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《吉姆爷》的圣经原型解读

An Archetypal Reading of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*

刘 姍 姍

指导教师姓名: 李美华教授

专 业 名 称: 外国语言学及应用语言学

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## Abstract

Joseph Conrad is a Polish-born British writer. He is considered as one of the greatest English novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His works are full of rich symbol, deep image, unique narration and incisive subject. One of his masterpieces—*Lord Jim* has attracted a lot of attention and interests from critics and readers, both home and abroad, from his contemporary time to the very present. Readers interpret this famous novel from multiple perspectives, such as feminism, impressionism, Post-colonialism, symbolism and so on. Some scholars in our countries have already begun to explain this novel by using Mythical archetypal criticism theory. But they do not carry on comprehensive and systematic prototype analysis to this novel. Therefore, this article will use The Mythical archetypal Criticism to analyze the relationship between *The Bible* and *Lord Jim*.

As we know, the western society is a society which is deeply immersed in the Christian culture. Almost all the western major writers' works are greatly influenced by *The Bible*. Joseph Conrad is no exception. Conrad was born in a strong Christian family, and was a pious Christian when he was young. But, with the influence of other currents of thought, Conrad began to doubt the existence of God. This Process of his changing of religious belief deeply influenced his writing. Conrad's novels are full of the prototypes and images from *The Bible*. In *Lord Jim*, Conrad not only borrowed names and allusions from *The Bible*, but also unfolded the plot of the story according to the biblical plot modes. His description and praise of the main character—Jim reflect Conrad's faith in Christianity and God and also reflect his desire for and advocacy of Christianity's spirit of universal love and self-sacrifice. But his disposition of destiny of Jim shows his disappointment in Christianity.

This article is divided into three parts. The first chapter introduces the writer, his relationship with *The Bible* and the Mythical archetypal criticism of Northrop Frye. The second chapter discusses the innovation and understanding of the author

when he uses *The Biblical* archetype, mainly from the original sin subject, expiation subject and rebirth subject. The last chapter analyzes *The Bible* archetype in the novel, including the characters, the environment, narrative structure and the theme.

**Key Words:** *Lord Jim*; the prototype of *The Bible*; image; salvation

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## 摘要

康拉德是一位著名的波兰籍英国作家。他被看作是 20 世纪最伟大的英国小说家。康拉德的作品以丰富的想象、繁杂的意象、独特的叙事以及深刻的主题得到世人的广泛关注，成为英国文学历史上的一个传奇人物。他的代表作之一《吉姆爷》一书自从问世后就得到世人的广泛关注，在文学评论界掀起了一股轩然大波，读者从许多不同的视角对这篇文章进行了分析。本文拟从原型批评的角度来探讨一下《吉姆爷》与西方经典文本《圣经》之间的密切关系。

《圣经》是西方文学的源头之一，几乎每个时代最著名的文学著作都能在其中找到它的印记。西方的文学大师们都受到它的影响，康拉德也不例外。他出身于典型的基督教家庭，从小就是个虔诚的基督教教徒，后来由于受到许多社会和哲学思潮的影响，康拉德渐渐开始对上帝的存在有所怀疑，使自己也极度痛苦。这一宗教信仰的转变在极大程度上影响了康拉德的文学创作。他的小说里充满了《圣经》的原型和意象。在《吉姆爷》一书中，康拉德不仅大量借用了《圣经》中的人名以及典故，而且还按照《圣经》的叙事结构来展开故事情节。康拉德对本书中的主人公吉姆的精心刻画和歌颂，反映出他对基督教博爱精神和自我牺牲精神的宣扬和推崇；但在小说的结尾，康拉德仍然选择让吉姆以死亡告终也体现了康拉德对基督教和上帝的模棱两可的态度以及对改变现实社会中丑恶一面感到无力的态度。

本篇论文旨在用弗莱的原型批评理论对康拉德的《吉姆爷》这部小说做一个全面而详细的圣经原型解读，从而揭示了康拉德对基督教所持的矛盾态度，使读者能够更好地理解这部小说。

本文分为三章。第一章介绍作家背景、作品，他与圣经间千丝万缕的关系以及对原型批评理论作了简要的介绍。第二章则主要从原罪主题、赎罪主题、新生主题三个方面来分析康拉德对圣经原型所做的创新，同时本章节还指出《吉姆爷》一书中由于化用圣经原型而带有的喜剧色彩。第三章则主要从人物、环境背景、叙事结构以及小说主题来分析小说中的圣经原型。

关键词：吉姆爷 圣经原型 意象 救赎

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## Introduction

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), a Polish-born British writer, occupies an important place not only in the history of British literature but also in the world literature. In 1998, The British Random House listed 100 great novels in English in the 20th century, among which Conrad ranks the first with four novels. Conrad's works have been translated into more than 40 languages and he is acknowledged to be one of the finest modern novelists in English. And his influence has been admitted by many famous writers, for example, Andre Gide, Ralph Ellison, Jorge Luis Borges, T.S Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway. T.S Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway also admitted Joseph Conrad's influence on their writings.

"*Lord Jim* is the most important and indeed, is in some respects the greatest of Mr. Conrad's book" (Hugh, 1899: 1). It was first published in England in 1900. After the publication of the *Lord Jim*, many critics and readers have shown great interest in it. Cedric says: "*Lord Jim* holds a secure place as one of Conrad's greatest novels, and therefore, as one of the world's literary masterpieces" (Watts, 1982: 19). Readers interpret this famous novel from multiple angles, such as feminism, impressionism, Post-colonialism, symbolism, psychology and existentialism. And some scholars in our country have already begun to explain this novel by using archetypal critical theory. But they do not carry on comprehensive and systematic prototype analysis to this novel. Therefore, this article will use the archetypal criticism to analysis the relationship between *The Bible* and *Lord Jim*.

If people want to have a good command of Western literature, the first thing they should do is to understand *The Bible* very well. The famous Scottish novelist Scott, when he was dying, said: "Bring me the Book!" Somebody asked: "Which book?" "Stupid! The only book is the Bible" (qtd. in Liu Tao, 2008: 5)! From any sense, *The Bible*, in the history of human being is a very unique book. And it

deserves “the only book” reputation. Religion is central to Western people’s language and thinking mode. “It may still be but it is sharing the world-ways with an even more cosmopolitan culture that has released itself as a culture—whatever the faiths of individuals—from the control of its religious traditions” (Maynard, 2004: 193). Frye remarks the Bible as “the major information influence on literature symbolism” (Frye, 1973: 316). He considered *The Bible* a literary work in the encyclopedic form, which brings about the unification of Western literature and its culture. Some famous writers have already put it into practice in their works. For example, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1657) and John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678). As Leland Ryken pointed out in his *Literature of the Bible*, The Bible contains a lot of archetypes in lots of literary works. Therefore it is very important to understand the novel from the view of biblical archetypal theory.

As we know, the western society is a society that is greatly immersed in the Christian culture, and almost all the western major writers’ works are greatly influenced by *The Bible*. Joseph Conrad is no exception. He was born in a strongly Christian family, and he was deeply impressed by the culture of Christianity. Conrad himself admitted that he was a pious Christian: “he (like all true seamen) was a believer” (Watts, 1982: 48). In *Lord Jim*, Conrad not only borrowed many names and allusions from the Bible, but also unfolded the plot of the story according to the biblical plot modes. Besides, his disposition of destinies of the main characters, who are punished when they commit crimes, also reflects Conrad’s faith in Christianity and God; and his portrait of the *Lord Jim*, as well as his praise on him, reflects his desire for and advocacy of Christianity’s spirit of universal love and self-sacrifice.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first chapter introduces the writer and his works, the literary review on *Lord Jim* and the archetypal criticism of Northrop Frye. The second chapter discusses the innovation and understanding of author when he used *The Bible* archetype, mainly from the original sin subject, expiation subject and rebirth subject. The last chapter analyzes *The Bible* archetype in the novel, including the characters, the environment, narrative structure and the

theme. In Conclusion, the author points out the advantages and the disadvantages of Joseph Conrad in this famous novel.

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## Chapter 1. Joseph Conrad and Literary Reviews on *Lord Jim*

### 1.1 Joseph Conrad's Life and Works

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), a Polish-born English writer, becomes a legend in English literary history. In a relatively brief literary career Conrad has produced a lot of works which remain unique in British literary history. He has published altogether 13 novels, 28 short stories, 3 plays and 2 volumes. Many of his works are on school reading-lists and in university courses. In English alone, the books, articles, and notes published about his life and works amount to several thousand items, and the guides directing the students or the interested readers have been amounted to several thousand pages.

At his death in Canterbury in August, 1924 he was already a legend in his own lifetime. He became a published author in 1895 at a relatively late age for a writer—thirty-seven. Before becoming a writer, he was a seaman. Between the ages of fifteen and seventeen Conrad astonished his guardian by expressing his desire to go to sea. It seemed a strange idea for someone living in a mainly inland country and he was viewed by many of his relatives as either foolishly quixotic or a scandalous “betrayal of patriotic duties” (Najder, 1983: 141). But the little boy insisted, and in 1874 he became a seaman. With nearly 20 years of sea voyage experiences Conrad got many materials about man and life, which became the main sources of his creative works. It was the sailing experience that provided him with material on the exotic locations of men of his novels.

Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, appeared in print in 1895. And the next thirty years would see the emergence and development of the astonishingly prolific and arduous career of the writer identified by the pen name “Joseph Conrad”. Conrad's literary career can be divided into three periods: a short early period of

largely Malay fiction is ended in 1896; the major phase is from 1897 to 1911; and a more diverse body of later fiction that many critics divide into two phases—a period of transitional writing extending from 1911 to 1917, and a decline encompassing his last years from 1918 to his death in 1924. The major fruits of the years are from 1898-1902, for Conrad's famous narrator Marlow appeared. It is this character that decides the experimental nature of his three famous works: *Youth* (1902), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and *Lord Jim* (1900). If you like to study Conrad's works from the perspective of the subject matter, his novels can be divided into sea novels, jungle novels and political novels. His sea novels include *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), *Youth* and *Typhoon* (1903). *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), together with *Under Western Eyes* (1911) is categorized as his political novels. The most distinguished and widely-read novels are his jungle ones such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*.

Conrad is good at exquisite, complicated multi-voice narration, separated and obsessed time sequence, complex images and symbols. This broken, multi-level, direct narration deepens the visionary impression and also strengthens the moral "paradox". Joseph Conrad's works has attracted great attention in the literary world. There are many critics who try to study his works. The Joseph Conrad Society was founded and it publishes twice a year a periodical which studies Joseph Conrad's works solely. Some of his works have been taken as models for the development of new literary genres. *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* are among the first studies of spies who cannot come in from the cold, *Nostramo* is the first panoramic epic of South American colonialism, and *Heart of Darkness* is frequently invoked as a cultural token signifying the "horror" at the heart of modern western civilization. The life and works of Conrad have inspired films, journeys, sculptures, comic books, Conrad societies and journeys, and well over one thousand academic books and articles.

Conrad's literary reputation is hard-won. Early critics only see him as a writer of the sea and adventure. Conrad himself reveals to Sir Sidney Colvin in a letter that he has been called as "a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a



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