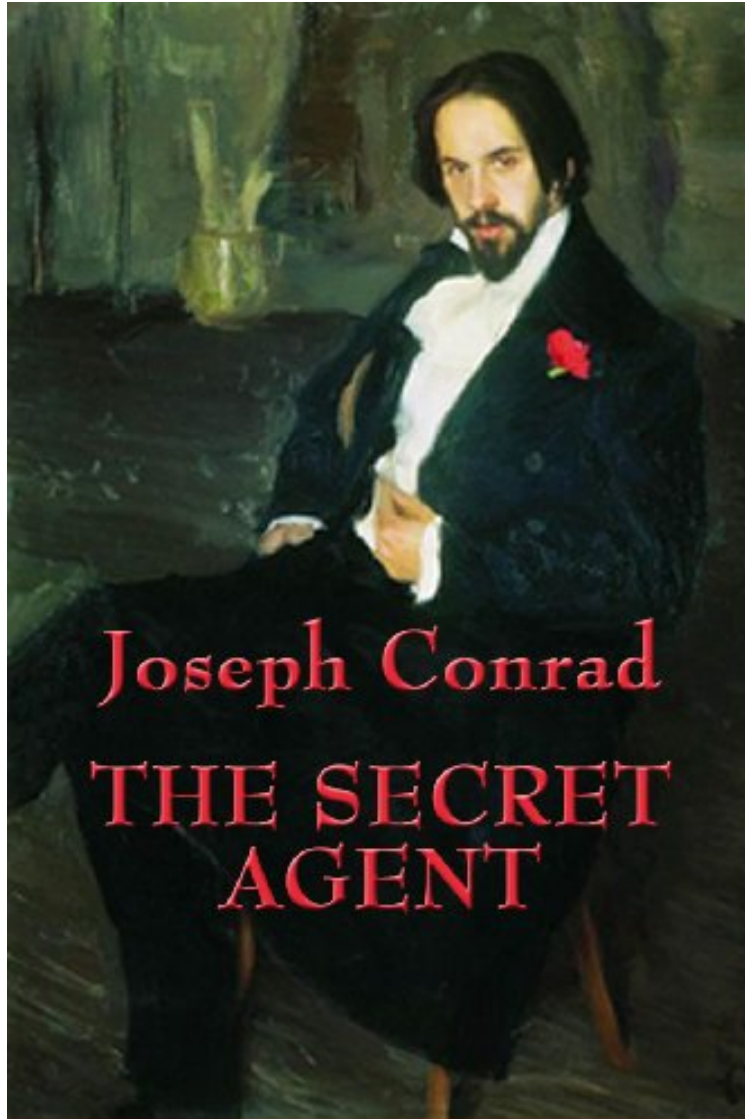


The Secret Agent

Von Joseph Conrad

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Von Joseph Conrad : The Secret Agent before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Secret Agent:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Then the Vision of an Enormous Town Presented Itself, Von Tristram Shandy of a monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heavens frowns and smiles; a cruel devourer of the worlds light. There was room enough to place any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any

setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of lives. Thus Joseph Conrad in his Authors Note on his novel *The Secret Agent. A Simple Tale* (1907) identifies the protagonist of his story, which is, in fact, based on the attempted bombing of Greenwich Observatory by a French anarchist in 1894, an attack that went wrong due to the premature detonation of the bomb. Conrad uses this authentic case as a source of inspiration, modeling the French anarchist into Stevie, a young man suffering from a slight mental disability, who has unwittingly been turned into an accomplice in this crime by his brother-in-law, Mr. Adolf Verloc. This Mr. Verloc, who owns a rather dismal shop of shady goods in Soho, is a notorious political radical who consorts with a number of migr communists and anarchists. At the same time, Verloc uses his position to work as a secret agent for an embassy that is not defined as Russian in so many words, but is strongly indicated as such. Mr. Vladimir, an employee of this embassy and Verlocs new superior, feels that the English public and the British government are too lax on political radicalism and that is why he browbeats Verloc into feigning an anarchistic bombing so that there will be a public outcry and political action against these foreign radicals. Knowing that his revolutionary associates are anything but willing to lift a finger to actually do something, Verloc, himself a convinced disciple of inaction, finally decides to pull off the bombing with the help of his unsuspecting brother-in-law, whose sister Winnie has taught him to look up to Mr. Verloc as to a source of good. The attack, however, goes awry, at the cost of Stevies life, and when his protective sister finally learns about the truth behind the tragedy, yet another tragedy is to follow. Unlike in most of Conrads novels, the setting of *The Secret Agent* is not an exotic one, but the streets and houses of London. However, Conrads descriptions of places and his assortment of seemingly unimportant details leave little doubt as to the writers pessimistic fears about the monstrosity of human greed, folly and egoism. Pessimism pervades every aspect of the novel, starting with the description of the migr anarchists who have settled down in London, and who are actually a motley of contemporary real-life revolutionists: There is the immensely obese ticket of leave apostle Michaelis, who was imprisoned for his complicity in a bomb attack to free another revolutionary and who now enjoys the patronage of a grand society lady; there is Karl Yundt, a malevolent and decrepit old man full of hatred and contempt for the rank and file of the working world; there is Comrade Ossipon, a would-be medical student and compulsive womanizer; and there is the Professor, a deadly anarchist who walks around London with a defused bomb in order to be able to blow himself up immediately, should the police ever try to lay their hands on him. All these characters are drawn as bitter caricatures, none of them, for instance, being of normal proportions and features, but either too tall, too fat, too weak, or too small, and all of them depending on the magnanimity, or gullibility who can make a difference? of women. Michaelis, for a start, is pampered by his grand patroness, who has taken a fancy for his nave dreams of future society, whereas Karl Yundt, even unable to take longer walks without help, is totally dependent on a sour-faced old spinster that has somehow come to look after him. Ossipon, finally, earns his money by beguiling starry-eyed maidservants into opening their purses to him (double-entendre intended, now that I come to think of it). And, what is most ironic, all those fervent adherents of radical social change and betterment except, arguably, the Professor have actually managed to find their niche in the society they claim to despise and they get by admirably within it. Sloth, a relish for intellectual glass bead games and utter fecklessness are but few of the unpleasant attributes Conrad attaches to revolutionaries as such. Mr. Verloc, however, is even too lazy to be one of them, and thats why he has decided to work as a secret agent for the Eastern European embassy. Egoism and cold calculation are the common denominator of pretty much everything that is said, thought and done in *The Secret Agent* whereas neither Winnies marriage to Verloc nor her mothers leaving the household are the fruits of egoism, yet they were engendered by calculation for Stevies sake. All other actions performed in the novel are the outcome of selfishness: Mr. Verlocs attempt to save his livelihood as well as the revolutionists inertia; even the Commissioners attempt to clear Michaelis from any kind of suspicion that might fall on him arises from his wish not to forfeit the grand ladys favour, whereas Inspector Heat seems over-intent on pinning the crime on Michaelis because he apparently harbours a personal grudge against that salon socialist. Apart from that Heat has struck up a bargain with Verloc, who has become his personal informer. So if even the representatives of the states power are more concerned with their personal assets in this matter, whom can one turn to? Winnie Verloc, who, according to the author, normally holds the view that things do not bear too much looking into, actually sums it all up very neatly by saying, Dont you know what the police are for, Stevie? They are there so that them as have nothing shouldnt take anything away from them who have. This is maybe a reason why both those who have nothing and those who have quite a lot already generally take away something from those who have next to very little but this is neither here nor there. One of the greatest achievements of Conrad in *The Secret Agent* is the way he depicts poor Stevie, there being none of the unbearable sentimentality that was so typical of even great writers like Dickens. Stevie is, on the one hand, a rather defenseless, completely guileless person, but on the other, even he is motivated by egoism, for example when it comes to his sensitivity towards pain and suffering. Reading his conversation with the coachman from hell is definitely an unforgettable experience, and, paradoxically, surrealistic scenes like these, show Conrads descriptive power at its best. All in all, *The Secret Agent* is one of my favourite books by one of my favourite writers. Conrads sarcasm has probably never been more relentless, his pessimism hardly ever more scathing although, with somebody like Conrad that may be difficult to tell. To prevent any misunderstandings, this is not a detective story or a yarn about secret agents, this is a bitter and timeless parable of life. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.

Verwirrende Zeitverschwendung Von Bruno Schwarz I'm not a native English speaker. Lese aber mit Begeisterung englische Kriminalromane. Bin aber hier kläglich gescheitert, einerseits wegen einem Vokabular das alle paar Minuten zum Nachschlagen im Wörterbuch zwingt, andererseits ist das Geschehen so unendlich langweilig und umständlich beschrieben, dass mir das Buch immer wieder aus der Hand gefallen ist. Lediglich die letzten zwei, drei Kapitel besitzen eine gewisse Spannung, mehr nicht. Wer sehr viel Zeit und Geduld hat und sich für englische Wörter interessiert die er noch nie gehört oder gelesen hat ... sie auch wohl nie mehr in der Umgangssprache gebrauchen wird.... kann sich mal an den schweren Stoff ran wagen. Keine der beschriebenen Personen ist auch nur im Entferntesten ein Sympathieträger oder eine Person mit der man sich identifizieren könnte/möchte. Fett, Doppelkinn, unrasiert, fies, ungepflegte Haare, Schlappe...., dazu noch ein dsteres, feuchtes, unwirtliches London. Irgendwie passt ein Kriminalroman in diesem Stil nicht mehr so richtig in unsere Zeit. 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Well (but difficultly) done, Joseph Conrad Von Pilot It would not be Conrad if it truly was a "simple tale". "The Secret Agent" is the story of Alfred Verloc, his wife Winnie and Stevie, who is, incidentally, killed in an attempt to blow up the Royal Observatory in Greenwich. I have to admit that this is not an easy read. However, it turns out to be a brilliant novel once one manages to dig deep into Verloc's desperate life in late-Victorian London. It might require a second read to make it into the "Heart of Darkness" which is also depicted in this Conradian novel because "The Secret Agent" presents itself as a discourse on Victorian ideology, especially with regards to feminism and imperialism (it is not a coincidence that the target of Verloc's terroristic attack is Greenwich).

Kurzbeschreibung The Secret Agent deals broadly with anarchism, espionage, terrorism, and exploitation. Due to its examinations of terrorists, The Secret Agent has been noted as one of the most cited literary works in the American media post September 11th. This novel can be seen as both pro and anti terrorist. A complicated view into a dark and dangerous world. Pressestimmen "Tanya Agathocleous's edition of Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent, a tale of espionage in the age of ennui, is an excellent, important, and timely addition to the Broadview list. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the novel uncannily speaks to a range of concerns that continue to preoccupy us--metropolitanism and cosmopolitanism, political terror, degeneracy and the "ends" of history, the collapse of boundaries between domestic and public life, the State's intrusion into the lives of its citizens--issues that insist on a deep and careful understanding of their historical antecedents. Professor Agathocleous has judiciously selected materials from Conrad's moment that will effectively immerse students in the social, political, and intellectual milieu of Conrad's novel." --Joseph McLaughlin "An outstanding edition. First-time readers will welcome the eloquent introductory essay, which places The Secret Agent in the context of both Victorianism and modernism, as well as the very useful supplementary materials on anarchism and degeneration. And those already familiar with the novel will be prompted to re-read it in light of Agathocleous's claim that Conrad, along with his New Woman contemporaries, is exploring marriage and the condition of women as well." --Amanda Claybaugh Tanya Agathocleous's edition of Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent, a tale of espionage in the age of ennui, is an excellent, important, and timely addition to the Broadview list. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the novel uncannily speaks to a range of concerns that continue to preoccupy us--metropolitanism and cosmopolitanism, political terror, degeneracy and the ends of history, the collapse of boundaries between domestic and public life, the States intrusion into the lives of its citizens--issues that insist on a deep and careful understanding of their historical antecedents. Professor Agathocleous has judiciously selected materials from Conrad's moment that will effectively immerse students in the social, political, and intellectual milieu of Conrad's novel. Joseph McLaughlin, Ohio University An outstanding edition. First-time readers will welcome the eloquent introductory essay, which places The Secret Agent in the context of both Victorianism and modernism, as well as the very useful supplementary materials on anarchism and degeneration. And those already familiar with the novel will be prompted to re-read it in light of Agathocleous's claim that Conrad, along with his New Woman contemporaries, is exploring marriage and the condition of women as well. Amanda Claybaugh, Columbia University "Tanya Agathocleous's edition of Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent, a tale of espionage in the age of ennui, is an excellent, important, and timely addition to the Broadview list. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the novel uncannily speaks to a range of concerns that continue to preoccupy us--metropolitanism and cosmopolitanism, political terror, degeneracy and the "ends" of history, the collapse of boundaries between domestic and public life, the State's intrusion into the lives of its citizens--issues that insist on a deep and careful understanding of their historical antecedents. Professor Agathocleous has judiciously selected materials from Conrad's moment that will effectively immerse students in the social, political, and intellectual milieu of Conrad's novel." -- Joseph McLaughlin, Ohio University "An outstanding edition. First-time readers will welcome the eloquent introductory essay, which places The Secret Agent in the context of both Victorianism and modernism, as well as the very useful supplementary materials on anarchism and degeneration. And those already familiar with the novel will be prompted to re-read it in light of Agathocleous's claim that Conrad, along with his New Woman contemporaries, is exploring marriage and the condition of women as well." -- Amanda Claybaugh, Columbia University "Tanya Agathocleous's

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