

VARIANTS OF ALIENATION IN CONRAD'S *VICTORY*

Nataša Tučev^{1*}, Nikola Petrović²

¹University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, Serbia

²Metropolitan University, Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Nataša Tučev

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7542-7151>

Nikola Petrović

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7500-0606>

Abstract

The paper deals with various manifestations of alienation in Joseph Conrad's novel *Victory* (1915), primarily by referring to the classification put forward by the American sociologist Melvin Seeman. The introductory part provides a brief historical overview of major theoretical perspectives on alienation as a social and psychological phenomenon, as well as a discussion of Seeman's approach to it. By applying these theories to the analysis of Conrad's novel, the paper aims to demonstrate that the motif of alienation is predominant in *Victory*, denoting a condition which plagues not only the novel's protagonist, Axel Heyst, but numerous other characters as well. The same as many other authors in the period of modernism, Conrad was preoccupied with the problem of an alienated individual in the contemporary society, which makes the discussion of this motif essential for understanding his artistic vision.

Key words: Joseph Conrad, Melvin Seeman, alienation, modernism, characterisation.

ВАРИЈАНТЕ АЛИЈЕНАЦИЈЕ У КОНРАДОВОЈ ПОБЕДИ

Апстракт

Рад се бави манифестацијама алијенације у роману *Победа* (1915) Џозефа Конрада, првенствено се ослањајући на класификацију коју је предложио амерички социолог Мелвин Симен. Уводни део пружа кратак историјски преглед значајних теоријских ставова о алијенацији као друштвеном и психолошком феномену, као и расправу о Сименовом приступу овој теми. Потом се ове теорије примењују у анализи Конрадовог романа, са циљем да покаже да је мотив алијенације свеприсутан у *Победи*, не само као духовно стање протагонисте, Аксела Хејста, већ и као компонента у карактеризацији бројних других ликова. Као и други аутори у периоду модернизма, Конрад је заокупљен проблемом отуђеног појединца у савременом друштву, тако да је расправа о овом мотиву суштински значајна за разумевање његове уметничке визије.

* Corresponding author: Nataša Tučev, University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Ћirila i Metodija 2, 18101 Niš, Serbia, natasa.tucev@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Кључне речи: Џозеф Конрад, Мелвин Симен, алијенација, модернизам, карактеризација.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of alienation has been used to refer both to a certain type of personal psychological state and to a social relationship. The initial meaning of the term, as Hamid Sarfraz argues, was established in the writings of theologians, and can be identified in the sources pertaining to a variety of religious traditions, such as Hindu, Islamic, Christian or Buddhist (Sarfraz, 1997, p. 45). In these writings, alienation is a term which can have both positive and negative connotations, depending on whether it refers to a renunciation of worldly affairs or to a sense of separation from God. As Sarfraz explains, “The main cause of alienation to most of the theologians was worldly (material and sensuous) involvement, and in order to avoid spiritual alienation, they encouraged alienation from the physical and social world” (ibid.).

A dichotomy between a desirable and undesirable form of alienation is also found in the writings of Hegel; however, his terminology pertains to a notion of the self as a social and historical creation. For Hegel, the undesirable alienation, or *Entfremdung*, occurs when an individual ceases to identify with what is perceived as the ‘objective’ world and its social, political and cultural institutions. However, such alienation can be overcome by a voluntary act of self-sacrifice for the common good, which Hegel terms *Entausserung* (surrender or divestiture). Through such an act, the world becomes perceived as just another aspect of self-consciousness, and one establishes again a sense of unity and identification with the social system. In this manner, as Sarfraz sums it up, not only is alienation negated, but a positive result is achieved and “universal essence of man is realized” (ibid., p. 46).

In his early writings, Marx likewise posits the existence of man’s essence, which he terms *Gattungswesen* (‘species being’). In his interpretation, that which defines man’s species-life is productivity: while operating on the external nature, man simultaneously produces himself, viewing his own existence as an object he is consciously shaping through his labour. This kind of free, spontaneous and conscious life activity is for Marx a precondition to self-realisation; however, as he points out, in the capitalist society it becomes degraded and alienated from the worker. In his analysis, conducted in “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” Marx argues that in capitalism, the alienated man no longer views his work as an essential life activity through which he produces his very sense of the self. On the contrary, it becomes only a means of sustaining one’s physical existence and is “shunned like the plague” once it is no longer required (2010, p. 274).

Of the more recent theories on alienation, perhaps the most empirically explored is that of Melvin Seeman. In his 1959 paper titled "On the Meaning of Alienation," he distinguishes between five of its variants: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement and isolation¹. While Seeman refers to Marx's concept of alienation in the paper, he does not approach the issue from the Marxist perspective. Unlike Marx, he does not see alienation as an objective condition existing in a particular type of society; instead, he approaches it "from the personal standpoint of the actor" and "the social-psychological point of view" (Seeman, 1959, p. 784). Whereas for Marx alienation objectively exists in capitalism, Seeman is not primarily concerned with the objective conditions in a modern society, but rather with an individual's subjective perception of them.

Powerlessness, the first variant of alienation in Seeman's essay, is defined by him as "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes... he seeks" (ibid.). Seeman explains that it primarily refers to man's relation to the larger social order: an individual feels that he or she has no control over large-scale socio-political issues, such as the existing political system, industrial economy or international affairs (ibid., 785). In his later works, however, Seeman also comes to recognise a narrower approach to powerlessness, citing studies which have used his terminology to refer to research in family dynamic, or the experience of pupils in a classroom (Seeman, 1991, p. 294). Powerlessness may thus be defined as a lack of control over the events of one's social world, regardless of whether this social world comprises the entire society, or some more specific environments and communities.

The next type of alienation, *meaninglessness*, refers to "the individual's sense of understanding the events in which he is engaged" (Seeman, 1959, p. 786). This type of alienation is related to the feeling that the circumstances, or events, have become too confusing and complex to understand. It also refers to a person's lack of predictive abilities: if one does not have a clear understanding of a certain situation, it is difficult to predict what outcome one's behaviour will bring. In connection to meaninglessness, Seeman also discusses ambiguous situations, which one may try to resolve by relying on rumours (1983, p. 177).

Normlessness is the third type of alienation Seeman writes about. As he explains, this part of his theory is derived from Emile Durkheim's description of 'anomie,' denoting a situation in which "the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effec-

¹ In his text "Alienation and Engagement" (1972), Seeman also establishes the sixth form, which he calls social isolation.

tive as rules for behaviour.” In such circumstances, a person is likely to disregard commonly held standards, develop instrumental and manipulative attitudes, and resort to socially unapproved behaviours in order to achieve his goals (Seeman, 1959, pp. 787–788). Seeman points out that his theory deals with ‘perceived normlessness’ – that is, with an individual’s perception that there has been a breakdown of the social order, regardless of whether this is objectively true of a given society. According to him,

The core idea in this individual-centered viewpoint is that certain people at certain times may not respect the presumed norms, may not trust others to respect them, may not perceive that there is a consensus with respect to appropriate behavior, and may be prepared to act in deviant ways to achieve given goals (e.g., to get elected, to be occupationally successful, to have one’s way).

(Seeman, 1991, p. 311)

The fourth type of alienation in Seeman’s theories is *self-estrangement*. While Seeman discusses the similar concept used by Marx (i.e., his notion of alienation from one’s ‘species being’), he expresses scepticism with regard to Marx’s essentialism, pointing out that in Marx’s writings “it is difficult to specify what the alienation is *from*... Apparently, what is being postulated here is some ideal human condition from which the individual is estranged” (Seeman, 1959, pp. 789–790). Seeman, however, embraces Marx’s idea of an intrinsically meaningful activity, a kind of work which, in a non-alienated state, would represent its own reward. Based on this premise, he defines self-estrangement, more closely, as “the degree of dependence of the given behavior upon anticipated future rewards, that is, upon rewards that lie outside the activity itself” (ibid., p. 790). Any instance in which an individual engages in activities which are divorced from affect, and not rewarding in themselves (e.g., a worker who works merely for his salary, and not because he finds the work creative, fulfilling, or meaningful in itself) would fit Seeman’s notion of self-estrangement.

Isolation, the fifth variant of alienation according to Seeman, deals with “individual’s rejection of commonly held values in the society” (1975, p. 93). The experience of this type of alienation is often accompanied by a sense of superiority; it invokes the stereotypical image of an intellectual or an artist, who shows little concern for the goals or achievements which are otherwise highly valued in his society. In his later work, Seeman changed the name of this variant to *cultural estrangement*, using two scales to measure its aspects: one concerned with general social criticism (i.e., with an individual’s approval or disapproval of certain phenomena in society); and the other, with the differences in ideas and opinions between an individual and his or her immediate social environment – such as family members, or a friend group (Seeman, 1991, p. 352).

Seeman's concept of alienation has been criticised, especially from the Marxist perspective, for its lack of consistent social criticism, its primary focus on subjective perception and on finding remedies which would only have impact on the consciousness of an individual, helping him or her adjust to the existing social order (Healy, 2020, p. 10). In spite of these objections, however, his theoretical model has proven useful and effective in understanding contemporary social phenomena. There have also been numerous instances of its application to literary analysis. In his recent discussion of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for instance, Aleksandar Kordis refers to several theories on alienation, including Seeman's, in order to link different aspects of Woolf's narrative to different "narrative personae," and demonstrate how each represents an extension of the writer herself (Kordis, 2016, pp. 9–15). Likewise, Seeman's theories have been used as a framework for discussing social alienation in Eliot's "Prufrock" (Köseman, 2016, pp. 2–3), as well as the alienated condition of Kafka's literary characters (Fatehi, 2019, p. 7).

In the following sections of this paper, Seeman's theoretical model will be applied to the analysis of Joseph Conrad's well-known novel, *Victory* (1915). While critics have pointed to the alienated state of the novel's protagonist, Axel Heyst (Romanick, 1999, p. 235; Tučev, 2017, p. 229), it is also possible to discern various types of alienation as they manifest in the psychic disposition of other characters. In fact, as the following analysis will aim to demonstrate, each of Seeman's five variants of alienation is exemplified by Conrad's characters in *Victory*, or at least pertains to one phase of their development. Since the motif of alienation is one of the predominant motifs in *Victory*, its analysis through the prism of the aforementioned theories contributes significantly to understanding Conrad's artistic vision.

ALIENATION IN CONRAD'S VICTORY

Even though it takes place in the exotic and distant setting of the Malay Archipelago, Conrad's novel deals with recognisable existential issues and dilemmas which plague the modern man in general, exploring in particular the inability of its protagonist, Axel Heyst, to overcome the loss of affect, and the tragic consequences of his withdrawal from a life of action. The plot of the novel focuses on two instances when Heyst, in fact, decides to act in opposition to the nihilistic principles he has embraced, and comes to aid of two individuals: captain Morrison, whose debts he pays off, and Lena, whom he saves from a kind of indentured slavery. Neither Morrison's friendship nor Lena's love, however, succeed in altering Heyst's alienated state. The arrival of the three deadly adversaries – Jones, Ricardo and Pedro – to the island of Samburan, where Heyst lives a secluded life with Lena, likewise fails to compel him to act. Ultimately, it is Lena who devises a plan to resist the dangerous intruders, but her

courageous actions end in tragedy. In the end, Heyst can only come to realise that his detached attitude to life has been a mistake, and the manner in which he chooses to commit suicide after Lena's death – by setting a large portion of the island on fire – symbolises passion and the intense emotions which he has tried to evade throughout his life.

As this summary suggests, the theme of alienation in the novel is most strikingly connected to the character of Axel Heyst; however, other prominent characters, such as Lena, Jones, Ricardo or Morrison, are likewise affected by various form of estrangement, which may be suitably explained by referring to Seaman's classification.

Powerlessness

Powerlessness appears to be the most prevalent variant of alienation in Conrad's *Victory* and can be observed in a number of characters. The dynamic related to powerlessness is most obvious in the case of captain Morrison who, at the beginning of the novel, is in danger of losing his brig due to a minor debt. He is convinced that there is nothing he can do to alter his predicament; he feels he can neither procure the money himself, nor 'squeeze' the Malay natives who are indebted to him. These feelings correspond to Seaman's definition of powerlessness as a state of mind in which an individual does not expect that his behaviour can bring about the outcome he seeks. The desired outcome is perceived as something that can only come from outside (Seaman, 1959, p. 785). It is indeed perceived this way by Morrison, who recounts to Heyst that he "prayed like a child" to God to deliver him from this situation, even though he had previously cherished some abstract belief in self-reliance (Conrad, 1915, p. 19). When Heyst, with whom he is hardly acquainted, offers him financial aid, it appears to Morrison as though his prayers were answered. The dramatisation of Morrison's powerlessness is important for grasping his character, as well as his relationship with the sceptical, reticent Heyst, who immediately finds the other man's religious fatalism farcical, and is irritated by Morrison's emotional expressions of gratitude.

Another principal character affected by a sense of powerlessness is Lena. At the moment when Heyst meets her, she is a member of an all-woman travelling orchestra performing in a hotel in Surabaya. Lena is unhappy with her position, being harassed and mistreated both by the orchestra owner, Zangiaco, and by his sadistic wife. However, when Heyst asks her how she ended up in the orchestra, she replies, "bad luck," implying that her circumstances have been beyond her control, and cannot be influenced or changed by her actions. Her sense of powerlessness is also evident from her explanation that she cannot defend herself from the couple, nor from the advances of the hotel owner, Schomberg, because "They are too many" for her (ibid., p. 64). In Lena's case, powerlessness does not refer to her relation to the large-scale world events,

which was the original meaning Seeman ascribed to this variant of alienation. Rather, it corresponds to his later observations on how powerlessness can also manifest in one's social world on a smaller scale, and in some specific environment (Seeman, 1991, p. 352). In this case, Lena's 'social world' is the orchestra, where she feels helpless and unable to affect the power dynamic.

It is important to point out, however, that Lena's conscious attitude changes after Heyst helps her escape from the orchestra and brings her to his isolated abode on the isle of Samburan. Even though Lena realises that Heyst has saved her out of pity, and not out of love, she is empowered by her newly awakened feelings for him. When the ominous Mr Jones and his two companions land on Samburan, Lena is no longer represented as powerless, but as determined to act and fight for hers and Heyst's physical survival, while also hoping that her gesture will help Heyst transcend his state of emotional and spiritual paralysis².

It is, in fact, Heyst who feels powerless against Jones, Ricardo and Pedro, the three bandits who have come to Samburan to rob and kill him and Lena. On two occasions, he explicitly refers to the feeling he is experiencing about the situation as the feeling of powerlessness. Confiding in Lena, he exclaims, "I can't protect you! I haven't the power," and later admits that, "I feel very much like a child in my ignorance, in my powerlessness, in my want of resource, in everything except in the dreadful consciousness of some evil hanging over your head – yours!" (Conrad, 1915, pp. 270–271). Similarly to Morrison, who confessed to Heyst that he "prayed like a child" when he was about to lose his ship, Heyst invokes the imagery of a helpless child to illustrate the low degree of control he believes he possesses. The notion of "some evil hanging" over his and Lena's head implies a sense of doom, or the forces of destiny against which one is defenceless. It is reminiscent of Seeman's explanation that "for the alienated man, control seems vested in external forces, powerful others, luck, or fate" (Seeman, 1972, p. 472).

Heyst's sense of powerlessness is represented in the novel as a direct consequence of his mindset and his existential choice. Living for years in self-imposed isolation and passivity has caused him to become apathetic, indecisive and reluctant to act. In his preface to the novel, Conrad sums up Heyst's psychic condition by saying he lacks the ability to "assert himself":

² Interestingly, however, some prominent Conrad scholars, such as Thomas Moser (1966, p. 126), have argued that the alienated, powerless Lena from the beginning of the narrative is more convincing as a literary character than the saintly heroine she transforms into towards the end.

...Heyst in his fine detachment had lost the habit of asserting himself. I don't mean the courage of self-assertion, either moral or physical, but the mere way of it, the trick of the thing, the readiness of mind and the turn of the hand that come without reflection and lead the man to excellence in life, in art, in crime, in virtue, and, for the matter of that, even in love.

(Conrad, 1915, p. 6)

Meaninglessness

Meaninglessness is indirectly associated with Heyst's character, in the sense that due to his aloof, hermit-like way of life he remains largely unknown even to the people who have met him in person. Although Conrad writes that "everyone in that part of the world [the Malay Archipelago] knew of him, dwelling on his little island" (Conrad, 1915, p. 11), no one truly understands Heyst, and making sense of his behaviour or predicting the course which the interactions with him would take is almost impossible. Heyst is generally known only by his external characteristics, such as his perfectly courteous manner or the gentle note of teasing in his voice. Some of his occasional remarks are turned into nicknames: thus, since he once exclaimed that he was enchanted by the southern islands, he was nicknamed "Enchanted Heyst"; on another occasion, he acquired a nickname "Hard Facts" because he stated that they were his only concern. These nicknames, however, still do not reveal anything essential about him, but merely contribute to a contradictory simulacrum which is constructed around his character.

As Seeman points out, such situations may cause a concomitant sense of ambiguity, which leads one to resort to rumours (Seeman, 1983, p. 177). A similar theory has been put forward by the Jungian psychologist Marie-Louise von Franz, who explains it by quoting a French proverb: *Les absents ont toujours tort* ('the absent ones are always to blame'). This means that a person living outside a community inevitably becomes a target of negative collective projections. If there exist warm human contact and interaction, as Von Franz argues, the ties of affection and feeling will "dissipate those clouds of projection"; but if one is always alone, there is no correcting factor which would change people's minds and show them the difference between the real person and the contents they have projected upon him (Von Franz, 1995, p. 188). A similar pattern is presented in Conrad's novel, where rumours are constantly made up about Heyst due to his enigma and isolated life. Such are the rumours spread, for instance, by the hotel owner Schomberg, who accuses Heyst of manipulating and swindling captain Morrison, and eventually causing the man's financial breakdown and death. Although Heyst knows he is not to blame for Morrison's demise, he still feels upset about the rumours. His vague sense of guilt stems from the awareness that due to his passivity and lack of affect he has not been able to reciprocate Morrison's friendship.

Normlessness

Jones and Ricardo hold a worldview which is characterised by a strong sense of normlessness. At one point, Jones tells Schomberg that he “depended on himself, as if the world were still one great, wild jungle without law,” and that the same is true of Ricardo (Conrad, 1915, p. 93). As Seeman explains, such a state of mind manifests as pessimism, cynicism and distrust, as well as the general feeling that adhering to socially approved norms will not enable one to achieve desired goals. Quite the contrary, the world is experienced as a wild, lawless place in which one no longer feels bound by conventional morality or any ethical standards of behaviour (Seeman, 1991, p. 313).

One of the ways in which Jones and Ricardo justify their lawless attitude is by referring to the concept of ‘tame’ individuals. Tameness is perceived by them as a despicable trait, suggesting the kind of people who are too timid to display their vicious nature openly, but rather act in a secretive and treacherous manner. Ricardo believes, for instance, that Heyst is one of the ‘tame’ people, whose secret manipulations have caused Morrison’s financial breakdown, illness and death, and he refers to Heyst’s alleged crime as “one of your tame tricks” (Conrad, 2015, p. 209). This attitude, harboured by Ricardo and Jones, seems to be a result of projective identification: they externalise their immorality and Machiavellianism, and project them onto the entire society. In this way, their normless behaviour appears to them justifiable against the backdrop of a ‘wild jungle’ populated by malevolent, ‘tame’ people.

The criminality displayed by these two characters is also due to their severing all the affective ties with the world. Much like Conrad’s best known protagonist, Kurtz, in the novella *Heart of Darkness* (1900), Jones has also “kicked himself loose of the earth” (Conrad, 1994, p. 95) – i.e., he no longer feels hampered by any moral restraints in his dealings with the rest of the world. Jones’s detached, dispassionate destructiveness is evident, for instance, in the scene in which he cold-heartedly murders Pedro’s brother and then forces Pedro to become his servant. Ricardo expresses the same mental disposition when he explains to Schomberg that he is completely indifferent to the hotel owner’s existence, and may decide on a whim whether to kill him or to let him live: “Now, here we sit, friendly like, and that’s all right. You aren’t in my way. But I am not friendly to you. I just don’t care. Some men do say that; but I really don’t. You are no more to me one way or another than that fly there. Just so. I’d squash you or leave you alone. I don’t care what I do” (Conrad, 1915, p. 105).

Self-estrangement

Self-estrangement is also present in the novel, in the sense which Seeman most commonly ascribes to the term, as “the individual’s engagement in activities that are not rewarding in themselves” (Seeman, 1983, p. 179). This experience of estrangement from a meaningful, productive life activity, which is closest to Marx’s notion of alienation from one’s species being, is most easily discerned in Ricardo and Lena. These two examples, however, are clearly differentiated by the fact that the theme of self-estrangement is treated ironically in Ricardo’s case, and sympathetically in connection to Lena.

In the novel’s pre-history, Ricardo used to be a mate on a ship, with a steady employment and good wages. In spite of this, however, he came to view wage labour as tantamount to selling a portion of his own self:

They give you wages as they’d fling a bone to a dog, and they expect you to be grateful. It’s worse than slavery. You don’t expect a slave that’s bought for money to be grateful. And if you sell your work--what is it but selling your own self? You’ve got so many days to live and you sell them one after another. Hey? Who can pay me enough for my life? Ay! But they throw at you your week’s money and expect you to say ‘thank you’ before you pick it up.

(Conrad, 1915, p. 116)

Ricardo’s criticism of wage labour, however, is problematised and rendered ironical by the fact that the only alternative he can find to it is teaming up with the ominous Mr Jones and becoming a criminal. This makes him similar to Donkin, a character in Conrad’s early novel *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897). A sailor aboard the *Narcissus* and a skilful orator, Donkin uses the rhetoric of workers’ rights and even entices a mutiny on the ship for personal gain; eventually, his ulterior motives become obvious when he steals the property of a dying crew member. As Terry Eagleton rightly observes, Donkin is in fact “a lurid caricature of a working-class agitator, sly, cowardly, blustering and indolent” (Eagleton, 2005, p. 162). Ricardo’s protest against the wage system likewise appears to be a caricature, possibly pointing to Conrad’s conservatism and dislike of socialist ideas.

An opposite example may be found in Lena, whose employment in Zangiaco’s orchestra also presents a kind of self-estrangement. Originally, playing the violin was a pleasurable and meaningful activity for Lena, who enjoyed learning the skill from her loving father. In the orchestra, however, Lena no longer experiences any fulfilment in performing, which she only does in order to survive. Heyst’s friend Davidson comments on the exploitative and unjust conditions of such working arrangements, which he regards as not much better than slavery: “Davidson

felt sorry for the eighteen lady-performers. He knew what that sort of life was like, the sordid conditions and brutal incidents of such tours led by such Zangiacomos who often were anything but musicians by profession" (Conrad, 1915, p. 37). Unlike Ricardo, however, Lena does not resort to criminality as an alternative to alienated labour, but truly manages to engage in a more meaningful life with Heyst after escaping from the orchestra, so that her existential choice is not rendered ironically.

Cultural Estrangement

Seeman's fifth form of alienation, isolation, whose name he later changed to 'cultural estrangement', refers to an individual's disagreement with the dominant values, goals and beliefs in the society, and often entails social criticism. Heyst provides a very good example of this dynamic, as he deliberately refuses to identify with the proclaimed values of his culture. An entirely different value system has been developed by Heyst's father, a renowned Swedish philosopher, and we are told that Heyst internalised it at an impressionable young age. The tenets of these teachings are that all ambition should be discarded and that one should abstain from all action, as it can only increase the sum total of the existing evil in the world. Heyst's father also refutes all the societal formulas for leading a meaningful life, instructing his son instead to assume the position of a distant observer. This nihilistic worldview is effectively summed up in a vision which comes to Heyst shortly after his father's death:

He observed that the death of that bitter contemner of life did not trouble the flow of life's stream, where men and women go by thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep them in their proudly upright posture... After the funeral, Heyst sat alone, in the dusk, and his meditation took the form of a definite vision of the stream, of the fatuously jostling, nodding, spinning figures hurried irresistibly along... And now Heyst felt acutely that he was alone on the bank of the stream. In his pride he determined not to enter it.

(Conrad, 1915, pp. 137–138)

The stream carrying other people's lives implies their constant quest for achievement, financial gain or a distinguished social position. Heyst, on the other hand, discards the ideals of a utilitarian, money-oriented society and uses his modest inheritance to wander aimlessly for years in the Malay Archipelago.

A more problematic aspect of Heyst's philosophy, however, is that it also calls for relinquishing all attachments, including those to other human beings, which leads to this character's emotional and spiritual isolation. Even when Heyst finally decides to settle on the island of Samburan, the narrator still compares him to a "detached leaf" (ibid., p. 77) be-

cause he does not connect in any meaningful way to his environment. His servant Wang and the native Alfuro tribe on the island are almost invisible to him. Heyst's essential isolation becomes evident when his character is compared to Wang's. Originally working for the Tropical Belt Coal Company, Wang is the only employee who remains on the island after the company has gone bankrupt and dissolved. Heyst and Wang appear to be equally attracted to solitariness; however, Wang successfully integrates himself in the life of the island by tilling the land and taking a wife from the Alfuro tribe. Heyst makes no such effort at integration, remaining perennially passive and absorbed in thought. He spends his days wandering the island aimlessly or leafing through his father's books. His inability to form attachments is presented in the narrative as his crucial flaw, leading to a kind of inner paralysis and the absence of affect. Heyst is neither capable of being a friend to Morrison, nor a loving partner to Lena, even in her final moments when it becomes clear that she has sacrificed her life for him. This is what makes her 'victory', to which the book owes its title, questionable and only partly real.

CONCLUSION

Alienation is one of the major preoccupations in Joseph Conrad's novel *Victory*, where it is most clearly recognised as a defining characteristic of the novel's protagonist, Axel Heyst. Heyst primarily feels alienated from the dominant values of his utilitarian, money-oriented society; on the other hand, a more problematic consequence of his alienated condition is his inability to form attachments and connect meaningfully to other people. His state of emotional and spiritual paralysis, as presented in the novel, fatally affects his friendship with Morrison and his love affair with Lena.

However, Heyst is not the only estranged character in *Victory*, and it is possible to discern various forms of alienation as they manifest in the psychic disposition of numerous other characters as well. By applying Melvin Seeman's theoretical model, these manifestations have been classified and explained. In fact, as the analysis has demonstrated, each of Seeman's five basic variants of alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement and isolation, or cultural estrangement) is exemplified in Conrad's narrative, or at least pertains to one phase of his characters' development.

Such a striking presence of this motif in Conrad's work may suggest that, unlike Seeman, Conrad did not consider alienation in strictly subjective terms, as an individual mental state, but rather as an objective social phenomenon at the beginning of the twentieth century. This may also be cited as the reason why not only Conrad, but other prominent modernists as well, are so often preoccupied with the selfsame theme. Alienation is clearly treated as a social phenomenon, for instance, in Virgin-

ia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), where the mental instability of Septimus Warren Smith is represented as a reaction to the dehumanised and alienated state of the entire society. Septimus' own alienation, therefore, is both a product of social circumstances and a pithy symbol of the general condition of modern man (Hawthorn 2009, p. 115).

A similar view on the centrality of the theme of alienation in modernism is expressed by Harold Bloom: thus, in editing a collection of critical essays on alienation in literature, he includes a considerable number of texts dealing with the works of major modernist writers, such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Camus, Kafka, or T. S. Eliot. While alienation appears as a term even in some of Shakespeare's plays, it is in the period of modernism, as Bloom maintains, that it acquires the meaning of "existential dread" (2009: xv). Jeremy Hawthorn likewise discerns a causal connection between alienation and modernity, stating that alienation is "a phenomenon which appears so insistently in the literature of this period that it suggests some common, fundamental reality underlying it" (2009, p. 212). The same as *Victory*, these works treat alienation not merely as a literary motif, but as a phenomenon generally recognised in social and historical reality.

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ВАРИЈАНТЕ АЛИЈЕНАЦИЈЕ У КОНРАДОВОЈ ПОБЕДИ

Наташа Тучев¹, Никола Петровић²

¹Универзитет у Нишу, Филозофски факултет, Ниш, Србија

²Универзитет Метрополитан, Београд, Србија

Резиме

У раду се анализирају различите манифестације алијенације као друштвеног и психолошког феномена везаног за карактеризацију ликова у роману *Победа* Џозефа Конрада. У уводном делу дат је кратак историјски преглед теоријских ставова о алијенацији, почев од оригиналног теолошког значења овог појма, преко Хегеловог схватања и Марксове анализе, према којој је тумачење алијенације неодвојиво од друштвене критике. Највећа пажња у овом делу рада посвећена је доприносу Мелвина Симена, чији емпиријско-теоријски модел обухвата пет основних варијанти алијенације: немоћ, одсуство смисла, одсуство норми, самоотуђење и изолацију. Анализа Конрадовог романа показује да се за сваку од наведених варијанти могу наћи примери, при чему се отуђење у неким случајевима препознаје као суштинска одредница ликова, а у неким као компонента која се везује за једну фазу њиховог развоја. Увид у критичку литературу показује да је феномен алијенације у роману *Победа* најчешће довођен у везу са протагонистом, Акселом Хејстом, тако да се допринос овог рада састоји у томе што сагледава отуђено стање у ширем контексту, укључујући и бројне друге ликове у роману. Варијанта алијенације коју је Симен означио као „немоћ“ у *Победи* се манифестује као унутрашњи доживљај ликова да немају утицај на догађаје у свом окружењу, да не могу да се

избаве из неправедних услова у којима живе, или спрече насиље које им прети. „Одсуство норми“ препознајемо као субјективни осећај ликова да живе у свету беззакоња и да стога ни сами не морају да се придржавају етичких начела. „Самоотуђење,“ Сименов термин који је најближи Марксовом појму алијенације, односи се на ликове у роману *Победа* који су приморани да зарад физичког опстанка обављају послове у којима не налазе никакву сатисфакцију. Овај мотив може у Конрадовом роману бити третиран и иронично, као у случају где један од ликова не види другу алтернативу отуђеном раду сем да се окрене злочину. Анализа ових, као и других примера, наводи на закључак да отуђење појединца представља једну од кључних преокупација у овом Конрадовом делу, при чему је аутор не третира искључиво као књижевни мотив, већ као појаву која је јасно утемељена у друштвеној и историјској стварности.