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REPRESSED SOCIAL CONTENT IN A MODERNIST NARRATIVE: THE CASE OF *LORD JIM*

The paper starts from the assumption that the social content is not absent from the major works of Modernist literature, but merely repressed or displaced through various narrative strategies. While the early critical debate on Modernism – which started with Lukács' writings in the 1930s – condemned this literary movement as apolitical, and too narrowly focused on the subjective, inward experience of an individual, subsequent contributors to the debate took a more balanced approach. The paper pays special attention to Fredric Jameson's theory on the existence of repressed social meaning in Modernist works, and his view that by applying Marxist hermeneutics it is possible to discern it and show how it affects the narrative. Joseph Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* (1900) is used in this paper to exemplify the features of Modernism discussed by Jameson. Some of the key scenes and motifs in the novel are analysed with a view to establishing their underlying socio-historical dimension and demonstrating how it contributes to the overall understanding of Conrad's artistic vision.

Key words: Joseph Conrad, Modernism, Marxist literary criticism, social content, narrative strategies

1. Introduction

Modernist literature, and Modernist art in general, has often been accused of being apolitical. Its focus on individual consciousness and the concomitant subjective experience was regarded by some critics as too narrow, leaving a great portion of social reality underrepresented, or failing to consider the interaction between an individual and the objective political and social circumstances. Such negative appraisals of Modernist art have been especially prominent in Marxist and ideological criticism, and it is usually assumed that the rejection of Modernism on political grounds begins with the observations of the Hungarian philosopher and Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács. Lukács' first important assault on contemporary art was expressed in his essay "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline" (Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus, 1934)[3]. His criticism in the article is directed in particular against the German Expressionists[4], whom Lukács blames for sub-

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4 Since the term "Modernism" covered a number of interrelated and overlapping movements which emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century – such as Imagism, Symbolism, Futurism, Cubism, Surrealism, Dada or Expressionism – Lukács' negative assessment of Expressionism in this article may be

jectivism, solipsism and an overall apolitical stance. While these authors, as Lukács maintains, embrace Neo-Kantian idealism and condemn all materialistic inclinations in their contemporary society, they do not ascribe the vice of materialism to any particular class, but postulate a kind of eternal conflict between materialism and idealism, obfuscating the pressing social issues. The article establishes Lukács' critical position and his negative attitude towards Modernism in general, which he would maintain throughout his oeuvre (LIVINGSTONE 1980: 10–11).

Lukács' views are even more elaborately expressed in his well-known essay "The Ideology of Modernism", published as a chapter of his study *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* ((*Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des Kritischen Realismus*, 1957), where he contrasts Modernism with Realism, or with traditional literature in general, stressing the merits and advantages of the latter. In traditional literature, as Lukács argues, man is invariably depicted as *zoon politikon*, a social being. This Aristotelian definition, as he explains, means that the individual existence of literary characters in traditional literature "cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created" (LUKÁCS 1996: 143). As opposed to this, Lukács criticizes Modernist literature because it fails to represent literary characters as social beings, in meaningful interaction with their environment, viewing them instead as solitary, asocial and unable to connect with one another or with their community in general. The solitariness represented in Modernism is not a rare or exceptional human condition, as Lukács maintains; instead, it is depicted as "the inescapable, central fact of human existence". In Modernist literature, man neither forms his society, nor is formed by it, which also renders any narrative of social progress or social change impossible in these works (ibid., 144).

An important theme in Lukács' essay concerns the difference between two philosophical categories which he refers to as *abstract* and *concrete potentiality*. Abstract potentiality is understood by Lukács as a term which comprises an almost indefinite number of possibilities for the development of one's personality and the direction one's life may take. However, in reality, only a few of these possibilities are in fact actualized. Namely, as Lukács maintains, in real life we face certain critical situations which demand that we make a decision and a crucial choice. In the act of choosing, we actualize one of our abstract potentials, thus making it concrete. Lukács draws a parallel with literary characters, arguing that, just like actual individuals, they cannot be defined nor gain clear contours just on the basis of their abstract potentials, which are infinite; only the critical moments of choice reveal one's character. This is what makes the ontology on which Modernism is based so problematic, according to Lukács: namely, all the distinction between the abstract and the concrete is annulled due to the Modernists' exclusive focus on subjectivity. Since the Modernist text insists on an individual's essential solitariness and isolation, there never occurs a dialectic between the subjective and the objective – that is, between one's inner being and the socio-historical reality. Reading a Modernist narrative, as Lukács maintains, does not enable us to establish which of the character's abstract potentials may become concrete, nor what crucial decision they would make in a moment of crisis. This, in his opinion, inevitably leads to the disintegration of human personality in a Modernist work

subsumed under his general criticism of Modernist art.

(ibid., 146–147).

Lukács' harsh criticism of Modernist literature has been contested by a number of critics, including those whose political views are akin to his own. Most notably, Bertolt Brecht, himself immersed in Marxist thought both as a theorist and as a creative writer, did not share Lukács' belief that Modernism was apolitical. He polemicizes with Lukács' argument in a well-known article titled "Against Georg Lukács"[5]. Viewing his own work as strongly affiliated with Modernism, Brecht affirms its capacity for expressing non-ideological, progressive views. He argues that Modernist subjectivity in itself is simply a novel literary experiment, whose purpose needs to be established in each individual case, and that any formal innovation which may contribute to articulating the truth about the modern man should be encouraged (BRECHT 1980: 75). In *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, first published in 1976, Terry Eagleton likewise expresses his disagreement with Lukács with regard to Modernist literature; however, he also points out that when evaluating Lukács' work, historical factors which have shaped his attitude should be taken into consideration (EAGLETON 2003: xii). Thus, one should bear in mind that Lukács launched his first attack against the authors who wrote in Germany in the 1930s, at the time when Nazism was on the rise. The ascent of totalitarian regimes and the threat of a new war looming over Europe made critics such as Lukács feel that the artistic trends of the first two decades of the twentieth century were becoming inadequate. Modernists' preoccupations with the phenomena of individual consciousness, or with the subjective experience of temporality, seemed incongruent with the urgency of the political situation that literature need to address (MATZ 2006: 217).

In his writings, Neo-Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson has taken a different approach towards the politics of Modernism. He points out that

> even those who wish to sustain Lukács' hostile verdict on modernism would necessarily insist on the existence of a repressed social content even in those modern works that seem most innocent of it. Modernism would then not so much be a way of avoiding social content... as rather of managing and containing it, secluding it out of sight in the very form itself, by means of specific techniques (JAMESON 1980: 202).

Unlike Lukács, Jameson does not view Modernist subjectivism as a negation of social and historical reality, or an act of withdrawal and escape from this reality into the individual's inner being. Instead, he argues that the relationship between Modernist art and contemporary world, or between "the text and its social subtext", is much more complex and should be interpreted in terms of "production, projection, compensation, repression, displacement and the like" (JAMESON 1982: 44). The political dimension is therefore not completely absent from the Modernist text, but has been "managed and contained" by means of various narrative strategies.

In Jameson's opinion, Joseph Conrad's fiction provides some very good examples of the way in which political content may be hidden from the surface layer of a Modernist text, while still contributing significantly to its overall meaning. He singles out Conrad's famous novel *Lord Jim* (1900), which on the surface tells the story of Jim's struggle with the issues of guilt, honour and self-realization, whereas the social and historical context of this

5 This text was first published in Brecht's book *Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst* in 1967.

struggle is repressed but may still be decoded by means of Marxist hermeneutics. A paradigmatic scene which, in Jameson's opinion, demonstrates Conrad's strategy of repressing the political content, takes place close to the beginning of the novel. As Jim watches the Malay pilgrims sleeping peacefully on the upper deck of the steamer Patna, he enjoys "the great calm of the waters under the inaccessible serenity of the sky" (CONRAD 1994: 20). This blissful quiet is only occasionally disturbed by the noise from the boiler room deep below the deck: "the short metallic clangs", "the sharp scrape of a shovel", "the violent slam of a furnace door" (ibid.). Jameson points out that what is "below the deck" in this scene is not only the labour of the workers in the boiler room but also, by implication, the entire social and political reality which shapes the events in Conrad's novel and Jim's own destiny:

> ...this ground bass of material production continues underneath the new formal structures of the modernist text, as indeed it could not but continue to do, yet muffled and intermittent... its permanencies ultimately detectable only to the elaborate hermeneutic geiger counter of the political unconscious and the ideology of form (JAMESON 1982: 215).

In the following sections of this paper, several important motifs in Conrad's *Lord Jim* will be analysed with a view to establishing their underlying political dimension and demonstrating how it contributes to the overall understanding of Conrad's artistic vision. It will be discussed how Conrad manages the political content in the novel by means of narrative strategies such as repression and displacement, while keeping in mind Jameson's argument that this method is at the same time characteristic for Modernist fiction in general (ibid., 44).

2. The Sea as a Non-Place

In his study *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Fredric Jameson argues that Conrad's choice of the sea as a setting in numerous novels and short stories may be viewed as this author's "strategy of containment". Namely, in these works the sea functions as a kind of ideological construct which enables Conrad to detach his storyline from the urban life of the late industrial capitalism and avoid dealing explicitly with the conflicts and contradictions of the capitalist society. Prior to writing *Lord Jim*, Conrad already applied the same strategy in several other works, most notably in his novel *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897). Here, Conrad deliberately moves the community of sailors aboard the Narcissus away from the social issues which dominate the mainland. Even though Narcissus is a merchant ship, Conrad's writing technique gives us an impression that, when its sea-journey begins, all the utilitarian motives are left behind on land. As we are told, "The august loneliness of her path lent dignity to the sordid inspiration of her pilgrimage" (CONRAD 2000: 13). The Narcissus sets sail for "sordid" materialistic reasons – in order to transport a load of merchandise – but nevertheless gains dignified stature as soon as it finds itself on its lonely sea path. This narrative method enables the author to focus on the inner life of the sailors and explore their collective psyche in an ostensibly timeless setting, through their confrontation with the forces of nature and a sense of existential loneliness.

In *Lord Jim*, the same "strategy of containment" enables Conrad to focus on Jim's character at a moment of personal crisis. As Jameson explains, Conrad uses the sea as a

"non-place" in order to focus on his protagonist's psychological experience and represent it as a universal existential problem, unrelated to the social and historical circumstances (JAMESON 1982: 213). This manoeuvre is evident, for instance, in an early scene in the novel where Jim is shown on a training ship for officers of the merchant navy. Having climbed the ship's fore-top, he is looking down from this position at the distant factory chimneys on the shore; it is, as Jameson comments, "the place from which Jim can contemplate that dreary prose of the world which is daily life in the universal factory called capitalism". As he concludes, Jim has chosen a vocation "such that he can step completely outside all... class terrains and see them all equally, from over a great distance, as so much picturesque landscape" (ibid., 210–211).[6]

However, as Jameson points out, this is not the only function of the sea in Conrad's novels. Historically, at the time when Conrad wrote his fiction, the sea was also an essential "highway", connecting the outposts of imperial capitalism with the mother country and enabling the flow of merchandise and raw material from the colonies. In addition to this, Conrad's novels also provide a realistic depiction of the life of sailors, so it may be argued that the sea is for Conrad also "a place of labour" (ibid., 213). All these features of the life at sea are latently present in *Lord Jim*:

> For the sea is both a strategy of containment and a place of real business; it is a border and a decorative limit, but it is also a highway, out of the world and in it at once, the repression of work... as well as the absent work-place itself. …[T]he sea is the empty space between the concrete places of work and life; but it is also, just as surely, itself a place of work and the very element by which an imperial capitalism draws its scattered beachheads and outposts together... Nor is the sea merely a place of business; it also a place of labour, and clearly we will say nothing of consequence about the author... if we overlook the "realistic" presentation of working life at sea (ibid., 210, 213).

Therefore it may be argued that the sea in *Lord Jim*, in addition to providing the setting for the protagonist's existential drama, also has a political meaning. Although it has been repressed from the surface of the text, it still has its function in the narrative and contributes to the complexity of Conrad's artistic intention. As the subsequent analysis will show, the connection of the sea to the enterprise of imperial capitalism, and Jim's own merchant service, will prove especially relevant for understanding the novel's social and historical connotations.

3. Jim's Desertion and the Category of Concrete Potentiality

The reason Jim has chosen the life at sea is that he is by nature prone to bovarism and day-dreaming. We are told that before joining the merchant navy, he has read extensively popular adventure novels about the life on the high seas; he fantasized about gaining heroic stature similar to the protagonists of these novels and experiencing the kind of adventures they describe. His day-dreams of performing heroic feats are inspired by this

6 When it comes to spacial metaphors, it is also interesting to observe the chosen vocation of Jim's father, who is an Anglican parson. Conrad represents his "little church" as quite literally placed halfway between the cottages where the poor people live and the mansions belonging to the rich upper class, suggesting the function of institutionalized religion in producing the dominant ideology, making the society appear harmonious in spite of the class differences, and maintaining status quo (JAMESON 1982: 211).

"course of light holiday literature":

> He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line... He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men – always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book (CONRAD 1994: 11).

However, in the crucial moment of crisis in the novel, Jim betrays his youthful romantic ideals, deserting the damaged steamer Patna and endangering the lives of its eight hundred Malay passengers. The centrality of this crisis in Conrad's narrative seems to contradict Lukács' claim that such motifs are only characteristic for fiction written in the period of Realism (LUKÁCS 1996: 146). While Lukács insists that the dialectic between a character's subjectivity and the objective social reality does not take place in Modernist works, the motif of Jim's leap from the Patna implies exactly such dialectic. Jim's daydreams of heroism correspond to the category which Lukács calls abstract potentiality, consisting of innumerable possibilities for one's psychological development; whereas his decision to jump denotes his concrete potentiality. In a situation of actual, life-threatening danger, Jim does not actualize his potential for heroism, devotion to duty and self-sacrifice, but his potential for cowardice, self-serving concerns and betrayal of the seamen's code of conduct. Contrary to Lukács' claim that Modernist fiction never differentiates between the abstract and concrete potentiality, the crucial moment of choice in *Lord Jim* leads to exactly such differentiation.

In fact, as Thomas Moser argues in his study *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (1957), the motif of choice plays an important role throughout the period which Moser considers the first (and best) phase of Conrad's output, from 1895–1912, and in which his fiction is focused on the issues of fidelity and betrayal. Moser maintains that the central situation in these novels is a test. It is a test of moral responsibility, demanding that, in a moment of crisis, the protagonist should remain loyal to his proclaimed values and principles (MOSER 1966: 15). Thus, the subjective world of Conrad's protagonists is tested through confrontation with objective reality in a number of his novels – such as *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1904), or *Under Western Eyes* (1911). This confrontation often has devastating consequences for the hero's delusional perception of the self. Conrad's characters attempt to act in the real world, but usually do not succeed in affirming their proclaimed ideas and values; instead, they discover that they have lived in illusions, betray their projected goals and experience moral failure. Therefore, it may be concluded that the interaction of the Conradian hero with the objective social and historical reality is not absent from the narrative, as Lukács would maintain. On the contrary, it plays an important role in the author's exploration of the self, its primary purpose being to expose the protagonist's delusions and his unattainable ego-ideal.

4. "Social Scandal" and the Imperialist Myths

Jim's leap from the Patna does not only reveal the truth about his own character, but also has wider social implications. They are discussed, for instance, by Otto Bohlmann

(1991), who draws parallels between the worldview presented in Conrad's novels and the tenets of Sartre's philosophy, as well as those pertaining to existentialist philosophy in general. In his analysis of *Lord Jim*, Bohlmann argues that in the moment when Jim jumps from the Patna he heeds his "inauthentic self", the self wedded to the conventional "they" (the other European officers who have already deserted the ship) who applaud his choice (BOHLMANN 1991: 115). As Bohlmann explains, according to the existentialist ethics, the responsibility we assume upon making each individual choice extends beyond the individual to encompass, in the last analysis, the entire humanity. This is because, by fashioning ourselves through our individual choices, we also fashion a certain image of man as we would have him to be. Nothing can be regarded as a better choice for an individual unless it is also a better choice for all men. While choosing what he will be, man is at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind. Therefore, as Bohlmann concludes, "only a diminished existent not responsibly himself makes choices that adversely affect man at large" (ibid, 107). At the moment of desertion, Jim corresponds to Bohlmann's category of a "diminished existent", fashioning a negative image of himself, but also of man at large. As Sartre writes in *Being and Nothingness* (1943),

> from the instance of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it... I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant (SARTRE 2011: 670–671).

Fredric Jameson likewise draws parallels with Sartre's work, comparing the experience of estrangement which accompanies Jim's leap with Roquentin's experience in *La Nauseé* (1938). However, Jameson focuses more closely on the consequences of this event on the community of merchant navy officers in the Far East, pointing out that Jim's discovery of Sartrean freedom causes a "social scandal":

> ...it becomes clear that there were always two problematics:... Roquentin's "discovery" of being in *La Nauseé*, with all the unavoidable results for him as an individual subject – and that quite different matter which is the relationship of the social institution – the bourgeoisie in Bouville – and its structures of legitimation to this shattering discovery, and to the scandal of the asocial individual. Conrad pretends to tell us the story of an individual's struggle with his own fear and courage; but he knows very well that the real issues are elsewhere, in the social example Jim cannot but set, and the demoralizing effect of Jim's discovery of Sartrean freedom on the ideological myths that allow a governing class to function and to assert its unity and legitimacy (JAMESON 1982: 264).

Jim's failure to make a responsible choice is, as Jameson maintains, "socially significant". It is not only related to one individual's struggle with fear and courage, but also sets a social example that has a "demoralizing effect" on the dominant ideological myths. These ideological issues are only hinted at in Conrad's narrative, as the officers of the merchant fleet presented in the novel do not seem to belong to any clearly defined social structure or organisation. As the novel's chief narrator Marlow explains, they are just members "of an obscure body of men held together by a community of inglorious toil and by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct" (CONRAD 1994: 43–44). However, in Jameson's opinion,

there is a symbolical connection between these merchant officers, adventurously gaining wealth and influence in the far reaches of the world, and the bureaucracy of the British Empire: "it is the ruling class of the British Empire, the heroic bureaucracy of imperial capitalism which takes that lesser, but sometimes even more heroic, bureaucracy of the officers of the merchant fleet as a figure for itself" (JAMESON 1982: 265). Therefore, the "ideological myths" which Jim's failure undermines are, in the final analysis, the myths of racial and cultural superiority, the same myths which sustain the British Empire and European imperialism in general.

The theme of supremacist discourse, and the ideological support it provides to imperialism, is not explicitly stated in *Lord Jim*. However, the shattering effect of the Patna incident on the legitimacy of this discourse may be clearly observed on the example of a side character, captain Brierly. Brierly's conversation with Marlow implies that he considers the Malay pilgrims who were on board the Patna as no more important than any other kind of cargo. He shows no concern for their welfare and is solely worried about the public disgrace and humiliation that Jim's trial is causing to the white merchants and naval officers:

> This infernal publicity is too shocking: there he [Jim] sits while all those confounded natives… are giving evidence that's enough to burn a man to ashes with shame... We are trusted. Do you understand? – trusted! Frankly, I don't care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales (CONRAD 1994: 55–56).

In such situations, as Paul Armstrong maintains, a society generally seeks to avoid facing disturbing insights and re-examining the dominant ideological narratives; instead, it resorts to marginalizing and scapegoating the problematic individual. Jim is thus officially branded a criminal, which enables the society to exorcize, along with him, the reminder of the frailty of all it takes for granted: "By labelling the culprit 'other' than itself, society repels any suggestion that it need re-examine its beliefs" (ARMSTRONG 1987: 116). However, the problem with scapegoating Jim is that he does not fit the stereotype of a "villain". There is a striking discrepancy between the thoroughly positive impression Jim leaves upon an on-looker, and the hidden "soft spot" which has made him jump the ship in panic and endanger hundreds of lives. By his outward appearance, Jim seems to be a perfect representative of his culture, a healthy, strong, decent-looking young man epitomizing its idealized self-image and proclaimed values. Knowing the truth about the Patna, Marlow is angered by this discrepancy as soon as he lays eyes on Jim: "I was as angry as though I had detected him trying to get something out of me by false pretences. He had no business to look so sound" (CONRAD 1994: 36). Jim represents a problem for the community because it is difficult to label him as "the other", given that his appearance invites identification rather than rejection. It is this disturbing inconsistency, or ambiguity of Jim's status which, in Armstrong's opinion, causes a psychological crisis in both Marlow and Brierly, eventually leading Brierly to commit suicide (ARMSTRONG 1987: 117). Jameson likewise argues that Brierly's suicide represents a "social gesture" and that the reasons behind it cannot be reduced to a personal psychological crisis (JAMESON 1982: 264).

5. Conclusion

While the early critical debate on Modernism – which started with Lukács' writings in the 1930s – condemned this literary movement as apolitical, the subsequent contributors to the debate took a less radical approach, eventually reaching a conclusion that the social and historical content is not entirely absent from the Modernist text, but only repressed and displaced through various narrative strategies. The Modernists, according to Fredric Jameson, reacted to reification, fragmentation and overall dehumanization of the late industrial capitalism by offering a kind of "utopian compensation" (JAMESON 1982: 266) which consisted in cherishing and minutely exploring the subjective self. While focusing on the inner life of an individual, the Modernist narrative still retains a complex relationship with the social subtext, so that the creative method of these writers cannot be reduced to some form of escapism. By combining Marxist and post-structuralist analysis, Jameson demonstrates that it is possible to discern political meanings and show how they continue to affect the narrative "under the new formal structures of the modernist text" (ibid., 215).

Joseph Conrad's novel *Lord Jim*, published in 1900, may be used to exemplify the narrative techniques discussed by Jameson. It is usually cited as chronologically the first novel in Conrad's oeuvre which fully belongs to the Modernist movement, both in terms of its innovative stylistic features and its subject matter, keenly focused on the individual destiny and inward quest of its protagonist. By moving the action to the sea, away from the contradictions and tensions of the late industrial capitalism on the mainland, Conrad frames Jim's fateful leap from the steamer Patna and his subsequent struggle as a timeless existential problem, ostensibly divorced from social and historical circumstances. The narrative of *Lord Jim* is often viewed as a kind of "unofficial inquiry" whose purpose is to explore and establish the root causes of Jim's moral failure – which the official inquiry, carried out in the course of his trial, has not accomplished (BERTHOUD 2003: 78–79).

It turns out, however, that the social and political circumstances of Jim's case cannot be excluded from such an inquiry. In addition, the consequences of Jim's failure likewise transcend the problematics of a personal destiny, affecting the entire community of white merchants in the Malay Archipelago and gaining social significance. In the last analysis, the narrative shows, albeit subtly and indirectly, how Jim's cowardly act undermines the ideological myths of racial and cultural superiority which sustain European imperialism. All these facts demonstrate that the Modernist strategies applied in *Lord Jim* by no means render the novel apolitical; while the political content of the novel is less manifest, it nevertheless represents an integral part of Conrad's artistic vision.

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Наташа Тучев

ПОТИСНУТИ ДРУШТВЕНИ САДРЖАЈ У МОДЕРНИСТИЧКОМ НАРАТИВУ: СЛУЧАЈ *ЛОРДА ЏИМА*

У раду се полази од става да се не може говорити о потпуном одсуству друштвеног садржаја у најзначајнијим делима модернистичке књижевности, већ да је такав садржај потиснут или измештен путем различитих наративних стратегија. Критичка дебата о модернизму, која је почела са Лукачевим изузетно негативним ставом о аполитичности овог покрета, у каснијим фазама попримила је одмеренији тон. Рад се нарочито фокусира на теоријске поставке Фредрика Џејмсона, према којима у модернистичком тексту долази до потискивања друштвеног и политичког садржаја, при чему Џејмсон сматра да је путем марксистичке херменеутике могуће декодирати такав садржај и установити његову улогу у наративу. Роман *Лорд Џим* Џозефа Конрада (1900) узима се у раду као пример управо оних одлика модернизма о којима говори Џејмсон. У раду се анализирају неки од кључних мотива у овом роману, са циљем да се утврди његова друштвено-историјска димензија и покаже како она доприноси потпунијем разумевању Конрадове уметничке визије.

Кључне речи: Џозеф Конрад, модернизам, марксистичка књижевна критика, друштвени садржај, наративне стратегије