CHAPTER IV : THE SECOND PHASE
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The Second Phase

I

The celebrations of an individual in Heart of Darkness, and Lord Jim give way, in the next three novels, to deeper perceptions into societies. The problems of ultimate significance of the individual’s life continue to preoccupy Conrad’s imagination. However, his interest in the individual is overtaken by other considerations. Nostromo, The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes have been generally categorised as political novels. But political intrigues and manipulations are present even in the earlier novels. Politics is a consciousness too, that forms the inner world of an individual. In this meaning all novels before Nostromo are political. The only distinction is that they were, “interior”¹ novels, as Guerard puts it; and the ensuing three novels are ‘exterior’ in conception and treatment. The introversion and introspection of the earlier characters is absent in these novels. The earlier novels show Conrad as guided by impulse and outbursts of inspiration. He was too subjective then and seemed to lack objective standards manifest in the novels of his second phase.

Nostromo (1904)* is not only about the highly individualized characters and their moral problems but is also concerned with the whole political state, the Republic of Costaguana. A very broad spectrum of society and inter-action of characters under

the bright-dark shadow of San Tome Silver Mine is exposed to the view. Practically every theme that can possibly be weaved into the fictional texture, has been included, as Leo Gurko observes:

It is full-scale account of politics, society, the historical process, geography, economics, morality, love, revenge, primitivism, civilization and imperialism.... There is even the theme of race relations, in the struggle between Blanco Aristocrats and Negro masses.2

Never before was Conrad so much at ease in delineating the complex world of human relationships; never before his art sailed so smoothly through the political, social, religious, military, economic and personal streams. In a letter to his American literary agent J.V. Pinker, Conrad struck a positive note about himself and Nostromo, which he was working on at the time. He wrote, "it is very genuine Conrad. At the same time it is more of a novel pure and simple than anything else I have done since Almayer’s Folly."3

At the center of the novel is the "development of material interests" (p. 511) guided and controlled by silver. The incorruptible metal has a corrupting influence on every individual and on the life of the Republic in general. The characters are conceived not only from within, as in the earlier novels, but from without too. The absence of a narrator gives us an open understanding of the characters. Their mutual opinions about each other help us formulate a definite and independent
view of their inter-relationships. *Nostromo* is basically about the making of the history of a nation. It also involves individuals, group of patriots, opportunists, citizens and soldiers, ambitious to possess history. But in the final analysis, men and women in *Nostromo* are made to accept that their ambitions are deeply influenced not only by their personal history but history of their nation. *Nostromo*, as Ernest Bevan puts it, is:

Conrad's conception of dynamic relationship between private and public history.... Conrad conceives history as a clash of personal goals and haphazard forces, rooted in man's most instinctual desires....

In *Nostromo*, as in *Lord Jim*, Conrad perceives socio-economic and historical forces as governing the life of an individual. He places the individuals in the modern world, especially as aspiring to heroic positions. *Nostromo* is the story of San Tome Silver Mine and, thereby, also the history of Gould family in particular. Charles Gould "believed in the mine" (p.75) because he had to atone for the failure of his father in running it and like Jim, an "ideal of rehabilitation had entered the plan" (p.74) of his life. The father-son relationship here, is anticipatory of the one in *Victory*, though with a difference but not without similarities. The common motive between the two novels is the failure in marital life. In both cases it is the paternal heritage of the protagonist, that blocks male-female
relationships.

*Nostradamus* presents the history of Gould family. Three generations of Goulds have lived in Costaguana to witness and be party to the rise and fall of many governments. Charles Gould is obsessed with the passion to complete his father's mission. His father's mission was to complete the work on San Tome Silver Mine. Except his obsession with the Mine, Charles Gould is a lonely soul. The only companion he has is Emilia. Emilia, his wife, was the only person who understood Charles's attitudes, for she was "highly gifted in the art of human intercourse" (p. 46). After his father's death Charles takes up the mine with useful optimism. Initially, the mine is a matter of his own moral values and his personal integrity. More than the material interests involved, Charles accepts work on the mine as a moral challenge. But gradually he is confronted with the world of practical necessity. Due to very practical reasons he is obliged to keep the "idea of wealth to the fore" (p. 75). Charles had not surmised that the firm footing of material interest would tread upon the human lives - upon his own life and crush him.

Charles Gould had felt all along that the mine should be prevented from being the repository of political corruption but he did not understand that the mine could not remain a neutral force in the given political situation of Costaguana. In fact, the mine begins to assume socio-political dimensions. Charles's single minded preoccupation with the mine as a source of material
prosperity makes him almost insensitive to the urgencies of socio-political as well as the domestic life. As a result, he is gradually cut-off not only from his wife but also from the moral value by which he wished to justify the mine. Charles gradually becomes an embodiment of man's tendency to self-deception and the need to idealise every action. His obsession with the mine proves to be an end in itself, for his passion for the mine makes him forfeit opportunities for love, friendship and self-growth. One sometimes wonders at the gradual alienation of Charles from Emilia. She comes to Sulaco with Charles considering the mine as their joint venture. She goes out with him to recruit the labour and admires Charles' economic individualism. Her commitment to mine is complete till Charles detaches himself from her. Her isolation is a result of failure of love and trust. Yet she continues to participate fully in his work by looking after the needs of the mine workers and the victims of Monterist rebellion.

The silver mine had killed Charles' father and has taken its toll on the son's marital relationships. Two scenes are particularly striking where one feels the intensity of the excruciating pain of Mrs. Gould. The first scene occurs after their return from Europe when Emilia wants to have Charles to herself for one evenning, in the house she loves. After waiting long for Charles to return from the mine, she receives the message that he would sleep at the mountain that night. Conrad
comments upon her feelings: "she saw clearly the San Tome Silver Mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds" (p.522). "Last" brings an additional sense of tragic since Emilia had not been the recipient of God's blessing, "be fruitful and multiply". She has no child even by way of consolation, though C.B. Cox believes that the material interests "can not be blamed for Gould's failure to produce a child... the barrenness of the marriage appears to be symbolic."\(^5\). Richard Curle's understanding of Emilia-Charles relationship is more humane and sympathetic. He comments, "had they not been a childless couple, not only would her loneliness have found an anodyne, but Charles Gould himself would inevitably have been less withdrawn."\(^6\)

The second scene is towards the end of the novel when Nostromo has been shot by Viola due to mistaken identity for Ramirez. Gissele whispers to Emilia:

"He loved me. He loved me as no one had ever been loved before".

"I have been loved too" Mrs. Gould said in a severe tone" (p.561).

Emilia's tone speaks volumes of history of her relations with Charles; she does not break her silence at Gissele's counter remark, "oh, Senora, but you shall live adored to the end of your life" (p.561), because she has felt within her and lived through the irony of those adorations - of silver. Not that Charles was
insensitive to Emilia's emotional needs; it was his own need too and he too felt, "the remorse of that subtle conjugal infidelity through which his wife was no longer the sole mistress of his thoughts" (p.365). But his priorities were predetermined like Jim's. Charles was wedded to an ideal before he was to Emilia. Supremacy of the ideal or duty over love is a motif that begins with *Lord Jim* and recurs in quite a few novels of Conrad after *Nostromo*. Charles resembles the American capitalist Holroyd in some respects. As Holroyd is determined to "run the world's business whether the world likes it or not" (p.77), so is Charles determined to impose his ideas on every thing and, in a way, wants to conquer the whole land.

Charles Gould supposes that the process of law will be suspended in order to facilitate his own fulfilment and that he would remain unaffected by the actions of his associates. But ironically enough Charles is himself gradually trapped in the evitable process of corruption and deterioration. Hay offers a deeper insight into Charles' relationship with the society. She remarks that in:

> Gould's refusal to commit his mine to any politically responsible line, Conrad evidently means to demonstrate the essential anarchy of capitalistic societies in which politics is directed by business interest.  

It is in this sense that *Nostromo* is an inquiry into the failure of social institutions and the failure of history to make any
sense. Conrad, in his essay on Anatole France, wrote that, "political institutions, whether contrived by the wisdom of the few or ignorance of the many, are incapable of securing the happiness of mankind."^8

Conrad builds Nostromo's character very systematically, though indirectly, from the very beginning. It is very important to know that Nostromo is already a legend before we actually meet him. We hear of Nostromo saving the life of a dictator, Nostromo an "invaluable fellow", "a fellow in a thousand" (p.12), "a man absolutely above reproach", "terror of thieves in the town" (p.13), and is "much of a man" (p.15) with "the force of character" (p.13), etc. The he-man image of Nostromo is built on the basis of the influence he exercises over every other character in the novel. In Author's Note to Nostromo, Conrad tells us that everyone on the island is Nostromo's friend and that he is "contented to feel himself the power within the people" (p. xx).

The individuality of Nostromo emerges out of "his mingled love and scorn for life" (p. xxi) and the fact that "he is still of the people, their undoubted great man - with private history of his own" (p. xxi). He is a man whose survival is supported by the impact he makes upon other people. For example, Decoud measures him correctly when he says that, "the only thing that he seems to care for is to be well spoken of" (p.246). Nostromo's
early life had been that of an orphan exploited by an abusive uncle. His need for human ties is so pervasive that he finds in Violas a surrogate family to which he is deeply attached. During political agitations he comes forward, first of all, to protect his ‘own’ – the violas. He even allows himself to be scolded by Teresa Viola, as a mother would scold a son, since he realizes that she means it for his own good.

Nostromo is a man who has a tremendous faith in the life of intimate passions and an equally passionate distrust of socio-political institutions. Having seen so many political mercenaries like Guzman Bento, Montero, Pedrito and Sotillo etc., clawing one over the other for the sake of silver, he can not but be sceptical about everything that goes in the name of ideal including the Goulds’. The story Nostromo is about the ironic fate of an individual who is celebrated as a hero. To begin with, Nostromo is heroic indeed but, as in many other novels of Conrad, here too we find the inevitable fall of nobility caused by the pressures of external reality on the conscience of the individual. In this case the snake in the garden is the silver. Nostromo’s fall epitomises the colossal waste of human potentials because of the impact of the material on the moral. Once the corruption sets in Nostromo loses all sense of fidelity to all personal and social relations. He betrays Linda in favour of his sinful passion for Giselle. Stephen Land analyses Nostromo’s response to the two girls as a conflict between two selves of an
individual. He maintains:

The two girls represent the paradoxical tension between Nostromo's goal, the satisfaction of his appetites and the gravitational pull of social reforms. The orthodox Linda, like Teresa, stands for public and approved domestic stability, whereas Giselle is licentious, passionate and thoroughly desirable in a definitely unconventional way.

This man, once the man of the people, betrays people's trust for the sake of silver. Ironically, Conrad uses the word "incorruptible" for the man as well as the metal. His enslavement to the silver deeply affects all sets of relationships including the Viola family. Now he begins to fear Linda and falls passionately for Giselle. The radical shift in Nostromo's passion for Giselle, instead of Linda, significantly corresponds with the shift in his loyalties to the people. In Giselle he finds the life of comfort, luxury and gratification that he had renounced in his love for Linda and in the service of his people. It is at this stage that he begins to look at every thing from an extremely subjective point of view. He broods, "no one cared. He might have been drowned by this time. No one would have cared -" (p.422). Quite naturally, he feels betrayed.

The beginning of the end of all relationships lies in bitterness and scepticism. Nostromo loses his grain when he loses the sense of social commitment and begins to think of his own interests—silver & Giselle. All human beings, except

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himself, become insignificant to him. Even Giselle is preferable over Linda because the former is complementary to his desire for freedom and affluence, whereas, the later is the negation of his newly cultivated values. One can notice, here, the devastating impact Nostromo's newly acquired 'ethics' has on the various sets of relationships in the novel. He is now "deprived of certain simple realities, such as admiration of women, adulation of men and the admired publicity of life..." (p.420). No doubt Nostromo's basic urge for human ties remains intact, even in death. Infact, Nostromo's life is a paradox. On the one hand is his search for human bonds, on the other is his quest for personal fulfilment. Unfortunately, Nostromo's heroic quest is completely inverted towards the end. Instead of being content with achieved relationships, he desperately longs for substitutes. One such example is his relationship with Emilia. Towards the end Nostromo turns to Mrs. Gould in search of a mother figure in place of Teresa, as if to seek a substitute. Nostromo, for the first time, finds a woman in whom he can confide, since she has 'genius of sympathetic intuition' (p.560). His last wish, to confess about the silver to Mrs. Gould, illustrates the value and importance of personal relationships.

In the character of Martin Decoud, Conrad has shown the dangers of excessive intellectualism. Young Decoud rationalizes every event and relationship to such an extent that he becomes cynical about all human activities and ties. His "sane
materialism" (p.223) is based on the idea that there is no possibility of friendship between man and woman. He thinks that the only friendship possible is between brother and sister. He has a strange opinion about Charles - Emilia relationship but does believe in the genuineness of his own feelings for Antonia. All his judgements appear to be purely subjective. He generalizes relationships, always making himself an exception. It is a kind of a raillery that blinds him to "genuine impulses of his own nature" (p.153). Decoud's rationlisation and raillery have no scope for human warmth. Emphasizing the need for human warmth Conrad writes in A Familiar Preface to A Personal Record:

The sight of human affairs deserves admiration and pity. They are worthy of respect too. And he is not insensible who pays them the undemonstrative tribute of a sigh which is not a sob, and of a smile which is not a grin. Resignation, not mystic, not detached, but resignation open eyed, conscious and informed by love*, is the only one of our feeling for which it is impossible to become a sham.  

The fundamental feeling essential to relationships between individuals is love, the only feeling that does not become a sham. This is a remarkable realization in Conrad's treatment of human relationships. By presenting Decoud as devoid of all such feelings Conrad emphasizes their absence in the modern society. Despite his generalization about human relationships Decoud is a human being and, therefore, can not escape human ties. For

* : Emphasis mine.

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instance, he depends upon Don Jose, Antonia and his sister to define himself. Decoud's love for Antonia manifests to him a world of genuine feelings, though he prefers to think of love as an illusion. With Antonia a new sensitivity is born in him, though surprisingly it fails to inspire in him an impulse for human bonds in general. It is quite obvious that Decoud's intellectualism blocks his capacity for intimate relationship. As a human being he has the potentials but as a rational being he denies himself the chances to transcend his own limitations. The only exception, however, is Antonia.

Decoud's love for Antonia becomes his "only one aim in the world" (p.179). It is for her sake that he puts on the guise of a patriot - for "no one is a patriot for nothing" (p.189). He plans Sulaco's separation simply because of his passion for Antonia. He confesses to Mrs. Gould:

I am not deceiving myself about my motives. She (Antonia) won't leave Sulaco for my sake, therefore Sulaco must leave the rest of the Republic to its fate. (p.215)

It is a very strange form of patriotism which pushes Decoud to work for the division of his own country. He does it for the sake of his love. The fact is that he has "no faith in anything except the truth of his own sensations" (p.229). Conrad, through Decoud, wishes to suggest that with such individuals neither love nor patriotism provide immunity against scepticism. His love for
Antonia makes him join the events which otherwise would be the target of his ironical butts. This makes Decoud a case of split personality.

Love makes it difficult for Decoud to maintain his scepticism. His scepticism makes it impossible for him to sustain a hope without which love remains an abstraction. This tension between his love and scepticism is ultimately the cause of his death. Alone on the island he has neither the object of love (Antonia) present nor the target of his sceptical observations (the historical events). Conrad suggests that intelligence may sometimes guide a man in material situations but it cannot sustain a man at times of emotional crisis. Shorn of any justifiable reason to exist, Decoud loses all desire to live. He dies due to "want of faith in himself and others" (p.496).

Adam Gillon's analysis is very precise when he comments:

Unable to fall back on any religious, moral or political dogma (which is man's link with the outside world), he disintegrates morally for he has been robbed of his reality....

The process of Decoud's disintegration begins at a very early stage. In fact his later decision to commit suicide is deeply rooted in his intellectualism. Decoud's rationalism is inherently suicidal. Conrad, effectively, brings out Decoud's despair and anguish, a few moments before he commits suicide, in the following passage:
He spent the night open-eyed, and when the day broke he ate something with the same indifference. The brilliant "San Decoud", the spoiled darling of the family, the lover of Antonia and journalist of Sulaco, was not fit to grapple with himself single-handed. Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place. It takes possession of the mind, and drives forth the thought into the exile of utter unbelief. (p.497).

The passage quoted clearly suggests that Decoud had been cynical all along. All that he had been certain of was his "independent existence" (p.497) and now he "caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality." (p.497).

A small observation must be made here about Decoud's sense of relationships. His parents are alive but they hardly occupy his thoughts, since he regards them as ineffectual ties. To him anything beyond his own person is irrelevant. Every idea, for Decoud, must be backed by "a personal feeling" (p.236), but he does not relate this feeling to human relationships in general. Ironically, he can not stand his own separation from society. Frederick Karl calls Decoud "a nihilist, who denies even his own feelings." Decoud is an extremely self-conscious individual. His failure to sustain himself is the result of this tendency. He, therefore, finds it impossible to commit himself fully and genuinely to any relationship. His tendency to over-rationalize automatically leads to the frustration of emotional possibilities. So, he dies, Conrad tells us, "without any sort
of emotion whatever" (p. 498).

Women play an important role in the Conradian world of human relationships. In this particular novel the two women who hold a significant position are Antonia Avellanos and Emilia Gould. Antonia, as Conrad confesses in Author's Note, is modelled on his "first love" who was "the standard bearer of a faith to which we all were born..." and was "an uncompromising Puritan of Patriotism", (p. xxii); though, in comparison, Antonia, Conrad agrees, has more "serenity in her soul" (p. xxii). Antonia, in Nostromo, is a motherless girl whose father Don Jose Avellanos "depended much upon the devotion of his beloved" (p. 140) daughter. Antonia is a great inspiring force in the life of the sceptic like Decoud, whose only moments of normalcy in human relationships figure when he is under her influence. Antonia's achievement, in terms of relationships, can be gauged by the warmth that Decoud exudes. He does behave like a young lover with all the failing of youth visible in his conversation with

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Antonia. Conrad writes very warmly about this relationship. He says:

With a touch of penetrating tenderness in his voice he assured her that his only aspiration was to a felicity so high that it seemed almost unrealizable on this earth. (p. 192).

Decoud, writing about Antonia to his sister, confesses, "there is that in Antonia which would make me believe in the feasibility of
anything... I love her... with the heart..." (p.239). It is heartening to see an intellectual talking of heart. This only shows the force of Antonia's personality.

One of the most impressive of Conrad's women is Mrs. Emilia Gould whose life reminds one of the tragic death of Desdemona caused by no fault of hers. Her role as a wife wraps up all she is capable of and saps away her every feeling. She has no parents to care and feel for; she is an orphan. Nor does she have the in-laws with whom she could establish some kind of a familial bond. Moreover, she is childless. This quite clearly suggests that she has no one else except her husband to console her in moments of emotional crisis. And unfortunately her husband, too, is gradually drifting away from her. Here Conrad deals very effectively with the problem of the balance between individual and society. The deceptive and disintegrating process of society and civilization leaves its impression on everyone and everyone in the novel surrenders to its impact except Mrs. Gould.

Emilia's devotion to Charles is so total that it verges on the edge of conventionality. While Charles is busy with his mine, Emilia's compassion leads her "to achieve the conquest of Sulaco" (p.67) society. Since "a woman's tenderness... is expressed in action of a conquering kind" (p.67). Her concern for closer human links in Sulaco society is a witness to her sense of human solidarity. "She was able to appreciate the great
worth of the people" (p.89), observes Conrad. She begins to merge in the local stream of Sulaco, with the workers of mine and their family, looking after their health and education. Douglas Hewitt misunderstands her intentions when he blames her of taking part in the game of material interest.\textsuperscript{13}

It is true that she does become a party to save silver. Of course, this is not out of any material interest but as means to an end. Tillyard does Emilia justice when he says that, "Mrs. Gould may fail in her dearest wishes but she has been little corrupted and preserves her standards."\textsuperscript{14} There is not a single person in Sulaco who has not felt the compassionate presence of Emilia in his life. She is a Madonna figure. Sometimes her attitude to her husband's obsession with the mine is that of a mother to her son's weakness. Her concern for Viola family is also genuine. She obtains from Sir John the permission that in the process of rail construction the house occupied by Viola would not be demolished. Her empathy for Antonia is quite moving. These instances clearly show that she identifies herself with the suffering lot. With her "endurance and compassion" (p.558) she inspires a feeling of understanding that can best be judged from the last desire of dying Nostromo. He wishes to confess to Emilia the secret of silver. This gives her the status of a religious priest in a confessional. She comes there "monastically hooded" (p.558).
Leo Burko is of the view that, "Mrs. Gould suffers from a steady corrosion of her ties to the world." But on the contrary, whatever consolation she gets for her emotional estrangement from her husband, is mainly through her ties with the world. Schwarz gains a point when he observes about Mrs. Gould that:

Even while repressing her own sexuality, she provides a warmth, understanding and sympathy not only to her husband, Dr. Monygham, and the Viola family, but to Decoud, Sir John, and finally to Nostromo himself.

Mrs. Gould's greatest contribution, as a human being, is in the life of Dr. Monygham. The earlier experiences of Dr. Monygham had been horrifying. He suffered indignities at the hands of tyrant Guzman Bento who tortured him into making false confessions against his own friends. Until he comes in contact with Mrs. Gould, Dr. Monygham could not sufficiently recover from his nightmares. He had his "soul withered and shrunk by the shame of moral disgrace" (p. 431) resulting in a totally "misanthropic mistrust of mankind" (p. 432). Dr. Monygham is the only person who has his detachment intact and does not idealize his actions. He has no faith in economic interests and is highly sceptical of every political action. He shows a truly striking insight into the politico-economic history of Sulaco when he says to Mrs. Gould:

There is no peace and rest in the development of material interests. They have their laws,
and their justice. But it is founded on expediency and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back. (p.511)

Dr. Monygham's loyalty to the mine finds its embodiment in "the shape of a little woman (Emilia)... the delicate preciousness of her inner worth" (p. 431). His mind embittered by his past "now became implacable in the expansion of its tenderness" (p.431). We recall that his betrayal was the betrayal of friendship and now he has matured into cultivating a fidelity, an emotional bond with another human being. This is the only relationship in the novel where all material and physical considerations are neutralized out of existence, giving way to a transcendental level of relationship. Christopher Cooper observes in this context:

Monygham is rewarded in wholly spiritual terms, that is by friendship, a deep meaningful friendship with another man's wife. And it is because there is no physical basis to their relationship that Monygham's reward is so great.17

Through the relationship of Dr. Monygham and Mrs. Gould, observes Hunter, "altruism is offered to altruism."18 Since all other relations are motivated, this relationship becomes poignant. People of Sulaco had long considered Dr. Monygham a man without even common decencies but with "Mrs. Gould's
humanizing influence" (p. 45) he had recaptured the idea of respectability. This emphasizes the value of human relationships in *Nostromo*. F.R. Leavis considers Monygham as an ideal character. "Of all the characters", says Leavis, "the one nearest to self-sufficiency is Dr. Monygham."\(^{19}\) It is in Emilia's contact that Dr. Monygham has, at last, found some purpose in life - the faith in the futility of materialism, the faith in the permanence of human relationships through love. Hay is very right in remarking that Emilia-Monygham relationship epitomizes "the marriage of politics and morality which Conrad saw as perhaps unattainable goal of human history."\(^{20}\)

Another minor but a very significant character in the novel is Captain Mitchell. His faith in society is overwhelming. As a human being his portraiture is a great tribute to Conrad's skill. "It warms our hearts"\(^{21}\) as Curle puts it. He observes:

> ... as his complacency was devoid of conceit and as he had complete integrity of character, his standing in the community was a triumph of personality rather than a tribute to his intellectual equipment or his influence on the life of city.\(^{22}\)

He believes in social stability inspite of its total absence. He is an incorrigible optimist who thinks of the world as essentially good, an orderly place which can and does face and defeat the forces weakening its order. Despite the unsoundness of the doctrine Captain Mitchell is saved by his faith in society
and human relationships, whereas, Decoud is lost due to his involvement in the same socio-political order. The reason is not far to locate; Decoud fails because he never really subscribed to the social values. It is through Captain Mitchell that we get the first idea of the outer world and its relations with Sulaco.

The essence of all human relationships, Conrad recurrently emphasizes in *Nostromo*, is love and compassion which are totally out of bounds for the people whose lives are hounded by materialism. Taking materialism as it has come to invade the life of modern man and society, Conrad seems to ask, what could be the possible way for the life of peace and morality? Answers to these questions are deeply rooted in the complex world of human relationships, that Conrad presents over and again. *Nostromo* is one such example. Of course, *Nostromo* is not the final answer, for the political-economic realities are so dominant in this novel that human relationships seem to fade into background. An important sequel to *Nostromo*, therefore, is *The Secret Agent*.

II

In *The Secret Agent* (1907)* Conrad’s main thrust is on the relations within a lower-class family in modern society. It also explores the possibility of sentiment in such a representative

family. Once again, as in *Nostromo*, here is the vast world of human-interaction. Whereas *Nostromo* dramatizes the history of events in an underdeveloped nation, *The Secret Agent* presents a world of developed nation. In the background is the great city of London and in the foreground is the tragic life of Verloc family. *The Secret Agent* is "a simple tale" about life in a modern European city of London where no one seems to have a definite identity of his own. Every individual is struggling for his own security and survival and is lost in the process. People, throughout the novel, treat each other as means to an end, as articles of manipulation rather than as human entities. Conrad's ironic treatment extends not only to one or a few characters but goes beyond them to cover all cross-currents of relationships between people and social institutions. Conrad takes us in an altogether different society, compared to the one in *Nostromo*, but similar nonetheless, in the sense that both novels portray the different faces of squalor created by materialistic outlook.

Initially, the story appears to be of a lower class family without much expectations from life except a secure and reasonable living. The central motif of the novel is home, which every human being longs and works for. Family is an ancient and indispensable constituent of any civilized society. But, ironically, having achieved a particular level of civilized being the society itself becomes instrumental in breaking it down.
Conrad in his Author's Note insists that The Secret Agent is "Mrs. Verloc's story" (p. xiii), though it derives its title from Verloc's activities. Conrad's insistence can be justified, perhaps, on the ground that his emphasis is directed on the lasting values of love and compassion as embodied in the person of Mrs. Verloc.

The assumption in The Secret Agent is that society wrecked by economic rat-race and political cut-throatism has to be protected. This automatically means that the individual must also be preserved. The modern man, Conrad believes, has become the victim of "a philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every human effort" (p. 12). Yet Conrad's novels do basically deal with human efforts at solidarity and fraternity. Hawthorn rightly observes that:

The world of The Secret Agent is a world of 'private individuals' who have the appearance of self-sufficiency and independence, but who are related to one another in all sort of concealed but crucial ways... 23

Verloc is a typical Conradian hero of the second phase, self-centered, seeking security and safety, lethargic and avaricious. He moves between two political worlds, of anarchists on the one hand and is protected by police and foreign embassies on the other. But, personally he is committed to neither. He is a "thoroughly domesticated" (p. 5) person with not much of "spiritual, mental or physical needs" (p. 5). He is content to
find at home, "the ease of his body and the peace of conscience together with Mrs. Verloc's wifely attentions and Mrs. Verloc's mother's deferential regard" (pp. 5-6). Jocelyn Baines thinks that indolence is the sustaining base of Verlocs' relationships without which they can not live together and, "with it they are able to live insulated from each other, like two wires in an electric flex; the breaking of the insulation brings immediate disaster."²⁴

The Verloc family set-up seems to work well with all its members catering to the secret needs of each other. David Daiches terms it as "little domestic society,"²⁵ which falls apart when those secret needs are suddenly revealed. Verlocs have no children but Mrs. Verloc's maternal affections find their object in her half witted brother Stevie. Winnie's father was bitter that he produced a retarded son. He hated his son and could not have loved Winnie for protecting the object of his hate. Her mother's excessively sentimental love for Stevie prevents her from loving her daughter. Winnie, the non-recipient of filial compassion grows up to play almost the role of a surrogate mother for Stevie. All her personal happiness is absorbed in that role.

Since Winnie is a surrogate mother she can not think of being a daughter, sister or wife. Her relationship with Stevie, however redeeming it may be on a personal level, has a devastating impact on her marriage. Moser considers Stevie as a
rival figure in Winnie's marriage since Winnie prefers her brother above her husband. Moser seems to be unduly obsessed with the sexual undertones of the brother-sister relationship. Moser fails to understand that Winnie has a motherly instinct. Her protective love for Stevie reveals a deeper sense of human bond. Deprived of filial love, Winnie knew its value and desired Stevie to have it at all costs. So, in marrying Verloc she sought a father for her adopted son. All this does not mean that *The Secret Agent* is a very simple story of a woman's determination to protect the future of her own sibling. Like other stories of Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, too, is a complex story of woe, longing and suffering.

Conrad's concept of the "history of human experience" is contained in one word - suffering. Suffering in Conrad's novels involves the fate of an individual attempting desperately to wrest a life of peace and contentment in a world of discontent and disharmony. Verloc's attempts to maintain at least a semblance of peace, in such discontented world, are worthy of moral attention. Verloc, in truth, is a respectably married man, given to maintain himself and his wife in comfort and security of home. We even approve of the moral insulation that has kept this couple contented in their decent marital domestic fold. The ease-loving middle class citizen, Verloc, gets involved in a dangerous situation. C.B. Cox calls him, "a typical domestic bourgeois." Verloc has, in his own way, a
fidelity to the idea of social stability, mainly, of course, because of his lethargic temperament. He is out to disclose the plans of anarchists, "his mission in life being the protection of social mechanism" (p.15). But ironically every step that he takes is in the direction of destroying that mechanism. The ideology of social stability he follows is represented by a person like Vladimir.

Vladimir believes in no establishment, no system or social institution. The idea of human bond through marriage and family is contemptible to him. Forming an "attachment" is "doing away with your usefulness" (p. 36) opines Vladimir. For him, royalty and religion are no more respected and therefore no more needed by humanity. He tells Verloc that "the sacrosanct fetish of today is science" (p.31). And the greatest utility of science, Vladimir thinks, is in the convenience that it can extend to anarchists for the purpose of destruction. Without this the survival of society and emergence of a new order could not be visualized. For Verloc such an ideology seems to be a suitable arrangement since it provides for his own livelihood and the well-being of his family. But he does not visualize the dangers involved.

The Secret Agent presents two contrasting worlds. First is the world of Verloc's, a quiet world of family life. It is a family knit together by mutual acceptance of relationships, with
Mrs. Verloc at the center. Contrasted to this is the world of anarchy represented by Vladimir. The first world consists of domestic expectations and emotional dependence in family relationships. In spite of the seeming indifference of the Verlocs' relationship there is an element of intimacy and concern that works as a catalyst. The following dialogue from the text would prove the point effectively. It is between husband and wife:

"I don't feel very well", he muttered passing his hands on his moist brow.

"Giddiness?"

"Yes. Not at all well...."

"You'll catch cold standing there" (p. 57).

Conrad describes this inter-dependence and mutual indispensability of Winnie - Verloc bond as "the sentiment of appreciation, stirred by display of something resembling emotion" (p. 59).

The most moving relationship in the novel centers round Stevie. Winnie, Verloc and others are related to Stevie in a complex vortex of emotions and sentiments. For the quiet looking and submissive Winnie the main source of sustenance is her brother and not her husband. She had quietly ignored her feelings for the butcher's son, mainly because she thought Verloc could provide the security of home to her brother and mother. Meyer believes that "psychologically, Stevie... is Winnie's child."
And to complete the family picture, Winnie thinks of Verloc and Stevie as "father and son" (p. 187). Winnie's mother could never see why Winnie had ever married Verloc. But Winnie, on her part, had come to have a satisfactory arrangement with Verloc. "He was a good husband and she had a loyal respect for his rights" (p. 191). To Winnie marriage is a matter of convenience, and not at all born out of affection and warmth of love. She is a dutiful wife. Oliver Warner's observation about Winnie is very precise. He remarks, "she accepts; she works; she does not ask questions." Verloc's attitudes, too, are equally doctrinaire. Conrad tells us that Verloc, "was fond of his wife as a man should be - " (p. 186). Both have taken each other for granted. It seems to be a love-less family life but it works all right. Of course, in her brooding moments, Winnie is not without regrets. "This abode of her married life appeared to her as lonely and unsafe as though it had been situated in the midst of a forest" (p. 201).

This accurately describes a typical family set-up in modern society. Like every other relationship, the relationship of husband - wife too has its own limitations. When Winnie realizes the extent of her husband's involvement in Stevie's death, the very foundation of her being seems to give away. Right from her early days hers has been "a life of simple purpose and of a noble unity of inspiration" (p. 242), to protect her brother at all costs. With Stevie gone for ever she feels betrayed and free -
free from the bonds of marriage with Verloc. In a single stroke
two supports of her existence, trust and love, crumble.

Conrad's women epitomize devotion but it is their lot to
live or die unrequited. Mrs. Verloc's mother is another example
of the futility of good action in today's society. She goes away
to live in the alms house so as not to impose strain on Verloc's
generosity. She sacrifices the old-age comforts of her
daughter's home in the hope that her share of attentions would
fall into her son, Stevie's lot. In the general set-up of the
novel which is dominated by egoism, it seems queer to perceive
the altruism of Mrs. Verloc and her mother who are both eager to
go to any extent and stoop to any level for Stevie. Allan
Hunter's observation appears to be very scientific when he says
that, "they are inherently - genetically - predisposed to acts of
abnegation that Conrad saw as typical of women."

Winnie, Emilia, Jewel are few of the many women of Conrad
whose devotion is wasted in the face of ideals or ideas cherished
by their men. For instance, Winnie feels completely alienated
after the death of her brother. Stevie is a major source of
familial tension in The Secret Agent. While his death affects
Winnie adversely, Verloc too, can not escape the devastating
impact of Stevie's death. While Winnie feels alienated, Verloc
loses all communication with his wife. The growing hostility
between Winnie and Verloc has been variously interpreted.
Meyer describes the scene in which Winnie plunges her domestic knife into Verloc and kills him. At that moment Winnie resembles Stevie, but soon after the murder that resemblance disappears. To Meyer this is a very significant change because here Stevie and Winnie have become one. Meyer observes:

... the murdered Stevie becomes united with his murdering sister-mother. 'Mother' and 'son' become one, sharing an ancient elemental enmity towards the 'father'.

Here comes an end of all relationships between Winnie and her husband. But life is an eternal search for warmth of love and security; inspite of all the hurts and humiliations, Conrad suggests, life's forfeiture is not within an easy range of human courage. In the vast world of human associations Winnie finds that she has no obligations any more and feels free. But she does not know what to do with her newly acquired freedom. She contemplates suicide but the life-instinct gets the better of her fear and she begins to weave a highly subjective system of morality and a private code of conduct. It is very interesting to observe that Winnie does not renounce her hopes in life despite the goary tragedy she has recently come out of. Absolutely free now she takes to Ossipon who appears to her "a radiant messenger of life" (p.274). She thinks of Ossipon as her last link with life - life as a private treasure and no more a public obligation. Richard Curle is highly sympathetic to Mrs. Verloc. He pities her for going to Ossipon because, contrary to
Winnie's aspiration Ossipon is a man who is given to survive, "on silly girls with savings-bank books" (p.53). Curle observes that, "of all the men in London the unfortunate girl could not have chosen a more worthless confidant than Ossipon."32

Irrespective of the fact that Ossipon has no genuine commitment, Winnie must find some one to devote herself to. Allan Hunter argues that Winnie's life is meaningful only in so far as "she can devote herself to others.... Ossipon represents her last chance for selfless devotion."33 She even tries to strike a deal with Ossipon but fails. She entreats him, "I will work for you. I will slave for you.... I won't ask you to marry me" (p.289). When Ossipon deserts her she kills herself since she has no one to work for. Winnie is an example, in Conrad, of the feminine devotion transforming into a relational value. However, Winnie's death cancels out this possibility. But the irony here is that this possibility is frustrated not because of any inherent limitation of the feminine soul but because of the limits of relationships in a male-dominated world. Winnie's life has been a compromise between her loyalty towards her family and an effort at satisfying her feminine instincts.

In Conrad's novels, the individual is the ultimate source of hope and optimism against the frenzy and madness of a dehumanizing materialistic society. Berthoud rightly observes that ultimately the social institutions survive "on the strength of its members' capacity to disregard the madness and despair
that infects them. An extremely lucid example of such an individual is Stevie in The Secret Agent. The half-witted brother of Mrs. Verloc seems to be the only fully human and sane character in the story, with a strong sense of pity and compassion for every type of suffering. Stevie, in his own way, knows that love can be an effective substitute for all inhuman and violent ways of man in society. While Verloc's anarchist friends pretend to adopt postures of social responsibilities, Stevie, as Stephen Land perceives, "shows a genuine social conscience and true sympathy for the poor and the oppressed." Stevie's concerns are larger than the London society can contain. He has equal sympathy for the human as well as the animal. When Stevie entreats the cab-driver not to whip the horse, we have an insight into the 'lunatic's' sanity contrasted to the insanity of London society permeated with politics and anarchic squalor. Stevie's sympathy for the horse is a commentary on man's inhuman and cruel ways. His sympathy for the cab-driver, on the other hand, is a sad comment on society. In this society, dominated by extra moral considerations the threat to family becomes imminent. Even the cab-driver is aware of the world's hostility to the individual and his longing for a peaceful family life. The necessity for family ties is quite visibly strong in the cabman's observation. He tells Stevie, "I have got my missus and four kids at 'ome... this ain't an easy world" (p.166). Stevie feels so strongly for their suffering that he has a desire to take them
into "a bed, of compassion" (p. 168).

Stevie is a compassionate soul but that does not necessarily mean that he is capable of understanding the world. Winnie alone is the person who can understand this particular dilemma of Stevie. Winnie knows that Stevie is upset by the world because he does not understand it. And to understand is to accept. The painful irony of it all is that Stevie's compassion derives from his madness. Obviously, Conrad seems to suggest that in an insane world the only merit of sanity is the compassion of a mad man. Stevie is an embodiment of simplicity and positive morality. But the society in which he lives is complex and tends to eliminate simplicity. The simple ones are not allowed to exist. Suresh Raval rightly observes that in the disintegrating world, "integrity and sincerity exist only in a crazed nihilist like the Professor, or a congenitally defective boy like Stevie." 36 John Batchelor notices that the "novel's moral positives are found clustered around Stevie." 37 It is in the portrayal of Stevie that Conrad does some serious thinking on madness and castigates the madness of the world in general.

Apart from Stevie there are quite a number of individuals in The Secret Agent who deserve our attention. But we have to be very careful in assessing their position both as individuals and also as members of a wider human community. They are individuals no doubt, but they have no identities, in a way they are faceless. This is also the reason why unlike Stevie, many of
them have no specific name – they are nameless, cogs in a larger social machine consuming and consumed. To these nameless individuals possibilities of relationships are denied. They enter into relationships that are purely functional and are devoid of the subtleties and complexities of community bond. Whatever potentials for human relationships they have are either frustrated because of their professionalism or consumed by the fire of their passion for an abstract ideal.

As opposed to the family group of Verloc’s, there is the rival world of anarchists and police. These two constituents of the second group seem, apparently, to represent different ideologies but ultimately “both come from the same basket” (p. 69), as the Professor puts it. The Professor is opposed to any “conventional morality” (p. 68) and “social order” (p. 68) as advocated by revolutionists like Ossipov and his friends. The Professor, the son of a preacher father, who preached compassion, turns out to be an “individualist by temperament” (p. 80). This man of “humble origin” and “human” (p. 80) heart with detonator in his pocket, finds himself “lost in the crowd” and “seeking for peace in common with the rest of the mankind” (p. 81). The Professor’s value can not be expressed in terms of the truth of lived relations because he denies the legitimacy of all relations. His views strike one as brilliant but offer only a fragmentary insight.
Karl Yundt, Michaelis and Ossipon are not the hardcored crime-fringed revolutionists. Despite all revolutionary jargon, Conrad insists, they are essentially the men with human impulse. All they aspire to achieve is to change the society and mould it in conformity with individual ideologies. These impractical intellectuals sometimes inspire a sense of pity and deserve our sympathy. Eloise knapp Hay’s approach to them is very humane. She says:

The revolutionists Ossipon, Michaelis and Yundt are pathetic enough in their general unfitness for survival but still more so in the way each contradicts himself while promoting the theories....

Not that their ideologies are justifiable but their frustrations have not created such complexes in them as to convert them into nihilists. All three of them, at sometime or other, have some relationship with women, which may not be love but which at least is expressive of their need for human warmth and intimacy. Conrad tells us that they all, “had women to fall back upon” (p.54). They all depend upon the goodwill of their respective women. Ossipon lives on girls’ bank balance, Yundt is nursed by his former lover, Michaelis lives by the good books of his Patroness.

The social establishment which is to be sustained by the police inspector Heat is a structure where all classes are degraded. There is no difference between policemen and
criminals. But inspite of his awareness of the facts about
social system, Heat has not become a complete cynic. He still
believes in personal relationships and uses the private
information from Verloc for his professional benefit without
harming Verloc's interests and survival. Heat realizes the
value of human life and is moved by "the force of sympathy" (p.
88), at the thoughts of "pangs of inconceivable agony" (p. 87) at
Stevie's death by explosion. The incident had "forced upon him
the general idea of absurdity of things human" (p.91). Stevie's
death reminds Heat of the "strong hold" (p.94) that life has on
him. Conrad, repeatedly, speaks of the humanity of inspector
Heat which in no way is a compromise on his efficiency and
fidelity to his duty. His notions of human relationships extend
to include even the thieves in his life - fold. He feels
sympathetic affinity to the thieves as "they were his fellow-
citizens, gone wrong because of their imperfect education"
(p.92). Both need each other to exist, for crime and anarchy
without opposition from establishment, and establishment without
these elements of destruction is unimaginable.

The Secret Agent is Conrad's picture of man-made society -
the dark and sinister world of London - where every thing dazzles
by its sad meaninglessness, where helpless humans struggle like
trapped animals and are crushed under the burden of civilization.
It is a world in which science has failed to relate itself to
human emotions, an individual has failed to identify himself with
another's sufferings and human beings have failed to be honest in their relationships. Conrad insistently suggests that human beings will have to develop effective communication with each other and for that feelings are simply not enough. We need a strong base for moral conduct that can raise us above our immediate needs.

III

*Under Western Eyes* (1911)* must be linked with *The Secret Agent* as both are bomb-scarred novels of revolution. In *Under Western Eyes* Conrad expands his area of exposition from Democratic Europe to Communist Russia. Not that a particular political -ism interested him; it is the individual, living and suffering, under these patterns of society that concerned Conrad. His main thrust is on "the aspect, the character, and the fate of the individuals" and the "moral and emotional reactions of the Russian temperament to the pressure of tyrannical lawlessness" (p.viii) as Conrad writes in his Author's Note to the novel. Conrad's later works are marked by a distinct division of mankind into two rival groups - good and bad - the former embodied in the west and the later in Russian society. Douglas Hewitt offers a fine point of distinction between the two. He observes:

The morass of mistaken loyalties, tyranny, deception and shame is, we are constantly informed, a particularly Russian phenomenon. To a great extent, in fact, evil is given a local habitation and a name in Russia. The emphasis throughout is that we — the West — are not tainted by this form of evil.

*Under Western Eyes* expresses Conrad's true and bitter feelings of hatred for Russia. He considered Russia responsible for the death of his parents and it always angered him to be compared, even in a remote way, with the greatest of the Russian writers. As compared to other novels of Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*, looks less hopelessly on the human wickedness. Razumov, the protagonist, tries to remain aloof and withdrawn but fails, and gets involved in a complex political — human situation. Like many other heroes of Conrad he is alone in the world, with no official record of his parentage except that he is a Russian. We are told that, "no home influences had shaped his opinions or his feelings.... The word Razumov was the mere label of a solitary individuality" (p. 10).

Focussing on the absence of the warmth and intimacy of personal relationships in the life of Razumov, Conrad wishes to emphasize a sense of waste in the life of an individual. In Razumov, Conrad presents a case of split personality. In the absence of personal ties, Razumov attempts to rise on social ladder, just for the sake of it. He has no one to care for him and no one for whom to care. The result is sheer nothingness.
Infact, the lack of family ties appears to be the main reason for his intense careerism. The greatest quality that proves to be a sort of tragic flaw in his character, is that he inspired confidence in the people. Even strangers would confide in him and this is how he gets entangled, inadvertently, in a complex political situation with destructive consequences to himself. Daniel Schwarz puts it aptly when he remarks that Under Western Eyes is a "dialectical novel whose central agony is conflict between political and personal values." 40

Razumov, whose only ambition remains to be an academic success, finds himself thrown in with the wild lot of Haldin, the revolutionist - murderer of Mr. de P -, the minister of the state. Razumov's desire for distinction in academic world is associated with his awareness of its futility since his success would matter to no one. But this does not embitter him towards his fellow men. He has a natural human instinct for relationships and a desire to be recognized and even loved. He broods, "a man's real life is accorded to him in the thoughts of other man by reason of respect or natural love" (p.14). In terms of Conrad's progression of the thought of individual and human relationships Razumov's character not only shows a distinct awareness of personal and social bonds but is an expression and confirmation of the necessity of such relationships. His urge for "an honoured name" (p.14) is the part of this expression. When Haldin approaches him for his help to escape from the city

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police, Razumov’s dreams of personal progress are threatened into
annihilation, "the sentiment of his life being utterly ruined by
this contact with such a crime" (p. 16).

The society and the world of human beings, by which Razumov
had longed to be honoured and loved, definitely did not include
an anarchist like Haldin. But Haldin felt ‘confidence’ in
Razumov’s "superior mind" and that some day he would "help to
build" (p. 19) Russian society. The irony of Haldin-Razumov
relationship is that Haldin considers Razumov a fit instrument
for his plan, whereas, Razumov considers Haldin as an agent of
destruction for his plans. Haldin’s feeling of affinity with
Razumov for the ‘cause’ is the beginning of an end for Razumov.
Haldin has selected Razumov for his task, since the later has no
family, and therefore, as Haldin understands, nothing to lose.
Razumov rejects the human appeal of Haldin since he wanted to
save whatever he had, for himself. He wished to keep his ideas
of social success intact through his academic pursuits. He
contemplates that, "others had father, mother, brothers,
relations, connexions, to move heaven and earth on their behalf –
he had no one" (p. 21).

It must be noticed that like all other protagonists of
Conrad Razumov’s mother is dead. Until the story opens he has
seen his father – Prince K – only once in his life; he has not
forgotten the warmth of that hand-clasp. Razumov represents an
individual’s urge for family and friends not merely for emotional
support but for material well being and recognition of one's achievements. With the arrival of Haldin Razumov feels the harmony of his existence endangered. Having no ties it is natural that he treats Russia as his family and gets inclined to the regime. The present institution appeared quite "rational" (p.21) to him, having "a force of harmony" (p.21), whereas Haldin's presence marked a "horrible discord" (p. 21). Not that Razumov had a particular leaning towards this "despotic government" (p. 25), but by implicating himself he did not wish to sink in the "lowest social depths" (p. 26). As a human being, on the other hand, he found it difficult to reject a simple human appeal for help. He, therefore, goes to convey Haldin's message to Ziemianitch to meet him with a carriage for Haldin's escape. His notions of Haldin's 'cause', however, are shattered on seeing the dirty, drunken Ziemianitch. His sense of human decency is outraged at the degenerate appearance of the "bright Russian soul" (p.31).

Razumov, who had loved his country because he had "nothing but that to love" (p.34), had no desire to see his future ruined at the hands of Haldin the "fanatic" (p.34). But the thought of giving Haldin up to the authorities, made Razumov restless with a feeling that he was betraying a human being. C.B. Cox assesses this betrayal as caused by Razumov's "fear of his own skin, and instinct for self-preservation." At this stage it is difficult to say that Razumov was afraid for his own safety. Had it been

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so he would not have gone to Ziemianitch to convey Haldin’s message. It was only when he saw Ziemianitch’s drunken and unclean state that he realized the futility of his efforts to help Haldin. Even while going to Prince K—to report on Haldin, Razumov’s conflict can not be overlooked. In the heart of his hearts he did not feel "a bond of common faith, a common conviction" (p. 38) with Haldin. So where was the question of betrayal? In fact he goes to Prince K—because he longs for someone to advise him, to give him moral support and to understand him which is, according to Conrad, "a universal aspiration" (p. 39). Conrad comments sympathetically, with no tinge of irony, that "Razumov... amongst eighty millions of his kith and kin, had no heart to which he could open himself" (p. 38).

The Razumov-Haldin relationship is based on one-sided trust. It is Haldin’s error of judgement that he ever put his trust in Razumov. Jacques Berthoud considers Razumov morally reprehensible since "Razumov has not undeceived him (Haldin). On the contrary, he has acted as if to justify this confidence...." 42 It is through this breach of trust that the code of honour is violated and Razumov’s action, like Jim’s, becomes an act of self-betrayal. Critical opinion on this has been very divided and controversial. Leo Gurko is of the opinion that Razumov betrays Haldin out of "pure self love," 43 Whereas Mrs. Hay observes:

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Razumov never felt simple remorse for having sent a fellow mortal to death, for this kind of contrition was always overshadowed by insistence in his mind on the criminality of Haldin's action.\textsuperscript{44}

Bruce Johnson finds it difficult to accept the views of Leo Gurko and Mrs. Hay because, "the two views are extreme in opposite direction: the one gives the betrayal no colouring of moral integrity, the other too much."\textsuperscript{45}

It is easier to agree with Bruce Johnson rather than Gurko and Hay since both fail to take the human limitations of a sensitive character like Razumov, into account. After going through the hell of uncertainty between his humanity to Haldin and loyalty to what he thinks is right, Razumov gives Haldin up to Tsarist authorities. On human considerations, that include considerations of his own safety, he decides to keep Ziemianitch out of the picture for whom he had begun to feel a tenderness now, having beaten him, earlier, remorselessly. The mystery of relationships is so baffling, Razumov wonders what could have induced Haldin to choose him for help. After all Razumov had no one to think of, whereas Haldin had all sorts of ties. He was "a son, a brother, a nephew, a cousin... to no end of people" (p.61). Razumov was "just a man... who had never heard a word of warm affection or praise in his life...." (p.61). Meyer perceives in \textit{Under Western Eyes} Conrad's confessional account of his own sense of isolation. Meyer tries to trace similarity
between Razumov's and Conrad's emotional needs. He observes:

Perhaps of all of Conrad's writings Under Western Eyes conveys most poignantly his own sense of isolation, his intense longing for human warmth and that unappeasable hunger for physical contact which confers such profound and unspoken significance upon the memory of a hand pressed by a father's hand and of a head cradled within the soft embrace of a mother's arms.

It was a perennial source of sorrow for Conrad to think of his mother who died an untimely death. Razmov speaks to Nathalie in his diary, "I was afraid of your mother. I never knew mine.... There is something in the mere word." (p.360).

Razmov has two types of social links or social traditions—the first represented by the "thinkers" (p. 82) of the university who connect him to Haldin and secondly the Tsarist authority embodied in general T. Both suffer from a "human folly" (p. 83) to link Razmov to their respective 'cause’. The former's cause being the liberation of Russia and the latter's being the protection of it. Razmov falls under the curse of being misunderstood by both the groups and proceeds to Geneva as a double agent.

Haldin, along with his mother and sister Nathalie, forms a closely knit family group. Haldin reminiscently speaks of his father as "a simple servant of God" and "the soul of obedience" (p.23). His sister had "the most trustful eyes of any human being that ever walked this earth" (p.22). The relationship of
intimacy between brother and sister held a great fascination for Conrad. He had already depicted the significance of these loving ties in *Nostromo*, between Decoud and Antonia, in *The Secret Agent*, between Winnie and Stevie, and repeats it in *Under Western Eyes*, between Haldin and Nathalie. Haldin’s mother can not give up praying for her son, though in Russia the Church stands for oppression. Haldin is a believer, too, like his mother. Belief in God symbolizes man’s hope and trust in goodness, love and light through human bonds. Human relationships exist irrespective of the forms of government. They are rooted in mutual trust and faith that emanate from God. For Haldin’s mother belief in God presupposes that in Judas. Nathalie, too, suggests the same when she tells her mother that Haldin might have been the victim of betrayal by some “false friend” or “cowardly creature” (p.117). Without being aware of it both mother and daughter are referring to Razumov who is shortly going to appear before them as Haldin’s best friend. His mother can not endure the thought that her son died due to some mistake of his own. She needs to hold someone else responsible for Haldin’s death to retain the image that she had formed him during his lifetime.

Razumov, the betrayer, comes to Geneva to fall in love with Haldin’s sister. Razumov was the only one about whom Haldin had written to Nathalie admiringly, as one of “unstained, lofty and solitary existences” (p. 135). Through her dead brother,
Nathalie gets interested in the living Razumov but not so her mother. The mother has lost her son and there can not be any substitute for him. Nathalie, despite the loss of her brother, finds in Razumov a sustenance for the impulses of her youth and is thus less pessimistic than her mother. Richard Curle’s comparative analysis of mother and sister must be produced in full to get to the heart of their respective reactions to Razumov. Curle observes:

People in her (mother’s) mental condition can have their moments of piercing intuition, and possibly her distrust of Razumov was as instinctive as was Nathalie’s trust. In a sense, indeed, the mother’s passion, tragic as it was, was less terrible than Nathalie’s. Both had lost their dearest, who was ‘all in all’ to them, but while the mother, dreadful as her dreams may have been — for if she now believed her son to be alive, she knew after the manner of such hallucinations that something was terribly wrong somewhere — was fading into oblivion and death — the daughter, even through her sorrow, was grasping at a new happiness which was despairingly to elude her. It is witness to unconquerable fineness of her nature that after the first blast had spent itself ("It is impossible to be more unhappy"), Nathalie Haldin did not allow this appalling experience to poison her humanity or her idealism.... And once again she looked forward with fervour that adds music to her sentiments.  

The position of Razumov, on the other hand, is very painfully embarrassing. He discovers the falsity of his position in his relation to the revolutionaries in Geneva, which in itself is a great source of his restlessness. But to face
Haldin's mother and sister makes it doubly difficult for him. Both expect from him some definite information about Haldin and even some consolation in their sorrow. And that is precisely what he can not give. Now that Razumov is thrown into closer contacts with others, he is no more an ambitious and isolated intellectual. However, every relationship at this stage, suffers from a set-back of duplicity. He betrays the confidence of Geneva revolutionary group by writing about the activities to the Russian police; he betrays the trust of Haldin's mother and sister by posing as Haldin's closest friend. His conscience begins to stir for having sent Haldin to death, while he finds himself leaning towards Nathalie Haldin. Leo Gurko observes:

The instant he begins to love someone the foundations of his pure self-love are undermined, and he can no longer stand on his old good. At the same time he makes the agonizing discovery that his attachment to Russia, deriving from self-interest, has been fed by betrayal and deception and is, therefore, itself a deception.48

It is through his love for Nathalie that the truth about the falsity of his action comes to surface. The light of understanding dawns upon him. Leo Gurko refers to the meaning of the name Razumov, which in Polish Russian means understanding. "His journey through the novel is an exercise in understanding," comments Leo Gurko. Razumov realizes that in giving Haldin up "it is myself whom I have given up to destruction" (p.341). Through contact with Nathalie the truth
of his existence comes home to Razumov's heart. This, in Conrad, is the civilizing influence and the humanizing impact of love that "releases men from the suffocation of narcissism and emptiness of non-involvment" as Gurko puts it. If we look at Razumov's existence, in retrospect, everything seems to fall in a pattern. Old Mrs. Haldin has lost her son and Razumov has no mother. Nathalie presents all possibilities of future wife to him, and What he has been seeking all along - a family. Infact, it was the original plan of the novel. So in marrying Nathalie, Razumov "would have married a family - Haldin's," as Frederick Karl analyses it.

The greatest contradiction in Razumov's thinking is that he hates Haldin while loving his sister. Earlier, he could not "shake him off" (p.341) and now "it was she who had been haunting him" (p.342). Presence of Nathalie constantly reminds him of the truth that he is trying to conceal. He suffers as much confronting the innocence of Nathalie as he had suffered the fatality of her brother's actions. For Razumov it seems to be a painful history to repeat. Eloise Knapp Hay offers a deeper insight into Razumov's tension. She comments:

... surrendering to her will be in part surrendering and exonerating Haldin whom he must continue to abhor as a criminal if he is to be true to himself. If he loves her without living up the convictions that made him betray Haldin, he will be 'stealing a soul.' Haldin's soul, as it lives on through her.
John Saveson refers to Guerard's objection about Razumov's temptation to "steal the soul" of Haldin's sister as "not credible". Saveson calls it "sadistic emotion." Saveson argues that Razumov had that tendency shown in his thrashing of Ziemianitch and in his impulse to strangle Haldin during the last interview.

Saveson's analysis appears to be highly unsympathetic. In his encounters with Haldin and Ziemianitch, Razumov is caught unawares and, therefore, he behaves the way he does. Whereas in his encounter with Nathalie his feeling is changed; that was anger, this is love. Razumov's inner peace is restored when he comes under the harmonizing influence of Nathalie. He achieves moral completeness due to her love. "It is the moving force of his redemption and shows his moral advancement," observes Christopher Cooper while tracing the concept of moral role of love in Conrad's novels. David Daiches sees Haldin's relation with Nathalie as "his most testing relationship" since she "sees in him her only contact with her adored brother and is ready to hero-worship him." In the ultimate analysis it is Nathalie who induces in Razumov a need to confess. His confession is not the result of his feeling of guilt towards the revolutionaries; it is his love for Nathalie which stirs an inner conflict in him. Frederick Karl attributes Razumov's ultimate self-discovery to Nathalie's love. He maintains that:
Razumov recognizes his own impurity confronted by Miss Haldin's trust. Through love and trust Razumov attains self-knowledge and realizes that in betraying Haldin he has most basely betrayed himself.57

Confession becomes a moral need for Razumov but what he does not realize is that in doing so he has destroyed Nathalie's love. Allan Hunter concludes from this that, "the man has followed his ideals, the woman has followed the man, even though she takes second place."58 One important reason for Razumov's confession is his need to communicate with others, without which he can not know himself. Right from the beginning he has led an isolated existence and by lying he is still more isolated. He has the pressing urge to open up to someone. Till he shares the secret of his knowledge with someone he would continue to keep himself separated from other people. So confession becomes his personal need too. Jeremy Hawthorn gives a fine analysis of Razumov's mind at this juncture. He observes:

Once thought is locked away from other people, from the pressure of reality with which it must make contact, then it can become uncontrollable. Razumov discovers that he can not just go on maintaining sanity and mental equilibrium while living a lie to other people.59

He has struggled hard, all along, to maintain his independence from the human community but has, in the end, to surrender to its demands. His confession is the evidence of "the pull of human solidarity,"60 as Bruce Johnson observes. Razumov, in his

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diary, writes to Nathalie, "I am independent -- and therefore perdition is my lot" (p.362).

A new dimension of man-woman relationship, which Conrad introduced in *Nostromo* through Mrs. Gould and Dr. Monygham continues to make appearance in *Under Western Eyes* through Miss Haldin and the Language Teacher. It seems to be a Platonic form of friendship based on non-sexuality in mutual leanings. Nathalie and the Teacher continue to need each other even after Nathalie’s English learning is over. There is no physical attraction between them. Their mutual contributions in each others’ lives have been mainly in the nature of filling an emotional void. The following conversation between them makes the point clear:

"You are quite right" I said. "I think very highly of you".

"Don’t suppose I don’t know it", she began hurriedly. "Your friendship has been very valuable".*

"I have done little else but look on". She was a little flushed under the eyes.

"There is a way of looking on which is valuable. I have felt less lonely because of it.* It is difficult to explain".

"Really? Well, I too have felt less lonely.* That is easy to explain though..." (p.134).

Here Conrad could have, as well, been referring to his own relationship with Marguerite Foradowska.

* Emphasis mine

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Nathalie tells Razumov that she has given her "confidence" (p.178) to the Language Teacher and that he was a "great support in our sorrow and distress" (p.178). The word confidence seems to be a deliberate repetition by Conrad. The same role of a responsible friend, Haldin had expected Razumov to play since Razumov inspired "confidence" (p.19). The Language Teacher, in his compassionate way, is "favourably impressed" (p.179) by Razumov but Razumov does not very much appreciate Nathalie having placed her confidence in "this elderly person - this foreigner" (p.179). At times one get the impression of rival - figures in the persons of Razumov and Language Teacher, but the later is too mature and too understanding to degrade himself even with the thought of Razumov as a rival. Razumov, on his part, takes an instant disliking for the Teacher. Suresh Raval has a fine comment to make. He observes:

The Teacher seems diabolical to Razumov because his is the reflective, though reticent, consciousness capable of penetrating Razumov's darker motives, as well as his intentions towards Natalia. And at a subtler displaced level Razumov's attitude to the English Teacher is a re-enactment of his response to Haldin.61

In Under Western Eyes Conrad vents his distrust of all forms of political ideologies. In The Secret Agent he attacks the democratic process wherein all individuals are crushed under the weight of freedom. In Under Western Eyes Conrad proposes to prove that individual sufferings are the same whether they are
for communist ideology in Russia or against it in Geneva. European society has an edge, to boast, over Russian autocracy that has nothing to boast of. Conrad, in *Autocracy and War*, does not hide his abhorrence of Russian oppression. He strongly believes that, "Russia ... is a negation of everything ... that has its roots in reason and conscience."⁶² But Conrad has a word of caution for the lovers of democracy if it is to survive. He says, "democracy which has elected to pin its faith to the supremacy of material interests, will have to fight their battles to the bitter end, on a mere pittance ..."⁶³

In his portraiture of minor characters in *Under Western Eyes* Conrad's stress remains on human relationships. Sophia's attitude, as for example, towards Russian society is "retributive" (p.262), because her family suffered by its autocratic establishment. Her father hardly ever had a life to live, "no joy had lighted up his laborious days... he laboured, he suffered and he died" (p. 262). Man needs love, respect and sympathy but in the Russian society there is "nothing except perhaps a beggarly dole of bread —" (p.262). On personal level the only source of Sophia's joy is her love for Yakovlitch and on ideological plane she remains the follower of Peter Ivanovitch who, she feels, is 'an inspired man" (p. 382). She may never realize the fact of her erroneous assessment of Peter Ivanovitch but she does achieve the maturity to comprehend the truth of her love for Yakovlitch. She even tells Nathalie Haldin, "it is
good for you to believe in love" (p. 331), the only human feeling
that can guarantee lasting peace.

John Batchelor notices the significance of Sophia's role as
a narrator towards the end of the novel, as Conrad shifts it from
the Language Teacher. It is through her that we get the final
view of the characters, their reality and relationships. She
briefs the Language Teacher about Razumov who has come to be
considered as an ascetic and a prophet in Russia, Nikita has been
exposed as a double agent, Madame de S left all her money for her
relatives rather than for her parasite — Peter Ivanovitch,
because he disappointed her by marrying a peasant girl without
completing his task in Geneva. The important thing that has to
be observed behind Sophia's reporting is that all these
enthusiasts and so-called revolutionaries have come back to
Russia, without changing its society. They have compromised with
whatever ideals it extols since all including Nathalie have come
to appreciate that there is no ideal greater than the ideal of
love that binds all human beings together.

Tekla's life story is a moving reiteration of Razumov's own
life. She narrates her tale of woes to Razumov. The openness
and sincerity of her narration is contrasted with the story of
Peter Ivanovitch who had escaped the autocracy of Russia only to
be an autocrat in his own right. Tekla, on the other hand,
escaped her autocratic family, to remain humble and sincere till
end. Ivanovitch, who claims to have worked for the liberation of lower classes, practically tortures Tekla, the representative of that very class. Despite all his sufferings, Ivanovitch has no compassion for those who undergo the same sufferings. Tekla strikes a note on extolling the virtue of love and compassion by devoting herself to look after the maimed Razumov. Tekla "the good samaritan finds her true identity in self-sacrifice" observes C.B. Cox. She hates all political bodies and wished people to grow more loving. Through her instinct, she rightly understands Ivanovitch as a despot and advises Razumov not to bring Nathalie into his fold. Razumov, in the end, attains the long-denied love through Tekla. Thus atleast before death, Razumov is able to attain the bliss of childlike emotional coziness in the arms of a loving mother; a woman who appears to be carrying a sense of ultimate salvation for Conrad's heroes. Razumov's salvation seems to be a desperate affair but is "made possible only by the genuine selflessness, the positive sainthood" of Tekla as David Daiches puts it.

Nathalie, who having suffered the loss of her brother and her mother and who could not get herself to believe in her lover, did at last believe that:

... the future will be merciful to us all. Revolutionist and reactionary, victim and executioner, betrayer and betrayed, they shall all be pitied together when the light breaks on our black sky at last. Pitied and forgotten; for without that there can be no union and no love. (p.253)
In Nathalie Haldin Conrad has presented his version of ideal womanhood. She does not allow her horrifying experience to destroy her humanity and idealism. The idea of progression in the life of an individual, in relation to human beings, gets an upward thrust with the hope and need for mutual love and sympathy, in the political novels of Conrad.
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