



THE PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE AND ALIENATION IN CONRAD'S *LORD JIM*

CONRAD'IN *LORD JIM* İNDE VARLIK VE YABANCILAŞMA PROBLEMİ

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Abstract

Joseph Conrad, as one of the outstanding twentieth century novelists, explores the human condition and reflects the contradictions of human nature in his novel, Lord Jim. According to him, man is an absurd creature living in an absurd world, in a sinister and alien environment. He deeply feels his loneliness and his meaningless existence. Living in this meaningless world does not make any sense at all. So against this background, the question he asks in anguish is 'who am I?' Joseph Conrad, the writer of early modernist English fiction, reveals a striking affinity with Existentialism. Existentialism aims at exploring human condition, the absurdity and alienation which man experiences, and existential commitment to life in search of a lost identity. In the same way, Conrad's work Lord Jim brings out existential truths about the human condition, the nature of man and the problem of identity as one of the crucial issues man faces. The present analysis is intended to shed some light on Lord Jim as an existential novel in the framework of existential concepts such as existence, essence, freedom to choose, responsibility, anguish, sense of guilt, isolation, and authentic identity. The aim of this paper is to elucidate Conrad's existential assessment of human condition, human life, the meaning of human existence.

Keywords: *Existence, Alienation, Existentialism, Identity, Lord Jim.*

Öz

Yirminci Yüzyılın önde gelen romancılarından biri olarak Joseph Conrad Lord Jim başlıklı romanında insanlık durumunu araştırmakta ve insan doğasının tutarsızlıklarını yansıtmaktadır. Ona göre insan tehditkâr ve yabancı bir ortamda, anlamsız bir dünyada yaşayan anlamsız bir yaratıktır. İnsan yalnızlığını ve anlamsız varlığını derinden hissetmektedir. Bu anlamsız dünyada yaşamak hiç de anlamlı gelmemektedir. Bu bağlamda insanın kendisine sorduğu 'ben kimim?' sorusudur. Erken modern dönem İngiliz romancısı olan Conrad, Varoluşçuluk felsefesiyle çarpıcı bir benzerlik sergilemektedir. Varoluşçuluk insanlık durumunu, insanoğlunun yaşadığı anlamsızlığı, yabancılaşmayı, kaybolan kimlik arayışında yaşama karşı varoluşçu bir yükümlülüğü araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Conrad'ın Lord Jim

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adlı eseri de benzer şekilde insanoğlunun karşı karşıya kaldığı önemli sorunlardan biri olarak insanlık durumunu, insanoğlunun doğası ve kimlik problemi konusunda varoluşçu gerçekleri ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma varlık, öz, seçme özgürlüğü, ıstırap, yalnızlık ve özgün bir kimlik gibi varoluşçu kavramlar çerçevesinde Lord Jim'i varoluşçu bir roman olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı Conrad'ın insanlık durumunu, insan yaşamını ve insan varlığının anlamını varoluşsal açıdan nasıl ele aldığını açıklığa kavuşturmadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Varlık, Yabancılaşma, Varoluşçuluk, Kimlik, Lord Jim.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works are manifestations of a historic, cultural, intellectual world view, the philosophic spirit and the temper of an age. Philosophic views enter into works of literature and art. These two usually interact with each other. Literary or artistic works mostly borrow and employ philosophic views of a given period or age. A novel, a poem or a play can make some claims about certain philosophic views. The artistic and philosophical works are the products of a given age. The cultural world view is portrayed, the temper of an age is revealed, and the philosophical views are presented through the works of art. The artistic and Philosophical are both the products of a given time, and philosophy enters into works of literature in this way. All art is philosophical since a work of art reveals a philosophical position in this way or in that way. A novel, a poem, or a play in its imaginative arrangement presents or adopts certain philosophical views and points of view. They portray or display philosophical views, attitudes or positions of the periods in which they are written. Thus, 'philosophical' and 'literary' works are closely connected. It is very illuminating to study the ways in which a work of art exemplifies the philosophical spirit and the temper of an age. It can adopt philosophical ideas and make claims about them. Authors may often be immersed in philosophical material and embody the philosophical views in their work. In the same line of thinking, Albert Camus remarked that “If you want to be a philosopher, write novels.” (Camus, 1965: 10) Camus and Jean Paul Sartre made use of fictional forms in order to express their existential ideas. The present analysis is intended to shed light on Joseph Conrad's existential concern in *Lord Jim* in the light of Existentialism.

Most of the twentieth century novelists imbued their novels with considerable philosophic perspectives in order to refer to a variety of psycho-social disorders which modern man faced such as loss of self, anxiety, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganisation, loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism and loss of beliefs or values. As a result of the great social change caused by industrialism, people who were living as small groups in villages, towns, and small cities and who were mostly guided by religious values, traditions and customs left aside all these values and began to rush into the urban centres where living conditions proved to be inadequate. The man, having been deprived of his natural surroundings and ties, became helpless and was reduced to a creature faced with life and death struggle. Thus, having been cut off from all his ties, his religious, spiritual ties, metaphysical and transcendental roots, people began to lead a life which seemed to have no

meaning and purpose at all. Man confronted great contrasts and opposites as he deeply felt troubles as he faced the immense gulf between his finest achievements of hand and his brain.

2. EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emerged in the twentieth century. Though the seeds of existentialism were sown in the later years of the 19th century, it was more appropriately a 20th century philosophy. It represents some of the most prominent features of the cultural, social and political developments of that period. Shattered beliefs, loss of faith, and decline of the significance of religion and the effects of the two world wars were among the reasons, responsible for the emergence of existentialism. The most remarkable exponent of this philosophical movement is, undoubtedly Jean Paul Sartre. Although there are other philosophers such as Karl Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Albert Camus who dealt with existentialism, it is Sartre's name which is mainly associated with Existentialism. The existentialist philosophers dealt with some important questions such as 'What is the main purpose of human life?', 'What meanings can be given to human life?', 'what is the meaning of existence?', 'what is the truth of existence?'. Existence, essence, personal choice, metaphysical conception of truth, death of God, freedom, existential situation, despair, anxiety, authenticity, authentic existence, inauthentic existence, being hurled, Dasein, contingency are some of the existential concepts the existentialist philosophers preoccupied with. The questions concerning human nature, the essence of man and his distinctive characteristics have always attracted their attention throughout the ages. The earlier ages either had the religious and theological perspectives which linked it with God or the secular and rational expositions which focused on universal rationality. Opposing these prevailing perspectives, rejecting the universal rationality, the absolute truth and reason, the existentialist philosophers emphasize individual existence. Existentialism is a philosophical movement which focuses on an analysis of human condition, individual existence in a hostile, an unfathomable and indifferent universe. It makes an existential evaluation of human life. Existentialism is a philosophical exploration into the ultimate meaning of human existence. It is an analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world. It claims that humans exist first and then each individual spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature. Existentialism deals with finding self and the meaning of life through free will, choice, and personal responsibility. People search to find out who and what they are throughout life while they make their choices. It centres upon the plight of the individual who must take upon the responsibility for his own actions. It also emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual in an indifferent universe. Existentialism deals with the question of being a subject, who has a unique position as a self-determining person who must be responsible for the authenticity of his or her own choices. Man constructs his essence in the course of his life depending upon his personal choices. The existentialists focus on the individual, his existential problems and question his existence in this world as a concrete human being without isolating him from his political, social and cultural environment. Man is inescapably a being as thrown and contingent like Jim in *Lord Jim*, who at the beginning feels himself among men "who like himself thrown there by some accident (Conrad, 1994: 16) without prior meaning and purpose in the world. The world has no absolute meaning. Man must carve meaning and goal out of chaos. Man

just exists in an inconceivable world as a solitary being who has been abandoned to himself in an irrational and absurd world. As Marlow points out in *Lord Jim*, being is “one colossal presence.” (Conrad, 1994: 251) Man is free to create himself, but he must assume the ultimate responsibility of his free will. Man must create his own authentic identity depending upon his own sense of freedom. Man is never what he is, but what he makes. The first motto of existentialism as expounded by Sartre in his *Existentialism and Humanism*, is “existence precedes essence,” (Sartre, 1948: 28) which is in stark opposition to the Aristotelian postulation that “the essence of a thing is that which makes it that thing or what a thing is.” (Aristotle, 1896: 211-225) According to Aristotle, the essential nature of a thing is its essence. He believes in the existence of some universal essences in the things. On the other hand, according to Sartre, first of all, man has to exist. Man exists, confronts himself, and then defines himself. At first, he is simply what he is, and then he is what he makes of himself: “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.” (Sartre, 1948: 28) Existence is the first requirement of having essence. Sartre also states “He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself” (Sartre, 1948:28). Sartre believes that man lives in an indifferent universe, so he has to create and organize his own purposes, aspirations and goals. Humans must create their own identities. People are all free. People are “condemned to be free”. (Sartre, 1948:34) Thus, they are responsible for everything they do. They have no one to blame for what they are except themselves. They choose not only for themselves but for all people. They are therefore responsible not only for their own individuality but for all people. People are only a sum of their actions. Besides their actual lives, they are nothing. Apart from their existence, there is nothingness. There is nothing besides the existing individual, which means the absence of God, lack of objective values, and prior essences. As Bohlmann points out, for existentialists, “the world is utterly without absolute meaning, and man is left to invent his own personal meaning for his existence” (Bohlmann, 1991:14). There is no prior essence in people. There is no meaning or sense in life prior to acts of will. As Sartre states, “life has no meaning a priori. Before you come alive, life is nothing” (Sartre, 1957: 49).

Joseph Conrad, the writer of early modernist English fiction, dealt with the main themes of the modern period in a subjective manner such as fear of loneliness, loss of identity, discontinuity of social relations, anxieties, fears and inner conflicts of individuals. Joseph Conrad reveals a far more striking affinity with Existentialism. His work *Lord Jim* is a novel which has a philosophical basis and brings out existential truths about the nature of man and of moral behaviour: the problem of identity as one of the crucial issues man faces. Existentialist philosophy is one of the main ingredients of the novel from the philosophical point of view. Conrad’s character Lord Jim is a dramatization of the problem of identity. Conrad displays and portrays the collapse of personality, the breakdown of identity which leaves his character Lord Jim in a terrible confusion and uncertainty. The existential truths are questioned by Jim and Marlow in the novel. They lie hidden beneath the surface appearance of existence. Conrad is in line with the existentialist philosophers who wonder how human beings define themselves and questions how we often accept the formulations and definitions of ourselves which other beings thrust upon us.

3. CONRAD'S LORD JIM

Like all existentialists, Conrad tries to make an analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world. Every individual unavoidably exists in the world, which is an absolute condition of man at first. Man feels himself, as Sartre declares, "abandoned in the midst of indifference." (Sartre, 1956: 508) He is desperately alone, which is too painful, and there is nothing which will lighten this terrible loneliness. In a similar frame of mind, Marlow tells of Jim, he is:

a lost youngster, one in a million—but then he was one of us; an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself...(Conrad, 1994: 75)

Although Jim, a young man, who earns his living as a ship-outfitter's water clerk in various seaports, is very efficient, he never sticks to any job. He seems to be running away from something in his past. His guilty conscience makes him go from one place to another. As a result of this flight, he loses his identity and is reluctant his last name. Unable to take decisions in life, Jim drifts away from life and becomes a detached person. Thus, Jim indulges in his dreams of a splendid future. There is a great gulf between his visions of himself and what he is, in reality. His life is turned into a dreamy one in which he is forced to differentiate reality from imaginary. He prefers to waste most of his time daydreaming about imaginary feats of heroism. As Sartre says, "there is no reality, except in action ... Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is. ...It puts everyone in a position to understand that reality alone is reliable; that dreams, expectations and hopes serve to define man only as deceptive dreams, abortive hopes and expectations unfulfilled." (in Kaufmann, 1956: 300) Jim is full of romantic illusions derived from reading of romantic literature. His identity-for self is constructed through the light literature he has been reading. Jim develops a distorted view of reality and an exalted conception of himself. Lost in his daydreams, he finds it difficult to make the transition from the world of fancy to the world of facts. Jim's fondness for dreams of heroism dulls his ability to participate in the world of action. As Stein points out, "a man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns." (Conrad, 1994: 163)

To exist is a heavy burden upon his shoulders, and he should be able to take up the responsibility of his own existence. He deeply feels his loneliness in a sinister and absurd world. Thus, in his sinister and alien environment, Jim is turned into an absurd creature living in an absurd world. This meaninglessness produces discomfort and anxiety, a terrible feeling of loneliness in Jim. What prevents Jim from acting is his own consciousness, his awareness of the absurdity and chaos of the modern universe. "That man there seemed to be aware of his hopeless difficulty" (Conrad, 1994: 31). The feelings of discomfort and anxiety force Jim to "spen[d] many days stretched out on his back, dazed, battered, hopeless, and tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest." (Conrad, 1994: 14) Jim is conscious of this tragic and inevitable situation of his own existence and his hopeless situation. Conrad's depiction of

Jim and the nature of his inextricable condition is in agreement with existentialists' views of modern man. At the beginning of the novel, Lord Jim is aware of the fact that he exists in an unavoidable contingency with all that surrounds him: "They appeared to live in a crazy maze of plans, hopes, dangers, enterprises, ahead of civilisation, in the dark places of the sea; and their death was the only event of their fantastic existence that seemed to have a reasonable certitude of achievement. The majority were men who, like himself, thrown there by some accident..." (Conrad, 1994: 16) Life is replete with a crazy maze of plans, hopes, dangers, and enterprises, and death is certain. Jim's point of view is existential, and from this perspective he is there by chance which goes on shaping his life and affecting his existence. As Stein remarks, "man is come from where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him." (Conrad, 1994: 159) His existence is a great turmoil, tumult and menace. Jim goes on feeling a sinister violence of intention, an indefinable something which forces it upon his mind and his heart. There is something which directly threatens his existence, which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he has.

There is something peculiar in a small boat upon the wide sea. Over the lives borne from under the shadow of death there seems to fall the shadow of madness. When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, took care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination. (Conrad, 1994: 95)

However, he has to exist, and he has to work with his divided self. He is an unavoidable part of this absurd world, and he cannot escape engaging it. The responsibility of his existence lies on his own shoulders. Jim must determine his own fate. As Sartre asserts, "there is no sense in life a priori...it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose." (Sartre, 1948: 54) His absolute existence totally depends upon his own conduct. He has to be his own project. It is up to Lord Jim himself to decide upon his own response to his own existence in the world. He has been granted the freedom to choose. As Sartre in his *Anti-Semite and Jew*, explains, "to be in a situation ...is to choose oneself in a situation, and men differ from one another in their situations and also in the choices they themselves make of themselves." (Sartre, 1948:60)

Freedom, choice, action and responsibility are inevitably interrelated. They are interdependent on each other. As Sartre puts it, "when a man commits himself to anything fully realising that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind – in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility." (Sartre, 1948: 30) As a result of a collision concerning Patna with submerged derelict, which is an old iron ship which engaged in transporting eight hundred pilgrims, Jim's leap from Patna is his own choice: "There were eight hundred people in that ship...eight hundred living people, and they were yelling after the one dead man to come down and be saved. 'jump, George! Jump! Oh, jump'...I had jumped..." (Conrad, 1994:88) Jim was free not to jump as he was free to choose his own job, and free to abandon it. Jim as a free individual cannot avoid action and responsibility for it. He cannot avoid his feeling of responsibility. As Sartre remarked, "Everything takes place as if I were compelled to be

responsible. I am abandoned in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather in that 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. I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities.” (Sartre, 1956: 556)

Jim does not want to accept that he himself has decided to jump. He tries to persuade himself that he has not made a conscious decision to jump. Jim constantly tries to deceive himself. He tries to justify his act. He does not remember how it has happened somehow, but “there was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well – into an everlasting deep hole...” (Conrad, 1994:89) He at first avoids responsibility by putting the blame on different reasons: “this extreme weariness of emotions, the vanity of effort, the yearning for rest? Those striving with unreasonable forces know it well, - the shipwrecked castaways in boats, wanderers lost in a desert, man battling against the unthinking might of nature, or the stupid brutality of crowds.” (Conrad, 1994:71-72) He also does not refrain from blaming the other officers for tempting him to jump. He is in a gigantic delusion. In fact, the reality lies in his soul, and however much he tries to cover it, it goes on disturbing him. As Marlow points out, “he would be confident and depressed all in the same breath, as if some conviction of innate blamelessness had checked the truth writhing within him at every turn.” (Conrad, 1994: 64) As Nietzsche points out, in his *The Will to Power*, “the world seems logical to us because we have made it logical. (Nietzsche, 1967: 283) Jim suffers from self-delusion.

This jumping is an act of betrayal to human solidarity for self-survival. His action draws his destiny. Although Jim knows the fact that he is free to choose leaping or not leaping, he does not want to take up the responsibility of jumping. Since he is “condemned to be free,” (Sartre, 1956: 439) he makes a mistake, and his freedom to choose brings him anguish and a sense of guilt. His freedom contains his own potential destruction. Since he is free to choose, he makes a wrong choice and therefore, suffers from anguish and a sense of guilt throughout his life.

Jim develops a split personality. Joseph Conrad makes a daring attempt to describe doubleness in human nature, which comes into being as a result of existential anguish. Splitting is a powerful, expressionistic way of dramatising psychic processes. Conrad represents split personality as a complex phenomenon which is brought about by personal as well as existential causes. Conrad shows how easy it is for the self to lose control and plunge into doubleness. Jim’s divided self alienates him not only from his own surrounding, but also from his own nature. He is lonely and alienated in an indifferent world. He suffers from sense of alienation. As Sartre expounds, “man is assailed by a presiding sense of alienation in knowing that he is an entity separate from all that surrounds him, ‘left alone’ to create his own values without any means of justification or excuse.” (Sartre, 1948: 34) Jim does not want to objectify his real character, so he experiences a conflict between his individual consciousness and his oppressed and submerged reality. Jim’s split personality, disillusionment, despair and internalised anguish lead him to an existential quest. He lives through an internal quest, meaning personal internal journey. He questions himself about his leap from Patna. As Suman Bala remarks, “throughout, Jim is engaged in the deeper

quest of why he acted as he did. He does not fully understand the complex reasons for his act, although he senses some of the truth.” (Bala, 1990: 124)

This event becomes a turning point in Jim’s life, and it brings along a great change in his perspective of himself and the universe. His anguish, his pangs of conscience and his fear of death force him to question the course of things, which will result in an existential quest. He is in search of his authentic identity. Rootless and without identity, Jim’s goal is self-knowledge. Jim’s tormenting journey towards self-knowledge is the central theme of the novel. Throughout his journey, Jim confronts individuals and forces which undermine his precarious self-sufficiency, and they also deepen his isolation. As Otto Bohlmann remarks, “as one sees...in Jim and his attempts through the torments of conscience to gain what existentialists would term authentic existence...In sweeping terms, an individual’s existential ‘process of becoming’ should entail a passage towards authentic personal being, a quest for true selfhood, through his ultimate freedom for responsible choice (however oppressive the forces against him) and through his decisions and actions, hedged about the dictates of conscience.” (Bohlmann, 1991: 46)

Jim’s ultimate aim is to be authentic, and *Lord Jim* indicates his “determination to lounge safely through existence.” (Conrad, 1994: 16) Jim is indefinable as existentialists would conceive him. It is because at first he is nothing. Having been certain of his existence, Lord Jim searches for the ways of filling in his existence. He is ready to encounter his real self. Jim’s strife involves painful strenuous, dangerous tests and trials. His way is full of obstacles, which try to divert his mind from such a quest. It is a conscious decision. He takes the responsibility for his own individuality. He is the future of himself. Jim is in dire need of learning in order to prove himself that he really exists. He has such kind of will. As explained by Marlow, “indeed very few of us have the will or the capacity to look consciously under the surface of familiar emotions.” (Conrad, 1994: 169) It requires effort and courage. Lack of an authentic personality creates anguish in Jim He is aware of “the magic monotony of existence” (Conrad, 1994: 14)

Jim’s world is utterly devoid of absolute meaning, and Jim has to find out the meaning of his own existence. Jim appears by chance, and he has to make of himself and create for himself. This situation creates a terrible existential anguish in his soul. He would like to escape, but there is no way out:

Jim...used to say afterwards, ‘Man! It’s a pairfect meeracle to me how she lived through it!’, spent many days stretched on his back, dazed, battered, hopeless, and tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest. He did not care what the end would be, and in his lucid moments overvalued his indifference. The danger, when not seen, has the imperfect vagueness of human thought. The fear grows shadowy; and Imagination, the enemy of men, the father of all terrors, unstimulated, sinks to rest in the dullness of exhausted emotion. ...But now and again an uncontrollable rush of anguish would grip him bodily, make him gasp and writhe under the blankets, and then the unintelligent brutality of an existence liable to the agony of such sensations filled him with a despairing desire to escape at any cost. (Conrad, 1994: 14-15)

Jim's leap from Patna strikes up a terrible truth in Jim. He discovers that the self he has is not the self he has ultimately wanted. Man does not have a fixed and a given human nature. There is no determinism in Jim. He is free to choose his self, and it changes in connection with his own choice. Jim's indulgence into splendid dreams does not provide him with necessary protection and a sound personality. Unable to take the right decisions in life, Jim finds himself in an imaginary world which has nothing to do with his own realities: "He loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with a heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself." (Conrad, 1994: 21-22) He spends much of his time daydreaming, which does not contribute to the solution of the enigma of his personality and which proves his avoidance of his own reality.

Jim's leap from Patna leads him to question his existential self. He would like to make an explanation of this leap for truth's sake, but especially for his own sake: "...his mind positively flew around and round the serried circle of facts that had surged up all about him to cut him off from the rest of his kind: it was like a creature that, finding itself imprisoned within an enclosure of high stakes, dashes round and round, distracted in the night, trying to find a weak spot, a crevice, a place to scale, some opening through which it may squeeze itself and escape. This awful activity of mind made him hesitate at times in his speech." (Conrad, 1994: 29) Although he tries to suppress this inner voice, it forces itself upwards. His moral anguish forces him to face himself as he is and to discover his self. By his own choice and free will, he accepts being questioned at the trial. His free will attracts Marlow's attention: "I became positive in my mind that the inquiry was a severe punishment to that Jim, and that his facing it - practically of his own free will - was a redeeming feature in his abominable case." (Conrad, 1994: 57) Jim is brave enough to be able to deal with his own existence. He takes up his responsibility, and faces it courageously. However, he becomes a detached person, and feels isolated and lonely, which is the cost of his existential quest. Jim begins "the journey towards the bottomless pit. ...it is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence." (Conrad, 1994: 138) Jim's strife with himself ends in Patusan where Jim finally achieves to make himself as he wishes and reaches peace with himself he has created on his own. His remaking of himself is not easily won. He comes very near at last to mastering his fate." (Conrad, 1994: 207) At last he discovers himself. Now he is nothing else but the sum of his actions. Jim takes up the responsibility of his own existence in Patusan. In some sense, Jim in Patusan lives some cleansing and purifying process. He expiates his old sins, regains his self confidence and success. Jim reconstructs his existence. He wins the confidence of the native people and acquires dominance over them. At last he captures the fact that his individual choices and actions are extremely crucial for his individual existence. His responsibility is much greater than he has assumed so far, for it does not only concern himself but the native people in Patusan. He tells Marlow "You take a different view of your actions when you come to understand-when you are made to understand-every day that your existence is necessary to another person. I am made to feel that." (Conrad, 1994: 229) Since he has discovered himself, he also discovers the existence of others. As Sartre underlines, "man condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world." (Sartre, 1956:

553) It is his own individual choice and his sense of responsibility which take him to death at the end of the novel. As pointed out by Suman Bala, “for Marlow, Jim has become a symbol of hope, a necessary affirmation of the human potential to overcome the darkness of a meaningless universe.” (1990: 141) Jim has regained his self-identity and has become aware of meaning in his own life. There is a change, some type of awakening from unconscious situation to consciousness.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Conrad’s *Lord Jim* is a fictional space to explain mankind’s place in the modern world and to expose his ideas and views about the deplorable situation of the twentieth century man. Reality was no longer thought to be so simple as in the nineteenth century and became inadequate in the presentation of psycho-social problems of modern man. Conrad indicates the human predicament in a universe which cannot be apprehended by us. A new perspective of man and life is brought to literature through the insertion of philosophical outlook, an existential perspective. As Otto Bohlman concludes in his epilogue, “Conrad existentially reveals that man is in his own source of transcendence. Through man’s resolute moral efforts to create his unique for-itself amid his utter freedom of choice for action that entails responsibility both to himself and others, he has the potential to overcome the Sartrean weight of the world that induces feelings of anxiety and alienation.” (Bohlmann, 1991:196) Conrad’s work displays particular existential concerns which are remarkably shared by the existentialists, primarily by Sartre. The great technological and social revolutions of the past promised social order and individual freedom. However, they shattered the collective unity and man’s individuality. Since then, man has been suffering from his sense of estrangement from the world he himself has made. As an existential and modern hero, Jim in *Lord Jim* finds himself in an absurd world which is indifferent and meaningless in the early beginning of the novel. There is no way out for Jim except for enduring the absurdity of his existence. It leads him to alienation, isolation and loneliness from which he cannot escape. At the beginning, he falls into untrue self to avoid his responsibility. His jumping from Patna destroys all his faith in himself and cuts him off not just from the people around himself but also from himself, which results in his existential guilt. Through his own efforts, Jim begins to acquire existential values and to develop self-discovery. His decision to face his own guilt and the trial is a clear indication of his existential attitude towards life. Jim’s searching for his lost identity and for his true self forces him to assume his responsibility for others. His commitment is the only way of avoiding his existential anguish and isolation. This existential commitment to life has paved the way for his authentic existence.

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