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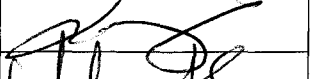

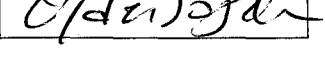
The Decomposition of the Western Ideal in
Selected Works of Joseph Conrad

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Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Murat Seçkin
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ÖZ

Bu tezin amacı Joseph Conrad'ın seçilen eserlerinde bir araya geldiğinde “Batı İdeali” diye tanımlanabilecek medeniyet, demokrasi, emperyalizm ve materyalizm gibi düşünsel ve yapısal bazı temel değerlerin ele alınışı ve yeniden anlamlandırılıp çürütülmesini incelemektir. Batı ideali, gerek Avrupa ülkelerinde gerekse dünyanın dört bir yanındaki kolonileştirilmiş ülkelerde uygulanan ekonomik ve düşünsel sömürünün bir paravanı olarak kullanılmış, temeldeki yabancılaşma ve yabanileşme saklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Seçilen eserler Batı Medeniyetinin sözü edilen gizli kalmış yönlerini açığa çıkarmakta, bazı terimleri yeniden tanımlamakta ve Batı İdealini çürütmektedir.

Giriş Bölümünde “Batı İdeali”, Conrad'ın eleştiri anlayışı ve bireyin kirlenmedeki merkezi rolü genel hatlarıyla ele alınmaktadır.

Birinci Bölümde *Heart of Darkness* incelenip, Batı Kültürünün ‘Evrensel Deha’ olarak tanımladığı Kurtz karakterinin temsil ettiği değerler altında yatan vahşileşmiş Kolonicilik ele alınmaktadır.

İkinci Bölümde “*An Outpost of Progress*” adlı kısa hikayede medeniyetin beşiğinden alınıp Afrika'nın ortasına koyduğu iki sıradan karakter aracılığıyla Conrad'ın Emperyal söylemi nasıl alaya aldığı ve sıradan Avrupalının içinde yaşadığı kültüre yabancılaşması sergilenmektedir.

Üçüncü Bölümde *Nostromo* romanında Kapitalizmin daha olgunlaştığı, sınıfsal farkların öne çıktığı, politik oyunların oynandığı bir devlet ve yabancılaşmış, yabanileşmiş, inançsızlaşmış insanlar konu edilip, yine Batı Medeniyetine göndermeler yapılmaktadır.

Sonuç Bölümünde, Conrad'ın eleştiri anlayışı ve “Batı İdeali'nin” çürütülmesi üzerine genel bir değerlendirme yapılmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine the consideration, re-evaluation and decomposition of some basic intellectual and structural values like civilisation, democracy, imperialism and materialism that can be defined together as “the Western Ideal”, in selected works of Joseph Conrad. “The Western Ideal” had been used as a disguise for the economic and intellectual exploitation in the European and colonised countries all over the world, to hide the alienation and dehumanisation below. The selected texts bring the mentioned hidden aspects into the open, redefine some terminology and deconstruct “the Western Ideal”.

In the Introduction “the Western Ideal”, Conrad’s criticism, and the individual’s central role in the corruption are handled in general terms.

In Chapter 1, *Heart of Darkness* is examined. Colonialism and the character of Kurtz, who is ‘the Universal Genius’ of the Western Culture, are studied in this Chapter to expose the false values they represent.

In Chapter 2, Conrad’s mocking of the Imperial legend and the alienation of the ordinary European to his own culture are exposed in the short story of “*An Outpost of Progress*” through the two ordinary characters taken from the cradle of the civilisation and put in the middle of Africa.

In Chapter 3, the novel of *Nostramo* is studied with its understanding of state, maturing form of Capitalism where the class discrimination is open and political tricks take place, and with its alienated, dehumanised, unbelieving people by giving references to the Western Civilisation.

Finally, the conclusion provides a general evaluation on Conrad’s criticism and the decomposition of “the Western Ideal”.

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INTRODUCTION

Joseph Conrad is a novelist of an imperialist age when the world was united under the rule of the West. Until the Second World War, the imperial powers of the world had colonised, exploited and changed the distant countries all over the world. Edward W. Said summarises the expansion of Imperialism in the following words.

“This century climaxed ‘the rise of the West’, and Western power allowed the imperial metropolitan centres to acquire and accumulate territory and subjects on a truly astonishing scale. Consider that in 1800 Western powers claimed 55 per cent but actually held approximately 35 per cent of the earth’s surface, and that by 1878 the proportion was 67 per cent, a rate of increase of 83,000 square miles per year. By 1914, the annual rate had risen to an astonishing 240,000 square miles, and Europe held a grand total of roughly 85 per cent of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions, and commonwealths. No other associated set of colonies in history was as large, none so totally dominated, none so unequal in power to the Western metropolis.”¹

Capitalism also developed with the “overseas markets, raw materials, cheap labour, and hugely profitable land.”² With a mature capitalism, social structures of the dominating countries changed a lot, too. The growing population of the poor and uneducated class opposed the rich classes in the cities.

Such strong changes in economic and social life reflected themselves in the cultural life, too. As Said says “the processes of imperialism occurred beyond the level of economic laws and political decisions, and – by predisposition, by the authority of recognisable cultural formations, by continuing consolidation within education, literature, and the visual and musical arts.”³ As a novelist of that age Conrad’s works included the cultural tensions. His settings are generally chosen from the countries that imperialism held its hand on. However Conrad is not involved in the Cultural Imperialism, or in other words his works does not defend and develop the imperialism in the cultural aspect. On the other hand they undermine the basic concepts of that culture and expose the dehumanisation and violence below.

¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Publications, 1994, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.* p. 12.

Imperialism is not a light giver in the works of Conrad but it brings chaos, disorder and exploitation.

This thesis gathers the main dominating discussions of imperialism and capitalism under the title of 'the Western Ideal.' It is called an ideal because it represents the false values like freedom, democracy, free will, independence, nationalism; all of which hide the exploitation and slavery behind them.

The narration of Conrad is not after a narrow criticism on the class or political context, though. Instead, it is the product of an artistic view which was not dominated by the dogmas of its age. Of course it is also not too easy to be completely free from the cultural impact of a powerful imperialism, but despite of its difficulty Conrad's works questions the dogmas of the age and redefines some terminology and values. In his works the reality of the Western world becomes an illusion and the real address of the darkness turns out to be the heart of civilisation.

Conrad also accuses the individual as the source of corruption and dehumanisation. As well as the governing classes, the uneducated worker class, who do not question anything and live in a blind safety, are responsible of these two. And like the poor class, the rich also suffers from the outcomes of the age such as alienation and isolation.

A novel, a novella and a short story are studied in this thesis. While *Heart of Darkness* and "*An Outpost of Progress*" tells the thieving of ivory from Africa with the colonisation of the land, *Nostramo*'s subject is a maturing capitalism. However exploitation and dehumanisation are similar in them. The narration in these works arrives at a decomposition of the Western Ideal.

CHAPTER 1

HEART of DARKNESS: THE COLONISER

Heart of Darkness was written between 1898 and 1899, at the peak point of imperialism. Marlow's voyage to the interior Africa as well as his metaphorical voyage into the darkness of his culture's sub-conscious, ends with a realisation of the motives lying under the Western Civilisation. *Heart of Darkness* questions some primary concepts of Western Civilisation such as light and darkness, just and unjust, civilised and savage, and it does not only question but also deconstructs them. The concepts are basically to be created for the good of the imperial system and turn out to be unreal. Marlow, in his heroic voyage to "the earliest beginnings of history", sees that the roots of the Western Civilisation are crackling together with all its ideologies, religions, politics and past as well as its future. What he finds there is the ivory lying behind all the motives. Ivory is above all the individuals. Ivory, as the symbol of material interests, is all the reason of the Western interference in Africa and Kurtz, the best agent in the profession of collecting ivory, is simply the coloniser who went out of the borders. Marlow's journey to the heart of darkness questions the motives and borders of European Civilisation on an imperial setting.

The story of Marlow begins on "the *Nellie*, a cruising yawl". It rests and waits for the turn of the tide on "the sea-reach of the Thames" which stretches "like the beginning of an interminable waterway."¹ The story teller and the listeners are all the employees of imperialism: The Director of the Companies, The Lawyer, the unidentified outer narrator and the inner narrator Marlow, "who still 'followed the sea.'"² It is for sure the narration is an imperialist one with its teller and listeners. Marlow makes his beginning from the history of England. He mentions how the

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Books, ed. 1994, p. 5.

² *Ibid.* p. 7.

Romans had conquered it and how the British people are different from the Romans. The difference is that they are colonists but not conquerors and they have efficiency. Moreover he also tells how Britain itself was a dark place on the maps in the deepness of history. The narration begins with a classical praising of imperialism as a light-giver. The parallelism between the Britain and Africa and between the rivers going inside them, the Thames and the Congo is set beforehand. It is understood clearly that the journey will not only be a retrospection of one made through the heart of darkness in the uncivilised jungles of Africa, but it will also and more be to the heart of darkness in the civilised city-life of Britain. The seeming message is clear: London was a dark place when it was first conquered. On the other hand Congo possesses the darkness and the light of civilisation will spread there with the colonists like Marlow. However the real message is that London, which is considered as the centre of civilization, possesses darkness at least in the amount that Congo has.

Marlow's narration begins with the idealisation of his voyage; how he "as a little chap ... had a passion for maps", how the darker places of those maps and especially Congo as the darkest one "resembling an immense snake uncoiled had charmed him."³ The idealisation seems to be an imperialist attitude of pride. The metaphor of snake of course indicates the evil lying in the place that the river goes into. The journey will be a very difficult and dangerous one and the voyager needs to be courageous. Marlow says "I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre" and he thinks the companies officers as "guarding the door of Darkness."⁴ Marlow like a "Buddha preaching in European clothes" tells how he felt "as though, instead of going to the centre of a continent"; in fact he was "about to set off for the centre of the earth" and how he heard the whispers of "come and find out" in the air⁵ and how the journey "throw a kind of light on everything about" him and into his thoughts.⁶

² Ibid. p. 7.

³ Ibid. p. 11.

⁴ Ibid. p. 15.

⁵ Ibid. p. 10.

⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

All depictions of the journey refer to the importance, hardness and danger. As a talented story-teller Marlow prepares his audience for his story first. The metaphors he uses to describe his journey foreshadow the future of the story. Congo is like a snake, it advances to the devilish darkness and the journey up to the river is resembled to a journey to the centre of the earth. Marlow's metaphorical journey will also be towards the beginnings of the history, to their past. He will step "into the gloomy circle of some Inferno"⁷ heroically to face the Satan and to find out the truth.

"I have seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men – men, I tell you. But as I stood on the hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. How insidious he could be, too, I was only to find out ..."⁸

He is courageous and fearless to go "deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness"⁹ as if "travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world."¹⁰ Marlow's search soon appears to be the search for his sub-conscious with his interest in the journey.

"I don't like work – no man does – but I like what is in the work, - the chance to find yourself. Your own reality – for yourself, not for others – what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means."¹¹

However the work of Marlow is an imperial one and the search for his sub-conscious also represents the search for the civilisation's sub-conscious. He will at last be one of those "pioneers of progress"¹² since he is a member of a trading company. Marlow thinks of the officers of the Company "guarding the door of Darkness."¹³ The "heavy writing desk" Marlow sees in the Company's office, which

⁷ Ibid. p. 24.

⁸ Ibid. p. 23.

⁹ Ibid. p. 50.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 48.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 44.

¹² Ibid. p. 15.

¹³ Ibid. p. 16.

he signs some documents on including one “not to disclose any trading secrets”¹⁴, stands for the cultural accumulation behind the colonial activity. Like the desk, the activity of writing as a symbol of civilisation is a tool for the imperial activity. Valentine Cunningham points at the colonial role of the writing activity.

“The metatextual writing subject is also a colonial one. The astonishing bookkeeper is the agent of a colonialist system that makes money the supreme value, whose fetish is successful accountancy, spruce book-keeping. Kurtz’s writing is done at the behest of a colonial agency. At the centre of the labyrinth of the Belgian head offices squats ‘a heavy writing desk’. Colonising means writing, and writing – whatever else it might mean – spells colonising.”¹⁵

Kurtz’ ability to use language, his playing with the words, is also tied to the same relationship of colonialism and culture which will be dealt later on.

The references to the mentally spoiling atmosphere of Africa are important from the beginning. The steamer that Marlow will be the captain of was belonging to a Dane named Fresleven who was killed because of some hens. Thinking that he was cheated in a bargain, Fresleven, “who was the gentlest and quietest creature”¹⁶, hammers the chief of a native village and in revenge the chief’s son kills him. As the doctor of the company says, there in Africa some “mental changes of individuals”¹⁷ happen. Some go mad; some hang themselves, some change in the character. In this way or other the European cannot fit the reality of Congo, as well as its cultural elements.

Life including everything, the definitions, the meanings, the values and the termination, begins to change when they are approaching to Africa. Somebody on the ship calls the natives as “enemies.”¹⁸ And they are treated as enemies really with the first impression of Marlow at the town of Company’s station. Marlow sees six black men having iron collars on their necks, who are connected together with a chain, and behind them a white man with a uniform jacket and a rifle. “They were called

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Valentine Cunningham, “Fresh Paths in 1990s,” *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*, Ed. by Nicolas Tredell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 152-153.

¹⁶ Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 17.

criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea.”¹⁹ The picture summarises the European interference in the land as an exploiting and slaving one. As Marlow accepts: “After all, I also was the part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings.”²⁰ The building of the railway in the town must be noted as well. Everything is for exploiting the country. Just as the writing desk in the Company’s office, the “penholder”²¹ behind the ear of the station chief accountant takes the attention of Marlow. What is done is a profitable trade: “a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads, and brass-wire sent into the depths of darkness, and in return came a precious trickle of ivory.”²²

The legend of Mr Kurtz begins when they set on the continent. Marlow will hear this name from everyone with respect, during his voyage up to the river Congo. The first person who pronounces the name is the chief accountant of the company. Asking who that Mr Kurtz is, Marlow learns that he is “a first class agent” and “a remarkable person” who is “at present in charge of a trading post, a very important one, in the true ivory-country, at the very bottom of there” sending “in as much ivory as all others put together.”²³ The first impression of Kurtz is of a professional colonist who is very successful in robbing the country of its wealth of ivory. But this is not enough to tell the respect that man in the Central Station arises on people. The accountant thinks that:

“... he will go far, very far ... he will be a somebody in the Administration before long. They, above – the Council in Europe, you know – mean him to be.”²⁴

Kurtz’ being at the Central Station indicates his central position in the colonising activity, not only practically but also when the accountant says for the Council he

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 20.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 22-23.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 23.

²¹ Ibid. p. 25.

²² Ibid. p. 26.

²³ Ibid. p. 27.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 28.

deserves to be one in the Administration. Kurtz is a very valuable member of a colonising Company. However Marlow soon learns that the unhealthy atmosphere of Africa also affected Mr Kurtz. "There were rumours that a very important station was in jeopardy, and its chief, Mr Kurtz was ill."²⁵

Congo is not only unhealthy, it also seems unreal to Marlow. Maybe it is unhealthy for the Europeans going there because it is unreal. It is unreal for the reality of European values taught and learned. What the individuals live there is a kind of cultural depression as Marlow does:

"The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came out of it, of course. It was unreal as everything else – as the philanthropic pretence of whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages."²⁶

Western reality cannot resist Africa and everything becomes unreal and dreamlike. Nothing but ivory, as the symbol of material interests, lives over all. Principles, human rights, or even religion, all of which are the basis of the Western Civilisation, do not exist there. In the jungle, people pray ivory instead of the Christian God. Beating "the niggers,"²⁷ punishing and killing them is not only usual but is seen as a method to prevent "all conflagrations for the future."²⁸

Within the unreality the legendary man continues to become more unreal. It is said that "the chief of the Inner Station" is not only a success in the trading business and collecting ivory, but he is more than that. The real target of Marlow's journey, "the evil or truth"²⁹ that he searches for, soon becomes concrete in the person of Mr Kurtz, in the deepest darkness of Africa, at the farthest point to the civilisation. Kurtz

²⁵ Ibid. p. 32.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 33-35.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 37.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 33.

stands for both Marlow's and the Western Civilisation's sub-conscious, he stands for the reality beyond the appearance. The journey to the Inner Station is like, as Frederick Karl says "that of Dante, Odysseus, or Aenas, into the underworld of human existence" and the Inner Station "has a totemic value as the lair for a dragon or primitive beast, as the mythical hiding place for Loke or another satanic figure of evil."³⁰ And as Ross C Murfin states "Kurtz, the particular figure who waits there for Marlow, is a particular kind of evil agent, namely, a latter-day Faust figure who has sold his soul in return for forbidden knowledge, experience, power."³¹

On the other hand Kurtz is a "universal genius"³² representing the Western Civilisation put in the heart of the jungle. Not only in the profession of collecting ivory, which is the most important activity in Congo, is Kurtz so successful but he is also "an emissary of pity, and of science, and progress."³³ Kurtz is not of those whose only desire is "to tear treasure out of the bowels of the land ... with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars"³⁴, instead he is there "also for humanising, improving, instructing."³⁵ He is an ideal, he is a "prodigy"³⁶ in the eyes of Europeans and he is like a God for the natives. Kurtz is the genius of Western Civilisation with his success in colonialism, humanities as arts and rhetoric. He is a thinker, a theoretician and practicer, and with his effect on people, he has a future in the politics. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."³⁷ Kurtz is the light of Western Civilisation sent into the darkness.

"... he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than the other agents together? That was not the point. The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words - the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most

³⁰ Frederick Karl, *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1979, pp. 425, 488.

³¹ Ross C Murfin, *Joseph Conrad Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1989, p. 109.

³² Conrad, op. cit. p. 40.

³³ Ibid. p. 36.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 44.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 47.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 36.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 71.

contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness."³⁸

Kurtz is a shaping and transforming power of the Civilisation, he is the light for the uncivilised people; he is a Jesus Christ figure in Africa, with a hopeful future in the mainland.

While the voyage up to the river towards Mr Kurtz continues, the crew of the steamer behave like lunatics.³⁹ Marlow and his crew become alienated from their past. In a distant setting all the familiar knowledge and memories become useless.

"We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet ... We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wandering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign, and no memories."⁴⁰

The journey detaches them from their past, like getting them ready for a process of purgation. Western Civilisation and its cultural extensions become useless for the purgation in the alienating setting of Africa. The individual is free from of the cultural restraints to face the truth. The truth is that Western Civilisation is a lie with all its ideologies, religions and memories.

Marlow's process of realisation represents not only his own individual one but also a foremost realisation of the European Hero sent into Africa. Alienation is not the only symptom of this realisation, there must be some other sacrifices while going into the heart of darkness. The death of the helmsman is another sacrifice in this process. Marlow is alone again, his only companion is himself, he is the Romantic artist type as a hero.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 68.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 51.

"He must meet that truth with his own true stuff – with his own inborn strength. Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags – rags that would fly off at the first good shake."⁴¹

In the madding voyage into the darkness Marlow learns that Kurtz made up his mind to return, but suddenly decided to go back on the way. The thing that charms Marlow more is the abnormality in it. The reality, the hidden "inner truth"⁴² charms him. He begins to understand the vanity of the justifications of imperialism such as "each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanising, improving, instructing."⁴³ Marlow knows that humanising and improving cannot lie in the groans of the beaten natives.

As a European hero Marlow is courageous, intelligent and honest. He is honest as much as he can be. However Marlow cannot be free from his cultural background as the hero of the European Culture. Whatever is his reason of going to Africa; Marlow goes and behaves as a colonialist there. He describes the natives as follows:

"They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation ... These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of the eyes under the trees. Then glancing down I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young – almost a boy – but you know with them its hard to tell."⁴⁴

Benita Parry is right in evaluating Marlow's attitude towards the natives as a

"distancing mechanism of racial differentiation. The specific agony of a particular individual dying before his eyes is transmuted into an insidiously vague generalisation about the agelessness of blacks"⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 51.

⁴² Ibid. p. 49.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 47.

⁴⁴ Ibid. pp. 24-25.

⁴⁵ Benita Parry, "Fresh Paths in the 1990s," **Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness**, Ed. by Nicolas Tredell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p. 144.

Marlow as the hero and the child of the Western Civilisation and as the inner narrator of a novel, whose audience is Europeans, cannot be free from imperialism. Marlow, as an employee of imperialism, has the same limited mind. It is not easy to comprehend such a reality for a European. As Marlow says: "The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach, and beyond my power of meddling."⁴⁶ The one that should comprehend the reality of the West is supposed to be the reader, not Marlow. He just acts as a medium to express the contradictions.

He thinks on the unjustness of the trade. In the bargain they give the natives brass wire instead of money, but what for. Everything seems different to Marlow. The voyage to comprehend the reality becomes more dangerous and difficult. "The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once-somewhere-far away-in another existence perhaps."⁴⁷ The danger is broadened by the natives' attack on the steamer. They get rid of the attack not with the rifles they have, but with the steam whistle that frightens the natives. Kurtz presents "himself as a voice"⁴⁸ as Marlow approaches to him.

Indeed, Marlow is also aware of the difficulty of understanding these realities without living the experience directly:

"You can't understand. How could you? – with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums – how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude – utter solitude without a policeman – by the way of silence – utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 48.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 70.

The passage tells the difficulty of an individual realisation. The experience is shown as the path to find or to face the reality through experience, as Marlow face Kurtz. The reality itself becomes questionable with what Marlow says. The reader begins to doubt of Marlow's narration first. And the next step is a general questioning of the imperial terminology and discussions. Maybe the imperialist claim of bringing light to the darkness and spreading the humanising civilisation is not true, since the reader sees that the imperial reality depends on narration for the ordinary European.

The Western reality is shuddered and deconstructed as well as the impression of Kurtz on people, when Marlow sees the skulls around his station. Kurtz' voice turns out to be an empty, possessive and brutal one, as a tool of imperial exploitation and he turns out to be an anti-Christ figure with the deconstruction, when Marlow hears him saying:

“ ‘My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my-’ ... Everything belonged to him – but it was trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own.”⁵⁰

Kurtz' personality, ill and half-mad, brings out the sub-conscious of the Western Civilisation. Possession is one of the motives of the West and its imperialism. And for the possession every brutality is possible. As Kurtz writes in his report to “the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs” the coloniser “must appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings” he must “approach them with the might of a deity.”⁵¹ Benita Parry says “colonialism seeks to construct a cultural ‘Other’ in terms of polarised oppositions such as white/ black, good/ evil, civilisation/ savagery.”⁵² Even the name of the society confirms Parry's statement. The definitions of colonialism and its oppositions are used to define the cultural side of imperialism. These definitions create what Edward Said calls ‘the commitment to imperialism and colonialism’.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 70.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 71-72.

⁵² Parry, op. cit., p. 141.

“... a commitment in constant circulation and recirculation, which, on the one hand, allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjugated, and, on the other, replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples...

For the enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of having an empire*, as Conrad so powerfully seems to have realized, and all kinds of preparations are made for it within the culture; then in turn imperialism acquires a kind of coherence, a set of experiences, and a presence of ruler and ruled alike within the culture.”⁵³

‘The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs’ stands for the cultural need of imperialism and Kurtz is considered as a writer of that society, a theoretician of imperialism, as well as a person with practical role of colonising. It is said before that Kurtz’ ability in both spoken and written language is related to his being a perfect colonialist. He uses the language as a means for his real activity which is simply collecting ivory at any cost. Marlow tells about his ability of writing in the report Kurtz had written for “the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs” as follows:

“I’ve read it. It was eloquent, vibrating, with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for!.. But it was a beautiful piece of writing... The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the unbounded power of eloquence – of words – of burning noble words. There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method.”⁵⁴

His success is also valid for the spoken language as it is easily seen in the impression he has on the colonialists and natives. It is said by the Russian that “You don’t talk with this man – you listen to him.”⁵⁵ Kurtz is like a powerful preacher or more a magician of words. The nights pass in the magic of his speech in the deepness of Congo as the Russian says:

⁵³ Said, op. cit., p. 10.

⁵⁴ Conrad, op. cit. pp. 71-72.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 76.

“ ... this man has enlarged my mind ... We talked of everything ... I forgot there was such a thing as sleep. The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything! ... Of, love too ... He made me see things.”⁵⁶

As Marlow comments “He had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour”⁵⁷ Marlow sees him as a ‘voice’ but not as a ‘body’ because his power comes from his words. His ability of language brings him in the symbolical position of swallowing everything in his mouth when he first met Marlow.

“I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow the air, all the earth, all the men before him. A deep voice reached me faintly.”⁵⁸

The heart of darkness that Marlow’s voyage tends to arrive in the depths of Congo, goes through the darkness of Kurtz’ open mouth. The darkness is in the darkness of his voice.

“A voice! A voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of whisper. However, he had enough strength in him – factitious no doubt – to very nearly make an end of us, as you shall hear directly.”⁵⁹

Ross C Murfin analyses Kurtz’ use of the language and Marlow’s respond to it with respect to the ideas of Bruce Johnson as follows:

“Kurtz sets himself up among the natives as a god and creates the *illusion*, of having a wholly adequate language, for anyone worshipped as a God may name and define at will, without being questioned or contradicted. Marlow, though, sees through the illusion and inwardly challenges Kurtz’s language. The severed heads on Kurtz’s fence posts are said by the man in motley, Kurtz’s ‘disciple,’ to be those of ‘rebels.’ ‘Rebels!’ Marlow exclaims to himself. ‘What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers – and these rebels.’ (p. 74)”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 78-79.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 85-86.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 86.

⁶⁰ Ross C Murfin, op. cit. p. 105.

The language creates illusions and realities, classifies people as slaves or masters, and divides people as enemies and allies. The language creates and terminates, it makes people worship or rebel, and it makes people die for something. And Kurtz has the ability to use that language.

Kurtz' voice is the voice of the educated and civilised European and his language is the language of Europe. As it is said "All the Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" with his "half-English" mother, "half-French father", and "German"⁶¹ name meaning short. It is not a coincidence that Kurtz lies unconscious with illness on the opened envelopes and letters "that littered his bed"⁶² when Marlow first sees him. Even in the worst condition he tries to catch life with his tie to the language. We also know that Kurtz had been writing for the papers in Europe, seeing it as a "duty", "for the furthering of" his "ideas."⁶³ "His hand roamed feebly amongst these papers."⁶⁴ Going into the words or into the mouth of Kurtz, Marlow finds the soul lying in the darkness.

"They were common everyday words – the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man."⁶⁵

By the assistance of language, which is a sign of civilisation, but not of light, Imperialism brings death to the uncivilised, as it is seen in the shocking statement of Kurtz: "Exterminate all the brutes!"⁶⁶ The sub-conscious of Western Civilisation and its individual are possessed by the brutal, animalistic instincts. As Marlow says and "Kurtz's last disciple"⁶⁷, the Russian accepts, " he raided the country."⁶⁸ Marlow comprehends this reality in the deepest darkness of Africa.

⁶¹ Conrad, op. cit. p. 71.

⁶² Ibid. p. 86.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 99.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 86.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 95.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 72.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 84.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 80.

"I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror – of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath – 'The horror! The horror!'"⁶⁹

Marlow goes into the heart of darkness; he enters the Inferno and faces the Satan. The Satan he faces is nothing out of his and the Western Civilisation's subconscious. What he comprehends is a voice only, an empty voice. The Western Civilisation is empty as this voice just like the valuable but in fact useless ivory coming out of Africa. It is built on false values, its reality is different from its appearance and there is violence and horror at the bottom of it.

Instead of their experience with the darkness Marlow and Kurtz stay as imperialists because as Edward Said writes:

"... (they) are also creatures of their time and cannot take the next step, which would be to recognize that what they saw, disablingly and disparagingly, as a non-European 'darkness' was in fact a non-European world *resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not, as Conrad reductively says, to re-establish the darkness. Conrad's tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism was essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that 'natives' could lead lives free from European domination. As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them."⁷⁰

However the severe critique of Conrad prepares the medium for the deconstruction of the imperial terms. The parallelism between the rivers Congo and Thames reinforces the real address of the darkness to be in the heart of civilisation. The snake lies in the hearts of the civilised individuals. Avrom Fleishman reads the experience of Kurtz in a similar way as an anarchist one as follows:

"The norm against which Conrad's account of detribalization was written is ultimately the concept of the organic state. For Conrad shows that the natives, as well as Europeans, are destroyed by the breakdown of their relationship with a stable order of society – by their loss of that sense of identity with a larger reality that gives the otherwise anarchic individual a rule of life. If we were to give a name to Kurtz's vision of "the horror," it might appropriately be *anarchy*: that state of social decomposition at the opposite pole from organic

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 99-100.

⁷⁰ Said, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

community. This anarchy is already latent in the individual – individuality and anarchy are implicated in each other – and the absence of an ordering community it springs into action as terrorism...”⁷¹

Fleishman’s point of view tells Kurtz’ becoming a terrorist in the interior Africa.

Marlow comes out of Congo as a resurrection to tell his story. As Maurice Beebe writes:

“When Marlow tells Kurtz’s Intended that the last word spoken by her betrothed was her name, he does not tell a complete lie, for the final scene of the story shows that there is as much horror, as much darkness in the dark-eyed girl herself as in the depths of the Congo” and “... Kurtz’s final utterance- ‘The Horror! The Horror!’- reflects not only his realisation that the darkness of evil is everywhere, but that it drives from within the self.”⁷²

Marlow’s heroic voyage to “the earliest beginnings of history” and into the heart of darkness shows that the real darkness lies in the heart of the civilised individual. The language can be the expression of the darkness within.

The narration of Marlow ends where it began. The unity of the opening and closing scenes of the novel makes the nature to be seen as a continuum like nature, to present the “theme of all experience being one ...”⁷³, as Leo Gurko states. What would happen if Kurtz’ dreams became true? Europe would see the reality a few decades later with the dreams of Hitler.

“How that man could talk. He electrified large meetings. He had faith ... He could get himself believe anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Avrom Fleishman, “The Politics of Imperialism,” *Readings on Heart of Darkness*, Ed. By Clarice Swisher, Greenhaven Press, San Diego, 1995, p. 159.

⁷² Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*, New York University Press, New York, 1964, p. 165.

⁷³ Leo Gurko, *Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile*, Macmillan, New York, 1962, p. 148.

⁷⁴ Conrad op. cit. p. 104.

CHAPTER 2

“AN OUTPOST OF PROGRESS”:

THE CITIZEN

Colonialism is again the main theme in the short story of “An Outpost of Progress.” The setting is Africa, at the Congo basin another Inner Station. The ivory, the natives, the forest all are the same of *Heart of Darkness*. But instead of a mostly respected and valuable character of Mr Kurtz we have two simple and incapable white men, Kayerts and Carlier, who are sent there by the Director of the Company after the death of the founder of the Station. The story tells how these two ordinary citizens being put into the atmosphere of Congo lose their connection with the Western reality and how they die.

The opening paragraph skilfully fixes the main characters and the overtone of the story:

“There were two white men in charge of the trading station. Kayerts, the chief, was short and fat; Carlier, the assistant, was tall, with a large head and a very broad trunk perched upon a long pair of thin legs. The third man on the staff was a Sierra Leone nigger, who maintained that his name was Henry Price. However, for some reason or other, the natives down the river had given him the name of Makola, and it stuck to him through all his wanderings about the country. He spoke English and French with a warbling accent, wrote a beautiful hand, understood bookkeeping, and cherished in his innermost heart the worship of evil spirits... Makola, taciturn and impenetrable, despised the two white men.”¹

From the very beginning, we understand that the white men will not be presented as the talented pioneers of progress, who are seen as deities in the eyes of the natives with the words of Kurtz, but they will be presented as two comic white men; one short and fat and the other tall and thin. They seem to be a duet of a parody. And also contrasting to their comic appearance there is a black man who speaks and writes English and French well, understands bookkeeping, He has got a wife and children

¹ Joseph Conrad, “An Outpost of Progress,” *Selected Short Stories*, Wordsworth Ed. Ltd. Kent, 1997, p. 3.

and his name is Makola. Makola seems to fit to the region as much as the two whites cannot. And instead of the sophisticated white men, we see Makola perishing Kayerts and Carlier. Even the opening paragraph is a decomposition of the classical colonialist picture where the white men bring civilisation, order and security to the uncivilised and unintelligent black* men.

We soon learn that the Director of the Company is also aware of the incapability of these white men. When he realises that the station is useless he sends them away because “they just fit the station.”² Leaving the station in the steamer not to return for another six months the Director thinks with a quiet smile that “they will form themselves there” or at least the company will get rid of them for six months.³ The two were in the country for a very short time, and looking after the steamer without any guidance in the wilderness where “the nearest trading-post was about three hundred miles away”⁴ they feel very much alone. Now the narrator begins to comment on the characters.

“They were two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals, whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds. Few men realize that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions and principles; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd: to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion. But the contact with pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man, brings sudden and profound trouble into the heart. To the sentiment of being alone of one's kind, to the clear perception of the loneliness of one's thoughts, of one's sensations--to the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilized nerves of the foolish and the wise alike.”⁵

The passage talks about the citizens who are, instead of calling their names as individuals, no more individuals than pet animals who live for safety and food. The individual is incapable of thinking and feeling since neither a thought nor a

* Here black means all the races which are not pure white.

² Ibid. p. 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

feeling nor a principle, nor does even any insignificant detail belong to the individual. They all belong to the crowd named society. It is important to note that the narrator does not call it a group or a class but a crowd because it is made of those individuals who cannot think or feel. The crowd believes blindly in its institutions, its police and its morals and do not investigate or question those morals for the sake of safety. Compared to *Nostramo* and *Heart of Darkness*, in this story Conrad criticises the values of the middle class directly, and he exposes his dislike of them openly. However the values that he criticises are the values of the audience he writes for and that is why his settings are so far from the mainland, so out of the crowds either in the deepest Africa or on a lonely ship or in an imaginary South American Province.

And as it is seen clearly , Conrad takes two of those incapable and insignificant citizens out of their safe cities protected by the police and morals outside themselves, and puts them into the middle of the wilderness, to live on their own, far from everything. Being left alone, first the problem of authority arises. Kayerts assumes “his superiority jocularly, but his meaning was serious”⁶ as the chief of the station. The need of being superior or the taught tendency for obedience in a hierarchical order exposes itself first. “Carlier, entering into the spirit of the thing” makes “a military salute” and answers in brisk tone: “Your orders shall be attended to, chief!” Authority as the main brick stone of the order must be constructed first. The ruler and the ruled must be clear. Is it possible for a Western individual live without a ruler or subjects?

On the first day they begin to work quickly to make their house habitable and pretty. The narrator tells how it is impossible for them to get used to that life.

“No two beings could have been more unfitted for such a struggle. Society, not from any tenderness, but because of its strange needs, had taken care of those two men, forbidding them all independent thought, all initiative, all departure from routine; and forbidding it under pain of death. They could only live on condition of being machines. And now, released from the fostering care of men with pens behind the ears, or of men with gold lace on the sleeves, they were like those lifelong prisoners who, liberated after many years, do not know

⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

⁶ Ibid.

what use to make of their freedom. They did not know what use to make of their faculties, being both, through want of practice, incapable of independent thought.”⁷

The narrator accuses the society more than these poor individuals. They are only simple rages of the machine, of the big system. They are resembled to the prisoners of the system. The Western reality that they live in, or which is shown to them as the reality, blinds their sight and stands in front of their freedom of thought like the walls of a prison. The colonial system which exploits kills and makes the natives slaves makes its own citizens prisoners too. In one way or the other the two white men, chosen at random from the ordinary citizens, shares the same faith of being ruled, blinded, exploited, imprisoned and killed like the natives of Africa. The exploitative system gives its citizens a feeling of safety if they fit to its type of the individual, but so does the colonial system in Africa. The natives who obey the whites are again safe. The citizen in London is resembled to the natives of Congo, who are frightened of the whistles of the steamers, who are simple and unintelligent machines doing what their rulers say. For the exposition of this reality these two exemplary individuals are chosen. They are simple men.

Kayerts had worked in the Administration of the Telegraphs for seventeen years happily. His wife was dead and he threw up his job to earn more money for the dowry of his girl. Carlier left the army and because of similar reasons he joined the trade company. The reason of joining the company is the same for both; money. They both regret all the details of their old life: “the gossip, the small enmities, the mild venom, and the little jokes of Government offices, ... , the clink of sabre and spurs on a fine afternoon, the barrack-room witticisms, the girls of garrison towns.”⁸ A kind of affection appears between the two as they are the only ties to their past life for each other and the other one becomes “more precious” there “in the centre of Africa, than a brother could be anywhere else.”⁹

⁷ Ibid. p. 6.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 6-7.

⁹ Ibid. p. 5.

They do nothing but wait for the ivory in their house. They live “like blind men in a large room, aware only of what came in contact with them (and of that only imperfectly), but unable to see the general aspect of things.”¹⁰ This means that the individual of the Western World cannot comprehend the reality of Africa.

“The river, the forest, all the great land throbbing with life, were like a great emptiness. Even the brilliant sunshine disclosed nothing intelligible. Things appeared and disappeared before their eyes in an unconnected and aimless kind of way. The river seemed to come from nowhere and flow nowhither. It flowed through a void. Out of that void, at times, came canoes, and men with spears in their hands would suddenly crowd the yard of the station.”¹¹

The void is of both a cultural and physical one. That is a great void what they are thrown into. They can do nothing but sit passive and watch the things which appear to them unconnected and aimless. The void is in fact the cultural depression they live in the darkness of Africa. Making fun of the natives as “funny brutes” or “fine animals”¹² they are still not aware of their own position. Makola takes the ivories and give “the beads, cotton cloth, red kerchiefs, brass wire, and other trade goods”¹³ in turn, which seems an absurd trade. The storehouse that the trade goods are kept in every station is called “the fetish, perhaps because of the spirit of civilisation it contained.”¹⁴

The narrator mocks them by calling “the two pioneers of trade and progress.”¹⁵ They understand and care for nothing except “for the passage of days that separated them from the steamer’s return.”¹⁶ The steamer’s return means the return of the Western reality that they have lost the connection. With it they can go back, with it the white man who knows the business come. Thus, comes their only touch with the reality they know and their only hope: the steamer. They also find some other bits of connection in the torn books left by their predecessor. They are

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid.

surprised and amused by those novels as “they had never read anything of the kind before.”¹⁷ “In the centre of Africa” they make “acquaintance of Richelieu and of d'Artagnan, of Hawk's Eye and of Father Goriot, and of many other people.”¹⁸ The novels become an escape for them to the Western reality or illusion. They talk about the characters and make discussions about the plots. “All these imaginary personages” become “subjects for gossip as if they had been living friends.”¹⁹ In a way they begin to escape from the reality of Congo with the illusion of these novels. Does the narrator want to say something about the audience of these novels? Maybe it is implied that the reader public of the civilisation that talks, discusses and even forms some discussion clubs of literature, escapes from the reality of the Western World like the two fools escape from the reality of Congo? And another possibility lies in the stress of the narrator on their reading literature for the first time. This also implies their place in the class context. These two men are from the lower middle class who earns as much as they can live, who are not educated and who are far away from the tastes of the higher classes. Because of their education and class context they can never be a kind of Mr Kurtz. They are only simple subjects that are ruled by the intelligent white men. This relationship is not so different from the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, or the master and the slave. Thus one can arrive at the conclusion that as colonialism exploits the alien lands and its people, capitalism exploits its own land and its own people. This conclusion means that the economic and ethic roots of the Western Culture are poor materialistic ones below the appearance of democratic and humanistic values.

Kayerts and Carlier find the “old copies of a home paper” named “Our Colonial Expansion” written in “high-flown language.”²⁰ “It spoke much of the rights and duties of civilization, of the sacredness of the civilizing work, and extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith and commerce to the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

dark places of the earth."²¹ The justification of colonialism consoles them. Forgetting their dead predecessor they think they will be written in history.

"In a hundred years, there will be perhaps a town here. Quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and--and--billiard-rooms. Civilization, my boy, and virtue--and all. And then, chaps will read that two good fellows, Kayerts and Carlier, were the first civilized men to live in this very spot!"²²

Among these days of consolation, escape and wait for the steamer's return, one thing does not escape from their eyes; the grave of their predecessor and the cross on it. "A tall cross" under which "slept the man who had seen the beginning of all this; who had planned and watched the construction of this outpost progress."²³ He is called as 'the artist' as "he had been an unsuccessful painter"²⁴ at home. The reference to the founder of the station as an artist bears out a resemblance to Mr Kurtz. However there is not much hints to develop this resemblance and in fact there is not much need to develop it as all the characters including Mr Kurtz are presented as the exemplary ones to arrive at a higher conclusion about colonialism or human nature or a pessimistic view of life which can change according to the reader. What is more important here is the fear of death symbolised in the cross of the dead artist, the fear which never leaves Kayerts and Carlier. The narrator's comment on fear is important.

"Fear always remains. A man may destroy everything within himself, love and hate and belief, and even doubt; but as long as he clings to life he cannot destroy fear: the fear, subtle, indestructible, and terrible, that pervades his being; that tinges his thoughts; that lurks in his heart; that watches on his lips the struggle of his last breath."²⁵

Putting the fear as the most basic instinct of human nature, one can explain the relationships between nature and man, or the social relationships at the basin of the fear. Returning to the passage about "the organisation of the civilised crowds"

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 16.

where “safety” is the most important aspect, and “police” is the protector of the safety fear is again on the scene as the protector of the system. Unfortunately the poor natives of the land come face to face with a highly systemised kind of fear with the coming of the white men.

The chief of the neighbouring villages Gobila, who is called father Gobila because of his paternal manner, visits them in some intervals. He likes the white men and sees them as immortals. “The death of the artist, who was the first white man whom he knew intimately, did not disturb this belief, because he was firmly convinced that the white stranger had pretended to die and got himself buried for some mysterious purpose of his own, into which it was useless to inquire.”²⁶ Gobila passes the affection created by the artist in him to these two white men as he believed that they are the brothers of the artist. Gobila’s village supports them with “fowls, and sweet potatoes, and palm wine, and sometimes a goat.”²⁷ The stations used these local supplies to survive, the Company never provisioned the stations fully. Five months pass in this way.

But then, some strangers come on a steamer. They are armed black men from the coast. “For the first time” Kayerts and Carlier become “aware that they lived in conditions where the unusual may be dangerous, and that there was no power on earth outside of themselves to stand between them and the unusual.”²⁸ They load their revolvers. They also make their mind to keep their men ready in the case of some trouble after the strangers leave.

Through the middle of the story these men are for the first time mentioned as unimportant animals kept there. They are the station men left by the director, taken of a distant tribe and “serving the cause of progress for upwards of two years”. With their insufficient feeding with rice that they could not get used to and with their

²⁶ Ibid. p. 9.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

collapsed bodies they are given tasks like “grass-cutting, fence-building, tree-felling etc.”²⁹ The narrator tells about their misery.

“Belonging to a tribe from a very distant part of the land of darkness and sorrow, they did not run away, naturally supposing that as wandering strangers they would be killed by the inhabitants of the country, in which they were right... They were not happy, regretting the festive incantations, the sorceries, the human sacrifices of their own land; where they also had parents, brothers, sisters, admired chiefs, respected magicians, loved friends, and other ties supposed generally to be human... Consequently they were unhealthy and miserable. Had they been of any other tribe they would have made up their minds to die--for nothing is easier to certain savages than suicide--and so have escaped from the puzzling difficulties of existence. But belonging, as they did, to a warlike tribe with filed teeth, they had more grit, and went on stupidly living through disease and sorrow.”³⁰

The stress is on their being human beings too. Their social ties of family and friendship are shown to expose the dehumanisation of the colonialism. In the hand of white men these human beings are only slaves who are sold and killed.

Kayerts and Carlier consider slavery as an awful thing and think how “frightful” are “their sufferings”³¹ which makes the narrator tell about the words and the feelings behind them.

“They believed their words. Everybody shows a respectful deference to certain sounds that he and his fellows can make. But about feelings people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. Nobody knows what suffering or sacrifice mean--except, perhaps the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions.”³²

The passage shows the inability of the civilised people to understand these cruelties as an outsider. We as the readers have the same inability for the narrator.

Thinking that the station is in a very bad order Makola sells these station men to the coast people with guns, the traders from Loanda “who fight with people, and catch women and children.”³³ Makola sell them to take ivory in turn. Even Kayerts and Carlier cannot believe in this. He sold their men for those tusks only. And the

²⁹ Ibid. p. 12.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

³¹ Ibid. p. 15.

³² Ibid.

worst was some of Gobila's people were there and they are carried off. This meant a problem with the local supply.

As Kayerts and Carlier guess the supplies coming from the village of Gobila is cut because of the people "they had lost by the witchcraft of white men, who had brought wicked people to their country."³⁴ They try to communicate with the village people but receive "a shower of arrows"³⁵ in turn. Losing the assistance of father Gobila may be symbolical with Gobila's parental image. By their inhumanity and wickedness they lose the affection of the father, the God. And in turn the God sends his curse on them by leaving them starving.

We hear some known words from the mouth of Carlier that we also heard from Kurtz. He talks about "the necessity of exterminating all the niggers before the country could be made habitable."³⁶ Passing the days without the food coming from Gobila's village, they eat only rice boiled without salt and drink coffee without sugar and curse on the Company. They began to live like their old slaves. The narrator puts his harsh comment on that point. "One must have lived on such diet to discover what ghastly trouble the necessity of swallowing one's food may become."³⁷ Their only hope is the steamer's return but the Director, having one of the steamers wrecked and "relieving very distant and important stations on the main river" thinks "the useless station, and useless men, could wait."³⁸

The insufficient nutrition and the long waiting for the steamer upsets their psychology more. The affection between them begins to decline, the fellowship changes, a kind of alienation enters between them. They began to question each other.

"Kayerts looked up quickly. Carlier was smiling with marked insolence. And suddenly it seemed to Kayerts that he had never seen that man before. Who was he? He knew nothing

³³ Ibid. p. 13.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 16.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 18.

³⁸ Ibid.

about him. What was he capable of? There was a surprising flash of violent emotion within him, as if in the presence of something undreamt-of, dangerous, and final."³⁹

The discussion arises because of the sugar that is left for hard conditions such as illness. Carlier wants to drink his coffee with it. Due to their spoiled psychology a quarrel grows up and taking their revolvers out, a pursue around the hut begins. During this Kayerts thinks:

"What was it all about? He thought it must be a horrible illusion; he thought he was dreaming; he thought he was going mad! After a while he collected his senses. What did they quarrel about? That sugar! How absurd! He would give it to him--didn't want it himself. And he began scrambling to his feet with a sudden feeling of security. But before he had fairly stood upright, a commonsense reflection occurred to him and drove him back into despair. He thought: "If I give way now to that brute of a soldier, he will begin this horror again tomorrow--and the day after--every day--raise other pretensions, trample on me, torture me, make me his slave--and I will be lost! Lost! The steamer may not come for days--may never come."⁴⁰

Kayerts feels that "death and life had in a moment become equally difficult and terrible."⁴¹ Thinking that Carlier has a revolver too Kayerts shoots him. When Makola comes he discovers that the dead Carlier had no gun. Kayerts' psychology goes worse. He feels confused. He develops a new understanding and it is as a kind of rebirth in fact.

"Kayerts shut his eyes. Everything was going round. He found life more terrible and difficult than death. He had shot an unarmed man... He seemed to have broken loose from himself altogether. His old thought, convictions, likes and dislikes, things he respected and things he abhorred, appeared in their true light at last! Appeared contemptible and childish, false and ridiculous. He revelled in his new wisdom while he sat by the man he had killed. He argued with himself about all things under heaven with that kind of wrong-headed lucidity which may be observed in some lunatics. Incidentally he reflected that the fellow dead there had been a noxious beast anyway; that men died every day in thousands; perhaps in hundreds of thousands--who could tell?--and that in the number, that one death could not possibly make any difference; couldn't have any importance, at least to a thinking creature. He, Kayerts, was a thinking creature. He had been all his life, till that moment, a believer in a lot of nonsense like the rest of mankind--who are fools; but now he thought! He knew! He was at peace; he was familiar with the highest wisdom!"⁴²

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 19.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 20.

⁴² Ibid. p. 41.

The understanding comes too late to change something. Being a thinking creature for years he knew and thought nothing but what the society wanted him to know and think. In the new consciousness of life or with his highest wisdom he sees his past life a foolish one. The rest of the society does not represent anything more than foolishness. He achieves peace at last. He hears a whistle in the fog. The fog and the mist are symbolical.

"He stood up. The day had come, and a heavy mist had descended upon the land: the mist penetrating, enveloping, and silent; the morning mist of tropical lands; the mist that clings and kills; the mist white and deadly, immaculate and poisonous. He stood up, saw the body, and threw his arms above his head with a cry like that of a man who, waking from a trance, finds himself immured forever in a tomb. "Help! . . . My God!""⁴³

Paradoxically the mist represents the realisation for Kayerts. As all the values and meanings change in the atmosphere of Africa, the illusion and reality change places too. He finds his realisation in the illusionary mist. And when he finds it the steamer comes through that mist of reality as an illusion of Progress.

*"A shriek inhuman, vibrating and sudden, pierced like a sharp dart the white shroud of that land of sorrow. Three short, impatient screeches followed, and then, for a time, the fog-wreaths rolled on, undisturbed, through a formidable silence. Then many more shrieks, rapid and piercing, like the yells of some exasperated and ruthless creature, rent the air. Progress was calling to Kayerts from the river. Progress and civilization and all the virtues. Society was calling to its accomplished child to come, to be taken care of, to be instructed, to be judged, to be condemned; it called him to return to that rubbish heap from which he had wandered away, so that justice could be done."*⁴⁴

The narrator stresses the coming of the director by calling him "The managing Director of the Great Civilising Company."⁴⁵ They find Kayerts "hanging by a leather strap from the cross"⁴⁶ on the grave of the artist. The last paragraph of the story telling the image of the hanging Kayerts ends with a beautiful sentence: "And,

⁴³ Ibid. p. 22.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 23.

irreverently, he was putting out a swollen tongue at his managing director.”⁴⁷ The realisation comes to Kayerts too late and too painfully that he commits suicide.

Kayerts and Carlier, two ordinary citizens of the Western Civilisation, put into the wilderness in the name of trade and progress cannot fit the realities of the country and die. Their death questions the basic concepts of the Western Culture like reality and illusion. The realities that the story question most are more about the colonial ones to arrive at a general decomposition of the values that compose the Western Ideal. Having a new understanding of the world he lives in Kayerts refuses to answer the call of the Progress⁴⁸. It is a progress which does not only exploit the alien lands and their people but also its own land and public. “An Outpost of Progress”, more than any other work of Conrad, questions the colonial activity and the civilisation behind it so harshly.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 22.

CHAPTER 3
NOSTROMO:
A STATE

Among the large scale of characters in *Nostramo*, the most important ones are certainly the San Tome Mine and the silver in it. The mine affects changes and shapes the lives of all the other characters. It is over all the individuals who try to adopt a society gathered for nothing but for the material interests. Isolation and alienation waits for those individuals who cannot adopt the organic society of Sulaco which can also be accepted as an exemplary to the modern societies in general. The aim of this paper is to analyse the shaping influence of the material interests, represented as the silver of the mine in *Nostramo*, on the individual behaviours of the modern society with all its institutions, politics and social relationships.

Nostramo's setting is Sulaco which is a part of an imaginary South American State, Costaguana. Sulaco takes attention first with its physical isolation from the rest of the country. It is sheltered with high mountains from the north and can only be reached by the sea. In fact Sulaco was not an important part of the state but a usual coasting port until the treasure of the mine was found.

Sulaco's "political atmosphere" is "stormy" living "between the revolutions."¹ With its political changes and civil wars The Province is chaotic. Just from the very beginning of the novel, the chaos is implied to be brought by the silver with the legend of the two gringos spectral and alive, waiting for the discovered treasure. The peaceful past of Sulaco with its "luxuriant beauty of orange gardens"² is presented as an antidote to the chaos. "The atmospheric conditions which had kept away the merchant fleets of bygone ages induced the OSN Company to violate the sanctuary of peace sheltering the calm existence of Sulaco."³ The Oceanic Steam

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Nostramo*, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., ed. 1996, p. 10.

² *Ibid.* p. 5.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

Navigation Company's existence in Sulaco is a sign of the material interests taking roots in the province. The company's ships, with their names taken all from mythology become "the household words of a coast that had never been ruled by the gods of Olympus."⁴ The reference is symbolical to mean a Western interference in a peaceful country, to bring chaos and disorder. Moreover, after the chaos, again the same OSN stands "very high for trustworthiness"⁵ due to its care for people's lives and property. In fact, Captain Mitchell, the representative of the company in Sulaco, is seen with "his profound knowledge of men and things in the country"⁶ to sometimes relate them as a historian. This double and contrary approach to the Western interference will need to be dealt later on.

The chaotic condition of Costaguana, which is no more different from the other South American countries that imperialism held its hand on, seems to be usual for the Europeans. Even God is likely to forget them as Mrs Gould's expresses: "God looked wrathfully at these countries, or else He would let some ray of hope fall through a rift in the appalling darkness of intrigue, bloodshed, and crime that hung over the Queen of Continents."⁷ Mrs Gould's general comment on America brings the question of imperialism into the matter. The peaceful past of this old Aztec country was first shattered by the coming of General Cartez whose flag is still the flag of the Ribierist State in Costaguana. The peace of America is no more gained back. Whatever their comments are, the Europeans seem to be responsible for the disorder and the narration gives the hints of this point of view without taking a direct side in the quarrel. The quarrel will be exposed more plainly later with the Monterist Revolution which exploits the Nationalism and anti-imperialism to declare a war "against France, England, Germany, and the United States, who, by introducing railways, mining enterprises, colonisation, and under such other shallow pretences,

⁴ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. p. 57.

aimed at poor people of their lands.”⁸ When Captain Mitchell accuses Sotillo, for his soldiers’ theft of his watch, Sotillo answers as:

“You foreigners come here to rob our country of its wealth. You never have enough! Your audacity knows no bounds ... It is you Mitchell ... who are the thief, not my soldiers!”⁹

The question of imperialism lies there in the various conflicts of the novel between the Europeans and the Americans and so on. Understanding this conflict is like understanding the history of San Tome Mine which was given to the European Goulds as a Concession to take out its treasure, silver.

The English Gould family is in Costaguana for three generations. The uncle Gould is killed in one of those usual revolutions. The father Gould “one of the most wealthy merchants of Costaguana”¹⁰ also dies in the country. The name “Gould” has a good reputation among the Costaguaneros. Goulds are “liberators, explores, coffee planters, merchants, revolutionists – of Costaguana” and Charles Gould is “the only representative of the third generation.”¹¹ He tells the position of Goulds in the country with an open idealisation when he is talking about his uncle:

“Uncle Harry was no adventurer. In Costaguana we Goulds are no adventurers. He was of the country, and he loved it, but he remained essentially an Englishman in his ideas. He made use of the political cry of his time. It was Federation. But he was no politician. He stood up for social order out of pure love for rational liberty and from his hate of oppression. There was no nonsense about him. He went to work in his own way because it seemed right, just as I feel I must lay hold of that mine.”¹²

Ironically the addiction of Gould family to social order and rational liberty has always something to do with the wealth of the country. However Charles Gould makes the justification of these material interests also well.

“What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one can claim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm

⁸ Ibid. p. 263.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 124-125.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 37.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 33.

¹² Ibid. p. 45.

footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That's your ray of hope."¹³

The passage stands for a pure justification of capitalism and imperialism as a light giver. They are said to bring civilisation, order and security in the long term. It whose is a rational explanation for the Western Civilisation economical basis is capitalism and imperialism, and more it stands for "man's necessity to justify himself by the 'idea', to idealise himself and his actions into moral significance of some order, to find sanctions"¹⁴, as Robert Penn Warren states.

The interest of Charles Gould in the San Tome Mine begins in Europe, with his father's letters, where he takes his traditional education like all of the other members of the Gould family. By the possession of the mine which "had been granted to him and his descendants for ever"¹⁵, father Gould begins to write nothing but about the mine. The effect of the mine on the father Gould reminds the legend of the gringos and the curse.

"He groaned over the injustice, the persecution, the outrage of that mine; he occupied whole pages in the exposition of the fatal consequences attaching to the possession of that mine from every point of view, with every dismal inference, with words of horror at the apparently eternal character of that curse...He implored his son never to return to Costaguana, never to claim any part of inheritance there, because it was tainted by the infamous Concession; never to touch it, never to approach it, to forget that America existed, and pursue a mercantile career in Europe. And each letter ended with bitter self-reproaches for having stayed too long in that cavern of thieves, intriguers, and brigands."¹⁶

At the age of fourteen Charles Gould grows "more and more interested in that thing which could provoke such a tumult of words and passion."¹⁷ When he is twenty he begins to visit mines in Germany and Spain to study about them "from a personal

¹³ Ibid. pp. 57-58.

¹⁴ Robert Penn Warren, "On Nostromo," *The Art of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Symposium*, Ed. By. R. W. Stallman, Ohio University Press, Ohio, 1982, p. 218.

¹⁵ Conrad, op. cit. p. 40.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 39-40.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 40-41.

point of view...as one would study the varied characters of men.”¹⁸ When his father dies after his sufferings “from fever, from liver pains, and mostly from a worrying inability to think of anything else”¹⁹ but the mine, it is the son Gould’s turn to take over the thing. His journey is implied to be another one into the heart of darkness, by the terrifying death of the father.

Mr Gould’s taking up the mine in spite of the contrary will of his father seems to be symbolic. He breaks the rule of his father by doing so. Yıldız Tuncer Kılıç states in her thesis on Organicism that: “The invocation of the divine within the novel to establish the father as the patriarchal corner stone of middle-class ethos is vital to the further construction of the myth of bourgeoisie ethic as a natural, pre-historic and pre-social order.”²⁰ According to this statement, by breaking the tie between him and his father, the son Gould goes out of the bourgeoisie ethic. But for what? The answer shows itself quickly in the person of the American capitalist Holroyd who becomes a second father figure to Gould. Gould begins the work first by taking the assistance of the great American capitalist Holroyd from San Francisco who is “considerable in finance and industry” with his name “familiar to many millions of people.”²¹ The American capital makes its way into Sulaco through Charles Gould. Holroyd as the great American imperialist needs to be dealt on to begin with his ancestors. “His parentage was German and Scotch and English, with remote strains of Danish and French blood, giving him the temperament of a Puritan and an insatiable imagination of conquest.”²² His roots belong to the great imperialists of Nineteenth Century, and he belongs to the new imperial power of the Twentieth Century with an advanced capitalism and Puritanism as the ethical basis of the economic system. His ideas on Costaguana and San Tomé Mine tells much about the American Imperialism.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 39.

²⁰ Yıldız Tuncer Kılıç, **Organicism: The Explanation and Exposition of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century English Novel**, Ph. D. Thesis, İstanbul University, İstanbul, 2002, p. 85.

²¹ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 49.

²² Ibid. p. 53.

"Now, what is Costaguana? It is the bottomless pit of 10 percent loans and other fool investments. European capital has been flung into it with both hands for years. Not ours, though. 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. 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, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold of turns up at 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. The world can't help it – neither can we, I guess."²³

Edward W. Said finds the roots of America's 'New World Order' in Holroyd.

The rhetoric is the same.

"... we are number one, we are bound to lead, we stand for freedom and order, and so on. No American has been immune from this structure of feeling, and yet the implicit warning contained in Conrad's portraits of Holroyd and Gould is rarely reflected on since the rhetoric of power all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when deployed in an imperial setting. Yet it is a rhetoric whose most damning characteristic is that it has been used before, not just once (by Spain and Portugal) but with deafeningly repetitive frequency in the modern period, by the British, the French, the Belgians, the Japanese, the Russians, and now the Americans."²⁴

This rhetoric is certainly the rhetoric of an imperialist. Holroyd's approach to the matter of San Tomé Mine is simply seeing it as an "experiment"²⁵ that has a little risk. The difference for him is the way of work as the narrator puts it:

"He was not running a great enterprise there; no mere railway board or industrial corporation. He was running a man!"²⁶

Gould goes out of the patriarchal order and the bourgeoisie ethic, by working the mine against the will of his father, and adopts himself to another ethic of an imperialist one in the new phase of Industrial Capitalism. And it is not possible to call it an ethic because as it will be seen clearly Imperialism has no moral order or limit at all. As well as Imperialism, this change in the father figures also indicates the change of balance between the Britain and America as the world powers.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Said, op. cit. p. 19.

²⁵ Conrad, op. cit. p. 54.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 56.

The first chapters of the novel expose material interests' taking their roots in the country. Although Charles Gould is the object of examination on the surface level, he is no more than a puppet of the greater capitalists like Holroyd. Charles Gould is nothing more than a tool for Holroyd. As Gould has his own personal motives and justifications so does the capitalist Holroyd. Whatever the motives of the individuals are, they are not free from the larger motives tied with social and economic conditions as in the example of Charles Gould. He is controlled by another man. His motives and justifications have clearly other motives and justifications behind them.

Nostramo is full of various characters with different characteristics and life stories. However, the novel zooms to some of them while it protects the aesthetic distance by various ways of narration and narrators. The novel never loses the distancing effect that brings the individualities of the characters into an objective showcase. Albert J. Guerard comments on the aesthetic distance as follows:

*"Nostramo thus carries further than usual a classical stratagem: to actualise the whole through the glittering fragment, the important through the peripheral or the irrelevant. And it recognises that a successful visualising of the strange or the ridiculous may lend more reality than a successful visualising of the obvious and ordinary.... This is then one of Nostramo's methods: to humanise moderately the important characters and to actualise a great mine through a cigar in a baby's mouth and the beads on his rotund stomach... Yet we are essentially dealing with the same creative temperament that refuses to give the normal, logical, expected emphasis: a temperament that insists on changing the lens, insists on varying distances, and by the same token keeps its distance."*²⁷

Thus the existence of the various characters and many digressions can be understood: for the achievement of the distance. And this explains why the novel does not give more information or a general depiction about some characters like Holroyd. It is enough to give his idea of religion through Mrs Gould mouth.

The working of San Tome Mine with its rich veins makes Sulaco the most important Province of Costaguana. As it is said in the Gould's justification of material interests, capital is the most important thing for the economy to bring order

²⁷ Albert J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 181-182.

and security. The state of Sulaco with its institutions must be tied up with the capital, silver. And as the owner of it, Charles Gould must have the utmost importance on the politics of the country. The last revolution that brought Senor Ribiera and the Blancos to the rule, which happens off stage of the narration, is said to be financed by Gould.

Charles Gould, as the owner of “the Gould Silver mine, the biggest thing in Sulaco, and even in the whole Republic”, is known in Costaguana as “El Rey de Sulaco” or “the King of Sulaco”²⁸ The owner of the capital is the owner of the state as Marx indicates. As somebody will utter the word that the officials of Sulaco are not the officials of the Government, “they are the officials of the mine –officials of the Concession...The political Jefe, the chief of the police, the chief of the customs, the general, all, all, are the officials of that Gould.”²⁹ Or in other words Gould is the owner of the Province of Sulaco. The questioning of the roots of the capitalist state is probably because of the “modern statecraft that troubled Conrad deeply, namely Imperialism, and Conrad’s hapless quest for an antidote to that evil among modern political systems – in democracy, in socialism, and even in anarchism”³⁰ as Türkan Araz writes. The various references to these systems like the new class consciousness of Nostromo or the bombing plan of the mountain can be understood on this basis.

Avrom Fleishman, too, deals with the statecraft in the novel. As he mentions “given the intimate connection of the novel’s themes with the history of imperialism in Latin America, it is possible to read (though by no means to exhaust) *Nostromo* as a record of the transition from precapitalist to capitalist – and, prospectively, to postcapitalist – society.”³¹ This kind of interpretation, which is unavoidable, will bring an understanding of the characters in the class context too, beginning with the bourgeoisie.

²⁸ Conrad, op. cit. p.63.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 75.

³⁰ Türkan Araz, *The Art of “Non-Commitment”: Problematic Issues in Conrad’s Major Fiction*, Ph. D. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, 1992.

³¹ Avrom Fleishman, *Conrad’s Politics*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1967, p. 171.

Being an example in the formation of a capitalist state Sulaco also creates a medium to criticise the other capitalist states. The journey into the history of the mine is also a journey to the foundations of the capitalist state and maybe Keiernan Ryan is right in saying that “in relating the history of the founding of the Sulacan Republic a modern capitalist state within the controlling matrix of American imperialism, Conrad ... inflicts on himself the narrative exploration of a social order he instinctively endorses, but whose unjust, dehumanizing rationale and alienating consequences he apprehends with painful clarity.”³²

Silver is described as “the true expression of an emotion or the emergence of a principle”³³ and the San Tome Mine as “an institution, a rallying point for everything in the Province that needed order and stability to live.” As the narrator puts it “security seemed to flow upon this land from the mountain-gorge.”³⁴ The power of the silver; both dangerous and vital as a continuous contrasting metaphor, constitutes in the Province as an institution, as a deeper state or as an “Imperium in Imperio.”³⁵

Doctor Monygham is the medical pastor of this institution, Don Jose Avellanos is the military leader and Father Roman is the priest; “all her ministers of state.”³⁶ More than a simple priest, Father Roman, as it is indicated in his name, stands as a metaphor of the religion as a part of imperialism. As a missionary, for Father Roman “the idea of political honour, justice, and honesty ... consists in the restitution of the confiscated Church property. Nothing else could have drawn that fierce converter of savage Indians out of the wilds to work for the Ribierist cause!”³⁷ Father Roman is no more than a tool of the imperialism again. T. McAlindon sees the religion of Sulaco as an “official imported religion” to discuss it as a device of imperialism and he relates:

³² Kiernan Ryan, “Revelation and Repression in Conrad’s *Nostromo*,” *Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo*, Ed. By. Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1987, p. 47.

³³ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 73.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 75.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 76.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 128.

“the link between San Tomé and San Francisco - on which the welfare of everyone, and especially that of the so-called Indians, is thought to depend ... Sanctuaries to which all look for protection and a ray of light, relics of a corrupted ideal, these two places are arguably the novel’s most important symbols of historical betrayal and sham. Their ironic function, too, is greatly enhanced at the end when Cardinal Corbelan and ‘the heroic Father Roman’ gird themselves to resist the missionaries who are on their way from San Francisco with a yet purer form of religion for the benighted Indians.”³⁸

With its religion, “with its organisation, its population growing fiercely attached to their position of privileged safety, with its armoury, with its Don Pépé, with its armed body of serenos (where, it was said, many an outlaw and deserter – and even some members of Hernandez’s band – had found a place), the mine was a power in the land.”³⁹

The power of the mine changes the simple coasting port of Sulaco:

“the San Tome mine had already thrown its subtle influence. It had altered, too, the outward character of the crowds on feast days on the plaza before the open portal of the cathedral, by the number of white ponchos with a green stripe affected as holiday wear by the San Tome miners. They had also adopted white hats with green cord and braid – articles of good quality, which could be obtained in the storehouse of the administration for very little money. A peaceable Cholo wearing these colours (unusual in Costaguana) was somehow very seldom beaten to within an inch of his life on a charge of disrespect to the town police; neither ran he much risk of being suddenly lassoed on the road by a recruiting party of lanceros – a method of voluntary enlistment looked upon as almost legal in the Republic.”⁴⁰

The silver carried from the mountain to the port is like “another victory gained in the conquest of peace for Sulaco”⁴¹ for the Goulds. However the mine begins to effect Charles Gould negatively as it did his father.

“The Mine” corrupts “his judgement by making sick of bribing and intriguing merely to have his work left alone from day by day.”⁴² His similarity to his

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ T. McAlindon, “*Nostramo*: Conrad’s Organicist Philosophy of History,” *Joseph Conrad’s Nostramo*, Ed. By. Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1987, p. 64.

³⁹ Conrad, op. cit. p. 75.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 67.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 78.

⁴² Ibid. p. 245.

father and uncle continues. Like his father he does not like to be robbed which "exasperates him."⁴³ And like his uncle killed in Sulaco, he goes

"forth into the senseless fray as his poor uncle, whose sword hung on the wall of his study, had gone forth – in the defence of the commonest decencies of organised society. Only his weapon was the wealth of the mine, more far-reaching and subtle than an honest blade of steel fitted into a simple brass guard."⁴⁴

Even at the worst situation, Gould's justifications of the organised society continues. As Warren states "the lowest creature must, in some way, idealize his existence in order to exist, and must find suctions outside himself."⁴⁵ But more than the idealisation the similarity of Charles Gould to his ancestors takes attention, which foreshadows the tragic end. The comparison continues with the adventurers. "After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions."⁴⁶ As the narration advances Charles Gould begins to live a realisation as the sentence above indicates. Gould, whose family "was no adventurer in Costaguana" at the beginning of the novel, perceives that he is a descendant of the adventurers after all. "For all the uprightness of his character" he has "something of an adventurer's easy morality which takes count of the personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action."⁴⁷ And the self-realisation ends with an almost anarchist plan. Charles Gould is "prepared, if needed be, to blow up San Tomé mountain sky high out of the territory of the Republic"⁴⁸ in a Monterist threat. This resolution does not only express the tenacity of his character but it also expresses his blowing up of the idealisations with his capitalist justifications leaving back simple greed for material interests. Or in Ursula Lord's words: "Idealism has

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Warren, loc. cit. p. 217.

⁴⁶ Conrad, op. cit. p. 245.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

degenerated into obsession; means have become ends; possession is now its own justification.”⁴⁹ Instead of loosing the mine, he prefers to blow it up with its society.

Sulaco is not an end of exploitation for the Westerners but it is also a medium for the colonisation of the inner America. The construction of the Central Railway is also “a project for systematic colonisation of the Occidental Province”⁵⁰ which is, in Decoud’s words, “to put money in the pockets of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Americans, Germans, and God knows who else.”⁵¹

Among the systematic colonisation and capitalisation of the country through the mine, Charles Gould mostly stands for the material interests as it is said before whereas his wife Emily Gould stands for the humanitarian side of those material interests. Instead of his husband’s coldness, she is the sympathy personified. And in a way her “unselfishness and sympathy”⁵² includes the materialism of her husband. The system must give something to its people. Mrs Gould is represented with education and hospitals; she is the civilising influence of material interests in Sulaco.

It is not a coincidence that Mrs Gould is represented “in the general life of the Gould Concession ... by her two lieutenants, the doctor and the priest.”⁵³ She is education, cure, care and religion. Mrs Gould is simply the complementary of materialism while on the other hand she is the opposite of materialism. As “an orphan from early childhood and without fortune, brought up in an atmosphere of intellectual interests (she) had never considered the aspects of great wealth ... even the most legitimate touch of materialism was wanting in Mrs Gould’s character.”⁵⁴ “She thinks of her own schools, of her hospitals, of the mothers with the young babies, of every sick old man in the ... villages.”⁵⁵ At the same time she stands for

⁴⁹ Ursula Lord, *Solitude versus Solidarity in the Novels of Joseph Conrad: Political and Epistemological Implications of Narrative Innovation*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Quebec, 1998, p. 238.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 80.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 155.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 102.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 51.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 128.

pure religion too when she sees the religion of Holroyd as “the religion of silver and iron” and sees him as someone who looks upon “his own God as a sort of influential partner, who gets its share of profits in the endowment of churches.”⁵⁶ From this point of view, Holroyd and his religion works for the imperialist causes while Mrs Gould’s works for the nationalistic purposes of Sulaco with a powerful justification of order and security in the country. Nevertheless both religions end at the same place, since Mrs Gould stands for the complementary of capitalism in Sulaco.

By all means, the most important outcome of capitalism in social relationships is alienation. And it is possible to see it in the basic family relationships, between the husband and the wife. Alienation of Mr Gould and Mrs Gould is obvious in the following passage.

“The fate of San Tome Mine was lying heavy upon her heart. It was a long time now since she had begun to fear it. It had been an idea. She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into monstrous and crushing weight. It was as if the inspiration of the early years had left her heart to turn into a wall of silver-bricks, erected by the silent work of evil spirits, between her and her husband. He seemed to dwell alone within a circumvolution of precious metal, leaving her outside with her school, her hospital, the sick mothers and the feeble old men, mere insignificant vestiges of the initial inspiration. ‘Those poor people!’ she murmured to herself.”⁵⁷

Mathew Waller reads the marriage of Goulds allegorically and comments on the alienation of the couple. He sees

“the marriage of Charles and Emily Gould ... as the marriage of Materialism and Altruism: in brief, the notion that industrial expansion constitutes some sort of uplifting of the downtrodden. Only while two concepts are ‘married,’ as it were, is industry able to justify itself as ‘progress’ in some humanitarian sense. The Gould’s gradual alienation can be read as embodying the historical process by which the material interests lose that altruistic justification... the Goulds do not actually divorce may illustrate the fig leaf of service that industrialism still employs, and must employ, but their alienation is otherwise total, and certainly in today’s world material ‘progress’ has so lost its humanitarian faith that one must employ scare quotes to be taken seriously.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 49.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 150.

⁵⁸ Mathew Waller, “Allegorical *Nostramo*: Following *Nostramo*’s Characters as Allegories,” (Çevirimiçi) <http://www.Nostramoonline.com>, 5th of March 2004.

Rather than this allegoric explanation of their alienation, San Tome mine becomes a barrier between the couple. The mine turns out to be an obsession for Mr Gould, as it was for his father. The mine gets "the hold of Charles Gould with a grip as deadly as ever it had laid upon his father."⁵⁹

"Charles Gould's fits for abstraction depicted the energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea. A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice; for he may not bring the heaven down pitilessly upon a loved head? The eyes of Mrs Gould watching her husband's profile, filled with tears again."⁶⁰

Too late to break the tie between the mine and her husband Mrs Gould tolerates her husband and continues their alienated marriage seeing "the despair of the unfortunate Antonia"⁶¹ who will live similar pains in her relationships with her father and darling.

The stiffness of Charles Gould's justifications to bring security and order to the country exposes itself barely when he sees the threat of losing the mine. With the dynamites ready to blow down the mine, he decides to close it forever instead of loosing it. He ties "the existence of the mine" to his "personal safety."⁶² The idea of terminating the mine is not a result of protecting his family but a result of dependence to a fetish. Not only this last plan of blowing the mine of, but also his relationship with the outlaw Hernandez, his secret ties with the dishonest state officials, as well as his open and direct relationship with his financier from San Francisco, all indicates something. This point out that Gould is not so true to his ideals and justifications, and exposes his "unconscious motives and self deceptions."⁶³ At the bottom of his ideals lies the simple addiction to the silver and its power. As Sotillo says to Captain Mitchell, Gould is one of the thieves robbing the country of its wealth.⁶⁴ However more they rob the country more they become addicted to the silver of the mine. And the silver, as a symbol of material interests

⁵⁹ Conrad, op. cit. p. 269.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 255.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 255.

⁶² Ibid. p. 273.

⁶³ Guerard, op. cit. p. 177.

alienates Charles Gould even from his wife. As everything in Sulaco, the silver destroys their marriage too.

The novel succeeds in decomposing the definitions of various values and definitions like the opposites; the good and the bad, the idealist and the bandit, the true virtue and the vanity, the lawful and the outlaw. Not only the readers but also the characters in the novel live a process of realisation, or at least a quest or a self interrogation. When the outlaw, the emissary of Hernandez asks Gould if he had a message to "the master of the Campo"⁶⁵ the similarity between him and Hernandez strikes Gould.

"The truth of comparison struck Charles Gould heavily. In his determined purpose he held the mine, and the indomitable bandit held the Campo by the same precarious tenure. They were equals before the lawlessness of the land. It was impossible to disentangle one's activity from its debasing contacts. A close-meshed net of crime and corruption lay upon the whole country. An immense and weary discouragement sealed his lips for a time."⁶⁶

Charles Gould, is at last both a slave of the mine and the King of Sulaco, he is both an idealist and a thief robbing the country's wealth, he is both cold as a stone and believed to have "so just" a soul "that a prayer from" him "would cure the sickness of every beast, like the orison of the upright judge."⁶⁷ The various characters like Gould, politics, beliefs, personalities and even love in *Nostramo* turn out to end in a pessimistic way for the human beings in general, as in the other novels of Joseph Conrad.

Fleishman explains the tie between silver and Gould as follows:

"The silver underscores his peculiarly behaviour, as Marx described it: it is wealth without value, money as a mere abstraction, an end without an aim. Silver thus becomes an ironic symbol of Gould's distortion of the work ethic. Economic activity comes to dominate his entire behaviour; his politics imply the support of any government at all which will allow that activity to continue. The ultimate failure of Gould's original policy of reliance on 'material

⁶⁴ Conrad, op. cit. p. 124.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 242.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 242.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 243.

interests' is dramatised by his wife's discovery that what were means for her husband have become all-absorbing ends in themselves."⁶⁸

The dehumanising process of capitalism will also alienate Gould in the class context with the creation of a proletariat which will be discussed later. However the change in the mine workers takes the attention on them from the beginning. The development in the life of the miners is obvious. "The poor were going to be made rich now."⁶⁹ They also have a kind of security too.

"In a few years the sense of belonging to a powerful organisation had been developed in these harassed, half-wild Indians. They were proud of, and attached to, the mine. It had secured their confidence and belief. They invested it with a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish made by their own hands."⁷⁰

Nevertheless Albert J. Guerard thinks that everything is not so positive for the miners: "The Concession does bring a position of 'privileged safety' to the miners, but at a cost of individuality and personal freedom."⁷¹ They are safe with armoury and under the authority of Don P  p   at the Campo and they are safe in the town only with their uniforms.

There are various tensions within the novel between chaos and order, the land and the sea, the mainland and the island, the European and the American, the native and the foreigner. They seem to be binary opposites that develop the novel. One of this binary opposites is certainly the past and the present. As well as the references to the very remote peaceful past of the country before the conquest of General Cartez, some references are given to the near past of the country, to the time of Guzman Bento "who had ruled the country with the sombre imbecility of political fanaticism."⁷² His army of pacification is famous with its unionism and supreme government opposing to the federalism of Ribierist regime. Under the rule of Bento for twelve years many people are said to be tortured and killed. With the help of the

⁶⁸ Fleishman, *op.cit.* p. 180.

⁶⁹ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 266.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 267.

⁷¹ Guerard, *op. cit.* p. 197.

⁷² Conrad, *op. cit.* 94.

capitalist financiers Gould and Holroyd the Ribierist regime comes to rule and again the approach of another unionist regime, the Monterist Revolution is the focus of the narration. Montero's being the war minister of the Ribierist Cause and than revolting against it again confuses the minds to quest the meanings of these causes. Who is different from the other and how? Which politics are true and which are false? It is a difficult question to answer. And in fact these questions risen in the minds in a distant setting does also quest the politics and values in the mainland, England.

When the matter of politics comes into question, the second major character of the novel after Charles Gould, Martin Decoud, the journalist of Sulaco must be discussed. The existence and importance of Decoud in Sulaco owes itself directly to the politics. As the Montero forces has got a journal in the State of Costaguana, there needs to be an opponent to defend the Ribierist regime in Sulaco ; and this one is of course financed by the Mine, or Gould. Martin Decoud is the chief writer of this journal. From this point of view, Decoud also belongs to the institution of San Tomé Mine like Dr Monygham and Don P  p  . However his role is a literal one.

Voicing the news and aspirations of Sulaco Province against the Monterist Press, "the Journalist of Sulaco"⁷³ in fact does not believe in even what he writes. He is a sceptic and disbeliever who accept that mission only for his love for Antonia, the daughter of Don Jose Avellanos. Decoud wants to leave the country with Antonia but she does not because of her devotion to her father and to Sulaco. He will "carry her off to Europe, away from the endless civil strife"⁷⁴ if she comes but she does not . He believes Bolivar's utterance that "America is ungovernable," and "after one Montero there" will "be another, the lawlessness of a populace of all colours and races, barbarism, irredeemable tyranny."⁷⁵ Having spent most of his life in Paris, Decoud is a "sort of Frenchman – godless – a materialist" and he is "neither the son of his

⁷³ Ibid. p. 68.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 126.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

country nor any other.”⁷⁶ He has “ a mere indifferentism posing as intellectual superiority.”⁷⁷ About his country he usually says to “his French associates”:

“Imagine an atmosphere of opéra-bouffe in which all the comic business of stage statesmen, brigands, etc., etc., all their farcical stealing, intriguing, and stabbing is done in dead earnest. It is screamingly funny, the blood flows all the time, and the actors believe themselves to be influencing the fate of the universe. Of course, government in general, any government anywhere, is a thing of exquisite comicality to a discerning mind; but really we Spanish-Americans do overstep the bounds. No man of ordinary intelligence can take part in the intrigues of *une farce macabre*.”⁷⁸

Instead of his shortcomings Decoud voices some realities with his sharp intelligence, as he analyses the political atmosphere well in the previous passage. The continuous revolutions and political changes in the country are not more serious than an opera. The actors are directed by others. However it is interesting that Decoud finds the scenes of bloodshed funny; and that indicates his “indifferentism” well. He also sees the danger of Gould’s idealism saying “he could not believe his own motives if he did not make them first a part of some fairy tale.”⁷⁹ Another passage in the novel points at the difference between Gould and Decoud taking the same “farcical” tendency towards Costaguana as the basis.

“Unlike Decoud, Charles Gould could not play lightly a part in a tragic farce. It was tragic enough for him in all conscience, but he could see no farcical element. He suffered too severely practical and too idealistic to look upon its terrible humorous with amusement, as Martin Decoud, the imaginative materialist, was able to do in the dry light of scepticism.”⁸⁰

It is also said that Decoud likes watching these scenes as a work of art.

“Martin Decoud, the dilettante in life, imagined himself to derive an artistic pleasure from watching the picturesque extreme of wrong-headedness into which an honest, almost sacred, conviction may drive a man. ‘It is like madness. It must be because it’s self-destructive,’ Decoud had said to himself often. It seemed to him that every conviction, as soon as it

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 134.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 104.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 145.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 245.

became affective, turned into that form of dementia the gods send upon those they wish to destroy.”⁸¹

In spite of his job as a journalist, Decoud is an outfit in the organic society of Sulaco with his sharp intelligence, indifference, and scepticism, the last of which is stressed more by the narrator. Maybe the cause of his tragedy is his being an outfit. He is against the primary principle of the country which is silver, and as “a man without faith and principle”⁸² he must be destroyed. However his being an outfit and a disbeliever is not an obstacle against his playing important roles in the future of Sulaco in his lifetime. He is the one who makes the separation plan of Sulaco from the rest of the Republic against the Monterist threat. In fact his blindness of love and entrance into the affairs that he does not believe brings him death, in the isolation of the island Isabels. The plan of carrying the silver away in a lighter before the approach of Monterist forces again belongs to him. He runs to his isolation himself. Even before leaving Sulaco, instead of eating something to gain power or trying to sleep for an hour he writes a letter to his sister in Paris to tell “the feeling of a great solitude around”⁸³ him.

Decoud’s destruction begins with his departure from Sulaco on the lighter carrying the silver away with Nostromo to finance a support from the North, if at least not to give it to the Monterist forces. Decoud, as a chief journalist of the Ribierist Regime is the first one to be killed, so he escapes with the lighter. He begins to lose his touch with the reality with the departure of the lighter, leaving Antonia, his love, in the country without knowing if he would see her again and leaving all the politics behind. On the lighter his voice ceases, “the enormous stillness, without light or sound” affect his senses “like a powerful drug.” Without knowing whether he is “asleep or awake”, “like a man lost in slumber” he hears and sees nothing.⁸⁴ He feels himself “on the verge of delirium” and “even his passionate

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 135.

⁸² Ibid. p. 160.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 155.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 176.

devotion to Antonia into which he had worked himself up out of the depths of his scepticism” loses “all appearance of reality.”⁸⁵

“He was thrown out of all this into a dark gulf, whose very gloom, silence, and breathless peace added a torment to the necessity for physical exertion. He imagined the lighter sinking to the bottom with an extraordinary shudder of delight ... He mastered the trembling of all his limbs, of his breast, the inward trembling of all his body exhausted of its nervous force.”⁸⁶

When he arrives safe on the Great Isabel he finds “himself solitary on the beach like a man in a dream.”⁸⁷ Everything seems to come to an end for Decoud with his departure from Sulaco. Illusion begins to replace the realities which have always been comprehended sceptically by Decoud. When Nostromo leaves again for Sulaco his message to Antonia is that he is “looking forward to a glorious and successful ending” to his mission.⁸⁸

In the isolation of the island, the days pass with insomnia without anything to eat and waiting for Nostromo who probably died either in the gulf or in the hands of the Monteros. More he probably will not be able to see his love Antonia again.

“The brilliant ‘Son Decoud’, the spoiled darling of the family, the lover of Antonia and journalist of Sulaco, was not fit to grapple with himself single-handed. Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place. It takes possession of the mind, and drives forth the thought into the exile of utter unbelief. After three days of waiting for the sight of some human face, Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality.”⁸⁹

The feeling of isolation and losing everything brings Decoud into a self questioning phase about his individuality. He gradually loses “all belief in the reality of his action past.”⁹⁰

“... as if to escape from his solitude, he absorbed himself in melancholy. The vague consciousness of a misdirected life given up to impulses whose memory left a bitter taste in

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 179.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 202.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 202.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 332.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

his mouth was the first moral sentiment of his manhood ... His sadness was the sadness of a sceptical mind. He beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images.”⁹¹

The self realisation of Decoud is in very hard conditions. Its results are also destructive. The sleepless days, passed sitting next to silver, end with his desire for an action. He takes four ingots of silver in his pockets and sails of the lighter into the gulf and shoots himself from his breast to fall into the water and go deep down into the gulf “weighted by the bars of San Tomé silver.”⁹²

Not only metaphorically but literally too, the silver kills Martin Decoud who does not fit to its society. As the narrator puts it, Martin Decoud “the brilliant Costaguenero of the boulevards had died from solitude and want of faith in himself and others.”⁹³ As the silver corrupts and kills everything in the country it kills Decoud too. As Fleishman writes “in the absence of social connection, the self’s only link is to nature, but it is an empty nature and a hollow link.”⁹⁴ Or it may be as Ursula lord says “in Conrad novels, those who question the foundations of human societal existence find them ultimately lacking, and fall into despair that often results in suicide, or at least the willing relinquishment of life”⁹⁵ adding that the suicide of Decoud is an alienation:

“Suicide is the ultimate expression of our alienation from our work, from others, and finally from ourselves. Decoud’s sharp intellect penetrates the ‘sustaining illusions’ upon which the institutions of society and the activity they engender are founded, and he is left with nothing.”⁹⁶

A few days after the “sleepless, crouching figure” of Decoud “was gone from the side of the San Tomé silver” another “sleepless” man appears at the same place. “And the spirits of good and evil that hover about a forbidden treasure understood

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 333.

⁹² Ibid. p. 335.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 331.

⁹⁴ Fleishman, op. cit. p. 178.

⁹⁵ Lord, op.cit. p. 207.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 229.

well hat the silver of San Tomé was provided now with a faithful and lifelong slave,⁹⁷ who gives the novel his name.

Nostromo is originally a Geneoise seaman who is persuaded to settle in Sulaco by Captain Mitchell. We must note that Captain Mitchell is always very proud of this action that gained major character to the Province of Sulaco. Although he is from the lower class Nostromo has a prestige more than any social position can give to one in Sulaco with his identity as the Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores, in other words the leader of the dock-workers. His prestige comes from his love of work and charisma, although he never has much money.

He has got many titles before his name. He is an "invaluable ... fellow in a thousand."⁹⁸ As "a man absolutely above reproach" and "a tireless taskmaster", he "has the force of character" and "leadership."⁹⁹ In the narrator's generous treating as well as the Sulaco society's, he is "the lordly Capataz de Cargadores, the indispensable man, the tried and trusty Nostromo."¹⁰⁰ In Decoud's words, he is "the next great man of Sulaco after Don Carlos Gould"¹⁰¹ who "seems to have a talent for being on the spot whenever there is something picturesque to be done."¹⁰² He always has the utmost importance in the high political affairs of the country as a "taskmaster."¹⁰³ He is the one who saved the last president Senor Ribiera. He is the "feared"¹⁰⁴ captain with his revolver and horse who has "solved the problem of labour without fail."¹⁰⁵ Nostromo is "incorruptible"¹⁰⁶ as it is repeated many times in the narration. It is for sure that Nostromo has an idealised character and an exaggerated view of that character on the public of Sulaco. The abnormality of the

⁹⁷ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 335.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 125.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 151.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 88.

exaggeration will bring a reversal in his character to solve the conflict which consists some of the major themes of the novel.

The "Mediterranean sailor"¹⁰⁷ seems to be satisfied with his incorruptible name and authority among the workers and the lover girls of him although his pockets are empty because of his un-materialism and partly of his gambling habit. Having not a real parentage, Nostromo had become a second son to the Italian family Violas whose son would have been at the same age with Nostromo if he had lived. Despite all of the praising, the defect of Nostromo is soon voiced from the mouth of Teresa Viola. He is accused to be "always thinking of" himself "and taking" his "pay out in fine words from those who care nothing for" him.¹⁰⁸ His only care is to be "well spoken of."¹⁰⁹

However before going to save the silver and the Republic, he wishes "to get something great for it someday."¹¹⁰ As Decoud says "he does not exercise his extraordinary power over the lower classes without a certain amount of personal risk" and "one must pay for such a solid thing as personal prestige."¹¹¹ He whose "value of life seems to consist in personal prestige"¹¹² foreshadows to change but still thinks that they will talk about him in America.¹¹³

"I am going to make it the most desperate affair of my life. It shall be talked about when the little children are grown up and the grown men are old."¹¹⁴

He is after being a part of a fairy tale too when he is saving "a greater treasure than the one which they say is guarded by ghosts and devils of Azuera"¹¹⁵, in his own words. He is ready to fight with those ghosts and devils, and make a tale from it from the very beginning. The defect of vanity in Nostromo's character is obvious and is

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 66.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 170.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 166.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 167.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 149.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 167.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 174.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 178.

pointed at by the narrator and by some characters too. "Decoud's, incorrigible in his scepticism, reflected, not cynically, but with general satisfaction, that this man was made incorruptible by his enormous vanity, the finest form of egoism which can take on the aspect of every virtue."¹¹⁶ Even his last act before leaving Sulaco is "in complete harmony with his vanity" in the narrator's words. "He had given his last dollar to an old woman moaning."¹¹⁷ However when he returns from The Great Isabel, leaving Decoud with the silver at the coast, a different Nostromo awakens from his long sleep, reminding a rebirth.

"Nostromo woke up from a fourteen hours' sleep, and arose full length from his lair in the long grass. He stood knee deep among the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from the evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a thoughtful frown, appeared the man."¹¹⁸

The scene is strong with its imagery. This rebirth is the beginning of a recognition which was suppressed to the unconsciousness of Nostromo. With this rebirth he will see his vanity and his place in the class context. It can also be seen as the recognition of a class consciousness of the lower classes that Nostromo represents. He is now "the renowned Capataz."¹¹⁹ The old Nostromo who works only for his personal prestige changes. He feels "the pinch of poverty for the first time in his life."¹²⁰

"Nostromo tasted the dust and ashes of the fruit of life into which he had bitten deeply in his hunger for praise. Without removing his head from between his fists, he tried to spit before him - 'Tfui' - and muttered a curse upon the selfishness of all the rich people."¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 172.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 201.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 277.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 276.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 279.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 278.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 279.

With his deadly sin of vanity, Nostromo seems to have eaten the forbidden fruit to be thrown out of the paradise to the Gulf of Sulaco in a new and painful understanding of life. He is now aware of the fact that he belongs to the poor class and he has nothing more than the praising of the rich who have always used and exploited him. Now he believes what Giorgia Viola, who has been a father figure to him, says true. "Kings, ministers, aristocrats, the rich in general, kept the people in poverty and subjection; they kept them as they kept dogs, to fight and hunt for their service."¹²²

Nostromo has always been a task-master or in other words he has been the best hunting dog of the rich. He has been a tool of the upper class to direct and suppress the lower class. "His life seemed to fail him in all its details."¹²³ The recognition is painful for him, in the physical and mental solitude created by the demolishing of the old Nostromo. He feels "ready to become the prey of any belief, superstition, or desire as a child."¹²⁴ He thinks of leaving Sulaco and returning to his native land, but with what? "With bare feet and head, with one check shirt and a pair of cotton calzoneras for all worldly possessions?"¹²⁵

Everybody in Sulaco has given up, thinks Nostromo and what he feels is no more than "he had been betrayed."¹²⁶ He even refused to bring a priest for Teresa Viola who had been a mother figure for him in her death bed before leaving for the lighter full of silver.

"Signora Teresa must have died...The cry of the ill-omened bird, the first sound he was to hear on his return, was fitting welcome for his betrayed individuality. The unseen powers which he had offended by refusing to bring a priest to a dying woman were lifting up their voice against him. She was dead. With admirable human consistency he referred everything to himself."¹²⁷

¹²² Ibid. p. 278.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 283.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 279.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 280.

¹²⁷ Ibid. pp. 280-281

Nostromo lives a kind of identity depression. He was betrayed and “a man betrayed is a man destroyed ... He had never been taken into account.”¹²⁸ “No one waited for him; no one thought of him; no one expected and wished his return” in his “profound isolation.”¹²⁹ He sees all the vanity of his life shattered away to leave him naked with a heavy burden of guilt. “The magnificent Capataz de Cargadores, deprived of certain simple realities, such as admiration of women, the adulation of men, the admired publicity of his life, was ready to feel the burden of sacrilegious guilt descend upon his shoulders.”¹³⁰ Going along with the feeling of being betrayed “the existence of the treasure” continues to confuse “his thoughts with a peculiar sort of anxiety, as though his life had become bound up with it.”¹³¹

“A man betrayed is a man destroyed.”¹³² He not only feels himself betrayed but he feels the same for his dock-workers. He calls them “my poor Cargadores, betrayed.”¹³³ This feeling going along with the division of the people as the rich and the poor, is a certain sign of Nostromo’s class consciousness that he has just maintained. He who had suppressed the revolts against the Goulds, he who is feared and obeyed by the workers, he who has always been at the side of the ruling class when he was rescuing Senor Ribiera and when he was saving the silver, now recognises that he is not a member of that class but only a tool of them against his own class which is poor like him. As he says to Dr Monygham:

“You fine people are all alike. All dangerous. All betrayer of the poor who are your dogs ... What are your politics and your mines to me – your silver and your constitutions – your Don Carlos this, and Don José that -”¹³⁴

The recognition is painful. Together with Nostromo the reader also realises that the hero of the novel who gives it his name is a fool. The title is a false leading one and many things are different from what they seem like in Conrad again.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 281.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 283.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 282.

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 284.

¹³² Ibid. p. 281.

¹³³ Ibid. p. 310.

Nostromo divides the classes in his words too. He calls the rich “you” as he calls the workers “we”. The recognition of class consciousness as well as his feeling of being betrayed results with Nostromo’s taking up the silver to end the “poverty, misery, starvation.”¹³⁵ The exaggerated idealisation of his character recoils and at the end of the second part the incorruptible Nostromo is corrupted by the silver of the mine to decide that he must “grow rich very slowly”¹³⁶. The irony is on the corruption. The incorruptible silver corrupts the incorruptible Capataz, as it corrupts everything in Sulaco. As well as the corruption the treasure is an addiction, it is a boundary, it is a curse as in the legend. Nostromo tells this as follows:

“There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man’s mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still preserve, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it only by a foot. He will see it every time he closes his eyes. He will never forget it till he is dead – and even then - ... did you ever hear of the miserable gringos on Azuera, that cannot die? Ha! Ha! Sailors like myself. There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind.”

Like the gringos Nostromo sees himself as a slave of the silver. The silver is the most important character in the novel. It is the most powerful one corrupting the incorruptible Nostromo, as well as Gould and Decoud. As the production of the mine or as the capital the silver also represents capitalism. The arrows of political criticism goes on capitalism with the class consciousness of Nostromo. The self recognition of Nostromo, or the tragedy of him owes to capitalism as well as his vanity. He and the poor class that he represents are exploited by the capitalists. They have nothing to lose except their life and the capital is even incapable of bringing security to the country. The silver of the mine is responsible for the greedy hands to play games on Sulaco with revolutions and regime changes. The aristocrats, the intellectuals or the capitalists, the nationalists or the Europeans do not differ. The exploited class is the poor class in every situation. The recognition fits to the Marxist class consciousness. In the last chapters of the novel he will also be a member of the Revolutionist Party, although not an active one.

¹³⁴ Ibid. pp. 304-305.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 311.

However the solution that Nostromo finds is not an ethic one according to the Marxist class consciousness. It is again an egoist one. Although he is a representative of a class, Nostromo is neither an allegorical character nor only an exaggerated hero but he is an individual. With his theft of the silver he chooses another identity as Captain Fidanza. It is not a coincidence that after the melodramatic last chapters of the novel Nostromo is killed by Giorgio Viola in a wrong identity in darkness.

Avrom Fleishman sees the death of Nostromo as follows:

“Nostromo is, even without Viola’s myopia, directly destroyed by the contradictions between self-seeking and class consciousness. He uses the silver, at least in part, for the support of the radical movement, but he keeps his secret so well that he becomes totally isolated. He is killed by that isolation, through Viola’s ignorance of his identity and designs. As in *Lord Jim* and other Conrad fables of the individual’s relation to the social organism, there is in *Nostromo* a residual resistance to complete assimilation with the people, and this heroic individualism accounts both for the hero’s demise and for his stature.”¹³⁷

Like Guerard, Avrom Fleishman finds classical elements in the novel when evaluating Nostromo as the pure representative of the proletariat, and joining him to Waverley heroes:

“... Nostromo’s career represents the history of an entire class, the proletariat – its enlistment and exploitation in the industrialisation of the country, its entry into the separatist revolution (fighting for class interests not directly its own), its growth of self-consciousness and discovery of an independent political role, its temptation by the materialistic drives of capitalism, and its purgation by traditional idealists in its own camp ... As in classical tragedy the hero is bounded by forces larger than himself, yet what happens to him is the expression of his own nature. Like classical drama, too, the novel connects the individual hero with a social group – which he represents not only symbolically but dramatically – in historical action. Conrad’s special version of tragedy is that this very social rootedness of the individualist hero contains the contradictions which destroy him.”¹³⁸

Nostromo is a kind of alternative history writing when we consider its deconstructive effect on the history of a modern capitalist state called Sulaco. The different point of views in the narrative changes the usual justifications of the bourgeoisie and brings the worker class and other point of views in the process

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 336.

¹³⁷ Fleishman, op. cit. p. 175.

¹³⁸ Ibid. pp. 163-164.

exposing the dehumanising and alienating effects of capitalism, the different dimensions of politics and the real powers at its back, the relationships between the imperialists and the capitalists of different nations, the tie of money and power. All these themes forces the borders of the official history writing. That is why, as Kiernan Ryan says, Captain Mitchell is in the novel with his narration of history.

“*Nostramo* deploys a range of strategies designed to deconstruct the bourgeois version of history and the whole ‘adventure novel’ genre tendentionally disposed to embody it. The text ruthlessly subverts all expectations of the kind of realist novel of epic action and exotic escapade with the title, subtitle and opening chapter deceptively arose. In so doing it embodies an aggressive refusal of the hegemonic ‘providential’ conception of history which finds ready mediation in the heroic and ‘colourful’ historical ‘yarn.’ That conception is, indeed, ironically salienced within the novel in the pompous, complacent discourse of Captain Mitchell. And in the sense the whole novel can be understood and fracturing of the Captain Mitchell version of Sulaco’s history.”¹³⁹

As well as Captain Mitchell, the history book of Don Jose Avallenos called *Fifty Years of Misrule* again takes the attention on alternative history writing.

All of the three major characters of the novel lives a tragic end. Decoud and Nostromo dies and Mr Gould lives an alienated life loosing the warmth even in his marriage. The silver plays the most important part in the tragedies of these characters. Mr Gould and Nostromo become the slaves of the silver, like the gringos. Being taken deep into the sea by the silver Decoud is killed directly by the silver. So more than their other personal shortcomings as vanity and idealism that all these three characters share, in the shape of the silver, material interests are responsible for their tragedies at all . The greed of power in the silver, like the lord of the rings, enslaves them. The material interests in human beings, which are given in a direct parallelism with capitalism and imperialism, are more the cause of chaos and death than order and stability. No matter he is a European or American capitalist and imperialist, or a national intellectual or a worker everyone has the human instinct of weakness towards the material interests which do not bring happiness.

¹³⁹ Ryan, loc. cit. p. 48.

Capitalism and imperialism are the systemised forms of the tendency of human beings towards material interests. Thus the negativism of material interests is also the negativism of the New century with its industrialism, capitalism and all the other aspects of them like isolation, alienation and dehumanisation as it is personified in the character of Sotillo and Guzman Bento who are torturer dictators.

The negatification of the New century also means the praising of the past. Without idealising, the narrator's choice is always the past in the obvious tension between the past and the present within the novel.

"Not perhaps that primitive men were more faithless than their descendants today, but that they went straighter to their aim, and were more artless in their recognition of success as the only standard of morality. We have changed since. The use of intelligence awakens little wonder and less respect."¹⁴⁰

The tortures of the intellectual are more savage than the primitives for sure. The narrator develops the matter about Dr Monygham's past. Monygham had great tortures from Guzman Bento; and then he gave full confessions. The narrator makes another comment on the torture through the agency of Dr Monygham:

"At no time of the world's history have men been at a loss how to inflict mental and bodily anguish upon their fellow-creatures. This aptitude came to them in the growing complexity of their passions and the early refinement of their ingenuity. But it may safely be said that primeval men did not go to the trouble of inventing tortures. He was indolent and pure of heart. He brained his neighbour ferociously with a stone axe from necessity and malice. The stupidest mind may invent a rankling phrase or brand the innocent with a cruel aspersion. A piece of string and a ramrod; a few muskets in combination with a length of hide rope; or even a simple mallet of heavy, hard wood applied with a swing to human fingers or to the joints of human body is enough for the infliction of the most exquisite torture. The doctor had been a very stubborn prisoner, and, as a natural consequence of that 'bad disposition'... his subjugation had been crushing and very complete...His confessions, when they came at last, were very complete, too."¹⁴¹

The explanation of torture is made in this passage with the 'growing complexity of .. passions' and the 'refinement of .. ingenuity.'

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 259.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 250-251.

The narrative technique is also important in developing the critical atmosphere of the novel. The camera of the narrator zooms to different characters at different intervals and then jumps to the other characters and scenes. Rieselbach states that this narrative technique makes the characters and the scenes more realistic.

“While Nostromo habitually appears unexpectedly, Charles Gould most often *disappears*. We glimpse him going out the door, or we hear the jingle of his spurs dying out in the distance, or even we see the backside of his horse! This oblique presentation of both Gould and Nostromo has the effect of adding a certain verisimilitude; we learn about the certain character gradually, almost we learn about people in real life. But it also has the effect of distancing us from the “heroes,” since we are never permitted to share their points of view uncritically – nor are we certain these characters will prove *to be* important, after we have been given so many false leads in the early chapters.”¹⁴²

Torture scenes are among these realistic and shocking scenes that the narrator zooms the camera on. Senor Hirsch’s torture scene is the most vivid one. To learn the treasures place Sotillo enters the torture chamber and personally interrogates him where the pain is given in detail. After the confession he kills Hirsch; and then he feels different.

“Quick as thought he snatched up his revolver, and fired twice. The report and the concussion of the shots seemed to throw him at once from ungovernable rage into idiotic stupor. He stood with drooping jaw and stony eyes...What had he done? He was basely appalled at his impulsive act, sealing for ever these lips from which so much was to be extorted. What could he say? How could he explain? Ideas of headlong flight somewhere, anywhere, passed through his mind; even the craven and absurd notion of hiding under the table occurred to his cowardice. It was too late; his officers had rushed in tumultuously ... ‘why did you kill him, *mi colonel?*’ ‘Because he has confessed everything’ answered Sotillo with hardihood of desperation.”¹⁴³

The dehumanisation of the individual is given so vividly and in an humanistic way. The feelings of the torturers are taken into the account instead of the tortured. Rather than an open comment on these scene, the effect is more important in raising the feeling of pain, and doubting about the roots of a state or any other social system. Avoiding also the “logical composition and expository

¹⁴² Helen Funk Rieselbach, *Conrad’s Rebels: The Psychology of Revolution in the Novels from Nostromo to Victory*, UMI Research Press, Michigan, (1980) 1985, p. 12.

¹⁴³ Conrad, *op. cit.* p. 301.

directness ... the reader is never allowed to settle down and enjoy"¹⁴⁴ but allowed to think and doubt.

Through these scenes in an imaginary South American State called Costaguana, the narrator makes the most effective comments on the society and it can be accepted as a kind of positive organism. Without disturbing the reader Conrad is capable of giving the most 'dangerous' messages between the lines, seeing the danger in the individual, and in the depths of the individuality and making him responsible for everything and cause of every system. In *Nostromo* the responsibility is always on the shoulders of the individuals. Social organisations, states, institutions, classes all exist. But they do not exist as higher standards of morality, they consist of the individuals who are responsible for what they do. As Guerard states:

"The history of Costaguana is largely determined by individuals and by their idealisations as well as by their cupidities and lusts; men compose the state. Yet these seem to be, in *Nostromo*, two separate areas of inquiry: first, man's propensity to self-deception and his need to "idealise" his existence; second, the failure of institutions to work and the failure of history to make sense. The protagonists and their illusions stand a little to the forefront of a turgid and disordered congeries of event."¹⁴⁵

Guzman Bento and Sotillo are responsible for the tortures, as Mr Gould and Nostromo are responsible for their own alienation and as Decoud is responsible for his idealisations that bring him to death. The overall message of the novel lying in the item of San Tomé Mine is no more than a metaphor of the darkness in the character of human beings. The Mine which is presented as the most important character in the novel is the metaphor of a the darkness in the human beings mirrored in the material interests. Whether he is a capitalist or a worker, an imperialist or a nationalist, an intellectual or an uneducated it does not differ, the instinct lies in everyone. The excessive fondness for the material interests destroys people at last. And this fondness is also presented as more dangerous in an age that men became more powerful with an accumulation of information and technique. The taking out of the silver from the mountain needs an extensive technique. Mr Goulds studies at the

¹⁴⁴ Guerard, op. cit. pp. 214-215.

universities about mining and in European Mines also indicates the information side. The technique and information of the age along with the complex passion and ingenuity of human beings make them more dangerous than the primitive men. And Conrad is able to see the growing destructiveness in man in the New century.



¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 191.

CONCLUSION

As Marlow's journey throws light on everything he comprehends, the *Heart of Darkness*, "*An Outpost of Progress*" and *Nostromo* brings a new understanding of the concepts like light and darkness, civilised and savage, reality and illusion. The reader hears the voice saying 'come and find out the truth' as Marlow does, and in fact the texts achieve to deconstruct some taught ways of behaviours and thoughts. Imperialism, capitalism, materialism and the other components of the 'Western Ideal' are decomposed through the stories and characters of these texts.

They are not shallow political works of art because they do not defend an alternative. For example *Nostromo* does not defend a Marxist Revolution although it includes the class struggle, or *Heart of Darkness* does not give a kind of solution in the national rebellion. Conrad's works have deeper meanings. These works of art go deep down into the beliefs, systems and ideals; they examine the individual, the human being, the biggest question on earth. Maybe the aim is not finding an answer, but living the experience of questioning and approaching 'the truth,' the truth lying in the last words of Kurtz, the truth in the corruption of an incorruptible Nostromo, or the shocking truth of Kayerts' killing Carrier because of a little sugar in the madding.

This thesis points out the difference of the truths of the mentioned works from the ones that are learned and believed by the citizens of the Western Civilisation. The exposition of the contrariness deconstructs those concepts and systems. Illusion becomes reality while the reality replaces illusion. At the end the concepts and systems that the thesis defines as the "Western Ideal" becomes an illusion. Democracy becomes a theatrical play where the ruling and the ruled do not change and colonialism does not bring the light of the civilisation to the distant countries but it brings chaos, disorder and bloodshed. The machines of the Industrial Age do not work for the good of the public, but they again work for the good of the privileged people. The lives of poor African natives are spoiled, they are killed and made slaves for the meaningless ivory which is used to beautify the lives of those privileged

people. However those privileged people cannot escape from the symptom of the inhumanity, isolation and alienation too. The religion is adopted to every need, it loses its humanitarian side as the other institutions. The political discussions, revolutions, the changing nationalist and unionists governments and tortures are all exposed as the wars of benefit in the age of materialism.

All the social groups, classes, and nations live the dehumanisation of the New Age in the works of Conrad. The ordinary English citizen, a simple dock-worker in America, or a universal genius of the Western Culture; all of them feels the dehumanising, isolating, madding and killing symptoms of the New Age. And at last, like the genius of that civilisation, the “Western Ideal” becomes an illusion too within the lines of the works of Conrad.



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