CHAPTER - V

NOSTROMO
Nostromo came out in 1904. Its title refers to an individual, its eponymous hero. Its sub-title, *A Tale of the Seaboard*, indicates an insight into the life of a community living on a sea-coast province, that is Costaguana. In *Nostromo* Conrad initially attempted to explore the interface between an individual and his milieu in the context of the transgression committed by the individual. This exploration ultimately led him to the presentation of the history of Costaguana, an imaginary Republic of South America, in the process of making itself a viable state. As Conrad observed it, everything that happened in Costaguana was the result of human actions, actions of those who were "short-sighted in good and evil" (*Author's Note* to *Nostromo*, p. xvii). It means most of the actors were like people who participated in the actions without understanding the full consequences of them. The ideological aspect of their passionate commitments were not clear to themselves. So Conrad's landscape of "high shadowy Sierra and its misty Campo" (*ibid*) almost appear allegorical. The weakness of the people, their inability to foresee their political future, their incapacity

* All textual references to *Nostromo* are from *Nostromo*, London: Dent, 1974.
to distinguish between friend and foe gave rise to the confusions that enveloped their larger communal life. According to Conrad, such confusions usually characterize men and society alike particularly during socio-political revolutions ("Author’s Note" p. xvii). Hence Nostromo turns out to be a study of Costaguanian socio-political history imagined through the moral and political actions of the characters who are often seen more as victims of rather than agents of history.

While still in his teens, Conrad visited Latin America once and he heard the tale of a man who stole a whole lighter-full of silver on the Tierra Firme seaboard during a South-American revolution. This anecdote in itself failed to interest Conrad as he had no special attraction, he says, in a study of "crime qua crime" (Author’s Note" p. xvi). But later, about twenty six or twenty seven years after, he came by a book in a second-hand bookshop where the story of the theft of silver was described, yet Conrad’s interest was not roused. The book portrayed the thief as a hardened criminal. Conrad was least interested in writing a crime story. But at this moment Conrad was passing through a lean period of creativity. He had just finished writing the Malay novels, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and numerous short stories including the Typhoon volume. It was particularly after finishing the Typhoon volume that he inwardly felt he had exhausted his materials: "... there was
nothing more in the world to write about."), he thought ("Author’s Note", p. xv). It is in this context that he was led to put under scrutiny the fictional viability of the silver thief episode which initially appeared insignificant. After a thorough and incisive scrutiny of the anecdote, Conrad reached the conviction that the thief was not a born rascal. He must have been drawn to the crime by the quixotic transactions of the South-American revolutions. Such circumstances have provided both incentive and coverage for a crime like this. It was only then that Conrad could crystallize the "vision of a twilight country which was to become the province of Sulaco, with its high shadowy Sierra and its misty Campo for mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil" ("Author’s Note", p. xvii). Thus a reflection on the irresponsibility of a human action essentially inspired by anarchic impulses in an atmosphere of financial speculations and political chaos provided him a subject for serious contemplation.

Conrad observed that any action required a context of an organized social community - to make it plausible. Besides, without a context individual deeds do not acquire moral significance. So Conrad thought of exploring the theft of silver as a depravity induced by situational evils inherent in the political environment. In Conrad’s hands, the crime of the
individual became an inseparable part of a larger design of exposing an anarchic socio-political situation destroying human lives. This interaction between man and his socio-political environment in which each person is involved in a perpetual permutation and combination of action and reaction is the principal focus in Nostromo. Being, in author's avowal, the "most anxiously meditated" ("Author's Note", p. xv) of Conrad's longer novels, it is a study of the myopic protagonists who live in society, work in enterprises in utter ignorance of their vulnerability. In Conrad's interpretation the theft of silver was a by-product of the corroding effect of the endemic greed generated by economic imperialism and a study of this was the dominant ideological thrust behind the plot.

The book to which Conrad was alluding in his note as a source has been traced by critics to On Many Seas: the Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor written by Frederick Benton Williams¹. Apart from this one, Jocelyn Baines has also mentioned some other books to which Conrad is clearly indebted. They include George Frederick Masterman's Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay, Edward B. Eastwick's Venezuela and one or more of Sir Clements Markham's books on South-America, and possibly some others yet unidentified.² Conrad's friend Cunninghame Graham who travelled extensively in South America and evinced a keen interest in South-American affairs was also a source of infor-
mation and inspiration to him. While Conrad was working on the novel, there was great ferment in the world of imperial politics. From this turbulent context of the times also Conrad must have drawn a number of ideas. Imperial powers were in conflict with each other and were changing their shades and strategies— from martial to economic domination. The British Empire was facing trouble and its powers were being challenged by the newly emergent rivals, particularly, The United States of America and Germany. Around the turn of the century the Central and South American affairs captured the front pages in newspapers. There was the Spanish American War as a result of which Spain had to part with the Philippines, and Cuba and there was U.S. intervention in Columbia resulting in the secession of Panama in 1904. So one can see justification in Avrom Fleishman’s interpretation of Nostromo as a figurative representation of the political affairs of Columbia of that period.

Fleishman held that though the popular Anglo-Saxon ethnic identity made the United States a natural ally to England, Conrad was opposed to the U.S. intervention in Panama. Fleishman, to prove his point, mentioned two letters of Conrad written on 1 May, 1898 and 26 December, 1903 respectively. In the first one, in the context of the Spanish-American War, Conrad expressed his support for Spain. In the second one he referred to the “Yankee Conquistadores in Panama” and equated American
expansion with that of Belgium in the Congo. Fleishman however was more interested in the documentary veracity of Nostromo regarding the affairs of Costaguana. Since Conrad’s sub-title refers to the story of a sea-shore province, Fleishman intends to read in it not just a story of Costaguana, but a reflection on the history of Columbia. He made a parallel study of the State of Columbia with the plot of Nostromo. So it will be of interest to see the details of Fleishman’s arguments.

As Fleishman sees it, the main political issue in both Costaguana and Columbia is almost the same: the essence of the conflict between the Centralists and the Federalists. The Unionists under Guzman Bento in Costaguana represent the Centralist party in Columbia while the Aristocratic Blancos typefy the Federalists. Fleishman says:

Federalism of this kind is a separatist tendency that expresses the desire of the aristocrats to be free of the exactions of the central government, which they can rarely control.

In Nostromo this desire for separation is temporarily baffled by Guzman Bento. Later on due to the intervention of an outside force the issue of separation is raised again. This situation was common both in Columbia and Costaguana. The creation of Panama, after separating it from Columbia, was for
the selfish benefit of the United States. In Costaguana the outside force is the Gould concession, backed by European and American capital, which also seeks to bolster up its controls by carving out a new state. Fleishman argues:

Here, too, the result is the independence of a province which is tractable and will, it is hoped, be stable in its dealings with foreign enterprises. The connection between the historical and the fictional events lies not only in their parallelism; the United States intervention in Panama culminated in 1904, during the writing of the novel, and must be considered an active influence upon its creation.

I introduce this reference to indicate the plausibility of Fleishman’s application of contemporary history in illuminating the political aspects of Nostromo. It is helpful in establishing a link between the fictional imperative of the plot and Conrad’s political attitudes. After all, an imaginative work seeks fulfilment for its author at all levels - and considering that Nostromo is so full of political and sociological insight, we cannot ignore the incentive that he might have received from contemporary history in ordering his vision.

To be sure, the central characters in Nostromo are not mere reflections from the pages of history. A novelist creates a fictional world which has all the plausibility of history,
but yet it is not history, as we see that the milieu in which Conrad places his characters has the veracity of a political life of its own which only the imaginary Costaguana could validate. Without negating the idea of a connection between Columbian history and the fictional country of Costaguana, it can be said that Nostromo is a study of human characters against a background which had a genuine South-American reality - though it is an abstracted reality. Here individuals melt into ideas though their performative interaction has the veracity of human action. History presents human action without being evaluated but in a fiction or in any imaginative presentation of history - the actions are also judged and evaluated. Thus Conrad defined the history of Costaguana as "events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil". In Conrad's eyes, his human characters are both the agents and the victims of socio-political miasma. To emphasize the historicity of the background Conrad affirmed that in Nostromo it had been his "ambition to render the spirit of an epoch in the history of South-America." But admittedly Nostromo is a novel and Conrad was very much aware that in a novel the spirit of the epoch manifests itself in the characters and the manipulation of events in the plot. Hence, the principal characters of Nostromo present a natural and spontaneous enactment of the dominant impulse towards developments, both economic and political, and show that this impulse is often frustrated by the
dragnets of financial imperialism.

Economic imperialism is the new phase of colonialism. Economic domination leads to the capture of political power and Conrad had a perfect understanding of it. So the sway of foreign capitalist powers over underdeveloped nations repelled Conrad. In his terms, the ascendency of foreign material interests is a form of conquest. By capturing the economy of a country the foreign financiers and investors gradually proceed towards domination of the socio-political life of the nations. This economic imperialism, or an imperialism which follows from a capture of the economic power is the background of Conrad's *Nostromo*. It is true that Conrad did not use the term "economic imperialism" because it did not have currency at that time. But there is no denying that Conrad could visualize it in *Nostromo*. Conrad's term for it is a pursuit of 'material interest' and it is the silver in this context. In his own words, *Nostromo* records the influence of silver on human characters. In a letter to Ernst Bendz, a Swedish professor, he said:

I will take the liberty to point out that *Nostromo* has never been intended for the hero of the Tale of the Seaboard. Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale (7 March, 1923).
So in *Nostromo* our expectation is to meet characters whose beings and becomings are centred around material interest where pursuit of silver controls the material as well as the moral events. In other words, *Nostromo* makes us see the process of growth and decay of human beings in a world where material interest has taken complete hold of the life of the people, both public and private. It may also be considered as a study of the growth of capitalistic enterprise in a backward, politically unstable and culturally volatile society.

To enumerate the main events in *Nostromo*: Costaguana, an imaginary South American republic, had witnessed a series of revolutionary upheavals leading it almost to the throes of a civil war. The liberal political ideas of the rationalist and humanitarian protagonists could not succeed in bringing peace to Costaguana or relief from the periodic seizure of autocratic power by rival generals of the Army. When Charles Gould had first come to Sulaco from England to reactivate the derelict San Tomé silver-mine, left to decay by his conscientious and timid father, he had to offer bribes to the government officials to protect his enterprise from the anarchic political condition and the immoderate exactions of the taxing authorities. Charles Gould's project was backed by a North-American financier, Holroyd. The present dictator at the head of the state was fortunately strong enough to retain his power for a
period of twelve peaceful years, during which time the San Tomé silver mine prospered greatly employing a larger number of people. The National Central Railway Company, encouraged by Gould's success, begins to lay extensive new lines throughout the country and the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company, with offices in Sulaco, grows rich on the revenue earned by carrying the San Tomé silver to the markets all over the world. These three big companies have become sheet anchors of the political economy of Costaguana.

San Tomé silver company had in fact become so strong a power that when the dictator dies and civil war breaks out, Gould's financial support of a politician, Ribiera, whom the more enlightened and liberal families of Costaguana, including the Avellanos family, helped to assume the dictatorship, resulted in quick success and law and order were restored. Gould's principal motive behind bringing to power the honest but weak Ribiera is a desire to have a man at the head of the state whose underlings will not have to be bribed and placed on a secret pay-roll. This is the path of enlightened capitalism and Gould has become a past master in it.

However, Ribiera, the liberal, failed to consolidate his position and within six months was faced with an insurrection. General Montero, who had been promoted by Ribiera to the post
of the minister of war as a token of recognition of his service, decides that he rather than Ribiera should be President.

Only the capital city and the province of Sulaco remain loyal to Ribiera. All the other provinces responded to Montero's accusations that Ribiera had allowed the foreign capitalists to steal the country's wealth from the people.

Don Jose Avellanos, the philosophic historian of Costaguana, took charge of the Ribierist campaign to defeat General Montero. He sent money, which Gould supplied, to Paris for bringing guns and ammunition and persuaded a young Costaguanian there, Martin Decoud, to superintend the purchase of war material. Decoud accompanied the ship that brought the ammunition to Sulaco. He had been attracted to Avellanos's daughter, Antonia, from her very tender age. A political sceptic and a writer who contributed articles to some Parisian journals, Decoud was persuaded to edit a Ribierist newspaper.

During the revolution, Ribiera escaped into the mountains and fled towards Sulaco. Nostromo, the most trusted young head-foreman of the O.S.N. Company, successfully whisked Ribiera away from his pursuers. News came that two Monterist armies were approaching Sulaco, one by land and one by sea. Their objective was to take possession of the San Tomé mine and to
confiscate the warehouses of silver.

Gould sent the ever trustworthy Nostromo to sea in a small lighter loaded with all the silver from the warehouse and instructed him to intercept any northbound ship and ask it to take him and the silver to North America. Decoud accompanied Nostromo. During the night the lighter accidentally collided with a Monterist ship entering the harbour. The lighter was partially damaged, but Nostromo succeeded in getting it beached on a small desert island. He unloaded the silver, buried it there and returned to Sulaco, leaving Decoud to face death by starvation in the desert island. The Monterist sea-captain involved in the crash reported that the lighter was sunk. Gould therefore believed that the silver was lost. Nostromo kept complete silence on both the silver and the whereabouts of Decoud. Nostromo’s next great assignment was to bring back the army which had been sent to relieve Ribiera, to oust the Monterist forces from Sulaco. Gould had decided to use his private army formed by a combination of the government forces in Sulaco with the forces of Hernandez, a bandit with a price on his head, to protect the mine and to defend the city and the province of Sulaco from the Monterist Army; he also intended to use it to set up a local secessionist government in Sulaco, independent of Costaguana. These plans were all accomplished and thus a new political state was born. Thus peace and pros-
perity came to Sulaco at last through the clever manipulation of men and affairs as peace and political stability were a necessity for the success of business. But in the very triumph of material interests, there lie the seeds of their transformation and these lead to the emergence of a discontented urban proletariat.

An epilogue to this history now occurs in connection with Nostromo and the hidden silver. Since everyone assumed that the silver had gone down with the sunken lighter, Nostromo decided not to reveal the truth about it but to grow rich stealthily though slowly. Nostromo sailed up and down the coast carrying freight and occasionally could sell in distant cities a few bars of silver which he used to pick up secretly at night from the island.

As navigation became more frequent with the prosperity of the mine, a lighthouse was built on the desert island and the job of the light-house keeper was given to Giorgio Viola, the father of Nostromo's intended wife. This gave Nostromo an occasion and a coverage to visit the island openly though he did not take anyone into his confidence on that matter. He made stealthy visits in the dark to remove his silver from the hidden place when everyone thought he had visited his fiancée. But one late evening it so happened that Viola mistook him for an unauthorized prowler and shot him. We shall refer more
elaborately to this episode later.

Conrad's Costaguana was the picture of a developing country, different from the Malay Archipelago or the Congo. The latter were colonies whereas Costaguana was politically independent though it became subservient to the financial empire controlled by Holroyd, the financial wizard of San Francisco; Sir John, the Chairman of the National Central Railway, and, the management of the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company. Conrad wrote this at a period when an enthusiasm for empire-builders was at its highest. Economic imperialism promoted by American financial houses was a new phenomenon and Conrad anticipated the nature of its operation and influence. The dominant ethos of such a society is material greed and its justification and accumulation of wealth considered as the key to progress - material as well as moral. An interrogation of this idea of progress, generated in the eighteenth century, became a subject of considerable interest in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century which Conrad in Nostromo echoes.

In the eighteenth century, the idea of progress was much debated. The notion of progress was a part of the philosophy of history, it led to apotheosize material development, though Rousseau (1712-1778) sounded his note of dissent. J.B. Bury, the historian of the idea of progress, says that Rousseau
contended that beneath the surface of civilization, there was
genuine depravity and that with the advance of sciences and
arts, human corruption also proliferated. Bernard De Mandeville
(1670-1733), too, in his sensational book, *Fable of the Bees*
(1714), admitted that human civilization had to make its way
amidst human vices⁹. Robert Nisbet rightly pointed out that the
subtitle of Mandeville’s book, *Private Vices, Public Benefits,*
is significant enough to indicate what he felt to be the
dominant trend in his contemporary society.⁹ It implies that
the thrust for material progress could mean the suspension of
morality. Bury recorded that in the first half of the nine-
teenth century the impressive results of science advertised
the idea of progress and it coincided with the notion of
‘development’ which gained wide currency through the study of
‘natural sciences’ and Hegelian metaphysics. Darwin heralded
the next stage of the idea of progress through his theory of
natural selection presented in his great work, *The Origin of
Species* (1859). It was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), the social
philosopher, who related evolution to progress.¹⁰ In Spencer’s
view, social evolution redeems humanity from militaristic bar-
barism to civilized industrialism and it is brought about by
increasing interpersonal differentiation of socio-economic func-
tions. And it virtually depends upon the subordination of the
interests of the less capable to those of their superiors.
Hence attainment of progress began to be looked upon as a
multi-faceted programme: political, sociological and eco-
In the later half of the nineteenth century when progress was synonymised increasingly with material progress, a counter process of interrogation started and Conrad seems to echo or anticipate such counter interrogative process in *Nostromo*. Among Conrad critics, Suresh Raval in his study of Conrad has hinted that such an interrogation was made by Conrad in *Nostromo*. Raval says that *Nostromo* offers a veiled challenge to the claims of establishing a close connection between capitalism and genuine progress. The idea that capitalism will bring about greater good and justice in society and that all round progress results from economic activities is a debatable proposition. Raval thinks that *Nostromo* would appear almost as a case-study of such theoretical claims. It seems that Conrad, being an avowed conservative, was sceptical about the nature and quantum of improvement in human situation brought about by economic and political action. Hence capitalism which is basically an economic strategy with a political superstructure failed to impress Conrad as the gateway to all round advancement of a society. In *Nostromo* the most scathing criticism is directed towards the invisible yet too tangible moral impacts of economic activities over the principal characters.

The character of Charles Gould has evoked varied responses
from the critics. Kiernan Ryan has observed: "In the Goulds Conrad exposes the self-deluding hollowness of the liberal rhetoric of progress and philanthropy legitimizing private enterprise ... and the dehumanizing reality of exploitation and corruption it conceals." In this view, Gould can be conceived as a subtle exposition of the incredibility of the liberal campaigns in favour of capitalism. Jeremy Hawthorn considers Charles Gould to be a half-ignorant agent of material forces which moulded his fairy tale of success. Hawthorn considered it a case of ideological displacement - the work he was dreaming of doing was the evil accretion of the capitalistic systems. These delusions ultimately destroy his relationship with his wife and suffocate his inner life. Mark Conroy assesses him as a victim of the mine's success as much as his father was the victim of its failure. What these views have in common is the reference to the negative aspect of Charles Gould's achievements: something misdirected, misplaced, mismanaged in his life. To be sure, there are in all narratives a manifest meaning and a latent metaphorical meaning. And often the latter undermines the former. The same is the case we witness in Nostromo. On the surface level, such an assessment of Charles Gould mentioned above may induce incredulity since as the administrator of the mine, he has earned immense success and that seems to have been relayed through the narrative. But what we cannot ignore is his ideological displacement of life
for work which resulted in his outward success and inward decay leading to mental separation from his wife. It seems clear to us that through Gould's life-history Conrad has offered an incisive critique of the operations of economic imperialism: its life-destructive effects, its manipulation of the socio-political life of a nation to safeguard financial investment. Material interest has made a complete transformation of Charles Gould the man. In terms of life we notice it was not a change for the better though material progress had been achieved in Costaguana or in the San Tomé mine. It was a change for an unhealthy obsession with the mine and a defiance of all other human considerations to achieve success in the business.

Charles Gould's father, the second generation among the Goulds residing in Costaguana, came to possess the concession of the San Tomé mine, famous as the Gould concession. It was conceded to him not as a token of any favour on the part of the Costaguana Government but in full settlement of forced loans to the successive governments. One alarming stipulation was that the concession-holder should pay at once to the government five years' royalties in advance over the estimated output of the mine. Having no expertise or experience in mining, the senior Gould fought against this concession but to no avail. Ultimately he died a miserable man, having grown weary and despondent over the mine which he could not run with profit. Before
death he repeatedly wrote to Charles, who was away in England for education, not to return to Costaguana and claim the Gould concession.

But Charles Gould had reasons to disobey the last wish of his dead father. First of all, he was a mining engineer. And secondly he had an extraordinary interest in making abandoned mines work. Abandoned mines, according to the authorial comment, "had acquired for him a dramatic interest. He studied their peculiarities from a personal point of view, too, as one would study the varied characters of men." (p. 59). It was an interest totally different from the usual material interest of a future industrialist. It was something of a psychological and moral impulse. The Gould concession took Charles Gould's fancy not because it could bring material prosperity, but because he, as distinguished from his "poor" father, could bring into working order an abandoned mine. It would be a glaring specimen of his superior capability. Charles Gould could be imagined as a modern entrepreneurial technocrat. He assumed his father had no modern technical knowledge and entrepreneurial genius.

Initially what moved Charles Gould towards the reworking of the mine was an awareness of his own ability to turn his father's failure into success: "He owed it to the dead man's memory" (p. 66). But, by an ironic twist of Conrad's narrative,
he had to enter into an alliance with Holroyd, an American millionaire and a financial wizard whose attitude to life was based on success and, his religion, of Puritan orientation, was assumed as a partnership with God in the game of attaining success. As Mrs Gould points out "... he looked upon his own God as a sort of influential partner, who gets his share of profits in the endowment of churches" (p. 71). She also noticed that his religious sense was shocked by the idolatrous decorations of the cathedral and he called it worship "of wood and tinsel". His sense of God was different, not worship as such but a partnership and he assumed that his religion was a "purer form of Christianity". This amused Mrs Gould. She thought these endowments of the churches were as much a perversion as the habits of a poor Chulo (half breed Indian) offering "a little silver arm or leg to thank his god for a cure..." (p. 71).

Holroyd, however, achieved great moral satisfaction in endowing immense wealth upon the church from his profit and making God a sharer of it. There is however another side to this endowment activities. In the 1890s when there were lots of working class unrest in U.K., government used to sanction large sums for building of churches in the poorer districts. Besides, building Protestant churches in a predominantly Catholic Spanish sub-continent could be a part of a design of the American capitalists, of which Holroyd is an authentic representative,
to prepare the ground for their entry into its market. Though Conrad presents it in sentimental terms: "The introduction of a pure form of Christianity into this continent is a dream for a youthful enthusiast" (p. 317), Conrad is subtle enough to suggest that this passion is not entirely religious: "He's not a missionary, but the San Tomé mine holds just that for him". (p. 317). Rightly Mrs Gould described his religion as "The religion of silver and iron" (p. 71).

Here one may discern in Conrad a critique of the religious pretensions of the Puritanical pursuits of success which of course was an important element in the development of capitalism in England. R.H. Tawney's unique study of this equation between Puritan ethics and rise of capitalism gives one a philosophical perspective to assess the financial activities of Holroyd and the attitudinal changes that have come to Charles Gould. Tawney says:

The idea of economic progress as an end ... found a new sanction in the identification of labour and enterprise with the service of God. The magnificent energy which changed in a century the face of material civilization was to draw nourishment from that temper. The worship of production and ever greater production --- the slavish drudgery of the millionaire and his unhappy servants -- was to be hallowed by the precepts of the same compelling creed.
This accurately describes the 'drudgery' of Charles Gould and the millionaire Holroyd's 'compelling creed'. So capitalism stands on the twin pillars of profit and progress and naturally, here, ancestral worship has no validity. So here is the irony of fate that Charles Gould who wanted to fulfil the ideal of his father had to find a patron in Holroyd in whom there was no place for such idealism.

Considering his subservience to Holroyd, I think, Charles Gould is a capitalist entrepreneur first before anything else. He displays the correct attitudes and aims for developing a capitalist enterprise in an underdeveloped anarchic state;

"What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one 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 "(p. 84). (italics mine).

It is clear that Gould had decided to keep the material interest of the San Tomé mine to the foreground in Costaguana. In his view, if he could make the mine thrive unmolested, if he could arrange for proper security and protection of the mine,
the entire Costaguana would be a co-sharer of the blessings of his success. What Gould failed to understand is that in ascribing priority to the profit of the mine, he, like Sir John, the Chairman of the National Central Railway and a doyen of capitalist enterprise, treated values not as ends in themselves but as a means: "Good faith, order, honesty, peace, were badly wanted for this great development of material interests", the authorial narrative affirms as Sir John's views (p. 117). As such these values do not constitute the interiority of man, they are a covenant for successful business dealing. When Charles Gould marked out the development of the mine to be the prime necessity in Costaguana, he had already taken leave of his inner self which once was motivated aesthetically when he avowed archaeological interests in derelict mines. As it happened, the corrosive effect of monetary success started manifesting itself in his astuteness: "He was prepared to stoop for his weapons. For a moment he felt as if the silver mine, which had killed his father, had decoyed him further than he meant to go" (p. 85). An idealist and a son of a wronged father, he was all set for a compromise with business politics which, he was quite sure, ran counter to conventional honest and moral dealings.

Gould's ideals were shared and reflected by Emilia, to whom significantly, he proposed marriage at the very point
when, having just learnt of his father's death, he decided to return to Costaguana: "His future wife was the first, and perhaps the only person to detect this secret mood which governed the profoundly sensible, almost voiceless attitude of this man towards the world of material things", as the narrative puts it (p.59). She shared with him his ambition for the mine and was conspicuously at his side from the beginning of his work. But after some time, she became a helpless witness of the attitudinal changes overtaking Charles Gould. As he had said earlier, the mine had imposed on him a huge responsibility:

"The mere working of it is a matter of technical knowledge, which I have - which ten thousand other men in the world have. But its safety, its continued existence as an enterprise, giving a return to men - to strangers, comparative strangers - who invest money in it, is left altogether in my hands. I have inspired confidence in a man of wealth and position" (p. 72).

He was well aware of the immensity of his commitment. He must ensure the security of the mine, its prosperity, as well as good returns to its foreign investors. There is nothing wrong in dreaming to be very wealthy as all capitalist enterprises are geared to profit. But one has to ensure that search for profit does not destroy the inner life of the man.

Charles Gould's wife noticed the subtle but prominent
changes in his psyche. He had forgotten his conjugal life and
his commitment to the spouse.

A passion has crept into his cold and idealistic life.... The little woman has discovered that he lives for the mine rather than for her.... Mrs Gould's mission is to save him from the effects of that cold and overwhelming passion, which she dreads more than if it were an infatuation for another woman (p. 245).

It was a subtle dehumanization of his inner self which Mrs Gould notices. He has turned away from love and domestic affection in order to concentrate all his attentions on the mine.

Though Gould did not want any participation in politics, he was forced by circumstances to get involved in "a land full of intrigues and revolutions" ("Author's Note" p. xviii). The politics of Costaguana compelled him to make compromises at specific stages in the interest of the mine. What he had adopted as a token of tribute to the memory of his father, became a relentless process shattering his morale. The authorial comment puts this compulsive participation to the following effect : "He was like a man who had ventured on a precipitous path with no room to turn, where the only chance of safety is to press forward." (p. 361) Commenting on this Fleishman observed:
The metaphor of the 'precipitous path' is a perfect figure for the absoluteness of the historical process. Though Gould's moral imagination is outraged by an alliance with what he considers another of the anarchic and criminal forces in the country... he must sacrifice principle to maintain his position. Indeed, he must become a party to the future proletarian revolution in the very process of securing the capitalist-backed separatist revolution.16

To maintain his position, to secure success in the business, Charles Gould had to traverse through a precipitous path causing often violation of his inherent beliefs. The failure of the mine had destroyed senior Gould but Charles Gould was in no better position with its success. Mrs Gould could see "the San Tomé mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds" (p. 522).

The economic success of the mine had overwhelmed Gould and had reduced his human identity to a mere mechanical existence with the mine controlling all his activities. He had all but snapped his relation with his family, particularly his wife, to maintain his dutifulness to the mine: "He was perfect, perfect; but she would never have him to herself" any longer (pp. 521-522). His success in the mine had little significance for the neglected wife, once his soul mate: "His part, his incli-
nation, and his policy were united in one endeavour to keep unchecked the flow of treasure... (p. 148). In his transformed role Gould looked more like an agent of the invisible hand of the financier capitalist rather than an initiator of his own actions. The youthful and exuberant (ad)venturer in mine business has become a security for the foreign investors' returns. In the light of this discussion we feel reluctant to share Robert F. Lee's generous view that "Charles Gould is one of the very few who are able to be true to others, to their own, and to themselves." To be sure, Conrad does not endow Gould with such rare capacities and in fact what we have noticed in Gould is a sort of death in life so far as his emotional life is concerned.

In the later phase of his career, Charles Gould himself was drawn to the realization that as an ally of financial imperialism, he compromised with his conscience:

... 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. (p. 365)

Charles Gould realized that his role in Sulaco was in no way distinguished from the predatory adventurers who came to
Sulaco to make a fortune. And that is why Gould was reluctant to leave the mine in the hands of the rebels: "... he promised himself to see it shattered into small bits before he let it be wrenched from his grasp" (p. 365). He was determined and hence set everything ready to blow up the mine with dynamite than to surrender it to the revolutionary forces. In this daring decision he unwittingly betrayed his marked decline from idealism. He would have thought twice before taking the decision to blow up the mine, had the mine been only his emotional and idealistic support. But since it was a source of wealth and prosperity, he would not allow his enemies to gain from it. This is the practice with all capitalist countries in the moments of meeting defeat. Gould forever remained a captive to Holroyd's dream of wealth and power who was stubborn in his "uncompromising attitude" in matters of wealth and business. So the financial imperialism that we see sprung in Costaguana is perhaps a more civilized form of colonialism as it operates from a distance than what prevailed in Africa earlier, but within the structure and tone of the novel, it is not considered any more desirable.

Side by side with Gould's transformation, it is clearly indicated that Mrs Gould had become a helpless victim of her husband's obsession with material interests. Her marriage with Charles, born of love and mutual dedication, turned out to be a mismatch; towards the end they had little in common except
sharing the abysmal solitariness of a childless conjugal life. As for Charles, this loneliness eluded him on account of his obsession with the mine. But, for Mrs Gould, it was a terrible and unbearable experience. She came from a middle class family and lost her parents in her childhood. Naturally she had a secret longing for strong family-ties. When Charles was courting her in Europe she was impressed by Charles's devotion to the memory of his father. She thought in Charles she had found a man devoted to his family and such would be the proper anchor for her own. Her attitude was not of one to be involved with material pursuits, as the narrative affirms: "... even the most legitimate touch of materialism was wanting in Mrs Gould's character" (p. 75). Charles led her to visualize a new world in Costaguana where material interests, brought forward "as a means, not as an end," would serve the cause of justice and the rule of law on an anarchy-infested region. The would-be Mrs Gould was thrilled with the prospect "for a future in which there was an air of adventure, of combat -- a subtle thought of redress and conquest" (p. 65), in fact, a social mission. They were going to settle in Costaguana not out of any petty avaricious motive but for the moral redress of a people by bringing about an ascendancy of order over the anarchy and lawlessness that was rampant in Costaguana. Though Charles was going to take up the derelict mine against his father's wishes, the grounds for the disobedience overwhelmed her: "You are splen-
didly disobedient" (p. 84). She assured him, it was all for a
great cause. In this way she identified herself with his project.

This intimate rapport between the husband and wife, how­
ever, soon started disappearing. Mrs Gould was gradually be­
coming conscious of her husband’s ideological displacements.
He had been infected by an “awful materialism” which has denied
her the legitimate intimacy with her husband. And as “Mrs
Gould had no silver mine to look after” (p. 149), her life had
become redundant in Costaguana. By nature she was tender,
affectionate and sympathetic and consequently had earned vari­
ous titles: “English signora-the benefactress”; “our Dona
Emilia - that angel”; “The first lady of Sulaco.”, and so on.
But all these titles sounded hollow and meaningless in the
light of her emptiness in married life. In Conrad’s ironic
presentation, “The first lady of Sulaco” came to possess a
poorer and inferior status than her maid. Her feminine life was
a void as Gould unconsciously violated the commitment to his
wife. She had entered into her conjugal life with new promises,
and new expectations. But all these were baffled by Charles’s
obession with the mine. Her maid was the proud mother of a
child, whereas the most respected and the most wealthy lady of
Sulaco was forced to lead the life of childlessness which
Conrad must have used as a metaphor for her emptiness.
And this terrible loneliness would continue without any prospect of relief:

A terrible success for the last of the Goulds. The last! She had hoped for a long, long time, that perhaps -- But no! There were to be no more.... 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. (p. 522)

Gould's fierce loyalty to the mine brought about the gradual impoverishment of their domestic life. Little by little he lost contact with his wife's redeeming vision and their relationship was reduced to a sterile formality. Economic success thus claimed a precious victim, a happy family life. The wife was sensitive enough to realize the cost of capitalist enterprise: "a commodification of individual life", in Marxist language, as pointed out by Ruth L. Nadelhaft. Sacrifice of all human ideals and valorizing of material success as the summum bonum of life have become the guiding principles in Charles's second life from which his wife turned away. Here, with Stephen K. Land, we too have the feeling that "by the novel's end Gould's entanglement with material interests has left Emilia a virtual widow." 

Conrad has shown other instances where material interest
claimed some high prices from some characters - for instance, the life of Decoud. He had the political sagacity to realize the ultimate futility of Avellanos's plan of propping up Ribiera as the ruler. Also it is from Decoud that the idea of a separatist plan for Sulaco came out: "...separation of the whole Occidental Province from the rest of the unquiet body." (p. 215). This separatist movement was necessary for the security and the success of the mine. Decoud has practical reasons for his support of the separatist movement. But this "adopted child of Western Europe" (p. 156) displays the contemporary contagious faith in the power of silver as he says, "This stream of silver must be kept flowing north to return in the form of financial backing from the great house of Holroyd" (p. 219). The Monterist Revolution brought a cataclysmic change in their lives. Decoud was assured of the monetary power of the silver to confront the Revolution. So when he had to leave Sulaco to avoid meeting Pedrito Montero whom he had antagonized as a journalist, he accompanied Nostromo on his lighter entrusted with the consignment of silver to strengthen the security of the mine. Of course he had another intention, that was to bring back the army of Barrios from Cayta to fight Pedrito Montero.

But the sinking of the lighter frustrated his hopes. He was stranded on a desert island with the silver. Nostromo left
for Sulaco with the promise to return soon and Decoud was alone on the island. His "intellectual audacity" (p. 501) never let him know that by the time the "incorruptible" Nostromo might have fallen for the silver and might have deliberately remained silent over his hidden stay on the island leading him to death. Decoud was forced to lead a life of solitariness on the island for a number of days. He was an energetic journalist, an intelligent political thinker and a passionate lover of Antonia, Avellanos’s daughter. By his political acumen he could see that in Costaguana the whole thing is interconnected - the protection of the state - the protection of the mine and the saving of the silver. But he failed to plan for his own protection and died a victim to the weight of silver ingots. Unable to bear with the loneliness, he put four silver ingots in his pocket and shot himself: "the brilliant Don Martin Decoud, weighted by the bars of San Tomé silver, disappeared without a trace..." (p. 501). A very subtle employment of the symbols of material interests which brought about Decoud’s death as they ruffled Charles Gould’s emotional life. Decoud thought the silver would work as the saviour in the political crisis, but the silver was ultimately used as a weapon to expedite his death.

With Decoud’s death, Antonia’s tragedy, too, became evident. She lost Decoud, who cherished genuine love for her. Decoud cared for the country solely because he cared for Antonia:
"There is nothing I would not do for the sake of Antonia. There is nothing I am not prepared to undertake. There is no risk I am not ready to run" (p. 213).

The pangs of her separation were doubled when she failed to implement her lover’s plan. She proposed to annex the rest of Costaguana with Sulaco to put an end to the violence and anarchy there, as this was Decoud's genuine wish. But Dr Monygham rudely reminded her that the controller of material interests would be least interested in this plan as pity and justice are trifles in comparison with their concern for the protection of the mine (p. 509). So the dream of Antonia based on her lover’s memory could not succeed and Decoud's idea left no lasting impression anywhere.

Dr Monygham, the Irishman, plays the role of the chorus in Nostromo. He explains, comments, and sets all the stray incidents in their proper perspective to reach a uniformity of vision. He was a victim of inhuman torture in Costaguana during Guzman Bento's reign. But still he did not offer his whole-hearted support to the idea of the secession of Sulaco. In his assessment it was not a step taken in human interest, rather it was an outcome of the necessity of protecting financial investments in the mine. That is why the annexation of the rest of
Costaguana appeared an unnecessary hazard for the financial overlords. Dr Monygham had made a succinct study of the ideology of material interest and explained it to Mrs Gould thus:

"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" (p. 511).

This speech spells out the fundamental evils of the system. Activities - political or social are not based on any moral principle but on the principle of expediency or practical utility. To extract optimum benefit with the least expense, this principle often leads to a flagrant denial of all moral or human considerations. Predictably enough, this type of an attitude to social action is bound to end in oppression, hence it is more serious in its consequence than the preceding anarchist revolutions as it tends to destroy the moral principle in man and society.

Dr Monygham's prophetic utterances stand as a sharp contrast to the childish exuberance of Captain Mitchell of Oceanic Steam Navigation Company. He held a high position in the company and consequently possessed a self-complacent disposition.
He was prone to exaggerate every incident by labelling it either as "history" or "dawn of a new era" or an "epoch-making" event. Any untoward incident he would explain away as either a "mistake" or a "fatality". He took for granted the speculative adventurers of England as a fulfilment of the inevitable cause of history (p. 174). Since he was a sympathetic participant in capitalist enterprises, he was blind to the evils of their actions. He could think neither ahead of his time nor in opposition to the prevailing platitudes of his day. As Jacques Berthoud rightly observed, what prevailed in Mitchell was a "lack of imagination coupled with a sense of customary well-being." To him material prosperity was welcome since it added to respectability. Hence he used to call Mrs Gould "The first lady of Sulaco" by virtue of her husband's commanding position in Sulaco. The irony of such an epithet, in the light of her disastrous married life, eluded his comprehension. He embodied the pompous fatuity of a wealthy member of the capitalist group who worked "with a strange ignorance of the real forces at work around him" (p. 136). He was very happy with his investment of seventeen shares at the San Tomé mine. To a visitor in Sulaco, he would most gladly show the mine as the "Treasure House of the World," (p 483) remaining totally unaware of the consequences of the enterprise -- both domestic and public. Compared to Mitchell's naive gullibility, the convictions of Dr Monygham offer greater insight into the vices
of capitalist expansion that we can discover in *Nostromo*.

The audacity and limitless aspirations of the Montero brothers were the unavoidable by-products of the pursuit of material interests. In the previous anti-Ribierist Revolution, Montero the senior, one of the Generals of Ribiera, had served him well and Ribiera, in return, gave him the post of the Minister of War. The accumulation of all military power on his hands instigated him to occupy the chair of the President. A revolution started as Montero openly complained against the policy of Ribiera to allow the foreign capitalists to steal the country's wealth. Montero's brother Pedrito, a worthless vagabond, joined hands with his brother to make money and to grow rich very quickly.

In the beginning of their career both the brothers came under the patronage of a European traveller, "to whom their father had been a body-servant during his journeys in the interior of the country" (p. 386). Montero the senior took the advantage of his munificence and gradually rose to the rank of a General. But Pedrito became a sort of a wanderer in Europe. But in it there was nothing romantic for he developed an inordinate desire for riches after reading the popular histories about royal glamour and splendour written in French. (p. 387). But he was scared of labour and risk. So for him, the
Montero Revolution offered a choice to acquire immense wealth by laying siege to Sulaco, "the land of future prosperity, the chosen land of material progress, the only province in the Republic of interest to European capitalists" (p. 388). Hence the attraction of foreign capitalists to Sulaco was a temptation for Pedrito. In fact economic imperialism which sought to benefit in the name of progress found fresh pastures in South-American states. As Jacques Berthoud has observed, the Montero Revolution is the misdirected action of the characters who have all "put themselves directly or otherwise in the service of the material interests that provoke it." We feel that here is Conrad's depiction of a further vulgarization of the ideology of predatory economic imperialism in the activities of Pedrito Montero. Pedrito longed for and ran after riches but was repelled by the necessity for labour and risk which are the essential inputs of a capitalist economy. The western ideology of economic domination, as interpreted in the Costaguanian thoughts, became tantamount to grabbing wealth instead of acquiring it by a long process of risk-bearing labour and investment. So the behaviour of the Pedrito brothers are ignoble and probably Conrad wanted to present them as the by-products of the vulgarized political culture of Sulaco. In Conrad's study we cannot help forming a general opinion of the environment of the South-American States as places where human values tend to degenerate quickly.
In the novel, the character of Nostromo has received the maximum number of praises and superlative commendation: "Nostromo, a fellow in a thousand," "a man absolutely above reproach," "much of a man;" "tireless task-master" and so on. Naturally, Conrad's readers may expect to bear witness to some of Nostromo's extraordinarily glorious feats. But this expectation was belied by Nostromo's eventual degeneration through greed. Kiernan Ryan is correct in assuming Nostromo's character as "Conrad's uncompromising recognition of his real objective status as a blind tool of the ruling classes". He was praised by everybody because he carried out orders unquestioningly. He was never concerned with the estimation of goodness or evil of his masters. His blatant refusal to fetch a priest for the dying Teresa Viola reflects the dehumanization of a man whose devotion veered towards practical ends and expediency. Teresa was the wife of Giorgio Viola, known as "Garibaldino", the Italian expatriate who earned his living as an innkeeper in Costaguana. Since Nostromo was also an Italian, he was most intimately connected with that family. Besides, Teresa Viola had a motherly affection for him. But when this old lady was dying, Nostromo was indifferent to her last wish for bringing a priest for confession as he was then entrusted with the safety of the consignment of silver.
"You refuse to go?" She gasped. "Ah! you are always yourself, indeed." "Listen to reason, Padrona," he said. "I am needed to save the silver of the mine. Do you hear? A greater treasure than the one which they say is guarded by ghosts and devils in Azuera. It is true. I am resolved to make this the most desperate affair I was ever engaged on in my whole life." (pp. 255-256).

Hence concern for the silver and the necessity to affirm his competence to his worldly masters left little room for any spiritual service. Honouring the wish of a dying person is the minimum generosity expected of a man but Nostromo dismissed it as a mere superstition. The greed for money and hope for personal advancement are responsible for this indifference to religious and human values. We think Conrad here wanted us to have a glance at the theory of progress as endorsed by materialist thinkers and even perhaps by the idea of the 'Elect' in Puritan ethics. Here economic progress made man ignore all spiritual claims as superstition in the name of rational progress. In this view only silver/money is real and all other necessities of life have to be subordinated to it. Should progress be attained only through degeneration of man?

After the collision of his lighter, Nostromo returned to Sulaco, leaving Decoud and the silver on the desert island. Everybody had got the idea that Nostromo and Decoud along with the silver were drowned in the sea. Now Nostromo's return was
attributed to his extra-ordinary swimming power. Almost immediately he had to start working for bringing back the army of Barrios to protect Sulaco from the revolutionary attacks. By now the second phase of Nostromo’s transformation under the influence of the stored silver had already set in. He concealed his abandonment of Decoud on the island primarily to protect the secret of the saved silver, and, secondarily, to concentrate on his new errand: to arrange for the security of Sulaco which housed the silver-mine. This time also in the face of an imminent death (he was sure of Decoud’s death from starvation), he acted in a perversely inhuman manner out of his greed for the silver.

As Conrad presents, the prevailing tendency of the milieu, inclined to greed and expediency, must have emboldened him to misappropriate the hidden silver as a consolatory recompense for his loss of human values. Nostromo was conscious of the heinous nature of his sins: to attend to the duties of the silver-mine, he had dishonoured the last wish of someone whom at one stage he addressed as a mother and he had abandoned another to death:

First a woman, then a man, abandoned each in their last extremity, for the sake of this accursed treasure. It was paid for by a soul lost and by a vanished life (p. 502).
This was authorial commentary on the shocking situation generated by greed and the prevailing ethos. The love of the silver dehumanized and demoralized Gian' Battista Fidanza, Capataz de Cargadores, the incorruptible and faithful Nostromo. This is a rare instance of how an obsession with material interest could pervert a man's perspective regarding life and values and how it ended by eliminating all discrimination between right and wrong. Even his love affair was perverted by this greed of silver.

A lighthouse was constructed on the desert island (where Decoud had been doomed to death) and Giorgio Viola was appointed its keeper. Before her death, Viola's wife proposed their elder daughter Linda's marriage with Nostromo, though Nostromo was attracted to their younger daughter, Giselle. But since the hidden silver was kept in the desert island, Nostromo professed to court Linda according to the family's choice, as he "was afraid of being forbidden the island" (p. 531). Simultaneously, he kept up his affair with Giselle secretly by his stealthy visits to the island which regularly he undertook chiefly for picking up the silver. So what Nostromo practised was all eyewash, deception and imposture. His love for Giselle was adultery for he was betrothed to the other. Similarly his love for the silver was also illicit as the silver was stolen. And even in his affair with Giselle, he forgot the pure senti-
ments of love out of his thirst for silver. He left her wholly in the dark as to why he had been frequently visiting the desert island.

As in the case with Mrs Viola, this time also Nostromo was playing false with a woman's sentiments for the lure of silver. But when he succumbed to Viola's shot at dead of night, because he was thought to be an interloper, even then he lied to Giselle that he took the risk of calling on at the unexpected hour only to have one more look at her: "It seemed as though I could not live through the night without seeing thee once more -- my star, my little flower", as he said (p. 554). So even at the moment of his death he could not have the strength to set his record straight. This shows the utter degeneration of Nostromo acquired by him through material interest. The silver has poisoned his soul.

Now the devastating irony of his name becomes clear. He was called Nostromo which in Italian meant "our man". In his preface Conrad proposed to portray him as a man of the people (p. xxi). But in the narrative, Conrad's presentation of Nostromo took a highly dramatic and subversive form. The epithet 'our' assumed a strong ambiguity. "The man of the people" ultimately became the man of his masters, the blind tool of the capitalist imperialist enterprise. The "miscalled Capataz", as the autho-
rial comment describes him (p. 527), became a misnomer as he was not a boss but a slave. Nostromo, a "perfectly incorruptible fellow" (p. 127) became "the slave of the treasure" (p. 533), the "hopeless slave of the San Tomé silver" (p. 533). His devilry was probably generated by the inheritance of the greed-oriented system of trade and domination. As he delivered his dying declaration to Mrs Gould, he held the material pursuit guilty for his depravity: "The silver has killed me" (p. 559). Here silver stands as a symbol for the ruling ethos of the whole capitalist imperialist enterprise of exploitation of man and society for profit.

Conrad presents the silver mine as the centre of all pursuit, material as well as political, in Nostromo. It becomes a lucrative project for Gould, a lure for Nostromo, a political tool for Decoud and an employment opportunity for numerous Costaguanian. It had become almost a necessity to be in the good books of Charles Gould if one aspires to secure some footing in any business in Costaguana. This unofficial power was the result of his material success from the mine. Almost automatically Charles Gould had come to possess the supreme power of the uncrowned "King of Sulaco"- as wealth and power are interallied (p 93). Even the Government officials had become his aides, so to speak: "You call these men Government officials? They? Never! They are officials of the mine -
officials of the Concession - I tell you" (pp. 110-111). The Sam Tome mine constituted the "Imperium in Imperio" of Sulaco (p. 189). This servility of the government officials to Gould is due to the success of his enterprise. Earlier he had to bribe government officials to get his way, now they come at his beck and call. The silver mine has become a parallel state of power.

Gould wields power in a state in which he holds a concession for trade - and the main spring behind his power is his financial lord Holroyd of the USA who through Gould absolutely controls the trade and shuts out other competitors from the area: "Europe must be kept out of this continent, ..." (p. 78). That was Holroyd's strategy. Thus the growth of the silver mine in Sulaco and its success story give Conrad an opportunity to make a study of the nascent financial imperialism and its consequences on man and society in a culturally backward state. So there is a moral base and a political superstructure in the novel Nostromo. The moral base exposes the perversion caused by material greed and the conflicts and intrigues which were necessary to protect the trade. And it is the political superstructure which gives the necessary support to the plan to create the new Occidental state, where Decoud thought liberalism would be practised and Holroyd's Missionary Fund wanted a purer form of religion to go with economic imperialism.
The strategy of Holroyd and Sir John were geared to control the socio-economic and political institutions in Costaguana. On the manifest level Holroyd is portrayed in familiar terms as a financial tycoon motivated by financial imperialism. He had outwardly a consciousness of a burden or a Puritan American burden of rescuing a benighted world from false religion to a pure form of religion. And this missionary zeal was similar to the imperialistic expansion of the period. He was lavish with his financial help to Gould, but at the same time he was circumspect about business returns as it was through spread of financial control that he hoped to get hold of the entire world under his power: "We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not" (p. 77). This financial tycoon, the progenitor of the American financial neo-colonialism had a Scottish Puritan background and Viking Danish blood in him; Conrad seems to be trying to genetically portray his insatiable imagination for conquest through this alignment. Holroyd represents the intrusion of American financial imperialism into the South American Republics and he is conscious of his responsibilities. The imperial adventure of the British was called the great game by Kipling in *Kim* and so does Conrad, it seems, in *Nostromo*. Holroyd described his adventure in South America to the same effect. Costaguana was a game that could be made profitable through circumspection. The Americans are not
to waste their wealth for nothing. Conrad sees prophetically the rise of the American power in modern times as he presents it:

"We in this country know just about enough to keep indoors when it rains. We can sit and watch. Of course, some day we shall step in. We are bound to. But there's no hurry. Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's Universe" (p. 77).

This combination of piety and business is typical of the Americans and Conrad caught it accurately.

In financial dealings, as in imperial capitalist administration, human sentiments do not count. Holroyd's encouragement of Gould was based on his clever assessment of his personality - it was not for any sympathy that he backed Gould: "This young fellow," he thought to himself, "may yet become a power in the land" (p. 80). He was hopeful of Gould's future - so Gould becomes a safe investment for him. This was the philosophy of Holroyd to whom political power, in itself, had no attraction unless it would yield larger profits. He told Mrs Gould that he was not interested in Costaguana, it was then a place where European money had been poured in but to no great results. He would not be foolish as to run into it unless he saw some future in it. He said, "... what is Costaguana? It is the
bottomless pit of 10 per cent. loans and other fool investments" (pp. 76-77). For the time being he would like to see what returns came from the mine.

This financial tycoon stirred Gould into a relentless drive for the prosperity of the mine with the threat of his withdrawal of support:

"...if you can't keep up your end, we will stand our loss, of course, and then -- we'll let the thing go. This mine can wait; it has been shut up before, as you know. You must understand that under no circumstances will we consent to throw good money after bad" (p. 79).

For Gould wealth was a means, not an end (p. 75) but now wealth became a fetish with him as he was forced to stake all his life on the mine which ultimately engrossed his total consciousness. Greed became contagious in Sulaco and brought in a perversion of psyche and of human feelings. Holroyd behaved as effectively as did the whips of the white masters on the slave.

Money power is a corrupting influence on an essentially good person like Gould; his commitment to it has subverted all that was idealistic in him. This was indeed an illustration of what Marx called the "fetishism of commodities". In Conrad's
estimate this was an unhappy state of affairs as it created an unusual obsession with Gould over the success of the mine at any cost. This obsession was akin to the worship of a "fetish" in Mrs Gould's eyes: "She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish," (p.221). This fetishism was one of the moral evils of the capitalist social system, as Conrad seems to have captured the spirit of it in Nostromo.

In pursuit of business success Sir John vied with Holroyd almost on equal terms. Sir John, the Chairman of the National Central Railway, was also a clever capitalist entrepreneur. He knew how to achieve his target. He knew to whom to be amiable, how to play on people's sentiments to get what he wanted. When he found the local land owners benighted who could not see the advantages of the Railways in Sulaco and were hesitant in giving permission to dig their lands -- he decided to use sentiments to overcome their opposition. He decided to organize a ritualistic ceremony by inaugurating the work through the President-Dictator of the state. He also knew how to use other people's influence to get his work done. Charles Gould was cultivated because "he can wind all the hidalgos of the province round his little finger" (p. 42). He knew how to overcome opposition "by the resources of finance" (p.39). He was all set for the progress of his Railways. Hence he was holding up material hopes to Mrs Gould who was worried over
the destruction of lovable places. Sir John mocked Mrs Gould's backward looking attitude; "We can't give you your ecclesiastical court back again;", he said (p. 36). But he would try to bring progress; "... 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" (p. 36). So in the balance of Sir John the ecological depredation caused by modern development is far less harmful than trying to bring the Inquisition back. Modernism supersedes the superstitious and benighted past, from which both Sir John and Holroyd wanted to rescue the Occidental province. The word "infinitely" hangs ironically in this sentence.

The Railway Company took over all the nice spots of the town through the clever manipulation of politicians. Charles Gould declared; "All this piece of land belongs now to the Railway Company" (p. 123). So Sir John had his way towards full colonization of the Occidental Province:

He 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 (p. 117).

He had invested profusely in Costaguana, in the form of a
loan to the government, and by opening the Railways which obviously would bring higher returns. The narrative affirms that the people of Costaguana are fated to come under direct control of such manipulators like Sir John and the people of Costaguana are victims here rather than willing participants. Conrad puts it succinctly when he said, they were "mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil" ("Author’s Note", p. xvii).

Conrad’s grim aversion to the system introduced by foreign capitalists finds a clear reflection in his treatment of Sotillo. Sotillo was a general for the Ribierist cause who later changed sides to participate in the scramble for loot that affected Costaguana during the Revolution. But Conrad made his rapacity look less severe than that of the foreign capitalists by interposing moments of childishness in his action. During his armed attack on Costaguana, he made Captain Mitchell his prisoner. His soldiers snatched Mitchell's precious sixty guinea gold half-chronometer and handed it over to Sotillo, and, as the narrative affirms, "He became so interested that for an instant he forgot his precious prisoner." (p. 333). Conrad’s comments on this episode is interesting: he feels that it is the difference between the North and the South. The rapacity of the passionate clearminded Southern races has something human in it but the misty idealism of the Northerners makes them
paranoid, satisfied with nothing but the conquest of the earth. The attitude of the Northerners, therefore, Conrad seems to imply, is going to be cruel and more rapacious. The decorative splendour of the watch distracted the attention of Sotillo from the larger spoils of a siege. This type of occupation was an old-fashioned human conquest and hence can be laughed out but exploitation of the imperialist rule is far reaching and cannot be easily overcome. Despite the crude chauvinism of Sotillo, his statement was not devoid of truth when he says: "It is you, Mitchell,... who are the thief, not my soldiers!" (p. 334).

In Nostromo Costaguana is depicted as a multi-ethnic community. There are Indians, Europeans, Costaguansians, descendants of Spanish immigrants and people of Negro blood. The Goulds are English, three generations old. Giorgio Viola is an Italian, a follower of Garibaldi and Nostromo is a countryman of Viola. Decoud imagines himself Parisian and is the adopted child of Western Europe. The Avellanos family are one of the representatives of the older, original colonialists, the Spanish-American, although in fact Antonia Avellanos had a somewhat cosmopolitan background; born in Europe and educated partly in England. Other politicians and power seekers have Hispanic names: Bento, Montero, Sotillo, Ribiera. The heterogeneity of the inhabitants is Conrad's strategy to bring to light his parallel theme, the theme of state-information. Political sta-
bility in a country, which sheltered so many different ethnic communities, hangs on maintaining a precarious balance. One type of government is soon superseded by another type as a result of quarrels among the war lords and land-owners. Brigandism or banditry and military coups inspired by personal ambition give no chances for the growth of a civil society. So Charles Gould wanted to put all his strength acquired by the success of the mine on defence of "the commonest decencies of organized society" (p. 365). His uncle tried to achieve this with his physical prowess, but Charles Gould sought to do it through his wealth; "Only his weapon was the wealth of the mine" (p. 365). But this weapon is more dangerous as it is "double-edged", it could hurt the wielder as well.

Brigandism or banditry was common in Costaguana and was practised by autocratic rulers and military chiefs like Guzman Bento who ruled the country "with the sombre imbecility of political fanatacism" (p. 137). Evidently Bento was an unsympathetic political tyrant and his tyranny was succeeded by a "fatuous turmoil of greedy factions" (p. 140). When Charles Gould intends to bring a change in the political administration, his object is to secure in Costaguana a situation of political stability within which the mine can operate. The dangers of the mode are made plain in the persons of the two chief men whom Gould has now brought into his alliance: Ribiera,
the new head of the state and general Montero, Minister of war. Ribiera, obese to the point of infirmity, and physically almost a cripple, naturally fails to consolidate his power. And the anomaly of Ribierism is that a Montero necessarily comes up with it and destroys the political stability. The failure and consequent replacement of Ribierism by the political separation and the establishment of a government consistent with Gould's ideas do not bring any welcome relief from political turmoils. There grows up, in Costaguana, a democratic opposition to the present government. At the same time, some of Gould's political allies are saying that the logical and necessary conclusion of their work must be the annexation of the rest of Costaguana to the new state and that the democratic party is lending its support to this view. So in Nostromo Conrad elucidates one type of government at a time, exposes its demerits and then drops it. He considers none of the weak governments fit for consolidating a stable state or an organized civil society. This is the political message which we receive from Nostromo.

Conrad's narrative in Nostromo is very complex. But he is trying to probe here many questions: human, ethical, socio-political and even religious. But one thing seems certain that Conrad understood the totalitarian nature of the financial imperialism which has in the twentieth century taken over from
political imperialism. The anticipatory nature of Conrad's vision therefore has left its marks in his findings. But certain things are clear: material interest perverts moral life, makes man deviate from the fulfilment of his inward life, imposes alienation in the character of man as it hardens feelings and creates barriers between the inner man and the outer-his private life and the public self. Capitalism in its development is connected with rationalism, liberalism, freedom of the individual and the growth of civil society but all these noble ends are eventually subordinated to the safety of investment and accumulation of wealth. The old form of religion based on emotional participation with Nature and God which survives through symbolical forms of rites and rituals is eventually considered irrational. And by valorization of ethical imperatives as the only end of religion, the community worship is superseded by the individual search for God. Thus Protestantism and Puritanism came to be considered safer than Catholicism for material advance in a country. Conrad has shown us that Holroyd, the financier of Gould and San Tomé mine, sought to control not only the mine and the state (to protect the mine) through his money-power, but he also sought to subvert the older religion of Costaguana through his missionaries: "Holroyd, would not drop his idea of introducing ... that pet dream of his of a purer form of Christianity" as Decoud wrote to his sister (p. 240).
In Nostromo, the form of the narrative shifts from character to character in a perplexing way. The strategy seems clear in the observation of Douglas Hewitt: "... its form throughout asserts its meaning - the subordination of individuals to the social and political situation.... People are less important and less free than they think." Hewitt thinks that the apparent haphazard presentation of characters indicates their individual insignificance. The story proceeds with the events and the characters are tied to the turn of events by the socio-political background. In the heart of it, there is a unifying factor which is relevant to everybody and that is the attitude to power, the necessity to control power in order to safeguard the attainment of economic gain. Economic security is the motive force behind the multifarious attempts at state formations in Nostromo. Kiernan Ryan feels that the "whole structure of thinking, with its tacit teleological assumptions of the modern capitalist state within imperialism as the natural 'end' of history, is exploded by Nostromo's violations of conventional narrative expectations." The gap between Gould's aspiration and achievement lays bare the undesirability of the whole thrust for the growth of a society where material interests alone provide the driving power. Gould said he was exercising his power of wealth "in the defence of the commonest decencies of organized society" (p. 365), but the ultimate
objective was not the growth of a juster society but the safety of the mine in the country, the silver must keep flowing. So the effort to build a new state in Sulaco was to protect the interest of capital. The novel tries to show the moral consequences of actions which outwardly seem only a political idealism. Hence the principal question is: Can one rear a modern capitalist state in a place like Costaguana infested with brigandry and low social expectations of freedom and dignity of man? Nostromo questions this and sets before us the whole imbroglio of such futile efforts against a backdrop of moral desiderata.

The complex narrative of Nostromo is a figural representation of the political and moral situation produced by the perverse thrusts of foreign economic power into a region which has not yet developed any socio-economic self-consciousness. Hence local inhabitants including Charles Gould have become naive agents of money power. So whatever changes one notices in Sulaco, to quote Tony Tanner, Conrad depicts in "a fractured and scrambled way" so that none will "be lulled into assuming that such changes inevitably constitute improvements". This narrative method "determined that none of his readers should accept the notion of progress uncritically." Accordingly there are hints of a Catholic backlash against the Protestant Holroyd's invasion of Sulaco organized by the Holroyd Missionary Fund. In
depicting the principal protagonists, Charles Gould and his wife, Conrad shows that despite the overwhelming success of the mine, they are suffering from a sense of failure. Nostromo dies "betrayed - betrayed" by his lust for silver which was the symbol of progress in the Occidental Province (p. 559). In fact the narrative voices a disclaimer through the rhetoric of the Commandante of the National Guards, though this disclaimer is placed in a jocular way; "His opinion was that war should be declared at once against France, England, Germany, and the United States, who, by introducing railways, mining enterprises, colonization, and under such other shallow pretences, aimed at robbing poor people of their lands..." (p. 392). One can heartily concur with the observation of Tanner that Conrad has juxtaposed contrasting sequences to make his readers aware of the disjunction of cause and effect of the narrative.

Conrad's prophetic vision could understand the evil effects of the mine even at the grassroots level. The common people of Costaguana, particularly those who are employed in the mine, are subjected to another of its corrosive results. The mine has provided them with every amenity needed for a comfortable living. As a result they have decided to refrain from active participation in the affairs of the state. They have become indifferent to the socio-political changes taking place in Costaguana. This is a sort of situation which helps
the growth of Fascist values in a country. And spiritually this is what might be called a state of moral torpor. The attitude of the alcalde, an employee of the mine, bears testimony to this:

He listened to the news from the town with curiosity and indifference, as if concerning another world than his own.... In a very few years the sense of belonging to a powerful organization had been developed in these harassed, half-wild Indians. They were proud of, and attached to, the mine.... They invested it with a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish made by their own hands... (pp. 397-398) (italics mine).

This attraction towards fetishism of the wealth and the well-being derived from the success of the mine are a form of moral retrogression which Marx underlined in his study of capitalism. The consequent indifference to socio-political issues impairs all movements for social amelioration.

It would be interesting to have a look at what Elsa Nettels feels about Conrad's strategy in presenting the effect of the silver mine. In her view, by projecting the personal loss of values in Charles Gould and the transformation of an idyllic surrounding, Conrad exposes the misdirected zeal of the capi-
alist enterprise. To quote her,

... the mine under Gould has to some extent transformed the wilderness into a wasteland, destroying a waterfall, killing vegetation, and scarring the hillsides with trenches of refuse. The childless marriage of the Goulds is another sign of the blighting effect of the mine. In all periods of Sulaco's history the silver of the mine drives rapacious leaders like Sotillo and Pedro Montero to acts of atrocity. 25

Though the critic has rightly noted the evil effects of the mine, we feel Conrad's irony is not so straightforward. If the silver of the mine seems a moral curse on the people, the work of the mine and the socio-economic development that it promotes are the only anchor of stability into an era of endless social upheavals. Nostromo, the one man who has the rectitude to denounce the 'accursed' wealth of the mine is himself its most faithful slave. And it is the mining operation that will of course remain as the focus of social struggle and social development in the future.

In a novel, every object is a reflection of the ideology behind the narration. As Mikhail Bakhtin has observed, a "particular language in a novel is always a particular way of viewing the world.... It is precisely as ideologemes that discourse becomes the object of representation in the novel". 25
In Nostromo Conrad's ideas coalesce to suggest that the true significance of democracy is ever denied in a capitalist state and more so in a backward state like Costaguana. Charles Gould has realized it himself: "Liberty, democracy, patriotism, government - all of them have a flavour of folly and murder" (p. 408).

The democratic state is necessary for the protection of the self-interest of the capitalists, for the safety of their property. Rationality, freedom and security for life are also the minimum expectations of a civilized society. But in a capitalistic state they are not ends in themselves. The aim of capitalism is basically wealth and power. To safeguard and secure the achievement of these, some sort of justice, law, stability and political peace have to be ensured. In this respect the role of the San Tomé mine is pivotal. When Antonia asked to extend Sulaco to cover the rest of Costaguana, Dr Monygham replied that though the proposal stood on pity and justice, it could not be implemented as that might not be safe for protecting the material interest which is the real objective of the state. As Charles Gould exclaimed: "I am forced to take up openly the plan of a provincial revolution as the only way of placing the enormous material interests involved in the prosperity and peace of Sulaco in a position of permanent safety..." (p. 379). A little later, Gould observed "I shall
write to Holroyd that the San Tomé mine is big enough to take in hand the making of a new State" (p. 380). So everything is to be done for the sake of Sulaco which houses the mine and is the source of prosperity for the region. Since economic gain is the sole criterion behind every project, it vitiates and baffles the higher ideals of democracy.

In this context, the appointment of Viola as the lighthouse-keeper demands a closer observation. In Costaguana Viola was the main inspirer of liberty, the immaculate Republican, the hero without a stain; "Liberty and Garibaldi were his divinities" (p.16). But in the new State of Sulaco the main inspirer of liberty was placed in the lighthouse which was not a part of the main land though one can assume metaphorically that he holds the beacon light. In reality this embodiment of true liberty was separated from the new state of Sulaco and placed in a desert island. So liberty in its most pure form represented by Viola has no place in the main island and for that matter in a state like Costaguana of internecine warfare and colonial exploitation. Besides, the lighthouse also has lost its sanctity; it has become a repository of stolen wealth, it becomes a scene of adultery and murder too, as Viola mistakes Nostromo for Ramirez and kills him. Even after shooting down Nostromo, Viola is firm in his conviction that he has killed Ramirez, the interloper: "I have shot Ramirez... Like
a thief he came, and like a thief he fell" (p. 554). So the note of disintegration has started to act upon Viola too; the lighthouse-keeper has lost his power of perception. Conrad’s narrative always reads like parables.

The solitude and starvation to which Decoud, the imaginative materialist, succumbs in the desert island is another of Conrad’s figural projection of the fate of an ideologue. To quote Stephen K. Land,

The marooning and death of Decoud show that separatism, although genuinely beneficial to the western province, is tainted with immoral selfishness and therefore ultimately moribund, both in that it is conceived by Decoud for a selfish reason (to secure the company of Antonia) and in that (as Antonia herself later realizes) it involves the casting off of a larger and poorer part of the country.... The silver ingots which weigh down his body signify the material, selfish aspect of the separatist policy, of which the treasure was to have been a key instrument.

So Decoud’s death at the desert island is not simply a melodramatic incident, rather it is integral to Conrad’s message.

Thus, in Nostromo, Conrad’s ‘ideologemes’ assist his readers to imagine the physical realities in Costaguana. They
highlight his ideological constructions in *Nostromo*. As he viewed it, the new state of Sulaco had brought little peace and stability in the life of the Goulds. And this restlessness is reflected in the holiday which they undertook to enjoy in Europe and the USA (p.504). This holiday is actually a way of reviving oneself by external means. So material prosperity still left some void in the Goulds' life. Material wealth has virtually robbed the Costaguanians of innocent happiness. For this "accursed" treasure, Nostromo and Decoud die miserable deaths, and the life of Gould also suffers a transformation that the text deplores.

The opening chapter of *Nostromo* has a reference to the two ghosts, of two wandering sailors who died while trying to find forbidden treasure and are now guarding the treasure on the Azuera. *Nostromo* ends by implying that another ghost is born, in the dark gulf of the peninsula, the magnificent "Capataz of the Cargadores" will now dominate the region guarding his conquest of "treasure and love". So Conrad symbolically undermines the achievement of the whole enterprise. The epigraph from Shakespeare, "so foul a sky clears not without a storm" has attained its full meaning in the closing episode of the narrative.

The opening chapter is indeed a curtain-raiser to another
stream of thought that one notices in *Nostromo* - the opposition to Protestantism and Puritanism. In Conrad's views, the ghosts on the Azuera were heretics, the gringos who dared through unethical means to approach forbidden treasure. They were called 'impious adventurers' by the local resident: "They are... defiant heretics" and hence have been tethered to the treasure where a Christian would have renounced and been released. (p. 5) Such beliefs are associated in the text with Catholic Christianity to which of course Conrad was born. The attitudinal conflict embedded here is between the money-grabbing adventurers of the capitalist, Protestant, Puritan orientation and the God-fearing home-bound pious Catholics. This conflict sets the background of the treasure-hunting drama of Sulaco. That a materially successful man is blessed by God is one of the vulgarized notions of Puritan ethics. In the Protestantism of Holroyd, Conrad gives some indication of his understanding of such ethical notions. The narrative records, "The head of silver and steel interests had entered into Costaguana affairs with a sort of passion. Costaguana had become necessary to his existence;" (p. 378). Conrad, born a Catholic, was quite sensitive to such display of material-spiritual extravaganza. Conrad's critique here is not against capitalist, imperialist, political, economic framework alone, he goes into the essence of the evil: the valorization of material prosperity and material interest as the *summum bonum* of life. This has, as we
see in the case of Charles Gould and Nostromo, smothered feelings and turned man to machines. In the closing episode of Nostromo, the conversation between Mrs Gould and Giselle makes this point more clear:

"Console yourself, child. Very soon he would have forgotten you for his treasure." "Senora, he loved me. He loved me," Giselle whispered, despairingly. "He loved me as no one had ever been loved before."

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

Here, in Mrs Gould's view, Nostromo's death should not be an occasion for Giselle's sorrow since, otherwise, too, he would have turned away from her, for the concealed silver as her husband had turned away from her. It shows that love and friendship are not likely to be nursed in the hearts of those who commit themselves to the worship of silver. The pessimism of Mrs Gould embodies the vision of Conrad and constitutes the critique of development within the imperialist colonial frame which makes such degeneration inevitable.

Thus Nostromo presents the new state of Sulaco with disjunction between its aims and achievements. Values and motivations should be integrated into characters to create a healthy society. In Sulaco we find that a puppet government controlled
by Gould's money became an embodiment of civil society where democracy had no place: "Republicanism had done its work. Imperial democracy was the power of the future", as Pedrito Montero realized (p.405). Pedrito Montero had a sense of fellowship with Don Carlos as he thought Charles Gould, being hailed as "El Rey de Sulaco" and a great captain of industry, would fully sympathize with such sentiments. By indirections Conrad has shown that the success of the silver mine had become the ruin of the idealist "Charley".

Thus the so-called missionaries of civilization and progress stand Janus-faced as the narrative developed. It is much to the credit of the imaginative vision of Conrad that he could anticipate the development of financial neo-colonialism with all its evil effects in the political moral panorama of the developing Third World.
NOTES AND REFERENCES
CHAPTER - V


4. Avrom Fleishman in "Class Struggle as Tragedy" in Conrad : Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes, p. 93

5. Avrom Fleishman in "Class Struggle as Tragedy" in Conrad : Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes, p. 94


