# The Conflicting Political Ideologies in *Nostromo*

Marian Sebastian LUPU[*]

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## 0. Introduction

*Conflict* is a keyword in the scientific investigation of politics in general. In *Nostromo* Charles Gould strives to remain successful in the harsh political atmosphere of Costaguana: in the attempt, he experiences inclination to material interests and neglects the happiness of his marriage. Conflict is an immanent feature of ideology, a concept which deserves critical construal in order to expound properly the aim of the present research.

One cannot regard politics without the concept of *ideology* in mind. Ideology, according to James Decker, is the set of mental parameters, inherited from the ancestors, which guides one's life, convictions, decisions, knowledge or even thinking. It may be acquired consciously or unconsciously. It may be subjective, social or institutional (Decker 2004: 3, 6−7). Eagleton proposes ideology as the force which engages human history itself to the path of evolution (Eagleton 1991: 1). We can agree then, that ideology incorporates politics which, in its turn, is a human social relationship whose purpose is the distribution of material interests within the members of the community. In its attempt to share the material interests, politics is based on a set of ideas, norms which defines the political agenda. As such, Decker notes, political ideology, in the present case, aims to adjust reality to the particular political agenda (Decker 2004: 5). In the process, there issues a binary opposition between what it is and what is meant to be, and, as Hawkes signals, falsity appears due to representation (Hawkes 2003: 8). In other words, representation is the political undertaking to adjust reality according to ideal coordinates or to attach to social reality an ideal status. Decker compares the opposition between the real and the ideal to Bakhtin's *Dialogics* to highlight that politics, like ideology, is the source of human perverted demeanour as it impresses upon the individual false ideas to stand for when faced with truth (Decker 2004: 4). Political ideology, we may agree, makes use of linguistic power to express lofty ideals in opposition with the actual historical circumstances (Decker 2004: 4).

[*] "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania.

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Why does politics resort to deceive the community? Niccolò Machiavelli believed that the masses are skeptical about innovation as their mentality is flooded with traditional values. In order for a society to evolve, the political figures have to deceive the community into believing that tradition should remain unharmed (Hawkes 2003: 30−31). In *Nostromo* Charles Gould's silver mine is an enterprise aimed at social evolution: it results in conflict with Montero's zealots who consider the mine as the means of stealing the country by foreigners. Eagleton considers that politicians deceive to justify their deeds or to manipulate the masses into believing to be right what is wrong (Eagleton 1991 : 28). By advancing Eagleton and Machiavelli's insight, we can extrapolate that politics is nothing more than getting access to power even under the guise of lies.

What we can agree on presently, is that politics is based on conflict for it aims to eliminate the gap between idea and reality through representation. Furthermore, it presents a certain ideology which, as Machiavelli realized, is in a conflicting relation with the norm or tradition of a certain society, and aims to achieve power. One should consider that each ideology, political in our case, cannot appear out of thin air: it must rely on previous ideas to overthrow the actual political ideas, either peacefully or by force and violence.

## 1. The conflicting political ideologies

Edward Garnett in a review on 12 November, 1904 wrote: "The foreground of Nostromo is, indeed, the dramatic narrative of the political and revolutionary vicissitudes of the town of Sulaco" (Sherry 2005: 129). The *dramatic narrative* Garnett refers to is inherent in the silver mine of Sulaco, the navel around which everything spins and resonates with. *Nostromo* is, "in essence a short story" (Sherry 2005: 122) which radiates with meaning. Despite its intricate narrative development and length, *Nostromo* dovetails into the complex life of Charles Gould, an individual born in Sulaco by British parents and educated in Europe. He returns to take possession of the silver mine even though his father warned him the other way round lest the son would fall prey to the brutal political injustices congenital to Costaguana. He succeeds in turning the mine lucrative with investments from abroad but at destructive retribution: Sulaco witnesses the war between the opposing political factions of Señor Vincente Ribiera and that of the Montero brothers whereas the citizens face confusion, despair, death, and moral degradation. The second part of the novel reminisces upon Nostromo's inner struggle when he realizes the actual political situation of Costaguana. Therefore, the novel progresses from outward conflict toward inner conflict.

Gould's journey of initiation parallels Marlow's descent to Congo in "Heart of Darkness": they are both under the influence of illusions at the inception. Marlow believes in Kurtz as a true model of morality whereas Gould puts all his force and confidence in the economic success of the mine. Costaguana, as well as Congo, is a harsh environment where silence is the primary weapon of retaliation for the protagonists. Silence is a reflection of inner torment, and the torment is a result of delusion. Gould's delusion rests upon the mine's inability to bring the long awaited peace, and decides to destroy it if conquered by Pedro Montero.



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Politically speaking, *Nostromo* parallels "Heart of Darkness" due to the air of prophecy which both works incorporate, for it shows the effects of the imperial policy upon native societies. The novel depicts imperialism strictly related to the economic system in the western hemisphere; it is fashioned by and for the wealthy, and the economic system itself shapes culture (Watts 1994: 25). Charles Gould's entire economic system engages three worlds: the European imperialism of Sir John and his railway company, the North American imperialism of the American financier Holroyd, and the South American country of Costaguana. It is a triangular economic system that Conrad depicts in *Nostromo*. Sir John stands for the British Empire's colonial policy, Holroyd for the North American counterpart whereas Costaguana is the symbol of the exploited territories in South America.

Conflict dominates *Nostromo*'s narrative as it is disposed on three entwined levels. The first level is broached in episodes as Holroyd's requirements for further investments in the mine. He wants European involvement hindered from Sulaco's business, and the local government kept at bay (*Nostromo*, p. 76−77). Holroyd's intention suggests worldwide struggle for colonial markets between global empires. Sir John, on the other hand, seeks to influence the local government of Sulaco after the previous success in Sta Marta, and discloses to Emilia Gould that "you [Sulaco] 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. 42). Like Marlow's position between the clash of two worlds, so is Sulaco which is exploited by Europeans and the United States. Moreover, Sir John hints to an ideological clash between past and future. Costaguana was once under the influence of the Spanish Empire up to the revolutionary movements in South America in the first half of the 19th century. Giorgio Viola, along with his political idol, Garibaldi, fought against the Spanish Empire by the side of the revolutionaries in places as Montevideo for the ideal of liberty (p. 37). Charles Gould's grandfather fought for the independence cause of Simon Bolivar at Carabobo under an English legion. Charles's family line is described by the narrator as one of "liberators, explorers, coffee planters, merchants, revolutionists" (p. 51). The descendent Spanish aristocratic families, the Don Ambrosios and Don Fernandos, play minor roles, silenced, and are barely given importance in the local politics. Conrad attaches the mark of oblivion concerning a former empire whose existence has been shattered and confined mainly to Spain and a cluster of islands in the western hemisphere. As they enter Sulaco, the soldiers of Pedro Montero fail to recognize the statue of king Charles IV of Spain, and wonder: "What is that saint in the big hat?" (p. 319).

The imperial ideology of expansion can be summarized in Holroyd's speech which is worth quotation. The American financier delivers his "eloquent" speech before a confused Gould back in San Francisco.

> 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. We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's Sound […] up to the North Pole. And then we shall have the leisure to take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth. We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not" (p. 75).



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The imperial ideology proposed by Holroyd resonates with the Belgian enterprise in Congo: the world shall be designed by the imperial gauges of development of the western hemisphere. It is an endeavor aimed to improve, to label names of professions, to control the world and squeeze its wealth for the few capitalists. Holroyd and Sir John are the great imperial capitalists who invest their capital in foreign colonies as Costaguana. In order to comprehend how the capitalist system works concerning foreign markets I shall present Arendt's theory on the respective problem. Arendt expounds the New Imperialism's trust in the export of capital in the colonies. When domestic markets reached their maximum capacity for absorption and expansion, investments of capital were issued abroad. The new wave of colonizers was collected from the bourgeoisie or the unfortunates at home who were unemployed. The political power, whose warrant was the nation state, protected the money invested in the colonies, as well as the labor force (Arendt 1958 : 135−136). Arendt's theory is highly applicable in the work under discussion where foreign interests direct the political and social atmosphere of native colonies in concord with maximized profit.

The second level of conflict is diffused between the two political factions of Sulaco earlier mentioned, and the struggle generates economic and political instability. The actual "*president dictator*" of Costaguana, the "*Excellentissimo*" (p. 41) Ribiera, agrees with the deployment of the railways near the San Tomé silver mine, and encourages foreign investments. The local government is supportive as Don Juste Lopez and Don José Avellanos promote democratic principles and peace. The *Oceanic Steam Navigation Company*, highly regarded among Sulaco's inhabitants, facilitates the exports of goods from Sulaco, and proves very lucrative for its officers as Captain Joseph Mitchell aim at no failure in their commercial duties at sea (p. 21−22). The company owns many ships whose denomination recalls Roman and Greek mythology: there are ships called *Juno, Saturn, Ganymede, Cerberus* or *Minerva*. The European culture also is disseminated in the colonies besides investments of capital. Gould's silver mine provides employment for hundreds of workers around three native villages. Its yield in silver ingots is directed to San Francisco, Holroyd's business offices. The mine also allows for Sir John's railway business to flourish and Sulaco to thrive.

General Montero and his brother, Pedro, are against the capitalist system of Sulaco because they consider it as a means to exploit the country by the foreigners. General Montero is a member of the *Blanco* aristocratic party although he does not have noble origins. Originally, General Montero secured Ribiera's presidency in the aftermath of the battle of Rio Seco. Half a year later, Montero would interpret Ribiera's political actions as a betrayal of the country to the foreign capitalists and would instill a military propaganda against the former ally. After military success in Sta Marta, Pedro assembles an army headed for Sulaco, the *Occidental Province.* Sulaco strikes back through General Barrios and his army as they head southward to face General Montero (p. 129−131). Meanwhile, Decoud issues a plan to load the silver stocks of the San Tomé on a lighter for Azuera and send it to San Francisco via a commercial ship. The purpose is to turn the silver in money to support other offensive campaigns against the enemy: if Montero possessed the silver his power would be unchallenged. This possible scenario makes the chief engineer confess



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that: "If it [silver] must be lost, it is a million times better that it should go to the bottom of the sea!" (p. 219). Just before Pedro Montero's entrance in the city, the masses of citizens make haste to avoid the eventual massacre of the *guerrillero*'s soldiers. The scenery recalls the Jewish exodus from Egypt under Moses:

> …the exodus had begun. Carretas full of ladies and children rolled swaying across the Plaza, with men walking or riding by their side; mounted parties followed on mules and horses; the poorest were setting out on foot, men and women carrying bundles, clasping babies in their arms, leading old people, dragging along the bigger children (p. 296).

Pedro Montero, as well as Sotillo, wants the silver of Sulaco and nothing else. Although he ventures to Sulaco under the pretense that foreigners rob the country of its wealth, he realizes that the town is the future of Costaguana's politics and economy. He is also eager for fame (p. 321). Pedro summons Gould to the *Intendencia* to convince him to hand over the silver. As Gould threatens to blow up the mine, Pedro delivers eloquent speeches of former empires and ideals, and assures that Sulaco's politics and the mine would not be harmed (p. 334). Later on, Nostromo leaves Sulaco to inform Barrios he is needed: Barrios returns with his army, and helps Don Pepe and his miners to defeat Pedro's army. Captain Mitchell, in the peculiar chapter ten of *The Lighthouse,* describes the battle between the Monterists and Sulaco's joint forces:

> A terrible fire, by the light of which I saw the last of the fighting, the llaneros flying, the Nationals throwing their arms down, and the miners of San Tome, all Indians from the Sierra, rolling by like a torrent to the sound of pipes and cymbals, green flags flying, a wild mass of men in white ponchos and green hats, on foot, on mules, on donkeys (p. 392).

Conrad brilliantly depicts the repercussions felt by the citizens of Sulaco who happen to reside on conflicting, oppressive realms. The political upheaval is set in action by material interests as the silver of Gould's mine and the wages for workers. Whereas the former interests belong to the powerful men or the wealthy capitalists, the wages allow for the working class to live in society. In "Heart of Darkness" Marlow is driven by the need of employment to venture down the Belgian colony; Nostromo, the natives of Sulaco, and the European expatriates, all work and live on the yield in silver of the San Tomé mine. The silver is extracted with the help of foreign investments which materialize in wages and adequate tools for the task of mining. Thus, Conrad exemplifies the Marxist material determination of history.

In *The German Ideology* (1845) Marx defines human social relations in terms of material interests (Marx, Engels 1998: 42). He is of the opinion that humans relate life itself to economic exchange and gains. Private property, the basic ideal of capitalism, is the element which shatters the relation between the individual and collectivity (Marx, Engels 1998: 52). It is conflicting for it acts against equality in the process of distribution of the material interests. The silver goes to Holroyd whereas the locals receive monthly wages. In exchange, Holroyd invests money in the silver mine. The whole economic enterprise of Sulaco develops on Charles Gould's private property. As such, he is the master whose slaves, the workers, set the silver machine in motion. Hawkes, based on the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic



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beliefs that worshipping man-made objects is like the adoration of false gods, claims that the fetishized artificial objects are imbued with fake value (p. 16−18). Money is man-made and credited with value: the value is self-referential as money does not have a real referent but itself (p. 5−7). Consequently, the imperial capitalist, Holroyd, deceives and robs the entire town with paper bills which actually set in action the economy of Sulaco. He is described in the image "of a Caesar's head on an old Roman coin" (p. 75). If we judge from this standpoint, any ideal of progress inherent in Gould, Ribiera or Mitchell is based on nothing but illusions, a sham designed to keep the population working. The entire working class of Sulaco experiences the ideological *camera obscura* effect (Marx, Engels 1998 : 42) which is an idealization of the world which resides on the influence of material gains. In other words, Ribiera's regime promotes foreign investments in the hope for social improvement. The local government of Sulaco backs the ideal. All the workers believe in the illusion. Still, Conrad exposes the noxious effects of such ideals in the conflicting situations above mentioned, but also in the inner conflict of the characters, the third level, which would be approached later.

As we have seen earlier, the European culture has been adopted by Costaguana through names of the ships or the economic system which directs the lives of the citizens. Money is the cultural product for regulating social economy: in addition, it serves as a measure of success. Gould's victory is gauged in the yield of silver. Holroyd's God is "a sort of influential partner, who gets his share of profit in the endowment of churches. That's a sort of idolatry" (p. 70). Holroyd despises statues and figures of saints in churches but finances them in exchange, he hopes, for success in business. Charles Gould's only desire is to get rich and turn the mine lucrative.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) denounces reason because it works against the individual by insulating one from nature into social ties and norms which are oppressive to the natural development (Rousseau 1992: 37). Virtually all the citizens of Sulaco, Emilia Gould and Monighan excluded, are guided by the reason to get rich, to follow endangering chimeras of material gains. Morality is an obsolete human conduct for the week and uncanny as Monigham. In *The Social Contract* (1762) Rousseau aims to expose social law as the state mechanism by which the individual "is everywhere in chains" (Rousseau 1968: 49). Although the individual is born free in nature, in society one is born in the *chains* of law. Conrad presents Costaguana's law as corrupt for Charles's father has been "robbed under the forms of legality and business" (p. 58). The narrator informs that Señor Gould's downfall has been triggered by his emotional attachment to the silver mine business and the eventual ruin caused by the corrupt government. The silver mine grudge has been passed on, legally, to Charles as he has returned to Sulaco. He has managed to avoid joining politics, for the moment, but the legacy itself stirs political conflict. The silver mine business creates social layers as there are native workers, fitters, *cargadores*, sailors to deliver the cargo, and the masters who get wealthier. Conrad acknowledged that humanity has fallen prey to a false god or religion, which is the worship of money. Thus, the silver mine is the embodiment of a false god or a symbol of corruption for it is perceived as Sulaco's salvation and prosperity by most of the citizens.



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Charles Gould's private property, as noxious as it may be judged through Marxist eyes, creates identity and conflict. Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) exposes his philosophy of human social relation in that in order to identify oneself one has to relate to the other. He identifies a binary relation between the powerful, the wealthy who dominates the weak, the poor. This relation of domination creates social roles where the poor suppresses the condition of the self in work and acceptance of the economic game imposed by the master (Hegel 1977: 111−118). Applying Hegel's insight to the world of Sulaco, we can extrapolate that the foreign imperialists subdue the people of the town in the social position of workers, the modern slaves with wages. The initial acceptance of the socio-economic position of the natives ends up in revolutions as the one waged by General Montero who rebels against the actual master-slave relation of Sulaco. The General promotes a return to traditional politics, not the tyrannical model of Guzman Bento but that of the Roman model. In the famous chapter 10 of *The Lighthouse*, Mitchell informs that General Montero proclaimed himself emperor of Costaguana but assassinated a month after the coronation (p. 400). "Emperor" Montero is a native of uncertain origin: his newly fashioned political position reminds of the Roman emperors of antiquity who would die due to plots enacted by political opponents. Pedro Montero possesses similar political visions when he delivers his grandiloquence to Gould in the Intendencia:

> …the highest expression of democracy was Caesarian: the imperial rule based upon the direct popular vote. Caesarism was conservative. It was strong. […] Caesarism was peace. It was progressive. It secured the prosperity of a country (p. 335).

Conrad's depiction of the scene when Pedro Montero, accompanied by Fuentes and Gamacho, enters the town of Sulaco to deliver his speech before the citizens, parallels Anthony and Brutus's speeches before the Roman mob in *Julius Caesar*. Anthony's well known speech "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears" (III, II, p. 81) resonates with Pedro's speech before the mob which begins with "*Citizens!*" (p. 322). As he speaks, his gestures betray the qualities of an orator, and the crowd greets his speech with ovations as "*Vivas*" (p. 323). The atmosphere in Sulaco at that particular moment is similar to that of Rome when Brutus and Anthony argue upon Caesar's death. The mob reacts in agreement with the eloquence of the speaker; shouts of greetings are heard. Conrad links this particular episode with Shakespeare's play to intensify the corrupt state of politics in Sulaco. *Julius Caesar* depicts tumultuous political moments in the history of the Roman Empire where betrayal and murder went hand in hand. It was all done for power. Likewise, Pedro Montero is eager to achieve power over Sulaco and steal its silver. His eloquence is used to deceive and gain followers. The political alliance of the trinity of evil is doomed as Pedro calls Gamacho a *brute* just as the latter is heard outside delivering a speech to the mob (p. 323−324). Fuentes agrees with Pedro's plan to send Gamacho to face Hernandez's army. Gamacho is a victim who believes that Pedro is the only one who can end the foreign influence in Costaguana's economy. On the contrary, Pedro believes that foreign investments should be encouraged: that is why Pedro sends Gamacho to his own death in that particular fight. The political plot revolves around the same issue as that enacted by Brutus,



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Cassius and Casca: to murder the opponent. The plots are based on common material interests in the way to achieve power.

The San Tomé silver mine was, at first, exploited by the Spanish with the help of native Indian slaves; it was abandoned until Guzman Bento's tyrannical regime. The mine was taken by an English company whose owners were killed by the angry native miners, right after the revolution which resulted in Bento's death (p. 55-56). Guzman Bento becomes the autocrat unionist president of Costaguana after he kills Charles's uncle, Harry, the previous president. Gould mentions that his uncle is the symbol of "social order out of pure love for rational liberty and from his hate of oppression" (p. 65). Guzman Bento has overthrown the period of order with the chaos of his regime. Bento would torture and kill every opponent to his political ideas. The opponents would be crushed and killed by soldiers of the army wearing Christian crosses on them (p. 123). The textual hint suggests that the army have enacted methods of the Spanish Inquisition which tortured and killed innocent natives in the name of the Lord. Bento's ideal is to turn his regime into a new religion. The narrator portrays the army's methods to maintain peace and unity in the country as follows:

> The army of Pacification would move on over the savannas, through the forests, crossing rivers, invading rural pueblos, devastating the haciendas of the horrid aristocrats, occupying the inland towns in the fulfilment of its patriotic mission, and leaving behind a united land wherein the evil taint of Federalism could no longer be detected in the smoke of burning houses and the smell of spilt blood (p. 124).

The excerpt vividly expresses the materialization of the conflicting political ideologies in the lives of the inhabitants of Costaguana during Guzman Bento's regime. The aristocrats believe in the federalization of Costaguana whereas Bento's oppressive regime cuts short any attempt to divide the country through extensive destruction and bloodshed. Nothing pleases the "Citizen Saviour of the Country" (p. 124) more than to see his enemies crushed, in pain, and imprisoned. He enjoys harming the weak. Despite the fact that Don José Avellanos has been a victim of Bento's cruel regime, he admits in his *History of Misrule* that the unionist regime granted the long desired peace in the country (p. 126−127). Peace is acquired in this "cavern of thieves, intriguers and brigands" (p. 59) at a terrible cost. It can also be stated that violence is cured with violence.

The horrendous episode which reenacts Dr Monygham's tragic experience under the unionist regime provides a panorama of human degradation as a clerical figure, Father Berón, is no different from the soldiers bearing the cross. He is an official of the government who tortures victims of the regime for information concerning alleged political machinations. Monygham has been a suspect of plotting against the regime and tortured by the cleric up to the point of confession. Father Berón's words "Will you confess now?" (p. 310) haunt the doctor's mind and tormented soul. The father is the embodiment of the Spanish Inquisition's political ideology which massacred the natives under the pretense of Christianizing the world. The narrator describes Father Berón as a dirty, greasy individual to foil his inner moral degradation.



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Conrad exposes the wide range of conflicting political ideologies above mentioned to highlight the destructive powers dormant in humanity unleashed by greed when it comes to the silver mine as a source of material interests. The silver mine, indeed, guides and structures the human society of Sulaco. Pedro Montero wants to take it as a model for the entire country. Gould would rather die than lose it. In fact, Conrad's purpose is to reveal the moral decay of each and every individual of *Nostromo*: the conflicts exposed in the second level foil the third level which embodies the inner conflict of the characters.

Panichas in *Joseph Conrad: His Moral Vision* (2005) comments upon *Nostromo* not only as an example of political struggle for power but also as having an existential dimension where *moral darkness* (Panichas 2005 : 72) has overtaken the human soul due to its rapacity for materialism (Panichas 2005 : 76−78). Most of the characters have been deceived by the silver mine except Mrs Gould, Antonia Avellanos, and Dr Monygham. As presented earlier, the doctor is a victim of the former government of Guzman Bento who cannot get rid of the past. Just like Conrad himself who could not forsake his Polish years as Karl reveals in his biographical study *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (Karl 1979 : 120−121), so Monygham develops hate for humanity and the world he lives in. Still, he influences the fate of Sulaco with his cunningness employed to deceive both Sotillo and Nostromo: He attends the wounded of the revolution, and praises Mrs Gould for her pure soul. He could be considered a humanitarian who has lost faith in humanity, a typical Conradian paradox. He is the most exposed and influenced individual by the political situations Costaguana has been through. He is stigmatized by the community as an uncanny man who lives in seclusion: he cannot release himself from his guilt of treason either, which is a burden for his soul.

I believe that the next character most victimized by the political environment of Costaguana is not Nostromo, Decoud or Charles Gould but a minor character, Señor Hirsch. He is a German hide merchant of Jewish origin from Esmeralda who comes to Gould hoping that Sulaco would bring him fortune in business. His trip to Sulaco is a total failure like his business back home. Furthermore, he is caught in the middle of the conflicting forces which threaten the Occidental Province. He literally walks in darkness as he is horrified by the revolutionaries, and seeks refuge in the lighter carrying the silver after wandering in the harbour at night. Soon, Nostromo, Decoud, and Hirsch emerge in the offing where "The sea in the gulf was as black as the clouds above" (p. 219−220). Unaware of his position, Hirsch is engaged in the ultimate political mission of Sulaco to hide the silver from the marauding Monterist army. When he is discovered by Nostromo and Decoud, Hirsch resembles a corpse in mourning (p. 226−227). Nostromo admits that Hirsch has come to the lighter out of fear and despair (230). The narrator informs that "…the fate of Señor Hirsch remained suspended in the darkness of the gulf at the mercy of events which could not be foreseen" (p. 231). It is indicated that nature or destiny plays with his fate. It is as though Conrad employs elements of the Greek classical tragedy whose heroes are only tools in the hands of gods. Conrad, indeed, portrays this state of affair concerning Sulaco's politics which affects the entire community. The three characters enact "a blind game with death" (p. 232). Later on, Hirsch is picked up as a fish from a pond by the anchor of the ship commanded by Sotillo: this event seals



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Hirsch's doom for he would undergo the same tortures as Monygham. Sotillo, driven by his madness to grab the silver, believes Hirsh is lying and inflicts excruciating pains to the poor hide merchant. As foreshadowed by the narrator, Hirsh's fate and body are suspended in Sotillo's torture room: he is eventually shot to death (p. 367−370). Then, suspended by a rope, Hirsch's corpse is accompanied by two lit candles which project a "burly shadow of head and shoulders" which "had an air of life" on the walls of the room (p. 371). Conrad suggests that Hirsch has released himself of the burden of life in death, and his soul has been freed.

Nostromo is an Italian living in the Occidental province, and known by various names as the *capataz*, *the incorruptible* or *Gian' Battista Fidanza.* David Ward thinks the plethora of names surfaces Nostromo's desire to be appreciated by and identified with the community (Bloom 2003: 87). Nostromo is created in the image of the romantic hero who rescues endangered people, the *cargadores* or Ribiera, is praised by the community, and deeply trusted. In the second part of the novel Nostromo experiences an epiphany concerning his role in the community. As he wakes up on the shores of the sea near an abandoned fort he realizes that his fame has been a sham. He is loved because he can help not because who he is. It is now when he identifies with the workers, the Hegelian slave in the service of the wealthy, the masters. Facing his new identity, he thinks that "…kings, ministers, aristocrats, the rich in general, kept the people in poverty and subjugation: they kept them as they kept dogs, to fight and hunt for their service" (p. 342). As a member of the weak, Nostromo hates the citizens of Sulaco, as Monygham, and loves no one, even Giselle, the girl he professes his love to. When he suspects Giselle may love Ramirez, Nostromo thinks of killing her (p. 437). It is exactly the silver which makes Nostromo realize his actual condition.

Ward states that Gould's illusion is autonomy from the politics of Sulaco where his silver mine may develop to success (p. 82−85). David Trotter notes that Charles Gould's house has become the government of the Occidental Province just before the Monterists enter the town. Don José, Charles, and the other political figures discuss upon the measures which should be adopted in the face of invasion (Trotter 1993: 92). Pedro Montero summons him in the Intendencia to discuss the future of the silver mine, and obeys Decoud's plan to take the silver to the islands in the offing. He also agrees with the plan of separation. Consequently, Gould has been dragged in the political mechanism with or without his consent. We can agree that Conrad's intention is to render the insignificance of humanity in the higher machinations of history directed by materialism. In the process, the addiction to wealth manifested in parsimony is a human trait which dooms the individual in the position of the slave worshipping falsity at the expense of morality, the true value of human life.

I shall conclude the analysis of *Nostromo* with Eloise Knapp Hay's observation that the novel swirls around five ideologies of revolution, broached earlier, which are manifest in five different characters: Charles Gould, the capitalist, Giorgio Viola, the humanitarian revolutionary, the Montero brothers, the Roman republicans, the Marxist journalist, the revolutionary who hates class division and the wealthy, and a psychological revolution that occurs within Nostromo himself. Hay acknowledges that the chronological leaps help to evince these revolutionary



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ideologies (Stape 1996: 88). Hay admits that the economic stance deployed by Conrad in *Nostromo* follows the patterns of the Marxist *labour theory of value* which has originated in the illusion of worldwide economic prosperity proposed by the early imperialists such as the Spanish conquistadors (p. 90). In fact, Dr Monygham, the moralizing force of the novel who follows no ideology as Hay sees him (p. 94), acknowledges that

> There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. […] 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. 419).

Through the doctor, Conrad expresses his belief that material interests lead to the *moral darkness* proposed by Panichas. Revolutions set other revolutions in a never ending cycle of order and chaos. Revolutions subscribe to the natural cycle of life itself which renders human action as politics trivial in the greater scheme of the universe.

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## Abstract

The aim of the present research is to evince the nexus of conflicting political ideologies which guide the social and individual life of the fictional country of Costaguana. On the one hand, the study highlights how politics is made use of in order to satisfy the insatiable urge for power and wealth from the vantage point of imperial powers down to the local interests of the local government of a certain city, Sulaco, whereas, on the other hand, the focus falls also upon the inherent ideological pattern which animates both the political action and the political man. As we shall see in the preamble section, ideology explained, is the fundamental predicament of human life sociologically speaking; it endorses the fact that human agency, occurred or occurring, is activated by an innate spur of desire which calls for fulfillment at any cost. It is at this point where ideology takes the lead for it sets about the contingencies or available plots for fulfillment. The enactment of a certain *plot* to fulfilling the desire takes the shape of a policy in social life. Understood in this sense, the social individual is inherently political, an individual who goes by a certain behavioural blueprint or set of moral or legal values in order to enlist the viable life contingency which is a result of desires being satisfied. Aristotle was well aware of this quagmire when he called the social man *zoon politikon* (Bowles and Gintis, 173) for there is a common socio-politico-economic agreement which regulates and ensures safe and long lasting human interrelationships in what we call human settlements as villages, cities or countries.

Conrad's novel portrays the mire broached in the lines above, that is, to make the reader conscious about his role in the socio-economic environment as an obedient citizen unconsciously fitting either the social status of the worker, the modern slave, or that of the master, the employer, the exploiter. The novel's action rests upon the political conflicts enacted by the native nationalists of the Monterist faction who consider foreign investments and European expatriates the thieves of the country's wealth: in the process, the citizens of the country are caught in the middle of the conflict, citizens who join sides according to the greater bidder. The political conflicts resemble just a link in the longer historical perspective of material interests which, in the novel, are fueled by Charles Gould's silver mine in Sulaco, a provincial town of Costaguana.



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