

J O S E P H C O N R A D ' S W O M E N .

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PART 1 : Introduction.

- Fiction, says Conrad, in "A Personal Record",
- (a) "after all is but truth often dragged out of a well, and clothed in the painted robe of imagined phrases". From whatever aspect we regard the novels of Joseph Conrad, we must note, above all things, the author's aim at truth. Whether it be as artist, story-teller, or psychologist, Conrad seeks truth of presentation. His whole conception of art is the revelation of truth.
- (b) He says : "art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential -- their one illuminating and convincing quality -- the very truth of their existence".

But the mere bringing to light of the truth, is not in itself sufficient, although it may justify the writer of fiction to some extent. There must be also a sincere endeavour to follow that truth, dragged from the well, or snatched from the "remorseless rush of time",

- (a) "A Personal Record" - P. 152.
- (b) "Nigger of the Narcissus" - Preface, P. 7.

- and to hold it up before the eyes of mankind, unflinchingly. And, in return for such a task accomplished -- "behold! -- all the truth of life is there : a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile -- and the return to an eternal rest".
- (a)

This idea of Conrad's, of fidelity to truth, is best expressed in a very famous passage from the Preface to the "Nigger of the Narcissus":-

- (b) "To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes and in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth -- disclose its inspiring secret; the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment. In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world". This passage is important in any study of Conrad, because it expresses the two fundamental ideas behind all his work, fidelity and solidarity.

- (a) "Nigger of the Narcissus" - Preface, P. 13.
 (b) " " " " - Preface, P. 11.

So far I have spoken of Conrad's own fidelity.

But this faithful adherence to the presentation of truth is the outward manifestation of Conrad's conviction that the highest phase of truth, as revealed in human nature, is fidelity. Fidelity, then, becomes Conrad's ideal, which he not only aims at in his search for truth, but also seeks in the world about him.

- (a) "Those who read me, " he says, "know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity".

It is this conviction which colours Conrad's whole interpretation of human nature. In all his characters, men and women, it is the idea of fidelity that is emphasized. His finest men and women are those which reveal some aspect of fidelity; his worst characters are those which have missed the idea altogether, or reveal a fidelity to the meaner aims in life. Thus the positive or negative phases of fidelity are stressed in all Conrad's characters.

- Where we find in Conrad a character revealing a sense of fidelity, there is present also a sense of "solidarity". By solidarity is meant the bond which unites the whole of mankind in one great fellowship. It is revealed in characters which show a selfforgetfulness, and a feeling of human sympathy. There is in all of us the "latent feeling of fellowship with all creation", and this is aroused to strong conviction when it has behind it the ideal of fidelity. The two ideas are forever bound up with one another. The whole world, says Conrad, rests upon this idea of fidelity; all human nature reveals its several aspects, and fidelity, itself, is therefore but an aspect of "the subtle but
- (b)

- (a) "A Personal Record", P. 13.

- (b) "Nigger of the Narcissus", Preface, P. 13.

invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity -- the dead to the living and the living to the unborn".

It is my intention to endeavour to trace these two ideas of fidelity and solidarity in Conrad's characterization, first in his treatment of his characters, and secondly, in his conception of character; and, afterwards, with this as a background, to endeavour to show the important part these ideas play in Conrad's depiction of women. In matter of treatment, Conrad's own fidelity to his purpose of presenting the truth of life is to be sought, and his own sense of solidarity. In regarding Conrad's conception of character, these basic ideas themselves are to be sought. We must find in what characteristics these ideas of fidelity and solidarity are expressed, and in what types of character they are best revealed.

- (a) The most striking quality of Conrad's treatment of character is its realism. Speaking of "Nostromo", Conrad, himself, says: "I had, like the prophet of old, wrestled with the Lord for my creation,.... for the breath of life that had to be blown into the shapes of men and women". Conrad's characters have a warm, living reality, for the very breath of life is in them. Richard Curle, speaking
- (b) of Conrad's realism says: "nowhere more decisively than in his drawing of character does Conrad reveal his tremendous grip on reality. Not only are his people drawn with rare imagination, but with a ceaseless detail which is ever awake to uphold, like Atlas, the structure of his visionary world. It is the conjunction of these two diverse and necessary

(a) "A Personal Record" - P. 160.

"Curle: "Joseph Conrad" - P. 92.

forces that gives the high actuality to his creations ... The figures of Conrad live because the fires of their existence burn inwardly. They are projected once and for all from the mind of their author and thereafter they have no need to call upon him for help". This realism is perhaps the greatest manifestation of Conrad's fidelity to the presentation of the truth. It is life in all its phases that the writer desires to set before us, not only for its own sake, but because of his conviction that such is the duty of the novelist. In "A Personal Record", Conrad (a) says: "the unwearied self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness may be our appointed task on this earth -- a task in which fate has perhaps engaged nothing of us except our conscience, gifted with a voice in order to bear true testimony to the visible wonder, the haunting terror, the infinite passion, and the illimitable serenity; to the supreme law and the abiding mystery of the sublime spectacle". Surely Conrad's has been the unwearied, self-forgetful attention to every phase of life and human nature, and the living actuality of his men and women bears a true testimony to their creator's fidelity to the truth.

The second evidence of Conrad's fidelity to his purpose in the presentation of his characters is his restraint. Extravagance of any kind, he believes, would lead to insincerity, and, therefore, to departure from the truth. He maintains full possession of himself and never allows himself to be carried away in his treatment of a character. (b) He says, "Even before the most seductive reveries I have remained mindful of that sobriety of interior life, that asceticism of sentiment, in which alone the naked form of truth, such as one conceives it, such as one feels

(a) "A Personal Record" - P. 151.

(b) "A Personal Record" - P. 179.

it, can be rendered without shame". It is this restraint which makes Conrad the "historian of hearts", not of emotions. He denies himself the thrill of the sentimentalist, he never treats of feelings for their own sake. Conrad seeks below the surface of his characters for the truth he believes is in the heart of each; he touches the heart itself, the very "fountain of laughter and tears". But he fears to treat of extravagant emotion lest it lead to untruthfulness in his

- (a) depiction. He says, himself: " I have always suspected in the effort to bring into play the extremities of emotions the debasing touch of insincerity. In order to move others deeply we must deliberately allow ourselves to be carried away beyond the bounds of our normal sensibility -- innocently enough , perhaps But the danger lies in the writer becoming the victim of his own exaggeration, losing the exact notion of sincerity, and in the end coming to despise truth itself as something too cold, too blunt for his purpose -- as, in fact, not good enough for his insistent emotion." Emotion in his treatment of character and undue emotion in the characters themselves, Conrad avoids. He restrains himself in his depiction of men and women, in his endeavour to maintain a fidelity to the truth.

Conrad shows, to a very marked degree, a sense of proportion in his treatment of character. This is revealed, as may be inferred from what has been said, in his restraint, in his avoidance of extravagance. It is revealed again in the unity of all his work. No character, however important, dominates the story to such an extent as to interfere with this unity. This quality of Conrad's work is a further evidence of his fidelity. His novel must be a unified whole in order to present a truthful picture of life.

- (a) "A Personal Record" - P. 11.

Conrad's treatment of character reveals also his sense of solidarity. This is shown in a very striking quality of his character depiction, his custom of viewing his men and women through the eyes of several different characters. Among Conrad's men, for instance, the most striking example of this treatment is Lord Jim, whose story is told by several different characters, and we are enabled to make a much broader judgment upon Jim, than would have been possible, had we been given but one interpretation. Dona Rita and Flora de Barral, as we shall see later, are depicted in a similar manner. Such a view of character is part of the author's desire for unity in all his work, since he has always before him the grouping of his men and women. But more than this, it is an evidence of Conrad's sense of solidarity. He is interested in the reactions of people upon one another; he desires to prove his sense of the mysterious bond which unites the whole of mankind. He shows us how near to, or how far from the truth one person's view of another may be, according to his sense of fellowship. If he finds that sense of fellowship present, and it is always present to some extent, Conrad has proved his conviction of solidarity.

I have thus far endeavoured to show how Conrad's sense of fidelity and solidarity affect his treatment of character. Let us turn now to a consideration of Conrad's conception of character. I find these ideas best exemplified in his women. Fidelity, I have said, is Conrad's

(a) ideal, and, as Richard Curle says: "Conrad, (especially in his portraits of women) is more successful the nearer he approaches to what is apparently his ideal". He stresses his ideal of fidelity to a greater extent in his women than in his men.

There are two reasons why Conrad's ideal of fidelity

(a) Curle: "Joseph Conrad" - P. 103.

is best seen in his women. First of all, it has been truthfully said that Conrad's women are more direct than his men, and require for right understanding only the talent of sympathy and observation. Conrad's women are nearly all direct and simple characters, and this central idea of fidelity is therefore, very clearly evident. The psychology of Conrad's men is often complex; I do not mean that the ideal of fidelity is not present in these men, but because of this complexity, it is not as self-evident. The second reason for this emphasis of the ideal in Conrad's women, (and this, in its turn, is the cause of directness in his presentation of women) is that Conrad has grasped the fundamental quality of woman's nature, which is fidelity.

Fidelity is the quality wherein lies a woman's greatest strength or her greatest weakness. It is, perhaps, too obvious a remark to say that the finest women are those who possess the qualities of constancy, consistency, steadfastness, and sincerity. Women through all ages have been laughed at for their infidelity and insincerity. It is the great weakness of women, this difficulty they find in being wholly sincere and wholly constant. Therefore, we praise constancy and sincerity in a woman, because these represent the triumph of all that is best in her nature. It is a woman's greatest defence against life, although perhaps not the bravest defence she could make, to conceal the truth that is in her heart. In constancy, steadfastness, and utter sincerity is revealed a woman's adherence to perfect truth, and all these are but aspects of fidelity. Where we find fidelity, therefore, we find the strongest and the finest women, for not only does fidelity reveal strength of character in a woman, but it represents the triumph of truth itself.

Conrad grasps this idea of fidelity in woman's nature the better since it is his own ideal. He seeks to bring out this fundamental quality he has discovered, since it is his ideal. The finest women in Conrad are direct and sincere, strong and faithful, because their creator knows the secret of their strength and nobility. Conrad has many fine women, and all reveal some aspect of fidelity. He has also a few unpleasing women, who reveal his own hatred of the qualities of inconstancy and insincerity, or show some negative aspect of his central virtue. Let us, then, consider these aspects, positive and negative.

- First of all, in order to give some of the positive aspects a background of reality, let us consider Conrad's recollections of his own mother. In these we find a conception of noble womanhood, reflected to some extent in most of Conrad's women. A "loving, wide-browed, silent, protecting presence, whose eyes had a kind of commanding sweetness" -- such was Conrad's first impression of his mother. She was brilliantly gifted, he tells us, and expected much from life: "meeting with calm fortitude the cruel trials of a life reflecting all the national and social misfortunes of the community, she realized the highest conceptions of duty as a wife, a mother, and a patriot, sharing the exile of her husband, and representing nobly the ideal of Polish womanhood".

Fortitude under suffering, devotion to duty, and self-sacrifice are three of the aspects of fidelity revealed in Conrad's finest women and in Antonia Avellanosa and Nathalie Haldin, the three qualities unite to form a very marked reflection of Conrad's picture of his mother. We see fortitude and self-sacrifice in Mrs. Gould, Bessie

- (a) "A Personal Record" - P. 48.
- (b) "A Personal Record" - P. 55.

Carvil, and others. Sometimes this self-sacrifice in Conrad's women amounts to entire self-forgetfulness, as in Winnie Verloc and Lena.

These qualities of self-sacrifice and fortitude are all called forth by some definite appeal to fidelity, but there are other aspects of this ideal inherent in the natures of faithful women. Conrad's finest women, for instance, are utterly sincere, truthful and honest. Straightforwardness and honesty, also, are often the very forms of fidelity shown in some of the simplest of these characters.

Turning now to the negative aspects of fidelity, we find such qualities as insincerity, vanity, and self-sentredness in a few of Conrad's women. They are seen, for instance, in Felicia Moorsom, Mrs. Hervey, and Mrs. Davidson. The contempt with which Conrad regards these characters arises from the rebellion of his high conception of women against the qualities which make for infidelity. Shams and hypocrisies have little place in Conrad's womenkind. He could not create a Becky Sharp, because, although Becky may be a typical woman, yet she is after all superficial; she lives on the surface of life, and Conrad penetrates below the surface. His hatred of such qualities, of insincerity and selfishness, threatens even to injure his realism when he is depicting these women.

There is another phase of fidelity Conrad emphasizes which has both positive and negative aspects. It is a phase which is revealed in both men and women characters. In Conrad's men it comes out in the domination of one idea. The parallel in his women is their frequent lack of proportion in the devotion to one object in life. But the difference in these latter characters is the presence of an element of unselfishness. We see, for instance, this domination of one idea in Axel Heyst and

Charles Gould; both men are selfish. Very marked is the contrast between these men and such a woman as Winnie Verloc, whose devotion to her brother Steevie exhibits a very womanly lack of proportion, but is ennobled by her forgetfulness of self. It is a fidelity praiseworthy because of this element of unselfishness. The same may be said of Mrs. Gould, Lena, Flora de Barral, and others of Conrad's women. But in another woman, Therese of "The Arrow of Gold", the domination of one idea is accompanied by selfishness. It depends upon the fixed idea, upon the object of the devotion whether or not fidelity is praiseworthy. Thus, this form of faithfulness may have, what we may call both positive and negative aspects.

Let us consider now, in what qualities of Conrad's women a sense of solidarity is revealed. Self-sacrifice and unselfishness make for human sympathy, and a sense of human fellowship. These are revealed in such a character as Mrs. Gould. Devotion to duty and loyalty imply also a sense of fellowship with all mankind. But the sense of solidarity is also revealed in the positive longing for community, the desire for fellowship which is so often denied. Such longing is seen in Lena, in Flora de Barral, in Bessie Carvil, and in many others. The foiled struggle for fraternal relationships is to Conrad the greatest tragedy in life, but it is, too, the highest evidence of the solidarity which binds mankind together.

It is this union of the two ideas of fidelity and solidarity that makes Conrad the historian of hearts, and the historian of the lonely. I have spoken before of Conrad as historian of hearts, in commenting upon his restrained attitude to his characters. When we come to consider the characters, themselves, we find that they also have a restraint that seems inherent in their natures. This is especially true of Conrad's women. They are not

Only restrained, but they are often almost wordless.

- (a) Phelps in this connection says: "Conrad's women are highly interesting, although unlike any women I have ever met. They have an endless capacity for suffering with no power of articulation. Most women that I have known suffer less and talk more. There is something hideous in the dumb pain of these creatures". This seems a direct attack upon the reality of Conrad's depiction of women. And ^{as} I have endeavoured to justify Conrad's restraint in the treatment of Character, let us now consider for what reasons Conrad's women characters are so silent and restrained. Conrad definitely chooses to portray women who are for the most part silent and inarticulate by nature. It is impossible for him to deal with mere superficialities, and so much of what is spoken, especially by women, is superfluous. Other authors have created delightful and garrulous women, but theirs is a different task. Conrad chooses to depict restrained women that he may bring out his basic ideas. Mrs. Gould, for instance, one of Conrad's most restrained women, has a very marked gift of human sympathy. Hers is the wisdom of the heart, which, as Conrad tells us, has no random words at its command. Again, Mrs. Gould's disillusion and loneliness is only suggested to us. She never reveals it, because out of her self-forgetfulness she would not unburden herself to others. She has too much understanding of the heart not to realize that her own disillusion but binds her more closely in fellowship with mankind in the solidarity of grief. Mrs. Verloc, too, is by nature a very wordless and restrained woman. Her whole life has been one of selfrepression, and self-sacrifice for Steevie. Her repression makes

- (a) Phelps: "Advance of the English Novel" - P. 212.

us feel the depth of her sacrifice more than any words. Again, Flora de Barral, driven by harsh circumstance within herself, can find few words to express the turbulence of her soul. Perhaps the most silent figure among all Conrad's women is Hermann's niece in "Falk". She has not a single word to say for herself, but there is no need for her to speak. She is sincerity itself, and, in her acceptance of Falk's story, she reveals the breadth of her understanding and sympathy, the depth of her compassion and love. The wordlessness, the restraint of all these women, which is inherent in their natures, and therefore, cannot detract from their reality, is but exemplifying their faithfulness.

It is a short and easy transition from Conrad's silent women to his lonely women. "Historian of hearts" is not a more common term applied to Conrad than "historian of the lonely". Conrad stresses the loneliness of men and women, because he has a very intense feeling of the rebellion of the soul against isolation from community and fellowship. This isolation of the soul is due to various causes. Sometimes it is the force of circumstances which drives men and women apart from one another sometimes it is the tendency of their natures. It is the tragedy of the lonely that they must struggle for fellowship and community. Among Conrad's women, the most pathetic are those whose loneliness is intensified by their desire for community. Perhaps foremost among these stands Mrs. Gould, the lonely little lady of Sulaco, so ready with affection and sympathy for others, but denied the love and tenderness for which she longs. The tragedy of Flora de Barral is felt to be her estrangement from the human sympathy and understanding she craves; an estrangement not alone the outcome of harsh circumstance but also of her own sensitive shrinking nature. Lena's loneliness, the outcome of environment, has not warped

the warm nature of the girl. She is ready to respond with unselfish loyalty to the friendliness and chivalry of Heyst, a kindliness she had never known before, but which she had always desired. Another lonely figure is Alice Jacobus, in "A Smile of Fortune", who, being denied human sympathy, shuts out the world in sullen obstinacy. That she too, has a desire for fellowship, is shown by her response, though slight, to the friendliness which is offered her. Bessie Carvil's little dream of love and happiness shows her desire to escape from a life of self-repression to one of human sympathy. Very lonely also is Nina Almayer, who chooses the life of the -savage, because it means affection and happiness, in place of the false friendships she found in the white man's civilization, and in place of the loneliness of her life with her father. In all these lonely women, therefore, is revealed this sense of solidarity: and in their search for fellowship is revealed their infinite fidelity.

I have spoken a great deal of Conrad's ideals of women. I do not mean to imply any didactic purpose in Conrad's depictions of women. After all, fidelity is a very simple, ordinary ideal, and the qualities of sincerity, honesty, loyalty, fortitude, and self-sacrifice are those most commonly conceived as being the highest qualities of human nature. Conrad emphasizes such qualities, because he believes them to be fundamental, not incidental. The greatness of Conrad's creations of women rests in the fact that he has found the ideal in the real.

PART 2:

In my introduction I have set forth certain points of Conrad's depiction of character which reveal his two fundamental ideas. I should like in a more detailed study of Conrad's women, first of all to consider how far these aspects of Conrad's treatment of character are shown in these portrayals.

In the first place, let us consider the realism of Conrad's depictions of women. I have endeavoured to show that Conrad's emphasis of the two ideas of solidarity and fidelity does not detract from the reality of his portraits, because he has found the ideal in the real. He has found and stressed the fundamental quality of woman's nature, loyalty, and consequently, the reality of his conception of women cannot be denied. But there are certain other characteristics of Conrad's portraits of women which must be considered in connection with their realism.

I would emphasize, first of all, the "femininity" of Conrad's women. It is difficult to define this quality, but one cannot leave these women without feeling that they possess very femin^{ine} characteristics. Most novelists, if they gain this effect, do so by stressing the foibles of their women, or by using them merely to create a love story. But Conrad does neither.

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(a) Richard Curle says: "In Conrad's eyes all the graces of intuition and pity in women spring from this subtle femininity. His finest women, it is true, are women of character and resolve, but they have the feminine temperament. Not only is there no antagonism between the two, but they are in accord with one another". In some of Conrad's finest portraits, this femininity is the sum of all the elusive charm and beauty of a feminine nature, united with the finest qualities of womanliness. Perhaps this characteristic would be better brought out by illustration. It is revealed, for instance, in the portraits of Mrs. Gould, in this, almost the last picture of the little lady of Sulaco:

(b) "Mrs. Gould leaned back in the shade of the big trees planted in a circle Small and dainty, as if radiating a light of her own in the deep shade of the interlaced boughs, she resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing, touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours, the powerlessness of her magic".

There is a delicacy about this and about all the pictures of Mrs. Gould which shows Conrad's grasp of the very feminine nature of this woman, with her daintiness and fastidiousness, and her wealth of gentle, sympathetic understanding of others. In the portrait of Mrs. Gould, as in all Conrad's

(a) Curle: "Joseph Conrad" - P. 159.

(b) "Nostromo" - P. 451.

portraits of women, this femininity is prevailing, but it is never stressed, and therefore, it becomes subtly interfused with the reality of his women portraits.

The second characteristic of Conrad's realistic depiction of women is the maternal quality of their affection. Conrad has never written a love story, pure and simple, but he has emphasized women's power of affection. In his stress upon the maternal element in all womanly affection he has again touched upon a fundamental quality of woman's nature. In all women there are great possibilities of affection, and these are realized to the highest extent when the affection is maternal. Such affection calls forth devotion, self-sacrifice, fortitude under suffering, and passionate desire to protect its object. Such affection is universal, and Conrad's emphasis of it is one more asset to the realism of his women. It is seen for instance in Mrs. Gould's love for her husband, in Winnie Verloc's devotion to her brother Steevie, and in Laughing Anne's renunciation for the sake of her little boy. Conrad makes compassionate maternal love the revelation of nobility of character in his women, and another evidence of their reality.

Having considered the realism of Conrad's women, let us next investigate Conrad's restraint in treating them. I have already pointed out that these characters are restrained by nature; But Conrad, himself is restrained in his treatment. I have never felt that this restraint prevented Conrad's truth of depiction, but rather aided it. It has been the tendency to exaggerate women in fiction, either on the side of their weaknesses or of their nobility. But Conrad withholds both praise and blame from his women, lest either interfere with the

truth of his presentation. He never allows his own feelings to enter into his portrayal of character.

This restraint is perhaps best seen in Lena of "Victory". Lena is devoted, self-sacrificing, and loyal. Hers is a type of character which could be very easily exaggerated, until it became not only an untruthful presentation, but melodramatic. Yet even in the most critical scenes, Conrad never allows himself to be carried away by sentiment or emotion in his portrayal of Lena. Even in the hour of her death, it is not the emotional stress of the scene we feel so much as the triumph of Lena's victory. In the same way, Conrad never comments upon Mrs. Gould's loneliness and disillusion, but the qualities are the more sincerely felt for this restraint. They are revealed, for instance very poignantly in the following passage, but they are not exaggerated:

(a)

"She saw the San Tomé mountain hanging over the Campo, over the whole land, feared, hated, wealthy; more soulless than any tyrant, more pitiless and autocratic than the worst Government; ready to crush innumerable lives in the expansion of its greatness. He did not see it. He could not see it. It was not his fault. He was perfect, perfect; but she would never have him to herself. Never; not for one short hour altogether to herself in this old Spanish house she loved so well!she saw clearly the San Tomé mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds.....The last! She had hoped for a long, long time, that perhaps -- But no! There were to be no more. An immense desolation, the dread of her own continued life, descended upon the first lady of Sulaco. With a prophetic vision

(a)

she saw herself surviving alone the degradation of her young ideal of life, of love, of work -- all alone in the Treasure House of the world".

There is restraint also in the portrait of Winnie Verloc, whose self-sacrifice is never exaggerated or sentimentalised. Even the frenzy of her last hours is never felt to be anything but real, because the emotion behind it is sincere, and because Conrad knows just how far to restrain himself, in order to keep his presentation true.

Just as Conrad is restrained in his depiction of women, so he preserves his sense of unity. No matter what their importance his women never dominate his novels, for Conrad never loses his sense of importance. For instance, the unifying element of "Nostromo" is the influence of the San Tomé mine upon both characters and action. Subordinate to this influence is that of Mrs. Gould. She is not prominent in the action of the book, but her influence is felt in nearly every phase of that action, and upon nearly every character. She is intensely enthusiastic as to the future of the silver mine, and her enthusiasm inspires and strengthens Charles Gould. She exerts a gentle and strong sway over Dr. Monygham, and over old Giorgio Viola, and a protecting influence over Antonia and the Viola girls. The ladies of Sulaco, we are told, adored Mrs. Gould. It is to her alone that Nostromo is willing to confess his theft. In another way Conrad's sense of proportion is brought out in the portrait of Winnie Verloc. Curle says of this story: "In the darkening gloom the figure of the woman seems to step forward inch by inch, her look of immobility fastened upon the face of her idiot brother". In the beginning the character of Winnie Verloc is only

of minor importance, her position is analogous to her own self-repression. But as the story progresses her figure steps forward, until at the end, she is the centre of vivid and terrible action. These are only two of the many instances of Conrad's sense of unity and proportion in his depictions of women.

I have said that Conrad's sense of solidarity is revealed in his treatment of character by his custom of viewing his men and women through the eyes of several different characters. Among his women this is best seen in the portrayals of Dona Rita and Flora de Barral.

In considering Dona Rita's character, there are three viewpoints on which to base our judgment-- what George and the other men think of Rita, what the women say of her, and her own keen self-analysis. George's judgment is somewhat warped by his engrossing love for Rita. To him she was "supremely lovable". At first attracted by her fame, and her beauty, by her native intelligence and quick-wittedness, he very quickly falls under the spell of her tantalizing aloofness and her "terrible gift of familiarity". His love for Rita amounts to adoration, and somewhat dwarfs his appreciation of Rita's finest qualities. Captain Blunt too, the American gentleman who lives by his sword, is very much in love with Rita. She appeals to his chivalry, of which he is so proud. But he is a little shocked by her unconventionality. "Every time he goes away from my feet", says Rita, "he goes away tempted to brush the dust off his moral sleeve". Mills, the man of books, has perhaps the broadest judgment of the three. To him, Rita is "very much of a woman. Perhaps a little more at the mercy of contradictory impulses than other women". He calls her lovable and elusive, but he pays

(a)

her the highest tribute of all, when he says:

- (a) "Amid all the shames and shadows of that life, there will always lie the ray of her perfect honesty". Again, there is Dominic's opinion. No woman could **awe** Dominic, but ^{is} he/profoundly
- (b) impressed at his meeting with the Senora. "A woman like that", he says, "one, somehow, would grudge her to a better king. She ought to be set up on a high pillar for people that walk on the ground to raise their eyes up to".

Four women in the story speak of Rita, and very different are their estimations of her.

- (c) "Madame should listen to her heart", says Rose, Rita's discreet and very faithful maid, and in this simple remark **there** lies a solution to Rita's problem, which she herself will never accept. Madam Leonore, herself a very lovable woman and gifted with the wisdom of the heart, after one glimpse of Rita is haunted by her face. She says:
- (d) "I myself was once that age, and I, too, had a face of my own to show to the world, though not **so** superb. And I, too, didn't know why I had come into the world any more than she does". Then she tells George: "She is both **flesh** and shadow more than any one that I have seen. Keep that well in your mind: She is for no man! She would be vanishing out of their hands like water that cannot be held!" When George, with

- (a) Arrow of Gold - P. 335.
- (b) " " " - P. 116.
- (c) " " " - P. 141.
- (d) " " " - P. 124.

his youthful inexperience, asks: "Inconstant?" -

Madame Leonore answers: " I don't say that.

Maybe too proud, too wilful, too full of pity".

Another characterization is given by Mrs. Blunt.

She speaks of Rita as a remarkable woman, capable of the most surprising actions, and says further:

- (a) "She is not to be judged like other people, and as far as I know she has never wronged a single human being". Mrs. Blunt interprets Henry Allègre's remark concerning Rita, that there was something in her
- (b) of the women of all time, in this way: "I suppose he meant the inheritance of all the gifts that make up an irresistible fascination -- a great personality".

Lastly, there is Therese's judgment upon her sister.

She considers Rita a very wicked woman, in some way leagued with Satan. She speaks very compassionately of her sister's poor, wretched, unbelieving heart, which is quite black with sin. Each of these judgments upon Rita is typical of the man or woman who makes it, and, save in that of Therese, in each there is an element of truth. It is interesting to note the effect Rita has upon the people with whom she comes in contact, especially when this effect shows strikingly either the presence or absence of human sympathy and understanding which make for fellowship. Mills' estimation of Rita is the only one which comes very near the truth, he understands the struggle in Rita's soul, but the others, either understand Rita to a very limited extent, or feel her fascinating elusiveness, which prevents perfect understanding. In this method of treating this woman, Conrad shows his sense of solidarity, for in nearly all these opinions of Rita there is at least a striving for understanding. There is none in Therese's judgment

because Therese herself is utterly lacking in a sense of solidarity.

I have dealt extensively with this treatment of Rita, because it is very well exemplified in this character, and also because I wished to show how Conrad uses this method. His treatment of Flora de Barral is very similar. Her story is told by Marlow who welcomes the opportunity to give his views upon women, and who gives a very true and sympathetic judgment of Flora. Then there is Mrs. Fyne's judgment of Flora, very typical of the lady. She pities the girl but at no time considers her either very lovable or charming. But Mrs. Fyne does not want women to be women, and when Flora runs away with Captain Anthony, Mrs. Fyne condemns the "triumphantly feminine" action. Again, Captain Anthony's judgment of Flora springs directly from his romantic, chivalrous nature. Her defenceless, forlorn state calls forth in him a generous, protective affection. He calls her a "little ghost of all the sorrow in the world". From all these estimations of Flora, we are given a conception of the forlorn, rather helpless girl, whose charm lies chiefly in her individuality. The only fellowship which could be offered Flora is that of sympathy and affection, and these people offer her both, though Mrs. Fyne's sympathy is limited. It is in such depictions as these that Conrad reveals his sense of solidarity, because they not only reveal the presence of human sympathy among mankind, but reveal also how near the truth the opinions of others can come, when the feeling of sympathy is present.

I have now endeavoured to show how Conrad's treatment of character, which reveals his two ideas of fidelity and solidarity, is exemplified in his depictions of women.

24.

Let us now consider more definitely how these
ideas are set forward in the women themselves.

PART 3:

In this detailed study of Conrad's women, it is my intention, first of all, to show their fidelity as revealed in such characteristics as devotion to duty, fortitude under suffering, self-sacrifice, and self-forgetfulness; secondly, to make a study of certain of these characters in whom there is a conflict of fidelities; thirdly, to consider how far the qualities of sincerity, honesty, and trustworthiness are revealed in their natures; fourthly, to treat of the women who show infidelity; fifthly, to consider the lack of proportion which they exhibit; and lastly, to deal with the ideal of solidarity as they illustrate it.

In the first place let us consider two of Conrad's women who reveal to an outstanding degree devotion to duty, and fortitude under suffering. These two are Antonia Avellanos and Nathalie Haldin, both of whom bear a distinct resemblance to Conrad's own mother. Both are set amidst the trials of a life "reflecting all the national and social misfortunes of the community," and both bring the same spirit of fortitude to bear upon the disasters of their lives.

The stately, quiet-souled Antonia will always impress us with a feeling of exaltation. She is self-confident and daring in her defiance of the ordinary conventions of a Spanish girl's life, and her emancipation is natural,

for Antonia has a very strong conviction that life must be lived to some purpose. She finds that purpose in a devotion to her duty as a woman, and in fidelity to ^alost political cause. Her exalted idea of the purpose of her life sustains her amidst the overwhelming troubles which surround her. When her lover, Martin Decoud, is drowned, Antonia never falters in her brave attitude to life, and she cares for her father and meets his death with equal fortitude.

Turning to Nathalie Haldin, we meet with an almost similar type of character. Calm and youthfully superior, filled with the highest conceptions of duty, loyalty, and patriotism, she is brought face to face with the most tragic outcome of revolutionary intrigue. She bears the loss of her brother with all the bravery of her strong nature, and strives to forget her own grief in a tender regard for her mother. She is ready with deference and respect for the man whom her brother has praised so highly. Razumov stands in her estimation the man capable of realizing all her highest ideals, the ideals for which her brother died. Then she learns cruelly that Razumov has violated her highest idea of fidelity, he has betrayed her brother and acted as a spy. Close upon this revelation comes the death of her mother, and Nathalie is left, grief-stricken and forsaken. "It is impossible," she says, "to be more unhappy." Yet Nathalie does not lose her old tranquility, and her own sorrow only deepens her compassion for others.

- (a) "There was no longer any Nathalie Haldin, because she had completely ceased to think of herself. It was a great victory, a characteristically Russian exploit in self-suppression."

- (a) "Under Western Eyes" - P. 371.

But Nathalie's ideal changes, she brings all her fidelity to bear upon the cause of the revolutionaries, because she foresees in the triumph of that cause the silencing of all discord, the end of all grief and pain.

Self-sacrifice is the link which unites these two women to another group. In both Antonia Avellanos and Nathalie Haldin it is not only devotion and bravery which is so marked, but also self-sacrifice. This characteristic in itself implies fidelity, since only great loyalty or great devotion can call forth renunciation of self. In this second group I have included those of Conrad's women whose fidelity is best expressed in their self-sacrifice.

Foremost among these is Mrs. Gould. First of all, let us consider the reason for Mrs. Gould's self-sacrifice. When she met Charles Gould, she had been living in idealistic dreams of success in life, and this man had given a "vast shape to the the vagueness of her unselfish ambitions." "She had a great confidence in her husband, it had always been very great. He had struck her imagination from the first by his unsentimentalism, by that very quietude of mind which she had creeted in her thought for a sign of perfect competency in the business of living." Moreover, Charles Gould had found a purpose in life, one which realized all Mrs. Gould's ambitions and satisfied her longing for a life of unselfish endeavour. Both started with a vigorous attitude towards life, and both were inspired by an idealistic view of success. Charles Gould felt very strongly that the worthiness of his life was bound up with the success of the San Tomé mine. Mrs. Gould shared this feeling,

(a) "Nostromo" - P, 71.

and because of this she gave up her own ambitions, unselfish as they were, to the furtherance of her husband's.

(a) But from the first the San Tomé mine frightened Mrs. Gould a little by the very magnitude of the enterprise. It was not the mine however but its influence over her husband that Dona Emilia had to fear. "It had been an idea. She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a tremendous and crushing weight. It was as if the inspiration of their early years had left her heart to turn into a wall of silver bricks, created by the silent work of evil spirits, between her and her husband. He seemed to dwell alone within a circumvallation of previous metal, leaving her outside with her school, her hospital, the sick mothers and the feeble old men, mere insignificant vestiges of the initial inspiration". Charles Gould yielded to the overmastering sway of "material interests". Even his love for his wife faded before his passion for the success of the mine. This success was bought at the price of a woman's ideal.

(b) Most pathetic of all is Mrs. Gould's self-renunciation in the face of this disillusion. She accepts the principle that her husband's success is not in any way bound up with her own happiness, with the satisfaction of her desire for affection, or with the realization of her own ideal. She acknowledges that there was "something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea". Charles Gould's

(a) "Nostromo" - P. 190.

(b) "Nostromo" - P. 452.

passion for the success of the San Tomé mine becomes the one mastering idea of his life. Mrs. Gould has no silver mine to look after. Her happiness is surrendered to the seduction of this idea.

(a) This self-sacrifice, however, but intensifies Mrs. Gould's fidelity to her husband. No matter how Charles Gould failed her, nothing can alter her affection for him. He never violated his wife's pride in him. "He was perfect-perfect. What more could she have expected? It was a colossal and lasting success; and love was only a short moment of forgetfulness, a short intoxication, whose delight one remembered with a sense of sadness, as if it had been a deep grief lived through". And so Mrs. Gould bravely and unselfishly surrenders her own claim to happiness, in a complete self-renunciation.

There is a striking similarity between Mrs. Gould, and Winnie Verloc, another of Conrad's finest women. In the affections of both as we have seen, there is a strong maternal element. Both are denied the natural outlet to that affection, Mrs. Gould lavishes it upon her husband, Winnie Verloc upon her idiot brother Steevie. The mainsprings of the affections which dominate these women are the same, but the differences in their natures are revealed in their separate attitudes towards the loss of the objects of their affection. Mrs. Gould bears her disillusion and loneliness silently; they call forth only greater self-renunciation. Winnie's self-sacrifice is more complete in the first place; it might almost be called self-obliteration, since her

whole life was a long story of struggle and self-suppression for Steevie's sake. Winnie's act of murder is a natural reaction; restraint had become a second nature to her; only in violent action can she relieve the pent-up agony of her loss.

Let us consider the character of Winnie's self-sacrifice. In the first place, it is self-sacrifice for one person, her idiot brother, Steevie. It is not called forth by pity alone, because Mrs. Verloc

(a) never regards the boy as an idiot. "She saw him amiable, attractive, affectionate, and only a little,

a very little, peculiar. And she could not see him otherwise, for he was connected with what there was of the salt of passion in her tasteless life -- the passion of indignation, of courage, of pity, and even of self-sacrifice". Winnie's affection for her

(b) brother has the "ardor of protecting passion, exalted morbidly in her childhood by the misery of another child".

In their childhood she had had to protect Steevie from the anger of a drunken father. Grown to young womanhood, Winnie found herself the sole support of the boy and her invalid mother. This called for more self-sacrifice, she met a man whom she learned to love ; but she had to refuse him, because he could not support these two people dependent upon her. Then she married Mr. Verloc, because he offered her a home in which she could protect Steevie. Besides, Mr. Verloc had shown kindness to her brother, and that was sufficient to inspire Winnie's trust. Nevertheless, Winnie's marriage was a real self-sacrifice, since it lacked the tenderness and affection she craved, just as surely as did Mrs. Gould. Of the relations existing between Winnie

(a) "The Secret Agent" - P. 209.

(b) "The Secret Agent" - P. 208.

and her husband we read:

- (a) "Their accord was perfect, but it was not precise. It was a tacit accord, congenial to Mrs. Verloc's incuriosity and to Mr. Verloc's habits of mind, which were indolent and secret. They refrained from going to the bottom of facts and motives ... Their reserve, expressing in a way, their profound confidence in each other, introduced at the same time a certain element of vagueness into their intimacy".

To Steevie, therefore, Winnie gave all the affection which was wanting to complete her marriage. His loss, therefore, is not that of an ordinary stroke of death.

- (b) "The protection she had extended over her brother had been in its origin of a fierce and indignant complexion. She had to love him with a militant love. She had battled for him -- even against herself. His loss had the bitterness of defeat, with the anguish of a baffled passion".

- (c) But in considering Winnie Verloc's character, we must not forget her profound conviction that things must not be analysed too thoroughly. "She had an equable soul. She felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into. She made her force and her wisdom of that instinct". This philosophy made Winnie's self-sacrifice easy and natural, since she never attempted to analyse it any more than she attempted to analyse her instinctive protection of Steevie. But the sudden disaster which fell upon Mrs. Verloc at the death of her brother made it imperative for her to look deeper into things, to analyse her motives. She awakened from the self-repression which had become a second nature to her,

- (a) "The Secret Agent" - P. 62.
 (b) " " " - P. 298.
 (c) " " " - P. 290.

to the tragic realization of self-sacrifice which had not even attained its own end, but had suffered utter defeat.

Still another example of self-sacrifice is seen in the character of Laughing Anne. In this case it ended in the woman's death. Winnie's sacrifice was called forth by devotion to one person, but Anne's was part of a larger fidelity. Laughing Anne had sunk very low in the world, but through all the story of her sordid life, stood out her perfect loyalty.

- (a) "She prided herself on her loyalty to the successive partners of her dismal adventures. She had never played any tricks in her life. She was a pal worth having".
- (b) Anne, herself, told Davidson: "You know that I was always ready to stand by my men if they had only let me..... I have acted on the square to them all one after another." When Anne finally picked up with Bamtz, she was so helpless and despairing that she was willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of her child. Her whole life was now bound up in the desire to protect her child, who, as she said, had hardly a dog's chance
- (c) in the world. "It's for the kid. How could I have kept him with me if I had to knock about in towns? Here he will never know that his mother was a painted woman. And this Bamtz likes him. He's real fond of him. I suppose I ought to thank God for that". When Davidson, for Laughing Anne's sake, consented to trade with Bamtz, the woman was very grateful, since she saw her child's future now made more secure. Davidson made a much greater appeal to Anne's loyalty, when he came just in time to save her child's life. Her bravery in the face of the danger which threatens him springs from her loyalty to this man. Her last

words to Davidson, when she arranged to warn him of his danger, are typical of her whole brave attitude to life: "I'll go outside with them when they start, and it will be hard luck if I don't find something to laugh at. They are used to that from me". Anne died for Davidson, and in her death she made the supreme self-sacrifice for which her loyalty called.

There is a great contrast between this portrait of Laughing Anne, and that of Bessie Carvil. The self-sacrifice of the latter is not of any startling nobility. It consists mainly in a monotonous life, bereft of happiness, but lived without complaint. It is a very ordinary and a very womanly self-sacrifice, born with a womanly patience and resignation. It is, moreover, a sacrifice which is not undertaken willingly; there is no devotion and little affection behind it. Yet there is fidelity, of a blind, unquestioning sort, for Bessie cannot see any change or any end to her life but mere death.

(b) During the ten best years of her life, Bessie has nursed her blind father, until she has become practically a slave to his wishes. "He would not lift his hand to reach for the things she took care to leave at his very elbow. He would not move a limb; he would not rise from his chair, he would not put one foot before another, without calling her to his side and hanging all his atrocious weight upon her shoulder. He would not eat one single mouthful of food without her close attendance. He had made himself helpless beyond his affliction, to enslave her better". The measure of Bessie's self-sacrifice cannot be lessened by its sordid, hum-drum nature; it

- (a) "Because of the Dollars" - P. 281.
 (b) "To - Morrow" - P. 240:- "Falk".

is deepened by her uncomplaining resignation.

- (a) Bessie Carvil's patient figure is further ennobled by her gentleness and forbearance towards Captain Hagberd. Although she has no doubts as to the old man's madness, yet there is charm for Bessie in his gentle ravings. His talk, in which she half believes, leads her to dream of escape from a life of continual self-sacrifice. "This madness that had entered her life through the kind impulses of her heart had reasonable details. What if some day his son returned? But she could not even be quite sure that he ever had a son; and if he existed anywhere he had been too long away. When Captain Hagberd got excited in his talk she would steady him by a pretence of belief, laughing a little to salve her conscience". Thus Bessie listens to the old man's projects of a home with his son, when that prodigal returned, and with Bessie as that son's wife. When Harry Hagberd finally does return, and the father, still looking towards an everlasting "to-morrow", refuses to own him, it is to Bessie that he comes for explanation. With the telling of the pitiful story and Harry's reception of it comes Bessie's disillusion. She realizes that her own dream had been only a "hopeful madness". Harry Hagberd goes away into the night, leaving Bessie lonely and hopeless, with her shattered dream of happiness. She is aroused by the voice of her father, calling her. "She heard him at last, and, as if overcome by fate, began to totter silently back towards her stuffy little inferno of a cottage. It had no lofty portal, no terrific inscription of forfeited hopes --- she did not understand wherein she had sinned".
- (b)

Bessie's is a nature that would willingly make any sacrifice for others, but the sacrifice she is re-

- (a) "To-Morrow" - P. 229.)
 (b) " " " P. 270.) { "FAIR".

-quired to make has no affection behind it, therefore she dreams of escape to a life of love and happiness. Her dream ends in disillusion, and it is indeed, 'as if the dark hand of fate were upon her as she turns again to her old life.

Another very pathetic figure is that of Tekla, "dame de compagnie" to Madame de S-- , the mistress of a revolutionary salon. Tekla became a revolutionist through no fanatical tendencies, but through a very profound feeling of pity for suffering humanity. She says:

- (a) "My eyes began to open gradually to the horrors from which innocent people are made to suffer in this world, only in order that governments might exist". She went out, as she expresses it, "to live in cellars with the proletariat", with the hope of **alleviating** the suffering she saw all around her. She tells of these efforts: "I tried to make myself useful to the utterly hopeless.... I mean the people who have nowhere to go and nothing to look forward to in this life Sometimes I think that it is only in Russia that there are such people and such a depth of misery can be reached". How Tekla succeeded in her endeavour is best told in the story of her care for a young, ill, and poverty-stricken revolutionist, whom she nursed faithfully till his death. Afterwards, she is employed in various ways by revolutionaries, until, at the time we first meet her, she is working under the great feminist, Peter Ivanovitch. Having taken down the great man's **words** in dictation for two years, Tekla finds it difficult to be even a republican. "I am quite willing," she says, "to be the blind instrument of higher ends. To give one's life for the cause is nothing. But to have one's illusions destroyed -- that is really almost more than one can bear It seemed to freeze my very beliefs in me".

- (a) "Under Western Eyes " - P. 148.
 (b) " " " " "
 (c) " " " " 146.

(a) Tekla's self-sacrifice is bereft, therefore, of the idealism which had inspired it, the belief in the high purpose of the revolution, the alleviation of the suffering of mankind. She desires now to escape from bondage under Peter Ivanovitch. To Razumov, who is kind to her, she offers herself eagerly as a help if he is ever in trouble. "If you were to get ill," she tells him, "or meet some bitter trouble, you would find I am not a useless fool. You have only to let me know. I will come to you. I will indeed. And I will stick to you. Misery and I are old acquaintances -- but this life here is worse than starving". Tekla later is given the chance to prove her self-sacrifice and fidelity when she comes to Razumov in his trouble and suffering, to remain with him to the end of his life.

In the sacrifice made by all of these women there is a natural forgetfulness of self. Winnie Verloc's sacrifice, for instance, amounted almost to self-oblit-
eration . But there is another kind of self-forgetfulness that does not imply sacrifice, save perhaps in the sense of a willing renunciation which is an equally great proof of fidelity. A devotion which leads to absolute forgetfulness of self is just as worthy as one which calls for deliberate self-sacrifice.

Such self-forgetfulness we see in Lena of "Victory". "I can only be what you think I am", she tells Heyst. Her love, which springs primarily from her loyalty to the man who has saved her, is so deep and strong as to absorb all thought of self, until her very existence seems to depend on Heyst's existence. She wishes to

(a) "Under Western Eyes" - P. 231.

forget that she is merely "a fiddle-scraping girl, picked up on the very threshold of infamy".

- (a) "It was a fresh start for me, with you -- and you know it," she tells Heyst, "I wish I had forgotten who I was -- that would have been best; and I very nearly did forget". But before Lena's intuitive love and trust in Heyst is set up the barrier of his aloofness and philosophical reserve. She is made poignantly aware at times of the distance between them, but there is all the more reason for her disregard for self in her aim to win Heyst's love.

- (b) Lena cannot trust her intuition to the extent of implicit belief in Heyst's love for her. "You should try, to love me", she says, and again: "Sometimes it seems to me that you can never love me for myself, only for myself, as people do love each other when it is to be forever". She realizes that Heyst has not forgotten himself in their love as she has; he cannot forget who she is, ~~and he cannot forget who she is~~, and he cannot allow his skeptical mind to be dominated by too great a trust in their love. Lena welcomes the trouble which comes to their peaceful island, for she says: "It's perhaps in trouble that people get to know each other". She is driven out of her self-forgetfulness by Heyst's aloofness, and her great desire is now to prove her love, that their happiness may be complete. "Such as she was she would try to rise above herself, triumphant and humble; and then happiness would burst on her like a torrent, flinging at her feet the man she loved".

(a) "Victory" - P. 235.

(b) "Victory" - P. 250.

(c)

In the highest sense of all, Lena's victory is that of self-renunciation. She dies for Heyst, but even in the moment of her death, the realization of her victory comes to her with its full meaning. Her dream has come true, she has proved her love.

(a) He can no longer doubt or mistrust, and their happiness will be complete. "Exulting, she saw herself extended on the bed, in a black dress, and profoundly at peace; while, stooping over her with a kindly, playful smile, he was ready to lift her up in his firm arms and take her into the sanctuary of his innermost heart -- forever!" At that supreme moment, love is to her complete surrender of self. Heyst, himself, realizes Lena's victory to the utmost, his passive philosophy of life has been shattered, and he acknowledges his defeat -- and his victory -- in (b) his last words: "Woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young, to hope, to love -- and to put its trust in life".

Let us turn now to consider the situation in which there is a conflict between one fidelity and another.

Two more dissimilar characters it would be difficult to find than Flora de Barral and Dona Rita; but they are alike in that they are both called upon to choose between two fidelities.

The circumstances of Flora de Barral and of Lena are strikingly similar, and the natures of the two girls as strikingly different. Both are alone in the world, but, whereas Lena fights her way against misfortune, Flora is passive. Each appeals in her defenceless loneliness to the chivalrous protection of a man, and each responds in her own way, Lena with devotion, Flora with shrinking hesitation. Whereas Lena puts her faith in her woman's intuition, Flora is distrustful of every one and of herself.

Perhaps Flora may be condemned for her weakness, and her passive attitude towards misfortune; but the pathos of her story is all the deeper for her inability to struggle forward against all odds. Her youthful unconsciousness had been broken into "with profane violence, with desecrating circumstances, like a temple violated by a mad, vengeful piety". She was old enough to be matured by the shock of her governess's cruel treatment, but so violent was the shock that Flora remains helpless, sensitive and shrinking, distrustful of herself. Everywhere she meets with misfortune and misunderstanding.

The basis of Flora's nature is very simple. She desires above all to be loved for herself. Her sensitive nature requires sympathy and affection. This desire in itself may be selfish, but Flora shows, on the other hand, an ability to make a sacrifice in return for its fulfilment. It is behind Flora's fidelity to her father. She is fiercely defensive of him, because she only remembers his love for her, and she clings to that childhood memory, her only knowledge of real, human affection.

Anthony enters Flora's life first of all by preventing her from committing suicide, and then very suddenly offering her his love and protection. It is then that Flora shows her ability to act unselfishly, for the direct motive behind her acceptance of Anthony is gratitude, not for saving her life, but for his sympathy. She tells Marlowe: "If you will have it that he saved my life, then he has got it. It was not for me. Oh no! It was not for me that I -- It was

(a)

(a)

"Chance" - P. 212.

(a) not fear! I have given him what he wanted -- that's myself". But Flora, in reality, does not know her own mind. "All this work of the merest chance had been so unexpected, so sudden. And she had nothing to fall back upon, no experience but such as to shake her belief in every human being Even since Anthony had suddenly broken his way into her hopeless and cruel existence she lived like a person liberated from a condemned cell by a natural cataclysm, a tempest, an earthquake; not absolutely terrified, because nothing can be worse than the eve of execution, but stunned, bewildered, abandoning herself passively. She did not want to make a sound, to move a limb. She hadn't the strength And deep down almost unconsciously she was seduced by the feeling of being supported by this violence. A sensation she had never experienced before in her life".

(b) It is when Anthony, with his mistaken generosity, makes Flora believe that he does not love her after all, that the idea of self-sacrifice comes to the girl. "It was all over. It was as that abominable governess had said. She was insignificant, contemptible. Nobody could love her. Humiliation clung to her like a cold shroud -- never to be shaken off, unwarmed by this madness of generosity". But even with this thought Flora remembers her father. As Marlowe says: "In the (c) distrust of herself and of others she looked for love, any kind of love, as women will. And that confounded jail was the only spot where she could see it -- for she had no reason to distrust her father". For the sake of his love, therefore, and in order to give him her own love and protection, she will marry Anthony. "I really believed (a) I was selling myself", Flora says afterwards, "and I was proud of it. What I suffered afterwards I couldn't tell

(a) "Chance" - P. 300.
 (b) " " " 304.
 (c) " " " 320.
 " " " 403.

you; because I only discovered my love for my poor Roderick through agonies of rage and humiliation. I came to suspect him of despising me; but I could not put it to the test because of my father".

When Flora realizes her love for Anthony, the struggle begins between her loyalty to her father, and her fidelity to the man she loves. On the one hand there is her father, for the protection of whom she was willing to make any sacrifice. De Barral's one dominating idea is that of revenge, while Flora desires only to shield him from further calumny. He impresses upon the girl the fact that she has sold herself, and at first she half believes it. Her loyalty to her father, emphasized by her sacrifice, urges her to agree to his plan of leaving Anthony. On the other hand, there is her husband, whose magnanimity, as she says, almost crushes her. Her sacrifice and humiliation fade before her growing love for Anthony. Her fidelity to the new love proves the stronger. Instead of antagonism to the rest of mankind, and revenge, Flora chooses human sympathy and affection: "Only think! I loved and I was loved, untroubled, at peace, without remorse, without fear. All the world, all life were transformed for me. And how much I have seen! How good people were to me! Roderick was so much liked everywhere. Yes, I have known kindness and safety. The most familiar things appeared lighted up with a new light, clothed with a loveliness I had never suspected". Flora received the full reward of her choice of the truest fidelity, in the satisfaction of her desire to love and be loved.

In Dona Rita there is a much greater conflict. Her nature is far from being as simple as Flors's .

She is torn between conflicting impulses, swayed by fidelity now to one purpose , now to another. Her choice in the end is a fidelity which calls for renunciation and sacrifice. Very bravely Rita gives up her love, her chance of peace and happiness, in the belief that what is giving her these is not the best in life for her, nor for the man she loves.

- One of our best sources of judgment upon Rita, when we remember her perfect honesty, is her own keen self-analysis. (a) "I stand here", she says, "with nothing to protect me from evil fame, a naked temperament for any wind to blow upon". Left very lonely and unprotected at the death of Henry Allègre, with already the fame of her beauty widespread, she daringly chooses a life which endangers still more her reputation in the world. Rita, herself, realizes her helplessness: (b) "My instinct may have told me," she says, "that my only protection was obscurity, but I didn't know how and where to find it.... I didn't know how to be on guard against myself, either. Not a soul to speak to, or to get a warning from. Some woman soul that would have known, in which perhaps I could have seen my own reflection." But Rita knows that whatever influences she may be under, she must be true to herself, true to the impulses within her heart. (c) "I have got to be what I am," she tells George, "and that, amigo, is not easy, because I may be simple, but like all those in whom there is no peace, I am not One. No, I am not One!" In this analysis Rita strikes the very (a) "Arrow of Gold" - P. 76 (b) "Arrow of Gold" - P. 77. (c) "Arrow of Gold" - P. 107.

keynote of her character.

Rita's is a soul divided against itself. I have said that Rita is at the mercy of several impulses, but I do not mean to imply that she is merely a creature of impulse. The conflict in Rita's soul is far deeper than that. The very presence of those warring impulses within her gives her something of the women of all time. In all women there are two desires, the first the desire to love and to be loved, the second the desire to share in the creative endeavour of life. There is an impulse in all women to follow the strongest of these desires, but sometimes they are equally strong, and it is then we find contradictory impulses. All must choose, consciously or unconsciously, which impulse they will follow. Mrs. Gould, for instance, followed the impulse of her love, which was all the stronger because it fulfilled her other desire as well, in promising her a share in a great purposeful undertaking. But the share is never any greater than the allowance of her gentle encouragement, and the adventure is robbed of the idealism she gave it. Rita, as Mills says, is more at the mercy of contradictory impulses. She is offered love on every side, but love alone is not what Rita desires. Madame cannot listen to her heart, as Rose suggests, and remain wholly honest with herself. She has grown just a little skeptical during her life with Henry Allegre, just a little more desirous of finding the best in life. Love, she realizes, is not sufficient, and the desire grows strong within her to take her share in the great adventure of life. These conflicting desires are behind what appears to be Rita's changing fidelity.

That Rita can be faithful and loyal is not doubted

from the very moment when we first meet her. She is then engaged in giving active and energetic assistance to the Carlist cause, which she has made her own, not through any love for the king whose crown she seeks to make secure, but following the generous impulses of her heart. She devotes her life and fortune to this cause, and her fidelity to it springs from a youthful love of adventure, and from her desire to share in some form of human endeavour.

It is the other impulse which dominates Rita when at length she yields to George's love. Love in itself does not frighten her, but she does fear lest her love should not be honest. She surrenders to George in a moment when all her defences are gone. Her fear of Ortega's love had been the barrier she raised before the love George offered her, but Ortega has become ridiculous. Therese waits to save her sister's black soul, and her perfidy is symbolic of the dishonesty Rita finds all about her. The only honest thing left in life for her is her love for George.

What then of Rita's disappearance? is it desertion? is it infidelity? is it, again, the assertion of the other impulse in Rita's soul? To these questions we answer that this apparent desertion is but the highest evidence of Rita's fidelity to George. She knows very well that for them both to lose themselves in love would be to give up the best in life, the adventure, the endeavour, the purpose, the very "integrity" of life. She knows also that love for her will very quickly ruin the man's worldly prospects. Rita says, quite honestly, that until she met George she knew nothing of love. Her affection for him is complete and all-absorbing. If there was ever an impulse within her to turn from love, it is dead. And the triumph of her love is her realization that she is destroying the integrity of George's life. Mills realizes her sacrifice when he says: "She may find something in life. She may! It won't

(a) be love. She has sacrificed that chance to the integrity of your life -- heroicallyWell. she is gone; but you may be sure that whatever she finds now in life it will not be peace".

But before Rita reached the decision to leave George, there is a struggle between her two calls to fidelity. On the one hand is her fidelity to their mutual love, or rather to her own love for George which she acknowledges to be as deep and complete as she could wish. On the other hand is the call to be faithful to what she knows is the best in life for George. The triumph of this latter call to loyalty is the triumph of unselfishness, of self-sacrifice, and of perfect honesty to herself and to George.

In the third division of this detailed study I propose to consider a simpler group of characters -- a group in which is revealed mere, simple truthfulness or sincerity. Such a quality must of course be inherent in the nature of one who is faithful and loyal to some purpose in life, of one who is capable of self-sacrificing devotion. But further, in themselves honesty, sincerity, and straightforwardness imply fidelity to truth.

In the first place, utter truthfulness and sincerity are revealed in the characters of women we have already considered. Lena, for instance is wholly sincere in her appeal to Hayst for protection, and later in her endeavour to win his love. Her intuitive trust and love for this man spring from her own sincerity, which is, therefore, the very basis of her fidelity.

Again, Winnie Verloc is utterly sincere in her devotion to Steevie; she is true to her own nature, to her strongest instincts, which are maternal and violent. The devotion and fortitude of Nathalie Haldin and Antonia Avellanos

spring from their own sincerity of purpose. If we wish for honesty we cannot find it better expressed than in the character of Dona Rita. She says herself: "I have always spoken the truth," and we have already seen how honesty is behind her fidelity to George. Laughing Anne, too, is utterly straightforward, she has played no tricks in her life. Neither does Flora de Barral attempt to deceive Anthony, and, in the end, her confession of her love is wholly honest.

But let us turn now to a few of these women in whom fidelity to truth is represented simply by a plain sincerity, honesty, and straightforwardness. First among these is Freya of the Seven Isles. Freya has a radiant personality, she emanates charm and joyousness. She gives an impression of health and strength, of whimsical determination and self-confidence, and above all, of frankness and straightforwardness. These latter characteristics perhaps spring from her self-confidence. She is so sure of herself; she keeps in check the headstrong nature of her lover, Jaspar, and sets her wits against her father and Jaspar's rival, Heemskirk. But she is incapable of duplicity. Steady and tactful as she is, she would not tolerate for a moment any thought of conciliation with Heemskirk, not even for the sake of her love.

We find utter sincerity in another figure, that of Hermann's niece. The mere description of the physical personality of this girl is sufficient to give us a picture of vigorous life, simplicity, and sincerity. She is generously alive, " she

- (a) could have stood for an allegoric statue of the earth. I don't mean the worn-out earth of our possession, but a young Earth, a virginal planet, undisturbed by the vision of a future teeming with the monstrous forms of life and death, clamorous with the cruel battles of hunger and thought." The atmosphere of peace surrounds the quiet figure of this girl, the peace of a profound simplicity and a perfect sincerity. While in the others the tale of Falk's cannibalism excites horror and disgust, in Hermann's niece it only calls forth compassion. Her honest, simple love for the man cannot be hindered by any tale of his past.

Perhaps we might also call Nina Almayer's choice of the life of the savage a triumph of sincerity. There is a conflict of fidelities in Nina also, but it is never very great. She is true to the strongest instincts within her, that of her Malay blood, and she is honest in her confession of this to her father.

- (b) But the struggle is a real one at first. "Her young mind having been unskillfully permitted to glance at better things, and then thrown back again into the hopeless quagmire of barbarism, full of strong and uncontrolled passions, had lost the power to discriminate. It seemed to Nina that there was no change and no difference". In savage barbarism and in white men's civilization, she sees the same manifestations of greed and hate. Nevertheless, sincere herself, and having a love of sincerity in others, she chooses at last the life of the savage. (c) "To her resolute nature, however, after all these years, the savage and uncompromising sincerity of purpose shown by her Malay kinsmen seemed at last preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite

- (a) "Falk" - P. 14.
 (b) "Almayer's Folly" - P. 54.
 (c) " " - P. 55.

disguises, to the virtuous pretences of such white people as she had had the misfortune to come in contact with"

- (a) The other reason for Nina's choice is her fidelity to her own instincts, which is in itself sincerity. The growing impulse towards the savage strain in her nature is fostered by the barbarous tales she hears from her Malay mother, and reaches its climax when she meets Dain Maroola. "Nina felt as if this bold-looking being who spoke burning words into her willing ear was the embodiment of her fate, the creature of her dreams..... the ideal Malay chief of her mother's tradition..... She recognized with a thrill of delicious fear the mysterious consciousness of her identity with that being". Later, to her father,
- (b) Nina makes a supreme declaration of her choice " I am not of your race", she tells him, "you wanted me to dream your dreams, to see your own visions -- the visions of life amongst the white faces of those who cast me out from their midst in angry contempt.....But while you spoke I listened to the voice of my own self; then this man came, and all was still;..... I have been rejected with scorn by the white people, and now I am a Malay! He took me in his arms, he laid his life at my feet. He is brave, he will be powerful, and I hold his bravery and his strength in my hand, and I shall make him great". Such is the form of fidelity in Nina Almayer's character. She is faithful to her savage instincts, and honest in her acknowledgement of their domination.

Having considered the women who are loyal to some purpose in life, who exhibit bravery, self-sacrifice and devotion to that purpose; and having considered those women ^{whose} straightforwardness and truth represent their form of fidelity, let us now turn to the hypocrites, the

- (a) "Almayer's Folly" - P. 82.
 (b) " " " - P. 236.

unfaithful ones among Conrad's women. They, themselves, show Conrad's own intense hatred of all sham and dissimulation. They are vain and self-centred; they are insincere. The basis of their characters impl^{ies} infidelity, they are incapable of loyalty to the truth in their own hearts, and are unfaithful to any conception of duty.

(a) Such a woman is Felicia Moorsom. She has "moved, breathed, existed, and even triumphed in the mere smother and froth of life", in a world where "everything is possible, except sincerity." The brilliance and attractiveness of Felicia's personality fade before this lack of sincerity which is the product in her character of the artificial and superficial life she has led. Besides this, she is vain and self-centred. "I had nothing to offer to her vanity", says the Planter. Her dream is to influence some human destiny: it is a romantic dream of herself, which has been fostered by the vanity of the world. But there is nothing genuine in Felicia's character, and the impression throughout is that she is playing a part.

(b) A somewhat similar figure is that of Mrs. Alvan Hervey, a woman who moves in the same circle as Felicia. She and her husband "skimmed over the surface of life hand in hand in a pure and frosty atmosphere..... disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life profound and unfrozen". Mrs. Hervey makes one attempt to break away from this superficial life, and the attempt itself, is not praiseworthy. She returns, tries to make her husband understand her motives, which she scarcely understands herself, and finally sinks back to her former existence, half relieved to find it is not too late. She has had one glimpse of

(a) "The Planter of Malata" p. 58:- "WITHIN THE TIDES".

(b) "The Return" p. 209:- "TALES OF UNREST".

what might have been a truer life, and yet she is content to come back to a life of insincerity. She is unfaithful even to the truth which she has glimpsed, and her only defence is that she is not brave enough to face the truth.

More displeasing still is the character of Mrs. Davidson. In one of the first pictures of her we read:

- (a) "What I noticed under the superficial aspect of vapid sweetness was her convex, obstinate forehead, and her small, red, pretty, ungenerous mouth." Mrs. Davidson's selfish nature comes to the fore when her husband brings home to her the child of Laughing Anne. He was trusting in her woman's natural compassion, but he did not know
- (b) "that her heart was about the size of a parched pea, and had the proportional amount of warmth; and that her faculty of compassion was mainly directed to herself." She works up her sense of insulted dignity and injured purity in the manner of a suspicious, narrow-minded woman, till at length she takes "her pure, sensitive, mean little soul away," and crowns her selfishness by infidelity.

Self-centredness again is seen in the character of the governess in "Chance", the woman whose cruelty so sadly wrecked Flora's youth and happiness. After making the girl the tool of her own selfish aims, she deliberately takes her vengeance upon her for the disappointment of those aims.

Two other displeasing characters are Madame de S- of "Under Western Eyes", and Miss Etchingham Granger, of "The Inheritors". The first is the "ghastly gracious mistress" of a revolutionary salon, and the inspiration

- (a) "Because of the Dollars" - p.249 : "Within the Tides".
- (b) " " " " - p.295 : " " " " .

of Peter Ivanovitch. She is not depicted at any length, but she gives a distinct impression of a sham. The second is a very strange young woman, who is almost uninterpretable. She is not a convincing depiction, and whatever her character she cannot be said to be straightforward.

What are we to conclude, then, concerning these insincere women? First of all that their insincerity makes for infidelity, as shown in Felicia Moorsom and Mrs. Hervey. More outstanding even than the infidelity of these characters is their lack of a sense of solidarity. Mrs. Davidson, with her selfishness and narrow-mindedness, is incapable of any feeling of human sympathy, and the same may be said of Flora's governess. Very marked is the hypocrisy of Madame de S-, especially when it is contrasted with the tender affection for others shown by Tekla, her "dame de compagnie", and Nathalie Haldin's vision of a world-wide brotherhood. Yet, hypocrite and sham that she is, Madame de S- is the supposed leader of a cause whose ideal is solidarity.

I have noted now various forms of fidelity revealed in Conrad's women, and I have also considered his unfaithful women. There remains to be treated a last aspect of fidelity. In my introduction I commented upon the frequent lack of proportion seen in Conrad's women. This lack of proportion is a very womanly characteristic. Women are apt, when their natures in the beginning are faithful and true, to go to extremes, especially when their loyalty is aroused by affection. Utter self-sacrifice is natural in a woman who has forgotten all in devotion to one object in life. The very affections of women are apt to lack a sense of proportion. Often this abandon, this tendency to extremes leads to tragic ends. Some

outside influence breaks harshly in upon the woman's self-forgetfulness, and perhaps deprives her of the object of her devotion. Sometimes, however, the lack of proportion is seen in the devotion to an unworthy object, to a selfish aim. It is then a negative aspect of fidelity. But when the devotion is worthy, unselfish, and sincere, the lack of proportion serves to emphasize the depth of the loyalty. Let us trace, then, these positive and negative aspects of this phase of fidelity in Conrad's women.

We have noted already Winnie Verloc's all-engrossing self-sacrifice. There is a decided lack of an ordered sense of proportion in this woman's devotion to her brother. As we have seen, the boy is connected with all that was best in her life. She loves him with a passionate, maternal love, the cause and the result of her struggle and self-sacrifice for his sake. It is no wonder, then, that Winnie cannot see Steevie as an idiot. As it so often happens, her devotion and self-sacrifice are carried to an extreme. Winnie is awakened very cruelly by the boy's death, to the realization of her self-sacrifice and of all the boy has meant to her. Her unproportioned sense of fidelity then leads her to murder her husband. It is the idea of vengeance which is behind the murder, the last blow struck for Steevie.

There is another evidence of the lack of proportion in the character of Freya. In this case it is seen in the disproportionate self-confidence of the girl, which is carried to a disastrous result. At the basis of Freya's strength of character lies this self-confidence. She has an implicit trust in her love, and therefore, she gives Jaspar no hold upon her. She relies upon herself to brave the difficulties of their situation. There is

too much confidence on her side, and too little on Jaspas's. When his brig is destroyed Jaspas's belief in the fulfilment of their love is forever broken, and Freya's trust in herself is shattered. Heemskirk, the man whom she has treated with almost hysterical contempt, proves the malignant fate which causes the disaster of Jaspas's life and hers. This knowledge shakes Freya's belief in everything, above all, her belief in her love. She even doubts whether she would have carried out their plan of escape. Hers is the tragedy of too great self-confidence, which, being shaken, ends in failure.

In the character of Amy Foster there is also a lack of an ordered sense of proportion. This girl who has no charm, who might justly be called stupid, who is silent and subdued, yet falls deeply and overwhelmingly in love. "She fell in love silently, - obstinately - perhaps helplessly. It came slowly, but when it came it worked like a powerful spell; it was love as the Ancients understood it: an irresistible and fateful impulse - a possession!" But when Amy Foster awakens from this enchantment, her unrestrained love gives way before an equally uncontrollable fear. She is filled with an unreasonable terror of the man she cannot understand. She leaves him to die, helpless and suffering, and after his death she sinks back to her old, dull apathy. She seems to have forgotten entirely the man who roused in her the two irresistible passions of love and fear.

An extremist of another type is Sophie Antonovna. She is a very unworldly wise person, a true-hearted revolutionist, and a mild fanatic. But her devotion to the cause and her unworldliness blind her to the follies of such people as Madame de S-, and Peter Ivanovitch.

She reveals a sincere but blind fidelity.

- Mrs. Haldin, again, is a very pathetic figure in whom is revealed the tragedy of too engrossing an affection. She has lavished all her love upon her son and daughter. Other interests are not excluded of course, for Mrs. Haldin is too good a Russian for that, but her whole life is centred in her children. She has the firmest belief in the extraordinary abilities and lofty character of her son. The tragic death of Victor is too heavy a blow for his mother. She found it very trying not to know all the details of his death, "she could not make up her mind to abandon him quietly to the dumb unknown.....In reality the inconceivable that staggered her mind was nothing but the cruel audacity of Death passing over her head to strike at that young and precious heart."
- (a)

Under the blow of Victor's death, Mrs. Haldin's mind becomes possessed of a fixed idea, - a simple and sombre idea that wore out the heart in endless questionings which only the dead could answer, - that her son must have perished because he did not want to be saved. No other explanation satisfies her, and she can find no reason for this one, but it dominates her shaken mind. Nothing could be more full of pathos and tragedy than this last picture of Mrs. Haldin:

- (b) "I had the certitude that this mother, after having heard now all that was to be known of her son's fate, refused in her heart to give him up after all. It was more than Rachel's inconsolable mourning, it was something deeper, more inaccessible in its frightful tranquility. Lost in the ill-defined mass of the high-backed chair, her white, inclined profile

(a) "Under Western Eyes" - p. 113.

(b) " " " - p. 335.

suggested the contemplation of something in her lap, as though a beloved head were resting there."

- There are two other women whose love is tragic because of its passionately unrestrained nature. In both it is an unrequited love. The first of these is Linda Viola, whose love for Nostromo is too overwhelming, too absorbing. She tells him: "Ever since I felt I lived in the world, I have lived for you alone, Gian' Battista. And that you knew!....I was yours ever since I can remember. I had only to think of you for the earth to become empty to my eyes. When you were there, I could see no one else. I was yours. Nothing is changed. The world belongs to you, and you let me live in it."...When Linda finds that Nostromo is unfaithful to her, that he loves her sister, Giselle, she is passionately jealous, but she is faithful to her love to the end. "'It is I who loved you,' she whispered, with a face as set and white as marble in the moonlight. 'I! Only I! She will forget thee, killed miserably for her pretty face. I cannot understand. I cannot understand. But I shall never forget thee. Never!'"

She stood silent and still, collecting her strength to throw all her fidelity, her pain, bewilderment and despair into one great cry.

'Never! Gian' Battista!'"

- Love and jealousy are united, too, in the Malay slave girl, Taminah. Her simple, primitive nature is well depicted: "She lived like the tall palms.... seeking the light, desiring the sunshine, fearing the storm, unconscious of either.....The absence of pain
- (a) "Nostromo" - p. 462.
 (b) " " - p. 491.
 (c) "Almayer's Folly" - p. 146.

and hunger was her happiness, and when she felt unhappy she was simply tired, more than usual, after the day's labour." With the coming of Dain Maroola into her life, there awakens within her the two passions of love and jealousy. In her heart there is a wild tumult of newly aroused joy and hope, and the rage and jealousy with which she watches Dain's love given to another, leave her helpless in the dumb agony of a wounded animal. The intense desire for revenge upon those who have caused her pain leads her to tell Almayer of Nina's flight with the savage chieftain. In this way Taminah is faithful, but faithful only to the unrestrained passions aroused in her.

As one would expect, Taminah is not the only one of Conrad's savage women who reveals a lack of proportion. Nina Almayer is unrestrained in her abandonment to the call of her Malay blood; and Aissa, as we shall see later, exhibits the same unrestraint. They are more faithful to their instincts, and their savage natures are more uncontrolled and passionate than those of their white sisters.

The women we have been considering all show a tendency to go to extremes in faithfulness, but their fidelity is praiseworthy because it includes no element of selfishness. There is jealousy, it is true, in Linda Viola and in Taminah; but in Linda this never led to infidelity, while in Taminah love and jealousy awoke together, there is no question of fidelity to Dain, because Taminah has never been true to him, only to her own instincts. These women, therefore, display the absence of sense of proportion in faithfulness which is sincere and not selfish.

But there are others of Conrad's women who go to extremes in fidelity which is self-centred and narrow,

and which is, therefore, not praiseworthy. There are three women whom I have placed in this category.

The first of these is Aissa, the third of Conrad's Malay Women. Aissa's love for Willems is selfish from the first, she desires to make him her slave.

- (a) "He was of the victorious race...They spoke with just such a deep voice - those victorious men; they looked with just such hard blue eyes at their enemies. And she made that voice speak softly to her, those eyes look tenderly at her face!,...He had all the attractiveness of the vague and the unknown - of the unforeseen and the sudden; of a being strong, dangerous, alive, and human, ready to be enslaved." Like Nina, Aissa knows her power over the man she loves, but she has no dreams of making the man great. Her love is savage and selfish. She will resort to any depth of cunning to keep the man her slave. Her love
- (b) is unrestrained, all-engrossing. "She, a woman, was the victim of her heart, of her woman's belief that there is nothing in the world but love - the everlasting thing." When Willems turns away from her, she cannot understand; she knows only the pain of separation,
- (c) and loneliness of heart. Hers is "the wonder and desolation of an animal that knows only suffering, of the incomplete soul that knows pain but knows not hope." With the loss of her power over this man, and with the loss of all hope of regaining it, all Aissa's savage nature asserts itself. Her love suddenly turns
- (d) to a great, wild hatred. "Hate filled the world.... the hate of race, the hate of hopeless diversity,

- (a) "An Outcast of the Islands" - p.95.
 (b) " " " " " - p.261.
 (c) " " " " " - p.365.
 (d) " " " " " - p.326.

the hate of blood; the hate against the man born in the land of gloom and of evil from which nothing but misfortune comes to those who are not white." In the blindness and rage of the hatred Aissa kills the man she loved so passionately. One might say that she is as true to her savage instincts as Taminah. But Taminah's is merely the awakening of love itself, there is no devotion to the object of her love. On the other hand, Aissa is faithful to Willems, but her fidelity calls forth duplicity and cunning, it a selfish loyalty. She would even have resorted to the murder of her old, blind father, to keep Willems with her.

Turning to a character of an altogether different type, we find displayed a lack of proportion in the domination, not of an affection, but of an idea, one which is narrow and selfish, which springs from ignorance, which finds expression in a doctrine, almost ridiculous in its narrow-mindedness. The lady in question is Mrs. Fyne, so excellently characterized for us by Marlowe. She is first presented as a woman who gives a distinct impression of being a very trustworthy, capable, and excellent governess. One has the feeling that her very children are not her own, "but only entrusted to her calm, efficient, and unemotional care." This cool, detached manner is a little surprising in this commonplace, not wholly intelligent, but earnest woman. Still more surprising is the discovery that beneath this calm surface there is a great unrest. "She had her reveries, her lurid, violent, crude reveries," and in these must have been formulated her feminist doctrine. From no actual experience could such a surprising doctrine have come, and, besides, Mrs. Fyne is "a profoundly (a) innocent person." "It was not political, it was not

- (a) social. It was a knock-me-down doctrine, a practical individualistic doctrine.....that no consideration , no delicacy, no tenderness, no scruples should stand in the way of a woman (who, by the mere fact of her sex, was the predestined victim of conditions created by men's selfish passions, their vices and their abominable tyranny) from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence. She had even a right to go out of existence without considering anyone's feelings or convenience since some women's existences were made impossible by the short-sighted baseness of men". Such are the teachings of Mrs. Fyne, but, as we shall see, they are not believed in fully even by the good lady , herself. When Flora, having listened to these doctrines, and yet remained a woman, runs away with Captain Anthony, Mrs. Fyne presents an implacable front to this "triumphantly
- (b) feminine" action. "Mrs. Fyne did not want women to be women. Her theory was that they should turn themselves into unscrupulous, sexless nuisances". Mrs. Fyne sternly disapproves of the assertion of Flora's womanliness, but when she learns that Flora has made her brother the victim of her feminist doctrine, she is horrified. The sincerity of Mrs. Fyne's theory can be judged by this attitude to the practical manifestation of it . The doctrine, itself, is too narrow, too selfish to be sincere, and its domination over Mrs. Fyne's mind is not a testimony to any very noble qualities in that lady's character.

Last to be considered in this group is Mademoiselle Therese. How such deception, such false righteousness, and mean rapacity could combine in the character of the sister of Dona Rita seems highly incongruous. She displays a "distracting versatility of sentiment:

- (a) "Chance" P. 75.
 (b) " " P. 138.

rapacity, virtue, piety, spite, and false tenderness". Therese is convinced, above all things of the idea that her sister is animated by an evil spirit. She is all that is wicked and sinful, and Therese's mission is to turn Rita from her evil ways. But Therese's religious zeal fails before the overmastering miserliness of her nature. She has been sent to

- (a) Rita by their uncle. She says: "It's he who told me to go forth and attempt to save her soul, bring her back to us, to a virtuous life. But what would be the good of that? She is given over to worldly, carnal thoughts.....No, let her give her ill-gotten wealth up to the deserving and devote the rest of her life to repentance". Therese's greed becomes an overmastering passion, her mind becomes dominated by another idea, the **control** of Rita's wealth. To gain power over her sister she will even sacrifice Rita to Ortega. There is something sinister in this complete domination of greed. Her heart is completely closed "against
- (b) remorse, compassion, or mercy, by the meanness of her righteousness, and of her rapacious instincts".

I have reached now the last division of the revelation in the characters of Conrad's women of the sense of solidarity. This ^{is} revealed, in the first place, in the feeling of human sympathy and fellowship evinced by certain of these women; and, conversely, its absence is seen in the lack of regard for others. Again, it is revealed in the longing for community seen in Conrad's lonely women.

The outstanding example of a woman, who has a very deep feeling of human sympathy, is Mrs. Gould. The first glimpse we have of Dona Emilia is in her

- (c) character of hostess. "She kept her old Spanish home open for the dispensation of the small graces of

(a) "Arrow of Gold" - P. 148.

(b) " " " " - P. 313.

(c) "Nostromo" P. 39.

existence. She dispensed them with simplicity and charm, because she was guided by an alert perception of values. She was highly gifted in the art of human intercourse, which consists in delicate shades of self-forgetfulness, and in the suggestion of universal comprehension". This suggestion, emanating from the words and actions of Mrs. Gould, attracts all to her.

- (a) "Senora", cries Don Pèpè! "it is as if God had given you the power to look into the very breasts of people!" Hers is the wisdom of the heart which enables her to sympathize with the joys or griefs of the people about her, which enables her to realize that all mankind is united in one great fellowship.

Another woman who also realizes the unity of mankind is Tekla. In this case, it is the unity of suffering. Unhappiness and misery seem universal, and Tekla's great desire is to alleviate to some degree, a little of the suffering she sees about her. She clings to the cause of the revolution, because its ideals seem to be the remedy of all ills, and the end of all suffering.

How great a contrast to these women are such figures as Mrs. Fyne and Mrs. Davidson! The former cannot see beyond her own narrow view of life, the latter has not even the sense of compassion. Both are unable to grasp the idea of the union of the human race: they cannot realize that when it is a question of sympathy between one person and another, narrow prejudices must be forgotten.

Sometimes, again, we see in a noble woman, who has suffered great grief, only a larger comprehension of the suffering of all the human race, and a greater

feeling of human sympathy. Thus, out of Nathalie Haldin's bitter, cruel experience comes a supreme belief in a future of perfect love and human accord.

- (a) She says: "I must own to you that I have been thinking of the time when all discord shall be silenced. Just imagine! The tempest of blows and execrations is over. All is still; the new sun is rising, and the weary men, united at last, taking count in their conscience of the ended contest, feel saddened by their victory, because so many ideas have perished for the triumph of one, so many beliefs have abandoned them without support. They feel alone on the earth together. Yes, there must be many bitter hours! But at last the anguish of hearts shall be extinguished in love." Such is Nathalie Haldin's great trust that through the united endeavour of mankind shall come the end of suffering for the human race. "She is wedded to an invincible belief in the advent of loving accord springing like a heavenly flower from the soil of men's earth, soaked in blood, torn by struggles, watered with tears".

I have already, in my introduction, considered Conrad's lonely women from the standpoint of their desire for community. Such women as Nathalie Haldin and Tekla are lonely also, but theirs is a self-forgetfulness, which knows no desire for community for themselves alone, but seeks it for the whole of mankind. Through their own suffering, and the suffering of others they realize the bond of universal grief, which unites the human race. There is just as great a sense of solidarity in Conrad's other lonely women, such as Lena and Flora de Barral, but they struggle for a place in the unity from which they are divided.

- (a) "Under Western Eyes" - P. 372.
 (b) "Under Western Eyes" - P. 375.

PART 4: Conclusion.

What, then, are we to conclude about Conrad's women? I have endeavoured to show how the two basic ideas of fidelity and solidarity are revealed in these characters; and, since these ideas are fundamental in the whole of the human race, they serve to emphasize not only the nobility, but also the reality of these women. I have endeavoured also to show Conrad's own truthfulness of depiction. I think we may conclude, therefore, that Conrad's women have an unassailable reality, and the finest of them have a nobility of character which places them in the front rank of all women in literature.

But, as we began with the study of Conrad's own ideals, and followed him in his search for these in character, let us return to the author, himself, and stress again the secret of his power of characterization. His is the power to "call spirits from the vasty deep"; his very subtlest creations have a breath of life in them. The secret of this power lies in Conrad's possession of the "wisdom of the heart". Something greater than mere observation, the talent of sympathy, and the ability to analyse, -- a rare combination -- this enables the creator to see into the very hearts of his people, to feel their feelings, to think their

thoughts, to probe the deepest motives of their actions.

- This wisdom of the heart is but an evidence of what John Galsworthy calls the "cosmic spirit" in
- (a) Conrad. "In the writer, Joseph Conrad, there is present behind his art, and the conscious qualities ranged in service to express it, a certain cosmic spirit, a power of taking the reader down below the surface to the earth's heart, to watch the process that, in its slow, inexorable courses, has formed a crust to which are clinging all our little different shapes. He has the power of making his reader feel the inevitable oneness of all things that be, of breathing into him a sense of solace that he himself is part of a great, unknown unity." The cosmic spirit arises from Conrad's sense of solidarity. He sees the unity of all, because he has penetrated to the depths of the human soul, and to the very roots and springs of life itself.

From this penetration arises, first of all, Conrad's belief that human nature rests primarily upon the idea of fidelity. Only through fidelity, can the unity he feels so strongly be realized by all. Greater fidelity leads to a greater sense of fellowship with all creation. Again, from this insight arises also Conrad's view of the universe as a whole, a view which has often been called pessimistic. He places his characters in the midst of life and makes no compromise. They are compelled to struggle against a force not benevolent, and often bearing the likeness of a malignant fate. This force rises out of the greed and selfishness of unfaithful men, which swallow up all sense of fellowship, which blot out sincerity and loyalty, and make for distrust, suspicion, deceit, and hypocrisy. Thus the world is full of

- (a) "Joseph Conrad" - John Galsworthy, "Fortnightly Review"-1908.

struggle and evil because such numbers of mankind have lost the sense of fidelity and solidarity. Such a view of life is pessimistic on the surface, but Conrad finds hope in the discovery of men and women, loyal and sincere, working unselfishly for the good of others, filled with a sense of the fellowship of all the human family, of the bond of joy and pain, of hopes and fears, of dreams and ideals, which unites "the dead to the living, and the living to the unborn".

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