CHAPTER- IV

Nostromo: Conrad's Vision of the Capitalist Model of Improvement

> *"What 'Nostromo' narrates is a passage not from edenic nature to a fallen world of culture, but from Spanish colonialism via the regimes of countless unstable and tyrannical republics and endemic civil wars to a new Anglo- American imperialism."*
>
> (Benita Parry: *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*)

Nostromo is regarded by Conrad as his "most anxiously meditated" (Vol. 2, 2004: 82) novel and it is in this novel of 1904 that Conrad proposes his most comprehensive perception of imperialism as the expression of gross capitalist materialism. Cedric Watts comes up with the view that the composition of *Nostromo* was almost certainly influenced by the political fact of the secession of Panama from Columbia, an event which is in itself a success of the American agenda that wanted to acquire control of the territory necessary to build a canal linking the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans (Watts 1969: 37-41). What happens in Costaguana over the course of the novel parallels the incidents happening in Panama in its early days. In her introduction to the Broadview edition of the novel, Ruth Nadelhaft goes so far as to suggest that the novel, which began as a short story on the lives of the Italian immigrants in South America, developed into a critique of what she calls "the annexation of Panama" by the United States (1997: 16). Given the fact that Conrad was critical of the US imperialistic attitude as is evident from his earlier letters to R. B. Cunninghame- Graham regarding the Spanish- American War, and pitting that information against the developments around Panama in those days, it can well be surmised that *Nostromo* consciously churns out aspects of Conrad's intellectual involvement with the culture of capitalism in the first decade of the 20th century (Watts 1969: 39). Set in the imaginary postcolonial South American nation of Costaguana, the novel suggests that a nation's political independence does not ensure

economic independence or even self- determination. On the contrary, even though Costaguana have been free of Spanish rule for fifty years, the nation's resources and markets are still controlled by foreign interests, as are its government and even its territorial boundaries. My attempt, in the present study of the novel, would be to examine the culture of this extreme capitalist materialism as addressed by Conrad while trying to build up a dialogue between the contemporary capitalist agenda of imperialism and the essential human values of men and women in a given society.

Nostromo, for many, has proved to be a novel with layered but ambiguous political implications, especially for its convoluted plot and an equally difficult treatment of the same. Fredric Jameson acknowledges the disjunction between the individual act and historical process and explains the disjunction in terms of how history inevitably "steals" individual agons:

> Here the central act, the heroic expedition of Decoud and Nostromo, which ought to have grounded their status as heroes, as ultimate legendary forms of the individual subject, is appropriated by collective history, in which it also exists, but in a very different way, as the founding of institutions. In classical Sartrean language, we can say that the historical act of Decoud and Nostromo has been alienated and stolen from them even before they achieve it; or in more Hegelian terminology, their action can be characterized as that of structurally ephemeral mediation.... Decoud's and Nostromo's is the moment of the action of the individual subject, but one which is at once reabsorbed by the very stability and transindividuality of the institutions it is necessary to found. History uses their individual passions and values as its unwitting instruments for the construction of a new institutional space in which they fail to recognize themselves or their actions and from which they can only, either slowly or violently, be effaced, remnants of another

> age -- not, this time, the myth of origins and the golden age of the giants, but rather the moment of the mediatory transition to another social form, a form as degraded, as transindividual, as non-narratable, as the one that preceded it, although in its own quite different way. (2002: 268-269)

Jameson's argument is a paradigm of an approach to *Nostromo* and Conrad's other political novels that strive to relocate the author's stand in between a collective political destiny and the struggling efforts of an individual/ idealist resistance in the wake of high capitalism. Charles Gould, one of the three most important characters in the novel, is shown enamoured of the capitalistic romance of national development and is made to pay heavily and dearly for the same capitalism working on the territories of Costaguana. Jameson inspects the very nature of Conrad's understanding of the culture of capitalism in the early years of the 20th century and adds further:

> [T]he novel is a virtual textbook working- out of the structuralist dictum that all narrative enacts a passage from Nature to Culture. Indeed, the opening pages evoke the landscape of the gulf, a landscape without people; while the close (excluding the death of Nostromo) celebrates the achieved society of the new republic. In Lord Jim, the interrogation of the individual act and possibilities of action led to the projection of a degraded image of "legendary" heroism; here, on the contrary, a similar interrogation would seem to have been able to lift itself to the level of the collective and to generate a narrative production of society itself. (262)

Since its publication, *Nostromo* has taken its place among Conrad's masterpieces as a panoramic novel of revolution and a profound meditation on history and the cultural effects of "material interests" on human destiny. A synchronic reading of the text and its biographical as well as politico- historical contexts would

sufficiently explicate the issue of capitalism and its regressive culture, as seen by Conrad in the plot of the novel. Taking the new historicist premise into account that both the author and cultural texts are the products of the historical and cultural contexts in which the author lived and his/her texts are produced, this part aims to show firstly that there has been an interaction between *Nostromo* and the culture in which it was produced. Through the construction of a biographical context in which Conrad's text is intended to be put, it proposes to show that Conrad made use of other peoples' experiences rather than his own experiences. Conrad utilized his own experiences of the actual events and places to some extent and combined them with the things of which he heard or read from other sources in the writing of the novel. This part also aims to show how Conrad combined, in his text, the particular histories of particular characters with the history of the world. Conrad took his subject matters and characters – there are many stories in *Nostromo*: the Goulds', Nostromo's, Decoud's, Giorgio Viola's and the Avellanoses' – from his own time, and dealt with the political and socio-economic issues of the time in the novel. He also had his novel have an artistic integrity by approaching history in a modernist sense and by means of his modernist narrative technique. In fact, Conrad's narrative technique employed in the novel also revolves round the theme of materialism and its degrading effects on individuals. Through the construction of the historical and political context, it is aimed to show how Conrad reflected the political ideas pervasive in the second half of the 19th century and subverted them in *Nostromo* by employing both symbolism and an ironic tone in the novel. To this end, first it will be given how such nations as the USA, Britain, Germany, Russia and Spain reflected their policies in the world arena in the second half of the 19th century and then it will be explored how Conrad perceived their ideologies and reflected them in his text. In other words, the chapter aims to show how Conrad responded to the imperial fable of capitalist improvement. In this part of this chapter, it will also be explored how Conrad gave his characters symbolic dimensions and to what extent they could fulfil their social and political roles; the effects of "material interests" on each character will be the concern of this part as well.

Before reading *Nostromo* in its biographical context, it would be appropriate to recall the story of the novel briefly. *Nostromo* is set in the coastal province of

Sulaco, the wealthiest region of the South American republic of Costaguana. The setting of *Nostromo* is a fictional colonial state whose economy hinges on the nearby San Tomé silver mine which the Englishman Charles Gould has inherited. Political instability creeps into the place as a civil war between Ribiera's legal government and Montero's Populist Party begins in Sulaco. To save the silver from the rebels Gould entrusts it jointly to the journalist Martin Decoud and the Italian Nostromo who is popularly known as the 'Capataz de Cargadores' and is regarded a local hero. But Nostromo smuggles it out into the gulf. When they are forced to run around on nearby islands, the Isabels, they hide the silver and Nostromo returns to Sulaco. Left alone, Decoud drowns himself. Though Dr. Monygham persuades him to summon loyal forces to save Sulaco, Nostromo has been shocked into awareness that he is exploited by his employers. He allows people to believe that the silver has been lost and makes secret visits to retrieve it from the Isabels, where the lighthouse keeper is now Georgio Viola, the father of his betrothed Linda. Nostromo finds himself in love with Linda's sister, Giselle. Georgio mistakes him for an intruder and shoots him, and thus the secret of the silver is lost forever. Though this surface story gives us what happens in the plot of the novel, it is far away from showing the depths of the characters and the integrity of the action in the novel.

Conrad in his "Author's Note" to *Nostromo*, which was written in 1917, thirteen years after the novel was published, recalled the circumstances under which *Nostromo* was begun:

> [A]fter finishing the last story of the "Typhoon" volume it seemed somehow that there was nothing more in the world to write about.
>
> This so strangely negative but disturbing mood lasted some little time; and then, as with many of my longer stories, the first hint for "Nostromo" came to me in the shape of a vagrant anecdote completely destitute of valuable details.
>
> As a matter of fact in 1875 or '6, when very young, in the West Indies or rather in the Gulf of

> Mexico, for my contacts with land were short, few, and fleeting, I heard the story of some man who was supposed to have stolen single-handed a whole lighter-full of silver, somewhere on the Tierre Firme seaboard during the troubles of a revolution.
>
> On the face of it this was something of a feat. I heard no details, and having no particular interest in crime *qua* crime I was not likely to keep that one in my mind. And I forgot it till twenty-six or seven years afterwards I came upon the very thing in a shabby volume picked up outside a second-hand book-shop. It was the life of an American seaman written by himself with the assistance of a journalist. In the course of his wanderings that American sailor worked for some months on board a schooner, the master and owner of which was the thief of whom I had heard in my very young days. I have no doubt of that peculiar kind in the same part of the world and both connected with a South American revolution. (1963: xv-xvi)

Although Conrad gives no other details, some critics such as John Halverson and Ian Watt argue that Conrad undoubtedly refers to a book whose title page reads: *On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor* (1897) written by Frederick Benton Williams. The book is cited as Conrad's original source for *Nostromo* by Halverson and Watt in their article, "The Original Nostromo: Conrad's Source" written in 1959 (1959: 45). *On Many Seas* is both an autobiography of Williams as a sailor who rose from a ship's boy to the position of a captain and an entertaining account of William's youthful adventures as a seaman from 1864 to 1878. It is also a tale of the stolen lighter of silver (Williams, 1897). On seeing that *Nostromo* includes some stories other than the stolen lighter of silver, we can concede that Conrad obtained certain important material, for his novel, from a number of books written about the South American continent. It can be suggested that Conrad might have read some other books about the South American continent besides *On Many Seas,* and

these books might have provided Conrad mainly with hints for characters, names, incidents and topography. Therefore, it can be said that there is not a single important source of *Nostromo*, and that a number of books are significant as sources because "they provide the suggestions for important movements within the historical, socio-economic world of the novel" (Sherry, 1971: 148). Previous studies of the sources of *Nostromo* have also showed that the novel was derived from George Frederick Masterman's *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* (1869), which is an account of Masterman's own torture in Paraguay. Ivo Vidan, in his article "One_Source of Conrad's *Nostromo*", recognizes the torture of Dr. Monygham in *Nostromo* as a parallel to Masterman's (1956: 287). Frederick R. Karl also states that Conrad drew the names of many of his chief characters from Masterman's book, for example Decoud, Mitchell, Gould, Fidanza (Nostromo), Corbelan, Barrios and Monygham (1979: 506-536). Apart from these source materials, Karl focuses on the importance of another book as a source for *Nostromo*. It is Edward B. Eastwick's *Venezuela: or Sketches of Life in a South American Republic; with the History of the Loan of 1864* (1868), of which Conrad may have heard from Cunninghame Graham (539). It may be considered that Conrad borrowed names such as Sotillo, Ribera, Antonia (Antonia Ribera in Eastwick's book), Guzman Bento (Guzman Blanco in Eastwick's book) from *Venezuela*. Karl argues that Conrad found descriptions in *Venezuela*, which he applied to "the topography of Sulaco, including the gulf, cape, customs house and lighthouse" (542). *Venezuela* provided Conrad with not only certain names but also a conception of Antonio Avellanos, though she was modelled on Conrad's first love. Conrad's Antonia has much in common with Antonia Ribera in *Venezuela* in respect of her appearance and mannerism. *Venezuela* is a book in which Eastwick both gives an account of his travels in Venezuela and records the incidents concerned with the negotiations with the local Government ministers. *Venezuela*, one of whose chapters is devoted to the history of the loan and another to Venezuelan economic history in terms of foreign loans, gives an analysis of the failure of Republican economics. This book is also seen as a source for another character in *Nostromo*, Sir John, who is the representative of "material interests" from abroad.

The actual historical events, true of the South American republics may be suggested to have been the model for the movements and ideas of the imaginary

Occidental Republic in *Nostromo*. The first parallel between the history of the South American republics and the Occidental Province is that in both the Italian element is strong. Conrad himself pointed out in the "Author's Note": "the thing is perfectly credible: Italians were swarming into the Occidental Province at the time, as anybody who will read further can see" (1963: xix). The Italian element was provided in the novel by the employment of Giorgio Viola the Garibaldino, whom, as Conrad writes in the "Author's Note", he drew as "the idealist of the old, humanitarian revolutions" (xxi). Conrad, to draw his character Viola, might have made use of R. B. Cunninghame Graham's experiences in South America or read *Thirteen Stories*, a collection of Graham's stories published in 1900. There are close parallels between Viola and Enrico Clerici, a character in "Cruz Alta", a story in Graham's collection. It is a tale in which Graham describes his experiences in post-revolutionary Uruguay and Paraguay, and tells how he had renewed his friendship with an Italian immigrant, Enrico Clerici, who kept a store overlooking the little port of Ytapua in Paraguay. In *Nostromo* Viola is presented as "Old Giorgio Viola, a Genoese with a shaggy white leonine head – often called simply 'the Garibaldino' (as Mohammedans are called after their prophet)" (Conrad, 1998: 22). He has a "little hotel [...] standing alone halfway between the harbour and the town" (21). He had been "one of Garibaldi's immortal thousand in the conquest of Sicily" (26). Graham's story contains the following account:

> Two days passed in Ytapua resting our horses, and I renewed my friendship with Enrico Clerici, an Italian, who had served with Garibaldi, and who, three years ago, I had met in the same place given him a silver ring which he reported galvanized, and was accustomed to lend as a great favour for a specific against rheumatism. He kept a *pulperia*, and being a born fighter, his delight was, when a row occurred [...] to clear the place by flinging empty bottles in his hand, whether as weapon of offence or for the purposes of drink; withal well educated and no doubt by this time

> long dead, slain by his favorite weapon. (Quoted in Sherry, 1971: 150-151)

The parallels between Viola and Clerici can be summed up as thus: Both are Italian and have served with Garibaldi, both became innkeepers in South America.

In *Nostromo* Conrad enlarges upon "the idea of the picture of Garibaldi, describing it in detail and making it a focus in the Casa Viola" (151). In the novel liberty and Garibaldi are represented as Viola's divinities (Conrad, 1998: 22). The scene in which Viola and his family – his wife and two daughters – await the attack of the rioters on his isolated inn is an evidence of Viola's attachment to Garibaldi:

> A discharge of firearms nearby made her throw her head back and close her eyes. Old Giorgio set his teeth hard under his white moustache, and his eyes began to roll fiercely. Several bullets struck the end of the wall together; pieces of plaster could be heard falling outside; a voice screamed 'Here they come!' and after a moment of uneasy silence there was a rush of running feet along the front.
>
> Then the tension of old Giorgio's attitude relaxed and a smile of contemptuous relief came upon his lips of an old fighter with a leonine-face. These were not a people striving for justice, but thieves. Even to defend his life against them was a sort of degradation for a man who had been one of Garibaldi's immortal thousand in the conquest of Sicily. He had an immense scorn for his outbreak of scoundrels and leperos, who did not know the meaning of the word 'liberty'.
>
> He grounded his old gun, and, turning his head, glanced at the coloured lithograph of Garibaldi in a black frame on the white wall; [...] His eyes, accustomed to the luminous twilight, made out the

> high colouring of the face, the red of the shirt, the outlines of the square shoulders, the black patch of the Bersagliere hat with cock's feathers, curling over the crown. An immortal hero! This was your liberty; it gave you not only life, but immortality as well. For that one man his fanaticism had suffered no diminution. (25-26)

Conrad also took Garibaldi as a model while constructing Viola's past, which is given in a series of flashbacks and references to past events.

As for Nostromo, his central dilemma, the responsibility for and corrupting influence of the silver came from the tale of the sailor, of whom Conrad heard in his youth, and read in 1890 or '91 as he states in the "Author's Note" to *Nostromo*. Conrad writes that he "received the inspiration for him [Nostromo] [...] from a Mediterranean sailor" (1963: xx). But Conrad does not reflect Nostromo merely as a thief. He had Nostromo have some other peculiarities such as his nationality, his being a man of character, his courage and trustworthiness. It is evident that Conrad utilized his own experiences to draw Nostromo. A certain Dominic Cervoni, whom Conrad had known at Marseilles between 1874 and 1878 when Cervoni was the padrone of the *Tremolino* may be the source of Nostromo. Apart from this, Cervoni was the first mate of the *Saint Antonia*, the vessel in which Conrad sailed to the West Indies and then on to the South American continent. "Cervoni's being a man of character; fearlessness and caustic manner are the traits, which Conrad passed to Nostromo" (Sherry, 1971: 163). Conrad also writes in his "Author's Note" to *Nostromo*: "Many of Nostromo's speeches I have heard first in Dominic's voice" (1963: xx). The parallels between Cervoni and Nostromo are drawn by Sherry as quoted below:

> [J]ust as Dominic 'belonged to the Brotherhood of the Coast, a kind of Mafia; Nostromo is leader of the Cargadores, and later of the labour movement and is a 'fearful and reared leader. Dominic was a smuggler [...] Nostromo is also chosen for difficult tasks, and is

> particularly involved in smuggling the silver out of Costaguana [...] Dominic has a physical assurance which attracted that splendid lady and Carlist intriguer, Dona Rita [...] and Nostromo is attractive to women also – both the Viola girls are in love with him. Cervoni's character of bravery on land and sea and his qualities of leadership can be seen in the character of Nostromo. (1971: 164-165)

In the novel the quality of leadership in Nostromo can be viewed especially in the scene in which Nostromo becomes a fearful and feared leader when he is at sea with the lighter of silver and when he becomes superior to the educated Decoud and threatens to put a bullet into Hirsch's head and a knife into Decoud's heart if they make a sound during the movement of Sotillo's transport across their bows. Nostromo shouts at Hirsch: "Don't move a limb. If I hear as much as a loud breath from you, I shall come over there and put a bullet through your head" (Conrad, 1998: 243). Likewise, he threatens Decoud: "Don Martin [...] if I didn't know your worship to be a man of courage, capable of standing stock still whatever happens, I would drive my knife into your heart" (248).;

Conrad took an actual person as a model for his character of Martin Decoud as he did for the characters of Viola and Nostromo. Vidan points out that "a certain Carlos Decoud is mentioned near the beginning [of Masterman's book, *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay*] in an account of an "unhappy incident" and that it bears "a remote similarity to Decoud's situation in *Nostromo*" (1956: 289). It can also be considered that Conrad reflected one of his experiences in Decoud. If we consider the relationship between Decoud and Antonia Avellanos, and the fact that Conrad implies that Antonia was modelled on his first love, whom he loved when he was young and in Marseilles, we can say that Conrad, while creating his character Decoud, took himself as a model for Decoud. Referring to his relationship with his first love, Conrad states that he was "very much like poor Decoud" (1963: xxii).

Conrad probably reflected, in Decoud, something of his own nature. As Conrad did, Decoud also beholds the universe "as a succession of incomprehensible

images" (Conrad, 1998: 436) and Decoud's final statement of man's position in the universe and his dealing with the helpless human condition are similar to those of Conrad. Decoud says: "In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part" (435-436). The assumption that Conrad has drawn a parallel between himself and Decoud can also be confirmed by a short glance at Conrad's youth, his relations to Poland, and his patriotic sentiments. Don Martin Decoud, "the dilettante in life", (181), "the adopted child of Western Europe," (143) has been living in Paris for several years. There he had been "an idle boulevardier, in touch with some smart journalists, made free of a few newspaper offices, and welcomed in the pleasure haunts of pressmen" (139-140). All this is closely modelled on Conrad's own life in Marseilles, and "this manner of existence has the effect on Decoud's character that it had had on Conrad's" (Morf, 1930: 129). Conrad says in *Nostromo*: "This life induced in him a Frenchified – but most unFrench – cosmopolitanism, in reality a mere barren indifferentism posing as intellectual superiority" (1998: 152).

Having put the characters into a fictional reality with serious parallels to contemporary political atmosphere, Conrad consciously sets out to put his critical views on the cult of materialist development in the novel. For achieving this end he builds up his plot out of the huge corpus of writing of the period on South America. Watts argues that Conrad, in *Nostromo*, not only drew upon the facts about South America told by Graham but also utilized Graham's criticism of imperialistic adventures found in his articles which were published in the *Saturday Review* (1969: 36). During Conrad's friendship with Graham, the US began to emerge as a rival to the older imperialist powers and Graham was concerned to express in his articles the opinion that the United States' policies toward Spanish-American territories were as hypocritical as Britain's policies in Africa. At this point, Conrad, as Watts states, was a reader of the *Saturday Review*, which contained not only Graham's warnings of the dangers and complexities of European and North American affairs but also sceptical editorial comments on the United States' expansionist ambitions (39). It is argued that Conrad shared much of Graham's antipathy to the policies of the US and thus he had a critical eye on the South American affairs. Particular current events in Central and Southern America are also considered the genesis of *Nostromo*. The significant idea

that must be emphasized now is that Conrad developed an awareness of the current events occurring in these areas of the world through Graham's writings. Therefore, we can say that Graham, by means of both his ideas he shared with Conrad and his writings, became effective on the ideas reflected in *Nostromo*.

Costaguana, the setting of *Nostromo*, is an imaginary South American republic. In his "Author's Note" to *Nostromo* Conrad wrote that Costaguana was all of South America (1998: xviii). It has been argued that Conrad took particular aspects of the continent as sources for Costaguana and Sulaco: "The name of the imaginary state, Costaguana is derived from Costa Rica and Guano" (Morf, 1930: 14). Sherry also argues that many of the names Conrad uses in the novel come from the long western coastline of South America. For example, Zapiga, which is shown as "a settlement of thieves and matreros" in *Nostromo*, is a place "in Chile in the region of Tarapaca, east of the coastal town of Pisagua", and Cayta, the principal port of Costaguana and "an important postal link" in *Nostromo*, is derived from the coastal port of Payta in the Northern part of Peru (1971: 189). Esmeralda, where Sotillo commands the garrison, is in Ecuador. Sta Marta, which is seen as the capital of Costaguana in the novel, is an actual Colombian port (190-191). Baines also comments on the topography in *Nostromo*. He writes, "Puerto Cabello [...] is situated in the Galfo Triste, which became the Galfo Placido", and "the reefs of Punta Brava became the cape of Punta Mala" in the novel (Baines, 1960: 296). Sherry shows Sulaco, a town in Honduras, as the original name of Sulaco in the novel. But we can also propose that Valencia in Eastwick's book may be the origin of Sulaco in *Nostromo* because both of these places have the quality of unchangeableness. Eastwick comments about Valencia: "I could not help asking myself how it was that in three centuries it had made so little progress in wealth, population and importance" (1868: 167). In *Nostromo* we are told that Sulaco is "an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world" (Conrad, 1998: 11). Besides, the silver mine San Tomé appears to be based upon a copper mine which appears in Eastwick's book. In *Nostromo*, we learn that:

> An English company obtained the right to work it, and found so rich a vein that neither the exactions of successive governments, nor the periodical raids of

> recruiting officers upon the population of paid miners they had created, could discourage their perseverance. But in the end, during the long turmoil of pronunciamientos that followed the death of the famous Guzman Bento, the native miners, incited to revolt by the emissaries sent out from the capital, had risen upon their English chiefs and murdered them to a man. (53)

And Eastwick writes:

> If I went to San Felipe, I could easily go on to the copper-mines of Aroa, which I was desirous of visiting. These mines were worked for a time under the superintendence of Englishmen with good results; but unfortunately one fine day the native miners took it into their heads that they had a grievance against the foreigners, so they fell on them suddenly, split their skulls with hatchets, and decamped with their property. For this cruel and cowardly deed some of the guilty parties were afterwards executed, but the mines were for a time abandoned. (1868: 144)

Conrad's psychology may be taken as the genesis of his pessimistic worldview pervasive in the novel. His pessimism emerges in such themes of the novel as history is futile and cyclical, individuals are impenetrable and solitary, and human values are relativistic and irrational. We can attach Conrad's pessimism to his historical condition in the general history, and recognize Conrad's personal standing "as an aristocratic Polish exile deeply committed to English conservatism, intensified for him the crisis of English bourgeois ideology" (Eagleton, 1987: 431). Considering that individual psychology is a social product, we can recognize Conrad's psychology as a product of the Western imperialism and capitalism, the aspects of which were studied by Conrad throughout his life. Eagleton observes that the pessimism in Conrad's worldview is "rather a unique transformation into art of an ideological

pessimism rife in his period" (431), and Conrad allied himself to the ideology of the Western bourgeois class. Eagleton adds:

> There were good reasons for that ideological crisis, in the history of imperialist capitalism throughout this period. Conrad did not, of course, merely anonymously reflect that history in his fiction; every writer is individually placed in society, responding to a general history from his own standpoint, making sense of it in his own concrete terms [...] To write well [...] means having at one's disposal an ideological perspective which can penetrate to the realities of men's experience in a certain situation. This is certainly what the Placido Gulf scene does; and it can do it, [...] because his [Conrad's] historical situation allows him access to such insights. (431)

We can cite the Golfo Placido scene as an example to show how Conrad transformed the crisis of the bourgeois class into his novel. In this scene, Decoud and Nostromo, having been charged with the duty of saving the silver, are seen trying to keep the silver out of sight and are isolated in utter darkness on the slowly sinking lighter. Though the radical pessimism of Conrad reveals itself throughout the scene, it is worthwhile here to quote some parts of it:

> The Capataz, extending his hand, put out the candle suddenly. It was to Decoud as if his companion had destroyed, by a single touch, the world of affairs, of loves, of revolution, where his complacent superiority analyzed fearlessly all motives and all passions, including his own.
>
> He gasped a little. Decoud was affected by the novelty of his position. Intellectually self-confident, he suffered from being deprived of the only weapon he

> could use with effect. No intelligence could penetrate the darkness of the Placid Gulf [...]
>
> 'We seem to be crossing her bows,' said the Capataz in a cautious tone. 'But this is a blind game with death. Moving on is of no use. We mustn't be seen or heard.'
>
> His whisper was hoarse with excitement. Of all his face there was nothing visible but a gleam of white eyeballs. His fingers gripped Decoud's shoulder. 'That is the only way to save this treasure from this steamer full of soldiers. Any other would have carried lights. But you observe there is not a gleam to show us where she is.'
>
> Decoud stood as if paralysed [...]
>
> 'The darkness is our friend,' the Capataz murmured into his ear. 'I am going to lower the sail, and trust our escape to this black gulf [...]
>
> A deathlike stillness surrounded the lighter. It was difficult to believe that there was near a steamer full of men with many pairs of eyes peering from her bridge for some hint of land in the night. (Conrad, 1998: 244-248)

Now, as a result of this source study for *Nostromo*, it can be deduced that Conrad made use of many of the details taken from a number of various sources and he brought them together in his text to create a convincing mine with a convincing situation and history.

It is known that Conrad began writing *Nostromo* in February or January 1903 and finished it in September 1904. It is therefore evident that the novel was written at a time when the new imperialism appeared in the world stage. Through this historical contextualization of the text, it is aimed to show how Conrad represents the

pervasive ideologies of the late Victorian period, how his text resists and subverts these ideologies, and how he criticized the dominant political ideas by means of these subversions. *Nostromo* can be read in the light of Conrad's representations of empire, imperialism, colonialism, political ideologies that are once again relevant in today's world. It is a novel in which an analysis of imperialism can be found. As Arnold Kettle states, with *Nostromo*,

> [W]e are in the 20th century. It is not merely a matter of the date of publication. The novel is a whole historical vista that has changed. The world of *Nostromo* is the world of modern imperialism, of war and violence and concentration camps, of displaced persons and mass neurosis, all on a scale and of a kind radically different from previous human experience. (1969: 59)

Nostromo's main theme, i.e., man's degenaration via "material interests", is all connected with the history of imperialism in Latin America. Therefore, it is possible to read the text "as a record of the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist – and, prospectively, to post-capitalist – society" (Fleishman, 1967: 171). To do so, it is necessary to look at the stages of society by their component classes, and at the same time to consider the main characters in the novel as representatives of those classes. In *Nostromo* the imaginary South American Republic of Costaguana becomes "a melting pot, a paradigm [...] a commentary on the entire Western world" (Jones, 1985: 122) with European capitalists, indigenous Spanish landowners, hidalgos, native Indians, imported European laborers, conquerors, colonists, aristocrats and revolutionists. It is therefore evident that in *Nostromo* Costaguana is depicted as an international community. The Goulds are a mixture of European Costaguanans and European immigrants; Georgio Viola is a Genoese; Nostromo is an Italian; Teresa Viola is an Italian, too; Decoud imagines himself as a Parisian, and he is also "the adopted child of Western Europe" (Conrad, 1998: 143). The Avellanos family are one of the representatives of the older, original colonists, the "Spanish-American" community although, in fact, Antonia Avellanos has a cosmopolitan background, "born in Europe and educated partly in England" (129). Holroyd is from San

Francisco and Sir John is from England. The politicians and power-seekers, Guzman Bento, General Montero, Sotillo and Don Vincente Ribiera have Hispanic names. Conrad with such an abundance of characters drawn with their national personalities explores, in a global perspective, the connections and similarities which the imperial nations shared.

In order to historicise the capitalistic culture of *Nostromo*, the political context in which the novel was written should be recalled. We can draw a panorama of the new phase of imperialism. Spittles points out that the British Empire expanded to cover the greatest area of the globe and the largest number of people, of any imperial range known in human history (1992: 89). British expansion created more jealousy and Britain's unpopularity among other Europeans powers (89). This meant that Britain's imperial power was being threatened by either the original European powers such as Spain, Portugal and Holland or newer forces such as the US and Germany. Toward the end of the century newly emergent nations joined the struggle for power, territory, raw materials and markets. Germany, for example, sought a place among the colonial scramble, the USA began to challenge Western European countries, Russia and Japan expanded their influence in the east. From the early 1890s to the outbreak of the World War I, a new global dynamic began to emerge, which was in many ways typified by the 1898 Spanish - US war. Having had a long-established rule in Cuba, Spain met with increasing resistance there in the last two decades of the 19th century. This opposition attracted the support of the USA. In February 1898, a visiting US battleship was blown up in the harbour of the Cuban capital, Havana, with the loss of 260 American lives. At this, The US government blamed Spain, and took the opportunity to proclaim the island independent despite the objections of Spain. There were Spanish troops garrisoned in Cuba but the ensuing war consisted mainly of a series of naval battles around the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, and subsequently in the Far East, where Spain had colonized the Philippine Islands. The six-month war ended with the capitulation of the Spanish forces in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Spain suffered a humiliating defeat concluded with a peace treaty in which Spain conceded independence to Cuba, lost possession of Puerto Rico to the USA and sold the Philippines also to the USA. It meant that "Spain was dwindling as an imperial power and the USA had entered the

international power struggle. Britain's initial response to the war was in favour of the USA" because Spain was a long rival of Britain (90-91). However, there were some commentators who saw the USA as a potential danger on the world stage. In 1898, *Blackwood's Magazine*, in which *Heart of Darkness* was serially published, analyzed the situation in an article. It is a great probability that Conrad read the article. The article is summarized by Watts with a conciseness that cannot be improved:

> [T]he political commentator made a dispassionate and partly ironic survey, his main points being:
>
> *(a)* The Americans had glorified the war; yet it was a rather tawdry series of minor engagements.
>
> *(b)* At the outset, most English papers had urged Spain to sacrifice one or two colonies 'as a cheap means of peace'. But 'now we have lately heard a great deal of the possibility, the not-unlikelihood, of a great European coalition to redistribute the colonial possessions of Great Britain'. [...] *At what point* would the beautifully accurate reasoning addressed to Spain be our own guide to giving in?
>
> *(c)* The Americans had originally claimed that they were helping the rebels to attain independence, but now they claim that the rebels were mere cut-throats: so that in Cuba and Manila 'there is considerable likelihood that [...] the Americans will have to deal not with a population grateful to its liberators, but with a malcontent people well practiced in rebellion who think themselves tricked into a change of masters.'
>
> *(d)* Therefore the war which had revealed the United States as a new imperialist power might well result in increased sympathy for Spain from other countries. (1969: 97)

Conrad showed his response in a letter to Graham, referring to both Spain and the USA as 'thieves', which shows that Conrad did not approve of colonialism (Karl, 1986: 81). Spittles also says that Conrad was suspicious of the USA's world ambitions, being aware that the globe was becoming a unified political stage rather than a collection of separate arenas. Conrad also realized that imperialism was developing a more subtle aspect than the old form of simple military conquest. As Conrad suspected, after the Spanish-American war leading to Cuban independence, the USA, which had "become increasingly powerful economically since the end of the American Civil War in 1865, became a power on the economy of Spain" (Spittles, 1992: 91-93). Thus, the USA realized one of its long- projected aims. As Alstyne points out, in the 1850s the USA had a desire for Cuba for its foreign trade (1960: 150). The possession of Cuba would make New Orleans the leading port of the world; and as a future slave state, the island was looked upon as a bulwark of strength for the South. Similar interests in the upper Mississippi valley regarded Cuba with great favour. Thus, the Illinois Central Railroad anticipated bringing Cuban sugar to the Chicago market and carrying wheat and pork south for export to the West Indies. Chicago, New Orleans, Havana and New York had been expected to be tied together in a web of banking, trading and transportation interests (153). It should also be noted that the USA, referred to as the greatest country in the world, developed a rising national feeling, a growing sense of power. This was initially viewed as an attempt to lead a coalition of the new world. But it was then turned into 'Pan-Americanism' by many 'Pan-American' conferences held between the years 1889-1901. Thus, the USA began to be recognized as a rival for world power. There was a growing British distrust of the USA. Yet Britain was cooperating with the USA in some respects. This paradox is considered to have stemmed primarily from the fact that the Boer War had exposed Britain's isolation in Europe and she needed American friendship badly enough. But it is clear that the cooperation was beneficial for both the USA and Britain, and it created an international capitalism in the world (Spittles, 1992: 92-93).

During the period in which *Nostromo* was written, the economic strength of the USA was translated into a "crypto-colonial expansion through the twin-forces of naval power and financial investment" (99). When *Nostromo* is put into its historical context, it can be seen that the novel was produced at a time when imperialism was

transforming into a new shape, in which money was recognized as power, through which the dominating country's control of the dominated country's government was ensured. Thus, the novel cannot be viewed as just a simple allegory of anti-Americanism. Conrad does not just reflect the politics in the world arena during the period when he wrote *Nostromo*. Rather, he works up an analysis of political realities and explores the different understandings of the process. Our concern here is to show how Conrad represents the world powers and their policies in *Nostromo*.

In the text, Americans are involved in a form of imperialism. At the beginning of the novel, Americans are in Costaguana because of the silver. The two "wandering sailors" who become folk legends haunting the Azuera Mountains because "Their souls cannot tear themselves away from their bodies mounting guard over the discovered treasure" are "Americanos, perhaps" (Conrad, 1998: 12). The USA is also represented by the San Franciscan financier, Holroyd, who is represented as a respectable figure of commerce and finance. He is such a character that he expresses his sense of nationalism in a similar way in which Pan-Americans expressed their jingoism. Holroyd refers to the USA "the greatest country in the whole of God's universe" (74). It is clear that Conrad was aware of the complexities of international capitalism. Imperialism is represented in the novel not as a simple case of pillage, but as a cooperation of the USA and Britain. Sir John is English, and the railway is British-owned; Charles Gould is the owner of the San-Tomé silver mine and has an English background and wife. San-Tomé is reopened by the finance given by an American, Holroyd, to an Englishman, Charles Gould.

It is known that by the turn of the century industry was expanding enormously. Railways were the great symbol of scientific, technological and industrial progress in Europe in the 19th century. When Conrad makes, in *Nostromo*, the railway a central feature of the development of Costaguana, it is not by a causal, coincidental choice. The 1890s were the years in which "the British Empire comprised more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the world", and "Englishmen were building railways throughout the empire at its outposts in India and Africa" (Leitch, vol. II, 2001: 926). A similar sentiment is reflected in *Nostromo* when the railway is described as a "progressive and patriotic undertaking", the very words in which: "Vincente Ribiera, the Dictator of Costaguana, had described the

National Central Railway in his greatest speech at the turning of the first sod" (Conrad, 1998: 37). The scene is a satire on the portentousness of politicians and merchant bankers on such occasions. That is, "Capitalism is presented in the novel as dressing up its own interests so that they appear to be for the common good" (Spittles, 1992: 98). For example, it is said that Sir John "worked always on a great scale; there was a loan to the State, and a project for systematic colonization of the Occidental Province, involved in one vast scheme with the construction of the National Central Railway. Good faith, order, honesty, peace were badly wanted for this great development of material interests" (Conrad, 1998: 109).

In this scene, the political stability is shown as a requirement of the protection of the investment of foreign capital. Conrad uses the phrase "one vast scheme" in an ironic tone. The scheme consists of the act of bringing together the moral virtues such as "good faith, order, honesty" and "peace" and the pursuit of "material interests". Thus Conrad criticizes the practice of political economy. The criticism is emphasized a few pages later in a scene in which the Goulds see the local people enjoying a native festival:

> Over little heaps of glowing charcoal Indian women, squatting on mats, cooked food in black earthen pots, and boiled the water for the maté gourds, which they offered in soft, caressing voices to the country people. A racecourse had been staked out for the vaquerors; and away to the left, from where the crowd was massed thickly about a huge temporary erection, like a circus tent of wood with a conical grass roof, came the resonant twanging of harp strings, the sharp ping of guitars, with the grave drumming throb of an Indian gombo pulsating steadily through the shrill choruses of the dancers. (114)

This scene illustrates how the ordinary folk of the country are happy enjoying immaterial interests such as music, song and dance. Immediately after this scene comes Charles Gould's remark to his wife: "All this piece of land belongs now

to the Railway Company. There will be no more popular feasts held here" (114). It is evident that Conrad subverts the practice of political economy, a practice which was pervasive especially at the end of the 19th century, by representing the "material interests" as something which lies behind the practice, and to which the immaterial interests must be sacrificed. The collective pleasure and sense of life of the common people must be sacrificed to the benefits of the Railway Company capitalists rather than the mass of the people of Costaguana.

The subversion of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism in *Nostromo* can be linked with Conrad's understanding of history reflected in the novel because the novel insists at length that it is not the consciousness of human beings that is primary in determining the events but other non-human forces: "material interests". To illustrate this idea in the text, Conrad makes the silver of San Tomé mine the symbol of "material interests" and an important factor affecting the lives of all the characters. Conrad's comment on the deliberateness of the silver as a symbol is well known in a letter dated 7 March 1923 to Ernst Bendzt, a Swedish professor who had written a study of Conrad's work:

> I will take the liberty to point out that Nostromo has never been intended for the hero of the tale of the Seaboard. The silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale. That this was my deliberate purpose there can be no doubt. I struck the first note of my intention in the unusual form which I gave to the title of the First Part, by calling it "The Silver of the Mine," and by telling the story of the enchanted treasure of Azuera, which strictly speaking, has nothing to do with the rest of the novel. The word "silver" occurs almost at the very beginning of the story proper, and I took care to introduce it in the very last paragraph, which would perhaps have been better without the phrase which contains the key-word. (Jean-Aubry, vol. 2, 1927: 296)

A significant concern of Conrad in *Nostromo* is the theme of man's self-deception, which is showed by the disparity between the ideal and the action, that is, the earlier dreams and intentions of the characters and the end results in the case of each character. The novel is full of characters who think that they are the masters of history but who are, in fact, its slaves and puppets. Conrad puts all his characters into a process of history in which no character realizes his ideals, and in which no progress is gained.

Now our concern will be to show how the major characters see themselves and each other at the beginning of the novel and how all of their assessments turn out to be incorrect by the passage of time. To begin with the Goulds, Charles Gould, who has inherited the San Tomé mine, sees himself as the bringer of order and law to a lawless land and of prosperity to a land of grinding poverty. The perspective from which Charles Gould sees himself and his mine is illustrated in the following passage in *Nostromo*:

> What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Anyone can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That's your ray of hope. (Conrad, 1998: 80)

We can also say that before the opening of the San Tomé mine, Mrs. Gould has a great confidence in her husband. We are told that: "He had struck her imagination from the first by his unsentimentalism, by that very quietude of mind which she had erected in her thought for a sign of perfect competency in the business of living" (51). We have also Gould's own idea of himself through which we see more or less how he sees himself. He compares himself to Holroyd, the American

capitalist: "In comparison to the correctness of his aim, definite in space and absolutely attainable within a limited time, the other man appeared for an instant as a dreamy idealist of no importance" (75).

Moreover, Gould is sure that he is no mere profiteer. He tells his wife that: "Uncle Harry was no adventurer. In Costaguana we Goulds are no adventurers" (64). Thus, it is clear that Charles Gould, according to himself and his wife, at the beginning of the novel, are not sentimentalists or adventurers. Charles Gould sees himself as one who pins his hopes on material interests rather than abstract ideals. However, Conrad controverts their assessments later on in the novel. Decoud tells Mrs. Gould his conviction that her husband is an idealist and sentimentalist:

> A puzzled look came upon Mrs Gould's face, and Decoud, approaching, explained confidentially – 'Don't you see, he's such an idealist.'
>
> Mrs. Gould flushed pink, and her eyes grew darker at the same time [...]
>
> He must have known what he was talking about. The effect he expected was produced. Mrs Gould, ready to take fire, gave it up suddenly with a low little sound that resembled a moan. (193)

Decoud then tells her that he believes that her husband can be drawn into his plan, "like all idealists, when he once sees a sentimental basis for his action" (195). In his letter to his sister, Decoud repeats these charges, referring to Gould's idealism and sentimentality. Gould's earlier claim that neither he nor his family was adventurers is contradicted by a later revelation of Gould himself:

> After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions. For all the uprightness of

> his character, he had something of an adventurer's easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. (323)

Thus, it can be said that Charles Gould, convinced that the development of San Tomé mine has been for the best moral reasons, is later forced to admit that he is an adventurer. What Conrad does through the failure of the noble ideals of Gould is to subvert the ideas attached to imperialism and colonialism. Gould, who holds the concession to the mine, is represented in the text, before his failure, as "the most powerful political force in the country, a man who can make or break governments" (Jones, 1985: 124). At the end of the novel, Gould is presented as one trapped by the material benefits which he thought would come through the silver of the mine. Gould is doomed to his isolation quite like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. But his doom is "not like Kurtz by avarice, vanity and violence, by refusing his mission as light-bringer, by repudiating the idea, but by accepting his mission as light-bringer and bearer of the idea" (Warren, 1960: 212). He accepts his mission, but ironically enough he becomes a victim of the impersonal logic of "material interests" and in the end, he becomes the slave of his silver because he has lost human love to the material enchantment of the silver. This, in its way, suggests an enormous abstraction of his cultural role in the historical context of a nation's materialist progress.

Conrad also suggests that the mine becomes "a demanding mistress" in Charles's life. As Johnson remarks, Emilia Gould will bear no children, and Charles is incessantly described as riding off to spend the night at the mine (1971: 107). Gould idealizes the mine "as a spiritual principle, turning it into an idol or fetish; but this simply rationalizes greed, rivalry, and the lust for power" (Eagleton, 2005: 248). By means of the character of Gould, Conrad shows us effectively that, "...[i]deals are no more than masks for material interests, objectivity is a convenient fiction, the human subject has no abiding core of truth, and so-called civilized notions are in the service of power and desire" (248).

Charles Gould is an important character in the novel with reference to Conrad's reflection of the bitter reality about imperialism through him. Hawthorn suggests that it was a substantial insight of Conrad's to perceive how important to

imperialism was the masking of the acquisitive spirit by fine words (1990: 212). Conrad draws, in the character of Gould, the colonial adventurer, who fails to perceive the real face of imperialism. Gould is an imperialist adventurer who conceals unpleasant facts from himself by means of pretty fictions.

That Mrs. Gould is as good an example as her husband is to confirm the idea that one cannot determine how the events will shape oneself. Mrs. Gould is such a person as changes into the opposite of her youthful self. Her initial idealism and sentimentality are pointed out early on in the novel. We are told with reference to her first visitors from abroad in Sulaco that perhaps had they known how much she was inspired by an idealistic view of success they would have been amazed at the state of her mind as the Spanish-American ladies had been amazed at the tireless activity of her body. She would – in her own words – have been for them "something of a monster" (Conrad, 1998: 66).

The following passage also reveals that, at the beginning, Emilia Gould is drawn as an idealistic character. During the meeting at the O.S.N. Company Mrs. Gould, as the only woman there because Sulacan women are not "advanced enough to take part in the public life to that extent", tells the Sulacan men:

> We can't give you your ecclesiastical court back again; but you shall have more steamers, a railway, a telegraph-cable – a future in the great world which is worth infinitely more than any amount of ecclesiastical past. You shall be brought in touch with something greater than two viceroyalties. But I had no notion that a place on a sea-coast could remain so isolated from the world. If it had been a thousand miles inland now – most remarkable! Has anything ever happened here for a hundred years before today? (38-39)

A little later in the novel, we are informed that, even the most legitimate touch of materialism was wanting in Mrs Gould's character. The dead man of whom she thought with tenderness (because he was Charley's father) and with some impatience (because he had been weak), must be put completely in the wrong to

suggest his son not to come back to the business of the mine. She thought: "Nothing else would do to keep their prosperity without a stain on its only real, on its immaterial side" (72).

It should be emphasized here that Emilia Gould's rejection of the materialist ambitions of her husband's father is self-deceiving, and "she fails to realize the extent to which the whole Gould project is still enslaved to 'material interests'" (211). Mrs. Gould changes in a direction contrary to the change she experiences in her husband. In other words, she is not sentimental any longer. She is not the sentimentalist and idealist woman, to whom Mr. Gould proposed. By this time she has begun to recognize "the contribution her sentimentality has made to her husband's enslavement to the mine" (Hawthorn, 1990: 221). The following account shows us that Mrs. Gould realizes what has happened to them:

> With a prophetic vision, she saw herself surviving alone the degradation of her young ideal of life, of love, of work – all alone in the Treasure House of the World. The profound, blind, suffering expression of a painful dream settled on her face with its closed eyes. In the indistinct voice of an unlucky sleeper, lying passive in the grip of a merciless nightmare, she stammered out aimlessly the words – 'Material interests.' (Conrad, 1998: 456)

Emilia Gould perceives the truth as if she were in a dream. But she is still "lying passive"; her idealism has unfitted her for her active struggle against "material interests". At the end of the novel, she is told by Dr. Monygham that the "material interests" will not bring about human betterment, they only cause the tragedy of human beings, and that human betterment will come only from active struggle in pursuit of a moral principle. Dr. Monygham tells Mrs. Gould:

> There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity

> and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back.' (447)

Throughout *Nostromo*, the pervasive idea revealed is that it is the power of nature that resists the schemes of men. This is dramatized in the failures of many of the characters in the novel, in their struggles to exploit the silver of the mine. Mr. Gould, Nostromo, Holroyd, Sir John, the Montero brothers and Sotillo can be accounted for their struggles to exploit the silver. The mine, as the narrator says, becomes the cornerstone of the social structure in Sulaco: "the San Tomé mine was to become an institution, a rallying point for everything in the province that needed order and stability to live" (110).

Once we turn our attention to Nostromo, the foreman of the cargadores, we immediately perceive that he is presented as "the lordly capataz" (144), and an "invaluable fellow" (18). With his broad chest dazzling with silver buttons, he receives, and gains sustenance from the adulation of the crowds. Warren defines Nostromo as,

> ...the natural man, the son of the people with the pride of the people, contemptuous of the 'hombres finos,' with their soft hands inexpert on tiller or rifle, half magnificent unconscious animal and half the confused, conscious tempted man, who is virtuous merely by vanity, for until the combination of opportunity and rancour strikes him he wants nothing but 'reputation,' that full awareness of his identity ideally projected in the minds and on the tongues of men. (1960: 213)

Nostromo's living by his reputation is suggested in his response to Charles Gould, who wants to reward him for his heroism. Nostromo says: "My name is known from one end of Sulaco to the other. [...] What more can you do for me?" (428). In a conversation concerning Nostromo, Decoud says, "The heroes of the

world have been feared and admired" (210). As Guetti points out, Nostromo is a hero, and each character fears or admires him in a different way; Nostromo's given name, Giovanni Battista, is also "the name of his patron saint, and for Signora Theresa Viola, [...] he is a saint" (1970: 36).

If we cast a second look at the character of Emilia in this context, we can see that she is the victim of her husband's mission. As Warren observes, being "over against the abstractions, [Emilia] sets up the human community, the sense of human solidarity in understanding and warmth and kindness outside the historical process" (1960: 212, 223). It is to her that the dying Nostromo wants to make his confession. It is she who compels the devotion of the bitter Dr. Monygham. The other characters, except for her husband taken up by his silver and his mission, gather around her. Emilia Gould, trapped in her "merciless nightmare" (Conrad, 1998: 456) in "The Treasure House of the World", leans over the dying Capataz and hears him say "But there is something accursed in wealth"; and then the dying man begins to tell her where the treasure is hidden. But Emilia bursts out: "Let it be lost forever" (488). This is her moment of vision, her repudiation of the logic of "material interests". This is, in short, also the moment of Conrad to condemn the culture of surplus, the culture of excessive capitalist materialism controlling the lives of men and women in the early part of the 20th century.

It should also be noted that Nostromo is drawn in the novel – before he stole the silver – as a mythical hero. Through the viewpoints of the other characters, we continually encounter "glimpses of this fabled and magnificent man. Here and there appear accounts of his shining black whiskers, his great revolver, and his bloodcurdling laugh" (Guetti, 1970: 37). He is often seen very mysteriously in the glimmering light of a flame: "The flame showed a bronzed, black-whiskered face, a pair of eyes gazing straight" (Conrad, 1998: 44). This mystery is heightened by Conrad's tantalizing presentation of Nostromo. For the greater part of the first half of the book, the reader is never sure where Nostromo is or what he is doing; he appears and disappears, a dark, spectral figure on a ghostly silver horse: "the short flick of yellowish flame in the dusk was powerless against the muffled-up mysteriousness of the dark figure with an invisible face concealed by a great sombrero" (169). Nostromo also exists as "a public persona". It is therefore evident that "he has no

value in himself, only in the way he is regarded by others" (Eagleton, 2005: 250). Nostromo himself qualifies the myth of his generosity which is attributed to him by others. He tells Decoud: "But, old or young, they like money, and will speak well of the man who gives it to them" (Conrad, 1998: 221). Nostromo exists, as he himself remarks, to be spoken well of. So Nostromo resembles "a commodity like the silver, which similarly has value only because it is thought well of. A commodity like silver accrues its worth only in what people make of it" (Eagleton, 2005: 250).

While presenting Nostromo like a commodity as the silver, Conrad implies the idea that nature and history are meaningless in themselves and people or objects take on value only because of the energies which men and women subjectively invest in them. The silver of the mine in itself is just inert material stuff; but in generating this whole enthralling drama, it becomes in Conrad's own words the hero of the novel. As men and women are turned into objects for others' power or profit, so objects like the mine begin to assume an oppressive life of their own (250).

The shift in Nostromo from being a public hero to a failure is strengthened by his awakening from the dream-ideal. In the following part of the novel, we can see that Nostromo perceives his life before he has stolen the silver as an illusion. The Capataz of the Sulaco Cargodores had lived in splendour and publicity up to the very moment, as it were, when he took charge of the lighter containing the treasure of the silver ingots.

Nostromo's failure can also be commented on from the standpoint of his psychology. Just before his meeting with the doctor, Nostromo suffered the first setback in his long career of brilliant feats of courage. He was unable to carry Gould's silver safely beyond the Isabels on the Gulfo Placido. The weight of failure is increased by the fact that the capataz, who has been for many hours facing terrible solitude on the company lighter, now possesses a secret which further cuts him off from nearly all his fellows. He cannot make his presence, or his story, known to the public, for it would be dangerous to risk the possible exposure of the secret of the silver. He must wait in continued solitude until he can find some important and properly appreciative figure that is connected with his daring adventure, before which he can recount his tale of bravery and frustration. The theft of the accursed silver

leads to an erasure of his personal identity that he so dearly maintained so far to protect his public esteem: "Perhaps for the first time Nostromo suffers a loss of identity" (Marten, 1976: 28-29). We may even say that Nostromo commits a kind of suicide because "he has destroyed the self by which he had lived" (Warren, 1960: 213).

Conrad, in his dramatization of Nostromo as a failure, through a series of antiheroic actions, shows the severe limits of idealistic action within a cultural dynamic of "material interests". The decline of Nostromo suggests that a man is subject to forces from without and that the noble idealistic desires are overcome by man's personal aspirations. Through Nostromo's decline dissolving his masterful aspect, Conrad also changes "the emphasis from Nostromo to the overwhelming elements with which Nostromo must struggle" (Guetti, 1970: 40). Eagleton also comments elaborately on the decline of Nostromo and on Conrad's achievements in dramatizing the haracter of Nostromo:

> Nostromo, then, exists as a fiction, like the novel he inhabits. Just as the novel itself exists only through language, so its protagonist lives only through his good name. His public altruism is thus in the service of private egoism. Like Kurtz, he is hollow to the core; like the silver, he comes to life only in the fantasies of others. He is entranced by a myth of himself, a self idealizer and self-fetishist. His name can mean 'our man', suggesting that like Decoud he is the hired lackey of the ruling class of Sulaco. Decoud's job is to lend his political masters some intellectual muscle, while Nostromo's is to keep the common people in order. One who has no identity of his own, however, being the mere instrument of others, has no personal self to pledge to them. It is not surprising, then, that Nostromo should finally come to 'betray' his overlords. Everybody's man is nobody's man. (2005: 250)

In brief, in the case of Nostromo we see how the 'incorruptible' man is corrupted by "the material interests".

On the other hand, Decoud's failure functions as an important element through which Conrad illustrates his views about the futility of "ideas". Eagleton, showing parallels between Decoud and his creator, comments on this matter:

> Decoud is actually more of an altruistic patriot than either he or the novel will allow; but he is painted as a faithless sceptic full of abstract ideas, Parisian flippancy and dilettantish irony. This is partly because his world view is actually uncomfortably close to his author's, and thus needs to be kept at arm's length. He is one of Conrad's secret sharers. Like Conrad, Decoud views the politics of his country as a futile farce. Like Conrad, too, he sees patriotism and other ideals as cloaks for material exploitation. Yet he also rejects all belief as odiously narrow, which allows the conservative side of Conrad to write him off.... (248-249)

But Decoud has his own ideal though that does not in any way help him to sustain the corrosive effect of the demanding capitalism. Eagleton says;

> He does indeed have one illusory ideal: his love for Antonia; but he is aware of his own illusion, which is the next best thing to having none at all. To know one is deluded is the nearest one can come to clear-sightedness. Marooned with nothing but his own sensations in the Placido gulf, he dies, so to speak, from a taste of his own medicine. Intellectuals like Decoud are more mind than action; and since for Conrad it is action that gives us the illusion of an independent identity, Decoud finally dissolves away. (248-249)

In *Nostromo* the characters' preoccupation with silver seems the source of not only the isolation of each character from the others but also of the political disorder. It is true that in the novel, there exists a portrayal of the Occidental Republic, but it is also observed that there is an analysis of the general political process. In his "Author's Note" to *Nostromo*, Conrad makes a reference to some "few historical allusions" in the novel, and says that they are "closely related to actuality – either throwing a light on the nature of current events or affecting directly the fortunes of the people" of whom he speaks (1963: xviii-xix). It is therefore evident that *Nostromo* is a text in which the author demands not only comprehension of a specific chain of events but understanding of the contemporary political process. So it is not wrong to say that *Nostromo* is a text in which Conrad relates history and narration. The actions in the novel are the subverted reflections of the great political and historical movements of the 19th century. In *Nostromo* the characters epitomizing political ideas can be taken as the subverted forms of political ideas. The text contains the real historical and political allusions only to subvert them. The subversion is achieved mostly by the failures of the characters in action. Nobody achieves his goal, and in the history of Costaguana no progress is gained. The opening of the San Tomé mine, opposed to Captain Mitchell's remark that "[t]his marks an epoch", (Conrad, 1998: 66) is observed as a regression rather than a progression. *Nostromo* begins with an epigraph that says: "So foul a sky clears not without a storm" ends, in one sense, with leaving the sky again foul. Thus, it can be said that in *Nostromo*, Conrad gives his critical responses to the pervasive ideologies of the 19th century, such as imperialism and capitalism through unmasking them.

To understand in what ways Conrad unmasks these political ideas in his text, we should turn to the issue- based relationship of the characters to their actions. The connection between the text and the world of reality is achieved, as Spatt suggests, through Conrad's making almost each character owe "his being or his aspirations to Europe or America" (1974: 39). Thus the men who dominate the action are, "not Costaguanans, but Englishmen, Italians, Americans" (39). Conrad's first means of inserting the action into the time-scale history can be considered to be Giorgio Viola's story. Through Viola's history given via flashbacks in the novel, we learn that Viola is a veteran of the war between Uruguay and Argentina in the 1840s and he was

a loyal follower of Garibaldi for some fourteen years. His support of Uruguay, led at the time by a man named Ribera, is seen as a fight for liberty against Argentina's dictator, Rosas, and the latter's two brothers who led his invasion forces. As has been mentioned in a previous part of this chapter, Viola's support of Garibaldi extends the struggle to include Garibaldi's war for Italian independence. Garibaldi's name was "a rallying-cry for liberals" during more than twenty years, ending only after his final defeat at the hands of the French at Mentana in 1867" (39) Viola thus epitomizes the forces of nationalism and democracy so powerful throughout the 19th century.

When we look into the history of the Goulds presented in the text and the actual history of Columbia, we can find a close parallel between these two histories. In Conrad's text we are told that Don Enrique Gould, uncle to Charles, is lauded as a champion of federalism executed by the dictator Guzman Bento during the latter's rise to power. Extrapolation through Gould's life from 1886 would set the time of Bento's accession to power in approximately 1852. It is true that Conrad's fictional state Costaguana experiences the cycle of civil war, deceptive stability, renewed turmoil, and secession. Yet Conrad does not only mirror these events through the history of Costaguana but inverts the history of Colombia for the purpose of expressing his cynical view of the political process. To confirm this idea Conrad's reflection of federalism in the fictional world of *Nostromo* can be defined: At first, "federalism is defeated [...] succeeding only when Colombian federalism failed"; as the novel closes, quite a few years later, "the seceded province is about to annex its former ruler, creating a new centralized state" (40).

Now we can turn to the characters in *Nostromo* to observe how Conrad reflected them as political figures in his text, and how, through his characters, he connected the history of Costaguana stepping into the world of global capitalism. He also unequivocally examines the imperial culture of the global leaders in capitalism. It is obvious that the personal stories are related not only in the contact of one person with another in the plot and as carriers of variations of the theme of illusion, but also in reference to the social and historical theme. That is, each character is also a carrier of an attitude toward, a point of view about, society and each is an actor in a crucial historical moment. This historical moment is presumably intended to embody the main issues of Conrad's time: capitalism, imperialism, revolution and social justice.

Many of the personal illusions bear quite directly on these topics: Viola's libertarianism, with dignity and leonine self-sufficiency and, even, contempt for the mob; Charles Gould's obsession in his mission; Avellanos's liberalism and Antonia's patriotic piety; Holroyd's concern with a "pure form of Christianity", which serves as a mask and justification for his imperialistic thirst for power; even the posturing and strutting "Ceaserism" of Pedrito Montero, whose imagination had been inflamed by reading third-rate historical novels (Warren, 1960: 221).

In *Nostromo* Costaguana is presented as a savage and fierce and an irrational milieu in which the progress which the Europeans try to introduce in the form of material interests is destroyed. The silver of the mine, the symbol of material interests, affects the lives of all characters in the book. *Nostromo* traces the violent history of Sulaco and the lives of the people who are involved in Costaguana's revolutionary politics. Most important in the novel's huge cast of characters are Charles Gould, an Englishman with a European education who was born in Sulaco, Decoud, another Costaguanan returned after life abroad, and Nostromo, the Italian "capataz" of the longshoremen. Among these characters Charles Gould perhaps should be the first to mention in order to confirm the idea that the political ideas are overcome by the "material interests". We know that at the beginning of the novel Mr. Gould, who has a European background and who studies mining in Germany, sees himself, and is seen by the others including his wife, as the bringer of modern technology to Sulaco: a silver mine, a railroad and electric lighting. But ironically, at the conclusion of *Nostromo*, we learn that some ten or more years after the revolutionary victory of technological interests, the electric lights of modernity illuminate only the domain of the rich: the mine, the docks, the Calle de la Constitucion. It is clear that "the political and economic significance of Sulaco lies in the San Tomé silver mine, which Gould inherits from his father" (Wollaeger, 1990: 126). In the Sixth Chapter of Part I of the novel, we are given the history of San Tomé mine. One of a series of Costaguanan governments ("the fourth in six years") forced the elder Gould to take up the mine as a perpetual concession and to pay heavy duties on it. Ruined by what amounted to officially sanctioned extortion, he advised his son never to take up the Gould concession. But after his father's death, Gould becomes stubbornly idealistic in his belief that the wealth of the mine will necessarily

improve Sulaco's standard of living in both economic and moral terms. In the course of the novel Charles Gould's idealism fails miserably. After the decision to pursue separatism, Gould comes to the conclusion that "the words one knows so well have a nightmarish meaning in this country. Liberty, democracy, patriotism, government – all of them have a flavour of folly and murder" (Conrad, 1998: 360). Charles Gould's materialistic ambitions fail because the security of mine depends upon political stability in the country; and history has proved repeatedly that permanent stability is impossible to achieve; the vain Nostromo is extraordinarily changed with his possession of the silver; and Decoud, more than any other character, represents the inabilities of European civilization to survive in a savage and ferocious country. The central tragedy of the novel lies in the incompatibility of "material interests" and the moral principles represented by Mrs. Gould, Viola, José Avellanos and Dr. Monygham. Conrad, in the character of Gould, reflects the European "idea" in a subverted form in his text because the Gould family is presented as a failure in it.

Without political stability Charles cannot succeed where his father has failed. Conrad making Mr. and Mrs. Gould remain childless implies the idea that Sulaco's progress in the hands of the Europeans would be impossible. As Ryan states, in the Goulds (Mr. and Mrs. Gould), Conrad "exposes the self-deluding hollowness of the liberal rhetoric of progress and philanthropy legitimizing private enterprise" because through these characters we observe "the soul-destroying contradiction between the cosmetic ideology and the dehumanizing reality of exploitation and corruption it conceals" (1987: 50).

Nostromo, who bears a name meaning "our man" in the novel, is not only a romantic individual but also a character to which Conrad gave a symbolic identity. In his "Author's Note" Conrad explains the meaning of this symbol:

> Nostromo does not aspire to be a leader in a personal game. He does not want to raise himself above the mass. He is content to feel himself a power – within the people [...] He is a man with the weight of countless generations behind him and no parentage to boast of [...] Like the people.

> In his firm grip on the earth he inherits, in his improvidence and generosity, in his lavishness with his gifts, in his manly vanity, in the obscure sense of his greatness and in his faithful devotion with something despairing as well as desperate in its impulses, he is a Man of the People, their very own unenvious force, disdaining to lead but ruling from within. Years afterwards [...] listening in unmoved silence to anarchist speeches at the meeting, the enigmatical patron of the new revolutionary agitation, and trusted, the wealthy comrade Fidanza with the knowledge of his moral ruin locked up in his breast, [...] remains essentially a man of the People. [...]
>
> Antonia the Aristocrat and Nostromo the Man of the People are the artisans of the New Era, the true creators of the New State. (1963: xx-xxi)

Owing to the fact that Conrad drew Nostromo as a symbol, Nostromo's career may be considered in the historical pattern of the novel. Nostromo can be defined as the symbol of a class – the proletariat, and thus his career represents this class's enlistment and exploitation in the industrialization of the country, its entry into the separatist revolution (fighting for class interests not directly its own), its growth of self-consciousness and discovery of an independent political role, its temptation by the materialistic drives of capitalism, and its purgation by traditional idealists in its own camp (Fleishman, 1967: 163-164). The examination of the symbolic identity of Nostromo has shown us that he is a dramatic representative of the "people". He is, however, an individual, a stern foreman, a "would-be popular hero" (173). For this reason, when Nostromo is taken either as an individual or a political figure, i.e., a representative of the proletariat, we encounter the fact that his individual aspirations are at work to make him a failure. Though he identifies himself with the community, when he is given a political duty (to save the silver and thus to protect the community from the depredations of a ruthless military regime) by Mr. Gould and the others who trust him, his greatest egoism appears because he thinks that he is exploited by the

advocates of the new capitalist regime. His altruism turns into egoism when he is already absorbed in his own plans to become rich. In other words, "his social integration is eroded by personal preoccupations" (175).

Each major character in *Nostromo*, both as an individual and a historical figure, shows that none of them could realize their ideals. Their personal aspirations and their egoisms come before their social and public roles. The utterly materialistic issues, the prospect of money and finance do not tend to spare them though those help to keep the imperial interests of foreign capitalists like Holroyd and Sir John intact and enterprising. *Nostromo*, which presents a large panorama of the history of the imaginary country, Costaguana, with its liberals, revolutionists, capitalists, also presents a history which seems repetitive, devoid of rational progression, without real progress toward a better form of society. One of the important themes of the novel – the world is not really designed for human consciousness and certainly not for freedom – lies partly in the presentation of the characters as failures. Through the presentation of the characters as the victims of their manly desires, and as corrupted by the silver, that is, "the material interests", the idea Conrad reveals is that man is not the agent of his destiny. Conrad, thus presents to us a pessimistic view that real progress can never be achieved because human beings cannot stand against their egoism, and that only if man does not become a slave of "the material interests", – which seems impossible in a world of materialism in which money means the greatest power – the real progress for the humanity will be achieved. This idea is well summarized in Dr. Monygham's speech toward the end of the novel when Emilia Gould asks:

> 'Will there never be any peace?'
>
> 'There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, and without the continuity and force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the

> people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back.' (Conrad, 1998: 447)

Thus, it can be said that *Nostromo* dramatizes "the failure of various grand narratives" as Henricksen argues. Conrad, while presenting the history of Costaguana in the narrative of *Nostromo*, undermines the grand narratives of native resistance and revolution (Henricksen, 1992: 113). Along with the history of Costaguana, we see how the diverse ambitions of a group of patriots, liberals, opportunists, citizens and soldiers coalesce to structure a national historical moment. In effect, beginning from its title *"Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard"*, the novel defies its plot. Its main character is not Nostromo, after whom the novel is called, nor is it a tale of the sea. After reading the novel, we understand that the real hero is actually the silver of the mine because it is the only thing that remains incorruptible in ironical contrast to the "incorruptible" Nostromo who is corrupted by the silver of San Tomé. We can also assert that there is a contradictory tension between the title of the novel and the actual absence of Nostromo from the centre of the historical action. This is a crucial deconstructive strategy of the text. The recurrent myth is that of history being made by the colourful Garibaldian, "Man of the People" – "a myth calculated to conceal the ruling economic and class interests actually constructing history" (Ryan, 1987: 49). As Mitchell begins the account of Sulaco by mentioning Nostromo, Conrad begins his novel with the name of Nostromo. Mitchell says: "A monument to the Separation could not do better than begin with the name of Nostromo" (Conrad, 1998: 422). In opposition to Mitchell's narrative, Conrad does not place Nostromo in the center of his narrative because, having observed that history is in fact made by "the material interests" and "at the discretion of the Goulds, the Sir Johns and the Holroyds, Conrad can no longer write as if it were made by the Nostromos" (Ryan, 1987: 49).

Nostromo, with its multiple points of view, its disrupted chronology and delayed information defies its clear, concrete, so-called objective background. Eagleton, concerning the structure of *Nostromo*, writes: "The novel has all the scope, rich social texture and psychological subtlety of a great realist work, yet with a resounding post- realist vacancy at its heart. It is as though that realist form has been remorselessly emptied of its positive content" (2005: 239).

It can also be noted that "positive actions, colourful people, warm feelings are constantly framed in a vision which seems to negate their existence" (Cox, 1981: 154). It is this dimension of the novel, which Leavis, in *The Great Tradition*, accounts for and says that "...for all the rich variety of the interest and the tightness of the pattern, the reverberation of *Nostromo* has something hollow about it; with the colour and life there is a suggestion of certain emptiness" (1948: 248). If we take the representation of the silver in the novel, we can see that it is first meant to lay the basis for peace and prosperity, but then it becomes the object that tears the country apart. Eagleton pinpoints this characteristic of the novel in the following passage:

> The silver, which was intended as a principle of unity, becomes a focus and force of division. Order is simply controlled disorder. Capitalism is an irrational system, as pointless as the cosmos itself, since it provides the material resources for human well-being only to undermine it. Material interests are seen as essential means for human flourishing, as Charles Gould recognizes; but for him and his colleagues they rapidly become an end in themselves, one to which human flourishing is brutally sacrificed. Gould is prepared to blow up his own mine rather than yield it to his political enemies, and is thus a kind of bandit or terrorist himself. The outlaw is the mirror-image of the businessman. In a neat reversal of the reflection, the bandit Hernandez is hired as a soldier. (2005: 247-248)

Besides, the historical vision of the novel is not articulated in strictly social and political terms. Indeed, politics and the history of public events seem to fade into the splendid and overwhelming natural geography of the country: the arcane Golfo Placido, whose indomitable calms and shiftless winds have defied for generations the sails of foreign shipping; the immense mountain, Higuerota, whose shadow delays the light of dawn from falling on the campo; the three Isabel Islands that the birds mysteriously avoid; and the "incorruptible" silver of the San Tomé Mountain. The atmosphere that pervades the novel is "beautifully poetic but it engulfs the events of

politics and history within a timeless world where the most enduring truths are left unsaid" (Jones, 1985: 123). Thus, the novel subverts all expectations of the kind of realist novel. In effect, *Nostromo* seems, at first sight, with its title and especially its first chapter, a realist novel. Then the novel subverts its realism with the deconstructive strategies in itself. One of the crucial strategies of deconstruction appears in the language of the novel when Conrad defines his characters to give us their public versions. The characters are defined with the recurrent adjectives. In other words, Conrad gives them recurrent epithets. For example, Mr. Gould is often presented to us as "El Rey de Sulaco", Mrs. Gould as "the First Lady of Sulaco". Nostromo's epithet is "Man of the People", Giorgio Viola's is "the old Garibaldino", and lastly Decoud is always presented as "the brilliant Costaguenero of the boulevards". However, Conrad peels back the public versions of the Goulds to reveal a man spiritually frozen and utterly alienated from his wife, and a woman, the universally revered "Dona Emilia", disillusioned, lonely and guilt-ridden. Thus it is clear that Conrad demythologizes his characters by means of pulling off their masks.

The pressure to demythologize exerts itself on the other figures as well. Thus, Decoud "...ends as the mere alienated ghost of himself, literally sinking in despair beneath the weight of the all-powerful silver, which is the real protagonist of this inhuman history" (Ryan, 1987: 50). With Nostromo we see once again how Conrad demythologizes his character. As has previously been mentioned, Nostromo is presented on the margins in the whole of Part I and most of Part II: in his fleeting appearance at the endangered Casa Viola or as John's escort, as "a most useful fellow" at the edge of the firelight; as the "phantom-like horseman" to solve the Company's labour problems, or passing mysteriously beneath Antonia and Decoud on Gould's balcony. Actually, this demythologizing is flagrantly indulged for a moment in that exotic scene with Morenita in Part I of the novel. As Guetti points out, in this scene, in opposition to Nostromo's fabled greatness, Conrad presents Nostromo as "devoid of embellishing awareness, often evidences a brusqueness that is close to cruelty" (1970: 37). One of the important themes in *Nostromo* is, as has been defined in an earlier part of this chapter, that history is not progressive but cyclical because it is shaped by the "material interests" not by moral ideas. Conrad's deconstructive trajectory is again at work in the narrative so that such a sense of

history – history is not progressive – could be evoked in the reader. The deconstructive trajectory of the narrative, as Ryan writes, embodies a genuinely historicizing dynamic, illuminating the real formation and motion of society in history – history being grasped as a humanly produced, changing and changeable process whose rationale, laws and consequences are not only fully intelligible but susceptible of definite moral evaluation (1987: 52).

But this historicizing impulse is simultaneously cancelled by the pervasive ontologising pressure exerted within and across the deconstructed sectors of the text by *Nostromo*'s basic descriptive style. By the help of the deconstructive trajectory employed in the novel, the narrative gives the reader the sense of a regression. Conrad reveals in the history of the Sulacan people the history of man. It is a history that is made by "the material interest", and thus doomed to regression. In the novel, Conrad, while revealing the action and characters through the descriptive method, also represses them through a deconstructive strategy. Therefore, the whole novel suffers from this contradiction between revelation and repression. What is opened up on one plane as intelligibly developing history made by men is written out on another intersecting plane as opaque, unchanging condition devoid of meaning and beyond evaluation (51). If we relate this reduced and deflated history with the representations of the characters as passive constructs in the novel, we can see that "there is no real *exchange* either of language or experience", as Ryan puts it forward. He writes:

> The characters in *Nostromo* are presented either as given and fixed thus or, insofar as they exhibit exchange, as subsequently *having become* thus: they are presented, in other words, as *results* [...] The result is a series of static pictures [...] The so-called action is only a thread on which the still lives are disposed in a superficial, ineffective fortuitous sequence of isolated static pictures. (52-53)

Consequently, in putting *Nostromo* into its historical context we have explored the relationship between the text and the history in which it was written. After this exploration that we have hitherto made, we can sum up our views as

follows: We have situated *Nostromo* in the history in which it was written. We have seen that Conrad was acutely conscious of the collapse of the Western ideologies pervasive in the 19th century when he was writing *Nostromo*. Through *Nostromo* Conrad explores the incommensurability between ideological identifications and the activities they legitimate. Conrad's text is, in a sense, his response to the indifference and immorality of the modern materialistic culture of the new capitalist world. In Conrad's opinion, the political ideologies such as imperialism and liberalism, and the economic politics such as capitalism are all cloaked by noble ideals. Behind them lies the very fact of man's egoism, greed and the wish of power to dominate the others. For this reason, true altruism and morality can never be achieved. This is the tragic condition of man. What is more tragic than this is that man cannot escape the consciousness. Therefore, we can say that Conrad reflects the characters' moments of consciousness in the most tragic scenes of the novel. The moment of recognition is, in one sense, more tragic than the plights of the characters. "Material interests" which were essentially seen as a means for human welfare rapidly turn out to be an end in themselves. As for the characters reflected as representatives of certain political ideas and classes in the text, they are represented as failures. As for the state, Costaguana, whose political life is simply sordid, repetitive rounds of greed, corruption, lawlessness and squalid power struggles, is presented as a country that will keep on existing with its political chaos. The natives are presented as the pre- capitalist primitives, who can best be seen in Montero's futile revolutionary struggles against US imperialism. The revolutionary struggles are equally presented as politics motivated by nothing more than avarice, illegitimate power and desire. While looked at from such a perspective of postcolonial criticism, the political perplexity facing the fictitious Sulaco in *Nostromo* illustrates that an independent state cannot hope to shake off the control and influence of globalized capital at economic, political or even individual levels.