CHAPTER - IV

WHO'S WHO?: The Bourgeoisie and the Anarchist in The Secret Agent.
The Secret Agent is one of the political novels of Joseph Conrad where politics is treated in a pure form. Gurko aptly points out: "Conrad comments frequently and slowly on the nature of revolutionaries. It is little wonder that the main current of the novel should be regarded as political."¹ The Secret Agent deals with anarchism and anarchists and their activities in London. Thomas Mann treats the novel as a crime story and also as an anti-Russian story. He also asserts that "its action takes place under the Czars, and that the conflict of West and East which forms its political background has lost nothing in timeliness by a change of government."² E.K. Hay thinks that the "contrast between what is fully human and affirmative toward life and what is wretchedly less than human and revolted by life gradually emerges as the central theme of The Secret Agent."³ To Gurko the central theme of The Secret Agent is concerned with anarchists and anarchist movement.

Conrad has expressed his hatred for revolution and revolutionaries in three minor works namely, "Gaspar Ruiz", "An Anarchist" and "The Informer", in the collection A Set of Six. "Gaspar Ruiz" deals with the world of South American revolutions and liberation of the countries of South America from the rule of Spain. Gaspar Ruiz, the hero, is a peasant who has been commissioned in the revolutionary army during the Chilean War of Independence. He is eventually captured by the Royalists. Gaspar is devoted to human affections. He is worthy of comparison with Nostromo. Stephen K. Land
regards him as "a very Nostromo-like man of the people, taciturn, powerfully - built, a natural leader, who is drawn against his own wishes into the revolutionary wars and is exploited, first by military officials and later by his vengeful royalist wife." Gaspar is forced to fight for the Royalists against the Republicans. He marries Erminia who hates the Revolutionaries because War of Independence has ruined her father. "The intensity of her passion is consumed not in loving him but in hating the Revolution which destroyed her position and ruined her father's life." He keeps himself untouched by the instigations of his wife and retains his love and tenderness. He is simple, with a mind "hardly active enough to take a discriminating view of the advantages of perils of treachery."

The stories, "An Anarchist" and "The Informer", expose anarchism. They both "look forward to the world of secret societies and double agents glanced at in the final section of Nostromo and given detailed portrayal in The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes." "An Anarchist" portrays an innocent person involved in a political conflict. The central figure, like Razumov, gets a name for revolutionary sympathies; which eventually leads him to a perilous situation. Paul is an anarchist who gets drunk and shouts anarchist slogans. He is accused of inciting riot. He does not get any job; he is forced to work with a group of anarchists who rob banks. The police capture him with two other anarchists Mafele and Simon
and send all of them to prison. They get free during a violent prison break; and he takes revenge on them by shooting and throwing their bodies from the boat in the sea because they took advantage of his hunger and forced him to be an anarchist. He reaches the cattle estate where the manager enslaves him by using his skill as a mechanic to repair the motor boat. He decides to live in isolation to avoid detection by the police. Thus, he is called the "Crocodile". "Although Paul's final rejection of society is a painful gesture, it has little public or even private significance."\(^8\)

Paul and the narrator criticise the anarchists. The narrator expresses his opinion about Paul and about the anarchist's enigma when he says: "On the whole, my idea is that he was much more of an anarchist than he confessed to me or to himself; and that, the special features of his case apart, he was very much like many other anarchists. Warm heart and weak head that is the word of the riddle; and it is a fact that the bitterest contradictions and the deadliest conflicts in the world are carried on in every individual breast capable of feeling and passion."\(^9\)

"The Informer" is the story of a man who joins the revolutionary group in order to spy on them and to reveal their secrets to the police. Mr. X tells us the story of Sevrin a police spy who pretends to be an anarchist and spies on anarchists because he is convinced that they are evil
forces operating in the society. Conrad concentrates on the moral injury inflicted on the spy himself. Lady Amateur is an upper class lady who joins the anarchist movement for fancy. She falls in love with Sevrin. Later on they feel cheated with each other. Sevrin loses Lady Amateur's love when she comes to know that he is not an anarchist but a police agent. In 'The Informer' we are told that Sevrin insists that "there's no amendment to be got out of mankind except by terror and violence." Lady Amateur's enthusiasm to join the revolutionary movement is described as amateurish. Her attraction is only a matter of fancy. She, like Sevrin, has no conviction in anarchism. Sevrin joins the movement for personal gain and she joins it as a matter of fancy and curiosity. Conrad gives us a gloomy picture of the savagery of revolutionary intrigues. The story has ironic overtones and the anarchists are condemned by the novelist.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to explore Conrad's concern with the destructive activities of the anarchists in London and the impact of these activities on the common man as envisaged in The Secret Agent. The anarchist émigrés leave their destructive effects on the society; and the individual in it finds himself exposed to the ruthless practices of the anarchists. The individual is victimized by anarchists who are parasites sponging on the members of the society. The secret agent, Mr. Verloc, brings
about the death of his brother-in-law. He himself is killed by his own wife later on.

In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad brings out his disapproval of the so-called revolutionaries and their activities. Conrad uses the technique of caricature in the novel to debunk the revolutionaries and other English characters. Stevie alone is saved from being caricatured. This technique is also employed in presentation of other characters in the novel. Therefore, a critic opines that "it is a serious misreading of *The Secret Agent* to regard it as an anti-anarchist polemic."\(^1\) The Professor is a real caricature, who is incapable of rationalization. He is a true anarchist. The other three anarchists, Michaelis, Yundt and Ossipon are shams. They are not true anarchists compared to Peter Ivanovitch in *Under Western Eyes*, while Verloc is not an anarchist, but he only pretends to be so. Jocelyn Baines thinks that "the anarchists in *The Secret Agent* are mere puppets compared with the revolutionary Peter Ivanovitch and Sophia Antonovna."\(^2\) Conrad admires a revolutionary who is sincere in his convictions, and is not selfish. In "Prince Roman" in the collection entitled *Tales of Hearsay and Last Essays* Conrad admires the hero Prince Roman who makes sacrifices for Poland. He joins the revolutionary movement out of conviction.

Conrad depicts the anarchists except the Professor as incorrigibly indolent. Conrad is not interested in analysing
the political theory of anarchism and anarchists as he claims. Perhaps he "drew not only on anarchist lore for his anarchists, but also on Fenian history - about which the information was more precise. It should be remembered that the Fenians were not anarchists, but violently subversive activists." Conrad has criticised anarchism severely. He does not sympathise with the anarchists nor does he admire them. In the 19th century acts of violence which were done, mostly by the anarchists were common. But ordinarily violence seemed to be associated with anarchism. A critical reading of The Secret Agent posits Conrad's attitude towards anarchism. His approach is different from the ordinary man's view. He regards anarchism as "a manifestation of human nature in its discontent and imbecility." Conrad's main concern seems to be with the exposure of anarchism accepted as a revolutionary creed. He wants to promote an inquiry into the politics of revolutionary anarchism, and to question the Public life in the city of London. Fleishman affirms that "anarchy (Arnold's term for unbridled individualism) acquires considerable amplification in the writings of Conrad, and we shall see that it is used to attack not only the radical left but, much as Arnold had done, individualistic society as well." Fleishman thinks that Kurtz's vision of "the horror," in Heart of Darkness is a kind of anarchy. He elucidates anarchy as "that state of social decomposition at the opposite pole from organic community. This anarchy is already latent in the individual-
individuality and anarchy are implicated in each other—and in the absence of an ordering community it springs into action as terrorism.\textsuperscript{16}

Conrad denies that his concern in \textit{The Secret Agent} is anarchism. He challenges this interpretation when he writes to John Galsworthy "I had no idea to consider anarchism politically or to treat it seriously in its philosophical aspect."\textsuperscript{17} His attack in the novel is directed against certain types of revolutionists and their motives. In the "Author's Note" which was appended to the novel in 1920, Conrad states:

I remember, however, remarking on the criminal futility of the whole thing, doctrine, action, mentality; and on the contemptible aspect of the half-crazy pose as of a brazen cheat exploiting the poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction. That was what made for me its philosophical pretences so unpardonable.\textsuperscript{18}

Conrad also writes to Mme Poradowska:"...You well know that anarchy and anarchists are outside my experience; I know almost nothing of the philosophy, and nothing at all of the men. I created this out of whole cloth."\textsuperscript{19} Conrad writes to Ambrose J. Barker that "the purpose of the book was not to attack any doctrine, or even the men holding that doctrine. My object, apart from the aim of telling story, was to hold up the worthlessness of certain individuals and the baseness of some others."\textsuperscript{20}
Despite Conrad's claim that his main concern is not anarchism, *The Secret Agent* deals mainly with the destructive activities of the anarchist émigrés in London. The novel is full of details about the anarchists and their activities. Hence, many similarities are drawn with James's *The Prince Casamassina*, Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* and Turgeneve's *Virgin Soil*. All these are earlier novels dealing with anarchism. Conrad is not true when he claims that he has no serious interest in anarchism "as a form of humanitarian enthusiasm or intellectual despair or social atheism."²¹ He claims that the revolutionaries are shams, but this is not completely true because the Professor is not surely a sham. Conrad's claim that he is not interested in anarchism will have to be understood from a proper perspective.

The theme of anarchism not only provides a structural unity to *The Secret Agent* but it also relates the novel to Conrad's concern with the life of the common man in a great city like London. Conrad wants us to understand that "life is not only ordinary, but also terrible, and that the difference between 'normality' that keeps us sane and what the novel refers to as 'madness or despair' may be no more than a function of the direction and depth of our gaze."²² Conrad has selected the anarchist movement as a formal theme but he has not studied it politically or historically, because his main concern is life. Conrad has deployed the anarchists in *The Secret Agent* for his own purpose which "is

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to establish the meaning of conservatism of a certain kind: to show, especially through the Professor, that such a conservatism is a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for the mutual stability of individual and society."\textsuperscript{23} The novel gives the impression that revolutionaries are generally lazy, callous to the suffering of the ordinary man, and quite prepared to sponge on others. Conrad is not able to take a sympathetic view of the revolutionaries because he can not appreciate the socio-economic issues which led to the rise of the revolutionary movements. Conrad, in this novel, does not defend anybody; the middle classes and the ruling persons are subjected to pervasive irony. Chief Inspector Heat is treated ironically. Heat assumes that what he is doing is always for the benefit of society. In this novel, Conrad satirizes the universal regard for science. Vladimir describes science as becoming a fetish of the modern age. He tells Verloc that "the sacrosanct fetish of today is science."\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{The Secret Agent} presents the society as disintegrating and falling in a state of unconscious anarchy. Howe thinks that the novel is full of irony but devoid of morality. It lacks "a moral positive to serve literary ends. Conrad's ironic tone suffuses every sentence nagging at our attention to the point where one yearns for the relief of direct statement almost as if it were an ethical good."\textsuperscript{25} Howe regards this as a bad flaw in the novel. On the other hand,
E.K. Hay thinks that the English Society functions as a moral force. She explains:

This is Conrad's only novel in which England comes off as what the deceased Poland had tacitly been to him before—the highest example of political rectitude. The British genius for overlooking what was inconvenient to an ideal or a plan, which Marlow exhibited in the Congo and Decoud exposed as a radical failing in Charles Gould, is found in The Secret Agent to have redeeming virtues."26

Conrad is much concerned with the individual. The life in London is one of his main interests. London appears in Conrad's mind even before the novel is imagined. It is a monstrous city, a centre of darkness burying its inhabitants. He says in the "Author's note":

Then the vision of an enormous town presented itself, of a monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heaven's frowns and smiles; a cruel devourer of the world's light. There was room enough there to place any story, depth enough for any passion, variety enough there for any setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of lives.27

The Secret Agent is an ironical portrayal of a corrupt society. The novel is full of ironies. It "is surrounded by a thick fog of irony which steadily eats away at the features, the energies, the very vitals of its major characters."28 The novel is also the story of Winnie Verloc as Conrad reveals in his "Author's Note", "I will submit that telling Winnie Verloc's story to its anarchistic end of utter desolation, madness, and despair, and telling it as I have told it here, I have not intended to commit a gratuitous
outrage on the feelings of mankind." Malice enters Conrad's portraits of the anarchists. They are comic caricatures, but it is observed that they are not worse than their adversaries. "The anarchists of The Secret Agent, who are shown to lack love in any perceptible degrees, can be no revolutionaries - they are too simple for that, merely hating and being hateful as they are." The anarchists do not acquire the sympathy of Conrad. The activities are presented in a special way to enquire the legality of the politics of revolutionary anarchism. "Conrad's contempt for [the anarchists] is too great for him to take them seriously, and they are mere caricatures." To Conrad, anarchism and revolution appear as mere slogans; and characters become mere pretenders.

The use of irony deprives Conrad's characters of their pretensions. They even can not claim the right to dignity and redemption. David Daiches asserts that irony used in the novel leaves the reader "wondering whether Conrad in writing this novel was more concerned to reveal something or to suppress something." Chief Inspector Heat whose mind is inaccessible to ideas of revolt is satirized in the novel. Heat is a competent policeman who lacks the breadth of mind necessary to follow the later stages of Stevie's murder case. He can not understand the mechanism of revolution. The English characters are portrayed in the novel as hollow men. Inspector Heat, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, and the Home Secretary Sir Ethlred suffer from stupidity. The
Secretary of State Sir Ethlred wants to be spared of the details of Stevie's murder case. The Assistant Commissioner states:

"This is an imperfect world--'The deep voiced-presence on the hearthrug, motionless, with big elbows stuck out, said hastily: 'Be lucid, please.'"33

With a master stroke of irony, Conrad shows us how the Home Secretary insists that the Assistant Commissioner must explain the situation briefly and lucidly. Conrad portrays Sir Ethlred as "the statue of one of his own princely ancestors stripped of a Crusader's war harness, and put into an ill-fitting frock-coat."34 E.K.Hay considers Sir Ethlred as "an image of the British State."35 A close glance at the novel makes us convinced that "the particular nature of Conrad's entertainment is to hold the reader at a relatively fixed distance of amused scorn from persons and situations."36 The English characters lack maturity; they do not understand the dangers of the anarchists who pose a serious threat to the society. Irving Howe suggests that in *The Secret Agent* "the English do not come off very well, for if they are not guilty of the crimes committed by the Russians and the anarchists they are guilty of a stupidity and complacence which renders them accessories to these crimes."37

Conrad develops the ironic mode artistically. It is heard and seen in every sentence. Howe states:
...irony has turned in upon itself, becoming facile through its pervasiveness and lack of grading. The qualifications required by irony are present in abundance, but it is difficult to determine what is being qualified, which standard of behaviour is being singled out for attack or defense. So perversely an irony must have its source less in zeal or anger than in some deep distemper."

Daleski defends Conrad's use of irony in the novel. He underscores the fact that Conrad's "ironic method, like that of an eighteenth-century satirist, constantly does posit the norm in relation to which his irony functions." The structure of The Secret Agent depends mainly on situational irony. Conrad justifies his use of ironic mode: "ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity." Irony is clearly applied to the three anarchists and sometimes to the pretended anarchist Verloc. Conrad declares:

But I don't think that I have been satirizing the revolutionary world. All these people are not revolutionaries - they are shams. And as regards the Professor I did not intend to make him despicable. He is incorruptible at any rate. In making him say madness and despair - give me that for a lever and I will move the world, I wanted to give him a note of perfect sincerity. At the worst he is a megalomaniac of an extreme type. And every extremist is respectable." Howe comments on the character of the Professor "it is difficult to regard this grumpy lunatic as anything but a cartoon."
The whole course of the story of this novel is "suggested and centred round the absurd cruelty of the Greenwich Park explosion." This novel tells us the story of a bomb blast in the Greenwich park. It is a trial to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. The Nation, a New York magazine in its issue of 26 September, 1907, states:

[The novel] tells us of a secret agent employed by the Russian Embassy in London, and of his relations with his employers, with the police, the anarchists on whom he spies, and the members of his own family. The incidents are bomb-throwing, murder, and suicide - the raw stuff of a shilling shocker. But the events are so over-laid with description, analysis, and the study of the psychological side of the characters that the book is hard to read. The characters stand forth clearly enough, but you can't get interested in them till you have gone through the first half of the volume.

'The secret agent' is Mr. Verloc. He is employed in the Czarist Embassy in London. All he wants is a life of comfort. He is engaged in a variety of secret occupations. His comfort comes to an end when his employer Vladimir urges him to commit an outrage meant to force the British Government to take repressive measures against the refugee radicals. He orders him to blow up the embodiment of pure science, the Greenwich Observatory. Mr. Verloc stumbles into a nightmare of calamities and then a sad death. Vladimir thinks that bombing the National Gallery will make some noise, but this is not serious enough. He tells Verloc that "a murderous attempt on a restaurant or a theatre would suffer in the same way from the suggestion of non-political passion; the exasperation of a hungry man, an act of social
revenge. All this is used up; it is no longer instructive as an object lesson in revolutionary anarchism.\(^45\) Vladimir does not want to kill the innocent people. He is not against them. He is against institutions. He orders Verloc to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. He does not prod him to kill a hungry man or the Prime Minister or the Archbishop of Canterbury. He is not against people or classes. Mr. Verloc depends on Stevie to carry the bomb after failing to get any help from other anarchists who are as lazy as he is. Stevie carries the bomb but on the way he stumbles and explodes himself. He is cut into pieces. Chapter eleven opens with Verloc's involvement in the explosion and the death of Stevie exposed to Mrs. Verloc. Mr. Verloc tries to justify his act to his wife who does not show any interest in what he says. He tries to reconcile her and to make up the quarrel with her. He calls her to come near him as if he has called his own death. Winnie comes nearer after collecting the sharp carving knife from the meat dish. She plants it in his breast. The knife meets no resistance. Mr. Verloc dies on the spot without stirring a limb. Mrs. Verloc turns to Ossipon for help, but he robs her of her money and deserts her on the ferry train. Out of anger and despair, she commits suicide by throwing herself off the ferry train. Here comes the tragic end of Winnie Verloc.

The Secret Agent exposes the torture, agony and misery of its characters. It unveils modes of social oppression
that form the basis of any revolution. It presents men who collapse down before the fatal challenge. They are led to self-destruction. Conrad's treatment of revolution in The Secret Agent is derived from his personal confines in exile.

Conrad tries hard in his political writing to produce characters with a range of political types. Most of the political types used by Conrad like Nostromo, Decoud, Mr. Verloc and Razumov are cut from a single mould. They are either officially involved in betraying revolution or move away from it with malice. It is observed that in this novel Conrad proves that human values and human rights are violated in the name of abstract political ideals. As a humanist, Conrad feels that human dignity and integrity are not maintained. As an anti-romantic he seems to focus his attention on the forces of darkness and destruction which are crystallized in radicalism and reform. They surprisingly dominate the world of politics too. As he predicts, the individual has to suffer in a world dominated by violence and anarchy.

Conrad probably does not like the idea of revolution. His objections are based on the moral character of the revolutionaries who he thinks are rascals, villains and fools. The anarchists corrupt their society and its established structure. They are blind to the moral result of their malicious and evil actions. In the eyes of Conrad, anything which degrades the human integrity is suspected. He
even suspects anything which endangers the customs, norms, law and society. He emphasizes order, responsibility, restraint and endurance. He predicts that the political realities of his time are uncontrollable and endangering the future of the individual. In his denunciation of the anarchists and the Russian revolutionaries, there seems to be an indication of the existence of Polish nationalism which appears to be certainly different from radical socialism. Conrad considers the anarchists to be shams and his novel is full of shams. His treatment of the anarchists is "warped or at least dubious." He sees them as rascals, and perverts who sabotage society. They are the enemies of the individuals and the poor. They even destroy themselves in the process.

One of the most outstanding themes in the novel is victimization. As in Lord Jim, Lord Jim is the victim of his selfishness and cowardice. In Under Western Eyes, Haldin is the victim of autocracy. Razumov falls a prey to autocracy. Councillor Mikulin and the revolutionaries make him their victim. He is also the victim of an irrational action. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness is the victim of his pride and his ideas of some sort. The colonized Africans are the victims of the Belgian colonizers. Nostromo is the victim of his ego, while Charles Gould is the victim of his greed. Also in The Secret Agent there are many victims. Stevie is "the first victim" in the novel. It is Stevie's capacity for sympathy, moral indignation, pity and fear that leads him to

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become a victim. Mr. Verloc cheats him and makes him carry the bomb to the Greenwich Observatory. On the way he stumbles and explodes himself. He is cut into pieces. Stevie "is meant to convey a purity of pathos and to represent the humanitarian impulse in its most vulnerable form." Verloc himself is a victim. Vladimir orders him to bomb the Greenwich Observatory. He has murdered Stevie to be himself murdered by Winnie who plunges a knife in his breast. Winnie is the main victim; she has sacrificed her love for the butcher, who has not been able to provide her and her brother Stevie with security and food, for the sake of Mr. Verloc. However, she has married another butcher who has butchered her brother and sent her to commit suicide. Conrad asserts that her story is the story of madness, disgust and desolation. Conrad has a sympathy for Winnie who falls a prey to the wickedness of anarchism. As a humanist, Conrad denigrates the revolutionaries who commit crimes for no rhyme nor reason. Conrad appears to suggest that revolution instead of advancing civilization brings about an era of primitive barbarity. In Conrad's opinion, revolutionary zeal dehumanizes to such a degree that the revolutionary becomes indifferent to human sufferings. He feels that revolutionary fanaticism robs the revolutionary of his human feeling.

Many of the anarchists are portrayed as senseless individuals who depend on women for their living and for their existence. Yundt depends on a bleary-eyed old lady.
Ossipon depends on silly girls with bank books. Michaelis too depends on an old lady. They live as parasites sponging on these ladies who are their victims. Michaelis's patroness is a rich lady who is presented as a combination of lofty snobbishness and stupidity. Stupidity and misunderstanding are the salient characteristics of the victims in the novel. Peter Stine grapples with this idea when he reveals that "recurring violence in the tale is visited upon its victims by their own blind stupidity. Misunderstanding and "accident" play such a dominant role that the issue of personal responsibility is blurred." These ladies are victimized by their attachment to these parasites.

Justice is the most important issue in the novel. Social justice in London is questioned through the role of the police. Winnie, Stevie and their mother look for social justice. E.K. Hay is of the opinion that "Conrad reminds us that [justice] is an unstable quality, determined by the ratio between individual expectations and the ability of society, at a given moment, to meet them." Also in the case of the Professor, he is treated with revolting injustice while he is working in the laboratory manufacturing dyes. He has rejected the treatment and has started a fight for justice:

His struggles, his privations, his hard work to raise himself in the social scale, had filled him with such an exalted conviction of his merits that it was extremely difficult for the world to treat him with justice - the standard of that notion depending so much upon the patience of the individual.
Conrad probably mocks at the concept of social justice as prevalent in the society.

In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad uses animal imagery abundantly. He employs it to humiliate and to debunk the anarchists whom he hates most. Verloc is imaged as a beast, a dog, a fly, a sprat, a wolf and a monster. While conversing with Vladimir, he, in an "uneasy" doglike growl, repeats the word 'Astronomy'. He is also described as a fly. When he sees Stevie drawing circles, he grunts surprisingly and returns to his sofa. Verloc is described as "wallowing" after taking breakfast at home. It has been observed by a critic that "through this image Conrad explores Verloc's unclean and greedy habit of mind." Verloc is described as a fat pig who depends on the Embassy for his livelihood. The animal imagery used for Verloc shows his animal psyche. He is described by the Assistant Commissioner as "a dogfish... a witty fish." Vladimir describes him as "a lying dog of some sort." Verloc is described as devouring his food and as baring his teeth as a wolf.

The anarchists are showed as cannibals in the novel. Karl Yundt talks about the economical conditions:

Do you know how I would call the nature of the present economic conditions? I would call it cannibalistic. That's what it is. They are nourishing, their greed on the quivering flesh and the warm blood of the people—nothing else.
Stevie is associated with animal imagery. He is described as an excited animal in a cage. Winnie becomes a snake who clings to Ossipon's legs. She is also described as a rabbit. The animal imagery is associated with Ossipon as well. He descends from an animal to a prey. He is a negro type.

The Professor is portrayed with large ears and flat cheeks. Inspector Heat considers him a dog. He is described in the last line of the novel as "a pest in the street full of men."\(^{57}\) The flat large ears of the Professor" are one of the characteristics pointed by Lombroso, of the murdering types."\(^{58}\) The Professor is a dangerous character carrying a bomb with a detonator in his pocket. It is a mixture of mud and green powder. "Mud symbolizes the animal instinct for self-preservation severed from all the ideals of life. Green colour is an image of savagery."\(^{59}\)

Michaelis is portrayed as having a dog's heart. Karl Yundt appears as a toothless fox. He is out for total destruction. He is a terrorist and a savage person whose savagery is imaged through the green havelock thrown on his shoulder. He is a beastly old man. The imagery of cannibalism comes in accord with the anarchist doctrine. The animal images have a psychological significance. They highlight the peculiarities of many characters. As he has explored Verloc's mind by linking it to the pig-image in this novel,"he explored Donkin's mind by linking it with the bird-images in The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'."\(^{60}\)
Conrad views the anarchists as perverts who denigrate morality and legality. They believe in destruction, terrorism and bring instability in the country. Malcom Bradbury affirms:

The basic themes of his writing—fidelity and betrayal, moral heroism and moral cowardice, order and the destructive element, stability and anarchy—were to be part of the story. And so was the matter of his own ambiguous attitude towards the radical and revolutionary assault on the contemporary social order.

Conrad believes that nationalism is an essential force; it keeps the individual dignity and integrity intact. Conrad is against the idea of internationalism. He sees Russia as manipulating international intrigues to further its expansionist policies.

Moreover, Conrad is fully aware of the fact that in politics fraternity among nations remains a utopian ideal. Conrad does not subscribe to the idea of international brotherhood. He is very sceptical about this movement. He mistrusts the desire for fraternity. In his opinion the big powers use fraternity to befoul other nations. The idea of international fraternity is created to weaken the national sentiment. He writes to Cunninghame Graham:

There is already as much fraternity as there can be—and that's very little and that very little is no good. What does fraternity mean. Abnegation—self-sacrifice means something. Fraternity means nothing unless the Cain-Abel business. That's your true fraternity. Assez.
Conrad believes that solidarity is important for social stability. It binds men together and brings them around one idea. But he is well aware of the fact that it is difficult to achieve solidarity in politics. Conrad's antagonism of internationalism is derived from his Polish past and his conviction that nationalism is a unique way for the development of countries. When Cunninghame Graham goes to talk at the peace conference, Conrad writes to him that he "can not admit the idea of fraternity not so much because I believe it to be impracticable, but because its propaganda (the only thing really tangible about it) tends to weaken the national sentiment, the preservation of which is my concern." Perhaps Conrad has in mind the annexation of the Polish territory by Russia on a false pretext of a politically efficient union of lands and peoples. A state suffers in the name of internationalism and universal brotherhood. Indeed, it goes to the credit of Conrad that he has predicted that the same fate will overtake Poland.

Conrad fastens the responsibility of the Greenwich Observatory bomb blast on the Russian Embassy in England. Vladimir, the first Secretary in the Russian Embassy, is the main spring of action in the story. Vladimir works secretly to demolish the English legal system. Vladimir is not happy over the leniency of the judicial procedure in England and the utter absence of repressive measures to suppress the revolutionaries and anarchists. As the Milan Conference is to be held, Vladimir feels that the psychological moment to
disrupt the Milan Conference has arrived. He directs Verloc to use his fellow anarchists to set many targets in London on fire. He tells Verloc that he has summoned him to the Embassy to crystallize this idea. He says to Verloc:

'What we want is to administer a tonic to the conference in Milan'... 'Its deliberations upon international action for the suppression of political crime don't seem to get anywhere. England lags. This country is absurd with its sentimental regard for individual liberty. It is intolerable to think that all your friends have got only to come over to---'...

'England must be brought into line. The imbecile bourgeoisie of this country make themselves the accomplices of the very people whose aim is to drive them out of their houses to starve in ditches. And they have the political power still, if they only had the sense to use it for their preservation. I suppose you agree that the middle classes are stupid?'

Vladimir asserts that the professors who are to attend the Milan Conference are not better than intellectual idiots. Vladimir tells Verloc that he is a civilized man who would not prod him to butcher the people but feels that anarchists must make a clear sweep of the whole social order. This can be achieved beyond ordinary passions of humanity. He feels that a bomb outrage would be effective if it were directed against science. He explains his point of view to Verloc: "the demonstration must be against learning - science. But not every science will do. The attack must have all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy. Since bombs are your means of expression, it would be really telling if one could throw a bomb into pure mathematics."

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Vladimir feels that science is the basis of existence and the source of material prosperity. Therefore, he decides to attack the Greenwich Observatory that stands for civilization of the whole world. He then orders him to seek the help from old terrorists Yundt and Michaelis. Vladimir gives Verloc a one month time to arrange for a dynamite outrage before the Milan Conference.

Verloc attempts to seek help from anarchists, but he finds them as lazy as he is. He then depends on the idiot Stevie to carry the bomb. Stevie stumbles and kills himself. Conrad narrates:

Bomb in Greenwich Park. There isn't much so far. Half past eleven. Foggy morning. Effects of explosion felt as far as Romney Road and Park place. Enormous hole in the ground under a tree filled with smashed roots and broken branches. All round fragments of a man's body blown to pieces.66

Vladimir's aim is purely anarchistic. He is the mind that creates. He is as Kurtz, the organiser of suppression and terrorism. He is a fanatic in his faith. He hates love and compassion. Vladimir turns to be cruel. Lady Mabel declares that Mr. Vladimir has been frightening her, and the society is threatened with all kinds of horrors. Mr. Vladimir has an innate fear of the London Police that stand as an arbitrary power. The Assistant Commissioner tells Vladimir about his intrigue and that he is the inciter. He also reminds him that the London Police are efficient to detect any case and to put the situation under control.

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Like Vladimir, the Professor is also committed to
destruction and murder. He belongs to the class of Kurtz. He
collaborates indirectly with Vladimir to bring about
destruction of Verloc and Stevie. Verloc acts quickly and the
Professor supplies the explosive. His appraisal of the
English echoes Vladimir's appraisal: "It is this country that
is dangerous, with her idealistic conception of legality.
The social spirit of this people is wrapped up in scrupulous
prejudices, and that is fatal to our work. You talk of
England being our only refuge!" So much the worse."67 The
Professor is an American terrorist who joins hands with
Vladimir. He provokes the British establishment to pass
universal repressive legislation. Vladimir and the Professor
are against non-partisan political conservatism as practised
in England. His characteristics strike us:

Unlike the revolutionaries, the Professor is free
of social restraints; he is not a slave of "the
social convention" since he has deliberately cut
himself off from human ties. He is devoted solely
to destruction. 68

The Professor considers himself superior to others as
he finds himself close to death. He is a perfect nihilist. He
despises the revolutionists:

'You revolutionists,'... 'are the slaves of the
social convention, which is afraid of you; slaves
of it as much as the very police that stand up in
the defence of that convention. Clearly you are,
since you want to revolutionize it. It governs
your thought, of course, and your action, too, and
thus neither your thought nor your action can
ever be conclusive.'69
The Professor feels that the terrorist and the policeman are the birds of the same feather. He is an active anarchist of a strong character. He is ready to give explosive devices to anyone who is ready to disrupt society. He wants to paralyze the social order. Ossipon insists on dissociating the revolutionaries from the Greenwich Observatory explosion. He blames the Professor for planning to overthrow the society through terror and murder. His frustration makes him adopt the idea of universal destruction. He accounts for the credo of doom:

'Exterminate, exterminate! That is the only way of progress. It is! Follow me, Ossipon, First the great multitude of the weak must go, then the only relatively strong. You see? First the blind, then the deaf and the dumb, then the halt and the lame—and so on. Every taint, every vice, every prejudice, every convention must meet its doom.'

This reminds us of Kurtz's advice: 'exterminate all the brutes'. The Professor is another savage like Kurtz. He is debunked by Conrad.

The Professor feels that anarchists lack determination. He shows his contempt of the anarchists as they fail to confront the police. He aptly remarks:

You lose yourselves in reveries of economical systems, derived from what is; whereas what's wanted is a clean sweep and a clear start for a new conception of life.

Conrad opines that revolutionary zeal dehumanizes an individual who becomes callous and indifferent to the
suffering of the people. Revolutionary fanaticism negates human sympathies.

The terrorist Professor is afraid of London and its crowds. Conrad presents the masses as lifeless crowd:

They swarmed numerous like locusts, industrious like ants, thoughtless like a natural force, pushing on blind and orderly and absorbed, impervious to sentiment, to logic, to terror, too, perhaps.72

Other anarchist characters are as hollow as the Professor. Verloc sees himself as the protector of the whole social order. H.F. Rieselbach's evaluation of Verloc is startling: "In his complacent conservatism, in his domesticity, in his characteristic reluctance to look deeply into the motives and feelings of others, Verloc personifies the values of the society he 'protects'."73 Verloc is a traitor, he works as an informer to London Police. He sends off many revolutionaries with their arms to be caught on the frontier.

Michaelis symbolizes Conrad's vision, he is a humanitarian, a little mad but unable to hurt a fly. He lives on the patronage of an old lady who believes in his theory of the future. He is primarily interested in "the complete economic ruin of the system."74 He is freed from the prison after spending fifteen years on promise that he will behave well. He has his own optimistic philosophy of socialism. He is optimistic of living in a world where the
strong protect the weak. He is simple and gentle. He has no direct connection with the Greenwich explosion except in harbouring Stevie in the country.

Karl Yundt is the most repellent of the anarchists. He sponges on a bleary-eyed old woman. The terrorist, as he calls himself, is old and bold. He is out for total destruction. He is the most reprehensible of the sham revolutionaries. His physique is as ugly as his principles. Conrad condemns him vehemently in the novel. He has no connection with the Greenwich explosion.

Ossipon is a sensualist who is portrayed as a Negro type with "almond-shaped eyes" leering "languidly over the high cheek-bones." He is inhuman to a degree that he betrays Winnie's hope in him. He has lost all human drives. He becomes "free from the trammels of conventional morality." His evil nature is clearly exposed. It seems that he becomes an agent of the devil. Mrs. Verloc turns to him for help after murdering her husband. She is desperate and hopeless. She requests him to take her abroad. She takes his arm into her arm. But Ossipon to whom Winnie clings for succour and support in the hour of her peril, betrays her, so that in a fit of despair she commits suicide by throwing herself from across channel ferry. Her suicide is described as a mysterious act of madness and despair. He is insensitive to the human suffering. He is not able to feel compassionately at the sight of human misery. He robs Winnie
of her money and sends her to her tragic end. Later on he feels remorse at his mad act. He resorts to drinking. He is treated with deflating satire throughout the novel.

Conrad's contempt for anarchists is pungent. He regards them as inhuman, immoral and unprincipled. His presentation is vivid:

The majority of revolutionists are the enemies of discipline and fatigue mostly. They are natures; too, to whose sense of justice the price exacted looms up monstrously enormous, odious, oppressive, worrying, humiliating, extortionate, intolerable. Those are the fanatics. The remaining portion of social rebels is accounted for by vanity, the mother of all noble and vile illusions, the companion of poets, reformers, charlatans, prophets, and incendiaries.\footnote{77}

Winnie appears to have been drawn after Conrad's wife Jessie. She resembles Jessie. As Norman Sherry views it, "Jessie Conrad's self-confessed method of dealing with the difficulties that arose in living with a man of Conrad's genius was that of holding her tongue."\footnote{78} She is described by Conrad as unfathomable. Her indifference can not be measured. She represents goodness and the virtues of fidelity. As Rieselbach views it, "Stevie and Winnie are the novel's real anarchists, ready to avenge injustice even by murder, while the pitiful, self-deluded theorists who gather at Verloc's do nothing but talk."\footnote{79} Winnie has a self-contained nature as also a possible rebellion within herself. It is observed that the most outstanding feature of Winnie's personality, which takes possession of Conrad's imagination,
is her maternal passion which gives her life a singleness of purpose and a noble unity of inspiration.

Winnie is devoted to her brother Stevie. Moser argues that Winnie has "married Mr. Verloc purely for convenience, as insurance for Stevie's future." She has married Verloc in a spirit of self-sacrifice. She does not love him and that is why after the death of Stevie she regards him as the murderer of Stevie and sees all her conjugal responsibilities cancelled. Her protecting passion results in a state of vacancy and in the nullity of her being. This eventually relates her to moral nihilism. She remains blind to her own inner hollowness. Her moral nature is shaken so that she cannot pull herself together. She is morally shocked at the death of Stevie and this is what disintegrates her. She goes mad and her madness accounts for her resemblance to Stevie as she moves to kill Verloc. It is observed that Conrad wants to show how the political forces operating in the world rob a simple woman of her humanity. It seems that the absurd death of Stevie brings home to us the appalling fact of how evil violates human dignity and human values leading to disintegration of human personality. It is argued that Conrad sees Winnie as a representative of goodness and the virtue of fidelity. Through her tragic end, Conrad shows us how these life-sustaining virtues are sacrificed at the altar of political dogmas. As a humanist, Conrad feels that human values are outraged and violated in the name of political ideals. Winnie is a victim of the so-called revolutionaries.

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She is the victim of a society dominated by destructive political ideas.

Winnie Verloc does not communicate with her husband. This lack of communication is not her fault. The childhood that she has spent without love has a serious effect on her behaviour. It is not only the Verlocs who do not communicate properly, the anarchists do not communicate either. They are shown in chapter three arguing with each other. They espouse contradictory doctrines. Michaelis believes in evolutionary socialism; Yundt preaches nihilism, and Ossipon believes in the triumph of science. Every one of them talks but nobody understands anything. Osborn Andreas makes Verloc responsible for non-communication. He has unwillingly distanced himself from his wife to the extent that his effort to bridge it has failed. She has become incomprehensible to him as he is to her.81

Winnie has a nice mother she is "a somewhat Dickensian figure who shares with her daughter an utterly unselfish concern for Stevie."82 She decides to live in the almshouse, and by this she gives her son "the advantage of a directly dependent position."83 Conrad makes it clear that Winnie's mother is the most respectable character in the novel.

Stevie is a humanitarian who has sympathy for others. He, even, is sympathetic to the horse carrying his mother to the charity house. He decides to help the horse by walking
himself. His "desire to make the horse happy and the cabman happy, had reached the point of a bizarre longing to take them to bed with him." Stevie talks with his sister about the poor. He wants to help them. He suggests that the police must also help, but to his astonishment he finds the police of no use.

When Winnie and Stevie come back home they find Verloc sad. Stevie believes that Verloc’s sadness is because of the old mother’s departure. Stevie is a humanitarian who believes in the human goodness but his belief, later on, proves baseless:

Mr. Verloc was good. His mother and his sister had established that ethical fact on unshakable foundation. They had established, erected, consecrated it behind Mr. Verloc’s back, for reasons that had nothing to do with abstract morality. And Mr. Verloc was not aware of it. It is but bare justice to him to say that he had no notion of appearing good to Stevie.

Stevie is very merciful. He is full of pity and mercy. Mrs. Neale discovers that Stevie is very kind and generous. She groans lamentably in front of him "having observed that he could be induced easily to bestow for the benefit of her infant children the shilling his sister Winnie presented him with from time to time."

Winnie convinces Verloc to take Stevie for a walk in the city. Verloc agrees and suggests to send Stevie to stay with Michaelis in the cottage. Winnie accepts the idea and urges her husband to take care of Stevie. Her concern is to
look after Stevie. Verloc, on the other hand, takes Stevie to his death where he explodes himself and turns into a "heap of rags, scorched and bloodstained, half concealing what might have been an accumulation of raw material for a cannibal feast." Chief Inspector Heat who comes to investigate the explosion is affected with the ruthless cruelty and destruction.

Verloc's involvement in the explosion and the death of Stevie becomes exposed to Mrs. Verloc who is sure that "Stevie dead was a much greater nuisance than ever he had been when alive." She sees a series of visions which both help to fill her past and present. She thinks of her childhood. She recaptulates moments of her intimate love with Stevie. She, also, has the vision of her husband and poor Stevie walking up Brett Street side by side away from the shop... And this last vision had such plastic relief, such nearness of form, such a fidelity of suggestive detail.

Mrs. Verloc has another vision about the murder of Stevie by Verloc. She expresses her anguish: '"This man took the boy away to murder him. He took the boy from his home to murder him. He took the boy from me to murder him!'"

Mr. Verloc tries to justify his act to his wife who does not show any interest in him. He is wronged, he is not justified by the people of the Embassy. Mr. Verloc turns into a wolf looking for his prey. He becomes revengeful. He
informs his wife of his desire for vengeance. He tells her that things have gone out of his hands. The only thing left to him is to take revenge on the Embassy people:

'The Embassy', Mr. Verloc began again, after preliminary grimace which bared his teeth wolfishly. 'I wish I could get loose in there with a cudgel for half an hour. I would keep on hitting till there wasn't single unbroken bone left among the whole lot. But never mind, I'll teach them yet what it means trying to throw out a man like me to rot in the streets. I've a tongue in my head. All the world shall know what I've done for them. I am not afraid. I don't care. Everything'll come out'.

Verloc reminds Winnie that it is she who has told him to take Stevie out. He tells her frankly "if you will have it that I killed the boy, then you've killed him as much as I." Winnie remembers Stevie, his death and his remains:

A Park-smashed branches, torn leaves, gravel, bits of brotherly flesh and bone, all spouting up together in the manner of a firework... 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 night of her 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.

It has been observed that Conrad wants to show how the innocent and the uncommitted are made to suffer by those who are too engrossed in their own narrow egoistic selves and are bent on pursuing their goal in a mood of "madness and
despair". Sacrificing an idiot boy like that is a shocking act of appalling inhumanity. The only conclusion is that anarchists' fanaticism leads nowhere but to such tragic ends.

Conrad has relentlessly stated Winnie's story as an anarchic act of desolation, madness and despair. The bomb blast is an act of madness which leads to the tragedy of the whole family. This domestic tragedy overwhelming the innocent Stevie and the good-hearted Winnie is the result of the mad act of Verloc. Verloc is a common man who wants to live a happy and peaceful life, but he becomes an instrument of terrorism and suppression. Vladimir is the mind that organises and creates and Verloc is the man that suffers. Perhaps Conrad wants to suggest that the fate of Verloc is the fate of the common man in the world. Verloc, a pretender of anarchism, brings about the tragedy of the entire family - husband, wife, brother. It seems that Conrad wants to say that anarchists not only disregard human and moral values, but they seek personal security and comfort at the expense of human life. Winnie's love for Stevie brings about her fall from normality. Her moral stature and her destructiveness belong to the same source. The anarchists stand behind her tragedy. Vladimir, Verloc, Ossipon and the Professor are directly responsible for her end.

It is argued that Conrad employs the anarchists in this novel to expose the flimsiness of their revolutionary zeal and to project the prevailing climate of English public life.
Conrad expresses the gravity of the destructive effects of the anarchists and its impact on the individual. They are ruthless terrorists. They victimize the innocent people. Stevie and Winnie are the real victims. Other ladies are also the victims of the irrational behaviour of the anarchists. It seems that Conrad wants to say that the tragic end of Stevie and Winnie is the end of every person who may be exposed to the violence of the anarchists.

In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad uses irony to expose the machinations of the Russian Embassy to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. The novel explores the political realities of its time and the dark areas of human experience. It has been observed that the novel acquires a tragic resonance. It presents indirectly Conrad's antithesis to the anarchists. It satirizes English society, family life and the corrupt policemen. Although Conrad portrays a number of English characters like Inspector Heat, the Assistant Commissioner of police and the Home Secretary, Sir Ethlred, as hollow men; his main interest is directed against the inhuman practices of the revolutionaries. He presents a sweeping and demoniac aspect of political commitments. The evil forces change the simple good hearted Winnie into an instrument of destruction. In this novel, Conrad appears as a humanist who is sensitive to human misery. As an ironist par-excellence, Conrad criticises both the bourgeois morality and the senseless terrorism of the anarchists.