'Theory of Hereditary' article in The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, stated: 'acquired modifications are barely, if at all, inherited, in the correct sense of the word'. (p.346) At the time Romanes is writing, however, he is intent on stating a complete résumé of the debate thus far, and he is obviously making sure he puts the record right once and for all, citing Darwin's own distinction that variations in conditions can bring about variations in animals, these in turn appear to be acquired and then inherited by offspring: 'structures which are rudimentary in the parent species, sometimes become partially re-developed in our domestic productions'.[2] The point is that the adaptation of a race is often not a simple task, and certainly not as straightforward as a Lamarckian view of the improvement of breeds of animals

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1. G.J. Romanes, Darwin and After Darwin, 2 vols. (London: Longmans and Company, 1893-95), II, 100.

2. Darwin, The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1868). Hereafter cited as Variations. Quoted by Romanes, Darwin and After Darwin, II, 96.

would suggest.[1] Almayer has no idea how difficult the task he is attempting is, and neither, incidentally, have huge quantities of colonists and missionaries like him. He wishes to endow his daughter, on his death, with the wealth he will have accumulated, and the standards he has left behind him in Europe. But the inheritance is refused, not for reasons of conscience (as in Felix Holt, for example) but for closely observed scientific reasons of the most up to date kind; even if Romanes was writing self-evidently in a fashion the middle-class interested amateur, as opposed to expert, could assimilate. Romanes, who was enormously popular and well-respected, gave his name to the series of lectures held annually at Oxford (we will remember that in 1893 T.H. Huxley, that even more well-known populariser of the ideas of evolution, gave as his Romanes lecture the paper later reprinted as 'Evolution and Ethics'). Although not esoteric and pettily pedantic, these were not light-weight lectures. Conrad was referring to a corpus of ideas that thinking men throughout England felt themselves to be involved with. But Conrad, as this early glimpse shows, was well read in the details of such matters, even at this early stage in his novel-writing career.

Apart from this, specifically striking, example, Conrad

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1. Romanes makes a useful comment on this: 'Lamarck believed that the adaptation of the forms to the habits could be explained by this simple hypothesis that the habits created the forms, through the effects of use and disuse, coupled with heredity.' (Darwin and After Darwin, I, 255.)
This is easily disproved, for mutilations are not hereditary, which are surely 'adaptations' in exactly the same way as an extra-strong leg may be.

does confine himself to the usual platitudes about racial mixtures. There is the usual embarrassment about what to do with half-caste offspring who are not socially acceptable anywhere. This, in 1895 was doubly embarrassing, since Darwin's work on the origin of the classification 'species' had shown that there really could be no cut and dried rules as to what was a species, and what was a variety. Mutual infertility was thought to be the decisive test, and Romanes considers this to be the only true distinction to be made, although he hints that this is not a popular belief:

> I believe that such is the only natural - and therefore clearly firm - basis on which specific distinctions can be reared. (Darwin and After Darwin, II, 236.)

This explanation would not suit the imperialists of the world. The problem, as I have hinted in the section on Lord Jim, is that it was extremely convenient for colonists not to have to regard other races as being of the same species, and thus to allow them only certain inferior status and employment. Unfortunately whites and these same other races inter-bred quite happily, producing offspring that no-one seemed at ease with, and proving that species differences did not come into play at all.[1] Perhaps the most obvious example of this is Willems, who is favoured by Hudig as long as he visits the Da Souza family; and patronised when he marries into it. Hudig is relieved of the care of a socially embarrassing half-caste daughter. Lingard, at the same time, does the same thing for Almayer, although with less furtiveness as to his reasons, by

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1. The idea of mutual infertility was useful to those colonists who wished to avoid inter-racial marriages, and who ostracized such 'unnatural' unions.

marrying him to an orphan Malay, and Almayer shows only grudging gratitude. But there are differences. Hudig wants, quite plainly, to be rid of a financial encumbrance the most convenient way possible and he offers advancement, even possible inheritance of his firm to the person who will take care of his unacknowledged heiress. Lingard, however, is genuinely interested in taking care of someone the only way he knows how. Both of them offer the promise of an inheritance to come to the bride, eventually. Willems, having cheated one benefactor, goes on to cheat another, and once again to become enamoured of a woman not of his race. The hint is clear. Conrad is suggesting that certain men are prone to repeating the same behaviour patterns, and making the same errors of judgement, time after time. Each man has a 'native' woman to deal with, and each engineers some sort of commercial bargain in order to fit them in to a secure place in such society as there is. Lingard marries off his orphan, just as Almayer sends Nina to Mrs Vinck's school, getting rid of his responsibilities to someone else who can be paid off. Hudig bribes Willems, although Willems doesn't know it, to take on the Da Souzas, whilst Willems himself is quite happy to feel his own importance in having them dependent on him. In his bid to establish his financial independence, he cheats Hudig, just as he cheats Lingard in order to gain Aïssa, whilst unaware of the political machinations that have been taking place in order to let him win her. In a very real sense Willems is the last victim of a chain that represents the same attitude to the Malay women in a whole colony, and the same mistakes duplicated in each instance. Even after he is dead the problem continues, since his widow

and child are kept, by Lingard. 'Oh! Lingard, of course, kept her and her ugly brat in Macassar' Almayer tells us with disapproval, even though he is keeping Aïssa, himself. This, evidently, is the way white men work in their relations to coloured women. Lingard's 'sentimental' (p.300) purchase of a gravestone for Willems 'Delivered by the mercy of God from his Enemy' is interpreted by Almayer as ironic: 'What enemy - unless Captain Lingard himself? And then it has no sense.' (p.300). Yet not even he can really think of it as ironic. It represents another belated attempt to buy some peace of mind on the matter, yet another belated attempt to settle up the damages.

Conrad, in showing how white men disport themselves, is making two points of major interest. One is that that is the way white men <u>are</u>. They have evolved in this way, and tend to duplicate their behaviour. Our inheritance is that we tend to adopt people for various reasons, and then, second, make them our monetary heirs when they may indeed be totally unsuitable. This, in effect, totally subverts the action of inheritance in nature, which ensures survival of similar types. Lingard, Hudig and Almayer ensure the survival of those who will do them most harm, who are least 'like' them. The story ends in the fashion of most nineteenth century novels, giving us a last look at all the characters, several years on, in the same way that, for example, <u>Middlemarch</u> does; a novel that also hinges on a point of inheritance. Old Featherstone's will, and Casaubon's various clauses in his will represent not just the inheritance novel expedient, but also in this case, a desire to control the future from the grave, and manipulate by money. George Eliot's triumphant point is that it doesn't succeed in

either case. We can see how far Conrad has moved from and extended this idea. When, for example, Nina Almayer runs away from her father, we have the pathetic scene of Almayer burying each of her footprints with a heap of sand:

> To Ali's great dismay he fell on his hands and knees, and, creeping along the sand, erased carefully with his hands all trace of Nina's footsteps. He piled up small heaps of sand, leaving behind him a line of miniature graves right down to the water. ...let her go. He never had a daughter. We would forget. He was forgetting already. (p.258).

Nina's refusal of the bribe of the will represents not an elevation to a 'higher' sphere of responsibility, to the dictates of one's conscience and emotions, but a return to what she, by the Darwinian laws of inheritance, has to be. In conventional terms, a step <u>down</u> in civilised values as understood by colonists. Conrad uses the same novelistic structure, but adapts it to his own ends. The action of burying the footsteps is a reversal of the usual 'burial' one would expect - Almayer disinherits his daughter from the sham legacy of whiteness and evaporated wealth, but at the same time asserts her complete alienation from him. She no longer exists; she belongs to a different race altogether, and as such is not <u>his</u> daughter at all.

This angle of Conrad's continues in his short story 'The Idiots'. The plot revolves around the inheritance of a farm and the young farmer's desire to produce sons to help him run it. But when Susan produces twin boys there is immediate doubt in the grandfather's mind. 'They will quarrel over the land.' (p.61). Conrad uses the fact of idiocy as the hinge of the entire plot, and although he is much more interested in the description of the crime of passion and its resultant hysteria (which he clearly used again in his treatment of Winnie Verloc) it is another re-assurance of his interest in scientific

matters connected with inheritance, albeit here at a fairly facile level.

Heritage and inheritance, the lure of different codes of conduct, arise again in The Rescue, but the ideas are rather confused, and the most valuable place to trace them is to Lord Jim. I have already noted that Heart of Darkness is concerned with, amongst other things, the biological chain of development that left men like Kurtz - representatives of 'all Europe' as critics are so fond of pointing out - in control of the blind will to power and egoism that must surely have been the prime motivation behind our ancestors. Social Darwinism was merely an excuse to indulge a barbarous desire to oppress which was already obviously present in man everywhere. By the time we reach Lord Jim, we are in a more complex realm still. We have speculated on Jim's actions. What is important about Jim is that he cuts himself off from home, and yet never wishes to abandon its standards; he can't shake off his heritage. Marlow gets him a place with his friend, an aged rice mill owner. Jim stands a very good chance of inheriting the old gentleman's wealth, we are led to believe. Marlow, at least, seems to think there is a good chance:

> And what if something unexpected and wonderful were to come of it? That evening, reposing in a deck-chair, under the shade of my own poop-awning (it was in Hong Kong harbour), I laid on Jim's behalf the first stone of a castle in Spain. (p.188).

Even Jim thinks of him as being 'more like a father' (p.190-191) and says 'I was called Mr James there as if I had been the son'. (p.190).

Clearly Jim was likely to become Denver's heir. He felt, however, that the second Engineer's arrival was too compromising: 'I would have had to tell him ... I preferred to go'. (p.191).

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This is nothing less than a refusal to accept an inheritance and with it a bogus identity, for it would be necessary to deceive his benefactor into thinking he was better than he seemed. The conflict lies in the possibility of an inheritance, which would be acquired wealth, whereas what Jim now needs is to make himself anew. Significantly he sees this spiritual process in terms of making money. His happy association with Egström and Blake seemed to depend upon his ability to assert himself as a water-clerk, and be one of the best in the trade. Making money becomes synonymous with coining respect, for him.

Although it seems that for him inherited wealth is too easy an answer, ironically he comes to accept precisely that. Stein offers him Patusan, which he himself had inherited from an old Scot, M'Neil.

> He was a heavy man with a patriarchial white beard, and of imposing stature ... He dragged his leg, thumping with his stick, and grasped Stein's arm, leading him right up to the [Queen's] couch. 'Look queen, and you rajahs, this is my son,' he proclaimed in a stentorian voice. 'I have traded with your father, and when I die, he shall trade with you and your sons'.
>
> By means of this simple formality Stein inherited the Scotsman's privileged position and his stock-in-trade ... (p.205-206).

Admittedly he has to subdue Patusan first, but Stein gives him a ring, and he inherits friends with this talisman. Jim can accept this inheritance because he does not recognise it as a conventional will-type bequeathing. As it turns out, Stein eventually presents him with all the stock and a wife, for Jewel is another item Stein has inherited from somewhere un-specified. The rest of the plot turns upon the problem of inheritance. Cornelius thinks he has been cheated by Jim's arrival, for he felt he had some unique claim upon Stein's wealth, and plots against him to that end. When Jim marries

Jewel, Cornelius feels he has been cheated of his last valuable asset, his step-daughter and heir. Ironically it is he who expects to make money out of her.

Only an understanding of the inheritance principle can bring us to realise just what happens at the climax of the work. Doramin questions Marlow obliquely:

> The impassive old Doramin cherished the hope of yet seeing his son the ruler of Patusan. During one of our interviews he deliberately allowed me to get a glimpse of his secret ambition ... I tried to put the subject aside. It was difficult, for there could be no question that Jim had the power; in his new sphere there did not seem to be anything that was not his to hold or give. (p.273-274).

The hint is that Jim can, if he wishes, block Dain Waris' way to the kingship. When Doramin asks his next artful question, the implicit thought becomes rather clearer.

> I was struck by the turn he gave to the argument. The land remains where God had put it; but white men - he said - they come to us and in a little while they go. They go away. (...) They go to their own land, to their people, and so this white man, too, would ... I don't know what induced me to commit myself at this point by a vigorous 'No, no'. The whole extent of this <u>indiscretion</u> became apparent when Doramin, turning full upon me his face ... said this was good news indeed, reflectively; and then wanted to know why ... He was not very pleased, I fear, and evidently I had given him food for thought. (p.274-275, my emphasis).

The fear that Doramin has, is that Jim is likely to prevent Dain Waris from gaining the throne, and that this is a long term strategy.

This fear at the centre of the novel is one that tends to be obscured by the catch-phrase that Jim 'had taken it upon his own head' that if anyone died he was to answer for it. It is a little more complex than that, and the ring plays a part here. On seeing it, Doramin changes from a quiet, sorrowing figure, viewing his son's corpse:

> ..and suddenly let out one great fierce cry, deep from the chest, a roar of pain and fury, as mighty as the bellow of a wounded bull... (p.411).

The ring was Jim's special token of guaranteed good will from Doramin. Now he no longer has it, Doramin has no shadow of an excuse for not executing him. Worse still, he has given it away to Dain Waris, admittedly only as a formality, but it may hint several things to Doramin. First, he has parted with it because he no longer values Doramin's protection, thus indicating contempt and a desire to overthrow him; second it symbolically changes Jim's and Dain Waris's roles, making it seem as though Jim is the true heir, and Dain Waris the favoured outsider. Tamb'Itam immediately knows what Doramin will think.

> 'Doramin' [Jewel] cried despairingly, as Tamb'Itam passed her. Next time he went by he answered her thought rapidly. 'Yes, but we have all the powder in Patusan.' (p.407).

Jim, on the other hand, does not see the situation the same way, since he immediately orders Tamb'Itam to organize a pursuit of Brown. The elliptical nature of the interchange between Jewel and Tamb'Itam shows their perfect comprehension of the problem in hand. This is Jim's reaction.

> '..in a steady voice, but speaking fast, he began to give him orders to assemble a fleet of boats for immediate pursuit, go to this man, go to the other - send messengers; and as he talked he sat down on the bed, stopping to lace his boots hurriedly, and suddenly looked up. "Why do you stand here?" he asked, very red-faced. "Waste no time." Tamb' Itam did not move. "Forgive me, Tuan, but ... but," he began to stammer. "What?" cried his master aloud, looking terrible, leaning forward with his hands gripping the edge of the bed. "It is not safe for thy servant to go out amongst the people," said Tamb'Itam, after hesitating a moment.
>
> 'Then Jim understood ... I believe that in that very moment he had decided to defy the disaster in the only way it occurred to him such a disaster could be defied.' (p.408).

The ambivalence of the last sentence is surely not casual. Jim

understands he is no longer trusted and thus he can say, 'I have no life' (p.409). He has no spiritual life, and he must forfeit his physical existence. But he thinks only of himself, and his lapsed status. What Doramin sees, I argue, is his raised political status that is consequent upon the broken promise of safety for all, the promise that killed his heir.

In addition he calls Dain Waris 'Panglima' (p.287) when he refers to the events of the day, using the official, political title of 'heir'. It looks suspiciously to Doramin like a political murder designed to establish Jim as heir to the throne: the ring is the one balancing piece of evidence that turns Doramin from a sad and pathetic figure, outwardly calm and possibly considering whether or not to extract the penalty from Jim, with all the problems of how to run the state after the deed, into a man bent on revenge.

This reading has the advantage that it leaves the possibility of forgiveness of Jim by Doramin, until he sees the ring (which is mentioned on rolling against Jim's foot at the last moment, and is rather more obtrusive than can easily be explained away). If there is no possibility, then Jim's initial flash of egoism that allowed him to make the claim of taking the blame on his own head is what really kills him. Conrad seems to hedge his bets. At the same time Marlow never gives any overt recognition to the facts we have just gleaned from his conversation with Doramin. For although Jim's word is law - 'on my own head', so is Doramin's silver ring. Circumstances conspire against Jim, until finally he appears to be usurping. Bereft of his talisman of inherited aid, he is deprived of the ultimate inheritance as well.

At a different level, as I have already remarked in my

section on Lord Jim, Jim's superiority in Patusan stems directly from his heritage as a white man. He has a repeating gun, a revolver, which enables him to shoot his would-be murderer concealed in the store shed. In exactly the same way as worked for Stein, the technological advantage is part of his heritage as much as knowing how to attack hills successfully; when he no longer has the confidence of his inherited superiority, when the enemy is Gentleman Brown, and not Sherif Ali, then he starts to make mistakes.

Both Brown and Jim have some moral sense, but Jim has standards of fair play that show up Brown's rather callous duel challenges:

> He would as likely as not invite him [his victim] to fight a duel with shot-guns on the beach - which would have been fair enough as these things go, if the other man hadn't been by that time already half-dead with fright. (p.352).

The two are in fact closer than this, for we hear that Brown's murderous 'revenge' on Dain Waris' encampment, is motivated by a perverse principle:

> Notice that even in this awful outbreak there is a superiority as of a man who carries right - the abstract thing - within the envelope of his common desires. It was not a vulgar and treacherous massacre; it was a lesson, a retribution - a demonstration of some obscure and awful attribute of our nature which, I am afraid, is not so very far under the surface as we like to think. (p.404, emphasis added.)

The man who can believe in this 'lesson' is not entirely different to a man like Jim, who veritably believes his schemes are best for Patusan. Both follow an abstract 'right', although in Brown's case it is an insane apprehension of it. Marlow's little emphasis on 'our' - meaning white man's nature as opposed to general human nature ('he was one of us' we remember) re-inforces this idea.

Jim's retreat in evolutionary time takes him back through several levels of awareness. Like Marlow, seen as a Buddha contemplating himself as a young boy - an 'animal' - and then as a young man before and after his meeting with Kurtz, Jim moves through several incarnations. He moves from 'hound' to the level of the homeless native 'tyke', a 'cur' rejected by all and perennially embarrassing in a legal sense. The tyke, we recall, trips up Marlow as he comes out of the courthouse, and Jim mistakenly thinks the 'cur' reference from Marlow is directed against himself. Finally, as I have hinted, he moves back to a level that is human, that of a child, as Cornelius sees him. And Jim meets his Kurtz-figure as well. This is made abundantly clear in the almost photographic nature of his meeting with Brown:

> They met, I should think, not very far from the place, perhaps on the very spot, where Jim took the second desperate leap of his life... (p.379-380).

They meet by the creek, which has the dead Solomon Islander embedded in the mud. If we look back to Jim's escape, we can't help making a few connections. Stuck in the mud of creek himself he realises his predicament.

> It was only when he tried to move his legs and found he couldn't that, in his own words, 'he came to himself'. He began to think of the 'bally long spears' ... The higher firm ground was about six feet in front of him ... He reached and grabbed desperately with his hands, and only succeeded in gathering a horrible cold shiny heap of slime against his breast, up to his very chin. It seemed to him he was burying himself alive ... He made efforts, tremendous, sobbing, gasping efforts, efforts that seemed to burst his eyeballs in their sockets and make him blind, and culminating in one mighty supreme effort in the darkness to crack the earth asunder, to throw it off his limbs - and he felt himself creeping feebly up the bank ... He will have it that he did actually go to sleep ... [he] stood there, thinking he was alone of his kind for hundreds of miles ... like a hunted animal. (p.253-254, emphasis added.)

When Jim 'comes to himself' he even begins to speak his school-boy slang again: 'bally long spears'. What we have here, though, is a metaphor of a peculiar and unique sort. Jim is 'six feet' short of the bank. He jumps and lands exactly his own height, the stature of a man, short: 'he was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet', we remember. He not only has fallen short of being a man, but he now has to attain that height, literally and metaphorically. He is 'upright' in the slime and has to crawl through it in a re-enaction of the evolutionary process. He emerges 'sobbing' from the primeval slime like the first aquatic reptile fighting for air, or like the prototype of the land animals, the lungfish, and enacts before us the entire evolutionary process in this highly schematised and suggestive fashion. The symbolic sleep, like that of Nostromo after his swim from the Isabels, can, I think be taken in both cases to represent a death and re-awakening to a new, altered condition. Nostromo's confrontation with death is in the knowledge that he has deserted Teresa. Jim's, pointed again later by the corpse of the drowned Solomon Islander (who called out for water - like the pilgrim Jim struck) is in his desertion, and leaving the pilgrims to die. Both men lose their name in the process, and have to remake their public personae. Jim is still at 'hunted animal' level, but he is, at least, moving upward on the evolutionary scale.

Jim represents the possibility of regeneration, from the level of slime to the eminence he has achieved, whilst Brown has degenerated from noble stock. They face each other, emblematically, as two ends of the spectrum separated by the laws of evolution, as witnessed by the creek.

They are even dressed differently, Jim is no longer mud covered, but completely dressed in white 'from the white helmet to the canvas leggings and the pipe-clayed shoes' (p.380). He is the moving embodiment of the value of the 'white' man, whilst Brown's name and raggedness show him, 'he was supposed to be the son of a baronet' (p.352) as degenerating towards the slime.[1]

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1. cf. Wallace, Natural Selection comments: 'There is not a single white land-bird or quadruped in Europe, except the few arctic or alpine species, to which white is a protective colour.' (p.47). He continues, reviewing the effects of domestication upon animals:

> Directly they [rabbits] are domesticated white varieties arise and appear to thrive as well as others... In almost every case in which an animal has been thoroughly domesticated, parti-coloured and white varieties are produced and become permanent. (p.48).

The hints behind Jim's white clothing are quite obvious at one level - he wishes to establish himself as living by a different code, and dressing to European standards, in accepted tropical clothing. Wallace, however, is dealing with the coats of animals and concludes that white is an artificial colour tenable only under domestic conditions. Jim, by this comparison, is a member of a 'domestic' breed, coming from his parsonage in Sussex. Only once does he change colour, (apart from blushing, which I have already mentioned) and that is when he is covered by slime in the tidal ditch. That, as I have shown, is the lowest point of his decline, back to reptile level, and he is now re-established, as the diagrammatic presentation of the meeting with Brown conveys, at a true 'domestic' level. He has restored Patusan to peace, and now he can adopt his true colours, in both senses of the cliché. Wallace has more to say on the matter:

> Domestic types, when turned wild, must return to something near the type of the original wild stock, or become altogether extinct. (Natural Selection, p.31).

This, as I have shown, is exactly what happens. Jim is turned 'wild', and retreats to the lowest common denominator of air-breathing life, a reptile, before re-ascending to take on the Malays on their own terms, and then establishing his superiority over them. He doesn't just go down a stage, he goes right back to his roots and then re-evolves.

Jim has resurrected himself, strictly according to the laws of evolution and inheritance. Norman Sherry in Conrad's Eastern World (p.153) notes that Jim's escape parallels a passage in Major Fred McNair's Perak and the Malays: 'Sārong' and 'Krīs',[1] in the details of barricades of 'felled trees' and the 'maize patch' which in McNair becomes 'Indian corn'. This rather adds weight to the evolutionary argument, since McNair was just one of a long series of writers on Malaya that Conrad is listed as using, and one with evolutionary persuasions. The detail is significant, Conrad wishes to be as true to recorded factual existence as he possibly can manage so that his emblematic placings will not take on the aspect of obtrusively heavy-handed gesturing at symbolism. There can be little doubt that this piece of evidence is designed to be identified, but only by those who have already the same evolutionary bias as Conrad himself.

One could argue that Jim and Brown are thus diametrical opposites, at the same 'level' on a human scale of values, and their circumstances bring this out. Just as Jim arrived with his revolver unloaded, Brown arrives ready for a fight. Brown's brief romance with the missionary's wife ended when she died; Jim's romance with Jewel ended with his life. Brown had to abscond with his woman, who was already attached socially, whilst Jim refuses to run away from Doramin with Jewel, and Jewel is all but an orphan, wanted by no one, not even Cornelius, that 'missionary' of the civilised world, a debased

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1. Major Fred McNair, Perak and the Malays: 'Sārong' and 'Krīs' (London: 1878) p.392-393 and p.380 .

trader. Brown cheats the clergyman and is not converted to Christianity. Cornelius claims Jim has cheated him, but in fact plots (successfully) to deprive Jim of everything. Jim on the other hand, is converted to a complete belief in himself and trust in his Malay friends. In a measure it is his trust in his own word of honour that makes him trust Brown, and disregard the treacheries of Cornelius until too late.

To see the plot as one of evolutionary and hereditary factors coming into play, and finally conflict, actually makes quite a bit more sense out of some difficulties, and creates some ironies that alter our conception of Jim. Jim is convinced he is being executed by Doramin because he has taken responsibility on his own head:

> 'He hath taken it upon his own head,' a voice said aloud. He heard this and turned to the crowd. 'Yes. Upon my head.' A few people recoiled. Jim waited a while before Doramin, and then said gently, 'I am come in sorrow'. He waited again. 'I am come ready and unarmed.' (p.415).

There are two distinct movements here - his taking up of the blame, which on its own signified honour to his own words, and his stating that he is to blame in his affirmation. This last is reinforced by Jim actually appearing bare-headed. This dangerous second position Jim then pushes to a point it might not otherwise have reached, he claims he is ready for his doom. Doramin has no choice, before his people. Not to kill Jim would be an admission of helplessness. Jim's mistake is in this, that he thinks <u>his</u> word has condemned him. Marlow comments:

> I do not know what this gathering really meant. Were these preparations for war, or for vengeance, or to repulse a threatened invasion? Many days elapsed before the people had ceased to look out, quaking, for the return of

> the white men with long beards and in rags, whose exact relation to their own white man they could never understand. (p.414).

To a certain extent the egoism that made Jim guarantee everyone's safety with his life is the egoism that makes him mistakenly, perhaps, turn a confused gathering into his own death-warrant, whilst he never understands that it may be because his motives are suspect and it is thought he wishes to inherit the 'throne' of Patusan. He thinks he is punished for his failure to become infallible. We see hints that contradict this.

The result, however, has to be the same. Once he is doubted, and confidence in him is shaken, he can no longer carry on, just as he could not carry on as a mate once his courage was in doubt. Jim confuses the reasons behind the doubts the Malays feel. He also cannot see the question of inheritance of Stein's goods, because it is not mere conventional wealth that is passed on, but an opportunity.

The fact that Jim cannot see the inheritance question in all its aspects here mentioned is most important. Obviously he does not see the embryological comparisons Conrad makes - very few readers ever have. But his failure to see either his racial, acquired, advantages, and the question of Doramin's successor, added to his blindness to the nature of Stein's gift causes us to raise some important questions. Is it because he is involved in his own intentions to make himself anew that he refuses to see the truth? He is, after all, a major political figure in Patusan, and so he should have some insight into Doramin's fears. Jim is heroic because it never occurs to him that more than his own preoccupations are involved. It is the pure action of ignorance, and he strikes

us as a hero because it never occurs to him that he isn't. Although we are dissociated from the deed by the considerations we have discussed, Jim's ignorance allows him to be in complete harmony with his actions. He is entirely integrated with his image of himself. The moral considerations that the reader has before him in Marlow's speculations seem to centre in the realization that one must find one's own convictions and reasons for conduct in this world, but at the same time one must admit that there will always be in them an element of self-aggrandisement and distortion. Jim is interesting to us because we cannot help but admire what he has done. He has become his own hero, and done what his subconscious demanded. We, however, differ from him in that our super-ego will not allow us to accept what our subconscious admires and desires, for we see the evasions that Jim is victim to.

This, I think, is the central tension not only for Marlow, but also for Conrad. It would, after all, be so reassuring to have one's moment of glory (however brief) pure and uncontaminated by complex moral considerations. The writing of Lord Jim, for Conrad was not merely an exploration in scientific detail of the well-springs of conduct, but also an exorcism. He has to admit that Jim's action is only praiseworthy or even valid, in Jim's terms, and that those terms are not acceptable any longer. Conrad reluctantly affirms the superiority of the super-ego, and the imperatives it must accept, whilst indulging the tendencies of the Id. Throughout Conrad's works we will notice the same, basic, conflict, and although it is not perhaps very helpful to express it in this bald fashion, it is the root cause of many of the difficulties of his work.

But to return to Jim in the Id state of consciousness, 'child like', we notice his use of vocabulary and his response to it is peculiarly naive.

Jim is, after all, peculiarly susceptible to language: when Brown addresses him he is moved. Brown congratulates himself: 'That's what I told him. I knew what to say.' (p.382). If, however, we look at Herbert Spencer's assessment of language and primitive peoples, we realise that Jim takes all that Brown says as referring strictly to himself. Brown was only intending to elicit some charitable action from a fellow adventurer, and he assumes their 'common guilt'. For Jim this guilt lies at a much more sensitive point, he feels Brown knows all about him. He refuses to give his name to Brown, which makes this quotation from Spencer all the more valid:

> In primitive thought the name and the object named are associated in such wise that the one is regarded as part of the other - so much so, that knowing a savage's name is considered by him as having some of his being, and a consequent power to work evil on him. This belief in a real connexion between word and thing continuing through lower stages of progress...[1]

Spencer, we notice, also takes it for granted that the 'lower stages' represent not a different approach to reality, but a less highly developed one, and he is using this argument to deduce the data of the ethical process. Conrad brings our attention to these levels of response to language in many ways. What we notice throughout, however, is that Jim responds to language at only <u>one</u> level.

For example, Jim re-christens Jewel, just as he makes a name for himself, 'Tuan Jim'; and 'Jewel' to him represents his

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1. Herbert Spencer, <u>The Data of Ethics</u> (London: 1879) p.13 para. 35.

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appreciation of her rare qualities, and is his expression of endearment. We, however, are inclined to find the monetary suggestiveness rather too great for us, and suspect that Jim does not really differentiate between human qualities and conventional ideas of worth. The governor of Celebes who talks to Marlow, however, really does think that 'Jewel' is a precious stone. In addition, we see the anachronistic coupling of Lord and Jim as a comment on Jim's achievement. Jim sees it as <u>being</u> his achievement. For Jim, and the others at his level, words refer directly to objects. The talismanic status of Stein's ring is insisted upon. It <u>means</u> friendship initially. When Jim gives it to Tamb'Itam for Dain Waris it becomes the embodiment of truth.

> Before starting Tamb'Itam, more as a matter of form (since his position about Jim made him perfectly known) asked for a token. 'Because Tuan,' he said, 'the message is important, and these are thy very words I carry.' His master first put his hand into one pocket, then into another, and finally took off his forefinger Stein's silver ring. (p.396).
>
> Tamb'Itam began by handing him [Dain Waris] the ring which vouched for the truth of the messenger's words. (p.402).

As Jeremy Hawthorn[1] has suggested, this is a world of re‿ified language, and Jim <u>must</u> therefore keep his word. His is a 'Zero degree'[2] of vocabulary, and he confounds the word with the fact. Stein, we notice, doesn't. His butterflies act as reminders to him of something beyond themselves - of his aims, his

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1. <u>Joseph Conrad, Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness</u> (London: Arnold, 1979).

2. I use this in the strict sense suggested by Roland Barthes', <u>Writing Degree Zero</u>, Trans. Richard Miller. (London: Cape, 1974.)

adventures, his youth - and he thinks whimsically of them back in his 'native town', deprived of all their associative power. Yet he too, I have suggested, is apt to consider them as achievements in themselves, and console himself with the aquisition of reassuring memorabilia. His study, with its cabinets full of classified and ordered insects is suggestive of the way men can order their memories, removing any hint of an unfulfilled life by the accumulation of objects that merely act as substitutes. No one, after all, can preserve moments. Stein has, like an ageing spinster viewing a photograph album, controlled and tamed his turbulent past.

This brings us back to our earlier consideration of Jewel's and Jim's way of seeing themselves. When Jewel begins to see herself as a tragic heroine she is making a major step forward, from the status of one who lives and expects only suffering, to one who has a purpose. Her vigil over Jim at night is her first purpose which leads directly to her establishment as Jim's wife. What I think Conrad is trying to suggest is that tragedy is a more fluid concept than ever before. If one takes it as being allied only to the falls of princes, then how does 'Lord' Jim match up to this? Furthermore, if one takes the idea of his 'involuntary muscles' and the nature of the reflex action Jim succumbs to when he jumps - do we not have a problem like that of, for example, Oedipus? No matter what Oedipus chooses to do, he must sin, bring prosperity to a city, and then must suffer for his involuntary crime, in this case paradoxically plunging the town of Patusan back into barbarity. I do not consider that the comparison can be taken much further. What is important, though, is the sense of a mechanistic universe

that causes Jim to feel he has to give up his life to Doramin to atone for a jump he did not execute, for a death he did not cause; he feels he has to be the story-book hero, but his response to this ideal comes from the same 'lower' level as the action of his 'involuntary' muscles. He is thus caught by the values that make him great. Can we then merely see him as short-sighted and foolish? I shall argue, as follows, that he is tragic.

Why tragic? The simple answer is because he sees himself as capable of tragic status, and responds accordingly, even though the circumstances that cause him to respond that way have, quite literally, only cruel accidentalism as their unifying element. If Jim retreats again from this test, his image of himself, his entire life, in effect, must be destroyed. To Jim, that constitutes himself. Once a man has a purpose and a direction, Conrad suggests, then he becomes liable to bad luck that may thwart his ambitions. A man without hope or expectations, like Cornelius, is pitiable, but hardly tragic. The reader and the character must both share a sense of loss, for tragedy to have any hold over us. Tragic status thus becomes closely allied with the necessity in each human for self-recognition as a conscious, thinking animal.

I think this is what lies behind Conrad's letter to Cunninghame-Graham, dated 31 January, 1898:

> Yes, egoism is good, and altruism is good, and fidelity to nature would be best of all, and systems could be built and rules could be made - if we could only get rid of consciousness. What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of this earth is very well - but as soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife - the tragedy begins. We can't return to nature, since we can't change our place in it. Our refuge is in

> stupidity ... There is no morality, no knowledge, and no hope; there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that, whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror, is always but a vain and floating appearance. (L. and L. I, 229.)

Egoism, arguably is the basis of Jim's motives, and altruism is the very ideal that the novel is questioning. But 'fidelity to nature' involves treating man as an animal that can function only by exercise of egoism and the laws of self-interest. The moment one recognises that this is the rule by which the world is governed, one is no longer blithely living by such rules, but realising the flawed bases for one's idealism; the idealism that produces 'laws'.

Conrad envies Cunninghame-Graham's altruism, however, as a letter dated 6 February, 1898 suggests:

> You are misguided by the desire of the impossible - and I envy you ... Alas, what you want to reform are not institutions - it is human nature. Your faith will never move that mountain. Not that I think mankind intrinsically bad. It is only silly and cowardly. Now you know that in cowardice is every evil - especially that cruelty so characteristic of our civilisation. But without it mankind would vanish ... we are born initiated, and succeeding generations clutch the inheritance of fear and brutality without a thought, without a doubt, in the name of God. (L. and L. I, 229.)

Man has evolved, silly, cowardly and thus prone to oppressing each other and nothing can change it, it is an 'inheritance' in the crudest sense. It is not an acquired gift, but an attribute genetically passed on, and the inheritance is thus self-perpetuating in its own right. It has set up the institutions that allow for its continued successful flourishing.

Revealing as these two quotations are, made to Cunninghame-Graham in 1898, I think we can see that Conrad's ideas, although

basically unchanged, have become more complex. There are evidently more than the three levels he suggests, as the examination of Lord Jim has hinted.

CHAPTER 3

Section I

> What is it? The fascination of primitive ideas - of primitive virtues, perhaps. Something enticing and bitter in the life - in the thought around you. If you once step into the world of their notions. Very bitter. We can never forget our origin.... Don't give yourself up. Primitive virtues are poison to us - white men. We have gone on different lines. (Rescue MS.)[1]

In the previous chapter I have noted Conrad's specific resemblances with other writers. What I have been at pains to show is that Conrad is essentially adapting a very familiar literary genre - the adventure story in Lord Jim, and the travelogue or quest in Heart of Darkness - through detailed application of various evolutionary and scientific theories. If, as I believe, Conrad is re-exploring the area covered by Huxley, it is as well to try to place Huxley's theories within a tradition of speculation upon the topic of ethics. For Huxley was but one of several writers onthe topic of ethics. This chapter will approach the problem of assessing the less specifically scientific theories of ethics current in the 1890s in order to show just what major landmarks of thinking Conrad had around him, and how he reacted to them.

If Heart of Darkness is, in part at least, a response to Huxley's 1893 lecture, it is possibly worth glancing at a reply that was made to Huxley by another eminent anthropologist, Henry Drummond, and one that seems to come from the other side of the battle about ethics. Huxley had laid his emphasis on sympathy, but Drummond placed his upon his maternity.

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1. Quoted in E. Knapp Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), pp.141-142. Knapp Hay's reference is to British Library MS Ashley 4787. Knapp Hay hereafter cited as Knapp Hay.

In the following pages I give examples of superficial resemblances between Conrad and Drummond, and various reasons why I feel Drummond's overall approach would be unacceptable to Conrad, and what the relation between the two writers can tell us. It is, above all, useful to trace Drummond's thought, because he represented one of the only other theoretical standpoints on the topic of ethics at this time.

Indeed, Drummond's book opens with the most remarkable verbal echo of Conrad.

> 'The more I think of it,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'I find this conclusion more impressed on me - that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way.' In these pages an attempt is made to tell 'in a plain way' a few of the things which science is now seeing with regard to The Ascent of Man.[1]

These, the opening remarks to the preface of Henry Drummond's work, The Ascent of Man (1894), must surely send all Conrad scholars searching for the much quoted preface to to Nigger of the 'Narcissus':

> My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel -- it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything. (p.x)

The likelihood of Conrad having read this work is quite great. Drummond's book, a product of the Lowell lectures given by him in Boston, was well regarded. Professor Drummond deliberately entitled his work The Ascent of Man because he wished to put right what he thought were the shortcomings of Darwin's work, and in particular The Descent of Man. These were, primarily, that Darwin had neglected to mention the ethical processes in man. In addition, Drummond regards

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1. Henry Drummond, The Ascent of Man (London: Hodder, Stoughton, 1894) p.iii. All quotations are from this edition.

himself as putting right the evasions of T.H. Huxley's lecture, 'Evolution and Ethics', since he comments that Huxley 'ejects himself from the world order, and washes his hands of it in the name of ethical man' (p.28). Plainly, Drummond is vociferously demanding audience for an area he is determined to explain properly.

> The consternation caused by Mr. Huxley's change of front, or supposed change of front, is a matter of recent history, Mr. Leslie Stephen and Mr. Herbert Spencer hastened to protest; the older school of moralists hailed it almost as a conversion. (p.31)

As I shall argue throughout, if Drummond was struck by the evasions of anthropology, he was not the only one. The Huxley lecture had taken place in 1893 and was printed in 1894 - Drummond's work was printed in 1894 (frontispiece date) and is already a reply that can quote the opinions of third parties to Huxley's views. The Lowell lectures themselves took place in 1893, which indicates this was a speedy process through the press. The topic was evidently one of contemporary interest as well as of far-reaching implications, since the two sets of lectures can only have been a matter of months apart.

These two sets of lectures, and publications came from opposed sides of the ethical arguments of evolution, and Drummond is replying to Huxley. Huxley has argued something close to enlightened self-interest as the genesis of morality, whilst Drummond argues what seemed the only possible alternative, altruism as an inbuilt biological fact. These are the two sides of the question. It seems that Conrad is well acquainted with both parties and their causes.

Certainly, as I have shown from the previous chapter's observations, Conrad endorses Drummond's criticism of Huxley,

but he is, I feel, not inclined to accept Drummond's own theories in place of those of Huxley. Drummond had been steadily propounding his doctrine since the publication of Natural Law in the Spiritual World in 1883,[1] so his overall views were hardly new, but the nature of the book's production indicates a haste, and desire to publish a decisive statement in the field of ethical speculation: an 'attempted readjustment of the accents' (p.vii).

But to return to the original comparison of Drummond and Conrad, both the above comments come from the Preface of each work, and in Conrad's case he is specific in that he is not attempting either the scientist's or the thinker's tasks. Drummond mirrors this:

> There is nothing here for the specialist - except, it may be, the reflection of his own work. Nor apart from Teleology, is there anything for the theologian. (p.vii)

I am not here concerned to discuss the merits of The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'. This has been done by many, more able than I, and generally I concur in their judgement that it is a story concerned with the latent egoism of sympathy and its possible destructive capability. The work is self-evidently about this.[2] But the crew are by no means representative of humanity, since there are no women aboard. It is a society bound by the necessity of co-operative actions.

In this it is a deliberate contrast to anything Drummond writes in his work - so much so that I contend Conrad is deliberately attacking Drummond, in his Christian, female-idolizing work. To Drummond there are two major struggles in existence:

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1. Henry Drummond, Natural Law in the Spiritual World (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883).

2. Cf. Ian Watt's admirable résumé of current acceptable ideas on the topic: Op. Cit. Chap. 3, pp.68-125

the Struggle for Nutrition and the Struggle for Reproduction. These two struggles are contained in another story by Conrad written to go alongside the Nigger, namely Falk, where the struggle to gain food comes about only after Falk's ship is disabled and becalmed, and the struggle for a mate is the topic of the second part of the tale. On the 'Narcissus' however, food is no trouble at all, it seems. Jimmy, obviously unfit, has other men struggle to give him the best food, even to the point of stealing the officers' Sunday pie. Neither is reproduction a topic to be considered. There are, however, other, deliberate, superficial resemblances.

For example, Drummond, in assessing the workers in the scientific field, considers their various specialized areas as often too isolated:

> Content with building up the sum of actual knowledge in some neglected and restrictive province, they are too absorbed to notice even what workers in the other provinces are about (p.41).

This may be echoed by Conrad in his slightly tongue-in-cheek comparison in the Preface, in which he adopts an attitude of indolent superiority, that is reminiscent of Drummond's self-confident certainty that he does know what everything is about.

> Sometimes, stretched at ease in the shade of a roadside tree, we watch the motions of a labourer in a distant field, and after a time, begin to wonder languidly as to what the fellow may be at. (p.xi)

Conrad continues, stating, that his task 'is not the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called'Laws of Nature' (pp.xi-xii). This is, I feel, an obvious swipe at Drummond who regards his theory of ethics as vital and his concern with the Struggle for Reproduction as a pioneering matter. In his own view, he is the only one not guilty of 'the omission of this supreme factor' (p.23) as he calls it.

Drummond's main point is worth outlining since it is of importance to realize how unacceptable it would be to Conrad and hence why Conrad would attack him. Drummond is at pains to assert that the basic ethical training is available to all mammals because they are subjected to maternal care and altruism, and that reproduction involves a series of actions that will benefit only the offspring, and therefore must be altruistic. Here, in brief, Drummond argues, is the ethical basis of all.

> For hours, or days, or weeks in the early infancy of all higher animals, maternal care and sympathy are a condition of existence. Altruism had to enter the world, and any species which neglected it was extinguished in a generation. (p.40)

This argument is, unfortunately, easily defeated, since one has only to claim that what one has is not altruistic behaviour, but a successful variation of action within a class of the animal kingdom. Efficient variation is then a physiological fact rather than a moral capacity. His exceedingly feeble argument is bolstered up by a rising cadence of rhetoric that is Christian based, rather than empirical. Drummond's desire to solve all the considerations as to where ethics arise from leads him into some self-evident absurdities, as for example, his discussion of the amoeba's growth. 'It must divide, or die. If it divides, what has saved its life? Self-sacrifice'.(p.289) It would be just as rational to substitute for 'self-sacrifice', 'egoism' or 'self-interest' or even 'desperation'.[1]

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1. This point was, in fact, one made by Herbert Spencer in The Data of Ethics when he wrote:
> The simplest beings habitually multiply by spontaneous fission. Physical altruism of the lowest kind, differentiating from physical egoism, may in this case be considered as not yet independent of it. (pp.201-202)

f/n.cont.on p.126

I labour this point because the maternal-altruism argument is really the only point Drummond has to make, and yet if one considers Conrad's own parental tension, it must inevitably be seen how much reason he would have to disagree with Drummond.

Frederick Karl points out that Conrad almost certainly modelled his dutiful women characters on his mother.

> Whatever the precise terms of the relationship, Ewa turns up repeatedly in her son's fiction, the Madonna figure greatly devoted to her husband, the woman whose own 'career' is found only in marriage, or in commitment to an ideal. We think of Mrs. Gould in Nostromo or of Miss Haldin in Under Western Eyes, both lacking the chance to move actively in the world... (Karl, p.37).

But Karl does not make the essential point that Mrs. Gould and Miss Haldin are deceived, that they give their allegiances to men who lie to them, desert them, and who are self-obsessed. In this category then, can be included Antonia, Linda Viola, Jewel, Winnie Verloc and the Intended. From the earlier works Aïssa and Joanna Willems can be added, and even Nina Almayer, though she has to desert her father herself. Karl continues:

> Ewa's defiance of the Bobrowski plans for her brought Apollo a woman he truly worshipped, and we know that after her death in 1865, at the age of thirty-two, he kept her memory alive to the young Conrad. There is no question that Conrad, who was barely old enough to remember her, worshipped at her shrine with his father. Apollo's grief was real; his guilt profound; his sense of failure overwhelming. Conrad grew up in that atmosphere... (p.37)

Apollo's worship of his dead wife can be seen as a belated gesture of his appreciation of her self-denying support of

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f/n.1 continued from p.125.

Although Spencer seems to be contradicting Drummond here, he falls into the same line of arguing by declaring that female mammals make the 'material sacrifice' of a foetus, milk, and so on, and he concludes 'self-sacrifice, then, is no less primordial than self-preservation' (p.203). Drummond's high regard for the female sex could be seen as an absorbed Spencerian fallacy, that he turns into his whole argument.

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him, and of her readiness to follow him into exile which nearly killed Conrad and eventually killed her. Conrad remembers her in A Personal Record, and describes her thus:

> ...meeting with calm fortitude the cruel trials of a life reflecting all the national and social misfortunes of the community, she realized the highest conception of duty as a wife, a mother, and a patriot, sharing the exile of her husband and representing nobly the ideal of Polish womanhood. (p.29)

Naturally Conrad can hardly criticize his mother in public. But Drummond's point is entirely up-ended. Ewa's loyalty was first of all to her husband, and then to her son. Her husband's loyalty, however, was to a cause that, as many critics have pointed out was rather more than desperate, and tinged, certainly with self-obsession. Bobrowski would have made quite sure the young Conrad felt that point.

Conrad's personal experience, and his experience as reflected in his works, places the emphasis not on the abnegation of the mother towards her child, which is Drummond's point, but rather on the devotion of the noble-hearted woman for her idealist husband or lover, and the waste of the woman's life. Drummond's explanation of the ethical process would therefore be completely unacceptable to Conrad, since it does not correspond to anything he knew or reported. As I have shown, though, Drummond's was possibly an extreme expression of something Herbert Spencer had touched upon. Spencer is only interested in the ideas as contributory evidence to his argument that altruism has survived because it has aided survival.

Here another point demands attention. At no stage in the corpus of Conrad's work does he examine in detail a mother-child relationship. The closest he ever comes, in The Secret

Agent, is, in fact, the brother/sister link of Winnie and Stevie. It is an ominous omission, and it is one that can only be explained by assuming the point was far too painful for him or he felt he did not know enough about the area concerned. Norman Sherry speculates on Conrad's feelings as Jessie was pregnant with their second son, John, and Conrad was finishing the first draft of The Secret Agent:

> Conrad's full awareness of the force of that maternal instinct that had first attracted him to Jessie and then outwitted him by producing two children, occurring at a time when he was writing the novel, extended the range of his source material by the addition of very necessary personal and intimate perceptions. And if something of Jessie went into the creation of Winnie, it is likely that a little of Conrad also went into the creation of Verloc.[1]

I think one would be bound to admit that there must be a fairly extreme stimulus in Conrad's memory to evoke such an oblique treatment of that most common of all connections, the parent-child, and not merely a passing phase in Conrad's thoughts, as Sherry suggests. In addition, whatever else one concludes about Winnie Verloc, her maternal feelings are strong, alarmingly so, and by no means loyal to her husband. If Apollo had inadvertently nearly annihilated Conrad whilst involved in his political intrigues, Verloc succeeds consummately in destroying Stevie, and finally himself.

What needs stressing is that Winnie is completely loyal to Verloc (although tempted by Ossipon) until she feels she has been betrayed, when her familial/maternal feelings receive the shock of Stevie's death. It is only then that Winnie rebels. Her primary loyalty is to her husband. If Conrad put anything of his own familial relations into this novel it was, possibly, the fear that he, like Apollo, might lead

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1. Norman Sherry, Conrad's Western World (Cambridge:Cambridge University, 1971),p.371. Hereafter cited as CWW.

his family into hardship, a hardship that might cause the death of a child, and Jessie's withdrawal of support from him.

Drummond's argument is based heavily on the evolutionist's assumption of progression. Having established maternal relations as the well-spring of all ethical processes he postulates a line of continual improvement to the point of the perfection of Mankind, in a sort of glorious upward drive of moral achievement. This assumption is one that Spencer and Darwin were partly responsible for fostering. The overall view, however, is rather more complex. Kenneth Bock's article on 'Theories of Progress, Development, Evolution' is well worth quoting from here:

> Given the universality and uniformity of change throughout all nature including society, Spencer proceeded without question to the familiar observation that the stages of the change in civilization 'as a whole' could be documented by reference to existing savage and barbarous peoples, to extinct civilizations, and finally to contemporary Europe. The entire movement is from the homogenous to the heterogeneous, from the simple to the complex, from the undifferentiated in form and function to the differentiated.
>
> Throughout his work on social or civilizational change, Spencer did little more than enlarge on the details of a process that was in its fundamental aspects the same as that pictured by the [French] philosophes or, indeed, by Aristotle.[1]

The advantages of this attitude, Bock continues, are that it asserts an ethnocentric superiority implicitly - and that is a very useful ideology for a race that wishes to subdue others.

This is a method of perception that Conrad most emphatically uses, since there can be no doubt that the Malays are a 'lower' race evolutionarily to Conrad. Modern sociology prefers to work from the more humble assumption that all humanity has been evolving for an equally long time, as far as anyone can tell, and that savages, although they may seem

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1. Kenneth Bock, 'Theories of Progress, Development Evolution', in A History of Sociological Analysis, ed. Tom Bottomore and R. Nisbet (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp.63-64.

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less 'developed' are in reality merely different, equally developed but in different directions.

> For Spencer, social and cultural diffences simply represented various stages of evolution; the data his associates gathered for him served to illustrate social evolution under its various aspects [Spencer, Descriptive Sociology div III no. 1 part 1-C 'English' (London: William & Norgate, 1873)]. If social evolution had been other than unilinear, certainly the other lives were not described to us by Herbert Spencer.[1] (Bock, p.65)

Compare this attitude to a rather less assuming one expressed by Ruth Benedict:

> Since we are forced to believe that the race of man is one species, it follows that man everywhere has an equally long history behind him. Some primitive tribes may have held relatively closer to primordial forms of behaviour than civilized man, but this can only be relative and our guesses are as likely to be wrong as right.[2]

Conrad's novels here under discussion, are modelled on precisely this assumption, and as they are experiments in fathoming civilized man's conduct, it is extremely useful to him to accept the idea of his age. But in other ways Conrad strikes out on his own. The circular and self-thwarting narrative of Nostromo, as was first pointed out by Albert Guerard, seems to deny the idea of progression and history.[3] Certainly, Kurtz's superiority is paper-thin, and he degenerates rather than evolves. To itemize all Conrad's examples would be vain; it suffices to say that the moral squalor of Verloc's London, the impending chaos after Jim's death in

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1. Cf. Spencer, Principles of Sociology (New York: D. Appleton and Co.,1901-1907), II, pp.242-243, III, p.331. The idea is presented that retrogression is as frequent as progression: however, the'lowest types' are truly those closest to 'primitive'man, according to Spencer. See also Spencer, Principles of Sociology, I, 95. This anomaly is never explored by Spencer to question the progressionist ideas.
2. Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (Boston: Routledge & Son, 1934) p.18.
3. Albert Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958.

in Patusan, and the continuing tyranny in Razumov's Russia do not indicate the triumphant progress of the human race.

Conrad, indeed, is reluctant to follow another of the evolutionist's thoughts, namely, that one could trace the root of human ethical behaviour, as Drummond thought he had. Kenneth Bock, again, describes Spencer and Durkheim both searching for:

> The genesis of fundamental categories of thought, and he (Durkheim) believed his search would be rewarded by looking at a single people. (Bock, 64-65)

It is the 'genesis' that is sought by both of these giants of anthropology, and it is a task that Conrad does not seem to think can be achieved. The 'Narcissus' crew are there because work places them there. From their circumstances the reader is enabled to see and learn something about himself and mankind. But Conrad is extremely careful here, for he realizes that any statement or evaluation must of necessity be coloured by the circumstances surrounding it. He attempts only: 'to snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life...' (Preface, p.x.). The result will not be one of 'the Laws of Nature. It is no less great, only more difficult'. (p.xii).

Whether or not one accepts that Conrad may have read Drummond, it is certain that the above-mentioned work points out two vital and conflicting areas of Conrad's thought. His interest lies in discovering the reasons behind human ethical behaviour, but he seems exceptionally reluctant to turn his attention to the altruism of the family. Conrad's methodology shares a great deal with the leading anthropologists and sociologists of his age, particularly Spencer.

Section II

Although it is useful to note generic similarities in outlook between Conrad and Spencer, I feel the issue can be taken further with some profit. Whilst it would be foolhardy to assert that Conrad knew all or even most of Spencer's work, I think it can be shown that he had a certain familiarity with particular works.

The sense of duty and the evolution of it as an idea that Conrad conveys is rather different from anything Herbert Spencer has to offer, although they certainly share the same outlook, that of scientific investigation of human phenomena. Spencer regarded himself as a practical scientist whose work led naturally to a discussion of ethics. His entire life's writings in fact, did culminate in a work called The Data of Ethics.[1] Interestingly enough there was a cheap edition of this highly influential work in 1894, which would seem to indicate that Spencer was not only still well thought of, but also still inthe mainstream of ethical discussion at the time. Spencer himself is not unaware of the direction his philosophy has taken, and the practical value of his findings.

> The establishment of rules of right conduct upon a scientific basis is a pressing need. Now that moral injunctions are losing the authority given their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is becoming imperative. (p.iv)

Spencer pre-empts some of his critics adroitly, whilst establishing himself as an empiricist by adding 'critics of a certain class, far from rejoicing that ethical principles

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1. London, 1894. All quotations from this edition.

otherwise derived by them, coincide with ethical principles scientifically derived, are offended by the coincidence'.

Spencer's approach is a logical extension of the implications of Darwin - since instead of fretting that science had shown ethics to be rather hollow, he took the far more productive view that man has made morality, but obviously for a purpose. If, then, one explores this process of moral codes and their genesis, one may learn much about man, and morals, but also a great deal about the nature of moral problems. The fashionable despair of the 'yellow nineties' had considerably slowed-up the general advance at a popular level of Spencer's approach to morality.

Certainly Conrad was concerned with the scientific basis of ethics, but he could not have accepted Spencer's overall doctrine that:'The good is universally the pleasurable.' (p.30) Spencer's conclusions on the topic of altruism and egoism have very little to do with Conrad, but if they differ in their conclusions overall, there are similarities to be noted, that lead one to believe that Conrad had some firm grounding in the Spencerian approach to ethics. It was Spencer who was among the first to point out the ethical implications of 'sympathy' (p.244ff) that Huxley and Conrad later explored (see previous sections).[1] In addition he made

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1. John Saveson in his book, Joseph Conrad, the Making of a Moralist (Amsterdam: 1972), points outthat the very word altruism owes its popularity to Herbert Spencer. 'It is a Spencerian term, and in Marlow's usage. . . it retains its Spencerian meaning, that is, of an evolved attribute.' (p.42) There is substance in Saveson's claim, although the Oxford English Dictionary attributes the word to Comte and then to Lewes who translated Comte (p.259) in 1853. It does, however, list several uses by Spencer. I do not entirely agree with Saveson's statement of Conrad's use of the word, since Marlow uses it to describe Dain Waris, who has 'a touch of altruism'--an opinion that under the circumstances is more suggestive than precise.

overtly the statement of evolutionary relativism that Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness are based upon.

> Already we have concluded in a general way that conduct at large, including the conduct Ethics deals with, is to be fully understood only as an aspect of evolving life . . . Moral phenomena [are] phenomena of evolution. (p.63)

Spencer's description of the mechanism of ethical development depends upon the relative worthiness of immmediate responses to situations, and considered responses. Considered responses, he argues, tend to assure survival in the being concerned whilst doing most good to others, and are thus a vital part of an ethical process that hinges upon social consideration.

> Throughout the ascent from low creatures up to man, and from the lowest types of man to the highest, self-preservation has been increased by the subordination of simple excitations to compound excitations - the subjection of immediate sensations to the ideas of sensations to come - the over-ruling of presentative feelings by re-presentative feelings. As life has advanced, the accompanying sentiency has become increasingly ideal; and among feelings produced by the compounding of ideas, the highest, and those which have evolved latest, are the recompounded or doubly ideal. (p.108)

Where this seems to go awry in Conrad's work is when this process is allowed to run free in the imagination of his characters. For example, Jim's ideas of heroism have been maturing for some time, ever since his boyhood, just as Nostromo's ideas of himself have been consciously kept up by his public display of bravado. But Spencer adds a proviso that it is especially relevant to quote here.

> Though in many cases guidance by the simple feelings rather than the complex feelings is injurious, in other cases guidance by the complex feelings rather than by the simple feelings is fatal. (p.110)

This, really, is one of the central points about Jim's leap, that it is taken under the influence of a prompting that is not so much moral, as sub moral. In order for a man's acts

to be either moral or immoral, they have first of all to be his own acts and Jim's leap is not, rightly, his. It comes from his Id rather than his Superego, if one needs an alternative vocabulary. It is upon this that H.M. Daleski's book, The Way of Dispossession is based I feel, namely upon the lack of self-possession that allows the primitive force to take over.[1] Although I accept overall Daleski's argument, it seems to me that he does not satisfactorily resolve the problem as to what the possessor of the soul is. The lower level of ethical prompting, the 'simple feelings' of self-preservation that Jim responds to is seen by Conrad as a biological fact that has to be dealt with by each human, all the time. Spencer sees it slightly differently - he over-rules certain seemingly random phenomena, as for instance the epileptic: 'Such actions as those of an epileptic in a fit are not included in our

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1. H.M. Daleski, The Way of Dispossession (London: Faber and Faber, 1977). Conrad makes two most interesting statements in A Personal Record about the nature of self-possession:

> I will make bold to say that neither at sea nor ashore have I ever lost the sense of responsibility. There is more than one sort of intoxication. Even before the most seductive reveries I have remained mindful of that sobriety of interior life, that asceticism of sentiment, in which alone the naked form of truth, such as one conceives it, such as one feels it, can be rendered without shame. (pp.111-112)
>
> I have tried to be a sober worker all my life - all my two lives. I did so from taste, no doubt having an instinctive horror of losing my sense of full self-possession but also from artistic conviction. (p.112)

What is particularly valuable about these quotations is that there is a direct correspondence between artistic integrity and the integrity involved in sailing a ship with precision - each demands absolute concentration and any reverie may be fatal - any loss of contact with the situation. But Conrad's evasiveness here leads him to assert more the genuine quality of his effort, rather than just exactly what he fears. It is a topic Conrad is fond of repeating:

> It may be my sea training acting upon a natural disposition to keep good hold on the one thing really mine, but the fact is that I have a positive horror of losing even for one moving moment that full possession of myself which is the first condition of good service. And I have carried my notion of good service from my earlier to my later existence. (p.xvii)

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conception of conduct, the conception excludes purposeless actions'. (p.5) Spencer is, however, prepared to see that certain actions which are not in themselves reprimandable may well have unforeseen consequences. 'The truth that conduct with which Morality is not concerned passes into conduct which is moral or immoral, by small degrees and in countless ways.' (p.6) And this is precisely Jim's trouble - he does something which is a reflex action, which reveals his imperfectly controlled 'lower' nature, and his higher nature only begins to moralize upon what has happened much later, in the boat and in his talks with Marlow. As he does so he reveals another aspect touched on by Spencer - namely that man can, if he wishes, rationalize his way out of almost anything. 'The sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory, and will diminish as fast as moralization increases. Startling though it is, this conclusion may be satisfactorily defended.' (p.127) Jim is able to forget about duty to the point where he regards the entire event as only 'a chance missed' - a chance for self-aggrandisement which he could have seized had he obeyed the promptings of re-presentative feelings. Furthermore, part of the seductive appeal of the work lies in Marlow's and consequently the reader's, desire to forgive Jim. This is a point I have already made, but the implication behind Spencer's words applies to Jim, Marlow and ourselves, equally. Here is Spencer again:

> Accumulated experiences have produced the consciousness that guidance by feelings which refer to remote and general results, is usually more conducive to welfare than guidance by feelings to be immediately gratified. (p.126)

Although to Spencer duty is reducible to one's egoistic desire to receive praise and give pleasure that leads to seemingly

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selfless conduct,[1] this is clearly not Conrad's feeling, as the previous chapter has attempted to show. But if Jim is one who allows himself to be 'immediately gratified' by his leap, rather than considering 'remote and general results', he is placed in a country where that appears to be the general rule. He is killed by Doramin because he had claimed responsibility 'on his own head', and if we see Jim as curiously short-sighted towards the possibility of accidental deaths or not, it is certain that Doramin is not thinking of the future of Patusan when he exacts his revenge. In this he fits Spencer's description of ethically primitive peoples, who have no true conception of 'distant and general needs [which are] little recognizable by primitive men, who have but feeble powers of generalization'. (p.126)

At the start of this section I dealt with the conflict of Huxley as a believer in 'sympathy' and Drummond as a believer in maternalism as the basis of all ethical conduct. In fact both these ideas are derived, as I have noted, from Spencer, and re-interpreted according to their own desires. If Conrad was responding to a current ethical argument, I have shown that there is every reason to believe he was responding to the two major sides in the debate, although for the reasons I have outlined, Huxley seems to him the more rational centre of attention. If I am correct, Conrad came upon this topical discussion very shortly after it first emerged, since there

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1. cf. The Data of Ethics, p.255:
In its ultimate form, then, altruism will be the achievement of gratification through sympathy with those gratifications of others which are mainly produced by their activities of all kind successfully carried on - sympathetic gratification which costs the receiver nothing but is a gratis addition to his egoistic gratifications.

are traces of Drummond's attitudes in the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', and the idea of sympathy in this work may also owe something to Huxley.[1] From there onwards Conrad's method of approaching the subject, and his preoccupations, continued along this same line of enquiry.

There are other instances that have a resemblance to Spencer, for instance, there is the case of Bob Stanton (which as I have already remarked, was important to Conrad), who died attempting to save the life of a lady's maid (pp.149-150). Spencer's comment on actions of this kind is that:

> Pushed to extremes, sacrifice of self for the benefit of others, leads occasionally to death before the ordinary period of marriage . . . therefore the unusually altruistic leave no descendants. (p.197)

This is precisely the case with Bob Stanton, for we are told 'Poor Bob's spell of shore life had been one of the complications of a love affair' (p.150). He has since returned to the sea, and his death, since his 'spell of shore life', but the implication is that he never raised a family. Spencer continues his chain of reasoning by saying that since the altruistic are killed in the course of their duties, mankind must eventually evolve as a blend of the gently altruistic and the not excessively egoistic. 'Every species is continually purifying itself from the unduly egoistic individuals, while there are being lost to it the unduly altruistic individuals' (p.204). But this is entirely at variance with Conrad's point, that men's fame lives after them, and affects others. Spencer's view is that mankind returns to a gentle mediocrity of morality with 'an egoistic pleasure in altruism, apparently' (p.228),

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1. Although I do feel that there is a specific debt to late Spencer, as I have demonstrated.

whilst Conrad's view of lasting fame is that from it springs the concept of idealized duty and heroism. Such a view point has much in common with Carlyle.

Carlyle is the only other major contestant in the debate on the origin of ethics. He does not consider the origin to lie in the spontaneous recognition by primitive man of moral goodness, as Huxley seems to, neither does he elevate women as the only origin of morality as Drummond does - instead he propounded, long before either of these men, the theory of exceptional men influencing the moral development of nations. It was a theory that found widespread acceptance, and is reflected by Wallace when he describes his impact on the Aru islanders as follows:

> I have no doubt that to the next generation, or even before, I myself shall be transformed into a magician or demi-god, a worker of miracles, and a being of supernatural knowledge. (The Malay Archipelago, p.470.)

Here was scientific proof of the myths of Prester John and his kind, or so it seemed. It was upon such evidence that Carlyle's argument was based and certainly is very relevant to a discussion of Lord Jim.

1

Section III

'It is certain any conviction gains
infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it.'

That Lord Jim is a novel concerned with heroism is self-evident. That the epigraph Conrad chose for the novel is from Novalis is accepted. That Conrad may well have read the quotation in Carlyle's On Heroes and Hero Worship (1840)[1] is a point that seems to have been ignored. Ian Watt footnotes it in Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, p.40, with an acknowledgement to Edward Said. Watt considers Carlyle to be almost certainly the source:'Conrad follows this version verbatim,' and concludes that:

> Carlyle and Conrad were very different. . . Conrad is largely reflecting the much bleaker and more threatening ideological perspective on human life which followed from new developments in physical science, in evolutionary theory, and in political life during the last half of the nineteenth century.[2]

Carlyle saw the threats of a Godless, mechanistic view of the world which the nineteenth century had inherited from utilitarianism and rationalism, and advocated faith in God. Conrad saw a world in which evolutionary science was in danger of explaining away everything. In the preceding section I have shown a Conrad approaching the problem of the provenance of courage, and seriously confronting the possibility that although it may be a biological characteristic, it has little to do with an individual's character. If rationalism had dethroned God, biology had deposed altruism.

This is precisely what I wish to argue in some detail.

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1. Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Heroworship, and the Heroic in History (1840; rpt. London: Chapman and Hall, 1872). All quotations from this edition, hereafter cited as Heroes.

2. Watt pp.150-1.

It seems to me that important areas of Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness can be usefully seen as extensions of Carlyle's thought.[1] The links between this idea of the hero, and Lord Jim are obvious. They are equally plain in a negative sense, in Heart of Darkness.

There can be no question that Jim, after the success against Sherif Ali, is raised to super-human status. The natives of Patusan believe he carried the canons on his back. Kurtz, in his eloquent essay, realizes his capabilities in a true Carlylean sense.

> He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of view of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings - we approach them with the might as of a deity.' and so on, and so on. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded,' etc. etc. From that point he soared and took me with him. (p.118)

The 'etc. etc.' and 'and so on' are clear indications that Marlow's quotations are of a character that would immediately be recognizable to his listeners as sanctimonious moralizing. But the sentiment is initially from Carlyle. Here is Carlyle, discussing Odin.

> A Hero, as I say, in his own rude manner; a wise, gifted, noble-hearted man. And now if we still admire such a man beyond all others, what must these wild Norse souls, first awakened into thinking, have thought of him! To them, as yet without names for it, he was noble and noblest, Hero, Prophet, God; Wuotan, the greatest of all. (Heroes, p.25)

As Ian Watt says, Carlyle and Conrad's ideas about the saving value of work are 'very similar', (Watt, p.150),

> ...except that Marlow's word for renunciation is 'restraint', and for duty, 'fidelity'. Neither Conrad, nor Marlow, pitch their claims for these defences

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1. Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes and Hero Worship start from the premise that the exceptional man will be admired and raised to legendary status.

> at anything like so transcendental a level as Carlyle; nevertheless, the same practical virtues, in a much attenuated and largely instinctive form, constitute virtually the whole of the meagre moral armament with which Marlow confronts Africa and Kurtz. (Watt, p.151)

On the whole I would be inclined to agree with him. But Watt says nothing about the Carlylean virtue of 'sincerity', an undefined concept used by Carlyle throughout On Heroes and Hero Worship. In addition, although neither Conrad nor Marlow 'pitch' high claims for restraint and fidelity in quite the terms Carlyle does, I shall argue that Marlow, whilst recognizing himself to be no 'super-hero' does have a moral armoury that is specifically comparable to the one Carlyle extolls. Carlyle wrote On Heroes after all, not only as a discussion of heroic men, but also in order to moralize and inform us how we, the readers, could live better lives. Marlow lives close to Carlyle, but Conrad is using him to question the doctrines propounded and question their assumptions.

This question of sincerity, to which Carlyle continually refers, is not an adequate yardstick for Conrad. Carlyle praises the quality but does not pursue it to ask how one can recognize it, or how to spot society's insincerities. Wisdom is always strongest in retrospect, and this is true of Carlyle's wisdom. 'If Hero mean a sincere man, why may not every one of us be a Hero?' (Heroes, p.118).

He uses a quotation from Coleridge who, accusing his age of lack of faith, addressed them as follows: "'You do not believe,' said Coleridge, 'You only believe that you believe.'" (Heroes, p.113) For Carlyle, this is a plea for a return to useful sincerity and purity. To Conrad, it is a sad fact - that very little can be believed, and even less understood.

But whereas to Coleridge and Carlyle this is disastrous, to Conrad the very realization represents a step forward. As he writes to Cunninghame-Graham on 5th August, 1897:

> And suppose truth is just around the corner, like the elusive and useless loafer it is? I can't tell - It is impossible to know. It is impossible to know anything, tho' it is possible to believe a thing or two.
> (L. and L. I, 208)

The word 'believe' has an entirely different value in Conrad's letter, where it is not specifically Christian and deliberately opposed to knowledge. It would be preposterous to Conrad to believe in anything, since that argues unquestioning acceptance, but to believe, to determine that something may be true, and exercise intelligent scepticism is, to Conrad, to make progress and understand the world. Jim, for example, believes implicitly in what he is and what he must do. However, there would be no novel to speak of were the question as simple as this. It is because the reader is placed in the position of one who cannot 'believe' as Jim does and is attempting to find something more solid and enduring to believe in. This is a considerable advance upon Carlyle's views. Although Conrad does not value sincerity as highly as Carlyle, he concurs with him in condemning insincerity. It is the insincerity of all that the Société Anonyme Belge stands for that is repulsive to Conrad. Here is Carlyle: 'Hollowness, insincerity has to cease; sincerity of some sort has to begin' (Heroes, p.185). The insubstantiality of the 'papier-maché Mephistopheles' comes to mind here; he is truly hollow: '... and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt maybe.' (Heart of Darkness, p.81.) This is a well worn critical point and needs little emphasis here. What is important for my case at this point is that however one assesses Jim or Kurtz

it is the moments when sincerity reaches Marlow that matter in these works, and they are reactions against the hollowness of others. Marlow sides with Kurtz rather than the Manager, since it seems the less odious choice; he sides with Jim rather than, for instance, Brierley, with his vacuous egoism.

To Carlyle sincerity is essential, and inevitably the main constituent of a hero who in himself is a fine example to all. 'Hero worship . . . there is an everlasting hope in it for the management of the world.' (Heroes, p.186) This, I can see as a positive endorsement of what Jim does for his Malays, but as being quite different when applied to Kurtz.[1] And yet, it is presumably Jim's reading of 'light holiday literature' - of adventure stories - which leads him into the merchant service in the first instance, his boyish hero-worship actually led him into a position that came close to destroying him before he had the chance to become a hero. 'What a chance missed' he muses, conveniently forgetting the possible deaths of the pilgrims, all of whom are on their way to Mecca, the shrine of that other Carlylean hero, Mahomet, in Lecture 2 of his series.

Compare the following with the discussions of loyalty that have circled around Conrad:

> And what therefore is loyalty proper, the life-breath of all society, but an effluence of Hero-worship, submissive admiration for the truly great? Society is founded on Hero-worship. (Heroes, p.11)

The 'society' that Kurtz produces is based on hero-worship, but it is self-evidently not admirable - it is debased hero-worship. However, Patusan is brought out of the stone age to a state of diplomatic, but peacful wrangling because of

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1. Carlyle never seems to consider that such a man as Kurtz could exist and succeed.

the worship that Jim inspires. Conrad has taken the statement of a pre-Darwinian, and applied it to the Huxleian problems of the organization of society.

Carlyle continues: 'The man whom Nature has appointed to do great things is, first of all, furnished with that openness to Nature, which renders him incapable of being insincere.' (Heroes, p.168) Whatever is said about Jim's jump from the Patna, there can be no doubt about his sincerity when he faces Doramin at last. We, as readers, may find circumstances that work against him, but for a discussion of the nature of Jim's death, these hardly apply. Jim dies a hero in the Carlylean sense, even though previously he has not behaved in an entirely spotless manner. Conrad's point seems to be that Jim can only be a hero in the Carlylean frame of reference; he is completely sincere to himself. The question that remains lingering uneasily behind Jim's death is: can anyone accept that vision of the world any more?

'Nature' in Conrad's case is no longer a question of adding a capital letter to a dangerous word and leaving it undefined. Jim's 'nature', his mentality, is dictated by what the conditions of his birth and upbringing were - a blend of inherited characteristics and nurture - in a state of civilization rather than of nature. It was the very crux of Darwinian thinking that inherited characteristics seemed to be altered by conditions of nurture, although the precise implications of this were never assessed by any of the major figures of the time. Darwin's The Effect of Domestication upon Plants and Animals is inconclusive, and firmly avoids considerations of tendencies in man. By the time Conrad is writing, it is evident that Carlyle's statement is too vague

to reveal a useful and definite meaning. His 'Great Things' could, after all, be achievements of good or of evil. Carlyle, at every stage, assumes goodness will prevail.

It is as well here to pause and realize that the resemblances between Carlyle and Conrad are not subsumable under coherent categories: my intention here is to show that areas of Carlyle's work have been adopted and expanded by Conrad, and that an itemization of them will do less injustice than an attempt to show a conscious and systematic attack by Conrad on the earlier writer.

Carlyle is interested in the hero as a product of his age, he says that men will try to deflate the hero's achievements: 'He was "the creature of the Time" they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything. . .' (Heroes, p.11) A statement such as this is profoundly ironic when applied to Lord Jim, since Jim is not a creature of his own culture's time, but he is a true hero when taken back in time, to Patusan. There, he fits the Carlyle formula closely; as does Kurtz, transported back to 'prehistoric' time in the Congo: 'The first man that began to think in this planet of ours, he was the beginner of all.' (Heroes, p.31) Jim is, as I have shown (p.73), the first man in Patusan since Stein, who begins to think in certain productive ways, in civilized ways. Carlyle's conclusion then is as follows, and it is one he is fond of repeating: 'The history of the world is but the Biography of great men' (Heroes, p.27). This frequently repeated sentiment is difficult to emphasize correctly in its relevance to Conrad since it is certainly true that the History of Patusan is the history of its great men, and that Jim's lifestory becomes in effect the history of that amount

of time in the annals of Patusan. Jim is Patusan. When he arrives it is threatened with destruction by civil wars, most of the houses burned shells. Once he is dead, the political balance is completely destroyed, civil war seems inevitable again, and Patusan as an organic, growing town, can be assumed no longer to exist. This turns the novel into a history not just of one man, not just of the archetypal human morality, but of morality dawning upon a previously chaotic society. Jim, as 'the youngest human being in existence' (Lord Jim, p.219) having crawled out of the mud of the creek, like an amphibian emerging from the primeval slime, has evolved to full human status, a status that includes morality. This story is not just about one man, living to the level of 'sincere' heroism, but of a whole society evolving to an ethical level. I think it can be seen as that whether or not one accepts the extension that Conrad seems to be putting on Carlyle's ideas, and whether or not one accepts that there may well be a direct debt owed by the one to the other. Even if this is demonstrably not the case, Carlyle's ideas are invaluable by way of comparison.

Carlyle is eager, on every convenient occasion, to refute the idea of a mechanistic universe, and places the blame firmly on the Eighteenth Century by saying:

> For it is false altogether, what the last sceptical century taught us, that this world is a steam engine. There is a God in this world (Heroes, p.183.)

Again, elsewhere he refers to: 'The machine of the Universe' (Heroes, p.19). In his discussion of Bentham and Utilitarianism (pp.159-161) he refers to the machine of the world only in order to deny the usefulness of seeing the world as such.

Against this can be put Conrad's two letters referring to the 'knitting machine' of the Universe.[1] Conrad certainly did see a mechanistic system in the workings of the world, but his tone in comparing it to a knitting machine is ironic, as I suggested in my introductory section (pp.15-18). Conrad is taking a cliché of the mode ish fin-de-siècle melancholy of the nineties as his method of expression. The fact that he uses the accepted cliché of the day ironically is a sure indication that he would question Carlyle's use of such an idea. Indeed, Carlyle was one of those who helped to spread the idea in the first instance, since he used it to support his arguments that tend to insist on the need for faith and on the desire to find a Messiah, and use this to counterbalance a world that seemed increasingly dehumanized and sceptical. Conrad realizes that Carlyle is completely obsolete. If heroism is in existence at all, he seems to argue throughout Lord Jim, it is a fantasm, something conferred upon one by gullible Malays or Congo natives, when the reality is far from heroic. To realize this is to 'live' but paradoxically it is also to be an exile, 'utterly out of it'. In the following of this realization there is, strangely enough, 'courage' - the new heroes are not the supermen of Carlyle, but those who realize that there is no possibility of heroism. Being a hero depends upon where you are (Tom Lingard goes back to England and disappears completely) and on a set of biological circumstances that make you who you are. Within this Conrad sees only one possible set of free

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1. L. and L. to Cunninghame-Graham 20.12.97, I, 215-216 and again 14.1.98, I, 222.

actions, which are at variance with Carlyle's ideas of 'sincerity', and this exists in realizing the potential soullessness of the universe and having the courage to admit the full implications. Lord Jim is a tale, it seems to me, that hinges upon Jim himself achieving hero-status, of becoming the integrated Carlyle Hero, but of the implicit rejection of his achievement since it is no longer possible for Marlow to believe as Jim believes. Marlow's story is about his courage in facing the possibility that Heroism in the traditional sense cannot exist. But Carlyle reveals further aspects of his thinking that are unacceptable to Conrad:

> I esteem the modern error, that all goes by self-interest and the checking and balancing of greedy knaveries, and that in short there is nothing divine whatever in the association of men, a still more despicable error, than that of a 'divine right' in people called Kings. I say, find me the true Könning, King or Able-man, and he has divine right over me. (Heroes, p.184)

This curious blend of cultural primitivism and adoration of the strongest - which reduces the complexities of modern political leadership to the idealized figure of an 'Able-man' - incidentally pushes aside, as it were, the main concerns dealt with in the previous chapters, namely egoism and self-interest, and the nature of heroism.

The Malays of Patusan do in fact respond to a logic very similar to this, in that they see Jim's evident abilities, and make him supreme arbitrator, even over such domestic problems as divorce. Yet Conrad is extending once again what Carlyle only outlines. Carlyle is intent on stating that there is more to existence than the social mechanism, and that more is God. Conrad takes the possibility of godliness

(as Carlyle sees it), as merely a delusion, although a very human one. The Malays have turned Jim from a prodigy into a god. But this, in itself, is not the most important issue. In Jim the prognosis for the community is favourable, whilst he lives; in Kurtz the possibilities are rather less comforting, although both are 'gods'. The 'divine' attribute that Conrad wishes to direct us towards is the 'association of men' - the understanding of Jim and Kurtz by Marlow, and the understanding of what that rapport means within Marlow. In this way Conrad hopes to direct our attention towards the frailties and illusions of mankind, and by uncovering them achieve real understanding, and courage. As Marlow comes to an understanding of Jim and Kurtz, the reader comes to an understanding of them through Marlow, which is arguably an understanding only of Marlow. In this way the action of discovery within the novel is duplicated by an action undertaken by the reader, who finds himself forced into the 'association of men', just as the wedding guest is collared by the ancient mariner. What the mariner's story may mean is too vast a topic for the mariner or his audience even to understand. But by the end of the tale they are both one before one of the great mysteries of the world. The reader of Conrad is left trying to fathom what it is he has learned and seen. By reliving, imaginatively, Marlow's experience with him the reader is furnished with a moral experience, an education that he must come to terms with himself. Except that now he knows he is not the only one.

This can be seen again in the following extract. Carlyle is talking about the nature of truth, using the Puritans as

an example:

> The nakedest, savagest reality, I say, is preferable to any semblance, however dignified. Besides, it will clothe itself with due resemblance by and by, if it be real. No fear of that; actually no fear at all. Given the living man, there will be found clothes for him; he will find himself clothes. But the suit-of-clothes pretending that it is both clothes and man --! (Heroes, p.190)

This could quite easily be taken for a description of Kurtz and the Harlequin. It also has resemblances to what Marlow says when he sees the Congolese on the shore, that he is relieved to see some 'straightforward savagery' after the veiled threatening nature of the Manager. This savagery he sees as 'truth - truth stripped of its cloak of time'. (p.97) To Conrad, the truth, unclothed, is frightening, but genuine and yet easily perverted, like the 'dog in breeches' (p.98) cannibal who attends the boiler. The clothing simile is cogent. The cannibal is reduced to a 'dog' made ridiculous by clothing. Again, Marlow comments on clothing 'Principles won't do. Aquisitions, clothes, pretty rags - rags that would fly off at the first good shake' (p.97). The clothing of ideas, of overlaid 'civilized' trappings, is either ridiculous or inadequate. Carlyle's image of truth is of something far more militant.

Truth, for Carlyle, can even be disseminated with the aid of untruth. He discusses Napoleon's 'lies' and says that the expression: '"false as a bulletin" coined at the time, was attributable to Napoleon's policy of issuing propaganda statements to his troops.' (Heroes, p.219) 'Yet Napoleon had a sincerity', he insists. Could this be comparable to Kurtz? I rather think so, since although Carlyle sees Napoleon as living insincerely his lies are for the good of his cause and

the success of what he believes in. It could in turn be applied to Marlow's lies, committed with the best of intentions towards the Intended. But his reaction is far from anything that could be associated with Napoleon. Marlow is not the kind of man who can transgress a code of behaviour without serious qualms. Napoleon traded on the illusions of his troops, but to Marlow the fact that there are illusions that have to be protected, and by his insincerity, is shocking. But then the illusions are so completely different. All soldiers are capable of facing official evasions, but could the Intended have faced the Horror and remained the Victorian woman? I doubt it. Napoleon is the last, and most modern Hero Carlyle mentions, and he is a figure who reappears in much late Conrad. Had Conrad read this work, as I believe he did, this section would have had special interest to him, and I am correct in my comparison here.

Napoleon was of interest to Conrad in other ways too. As Frederick Karl points out (Conrad, The Three Lives pp.58-9), many of Conrad's ancestors had fought in the Napoleonic campaigns, and Conrad's admiration for their heroism and useless patriotism was intense and ambivalent: 'both sympathetic and repulsive' (p.59). He admires their courage, but is appalled by their recklessness - the recklessness of Conrad's own fanatical father that killed his wife, himself, and nearly did the same for young Conrad. Karl discusses Conrad's turbulent childhood at great and revealing length.

There are other points of similarity that bear investigation; the following extract is from Carlyle.

> Why do not you too get up and speak; promulgate your system, found your sect? 'Truly,' he will answer, 'I am continent of my thought hitherto; happily I have yet had the ability to keep it in me, no compulsion strong enough to speak it. My 'system' is not for promulgation first of all; it is for serving myself to live by. That is the great purpose of it for me. And then the'honour'? Alas, yes - but as Cato said of the statue: So many statues in that Forum of yours, may it not be better if they ask, Where is Cato's statue? (Heroes, pp.206-207)

The rhetorical question attributed to Cato can only lead to one reply - namely that statues are not everything, and there are more silent 'heroes' than are ever commemorated. It is more fitting that their contribution should be noticed in this way, since Fame is not the reward of all.

The specific comparison I wish to make here is with one of the 'heroes' of Lord Jim, the aging French Lieutenant who is in charge of the towing on board the Patna. Carlyle, in the extract above, admires Cato's 'sincerity', and it is obvious that Conrad admires the straightforward and honest loyalty of the French lieutenant - but only up to a point. Conrad does not set the absolute trust in this sort of figure that Carlyle would seem to. Certainly, the Lieutenant is one of the 'silent' men Carlyle admires. Conrad describes him as being like a massive, quiet priest.

> He reminded you of one of those snuffy, quiet village priests, into whose ears are poured the sins, the sufferings, the remorse of peasant generations, on whose faces the placid and simple expression is like a veil thrown over the mystery of pain and distress. (Lord Jim, p.139).

He is: 'one of those uncounted lives that are buried without drums and trumpets under the foundations of monumental successes'. (pp.143-144) This corresponds fairly closely to Carlyle's praise for:

> The noble silent men, scattered here and there, each in his department, silently thinking, silently working; whom no Morning Newspaper makes mention of!

> They are the salt of the Earth. A country that has none or few of these is in a bad way. (Heroes, p.206)

But the appeal to the 'Salt of the Earth' is too easy - Conrad sums up the French Lieutenant as an outmoded specimen bound for extinction.

> I saw his chin sunk on his breast, the clumsy folds of his coat, his clasped hands, his motheaten pose, so curiously suggestive of his having been simply left there. (p.143)

This relic from another age does in fact 'get up and speak' in Carlyle's terms, and speaks exactly as Carlyle imagines he would. Compare the sentiments implicit in the following:

> 'I am continent of my thought. . .' (Heroes, p.206)
>
> 'One is always afraid. . . One may talk, but. . .' (p.146)
>
> 'My "system" is not for promulgation first of all; it is for serving myself to live by'. . . (Heroes, p.207)
>
> '"Take me, for instance -- I have made my proofs. Eh bien! I who am speaking to you now, once. . .". . . I found he did not mean to proceed with the personal anecdote".' (p.147)

The Lieutenant is certainly not talkative - and he has his own quiet system to live by, and he does not ask for his own statue in his honour, but he does believe in honour:

> But the honour - the honour, monsieur! The honour. . . that is real - that is! . . .when the honour is gone - ah ça! par exemple - I can offer no opinion - because - monsieur - I know nothing of it. (p.148)

It is this emphasis on honour which has changed. The Lieutenant is undoubtedly the 'silent' unsung hero of Carlyle, but Conrad has taken him one stage further. Whereas Cato's 'honour' exists in his integrity of thought which does not demand the conventional response of statues ('monumental successes' in Conrad), it is at least complete integrity. The Lieutenant, however, sees honour as merely being in 'the eyes of others' (p.147) in looking the part. This is why

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Conrad makes him stand up 'as a startled ox might scramble up from the grass'. (p.148) - The comparison is scarcely flattering. It is not surprising that 'at the end of an hour we had done with each other for life' (p.138) because Marlow has found out the Lieutenant's weak point, that he still uses the illusion of honour to drive himself on to do deeds that he has acknowledged frighten him, and his honour is based in vanity: 'the eyes of others'.

It would seem from the closeness of this comparison and the verbal echoes, that Conrad had read and remembered passages from Carlyle's widely read and influential pamphlet, and that once again he was extending what he read. I am inclined to think that Carlyle may have had an even more fundamental effect. Walter Houghton makes a useful point.

> It was Carlyle, however, who became the leading advocate of the writer as prophet. In his popular Heroes and Hero-Worship, the man of letters as well as the poet has his place, and a high one, he is 'our most important modern person.' He utters forth 'the inspired soul of him. . . I say inspired; for what we call 'originality', 'sincerity', 'genius', the heroic quality we have no good name for, signifies that'. (VF of Mind, p. 153. The Carlyle quotation is from lecture V of Heroes.)

The obvious comparison here is with Kurtz' rhetorical, moving pamphlet, and its sudden and brutal addenda. Kurtz is a vicious perversion of a Carlylean figure, a hero, but without sufficient internal belief. Kurtz becomes the 'god' himself, or rather, a devil. In addition, Carlyle is fascinated by the hero who is not naturally eloquent. For example, he cites Cromwell: 'The Prophet who could not speak'. (p.201)

Kurtz certainly could speak, and excited the admiration of Marlow, and the devotion of the Russian. Yet Carlyle is

contrasting the sincerity that is tongue-tied with the sincerity that eventually becomes articulate and persuasive. Lord Jim never becomes articulate in this way. His letter to Marlow has to be interpreted largely from its ink blotches, not through its words. The same opposition is seen by both Conrad and Carlyle, as is the opposition of sincerity and falsehood within one man.

It would seem to me that more can be made of this idea of the hero as an orator, since Conrad obviously believed that if he was rewriting various thinkers of his age, he was achieving an important and didactic task. There are, I suggest, grounds for thinking of Conrad as responding to Carlyle's definition of the hero as the man of Letters, and endeavouring to live up to it. He continually looks not just at learning and scientific conjecture, but actually tests them. As Carlyle says: 'A Hero, as I repeat, has this first distinction, which indeed we may call first and last, the Alpha and Omega of his Whole Heroism, That he looks through the shows of things into things.' (Heroes, pp.50-51) If a verbal echo is needed to re-enforce the point, one has to look no further than The Secret Agent: 'Mrs. Verloc, who always refrained from looking deep into things, was compelled to look into the very bottom of this thing.' (p.267) But Winnie physiologically cannot look into it, she has a seizure, she is not a hero.[1] The readers are brought to the 'thing' to confront it if they care to, and by implication the author

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1. Similarly, the Harlequin's words are memorable here. 'It was in general. He made me see things - things.' (Heart of Darkness, p.127) Like Winnie, however, whatever it is the Harlequin sees he is entirely unable to explain or even describe.

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is the educator of heroes, and one himself.

Of course, this may seem absurdly grandiloquent; but not if one pauses and realizes that Conrad's 'heroes' are nothing like Carlyle's supermen. These latter day versions are far calmer and more philosophic.

If one returns to the question of 'sincerity' and considers the ability of seeing 'into things', there can be seen a useful application to Marlow's puzzling statement about lies. 'You know I hate, detest and can't bear a lie'. . . (p.82) This quotation has been fought over at great length by many writers. I would suggest that Marlow doesn't actually know quite what he means - he is all too ready to put down his disgust to 'temperament'. It begins to make sense if we assume that the word 'lie' is a convenient blanket term for a large number of falsenesses in the world - just as Marlow's 'unspeakable' is made to answer for so much. The 'lie' is roughly equivalent to Carlyle's 'insincerity'. As I am arguing here, however, that 'insincerity' (Self-deception? Hypocrisy? Deception of others?) is an unexamined concept, and that in the course of these two works Conrad asks serious and disturbing questions, it is not unlikely that Marlow's horror of 'lies' is almost as needling a spot as the French Lieutenant's about 'honour'. It is the areas both feel strongly about and ultimately shy away from that attract the reader's attention. And it is these areas that Conrad is involved in probing.

At risk of labouring the point, I add a quotation from Walter E. Houghton:

> Though it has always existed and is still alive today - too much so under western eyes - hero worship is a nineteenth century phenomenon. At no other time

> would it have been called 'the basis of all possible good, religious or social, for mankind'. (Carlyle: Heroes and Hero Worship, Lecture 4, p.123. Cf. also Essays 4, 24)[1]

Conrad is undoubtedly attacking this school of thought, which, as Houghton continues, was still very much alive in the late nineteenth century: 'In the fifty years after 1830 the worship of the hero was a major factor in English culture.'[2] To Conrad, courage, that is intelligent courage, seems only to exist when one has deflated all illusions, especially that of courageousness.

My purpose in this section has been to suggest a close correspondence between Conrad and Carlyle, and demonstrate that the later writer knew the former's work.

Carlyle is of particular interest because he is commonly regarded as having had a certain amount of effect upon British Colonial thinking, and was certainly a powerful exponent of the territorial imperative. 'The English are to him a sort of chosen people whose special mission is to throw open the waste lands of the world.'[3] He is, therefore, a fitting adversary for Conrad to take issue with on this topic of heroism, colonies and godliness. Moreover, Carlyle tended to praise the John Bull type of Englishman rather inordinately, and here one could consider the following passages carefully.

> How one loves to see the burly figure of him, this thick-skinned, seemingly opaque, perhaps sulky, almost stupid Man of Practise, pitted against some light adroit Man of Theory, all equipped with clear logic, and able anywhere to give you why for wherefore![4]

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1. The Victorian Frame of Mind, p.305.
2. ibid., p.310.
3. C.A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism (London: Heinemann, 1960), p.29.
4. Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present (London: Everyman, 1843), Bk.III, Ch.V, p.153.

Could this not be taken, at first glance, for the central opposition in Lord Jim between Jim, one of the 'good stupid kind' who certainly exhibits sulkiness, and the more mentally agile Marlow? But if Conrad is echoing this, he has altered the context, slightly - the men are not opposites, neither are they 'pitted against' each other, unless one considers Jim's initial desire to fight Marlow over the misunderstanding of the 'cur' in the courtroom. Is it possible that Conrad is showing Jim as behaving and reacting in response to an imagined tableau by Carlyle, the man who helped to shape others' attitudes? If so, suddenly the literary example springs to life before the reader - and the outcome is by no means as straightforward as Carlyle's example would seem to hint. However this may be, it must be accepted that there is considerable overlap between Conrad and Carlyle, and that they see the same processes at work, although they differ as to the precise outcome of these methods, in the world.

Conrad, of course, could hardly have been ignorant of Carlyle's doctrine. Basil Willey comments in Nineteenth Century Studies in the following terms:

> Carlyle was a man with a message, if ever there was one, and the message was essentially that of the great Romantic poets and thinkers, applied to the conditions of England in the days of Chartism and dismal science. He is neglected now, but his influence in his own lifetime was enormous.[1]

That Carlyle was one of the major figures of his age is endorsed also by R.H. Hutton, writing at a time closer to Conrad's own probable contact with Carlyle: 'for many years before his death Carlyle was to England what his great hero, Goethe, long was to Germany. . .'[2] These references to Germany,

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1. Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), p.102.

2. R.H. Hutton, Essays on some of the Modern Guides of English Thought in Matters of Faith (London: Macmillan, 1887), p.1.

Romanticism and heroism must surely call to mind Stein's analysis of Jim as 'romantic', and the chance he provides for Jim to become a hero. There are rather too many coincidences to be merely accidental, I feel. If it is accepted that Conrad knew Carlyle's work it is also quite possible that he knew Spencer's critique of it, in The Study of Sociology (1873).[1] This work, which achieved great popularity and was printed in the popular International Science Series of King and Co. [Paternoster Row], attacks 'the great-man-theory of history' (p.32) describing it as 'an instinct not very remotely allied to that of village gossip' (p.33). Spencer sees this approach as entirely inadequate, and he continues with withering sarcasm:

> Being already fond of hearing about people's sayings and doings, it is pleasant news that to understand the course of civilization, you have only to read diligently the lives of distinguished men. (p.33)

This, I would contend, is exactly the temptation for the casual reader of Lord Jim. It can be read as an adventure story about a man bringing civilization to a remote spot, and his death, but the true issues about civilization lie at a different level. It is the mistake of the Harlequin that he becomes Kurtz's 'disciple' and so cannot understand his significance, although he does know the story of activities. Spencer explains his own approach to Sociology in far broader terms, and terms that are similar to Conrad's.

> What Biography is to Anthropology, History is to Sociology - History, I mean, as commonly conceived. . . . the sayings and doings that make up the ordinary account of a man's life. (p.58)

Conrad - as I have shown at length - used History culled from his own experience and travel books, in order to shape his

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1. Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology, 2nd ed. (1873; London, King and Co., 1874). Quotations are from this edition.

tales, his biographies, and ensure their authenticity, and he takes care that the evidence he presents should also harmonize with the anthropological theories he has adopted, and is exploring. Next to this quotation of Spencer's, Conrad's comments on Henry James are seen to share certain similarities:

> Henry James claims for the novelist the standing of the historian as the only adequate one, as for himself and before his audience. I think that the claim cannot be contested, and that the position is unassailable. Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting - or second hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass.[1]

Although here the definition of 'history' appears to be different, each author shares a concern for the raw materials, the data of information, and for the fact that something more important is being achieved than the collation of facts. The facts are only relevant when placed in a coherent theoretical framework that gives them meaning. Conrad is being flippantly glib when he claims 'thus fiction is nearer truth' - this is only true if the theoretical framework is sound, to give the facts direction.

What I wish to show here is that Conrad's attitude to Carlylean analysis is quite likely to be Spencerian. Spencer, after all, does not reject the theories of Carlyle out of hand, he recognizes that they represent a very natural tendency in man.

> The notion, widely accepted in name though not consistently acted upon, that social phenomena differ from phenomena of most other kinds as being under special providence, we find to be entirely discredited by its expositors; nor, when looked at, did the great-man-theory of social affairs prove to be more tenable. Besides

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1. NLL, 'Henry James', pp.16-17. Emphasis added.

> finding that both these views, rooted as they are in ways of thinking natural to primitive man, would not bear criticism. . . (The Study of Sociology, p.385)

The 'special providence' tended to assume, as in the cases of Huxley and Drummond, that altruism would be recognized as good. In Heart of Darkness the 'great-man-theory' is inverted - special providence has sent Kurtz, who is evil, and thus not quite so providential as could be desired, but who nevertheless does become a 'great man' of sorts, because 'primitive thinking' accepts him. If one wished to find a model for Conrad's approach to Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, I suggest that Spencer's critique of Carlyle might well be a likely candidate, since they both attack the same preconceptions using similar methods.

My purpose has been to demonstrate not that Conrad had read Carlyle, or that he had read Spencer, but to show that he had read both, or was at least very familiar with both sides of the question. Carlyle's theories were enormously influential, and Spencer quite obviously felt he had to attack them in order to clear a space for a study of sociology. It was this conflict of the old, accepted view and the more recent scientific view that, I contend, Conrad was acquainted with. These are the two opposite sides of the ethical argument, and incidentally two entirely different ways of apprehending the nature of society. The 'special providence' Spencer refers to occurs again, twenty years later, in Huxley's assumption that goodness will be recognized and endorsed, demonstrating that the same issues were by no means dead by the time Conrad would have been in a position to read Spencer.

Stepping back from this particular argument of evolutionism, and the various stances its representatives took up, it

may be helpful to examine other, quite different, doctrines, that several years later altered the entire discussion of ethics and evolution. These works, by contrast, help to show how closely Conrad follows the school of which Spencer, Drummond and Huxley are the main figures.

Section IV

Two major works in the discussion of morality and evolution deserve attention, namely Westermarck's The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas (2 vols. 1906)[1] and, published the same year L.T. Hobhouse's Morals in Evolution (2 vols.).[2] Both are exceedingly full and lengthy works, but they deviate quite markedly from the considerations dealt with up to this point. Westermarck discusses the origin of altruism, and compares not one, but three theories of 'maternal affection' (II, 186). He is unimpressed by Espinas' part of self' (II, 186) theory of affection for the young, and by Bain's explanation of the 'delight of embrace' (II, 187). Although he rejects neither of these entirely, nor Spencer's 'love of weak and helpless',[3] he goes on to list so many more examples of primitive awe and religious and ethical feeling, as to make a single theory of maternal affection seem hopelessly naïve. A short list may show just how far Westermarck has advanced the discussion. He attributes ethical values to their expression in primitive gods, and states: 'The Hindus

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1. Edward Westermarck, The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas (2 vols. London, Macmillan, 1906).

2. Morals in Evolution: A Study of Comparative Ethics (2 vols. London: Chapman and Hall, 1906).

3. H. Spencer. Principles of Psychology, II, 623.

venerate persons remarkable for any extraordinary qualities, great valour, virtue, or even vice.'[1] Here, in miniature, is the entire objection Conrad has been making to Carlyle's arguments about benevolent super-heroes. Westermarck continues to discuss the worship of the dead, and comments 'Mr. Spencer and Mr. Grant Allen even regard the worship of the dead as "the root of all religion".'[2] He then promptly deflates that argument by adding worship of 'medicines, intoxicants, stimulants' (11.591), thunder (11.592), startling events (11.593) and animals (11.596).

Exactly the same tendency is observable in Hobhouse's work, in which parental instinct is treated very differently to anything Drummond had imagined. Here is Westermarck again:

> ...biology does not lead us to assume an original egoism or self-regard out of which altruism evolved as a secondary result. Egoism is something at once too deliberate and too limited to be primitive. What we infer alike from biological principles and from observed facts is rather an unreflective, possibly a quite unconscious impulse growing by hereditary into a determinate instinct producing responses adapted to the maintenance of the stock by means of the maintenance of the life of the agent and its young. (II, 259)

In short, things evolved that way because they survived best under such conditions of parental care. The argument is additionally persuasive since it refuses to make the error of discussing an evolved attribute, such as 'egoism' in a primitive context. The implication is straightforward - 'egoism' has been adapting and changing in the same way as every other product of natural selection. In its original form it was 'instinct', and therefore non-moral.

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1. Westermarck, op.cit., II, 590.

2. II, 591. Westermarck's footnote here indicates: Grant Allen, The Evolution of the Idea of God (London: 1897), pp.91,433,438; and Herbert Spencer, Principles of Psychology (London: 1879-96), I, 411.

Hobhouse completely out-argues Carlyle almost as easily as Westermarck does, as he describes the primitive society's creation of deities:

> His theory of the world process, its God, if it finds the solution in a God, is an embodiment, so to say, of the categories which it finds most satisfactory (Hobhouse, II, 266)

Presumably this embodiment can be either good, or vicious, or something indeterminate. And, in any case, this is certainly not as straight forward as Carlyle's vision since the 'god' can be magic, or animism, rather than an exceptional human being, as he explains (II, 266ff.).

These two anthropologists are completely at variance with all the major issues that seem to be under discussion in Conrad's work, but this is to Conrad's credit since he is, as I hope I have shown, challenging the inadequacies of the earlier writers.

Section V

Equipped with the knowledge of the extent of Conrad's reading, and the preoccupations that lie behind it, it becomes necessary to ask at what point Conrad became interested in evolutionism and the study of ethics.

It is an exceedingly risky business to try and establish just when an author may have read a certain work or works. In an unpublished doctoral thesis, Redmond O'Hanlon has shown with exhaustive examples that Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands contained debts to Darwin and Wallace, and many others. But apparently there are no debts of any substantial kind to ethical topics. Could not part of Conrad's difficulty in continuing The Rescue stem from the influence of his reading on ethical topics?

The strange homogeneity of Conrad's early work and its central concerns deserve some preparatory scrutiny before one can establish the nature of any change that may have come upon Conrad. It can be done best and most briefly, I think, by comparing the attitudes Conrad and others had to his fiction at the time.

There are three versions of the story of the acceptance of Almayer's Folly by Unwin, two by Conrad and one by Garnett. Frederick Karl has collected them all together,[1] and they are worth examining. His letter to Marguerite Poradowska, is, I feel, rather evasive, since he stresses the smallness of the initial payment, the possibility of the book not being a

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1. Joseph Conrad, The Three Lives, pp.336-337.

success, and then the promise of a 'much better check' later. It would seem to me that in writing this letter to his favourite aunt and an already established authoress, he is trying to pass on his delight at success, and yet is most anxious to forestall criticism should the book fail to sell. Here is the extract:

> At first the two readers of the firm received me and complimented me effusively (were they, by chance, mocking me?). Then they led me to the presence of the head to speak of business. He told me frankly if I wished to take a part in the risk of publication, I would participate in the profits. Otherwise, I get £20 and the French rights. I chose this latter alternative. 'We are paying you very little', he told me,'but, remember, dear Sir, that you are unknown and your book will appeal to a very limited public. Then there is the question of taste. Will the public like it? We are risking something also. We will publish you in a good-looking volume at six shillings, and you know whatever we bring out always receives serious critical attention in the literary journals. . . We will print immediately, so that you can make corrections, and we will send the 'proof sheets' to Mme. Poradowska before Christmas. Write something shorter - same type of thing - for our Pseudonym Library, and if it suits us, we will be very happy to give you a much better check.[1]

The second extract has to be the far more accurate one, I feel, even though written some years after the event. I say this because Garnett was still alive, and the details had to be more accurate since he was present, at the time, and moreover would certainly read what Conrad wrote. And indeed, it agrees with the evidence Conrad placed in the Author's Note to An Outcast of the Islands, where 'The message was essentially the same: "You have the style, you have the temperament: why not write another?"'[2] Here is the second version.

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1. 10 Oct.,1894, Autograph Letter, signed, Yale library.
2. Author's Note, An Outcast of the Islands, p.viii.

> The first time I saw Edward (Conrad related) I dared not open my mouth. I had gone to meet him to hear what he thought of Almayer's Folly. I saw a young man enter the room. That can not be Edward so young as that, I thought. He began to talk. Oh yes! It was Edward. I had no longer doubt. But I was too frightened to speak. But this is what I want to tell you, how he made me go on writing. If he had said to me, "Why not go on writing?" I should have been paralyzed. I could not have done it. But he said to me, "You have written one book. It is very good. Why not write another?" Do you see what a difference that made? Another? Yes, I would do that. I could do that. Many others I could not. Another I could. That is how Edward made me go on writing. That is what made me an author. (Garnett, p.3)

Garnett's own account is amusing, but has a slightly different emphasis. He is obviously bemused by Conrad's mannerisms. But the same central point recurs, the question of the next book:

> My memory is of seeing a dark-haired man, short but extremely graceful in his nervous gestures, with brilliant eyes, now narrowed and penetrating, now soft and warm, with a manner alert yet caressing, whose speech was ingratiating, guarded, or brusk turn by turn. I had never seen before a man so masculinely keen yet so femininely positive. The conversation between our host [Unwin] and Conrad for some time was halting and jerky... Conrad, extremely polite, grew nervously brusque in his responses, and kept shifting his feet one over the other, so that one became fascinated in watching the flash of his pointed, patent leather shoes. The climax came unexpectedly when in answer to Mr. Unwin's casual but significant reference to "your next book", Conrad threw himself back on the broad leather lounge and in a tone that put a clear cold space between himself and his hearers, said, "I don't expect to write again. It is likely that I shall soon be going to sea". (Garnett,pp.3-4).

The vital phrases, to me, are those which speak of 'another book', since An Outcast is precisely that, another version of essentially the same story, with the same preoccupations, largely. Ironically, as Karl points out, Conrad already had 'another' under way. The stalling reply Garnett records could quite easily be Conrad's evasiveness, or his wish not to be taken over by one publisher who might not give him the best price. But if Conrad had already started An Outcast, why is he so willing to pass credit for it to Garnett? 'Another?

Yes, I would do that. I could do that. Many others could I not.' I feel that by giving this compliment to Garnett (and Garnett's own version seems to hint that at the time, for whatever reasons, Garnett himself is convinced Conrad had little intention to write again), Conrad is making a disguised point of self-evaluation. An Outcast is substantially from the same mould as the earlier novel, a different version of the same song, if one prefers. Why, then, could Conrad not turn out a third novel with relative ease? Bernard Meyer has suggested in his analysis of The Rescuer manuscript that it was the portion dealing with women that tended to hold Conrad up. Given what I have already shown to lie behind Conrad's assessment of feminine altruism it seems likely that The Rescuer began to escape from him because of his inability to deal with the bases of the human motivation he wished to depict. His perception of these motivations had changed - to such an extent that his next major work is the Nigger of the 'Narcissus', which is an entirely different mode.

Conrad was fully conscious of this repetitiveness in his early work. He abandoned an early version of The Arrow of Gold, The Sisters, in early 1896[1] only on Garnett's advice, and seemed reluctant to do so. Here is is his letter to Garnett, dated 23.3.96, in which Conrad describes his abandonment of The Sisters as follows:

> I surrender to the infamous spirit which you have awakened within me. . . You had better help, O Gentle and Murderous Spirit! You have killed my cherished aspiration, and now must come along to burythe corpse decently. I suggest The Rescuer. (L. and L., I, 186.)

The implication is that Garnett wants him to continue writing

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1. Cf. Watt, p.74.

exotic Malayan stories, and he does not particularly wish to do so. Furthermore, when writing of his works in late 1896 he seems to regard them as magazine fodder. Here he is writing to Edward Garnett about 'the Lagoon': 'a tricky thing with the usual forests, river - stars - wind, sunrise, and so on - and lots of secondhand Conradese in it. I would bet a penny they will take it.'[1] 'They' - The Cornhill Magazine - did accept it. The observation that has to be made is that Conrad feels by this stage that he is busy still working the same sort of material, the same sort of way, and it is unsatisfactory.

By September he has found himself involved in The Nigger. His tone changes, it is his 'Beloved Nigger' and he writes triumphantly to Garnett. 'I think it will do! It will do!'[2] There is no denying the sense of new purpose behind the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' - it is a declaration of direction as much as anything. Above all it is a break from the rôle Garnett had made him play.

But all did not run smoothly. Conrad can still be seen as generally disillusioned with his work after The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'. Still stuck with that unwieldly monument to his obsolete mode of thinking, The Rescue, he admits openly to Blackwood that the novel is journalistic:

> Of course the paraphernalia of the story are hackneyed. The yacht, the shipwreck, the pirates, the coast - all this has been used times out of number; whether it has been done, that's another question. Be it as it may I think rightly or wrongly I can present it in a fresh way. At any rate as I wish to obtain the effect of reality in my story and also wanted the woman - that kind of woman - there was no other way to bring her there but in the time-honoured yacht. Nothing impossible shall happen.[3]

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1. Garnett, p.47.
2. ibid.,p.67
3. 16 Sept. 1897, Blackwood, p.10.

Everything about this letter shows a weariness with the work in hand, and a conviction of its vacuousness. Not an impression guaranteed to keep a publisher sanguine as to the quality of the work concerned. It seems that Conrad still had no real central point upon which he could hang his story. He comments moodily on Stephen Crane's impressionism to Edward Garnett:

> He is the master of his reader to the very last line - then - apparently for no reason at all - he seems to let go his hold. It is as if he had gripped you with greasy fingers. This grip is strong but while you feel the pressure on your flesh you slip out from his hand - much to your own surprise.[1]

Some days later he writes to Galsworthy in terms that seem to suggest that perhaps after all, this insubstantial impressionism may be the only aspect of human life that can be written about, when he says, 'most things and most natures have nothing but a surface'.[2] He may, of course, be adopting a merely placatory mood to Galsworthy, but his attitude to Garnett is interesting because it implies there is more to be expected from literature than this. The 'more' is, I have argued, his anthropological reading.

The Nigger of the'Narcissus' is certainly a tale with a direction. It is an investigation of the dual ideas of sympathy and duty, set within the finite context of a voyage that must inevitably end. Conrad has drawn his events from personal experience, set them in a finite context and is concerned to examine a relatively defined ethical area. The Rescue is precisely the opposite of this, as Conrad himself lamented:

> I don't see the end of it. It's very ridiculous and very awful. Now I've got all my people together I don't

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1. L. and L., I, 211. 5 Dec. 1897.

2. ibid, I, 224. In response to Galsworthy's From the Four Winds (1897), 16 Jan.1898.

> know what to do with them. The progressive episodes of the story will not emerge from the chaos of my sensations. I feel nothing clearly . . . Other writers have some starting point. Something to catch hold of. (L. and L., I, 192)

The events lack coherence to him, and he quickly slides in this letter into a generalized despair at not having a 'starting point'. This is certainly the case in The Rescue, although not true of The Nigger. I would suggest that Conrad's plaint comes as a result of feeling forced (by Garnett and by Blackwood, to whom he owed The Rescue) to continue working along a line he considered sterile and obsolete, and which he found undermining to his own 'impressions and sensations' which have now 'all faded' as a result of his enforced attention to The Rescue. This letter comes close to being a reproach and an accusation that Garnett is to blame for Conrad's distress.

It is my belief that Conrad could only write in this fashion because he felt himself coming close to some sort of discovery about humanity. He was still writing melodramatically to Cunninghame-Graham, but the terms of his letter are worthy of note, because here too he assumes there is an inner truth that is eluding him.

> There is no morality, no knowledge, and no hope; there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror is always but a vain and fleeting appearance.[1]

'Appearance' argues a reality behind it.

Between this letter and his letter to Meldrum of 10 Aug., 1898, in which he speaks of lacking 'the belief, the conviction' to write, surely something major has occurred.[2] He has discovered what it is to have a belief - even if he has temporarily lost it. Ten days later, to Garnett, he claims he can write

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1. L. and L., I, 226, 31st Jan.1898.

2. Blackwood, p.27.

again, with a sense of all 'doors behind me. . .closed'.[1] What Conrad is writing at this time is Lord Jim, and he has indeed left his previous art well behind him in certain ways.

Karl writes, in terms that are vague, of Conrad's renewed abilities. 'The inner surge had finally arrived', on approximately 28th May, 1898,[2] and Conrad was taking on new work in vast amounts, enough to see him busy until as late as 1914, if we equate the short story Dynamite with Chance. Whether one accepts Karl's version or not, he is certainly right in showing that Conrad had changed his outlook, and there are two pieces of evidence that deserve attention. One is that he had reviewed Hugh Clifford's Studies in Brown Humanity, in the Academy for 23 April, 1898. Conrad's review is kind, but it stresses that Clifford's book is only a surface portrait of the Malayan people.

> Nevertheless, to apply artistic standards to this book would be a fundamental error in appreciation. Like faith, enthusiasm, or heroism, art veils part of the truth of life to make the rest appear more splendid, inspiring, or sinister. And this book is only truth, interesting and futile, truth unadorned, simple and straightforward. (NLL.p.60.)

Clifford was the man who had criticized Conrad's two Malay novels for factual inaccuracies,[3] and Conrad now criticizes him for being only factual. If Conrad truly felt he had closed the doors behind him, why was he reviewing travel books when The Rescue had been promised for the end of the year - and was barely one half complete?[4]

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1. 20 August, 1898, pp.134-135, Garnett

2. Karl, p.426.

3. Cf. Norman Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World, pp.139-140, which includes Conrad's reaction in his letter to Blackwood.

4. Cf. Karl, p.431.

It would seem that he had taken the opportunity to answer for his factual shortcomings by stressing the importance of artistry. This is not to say that Conrad was careless of facts. His letter to Blackwood (Karl, p.431) stresses his dependence upon authoritative texts: 'Curiously enough, all the details about the little characteristic acts and customs which they hold up as proof I have taken out (to be safe) from undoubted sources - dull, wise books.' Evidently Conrad is making a distinction that is not inconsiderable between truth as observed and artistic truth as a rendered literary achievement. The precise fact has somehow to be given the life that art provides to make it potent. It is this discovery (of a strictly artistic kind) that Conrad was, I think, trying to convey in the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'. Accuracy such as Clifford's and impressionism such as Crane's were simply not enough, as he had first thought. Making one 'see', that is to experience with immediacy, was not enough unless there was a truth behind it that was to be apprehended. The assurance with which Conrad had written 'all the truth of life is there' in the Preface to the Nigger now seems rather hollow. 'All the truth'? It is in the working out of the content of this 'truth' scientifically that, I contend, Conrad began to see it was a more unruly subject than at first thought.

But to return to the original point, namely Conrad's seeming truancy from pressing literary commitments. Why had he in the midst of this, taken the time to write an article on Marryat and Fenimore Cooper for Outlook on 4 June, 1898? The text of the article, seen in the light of Conrad's later anthropological interest, reveals a great deal, and is especially close to Lord Jim.

> To his young heroes [Marryat's] the beginning of life is a splendid and warlike lark, ending at last in an inheritance and marriage. . . it is absolutely amazing to us as the disclosure of the spirit animating the stirring time when the Nineteenth Century was young. ('Tales of the Sea', NLL p.53.)

This, Conrad continues, is an aspect shared by Cooper. It is, in effect, an accurate description of the young Jim, whose course of 'holiday literature' must certainly have included these writers, and who finds a war, an inheritance and a wife - although not quite in the way these two authors might have intended. Conrad continues, and this statement brings us close to evolutionary time scales, for Marryat produces characters such that 'the loves and hates of his boys are as primitive as their virtues and vices'.[1] The references to the beginning of the nineteenth century and the 'primitive' attributes of the boy heroes place the emphasis already noted in Lord Jim, that of a retreat in time, firmly on these authors.

My argument, which is necessarily tenuous since Conrad was evasive on such topics, is that Conrad had at this time regained his exuberance because he had gained a definite series of insights. Norman Sherry has shown just what learned books he must have read for the Malay background of his novels. What strikes me is not that he used details from these books in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Lord Jim, but the sheer weight of the materials he requisitioned for Lord Jim, which is greater than that used in the earlier novels.[2]

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1. ibid., p.54.

2. Norman Sherry's list includes:
. Captain Rodney Mundy Narratives of Events in Borneo and Celebes down to the Occupation of Labnan (London:1848).
. Captain The Honourable Henry Keppel, Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy (London:1846), and Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship Maeander (London:1853).

f/note cont. next page.....

I contend that Conrad was re-reading some of his material, as well as new material such as Clifford's book, because he wished to present a very different, scientific point of view. The detailed debts to these authors seem to argue either a prodigious memory on Conrad's behalf or, what is more likely, a scrupulous determination to ground his novel on fact, so that the scientific knowledge applied to it would not merely be a fighting with phantoms, but an artistic truth rendered with accurate respect to the real world.

My argument is that Conrad's uneasy transfer from his early novels to Lord Jim was in part due to the change in the nature of his way of seeing humanity. And that change was brought about by the influence of the writers I have cited, amongst others. This is the point at which verbal resemblances become noticeable between Conrad and the thinkers he was doing battle with. These echoes become noticeable because, I feel, Conrad is for the first time tackling these anthropologists and evolutionists on their own ground. Conrad, perhaps a few years late in his reply to Huxley in Heart of Darkness was snatching his opportunities as they arose, and Africa was in the news at the time.

F/note cont. from p. 175.

. Spenser St. John, F.R.G.S.,F.E.S., Life in the Forests of the Far East, or Travels in Northern Borneo (London:1863).
. Memoirs of a Malay Family transcribed by W. Marsden F.R.S. (London:1830).
. Alfred Russel Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, 6th edition, (London:1877).
. Major Fred McNair, Perak and the Malays: 'Sarong and Kris' (London:1878).
. Frank S. Marryat, Borneo and the Indian Archipelago (London:1848).
. Sherard Osborn, My Journal in Malayan Waters (London:1860).
. Capt. Sir Edward Belcher, Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Samarang during the years 1843-46 (London:1848).
from: Conrad's Eastern World, p.141,328.

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> [There were] a number of collisions among the great powers over the division of Africa, culminating in the Jameson raid of 1895, and the Fashoda Incident in 1898, when the French attempt to link their African territories from east to west by establishing a claim to part of the Sudan was turned back by Kitchener. (Watt, p.157)

The Boer War broke out in October of 1899. I think it likely that Conrad hoped his African novella might well profit by the revived interest politics had brought to the subject. It was a golden opportunity, and had to be seized. And so he took on the double workload of Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness.

John Saveson, too, regards this stage in Conrad's development as important and notes 'what appears to be in Lord Jim a changed estimate of the psychology and morality of primitive people'.[1] Saveson contends that Conrad had been reading Mivart, among others, and that this had led him to see his Malays as rather closer to white humanity than previously he had thought. This argument is persuasive, but I feel it needs more deliberate emphasis. Conrad most certainly had been reading evolutionary authors, but what seems remarkable is that his reading in travelogues (as noted by Norman Sherry) is so hopelessly out of date. The sources cited all belong to pre-1880, and most to pre-1870. Furthermore, a source raised by Saveson, John Templar's edition of Brooke's Letters, is dated 1853.[2] This places substantial numbers of sources at a pre-Darwin, and thus, pre-evolution ideological level.

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1. 'Conrad's Attitude to Primitive Peoples', Modern Fiction Studies, 16 (1970), pp.164-83: p.164.

2. The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke, ed. John C. Templar (London:1853). Interestingly enough, Budrudeen, James Brooke's servant, is the source for Dain Waris, argues Saveson, pointing to the phrase 'like a European' used by both Conrad and Brooke. (Saveson, ibid, 166.)

One reason for this is very straightforward, and that is Conrad's desire to set the story in Marlow's past, which he is now considering and attempting to come to grips with. Another is that Malaysia was in fact becoming considerably more westernized during the time that Conrad visited it, some twenty years after Wallace's expeditions, and as one point Conrad is trying to make is of a primitive land where white men are never, or rarely seen, the local colour that writers like Wallace can provide is precious, and belonging to a bygone age. Wallace describes the alarm of one girl who had never seen a white person before, and the consequent amusement of her more knowledgeable village elders (Malay Archipelago p.75) This setting of the scene as primitive allows the writer to make the anthropological points I have been considering without serious interference from those who in these latter days of the 1890s know how much everything has changed.

But there is more behind Conrad's religiously close reading of his 'favourite bedtime book' and its companion pieces. By their very date, these are precisely the works that would have been available to Conrad at the time he was sailing in the Malay Archipelago. These volumes would have been the standard works for the interested layman and the man dabbling in science at that time. Conrad, of course, admired them for their scrupulous accuracy and wealth of observed detail - but I argue that he is more than likely to have known them from his reading about the lands he was sailing around. His excursion into anthropological and evolutionary reading, then, was the second major stage in his discovery of what it

all amounted to, what it all told him. Because of the time of publication of most of his sources, there could be very little evolutionary thought actually contained in them. The raw material of information and the theory of its ordering are necessarily separated. If Marlow reflects years later, upon Jim, and what his significance is, Conrad reflects, years later, upon his reading, his impressions, and tries to assess them - except this time he has not only the wisdom of added years, but a formidable array of contemporary scientific thought to help him assess. The facts were firmly recorded in the travelogues - the theories were abundant in the current press. It was up to Conrad to compare the two, and make art out of this difficult combination. There can be no doubt, then, if this argument is accepted, that Conrad did change his attitude substantially. The basis of the change is clearly visible in the split in dating between his source materials and evolutionary materials; he has quite literally come to his old ideas in the light of new ones. His comments on Clifford's book, therefore, are quite revealing. To him, Clifford is still producing travel books, whereas what is needed are books that attempt to comprehend and order this knowledge profitably, constructively. The making of Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness is the making of Conrad's mind, a more complex version of 'Youth' in which the youthful attitude is seen to change from its initial idealism to an, as yet, not completely articulated knowledge of experience.

With this in mind, it is now possible to look at the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' and make a few general comments. I stress the word 'general' because there is no certainty in 1897 as to the precise depth of Conrad's scientific

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reading, though by 1899 Heart of Darkness showed a different turn of mind. As Conrad says in his 1917 Note to the Youth volume: 'More ambitious in its scope and longer in the telling, "Heart of Darkness" is quite as authentic in its fundamentals as "Youth". It is, obviously, written in another mood.' (p.vi) I do feel, however, that it is worth tracing the initial opposition Conrad makes in the preface between 'the thinker' with 'ideas', and the 'scientist' with 'facts' (p.vii). If we read this as the opposition between the moral philosopher and the collector of anthropological detail it leads naturally to the consideration of 'the artist' whose achievement outlives the 'successive generations' of ideas and facts (p.viii) because his appeal is to the 'sense of mystery surrounding our lives' (p.vii). The appeal is, in fact, made through the presentation of that very area of speculation that so fascinates both scientist and thinker - and indeed all men. But Conrad's task is not to explain these areas, but to describe them, to allow them to reveal themselves:

> It is not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion: it is not the unveiling of any of those heartless secrets which are called the Laws of Nature. It is not less great, but only more difficult.
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> To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth. . . , to make them pause for a look, . . . And when it is accomplished - behold! - all the truth of life is there: (pp.xi-xii)

The insight is not analytic but synthetic. Based on the analytic details of science and philosophy it is still a depiction of life, in this case rendered through impressionism. And indeed, the preface has been read as an impressionist manifesto, certainly Ian Watt sees it and Conrad's subsequent work as impressionistic in tendency.[1] I would contend that

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1. Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, p.87 and pp.168-180.

impressionism is for Conrad a mode of expression rather than an artistic credo. What I am anxious to establish here is that at this early stage (1897) Conrad had already used scientific facts in his early novels, and was thus already involved in the realms of the 'scientist' and of the 'thinker' too, since Wallace speculates freely on what his findings reveal about man. Conrad has, however, decided to slip between the two and produce a sense of recognizable reality that will 'arrest' the reader. He chooses to do this through impressionism. What will strike the reader is not just the impression, nor will it be a 'Law of Nature' or a mathematical equation, but a synthesis of all three. It is not until later in his career that Conrad stresses in his Author's Notes the fact that he has been commended for his realistic portrayals.[1] In these later works he takes the attitude that, if there is verisimilitude in the presentation, the content must be true to life, thus proving the validity of his insights into mankind. In order, however, to wriggle between the scientist and the thinker one has to be closely aware of their work.

It is not enough, however, to trace Conrad's indebtedness to other writers. Conrad may reject Huxley's idea of 'sympathy' being the first cause that allowed men to become social and tribal, and thus evolve, yet it is by no means certain what Conrad has to offer in its place. Perhaps all there is, is restraint'.

Much has been made, critically, of the restraint of the cannibals in Heart of Darkness, and the general consensus

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1. See Author's Notes to Under Western Eyes, and The Secret Agent.

appears to be that the cannibals do have restraint, although Kurtz does not: 'Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint' (p.31) Marlow tells us. I would add here an important caveat. It is by no means certain that the cannibals do possess this quality. Marlow, certainly, sees them as exercising it, but he is himself concerned to an overwhelming degree to restrain himself, and so one can quite justifiably question the extent to which he sees what he wants to see, both as a young man and as an older man reflecting on events. After all, fear of the pilgrims' guns may be the cannibals' 'restraint'.

Marlow's own recognition of 'restraint' within himself is rather ill-defined. He argues as follows:

> Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags - rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No, you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in their fiendish row [the native music] - is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil, mine is the speech that cannot be silenced. . .(p.97)

What 'voice' is this? The voice the men on the Nellie hear? Surely not. This is the distant, authentic voice of the conscience. If anything it is this that prevents Marlow degenerating to Kurtz's level. Kurtz only had the more impressive but less substantial 'voice' of his oratorical eloquence, and that was no defence for him at all. This 'voice' of Marlow's is what he feels keeps him separate from the Africans who he admits are not far removed from him.

> It was unearthly, and the men were - No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it - this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity - like yours - the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (p.96)

The only difference between Marlow and the Africans is that

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he has restraint enough not to join them. The implication is that with 'restraint' society can evolve, without it there can never be enough stability for more than tribal gatherings. Even the cannibals -the most obvious examples of self-destructive urges within society - have enough 'restraint' to realize that it is better to go hungry than risk an open fight they may lose. The steamer is a microcosm of a society with a task, and the cannibals know if they kill the white men they will at the same time wreck the steamer, their only method of returning to their own territory away from hostile tribes. On the other hand, the pilgrims (at a more facile level) know they cannot breathe the smell of rotten hippo meat without becoming irrational, and thus dangerous.

Without restraint, then, the cannibals would risk open warfare. Kurtz had no restraint and raided other tribes in what amounts to warfare. Without restraint society is fragmented, internally at war - it seems that this is the first term in the long line of development that leads to civilization, and this is the term Huxley should be examining.

Unfortunately this conclusion can only be accepted if one presumes that Conrad endorses Marlow's opinion, in Marlow's terms. This, of course, cannot be assured. The most that can be said is that Conrad is depicting one man's intuition and feelings on the subject. They may be inaccurate, but certainly Marlow believes them. He may only believe his 'voice', however, because as a fully-evolved modern man he has been conditioned to endorse general standards of decency and conduct, and furthermore this 'voice' may have evolved considerably in the timescale separating the African tribesmen and himself. Yet there is room to manoeuvre here, since Marlow does recognize

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the vestigal form of restraint in the cannibals, and can himself feel the appeal of the prehistoric primitiveness, it is fair to assume that he can identify the sources of primitive morality.

The journey up river, backwards in time (towards the source of the river, and the source of mankind) strips away the overlay of civilization and leaves him facing the roots of morality. The danger for modern civilization, it would seem, is that it can lose sight of its origins, the first term in the series is lost and the result is form without content, merely hollow. Once the voice has been lost, that first prompting of morality, there is no resistance should the boundaries of legality become blurred. This is what lies behind Marlow's assessment of Kurtz.

> I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him - himself - in his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! He had kicked the very earth to pieces. (p.144)

Kurtz is not a human being any more, but a 'being', undefined. He has lost touch with the 'earth', the basic moral promptings, the 'voice' Marlow describes. He is neither a superhuman, nor even human at all anymore, since he has no moral sense to bring him into line with humanity. He is, then, merely a 'being'.

Marlow learns, although possibly he is only dimly able to define it, not only what made Humanity, but also what made him human. He learns his own strength and the terrible precarious weakness of a race that has lost contact with its basic moral promptings, and thus is defenceless when the highly evolved systems begin to crumble. A powerful answer indeed to Huxley. The cannibals do not run riot, and thus live on

to reproduce other 'restrained' savages - an expedient of survival thus works its way into the biology of the race as a genetic characteristic that can be seen as moral. The helmsman has insufficient restraint not to wish to retaliate upon the attacking natives, and he dies. Kurtz has no restraint, and he refuses to leave the jungle - and he dies. Lack of restraint seems to herald biological disaster.

'Restraint' is not the main area of contention in Lord Jim, the central concern is slightly different, since Jim's crises are those of loyalty which demand restraint only inasmuch as he must suppress the desire to flee. I have already commented at length upon Conrad's analysis of heroism, which he perceives as based upon misunderstandings, and subjective misreadings of situations which are then raised to mythic status. The same process is evident with the quality of 'restraint' - it is a biological fact that Marlow, for one, is inclined to value as a moral prompting. But by the time Conrad is writing Lord Jim he is concerned to examine altruism and heroism in society rather than what it is that first allowed society to evolve, which is his concern in Heart of Darkness. Society, then, seems to be founded on the shifting sands of the word restraint, and its own illusions about itself.

CHAPTER 4

NOSTROMO

If man is inclined to interpret the outside world subjectively, and consequently misunderstand the nature of morality and heroism, it is possibly because in shaping his impressions he is inclined to make them into stories. Marlow, in trying to convey what he has seen in Jim and Kurtz, tells a tale, giving a synthetic rather than an analytic assessment, in each case attempting to come to terms with the legend each figure has created around himself. Nostromo continues this preoccupation.

The world of Costaguana is one that immediately presents the reader with legends. The gringos, 'the legendary inhabitants of Azuera' (p.5), are the first one meets, bound 'under the fatal spell of their success' (p.5) to guard the treasure, or so 'tradition has it' (p.4).

Legend, fates, spells and tradition are the first indications of a process that is pervasive in Costaguana, namely that events are repeated by the inhabitants in the form of stories and so become part of folklore. The gringos themselves responded to the ancient tales of the wealth of Azuera, but became, in turn, attributes of those tales - as 'legendary' as the myth itself.

If Azuera takes human beings and, as it were, consumes them, bringing them into its own legend, there is also an opposing trend in the popular story-making process. This is also a product of the tendency to describe natural vastness in human terms, but in the case of the description of the Placido, humanity has taken it, the Placido itself, and given it humanizing aspects.

'The Placido - as the saying is - goes to sleep under its black poncho' (p.6).

Conrad takes care to repeat this when the silver lighter sets sail with Nostromo and Decoud: 'The Placido was sleeping profoundly under its black poncho' (p.261). Even the mist on the Placido has its own idiosyncratic way of fading: 'The sun, as the sailors say - is eating it up' (p.6).

Nature is personified by local imaginative description, but because the Gulfo Placido is so vast, and its darkness so excessively dark, the effect is less of comfortable personification, but rather of a description of the characteristics of a huge giant.

The vision of Costaguana has these two conflicting movements, in that the vast and impersonal forces of nature take on a familiarity, whilst the two gringos and the 'good-for-nothing mozo' (p.4) become elevated to allegorical figures demonstrating the evils of wealth, or some similar moralistic statement. In each case the expressions are those that have grown spontaneously along the coast, one can assume, and although their way of perceiving the world seems to take two opposing directions, each shares the characteristic that the reality of an object or event has been taken over and adapted in common speech.

The vocabulary Conrad uses assures the reader that this process is firmly based in common parlance - mozo and gringo are the local words in current use (as the rest of the novel bears out), and expressions like 'as the sailors say' and 'as the saying is', melt easily into the far more substantial idea of 'tradition has it'. Perception of natural objects and interpretation of events has led to a re-definition of those very objects and events, and raised them from the status of facts to

the level of fact perceived as having some bearing on mankind, because the metaphors are necessarily those of human context. This is the popular myth-making process at its simplest level.

This process has two stages to it, in that the reality of a fact is described, and thus interpreted, in human terms (the Placido's poncho) and then the description passes into common usage and thus into popular mythology, an accepted way of seeing that tends to the universal:

> The poor, associating by an obscure instinct of consolation the ideas of evil and wealth, will tell you that [Azuera] is deadly because of its forbidden treasures. The common folk of the neighbourhood ... are well aware that heaps of shining gold lie in the gloom of the deep precipices... (p.4)

This curious phenomenon of redefinition is pursued further. For example, the ships of the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company '(the O.S.N. of familiar speech)' (p.9), which bear 'the names of all mythology' (p.9) become a legend in themselves, and have a reputation of infallibility. As Capt. Mitchell announces: 'We never make mistakes' (p.10). This opinion is endorsed by public consent: 'People declared that under the company's care their lives and property were safer on the water than in their own houses on shore' (p.10).

What one sees in these quotations is the very human desire amid Sulacans to give grandiose attributes to a rather tawdry world. The O.S.N. steamships Juno, Saturn, Ganymede, Cerberus and so on <u>are</u> the new mythology, even though Juno and Saturn are classically anachronistic. Even the architecture of the new dockside is reflective of this myth-making. An example is: 'The Custom-house, with its sham air of a Greek temple...' (p.384). It is important to differentiate here, between the folk-lore that enables everyone to see the Placido as some huge giant, and the deliberate myth-making that is fostered by the

commercial classes. Mitchell genuinely does not want mistakes because they will be bad for business, so he fosters the illusion of infallibility. The Custom-house, too, has obviously been built to impress, but this new mythology is a perversion of an older, spontaneously generated Greek mythic structure.

There are, then, two more tendencies that can be noted. First, the desire to shape reality according to myth is both a spontaneous act, dating back either to time immemorial in the case of the Gulfo Placido, or dating back within living memory to the popular response to the gringos of Azuera. Second, there is the crude and deliberate fostering of the notion of infallibility by such organizations as the O.S.N.

Within these two complementary but opposed tendencies we have the human desire to find one's own past as significant and important. Giorgio Viola, in a piece of free indirect speech, is seen assessing himself:

> 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, un uragano terribile. (p.25)

It is easy here to pick out the journalistic phraseology that Giorgio has absorbed and endorsed: Garibaldi was not, literally 'immortal', and he failed, therefore he is not 'invincible'. 'Fly like chaff' is surely a cliché inflated by the reference to a hurricane, and 'the mercenaries of tyranny' sounds suspiciously like present-day Vietnamese propaganda: 'the lackeys of Imperialism'. Both appeal to the same undefined concept by using single emotive catch words, 'mercenary', and 'tyranny', without ever exploring the implications; that, for instance, not all the mercenaries were willing, merely starving, and so on.

Giorgio Viola's cult of Garibaldi-worship is strangely confused, when he says: 'Garibaldi, an immortal hero! This was your liberty; it gave you not only life, but immortality as well! (p.21). Questions have to be asked here. Does Viola confuse the personality with the political idealism? Evidently. But this is because to him both are identical. Garibaldi is a true, 'sincere', Carlylean hero to Giorgio, who sees him not only as 'immortal' but also able to confer immortality upon the memory of others. A lesser man than Giorgio might have joined the Garibaldi struggle merely as a way of gaining fame, the illusion of immortality. But Giorgio's cause is whole-hearted and the sceptical suspicion that he uses his memories to console his old age bounces off him. He has no selfish thoughts. He <u>was</u> the cause he fought for. In Giorgio's view there is a complete identification of man and creed, and he believes totally in both. The clichés that apply to the fallen leader seem pitiful to us, now, a relic of a shattered ideology. But to Giorgio these are continuing truths.

If identification of self and cause is the hallmark of Giorgio's sincerity, which causes him to look wistfully at the portrait of Garibaldi, Teresa invokes a different saint.

> Oh Gian' Battista, why art thou not here? She was not then invoking the saint himself, but calling upon Nostromo, whose patron he was. (p.17)

The confusion of secular and holy is ironically pointed by the narrator. Saints may be holy, but men are also elevated daily to super-human status by their fellows.

This brings us to the most glamorous of the figures in the work, Nostromo. He, like Jim, has been transplanted from his natural birth-place, Genoa, and has gained great respect. As an Italian he is racially superior to the 'lower races' that

comprise his Cargadores, who are largely Sulacans and negroes.

Conrad takes great care to add many flattering adjectives to the words Capataz de Cargadores, whenever they appear. The following list is by no means exhaustive; famous (p.125), magnificent (p.252, p.129, p.125, p.561), greatly envied (p.126), resplendent (p.127), the generous, the terrible, the inconstant (p.128), dread (p.129), lordly(p.130), illustrious (p.259, p.452), splendid (p.254), great (p.257, p.513, twice), renowned (p.416), incorruptible (p.127, p.221 three times, p.514), indispensable (p.130), p.452 twice), unique (p.452 twice) and so on. Some of these soubriquets are supplied by characters within the novel, but others are authorial. The overall sense, however, is that the narrator is merely responding to what is common parlance, rather than inflating the character's importance before our eyes. The effect upon the reader is that he stops thinking about the banality of Nostromo's work title, Capataz de Cargadores - foreman of the dockers - and begins to realize he is valued at more than his daily wage suggests. He is Nostromo, 'our' man, not just in the sense of a servant but rather 'a sort of universal factotum - a prodigy of efficiency in his own sphere of life' (p.44). He is the helper of the monied classes but also a folk hero; in the same way that a football star, for example, becomes 'Our Georgie', Gian' Battista Fidanza has become Nostromo. He realizes his role and that he must maintain it, when he states: 'It concerns me to keep on being what I am, every day alike' (p.253). His dashing image, mounted on a 'silver grey mare' (p.124), his generosity and his revolver are all the classical attributes of the folk hero. Perhaps the closest equivalent is Dick Turpin, who has his 'steal from the rich and give to the poor' generosity (a thought that resonates disturbingly in this

work), who terrorizes people by flourishing his pistol and rapier, and who is never seen without his trusty Black Bess. Just as Turpin's famous escapades end with his epic ride from London to York, so Nostromo's crowning public achievement is in being: 'the man of the famous ride to Cayta' (p.473). I draw the parallel not because I feel Conrad has modelled Nostromo on Dick Turpin, but because I wish to point out that Nostromo is only what the public believes him to be, and all he desires is, as Decoud points out: 'To be well spoken of' (p.246). What the public has created is a folk hero. He is like Robin Hood, with his band of Cargadores as his 'merry men', or any other mythic figure of popular acclaim, except that he works within a larger society, of which he is not the head. Just as the tendency is to forget Turpin as a thief, and respond to him as a romantic figure, the populace of Sulaco sees Nostromo as romantic, but never learns that he is a thief. Mrs Gould keeps his secret: 'He told me nothing' (p.560) she affirms.

Mrs Gould is placed in a situation remarkably similar to that of Marlow who agrees to keep Kurtz' secret. In her case, however, she keeps the truth not only from the 'Intended' Linda and Giselle, but from everyone. Although we can have little doubt that she knows what Nostromo's crime is, she deliberately requests not to know of it. She can thus plead ignorance on the strength of a technicality - and her 'lie' is not really a 'lie' at all. It is a technicality that no one can truly believe in, but it is enough to preserve one's self-respect, and good enough to protect the cheerful, myth-making society from disillusion.

If society creates its own heroes at the peasant culture level, it also creates its own villians. Guzman Bento, for

instance, has left his mark, as men still refer to: 'The iron tyranny of Guzman Bento of fearful memory' (p.115). He had in time become elevated to 'the strange god: El Gobierno Supremo' (p.139), and he was:

> famed for his ruthlessness and cruel tyranny, (and) reached his apotheosis in the popular legend of a sanguinary and land-haunting spectre, whose body had been carried off by the devil in person from the brick mausoleum in the nave of the Church of Assumption in Sta Marta. Thus, at least, the priests explained its disappearance to the barefoot multitude that streamed in, awestruck, to gaze at the hole in the side of the ugly box of bricks before the great altar. (p.47)

It would seem that 'popular legend' has been helped along by a little mythopoeic free-booting on behalf of the priests. And here we have another dimension to the legends that are as yet all the history Costaguana can muster, and that is they can be manipulated. General Montero, for instance, is described by the Costaguana press as the man who achieved: 'The most heroic military exploit of modern times'. (p.39). Unfortunately he comes to believe it, and thus becomes exceedingly dangerous:

> He was able to spell out the print of newspapers, and knew that he had performed 'the greatest military exploit of modern times'. (p.119)

Montero begins to believe the clichés that are circulated about him. The Sulaco press merely compromises and makes him into a villain, a beast, 'Gran' Bestia' (p.177, 188, 191, 198).[1]

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1. 'Gran' Bestia' is taken from Charles S. Washburn, The History of Paraguay (Boston: 1871), II, 519, a debt noted by Norman Sherry, Conrad's Western World, p.166. It is useful to note that this popular manufacturing of villains that Conrad is tracing, is based very firmly in actuality. Conrad has seen the process of myth-making taking place, and is describing it in as accurate detail as possible. Mankind really does call its enemies monsters.

Decoud comments:

> 'This is the quintessence of my journalism, this is the supreme argument' he said to Antonia, 'I have invented this definition, the last word on the great question'. (p.191).

Decoud is busy writing propaganda, but he knows perfectly well that the winning side's propaganda will become the history of the future school books. He realizes he has created the myth that the people want and will accept. This thought is expressed interestingly in the following extract which refers to Pedro Montero who possesses, in the eyes of his men,

> a genius for treachery of so effective a kind that it must have appeared to those violent men but so little removed from a state of utter savagery, as the perfection of sagacity and virtue. The popular lore of all nations testified that duplicity and cunning, together with bodily strength, were looked upon, even more than courage, as heroic virtues by primitive mankind. To overcome your adversary was the great affair of life. Courage was taken for granted ... success [was] the only standard of morality. (p.385).

Conrad's assured tone here is noticeable. He confidently calls on the 'popular lore of <u>all</u> nations', and asserts without hesitation the 'heroic virtues' of man in his primitive stage. This is in direct conflict with Carlyle's benevolent heroes. Sagacity and virtue are duplicity and cunning in Costaguana, and if one accepts this, Pedrito has aspects that make him alarmingly close to a Carlylean hero, or at least a Kurtz. He is, in Carlylean terms, demonstrably superior to his followers and regarded by them as 'perfection' and 'popular lore' accredits him with 'heroic virtues'. In a world without fixed moral standards virtue is success, and he certainly is a 'hero' to his followers. There is also something faintly ridiculous about this dangerous figure. He shares all the symptoms of the stock villain, plotting and fantasizing are his true realms.

Conrad gives us the clear hint that he has his delusions of grandeur because of his reading habits, in a world where to be able to read is in itself an extraordinary achievement. 'His ability to read did nothing for him but to fill his head with absurd visions.' (p.387).

What Pedrito reads is interesting, since it is reminiscent of Jim's 'course of light holiday literature'. Significantly, Pedrito has been to Paris, which is where he gained these ideas of courtliness. He has absorbed the ideas of a 'higher' race. He is arguably more advanced than many of his followers, members of a 'lower race'. He reads the 'lighter sort of historical works in the French language ... But Pedrito had been struck by the splendour of a brilliant court.'(p.887). Conrad takes care to make the point again, later. 'A long course in reading historical works, light and gossipy in tone ... had affected the manners of Pedro Montero.' (p.403). His imagination is engaged in his fantastic image of Louis XIV courtliness, and when he moves into the Intendencia of Sulaco his rage is directed by his thwarted desire for splendid trappings. Gamacho has had the place sacked, and Pedrito, expecting grandeur, cannot even find a sofa to sleep on. His disappointment and pettishness, based on trivia, leads him to a major political decision, to oust Gamacho. Pedrito's reasons are slim, based on personal vanity. His egoism has been impugned, and more people will die.

> How was he going to take his siesta? He had expected to find comfort and luxury in the Intendencia after a year of hard camp life ... He would get even with Gamacho by and by. (p.392).

The realization this presents to the reader is that Pedrito, a man motivated by massively acquisitive egoism, has at the

back of his greed an egoism that is pettish and extremely whimsical, one that is based on his image of himself as he hopes to be.

Nostromo shares some aspects of behaviour that Pedrito has shown. Whilst Pedrito is busy trying to become his ideal, Nostromo is his own ideal but fighting to preserve it. If Nostromo brings Genoese ability to Sulaco, Pedrito brings French ideas. Each brings superior 'civilized' aspects of the world with him. Whilst Pedrito is pursuing an ideal that European Literature has beguiled him into thinking valid, Nostromo is seeking to uphold an ideal of himself that the Europeans of Sulaco have energetically fostered.

Conrad deliberately parallels the two, for ironic commentary. If two characters are as similar as this, how, after all, is one to evaluate them separately, one as hero and the other as villain? The dividing line is very thin, and sadly enough can only be appreciated by those who know of the poor quality of French historical novels. This is exactly the sort of information that is entirely inaccessible to either Llaneros or Cargadores. To the masses Nostromo and Pedrito are almost indistinguishable. Conrad lures the reader into an attitude to the events that has Blanco sympathies of an unmistakable kind, and then gently subverts them.

And this is the famous crux again, as to how society in its earliest stages managed to choose good as opposed to evil, in order to establish an order that includes altruism. In Costaguana, however, the problem is side-stepped, since the Blancos already believe, as products of a civilised world, in duty and idealism and do all they can to ensure the survival of

their cause. But initially there can be very little difference between Pedro and Nostromo, except that the latter is working with the idealists who also have technical superiority (the 'new rifles') on their side. Nostromo makes his heroic ride to Cayta, Pedro is the first man to ride with an army over the Cordillera.

Interestingly enough, Nostromo sees himself in terms that are reminiscent of local legend and cheap journalism, which, again, brings him close to General Montero, in the reader's mind.

> I am needed to save the silver of the mine. Do you hear? A greater treasure than the one which they say is guarded by ghosts and devils in Azuera. It is true. I am resolved to make this the most desperate affair I was ever engaged on in my whole life. (p.256).

This emphasis on 'desperate affair' seizes hold of Nostromo's mind, and he repeats the phrase continually.

> I am going to make it the most famous and desperate affair of my life. (p.265).
> It shall be the most desperate affair of my life. (p.268).

Monygham hears Nostromo say this last quotation, and reports it: 'I heard him declare in this very room that it would be the most desperate affair of his life.' (p.321). He uses the adjective 'desperate' twice of himself (p.279, 280) and the narrator comments on Nostromo's 'desperation' (p.282), on the 'desperate affair' (p.283) and the 'desperate adventure' (p.291). Nostromo, in free indirect speech, calls it 'the most desperate undertaking of his life' (p.426) and elsewhere it is referred to by him as 'a very desperate affair' (p.430).

The affair quite probably is 'desperate', but only to Nostromo does the word that echoes with such regularity through the text mean anything. To everyone in Sulaco it is merely a journalistic tag of easy access that makes the deed seem heroic.

To Nostromo it is an adjective that describes a task that is nearly impossible. There is a strange implication that this statement, that he is 'resolved' to make this 'the most desperate affair' has a renunciation in it - this is to be the last of the desperate affairs, he will accept no more. Well, he does accept one more, the ride to Cayta, but by then Nostromo is a changed man.

In order to understand the change that overtakes Nostromo, it is advisable to look first at the other, less important, heroic figures. Barrios, the old soldier, is another figure of popular mythology with his stories of 'jaguar hunts' (p.161). He is not merely an entertainer, but a man of proven courage. He is seen describing 'tales of extraordinary night rides, encounters with wild bulls, struggles with crocodiles, adventures in the great forests, crossings of swollen rivers. And it was not mere boastfulness that prompted the general's reminiscences, but a genuine love of that wild life'. (p.161). He is legendary in all senses of the word, for his habit of leading his troops into battle with a 'simple stick' and not a sword, and the nickname for him is suitably elevated: 'The Tiger-killer, as the populace called him' (p.163). Father Corbelan, however, sees a different reality when he assesses Barrios: 'The man is a drunkard' (p.194).

However true this may be, he is also a popular hero, and the judgement is over-ruled by popular acclaim. Corbelan himself takes on the aspect of a mythic, crusading hero. 'Rumours of legendary proportions told of his successes as a missionary beyond the eye of Christian man.' (p.194). Even Dr Monygham has some sort of importance: 'There were strange

rumours of the English doctor' (p.45). He is thought of as 'mad ... if not a bit of a sorcerer, as the common people suspected him of being' (p.45).

Don Pepe, too, manages to become a celebrity, and is known by the Indians as'"Taita" (father)'and as 'El Senor Gobernador' (p.99). As if the range of characters were not complete, we have a true Robin Hood figure in Hernandez: 'extraordinary stories were told of his powers and his wonderful escapes from capture'. (p.108).

What I am anxious to establish is the popular basis for the reputations of each figure. Don Pepe has the admiration of Indians and Spanish speakers, and is implicitly trusted by Gould. Conrad is energetically showing us how legends are made, and how history makes itself, through the eyes of the parti-cipants, who shape their heroes to fit. The famous and much quoted letter of Conrad's needs to be referred to again here:

> I will take the liberty to point out that Nostromo has never been intended for the hero of the Tale of the Seaboard. Silver is the pivot of moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale ... the word silver occurs almost at the beginning of the story proper, and I took care to introduce it into the very last paragraph, which perhaps would have been better without the phrase that contains the key word. (L. and L. II, 296.)

What is remarkable in the novel is the desire of every figure to see heroes wherever they can. Even Dr Monygham reflects cynically on the Engineer as the 'Napoleon of Railways'. (p.318).

This desire to see heroes and interpret history as a genuine progression is thwarted for the reader by the des-cription of the time sequence. Humans are seen manufacturing the reality they wish to believe in, even though the real course of events is impersonal and ignores them. The format of the tale becomes that of a 'perverted' fairy story.

The range of characters already includes a dashing hero, two villains, a deceased devil-type villain (Guzman Bento) and two good old men type figures and two priests, who subsist in uneasy rapport. Barrios the colourful drunkard and father Corbelan are obviously the highest ranking - the commander of the Army and Archbishop of the Cathedral - and whilst Barrios goes off on his expedition, Corbelan remains behind, fanatical and extreme. This parallels Don Pepe, who leads his own 'army' of mine workers, and father Roman who is left as the possible executor of Gould's fanatical plan to blow up the mine if need be. If Barrios drinks too much, father Roman in his excitement covers himself in snuff. To add to the confusion, Don Pepe is referred to by the Indians as 'father' (p.83), as though he were the true spiritual leader. Added to this, Conrad even gives the reader a Merlin type figure in Monygham, who is believed 'a sorcerer' (p.45).

The way in which Charles and Emily Gould are described is reminiscent of the fairy tale genre, in which Mrs Gould is the fairy godmother, and Don Carlos the good King. It is tempting to see them as flat characters: the Engineer sees Charles Gould as 'calmness personified' (p.310) and Sir John says 'the little lady is kindness personified' (p.42). However, the roles are not as simple as that, and are in fact far more threatening. Decoud describes Gould:

> An idealist ... He's an Englishman ... he cannot act or exist without idealizing every simple feeling, desire or achievement. He could not believe his own motives if he did not make them first a part of some fairy tale. (pp.214-215, my emphasis.)

The Engineer of the Railway regards all of Sulaco as fantastical, and Decoud's idea for separatism as laughable since it

comes:

> out of the head of a scoffing young man fleeing for his life, with a proclamation in his pocket, to a rough, jeering, half-bred swashbuckler, who in this part of the world is called a general. It sounds like a comic fairy tale, and behold, it may come off; because it is true to the very spirit of the country. (p.315, my emphasis.)

His view of Charles Gould is not quite the popular one which sees him as the 'King of Sulaco' (pp.93,116, 116, 203) or as 'El rey de Sulaco' (p.316). Rather: 'He is in the position of the goose with the golden eggs' (314). He even extends the fairy-tale analogy, but he is not the only one who sees how fantasy-like Sulaco is. Decoud sees it as 'une farce macabre' and 'opera bouffe' (p.152). It is a 'tragic comedy' to him, 'Quelle farce!' he says, disdainfully (p.176). Decoud, too, sees Charles Gould as living in his own moral world. He says to Antonia:

> I am not a sentimentalist, I cannot endow my personal desires with a shining robe of silk and jewels. Life is not for me a moral romance derived from the tradition of a pretty fairy tale. (p.218).

This, I feel, points the crisis area of the novel. There is a strong tendency within the novel for characters to see themselves as operating in some sort of fairy-tale, or some sort of romantic success-story. The opposition is best summed up in Captain Mitchell, who is perpetually remarking to the 'privileged passenger'(p.474) that momentous events have occurred. Everything 'marks an epoch' (p.68, p.112) it seems, and Sulaco is the scene of 'history' (p.113) 'an historical event' (p.116, p.473 twice). The war was an 'historic occasion' (p.130) 'history, sir, history'. (p.130). The visitor, we are told would be:

> stunned and as it were annihilated mentally by a sudden surfeit of sights, sounds, names, facts, and complicated

> information imperfectly apprehended, would listen like a tired child to a fairy-tale; (pp.486-487).

The words 'fairy tale' echo through the novel, even Mrs Gould takes on the aspects of a fairy, the presiding fairy of the strange folk-lore of Sulaco.

> ...with her little head and shining coils of hair, sitting in a cloud of muslin and lace before a slender mahogany table, [she] resembled a fairy posed lightly before dainty philtres, dispensed out of vessels of silver and porcelain. (p.52).

It is the frailty of this good fairy that is so disturbing, she is: 'Gracious, small, and fairy-like...' (p.112). The comforting force of good seems rather less than substantial, and in fact she is seen at the end of the novel as a defeated fairy.

> small and dainty, as if radiating a light of her own in the deep shade of the interlaced boughs, she resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing, touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours, the powerlessness of her magic. (p.520).

She is quite literally the god-mother of Linda and Giselle after Teresa dies, but she is a figure who has very little sway in Sulaco. It may be comforting to believe that the story will end happily ever after, but Conrad is determined to show the precariousness of such a view.

Mrs Gould, indeed, is the one true altruist in the novel. Her genuinely uncovetous hands touch the first silver bars, and she is the only person who has no egoistic motives. Dr Monygham comments to himself: 'She always thinks of everybody who is poor and miserable ... no one seems to be thinking of her' (p.380). Gould himself is determined to make the mine work because of his father's prohibition, and although he is completely sincere in what he does, he has lost sight of humanity altogether. The narrator comments, quite overtly:

> A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if the idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heavens down pitilessly upon a loved head? (p.379).

He is, perhaps, the completely sincere Carlylean hero, but he has ceased to be a human being.

The novel has other classical stock features of the fairy-tale. Quite apart from the large quantity of idiosyncratic but faithful old retainers (Mitchell, Barrios, Don Pepe) the 'King' and first lady of Sulaco, and so on, we have the beautiful Princess figure, Antonia Avellanos. 'Antonia, the beautiful Antonia as Miss Avellanos was called in Sulaco' (p.149), and we have the Knight, Decoud. But Decoud, although he risks everything for love, is a dangerous man. He is quite willing to manipulate politics in order to serve his own ends. He wishes to desert Costaguana, but stays on to be with Antonia, and eventually reaches his conclusion in rather astonishing terms:

> I cannot part with Antonia, therefore the one and indivisible republic of Costaguana must be made to part with its western province. Fortunately it happens also to be a sound policy. (p.215).

Again: 'He soothed himself by saying he was not a patriot but a lover' (p.176).

Decoud is, of course, a sceptic and anything he says is to be regarded with deep suspicion, but the overwhelming impression left is that he is quite prepared to follow his own egotistic inclinations and manipulate policy to fit. Seen in this context there is not a great deal to separate Decoud and Pedrito. As it happens the policy is actually a sound one, but the motivation is unashamedly selfish. This is a new twist to the folk story of the lover who risks everything.

There seems to be the offer of a love-story in Nostromo's

attachment to the Viola girls, but even this is perverted. He dare not ask Giorgio for Giselle's hand, since he is afraid of being banned from the Isabel and his silver. He therefore does the expected thing and accepts Linda. But Linda who has loved him from her youth and has always intended to marry him is not the one he wants. The childhood sweethearts ethic is reversed. Linda is an allegory-inviting figure, the keeper of the lighthouse 'containing not a lamp but some sacred flame' (p.552) as it seems. Indeed the whole idea of the lighthouse being like a tower, a castle which the girls live in, protected by the old man, 'the leonine' Viola who guards the island with his rifle after sundown, has a strangely romantic and almost medieval flavour to it. But this is in reality no castle of love, besieged by knights, guarded by a fierce creature. Nostromo, shot, manages to preserve the illusion of his romantic status. Linda asks:

> 'Oh! Why - why did you come Giovanni?'
> ...the voice of the resourceful Capataz de Cargadores, master and slave of the San Tomé treasure, who had been caught unawares by old Giorgio while stealing across the open towards the ravine to get some more silver, answered careless and cool, but sounding startlingly weak from the ground.
> 'It seemed as though I could not live through the night without seeing thee once more - my star, my little flower.' (p.554).

This is self-evidently a lie, but it preserves him as a lover, and not as a thief in men's memories. Fittingly enough Giorgio is unable to believe he has shot Nostromo, he thinks he has killed Ramirez. He dies shortly afterwards, and it is as though the sincere and completely integrated hero of Garibaldi cannot take the disillusion involved in the recognition of Nostromo's changed status, and he dies. Nostromo, too, realizes he must die, and refuses all aid from Dr Monygham.

Evidently he is determined he shall not survive, circumstances have become too complex and his honour is compromised. His death is dishonourable but actually preserves his honour. It is a strange parody of the conventional death-bed scene. Nostromo starts to confess, not to a priest, but to Mrs Gould, who refuses to betray his secret, and thus preserves his name as a hero. What he confesses, however, is not the romantic expectation of his love, but his slavery to the silver, his love of wealth. The entire episode has all the stage-props of romantic melodrama, but it turns into a cruel caricature of conventional expectations. Nostromo, it could be argued, is a suicide, since he refuses medical care. This brings him alarmingly close to Decoud. Both die on or close to the Isabels, both have ambivalent attitudes towards the women they are expected to marry, and both take silver ingots, although for differing reasons. But in each case the silver helps to kill them.

The memory of Decoud, too, is kept intact, and only the narrator can provide the information about his final disillusion. We are left in a world where it is by no means the case that the hero marries the heroine and all live happily. The only love interest that endures the struggle is the deeply moving devotion of the crippled Dr Monygham to the ageing Emilia Gould.

> With the utter absorption of a man to whom love comes late, not as the most splendid of illusions, but like an enlightening and priceless misfortune, the sight of that woman (of whom he had been deprived for nearly a year) suggested ideas of adoration, of kissing the hem of her robe. And this excess of feeling translated itself naturally into an augmented grimness of speech. (p.513).

It is words like 'adoration' that deserve scrutiny.

To Monygham the only person worth treating with adoration is the self‿less Mrs Gould. He does not indulge in the popular hero-cult, but finds himself able for the first time to feel love, a self‿less gesture to a self-denying person. Altruism is offered to altruism. Monygham is regenerated by his experience with Sotillo. The man who said 'I am not fit for confidences' (p.408), broken by the knowledge of his lying confession, has been allowed to risk his life for a cause, and regain his self-confidence. When Sotillo's ship is attacked he already has the rope around his neck and is as good as dead, and this allows him to realize he is capable of altruism, that he is not afraid of death - and opens the way for him to feel love. This love, however, is not the love caused by illusions.

If these are the two admirable figures we are left with, Conrad's main interest is in plotting the downfall of Nostromo from a hero of Carlyle's evaluation - 'Our Man' - to a private, guilty citizen, Captain of a schooner, not a captain of men, Gian' Battista Fidanza. If Nostromo has many names, it is worth perhaps analysing his own name, which is John, the Baptist, Confidence, literally translated. Fidanza has over-tones of 'fidelity' as well as of confidence. But whereas John the Baptist baptized with water and declared that Christ would come and baptize in the name of the Holy Spirit, Nostromo suffers two baptisms, which remove him from the status of loyal servant to thief. The point is made clearly in the following quotation. Nostromo awakes after his swim to the derelict fort:

> with the lost air of a man just born into the world ... as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a thoughtful frown, appeared the man (pp.411-412).

The description is deeply evocative in its suggestion of development from a wild beast to 'the man' who in this case realizes he has been given an impossible task. The natural hero has become self conscious, and instead of being washed clean of sin the 'new born' man has been presented with guilt.

The second baptism occurs when Nostromo leaps from Barrios' vessel to recover the rowing boat left by Decoud. He sits in it, thinking about what has happened to Decoud, although the 'brown stain' already tells its own tale.

> The Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores resembled a drowned corpse come up from the bottom to idle away the sunset hour in a small boat ... Slowly, without a limb having stirred, without a twitch of muscle or quiver of an eyelash, an expression, a living expression came upon the still features, deep thought crept into the empty stare - as if an outcast soul, a quiet, brooding soul, finding that untenanted body in its way, had come in stealthily to take possession. (pp.492-493).

The implication must clearly be that in order for Nostromo, the perfect hero, to reach the level of self involved egoist, he has quite literally to go through three incarnations, or three generations, three lifetimes of change. This in indeed thought of him, in free indirect speech, by Decoud, who reflects: 'He would have preferred to die rather than deface the perfect form of his egoism.' (p.301). Giorgio Viola cannot change without ceasing to be the complete hero, and he dies. But Nostromo moves from egoism devoted to a cause, to knowledge of his frailty, to embittered stealth. Nostromo is, in fact, several generations removed from the sincere heroism of Giorgio. The Garibaldino equates the Capataz with his own dead son, and certainly looks to Nostromo as a future son-in-law. The actual separation of hero and thief is four generations. Dr Monygham thinks Nostromo's disillusion has the same source as his own:

> The crushing, paralyzing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone, far from the eyes of his fellows. (p.433).

The natural forces, and the political forces, have dictated that Nostromo cannot win in his 'desperate affair'.

The topic of 'baptisms' deserves closer notice, since it achieves its most explicit statement in Nostromo. If Nostromo moves into another life after each swim, he is strictly comparable to Jim, emerging, renewed, from the muddy creek into a world of new possibilities. Glancing through the body of Conrad's work, one can see reduplication of this patterning, even the hapless Verloc has a multiplicity of lives - his first in France, his second 'new' life of a double agent takes place in Britain. Winnie moves from one life, with Verloc in Britain, but cannot achieve her escape as he had done, she drowns herself on her way to France. Razumov has two distinct lives, one in Russia, one in Geneva. Finally, he returns to Russia, deaf and crippled, to another 'life' - a changed man. Like Verloc, though, one of his lives was as a double agent. And this is the case with Nostromo and Decoud, Nostromo moves towards complete insincerity in his own double life, and Decoud moves from professing to believe in his task to self-destructive scepticism. This is traceable to the earliest stages of Conrad's writing career - Almayer has degenerated in his second life, as a protégé of Lingard's into one who lives only for a fantastic future. Willems, too, leaves one marriage (to Joanna) to be ensnared by another (to Aïssa) and incidentally destroys Captain Lingard's monopoly on the river, thus bringing him to another phase of life, too. The difference between the earlier works and the later is emphasised in Lord Jim, where the change

is seen in Jim as biological, evolutionary and above all, as ethical. This, although it lies behind the two earlier Malay novels, is by no means as marked an attitude. It is, however, worth remembering that Conrad himself had had several 'lives'. The precise number that one can calculate depends upon one's subtlety, Frederick Karl sees Conrad's 'Three Lives' in his biography, and it is certain that Conrad tried to kill himself in Marseilles, and nearly died in the Congo. How Conrad viewed himself we cannot be sure. I argue that his characters undergo 're-incarnations' that bring them to a new evolutionary level on each occasion, even in the case of degenerative evolution.

If Nostromo undergoes two baptisms, two new identities, which bring him to a level of complete dishonesty and lack of self-esteem, the movement is contrasted by Dr Monygham. Whatever the doctor was before Guzman Bento's torture, he expected his confession to be enough to ensure his death sentence. Miraculously he is allowed to live on, until he faces another neo-death, on Sotillo's steamer, when, with the halter already around his neck, he survives the hail of fire around him. The doctor's progress, then, is also through two deaths, but at the end father Beron disappears from his dreams; whilst Nostromo becomes obsessed with silver. Nostromo disintegrates and Monygham re-integrates, which adds poignancy to their meeting over the body of Señor Hirsch, when each is midway on his course of mental alteration, and when each fails to understand the other.

But there is an important distinction at work here, and one realizes the balanced structure of this story. If Nostromo is a hero, he is one who enjoys being such, in egocentric

self-indulgence. Decoud, to whom he is deliberately paralleled by Conrad, is a hero also whilst in the process of following his love interest. Self-love and the acquisitiveness of love are in contrast, and neither succeed. The parallelism is pointed by Conrad through repetition in consecutive paragraphs:

> A victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity, the brilliant Don Martin Decoud...
> The magnificent Capataz de Cargadores, victim of the disillusioned vanity which is the reward of audacious action, sat ... (p.501).

Each of the above quotations starts a paragraph, each paragraph runs on consecutively. Decoud thinks, 'I wonder how that Capataz died' (p.501), and falls dead. Nostromo, described as a 'corpse' (p.492) 'wondered how Decoud had died' (p.502). The quotations above are almost mirror images of each other with phrases like 'disillusioned weariness' ... 'disillusioned vanity', 'audacious action', 'intellectual audacity', 'the brilliant Don ...' 'the magnificent Capataz ...' and both are 'victims'.

Compared to these two are the perfectly intact heroic figures of Mitchell and Giorgio Viola. Mitchell is a hero through his insensitivity.

> The old sailor, with all his small weaknesses and absurdities, was constitutionally incapable of entertaining for any length of time a fear of his personal safety. It was not so much a firmness of soul as the lack of a certain kind of imagination - the kind whose undue development caused intense suffering to Señor Hirsch. (p.338).

Giorgio is heroic because the 'crushing paralysing sense of human littleness' (p.433), to describe it in Monygham's words, has occurred to him, and he is mentally undefeated. His cause may be vanquished, but he is not. He has failed, the political struggles and continued battles defeated his cause, but he still

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believes in himself. Nostromo fails for the first time and cannot face it. Giorgio despises money, Nostromo uses it to console himself. Giorgio thinks Carvour has betrayed his cause, Nostromo feels 'betrayed' but he is not sure who by. Decoud is motivated by his love for Antonia, but he fails to face his own scepticism, and the propaganda he produced for the Parvenir is evidently not something he believes in. Mitchell is motivated by duty to his job, and in contrast to Decoud he doesn't think a sailor should marry: 'a sailor should exercise self-denial' (p.347). Mitchell neither fails nor succeeds because he continues simply to be himself, fearless and unflappable. He, however, does believe in 'history' and 'progress' - in the very journalism Decoud produces. I am not suggesting these four characters are merely contrasts of each other, they are also living characters. But the balancing of each against each is, as I see it, evidence that Conrad is intent on exploring what it is to be a hero.

The parallelisms that have been noted in the novel serve not only to aid definition by allowing the reader the liberty of comparison and contrast, but they also tend to further Conrad's desire to show how little difference there is between men. Egoism seems to motivate all the men in the novel - even Dr Monygham has a self-involved obsessiveness when once his mind fastens on a method of deceiving Sotillo. But it a course of behaviour that he genuinely believes to be altruistic. Mrs Gould's refusal to reveal what she has deduced about Nostromo at his death-bed seems to be a mute realization of the frailty of Monygham's rehabilitated state.

> The light of his temperamental emnity to Nostromo went out of Dr Monygham's eyes. He stepped back submissively.

> He did not believe Mrs Gould. But her word was law. He accepted her denial like an inexplicable fatality affirming the victory of Nostromo's genius over his own. (pp.560-561).

The illusion of heroism has conquered the spirit of scepticism that characterizes the Doctor. Mrs Gould's silence prevents Monygham from penetrating the 'genius', the pervading illusion created by Nostromo, the idea of altruism. It is as though she knew, had he seen through the facade he must inevitably have questioned his own mental state, and found it precarious. Mrs Gould must, for his own sake, preserve the monolithic quality of Nostromo's integrity, but as she comforts Giselle, she realizes her own disillusions, her doubt of the value of altruism.

> And Mrs Gould, feeling [Giselle's] suppressed sobbing, nervous and excited, had the first and only moment of bitterness in her life. It was worthy of Dr Monygham himself. (p.561).

She knows she is no longer loved by her husband, and recognizes that Giselle's relations with Nostromo would have gone the same way. In recognizing the nature of men's love, she cannot fail to see the frailty of Monygham's regard for her, and the precariousness of his self-respect. Conrad's irony is insidious and acutely tragic.

> 'Console yourself, child. Very soon he would have forgotten you for his treasure.'
> 'Señora, he loved me ...'
> 'I have been loved, too.' Mrs Gould said in a severe tone. (p.561).

There is the suggestion here that even Mrs Gould's self-lessness has realized that it has been wasted. But in realizing that her natural generosity of spirit has been trampled on and betrayed she has, of necessity, changed. Just as one who has been in a car accident must, perforce, ride in motor cars again and not show signs of panic, so must Mrs Gould continue

to be herself despite the perceptions she has felt. Her self-abnegation is no longer 'innocent' and spontaneous, it must now be given consciously in expectation of betrayal - almost heroically.

Even Mrs Gould, then, is altered from a perfectly integrated figure to a character of internal conflict, and there is no 'sincere' character in the work if she is not it. This view of humanity as all ultimately reduced ethically in this way is a view that is carried over in The Secret Agent.

Much has happened to Conrad's political view since Lord Jim. The prosperity Jim brought to Patusan was undeniably an improvement, and this pre-supposition is left largely un-questioned in that work. The difference lies in the fact that Patusan never becomes the modern, industrial state that Costaguana must inevitably evolve into. And Jim is the hero, even though one has to make allowances to accept this, as my chapter on him shows.

But Nostromo deliberately questions material wealth and the role of the hero is energetically subverted. What has happened to Conrad's view of the world? I think he may have read J.A. Hobson's Imperialism, a study. (London: Nisbet, 1902).[1]

Whether Conrad knew this work at first hand, or merely had the details of it from Cunninghame-Graham, it was the classic work of its time, and created something of a stir. Conrad is remarkably close in some of his details. At a time when England was the most obvious Imperialist force in the world,

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1. All quotations from this edition, hereafter cited as Hobson.

Conrad chooses an example of American Imperialism as a subject for his novel. Hobson cites his statistics carefully: by 1900 Britain had 50 colonies, against a world total of 136.[1] Hobson leaves us with a clear hint, that Conrad may be taking up, when he makes reference to: 'The recent entrance of the powerful and progressive nation of the United States of America upon Imperialism'. (Hobson, p.23). Whereas the Congo was a fairly well-worn subject in 1899, the imperialism of the U.S.A. was, in 1903, a rather newer topic. The following quotation reinforces the point:

> Almost the whole of recent imperial expansion is occupied with the political absorption of tropical or sub-tropical lands in which white men will not settle their families. (Hobson, p.26).

Hobson's point is that the white man's invasion cannot therefore be permanent enough to allow him to set up reliable government, since he was simply not there for long enough. This tended to lead to straight rapine. This idea is conspicuously absent as a conscious factor in Conrad's assessment of the Congo, and as Jim is alone in Patusan, with Jewel, the question hardly arises. But in Nostromo the only families we see are those that fail to start - Mrs Gould had hoped for a child, but there was none - and those that are exiled. Giorgio is exiled from Italy, and finally removes to the Isabel. The exception is the Spanish families, and the 'pure Creoles' (p.59).

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1. Hobson checks his statistics against H.C. Morris' History of Civilization II, p.318) and the Statesman's Yearbook. Britain's 50 colonies encompassed 11,605,238 square miles and a population of 345,222,239 as against a world total of 22,273,858 square miles and 521,108,791 population. The U.S.A. then possessed six colonies of 172,091 square miles and 10,544,617 inhabitants. (Hobson, pp.19-20).

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The former, however, are seemingly in-bred, to an alarming degree:

> The representatives of the old Spanish families then in the town, the great owners of estates on the plain, grave, courteous, simple men, caballeros of pure descent, with small hands and feet, conservative, hospitable, kind. (Nostromo, p.34).

The family that could start, and help the government, the Decoud-Avellanos family, of course never comes to anything.

Conrad, in removing the scene of events to a South American republic avoids large areas of Hobson's thoughts. Costaguana is, for instance, not a colony in the true sense, although dominated by the remaining Spanish families, the Blancos. It shows no signs of being settled by any of the imported labour.

One of Hobson's recurrent points is that the partition of Africa may bring the great European powers into conflict. This does not arise as a question in Costaguana. Hobson also discusses the destruction of already established civilizations, such as in India and China: one can safely say Costaguana has no civilization by those standards. He also points to the conflicts in South Africa between Boer and Briton. Costaguana's history is not traced as far as arguments between, for example, the Italian work-force and the American warship that first recognizes for America the Occidental Republic's independence.

But the main argument is intact, namely that capital is in question, for investment. Money comes in, and silver goes out.

> The trade with the new tropical possessions, is the smallest, least progressive, and most fluctuating in quantity, while it is lowest in the character of the goods which it embraces. (Hobson, p.44).

Hobson calculates the total trade done with colonies in 1900 by Britain, to be less than £10 million, or about 1½% of total trade figures (p.44). This is remarkably similar to the circumstances Conrad portrays. Señor Hirsch fails conspicuously to gain ox-hides, and cannot trade dynamite. The only other trade mentioned is Anzani's store, expanded by his nephews, but evidently not large. Historically Conrad gives this information in the opening paragraph of the novel when he describes Sulaco: which,

> had never been commercially anything more important than a coasting port with a fairly large local trade in ox-hides and indigo. (Nostromo, p.3).

The following statements of Hobson's seem an adequate assessment of Costaguana.

> There is no true British settlement in these places; a small number of men spend a short broken period in precarious occupations, as traders, engineers, missionaries, overseers. The new Empire is even more barren for settlement than for profitable trade. (p.50).
>
> The proportion which [the colony's] trade bears to the total industry of Great Britain is very small, but some of it is extremely influential and able to make a definite impression upon politics. (p.55).

In particular Hobson lists engines, tools, machinery and guns (p.54). The application of this to Costaguana is obvious. The rifles Decoud buys decisively after the course of the war. The railway transports Nostromo 180 miles closer to Barrios. The telegraph enables certain vital messages to get through from Sta Marta, and the steamers themselves that play such an important role in the action are certainly not locally made. Obviously the total of trade value in these goods is paltry, but they substantially alter the course of the civil war. Hobson comments at length on the railways and mining interest.

> Every railway or mining concession wrung from some reluctant foreign potentate means profitable business in raising capital and floating companies. (p.65).

Conrad's alteration of this fact to a situation that bleeds Charles Gould's father of his wealth is a logical extension of the realization it upholds, namely that everyone knows such concessions are a source of wealth,[1] but only for investment. Conrad, as an investor in an unsuccessful South African mine, would have known this. Now, however, he seems to be arguing against his former optimism of investment.

The point is only touched upon in Nostromo. Hobson spends many pages outlining the problems attendant on mining operations, and mentions the mine workers' compounds of the Transvaal, and the damage such separation of families causes to 'the Kaffir'. Conrad unites this idea with several others of Hobson's, and gives us the San Tomé mine villages. These villages are for families, since there are children everywhere, but to Hobson this is not an improvement since: 'They will have no choice in determining their wages; no power of bargain will be left to them.' (p.302). The mine owns these workers. Although their enthusiasm is freely given when, under Don Pepe, they invade the town, there is surely a veiled threat in that Gould has his own private army, led by a retired major, and Don Pepe is assisted by Father Roman, a representative of a different, religious, hierarchy. Conrad does not examine the point in any detail, but one cannot help wondering why the mine workers march on Pedrito's troops. Is it because they are fighting for

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1. cf. E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (1968; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979). pp.134-136. Hobsbawm also quotes the Victorian cliché of Britain as 'The Workshop of the World' (p.134) because of its ability to supply railways and guns, the two manufactured items that have a massive influence on Costaguana. Conrad echoes this when he calls Costaguana 'The Treasure House of the World' (p.352, p.353).

the preservation of their employment? Hobson's discussion of native troops points how precarious a resource they can be:

> This mode of militarism, while cheaper and easier in the first instance, implies less and less control from Great Britain. Though reducing the strain of militarism upon the population at home, it enhances the risks of wars ... (p.145).

Conrad converts this militarism into the organized labour disputes hinted at at the end of the novel, without removing the implicit threat of rebellion from that quarter.

Hobson's example is taken from African and Indian regiments. Conrad has, I feel, actually extended this argument, since there is no army of occupation in Costaguana. Instead there are many armies. There are the Cargadores; and the largely passive railway workers; there is the mine army; and Barrios' troops, all raw recruits, Indios who can only just march, and equipped with the new rifles. There is no avoiding the sense of shock Conrad intends for us when he describes Pedro Montero's Ilaneros:

> Emaciated greybeards rode by the side of lean dark youths, marked by all the hardships of campaigning, with strips of raw beef twined round the crowns of their hats, and huge iron spurs fastened to their naked heels. (p.384-385).[1]

There is no true class structure in Sulaco, but there is a racial structure, at the bottom of which are these half-savage Indios. If this is the fighting force, Hernandez's army of bandits is indeed an impressive ally. The clear hint Conrad

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1. A factual debt is noted by Normal Sherry, Conrad's Western World (p.177) to E.B. Eastwick, Venezuela: or Sketches of Life in a South American Republic; with the History of the Loan of 1864, 2nd edn (London: 1868), pp.75-76, which would seem to imply the extraordinary sight is not only factually precise but also there to make a point.

makes to us is that there can be no class-structure in Sulaco, only a racial difference that may become hereditary. Giorgio's establishment is known from the early days as 'the Italian stronghold', and the Amarilla club is clearly for Blancos only. Society already seems to have set up its exclusive boundaries.

Hobson is working from his knowledge of Africa and India. Conrad, on the other hand, seems to have chosen South America, and in particular a part of it not occupied by a foreign army, because it is remarkably similar to the Indonesia Conrad describes in his early works. The various tribal rulers of the Malay novels are replaced here by the different 'armies'.

Another important variation is in the creation of Charles Gould. Hobson focuses on the investors of surplus capital, on the American 'mission of civilization' (p.79), on President Roosevelt's view of 'manifest destiny' (p.82). Hobson goes on to formulate the imperialist idea in imagined oratio recta:

> 'However costly, however perilous this process of imperial expansion may be it is necessary to the continued existence and progress of our nation.' The practical force of the economic argument in politics is strikingly illustrated by the recent history of the United States. (p.78).

Conrad is not making this sort of argument. Holroyd, we are clearly told, has an enthusiasm for church building, and views his capitalist expansion as inevitable: 'They can't help it. And neither can we, I guess.' But he is emphatically not much more than a man with a 'hobby' which takes up 'twenty minutes every month'. It is Charles Gould who is the true 'sentimentalist'. Hobson touches on the mentality of the investors' 'genius of inconsistency' (p.222) which he does not see as 'hypocrisy' (p.223):

> Plato terms 'the lie in the soul' a lie which does not know itself to be a lie ... Most of the men who have misled [England] have first been obliged to mislead themselves. (p.223).

The entire novel is, one may say, a demonstration of how one can be misled into believing in progress and overall amelioration. Gould himself has been led to a 'fixed idea' and is no longer a reasonable man, or even arguably, sane.

All these points are those that Conrad criticism has revelled in for many years, and it does not lie within the scope of this thesis to examine the precise motivations of each character. I am concerned here to show how Conrad differs from Hobson, in so far as Hobson sees the ideals of capitalists as based in self-deception and leaves his point at that. If Conrad knew of Hobson's work in some detail, as I feel he did since he shares much in common with the political theorist, it is equally remarkable that Conrad adopts only certain areas. Conrad does not draw a portrait of South African politics and mining, which would certainly have been topical in England, since the Boer War. Neither is he dealing with the difficulties of colonization, which had been a British preoccupation since 1880. He deliberately simplifies the question in many ways. There is no foreign military presence. There is no indigenous civilization. The construction of the story emphasises not the national presence nor national psychology of any one group of people, so much as the individual desires of a very small number of egoists. Conrad's scheme of Costaguana is to show the idealist Holroyd indulging in a hobby, and the idealism starting again lower down the hierarchy as each figure in turn becomes obsessed with his own personal struggles. The Engineer makes a succinct comment here.

> Upon my word, doctor, things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves. I begin to believe that the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity -
> 'Bah!' interrupted the doctor ... 'Self flattery. Food for that vanity which makes the world go round'. (p.318).

The story of Nostromo is not, I feel, the story of the silver nor is it the story of the men. It is a portrait of the emergence of an entire nation, and the overthrow of the hero as a concept. Gould may succeed, but he is no longer a human being, leaving Mrs Gould to all practical intents, a widow. A passage from Conrad's Author's Note may be of use here:

> Antonia the Aristocrat and Nostromo the man of the People are the artisans of the New Era, the true creators of the New State; he by his legendary and daring feat, she, like a woman, simply by the force of what she is: the only being capable of inspiring a sincere passion in the heart of a trifler. (p.xxi).

This carefully crafted sentence, balancing one figure against the other, supports itself by what it implies. Nostromo's feat is a legend, and something that posterity believes in as an abstract of heroism, even if it is hollow at centre. Antonia's achievement is to inspire an emotion that is 'sincere', to make a 'trifler' believe in something. By implication that is what Nostromo's exploits have done, they have set up a standard of dutiful altruism unknown in Contaguanan men before. Decoud becomes sincere, in the eyes of Sulaco, although not in terms of Carlyle's assessment. We are left watching a process that ends in the birth of the national illusion of altruism.

Conrad does not explore the usefulness of this illusion, and he does not show the ideology being exploited or perpetuated. He seems unconcerned with such questions as,

cannot the illusion of heroism be perverted to encourage military oppression of other nations? He is content to show mankind inventing its own heroes and decisive moments, moments that mean nothing to the 'privileged passenger' as he drinks his 'Tres de Mayo' coffee at the Amarilla Club.(p.479) The novel is, amid so much else, a natural history of heroism.

But this natural history of heroism is, in a sense, thwarted by its own inheritance of methodology from Carlyle and Spencer. Carlyle naturally assumes men will be heroic in primitive society, and that they will be admired for it, which is even less likely. In addition, such men will be raised to god-like status because of their capacity to do good deeds, as opposed to just succeeding. To Carlyle, Odin is admirable, therefore he was admired in the past. But what if, like Pedrito, he was admired only for his 'heroic virtue' of 'treachery'? Clearly Carlyle's argument does not reach as far as primary causes.

Spencer, on the other hand, follows the same tradition of analysing social phenomena by having recourse to an atomistic study of its individual members, and their beliefs. His interest is in understanding 'how an organization originated and developed' (Principles of Sociology, 3 vols. III, 1).

> Spencer writes: 'Instead of passing over as of no account or else regarding as purely mischievous, the superstitions of primitive man, we must inquire what part they play in the social evolution ...' (Study of Sociology, p.328) He even commended Ferguson for seeing 'the way in which social phenomena arise out of the phenomena of individual human nature' (Principles of Sociology, II, 230-31).[1]

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1. Burrow, p.198.

As a general approach, it is difficult to imagine a description of a methodology that seems more in harmony with what Conrad is approaching in Nostromo. Burrow criticizes Spencer, quite correctly, for his uncontrolled generalizations.

> He passes easily, and apparently without any sense of the enormous jump he is making, from a description of the behaviour of single inanimate objects, and groups of them, to 'aggregate of men' and finally, without any warning, to 'society'. (Burrow, p.199.)

Conrad never attempts the breadth of this study, and never makes an excursion into 'society' as a whole. Nostromo's history ceases before the society which has organized labour problems takes control of the novel. As he says in the last paragraph of the Author's Note, describing Antonia:

> A relic of the past disregarded by men awaiting impatiently the Dawns of other New Eras, the coming of more Revolutions.
> But this is the idlest of dreams; for I did understand perfectly well at the time that the moment the breath left the body of the Magnificent Capataz, Man of the People, freed at last from the toils of love and wealth, there was nothing more for me to do in Sulaco. (pp.xxii-xxiii.)

Conrad, although he is writing this some thirteen years after the publication of his work, knows exactly what task he had set himself. It is, perhaps worth noting that the last words of the manuscript draft of Nostromo are precisely those that convey the idea of the continuing spiritual presence of the heroic figure; as Giselle cries out for her dead lover:

> ..in that cry of a longing heart sending its never ceasing vibration into a sky empty of stars, the genius of the magnificent Capataz de Cargadores dominated the place.[1]

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1. From Norman Sherry Conrad and His World (London: Methuen, 1972), p.89).

The memory of the hero seems to be assured. He truly is 'of the People, their undisputed Great Man, with a private history of his own'. (Author's Note, p.xxi).

But, as Burrow points out, there is a large amount of tautology in Spencer's argumentation: if one wishes to explain social life, according to Spencer one is left with the following:

> if man had not possessed the potentiality of social life, social life could not have arisen among men, etc. ... Obviously we are on the verge of a circular argument. (Burrow, pp.200-201)

Burrow's brilliant and concise analysis of Spencer shows the short-comings of Conrad's own methods, namely that they can never apprehend the first cause that turned man into an 'ethical' creature. I quote Burrow again, as he cites Karl Popper's attack on J.S. Mill, which is a deliberate onslaught against the psychologist's viewpoint:

> Stress on the psychological origin of social roles or institutions can only mean that they can be traced back to a state when their introduction was dependent solely upon psychological factors, or more precisely, when it was independent of any established social institutions. Psychologism is thus forced, whether it likes it or not, to operate with the idea of a beginning of society, and with the idea of a human nature and human psychology as they existed prior to society.[1]

The point is made elegantly. There is no possibility of returning to a state of pre-social, pre-society existence in order to observe how social ethics came about. Conrad avoided the point in Lord Jim, or rather glossed over it. When Marlow informs us that Jim and Dain Waris shared a friendship such that one seemed to perceive the very birth of the idea of

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1. Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, 2 vols, revised ed. (1952), II, p.92-3, emphases as in the original. Quoted Burrow, p.201.

friendship, the observation is not followed through.

Conrad's method of investigating heroism is not, in fact, a true life-history of the ethic. It cannot be, since it assumes a priori that there are heroic virtues. Nostromo is from Genoa and arrives in Costaguana with an already 'civilized' response to concepts such as duty. Despite the savagery of Pedrito's llaneros who think their leader's treachery is 'heroic', most of Costaguana was unmistakably taken over and influenced by the Catholic Church long before the action begins, and so the ground work of ethical response is already achieved. Moreover, if it is true that those who pay the piper call the tune, then it can safely be said that all those figures who control the novel's actions have some ethical education, absorbed in Europe before their arrival in the state of Costaguana. Given these three facts, the novel must necessarily be concerned to show the arrival of the ethical process in an under-developed country, rather than charting how ethics may have arisen in the first instance. From the very first the legend-making of the populace is moral - the gringos learn the enslaving power of wealth. It is a lesson that the latter day gringos are only just beginning to learn again at the close of the novel.

Even the naturally heroic figures in Nostromo have the flaws of a priori ideology: Giorgio is a hero - but if Mitchell lacks the imagination to be afraid, Giorgio lacks the natural suspicions that would question what he believes. He is like a religious enthusiast who believes entirely what may be a hollow legend. He is a hero, as it were, by default. Perhaps that is why Conrad made him in the precise image of his hero Garibaldi,

as described in several books he used as sources.[1] He has become the creed in its accepted, heroic form. Nostromo shows courage, when what motivates it is egoism. From the display arises the legend, and from such legends comes the human belief in altruism, which occasionally finds root in a person like Giorgio Viola, or Captain Mitchell. Decoud, outside the a priori suppositions of society, can find no redeeming features in himself, and kills himself. If he could not find them, neither can Conrad. Society has evolved itself, but only from egoism.

If Conrad was interested in the primal causes of human motivation, the emphasis in Nostromo is not upon such elusive subjects any more. Conrad is describing the 'knitting machine', not exploring how it first came about.

As Conrad was to write later:

> The ethical view of the Universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions ... that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would firmly believe that its object is purely spectacular... [2]

A whimsical statement, but one that rings true, here. Sulaco imagines itself to be progressing, a fairy-tale success story, but that is an illusion fostered by men's expectations and desires.

This view of the evolution of Sulaco into the depressing

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1. Norman Sherry, Conrad's Western World (pp.147-161) notes several works, and concludes:
> Viola thus derives in part from the lives and careers of two followers of Garibaldi, but significantly, he is in his appearance and character, Garibaldi himself. (p.158).

2. A Personal Record Quoted by Peter Glassman, Language and Being: Joseph Conrad and the Literature of Personality (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1976), p.107.

picture of a state run by 'material interests' or Hobson's 'investors of surplus capital' was by no means quite as widely accepted an attitude as is generally assumed today. The position is perhaps best described by analogy with 'the most outspoken disciple of Herbert Spencer in America', William Golding Sumner. Sumner (1840-1910) was a well-known sociologist, who, towards the end of his life was seen 'passionately defending free individual enterprise at just the moment when it was rapidly displaced by huge trusts and corporate giants'.[1] Sumner is a convenient figure since he is typical of the very attitude we see in Sulaco, which is busy honouring its individual celebrities at a time that their rôles are in question by the reader. With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to see how mistaken Sumner was; it is Conrad's strength that he interpreted the conditions in Sulaco so exactly as to be in tune with posterity.

In Sulaco mankind has evolved to the point at which, instead of biological perfection, paradoxically we have humanity displaced to a minor role by wealth.

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1. Lewis A. Coser, 'American Trends' in A History of Sociological Analysis Ed. Bottomore and Nisbet. (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp.294-5.

CHAPTER 5

In the section on Nostromo I found it necessary to let the work explain itself first as a product of man's desires to formulate stories, before looking closely at what Conrad wished to show us about the story-making process, and how this is seriously at variance with the reality of politics. Hobson is not truly scientific, but he uses a scientific and analytic method to deal with social and political facts. It has been my aim to show Conrad moving away from preoccupations with the details of evolutionary thinking, and endeavouring to show the common delusions of mankind that are at variance with any informed, objective view of the world.

The Secret Agent is an achievement of a different sort. The informed, objective view now becomes ironic. I have found it useful to follow the same procedure in this chapter as in the previous chapter. I concentrate upon showing the novel as a story that refuses to fall into the familiar spy-story genre, and then I move on to discuss specific scientific topics that Conrad is evidently taking issue against, since I see his refusal to produce a predictable text is necessarily linked to his rejection of the scientific theories he is involved in discussing.

Section I

The Secret Agent is appropriately titled. One expects some sort of James Bond figure, and gets Verloc instead. Fat and ageing, he is the direct antithesis of the normal expectations of sensational literature. Neither is he romantic - he is married and lives in cosy squalor - nor even particularly alarming. He had:

> ...the air of moral nihilism common to keepers of gambling halls and disorderly houses; to private detectives and inquiry agents; to drink sellers, and, I should say, to the sellers of invigorating electric belts and to the inventors of patent medicines. But of that last I am not sure, not having carried my investigations so far into the depths. For all I know, the expression of these last may be perfectly diabolic. I shouldn't be surprised. What I want to affirm is that Mr. Verloc's expression was by no means diabolic. (p.13)

The extract seems to promise some revelation, and a detailed description of a sinister face. Instead of this, the tone changes to the rather off-hand and disarming 'But of that. . .', a confession of ignorance. As one of the marks of the thriller is that it assumes familiarity with large areas of experience unattainable by most (as well as a complete acquaintance with all sorts of exotic weapons) Conrad is deliberately deflating us. The phrase 'the air of moral nihilism common to. . .' is balanced carefully by the definite article. What air that is so common? But the phrase either assumes we know the particular air, or that we are ready to take the author's knowledge as accurate. And so we would, in a normal thriller. But Conrad catches us out. Verloc springs back before us not as a sub-literary cliché, but as an item of humanity.

No. Verloc is not what we expect. Neither are the anarchists. Who is the true Secret Agent is left in doubt - as

there are so many secrets and so many agents of concealment. Conrad does one thing to dispel completely any sense that this is a thriller. He alters the time sequence. There is no conventional sense of suspense leading to a climax where the explosion is concerned. Our attention is not drawn by the deed, which achieves so little, but to speculations as to how it came about, what went wrong, and eventually, how Verloc can explain to Winnie what has happened. Conrad forces us to see the motives behind the deed.

So, what is the novel concerned with? 'Winnie Verloc's Story' (Preface, p.xv). Her 'story' used as an example, presumably. Only a close reading can tell us what we can learn. This is what I have attempted.

The 'wrong-footing' that the title gives us with respect to the anticipated contents of the novel can be compared to the iconoclastic process I have argued for Nostromo, in a more condensed form. Obviously no-one is capable of heroic status in The Secret Agent, but we are invited by the title to make the same mistake of imaginative complicity with the figures' own view of themselves. Evidently, we cannot fall into this trap. Only Stevie can, when he accepts Winnie's myths of Mr. Verloc's 'goodness' (p.151) in the abstract. It is, essentially, the same point made in each case.

There are also profound similarities in the treatment of time. Although both novels leap from one time range to another, they both share the idea of moments of pause. Thus A.J. Guerard[1] objects that at p.249 of Nostromo there is a 'crucial change' at the 'end of Decoud's letter', revealing 'a more

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1. Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p.203.

naïve dramatic interest in the unrolling events.' This is hardly the case. Decoud, we remember, finishes his letter and falls momentarily asleep, a moment of complete oblivion in which the eloquent journalist, having given his sister a complete résumé of the entire plot to date, emblematically drops his pencil. He is then awakened by Nostromo and time progresses in a linear fashion (more or less). The 'background' is complete at that point, the plot must continue. This is precisely the same as a device used in The Secret Agent, and duplicated there, as in Nostromo. Comparison can help us understand. The Assistant Commissioner, emerging from the Explorer's Club, notes with satisfaction that it is only 10.30 pm. and he has already solved his mystery. Conrad does not give us much gratuitous information, but one thing we do note is that the train Mrs. Verloc takes leaves Waterloo for Southampton and St. Mâlo at 10.30 pm. At the same time the Assistant Commissioner thinks he is safe, his principle remaining witness is escaping - as it turns out forever, to a fate not dissimilar to Decoud's. He and Mrs. Verloc both find themselves without beliefs. Ossipon takes the money, handsome charlatan that he is, and slips into alcoholism. Nostromo takes the money, romantic puppet that he is, and becomes a drab man in a brown suit. Each loses what spark of pride he had.

Now, this 'ending' for the Assistant Commission, which is only the beginning of the end for Winnie and Ossipon is in direct contrast to Decoud's 'ending' of the letter (all details to date) which will soon be the beginning of the end, and the change that will come over Nostromo, that will shatter his integrity. Beginnings and endings are things for conventional

novels only, we see. In each case, however, time continues in a more or less coherent fashion afterwards, as compared to the lively sequences we have previously had. The change, one could argue, marks the true beginning of events.

Conrad also takes care to back up each of these treatments of time in a different way. He gives us another example. The start of the case for Heat, is the survey of Stevie's body, which is the end of it all for Stevie, and just the beginning in the Winnie-Adolf conflict. It, too, is marked by an 'eternal' moment.

> Instantaneous! He remembered all he had ever read in popular publications of long and terrifying dreams dreamed in the instant of waking; of the whole past lived with frightful intensity by a drowning man as his doomed head bobs up, screaming, for the last time. The inexplicable mysteries of conscious existence beset Chief Inspector Heat till he evolved a horrible notion that ages of atrocious pain and mental torture could be contained between two successive winks of an eye. (p.88)

The side-swipe at 'popular publications' is delicately poised. The Secret Agent declares its separateness. It can be argued that it has - on this showing - three starts and three endings (including the conventional ones). The same would be true of Nostromo. When Dr. Monygham and Nostromo also meet over a dead body - that of Hirsch - Nostromo realizes that he does not matter in Monygham's plans, thus leading indirectly to his theft, and Monygham is busy deceiving everyone, which leads in the end to his spiritual and social re-instatement in Sulaco, a new start for him. In each of these cases I have been careful to show that the moments concerned simultaneously affect two or more people fundamentally. For Hirsch it marks the end of his career. In seeking to avoid suffering he opts for a quick death, spits at Sotillo, is killed, and ironically becomes a hero, since Sotillo then has to commit himself to a

fixed (and mistaken) line of conduct.

This ironic poise in each case is part of the nature of the event. It is, if one prefers, structural irony, and different from irony pointed out by the narrator, which in turn is different from any ironic comments made by any of the characters. My examination of The Secret Agent will concen- on these three discrete levels.

Critical attention has quite understandably centred upon the similarities shared by even those apparently completely opposed characters. This topic deserves close attention because Conrad is interested in drawing a series of intricate comparisons that will undercut the distinctions between characters, even as they attempt to assert their individuality. The Professor declares to Ossipon that: 'You revolutionists are the slaves of the social convention ... slaves of it as much as the very police that stand up in defence of that convention.' (p.69) From the other end of the novel's spectrum, this view is vouched for by Chief Inspector Heat himself, in a piece of free indirect speech: 'The mind and instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and instincts of a police officer. Both recognize the same conventions.' (p.92) When they meet, they actually turn out to think in almost precisely similar terms - the Chief Inspector sees criminal catching as: 'Open sport, where the best man wins under perfectly comprehensible rules' (p.97) - whilst the Professor mutters out loud - 'The Game'.[1] He understands the social set up well enough. Their view of the external world is precisely the

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1. In the playscript of The Secret Agent, printed in Three Plays (London: Methuen, 1934), hereafter referred to as Three Plays, Heat uses the phrase 'the game' and near variants six times (Act II, sc.II, p.123; p.125; Act.IV, sc.III, p.159, four times), the Professor uses it (Act II, sc.I, p.110) and the Assistant Commissioner speaks of 'my game' (Act II, sc.III, p.144),

same, but they have taken up completely opposite methods of operation in regard to it. Heat works within the system, and the Professor refuses to be part of it, but both recognize the workings of it. Conrad even takes care to give us a glimpse at the primal causes behind this. Heat is aware that: 'A reputation is built on manner as much as on achievement.'(p.85) The Professor on the other hand sees only:

> A goal of power and prestige to be attained without the medium of arts, graces, tact, wealth - by sheer weight of merit alone. On that view he considered himself entitled to undisputed success. (p.80)

Conrad takes care to stress these conflicting views when the men meet, and in so doing stresses their similarity in diversity. For if nothing else both see and think about society in the same terms as being a homogenous mass, where according to the Professor: 'Terrorist and policeman both come from the same basket.' (p.69) Although one is successful within society and the other chooses the consolation of finding 'the perfect detonator' both have realized that the rewards of the world are not necessarily just. They both respond to the same facts of life the same way, but use their conclusions to different ends.

When two characters complement each other in this way across a work, we can be fairly sure that we are being given hints as to how we should read what is before us. But my major concern will not be to show how Conrad compares and identifies apparently opposed ends of London, but to ask what his methods are, and what the use of such methods implies about the book. For, after Nostromo, The Secret Agent seems a very curious departure indeed.

I do not think it is enough to conclude, with John Hagen, Junior: 'Anarchy in the novel is more than a political

philosophy, it is a moral condition involving everyone.'[1](p.158) This much we can all see. The ironic distance of the narrator leaves us in no doubt as to this. Conrad, I would suggest, is aiming at more than this, and it is helpful to look at Stevie's groping for articulacy after the cab ride - for this scene could be regarded as a mise en abîme[2] for the whole problem of the novel's ability to communicate.

> It was as though he had been trying to fit all the words he could remember to his sentiments in order to get some sort of corresponding idea. As a matter of fact he got it at last. He hung back to utter it at once.
> 'Bad world for poor people'.
> Directly he had expressed that thought he became aware that it was familiar to him already in all its consequences. (p.171)

The enormous effort Stevie makes produces a platitude. Similarly Conrad knows he cannot produce a final moral pronouncement, or even convey new information about the nature of mankind. As I shall show, no character in the work ever becomes more than a weird cardboard-cutout figure, and so very little of a psychological nature can be learned; all are contained in a framework of contrasts that merely mocks them. Conrad seems to be more interested in the framework itself.

The Secret Agent is riddled with repetitions, and my intention now is to examine them in some detail. Every critic who has written on it has referred to Michaelis as 'the ticket of leave apostle'. (p.104) This is hardly surprising, since great care is taken to repeat this label at strategic points,

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1. 'The Design of Conrad's The Secret Agent', Journal of English Literary History XXII (1955), pp.148-164.

2. This term was originally used by Gide to refer to a motif in a text or work of art, which can be regarded as a microcosm of the operations of the entire text.

much as one would recite a formal title or the letters after someone's name. This particular phrase is used (or close echoes of it), only five times in total, but its effect is reinforced by extension and development of the word 'apostle' (p.110). The massively overweight Michaelis is seen, astonishingly enough, as 'angelic' (p.110,303); 'innocent' (pp.109,111); 'seraphic' (p.49); and 'saintly' (pp.107,109). He was 'like those saintly men whose personality is lost in the contemplation of their faith' (p.107). His theories are seen as: 'a faith revealed' (p.42), 'the confession of his faith' (p.45), and he possesses 'an unembittered faith' (p.107), the whole being 'a creed confessed rather than preached' (p.107). This is also expressed as his 'humanitarian creed' (p.108): 'humanitarian passion' (p.109) and 'humanitarian hopes' (p.111) whilst Michaelis himself is a 'humanitarian sentimentalist' (p.109), basking in the luxury of 'humanitarian idleness' (p.53). This is a prodigious amount of repetition for one character, even if he is the peg upon which the Assistant Commissioner's story hangs. He appears personally on only thirteen pages, but still manages to leave an impression of obesity, in addition. He is 'grotesque' on three occasions (pp.107,108,110), 'monstrous' twice (p.110), and 'distended' on three other occasions (pp.41,50,108). Even the Professor finds time to comment on his slimmer's diet of 'raw carrots and a little milk'(p.303) - we never forget the physical size of the man. The list of repeated descriptions could go on and on.

Nor is he the only character to be treated in this way. Ossipon has labels that vary from a complete recapitulation of everything he has ever done, to the single word 'robust'

(pp.302,304). This, and permutations of 'the robust anarchist' (p.287), 'the big anarchist' (p.64), occur some seventeen times. Conrad even provides us with an official résumé of Ossipon, and ensures that parts of it are allowed to re-emerge from time to time elsewhere.

> Comrade Alexander Ossipon, nicknamed the Doctor, ex-medical student without a degree; afterwards wandering lecturer to working men's associations upon the socialist aspects of hygiene, author of a popular quasi-medical study (in the form of a cheap pamphlet seized promptly by the police) entitled 'The Corroding Vices of the Middle Classes', special delegate of the more or less mysterious Red Committee, together with Karl Yundt and Michaelis for the work of literary propaganda. ... (p.46)

Verloc, too, is treated in exactly the same way. His particular words are 'heavy' (p.4) (extended to 'heavy-lidded eyes' (p.7)) and 'husky' (p.24).[1] When he is finally murdered, he merits eleven separate adjectives and adjectival phrases, all of which are familiar to us from the earlier parts of the work.

> Mr. Verloc, the tried revolutionist - 'one of the old lot' - the humble guardian of society; the invaluable secret agent Δ of Baron Stott-Wartenheim's dispatches; a servant of law and order, faithful, trusted, accurate, admirable, with perhaps one single amiable weakness: the idealistic belief in being loved for himself. (p.288)

Once alerted to this, a survey of the vocabulary shows a surprisingly narrow range for each character. There is, in addition, very little difference between narrational comment and the views characters have of each other. In Michaelis's case one 'monstrous' and one 'grotesque' are contributed by the

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1. Cf. Three Plays, Act I, p.84, the stage direction describing Verloc includes the suggestion that he is 'heavy-eyed'.

fashionable salon he has just left, and another comment on 'the monstrosity of the man' is clearly a remark made by the Assistant Commissioner to himself, rendered in free indirect speech. Noticeably, however, these are only physical details. Conrad loads us with visual information, as well as what amounts to narrational value judgements. Everyone refers to Michaelis as 'the ticket of leave apostle' it seems, and physically he does seem like an overgrown cherub - which causes the society hostess to remark on his placidity as being 'saintly', even though she cannot understand his theories. Conrad makes us 'see', in the much-quoted phrase, and we see not only physical details, but also characters' rather facile responses to each other. The descriptions can hardly be said to be of a psychologically questioning nature. It is as though Conrad were afraid of delving too far, and the effort that went into convincing us of the objective reality of the very stones of Sulaco has here been used to pin down characters immutably, behind catchphrases. There is also a corresponding desire to reduce figures to tableaux, and Ossipon becomes 'the picture of eager indecision' (p.63), whilst Mrs. Verloc becomes a 'veiled sorrow' (p.195), and Verloc is: 'Like the very embodiment of silence' (p.175). They are seen here in the same way as allegorical figures in pre-Raphaelite paintings. The treatment borders on the mock-heroic.

Here it is advisable to take a close look at Conrad's use of collocations. Angus McIntosh argues in 'Patterns and Ranges'[1] that a joining of an adjective and a noun like 'molten feather' was of interest because: 'words like "molten"

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1. Language, 1961, pp.525-587.

are defined by what they link to - if they are joined to the wrong "family" (e.g. "feather") we are outside acceptable "range".' (p.527). Conrad is far from insensible to this, and a particularly good example of his tendency to use collocations in The Secret Agent is the description of Karl Yundt, who is a 'moribund murderer' (p.42). This coupling of normally incompatible words, here reinforced by alliteration, is eminently memorable, and immediately arresting. As such it can be described as Karl Yundt's formula, giving him an impressiveness that with other characters is achieved by repeated, less striking, formulae. Conrad exploits this useage to good comic effect by such phrases as 'senile sensualist' (p.43), with his 'thick stick' (p.42), an 'extraordinary expression' (p.42),in his 'extinguished eyes' (pp.47, 42). Here we have two rather startling collocations and two rather ordinary ones, all brought to our notice by the use of alliteration and assonance. Among the startling examples we have the oxymorons: 'impotent fierceness' (p.43) and 'swaggering spectre' (p.52); and there are also the grotesque examples of 'a moribund veteran' (p.48) out for a 'constitutional crawl' (p.52). The effect is blackly comic, and thus distances us from the figure, but essentially it is a very memorable effect achieved in precisely the same way as Michaelis' treatment. 'Humanitarian idleness' (p.53) may not be as powerful a phrase as 'moribund murderer' butthen we are not asked to reject Michaelis as contemptible out of hand. The purpose is evident, we are being asked to accept a fixed impression that allows no questioning.

These collocations appear everywhere in this fashion. The anarchists speak of 'private property' (p.43), 'possessors

of property' (p.43), of the 'awakened Proletariat' (p.43), and 'private ownership' (p.43). These last collocations dwindle to the level of cliché and journalese, and yet seem to refer to definite concepts. One can't help feeling that they are there to be questioned. For example, everyone knows the collocation 'hollybush' - originally two words and now one, as an acceptable unit of meaning. This is fine, as long as we do not forget what it really means and start saying hollybush when we mean holly tree. Repeatedly Conrad forces these two word combinations upon us, and some of them are evidently clichés, such as 'economic conditions' (twice on p.41 and thereafter plentiful) - but he also hints that these phrases disguise uninvestigated basic concepts. Verloc is described as speaking to his wife after the explosion with 'marital solicitude' (p.251); is this in fact the case? Hardly - he is busy making excuses, and desperately anxious for reassurance, but he has no idea that he may be ripping her sensibilities to fragments. The elevated, stilted vocabulary of the ironic narrator has placed us on our guard. The use is satirical, and like all satire it calls us to question this familiar phrase.[1] We can smile (grimly) that this is hardly what the words mean in normal use, but at the same time we have to re-assess the very words we have admitted using.

The more ordinary collocations are used merely as labels, 'the robust anarchist', and as such they are more like dismissive off-hand reminders to the reader of what the character's public status is meant to be. It is used as a type of proper name, asserting the existence of a figure about whom both

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1. Conrad takes care to repeat it, with slight variations: 'marital spirit' (p.258), 'marital authority' (p.261).

author and reader are in agreement, whilst refraining from any deeper considerations of what he is.

Here there is an interesting and deeply-felt tension in the work. Conrad can dismiss Karl Yundt in powerful collocations but still feels the evasions inherent in the unexplored concepts the anarchists tend to use. They all argue about the relevance of the word 'criminal' - Ossipon, the Professor and Karl Yundt, and yet they quietly accept such phrasings as 'private property'. Moreover, we have already seen that to Heat and the Professor, criminals and policemen are part of the same system. The words hardly mean anything. The only person who sees things in clear terms (if 'clear' can be used for his simplistic approach) is Stevie, who enunciates boldly: 'Bad world for *poor* people' (p.171). He is completely contented with his diagnosis even though it rests on two entirely unexplored collocations. We can hardly accept this, or his other belief that Mr. Verloc is 'good' (p.176). Stevie lives in a realm where words are absolutes and representative of reality. His pathetic belief is surely a pointer to make us question each figure's assumption. Conrad uses his labels for each character knowing that they refer only to the externals. He delves no deeper, because his characters do not themselves delve any deeper. The only person who ever thinks deeply is Mrs. Verloc:

> Mrs. Verloc, who always refrained from looking deep into things, was compelled to look into the very bottom of this thing. She saw there no haunting face, no reproachful shade, no vision of remorse, no sort of ideal conception. She saw there an object. That object was the gallows. Mrs. Verloc was afraid of the gallows. (p.267).

This is clearly an evasion. Instead of seeing the futility of her surface existence, and all that such a realization implies in Conrad, she remains firmly placed in the world she knows from cheap literature and newspapers. She makes no effort to

come to terms with conscience or the indifference of the universe. No, her mind fastens on concrete items of conventional justice. Not even Mrs. Verloc truly looks below the surface.

For this reason, namely that the characters themselves do not question important aspects of terminology, Conrad can continue to use his labels, and use them to show how similar all the characters are, thus debasing the validity of the label. Conrad's perception of language is post-Saussurean, words are suspended in a purely relativistic framework, and can be made to mean anything, as well as disguising almost anything. It is closely parallel to his much quoted view of society, in which all men are of the same sort, all essentially criminals together:

> La société est essentiellement criminelle, ou elle n'existerait pas, c'est l'égoisme qui sauve tout-absolument tout...[1]

But paradoxically, in order to show this to be the case in this novel, he has to use distinctive labels which he recognizes as empty, and arrange them in contrasting patterns to prove that they are empty. A name is not proof of a definite identity. By comparisons and contrasts Conrad shows us many similarities that subvert the myth of identity and separateness that is upheld by names.

John Searle is helpful on names here:

> The uniqueness and immense pragmatic convenience of proper names in our language lies precisely in the fact that they enable us to publicly refer to objects without being forced to raise issues and come to an agreement about which descriptive characteristics exactly constitute the identity of the object. They function not as descriptions but as pegs on which to hang descriptions.[2]

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1. To Cunninghame-Graham, L. and L. I, 269, 8.2.99.

2. Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p.172.

A more extreme view, but very relevant, is posited by Roland Barthes. 'All subversion, or all novelistic submission, thus begins with a Proper Name.'[1] Similarly, Conrad is quick to exploit the uses of absence of names. Mrs. Verloc's mother is never referred to as anything else, she is merely a reason for Winnie to become Mrs. Verloc in the first instance. When she leaves the family it is as though she has already ceased to exist. She is described as on her 'last cab-drive' (p.155) and she has already made and executed her will by distributing her furniture. It is as though she is already dead. Her lack of individuality is reflected in her namelessness; she was merely an item of familial politics.

The Assistant Commissioner, too, has no name, because he never for a moment ceases to be on duty. On this occasion social and professional interests are almost identical. The Professor, similarly is only known by his nickname, but is more familiar as 'the little man' (pp.61,63). Dedicated and insignificant, he is memorable for his spectacles, which glitter on eleven occasions, and are used in conjunction with synecdoche on five of those occasions: 'These round, black spectacles progressing along the streets ... (p.63).

Toodles's nickname, for instance, has become so apt that Sir Ethelred even uses it when speaking to the Assistant Commissioner, without a second thought (p.143). And Verloc, the secret agent, Δ, nameless in certain contexts, is defined by the repeated references to his hat and overcoat, his 'heavy-lidded eyes' and his 'husky' voice - a continual memory-jogger of his public speaking ability: of his secret and official life.

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1. S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p.102. Extract as translated by Dr. A. Jefferson, St. John's College, Oxford.

The problem still remains, why does Conrad use all these formulae and repetitions? This method turns his characters into flat cardboard cutouts, and encourages us to simplify our moral view of them. It gives us very little choice, for we cannot discover a character in the same way we gradually fathom Dr. Monygham, or see Nostromo evolve. Evidently Conrad is trying a different experiment entirely. A letter of 18th March 1917 to Sir Sydney Colvin may well be of some use here:

> I have been called a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a romantic writer - and also a realist. But as a matter of fact all my concern has been with the 'ideal' value of things, events and people. That and nothing else. The humorous, the pathetic, the passionate, the sentimental aspects came in of themselves - mais en vérité cést les valeurs idéales des faits et gestes humains qui se sont imposés à mon activité artistique.
> Whatever dramatic and narrative gifts I may have are always, instinctively, used with that object - to get at, to bring forth Les Valeurs idéales.
> Of course this is a very general statement, but roughly I believe it is true. (L. and L. II, 185.)

From the safety of 1917 Conrad can afford to make statements of this sort. This leaning towards 'ideal' values can logically only find its expression in programmed, diagrammatic literature. And this is what I consider The Secret Agent to be approaching. It would be far too glib to suggest that after the efforts of Nostromo he set about constructing an ironically poised moral diagram. Yet something of the sort seems to be the case. The rigidity of characterization suggests a preoccupation with form - a concern that was solved in Nostromo by the dictates of actual historical fact, closely adhered to. The Author's Note to The Secret Agent provides some exciting hints:

> Personally, I have never had any doubt of the reality of Mrs. Verloc's story; but it had to be disengaged from its obscurity in that immense town, it had to be made credible, I don't mean so much as to her soul but as to her surroundings, not so much as to her psychology but as to her humanity. For the surrounding hints were not lacking. I had to fight hard to keep at arm's length the memories of my solitary and nocturnal walks all over

> London in my early days, lest they should rush in and overwhelm each page of the story as these emerged one after another from a mood as serious in feeling and thought as any in which I ever wrote a line ... ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity. (p.viii)

Frustratingly, Conrad then goes on to discuss something else, having come so close to complete revelation, but enough remains. First, there is the opposition of 'soul' with 'surroundings'; and of 'psychology' with 'humanity'. This would indicate that Conrad's interest lies in the type of people and their social interaction, rather than with individuals. His concern with this approach has led him to exclude much personally experienced material, in order to keep this social interaction unencumbered. He has had to struggle to stop the story taking control, and feels something akin to guilt over this, for he insists on the seriousness of the mood. It is as though he is afraid of re-proaches for having forced the story into a predetermined pattern, rather than allowing it to get 'itself written'. This is a far cry from a letter to Garnett, 14 August, 1896, about An Outpost of Progress:

> The construction is bad. It is bad because it was a matter of conscious decision, and I have no discrimination - in the artistic sense. Things get themselves written - and you like them. Things get themselves into shape - and they are tolerable. But when I want to write - when I do consciously try to write or try to construct ...
> (L. and L. I, 193.)

As the last quoted sentence of the preface tells us, Conrad here felt that something had to be expressed, a clear and totally realized structure of relationships, and it was not to be prevented. The subject had been decided upon; on no account must it be allowed to lose its way. We are faced with a didactic novel, and one that the author feels guilty about. Eager to assert that it is not merely an exercise of an improving sort, he states, 'I really think the Secret Agent is a perfectly

genuine piece of work'. (p.xiii.)

Given that the novel is carefully patterned, it is useful to bear in mind a letter of Conrad's to Richard Curle of 14 July, 1923:

> ...the thought for effects...can be detected in my unconventional grouping and perspective, which are purely temperamental and wherein almost all my 'art' consists. (L. and L. II, 317.)

Conrad's repetitions, then, are part of a striving after an effect to show unexpected 'perspective' - relations between things and events. The repetitions we have noticed, not surprisingly, give us a clear enough image initially to allow for comparisons and contrasts. Verloc and the Professor, for instance, although both supposedly anarchists, could hardly be more different. What is interesting is that Conrad indicates this first from a purely physical viewpoint. Verloc's 'heavy-lidded eyes' were 'not well adapted to winking', but given rather to closing 'with majestic effect' (p.13). 'Winking' is used three times in half-a-dozen lines with reference to Verloc's eyes. The Professor is distinctive by his 'sleepless unwinking orbs' (p.64); the verbal repetition of 'winking' has put us on our guard. Verloc is proud of the power of his voice, and we have already noted the significance of 'husky' where this is concerned. The Professor, however, 'without raising his voice' insists on his 'force of personality' (p.67) - his bomb. Both have a 'reputation', Verloc because of his voice (p.24) and his success with Baron Stott-Wartenheim - and he has been living comfortably off this reputation. The Professor's reputation is not of past abilities supporting present existence, but of present abilities (the bomb) promising future annihilation, which ensures his continued immunity. The first time we see Verloc he is up early, to see Mr. Vladimir. This is a change

from his usual aspect of 'having wallowed...all day on an unmade bed', 'wallowing there with an air of quiet enjoyment till noon every day' (p.6). The Professor, too, is not following his usual routine, when we first see him; he says 'I stayed in bed all morning'. (p.62) It is his day off; the same day that Verloc has to do his first work for a long time. One is 'large' the other is 'the little man'; one is lazy, the other has to work; 'fourteen hours a day, and go hungry sometimes'. (pp.69-70) Verloc never goes hungry, as we infer when Winnie tells Stevie: 'You aren't ever hungry'. (p.174) Yet that day Verloc had had no breakfast (p.232) and Heat had not felt like any food either, after viewing the remains of Stevie. 'And since breakfast Chief Inspector Heat had not managed to get anything to eat'. (p.86) We have already noted the similarities of the Professor and Heat, and now we compare Verloc and Heat, discovering a few pages later that they work together. Verloc differs from the Professor even with respect to their boots. Verloc's are 'shiny' (p.13), the Professor's are 'unblacked'. (p.304) Yet these two are on the same side, and share certain rather strange similarities. Verloc took over Winnie and her mother 'with the furniture' (p.8), whilst 'the perfect anarchist' rents a room 'furnished, from two elderly spinsters'. (p.62) The exactitude of the contrast serves to bring the two together as different ends of the same spectrum.

Nor are these the only contrasts. It would be tedious to list them all. Their importance is that they can only work with rigid characters seen from an uninvolved, external perspective - and Conrad uses every comparison he can. The question to ask is, <u>who</u> is making this contrast? It cannot be attributed to the ironic narrator, I feel, but rather to the author himself.

Just similarly, the structural irony of the novel compares different characters under similar circumstances as events are paralleled. But who is paralleling the events? Certainly not the narrator, but the author.[1] For example, he contrasts things supposedly alike, things apparently unlike each other, and he even compares events. Wurmt is depicted criticizing Verloc's reports, 'pressing the tip of his forefinger on the papers with force'. (p.16) Heat suffers in precisely the same way after his confident assurances have been proved wrong, from

> the unanswerable retort of a fingertip laid forcibly on the telegram ... To be crushed as it were under the tip of a forefinger was an unpleasant experience. (p.85)

If repetitions are used in this way, and Winnie Verloc is the centre of the story ('This book is that story' Author's Preface, p.viii), what are we to make of the stultifyingly rigid form of her character? On seven occasions we discover that: 'she felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into'. (p.177) Some more examples are listed here:

> She did not allow herself to fall into the idleness of barren speculation. She was rather confirmed in her belief that things did not stand being looked into. (p.178)

> Confirmed in her instinctive conviction that things don't bear looking into very much. (p.180)

> Mrs. Verloc's comment ... coming from a person disinclined to look under the surface of things. (p.185)

> His walks ... which his wife had never looked deeply into. (p.188)

> 'I don't trouble my head much about it,' Mrs. Verloc remarked. (p.239)

> Without 'troubling her head about it' she was aware that it 'did not stand looking into very much'. (p.241)

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1. Daniel R. Schwarz makes much of the humanity of the ironic narrator in his discussion of The Secret Agent in Conrad: Almayer's Folly to Under Western Eyes (London: Macmillan, 1980).

> [Mr. and Mrs. Verloc] refrained from going to the bottom of facts and motives. (p.245)

It is also worth noting that the playscript of The Secret Agent has Winnie saying precisely the same things: 'I don't trouble my head about it, things don't stand looking into much',[1] and 'life does not stand much looking into'.[2] If the Verlocs retreat into linguistic formulae of an incurious sort we are encouraged to see Mrs. Verloc in her bed as Verloc sees her - always in the same terms.

> That ample form ... her head on the pillow and a hand under her cheek. Her big eyes stared wide open, inert and dark against the snowy whiteness of the linen. (p.177)

> Her black head sunk into the white pillow, one hand under her cheek, and the big, dark, unwinking eyes. (p.177-178)

> Her ample shoulders, draped in white, the back of her head with her hair done up for the night in three plaits tied up with black tapes at the end ... This head arranged for the night, those ample shoulders, had an aspect of familiar sacredness - the sacredness of domestic peace. (p.179)

Three close repetitions in such a short space are not to be overlooked, especially when backed up by a similar treatment from the first bedroom scene.

> The white pillow sunk by the weight of her head ... dark hair done up in several plaits for the night. (p.55)

> Her big eyes gleam[ed] under the dark lids. (p.58)

On each occasion she talks of Stevie, on each occasion she asks her husband if he is not afraid of catching cold, and on each occasion she puts out the light. The powerful image of an invariable domestic scene is so forceful that we feel it as a rut. Both times Verloc feels himself in 'a vast and hapless desert' (p.179) or on 'an uninhabited and thirsty plain'. (p.57)

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1. Three plays, Act I, p.75).
2. ibid. p.78, with variants on pp.83,98 and 100.

It is all the more surprising, then, when the scene is reversed, when Verloc, seeming really to have caught cold, calls Winnie over to the couch and is murdered. It is an ironic inversion of the normal scene, even down to the detail of her forgetting to put the light out - a task eventually achieved by Ossipon. The ticking of the clock Verloc notes so wearily (p.179) gives way to the dripping sound of blood Winnie notices with terror (p.264).

So firm is the rut of her married life that Conrad even makes her think according to a definite formula.

> [She] pronounced Karl Yundt 'a disgusting old man'. She declared openly her affection for Michaelis of the robust Ossipon, in whose presence she always felt uneasy behind an attitude of strong reserve, she said nothing whatever. And continuing to talk of[her] brother ..(p.59)

> Karl Yundt had come ... He was 'a disgusting old man'. Of Comrade Ossipon whom she had received curtly entrenched behind the counter with a stormy face and a far-away gaze, she said nothing. Her mental reference to the robust anarchist being marked by a short pause ... And bringing in her brother Stevie as soon as she could... (p.183)

> Mrs. Verloc declared her affection for Michaelis; mentioned her abhorrence of Karl Yundt, 'nasty old man', and of Ossipon she said nothing. As to Stevie ... (pp.188-189)

The same movement of thought occurs in each case, even down to the same items of vocabulary.[1] Of course, Conrad has added his own commentary, such as the fact of 'stony reserve', but this is basically free indirect speech, and evidently Mrs. Verloc is just not capable of thinking in any other way. She can never cease, it would seem, to be herself. It is surely a mistake to think that because she is self-denying for Stevie and her mother's sake, that she does not have an individual selfhood. Paradoxically, she has a very rigid identity which includes the trait of acting selflessly, namely, for Stevie:

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1. cf. Three Plays, p.98. Winnie sees Karl Yundt as a 'nasty old man' and as 'a horrid old man', p.106.

Before continuing, it is necessary to consult two letters;

first, one to Marguerite Poradowska of 20 July, 1894:

> One must drag the ball and chain of one's selfhood to the end. It is the price one pays for the devilish and divine privilege of thought; so that in this life it is only the elect who are convicts - a glorious band which comprehends and groans but which treads the earth amidst a multitude of phantoms with maniacal gestures, with idiotic grimaces. Which would you rather be: idiot or convict?[1]

Second is one dated 23 March, 1896, to Edward Garnett:

> When the truth is grasped that one's personality is only a ridiculous and aimless masquerade of something hopelessly unknown, the attainment of serenity is not very far off. Then there remains nothing but the surrender to one's impulses, the fidelity to passing emotions which is perhaps a nearer approach to truth than any other philosophy of life. And why not? If we are 'ever becoming - never being' then I should be a fool if I tried to become this thing rather than that...
> (L. and L. I,186.)

Winnie, in murdering Verloc, is responding to 'impulse' - she had intended to leave and was 'at the mercy of mere trifles, of casual contacts' (p.255). The death of Stevie leaves her a 'free woman' (p.263)'almost in the manner of a corpse'. (p.263) Her selfhood of drudgery on Stevie's behalf is shattered, the 'ball and chain'has been removed. What she now has to realize is that this same freedom has to be recognized, and its anarchistic impulses controlled by willpower, - a sense of duty that is truly her own rather than one formed in deference to the needs of her mother and brother. She is unable to face the knowledge that her inner essence is anarchic, and craves refuge from it. She finds salvation in the promise of a return to her former state of smothering of her individuality - namely becoming Ossipon's mistress. She does not escape her 'selfhood' - she merely repeats her mistakes. Originally she married Verloc as

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1. Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Paradowska, 1890-1920. Ed. John A. Gee and Paul J. Sturm (London: Oxford Univ.Press, 1940), p.72. Hereafter cited as Sturm and Gee.

part of a 'bargain' (p.256) to keep herself, her mother and Stevie from poverty. Now she is only too eager to relapse into the same bargain. She is quite unable to walk after the murder and quite literally needs Ossipon's support, which becomes a metaphor for her unsupported mental state. Like a caged bird set free she is unable to use her freedom, and she is eager for the next chance to find a cage of servitude. The desire to throw herself in the river, is a clear pointer - once her world has collapsed she has no future, no life. But she is unable to realize what is happening to her. Discovering that she has no morality she re ifies the problem in the only easily comprehensible way she can - fear of the gallows, her 'fixed idea' (pp.249, 250) is that 'the drop given was fourteen feet'. (p.268, three times repeated.) She escapes again into the scant comfort of repeated verbal formulae.

No one, it seems, escapes from themselves. Ossipon, at the moment he meets Mrs. Verloc, is acting well within his usual character, accosting 'strange women' (p.271) and uses his habitual sweet-talking formula:"'I've always thought of you - ever since I first set eyes on you.'" (p.271) "'I've been fond of you beyond words ever since I set eyes on your face.' Comrade Ossipon assumed correctly that no woman was capable of wholly disbelieving such a statement." (p.273.) '...By a sudden inspiration [he] uttered an "Unhappy Woman!" of lofty commiseration instead of the more familiar "Poor darling!" of his usual practice.' (p.276) In the end, too, he manages to get her money from her as if she were just like the other 'silly girls with savings bank books'. (p.53)

Verloc repeats his mistake that cost him five years' rigorous confinement in a fortress by imagining Winnie loves

him. It seems he could not help but make the same error, for he:

> had always been carelessly generous, yet always with no other idea than that of being loved for himself. Upon this matter, his official notices being in agreement with his vanity, he was completely incorrigible. (p.251)

Even when he desires to confess he does not lose his secret agent's method of thinking:

> It was in harmony with the promptings of Mr. Verloc's genius. It had also the advantage of being within the range of his powers and of adjusting itself easily to the practice of his life, which had consisted precisely in betraying the secret and unlawful proceedings of his fellowmen. (p.245)

The Assistant Commissioner, too, can never stop being a detective. 'It was natural, he was a born detective... We can never cease to be ourselves.' (pp.117-118) He suspects Heat of duplicity in precisely the same way as he had found out the old tribal chief in his colonial days; whilst Heat himself has concealed his 'private' sources from three Assistant Commissioners. Stevie repeats his mistake with the fireworks on a more disastrous scale. Michaelis exchanges one prison for another - 'It was like being in prison' in his cottage, we are told. (p.120)[1]

This vision of characters entirely unable to escape from themselves is unrelieved by any ability to communicate with each other. In the scene in Verloc's parlour, for instance, the revolutionaries fail to make any contact at all, so engrossed are they in their own private concerns. Michaelis' 'confession of faith' cannot be interrupted without him losing his thread, and as he continues they become aware that: 'He talked to himself, indifferent to the sympathy or hostility of his hearers'. (p.45) He is not accessible to argument and the

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1. cf. Three Plays, p.116. In Act II scene I the Professor calls Michaelis' country cottage 'a cage'.

Professor finds, later, that:'the poverty of [his] reasoning is astonishing'. (p.303) Yundt giggles and reminisces over his own last chance of founding a 'truly dedicated' band of anarchists. Ossipon laughs and sidetracks himself by regarding Stevie scientifically. Verloc, tormented by the threats of Mr. Vladimir, hears the word scientific and curses. Each is interested only in his own area. Later Verloc tries to confess to Winnie, but because they see Stevie entirely differently, they make no contact at all. At the moment Verloc offers her love, Winnie offers him death and hatred. The two could hardly be further apart. Winnie then tries to confess her crime to Ossipon, and merely succeeds in confusing him. Ironically, she assumes she is loved for her own sake by him, and her mistake is the precise counterpart of Verloc's confidence in her love. The third 'confession' in this series is the one Ossipon tries to make to the Professor about his part in Mrs. Verloc's death. Whereas Mrs. Verloc's 'fixed idea' (p.188) was that Verloc took Stevie away 'to kill him' 'to murder him' (eleven repetitions, in groups of two or three pp.246,249 and again, p.290 'after killing the boy') and later 'the drop given was fourteen feet' (p.268 three times, and p.270) - Ossipon mirrors this precisely with his two recurrent phrases. He sees Mrs. Verloc as 'the sister of the degenerate - a degenerate herself of a murdering type'. (pp.290,297 verbatim) This fixed idea of Mrs. Verloc's murderous ability parallels her own view of Verloc's supposedly homicidal intentions. Ossipon's other obsessive phrases are 'an impenetrable mystery' and 'madness or despair'. (pp.309-310-311) Like Mrs. Verloc's magic distance of fourteen feet, it comes from a newspaper article: 'The newspapers never gave any details except one...' (p.268) When Ossipon tries to speak

to the Professor about madness and despair, the Professor thinks of them only as indicative of panic, which is what he wishes to achieve. To Ossipon they mean melancholy and realization of emptiness as he fears for his own sanity. It seems that Ossipon and Mrs. Verloc share strangely similar fates.

Situations, too, are comparable elsewhere. Not only does Heat have to confess his anarchistic links to the Assistant Commissioner, but Verloc has to confess his bourgeois background to Mr. Vladimir. Neither the Assistant Commissioner nor Verloc feel they can go abroad because of the objections of their wives. But these are surface connections. What is really important about the explosion is that it manages to shatter these six closely interwoven worlds at the only point at which they intersect. For Verloc it means the end of a stable life as a secret agent; for Winnie it means the end of her obvious reasons for existing. To the Assistant Commissioner its importance lies in the threat to Michaelis and the danger this spells for his standing personally with his wife, with society and with the lady Patroness. For Heat it spells danger, to society in the larger sense, to the continuing of his successful public career, and to his personal source of information. For the anarchists it could produce repressive legislation at the Milan Conference, whereas Mr. Vladimir risks discovery and deprivation of the use of valuable secret agents.

Conrad criticism has long since acknowledged that all the characters in this work are physically frail. All suffer from physical disabilities. Mrs. Verloc's mother has swollen legs; Michaelis, Verloc and Heat are overweight; the Assistant Commissioner has a 'sensitive liver' (p.100); Sir Ethelred and

and Wurmt have weak eyes; Stevie is mentally deficient and Mrs. Verloc has trained herself not to think too much. The Professor is 'obviously unfit to live' (p.94); Yundt is 'moribund' (p.48) and the lady Patroness is ageing, whilst Ossipon admits 'I am seriously ill' (p.311) and seems on the way to alcoholism. Mr. Vladimir, on the other hand, after having the air of 'a preternaturally thriving baby' (p.19) - in itself rather ominous - eventually feels 'slightly sick' (p.226) on being found out.

Characters also tend to be seen, and see each other, as rather less than human. The Assistant Commissioner and Sir Ethelred are like 'reed' and 'oak' (p.136) respectively, whilst Sir Ethelred is ready to see Heat as an 'ass'. (p.139) Vladimir sees Verloc and immediately classifies him: 'he's fat, the animal', and Verloc reciprocates by describing him as a'brute'(pp.238,239) and a 'swine' (p.238 twice). To Verloc Stevie is like'a household dog' or 'his wife's favourite cat'. To Sir Ethelred all revolutionists are a 'pest' (p.142); the Professor is like a plague, 'a pest'. (p.311) Mrs. Verloc's mother came 'with the furniture' (p.35) like a spare carpet, whilst Winnie and Stevie are only 'degenerates' (p.290) to Ossipon - himself compared authorially to a negro (p.44) a popularly thought degenerate type at the time. Ossipon sees himself as close to lunacy, and even the cabman is 'maimed' (p.156). The fish imagery is prominent, too, in which Vladimir's figures as a 'whale' (p.216), Verloc as a 'sprat' (pp.216,145), London as an 'aquarium' full of 'foreign fish' (p.222) and Sir Ethelred is intent on nationalising the fisheries.

Moreover, in general terms all the male characters depend upon the goodwill of women. Ossipon lives on their bank

savings, Yundt is nursed by his former lover. Michaelis and the Assistant Commissioner both depend upon the good favour of the Lady Patroness, and even the Professor lodges with two old ladies. Vladimir, too, depends upon the Lady Patroness for his ability to persuade high class salons of the necessity of repressing all political deviants. Just as the Lady Patroness supports Michaelis so that he can write, Winnie supports Stevie so he can, it would seem, draw circles. The parallel is reinforced because Stevie and Michaelis actually stay in the cottage together, and although the Assistant Commissioner knows Michaelis' worth to him vis-à-vis his wife, Verloc's dependence on Stevie for his wife's goodwill is one of the major facts of which he is ignorant. The two situations are identical, but handled to produce different results.

The resemblance of Stevie and Winnie is brought out most clearly during the murder, when Winnie actually becomes Stevie for the duration of the deed.

> As if the homeless soul of Stevie had flown for shelter straight into the breast of his sister, guardian and protector, the resemblance of her face to that of her brother grew at every step, even to the drop of the lower lip... (p.262)

Notice also that 'lower lip' and 'lower jaw' (p.172) are repeated labels for Stevie; 'sister, guardian and protector' is repeated verbatim, p.155. But she is not the only one to share a resemblance to Stevie. Michaelis is like Stevie in his inability to remain in contact with the outside world:

> The mere fact of hearing another voice disconcerted him painfully. (p.45)
>
> This vision of truth had grown so intense that the sound of a strange voice failed to rout it this time. (p.50)
>
> His candid blue eyes [were] cast down because the sight of faces troubled his inspiration developed in solitude. (p.107)

What could be closer to Stevie's problems as stated by Winnie's mother? 'And if somebody spoke to him sharply, his name and address may slip his memory...' (sic.p.164) Stevie also has a 'candid gaze' (p.145) and is 'like a small child' (p.146). Michaelis is described as having 'no more self consciousness than a very small child' (p.107) and these are no chance repetitions of details. Michaelis opens his arms in 'an attempt to embrace and hug to his breast a self-regenerated universe'. (p.50) The only comparable sentiment is Stevie's desire -

> ...to make the horse happy and the cabman happy [which] had reached the point of a bizarre longing to take them to bed with him. (p.167)

This feeling is based directly upon Stevie's experience of Winnie carrying him off to bed 'as into a haven of consoling peace'. (p.167) The three are closely linked. Michaelis' 'saint'-like temperament is mirrored by Stevie who charitably descends from the cab to give the horse an easier pull - opposite to St. Stephen's Church. In line with this is an authorial comment on Mrs. Verloc:

> It was a life of single purpose and of a noble unity of inspiration, like those rare lives that have left their mark on the thoughts and feelings of mankind. (p.242)

Her selflessness is almost of a divine order, it would seem. We have already noticed 'the heaven of consoling peace' she offers. Whilst these similarities should be stressed, they also provide an interesting divergence. Michaelis is compared to all the impotent and absurd characteristics of Stevie, whilst Winnie's action possesses the very soul of Stevie's moral simplicity, the simplicity that was going to plant the bomb, the rage that left Stevie with the carving knife in the kitchen, (p.60) trembling, and the straightforwardness that

took up the same carving knife to exchange a life for a life.

Such is the moral patterning of the book. Self evidently it is an exceedingly carefully prepared pattern. Why is it there? We have a world in which there is very little mutual understanding, and almost no communication. The world is seen to be based upon self interest and the almost criminal tendencies this provokes, especially in the police circle, it seems. We see very clearly indeed what is meant by the letter of 8 February 1899 to Cunninghame-Graham: 'La société est essentiellement criminelle - ou elle n'existerait pas, c'est l'égoisme qui sauve tout -.' It is only the desire to protect one's possessions, after all, that ensures abstracts like laws can be enforced effectively. The same men who make the rules 'thou shall not steal' have initially accepted that stealing is an attractive proposition. If it were not, it would not need to be forbidden. This is the egoism of society. Because of this criminals have essentially the same responses as everyone else, but prefer to take their risks. To Heat: 'the idea of thieving appeared...as normal as the idea of property.' (p.93) Against this is set the selflessness of Winnie and her mother - both of whom survive by deceiving men for Stevie's sake. Winnie lets Verloc think he is loved, and her mother lets the charity commission assume she has no family.

I think, however, that Conrad wishes to show us something more than this. He has denied the importance of the labels that give us the rather flimsy boundaries of our existence. By comparing everyone with everyone else he points to the vanity of 'personality' - a fact no one in the novel is eager to face. Yet it is still more than this. Conrad is presenting us with a full vision of his infernal 'knitting machine'.

authorial comment makes overt reference to the 'machine' of society, by comparing Heat and the thieves he catches in the following terms:

> Products of the same machine, one classed as useful and the other as noxious, they take the machine for granted in different ways, but with a seriousness essentially the same. (p.92)

It is the same machine that caused the non-progress in Sulaco, but here made more obvious, brought home to the average English reader more forcefully - if he can see it - by being placed on his very own doorstep.

It would seem that The Secret Agent has the same outlook as Conrad's statements about the 'knitting machine' to Cunninghame-Graham in December 1897. (L. and L. I, 216.) But just as he admitted then 'that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing', we have to deal with the presence of the ironic narrator.

I have tried to suggest in this section not only the highly patterned network of comparisons, but also that the comparisons are perceived to a greater or lesser degree at all the levels of the narrative. The Professor sees 'the game' - although we are never sure how much of the pattern is included in his view. Characters make the same sort of comments about each other as the narrator makes about them, although with lesser understanding. And finally, the negative comparisons as between Verloc and the Professor, are surely provided by the author. What we have here is not so much an ironic narrator figure who can be analysed in the same way as Marlow, but an author who has deliberately chosen to take on an ironic mode. As Conrad says:

> Even the purely artistic purpose, that of applying an ironic method to a subject of that kind, was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest

> belief that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity. (Author's Note, p.viii)

This is an author who has deliberately taken it upon himself to adopt a rather grim tone in order to demonstrate the shortcomings of humanity. In so doing, however, he tacitly assumes that there are values worth preserving. After all one doesn't have a shortcoming without some sort of ability to imagine what the fulfilment should be. One cannot criticize squalor without an implicit assumption that one knows something better. Paradoxically, by showing how humanity fits together, and how it fails to perceive its mental imprisonment Conrad shows 'scorn and pity'. By concentrating on the debasement of language, and using language to describe it, Conrad does not make himself independent of his topic so much as come to a realization, with the reader, of the measure of our own lack of independence. The 'scorn' may define the world, but the 'pity' defines our own relation to it.

If there is misunderstanding and myopia within the novel, what is the positive side of Conrad's vision? I suggest that The Secret Agent is the mature expression of Conrad's expressed aim in the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus': 'That at the last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity;' (p.xi). This is the solidarity of those who have received the communication of the novel and who, as it were, peep over the fence at others just like themselves who cannot see their own plight. Solidarity is not only working together in a storm at sea for survival, but a way of seeing.

In order to make his point clear, however, Conrad has had to take artistic risks. He has had to reduce his figures to

cari˘catures. The danger there is that a cari˘cature must always perform true to type. To have had the Professor, for example, turn out to be a pigeon-fancier in his spare time would have been to give him an inconsistent attribute that would risk turning him into a real character, a major creation. Such a figure might well upset the delicate balance of the work. This is not a merely whimsical suggestion - Almayer's pride in his flock of geese helps to make him a major figure. Conrad realizes that men are like that, and have absurd hobbies.

Conrad risks the artistic integrity of vision in this work. It has already been pointed out at great length that Conrad was desperately anxious that his vision of life should correspond to what life is, both in its surface manifestations and its overall theoretical vision. In the 1920 Author's Note to the novel he comments:

> I was gratified to hear that an experienced man of the world had said that Conrad must have been in touch with that sphere or else has an excellent intuition of things. (p.viii)

and he goes on to say: 'It would have bored me too much to make believe'. (p.viii) This is the proof that the tale has worked, for Conrad. This is the touchstone that vindicates the art. Conrad gives the following vital clue to this danger, writing in A Personal Record:

> In order to move others deeply we must deliberately allow ourselves to be carried away beyond the bounds of our normal sensibility - ... And surely this is no great sin. But the danger lies in the writer becoming the victim of his own exaggeration, losing the exact notion of sincerity, and in the end coming to despise truth itself as something too cold, too blunt for his purpose - as, in fact, not good enough for his insistent emotion. (pp.xvii-xviii)

It does not need a great deal of effort to see the relevance of this to the ironic method in The Secret Agent. What the

'truth' is, however, has not been laid bare as yet. And indeed Conrad is considerably chary of admitting what it might be, as is revealed in the following section.

Certainly the novel is dominated by egoism, but this in fact draws attention to the curious altruism of Winnie and her mother, both of whom are willing to compromise every other standard of honesty and decency for Stevie. It seems they are inherently - genetically - predisposed towards acts of abnegation that Conrad saw as typical of women: to his aunt he writes of :

> that mysterious urge towards abnegation and suffering which guides womanly feeling. (Sturm and Gee, p.42)

> In my opinion abnegation carried to an extreme - where you are carrying it - becomes not a fault but a crime. (Ibid.)

> Oh, my dear Aunt, "men are incredible", and I would say to you that women are ... very womanly . (Sturm and Gee, p.36)

If natural selection has made sure that the two women are likely to act that way, then their altruism is instinctive, not really conscious. Can it therefore be altruism? The timing of Mrs. Verloc's mother's move means that once Stevie is dead, Winnie is a free agent, her 'bargain' as we are told, is ended. She explains this dispiritedly to Ossipon as they flee - what he fails to see, though, is that behind her compromise with existence lay some protective urge towards Stevie, which was there from childhood on. The question that Conrad seems to be phrasing is - what is this feeling? If it is merely a biological predisposition we are left with two choices. First: that it is an evolved biological trait designed to aid the perpetuation of the species, in which case it is a form of self-interest and not a matter of conscious decision. Like

a reflex action, it cannot be praiseworthy, it must be neutral. Second, that it is a matter of conscious decision by Winnie, and praiseworthy, even though set about in the most calculating way possible. But this does not corner the difficulty. Conrad speaks of Winnie's 'maternal passion' as though he were discussing a case history - yet there was something before that which made the infant Winnie 'in short skirts' defend Stevie from an angry father.

A modern author would, I think, give us a few details here which we could link to Freud. Conrad does not. In effect, having constructed his elaborate model of the knitting machine, he finds he cannot fathom this problem of altruism. The novel explores as far as it can, it posits the possibilities - that altruism is genetic and hereditary, especially in women, that it may well be pure because of this or merely another manifestation of nature's prodigious egoism in each species' will to survive, that we can never know what the force is, but it is one that has to be dealt with.

I consider that this is Conrad's major exploratory novel on the theme of altruism, and that after this, he explored no more. I shall argue in my next chapter that this abnegatory urge in women is merely delineated, not questioned further in Under Western Eyes. Teklas' devotion is admirable, but also it is left largely unexplained.

> I am sending you my latest volume. Receive it with the indulgence which cannot be refused to a profound and sincere sentiment prompting the act. The covers are deep red, I believe. As to what's inside them I assure you I haven't the faintest idea. That's where Hazlitt's Indian Juggler has the pull over a writer of tales. He at least knows how many balls he is keeping up in the air at the same time ...
> (L. and L. II, 53.20 Sept. 1907)

This statement, written to accompany a copy of the Secret Agent sent to Henry James, is laconic in the extreme, and is just one of many such statements Conrad made about his work. He addressed James as his 'Très cher Maître', and is evidently bantering in an excessively defensive fashion. If, as I have suggested, the entire work is an exploration of altruism, then Conrad's irony in explaining himself as motivated by 'a profound and sincere sentiment prompting the act' is a sort of donnish giggle. Should James understand the work, he will also understand the joke, but Conrad refuses to give him any clues: 'As to what's inside ... I haven't the faintest idea.' In this last sentence, however, I detect a slightly nervous apology, as Conrad attempts to deny the undeniable. Of course, he doesn't know, as author, how the work will be judged publicly. But he denies he knows what is contained in his story, and goes on to compare himself to a juggler.[1] As I hope I have shown, he is juggling a pattern, manipulating characters without commenting upon them as individuals, relying on their relations with each other to produce the overall effect, and ironically he doesn't know what's inside 'them' either. This reluctance to make any comment about the nature of his work is so typical of Conrad's evasiveness, that it is only by examining other references he makes to the Secret Agent that anything approaching insight can be gained. Obviously, in any communication with James the question of the ironic style would be foremost in Conrad's mind - and he deliberately wishes to forestall questions, claiming a sort of artistic somnambulism, that

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1. He has the air of teasingly out-doing James at his own trick, that of indirection and attachment, but I feel his joke hides a deeper meaning.

will not allow him to know what he wrote. He seems determined to maroon James, and indeed every reader, alone with his work and let them learn to decipher it without reference to him.

He is similarly unhelpful to John Galsworthy:

> The point of treatment you raise I have already considered. In such a tale one is likely to be misunderstood. After all, you must not take it too seriously ...
> As to the beastly trick of style, I have fallen into it through worry and hurry. I abominate it myself. It isn't even French, really. It is Zola jargon simply. Why it should have fastened on me I don't know. But anything may happen to a man in a state of distraction. We shall see to that with great care when the tale is finished. (L. and L. II, 32-33, my emphasis.)

Internal contradictions such as these, that seem to stand between disclaimers as to the carelessness of the creation and the obvious care Conrad intends to extend to the work, should put us on our guard immediately. Is he worried about the style or is he stalling, in order to calm Galsworthy down? '... And was Ada really interested?' (Ibid,p.33) Here, I think, Conrad's true interest lies, in the penultimate sentence of this letter. If Ada is interested, then he has some reassurance, in my view, since I have argued that he is intent on exploring the realms of feminine altruism. Conrad leaves it until the last possible moment before interjecting his sly little question. He is, of course, being slightly sycophantic towards both Galsworthy and James, although the tone used to James is deferential and not at all the breezy bogus frankness he bestows upon the Galsworthys, to whom he owed money.

He adopts a quite different tone, however, when he writes to Algernon Methuen, a month later, about the novel. Here we have none of the denials as to just what he has done; we have instead an angry assertion that he does know but it is not his business to state it outside the work concerned. This is not

only the arrogance of an aristocrat speaking to a 'tradesman' - Conrad uses it as a convenient excuse to be high-handed and not have to release any extra information. He, Conrad, steadfastly refuses to give his public any clue as to how to read the work.

> I've a very definite idea of what I tried to do and a fairly co^he^rent one (I hope), of what I have done. But it isn't a matter for a bookseller's ear. I don't think he would understand: I don't think many readers will. But that's not my affair. A piece of literary work may be defined in twenty ways. The people who are serializing the Secret Agent in the U.S. now have found their own definition. They describe it (on posters) as 'A Tale of Diplomatic Intrigue and Anarchist Treachery'. But they don't do it on my authority and that's all I care for. ... ...
>
> It has no social or philosophical intention. It is, I humbly hope, not devoid of artistic value. It may have some moral significance. It is also Conrad's writing.
>
> (L. and L. II, 38-39, 7.11.06)

Conrad's refusal to supply an advertising notice for his work deserves the closest attention. He is clearly most annoyed that the suggestion should have been made, and this reveals more than one might expect. I would argue that Conrad's angry stance is taken on the ground that one cannot paraphrase the truth of an aspect of reality without risk of betraying it. Interestingly enough, he does relent slightly whilst seeming to attack: 'It has no social or philosophical intention' he thunders. Not very helpful, since he is saying what it has not got. But in so doing he concedes that he is not prescribing a recipe for social change, but describing a set of circumstances he can use to explore human motivations.[1]

It should be evident, I think, from these letters, that Conrad believes he has something important captured in the

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1. He may have added this comment because he realized that the label of 'novel of social philosophical import' might well have been applied to it. This would have been directly contrary to his desire to be treated as a novelist as opposed to a social critic.

Secret Agent, and something that has to be discussed in its totality or not at all. He puts himself in the position of Professor of Philosophy approached by the naïve schoolgirl who wants a one-word answer to her question 'what is life?' He demands to be understood on his own terms or not at all.

Several months later, he has cause to complain bitterly to his agent Pinker.

> The proofs of S.[ecret] A.[gent] have reached me, and I have almost cried at the sight. I thought it was arranged beyond doubt that I was to have the galley slips for my corrections. Instead of that, I get the proofs of set pages! Apart from the cost of corrections, which will be greatly augmented through that, there is the material difficulty of correcting clearly and easily on small margins. (L. and L. II, 48-49, 18.5.07)

Evidently Conrad expected to make many and even lengthy alterations, although not, I would suggest, of a radical nature as for instance the complete re-orienting of the narrational stance. He is interested in precise stylistic alterations, and this seems rather at variance with what he suggested to John Galsworthy. Indeed, if the style is careless as his letter to Galsworthy suggests, then the work is hardly likely to merit careful, minute, alterations that cannot be rushed through the proofs. What this letter intends is something that can be illustrated by reference to a letter to Galsworthy, two weeks later. Again, Conrad is intent on covering his tracks. In the quotation cited above, he seems hurt because his instructions have been disobeyed, as he goes on to say:

> I am hurt at Methuen disregarding my perfectly reasonable wishes in such a manner. If Alston Rivers can always furnish galley proofs to Hueffer, Methuen could well do that much for me. I feel their carelessness in this matter as a slight.

Conrad is determined that this novel, a new departure in style, will not be pushed through hurriedly. When he writes to

Galsworthy he uses another evasion:

> It is very important that the conversation of Mr.Verloc with his wife should be elaborated - made more effective don't you know, more true to the situation and the character of these people. (L. and L. II, 56, 6.6.07)

Conrad's evasion lies in his 'made more effective ... more true'. Reading between the lines, as we have so far done, we are forced to admit that Conrad is busy covering his tracks. The conversations between Verloc and his wife are surely at the centre of the work inasmuch as they are completely formulaic, following exactly the same constrained pattern on each occasion. Winnie's stab is the one 'free' act of the entire interlocking pattern of events, the explosion really has provided room in which to move. It is not possible, then, to stress too highly the importance of these 'conversations' - Conrad is casually mentioning that he is busy perfecting the most delicate part of his work, and this at a time when both Borys and Jack were near death with their respective ailments, and Conrad was nearly penniless in Geneva. How, then, does one interpret the sentence that follows the quotation? 'By Jove! I've got to hold myself with both hands not to burst into a laugh which would scare wife, baby and the other invalid ...' That Conrad was still able to work, despite all his harassments and distress, is important. Critical opinion has suggested on various occasions that Conrad identified himself with Verloc, and saw himself as the victim in his own family. But here, I think the laugh is a laugh of triumphant realization that he has made a logical, coherent, and original investigation of the nature of mankind's allegedly self-less actions, and has got it the way he wants it.

On 30 July 1907 he writes to Galsworthy, and suggests a

great deal, when he talks of moving house on his return to England.

> We shall try to pick up the old existence somewhat nearer London than the Pent. But everything is difficult in my position. I look forward with dread to an effort which I fear, in the nature of things can never anymore be adequate.
>
> It shall be made, of course, but the feeling is against the probability of success. Art, truth, expression, are difficult enough by themselves, - God knows! (L. and L. II, 54)

Speculation on the precise meaning of this could lead one into deep water. What 'effort' is this? The effort of writing? Conrad wrote nearly thirty thousand words of the Secret Agent during his otherwise disastrous holiday. Is he talking of a re-alignment of attitudes within his family, or towards Art, or both? Whatever we conclude, it is impossible to avoid the fact that the completion of the Secret Agent marked a change in Conrad's life and attitudes.

The same day he wrote to his agent, J.B. Pinker, and was grimly optimistic: but then, as he owed Pinker £1,000 at this time, perhaps he felt he had to be. Even so, there is a tone of determination and assurance in this letter that strikes me as genuine.

> One may read everybody and yet in the end want to read me - for a change if nothing else. For I don't resemble anybody, and yet I am not specialized enough to call up imitators as to the matter of style. There is nothing in me but a turn of mind which, whether valuable or worthless, cannot be immitated.
>
> ...Without exaggeration I may say I feel renovated by my cure here - and considering the adverse circumstances, this seems a good sign. I am anxious to get back and drive on. (L. and L. II, 58)

Conrad is not playing for time, or pleading illness, as he sometimes does in his letters. He feels 'renovated' and in possession of a unique 'turn of mind'. It is my opinion that Conrad realized he had not only explored a vital issue in the

whole question of human motivation, but had answered it as well as he could, and now had a firm basis for his art for future creations. He was now ready to re-explore some of the issues raised in Lord Jim, in Under Western Eyes.

There is more than this to consider, as it happens, since we have the topic of the ironic method to deal with:

> Even the purely artistic purpose, that of applying an ironic method to a subject of that kind, was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest belief that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as pity.
> (Author's Preface, p.xiii.)

The cypher quality of the characters and the pervading authorial distance never for one moment allow the reader to relax from the realization that this is a story, and one that is closely patterned by an authorial consciousness. Whilst in Lord Jim we were always aware that Marlow had organized his information about Jim into an after-dinner tale, and that Jim himself was living his own private adventure story, here we have the ironic distance that draws attention to the very texture of the tale as an artifact. It quite deliberately draws attention to itself as one of those 'conveniences' that Marlow sees Jewel fabricating.

> For a moment I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder, while, in truth, thanks to our unwearied efforts, it is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive. (p.313)

In The Secret Agent the 'convenience' which enables us to apprehend the tale as a tale, as a story with a beginning and an end, is the obtrusive authorial irony, continually telling us that this is one man's view of the point at issue, even though that one man is an omnipotent narrator. We cannot be tempted, therefore, to dismiss the chaotic whirl of the real,

objective world as something negligible. Man's natural tendency is to impose his own, bogus or illusory 'order' upon the shapelessness of reality, as a sop either for his pride, or a consolation for his fear. By foregrounding this tendency which exists par excellence in the writing of novels, Conrad attacks the entire problem of man as a story-telling animal. Here he gives us our story, he raises our expectations, and gives us more than we bargained for, as the critics at the time noticed. He also gives us a novel that in effect refuses to be a novel, by constantly pointing out that it is only 'a simple tale'.

That Conrad had surprised his market is obvious. The anonymous reviewer of the novel in The Times Literary Supplement for 20 Sept. 1907, states quite clearly that this is no usual tale of intrigue.

> To show how narrow a gulf is fixed between the maker of bombs and the ordinary contented citizen has never before struck a novelist as worth while. The subterranean world in which the terrorists live having up to the present time been considered by him merely as a background for lurid scenes and hair-raising thrills. And then comes Mr. Conrad with his steady, discerning gaze ...

Eight days later, Edward Garnett wrote in The Nation on 'The Novel of the Week' and chose the Secret Agent. He too makes a similar point.

> [Conrad] has brought clearly into our ken the subterranean world of that foreign London which, since the death of Count Fosco, has served in fiction only the crude purpose of our sensation writers.

The repeated phrase in each is 'subterranean world' - the sort

of expression that was at the time verging on the brink of literary cliché as a description of genre. It is a sphere of writing neatly assumed by both, and equally neatly so far in literature only treated for sensational novels. 'Subterranean' had been used as a cliché as early as 1886 by Henry James in The Princess Casamassima when James makes even the ageing liberal Anastasius Vetch use it in conversation to Hyacinth Robinson. 'Well now, the other thing - what do they call it? the subterranean? - are you very deep in that?'[1] Clearly it was a slang term even then. Conrad revivifies and pokes fun at it by comparing London to the bottom of the sea. Both reviewers note the technical daring in Conrad's re assessing of previously thought dubious material, and see this as a major part of the work in question. It is one of their first observations about it. Evidently, the feeling is that Conrad is showing us something not at all ordinary, and denying us our comfortable pulp novel responses. This explains to an extent the disappointment of the reviewer in the New York Nation who comments at roughly the same time as the other two reviewers (26 Sept. 1907):

> The incidents are bomb throwing, murder and suicide - the raw stuff of a shilling shocker. But the events are so overlaid with description, analysis, and the study of the psychological side of the characters that the book is hard to read.

Evidently he expected something rather different, although his critical points are, paradoxically, very much to the point. 'The Secret Agent is still less of a story,' He admits. This is precisely the point I wish to establish. Conrad is

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1. H. James, The Princess Casamassima (1886; London, Bodley Head, 1972) P.162.

systematically destroying every preconception of the novel we ever had, although he is accused of heavy-handed treatment of material that had long been consigned to the category of 'light', consumable literature.

William Martin Payne, in The Dial of Chicago, was equally non plussed, and opens his critique with precisely the points we have been discussing, (16 October 1907).

> We approach Mr. Conrad's The Secret Agent with anticipations that are not fulfilled. Its programme of anarchists and bombs and detectives promies lively entertainment, but we get instead interminable descriptions and discussions of motive. The result is a good story completely smothered by analysis ... a novel upon such a theme as this calls for action, and again action and of this we get next to nothing.

So strong is the prejudice towards 'thrillers' that the reviewers are not prepared to review their own reactions and examine their own categories of response. The Boston Evening Transcript hesitates to commit itself, but opens with a similar immediacy, (9 October 1907).

> To pick up The Secret Agent with the expectation that it is a shilling shocker, even though it bears Joseph Conrad's name as author, would be a serious mistake. Nevertheless it contains the stuff whereof shilling shockers are made, but in Mr. Conrad's developing hand it becomes something far different and far superior ...

But there was another critical difficulty for reviewers, and one treated in a hostile and haughty fashion by the reviewer in Country Life, 21 September 1907, who criticizes Conrad's analysis of Winnie Verloc, and is unconvinced:

> The reader knows absolutely that Mr. Conrad is guessing and guessing very badly, at the intricate movements of a woman's mind. There is no way by means of which he could get with in it.

The Spectator of 21 September 1907 agrees:

> There are certain obvious blemishes in this book. There is a murder which we cannot regard as justifiable either by logic or art.

Even Garnett, in the review cited above, has some hesitations. He praises the work for its depiction of life: 'the laws that govern human nature are often as disconcerting to our self-esteem as they are chastening to our spiritual egoism.' He then goes on to make a most telling comment when he describes Verloc and Winnie and says: 'There is a hidden weakness in the springs of impulse of both these figures, and at certain moments they become automatic. But such defects are few.' He clearly indicates the most delicate area of the work, in that at certain points there is an important absence of reason. Winnie stabs Verloc whilst in some sort of daze. It is, as I shall demonstrate, important to Conrad that certain aspects of behaviour have no apparent reason. Certain repeated actions are lapsed into in default of anything else in times of stress. But certain other actions can have no rational explanation, and this is one of Conrad's major points. If one removes all the surface impediments to action, as happens to Winnie, she is left with no responsibilities, no direction and no motivation, and as dangerous as Kurtz.

Up to this point my discussion of The Secret Agent must seem to have wandered far from any 'scientific' topic. The reason for this is that in order to understand the relevance of the scientific erudition that does exist in this novel, it is first necessary to understand its structure, and also to be aware of the fact that it does not appear to be obviously 'about' anything, except perhaps Winnie's strange self-lessness.

To conjecture on Winnie's motivation would merely be to add one's own weight of eloquence to the text without necesarily coming to a closer understanding of it. However, Conrad mentions the fashionable criminologist Cesare Lombroso in the

body of the work, only to have Karl Yundt spit out his views on the subject immediately afterwards. There are, as I shall establish, clear debts to Lombroso.

Lombroso's impact on his age is perhaps best observed through the medium of that organ of solid good sense, The Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed., 1910). His contribution to criminology is assessed critically as follows:

> [He was] strongly influenced by Auguste Comte, and owed to him an exaggerated tendency to refer all mental facts to biological causes. In spite of this, however, and a serious want of accuracy and discrimination in handling evidence, his work made an epoch in criminology; for he surpassed all his predecessors by the wide scope and systematic character of his researches and by the practical conclusions he drew from them.

In Volume 7 of the Encyclopaedia, however, the entry under 'criminology' tells a rather less flattering tale: the Lombrosan school of thought had its critics:

> A pertinent objection was that the deductions had been made from insufficient premises. The criminologists had worked upon a comparatively small number of criminals, and yet made their discoveries applicable to the whole class. The facts were collected from too small an area, and no definite conclusions could be based upon them. Moreover, the criminologists were by no means unanimous. They differed amongst themselves and often contradicted one another as to the characteristics exhibited. (ibid).

Even in 1910, and in a conservative repository of knowledge such as this, his work is seen in a questionable light. The entry under his own name tends to accentuate his achievement, whilst that under 'criminology' quite rightly points to his short-comings, which were evidently still themes of discussion of some delicacy. I quote again:

> The new science has, in fact, by accumulating a number of curious details, in recording the psychology, the

> secret desires, the springs of the criminal's nefarious actions, his corrigibility or the reverse, prepared theway to his sociological explanation.
> (Tarde)

As far as can be accurately ascertained, in 1907 Lombroso would have been an impressively major figure to take on as part of a novel's discussion of the criminal world. The Professor was still alive - he did not die until 1909 - and his daughter Paola Carrara and Gina Ferrero had written a biography of him with an analysis of his works and their conclusions on the occasion of the 1906 sixth criminal anthropology congress at Turin. Could Conrad be referring obliquely to this when Vladimir mentions the International Congress at Milan that is to discuss terrorism? Whether one accepts that or not, in 1906-7 when Conrad was composing The Secret Agent it can be assumed that Lombroso was still a venerable figure.

Lombroso's doctrine is described, and criticized, in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and this is a convenient way of assessing his work for the present:

> He discovered, or was supposed to have discovered a criminal type, the 'instinctive' or 'born' criminal, a creature who had come into the world predestined to evil deeds, and who could be surely recognized by certain stigmata, certain facial, physical, even moral birthmarks, the possession of which, presumably ineradicable, fordoomed him to the commission of crime. ... If the doctrines be fully accepted the whole theory of free-will breaks down, and we are faced with the paradox that we have no right to punish an irresponsible being who is impelled to crime by congenital causes, entirely beyond his control. ('Criminology')

The question of free-will immediately attracts attention, since Winnie has been described as the only 'free' character in this claustrophobic work, and it is precisely then that she commits her crime.

In a letter to Ambrose J. Barker, in 1923, Conrad wrote that he knew very little of the factual bomb outrage: 'All I

was aware of was the mere fact - my novel being, in intention, the history of Winnie Verloc.'[1] If this is the case, it seems most useful to assess the novel first by the most obvious route, the one that Conrad is most likely to have read for an insight into female psychology. I start, therefore, with the Female Offender, ed. W.D. Morrison (London: 1895) and move chronologically to Criminal Anthropology (London: 1897), and then to broader and less specialized works, The Man of Genius (London: 1891) Ed. Havelock Ellis, and Ellis' other Lombrosan work, The Criminal (1890 and 1901: London). I also include a work that post-dates The Secret Agent, Hans Kurella's Lombroso, a Modern Man of Science (1911). I discuss it in preference to Gina Ferrero's assessment and adaptation of her father's views published in English in the same year, since I judge that Kurella outlines the main points of learned discussion of controversy rather more objectively than Lombroso's daughter. As there was no English translation of L'Uomo delinquente before 1911, I conclude that Kurella, a writer on Criminology and Lombroso since 1892[2] would present a better general assessment of the virtues and shortfalls of the Lombrosan system. This will help to show that Conrad has a grasp of the more general nature of criminological discussion, as well as a specific knowledge of Lombroso.

Lombroso's main achievement was to have linked epilepsy and criminality. Such a body of work would have been of obvious interest to Conrad since his cousin Michaś had epilepsy, and it was thought at one stage Conrad himself suffered from

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1. L. and L. II.322.

2. Caesare Lombroso und die Naturgeschichte des Verbrechers (Hamburg: 1892).

it. Taddeus Bobrowski writes of Michaś: 'he may be suffering from the same illness as you were,' and he hopes he may grow out of it by the age of 14 as Conrad had done.[1] Czeslaw Miłosz asserts that Conrad had meningitis whilst at Perm,[2] and meningitis is frequently referred to by Lombroso as damaging the brain. Certainly, Conrad was no stranger to the idea of skull measuring. The episode in Heart of Darkness in which the company doctor measures his skull and asks 'any history of madness in the family?' has its basis in fact. Taddeus Bobrowski had written to Conrad on 15.3.1881 reminding him of his old tutor during 1870, Dr. Izydor Kopernicki, the author of Comparative Studies of Human Races, based on types of skulls (sic), and forwards the craniologist's request: 'He earnestly requests you to collect during your voyages skulls of natives.'[3] Given such evidence it is reasonable to suppose that Conrad had some acquaintance with Lombroso's work.

It is also well worth noting that as early as the 1877 edition of Wallace's Malay Archipelago, there is an appendix which criticizes craniology fairly severely, and that it may have given Conrad the suggestion that led to his questioning of Lombroso. Wallace opens his short section on craniology as follows:

> A few years ago it was thought that the study of Crania offered the only sure basis of classification of man. Immense collections have been formed; they have been measured, described and figured; and now the opinion is beginning to gain ground that for this special purpose

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1. F. Karl, Joseph Conrad, The Three Lives, p.70. The stage direction in Three Plays describes Stevie as 'about seventeen" (p.73).

2. 'Apollo N. Korzeniaoski: Joseph Conrad's Father' Mosaic VI/4, 135, mentioned by Karl, op.cit., p.51.

3. F. Karl, Ibid., p.81.

> they are of very little value. Professor Huxley has boldly stated his views to this effect, and in a proposed new classification of mankind has given scarcely any weight to characters derived from the cranium. (p. 599)

If the classification is inadequate to distinguish even races, how much more complex and abstruse the criminals in a race must be to identify.

For one who read Lombroso, Conrad's interest can hardly be said to be in the painstaking and immensely inconclusive measurements of skulls that make up huge sections of The Female Offender, yet there are certain areas that undoubtedly must have influenced him, for instance, this description of an hysterical offender shares much with the description of Winnie: '..hereditary signs are - very thick, black hair, black eyes, a big mouth, very prominent cheekbones and frontal microcephalia.[1] This compares tellingly with the forceful, repeated description Conrad gives us of Winnie: 'Her glossy dark hair' (p.6) 'Her black head ... and the big, dark, unwinking eyes.' (p.177) Yet, Lombroso is eminently uncommitted on this point of appearance and goes on to say that: ' female offenders from passion have no special physiognomical characteristics nor signs of degeneration. ...it is remarkable that female offenders of this class have some masculine traits of disposition;' (p.245). This can be usefully compared to the opening description of Winnie in the shop:

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1. C. Lombroso The Female Offender, Trans. and Introduced by W.D. Morrison (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), p.233.

> Steady-eyed like her husband, she preserved an air of unfathomable indifference behind the rampart of the counter. Then the customer of comparatively tender years would get suddenly disconcerted at having to deal with a woman, and with rage in his heart would proffer a request for a bottle of marking ink ... (p.5)

The obviously less than timid appearance of Mrs. Verloc, and her complete indifference, are able to outface young men, thus tending to place her at a more 'masculine' level. She is, in several places,'like her husband'. This is surely one of Conrad's ironies, however, since Winnie, although masculine in her attitudes, is undoubtedly female. Her 'tight bodice' assures us of that. And she is completely unlike Verloc in not being overweight, and in being the efficient householder, rather than the slovenly shop-keeper. Conrad's description refers only to her eyes as being like her husband. My contention is that Conrad is deliberately stressing Winnie's hard 'male' method of facing the outside world, whilst never allowing us to forget that she is female and attractive. Ossipon, for one, finds her attractive and yet unapproachable. Her attitude however, is too forceful even for this lady-killer. Her masculine traits are genuinely those of disposition. The disquieting sensation one gains from this comes partly from the realization that Winnie has had to adopt these masculine traits in order to survive. If masculine traits enable one to survive, however, they also tend to indicate that only the potentially criminal will survive in London.

But more remains to be said. Lombroso is saying that female offenders of the hysteric, of 'crimes of passion', variety do not necessarily look any different from other women. Indeed, if all criminals were easily identifiable facially, police detectives would have an easy task. Conrad, I would suggest, has picked up enough hints to show us Winnie Verloc as a woman

somehow not entirely like the others, but not sufficiently disquieting for us to categorize her as a freak.

Lombroso's interest for Conrad lies, clearly, in the crimes of passion he lists so exhaustively, for it is those that Conrad wishes to explore. Lombroso states that such offenders are often: 'A most affectionate wife, an exemplary mother, and of ... immaculate conduct'. (p.247) Winnie, superficially at least, is the perfect wife, and ideal family woman. Indeed she has married Verloc in order to keep her family from poverty. She is a'mother' only inasmuch as she regards Stevie more as a child than a brother. Seeing Verloc take Stevie out one day she thinks 'they could be father and son' - a transference of status that turns her into a mother figure. When Winnie stabs Verloc it is in response to the feeling that Verloc killed him. 'He took the boy away in order to kill him.' (p.249) The ambivalent value of 'the boy' is perfectly balanced for Conrad's purpose, to show Winnie as acting like a mother, revenging her child.

> A woman regards her child as a part of herself, providing for him and resenting in her own person the injuries inflicted on him, especially when he is little and cannot provide from himself. (p.255)

Stevie, in this instance, certainly cannot 'provide for himself'. Lombroso makes the point several times:

> More rarely than the other causes which we have detailed, the incentive to crime is some injury inflicted on the woman's maternal or domestic affairs. (p.253)
>
> Maternal love ... woman's strongest sentiment. (p.254)

Lombroso continues his discussion of crimes of passion, and makes a number of interesting statements, but he divides the crimes in two parts, the immediate crimes, and the carefully staged crimes. He describes the impulsive act and states: 'Only in occasional instances is the suddenness of the impulse

betrayed by the choice of any weapon within reach.' (p.257)
In Winnie's case, the impulse must, by this token, have indeed been sudden, since she seized the carving knife, the only weapon at hand, and thus cannot have premeditated. But Conrad's description builds up slowly:

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

The irony is grim, and it is at Lombroso's expense, since her expression changes completely, although its import is obvious. There are certain things that science will never be able to observe, and one of them is the precise nature of the change that comes upon criminals of passion. The deed does not take place in a fury, but in a coldly planned and carefully approached fashion, built up for us over two pages:

> The eyes of Mrs. Verloc seemed to grow still larger (p.260)
>
> Her wits, no longer disconnnected, were working under the control of her will. (p.261)
>
> an almost preternaturally perfect control of every fibre of her body. (p.261)
>
> She was clear-sighted. She had become cunning. (p.261)
>
> As if the homeless soul of Stevie had flown for shelter ... (p.262)

How does this fit with Lombroso? As it happens, rather closely; as closely, that is, as Lombroso's own contradictory views permit. He never seems to have allowed himself to consider the actual deed, seeming to separate the 'sudden' and the calculated crime. Conrad has taken both sides of Lombroso's description and welded them into theform of a crime committed in a calm fury. Lombroso cannot see this, for as he says:

> Often premeditation in the woman is longer than in the man; it is also colder and more cunning, so that the crime is executed with an ability and a gloating which

> in a deed of pure passion are psychologically impossible. Nor does sincere penitence always follow the offence; on the contrary, there is often exultation, and rarely does the offender commit suicide. (p.258)

Winnie can hardly be described as 'exulting', and she does commit suicide. Conrad tells us she leans over the sofa 'not in order to watch or gloat over the body of Mr. Verloc' (p.263), yet 'she was a woman enjoying her complete irresponsibility and endless leisure' (ibid.) This distinction extends Lombroso's conception somewhat. Lombroso too tidily assumes that crimes of passion occur in a mad fury, and that revenge is calculated, and of criminal intent - premeditated. In the gradual build up to Winnie's knife blow, and in the semi-sarcastic aside of 'an expression seldom observed by competent persons' Conrad informs us that his imaginative reconstruction of the crime is not at all the text-book item. Lombroso assumes that 'pure passion' must be incompetent because it cannot know the nature of what it is doing. Conrad shows it as frighteningly competent, since it has cast away the restraint of morality. Winnie becomes the aspect of Stevie that felt passion upon reading the revolutionary pamphlets, and stalked through the kitchen with a carving knife. Conrad's description of gathering rage effectively deflates the myth's wild passion, and cold revenge. Would it be spurious to compare the action of Hamlet, who suddenly finds himself in act 5 with every reason in the world to kill Claudius, when he has been unable to do so before? Lombroso, however, tries to edge away from his distinction by adding that the coolness of a deed often runs: 'Contrary to the supposition that the woman is very much agitated.' (p.259)

One cannot expect too much in the way of direct insights

from Lombroso, since he did not pretend to understand crime, but merely wished to show a connection between mis-shapen skulls and the nature of the processes that were likely to go on inside them. But he is useful for hints that may help us to understand Conrad. He summarizes women's crimes in general as events that 'might be described as offences committed by big children of developed intelligence and passion' (p.267). This, in itself, is a less than helpful comment, but if we add to it Conrad's description of Winnie, as she stabs Verloc, we have a useful parallel.

> As if the homeless soul of Stevie had flown for shelter straight to the breast of his sister, guardian, and protector, the resemblance of her face with that of her brother grew at every step, even to the droop of the lower lip, even to the slight divergence of the eyes. (p.262)

She has become a 'big child' certainly. We have only to compare the fact that Stevie himself picks up the carving knife, far earlier in the book, when he reads of the mistreatment of German soldier recruits, to realize that the suggestion from Lombroso has been given far greater weight by Conrad. Winnie really does show signs of atavism in her crime, as Conrad overtly comments. (p.263) She displays 'all the inheritance of her immemorial and obscure descent, the simple ferocity of the age of caverns, and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms.' That the criminal is somehow a throwback in evolutionary time to an earlier, less moral being, is one of Lombroso's theories. As Douglas Morrison points out in his introduction to The Female Offender:

> In short, the habitual criminal is a product, according to Dr. Lombroso, of pathological and atavistic anomalies; he stands midway between the lunatic and the savage; and he represents a special type of the human race. (p.xvi)

He also holds this to be a characteristic of epileptics. Stevie,

as an epileptic (his 'fits') and an idiot - a 'moral idiot' - and as Winnie's brother, shares an inheritance with her that includes within Winnie the possibility of epilepsy and 'moral insanity'.[1] Conrad is hinting to us that crime occurs in a blind spot, in a moment of loss of self-possession, that in Winnie's case may well have a great deal to do with her inheritance, and with epilepsy. Here it's useful to compare the two extracts from Lombroso:

> Pure, strong passion, when existing in a woman, drives her to suicide rather than to crime. If the contrary be the case then either her natural latent fund of wickedness has been set free, or virility of disposition has infused into her feelings a violence, and consequently a capacity for murderous assaults, to which the true woman, the finished woman, is a stranger. (p.276)

This evidently has a simplistic ring to it today: 'latent fund of wickedness' is rather hard to swallow and is more befitting the morality of the preparatory school. In Lombroso's case it demonstrates yet again a complete inability to understand the motivation behind the deeds. He never asks where this 'wickedness' comes from, nor why it is 'natural'. But this, I feel, is a close approximation to Winnie's behaviour, in certain respects. She has, as I showed, a 'virility of disposition', and she is 'set free' from all the ties of duty that previously held her. She does have a capacity for 'murderous assaults', but is enough of a woman to respond to the call to suicide immediately afterwards, as she makes her way to the river. Lombroso's statement is a curious blend. He has evidently taken great care to establish what he believes to be an accurate paradigm of a certain class of behaviour. Yet it is equally evident that he has no real grasp of the nature of criminality.

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1. 'Moral idiocy' and 'moral insanity' are phrases used throughout Lombroso's work to explain non-moral and irrational criminal actions.

I contend that it is very likely that from statements such as this that Conrad was working when he developed Winnie Verloc. Lombroso finishes his inconclusive work by giving many examples of female crimes of passion, which he clearly sees as interesting but unfathomable. His eagerness to define a species or a group that is criminal I think merely reinforces the lack of comprehension he has of deviant behaviour. He is excessively eager to leave all crime in the hands of recognizably sub-standard items of humanity. One of his examples may well have been suggestive to Conrad:

> Madame Arresteilles, who adored her son of 29, an epileptic idiot, fearing that the rest of the family might treat him harshly after her death, killed him and committed suicide.(p.283)

This has aspects of Winnie's mother's behaviour, since she is determined Stevie should be well treated, and so effectively 'dies' by moving away. It also has aspects of Winnie's behaviour, in that she revenges Stevie and does justice to him that way, and then seeks to kill herself. Madame Arresteilles, I assume, felt the similar claims of justice in not wanting her son to suffer. One could speculate, yet the important consideration is not the precise impact of Madame Arresteilles on Conrad, but rather that Lombroso does not understand motivations, although he gives many examples. Conrad wishes to understand, andhe seems to be suggesting here that certain serious crimes can only be committed in a state of moral limbo. Normal events are upset, normal relations dislocated, and the effect on a woman even as uninspired as Winnie Verloc can be horrifying. When the normal restraints are gone, mere impulse remains. Stevie, when watched over by Winnie, is very obedient, and cannot bear the mention of certain moral transgressions, like the word 'steal'. Neither can he bear to see suffering, as with

the spectral cab-horse. But, when lost in a book, or a subversive magazine, his rage on reading of the recruit's lacerated ear has no superego to check it, and he becomes homicidal. Just similar is Winnie, the 'free woman' (pp.263-264). Totally freed from normal restraints, she is wide open to impulse. This can happen to anyone, even the most altruistic. There can be no proof, of course, that Conrad actually read The Female Offender and it would be rash to say so. It would be equally rash to suggest that he read Lombroso's Criminal Anthropology yet there is evidence that he knew of its contents, possibly in some detail. I keep my discussion of each work separate in relation to The Secret Agent so that others reading this may weigh the possibilities for themselves. The circumstantial evidence suggests that Conrad had not only read these works, but had carefully digested large amounts of them.

In furthering the discussion of Winnie's deed, and the possibility of her being an epileptic, it is useful to look at the following:

> The absence of convulsions not only does not exclude the possibility of psychical epilepsy, with a predominance of morbid impulsions, but experience demonstrates that the latter are as a rule accompanied by vertigo, and most rarely by an epileptic convulsion.[1] (V. Krafft-Ebing)

The quotation is from a synopsis of Lombroso's L'Uomo delinquente entitled Criminal Anthropology,[1] and Lombroso is endorsing Krafft-Ebing's opinion here. This could help explain Winnie's sense of vertigo after the deed, 'the undulatory and swinging movements of the parlor, which for some time behaved as though it were at

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1. Twentieth Century Practise, an International Encyclopedia of Modern Medical Science by Leading Authorities of Europe & America, ed. T.L. Stedman M.D., (London: Sampson, Leer & Marston, 1897), XII p.398. This was the first English translation of Lombroso's major work until 1911, and it is merely a synopsis. Hereafter cited as TCP.

sea in a tempest. She was giddy but calm' (p.263). It could also be seen, of course, as an emblematic representation of her as a woman totally unsupported by any social ties, but I think it has its foundations here in scientific writing. There also seems to be a comparison with the following:

> We may add that not only may there be forms of epilepsy accompanied by a short and temporary loss of memory and consciousness, but some accompanied by automatic attempts at suicide . . . (TCP, p.397)

The entire section has a general similarity to Winnie's action, and the considerations Conrad raises for us. Lombroso continues to list the actions of criminals: there are the delinquents of passionate impulse.

> The passions which stimulate them to criminal actions are not such as develop gradually and can be restrained... Their previous lives have always been known as spotless... Of this kind was Curti, who supported his three poor brothers. (TCP, p.399)

> Moreover, the crimes are never committed secretly, nor by means of dissimulation, nor by the aid of accomplices, nor with weapons procured in advance. Whatever is at hand they seize, a stone, a pair of scissors...(often)... furiously striking right and left. (TCP, p.400)

> Although it is no longer possible to include all the criminal insane in one special class, yet one fact remains very evident - namely, the frequency with which the epileptoid form seems to prevail,... (TCP, p.402)

All this evidence reinforces the points made in the previous section on the Female Offender that epilepsy and crimes of passion are linked, and that Winnie, as the sister of an epileptic, might well be one herself. Her crime answers closely to the details Lombroso cites. Winnie supports her brother and mother, by her advantageous marriage, as Curti supported his brothers. Her 'spotless' conduct is analogous to the 'virtuous attachment' Vladimir describes her as having with Verloc. Certainly there is no secrecy about her crime, since she even

asks Ossipon to turn off the light in the parlour - she assumes he must know of her deed. The carving knife, too, is a prime example of an object 'at hand', but she only strikes once. The 'ancestry' Winnie and Stevie share is also of a suspect nature. Winnie's father, we learn, was a 'licensed victualler' - a public house owner, who was inclined to rage at Stevie's idiocy, the hint being that he drank himself to a rage.

Alcoholism and crime, and the debilitating effects of alcohol upon constitutions already weakened by malnutrition, is one of Lombroso's constantly repeated points.

> The frequency of alcoholism in the parents of criminals does not stand in need of demonstration; in the cases reported it goes as high as 30%. (Female Offender, p.398)

> Not only does alcoholism in the parents favour crime in the children, but, as is natural, and as indeed we should expect to be even more the case than is shown by statistics, criminality in the parents become hereditary.
> (Female Offender, p.406)

Lombroso, once again, places broad categories such as 'criminality' in the way of understanding any true link between alcoholism and socially deviant behaviour. We have only to look at Conrad's creations, Mrs. Neale and the cab-horse driver, each using the excuse of their children to gain money that they immediately spend on drink, to realize that Conrad sees a more complex interaction of society than Lombroso. Evidently each figure drinks as a solace for miserable conditions, conditions that in themselves are not advantageous for the raising of children. By drinking they render themselves less able to support their offspring. All this Conrad sees, and Lombroso evidently does not.

In Lombrosan terms, Winnie is descended from alcoholic parentage and related to an epileptic, whilst sharing some 'masculine' characteristics of the female criminal. Clearly

she is prone to crime. In addition, Winnie's arranged marriage - for her family's continued survival - puts her on the level of a prostitute. She offers to be Ossipon's mistress in return for him aiding her escape, and thus seems all too willing to duplicate her previous 'crime'. This, in Lombrosan terms, is criminal activity. 'An eminent statistician wrote: "Prostitution is to women what crime is to men."' (TCP, p.410) She already helps to run a shady shop, and is married to a French emigrant, Verloc, who is described as lazy and 'indolent' throughout the novel. This has reverberations with the two following extracts:

> The emigrant is the type of that species of humanity which has the most incentive for, and the greatest facilities for, the commission of crime. (TCP, p.413)

> French thieves call themselves pègres (idlers or laggards). Lazy men are legally a variety of the criminal type, and perhaps more than any other class help to populate the prisons. (TCP, p.391)

Conrad the emigrant and frequenter of the illegal gun-running circles of Marseilles would be unlikely, had he read this, to let it pass, unregistered. He had dabbled in crime, and the incentive was precisely that he had to make money, since his exile from Poland had left him largely without permanent prospects in life, especially since he had overspent the allowance Bobrowski gave him, on several occasions. These events, although well in the past, were unlikely to be forgotten. Could knowledge of these two passages have led Conrad to make Verloc into the figure he is? The original of Verloc is H.B. Samuels, an Englishman, whilst Martial Bourdin himself was French.

The next source I consider is Lombroso's The Man of Genius[1]

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1. C. Lombroso, The Man of Genius, trans. H. Havelock Ellis (London: Walter Scott, 1891). Hereafter cited as Man of Genius.

and the possibility that Conrad might well have read it. Lombroso is anxious in this work to posit the similarities between degenerate characteristics and those of genius. This work, by modern standards, is absurdly facile, and inconclusive, yet it evidently would have been of interest to Conrad. As a child, Conrad had suffered from 'fits' of various sorts.

Conrad almost certainly suffered after his mother's death from migraines and a form of epilepsy which he later seems to have outgrown. His interest in Lombroso, then, is scarcely to be wondered at, as Lombroso sees epilepsy as the root cause of 'criminal insanity'. This could also refer to Conrad's repeated preoccupations with moments of blankness, hesitation and violent, almost unconscious action. Ian Watt comments: 'Conrad's health as a child was very poor; there were long periods of bad migraine, and he was also subject to nervous fits, perhaps a form of epilepsy, which he later outgrew.' (Watt, p.4)[1] Watt goes on to give Langlois' statement reported in Baines, p.97, and dated at 1888.

> [Conrad] had a tic of the shoulder and of the eyes, and the most minor unexpected occurrence - something falling on the floor or a door slamming - would make him jump. He was what we would call a neurasthenic.

Furthermore, Conrad, when speaking of the Torrens states that he had sympathy with a nervous passenger because 'it was not long since I had been neurasthenic myself'.[2] Conrad was first mate on the Torrens in 1891.

Havelock Ellis, in his work The Criminal, based heavily on Lombroso's work, classes together 'Epilepsy, hysteria and

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1. cf. Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends, ed. Zdzislaw Najder, trans. Halina Carroll (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), pp.9--10.

2. LE, p.24.

neurasthenia'[1] as hereditary diseases, and cites F. Magri, as his authority.[2] These are all reasons why Conrad would have been concerned to fathom the precise medical nature of his own mental condition as it was then understood, and why he at first desired not to have children. Obviously he feared hereditary transmission of mental disturbance. The mood of his honeymoon in Brittany emerges as quite sombre when we realize he wrote the short story 'The Idiots' there, inspired by the sight of some genuine cretins living in the district. Their mother also kills her husband, when he makes sexual approaches to her - just like Winnie.

Lombroso's Man of Genius, then, must have been both disturbing and relieving to Conrad, since it states that often what looks like degeneration may be genius - the thing that Conrad the artist most wanted to hear. Even so, the following quotations must have been far from re-assuring.

> I had been enabled to discover in genius various characters of degeneration which are the foundation and the sign of nearly all forms of congenital mental abnormality. How, in fact, can one suppress a feeling of horror at the thought of associating with idiots and criminals those individuals who represent the highest manifestations of the human spirit? (Preface, p.iv.)

From the point of view of The Secret Agent, Lombroso once again makes his statement about alcoholism, this time placing Stevie and Winnie on the lowest rung of degeneration: he speaks of :

> degeneration...in the children of the inebriate ... until the march of degeneration, constantly growing more rapid and fatal, is only stopped by complete idiocy or sterility. (Man of Genius, p.5)

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1. H. Havelock Ellis, The Criminal (London: Walter Scott, 1890) p.120.

2. F. Magri: 'Le famiglie dalle quale discendano; delinquenti' Archivio di Psychiatrica fol XVII, Fasc. V-VI 1896.

The suggestion is that Stevie is seen as the last stage and that Winnie is not far behind. Lombroso continues with yet another of his descriptions of the typical degenerate, in this case a rather good portrait of Stevie.

> certain characters...psychical inequalities owing to the excess of some faculty (memory, aesthetic tastes, etc.,) ... exaggerated mutism or verbosity, ... the abuse of symbolism and of special words which are used as an almost exclusive mode of expression. Such, on the physical side, are prominent ears, deficiency of beard, irregularity of teeth ... (Man of Genius, p.6)[1]

'The smallness of the body' (p.6) is also mentioned and 'Stammering: Left-handedness: Sterility,' are all cited as characteristics of degeneration (p.13), as is amnesia (p.33). Stevie certainly fits these details; he is small, stammers, is subject to amnesia, has a fear of certain words, and a pathetic faculty for constructing meaning from others: 'Bad world for poor people' (p.171) is a good example. Normally quiet and good, he is not exactly 'muted'. At table Winnie watches over Stevie in case he has one of his 'fits of loquaciousness'. The authorial irony works bitingly here. Stevie is hardly capable of stringing half a dozen grammatically correct words together. 'Loquaciousness' for him would be to break silence at all. He cannot be described as 'mute', and neither can Winnie, although she possesses the 'stoney reserve' of silence behind the shop counter. These two, however, are extraordinarily silent. Verloc, however, makes a useful comment when he refers to Winnie's 'deaf and dumb tricks'. The two possibly share this inherited characteristic. The incidental detail of 'deaf and dumb' is, of course, a colloquialism, but one that has

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1. He cites: Magnau Déjerine: L'Hérédité dans Les Maladies (1886) and Ireland: The Blot Upon the Brain (1885).

reverberations of a sinister kind, and serves to show how close to the epileptic type Winnie might be. It is my opinion that such detailed choice of vocabulary as this is specific evidence of Conrad's preoccupation with Lombrosan thought. In addition Stevie is: 'a delicate boy, not withstanding the fluffy growth of golden hair on his cheeks' (p.167) and he suffers amnesia: 'Stevie, though apt to forget mere facts, such as his name and address for instance, had a faithful memory for sensations.' (p.168) This latter quotation I take as being 'the excess of some faculty...' that Stevie possesses to counterbalance his amnesia, a fact born out by a quotation from the introduction '... a hypertropy of certain psychic centres is compensated by the partial atrophy of other centres . "Natura non facit saltus." ' (Man of Genius, p.viii) The question of stammering is also catered for in The Secret Agent: 'A brusque question caused him to stutter to the point of suffocation' (p.9).

What I want to establish here is not that there are minute correspondences between Lombroso and Conrad, but rather the nature of the correspondences. For all his work, Lombroso is dangerously close to the realm of platitude, since he is reduced to citing examples of folk culture to support his examination.

> ...In Hebrew as well as in Sanscrit the lunatic is synonymous with the prophet. We may see it, too, in proverbs, 'I matti ed i fancialli indovinano;' 'Kinder und Narren sprechen die Wahrheit;' 'Un fol advise bien un sage;' 'Saepe enim est morio valde opportune locutus.' (Man of Genius, p.ix)

This really is not of much help, since if the facts are as well known as the breadth of reference indicates, how is the book before us helping to forward our sense of understanding of the nature of the crime? Although Lombroso makes the telling point

that: 'Joly affirms in a too-convenient formula that "it is not even necessary to refute the theory of insanity in genius".' (Man of Genius, p.vi) He does nothing himself to re-assess the formula in any way. We are no closer at the end of his work to understanding what genius or insanity are. It is left up to Conrad to explore the problem.

Indeed there are sections of this work that must certainly have caught Conrad's attention. They are, however, merely facts compiled and left relatively unsifted by Lombroso. The overall effect of Lombroso's work in this case is to bring to our notice examples of strange behaviour in men, and show us that although they may be strange, they are also not uncommon attributes of human behaviour. When Lombroso speaks of the genius' creative 'delerium' and continues: 'there are men of genius who have long been subject to hallucinations',(Man of Genius, p.2), it is impossible not to think of Conrad himself, writing Almayer's Folly, imaginatively 'directly after my breakfast holding animated receptions of Malays, Arabs and half-castes' (PR. p.9) in his front room, as he wrote. Certainly Lombroso regarded this as a characteristic of mental activity often allied to genius.

> It must be added that inspiration is often transformed into a real hallucination: in fact, as Bettinelli well says, the man of genius sees the objects which his imagination presents to him. (Man of Genius, p.23)

Conrad, had he not read or heard of Lombroso, would have been likely to consider his 'hallucinations' experienced whilst composing, as possibly socially inadmissible and unacceptable. Yet, he not only cheerfully admits the way his imagination works, but more important, shows his main characters also acting this way. In particular Razumov, the intense young

student sees visions of Haldin. To many readers this mental trait must serve only to alienate Razumov from a 'normal' sphere of reference, making him seem unacceptable. He is, however, close to 'genius' since he hopes to win the prize gold medal, and rise to be a professor. I suggest that Razumov's strange hallucinations actually threaten the success of the novel, since one could so easily dismiss him as a freak. Conrad is concerned to examine a psyche that shares his own trait of seeing visions. It is not unlikely that reading Lombroso's accounts of the traits of various men of genius convinced Conrad that hallucinations were not the attributes of a diseased brain, and that Conrad then veered to the other extreme, cheerfully assigning to Razumov mental conditions that are actually obstacles to a sympathetic reaction to him by the reader.

Razumov himself reaches his climactic moment in a thunderstorm. Not only is this acceptable novelistic emblematizing, but it would seem to have its roots in Lombroso who discusses the effect of temperature upon lunacy (p.100) and finally gives the example of Gordani, who could foretell storms. The clear hint is that the electricity in the atmosphere has acted upon Razumov as a highly wrought and sensitive 'genius' and brought him to his confession far quicker. These are the sorts of hints around which Conrad could construct a work. And it is my contention that he did so.

My next examination of material is anomalous, since it was not published until 1911, in other words, several years after the time to which I seek to link it as source material. The reason for considering Hans Kurella's book is that it represents the first printing of an assessment of Lombroso in English.[1] The same year, however, his daughter Gina Ferrero presented a summary of his work entitled Criminal Man, according to the Classification of C. Lombroso[2] which is a condensed and adapted form of his original writing. The only English version previous to this appearing under Lombroso's name is the much truncated section that appeared in The Twentieth Century Practice, already referred to above. By comparing Kurella's rendition of Lombroso with Conrad's preoccupations in literature I can help to show that Conrad had evidently read Lombroso - possibly in the French translation of 1895.[3] Here it is worth noting that the Rev.F.W. Denys, writing on Lombroso's Theory of Crime to the 'Clericus' society (13 April, 1896) feels he has to explain that 'I have found very little that has been translated either into English or French' (pp.4-5). He goes on, however, to make the most interesting point that '[Lombroso's] views are probably best embodied in his book entitled "L'Uomo Delinquent" (sic) ... (indeed he virtually admits this in a recent letter to me.)' (p.5) The two works already referred to, The Man of Genius and The Female Offender were both readily

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1. Hans Kurella, Cesare Lombroso: A Modern Man of Science, Trans. by M. Eden Paul (London: Rebman, 1911). Hereafter cited as Kurella.

2. C. Lombroso, Criminal Man (London and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911).

3. L'homme Criminelle, 2nd ed. 2 vols., Paris: 1895.

available in Britain, The Female Offender appearing in the Criminology Series (T. Fisher Unwin), and Man of Genius appearing in the Contemporary Science Series (Walter Scott). This suggests that when Conrad became interested in Lombroso he was sufficiently stimulated to read him in the 1895 French edition. This he could only have done at the cost of some little effort to himself to locate and gain access to a foreign book whilst he was well and truly settled in London. Is it possible that he bought the two volumes in Brittany on his honeymoon? Certainly it would help to account for his rather depressing tale of 'The Idiots'. What I am anxious to make clear is that it seems likely that Conrad read Lombroso's translated works, was suitably impressed, and decided to acquire L'Uomo delinquente without waiting for it to be translated.

If he had access to the French translation in 1896, there is little enough sign of Lombrosan thinking in The Nigger of the Narcissus. There is the argument that Wait, as a negro, is a recognizable Lombrosan criminal.Ossipon has'negroid' features, which are obviously designed as incidental detail to help us classify him. Donkin, too, could be seen as Lombrosan. However, it should be remembered that Lombroso found scientific re-enforcement for a large number of fashionable prejudices about negroes, 'lower' races and their closely allied species the lower classes. The prejudices at work in The Nigger are pre-Lombrosan. In these pages I attempt to show how much of Lombroso there is in The Secret Agent. There is surprisingly little elsewhere in Conrad.

The following quotations are Kurella's repositing of Lombroso's arguments and can, I think, be seen to be very much in line with Conrad's own thoughts. This quotation has relevance

not only for Giorgio Viola in Nostromo, but also for Under Western Eyes, where Nikita certainly rates as a 'bestial' nature. In addition it deliberately contrasts South America and Italy in a way that Conrad does in Nostromo.

> Whereas among the French revolutionaries of 1793,among the revolters of South America, the rioters of the Paris Commune, and the modern anarchists, Lombroso finds the most bestial criminal natures and the most horrible moral insanity predominant, among the heroes of the prolonged Italian struggle for freedom and among the so-called nihilists he describes a number of anthropologically normal and noble figures, from whom nothing is more remote than degeneration, criminality, or mental disorder. (Kurella, p.77)

The following quotation could apply to Stevie, halted at an incomplete level of development, or even to Lord Jim. Jim, however, as I have argued, belongs to a more direct line of evolutionary thinking, from which Lombroso's own theories develop, as Kurella explains in these extracts:

> Passing on now to consider the pressing question of the causal connection between the psychical and the physical fundamental characteristics of the criminal, we find that it is not possible from the physical characters to deduce with certainty a corresponding development of feeling. But it may well be that both series of phenomena result from a common cause, viz, the arrest of development at a not completely human stage of evolution. This conception of Lombroso's - which I myself regard as correct - is readily comprehensive by every evolutionist, for the evolutionist must assume the inheritance of social feelings, and therewith also the inheritance of the organic substrata of these feelings. (Kurella, pp.95-96)

Lombroso's doctrine, he continues, always presupposes the acceptance of the 'fundamental biogenetic law'. (Kurella, p.119)[1]

Kurella does not just reproduce what Lombroso says, but calls it into question on occasions, and some of these can be usefully applied to Stevie. Lombroso's great central idea was

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1. 'The History of the foetus is a recapitulation of the history of the race, or, in other words, autogeny is a recapitulation of phylogeny' Haeckel, The Evolution of Man, Popular English Edn. p.2 (Kurella's footnote).

the identity of criminals as epileptics who had remained undetected. This clearly cannot be entirely the case.

> Lombroso himself emphasizes the relationship between epilepsy and the criminal nature; and, indeed, that he draws an analogy between the permanent psychical state of the born criminal and the conditions of the brain giving rise to epilepsy. To some extent, indeed, he regards the two conditions as identical. (Kurella, p.98)

In this sweeping conclusion, however, he is mistaken, as Kurella goes on to demonstrate:

> Lombroso finds a link between epilepsy and criminality in certain types of character which, long before his time, certain alienists - especially those of England - had described as quite specific, and as different entirely from ordinary insanity. (p.99)

Conrad does not follow Lombroso blindly, since he makes Stevie into one of the few figures of generosity of spirit in the novel, one who actively thinks Verloc 'good' and who believes unreservedly in the virtue of the police force, and who feels genuine pity. This aspect of Stevie's generosity of feeling is thrown into sharp relief by Conrad's statement of it in the context of the Assistant Commissioner's lack of comprehension of it. There is, of course, never any doubt that Stevie has been duped and exploited by Verloc, but in this context the innocence of Stevie seems especially poignant. The Assistant Commissioner speaks, and speculates on

> '...how, in that last case, he could hope to have his own share in the business concealed is more than I can tell' he concluded, in his ignorance of poor Stevie's devotion to Mr. Verloc (who was good), and of his truly peculiar dumbness... For Stevie was loyal... (p.220)

The 'peculiar dumbness', which, we are told:

> in the old affair of fireworks on the stairs had for many years resisted entreaties, coaxing, anger and other means of investigation used by his beloved sister... (p.220)

This reflects back to the 'deaf and dumb' considerations already touched on (see p.296) The two aspects of Stevie's

dumbness - his idiocy and his fierce loyalty in refusing to inform on his accomplices - display considerably more subtlely of insight on Conrad's part than Lombroso ever allows himself. Verloc, himself is not 'loyal' at all, since he does inform on his own friends for a living. Stevie, although an idiot and brought to 'moral insanity' is, in fact, profoundly moral.

Stevie believes in the absolute justice of the police: 'He had formed for himself an ideal conception of the metropolitan police as a sort of benevolent institution for the suppression of evil.' (p.172) In addition, his sense of pity is most evident in the reaction to the spectral cab-horse (pp.168-172). Lombroso's eagerness to condemn a fictive criminal race takes no account of the possibilities for good that have been thwarted or perverted in many of his 'degenerates'. It is in the detailed consideration of Stevie that it can be seen how radically Conrad differs from Lombroso. So many correspondences with Lombroso which Conrad then takes efforts to redefine suggest a very close reading of Lombroso's works. More than this, it suggests a desire to rewrite Lombroso's doctrine.

Clearly Lombroso's view is too sweeping. Kurella quotes him '...undoubtedly born criminality and moral insanity are both of them nothing more than variants of epilepsy (Greisinger terms them "epileptoid states").' (p.100) To summarize Lombroso's main arguments in Kurella's terms is also important for an understanding of Conrad, since Kurella sees him as midway between evolutionism and determinism. Lombroso's opponents thought that:

> Law is a product of the intellectual, not of the organic life of mankind, and that therefore it was not nature that produced criminals, but social and national processes. After Darwin it became necessary for him to prove - as

> in my opinion he succeeded in doing - that nature makes the criminal, but that society provides the conditions in which the criminal commits crimes. (Kurella, p.117)

The importance of this argument that places criminals on one side as a poor mentally deprived crew is that it then re-introduces them to society and finds that they cannot help themselves, functioning in a complete daze, they commit crimes. 'Lombroso regarded the activity of the individual as devoid of all true spontaneity ... the personality of the doer tended to disappear.' (Kurella, p.117) Certainly crimes in Conrad's work seem to occur at times when there is no self-possession. 'The homeless soul of Stevie' takes charge of Winnie during the murder - but Conrad leaves us with the uncertainty of 'as if' when he describes the event. Leggatt throttles the sailor he fights with, and has to have his hands prised from the already dead man's throat. Jim breaks a billiard cue and throws an accuser into the water at Schomberg's, and so on. H.M. Daleski's The Way of Dispossession (London: Faber, 1977) explores this idea. I have already argued, in the section on Lord Jim that the loss of self-possession is a reversion to a lower level of existence. Certainly Lombroso believed in spiritualism and this is one explanation for the stabbing of Verloc. Lombroso speculates on this in the following terms:

> May it be that in the forms of energy known under the names of electricity, magnetism, heat, light, and sound, there is produced the same thing as in thought; and if one admits this, may it not be that thought is simply a phenomenon of movement? (Annales de Sciences Psychiques 1904: quoted Kurella, p.174)

Conrad emphatically did not believe in spiritualism (neither does Kurella who describes the Lombroso of 1896 onwards as 'the Lombroso of senile decay' (p.175) as he dabbles in the occult), I think that Conrad had realized that there can be no explanation of certain deeds. Winnie is at the mercy of

impulses, and her impulse is destructive.

I come now to a work that Conrad almost certainly had access to, and that is Havelock Ellis' The Criminal, the third, and revised edition, was printed in 1901 in London in the 'Contemporary Science Series'.[1] The first edition had been in 1890, and so one can conclude that this was a steadily selling work. It is based quite directly on Lombroso's work, and yet in his preface Ellis does not hesitate to attack Lombroso.

> The critic who regards the study of criminals as neither more nor less than the art of recognizing crime on the countenance can scarcely now expect to arouse more than a smile. (p.xiv)
>
> The view that the criminal is an epileptic has never been widely accepted, and as it only becomes tenable when we give an extremely wide extention to the term epilepsy, it is too arbitrary a definition to be of much use. (p.xv)

He adds rather high-handedly that Lombroso's contribution to criminology was the link between criminality and epilepsy (p.29).

There are various oddments Conrad may have gleaned from this work, on the appearance of criminals. Lombroso's entire theory is summed up as follows:

> Born criminals have projecting ears, thick hair, a thin beard, projecting frontal eminences, enormous jaws, a square and projecting chin, large cheek-bones, and frequent gesticulation. It is, in short, a type resembling the Mongolian, or sometimes the Negroid, ...the lips large and thick. (pp.90-91)

The overwhelming impression we gain from the following extracts from Ellis is the surprisingly contradictory nature of what is being said.

> The Anthropometric committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science examining over 3000 criminals, found them about 2 inches shorter and 17 lbs. lighter than the average British population. (p.94)

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1. H. Havelock Ellis, The Criminal (1890; rpt. 3rd Edn. London: Walter Scott, 1901). All quotations from this edition.

> In Italy Lombroso and others have found a tendency among criminals to be taller and often heavier than the normal population... (p.95)
>
> ...deformities of the thorax predisposing to lung disease are extremely common among criminals as well as among other classes of degenerates. (p.98)

This last statement might well be true of Stevie with his 'narrow chest' but not of Winnie with her 'tight bodice', surely. Yet Ossipon condemns them together. Could it be that Conrad has taken these inconsistencies and used them to his own advantage in describing the differing aspects of Winnie and Stevie? Ossipon evidently does not see any contradiction, and he is the representative of the contradictory aspects of Lombrosism, since he espouses a theory that necessarily condemns him. Heat and Verloc are physically similar, we recall - evidently anyone can look like a criminal, and vice-versa. Lombroso seems to be erecting a pseudo-scientific theory to explain the all too human urge to judge people on visual impression. Conrad himself had been called 'the Russian count' whilst a sea captain, on account of his manner of dress. Yet he hated Russia and distrusted aristocracy, and public opinion still condemned him to be something he did not wish. Ellis, again, quotes Lombroso on the shamelessness of prostitutes. 'Among the inscribed prostitutes' he remarks, 'none blushed when questioned concerning their occupation.' (p.139) This can have parallels with Winnie's unblushing 'stony-eyed' attendance at the cash register in the dingy and sordid shop. There are other hints, too, that Conrad may well have picked up, such as when Ellis mentions: 'Vidocq, a clever criminal who became an equally successful police officer.' (p.157) This and other remarks are surprisingly in tune with Heat's view of criminals as being involved in a type of 'open sport'. He

quotes another prisoner who describes the 'criminal philosophy' as 'a game of rogue catch rogue'. (p.238) As I have already shown, Conrad is anxious to show that criminals and policemen are really reacting to the same laws in different ways, they come from 'the same basket'.

There are other details that Conrad may have in mind from this work. Ellis discusses 'the use of hieroglyphics among criminals' (p.201) Here it's worth remembering that Verloc was the secret agent designated by the sign of a triangle, functioning on the borderlines of legality.

Conversely, Stevie's hieroglyphics of circles cease to amuse him after Verloc sets about converting him to bomb-throwing. 'It is not, usually, until he is in prison, that the criminal tries to find literary expression for himself.' (p.302) This, one cannot help thinking, aligns with another statement about the criminal's 'homesickness' for prison (p.316). It is similar to the view of Michaelis, out on parole, writing his work of literature in a small cottage in the countryside, keeping himself almost as isolated as during his years of confinement. Ellis, indeed, points out another fact that Conrad makes about Michaelis. When he was caught he had a hammer and a heavy chisel 'no more or less than a common burglar' - yet he was imprisoned for 20 years, by an enraged public. Vladimir's plan is to enrage the public by a bomb attack in order to provoke repressive laws. Ellis' overall comment that meshes with this, after a discussion of the arbitrary nature of sentences, is:'The haphazard fashion in which the period of a prisoner's detention is fixed on beforehand is quite in harmony with the unsatisfactory character of the results.' (pp.316-317). The 'unsatisfactory' nature of the

results in Michaelis' case is that he has become entirely useless. Grossly overweight, sharing the mental characteristics of Stevie, he is unable to re-adjust to a life of freedom, and retreats, a tame curiosity of the Lady Patroness, to his other prison, the country cottage. His revolutionary thoughts are still with him, but now they are despised by the Professor, and Karl Yundt. His fiancée died during his imprisonment, we are told, and he has been rendered physically, mentally and socially useless: 'unsatisfactory' indeed, as Conrad depicts it. As Ellis says elsewhere, justice is far from precise: 'What we call law or justice is simply a name for the inevitable "social reaction against criminality".' (p.366) 'The social reaction against anti-social actions is a primitive and inevitable effect of all social life.' (p.367) The circumstantial evidence suggesting that Conrad was familiar with Ellis' ideas and work can only be re-inforced when we read of the remarks he quotes as being made by a criminal to Gisquet, the Paris Prefect of Police.

> ..they talk of thieves as of persons always in misery, and who always finish their lives in prison; but they think of those whom they have seen in their apparent state when arrested. They do not consider that many have secret resources, and that most of them are clever enough to get on without ever having anything to do with justice. (p.244)

This I would suggest is very close in tone to Karl Yundt's own statement on the nature of Lombroso's work. Possibly the latter statement was inspired by the former.

> For him the criminal is the prisoner. Simple, is it not? What about those who shut him up there - forced him in there? Exactly. Forced him in there. What is crime? Does he know that, this imbecile who had made his way in the world of gorged fools, by looking at the ears and teeth of a lot of poor, luckless devils? (Secret Agent, p.47)

This paragraph deserves close scrutiny, since it attacks first

of all Lombroso's methods - Lombroso took statistical measurements based on the dimensions of prisoners' skulls, presupposing as his premiss that all criminals are caught, and confined to prison. This is of course by no means the case. Moreover, if we remember Conrad's own statement, 'La Société est essentiellement criminelle, ou elle n'existerait pas', we can see that Conrad could never really endorse conclusions arrived at on the basis of only a few hundred as a sample of criminal skull dimensions. Within the rhetoric of the passage we have many loaded words: 'Simple', 'imbecile', 'And what is crime', 'gorged fools'. Simplicity and imbecility are two attributes Lombroso returns to very often, making the point that many criminals are mentally damaged. The 'gorged fools' resonates within the body of a novel that is entirely filled with men who are too fat, in some way, and those who are pitifully underweight. But even the scrawny Stevie, we are told, is reproached by Winnie with the words 'you don't ever go hungry'. And he is undeniably the popular conception of a 'fool'. The speaker, the 'spectral' Karl Yundt, has every reason to scorn at least some of those more physically capable than himself. To consider the last remaining statement 'what is crime?' we can refer within the novel to Ossipon's meeting with the Professor in the Silenus Restaurant, when Ossipon refers to the bomb attempt as 'criminal' in the loosest possible sense.

> 'Criminal! What is that? What <u>is</u> crime? What can be the meaning of such an assertion?'
>
> 'How am I to express myself? One must use the current words.' (p.61)

This interchange, which brings us no closer a resolution of

the problem, can, I think, only highlight the point that, despite the fact that Yundt and the Professor are noticeably eccentric figures, they have considered the problem of criminality in some depth, whereas Ossipon, the more normal and obviously acceptable figure, has not. That he is acceptable we have no doubt, since Conrad refers to his plausibility in his seduction of young serving girls met in Hyde Park. That he is also a petty criminal (he takes their savings-books) and he is the only devotee of Lombroso in the work, is an obvious irony. The Professor on the other hand is such a poor specimen that Heat, in an excess of the Lombrosan attitude thinks him 'obviously not fit to live'. Karl Yundt is so decayed as to be 'moribund' and 'spectral'. Natural selection, even so, seems to be slow in weeding him out. This is another stroke of irony since Yundt is described as having a mistress whom 'he enticed away from a friend' and who clings to him, and shows no sign of wishing to depart. Clearly, if the natural selection procedure of winning a mate is to be regarded as relevant, Yundt, Ossipon and Verloc himself have all been eminently successful.

Another application of this is found when Lombroso urges the use of capital punishment since it is 'The foundation theory of the perfecting of the human race by means of selection and the survival of the fittest'. (TCP, p.422) It can only be an implicitly critical reflection of Lombroso, that his views are reflected by Vladimir and Heat, figures who cannot understand anarchists, or even criminals, even though they are deeply immersed in more spheres of action than anyone else in the novel.

That Ossipon has read Lombroso and still has no clear conception of the nature of crime reflects poorly on both his

own lack of analytic ability, and, more damagingly, on the fact that Lombroso has never attempted to define the word. Conrad, in conjunction with Hueffer, on the other hand, at least considered the problem that later emerged as The Nature of A Crime two years later. In this work we have every indication from the action that Conrad does still see crime as part of the law. A solicitor in the story systematically defrauds his client.

Here the question must be asked, is Verloc's action, in fact, a crime? He is, surely, only trying to perpetuate his survival, he is an agent - the deed rightly belongs to Vladimir. This could help to explain why Verloc leaves Stevie to plant the bomb. It is, of course, part of the original source material that Martial Bourdin, an idiot, was given a bomb to plant by his brother-in-law.[1] The motivation behind the retaining of this detail can be more plainly understood if we consider that Verloc has to accompany Stevie for almost the entire journey. Bourdin, on the other hand took a tram by himself. The question is, why does Verloc go to all the trouble to take someone as incompetent as Stevie along? Could it be because if he is caught, Stevie (the bomb planter) will be so obviously unfit for trial as to avoid the normal course of justice? Stevie, there can be no doubt, is not what Lombroso would call 'morally sane' since he believes in what he is doing. The possible resonances between Conrad's story, and Lombroso's preoccupations make it seem overwhelmingly as though Conrad had an intimate understanding of what Lombroso had

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1. Norman Sherry, 'The Greenwich Bomb Outrage and The Secret Agent', Review of English Studies XVIII (1967), pp.412-28. Reprint in Casebook: The Secret Agent, Ed. Ian Watt (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp.202-227.

written. This point is supported by Conrad's later playscript, in which Verloc is presented confessing to Heat his reasons for taking Stevie with him: 'If he had been caught, it would have been the asylum for him, nothing worse.' (Three Plays, Act IV, Sc.III, p.161). Also, in this version Winnie actually does break down mentally, and the final scene is Heat gazing at an obviously nervously destroyed Mrs. Verloc. She is 'a mad woman' 'no law can hurt her now' he concludes. (pp.182-183)

If Ossipon is a disciple of Lombroso, the 'negro type of his face' necessarily condemns him in Lombrosan categorization. His own careless use of the word 'criminal' is duplicated by the following scene: He states

> Without emotion there is no action... I am speaking to you scientifically - scientifically, Eh? What did you say Verloc?' 'Nothing' growled from the sofa Mr. Verloc, who, provoked by the abhorrent sound, had merely uttered a 'Damn'. (p.47)

Verloc's response to the word 'science' is quite distinct from the Professor's energetic questioning of the word 'criminal'. Verloc is still wincing from Vladimir's threat, and the assertion that 'The sacrosanct fetish of today is science'. Conrad seems to be directing us to the point when we have to agree with Vladimir's almost hilarious comic statement that science should be shaken by blowing up Greenwich Observatory. It seems he could be right - Ossipon's reading has done him no good at all, he clings to it as a method of evading the reality of the outside world. Faced with a fleeing Winnie Verloc for example, he assumes she is a drunken prostitute, and prepares to take advantage accordingly, by catching hold of her. He then goes through his usual seduction technique, and makes a point of securing the money in the same way that he did with all the unsuspecting girls he had met in parks.

He, in fact, functions perfectly according to habit, following a pattern of conditioned behaviour until he finds Verloc's corpse. Then, instead of attempting to understand what has happened and assess its human importance, he takes refuge in Lombroso. Even before that, however, all is not entirely well, as he feels uneasy in his treatment of Winnie.

> 'A love like mine could not long be concealed from a woman like you,' he went on, trying to detach his mind from material considerations such as the business value of the shop, and the amount of money Mr. Verloc might have left in the bank. He applied himself to the sentimental side of the affair. In his heart of hearts he was a little shocked at his success. (p.279)

When he has to deal with Winnie the murderess, he leaps into the phraseology of Lombroso for consolation. 'He was excessively terrified at her - the sister of a degenerate - a degenerate herself of a murdering type ...' (p.290). Compare this to the following quotation:

> He was scientific, and he gazed scientifically at that woman, the sister of a degenerate, a degenerate herself - of a murdering type. He gazed at her, and invoked Lombroso, as an Italian peasant recommends himself to his favourite saint. He gazed scientifically ...' (p.297)

In the ten lines that follow, 'scientific' occurs three times, Lombroso once and the phrase 'a murdering type' once also. These repetitions, there can be very little doubt, are presented to us in a version of free indirect speech intended to convey to us that however 'scientific''the Doctor' Ossipon is, he uses his smattering of knowledge to avoid having to come to his own conclusions.

As I suggest, Lombroso's shortcoming is his avoidance of a true discussion of the nature of human motivation. Lombroso wishes to divide the world cleanly into good and evil, and he uses legal and illegal as his categories. The fallacy in this is obvious. By showing the illegal class as a separate race,

a species of humanity, Lombroso evades vital human issues. Ossipon does not see himself as criminal, and his bigotry enables him to describe others as such, without worrying his self-esteem. Ossipon retreats into a repeated pattern of unanalytic thinking precisely similar to Winnie's, which maintains that 'things don't bear looking into'. He is entrapped in the boundaries of his own patterned thinking. Eventually he will reduce himself still further by repeating to himself the newspaper headlines about Winnie's death in an effort to avoid speculation on his moral and ethical responsibility for her suicide. 'An Impenetrable Mystery surrounds this Act of Madness and Despair.' Conrad's view of science as shown through Ossipon is of a little knowledge being a smoke-screen that prevents true observation of one's fellow men. In the Professor's case, his search for 'the perfect detonator' - which is so conspicuously unachieved when Stevie blows himself up - is part of a process of research that entirely abstracts him from any normal human contact. His personal bomb is enough to ensure that. He too has alienated himself from humanity.

The phrase 'criminal type' is, of course, used ironically here, since Ossipon has been attracted to Winnie for some time, and only now does he begin to think of her as being someone threateningly different. It shows not only the limitations of Lombroso's theories, but also the short-comings of his disciple. Ellis quotes a German writer, E. Bleuler, whom he translates from: Der Geborene Verbrecher (1896).

> 'Lombroso means by "criminal type" nothing more than that born criminals, regarded as a class, exhibit certain physical and material anomalies in greater number and in higher degree than average normal men.' Lombroso's position is thus in no degree injured by showing that any or all anomalies are found in the honest. (p.277)

As early as 1896, then, Lombroso's findings were suspect.

Ellis can also be usefully quoted later on the same page. The statement, incidentally, reduces Ossipon still further.

> It has long been a cheap form of humour with ignorant critics of the modern development of alienism and criminal psychology to talk about sending a man to prison or to the asylum on account of the shape of his ear or the length of his arms. (pp.277-278)

The disturbing fact, that so many characters in this novel have catch phrases in their mouths which echo absurdly even to the other characters, could be usefully compared again to the statement already quoted in The Man of Genius, referring to degenerates and geniuses. Lombroso refers to: 'The abuse of symbolism and special words, which are used as an almost exclusive mode of expression.' (p.6) A short run through the various repeated phrases will suffice to show how plentiful they are:

The perfect detonator	Professor
degenerate	Ossipon
scientific	Verloc
the drop given was fourteen feet	Winnie
this act of madness and despair	Ossipon
things don't bear looking into	Winnie

I've already shown how Winnie reduplicates her thought patterns, and I could make a more extensive list, but it would eventually contain every character in the novel and reflect only that they all have their own terminology, and vocabulary for whatever area of living concerns them most. This is a direct refutation of Lombroso's claim, and indeed of his exploration of the thieves' vocabulary in which he tries to identify a meta-language of criminality, and about which he comes to no conclusion.

To return to Ellis' book, he too, comments on anarchists -

but he describes them as being 'honest' and 'correct' amid the other criminals:

> Among 859 prisoners dealt with by Perrier, there were only two real anarchists, who were not without intelligence, fond of study, very reserved, not seeking to make converts, and by their fellow prisoners regarded as always honest and correct.[1]

This, I would suggest, is a possible source for the Professor, who is studious in that he reads fourteen hours a day, is reserved almost to the point of callousness, and certainly possesses intelligence. There are so few other mentions of anarchists in Ellis and Lombroso's English work that it is tempting to look on this one, which asserts the comparative rarity of true anarchists, as being a template for the one true anarchist, the 'perfect anarchist' of the novel. Other criminals, Ellis observes, have signs of atavism.

> By some accident of development, by some defect of hereditary or birth or training, he belongs as it were to a lower and older social state than that in which he is actuactly living. It thus happens that our own criminals frequently resemble in physical and psychical characters the normal individuals of a lower race. This is that 'atavism' that has been so frequently observed in criminals... (pp.251-252)

He adds moreover:

> To admit, therefore, in the criminal, a certain psychical and even physical element belonging to a more primitive age is simple and perfectly reasonable. (p.251)

In addition Ellis cites Darwin:

> With mankind some of the worst dispositions, which occasionally without any assignable cause make their appearance in families, may perhaps be reversions to a savage state, from which we are not removed by many generations.[2] (pp.251-2)

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1. Attributed by Ellis to C. Perrier, Les Criminels (1900), p.11, in footnote, p.191.

2. Ellis' note: Darwin. Descent, 2nd. ed. (1881), p.137.

It is easy to see how this school of thought has come about, and I suggest that Conrad's own thoughts on the question followed a similar development. I have shown already that Lord Jim has considerable debts to Darwin and Huxley, and was, in fact a re-writing of certain key ideas in those authors. Nostromo, however, seems unaccountably free from scientific bookishness, as Conrad writes a natural history of the passage from barbarism to industrialism in his own terms. In The Secret Agent, it would seem, he is busy re-writing the Lombrosan school. As I've suggested Ellis had already raised some objections in 1891, and Kurella's work which is a critical homage to the man's achievement appeared in 1911. The fact that there is no full English translation of L'Uomo delinquente, and no translation before this date seems to indicate that Lombrosan viewpoints not only needed editing, but also were not so highly thought of by 1911. In 1907, however, Conrad can still be acclaimed as attacking one of the modern giants of his time.

But what are we to make of the following quotation that Ellis uses from a gentleman called Hack Tuke, who describes an example of a moral imbecile as follows:

> ..such a man as this is a reversion to an old savage type, and is born by accident in the wrong century. He would have sufficient scope for his blood-thirsty propensities, and been in harmony with his environment, in a barbaric age, or at the present day in certain parts of Africa.[1] (p.253)

Could this not be argued for as contributory material for Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim? Almost certainly it could. But this is typical of the ideas that floated around in the mid-1890s, and I would contend that Conrad recognized how close

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1. 'A Case of Congenital Moral Defect', Journal of Mental Science, 1885. Ellis' reference.

his and Ellis' own thought had been. As Ellis' work progresses, we see this more and more to be the case.

In a footnote on p.281, Ellis looks sidelong at Lombroso's massive, inconclusive magnum opus:

> All the evidence which has so far been accumulated with regard to the connection between criminality and epilepsy will be found in considerable detail in the second volume of Lombroso's great work, L'Uomo Delinquente (1889). To announce any definite conclusions would still be premature.

Various other quotations have the quality of approaching very close to Conrad's own writings. For example Conrad's famous statement: 'La société est essentiellement criminelle'...[1] is very close to the following statement of Ellis':

> Criminality, we must remember, is a natural element of life, regulated by natural laws, and as women come to touch life at more various points, and to feel more of its stress, they will naturally develop the same tendency to criminality as exists among men... (p.265)

The Secret Agent, surely, is the story of an altruistic, self-denying woman of some respectability suddenly committing a deed that actually exceeds the acceptable limits of crime that surround her.

Moreover, this quotation must give us pause for thought if applied to Nostromo: for the Capataz himself is brought to mind here, when Ellis quotes Prof. Prins of Brussels:

> The criminal of today is the hero of our old legends. We put in prison today the man who would have been the dreaded and respected chief of a clan or tribe. (p.254)

It is exceedingly tempting to see Nostromo as a man who remains honest until he realizes that times have changed, he is being treated like an object, and so he succumbs to temptation. If one adds to this another statement a few lines further down the page, some useful parallels can be drawn. Ellis quotes

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1. To Cunninghame Grahame 8.2.99, L.and L. I, 269.

Colajanni: 'How many of Homer's heroes would today be in a convict prison, or at all events despised as violent and unjust?' (p.254)

The comparison that springs to mind is that in 'The Tremolino' in The Mirror of the Sea (1906), where Dominic Cervoni is described after the shipwreck, walking inland with an oar over his shoulder - just like Ulysses, as Conrad overtly observes (p.183). The gun-running of Conrad's youth was heroic, and punishable as a crime. Certainly, Cervoni would be very close to imprisonment, although Conrad reveres him as 'heroic'. (p.182)

With reference to The Secret Agent, however, Ellis' views come surprisingly close to Conrad's again, as the book concludes. Playfully, Ellis looks at the question of criminal responsibility: 'Responsibility, as Schopenhauer long since said, supposes that an individual could have acted differently from the way he actually did act.' (p.364) This links with my earlier point inquiring into why Stevie has to carry the bomb, and it sets the tone for the closing consideration of Ellis' book. The concluding sentence of the work carries this further:

> Perhaps every social problem, when we begin to look at it and to turn it round and to analyse it, will be found not to stand alone, but to be made up of fibres that extend to every part of our social life. (p.376)

The 'fibres that extend to every part of our social fabric' are precisely those links and correspondences that I have endeavoured to trace through the first section of this chapter, in which we realize that everyone is irretrievably knitted into a society that is not actually virtuous.

My concern in this section has been to show where I think Conrad's major scientific debt lies. I would like to stress that the scientific information itself is of a certain type,

and that what is interesting about it is its very normality. Lombroso was a much read and much discussed figure; if we need more proof of this we have only to ask why Conrad mentions his name in the novel and discusses him overtly, through Yundt and Ossipon. What interest could such a discussion possibly have today in a modern novel? None, unless it is on a suitably contemporary subject. Conrad is obviously right in the mainstream of thought at the time, and he wastes no time merely reproducing the genre 'shocker' and Lombroso's theories. It would have been absurd to attempt such tasks had they not been capable of being recognized by the reading public.

In this chapter I have been at pains to prove that this, the most highly formally patterned of Conrad's works, functions in a fashion similar to that revealed in Lord Jim. Conrad has presented the public with what appears to be a genre-piece, dealing with 'the subterranean', a world where criminals look like criminals. He has reassessed the formula, whilst at the same time rewriting the major criminologist of his time. It is his attempt to render the highest possible degree of truth about the visible universe in order, as the much quoted phrase would have it, 'to make you see'.[1] If this idea is acceptable what we see is Conrad depicting four crimes. Verloc's crime

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1. Pref. Nigger of Narcissus, p.xvii.

is to plant a bomb to ensure his existence and comfort. Is it necessarily criminal to preserve one's job, or does that depend upon the job? Stevie's crime is properly no crime at all, since he does not believe he is doing wrong, and in any case retribution is swift (occurring actually before the deed is complete) and disproportionately more violent than he deserves. Winnie's crime, properly speaking, is not committed by her at all. It is 'free' justice, and she prepares, freely, to take justice upon her own head by avoiding the public 'justice' of the gallows, and drowning herself. Ossipon's crime is lapsed into as a habit, and thus is more correctly a way of life than an act. Each of the 'crimes' described is, properly speaking, no crime at all. It is this that Conrad seeks to show. This may not constitute a conclusion,but The Secret Agent is concerned to describe a social problem, to describe the interactions of free-will and social conditions. The picture we receive is one that allows for precious little 'free-will', but at the same time does not resort to Lombrosan categorization.

Conrad's description of Winnie's state is very similar to the standard medical view of epilepsy in the Encyclopaedia Britannica for 1910. The following extracts must surely show how close Conrad is to orthodoxy. The repeated references to Winnie's black eyes are here explained as the preliminary indications of epilepsy, although they are also a symptom of the epileptic fit itself. 'The pupils, which are dilated during the fit, cannot be feigned...' 'The pupils dilated and the pulse rapid.'[1] This parallels Winnie's eyes: 'the enlarged pupils' (p.248), 'her black gaze' (p.259) 'And incredible as

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1. All quotations from the Encyclopaedia Britannica 11th ed. (1911) are from the 'Epilepsy' section, hereafter noted as EB.

as it may seem, the eyes of Mrs. Verloc seemed to grow still larger.' (p.260)

Winnie's attack, however, is not grand mal epilepsy, since it is entirely without convulsions, but it owes something to petit mal and Jacksonian epilepsy. Compare these statements with what we know of Winnie's giddiness after the deed and her strange calm 'cunning' nature during it:

> The second manifestation of epilepsy, to the names epilepsia mitior or le petit mal are given, differs from that above described in the absence of convulsive spasms. It is also termed by some authors epileptic vertigo (giddiness), and consist in the sudden arrest of volition and consciousness, which is of but short duration, and may be accompanied with staggering or some alteration in position or motion, or may simply exhibit itself in a look of absence or confusion ... In general it lasts but a few seconds... (EB)

In Winnie there is no 'arrest of volition' or consciousness, since she knows what she is doing and accomplishes the stabbing with startling success. 'Jacksonian epilepsy or partial epilepsy - is distinguished by the fact that consciousness is retained or lost late.' (EB) This would seem a clear description of Winnie's state of mind, and here it is useful to consider the Encyclopaedist's blanket comment, that seems to point at Lombrosan criminological thinking.

> There is reason to believe that crimes of heinous character, for which the perpetrators have suffered punishment, have been committed in a state of mind such as that now described. The subject is obviously one of the greatest medico-legal interest and importance in regard to the question of criminal responsibility. (EB)

Winnie stabs, Leggat strangles, Jim jumps, all responding to promptings that, at bottom are unknowable, but all of them involve a set of criteria that are not of the normal world.

To this should be added the fact that Conrad tended to regard women as weird altruistic creatures who live by separate moral criteria. Before going any further this idea must be traced, since it has a distinct evolutionary bias.

Conrad's attitude to women is by no means easy to fathom. He seems to have subscribed fairly openly to the prevailing attitude in England that Walter Houghton describes: 'The Victorian home was not only a peaceful, it was a sacred place.'[1] He goes on to quote Huxley in Science and Education, pp.68-69 (1865) in his article Emancipation Black and White , where Huxley speaks of 'the new woman worship which so many sentimentalists and some philosophers are desirous of setting up'.[2] Houghton concludes by stating:

> The Angel in the house serves, or should serve, to preserve and quicken the moral idealism so badly needed in an age of selfish greed and fierce competition. (p.352)

Woman-worship, and the idealism conveyed in the words 'Angel' and 'sacred' was, as Huxley so correctly points out, a Victorian phenomenon, but also a peculiarly recent one, and one Conrad endorsed. Conrad describes Janina Taube, his first love, in terms that are not unlike worship.

> [We] used to look up to that girl just out of the schoolroom herself, as the standard bearer of a faith to which we were all born but which she alone knew how to hold aloft with unflinching hope ... an uncompromising Puritan of patriotism.[3]

Surely this is not far from Kingsley's Yeast in which he puts before us Lancelot Smith's sketch entitled 'The Triumph of Woman':

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1. The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p.346. Hereafter VF. of M.

2. VF. of M. p.350.

3. Quoted in Frederick Karl. Conrad, The Three Lives, p.101, cited as from A Personal Record.

> Woman walking across a desert, the half-risen sun at her back, and a cross in her right hand - 'emblem of self-sacrifice'..., 'new and divine ideal of her sex.'[1]

In turn, could Kurtz's allegorical painting of a blindfolded woman, which Marlow puzzles over, could it be a twisted version of this? Certainly the intended is the 'Angel' who has been forsaken for the native mistress - Kurtz's 'moral idealism' has most certainly not survived.

In order for such allegorical paintings as those by Kurtz and Lancelot Smith to be understood, one must see them as part of the overall Victorian woman-worship cult, although naturally these are sensitive responses to the ideology. These are not quirkish responses, nor absurdly extreme, to judge by the standards of the age. Conrad himself has nothing but blind devoted respect for the mother whose willingness to follow her husband into exile cost her her life, and nearly Conrad's too, whilst forcing him through miseries that did not end with her life.

> Meeting with calm fortitude the cruel trials of a life reflecting all the national and social misfortunes of the community, she realized the highest concepts of duty as a wife, a mother, and a patriot, sharing the exile of her husband and representing nobly the idea of Polish womanhood. (PR, p.29)

She was certainly a martyr to her husband's ideals, but as a mother, she put the young Conrad at risk in taking him into exile.

To this idealization of women must be added the rather more scientific series of ideas about mankind that were being used to reinforce the ideology of woman as something pure that was better off at home.

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1. Quoted from Chapter 10 of Yeast, by W.E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, p.350.

Herbert Spencer, the leading light in Victorian ideologies,[1] deserves attention, since he makes the following telling remark, that he favoured 'a diminution of the political and domestic disabilities of women, until there remain only such as differences of constitution entail'.[2] What Spencer favours incidentally points directly at the situation as he then saw it, namely that there was an enormous separation evident between the sexes. Part of the problem was judged to be the direct working of natural and sexual selection, since men naturally were thought to choose the most glamorous mates. Herbert Spencer puts it, again, very interestingly: 'Men care very little for erudition in women, but very much for physical beauty.'[3] Spencer was using a Darwinian-based argument to point out that present day men, in whom erudition and sufficient wealth are often found, tend to choose superficially attractive wives, and thus tend merely to accentuate any differences between the sexes, since it is to be assumed that the male offspring will inherit the mental agility of the father, and the female offspring will become heirs to the mother's charms. This, of course, depends upon the rigorous application of the theory of inheritance according to sex, (the same law that ensured the continued production of magnificently coloured male birds and duller coloured hens, rather than a blend of the two colourations). That this state of affairs appears to have been reversed, the

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1. 'Spencer's name was for his contemporaries almost synonymous with the brand of deterministic positivism which dominated social theory in the second half of the nineteenth century, and was supposed to have superseded the old, narrow utilitarianism.' J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society, p.180.

2. Principles of Sociology, I. 755.

3. Education, Intellectual Moral and Physical, p.187.

females being now the magnificent ones, no one seems to have noticed.)[1] This attitude was taken up by W.L. Distant,[2] who cheerfully states in his article that: 'The course of sexual selection thus tends to mentally strengthen the males, but applies in an inverse ratio with the females.' (p.81) Distant continues, citing Darwin's example in The Effect of Domestication upon Plants and Animals that the brains of domestic rabbits are far smaller than is the case in the wild rabbit (p.82) and concludes:

> In primitive peoples the brain of woman approximates more closely to that of man than it does in a higher civilization, because man has comparatively alone pursued those avocations and undergone that educational discipline that tends to produce a highly developed cranial capacity. (p.83)

This, however, is not clear reasoning, since it has the stamp of Lamarckism upon it. Use of the brain, through education, increases the capacity, and such men are better equipped to survive, is how the argument seems to run, this acquired characteristic of mental acuity being passed on only to the males. Not only is the fallacy of the inheritance of acquired attributes an old howler of the Lamarck school, but also the reasoning is more seriously astray.[3] The article assumes that a society that possesses the exalted ornament of education that requires 'educational discipline' sufficiently rigorous

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1. This is illustrated in chapter 2, section 3 (see p.93 above) in which I quote Darwin: 'The characters of the parents often, or even generally, tend to become developed in the offspring of the same sex.' (Descent, I, 370). By 'characters' he does not mean mental attributes but 'secondary sexual characters' - aspects of visual appearance. It is from such words that possible misinterpretations arise,and Darwin seems to be endorsing Spencer's earlier contention whereas he is, in fact, making a quite separate point.

2. 'Mental differences between the Sexes', The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, No.4 (1874), pp.79-89.

3. But see the latest work in the topic, Edward Steele, Somatic Selection and Adaptive Evolution (London: Croom Helm, 1980). Steele suggests that some very limited aspects of Lamarckism may, infact, be true.

to produce a highly developed cranial capacity' is also a society that is involved in the jungle laws of the survival of the fittest - in this case assumed to be the most educated. Clearly this argumentation cannot stand any close or logical scrutiny, but it was presented to and accepted by the Anthropological Institute, who seemed happy enough to add it to their journal. This is not true anthropology, but the learned reflection of what was, in fact, popular prejudice at the time. A quotation from the Saturday Review may help illustrate this.

> The lower we go among savage tribes, the less of this diversity [between man and woman] there would seem to be; so that it appears to be a direct retrogression to assimilate the work of a highly -developed woman to that of her mate; and if perfection is to be the aim of our efforts, it will be best advanced by further divergence of male and female characteristics.[1]

The logical conclusion of this astounding piece of writing is to conclude that if the mark of the civilized woman is stupidity, then this has to be perfected. Evolution has dictated that women, like Darwin's domestic rabbits, were to be inferior, and this was evidently not to be altered. Although this is, perhaps, an extreme rendition of the line of reasoning in the Saturday Review, it is not difficult to see how such an argument could be used to confine women to domestic tasks only, whilst insisting that this was what evolution had intended for them.

This view of women takes an especially relevant turn when one reads of the attitudes of Elizabeth Sloan Chesser. Dr. Chesser was one of the first female general practitioners in England, and although she had broken the male domination in order to achieve her position, she seems to endorse the popular

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1. Saturday Review, 1871, 32.

theory of women's rôles. Writing as late as 1913 she says: 'sacrifice of self ...is the crown of women's destiny. The eternal law of womanhood is suffering for the sake of the race.'[1] To this can be added Herbert Spencer's comments on women and their influence on ethical development. 'women ... yield benefits not in proportion to deserts, but in proportion to the absence of deserts - to give most where capacity is least.'[2] This tends to have a disadvantageous effect on the community, since it leads to the cossetting of the least impressive specimens : '[the] fostering of the worse at the expense of the better.'[3] Spencer goes on to discuss the possible rôle of women in parliament, unaware, of course, how fast women were later to rise to the prime positions... and he considers their political influence as harmful since they would in his view: 'increase the ability of public agencies to over-ride individual rights in the pursuit of what were thought beneficent ends'.[4] The clash between familial morality and social morality is precisely the point that Conrad is discussing in The Secret Agent. It is made overtly when Verloc has to try to understand the nature of Winnie's affection for Stevie:

> Mr. Verloc was a humane man; he had come home prepared to allow every latitude to his wife's affection for her brother. Only he did not understand either the nature or the whole extent of that sentiment. And in this he was excusable, since it was impossible for him to understand it without ceasing to be himself. (Secret Agent, p.283)

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1. Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, Women, Marriage and Motherhood (London: Cassell and Co. 1913), p.201.

2. Data of Ethics, II, 196.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. p.197.

Verloc cannot understand the emotion that is one of the main issues of the novel, and this primarily is because he is a man, and cannot understand women's affections, let alone 'maternal' affection. He does not realize that Winnie has married him out of love for Stevie, since had he understood that he would have been faced with 'ceasing to be himself'. He believed himself loved 'for his own sake';[1] this blindness, Conrad suggests, is a blindness to precisely the area Spencer has described.

> The mind of Mr. Verloc lacked profundity. Under the mistaken impression that the value of individuals consists of what they are in themselves, he could not possibly comprehend the value of Stevie in the eyes of Mrs.Verloc. (p.252)

Verloc makes this mistake, but as stated, according to Herbert Spencer this is a fine case of 'benefits', namely love, being yielded 'not in proportion to deserts, but in proportion to absence of deserts'.

Conrad appears to endorse for Winnie an attitude to female altruism that is remarkably similar to Spencer's. One has only to compare one of his letters to Marguerite Paradowska, dated 5 March 1892, to see how long he had held this view:

> in my opinion, abnegation carried to an extreme - where you are carrying it - becomes not a fault but a crime, and to return good for evil is not only profoundly immoral but dangerous, in that it sharpens the appetite for evil in the malevolent and develops (perhaps unconsciously) the latent human tendency towards hypocrisy in the ... let us say benevolent. (Sturm and Gee, p.42)

I am not suggesting that Stevie is'evil', I am merely illustrating my contention that Conrad viewed women a little as a separate species with a slightly different morality. His marriage to Jessie has had many theories to explain it. Ian Watt, however, makes the least committed and most intelligent

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1. Verloc is presented, again: 'with no other idea than being loved for himself'. (p.252)

remark when he relates the comparative success of the union.

> Yet most people who knew them well believed that only a woman with Jessie's phlegmatic calm, not to say complacency, could have survived Conrad's excitable and unpredictable temperament for the twenty-eight years of what was always a difficult marriage. Lady Ottoline Morrell summed up Jessie as 'a good and reposeful mattress for this hypersensitive, nerve-racked man.' (Watt, p.72)

It would seem that Conrad required a woman to devote herself to him, and despite Watt's assertion that, 'Jessie "was the only woman he knew in England",'[1] I would argue that Conrad knew what he was doing at least from a theoretical point of view, since he subscribed to Spencer's attitudes. To Conrad, as to Marlow, the women 'are out of it, completely out of it'. Taking this to be Conrad's view we suddenly find ourselves confronted by an entirely new series of considerations. If Kurtz's actions and Marlow's own ethical reactions are not clear, how must they have struck the Intended? How can Stein even begin to try to explain Jim's action to Jewel? The alarming point that Conrad makes is that it is difficult enough to fathom such considerations even with the best intentions. Men like the French Lieutenant don't want to understand Marlow's subtleties. How on earth can one justify Jim to Jewel when Jewel's own moral world is so different, and yet so demanding of explanation? In Stein's case he doesn't even attempt the task. He 'shakes his head sadly' as though he has given up trying to explain. In Marlow's case he tells a lie to the Intended. In The Secret Agent the emphasis has changed, since the figures who desire explanations to be made to them are men, namely Ossipon (who regards it all as an 'act of madness and despair' but cannot forget it) and, if we allow

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1. Watt, p.70. Quotes R.C. Curle, from a letter [?] 16 Sept. 1895. Watt adds that Conrad was expected to propose to a girl in Geneva whom he met in May 1895 - he was married to Jessie less than a year later.

it, the dead Verloc, who never understands why he is killed. In this last case the questioning is shifted to the readers, who wish to understand the motivations at work. Winnie certainly values Stevie above herself, since her total self-abnegation (mirrored by her mother's self-imposed exile) shows a lack of self-involvement that is remarkable in the overall egoism of the other characters. Once Stevie is dead she is free. At that precise moment Mrs. Verloc began to look upon herself as

> released from all earthly ties. She had her freedom. Her contract with existence, as represented by that man standing over there, was at an end. She was a free woman. (p.252) (my emphases)

She has no 'earthly ties' (p.251), she exists only in so far as she can devote herself to others.

> Mrs. Verloc, the free woman, who had had really no idea where she was going to ... (p.252)

Having killed Verloc she hurries to try and kill herself, responding to the horrifying suggestiveness of the nature of the gallows, which she wishes to avoid.[1] Ossipon represents her last chance for self less devotion: 'I won't ask you to marry me.' (p.289) Once again she is prepared to make a 'bargain'. 'I'll work for you, I'll slave for you. I'll love you.' (p.289) This is not so much a bargain as a complete self-negation, to become someone's drudge. However, it is only in this context that Winnie can imagine herself continuing existence. Ossipon successfully gets her out of the country, although he deprives her of her money, and bereft of any human contact she kills herself. If Decoud feared his own objective existence when alone on the great Isabel outside his cause, Winnie ends her existence when she has no person to work for.

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1. Mrs. Verloc 'was at the mercy of mere trifles, of casual contacts'. (p.255)

Both are alone, both in a sense on an island. And here a distinction needs to be drawn. Winnie denies herself and exists, whilst Decoud (and indeed all of Conrad's men) assert themselves through tasks that may take a certain amount of hardship and that particular form of self-denial. His men submerge themselves in a task and incidentally find themselves or (like Decond) perish. Nostromo is everyone's opinion of himself, until he steals the silver. Women,it seems, devote themselves to another, and when they do not, they fail to exist. (Flora de Barral has no ties, and attempts to kill herself.)

Jewel attaches herself to Jim, effectively she saves him from the planned ambush, and she helps him find a direction for his life: but in order to do so, she has to give up her rather precarious 'freedom' - in which Cornelius sees her merely as a commodity Jim has not paid for. Kurtz's Intended, also, seems to function as a personification of grief - of a destroyed attachment. But here it is important to note that if Winnie has 'no earthly ties' (p.251) and is at 'the mercy of casual contacts' (p.251) then Kurtz is very similar. He has 'kicked himself loose of the earth' and has 'no restraint', whereas the Professor's view of society is of a system 'surrounded by restraints' (p.68) Kurtz and Winnie both, through the contrivances of circumstance, find themselves in a situation where all the normal restraints are removed. No laws can touch Kurtz, and Winnie's 'bargain' ends abruptly. Each has escaped 'the' machine', and Marlow calls Kurtz 'mad', the newspaper article calls Winnie's act one of 'madness or despair', and even Lombroso's analysis leaves us with Winnie as an epileptic. The Secret Agent seems to be a discussion of society with only

external restraints, yet these restraints are almost inescapable.

As regards the case of certain recurrent phrases, and catchwords by characters in the work it is worth looking at the way Winnie's mind functions whilst Verloc is talking to her. Conrad skilfully uses a freely reported rendition of internal monologue to show Winnie's preoccupation. 'This man took the boy away to murder him. He took the boy from his home to murder him. He took the boy away from me to murder him.' (p.246) The subtle dissolving of Verloc's status as her husband to 'this man' and 'he' is counterbalanced by the use of 'the boy' which is either sisterly or maternal regard.[1] It is the maternal aspect that seems to shift into prominence as the monologue continues since the domestic 'from his home' reference becomes personal in the phrase 'from me'. The statements modify each other as they occur until the maternal aspect is uppermost - 'He took the boy away from me' being a statement that could so easily be that of a mother establishing her possessive claim. Conrad is trying to depict a change in regard in Winnie. Her feelings have been described as 'quasi-maternal' already by Conrad. What he is doing here is preparing us for the mounting anger of Winnie that will break out as a passion every bit as powerful as thwarted maternal love.[2] Winnie is shown slipping into a role she has unconsciously always fostered. They could indeed be 'Father and Son' (p.243) to her. Now things have changed. 'It was Mr. Verloc who took

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1. 'The exigencies of Mrs. Verloc's temperament, which, when stripped of its philosophical reserve, was maternal and violent, forced her to run a series of thoughts in her motionless head.' (p.241) This is precisely the process that Conrad here depicts

2. Cf. Lombroso, The Female Offender describes Passion: 'which is only an excess of love; dangerous in a society where the dominating force is egotism.' (p.251) See also: The Secret Agent, (p.184) 'Baffled passion'.

him away. She had seen him. She had watched him, without raising a hand, take the boy away.' (p.246) The repeated phrase 'take the boy away' echoes through Winnie's brain, and whilst she ponders the point, Mr. Verloc's status is reduced still further: he is not 'Adolf', or even 'this man' but just plain Mr. Verloc. Then, as she considers further, Conrad gives us an overt hint: 'Mrs. Verloc's mental condition had the merit of simplicity; but it was not sound. It was governed too much by a fixed idea.' (p.249) This surely is comparable to statements made of Gould in Nostromo, 'he was a man governed by a fixed idea. And a man governed by a fixed idea is insane'. (p.263) Winnie's fixed idea leads her to revalue Verloc, and he becomes 'this man' again, and then 'the man'.

> Every nook and cranny of her brain was filled with the thought that this man, with whom she had lived without distaste for seven years, had taken the "poor boy" away from her in order to kill him - the man to whom she had grown accustomed in body and mind; the man whom she had trusted, took the boy away to kill him! (p.249)

Her focus clearly is not on Verloc nor on the precise nature of Stevie's death but merely on the fact of betrayal. The rhythm in this sentence is dominated by the relative clauses, 'this man, with whom'... 'the man, to whom'... 'the man whom ...' which ebb and flow around the two central points of the sentence, the repeated 'to kill him'. It is important to notice how the sentence speeds up, here, since it is an indication of the speed of realization going on in Winnie's brain. The relative clauses shorten from the slightly uncentred musings of 'this man, with whom she had lived without distaste for seven years...' to the short, powerful 'the man whom she had trusted'. Winnie's mental condition is being conveyed carefully and precisely, and she focuses here on the fact of betrayal. Just as earlier the emphasis had been on 'he took the boy away

from me', in a similar three part sentence structure which stressed Winnie's maternal feelings, so here we see her emerging realization that her strongest urges have been betrayed. When she considers Stevie's abrupt end specifically, Verloc does not even exist any longer in the sentence, the tense slips into the passive; 'the poor boy had been taken out and killed. The poor boy was dead.' (p.249) There can be no doubt that Conrad contrived this effect deliberately, since he takes such care to repeat Winnie's unanalyzed concepts; 'the poor boy' and words like 'murder' and 'kill' are her approximations to the understanding of the episode, not ours. Verloc is seen not as a person but increasingly as: 'the man who had taken poor Stevie from home to kill him somewhere.' (p.249) Returning from the bedroom, she still thinks the same way, her emphasis resting only on the fact of murder, and not on Verloc or the precise method. He is: 'the man who had taken Stevie out from under her very eyes to murder him in a locality whose name was at the moment not present to her memory'..(p.256) The curious mix of free indirect speech and authorial commentary helps to draw our attention to the fact that we are eavesdropping on Winnie's thought processes, and the rhythm of the sentence places the reading stress firmly on the words 'murder him'. This is indeed a logical series of preoccupations, but one that is 'insane logic'. (p.256)

This series of echoing catch words does not alter substantially until Winnie remembers where Stevie died, catching up Verloc's words mentally. 'A Park! That's where the boy was killed.' (p.260) So far, the only words we have newly discovered Winnie using are 'A park' - but this triggers off an image immediately:

> A park - smashed branches, torn leaves, gravel, bits of brotherly flesh and bone, all spouting up together in the manner of a firework. She remembered now what she had heard, and she remembered it pictorially. They had to gather him up with the shovel. Trembling all over with irrepressible shudders, she saw before her the very implement with its ghastly load scraped up from the ground. Mrs. Verloc closed her eyes desperately, throwing upon that vision the might of eyelids, where after a rainlike fall of mangled limbs the decapitated head of Stevie lingered suspended alone, and fading out slowly like the last star of a pyrotechnic display. Mrs. Verloc opened her eyes. Her face was no longer stony... (p.260)

It is no mere coincidence that we have references to fireworks in this passage. It is deliberately there to remind us of Stevie and the fireworks on the stairs episode. Just as Stevie gathered up the carving knife in response to the image of the German recruit, and became restless from Karl Yundt's overheard words, so similarly Winnie has the capacity to be deeply swayed by visualizing details. Winnie is very close to Stevie's epileptic mental condition, and she sees 'visions',hallucinations like Razumov's that link her to epilepsy. Her repetition of 'poor boy' reduplicates Stevie's: 'bad world for poor people', 'Poor brute', 'Poor! Poor!... Cabman poor too, he told me so himself.' (pp.170-171)

The resemblance is intentional. But whereas Stevie's excitement is directionless and comes to nothing, Winnie's immediately takes a direction, and she stabs Verloc. Stevie wants to stab the German recruiting sergeant, but cannot find him, for obvious reasons. Winnie feels the same emotions in less neutral circumstances.

Conrad shows Winnie's mentality in such detail in order to stress how catch-words can produce a certain emotion (that Verloc is a murderer) and then how another word 'park' can spark off a series of word associations exactly like Lombroso's

susceptible
epileptics, to mere suggestion.[1]

More important than this, however, is the precise tracing of Winnie's mental development. She moves from thwarted maternal love, to knowledge of betrayal of that maternalism. This could be seen as a wholly egotistic reason for murder, the vicious revenge of one whose love object has been removed, and who now can take solace in a desire to wound. But when Winnie actually does the deed, she is responding to an hallucination, an imagined sense of the sudden disintegration of Stevie. In such a case there can be no egoism, just as Stevie with the carving knife cannot be said to be responding enviously or egotistically in his desire to slaughter German recruiting sergeants. This 'crime' is not a crime at all, but an action of pity, of passion. Lombroso's definitions cannot hold here.

But if this point is pursued, Conrad is very careful to emphasize the similarities shared by Verloc and Winnie. The obvious similarity is that Verloc is busy justifying himself to Winnie, and is insensitive to her true state of mind, preferring to stress Vladimir's culpability: 'The brute',[2] whilst Winnie is busy with her own fixed ideas and catch-phrases. Verloc pauses at one point to ask: 'You understand why, don't you?' 'No ... what are you talking about?' (p.240) The

1. This aspect is brought out especially forcefully in the playscript, when Winnie repeats the terminal words of Verloc's speeches of explanation, 'Life' ... 'Park' etc., (Three Plays Act IV, Sc.III,p.168) and the stage direction indicates she responds to Verloc's use of the word 'knifed' (p.167). This is supported by Ossipon's comment upon Stevie in Act one as being 'a perfect slave to verbal suggestion' (p.103)

2. Notice the recurrent fixed image Verloc uses:
'You don't know what a brute I had to deal with' (p.237)
'A silly, jeering, dangerous brute.' (p.238)
'A venomous beast.' (p.238)
'a swine ... an ignorant overbearing swine.' (p.238)
'the bullying brute' (p.240)
This is yet another example of recurrent catch-words.

similarities are very telling, since they show both characters as being at the mercy of impulse. Winnie is described in this way.

> But this creature, whose moral nature had been subjected to a shock of which, in the physical order, the most violent earthquake of history could only be a faint and languid rendering, was at the mercy of mere trifles, of casual contacts. She sat down. With her hat and veil she had the air of a visitor. (p.255)

Verloc responds to the suggestion offered by the roast beef, Winnie to the chair, and then to the knife. The ironic reversal lies in Winnie's outdoor clothes, which previously had been a mark of distinction in Verloc, who ate his dinner with his hat 'pushed far back on his head'. This reversal emphasizes their similarity, and their differences at this point. Mrs. Verloc imagines escaping from Verloc:

> She could slip by him, open the door, run out. But he would dash out after her, seize her round the body, drag her back into the shop. (p.256)

This is surely paralleled by Verloc's own thoughts when he sees the knife, the movements of which seem 'leisurely'.

> They were leisurely enough to allow Mr. Verloc to elaborate a plan of defence, involving a dash behind the table, and the felling of the woman to the ground with a heavy wooden chair. (p.262)

Each has time for such imaginings, each is concentrating on a 'fixed idea'. What, if any, can be said to be the difference between them? Conrad gives us a distinct guide, and uses the loaded Lombrosan term 'genius' to alert us. Compare Winnie's fixed idea of familial bliss with Verloc's fixed idea of Vladimir:

> She stared at the vision of her husband and poor Stevie, walking up Brett St. side by side away from the shop. It was the last scene of an existence created by Mrs. Verloc's genius ... admirable in the continuity of feeling and tenacity of purpose. (p.244, my emphasis)

Verloc considers revenge; in the form of betrayal.

> It was in harmony with the promptings of Mr. Verloc's genius. It had also the advantage of being within the range of his powers and of adjusting itself easily to the practice of his life, which had consisted precisely in betraying the secret unlawful proceedings of his fellow men. (p.245, my emphasis)

'Genius' of course is used loosely here. Neither Winnie nor Verloc merit its use in its modern day intellectual sense. And neither is it Lombrosan, strictly. But it is a sign-post in the text that allows identification of useful parallels of thought processes. Here lies the point. Verloc and his wife are, in fact very similar indeed. They share, in this sense, precisely similar patterns of thought, even though each is purely self-involved. Verloc's 'come here' is an expression of love; Winnie comes, but kills him in revenge, an expression of love for the dead Stevie. They even have congruent imaginative visions of escape, and both are open to mere suggestion by the objects they perceive. Yet to Winnie her life's work, the construction of her 'genius' is shattered. Verloc's genius is still determined to continue being itself, since betrayal is 'in harmony' with his lifestyle. Verloc remains himself, despite the collapse of his domestic security. Winnie exists for domestic security which revolves around Stevie. These gone, she is 'free' and dangerous, and her epilepsy takes over.

By stressing how similar Winnie and Verloc are in certain ways, Conrad emphasizes how difficult it is to break out of the several webs he sees as holding society together. There is the web of self-involvement, which may depend upon the repeated catch-phrases of unexplored and undefined concepts that can allow no freedom of perception. There is the imprisoning web of (monetary) dependence, pushing one into conditions of obligation. There is also the authorially perceived web in which the reader is shown just how similar all the figures are, and

how they are merely slightly differing versions of the same, basic humanity, as they all reflect each other's traits. The explosion and epilepsy leave enough room for a change of condition. And suddenly, outside the web, beyond the rules of society, there can be no true way of assessing what Winnie does. It can be excused as epilepsy, explained away as a crime of passion, but the reality Conrad gives shows a deed that takes place on a separate moral level, and one that is not apprehensible on any but its own terms. It is the complete anarchic act, the individual produces the deed. It cannot be explained.

Whether Conrad's view communicated by this is acceptable or not is a matter of some doubt. He seems to suggest that tainted motives of any sort necessarily make actions invalid. Even the 'perfect anarchist', the Professor, functions to a certain extent out of envy, and disappointment at his lack of promotion. But does this, of necessity, invalidate all he stands for? To Conrad, certainly. The Professor is a disease, a 'pest', a product of diseased thought. And Winnie is at the mercy of a diseased mind.

However, despite recourse to Spencer, Ellis, Kurella and Lombroso, the centre of this novel is still largely unexplained, the motivation obscure. Winnie, shorn of all the restraints of civilization, is a portrait of altruistic love. That love is anarchistic, and by implication with Lombroso's and Ellis' idea of criminals belonging to a lower level of development, it is also atavistic. But <u>what</u> altruism is remains, and must remain unfathomable. It can be described but not analyzed. Humanity is reduced in this novel to basic traits, and these are egoism

for men and devotion for women. But having said that, it seems that Conrad is actually unable to proceed any further in his exploration. And I maintain that after The Secret Agent he did not try to proceed any further. This is the basic truth he perceives about humanity, and in Under Western Eyes he no longer explores the problem of female altruism. Tekla is a fact, rather than a figure to analyze.

Society, then, has evolved itself between these two extremes of egoism and altruism in man and woman. This altruism must not be obscured by the petty selfishness that the Assistant Commissioner's wife shows in her refusal to leave London for her husband's sake, or its parallel in Verloc's uneasy knowledge that Winnie would not agree to go abroad. This is the surface only. The altruism, the devotion Conrad is uncovering,lies rather deeper. In primitive times it may certainly have ensured the survival of the species - Winnie marries after all because she, Stevie and their mother may otherwise be destitute - but in turn of the century London familial devotion is perverted and becomes destructive.

The distant, ironic narrator, is therefore not being brutal or nihilistic. He puts the reader in touch with one of the great mysteries of civilization, altruism, which he locates firmly in familial devotion of women. It is an analysis Conrad has been constantly concerned with, since his work is filled with examples of families ruled by female altruism being destroyed by male altruism to a 'cause', a source of egotistic self-fulfilment. Thus we can see Jim, leaving Jewel and all of Patusan at the call of his idealism. Kurtz abandons the Intended in the cause of gain. Nostromo abandons Teresa as she dies to do his duty; Giorgio has followed Garibaldi, but

Teresa has followed him. Haldin leaves his devoted family, and his mother is shattered by the news of his death in the name of a revolutionary ideal. Razumov destroys Natalie Haldin's love because of his need to confess (he could merely have avoided her) and consequently she becomes like Sophia Antonovna, who had loved Yakovlitch, and who now is a revolutionary. The hint is that in each case the man has followed his ideals, the woman has followed the man, even though she takes second place. Merely to repeat example after example like this is, however, to risk obscuring the point, which is that female altruism is unfathomable. This is not merely a 'heartless Law of Nature' (Preface to The Nigger, p.viii) but a genuine insight that can help the reader understand society and consequently value it more. Just as when one truly understands how a piece of machinery works, and where its various frailties are located, one begins to treat it more carefully, so when the ironic narrator reveals this view of society one is expected to have a greater (and more intelligent) sympathy with mankind's frailties.

This is Conrad's most far-reaching experiment in life. He realized he could not explain altruism, since it was hereditary and its sources are historically unreachable. I have been at pains to show in this chapter the pursuit by Conrad of a point of view. What needs to be said at this point is that Conrad explores his topic with scientific learning that obviously does not provide the precision or the insight he desires. The novel's ironic mode is applied to contemporary criminology as well as to the characters. It is, if one prefers, the novel in which Conrad rejects scientific and ethical speculation as inadequate to his needs. For these reasons I consider

The Secret Agent to be Conrad's most important novel. It is the pinnacle of the 'scientific' aspect of his art since he declares his independence from it.

If one accepts my argument in the preceding chapter on Nostromo that Conrad knew the work of J.A. Hobson, and endorsed aspects of it, it becomes apparent that Conrad's desire to take issue with Lombroso is not gratuitous. Just as Huxley and Drummond represented the two poles of the ethical argument on the binding force behind humanity, and Carlyle and Spencer represent two opposed positions concerning the nature of heroism, so Hobson and Lombroso see humanity from different viewpoints. To Hobson humanity is to be understood from the point of view of its political, social and economic institutions. To Lombroso man is defined by the shape of his skull, and those who look suspicious should be put in institutions. Knowledge of such divergent sources argues, in Conrad, not merely an eclectic mind, but rather that he has a coherent knowledge of the major areas of contention of his day, and moreover is prepared to question all the arguments. If each of the sections in this thesis seem to veer wildly between differing areas, it is because the topics under discussion are in their very nature open to greatly differing interpretations, and Conrad is threading his way amongst them, developing his own approach. I contend he knew the detailed theories of each side in each of the major topics he takes on, and that in The Secret Agent he can be seen breaking free.

CHAPTER 6

It could be argued that Under Western Eyes does not truly come within the scope of this work, but the reasons for this are important. Conrad has, in this novel, broken no new scientific ground. In fact it is useful to list here the things Conrad is obviously not interested in, which an energetic follower of science and sociology would have known about, in 1910. He does not seem interested in urban poverty despite the following epoch-making works:

S.B. Rowntree, Poverty, A Study of Town Life, London 1901

C. Booth, Life and Labour of the People of London,17 vols, London, 1889-97

The Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, London, 1904

This last produced the Education Act (Provision of Meals) of 1906 and the Medical Inspection Act of 1907. Conrad seems equally uninterested in female suffrage, despite the activities of Cristabel and Emmeline Pankhurst from 1903 onwards. In this he is in complete contrast to his former friend Cunninghame Graham who in later life 'campaigned vociferously for universal suffrage, free secular education, abolition of Lords, dis-establishmentarianism, a graduated income tax, a free meal for every state school pupil'.[1] He shows no interest in the pursuit of the controversies about Mendelian genetics, re-discovered in April of 1900 by Hugo de Vries, Karl Correns and Erich Tschermak, and hotly discussed by W.F.R. Weldon and W. Bateson from 1902 onwards. Finally, Conrad shows no interest in exploring psychology further, although it had

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1. Frederick Karl, Op. Cit., p. 396.

expanded greatly. In 1892 William James had concluded, sadly, 'This is no science, it is only the hope of a science'.[1] But the field was rapidly expanding. Freud's Interpretation of Dreams was published in 1900, James' own Varieties of Religious Experience appeared in 1902, and Pavlov's early papers a year later. The British Psychological Society had already been founded in 1901.

Conrad, I contend, was not interested in science to the same extent after 1907. He had stopped exploring the motivations of the human mind in purely scientific terms. But he had, by the time he was writing Nostromo, already developed a coherent line of exploration of his own, and no longer needed the support of theoretical speculation. I say this from the point of view of one who has been unable to trace in all the ethical and philosophical works I have covered a scheme that Conrad seems to endorse. And indeed I do not believe there is one. Conrad may certainly have been eclectic, but as I have attempted throughout to show, what he assimilated he took care to make an integral addition to his own ideas.

To recap thus far – one can see Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness as experiments in tracing the concept of heroic action and all that it implies. Nostromo argues egoism as the basis of heroism and even altruism in men, whilst true self-sacrifice seems confined only to the women. The Secret Agent takes on a far grimmer aspect in that, although it is involved in deflating the romance of the terrorist, it displays a world entirely dominated by egoism. Which leaves Under Western Eyes.

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1. Text Book of Psychology (London: Macmillan, 1892), p.468.

This novel I see as a crisis work. Certainly Conrad's mental health was upset by the task of writing the work. Jessie Conrad's letter to Meldrum is worth quoting here:

> Poor Conrad is very ill and Dr Hackney says it will be a long time before he is fit for anything requiring mental exertion ... there is the MS complete but uncorrected and his fierce refusal to let even I touch it. It lays on a table at the foot of his bed and he lives mixed up in the scenes and holds converse with the characters.
>
> I have been up with him night and day since Sunday week and he, who is usually so depressed by illness, maintains he is not ill, and accuses the Doctor and I of trying to put him into an asylum. (6 Feb. 1910).[1]

The crisis stems not just from a confusion of the artistic with the actual world, and a delirium perhaps gout-induced. Bernard Meyer and the school of thought that sees this point as being the start of Conrad's decline may well have an important argument here, and one I am inclined to endorse. But I am prepared to accept the argument only because I feel that Conrad's breakdown represents not so much a mental and psychical failing but rather the achievement of an aim. The achievement is, I contend, the apprehension of a fundamental truth of human nature.

To understand his discovery, it is necessary to understand, in part at least, Conrad's view of Russia. His pessimism about the nature of political institutions is obvious. He does not draw the Marxist distinction between individuals and social structures. In his article on 'Anatole France' (NLL., p.33) he praises France:

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1. Jocelyn Baines mentions this (Baines, pp.372-3) and cites as evidence: a letter to Davray, dated 3 May 1910, Lettres Francaises ed. G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1929), p.100; a letter of 19 May 1910, L. and L. II, 109; and one of 28 June 1910, L. and L., II, 113. He also adds Jessie Conrad's Joseph Conrad As I Knew Him (Garden City: Doubleday, 1926), pp.135ff. and Joseph Conrad and His Circle (New York: Dutton, 1935), pp.140 ff. See also Karl, p.677 ff. 'The completion of Under Western Eyes marked the end of an era.' (p.678)

> He perceives that political institutions, whether contrived by the wisdom of the few or the ignorance of the many, are incapable of securing the happiness of mankind.1

Many quotations of this kind occur in Conrad's work. What is important is to realize what he means by 'political institutions', since it is hardly possible to have a gathering of more than a few people without some sort of 'political' code of procedure. This is more than amply demonstrated in The Nigger of the Narcissus.

Conrad's view of political man is not very far from his conception of savage mankind. In 'Autocracy and War' Conrad makes a series of revealing statements.

> The intellectual stage of mankind being as yet in its infancy, and states, like most individuals, having but a feeble and imperfect consciousness of the worth and force of the inner life, the need of making their existence manifest to themselves is determined in the direction of physical activity ... Action in which is to be found the illusion of mastered destiny, can alone satisfy our uneasy vanity and lay to rest the haunting fear of the future ... Let us act lest we perish - is the cry. And the only form of action open to a state can be of no other than aggressive nature. (NLL, pp. 108-9)

A number of suppositions hit us. The state is likened to an infant, and further to 'most individuals'. Conrad draws a direct correlation between the desires of individuals, who naturally wish to achieve something before death as a gesture against their cosmic insignificance, and the desire of a nation. The two, he argues, are not strictly separable. Nations are only the sum total of their frail and egocentric populace.

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1. This is actually very similar to Herbert Spencer's expressed views in The Study of Sociology as to the intractability of human institutions. It is also close to Spencer's view that in any society 'the character of the aggregate is determined by the character of the units'. (p.48).

The populace, unable to make use of 'the inner life' and cultivate personal spiritual achievements because these are less obviously tangible and reassuring, branches out into colonial conquest, war, and oppression of others. The image of 'infancy' is disturbing, since it reproaches all nations with a primitive level of social and political development. Their voracious expansionism shows no signs of being anything other than a simple extension of the laws of the jungle, a perpetual war: 'European peace' is maintained only by 'alliances based on mutual distrust, preparedness for war as its ideal, and the fear of wounds, luckily stronger, so far, than the pinch of hunger'. (p.107).

> The true peace of the world will be a place of refuge much less like a beleagured fortress and more, let us hope, in the nature of an Inviolable Temple. It will be built on less perishable foundations than these of material interests. But it must be confessed ... the very ground for its erection has not been cleared of the jungle. (p.107).

But if civilization is less advanced that one might like to think it, Russia, to Conrad, represents the depths of evolutionary sterility: 'She is not a Néant, she is and has been simply the negation of everything worth living for.'[1] (p.100). It is in this sorry condition because 'it has not been the business of monarchies to be adaptive from within' (p.107). Russia's development has been arrested at a level that is more primitive still than the 'jungle' (p.107) of mutual distrust Conrad somewhat dramatically indicates as Europe, pre- World War One. Russia is in this state because the ruling classes have crushed every level except those of

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1. The reference is to Bismarck's famous statement about Russia: 'c'est le néant'.

slave and master. Seen in this light, Conrad's phrase for Dostoevsky's works as 'fierce mouthings' from 'prehistoric ages' becomes clearer in its evolutionary bias.[1]

The Russia that Conrad sees is by no means that of his time of writing. It corresponds fairly closely, indeed, to the Russia Chaadaev criticizes in his first Lettre Philosophique (printed in Telescope, dated Dec 1, 1836). He reproaches his homeland with stasis: 'There is among us no inward development, no natural progress ... we grow but we do not mature'.[2] He continues to stress the isolation of the country and its lack of productivity of ideas.

> Isolated in the world, we have given nothing to the world, we have taken nothing from the world, we have not added a single idea to the mass of human ideas, we have contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit. And we have disfigured everything we touched in that progress. From the very first moment of our social existence, nothing has emanated from us for the common good of man; not one useful thought has sprouted in the sterile soil of our country; not a single great truth has sprung from our midst; we did not bother to invent anything, while from the inventions of others we borrowed only the deceptive appearances and the useless luxuries.(p.41)

This bleak view of his homeland was written in the transparently disguised form of a letter to a lady - and reminds one rather of Razumov's diary which he addresses to Nathalie Haldin. Chaadaev actually mounts his argument in ways that suggest Razumov, whose illegitimacy makes all Russia his parentage:

> ..but we Russians, like illegitimate children, come to this world without patrimony, without any links with people who lived on earth before us. (p.37)

Chaadaev's Lettres started the controversy that raged in Russia

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1. 27 May 1912, Garnett, p. 260.

2. Chaadaev, Peter Yakovlevich Philosophical letters and Apology of a Madman Ed. and trans. M.B. Zeldin,(Knoxville: Univ.of Tennessee Press,1969) p.37.

between the Westerners and the Slavophiles, the latter predictably enough praising the attitudes of resignation in the peasantry.[1] Could not this have some bearing on the final title of the novel, Under Western Eyes? Certainly Chaadaev's patronymic Yakovlevich suggests the anarchist Yakovlitch within the novel. However that may be, Chaadaev's view of Russia, although extreme, was actually endorsed, with reservations, by Pushkin, who was sent an advance copy of the Telescope article. In an unposted (for security reasons) reply, Pushkin argues a similar case for cultural fossilization:

> There is no doubt that the schism separated us from the rest of Europe and that we have not participated in any of the great occurrences which have agitated it. But we have our own special mission. Russia, in its immense expanse, was what absorbed the Mongol conquest. The Tartars did not dare cross our Western Frontiers and leave us to their rear. They withdrew to their deserts and Christian civilization was saved. For this purpose we were obliged to have a life completely apart, one which though leaving us Christians, left us such complete strangers to the Christian world that our martyrdom did not provide any distraction to the energetic development of Catholic Europe.[2]

Conrad may have known Chaadaev's work, as it was first published in French and is likely to have been known by Apollo Korzeniowski. Pushkin is less likely as a suggestion. I add his statement because it reinforces my main contention that Russia is stuck in some form of prehistory, and that its religion was also somehow darker and less well-developed. To

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1. Knapp Hay. Op.cit. pp.288-290: Michael Cherniavsky's article 'Holy Russia : a study in the History of an Idea' is referred to: American Historical Review April 1958, pp.626-632. Knapp Hay makes the point that Haldin praises the Russian soul: 'And don't you forget what's divine in the Russian soul - and that's resignation.' (Under Western Eyes, p.23)

2. A. Pushkin, Letters. Ed.and trans. J.Thomas Shaw, 3 vols. (Bloomington: Univ.of Indiana Press, 1963) III,779, letter 637.

quote Chaddaev again: 'We were Christians, but the fruits of Christianity were not ripening for us.'[1] The attitudes to religion and God, as reflected by Mikulin, Razumov and Haldin, for example, certainly argue a very unfamiliar level of Christian involvement. Russia, marooned religiously, closer to Greek Catholicism than anything else, had no chance of ethical development under religious impetus.

Poland, however, was energetically Roman Catholic, thus linking itself to European development. If one needs proof, one has only to look at the statement Conrad 'wrote' on the back of his photograph in 1863, at the age of 5½.

> 'To my beloved Grandma who helped me send cakes to my poor Daddy in prison - grandson, Pole, Catholic, nobleman - 6 July 1863 - Konrad'.[2]

This, written during Conrad's first exile[3] represents fairly accurately the spirit of his parents' Polish nationalism. The insistence upon Catholicism is certainly reflected by Conrad in later life, even though he shows no other signs of religious leanings. He declined an invitation of entry to a London club on the strength of his Catholicism.[4] This is more than an evasion, it is an upholding of his own status as one who was not part of the Russian-dominated east. It was Catholicism

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1. Op.cit. p.43.

2. Najder Ed. Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends. trans. Halina Carol. (London: OUP, 1964) p.8.

3. Ian Watt. Conrad in the Nineteenth Century. p.3.

4. The terms of Conrad's refusal are interesting, since he does not claim to be a practising Catholic: 'though the dogma sits lightly on me, I have never renounced that form of Christian religion. The book of rules is so, I may say, theological that it would be like renouncing the faith of my father'. Dated Oct 8, 1923: printed in Karl, op.cit. p.894.

that had, in a sense, kept the Poles in touch with the currents of European civilization that had never reached Russia. It was accepted knowledge, and a source of pride. Frederick Karl records it as follows:

> Unlike the Russian Ukranians, who were peasants, mainly illiterate, and Greek Catholic Orthodox, the Poles were 'noble', and Roman Catholic.[1]

Poland, on the other hand, had never allowed its landowners to lose contact with the workers. Conrad writes to J. Quinn with some pride, 24 March 1920:

> I confess to some little gratification at the thought that the unbroken Polish front keeps Bolshevism off, and that apparently the reborn state has one heart and one soul, one indomitable will, from the poorest peasant to the highest magnate. These magnates, by the by, have no more power and precious little more wealth than the poorest peasant, with whom they fight shoulder to shoulder against moral and physical pestilence bred in Russia ... (Quoted from E. Knapp Hay, p.55-56: unpublished letter.)

He was, as many have noted, particularly punctilious on this point, for what he saw in Poland in its agriculture-based economy and almost entire lack of an industrial middle-class was a social harmony that was very rare and indeed almost impossible in industrial Europe at the time. This unique interrelation of landowner and peasant was all too easily misunderstood, even by good friends. Conrad wrote to Galsworthy about his article upon him, saying:

> I would ask you at once to eliminate the word aristocracy, when you see the proof. Land-tilling gentry is the most precise approach to a definition of my modest origin. (L. and L. 11,63-64, 29 Oct. 1907)

Often it seems as though Conrad has no true idea of class differences. He writes to Elbridge Adams, on 22 November, 1922, in terms that I think are meant to be deliberately

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1. Conrad: The Three Lives, p.32. See also pp.40-41.

vague. Adams was not one of his long-standing friends, and there is no reason to suppose he opened his heart to him on this occasion. What is said here approximates that famous understatement about 'a few simple virtues ... fidelity'. Clearly Conrad intended each individual reader to see as much as he wanted to in that statement: 'That glimpse of truth for which [we] have perhaps forgotten to ask' (Preface to Nigger, 1897). Conrad's seeming naivété in this letter should not be misunderstood.

> I don't know that the advent of class parties into politics is abstractly good in itself. Class for me is by definition a hateful thing. The only class really worth considering is the class of honest and able men, to whatever sphere of human activity they belong - that is, the class of workers throughout the nation. There may be idle men; but such a thing as an idle class is not thinkable. (L and L II,285, my emphasis.)

This problem of class is particularly acute in Sulaco, where the various trades of miners, railwaymen, cargadores and merchants are actually racially different, and reluctant to mix. The 'Italian Stronghold' (p.32) of Giorgio's hotel and the Amarilla Club, the Blanco stronghold during the invasion of thieves, bear witness to this. The danger is, therefore, one of hereditary class systems that are entirely remote from each other, and a total loss of social movement. The miners who save Don Carlos do so because he is known to them personally and seen as working for the mutual benefit of all - like a Polish landowner. But as time continues, organized labour problems make such an event seem impossibly distant. Where evolution ceases, there must inevitably be revolution, and revolution was the only event in Costaguana's previous history, each revolutionary government being the same as the previous one. Unfortunately, latter day Costaguana has assured only

ossified class structures. This class rigidity is far more dangerous in its primitive form, as seen in the autocratic system in Russia, where the serf can either bow down and be crushed, or rebel and be crushed, but otherwise has no possibility to improve his conditions.

> In whatever form of upheaval Autocratic Russia is to find her end, it can never be a revolution fruitful of moral consequences to mankind. It cannot be anything else but a rising of slaves. ('Autocracy and War', NLL.p.102)

If the conditions of The Secret Agent suggested the impossibility of escape, Under Western Eyes presents it in a more extreme form, as one of the unavoidable problems. Verloc can't not plan a bomb outrage, or he is penniless - neither can he do what he is ordered without risking his job as an agent, and thus his lifestyle, and incidentally his life. Winnie, as I have argued, does not escape. She cannot even make it as far as St Mâlo. Razumov, once he knows Zemianitch is drunk and incapable, can't get rid of Haldin without giving himself away and losing everything. So he betrays Haldin, gives himself away by making himself known to the authorities, and thus loses everything anyway. Both he and Verloc are in a similar untenable situation. It is a sort of Catch 22 where if one doesn't obey orders one is shot, and if one does obey orders one is shot at by the enemy.

In the Author's Note to the novel, Conrad was scrupulous to state that he was interested less in the 'political state as the psychology of Russia itself'. In so doing he maintained 'scrupulous impartiality'. He continues:

> I had never been called before to a greater effort of detachment; detachment from all passions, prejudices, and even from personal memories. (p.viii).

This quality of detachment covers many intentions. It had to

be maintained because of his parents' appalling treatment by Russian officialdom, and every Pole's dislike of things Russian. This immediately begs the question - why write about something that is so hateful in so many ways? Why make artistic creation even more difficult, when Conrad was perpetually in literary agonies without dealing with obviously uncongenial material? Conrad's interest lies in trying to understand, I feel, how a race that is as inhuman to its own nationals, as well as to the Poles, can function, and how it came into being. There is a sense of terrified fascination in Conrad's contemplation of complete, unrelieved oppression. Only in Russia, it seemed, was there the sufficiently extreme example of the twin attributes of egoism and self-negation that suited Conrad's purpose. And so, for all his dislike of the place, Russia it had to be.

Before launching into an assessment of egoism and altruism in this novel, it is perhaps worth quoting a leading thinker of the day on the topic of ethics, A.E. Taylor, who seems to sum up the impossibility of explaining the two sides of man's nature.

> Altruism and egoism are divergent developments from the common psychological root of primitive ethical sentiment. Both developments are alike unavoidable, and each is ultimately irreconcilable with the other. Neither egoism nor altruism can be made the sole basis of moral theory without mutilation of the facts, nor can any higher category be discovered by the aid of which their rival claims may be finally adjusted.[1]

The same problem is still of interest to Conrad, although he has now to explore a different set of conditions, and he has by no means tired of his task. He seems determined to pursue the topic as far as he can, even if its 'genesis' and

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1. The Problem of Conduct: A Study in the Phenomenology of Ethics (London: Macmillan, 1901) p.183.

'ultimate causal connexions'[1] are beyond even Herbert Spencer's reach. This relinquishing of the pursuit of primal causes is implicit in the following statement:

> The various figures playing their part in the story also owe their existence to no special experience but to the general knowledge of the conditions of Russia and of the moral and emotional reactions of the Russian temperament to the pressure of tyrannical lawlessness, which, in general human terms could be reduced to the formula of senseless desperation provoked by senseless tyranny. (Author's Note, p.viii.)

If tyranny argues egocentric oppression of others, then rebellion is only a direct result of this, an assertion of the same egocentric right to exist. Conrad adds, slyly, that his work has been successful in its own right, as a descriptive exploration of ethics.

> I obtained my reward ... when I first heard that the book had found universal recognition in Russia and had been re-published there in many editions. (Author's Note, p.viii.)

'The reward' has been presumably that his art has vindicated his intellectual perceptions, and the truth of what he has been saying has been made plain and credible to the very people he is involved in describing. What could be more gratifying than this?

What Conrad has done is not to urge egoism as the ethical centre, nor to capitulate to altruism, but to extend the argument. In Under Western Eyes these categories of altruism and egoism, are re-examined in terms of oppression and oppressors. Russia, and Razumov, are very close to the beginning of ethical time, where it is a struggle for the fittest to survive, as Razumov's youth was, he confesses to Haldin:

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1. Herbert Spencer, The Data of Ethics, p.61.

> I have been brought up in an educational institute where they did not give us enough to eat. To talk of affection in such a connexion - you perceive yourself... As to ties, the only ties I have in the world are social. (p.60).

If Razumov's childhood was an actual struggle for nutrition and survival, the moral condition of Russia is communicated by one who has enjoyed a normal family upbringing, Miss Haldin. 'I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch a piece of bread.' It is not surprising that Conrad uses this quotation from the novel as its epigraph. The equation of the hunger and struggle for survival, and the desire to survive morally is deliberately placed before the reader. Spiritually and ethically, Russia is seen as being at the lowest level of development, with the advantage that although many are still at an exceedingly low level, others have been influenced by foreign ideas, and we have, effectively, a whole colony of people all marginally more advanced than the mass. One might say one has a dozen Lord Jims in a Patusan several thousand times larger than before. Ethics generally in Russia are not only at a low ebb, but also confused. Look, for example, at the chilling statement De P—— makes in his speech:

> The thought of liberty has never existed in the Act of the Creator. From the multitude of men's counsel nothing could come but revolt and disorder: and revolt and disorder in a world created for obedience and stability is sin. It was not Reason but Authority which exposed the Divine Intention. God was the Autocrat of the Universe... (p.8).

The 'mystic' De P——'s credo is astonishing for its inversions of the categories of altruism and egoism. To him egoism is revolt because it means following one's own ideas, and altruism becomes the espousal of duty, or rather self-negation and blind obedience, which includes the merciless subjugation of others. It is this attitude that Haldin so deliberately confronts. He

sees his own father as a dutiful citizen. 'His soul was the soul of obedience' (p.23), but when he continues to describe the Russian temperament, there is a marked change.

> What was it the Englishman said: 'There is a divine soul in things ...' Don't you forget what's divine in the Russian soul - and that's resignation ... I was resigned. I thought, 'God's will be done'. (p.23).

The resignation can either give one patience to bear oppression and be 'obedient', or, in Haldin's case, the resignation to do a distasteful deed that seems to contravene all accepted morality, namely murder. Haldin, however, does not seem to be aware of the fundamental differences between the two types of resignation, or rather, of the two entirely opposed directions 'resignation' may cause one to take.

Just similarly, Haldin's references to God, De P——'s mysticism, Madame de S——'s spiritualism and Razumov's increasing preoccupation with Providence are all different facets of the same very human emotion, to try to enlist the help and comforting power of some omniscient force, in order to reassure oneself of the essential rectitude of one's own standards of conduct. If The Secret Agent saw men paralleled and contrasted by those from other completely heterogeneous areas of society, St Petersburg is very similar:

> The oppressors and the oppressed are all Russians together; and the world is brought once more face to face with the truth of the saying that the tiger cannot change his stripes, nor the leopard his spots. (Author's Note, p.v, final sentences.)

The suggestion is clear - oppression is a law as immutable as these laws of the jungle that produced the two savage beasts - the tiger and the leopard. Both are ferocious, both different and both entirely unable to change. The case is precisely that of the autocrats and rebels in Russia.

In this work, Conrad does not seem to have the same heavily-emphasised interest in scientific thought. He seems to be pursuing an independent line of enquiry.

Madame de S—— is the nearest Conrad comes again to a Lombrosan figure. As far as the narrator is concerned, she is obviously mentally disturbed.

> I find it perfectly easy to believe that she had come within an ace of being spirited away, for reasons of state, into some discreet maison de santé - a madhouse of sorts, to be plain. (p.162).

Conrad shows her pushing herself into revolutionary and spiritual rant, before collapsing into silence: He paraphrases her speech to Razumov:

> The liberating spirit would use arms before which rivers would part like Jordan, and ramparts fall down like the walls of Jericho. The deliverance from bondage would be effected by plagues and signs, by wonders and by war. The women ...
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> ...She pressed her hand to her forehead. 'What is it? Ah, yes! That girl...' (p.223).

She falls, quite clearly, into the category of those with a 'fixed idea' that Conrad sees as so dangerous. She shares a great deal with Winnie Verloc, in fact. Compare the following descriptions. Madame de S—— has unnerving fits of abstraction.

> Her shiny eyes had a dry, intense stare, which, missing Razumov, gave him an absurd notion that she was looking at something which was visible to her behind him. (p.224).

This is rather similar to Winnie's stillness of shock as she listens to Verloc.

> It was not a wild stare, and it was not inattentive, but its attention was peculiar and not satisfactory, in as much as it seemed concentrated upon some point beyond Mr Verloc's person. The impression was so strong that Mr Verloc glanced over his shoulder. There was nothing behind him. There was just the whitewashed wall. (p.239-240).

The emphasis on the preoccupied 'unwinking stare' (p.225) of Madame de S—— is the same as that already noted stare of

Winnie's.[1] Mental disturbance is clearly an attribute of each. Furthermore, Winnie has been cheated in her 'bargain' with Verloc, she feels. Madame de S—— has been robbed by a 'Grand Duke' as she proudly proclaims. It is this which has helped to make her wish to damage her own class-structure. The same impulse lies behind Winnie's destruction of Verloc - she was deceived, he must die - although her vengeance is far more direct.

But if Madame de S—— declares herself a 'spiritualist' (p.226), how does this differ from Razumov's growing belief in 'Providence' (p.289)? Spiritualism was evidently despised by Conrad - one has only to look at 'The Black Mate' to see that - and it was remarkable of Lombroso's later life that he dabbled in and wrote about Spiritualism, much to the dismay of his scientific colleagues.[2] If Madame de S—— believes in spiritualism it is because it seems to offer her the apocalyptic possibilities of a revenge she desires and can achieve no other way. In Razumov's case, the 'Providence' is close to irony. Walking away from the Château Borel, Razumov realizes that chance has made his position absolutely safe. He sees Julius Laspara approach, and muses on it.

> I would see here the working of an ironic finger. To have a Julius Laspara put in my way as if expressly to remind me of my purpose is - write, he had said. I must write. (p.289).

Razumov does not allow himself to utter the final word. He prefers to avoid formulating the idea too clearly, and gets on with the task in hand. Razumov sees the future mapped out by

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1. Cf. The Secret Agent, pp.139 ff.

2. Cf. p. 305 above.

a teasing and ironic fate that he is half inclined to believe in. 'I have the greatest difficulty in saving myself from the superstition of an active Providence.' (p.350). He confesses this to Miss Haldin, and the narrator is led to comment to himself 'This man is deranged'. (p.350). The implicit comparison is thus made between Razumov and Madame de S——.

If Conrad can be seen to have a debt to Henry Drummond and the 'maternalist' explicators of ethics surely the debt is more ironically obvious in this work than any other, in the figure of Peter Ivanovitch. His reverence for women seems to be partly a criticism of Drummond, and partly a contribution to the theme of sexual interest as against sincere conviction, in this novel. Madame de S—— was quite clearly betrayed, and robbed, by the Grand Duke as the result of an affair, and her desire for revenge is personal, sexually based, and leads her into revolutionism. Peter Ivanovitch himself admits, in his autobiography, that at the death of his fiancée he became involved in underground activities. Even Sophia Antonovna's allegiance was personally based on love interest, initially. Razumov, in speaking to her of Yakovlitch surmises 'They have been living together'. (p.241). This seems to be a parody of Drummond's faith in maternal altruism. The ardour of these revolutionists is sexually based either negatively, as in the case of Madame de S——, or positively as in the case of Sophia Antonovna. Peter Ivanovitch falls somewhere between the disappointment of the one and the devotion of the other, in one of these schematic descriptive gestures of Conrad's, when he gives the reader, as it were, the whole range of possible responses to the same stimulus. These figures do not see that the idea of revolution may be only a form of self-deception,

a form of hypocrisy that gives the illusion of altruism. Even when Razumov reproaches Sophia Antonovna with this she reduces it, paradoxically, to a social level, in order to render his argument innocuous.

> 'I can only say I would scorn to be a slave even to an idea.' ... 'No, Razumov, your ideas are probably alright,' she said. 'You may be valuable - very valuable. What's the matter with you is that you don't like us.' (p.242-243).

She sidesteps the point. Razumov doesn't like them because they deceive themselves. Personal problems lead them to take refuge in an ideal. The patent illogicality of this disgusts him. They wish to avoid slavery and yet enslave themselves in comforting illusions. The man as an individual and as a political animal is inseparable. A tainted ideal is useless. 'Into the noblest cause, men manage to put something of their baseness.' This letter to Cunninghame Graham (approx. 6 Feb. 1898, L. and L. I, 229) lays down this fact firmly. It is a law that the revolutionists refuse to acknowledge.

Razumov himself has neo-Lombrosan attitudes: He looks at Sophia Antonovna and considers her thus:

> How un-Russian she looked, thought Razumov. Her mother might have been a jewess or an Armenian or - devil knew what. He reflected that a revolutionist is seldom true to the settled type. (p.214).

His attitude has much in common with that of General T who is, I feel, unmistakenly Lombrosan in as much as he endorses the prejudices that Lombroso took such pains to prove to his own satisfaction. He says twice 'I detest rebels' and twice, also 'they shall be destroyed', commenting: 'That breed leaves no posterity'. (p.50-51). He speaks of revolutionists as though they were a species apart, that could be wiped out by determined action. He is answered, in person and almost word for word by Haldin:

> 'Men like me leave to posterity, but their souls are not lost. No man's soul is ever lost. It works for itself - or else where would be the sense of self-sacrifice, of martyrdom, of conviction, of faith - the labours of the soul?'... 'Men like me leave no posterity,' he repeated in a subdued tone. (p.22).

This is the crux of the altruism problem already touched upon with reference to Lord Jim[1] where Bob Stanton leaves only the memory of his death behind him. This, Haldin achieves in a startling fashion, since he haunts Razumov, in the form of his body stretched out asleep, almost at the very moment Razumov decides to give him up. And he continues to haunt him throughout the novel. In this Razumov is not haunted by a spirit, so much as the immortality of an idea, which suggests itself to him as a spirit. Ironically, Haldin's own, remembered words may be working on his excited brain, to suggest the vision to him.

> They can kill my body, but they cannot exile my soul from this world ... The destroyers of souls which aspire to the perfection of human dignity, they shall be haunted. As to the destroyers of my mere body, I have forgiven them beforehand. (p.58, my emphasis.)

Haldin and General T actually echo each other in this way, and certainly Haldin's complete silence under interrogation is matched only by Mikulin's discretion as he is condemned. Their differences are shown through their similarities, and leave one with the conviction that these men, rebel and government official, are merely different ends of the same spectrum, responding to the same stimulus and reaching the same conclusions, but they value those conclusions entirely differently. The action of the one is revolt, of the other, complete obedience. Haldin's silence is destructive, Mikulin's

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1. Cf. p.83ff above.

is designed to protect the system that destroys him, and his devotion is complete, even praiseworthy by some standards.

> A devotion to Church and Throne is not in itself a criminal sentiment; to prefer the will of one to the will of many does not argue the possession of a black heart or prove congenital idiocy. (p.305).

This, one of Conrad's 'detached' statements, shows Mikulin as an implicit believer in the system that has long existed, a belief that is so ingrained as to be hereditary, in opposition to the claim that such a system could only continue as a result of 'congenital idiocy'. So great is his belief, that it is able to over-ride his presumably unjust trial. The ladder of self-aggrandisement he has ascended, the rigorous subjugation of all free thinking he has espoused, are defended even in his fall from power by a reaction that is close to altruistic.

> Councillor Mikulin went under, dignified, with only a calm, emphatic protest of his innocence - nothing more. No disclosures damaging to a harassed autocracy, complete fidelity to the secrecy of the miserable arcana imperii deposited in his patriotic breast, a display of bureaucratic stoicism in a Russian official's ineradicable, almost sublime contempt for truth; stoicism of silence understood only by the very few of the initiated, and not without a certain cynical grandeur of self-sacrifice on the part of a sybarite. (p.305-306).

The length of the sentence, and its list-like profusion of adjectives strikes us. The main verb has been deleted effectively, for the sentence, with the addition of the words 'He made ...' becomes a list. 'No disclosures ... (he had) complete fidelity ... (he made) a display ... (he showed) stoicism ... and cynical grandeur.' The narrator lists the qualities, but cannot seem to penetrate them. It seems inconceivable that any man should believe to the point of 'self-sacrifice' in a system so corrupt that it destroys him.

It is this proud, quiet self-negation that Conrad sees at

the heart of Russia. It is a quality Haldin's sister is to acquire, as the teacher comments.

> There was no longer any Natalia Haldin, because she had completely ceased to think of herself. It was a great victory, a characteristically Russian exploit in self-suppression. (p.375).

The self-suppression of revolutionary and master is essentially exactly the same, however. Just as the policeman and thief are the same to Chief Inspector Heat, so are Haldin and Mikulin the same. They both respond to the same fact, oppression. The only difference is that they respond in opposed directions.

This self-denial of Miss Haldin's is best compared to the defiant statement of Sophia Antonovna: 'I don't think, young man, I simply believe' (p.245). By refusing to think, she negates her own selfhood, and believes - becomes part of a cause greater than herself. Belief is the operative word. De P—— and Mikulin believe in their God, the revolutionists in theirs, all of them seem to be perversions of anything familiar to Western Eyes, and some, like Madame de S——, bizarre by any standards. Razumov's reaction to Peter Ivanovitch is altered when Sophia Antonovna tells him that he is milking Madame de S——'s wealth. When asked what he is muttering he replies: 'My admiration of Peter Ivanovitch's devoted self-sacrifice, that's all. It's enough to make one sick." (p.249). Peter Ivanovitch misuses Tekla and deceives a demented old woman for the good of his cause, which Razumov sees to be hypocritical. Self-sacrifice it may be, but it is based on a fallacy.

Although Razumov seems to be correct in his surmise, this is not the whole truth. 'And was not all secret revolutionary action based upon folly, self-deception and lies?'(p.83). The

point lies in the realization that the entire state is built upon untruth, 'The lawlessness of autocracy - for autocracy knows no law - and the lawlessness of revolution.' (p.77). For men there is only one way out - intoxication, either actual or spiritual. Razumov realizes this:

> Between the two he was done for. Between the drunkenness of the peasant incapable of action and the dream-intoxication of the idealist incapable of perceiving the reason of things, and the true character of men. (p.31).

The 'true character of men' is their propensity to intoxication.

Conrad sees Russia as a system of government and human behaviour that is hopelessly divided into the 'slave' of obedience and the revolutionary, and he sees it as, in that case, unable to evolve: 'That future menaced by the lawlessness of autocracy - for autocracy knows no law - and the lawlessness of revolution.' (p.77). Each type of lawlessness has its own loyal followers, each of whom seem absurdly extreme. General T is described as follows.

> He was the incarnate suspicion, the incarnate anger, the incarnate ruthlessness of a political and social regime as its defence. He loathed rebellion by instinct. And Razumov reflected that the man was simply unable to understand a reasonable adherence to the doctrine of absolutism. (p.84).

The repetitions of 'incarnate' are not accidental. Ideas in Russia are incarnate in extreme forms, embodied in individuals, and content to discard those same individuals whilst continuing to perpetuate themselves. The ideology seems truly to be immortal. Loaded Darwinian words like 'instinct' are not the convenient cliché they seem, since Conrad seems to hint that a propensity to accept an ideology can be inherited, that it may be a racial characteristic. Russia has not evolved, egoism and altruism do exist side by side - but in the case of the

governing figures their egoism has been subdued to serve the greater egoism of the Czar. These men have their own, inhuman, altruism and self-negation. Of course, incidentally, they survive very successfully which looks like egoism, did they not genuinely believe in their own sacrifices and loyalty. This is a moral world completely unlike any discussed by Spencer, Huxley or others. Instead of altruism or true egoism one has only self-deceptions. The egoism of sexual feeling leads some to what they suppose is altruism, and the self-abnegation of the bureaucrats leads to the sublime egoism of belief in their own purposefulness.

And what of heroism? One of the foremost self-deceptions of the novel is based upon Razumov's supposed heroism. There is throughout this work a terrifying sense of the overwhelming desire of humanity to set up someone, anyone, as an heroic figure. It is from Sophia Antonovna that Razumov gains 'the notion of the invincible nature of human error, a glimpse into the utmost depths of self-deception'. (p.282). What conceals Razumov is not so much Providence as the nature of mankind's aspirations, of their desire to praise altruism. Razumov muses to himself: 'It was a striking example of the true conspirator's blindness, of the stupid subtlety of people with one idea.' (p.283). Tekla, too, feels this need to believe in idealism. She vindicates Haldin to Razumov, and the irony is that to her there is no doubt what Haldin's death means. 'Didn't he make the sacrifice of his life? Wasn't he just simply inspired? Wasn't it an act of abnegation? Aren't you certain?'(p.157). It is from Tekla, however, that one gains the closest insight into the nature of the desire to believe.

> I am quite willing to be the blind instrument of higher ends. To give one's life for the cause is nothing. But to have one's illusions destroyed - that is almost more than one can bear. (p.148).

When there is nothing to believe in, one craves one's illusions.

Miss Haldin understands the problem only partly, when she says:

> Reform is impossible. There is nothing to reform. There is no legality, there are no institutions. There are only arbitrary degrees. There is only a handful of cruel - perhaps blind - officials against a nation. (p.133).

Seen in this way, the struggle appears well worth persisting in, because the odds are 'a nation' against 'a handful'. This stands against the starkness of 'Reform is impossible'. Despite the absolutism of this phrase it is obvious that Miss Haldin desires reform - and eventually she departs to struggle for it, following an illusion. The narrator describes her as:

> Wedded to an invincible belief in the advent of loving concord springing like a heavenly flower from the soil of men's earth, soaked in blood, torn by struggles, watered with tears. (p.377).

The expression is ironically inflated. It is clear that the narrator sees a hopeless idealism in what Miss Haldin is taking on, and the hint is that there is no logic behind such a view. Neither is there any point in arguing logically against it. It is a vision of the future, an illusion, and thus inviolable.

It is a vision that ignores Conrad's observations entirely because it sees only the rulers as at fault. But their problem is more wide-reaching in that the entire nation has become attuned to play the rôles of either slave or master. To illustrate - in order to obey a command one has tacitly to endorse the command structure, and this presupposes that when one gives a command one expects it to be obeyed. A general in the army can command and expect to be obeyed. Outside that structural ideology - on a street corner and dressed differently,

the command may carry no weight at all. Miss Haldin erroneously directs her energies against the generals without realizing that the troops have to be re-programmed before anything can be achieved.

Miss Haldin has become, by this stage, remarkably similar to the other revolutionary ladies in the novel. She has effectively been betrayed in love and expectation almost as radically as Madame de S——, whilst she all but followed in Sophia Antonovna's footsteps by joining a revolutionary cause out of affection for a revolutionary - however dubious.

Razumov finds himself as a living monument to the misguided, and desperately wished desire of others to believe in heroism. Haldin is a martyr, but Razumov is almost a super-hero, and is immediately allowed access to the inner revolutionary circuits. This is a very different aspect of heroism to Carlyle's or indeed anything so far encountered. What Conrad faces the reader with is the possibility that all that mankind has is a series of idealistic longings that will fasten upon any object, however unworthy, in order to give some sort of comforting illusion. Disturbingly enough, the illusion does not have to be logical. This view of mankind is profoundly upsetting, since it involves the realization of one's isolation. 'No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad. Razumov had reached that point'. (p.270). Razumov staves off his solitude by writing his diary until finally he has to confess.

Ironically, although his confession reveals him as less than the hero all had taken him to be, it is an undeniably very courageous act, and he becomes a moral hero, in spite of

himself. That, one may say, is the attraction of his diary. The narrator has constructed Razumov's story because he, too, sees some sort of moral triumph in Razumov's confession, although what this is he is unsure. The narrator sees a victory, as we, the readers do. On this count Razumov is a hero and his story will continue after him not only in the 'book' by the narrator, but in the memory of all who know the story, and particularly Miss Haldin and Sophia Antonovna. The women will perpetuate the memory of his idealistic honesty. The novel ends on the perpetuation of an unworthy hero - Peter Ivanovitch. Sophia Antonovna believes in him, however little we are inclined to agree. 'She turned round for an instant, and declared in a firm voice - "Peter Ivanovitch is an inspired man." ' (p.382).

The determination to believe in no consoling delusions that marked Razumov throughout the novel has been gently subverted. His honesty has become venerable in itself. Despite its strongest efforts, scepticism is often elevated to a heroic status it would be incapable of treating seriously elsewhere. Decoud the sceptic and suicide, becomes a hero commemorated in church. Mankind creates heroes, almost incontinently, and even against the wishes of the heroes.

With the end of Under Western Eyes, Razumov has unsuccessfully attempted to free himself from the delusions of a mankind that is intent upon seeing heroic figures. How far Conrad is reflected in Razumov, one can only speculate. I am inclined to think the relationship is disturbingly close. Razumov is forced into a situation where he has to report upon the follies of human nature as seen in the revolutionists, and in a sense

that is Conrad's career in brief. After writing Lord Jim there could be no going back for Conrad. Indeed it is doubtful if he could have avoided making his discoveries about the illusions of mankind after he had started writing, since even Almayer's Folly is concerned with deception. The discoveries of science and anthropology that Conrad follows through his work lead ultimately to complete disillusion and the realization of the hollowness of so much that is accepted as admirable in human achievement and aspirations. Yet even the prophet of disillusion can be revered for his heroism in facing his disillusion - thus perpetuating the cycle of hero worship. This happens to Razumov, and ironically to Conrad, too. He must surely have realized that if his work succeeded he would be shown to be subject to the same forces as those at work on Razumov. The knowledge of such an impasse must surely have contributed to his nervous prostration on completion of this novel, and his reluctance to let anyone touch the manuscript - his dangerous and final conclusion on the topic. Conrad is the true double agent, compelled to confess the situation of man in novel after novel, and fully aware that if he is listened to he will almost certainly be misunderstood.

It is here that I feel the subject naturally rests. Conrad's later works would be concerned with the nature of seeing, with the problems of those caught within their linguistic limitations. Emphases shift from what there is to be seen, to how men manage not to see their situation.

It may be useful, then, to make a general comment on the nature of Conrad's sources as argued in this thesis. Conrad's reading seems to fall into several sections that are independent. The purely factual travel-books are, as already

mentioned, usually venerable tomes of some 30 years or more previous, which Conrad has used to flesh out his own memories of 15 to 20 years previously. But the entire corpus of facts has been animated by artistic interpretation, and given a direction by his scientific knowledge.

But these three levels are not as easily separable as they may seem, since Conrad's reading was, as I have been at pains to show, rather eclectic, and often rather more topical than systematic. Fashionable scientific figures and accepted literary modes are ransacked in order to get at the centre of the issues as Conrad perceives them. It is this, perhaps, that led him to write to Garnett:

> My misfortune is that I can't swallow any formula, and thus I am wearing the aspect of enemy to all mankind.[1]

Conrad, indeed, does do battle with a large number of scientific theorists in the works I have examined, but his line of attack seems to fall into two sections. Huxley and Lombroso, I would argue, receive direct frontal assaults, as does Carlyle - but here one runs into a different set of propositions:- although Carlyle is attacked, and Spencer, too, the onslaught is less directly against them, as against the exponents of their mistaken or disturbed ideas. To draw an obvious parallel - it would be absurd to reproach Darwin with social-darwinism, but the ideology still needs correcting for all that, and the necessarily accurate side of each author must be accepted. So it is with Spencer - Conrad has objections to make, but

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1. Dated 24.9.19. Letters from Conrad 1895-1924. Ed. Edward Garnett. (Nonesuch, London, 1928). p.290.

substantially his viewpoint is that of Spencer. Drummond, I feel, is useful as an expression of a possible direction evolutionary thought could have adopted, but which Conrad largely by-passed as being totally inaccurate as an assessment of the evidence as he saw it. In pursuit of the prevalent arguments of the time on the topic of ethics, Conrad certainly does not seem to work systematically on one writer and then move on to the next. He is concerned with their theories only in so far as they affect his perceptions, until finally in Under Western Eyes such scientific debts as I have traced are quite muted. The energetic, almost prodigal, scattering of what amount to learned footnotes that can be seen in Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, has changed in character. The detailed references to, for example, experiments with decapitated frogs, have a slightly abstruse and bookish quality to them, and this type of reference has either disappeared entirely in the later works, or has been more cleverly disguised. I have, however, been at pains to establish that Under Western Eyes can be understood considerably more easily when set against this context of evolutionary thinking. Russia may be backward, but Switzerland in its complacent isolation seems to exist in a vacuum of time, undisturbed by any upheavals in other countries. Although rather more advanced than Sir Charles Lyell's lake villages, Geneva seems intellectually stagnant, and although safe, it is only marginally more advanced than the chaos of Russia. The surface froth of literary reference has gone from this work, but the body of acquired knowledge is alive under the surface.

It is my belief that in Under Western Eyes Conrad was driven to 'the steady contemplation of human loneliness' that he had

predicted would drive Razumov mad. The irony is that by the time Conrad had crystallized his view of humanity in this way, Hobhouseand Westermarck had instigated a new approach to anthropology that threatened to undermine the theoretical basis upon which Conrad's work was founded. Conrad's appeal was not affected, because his careful fidelity to the surface details of life had ensured accuracy, and his own powers of observation vouched for verisimilitude. Anthropologically, however, certain areas of his thought were obsolescent after 1906. Lombroso and 'lower races' were still popularly acclaimed (they still are) but academically they were not quite respectable. Conrad had largely given up the search for the first causes of ethics which it had seemed he was concerned with in Lord Jim, and was now endeavouring to go back in time only in order that his discussions of ethics should be a little clearer than they might otherwise have been.

The remaining works he produced are in a very different vein. Conrad looks back upon Napoleonic times, and examines the rigid ideas of conduct of the age, or he has a narrator look back on a youthful escapade, and try to assess it. In these later works he finds it less important to reach back so far in time - the Spencerian 'genesis' is acknowledged as out of reach.

CONCLUSION

An attempt to rationalize the information contained in a study such as this must necessarily simplify, and often to a dangerous degree. We can, however, say certain things about the nature of Conrad's literary borrowing that were an integral part of his exploration of the problem of ethics. His knowledge can be divided into four sections. First there is his own experience, and his intuitions of what is true to life. This not only supplied him with raw material in the sense of observations, but also inevitably shaped his attitude, such that his own sense of what humanity is continually tests the analytic material he confronts. This basic common sense, if you like, is what tests all facts and imaginative situations created from facts. This is a powerful force since it enabled Conrad, I feel, to read Carlyle and quite deliberately to conclude that heroes just were not like that.

Second, Conrad had to flesh-out his own experience, and scholars have often pointed out his indebtedness to travel books, to tales heard at second and third hand, and to newspaper reports. My concern has not been with this already well worked topic. I have, however, noted the fact that travelogues must necessarily be coloured for anyone living in the Darwinist era by knowledge of the theories of evolution, the doctrine of primitive survivals, and so on. This view, extensively researched by Redmond O'Hanlon in an unpublished D.Phil. thesis, I have mentioned.

Third, if Conrad does have literary debts to Darwin and Wallace, and there seems to be little doubt as to this, he continues to discuss areas that both these authors steer well clear

of. Indeed most of the major evolutionary writers of the day chose to stay well away from the topic of the evolution of ethics. Carlyle's views were still very popular, and T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer and Henry Drummond all attempt to counter the spiritual malaise of the 'yellow' nineties by putting forward their own theories. The modish despair at a mechanistic universe, where morals were merely developments of evolved instincts, convenient to the stability of society, were not things that could go uncorrected, according to these gentlemen, and their efforts were obviously undertaken in the cause of public duty. Conrad, as I have shown, takes issue with these men, and contests their findings, although certainly at the end of Heart of Darkness he does not really seem to have solved the problem - if indeed there can be a solution. We are left only with 'restraint' in the moral armoury at our disposal.

I continue to trace Conrad's re-assessment of evolutionary phenomena in Lord Jim. Here the emphasis is noticeably different - progress has been made in the discussion of ethics and evolution, for the ethical process is seen as actually independent of the biological process. Implicit in Conrad's work so far is the doctrine of evolutionary survivals, of lower races and the possibility of the white man 'going native'.

By the time we reach Nostromo Conrad has adopted a slightly different slant - he has moved from the history of a man, to the history of a nation and the men that made it. In this he seems in agreement with Hobson whose work was well known at the time, and yet Conrad is seen retaining his own particular slant. Whilst Hobson saw mankind as socially

conditioned and economically organized, Conrad has this as a background to his own theory of great men. A Hobsonian view is implicit in The Secret Agent. In this novel Conrad energetically rejects Lombroso's theories that see man as entirely a product of the shape of his skull. Lombroso is almost diametrically the opposite of everything Hobson stands for. Both these writers come into the fourth category of Conrad's literary indebtedness, they are both speculative writers on the social make up of Man. Although Conrad uses both writers, I have argued there is a stronger sense than ever before that he is formulating his own theories, which he supports by agreement, and disagreement, with other writers.

Under Western Eyes is seen as the point at which Conrad gives up using scientific source material overtly. In addition the actual background to the tale is by no means as easy to trace as in other, earlier, Conrad tales. This, I have argued, is the mature statement of Conrad's view on the topic of human ethical motivations, and the possibility that they may all be delusions and self-deceptions. My argument has been that in order to develop this bleak and unpleasant vision, Conrad had access to scientific thought. That he used Wallace and Darwin in his Malay Stories, is no new discovery, but that he energetically examined and questioned the implications of evolutionist theory from Heart of Darkness onwards, has, I believe, been largely neglected. I have started my survey at the point at which I feel Conrad began to diverge from accepted orthodoxy, and I finish at the point where Conrad effectively abandons science, since his own ideas are complete. These ideas are not strictly comprehensible without a survey of their development.

In this study I have been careful to try and draw up an overall picture of Conrad's reading and vision. Drummond wrote The Ascent of Man in reply to Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics', and Conrad appears to know them both in some detail. Carlyle and Spencer, two major thinkers of the age, are shown at variance - and Conrad knows the arguments and can disagree with both. Lombroso and Hobson are polar opposites each enjoying some popularity, and Conrad certainly seems to know their work, too. I have endeavoured to show that he was aware of both sides in three of the major arguments of the age, and that he set about assessing for himself what to believe. This, I have argued, is the scientific background from which Conrad developed.

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