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‘COSAS DE RUSSIA’: JOSEPH CONRAD’S CONFESSIONS ABOUT RUSSIA AND RUSSIANS

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Abstract. The paper addresses a very controversial subject in Conradian scholarship and criticism: Conrad's representation of the 'Cosas de Russia.' So far, it has been largely (but not necessarily correctly) interpreted as either Russophobia (in his non-fiction) or Russophilia (in his fiction). Conrad himself evaded any clear answer as to his precise stance and its respective background. But his narrative strategies are telling enough. They contain some carefully guarded secrets, but also unintentional confessions. The question therefore is: how much did he really know about Russia and Russians, how familiar was he with Russian culture, language and literature? These issues are explored through a combination of British Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Studies, but also Slavonic Studies. The methods employed are close reading, narratology, deconstruction and contextualization. Apart from Conrad's novels "Under Western Eyes" (1911) and "The Secret Agent" (1907) his essays "Autocracy and War" (1905) and "Turgenev" (1917) will be used for elucidation. Among the Russian works of fiction studied in comparison to Conrad's works are Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Demons" (1871–1872) and "The Brothers Karamazov" (1879–1880) and Ivan Goncharov's "Oblomov" (1859). The major attention, however, will be directed to Nikolay Gogol's short stories "Nevsky Prospekt" (1835) and "The Overcoat" (1842) as well as his novel "Dead Souls" (1842). After reconsidering central issues and correcting some misassumptions in literary criticism, the paper attempts to add a few new aspects to the debate by focusing on issues of intertextuality. What emerges from all this is that Conrad's 'Cosas de Russia' represent a kind of hidden master knowledge whose significance still needs to be fully recognized.

Key words: Joseph Conrad, Cosas de Russia, representation of Russian culture, language and literature, intertextuality, comparative studies of English and Russian literature, issues of translation.

Cosas de Russia

Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911) narrates the story of a professor of languages in Geneva who becomes a witness to the tragedy of a Russian family during the period of autocracy and revolution in Russia. In the course of narration, Conrad transgresses the private nature of this story and suggests a broader historical and political context. He was "trying to capture the very soul of things Russian, – *Cosas de Russia*."[1] So the novel addresses Russian issues, topics and concerns.

One thing that made me suspicious very soon is that the story, its characters and the narrator are not what they seem to be at first sight. In a similar way Conrad also started to emerge in my mind as a writer who tries to hide or conceal something very carefully. He never expressly revealed the essentials centering round his representations of the Cosas de Russia (matters of biography, history, politics, language, culture, literature). Yet his textual strategies are telling, of course. So this is what I turned to for various investigations, mainly of his novel *Under Western Eyes*. I explored the construction of the narrative perspective, the collapse of narratorial detachment, the perceptions of the mutual relations between Western and Eastern Europe, the intercultural juxtapositions involved, and the chronotopic representations of St. Petersburg and Geneva.

All in all, the debate about Conrad's involvement with Russia and Russians is a long-standing one in literary criticism. Over the decades it diversified tremendously, developed into a huge and very fierce controversy, with lots of intricate details. To some extent, this special branch of research can be seen as an epitome of Conradian scholarship and criticism.[2] But the scope of this paper does not allow to deal with this in greater detail. The focus here is rather on my own independent and creative reading of Conrad against the Russian background.

So what can I offer here? I suggest to shortly return to a few central issues, taking them up to correct a few misassumptions in criticism.[3] But then I should like to add, deepen and expand on a number of aspects, above all, in the field of intertextuality. I will do so by integrating British Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Studies, but also Slavonic Studies. This allows for a kind of investigation that ranges from philological

[1] Cf. Conrad in his letter to Galsworthy of January 6, 1908: "I think that I am trying to capture the very soul of things Russian, – *Cosas de Russia.*" [Jean-Aubry: 64].

[2] For more information about the Cosas de Russia see: Armstrong 1998, Busza 1976, Carabine 1991, 1996a and 1996b, Gilliam 1978, Gillon 1969, Guerard 1982, Kirschner 1968, Meyer 1980, Najder 1983 and 1997, Smith 1991, Tanner 1962 and Wheeler 1980 and 1983.

[3] For this paper ideas from other publications of mine about Conrad have been used. Cf. Bimberg 2010a, 2010b and 2011.*

details to major political themes and ideological issues. To me, this provides a very fitting perspective for the complex attitudes conveyed by Conrad towards Russian culture, language and literature. But also for understanding Conrad's multifaceted identity underlying these representations: a British writer emerging (at least), apart from Polish and Ukrainian, also from Russian cultural, linguistic and literary contexts.

As regards the discussion of Russian culture, language and literature, let me express my gratitude to several colleagues and friends. To Dr. Igor Volkov, with whom I discussed a much earlier draft of this paper (with a different focus) some years ago. For the paper in its present shape I am particularly indebted to Prof. Dr. Olga Dzhumaylo, who assisted me in lots of details, helping me to access Russian editions, locate certain passages and test their meanings/possible readings. Of utmost significance in such a research on intercultural and multilinguistic issues (English, Russian, German), linguistic nuances and connotations and individual readers' perceptions and sensitivities, was also the judgment of an Australian colleague of mine in Dortmund. Dr. Richard Bell was so kind as to test the effect of Conrad's English renditions of Russian speeches, sayings and proverbs on him as a native speaker of English. I formed the connecting link in all these observations and tests conducted in numerous cultural, linguistic and literary contexts. Let me say that I enjoyed this friendly cooperation between four scholars from different backgrounds (British/Australian, Russian, Ukrainian, German) tremendously. Without it certain assessments and conclusions would never have been possible.

The narrator of *Under Western Eyes*

A decisive clue to the perspective provided in *UWE* on all things Russian is the identity of the narrator. Curiously enough, many critics do not question the narrator's self-fashioning or the other characters' responses to it: they *un*critically call or present the narrator consistently, but wrongly, as British or English.[1] Very rarely does a scholar expressly note the narrator's Russian origin, but even then the

[1] For references to the British/English narrator/teacher/professor of languages or the Englishman cf.: [Berthoud 1978: 161; Crankshaw 1976: 103; Eagleton 2005: 253, 254; Fleishman 1976: 121; Gillon 1969: 690; Guerard 1982: 269; Lucas 1992: 116; Moser 1984: 32; Najder 1983: 359; Peters 2006: 88; Szittya 1981: 819, 835; Widmer 1991: 109; Zabel 1966: 130, 136].

observations are not totally devoid of contradictions.[1] Where, when and how the narrator gained his Anglophone identity is not clear. Yet according to textual evidence his true identity is a mixed East-Western one, characterized by hybridity, twoness and in-betweenness.[2] This constellation bears a close parallel to Conrad's own Anglicization and the tremendous problems of identity associated with that.[3] The central narrative task of the narrator, to bring in the perspective of a critical distance as a 'Western' observer, therefore remains unfulfilled. Neither is he a real foreigner to Russian issues, nor a total outsider, not even 'a disinterested spectator,' but rather an insider. This explains the collapse of narrative detachment even more convincingly. On the author's part, this is not a matter of personal sentimentality, but the result of a conscious narrative strategy, i.e. a controlled collapse, which Conrad found himself justified to practice due to his origin, socialization, biographical and historical conditioning. The truth is that his familiarity

[1] Greaney speaks of the narrator as "a British (but Russian-born) professor of languages" [Greaney 2002: 155]. Hay often calls him 'Englishman' or 'English narrator' [Carabine 1991: 125], but mentions the narrator's birth in Russia [ibid.: 125]. Carabine refers to him as 'the English narrator' [Carabine 1996b: 7, 28], but also remarks: "The Anglo-Russian narrator, born in St. Petersburg, who has neither art nor imagination, nor knowledge of Russia, is also the reverse image of his author, who is an Anglo-Pole with an established reputation as an English novelist, beginning his fourteenth volume" [ibid.: fn 15, p. 215]. Later, he calls him "the old Englishman" [ibid.: 247] and "Miss Haldin's English confidant" [ibid.: 247]. In a later publication Carabine describes the narrator as Conrad's "reverse image – an elderly Anglo-Russian teacher of languages, who disclaims the possession of art, imagination, and a knowledge of Russia but who none the less excoriates 'the Russian soul'" [Carabine 2000: 123]. Alternatingly he talks of "the complex interplay between the English narrator's conflicting editorial opinions and multiple narrative functions and Razumov's Russian diary" [ibid.: 123–24]. Elsewhere, he also addresses him as "the story's elderly English narrator" [ibid.: 125]. Kirschner describes the narrator as "This so-called Englishman, who lived in Petersburg as a child and speaks French and Russian…" [Kirschner 1985: 16] and as "the only "Englishman" in the novel" [ibid.: 19].

[2] He is proud of his extensive connections to the Russian quarter of Geneva where he has been living for a long time [ibid.: 4], taking special pride in his heightened standing there due to the ladies Haldin [ibid.:103], but without ever once regarding himself as part of that community. In the light of this closeness to Russians and their affairs, his statements about the Russians' inadequate usage of language [ibid.: 4] appear like the heartless gaze of a scientist studying an utterly alien phenomenon. In retrospect they look unconvincing. Later on he even admits that one has to be a Russian oneself in order to comprehend this (political) 'Russian simplicity' [ibid.: 104], once more completely repressing the fact that he is one himself by birth.

[3] For Conrad's difficult identity see: [Carabine 1996b; Carey 1977; Gillon 1974; Greaney 2002; and Knowles 2000].

with Russian issues is indeed tremendous, as often as he may have played it down in public.[1] This is why his statements in the "Author's Note" from 1920, which still try to uphold the principle of narrative detachment, may have to be regarded as a lie to cover himself, a measure of self-protection.[2] Just as the narrator seems at times to throw dust in the reader's eyes, so too does Conrad the writer.[3]

[1] Cf. the author's remarks in his "Author's Note" which have to be seen as a huge understatement: "The course of action need not be explained. It has suggested itself more as a matter of feeling than a matter of thinking. It is the result not of a special experience but of general knowledge, fortified by earnest meditation" [Conrad 1924b: viii]. "The various figures playing their part in the story also owe their existence to no special experience but to the general knowledge of the condition of Russia and of the moral and emotional reactions of the Russian temperament to the pressure of tyrannical lawlessness <…>" [ibid.]. In his essay "Turgenev," talking about Turgenev's treatment and reputation in Russia, he claims: "Frankly, I don't want to appear as qualified to judge of things Russian. It wouldn't be true. I know nothing of them. But I am aware of a few general truths, <…>" [Conrad 1924d: 47]. However, what he then mentions about Turgenev ('fatal absence of callousness in the man') testifies to his knowledge of the conditions of the time [ibid.: 47–48]. Besides, his essay "Autocracy and War" betrays his expertise (cf. also: [Gillon 1969: 686–87]). In some of his letters, Conrad likewise pleads ignorance, e.g. in a letter to Edward Garnett of April 1917 [Conrad 2002: 77–79].

[2] "My greatest anxiety was in being able to strike and sustain the note of scrupulous impartiality. The obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily, by the peculiar experience of race and family, in addition to my primary conviction that truth alone is the justification of any fiction which makes the least claim to the quality of art or may hope to take its place in the culture of men and women of its time. I had never been called before to a greater effort of detachment: detachment from all passions, prejudices and even from personal memories. "Under Western Eyes" on its first appearance in England was a failure with the public, because of that very detachment. I obtained my reward some six years later when I first heard that the book had found universal recognition in Russia and had been re-published there in many editions" [Conrad 1924b: viii]. The argument of detachment being a reason for the failure of the book in Britain does not seem too convincing to me because detachment is a marked feature of British identity. For the reception of *UWE* in Britain and in Russia see Davis 1974.

[3] E.M. Forster comments on these features in Conrad, his 'dread of intimacy,' the 'smoke screen of his reticence,' his never giving himself away, 'a central obscurity' [Forster: 137–38]. Berthoud characterizes Conrad's references in his correspondence to his work-in-progress, *The Secret Agent*, as 'a strangely defensive note' [Berthoud 2000: 100]. Subsequently, he analyzes Conrad's true motives behind it, among them his retaining his political independence. According to Berthoud, Conrad, in his letter to John Galsworthy on 12 September 1906 [Letters: III, 354], makes an unusual plea for a shallow reading. The reasons he gives do not convince Berthoud [ibid.: 100]: "'I had no idea to consider Anarchism politically – or to treat it seriously in its philosophical aspect: [but] as a general manifestation of human nature in its discontent and imbecility. The general reflections … come in by the way and are not applicable to particular instances – Russian or Latin … As to attacking anarchism as a form of humanitarian enthusiasm or intellectual despair or social atheism that – if it were worth doing – would be the work of a more vigorous hand and for a mind more robust, and perhaps more honest than mine'" [Letters: III 354–5] [ibid.: 100]. Even after the book had appeared at Methuen's on 10 September 1907, Conrad favoured evasiveness. In his letter to his friend R.B. Cunninghame Graham, a socialist, on 7 October, though relieved about his reaction (Graham liked the Chesham Square and Westminster scenes), he adopted a self-defensive stance at once [ibid.: 101]: "'I don't think that I've been satirizing the revolutionary world. All these people are not revolutionaries – they are shams'" [Letters: III, 491] [ibid.: 101]. Berthoud calls this "what has become one of the standard objections to the novel" [ibid.: 101]. He refers to Irving Howe who held that "gradually to deprive characters of their pretensions or illusions' is not the same

thing as 'to deny them the mildest claim to dignity and redemption'; to do *that* is to commit an artistic crime against them" [Howe: 76–113] [ibid.: 101]. Berthoud judges that Conrad did not mean the professor to be a caricature [ibid.: 101]: "'I did not intend to make him despicable. He is incorruptible at any rate … At the worst he is a megalomaniac of an extreme type. And every extremist is respectable'" [Letters: III, 491] [ibid.: 101]. Berthoud sees the letter as 'riven by an inconsistency' [ibid.: 101]. Generally he finds that "[t]he embarassment betrayed in these letters has been explained by Conrad's fear of offending the left-wing susceptibilities of his two correspondents. But political disagreement did not usually inhibit him" [ibid.: 101–02]. This playing down of his own expertise also relates to Conrad's own remarks about his knowledge of and attitude towards anarchism. In spite of contrary statements he conducted "a full-scale programme of documentary research" [ibid.: 102; details: 102–03]. "Thus we are faced with an elaborate structure of evasiveness in which the refusal to take responsibility for the novel's political content takes the form of a refusal to acknowledge the degree to which the novel is grounded on documentation and observation. We are told repeatedly, and it would seem reductively, that the novel is 'but a tale', and that we are foolish to make any further demands on it" [ibid.: 103]. Berthoud concludes: "Conrad is right to insist that in *The Secret Agent* he is not concerned with refuting anarchism; he performs a more radical operation, which is to relocate it within the discourse of narrative realism. To be more precise, he seeks to challenge – in the name of concord and justice – not so much anarchism as such as the shallow or unimaginative liberal-progressive response to anarchism. In short, the novel's true subject is the mind-set – the catechism of commonplace ideas, attitudes, and emotions – that the *lecteur moyen intellectuel* brings to it. In this light, Conrad's obsessive defensiveness when writing to his friends about the novel becomes more intelligible, if not more excusable. The main recipients of his letters were variously members of the intellectual left" [ibid.: 105]. In the following Berthoud supplies details about John Galsworthy (welcoming social revolution), Cunninghame Graham (advocating revolution), Edward Garnett (Conrad's literary patron, and, according to Najder, a 'leftist liberal') and his wife Constance (the greatest English translator of Russian classics). The Garnetts "had long cultivated distinguished anarchist émigrés like Volkhovsky, Kropotkin, and the former assassin Stepniak" (reference to Jefferson 1982) [ibid.: 105–06]. Doubtless Conrad entertained the highest esteem for his English friends, yet at the same time he kept his political independence in those relations. That he was also able of confrontation is evident from his reaction in 1911 to Garnett's review of *Under Western Eyes* [ibid.: 106]. Garnett had held that there was "'something almost vitriolic in Mr Conrad's scathing rejection of the shibboleths of the humanitarian lovers of their kind'" [ibid.]. Conrad railed against "Garnett's posture as 'Russian ambassador [*sic*] to the Republic of Letters': 'You are so russianised my dear', he went on to say, 'that you don't know the truth when you see it – unless it smells of cabbage-soup when it at once secures your profoundest respect'" ([Letters, IV, 488]) [ibid.]. Berthoud concludes: "Yet such an outburst is much less radical an attack on Edwardian liberal ideology than a novel like *The Secret Agent*. It is one thing to quarrel with an opinion or a judgement, quite another to call into question the whole value system that supports such individual verdicts. The central issue in the novel is not how anarchism should be judged, but what anarchism reveals about the England of the time. Perhaps Conrad is right to insist that *The Secret Agent* is not an attack on anarchism as such; what it does, rather, is to drop anarchism into London life, and show that life suddenly losing its transparency and precipitating its murkier messages. In so doing it foregrounds the whole question of the genuineness of the English left's commitment to social change. If this is so, then Conrad's evasiveness in his letters to his friends is understandable, for the novel threatens friendship much more seriously than this or that difference of opinion" [ibid.].

Russophobia and russophilia

Another fundamental mistake in the critical assessment of Conrad's Russian attitudes is the supposed marked contrast between russophobia in his non-fiction, i.e. his essays and letters, and russophilia in his fiction.[1] On the contrary, textual evidence proves that this contrast noted in literary criticism cannot be sustained.

[1] This contrast is stated in literary criticism, for instance by Tanner [Tanner: 198–99], Watts [Watts 1982: 57–59] and Zabel [Zabel: 136, 139, 140], who, however, see Conrad's more complex positions at the same time. Gillon discusses Russian strains in Conrad and relates them to his Polish origins. He stresses Conrad's (political) Russophobia more (e.g. Russia's barbarism), seeing his Russian attitudes as a consequence of Conrad's hatred of despotism and radicalism, and assigning them to the impact also of his father. He admits that Conrad's complex art has many sources, among them his persecution and exile, his betrayals of leaving his homeland for a career as a British seaman and starting a career as an English novelist, his familiarity with Polish romantic literature as well as other Polish works and his countrymen's hostility towards him at the beginning. Gillon relates several factors of Conrad's works (e.g. his romanticism, his focus on guilt and expiation, moral obligations to lost causes, the code of honour and duty, his *weltschauung* and various fictional devices) all to Polish literature, the atmosphere of Polish life or the impact of Conrad's family (further references by Gillon to textual similarities of Conrad to Polish works, especially literary motifs). Yet he also admits that Conrad was very reticent about these Polish ties. By contrast to Conrad's ambiguous attitude to his fatherland and compatriots he finds there is no such thing in Conrad's remarks about Russians and Russian literature. He quotes from a passage in his essay "Turgenev," where Conrad denies any expertise about Russians (cf. above), and finds this a contradiction to statements in the essay "Autocracy and War", where he sees him chastising Russian tyranny unequivocally, something that suggests a deeper knowledge of things Russian [Gillon 1969: 685–87]. Confuting not only Conrad's remarks, but also Conrad's biographer's, Jocelyn Baines's opinion that Conrad had a 'close knowledge of Russia', Gillon concludes: "There is no evidence of Conrad's close study of Russia; on the other hand, Conrad's protestations of sheer ignorance are belied by his political pronouncements on Russia, and his reading of at least three masters of Russian fiction: Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. In truth, Conrad's feelings towards Russia were not always unmitigated hatred and contempt" [ibid.: 687]. However, shortly afterwards, when discussing Conrad's attitude and initial misunderstanding of Panslavism, Gillon refers to Tadeusz Bobrowski who made clear to him that the Polish culture was 'more advanced' and Polish national history 'more ancient' than Russia's. According to Gillon, up from 1885 Conrad forgot about Panslavism and started to convey anti-Russian views for the remainder of his life [ibid.: 687]. Eventually Gillon refers to Conrad's letter to Garnett in 1917 about his supposed ignorance about Russian [ibid.: 687–88; cf. fn viii]. Most of this was used for Conrad's preface for Garnett's book about Turgenev. Gillon then turns to the debate about Conrad's attitudes towards Dostoevsky and Turgenev [ibid.: 688–91]. To me, he is mistaken in regarding Conrad's poetic winter images of Russia as Russophobia [ibid.: 692]. "Conrad's strong Russian phobia notwithstanding, he could and did create entirely sympathetic, even idealized Russians, as the bepatched, romantic adventurer of *Heart of Darkness*, and the tortured but heroic Tomassov of *The Warrior's Soul.* And I have attempted to show that Razumov is a typical Conradian protagonist and not a negative Russian" [ibid.: 694]. Summing up, Gillon refers Conrad's study of anarchism, tyranny and the Russian character in his fiction to his Polish literary and political tradition, but at the same time to Russian literary influence (especially Dostoevsky). To him, the prophetic insights of novels like *Under Western Eyes* and *The Secret Agent* are partly due to the fusion of Polish and Russian elements [ibid.: 694]. Edward Crankshaw offers a well-balanced assessment of Conrad's attitudes towards Russia. He sets out to modify certain assumptions, change emphasis and thus come a little closer to Conrad [1976: 91]. He regards it as "very widely accepted that Conrad's profound concern with problems of moral failure, of desertion, of betrayal, in a large part sprang from guilt feelings about his own abandonment of Poland – a Poland helpless under an alien tyranny" [ibid.: 91]. Crankshaw, however, modifies the ideas of Gustav Morf's, "the most extreme exponent of this theory" (*The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad*. London 1930; [ibid.: 91]). He cannot go so far as to support Morf's Freudian assumptions about Conrad (e.g. *Lord Jim* as a confession, a psychoanalytical novel even before the establishment of psychoanalysis). For Crankshaw, Morf seems to go too far. Crankshaw does not mean to critique Morf, but rather refers to him because he first suggested the focus on feelings of guilt of a simple nature in Conrad's work that all centered on Poland. This conception was too easily absorbed into the canon. Neither Conrad nor his feelings were simple. Besides: why feeling guilty as the result of reasonable action that was fairly commonplace in central Europe in the nineteenth century and even is so today. Crankshaw does not deny that guilt was a part of the make-up of Conrad as a very complex man. But he also reminds us that Conrad was not only a Pole, but also a Russian citizen under the tsars Alexander II and III and thus liable for conscription into the Imperial Army. So he renounced Russian, not Polish citizenship in 1886. At that time, Poland was divided up between Prussia, Austria and Russia. What Conrad cancelled was his formal allegiance to the reactionary Alexander III, in favour of Queen Victoria at the time of Gladstone's third administration. What kind of a betrayal should this have been? In Poland under Russian rule he could just have engaged in hopeless politics of revolt (after the defeat of the 1863 insurrection) or become a collaborator with the Russian occupying power [ibid.: 91–93].

In this context Crankshaw makes clear the meaning of the term ‘collaborator’: “Every individual in Russian Poland who lived quietly and got on with his own job was in this way a collaborator, in that he helped to make it possible for the enemy to govern. There was no escape from this. <…> The only non-collaborators were men like Conrad’s father who actively conspired and rebelled, risking their own lives and bringing down the wrath of Russia on their fellow countrymen – a line of conduct which Conrad came to deplore because of its futility. <…> Given this background it seems to me inconceivable that Conrad could have been overcome by a sense of guilt and betrayal to the extent that has sometimes been imagined” [ibid.: 93]. What he admits to are rather feelings of nostalgia, doubt, self-accusation, sympathy for the ones left behind as well as rejection of revolutionary violence of any kind as a consequence of his father’s futile conspiration and insurrection. The embitterment may have come from the split–up of his loyalties implicit in his rejection [ibid.: 93–94]. For Crankshaw, the real agony in Conrad and his writings is not inherent in Conrad’s relationship with Poland, but in something broader and more fundamental, an emotional and intellectual problem associated with what his own people experienced: evil as an irresistible force and the maintenance of personal integrity, honour and one’s soul in defeat [ibid.: 94]. “It seems to me that, acute as Conrad’s feelings about Poland as such quite evidently were, we should look at Jim in particular and the novels as a whole against this far wider and more generalised complex of problems. And I believe that Russia provides the clue” [ibid.: 94]. Crankshaw reconstructs European history at about 1895, the beginning of Conrad’s publishing, to demonstrate that the sense of evil as an arbitrary force had dwindled in Europe by that time and that hope and confidence were reigning. By contrast, the Poles felt differently, being subjected to Austrian, Prussian and Russian rule. The latter was the harshest, an utterly alien, arbitrary tyranny [ibid.: 94–95]. This is the crucial point for Crankshaw’s approach: “A good deal has been written about Conrad’s attitude towards Russia, especially, of course, in connection with *Under Western Eyes*. But nobody has yet given, it seems to me, sufficient weight to the role of Russia in shaping his whole outlook. And perhaps this is because it is impossible to appreciate the full weight of the impact of Russia on a speculative Western mind unless one has experienced it directly in one’s own life” [ibid.: 95]. For Crankshaw there is no doubt that Conrad experienced this directly. That the origin of his notion of evil stems from his childhood memories of Russian rule is not a new idea. Yet he finds fault with several critics: Sir Victor Pritchett underestimated the memories’ enduring force. Gustav Herling-Grudzhinsky, the Polish émigré- writer, (like others) reduced their significance, underestimating Conrad’s young age upon his departure from Russian Poland – the impressions cannot have been too strong or lasting after all [ibid.: 95]. The misconception is to assume that Conrad based his conception of Russia “on the cloudy memories of childhood impressions fortified with a little reading fifty years later” [ibid.: 95]. The critic, who had suffered himself from the terrible Soviet penal system may have first thought *Under Western Eyes* the work of a person far away from Russian reality because of his understated, very stylized argument in the novel. But this is not convincing, nor is it understandable why the critic discounted childhood experiences or thought that Conrad had not been reflecting a good deal about Russia, not expanded his historical understanding in the years that intervened. Instead, the critic deplores that Conrad’s treatment of the currents of revolutionary thought, the revolutionary psychology during the first years of the twentieth century, are so inadequate, so superficial., which, to him, proves the writer’s remoteness from Russian reality [ibid.: 95]. Crankshaw corrects this view: “<…> Conrad was only minimally concerned with the psychology of individual revolutionaries, still less with the niceties of their ideological variations. In fact, I am sure that he understood such matters more than Mr Herling supposes” [ibid.: 96]. Nor can Crankshaw agree with a detail in Dr Hay’s *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (that he generally regards as admirable): after using quotes from Herling and Pritchett she suspects that Conrad was inaccurate and loose on purpose to demonstrate how he despised the whole revolutionary circus. On the contrary, finds Crankshaw: when showing contrasting revolutionary types (e.g. Michaelis in *The Secret Agent*), Conrad came up with a totally adequate understanding of Marxism [ibid.: 96]. “To say that a man who could write those words [about Michaelis – C.M.B.] and oppose them to the destructive mania of Professor Yundt and the apocalyptical ravings of Comrade Ossipon knew nothing of contemporary revolutionary thinking simply will not do. It is a long way from Peter Ivanovich, ‘the heroic fugitive’ of *Under Western Eyes*. It is meant to be a long way. In *Under Western Eyes* Conrad was not remotely concerned with describing or analysing current revolutionary thought among the Russian emigrés in Switzerland (who, at that time, of course, included Lenin himself). He was not concerned with current affairs at all. He was writing about Russia – and not, as has been argued, in an abstract and generalised way but, rather, in the most immediate and concrete manner possible. He was distilling certain aspects of Russia, to arrive at the pure spirit as he understood it. And he brought the essential corruption of Russia, its irrationalism, its fathomless cynicism, etc., to life no less vividly than Mr Herling in his own fine book – pretty well the whole of that book about life in Stalin’s camps being implicit already in *Under Western Eyes*, from the terrible scene when the decent and rational student Razumov beats up the drunken coachman to the character of Nikita, the thug who bursts Razumov’s eardrums – and is accepted as a necessary evil and an equal by his idealistic comrades. He brings the nobility of Russia to life as well” [ibid.: 96–97]. Crankshaw judges Hay right to acknowledge (despondently) Conrad’s possible multiple sources for his Russian characters. Yet for him the only relevant source with a view to *Under Western Eyes* is Russia and the idea of Utopian revolutionism as one aspect (called so by Conrad). In the preface to the novel Conrad emphasizes that it is not about the political state, but rather the psychology of Russia. He states that “‘the obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily by the peculiar experiences of race and family.’” The limits to this fairness are shown up by Peter Ivanovich and Madame de S., so that fairness is restricted to the people of Russia (Prince P, Counsellor Mikulin, Sophia Antonovna, Victor Haldin, Natalie Haldin [ibid.: 97]. “Natalie may have been shaped by visions of martyred Polish women, but her special quality is as unmistakably Russian as the quality of Counsellor Mikulin himself – or of the ineffable Mr Vladimir in *The Secret Agent*. It is a tremendous fact, it seems to me, that Conrad could recognise this Russian

quality of nobility, recreate it and pay homage to it. It is a very important fact. It must have severely complicated his whole attitude towards Russia, as he saw it: an arena 'of tyrannical lawlessness which, in general human terms, could be reduced to the formula of senseless desperation provoked by senseless tyranny'" [ibid.: 97–98]. To tyranny itself, fairness could not be applied – autocracy was evil. The human characters who are not caricatures in *Under Western Eyes* are shown as victims [ibid.: 98]. Crankshaw delineates Conrad's biography: a Russian citizen for twenty-eight years, a life in the shadow of St Petersburg until age 10, then taken by his father to Austrian Poland, sent into exile at age 3 in 1861 with his parents, his stay at Vologda. The transfer of the family – because of the dying mother – by a kind governor to Chernikhov in the Ukraine in the summer of 1863 (at the height of the Polish insurrection), permission by another kindly governor of the visit of mother and son to her brother Thaddeus Bobrowski. Death of the mother from tuberculosis a year after her reunion with her husband in exile, when Conrad was seven years old. Death of the father in 1869 when Conrad was eleven years old [ibid.: 98–99]. Crankshaw reads this in a way that Conrad, whose parents had been successively killed by Russia, could, even as a little boy, not but be aware of Russia as a source of evil. Furthermore, he had the memory of an artist (cf. *A Personal Record*: the memory of his return into exile with his mother from the place of his uncle in winter 1867 at age six; the police captain watching his and his mother's departure by carriage). Russia's humiliation in 1904 by the Japanese may have released his pent-up feelings and triggered his essay "Autocracy and War," full of intensity, violence and prophecy [ibid.: 99–101]. "These are not the thoughts and feelings of a man with a dim, far-off memory, his knowledge brushed up with a little ad hoc reading. They are the thoughts and feelings, suddenly unloosed after decades of silence, of a man who had been shaken and shocked by the direct impact of the evil he evokes here after a lifetime of brooding" [ibid.: 101]. For Crankshaw, all this is not a matter of the truth of Conrad's vision of Russia. What is at stake here is the effect Russia had on him. The emotions Conrad expressed were shared by many people, even native Russians [ibid.: 101–02], who suffered or witnessed "those manifestations of bleak inhumanity which seem to be a permanent feature of the land which also produced Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov – and who have sought as far as I know in vain, for a rational explanation in the history of Russia" [ibid.: 102]. Crankshaw even notes the closeness of other Russians' expressions of unease (e.g. the Russian aristocrat and philosopher Peter Chaadayev in *Philosophical Letters* from 1830; 102). This is actually an observation that I made myself. As I recognized, in an extract singled out by Crankshaw from Chaadayev's first letter, phrases and ideas like providence and destiny; no learning/benefitting from the experiences of the ages, preceding epochs and generations; no contribution to the development of the human mind, occur. These are typical of the Western European discourse about Russia and also recognizable in Conrad's works. Crankshaw goes on to correct the views mentioned before by stating that the future Russia had to give a lot, but only the unofficial Russia, mostly writers and musicians [ibid.: 102]. Here, we see the differentiation between state and people that Conrad practiced himself. "But Russia as a society was to remain an arid void, offering no example, no ideas, until after the end of the dynasty – and what she has offered since then most of us would rather do without" [ibid.: 102]. Crankshaw concludes that Conrad deliberately did not deliver the whole truth about Russia in his essay and made amends for this in *Under Western Eyes*. But Crankshaw refuses to deal with Conrad's views on Dostoevsky in this context [ibid.: 102–03]. "Let us say then – and of this I am convinced – that in *Under Western Eyes* he sought to exorcise his obsessional sense of evil by examining its origins in the coolest and most neutral light: through the eyes of the English language teacher" [ibid.: 103]. To him "this sense of an arbitrary, cruel, irresponsible, irrational, inexplicable fire which could strike out of the blue and destroy at will the faithful work of men's hands" [ibid.: 103], which hovers over Conrad's work everywhere, is more than a sense of evil: "an acknowledgment of the omnipresence of evil and of the helplessness of ordinary, well-intentioned human decency in face of it" [ibid.: 103]. For Crankshaw, Poland was just the starting point for this painful exploration. Perhaps this unswerving fidelity to the memory of Poland estranged Conrad from his live Polish contemporaries (reference to Najder), but it forms a bridge, according to Crankshaw, at present [ibid.: 103]: "For the horrors of the past decades have brought us to recognise the existence of evil as a force unimaginable to most citizens of the Western world half a century ago. Conrad knew all about it when his contemporaries did not. Of course the Russian autocracy was not the only source of evil, but it was Russia which made him think about evil. It seems to me that for Conrad Poland was only a starting point and a symbol for lost innocence in face of evil, for which Russia was also in fact no more than a starting point and a symbol" [ibid.: 103]. Summing up, Crankshaw comes to the conclusion: "Far from being a particular confession, it seems to me that *Lord Jim*, like so many of Conrad's novels, should be seen as a warning, an urgent warning, to all dwellers in a fool's paradise, of the real nature of the universe and the infinite variety of the means whereby we may be crushed or led to our own undoing. It was, as he saw it, a universe for which the interplay between Poland and Russia was a perfect allegory. And an allegory of extreme, excruciating complexity – because, as he knew, there were good Russians and bad Poles" [ibid.: 104]. For further elucidation see: [Najder 1997: 119–38; Carabine 2000: 125–26; and Carey 1977].

Firstly, *UWE* itself is a very complex narrative, offering diverse opinions and attitudes which need to be carefully differentiated from each other. Through the category of the narrator as a person, the action of the novel, the encounters, speeches and dialogues of the characters, and the narrative comments and descriptions Conrad conveys a wide range of assessments and highly ambivalent attitudes, opinions and stances towards Russian issues that cannot be simplistically reduced to either russophobia or russophilia.

Secondly, when the novel is read in close comparison with Conrad's political essay "Autocracy and War" (1905), lots of connections become obvious. Both share a Western perspective on Russia and Russians as well as quite a number of historical and political observations: the distrust of words (the press, politicians); the sense of (historical) necessity, fate, fatalism, destiny; the differentiation between state/government and people (how states abuse people; how people are different from states, but linked/interlocked by fate; the dubious role of revolutions (e.g. the French Revolution); the phenomenon of the perversion/corruption of revolutions and the link between revolution and war. Furthermore the myth of Russia's power (the Russian giant) is deconstructed, especially in the hundred years between the Napoleonic Wars and the Russo-Japanese War. Conrad uses terms and phrases such as: gigantic and dreaded phantom; useful phantom, a phantom of invincible armies, the ghost or spectre of Russia's might; ravenous ghoul, blind Djinn, Old Man of the Sea; a spectre.

The negative associations of autocracy in the essay and in the novel are similar as well: the shadow or gravestone of autocracy, an ill-omened creation, the fantasy of a madman's brain, a figure out of a nightmare, a giant with a withered right hand, a monster. It is an autocracy without a past, without a future, without any development. The Russian despotism is neither European nor Asian/oriental, mentally belonging to neither East nor West. "It is like a visitation, like a curse from Heaven, falling in the darkness of ages upon the immense plains of forest and steppe lying dumbly on the confines of two continents: a true desert harbouring no Spirit either of the East or of the West. This pitiful fate of a country, held by an evil spell, <…> has made Russia as a nation so difficult to understand by Europe" [ibid.: 98]. This impenetrability is looked on with curiosity by the rest of the world. Further associations are: a curse that has entered her very soul; the poison of slavery; the apathy of hopeless fatalism; a God-sent scourge.

Conrad characterizes autocracy as cruel, causing the ruthless destruction of innumerable minds (cf. Razumov). He associates it with madness. It is a hopeless despotism, brutally destroying dignity, truth and rectity and all that is faithful in human nature, bringing about the extirpation of every intellectual hope. This makes life under autocracy meaningless. No evolution can

come out of a grave. “She is not a *Néant*, she is and has been simply the negation of everything worth living for. She is not an empty void, she is a yawning chasm open between East and West; a bottomless abyss that has swallowed up every hope of mercy, every aspiration towards personal dignity, freedom, knowledge, every ennobling desire of the heart, every redeeming whisper of conscience” [ibid.: 100; cf. *UWE*].

Conrad exemplifies the contemporary discourses: the ignorance of the West and the mistaken role and self-fashioning of autocratic, Tsarist Russia in Europe. He dismantles the role of Russia and its myth, shows the link between the Russian myth and the German Empire, the usefulness of the myth of Russia (as a giant): for Germany out of the present weakness of Russia (the Russo-Japanese War). He points out the changed historical role of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a new Russia, whose future has to be defined still (cf. below, the blank or blank page in *UWE*). Lastly, he denies the present Russia the status of a great state. The downfall of Russia’s might is unavoidable. Its future will be that of a néant. So it is time to consider the legacy of the spectre. He also addresses the common guilt of Russia and Prussia (Poland and its partition). The situation provokes revolutionary situations. There are no reforms possible in Russia. But Russia is also incomprehensible for Europe (autocracy; cf. *UWE*). The concepts of evolution, reform, revolution do not really apply to Russia. The European expectations towards a Russian revolution are therefore wrong. There is a fundamental difference from European revolutions. There is no legality in Russia, there are no roots in reason or conscience. A revolution in Russia will have no productive moral consequences to mankind, Russia will make no contribution to mankind and progress. He denies Russia to have a say in all matters of future humanity. The West looks on with curiosity. His prophecy for Russia’s future is: tyranny “will remain clinging to her struggles for a long time before her blind multitudes succeed at last in trampling her out of existence under their millions of bare feet ([ibid.: 102-03]; cf. Razumov’s hallucination of walking over Haldin’s body).

Moreover, both works integrate the Eastern stereotypes of the time: Russia as a phantom, a spectre, a giant/néant; the country’s vastness; snow; magic; fatalism; the dubiousness of language; Asiatic/oriental despotism; oriental wisdom and patience; Russia’s impenetrability; slavery; mysticism; purity, holiness, Holy Russia; madness and the inferiority of Russian achievements.

In addition, lots of similar images and metaphors occur in both works: the shadow of autocracy; the associations of autocracy with madness, nightmares and insanity; its closeness to death, starvation and murder: buried millions of Russian people, “their blood freezing crimson upon the snow of the squares and streets of St. Petersburg” [ibid.: 87], “the teeming graves of Russian people” [ibid.: 89], “the blood-soaked ground”

[ibid.: 89], "the black abyss which separates a soulless autocracy, <…> from the benighted, starved soul of its people" [ibid.: 89], "a rampart of piled-up corpses" [ibid.: 90], the torment and slaughter of the bodies of Russia's subjects.

The poetic images of Russia in *UWE* do in fact develop directly out of the political judgments in the essay, which also employs poetic imagery (as could be seen from the above). Integrated into the descriptions of St. Petersburg [Zabel: 133–34] and Russia are, for instance, impressive physical-poetic images of Russia, its people, urban and rural life, and life at large under the political conditions of autocracy. The passages depicting St. Petersburg in the winter, the wintry Russian earth and northern sky are politically connoted. Russia as oppressed by autocracy is likened to a country whose earth is covered and hidden by an all-encompassing snow [ibid.: 32, 33], referred to as "the sinister twilight of a land buried in snow" [ibid.: 84]. The parallel between the Russian winter and politics becomes fully evident when the narrator calls Razumov a "secret refugee from under the pestilential shadow hiding the true, kindly face of his land" [ibid.: 184], thus simultaneously pointing out the difference between state and people. The politically connoted renditions of Russian winter landscapes express a lot of empathy for the fate of the country and the common Russian people. Only at first sight do they appear as Russophobia, as anti-Russian views, as Gillon claims.[1] The Russian earth is likened to mother Russia. Contrary also to Greaney's interpretation (2002),[2] Razumov fully identifies with that

[1] Gillon judges that "As Razumov's redemption is grim so is the general view of Russia" [Gillon 1969: 69], referring to the quote that Razumov "… stamped his foot – and under the soft carpet of snow felt the hard ground of Russia[n], inanimate, cold, inert, like a sullen and tragic mother hiding her face under a winding sheet – his native soil! – his very own – without a fireside, without a heart!" (reference by Gillon to *UWE*, pp. 32–33).

[2] Greaney claims that "Razumov's assault on the sledge-driver is an extension of his *textual denial of Russian history*" [Greaney: 156; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. This is not the case: he identifies with Russia. Besides, the remark contradicts Greaney's later assessment: "Razumov's fit of violence (against Ziemianitch – C.M.B.) functions as an overture to a reverie in which he justifies to himself *his allegiance to autocracy and achieves a kind of communion with Russia*" ([ibid.: 160; my emphasis, C.M.B]; for illustration Greaney refers to the quote "Under the sumptuous immensity of the sky <…>, like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history. <…> murdering foolishly," *UWE* 33). To Greaney, "[t]the blank page connotes Razumov's *voluntary amnesia*, not only about his conduct at the eating-house, but also about what the eating-house represents historically – hunger and poverty as economic and political problems rather than as the trappings of spiritual degradation" [ibid.: 161; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. To me, the passage rather signifies that Razumov and Russia are both blanks to be inscribed by whatever comes – another hint at Razumov's identification with Russia. This is confirmed by: "His [Razumov's – C.M.B.] existence was a great cold blank, something like the enormous plain of the whole of Russia levelled with snow and fading gradually on all sides into shadows and mists" [ibid.: 303]. "Razumov's *erasure of Russian history* provides discursive confirmation of the fearsome thrashing of Ziemianitch. The *abolition of history* is a concomitant of autocracy's claim to divinely-ordained power" [ibid. 161]. To my mind, instead of eradicating history, Conrad rather differentiates, shows the intersection of state and religion (Holy Russia), but also the difference between state and people. Besides, autocracy does not *deny* history either, but rather *instrumentalizes* it for its own purposes.

Russia, its history/fate [ibid.: 33, 303]. Conrad's literary representations integrate associations of landscape, beauty, coldness, infinity, immensity [ibid.: 66, 315], its positive emotional effect upon Russians. The descriptions link geography, history, mentality, people, destiny, and politics.

> <…> he [Razumov] saw above his head the clear black sky of the northern winter, decorated with the sumptuous fires of the stars. It was a canopy fit for the resplendent purity of the snows.
>
> Razumov received an almost physical impression of endless space and of countless millions.
>
> He responded to it with the readiness of a Russian who is born to an inheritance of space and numbers. Under the sumptuous immensity of the sky, the snow covered the endless forests, the frozen rivers, the plains of an immense country, obliterating the landmarks, the accidents of the ground, levelling everything under its uniform whiteness, like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history. It covered the passive land with its lives of countless people like Ziemianitch and its handful of agitators like this Haldin – murdering foolishly.
>
> It was a sort of sacred inertia. Razumov felt a respect for it. A voice seemed to cry within him, "Don't touch it." It was a gurarantee of duration, of safety, while the travail of maturing destiny went on – a work not of revolutions with their passionate levity of action and their shifting impulses – but of peace. What it needed was not the conflicting aspirations of a people, but a will strong and one: it wanted not the babble of many voices, but a man – strong and one! [ibid.: 33]

The poetic images are here associated with patriotic emotions and political insights. The country covered in snow, in which there are more common people than revolutionary anarchists,

[1] Gillon interprets Conrad's vision of Russia's vast space and countless millions as owing something to Mickiewicz's description in the Third Part of *Forefather's Eve* (quoted by [Najder 1965: 167]). He goes on to refer to Wacław Lednicki and Zdisław Najder to point out "that actually all the "anti-Russian" sentiments [which they are not in fact – C.M.B.] of Conrad are not original but are almost word-for-word repetitions of the opinions of *Russian* liberal and revolutionary thinkers, e.g. Pyotr Tchadaev and Herzen" [Gillon 1969: 692]. He refers to Najder who held that Russia is not seen through 'Western' eyes, but through a calm English conservatism. These eyes behold a Russia as seen by Russian revolutionaries and supporters of reform, who are presented as distorted and caricatured figures in the novel [Najder 1965: 167–68]. To me, this is a one-sided judgment because Conrad offers multiperspectivity and does not just convey the views of revolutionaries. Already his parodying them proves that. Gillon goes on to claim that Conrad 'naturally' read neither Tchadaev nor Tchernyshevsky nor Herzen. Again he uses Najder: "Najder speculates that had Conrad known these writers he would have had to revise his views on Russia as well as form different opinions about the Russian émigrés and revolutionists. He concludes therefore that Conrad's main source of information about them "…, and thereby the source of the affinity of *Under Western Eyes* with their utterances, was no one else but Dostoevsky, especially the Dostoevsky of *The Devils.* (To a lesser extent the Turgenev of Fathers and Sons" [Gillon: 692–93; reference by Gillon to Najder, ibid.: 168; Gillon's translation]).

passively anticipates its future history like an imprint, like fate.[1] What is needed for Russia is evolution, not revolution, a peaceful transformation brought about by one strong man (Razumov stands on the point of conversion to autocracy because he associates Haldin with disruption). Razumov's lack of belief in strife, plurality and discussion echoes the medieval and early modern religious discourse: the Russian orthodox lithurgy does not know the Western form of the sermon which used to be associated in Russia with the dangers of dispute and heresy. The Orthodox belief is less one of the mind, but of the heart (cf. [Bimberg 2006: 189]).

In other words, Conrad individually, concretely and emotionally expresses in the novel what he had presented in more abstract ways in the essay. Both texts reflect the contradictions and ambivalences of the Western discourse about Russia. Moreover, a reading of the political essay clarifies Conrad's motives for writing the novel, making them more transparent. After having deconstructed in "Autocracy and War" the wrongness of the myth of Russia's power, the image of the 'Russian giant,' and its usefulness in the current powerplay among the Western European states (especially for Germany), in *UWE* Conrad wanted to question, examine more critically and challenge the so-called inscrutability of Russia by Europe and help Western readers to see through it (cf. [Conrad 1924: 83–114]).

Conrad's familiarity with Russian culture and language

What is conspicuous, is – additionally to the narrative representation of St. Petersburg and intimate and detailed observations about the national Russian character – the enormous familiarity with Russian culture, life and language in *UWE*. The narrative abounds in detailed descriptions of peculiar socio-cultural circumstances and conditions, aspects of the Russian mentality, of Russian lifestyles, habits, customs and sayings. Contrary to Conrad's protestations in his "Author's Note" (viii) this could not be regarded as 'general knowledge' in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century yet.

The wealth of social, cultural, domestic, psychological and emotional detail is impressive: Conrad subtly integrates details of social code, social difference and hierarchy, e.g. outward appearance, dress, behaviour and speech; facial expression, gestures and modes of communication or interaction between representatives of the various social classes, men and women at

[1] The following details testify to Conrad's expertise in the field: The person who throws the first bomb on Mr. de P- is disguised as a peasant in a sheepskin coat with "his shoulders hunched up to his ears under the falling snow" [ibid.: 8–9]. Victor Haldin, the second assassin, is described as "a strange figure, wearing a skirted, close-fitting, brown cloth coat strapped round the waist, in long boots, and with a little Astrakhan cap on its head. It loomed lithe and martial" [ibid.: 14]. Later, at the House of General T-, this coat is more precisely named "a Tcherkess coat" [ibid.: 45]. Elsewhere, a watchman

the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.[1] Conrad refers for instance to the notoriously depraved parasitic lifestyle of the sons of many Russian aristocrats and big landowners who spend their meaningless lives on parties, alcohol, brawls, women and horses (e.g. "Madcap Kostia", 78–82).[1] This is a phenomenon that figures prominently in the Russian literature of the nineteenth century (cf. also below on "lishniy chelovek"). He also depicts the female Russian beauty ideal of the time, which favours full-bosomed women (Ziemianitch's wife does not cor-

is described as wearing "two ragged army coats one over the other; his wizened little face, tied up under the jaw and over the ears in a dirty red handkerchief, looked comical" [ibid.: 18]. Furthermore, the picturesque narrative descriptions include an elderly female beggar in ragged shawls [ibid.: 26], a woman "on an open slope of rough grass outside the forest" [ibid.: 123] with a red handkerchief on her head, the owner of a shabby restaurant who is dressed in "a dirty cloth caftan coming down to his heels" [ibid.: 27], a proper Russian driver who is always dressed up, ready to go [ibid.: 29; cf. Gogol], and some Cossacks on guard before the house of General T- who carry the bridles of their horses over the arm while warming themselves by the fire [ibid.: 42]. Aspects of social difference and hierarchy are evoked in vivid visual detail: Razumov, while being aware that "he appeared as a tranquil student in a cloak" [ibid.: 40], admires a rich "pretty woman – with a delicate head, and covered in the hairy skins of wild beasts down to her feet, like a frail and beautiful savage" [ibid.: 40]. The driver who takes Razumov to the palace of Prince K- at night is a fully bearded moujik who is ordered by Razumov in the usual rude (socially arrogant) way to speed. He, in turn, addresses the student respectfully, perhaps slightly exaggeratedly and ironically, with 'your high Nobility' ([ibid.: 40]; "Вздрогнувший мужик, заросший бородой до самых глаз, подобострастно ответил: - Слушаюсь, ваше высокоблагородие"; [*LP* 247]. Razumov is informed about Haldin's and the second assassin's arrest by a red-nosed, cold- and famine-stricken student, who is a member of the revolutionary circles, a "long bony student in a threadbare overcoat" [ibid.: 72]. Russian habits and customs are presented with intimate knowledge. The reader can thus see Russian social and domestic life unfold directly before him. This impression is yet enhanced through non-verbal communication, mimics and gestures. The dvornik sweeps the street, receives letters for the tenants and delivers messages to them [ibid.: 83]. Razumov's landlady is described as "a short, thick, shapeless woman with a large yellow face wrapped up everlastingly in a black woollen shawl. When she saw him come up the last flight of stairs she flung both her arms up excitedly, then clasped her hands before her face" [ibid.: 75]. A waiter turns his talk to Razumov (about Ziemianitch) into a public affair at once by addressing all the guests and customers in the room [ibid.: 27]. The revolutionary Sophia Antonovna, when listening to Razumov's fake report about the events in St. Petersburg, his supposed involvement in the assassination and his desire afterwards just to lie down in the snow and go to sleep there, "clicked her tongue at that symptom, very struck indeed" ([ibid.: 256]; "Она прищелкнула языком, пораженная этой подробностью"; [*LP* 391]. This expresses the reaction of being impressed and thoughtful from the news. In order to suggest that he is engaged in dangerous work completely on his own, Razumov holds up "his closed hand with the index raised" ([ibid.: 234]; "Он поднял вверх указательный палец. - Как этот перст, - сказал он"; [*LP* 376]. Nathalie Haldin illustrates the closeness of their family's three lives (mother, brother, sister) by twining the fingers of both her hands together [ibid.: 116]. The Russian custom of embracing and thrice kissing each other on both cheeks upon greeting or (de)parting [ibid.: 16, 265, 315] is referred to several times.

[1] In the Russian translation the terms for this are: 'чудак' [*LP* 275] and 'пылкий юноша' [*LP* 275].

respond to that; she is called a hag by comparison; 28). Furthermore, side by side with the Russian admiration of Western manners and values and a certain inferiority complex revealing itself through the often uncritical Russian imitation of them, Conrad also demonstrates the characteristic Russian superiority complex. When Razumov, inclined to believe in his being a tool of Providence, reflects on whether he has hopefully been forgotten by the revolutionaries and the police (so that he can go on as before and study), he shortly envisages the prospect of a great future in his patriotic service to a great country: he thinks of becoming

> a great reforming servant *of the greatest of States*. Servant, too, of *the mightiest homogeneous mass of mankind* with a capability for logical, guided development in a brotherly solidarity of force and aim [see below: the importance of the word 'onwards' in Gogol – C.M.B.] such as the world had never dreamt of … the Russian nation! [ibid.: 301-02; my emphasis, C.M.B.]

And when he is made to feel (by Mikulin) that he has committed himself to go to Geneva and work as a police spy in the inner revolutionary circle, the argument is important that "[t]he repose indispensable to *a great country* was at stake" [ibid.: 308, my emphasis, C.M.B.] Ideas like these also exemplify the characteristic Russian habit of treating area, size/mass and numbers of people as equivalent to greatness and importance. This is in fact not a time-bound, but rather a permanent Russian stereotype transgressing Tsarism and continuing through the Communist and Post-Communist times (cf. also the quote above, the Russians' "being born to an inheritance of space and numbers," 33).

Furthermore, Russian signifying practices including social/domestic life and speech, are constantly integrated into the text. There are lots of references to typical objects of daily Russian life such as the samovar [ibid.: 68, 367], the Russian stove [ibid.: 14] or the troika, termed in English a 'three-horse trap' [ibid.: 138]. The use of the patronymic in Russia and the custom of addressing another male person affectionately by 'brother' [ibid.: 55, 56, 209] are also employed.

The linguistic details are particularly interesting. They reveal Conrad to be knowledgeable indeed about Russian and even tiny nuances of expression in speech. Generally speaking the shift in conversation from French to Russian (frequent among aristocrats in the nineteenth century and reflected in the literature of the time) suggests intimacy and a much greater emotionality. This is exemplified for instance in the talk between General T-, Prince K- and Razumov; (45). Additionally, Conrad, when letting Russian characters speak, uses various general/impersonal constructions and phrases that sound foreign or slightly odd in their English rendition and seem to point to Rus-

sian modes of expression.[1] The same applies to the use of the Russian diminutive of words and names to express a tender, emphatic or respectful attitude towards people.[2] Doubtless the use of Russian modes of expression, sayings, proverbs and phrases adds greatly to the local flavour of the speeches of Russian characters in the novel. For knowledgeable readers, who recognize the original Russian expression beneath/behind the English renditions, this gives the narrative an authentic Russian ring. At the same time uninformed English readers are perhaps at a loss or

[1] Haldin, when responding to a question of Razumov, replies "There you go catching at words that are wrung from one" [ibid.: 23]. Here, a native speaker of English has at least the feeling: "While 'one' is a little old-fashioned now, for the time it does not sound strange here." The Russian rendition reads: "Вот вы какой, ловите человека на вырвавшемся слове" [*LP* 236]. In another case the oddness is even more marked, for example when a Russian student asks Razumov: "May one come in?" [ibid.: 309]. The native speaker's comment is: "This definitely is an odd use of 'one' though." The Russian version reads: "Можно войти?" [*LP* 426]. Or the Russian woman revolutionist asks Razumov: "How is one to call it?" [ibid.: 250]. The native speaker judges: "This is also a strange choice in the context of the speech, where there is plenty of use of 'I' and the impersonal 'you.'" The Russian rendition is: "Как тогда это называется?" [*LP* 386]. Slightly later, the Russian woman revolutionist admits: "One does not know what to think, Razumov" [ibid.: 253]. To a native speaker "This also sounds incongruous". The Russian version is: "Не знаю, что и подумать, Разумов" [*LP* 389]. Yet later, the Russian woman revolutionist wishes: "One would like to understand you a little more" [ibid.: 255]. For a native speaker "This is also incongruous." The Russian version is: "Хотелось бы понимать вас немножко больше" [*LP* 390]. For a broader discussion of Conrad's odd/unidiomatic English, possible linguistic influences, matters of style and expression see: [Billy 1996; Clifford 1988; Coleman 1931; Coonan 1979; Crompton 1992; Gilliam 1980; Greaney 2002; Hawthorn 1979; Higdon 1986, 1991a; Kermode 1997; Kirschner 1998; Koc 1980; Kocówna 1976; Lucas 1994, 1998; Milosz 1982; Moore 1986, 2000; Morf 1965; Morzinski 1993, 1996; Najder 1983, 1995, 2003, 2005; Paccaud 1989; Pulc 1974; Ray 1983; Said 1974; Wells 1934; and Woolf 1968]. Conrad himself expressed his opinions in the "Author's Note" to *The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions/A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences.* London: Dent 1946 (1919): iii–x; the second preface (1919) to A Personal Record [VI, vii–viii; cf. Said 1974: 123] and a letter to Karola Zagórska of 10 April 1920 [Najder 1983: 450].

[2] Examples of Russian diminutives are for instance 'little father,' an address used by the owner of the den and a man in a long caftan for Razumov [ibid.: 28]. The Russian word for this is "батюшка" [*LP* 239]. Another diminutive is 'little pigeon,' used by the man in the caftan for Ziemianitch [ibid.: 29], in Russian "голубчик" [*LP* 240]. The native speaker's comment is: "The diminutives do sound odd, but I am afraid I'm not really sure how they should be rendered in English. Firstly the meaning and/or connotations in Russian are lost on me, and secondly, English does not really have commonly used diminutives like this." Because the Brits do not have it, the literal English translations 'little father,' 'little pigeon,' etc. sound so strange and unfamiliar, even exotic that within the text they must function like linguistic stumbling blocks to native speakers of English unaware of their precise Russian origin and meaning. Moreover, they evoke wrong, i.e. rather silly semantic associations of physically little people or animals. As one of my Russian colleagues informed me, 'Natalka' [ibid.: 101] can be a Polish diminutive, but also a common Ukrainian name. Russians almost never use 'Natalka.' They have Natashka, which is rude, or Natasha.

feel slightly taken aback or alienated. This is also true for the ornateness of the Russian mode of expression.[1]

Conrad's familiarity with Russian literature

In addition to the familiarity with the Russian national character, with Russian places, life, culture and language, *UWE* betrays Conrad's intimate knowledge of Russian history until and especially of the nineteenth century. This is something that cannot be dealt with in detail here. Yet how profound Conrad's knowledge of things Russian really is becomes fully evident through an important subtext, his treatment of Russian literature. And this, though he did not like the prospect of being compared to Russian writers at all (cf. Jessie Conrad, *Conrad As I Knew Him*, reference by Adams 1974: 113). However, his appropriation of Russian literature really gives him away, unmasking him as an expert in the field. It is the last and best proof to show that he is well able indeed to differentiate in his attitudes towards Russia and Russians between state and people, politics and culture. Parallel to and in stark contrast to his reservations about the political Russia, the Russian state, its repressive

[1] When Miss Haldin describes to the narrator the reaction of her mother to the events relating to her son's death, she says: "At first poor mother went numb, as our peasants say; then she began to think and she will go on now thinking and thinking in that unfortunate strain" [ibid.: 117]. 'Numb' suggests the feeling of being stunned. The Russian version reads: "Поначалу бедная мама, как говорят наши крестьяне, остолбенела; потом опомнилась и теперь будет непременно обдумывать эту злополучную мысль" [*LP* 298]. The description of the revolutionary Yakovlitch's lonely life in America by Tekla reads: "Lonely, like a crow in a strange country" [ibid.: 240]. The Russian version is: "Один как пугало в чужой стране" [*LP* 380]. The meaning of 'пугало' is: scarecrow or bogey (in German: Vogelscheuche, Schreckgespenst). Mikulin's phrase when releasing Razumov "Till then [until we meet again – C.M.B.] may Heaven send you fruitful reflections!" [ibid.: 297] is mildly ironic. The Russian version reads: "А пока пусть Небо посылает вам плодотворные мысли" [*LP* 417]. Besides, behind the expression "But each heart knows sorrow after its own kind" [ibid.: 28] is the Russian "Но у каждого свои горести" [*LP* 239]. Sophia Antonovna says to Razumov: "You must have bitten something bitter in your cradle" [ibid.: 253]. The Russian equivalent is: "Вы, должно быть, вкусили что-то очень горькое в колыбели" [*LP* 389]. When Razumov reflects on what happened to him since/because Haldin had hid in his room he suspects it might be fate. "And, after all," he thought suddenly, "I might have been the chosen instrument of Providence. This is a manner of speaking, but there may be truth in every manner of speaking. What if that absurd saying were true in its essence?" [ibid.: 301]. The Russian version is: "И, в конце концов, - вдруг подумалось ему, - может, я действительно стал избранным орудием Провидения. Это фигура речи, но и в каждой фигуре речи может заключаться истина. Что, если это абсурдное сочетание слов по сути своей верно?" [*LP* 420]. Especially Ziemianitch's, 'a man of the people's' ("человек из народа"; cf. above) sayings are said to represent the Russian people's wisdom: "And he has sayings too – simple, to the point, such as only the people can invent in their rough sagacity" [ibid.: 56]. "А его поговорки - простые, бьющие в точку, какие может создать только грубоватая народная мудрость!" [*LP* 258].

politics and dubious role in history, he is tolerant, sensitive and discerning enough to appreciate Russian literature. It appears in various shades and nuances in *UWE*, but also in *The Secret Agent*.

Firstly, Conrad takes up, re-creates and artistically appropriates important traditions and conventions of Russian literature of the nineteenth century. He employs certain themes and motifs characteristic of it,[1] such as the Russian national character and national stereotypes (cf. above), Russian attitudes to and ways of life (e.g. *Oblomovshtshina*[2]*)* or the Panslavic myth of the Russian soul. Furthermore he integrates the ideal of female purity, the adoration of women (especially of those who are mature at an early age), the cult of women (they are celebrated like saints, saviours and redeemers, cf. e.g. Nathalie, Tekla and Sophia Antonovna) into his text.

Secondly, he extends the discussion, widens the thematic scope and addresses a very philosophical issue, likewise characteristic of much nineteenth-century Russian literature: the meaning, significance and direction of human life. It tackles the most essential of all urgent questions: how is one to live? Perhaps this explains the impact of Russian literature on the Western culture and literature later on. Conrad adopts the same topic and, what is really ingenious, manages to even convey the spirit, the atmosphere and the mode of expression/conversation of nineteenth-century Russian literature. He integrates for instance effusive disputes about principles of life, models of living abroad and/or at home among young educated Russians, e.g. students, aristocrats and revolutionaries (cf. [Bimberg 2006: 168]). Moreover, he thematizes the patriotic notion of making oneself useful for the common good or for one's country and juxtaposes that to a lack of options in society and tragic failure. The latter notion refers to a famous topos, a special type of hero in classical Russian literature, which is termed in literary criticism 'lishniy chelovek/ 'the superfluous man' – in fact often a failed aristocrat or big landowner.[3]

Razumov is described in such terms by Nath-

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[1] "And from the time of Turgenev's *Smoke, Rudin,* and *Virgin Soil* or the novels of Dostoevsky, the modern novel had become increasingly concerned with themes of despotism, protest, and revolt" [Zabel: 122].

[2] Razumov is exactly unable to enjoy his exile in the democratic community of Geneva because he misses the Russian passion in all those sights of outward, but trivial perfection. Geneva holds no real attraction for him. Conrad uses a famous motif of Russian literature here, *Oblomovshtshina*. Ivan Goncharov, in his novel *Oblomov* (1859), had made Russian deficits, such as lacking energy, disinterestedness, indifference, and lethargy, appear more human, sympathetic and acceptable than German discipline, efficiency, stubbornness, and dullness (cf. also [Bimberg 2006: 195–96]). By the way, Constance Garnett received a training in Russian translation from Felix Volkhovsky, a Russian political refugee. She translated Goncharov's *A Common Story* and Sergey Stepniak (an exiled Russian revolutionist) went over it with her [Moser: 3, 5–6].

[3] The literal meaning of 'lishniy' is: surplus, superfluous, useless. Cf. [Bimberg 2006: 168–69, 2010a, 2010b and 2011; Binder 2016: fn 215 on p. 171 and fn 371 on p. 404; and Watts 1982: 68–70].

alie Haldin, though she does not know his true story yet: "He seems to be a man who has suffered more from his thoughts than from evil fortune" [ibid.: 168] <…> "And that is natural enough in a Russian;" <…>. "In a young Russian; so many of them are unfit for action, and yet unable to rest" [ibid.: 169]. Additionally, Madcap Kostia is also described as someone who, though aware of his various deficits, eagerly wants to make himself useful to other people, e.g. by helping Razumov to escape abroad, to make a sacrifice and feel worthy because of that [ibid.: 80, 82, 313]. Along with that, Conrad criticizes the unnecessary human sacrifices on behalf of autocratic or revolutionary ideals and principles; the senseless or even trivial deaths of individuals, the insignificance of a single person's life, the retreat into frustration/private seclusion in the countryside. Furthermore, he contrasts the hard daily life and the sufferings of the common Russian people to the parasitic lifestyles of Russian aristocrats or the dubious modes of existence of aristocratic/revolutionary Russians in exile. Russians in Western European exile carry their Russian problems extraterritorially abroad with them. They function as it were as mirrors of the conditions prevailing in their home country that they escaped from for a certain period of time (cf. [Bimberg 2006: 169–70]). When Conrad's representations are seen against the background of Russian history, politics, culture, language and literature, it becomes evident that they echo the ones in famous works of Russian literature, e.g. by Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky or Ivan Turgenev.

Thirdly, Conrad addresses the question of societal solutions for the current conflicts and problems of Russia – as does the Russian literature of the nineteenth century. It was renowned for thematizing societal issues, addressing the social, economic, political, cultural and religious questions of its time. In *UWE*, Conrad likewise thematizes a whole range of important issues: the role of science and religion/the church in the Russian state; Slavophilism versus Westernism; the political alternatives of waiting for an improvement by itself (evolution) or taking resort to reform and anarchy/revolution; Russia's right to freedom and political self-determination; its need for a special, non-Western way or solution; its pride in being different, challenged by strokes of fortune time and again (whereas other nations obtained control, arranged themselves with their fates). Again, Conrad offers multiperspectivity: through Haldin, Razumov, Nathalie Haldin and the narrator, he offers various stances to those issues. Especially the narrator's and Nathalie's opinions are highly polarized.[1] Fourthly, out of this emerges Conrad's appropriation of the greatest qualities of Russian literature: to discuss, often with a painful consistency and a huge emphasis on unbearable, almost inhuman qualities of suffering, the matter of personal happiness and/or

[1] Eloise Knapp Hay offers interesting views on this, though not completely devoid of faults. Her focus is on *Nostromo*, but there are lots of cross-references to *Under Western Eyes* also. First, she discusses connections discovered long since between *Nostromo* and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), where lots of similarities may be found, though the Russian novel may not have been a conscious model. Among them she mentions the wide range of history, the ideal of a nation's repulse of an invading army, the various histories of families and multiple plots accentuating match-making and reasons for their failure or success. A war of ideas is discernible in the structures of both works, the central one being that of freedom of the individual versus historical determinism [Hay 2000: 81]. Hay locates the difference: "But whereas history is determined by individual wills in *War and Peace*, the autonomy of the actors in *Nostromo* is overshadowed by a force in history over which they have little control, the power of silver" [ibid.]. Up from here, however, Hay's judgments begin to be problematic: "By contrast with Tolstoy's, Conrad's novel is especially 'modern' in that its perspective on history is ironic and bleak rather than heroic and triumphal. We can well ask, indeed, if Nostromo is the first case of Conrad's writing *against* the Russian novels he despised, as he would do it again in the anti-Dostoevskian *Under Western Eyes*. That he was being subjected to, and made to compete with, the growing craze for Russian fiction in England at just this time, may have been all the more galling because the chief English translator of that fiction was Constance Garnett, the wife of his friend Edward" [ibid.: 81–82]. This seems to me a false assessment. It strangely misreads Conrad's position, his attitudes towards Russian literature, the context of his circle of friends and the impact of these contexts. It sounds as if Conrad had been surrounded by an infinite series of obstacles or inconvenient factors, such as the vogue of Russian literature and the personal connections/friendships with British writers, critics and translators. To me, he is being judged by wrong criteria here and as if he were against Russian literature all over. On the contrary: he also indirectly 'profited' from the new hype about Russian literature, the interest it stirred in the Russian culture, made possible precisely because of the English translations. He must also have learned quite a bit from the Garnetts. The friendship with them was perhaps not easy all over, but certainly rewarding. Besides, he esteemed Russian literature – in a very differentiated way. Why should he lump all the Russian writers together indiscriminately? Was he not entitled, especially because of his particular biographical background, to judge certain features in an author/his texts more critical than others? Especially if the judgments are not based on politics, but on aesthetics. Western critics have done the same (cf. also Virginia Woolf) without being judged as 'anti.' Hay continues: "<…> *Nostromo* is thus set in the primal scene where, according to Conrad, 'history' began to be most 'disfigured'. As in *Under Western Eyes*, where Razumov dreams of beginning to write a history for Russia, history is something that can be *figured*, well or ill. Conrad speaks of both history and the 'human conscience' as capable of being shaped and consciously directed" [ibid.: 89]. This reading ignores, however, Conrad's frequent presentations that in Russia, both personal fortunes and history may be like an imprint, like fate, difficult to foretell and yet more difficult to consciously steer. This is a fundamental doubt of human mastery over reality, at least in an autocratic state (e.g. the comparison of both Razumov and the Russian earth to a blank: cf. fn xiv). As stated above in my essay, Conrad presents multiperspectivity on various issues, ideals and solutions in reality, with a juxtaposition especially between the stances of Nathalie and the narrator. Nathalie makes a claim for concord, whereas the narrator addresses the cruelties/atrocities of autocracy, the perversion of revolution. For Nathalie the conflict between West and East is not a conflict of classes or interest but of antagonistic ideas. Hay suggests at least a similarity of the positions of Nathalie and Conrad in "Autocracy and War": "Similarly the clearest voice on revolutions in *Under Western Eyes* seems to be that of Nathalie Haldin, who sharply criticizes the English, and presumably the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, on grounds that even many English historians find accurate. She says the English 'hate' revolution and are a nation 'which has made a bargain with fate … so much liberty for so much hard cash' (p. 134). This is precisely the bargain that Charles Gould makes in *Nostromo.* Though Natalia Haldin appears absurdly utopian to her unimaginative English professor, her political ideas curiously echo Conrad's own in 'Autocracy and War'. Here, blaming the violence of modern wars on nations that rely for their well-being on commercial success and action of aggressive kinds, Conrad writes, sounding much like Natalia Haldin: 'The ultimate triumph of concord and justice remains', he says, 'as yet inconceivable' because the jungle has not yet been cleared for its buildings (pp. 84, 107); 'The true peace of the world … will be built on less perishable foundations than those of material interests' (p. 107). In this essay he urges that political action must be based on 'the constructive instinct of the people', 'a collective conscience', and an as yet to be achieved moral 'principle' (pp. 91, 111) – like Dr Monygham's prescription" [ibid.: 95–96].

personal responsibility under difficult/hopeless/suffocating or extremely oppressive conditions. And to thematize grave moral and psychological issues like betrayal, self-betrayal, guilt, expiation, punishment, compensation, defeat or victory. Conrad addresses basic philosophical and social issues here that touch upon the fundamental relationship between individual and society. He demonstrates his conviction of the function of literature as a moral institution that reflects important concerns the way nineteenth-century Russian literature did. This relates to its philosophical reflexivity and moral-ethic-social orientation; the social significance of literature and art; humanity as a principle in life and art; the humanity, moral and social responsibility of the author; the passionate struggle in and through literature for personal/emotional/artistic truth (cf. e.g. Virginia Woolf). The debate about the relationship of life and art, so central to Russian literature, likewise shows in the commitment of Conrad's novel to the reflection of ethic, social and psychological problems.

Last but not least the collapse of narrative detachment also has to be seen as interlinked with Russian literature, where defeat or personal failure are not judged as a human error or a disgrace, but assessed as moral victory.[1] In depicting this dilemma Conrad proves himself a master of the appropriation of the traditions of classical Russian literature: "Have I then the soul of a slave? No! I am independent – and therefore perdition is my lot" [ibid.: 362], sounds Razumov's firm and proud self-affirmation after his confession to Nathalie Haldin.

The truth is that the abandonment of detachment and impartiality is closely bound up with/inseparable from the narrator, who was born in Russia. Seen dialectically, this 'narrative collapse' is exactly the presupposition for the true faculty of judgment – not of the intellect, but the heart ("more as a matter of feeling than a matter

[1] Berthoud suggests this as to Winnie's fortune in *The Secret Agent:* "The reader may be tempted to suppose that Winnie's destruction at the hands of Ossipon, who strips her of her savings and packs her off on a trip by train and boat whose only destination is suicide, marks the defeat of the claims of suffering. But dark as the narrative of *The Secret Agent* may be, it is not as dark as that. For Winnie's defeat is also, paradoxically, a victory – over the 'insufferable, hopelessly dense sufficiency' that has defined Ossipon's life" [Berthoud 2000: 119].

[2] Zabel is well able to see this complexity [Zabel: 128–29, 131, 136, 141–44]. "That problem – granting his prejudice and inherited emotion regarding Russia – was less one of the "impartiality" to which he addressed himself than of a*n engagement in the Russian fate and drama*: of entering that drama not as a critic or observer – a man of "Western eyes" – but *as a participant and sharer in the Russian destiny. Had he failed to penetrate his subject in this way, his novel would have failed in substance as much as in art. But in spite of his use of the old English professor as his narrator*, with all its attendant emphasis on incomprehension and bafflement before the riddle of Russian character and psychology, the book finds its strength in its penetration of the riddle, its distributed insight, and its identification with its characters and their fate" [ibid.: 136; my emphasis, C.M.B.].

of thinking"; *Author's Note*: viii).[2] A sober, unemotional style could never have achieved this. These are also the qualities that Conrad (and also Virginia Woolf)[1] appreciated so much in Russian literature, especially in Turgenev (cf. [Conrad 1924d: 46-47]), whose merits the British writer made intelligent use of in the novel. Especially the timeless 'truth of humanity' [ibid.: 46] was for Conrad an outstanding quality feature in the "serene Turgenev" [ibid.: 48], whom he loved and appreciated so much and contrasted advantageously to the 'convulsed terror-haunted Dostoevski' [ibid.: 48].[2]

However, all this is not just a question of Conrad's affinity to Dostoevsky, Tolstoy or Turgenev, the great Russian writers most frequently referred to in literary criticism.[3] Anton Chekhov, the famous writer of short stories and plays, should be mentioned here as well as a possible influence: with his calm, sober, unpathetic, unpretentious mode of perceiving and representing human suffering. The more so because of the frequent references to drama and theatre in *UWE* (e.g. stage, performance, theatrical aspects and qualities, acting out a part).[4] Besides, there is a

[1] Cf. Woolf's appreciative remarks about Russian literature in her essay "Modern Fiction" [Woolf: 1998–99]. One of the particular qualities that Virginia Woolf names in Russian literature is its capacity of offering visions, not eschewing or shirking the last consequences, not shunning pain and suffering. She juxtaposes the materialism and irreligious triviality of Western literature to the qualities of Russian literature: an understanding of the soul and the heart; comparable profundity; a natural reverence for the human spirit; sympathy not with the mind, but with the heart (cf. above); sympathy for the suffering of others; the inconclusiveness of the Russian mind; the sense that there is no answer, that life poses endless questions, which trigger hopeless interrogation even after the end of a story is over and leave the reader in a state of resentful despair [ibid.: 1998]. Zabel comes up with similar assessments about *UWE* [Zabel: 144; cf. below].

[2] By the way, I fully agree with Conrad's dislike of Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889). It is indeed unconvincing altogether. However, apart from Conrad's preferences or dislikes, in detail, the impact of single Russian writers on Conrad's oeuvre is a very complex and ambiguous affair because in spite of Conrad's dislike of certain qualities in Tolstoy or Dostoevsky their influence cannot be denied. "It is as though Conrad were expressing his profound irritation at the affinities he sensed with those writers whose themes he often took for his own, knowingly or unknowingly" [Gillon 1969: 689].

[3] For more secondary literature mainly about Conrad, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, but also about Turgenev and Pushkin cf. [Adams 1974; Andersen 1999; Berman 1980; Berry 1997; Berthoud 1993; Busza 1976; Cairney 2004; Carabine 1993, 1996a and 1996b; Curle 1928; Dalipagic-Csizmazia 1993; Durkin 2003; Fraser 2000; Garnett 1995; Gillon 1969; Graham 2000; Hay 1998; Higdon 1971, 1973, 1985 and 1991b; Higdon and Sheard 1987a; Gide 1982; Gillon 1974; Guerard 1982; Howe 1992; Kaplan 1995; King 1986; Kirschner 1985, 1993 and 1998; Lewitter 1984; Matlaw 1963; Moser 1984; Orr 1978; Pudełco 2004; Rising 2001; Sandstrom 1975; Sewlall 2004; Sokolowska 1999; Stammler 1979; Wasiolek 1990; Watts 1982, 1994 and 2000; Wheeler 1980 and 1983; Wilson 1995; and Zabel 1966].

[4] Kirschner compares Ibsen and Conrad as to theatrical imagination [Kirschner 1993: 178, 179, 193ff.]. Zabel (1966) uses terms of drama, but never refers to Chekhov.

parallel between the two writers in terms of their social and political commitment.[1]

All these observations made me go to the length of (re)reading several Russian works of literature. Consequently, I discovered numerous parallels between them and *UWE*, but also *The Secret Agent*. They occur in various areas: themes; images and metaphors; social and psychological observations; moral reflections; the construction of scenes, incidents and characters; narratology and psychology/atmosphere. A few examples will have to suffice here before I will turn to Gogol in greater detail.

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* (or, more correctly, *Demons/The Devils*, 1871-72), Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch Stavrogin's gives vent to his pent-up rage against the tramp Fedka [ibid.: 259-60]. The scene resembles that of Razumov's rage against the drunken driver Ziemianitch. In *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80), Mitya Karamazov tries to wake up the peasant-trader Lyagavy/Gorstkin. The happiness of his life depends on this (he is involved in a quarrel with his father over his inheritance; 400). This also bears a close parallel to Razumov's desperate effort to wake Ziemianitch up.

In the same novel, Katerina Ivanovna is characterized in terms that come close to Conrad's depiction of Nathalie Haldin. Katerina Ivanovna's physiognomy and personality are described through references to the imperiousness, proud ease and self-confidence of the haughty girl. She has fine, great, glowing black eyes and a pale, sallow longish face. The description emphasizes the lines of her exquisite lips [ibid.: 151]. She is exceptionally tall and moves with a vigorous, bold step [ibid.: 154]. In the novel, she is presented as the opposite to Grushenka. The latter is good-looking like so many other Russian beauties, also tall, but smaller than Katerina Ivanovna. She has a full figure, her movements are soft, as it were, noiseless, softened to a sweetness like her voice. Her feet make no sound on the floor. She sinks softly into a low chair [ibid.: 154]. The German rendition of this passage is: "Weich *glitt* sie in den Sessel <…>" [ibid.: 229-30; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. I.e. her *gliding* walks and movements are emphasized. In *UWE*, there is a passage which comments slightly condescendingly on that kind of walk of Russian women in order to bring out Nathalie Haldin's different walk the more effectively (cf. below).

Conrad uses the bodily features of Nathalie Haldin – her figure, the look of her eyes, her physiognomy, her voice, walk and movements – to fashion her whole personality as firm, al-

[1] "Als in Rußland Ende der neunziger Jahre neben den revolutionären Aktionen der Arbeiterklasse eine Welle von Studentenunruhen eisnetzte, ließ Tschechow sich nicht nur genauestens über die Ereignisse informieren, er unterstützte auch Studenten, die Opfer der zaristischen Repressalien geworden waren" [Düwel: 643].

most masculine, frank, courageous and resilient. These features parallel some of Katerina Ivanovna's characteristics that suggest a certain masculinity. Nathalie Haldin's figure is full [ibid.: 102]. She has grey (not black), frank eyes [ibid.: 141], shaded by black eyelashes [ibid.: 102]. Her glance is direct and trustful as that of a young man, intrepid, expressing a naïve, yet thoughtful assurance [ibid.: 102]. Her glance at Razumov is earnest and friendly [ibid.: 182]. She has a dark complexion, red lips [ibid.: 102], a deep, almost harsh, yet caressing voice [ibid.: 102]. "Her voice, slightly harsh, but fascinating with its *masculine* and bird-like quality, had the accent of spontaneous conviction" [ibid.: 141; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. As to her walk, she passes out of the gardens (of the Bastions), graceful and *strong* [ibid.: 110; my emphasis, C.M.B.], walks across the room (in the flat of the ladies Haldin) with a quick light step [ibid.: 112]. Her straight, supple figure recedes rapidly when she leaves the narrator and Razumov [ibid.: 182]. Most significantly, "[h]er walk was not that hybrid and uncertain *gliding* affected by some women [as for instance by Grushenka – C.M.B.], but a *frank, strong, healthy* movement forward. Rapidly she increased the distance – disappeared with suddenness at last [ibid.: 182; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. She has an expressive and warm handshake [ibid.: 118]. "The grip of her *strong*, shapely hand had a seductive *frankness*, a sort of exquisite *virility*" [ibid.: 118; my emphasis, C.M.B.] echoes famous passages in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* where the sentimental traveler has erotic encounters with two ladies whose hands he holds in his, effusively describing the sensations gripping him when feeling their pulses (the episode with the desobligeant [24, 31, 36, 48] and the glove shop [96–98, 100]). So the whole appearance of Nathalie Haldin conveys the impression of a strong vitality [ibid.: 102].[1] The narrator expressly notes her unconventional attractiveness in terms of gender: "<…> and I became aware, notwithstanding my years, how attractive physically her personality could be to a man capable of appreciating in a woman something else *than the mere grace of femininity*" [ibid.: 102; my emphasis, C.M.B.]. He observes "the harmonious charm of her whole person, its *strength*, its grace, its tranquil *frankness*" [ibid.: 167; my emphasis, C.M.B.], to which Razumov instinctively responds, as the narrator

[1] Jeremy Hawthorn, the editor of the Oxford World's Classics edition of *UWE*, explains that the passages "Her voice was deep …vitality" and "Her voice, slightly harsh" are related by Yves Hervouet (*The French Face of Joseph Conrad*) "to a description of the Princess Seniavine in Anatole France's *Le Lys rouge* (1894). This is only one of very many close verbal echoes of France's novel in *Under Western Eyes* detailed by Hervouet, many of which have to do with descriptions of Nathalie Haldin" [ibid.: fn 76 on pp. 292–93].

notices, before he even knows who she is.[1]

Last but not least her resilience is accentuated, her maturity at an early age, her superiority to young Western women:

> I knew well enough what a hard time of it she must be having. The stress, its causes, its nature, would have undermined the health of an Occidental girl; but Russian natures have a singular power of resistance against the unfair strains of life. Straight and supple, with a short jacket open on her black dress, which made her figure appear more slender and her fresh but colourless face more pale, she compelled my wonder and admiration. [ibid.: 177]

In the same way that Katerina Ivanovna contrasts starkly to Grushenka, so Nathalie Haldin juxtaposes herself several times to the type of (conventional) woman she thinks is the total opposite of her. Dissatisfied with herself during her first meeting with Razumov, she confesses to the narrator that she had behaved abruptly, impulsively, unworthily towards him, like an emotional French girl [ibid.: 171]. Personally, she is convinced that an emotional, tearful girl is not a person to be trusted [ibid.: 176]. Later, she even thanks Razumov for not dismissing her as a weak, emotional girl [ibid.: 180].

Ivan Goncharov, in *Oblomov* (1859), uses similar winter images of Russia as Conrad does in *UWE*. Snow covers the earth like a closely-woven cloth and covers everything:

> It was snowing heavily, the big flakes thickly covering the ground.
>
> 'Snow, snow, snow' he [Oblomov – C.M.B.] kept repeating senselessly, looking at the snow which lay in a thick layer on the railings, the trellis fence, and the kitchen-garden. 'It has covered everything!' he whispered desperately, lay down on the bed and sank into a leaden, comfortless sleep. [ibid.: 367]

Snow is like a shroud under which everything dies away:

> Then gradually dumb indifference took the place of deep grief. Oblomov gazed for hours at the snow falling and forming snowdrifts in the yard and in the street, covering the stacks of logs, the hen-houses, the kennel, the little garden, and the kitchen garden; he watched the posts of the fence being transformed into pyramids of snow and everything around dying and being wrapped in a shroud. [ibid.: 369]

The difference is that in *Oblomov*, these images are associated with mental states of depression,

[1] Besides, there are certain parallels in *UWE* between Nathalie Haldin and the Russian revolutionary Sophia Antonovna: the latter has black and glittering eyes, steady and brilliant, an erect figure and a manly hand-grasp [ibid.: 238, 240].

lethargy, gloom and melancholy that result from a mix of social and private reasons (Ilya Ilych Oblomov as an example of the 'superfluous man'), whereas in Conrad, they are endowed with political connotations (cf. above).

After these selected examples from Dostoevsky and Goncharov, I should like to turn now in greater detail to another famous Russian writer, who is rarely mentioned in literary criticism, Nikolay Gogol.

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*All the publications under the name 'Bimberg' are titles of the author of the present essay.

'COSAS DE RUSSIA': JOSEPH CONRAD'S CONFESSIONS ABOUT RUSSIA AND RUSSIANS

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Abstract. The paper addresses a very controversial subject in Conradian scholarship and criticism: Conrad's representation of the 'Cosas de Russia.' So far, it has been largely (but not necessarily correctly) interpreted as either Russophobia (in his non-fiction) or Russophilia (in his fiction). Conrad himself evaded any clear answer as to his precise stance and its respective background. But his narrative strategies are telling enough. They contain some carefully guarded secrets, but also unintentional confessions. The question therefore is: how much did he really know about Russia and Russians, how familiar was he with Russian culture, language and literature? These issues are explored through a combination of British Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Studies, but also Slavonic Studies. The methods employed are close reading, narratology, deconstruction and contextualization. Apart from Conrad's novels "Under Western Eyes" (1911) and "The Secret Agent" (1907) his essays "Autocracy and War" (1905) and "Turgenev" (1917) will be used for elucidation. Among the Russian works of fiction studied in comparison to Conrad's works are Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Demons" (1871–1872) and "The Brothers Karamazov" (1879–1880) and Ivan Goncharov's "Oblomov" (1859). The major attention, however, will be directed to Nikolay Gogol's short stories "Nevsky Prospekt" (1835) and "The Overcoat" (1842) as well as his novel "Dead Souls" (1842). After reconsidering central issues and correcting some misassumptions in literary criticism, the paper attempts to add a few new aspects to the debate by focusing on issues of intertextuality. What emerges from all this is that Conrad's 'Cosas de Russia' represent a kind of hidden master knowledge whose significance still needs to be fully recognized.

Key words: Joseph Conrad, Cosas de Russia, representation of Russian culture, language and literature, intertextuality, comparative studies of English and Russian literature, issues of translation.