

T.R.
ISTANBUL SABAHATTIN ZAIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE EDUCATION INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

POSSESSION AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: A
LUKÁCSIAN APPROACH TO JOHN GALSWORTHY'S
FORSYTE CHRONICLES

Ph.D. DISSERTATION

Tuba KEYVANOĞLU

Istanbul
July-2025

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July-2025

This study has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ph.D. Degree in English Language and Literature.

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DECLARATION OF SCIENTIFIC ETHICS AND ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that this PhD dissertation titled “**Possession and Class Consciousness: A Lukácsian Approach to John Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Chronicles***” is my work, and I have acted according to scientific ethics and academic rules while producing it. I have collected and used all information and data according to scientific ethics and guidelines on thesis writing of Sabahattin Zaim University. In both the text and bibliography, I have fully referenced all direct and indirect quotations and sources I have used in this work.

Tuba KEYVANOĞLU

İstanbul, July 2025

PREFACE

This thesis is not just an individual study; it was made possible by the joint efforts of many people who made valuable contributions during the preparation and editing process. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ali GÜNEŞ, for his expertise, guidance, understanding, and patience. I also want to sincerely thank my esteemed jury members, Asst. Prof. Dr. Abdül Kasım VARLI and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selçuk ŞENTÜRK shaped the research with their valuable comments and guiding feedback during the process. I am grateful to my husband and family for their unwavering support, encouragement, and superhuman understanding throughout this academic journey. Finally, I would like to thank the administrative staff in the department for their assistance with procedures and technical issues throughout my studies. I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who was directly or indirectly a part of this journey.

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ABSTRACT

POSSESSION AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: A LUKÁCSIAN APPROACH TO JOHN GALSWORTHY'S *FORSYTE* *CHRONICLES*

Tuba KEYVANOĞLU

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This study provides the first comprehensive application of Georg Lukács's Marxist literary theory to John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles*, examining the formation of class consciousness through the "sense of property" across three generations of upper-middle class Forsyte family at the turn of the century London. This theoretical approach represents a significant departure from existing Galsworthy scholarship, employing Lukács's concepts of "class consciousness," "historical totality," "typicality," "reification," and "false consciousness" to analyse the function of the sense of property as a determining force on economic, moral, social, and emotional levels in the formation of class identity within the Forsyte family. The research reveals that while property consciousness transforms over three generations, paralleling the changing phases of capitalism, it emphasises that this consciousness changes only in appearance, not in essence. Through the Soames and Irene relationship, the study demonstrates how the sense of property degrades interpersonal relationships into commodified exchanges, while revealing that bourgeois consciousness, which reifies others, is itself reified by rigid class norms. The study also examines the effects of historical events such as the Boer War and the First World War on the transformation of class consciousness and explores class conflict's ideological, economic, and political manifestations through the Forsyte family. Thus, this analysis repositions Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles* as both family saga and historical critique of capitalist development.

Keywords: Sense of property, class consciousness, reification, historical totality, typicality, class conflict, Lukács, Galsworthy, *Forsyte Chronicles*.

ÖZET

SAHİPLİK VE SINIF BİLİNCİ: JOHN GALSWORTHY’NİN *FORSYTE KRONİKLERİ’NE* LUKÁCSÇI BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu çalışma, Georg Lukács’ın Marksist edebiyat teorisinin John Galsworthy’nin Forsyte Kronikleri’ne ilk kapsamlı uygulamasını sunmakta ve yüzyılın başında Londra’da üst-orta sınıf Forsyte ailesinin üç nesli boyunca mülkiyet duygusu ile oluşmuş sınıf bilincini analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu teorik yaklaşım, Lukács’ın “sınıf bilinci,” “tarihsel bütünlük,” “tipiklik,” “şeyleşme” ve “yanlış bilinç” kavramlarını kullanarak, Forsyte ailesinde sınıf kimliğinin oluşumunda ekonomik, ahlaki, sosyal ve duygusal düzeylerde belirleyici bir güç olarak mülkiyet duygusunun işlevini incelemeyerek mevcut Galsworthy çalışmalarından önemli bir ayrımı temsil etmektedir. Araştırma, mülkiyet alayışının, kapitalizmin değişen evrelerine paralel olarak, üç kuşak boyunca dönüşüme uğradığını ortaya koyarken, esasında bu bilincin özde değil, yalnızca görünüşte değiştiğini vurgular. Çalışma, Soames ve Irene ilişkisi üzerinden, mülkiyet duygusunun kişilerarası ilişkileri metalaştırılmış değiş-tokuş süreçlerine indirgemesi gösterirken, aynı zamanda insanları şeyleştiren burjuva bilincinin kendisinin de katı sınıfsal normlarla şeyleştirdiğini ortaya konmaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca Boer Savaşı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı gibi tarihsel olayların sınıf bilincinin dönüşümü üzerindeki etkilerini incelemekte ve sınıf çatışmasının ideolojik, ekonomik ve politik tezahürlerini Forsyte ailesi üzerinden araştırmaktadır. Böylece bu analiz, Galsworthy’nin *Forsyte Destanı*’nı sadece bir aile destanı olarak değil, aynı zamanda kapitalist gelişimin tarihsel bir eleştirisi olarak yeniden konumlandırmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Mülkiyet duygusu, sınıf bilinci, şeyleşme, tarihsel bütünlük, tipiklik, sınıf çatışması, Lukács, Galsworthy, *Forsyte Destanı*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: JOHN GALSWORTHY: FROM PERSONAL TO POLITICS

This dissertation aims to examine the property-based class consciousness of the upper-middle-class Forsyte family, as depicted in John Galsworthy's trilogies *The Forsyte Saga* (1922/1950) and *A Modern Comedy* (1929/1967) spanning the period from the Victorian era to the Edwardian era. The dissertation will inspect the devout attachment to property as emblematic of the upper-middle class of the period, manifesting itself as the consciousness of the entire class in Galsworthy's novels. Furthermore, it aims to consider the implications of this attachment on familial and societal dynamics and its influential role in shaping interactions with other social classes, as portrayed within the novels. Through Galsworthy's comprehensive portrayal of the era, the dissertation will also dissect the changes and their ramifications on the upper-middle-class consciousness formed by the adherence to property ownership, thus tracing the evolution of this attachment and its consequential influence. Throughout the transformation process, ownership and accumulation emerge as prominent features in the class consciousness of the first generation of Forsytes. However, with historical events and societal changes, consumerism/spending has become the predominant feature in the consciousness of the third generation of the Forsytes. Given John Galsworthy's first-hand experience of this transformation as an upper-class member, his novels reflect personal experiences, social milieu, and historical events, mainly through the representation of the Forsyte family. Building on this foundation, the dissertation is guided by three central research questions: How does Galsworthy's biographical positioning and personal estrangement from his own upper-middle class enable him to represent class conflicts with the objective perspective that Lukács identifies as essential to critical realism? How does the "sense of property" function as a form of class consciousness in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, and how does this property-based identity evolve across three generations of the Forsyte family to reveal the transformation of bourgeois ideology from Victorian accumulation to Edwardian consumption? In what ways does Galsworthy's portrayal of the Forsyte family reflect Lukács's theoretical framework, particularly the concepts of "class consciousness,"

“reification,” “historical totality,” and “typicality,” and to what extent does his narrative align with Lukács’s theory of realism? To answer these questions effectively, this study first examines Galsworthy’s personal and historical background, demonstrating how his personal experiences shaped his critical literary perspective.

John Galsworthy emerges into an upper-middle-class during a period when England holds naval supremacy and global dominance, with his social class using considerable power within the nation. The emergence of the upper-middle class, into which Galsworthy was born, has its roots in the Industrial Revolution, which shifted economies from agriculture to industry and created new wealth for industrialists. Increased social mobility, capital accumulation through investments, and distinctive consumption patterns further strengthen their status. Moreover, the upper-middle class gains political influence by advocating for reforms that protect their interests. Therefore, the upper-middle class is defined by economic power, professional expertise, and social impact during the industrial and post-industrial periods (McDowall, 2006, pp. 139-140). Accordingly, Galsworthy’s character and mental development have been shaped by the Victorian upper-middle-class norms and conventions (Hamilton, 1941; Goodlad, 2000), as he was born in the last decade of the nineteenth century. When examining the characteristics of the upper-middle class during the Victorian era, as Galsworthy observes, they are perceived to exhibit qualities akin to successful professionals, fostering societal stability through promptness in duties and familial care. However, their excessive focus on material wealth closes their eye to spiritual and aesthetic values. They judge individuals by material possessions, define morality by legal standards, and show little empathy beyond their social circle. Their self-satisfaction and lack of humour lead to a lack of self-awareness, conclusively contributing to their deterioration (Cross, 1971, pp. 113-114).

Another prominent characteristic of the upper-middle class of the period is a distinct emphasis on family, reflecting broader Victorian social values (Young, 1949). Family plays a central role in the moral lives of the upper-middle class. Throughout the century, the middle-class home has symbolised ideal domestic morality, with family life closely linked to virtue and respectable public image (Young, 1949, p. 152), conforming to societal expectations. However, upon further examination, as depicted in Galsworthy’s novels, it becomes conspicuous that ‘the sense of property’ also

extends its influence to family relationships. At first sight, well-to-do families in the upper-middle class present as tightly connected, banding together when faced with challenges. Nonetheless, beneath this appearance, conflict resides within these families. Despite seeming close, there is an underlying sense of resentment and suspicion among family members. Authentic affection and intimacy are lacking, overshadowed by the ceaseless quest for property. This pursuit of property shapes relationships into business dealings, even turning marriages into partnerships where wives are considered as valuable possessions (Kettle, 1960, p. 96).

Within this background, raised by benign and affluent parents, John Galsworthy received a good education. He started his education first with private tutors in the typical manner of upper-middle class families and then attended an exclusive boarding institution located away from industrial areas and urban congestion, where he studied alongside children from noble and affluent backgrounds (Frechet, 1982, p. 23). When he was a teenager, plentiful opportunities appeared in his social stratum, including the upper-middle class and the landed gentry through his maternal lineage. House parties and extended weekends were frequent, with shooting parties consistently changing between country estates. Everything was meticulously devised to satisfy the gratification and satisfaction of the upper classes in England of that period (Ibid., pp. 21-43). He studied law at Oxford; however, he practiced it little. He lacked notable ambitions as an intelligent, handsome, and healthy young man (Marrot, 1936, p. 65). In his class, an antipathy for artistic pursuits prevailed, characterised by snobbery and restriction towards openness and creativity (Sternlicht, 1987, p. 1). Nevertheless, when he decided to pursue writing, he encountered no fervent opposition from his family. As Alec Frechet claims, “by nature he was privileged”; however, “he never misused this privilege” (1982, p. 21).

One of the turning points for Galsworthy is his observation of the obsession with property in his class and his realisation of how this obsession disregarded human relations and aesthetics. For his questioning of his class and their love of property, Wilbur Cross claims that Galsworthy’s exposure to various civilisations leads him to

ask about the strict English social order established by the Victorians¹. He believes that an author must transcend narrow selfhood to embrace a universal perspective (1971, p. 106). Galsworthy enlarges his outlook through experiences abroad, which prevents him from becoming like the protagonist, Soames Forsyte, a member of the upper-middle class whose life revolves around the amassing of property, in the *Saga* trilogies. Consequently, he adopts a critical attitude towards British social order, which he deems essential for a writer, as Wilbur Cross claims (Ibid.). However, not only his travels abroad but also his domestic travels emerge as one of the significant factors in the evolution of his critical perspective on the British social structure. Earlier in his life, he drafted legal analysis and was appointed to gather rents from properties owned by his father's firms. Witnessing first-hand the hardship endured by the socioeconomically disadvantaged population of London, he experienced the disturbance of the reformer's spirit within him (Sternlicht, 1987, p. 8). He had developed the routine of walking through the destitute areas of London, actively seeking interactions with individuals who had been detrimentally affected by the Industrial Revolution. In due course, Galsworthy continued to wander through those areas that had thoroughly stimulated his senses and imagination (Frechet, 1982, p. 29). The upper-middle class's obsession with property has also played a formative role in family norms and wife-husband relations. After meeting Ada Galsworthy, his cousin's wife, who would later become his wife, Galsworthy tends to dissociate himself from his class's family norms and uses his writing as a tool in his battle against these conventions. His shift in perspective, prompted by complex emotions towards Ada since their first meeting in 1893, was accentuated by her marital status, casting him as a dissenter against the prevailing social order. The pivotal moment occurred at the Gare du Nord in 1895 when Ada said the pivotal words, "Why don't you write? You're just the person" (Frechet, 1982, p. 29). According to Alec Frechet, this encouragement promptly established a harmonious triad between John, Ada and literature (Ibid.). Sanford Sternlicht asserts that Ada's marital status in the Victorian era, beauty, affection for her spouse, and daring involvement in a society-condemned relationship

¹ For further details, reference can be made to pages 74-88 of *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* by H. V. Marrot, 1936.

constituted a wellspring of inspiration, subject matter, and thematic material for a prolific literary career. Without her influence, Galsworthy might have limited his creative expression to mere letters to the editor of *The Times*. Although his relationship with Ada provides the foundation for exploring marriage and gender dynamics in his numerous works, its specific adaptation becomes evident in *The Forsyte Saga* trilogy, delineating the characters Irene, Soames, and Young Jolyon (1987, p. 11).

The estrangement initiated by his relationship with Ada, contradicting the conventions of his social class, undergoes further enhancement through the distressing experiences of the individuals he confronts within these areas. In his book, James Gindin attentively explores the aspect of Galsworthy's estrangement from his class and the attendant agitation he grappled with. For Gindin, Galsworthy consistently positions himself as the outsider, employing a dramatisation wherein he compares his character Robinson Crusoe, who is isolated on a remote island (1987, p. 8). Furthermore, Gindin incorporates Ford Madox Ford's commentary on the thematic matter. Ford's observations reveal Galsworthy's deep discomfort with his privileged background, noting how the author consistently found himself positioned just outside the inner circles of upper-middle class society. Even during his fashionable years in London, Galsworthy never achieved complete acceptance within exclusive social groups. This persistent exclusion created in him a lasting sense of displacement, what Ford describes as the feeling of being misplaced within his own social environment, never quite belonging despite his apparent advantages (Ibid., p. 6). Therefore, the foundational precept of Galsworthy's literary works hinges on a prevalent sense of estrangement within his social milieu and the accompanying disquietude stemming from such disturbance. James Gindin constructs his examination of Galsworthy's life. He works in his book, *John Galsworthy's Life and Art: An Alien's Fortress* (1987), around the phenomenon of Galsworthy's estrangement from his social class and explains its impact on his writing. According to Gindin, Galsworthy transformed his personal struggles, including his sense of guilt, social alienation, complex family relationships, and evolving worldview, into what he terms an imaginative refuge for the displaced outsider. This creative construct manifested across Galsworthy's entire literary work, though Gindin identifies its most concrete expression in *The Man of Property*, which eventually expanded into *The Forsyte Saga* trilogy after years of literary experimentation and development (pp. 9-10). Besides *The Forsyte Saga*,

Galsworthy wrote many novels wherein he critiques his class, articulating an unmistakable sense of estrangement and disquietude. Writing as an affluent member of the upper-middle class, devoid of monetary constraints, represented, for him, a moral responsibility. As Alec Frechet claims, through “a sense of duty,” Galsworthy writes to aid others rather than serve his interest (1982, p. 47).

Another significant determinant shaping Galsworthy’s writing is the historical backdrop of his epoch, with particular emphasis on two critical wars. The initial conflict depicted in his novels, plays, and notably in his essays is the Boer War² (1899-1902) between Great Britain and two Boer republics in South Africa; Galsworthy decisively expresses his opposition to the conflict as an affirmed adversary of imperialism. According to James Gindin, Galsworthy’s response to the Boer War aligns with the prevalent sentiments of his political and literary contemporaries,

² The Boer War (South African) War: The South African War, sometimes called the Boer War or Anglo-Boer War, was the first major conflict of a century that was to be marked by wars on an international scale. It demonstrated the inadequacy of 19th-century military methods and raised issues of whether conscription should be brought in and the use of concentration camps. The South African War was fought between Britain and the self-governing Afrikaner (Boer) colonies of the South African Republic (the Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. (At the outbreak of war, Britain ruled the South African colonies of the Cape and Natal). The war began on October 11, 1899, following a Boer ultimatum that the British should cease building up their forces in the region. The Boers had refused to grant political rights to non-Boer settlers, known as Uitlanders, most of whom were British, or to grant civil rights to Africans. Perhaps more important was the underlying question of control over the gold mines of the Transvaal at a time when the international financial system, and the stability of the British pound were based on the gold standard. The war was also about Britain's control of South Africa and, therefore, its 'great power' status. Although the war was fought between Briton and Boer, it was not simply a 'white man's war'. Large numbers of Africans and other non-Europeans were involved whether combatants or in support roles (including Mahatma Gandhi, then living in South Africa, who served as a volunteer stretcher-bearer in 1900), and the lives of many more were affected by the conflict. On the British side, troops came from Britain and other parts of the empire, especially Canada and Australia. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/census/events/britain5.htm> visited 18th Nov 2023

notably among the political Liberals who rose to power in 1906. Gindin also records foreign literary critics' comments on the period and states that foreign literary critics, like French scholar Andre Chevrillon, often interpreted academic attitudes as shaped by the war's aftermath. Chevrillon noted England's post-South African War efforts to comply with modern conditions, a sentiment extending to figures like Wells, Shaw, and Galsworthy, with Galsworthy regarded as an unorthodox author. Edwardian intellectuals believed the post-Boer War era to be both bewildering, initially, the loss of Britain's moral and military superiority, and liberating, indicating a departure from Victorian conventions. During this period, he was focused on internal issues within English society, encompassing an anti-imperial ethos and attending to the concept of "little England" (Gindin, 1987, p. 118). Galsworthy's perspective on the Boer War becomes distinct in *The Man of Property* and with a less impactful and profound expression within the late stories he wrote for *On Forsyte Change*.

His critiques of imperialism extend beyond the confines of the Boer War, encircling a protesting stance against England's attempt at forceful power over Ireland. In *The Island Pharisees*, earlier in 1904, he had decisively condemned imperialism by questioning why a small fraction of the global population should impose their cultural and moral standards upon diverse racial groups (Galsworthy, 1948, p. 113). The novel signified the admission of a prevalent attitude towards Galsworthy, notably among individuals at a remove from literary circles, identifying him as a figure obtaining particular socialist inclinations (Gindin, 1987, p. 143). Moreover, Alec Frechet mentions Galsworthy's attack on imperialism by referring to his play *The Forrest* in 1922. The play is exceptionally intriguing as it signifies the crest of Galsworthy's political philosophy, proclaimed in contemporary terminology. The work explicitly condemns the tenets of expansive capitalism (1982, p. 180). Henceforth, Galsworthy's anti-imperialist attitude, developing during what Hobsbawm (1989) identifies as the "age of empire," significantly manifests itself throughout his oeuvre of social criticism, beginning with *The Island Pharisees* (1909).

Also, the oeuvre of Galsworthy's literary composition is profoundly imbued with the ubiquitous impact of the First World War, a conflict that profoundly impacted the global atmosphere. The First World War proved to be an agonising period for John Galsworthy, much like it was for Europe. England, he had chronicled in Edwardian times, was effectively destroyed in the four-year conflict and subsequent economic

turmoil. In 1914, Galsworthy, an advocate of human goodness, could not anticipate the intense consequences of modern war. Unlike the Boer War, where conventional forces faced farmers, colonial conflicts led to relatively fewer calamities, particularly among Europeans. Galsworthy, a determined humanitarian who firmly believed in the innate goodness of humanity, was deeply traumatised by the mass slaughter and the destruction of individual freedoms during the First World War. Despite his fervent desire to contribute to England, his age of forty-seven prevented active military service. Galsworthy sought consolation from despair through writing. His determination to channel the entirety of his earnings from literary wartime pursuits into the war effort resulted in a body of work marked by quickened enactment, falling short of the pre-war standards he had created. Despite the deteriorated quality of his work, the financial contributions provided during this period were significantly substantial (Sternlicht, 1987, pp. 20-21).

While causing a traumatic experience for Galsworthy, the First World War simultaneously expedited substantial alterations in his political perspectives, evidently manifested within his literary works. Although he did not identify with any political movement or party (Marrot, 1936, p. 673), he intermittently articulated confluence points with the Liberal Party. While advocating for international peace and democracy during the war, Galsworthy's subsequent ideological tendencies inclined towards prioritising aristocratic values. Alec Frechet explicates this change in his mindset by noting how Galsworthy's aristocratic background influenced his skepticism toward democratic systems, which he associated with the emerging consumer culture. Despite supporting democracy as preferable to imperial systems, Galsworthy maintained that effective democratic leadership required individuals of superior character and intellect, reflecting what Frechet identifies as distinctly nineteenth-century thinking influenced by figures like Carlyle and Arnold (1982, pp. 181-182). Galsworthy's new attitude becomes evident in his writing, particularly in the second trilogy of the Forsyte family. While the initial Forsyte novels primarily adopt a critical perspective, his subsequent novels present more optimistic expressions of his preference for the crass materialism displayed by his Victorian characters. Instead of accumulating a collection of trivial items that debilitate their predecessors, the new generation of Forsytes conduct their focus on farmland, healthy residences, and physical reproduction as pragmatic investments in the nation's future (McDonald & Singer, 2015, p. 107).

Another pivotal determinant shaping his literary composition was the contemporary milieu, the turn-of-the-century paradigm. Galsworthy's writing during a period of significant social changes, thereby locating him as an author exemplary of transitional phases, aroused considerable attention within literary circles. The examination of whether Galsworthy affiliates with the late Victorian, Edwardian, or Georgian eras and the extent to which his writing conforms to the norms of the respective periods constituted essential debate in literary circles. For example, within the parameters of these debates, Sarah Edwards, in her article "The Rise and Fall of the Forsytes: From Neo-Victorian to Neo-Edwardian Marriage," conducts an analysis of Galsworthy's writing, particularly delving into the detailed composition of *The Forsyte Saga*. Quoting from Alison Hargreaves, Edwards suggests that *The Forsyte Saga*, set against the scenery of Victorian, Edwardian, and Modernist cultural shifts, performs as Galsworthy's critical response to the imminent trends of modernism. Amidst this transitional literary landscape, Galsworthy, stationed as the typical Edwardian writer, notable by Virginia Woolf, exemplifies a social realist with middlebrow and materialistic tendencies, synthesising between alignment and removal from the Victorian possessiveness apparent in his fictional characters. This tension within Galsworthy's fiction, aligning with and distancing from his Victorian roots, classifies him as a neo-Victorian writer in shifting from the Victorian period. In addition, Galsworthy's materialism is a severe stand for his social criticism while demonstrating his continuing devotion to Victorian realist aesthetics. Edwards further points out that Galsworthy, a product of the Victorian era turned Edwardian, illustrates the "Edwardian" as a modern, nostalgic, and utopian alternative in *The Forsyte Saga*. In the 1920 texts, he returns to both Victorian and Edwardian periods, applying neo-Edwardian aesthetics. This aesthetics clarifies the *Saga*'s revival at critical historical moments and the interaction between neo-Victorian and neo-Edwardian amalgam (2011, pp. 200-201).

Considering all these factors and their connection to his writing, John Galsworthy emerged as a distinguished author of his time, gaining recognition for his literary works that emphasised the social problems prevalent in the transitional period of British society (Farris, 1974). His works played a significant role in elucidating the complexities of class distinctions and pressing social issues of the period that spans the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. While Galsworthy

predominantly focused on the sociocultural observations towards the segment of British society to which he was elaborately tied, a prevalent faith among readers of divergent backgrounds continued. The values he approved, such as veneration for tradition, an affinity for the countryside, commitment to impartial competition, support for the underprivileged, ethical integrity in all human affairs (including business), a commitment to justice, scrupulous conduct, balanced relations between genders, and devotion to the precepts of a gentleman were not confined to his immediate social stratum. Concurrently, the values he disapproved of, comprising crass materialism, excessive possessiveness, indifference, snobbishness, and ignorance, were perceived as prevalent within the broader cultural milieu of British society, both in his time and the present. Indeed, British social dynamics have undergone significant transformations since Galsworthy died in 1933. However, remnants of the global perception epitomising the upper-middle-class British as an entity characterised by an air of supremacy, stoicism, wealth, aloofness, inexpressiveness, and an uninterested attitude, combined with a devotion to the empire, constantly find roots in the satirical portrayal presented in Galsworthy's Edwardian works (Sternlicht, 1987, Preface). Consequently, Galsworthy's substantial influence preserves its relevance.

Amid the entirety of his literary works, *The Forsyte Chronicles*³ consists of two trilogies, namely *The Forsyte Saga* (1922) and *A Modern Comedy* (1929), and more specifically *The Man of Property* (1906), the first novel within the first trilogy, has garnered success and fame for him. Various factors contribute to the recognition and achievements of his writings, such as *The Forsyte Chronicles*. First, even though the style and content of his writing have been the subject of vigorous debate, *The Forsyte Saga* trilogy mainly brings him significant success and popularity by perceptibly depicting the era and the class, class consciousness and identity he is identified with. The trilogy brings an inclusive and concise portrayal of English middle-class society and middle-class identity at the turn of the twentieth century, an epoch characterised by the zenith of British affluence and influence. It vividly depicts a societal milieu

³ On the naming of *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy* as *The Forsyte Chronicles*, see Flower, R. (1929). Mr. Galsworthy's 'Forsyte Chronicles.' *The British Museum Quarterly*, 4(2), 29-31.

wherein familial affiliations are paramount, embodying a distinct portrayal of a social class and nation teetering on the edge of decline in the aftermath of the First World War. According to Hugh Walpole, the trilogy was published during a significant moment in English history; just as Britain's era of imperial wealth and control was coming to an end. At this time, the Forsyte family represented the embodiment of upper middle-class values and were so secure in their dominant position that they could not imagine their power and status would ever decline (1933, p. 177).

Galsworthy first addresses the upper-middle class's most conspicuous characteristic, the fixation with property, within an extensive framework and reflects it in detail. In various letters, he explicitly mentions that he places the "sense of property" of his class as the primary theme of these books. For instance, after stating the central theme as the "sense of property" in his letter to Edward Garnett, he expresses in correspondence with his sister his belief that ownership represents an unchristian and morally questionable concept, hoping readers would recognise this perspective. Later, he reflects on how property and marriage converge in his fiction, arguing that while the impulse to possess might be understandable given that humans are essentially crude and desperate beings driven by fundamental necessities, he believes this behaviour cannot be morally justified through appeals to the sacred nature of marriage (Marrot, 1936, pp. 174-184).⁴ Focusing on the "sense of property," he is regarded as a representative who reflects the widespread class conscience of his time, which was ubiquitous during the Edwardian era. His "sense of being the outsider" (Gindin, 1987, p. 9) of the social milieu and his class gave him an insightful ability to reflect precisely and objectively on British society's deep-rooted defects and ills. Galsworthy did not procure success merely through a reflective portrayal of his social class. An additional determining factor of his success lies in his capacity to enunciate, through literary works, a collective identity to the citizens of an empire undergoing an extensive and destabilising phase following periods of stability. Through his writings, Galsworthy revealed an absolute sense of belonging and continuity, arousing an awareness of individual and collective identity among the citizens of a declining empire. As Alec

⁴ For further details, reference can be made to the mentioned pages of *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* by H. V. Marrot, 1936.

Frechet states, English readers acknowledged the social world depicted in Galsworthy's works and connected it with their own societal background (1982, p. 2). Moreover, Galsworthy intelligently discusses social issues of his time by narrating the lives of three generations of the Forsyte family, which extend from the 1880s to the 1930s. According to Sanford Sternlicht, *The Forsyte Saga* assiduously cumulated recognition as the quintessential English novel depicting a three-generation family, drawing parallels with Thomas Mann's German familial epic, *Buddenbrooks* (1900), which simultaneously received its initial English translation in 1924. In conjunction with his other literary works, the trilogy establishes a considerable nexus between individuals and their historical antecedents by furnishing them with a distinctive identity. The public swiftly ascertained that the author had not only chronicled the history of his parents' era but had also crafted a significant work that embodies the spirit of English identity, redolent of literary classics such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Tom Jones* or *David Copperfield* (1987, p. 23). Finally, *The Forsyte Saga*, which elucidates class consciousness associated with "the sense of property" through historical transformation over three successive generations of the Forsyte family, won him the Nobel Prize in 1932.

However, the literary value of Galsworthy's novels received controversial criticism. Close to December 1910, a period identified by Virginia Woolf as the decisive turning point witnessing a transformation in human nature and indicating the decline of the literary reputation of H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy, the outbreak of the "Georgian" era initiated. She explains her dissatisfaction with the literary tradition developed by these writers⁵ in her often-quoted 1919 essay, "Modern Fiction", published in *The Common Reader* (1925), and a lecture titled "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," delivered in Cambridge in 1924. In her evaluation of Galsworthy, she manifests the shift in December 1910, which challenges the conventions of Victorian literary tradition and implies a new approach and perspective in the art of writing (Frechet, 1982, pp. 3-4). In her close examination of the transition from

⁵ For a comprehensive analysis of Edwardian literary culture and the context in which these writers operated, see Batchelor (1982); see also Burkner (1969) on prominent Edwardian figures.

“Edwardian” to “Georgian” authors, Woolf associates Galsworthy with Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells as embodiments of the old-fashioned “Edwardians” characterised by a concentration on external factors, such as materialistic tendencies and excessive attention to factual aspects of life, social conventions, and prospects (1924, p. 4). These objective aspects, Woolf thinks, do not allow this Edwardian writer to see what is hidden beneath the unconscious realm of life (Bennett, 1953). In 1927, D. H. Lawrence authored an article on “John Galsworthy,” published the following year. He also observes a transformation in the more extensive historical context, although his timing differs from Virginia Woolf’s. He defines the contemporary era as a period of “collapse,” wherein individuals find themselves trapped within the confines of their social surroundings, resulting in a loss of freedom. According to Lawrence, in such an atmosphere Galsworthy’s stories lack the profound expression of the individual’s inner state, thus they are “feeble, the characters have no blood and bones, the emotions are faked, faked, faked. It is one great fake.”⁶ Furthermore, in his 1928 article,⁷ he “criticised Galsworthy for being class-conscious, and he talked of prostitution of property (Frechet, 1982, pp. 4-5). Despite such harsh criticism, early critics like Bates (1933) recognised important aspects of Galsworthy’s work. However, as William Bellamy aptly analyses, no significant additions have been made to the critical perspectives on Galsworthy since the 1920s when D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf proclaim their classic critiques of the Edwardians, particularly of Galsworthy. The understanding of Galsworthy has been widely shaped by the modernist viewpoint originating in the 1920s (1971, p. 1). This explains why much of the comprehensive critical material on Galsworthy dates from earlier decades, with limited extensive recent scholarship on his works. Consequently, this dissertation draws primarily upon these earlier critical works.

In the shadow of critical evaluation by Woolf and Lawrence, a diverse cadre of writers of the period consistently engaged in evaluating John Galsworthy’s writing by Woolf and Lawrence’s aesthetic sensibilities that prioritise the inner world of individuals beyond appearances and significant departure from traditional norms, thereby

⁶ Cited in Alec Frechet’s *John Galsworthy: A Reassessment* (1982).

⁷ Published in the leading liberal daily, the *Manchester Guardian* (Frechet, A. 1982, p. 5).

maintaining a critical discourse that sounded with the echoes of these two distinguished writers. In his book *John Galsworthy's Life and Art: An Alien's Fortress*, James Gindin records Desmond MacCarthy disapproving of Galsworthy's characters as rigid and sentimental, believing that Galsworthy's analysis abstained in approaching the underlying and more profound flaws within the English character, thus "leaving Galsworthy 'an excellent writer of the second class'" (1987, p. 3). James Gindin also mentions John Sparrow's assessment of Galsworthy's writing, claiming "This is not 'art' or 'genius' but, rather, a 'museum of the period'" (Ibid.). Furthermore, one of Galsworthy's contemporary novelists, Sheila-Kaye Smith accused Galsworthy of being a propagandist in her book on Galsworthy and his works. She claimed that Galsworthy alienates himself from individuals uninterested in learning, as he evidently commits to a propagandist agenda rather than merely embodying art for its innate value. While tailored for educational enthusiasts, this ideological barrier amply excludes dissenting voices (1916, p. 13). Also, Alison Hurlburt makes a similar disparaging statement and reprimands Galsworthy for creating characters meticulously defined by their social and financial relationships (McDonald & Singer, 2015, p. 103).

Other critics admire and still appreciate his writing. For example, James Gindin states that Arnold Bennett, the novelist and a keen and candid critic of the age, deeply comprehended the works of Galsworthy and analysed specific outcomes with compelling clarity (1987, p. 10). As Gindin records, Bennett argues that the Forsytes represents a universal human type, claiming that everyone possesses Forsyte-like qualities, and this undeniable observation establishes Galsworthy among the most distinguished writers (Ibid.). Ford Madox Ford, the novelist and friend of Galsworthy, also admired his talent even more since it had prospered despite arduous conditions (Ibid., p. 31). Lately, Alec Fréchet praised Galsworthy for his distinct observation of British society and its post-war issues, his strong writing, and his ability to combine the past with the future (1982, p. 2). As for his works, critics generally viewed Galsworthy as a social realist, historian, satirist of society and critic of the upper-middle-class. For example, J. B. Priestley claims that while Galsworthy demonstrates skills as both a novelist and playwright, his primary role is that of a social commentator and chronicles of contemporary societal changes (1925, p. 350). Early critical recognition of Galsworthy's social significance (Monypenny, 1933; Moses, 1933) established foundations for later analysis. Critical studies of *The Forsyte Saga*

(Harvey, 1996; Lindgren, 1947) and its cultural dimensions (King, 1942) further demonstrates this assessment of Galsworthy as social critic and historian. Moreover, James Gindin assesses Galsworthy's works with similar expressions in various parts of his book. He also mentions that reviewers evaluate Galsworthy's works as satire and social criticism. In doing so, he does not confine himself to the limiting perspective of the upper-middle class (1987, p. 229). Still, he represents the ills and evils of British society when many transitions and changes occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite periods of critical neglect, recent scholarship continues to find relevance in Galsworthy's exploration of alienation and modern consciousness (Baykent, 2022), demonstrating the enduring significance of his social critique.

The ongoing discussions, critiques and accolades encircling John Galsworthy emanate from his remarkable productivity and authentic representation of the social issues of his time, realistically capturing the complexities of class dynamics and individual experiences despite his upper-middle class background. Throughout his life, he wrote numerous plays, novels, short stories, essays, sketches, and poems. Given the innate affinity of fictional compositions with his subjective interpretation of personal, social and historical spheres, the scholarly avenue of literary biography stands out as the predominant and informative approach for comprehending the nuances inherent in Galsworthy's art (Gindin, 1987, p. xiv). His life story and the historical events of the period applied an extensive influence on the entirety of his literary corpus, including the beginning of his writing endeavours, the formation of his artistic identity, and extending to the determining selection of subjects that critique the upper middle-class of society and materialism, as well as the adoption of specific writing techniques. As James Gindin specifies, converting events or experiences into art unveils aspects of the individual, including their judgement, preoccupations, areas of wisdom and banality, and their realm of comprehension and limitations. Acknowledging the innate disparities between life and art, Galsworthy sought to establish a transformative and imaginative relationship between the two (Ibid., p. xiv).

Approaching Galsworthy with Wells and Bennett as transitional figures from a different perspective, William Bellamy, in his book *The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910* (1971), examined these three writers' works through the

framework of fin de siècle⁸ psychology, determining that their texts seemingly operate as a remedial reaction to the disruption generated by psychological tendencies. The era constituted a phase of transition where Victorians found themselves subjected to the inescapable influence of the “fin de siècle myth.” During that period, the confines of the cultural crisis were outlined, and a prevalent sense of “ontological crisis” pervaded Western societies. The eerie spectre in Europe could be conceptualised as the manifestation of humanity’s troubled existence stressing its need for remedy. It could also be concluded that the attempts of Marx and Freud emerged from a shared dilemma of the concerned self-confrontation with an uncertain future. Furthermore, understanding the “Mrs Brown” element within Edwardian fiction necessitates a scholarly examination of its roots in the latter phase of the nineteenth century, particularly within the milieu commonly characterised by the aftermath of Darwinian thought (1971, pp. 15-21). In such an atmosphere, analysing the fiction of the 1890s and 1910s, Bellamy further claims that both decades should be considered part of the turn-of-the-century crisis, and the composition of Edwardian novels is widely shaped by the circumstances of an ongoing response, gradually shifting through a more positive reaction to existential insecurity. However, with the appearance of the Liberal Revival, the three Edwardians had developed a novel genre that undeniably manifests a distinct and consequential phase in English literature. In contrast to the 1890s, there was a newfound confidence in living in a reclaimed present, marking an expansion towards society. By 1910, the three writers wrote novels that performed within and beyond the “realist tradition” (Ibid., p. 105). In the current intellectual milieu, Bellamy, preoccupied with a scholarly examination of novels from the period, claims that the narrative of English society throughout the twentieth century principally hinges upon the cumulative mitigation of social maladies. Edwardian fiction is defined by a marked interest in therapeutic elements, extending beyond social reform to conduct remedial action at the individual level, implementing a literature of exhortation (Ibid., p. 22).

⁸ Relating to the end of the 19th century, especially the period’s art, culture, and morals. (Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.) Definition of Fin de siècle. In [dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fin-de-siecle?q=fin-de-si%C3%A8cle) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fin-de-siecle?q=fin-de-si%C3%A8cle>

William Bellamy then creates a list of therapeutic elements in the novels of Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, emphasising Galsworthy. According to Bellamy, Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy emphasised their characters' possessive and locative dimensions, as the individuals they described were essentially dispossessed and displaced (1971, p. 15). The increasing diagnostic dilemma apparent in Galsworthy's work during the 1890s, depicting the condition of the "spiritual" Liberal, indicates the era's dedication to therapeutic ideals. An examination of Galsworthy's post-1900 fiction provides a chance for a more complex exploration of the diverse therapeutic initiatives by individuals of the Edwardian era (Ibid., pp. 165-166). Moreover, the characters' focus on the working class does not stem from class-based self-interest but from a therapeutic conception of society. The working class is the primary social healing condition, given its position as the most visible manifestation of physical and psychosociological maladies (Ibid., pp. 186-7). Galsworthy further enhanced these therapeutic elements with his *Forsyte Chronicles* through his portrayal of a rooted family that connects the past to the present, thereby endeavouring to mitigate the anxiety and crisis that emerged during the period of transition.

In general, when discussing the works of Galsworthy during this transitional epoch, distinguished by significant historical, social, and literary transformations, John Galsworthy demonstrated productivity in creating various literary works, including novels, dramas, essays, sketches, short stories, and poems. In the formative years of his early youth, Galsworthy encountered Joseph Conrad during a maritime expedition, and afterwards they cultivated a close friendship. While Conrad played a crucial role in causing Galsworthy's solemn contemplation of literary pursuits, Russian novelist Turgenev and French author and playwright Maupassant were the literary luminaries who significantly impacted Galsworthy's writing. Recent scholarship has explored Galsworthy's complex relationship with Russian literary traditions (Soboleva & Wrenn, 2017). These two authors were, he said, the initial writers who provided him with genuine artistic stimulation while teaching him about thematic balance and verval conciseness (Marrot, 1936, p. 135). Alec Frechet mentions three masters to whom Galsworthy was indebted most: Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Maupassant; among them, the impact of Turgenev on Galsworthy was exceptional, characterising an effective force both in literary and human spheres. Galsworthy praises Turgenev as "the finest natural poet who ever wrote novels," and "with more poetic feeling and greater sensibility"

than significant figures from the English and French literary traditions such as Austen, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Balzac, Stendhal, Dumas, and Hugo (1982, pp. 83-202). Galsworthy compliments Turgenev's contribution to fiction, referring to him as an "instinctive feeling for form" that presented the concept of selection, resulting in a coherent relationship between the parts and the whole, essential for the creation of what is perceived as a work of art (Gindin, 1987, p. 96).

The dialectic of part and totality acquires a distinguished position within Galsworthy's paradigm of realistic literature. In the dialectical framework of Galsworthy's novels, a marked manifestation is detectable in the affiliation between the individual and society. William Bellamy points to a realistic vision of the relation between the part and whole, as well as the individual and community. He asserts that the sociological perspective neatly elucidates Galsworthy's evident inclination toward depicting the contextual backdrop of temperament and the relationship between consciousness and environment. He further claims that realistic literature creates a novelistic form that depicts and judges life in totality through the experiences of individual characters (1971, p. 28). Moreover, due to the reasons mentioned earlier, such as the psychology of fin de siècle, Bellamy claims that Galsworthy's engagement with social realism derived from the recognition that the stability of social reality was precisely in question (1971, p. 201). In his realistic method of writing, he did not wholly discard Victorian realism in favour of Modernist impressionism, acquiring the disapproval of Virginia Woolf. Using realistic methods, Galsworthy effectively handled multiple writing genres, maintaining coherence as he moved from fictional to non-fiction writing. Realism permeated his fiction with lifelike portrayals of his era during significant transformation, mingling elaborate Victorian panoramic descriptions with the existential considerations of the twentieth century (Durey, 2021, p. 46). James Gindin claims that Galsworthy's realism transcends mere documentary representation of immediate social experience, instead approaching what he characterises as experiential presentation. This literary method demands emotional distance combined with genuine empathy and intellectual curiosity toward subjects, while maintaining a comprehensive perspective on human experience (1987, pp. 191-192).

Besides, Galsworthy profoundly influences twentieth-century critical realism, emphasising the life-changing potential of literature in improving lives and criticising social institutions. He maintained the tradition of social realism, using literature to

present the complexities and dualities of life and society (Shirinova, 2013, pp. 20-22). As one of the Edwardians, Galsworthy dealt with the challenges and questions of his era, including a Victorian shift towards Darwinism, the loss of moral certainty after the Boer War, and considerations about the estranged working class. The England in which Galsworthy evolved as a writer was comparatively stable but uneasy, characterised by an upper class reluctant to acknowledge the poverty and decadence signalled by regular reminders from the lower classes (Sternlicht, 1987, p. 28). While repeated themes in his novels include beauty, love, suffering, family, divorce, and art, the predominant and encompassing theme is the upper and middle classes' preoccupation with material possessions. His novels commonly present a society where the middle class holds a significant, though not dominant, position. In addition to six novels comprising the initial two trilogies, four others discuss the aristocracy (*The Patrician* (1911) and *the End of Chapter* (1932) trilogy), one focuses on the landed gentry (*The Country House* (1907)), and an additional four intertwine these social strata with urban middle classes, professionals, intellectuals, and artists (*The Island Pharisees*, *The Dark Flower* (1913), *The Freeland* (1915), *Beyond* (1917)). The novels' depiction of other social classes is markedly less accurate and precise. No significant character arises from a humble background, and the lower middle class is hardly represented. The destitute are depicted primarily by their economic status rather than as entirely developed individuals. Their presence is more observable through social troubles than as definite, autonomous characters. Their representation needs to be more present (Frechet, 1982, pp. 137-139). For the characterisation in Galsworthy's novels, Alec Frechet claims that Galsworthy encountered adversity in defining his main characters' situation, a state featuring quasi-rebellion, identified by an erratic and bewildered middle ground. This prevalent attribute repudiates their typical roles, leaving them in uneasiness. It reflects Galsworthy's experience of being typical of his class while contradicting it intrinsically due to his seriousness and constant unease (Ibid., p. 128). Sheila Kaye-Smith also criticises Galsworthy for his characterisation. She claims that his characters represent "types" rather than exceptional individuals who decide to conform to arranged situations. Unlike actors in a play, they are deficient in the personal aptitude an author brings to a novel, resulting in repetition of the same groups across different works; for example, the Forsyte family are typical of that division of the middle class whose primary purpose is possession (1916, pp. 55-58).

Galsworthy proudly aligned himself with the social classes he criticised. Nonetheless, the sharpness of his social criticism started to decline with the conclusion of the Edwardian Age upon the old king's death in 1910, leading to a period of motionless purpose. In his reflections on his writing journey in the preface of 1924 for *Villa Rubein*, Galsworthy traces the evolving balance between emotional and critical elements that shaped his literary development. He admits that his early writings were essentially structured by emotional inclinations rather than deliberate critical assessment, while the decade from 1901 to 1910 represented a period when his more detached, analytical tendencies gained prominence. The years from 1910 to 1918 witnessed a return of emotional elements in his writing, after which he perceived a steady tension between these competing forces (Qtd. in Frechet, 1982, p. 57).

The quality of Galsworthy's writing becomes more questionable when his emotional nature dominates, unlike the superior standard evident in works where his critical perspective is foremost, especially regarding upper-middle class critique. Edward Garnett, his mentor, presumed that Galsworthy, by altering the social satire of the class he confidentially apprehended, was directed towards a path that would inescapably disengage him from the source of his creative aptitude, his engagement with middle-class society (Sternlicht, 1987, p. 38) and satirical writing demonstrates his most practical literary technique. Moreover, Sheila Kaye-Smith asserts that he makes his art effective by accommodating propaganda into his artistic armoury, mainly in constituting foundations (1916, p. 102). During the period when his critical side was conspicuous, employing satire and irony as his most compelling literary techniques, Galsworthy wrote social criticism novels that concisely criticise the upper class of British society. These novels are *The Island Pharisees* (1904), *The Man of Property* (1906), *The Patricians* (1911), *The Freelands* (1915), and *Saint's Progress* (1919). They embody a penetrating critique, or more precisely, an intricately nuanced satirical commentary on English society. This comprises examining its distinctive elements, including character archetypes, moral frameworks, disciplinary structures, intellectual paradigms, and prevailing biases, discernible within each principal category (Chevrillon, 1923, p. 153).

As for the works that this dissertation will examine, the trilogy of *The Forsyte Saga* and subsequent trilogies that continue to tell the story of the Forsyte family, *A Modern Comedy* and *End of the Chapter*, have earned him acclaim and an extensive readership.

In these novels, he attempts to capture historical events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in England. He concentrates on the disintegration of the dominant English upper-middle class and the collapse of its associated social norms. In his trilogies, particularly the first and second trilogy, Galsworthy directs his attention towards the “possessive instinct” rampant among the upper-middle class. He carries out this by delving into the dynamics within the Forsyte family, particularly stressing the protagonist of the first two trilogies, Soames Forsyte. The Forsyte family, serving as a miniature of English society, reflects the exaggerated excessive possessiveness and materialism, extensive wealth, and dominant financial power prevalent during the Victorian era (Workman, 1942, p. 9). The drive for ownership and accumulation stood out as the prominent characteristics of the period and the first generations of the Forsyte family, eventually giving way to excessive consumerism in the subsequent generations (Hurlburt, 2015). Galsworthy illustrates the fall of British imperialism and the expanding capitalist era through consumer culture in the younger generations of the family. In addition, he also depicts the class struggle and the apprehension felt by the bourgeois regarding the emerging society of social equality represented by the Labour members of parliament. This anxiety is exemplified through George Forsyte, a second-generation family member, who expresses militant concern about increasingly assertive political radicals and socialists, viewing them as a direct threat to bourgeois material interests and warning of inevitable future conflict (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 632).

The studies and critical views above are meaningful and indicate the diversity and richness of Galsworthy’s literary works. It cannot be denied that all these approaches and critical ideas contribute to increasing knowledge of the Galsworthy studies. However, this dissertation will suggest a different perspective and approach to Galsworthy’s works, particularly *The Forsyte Chronicles*. In doing so, this dissertation primarily analyses ‘the sense of property’ as the defining constituent of the class consciousness of the Forsyte family, emblematic of the Victorian upper-middle class, in three generations, drawing on the theories of Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács, whose intellectual development from romanticism to Marxism (Löwy, 1979; Uslu, 2006) shaped his distinctive approach to class analysis. Although Galsworthy has often been overlooked in the shadow of the innovations of modernism, this dissertation reassesses him as an important realist writer whose depictions of class, property and

history correspond closely to Lukacisan principles. What makes this study unique is its theoretical precision and historical scope; concepts such as class consciousness, reification, historical totality, and typicality are not only introduced, but methodically applied to the generational structure of the novels. The analysis treats the Forsyte family not simply as fictional characters, but as ideological types whose evolution reflects shifts in capitalist society. At the same time, the “sense of property” which is the main focus of the study, is not an ideological trait to be restricted only to the Victorian bourgeoisie. It has perhaps a more powerful influence than in the past, shaping individual experiences and actions in contemporary societies. In this context, the dissertation analyses a historical class structure and identity and offers a systematic reading of contemporary problems.

While demonstrating the changing constructive aspects of historical occurrences in forming the class consciousness and identity, this dissertation also posits that despite the transformation of the “sense of property” within the subsequent generation of the Forsytes, it continually functions as the defining feature of class consciousness. The Victorian era is characterised by a unique sense of personal ownership, reflecting England’s national materialistic tendencies, exemplified through its colonial expansion policy. Within this context, the characters in the novels can be perceived as manifestations of social values formed by their surrounding factors and genetic background (Workman, 1942, pp. 48-53). However, over time, with changes in historical and social realms, the “sense of property” is also subjected to definite adjustments. Most notably, the new generation Forsytes display a leaning towards consumption rather than accumulation. Nevertheless, the “possessive instinct” in humans never ceases and has consistently been one of the most influential factors in shaping historical and social events. Therefore, by examining the upper-middle class Forsyte family formed by the “possessive instinct” and building on an understanding of how bourgeois consciousness operates in literature (Moretti, 2013), this dissertation will attempt to exhibit the impact of the “sense of property” on human relations and societal formation both in the past and the present.

The dissertation will consist of six chapters. Chapter II will explain Georg Lukács’s class consciousness and realism in detail since Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Chronicles* will be analysed in relation to Lukács’s literary theory and criticism. Chapter III will focus on the representation of class consciousness within the context of social realism

in Galsworthy's novels. The chapter will analyse the novels in terms of their historical, social, and cultural context that form the upper-middle-class consciousness and identity. Realism in these novels about "totality" within the context of the historically transitional period, from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, within the social and cultural context they belong to, will be studied. In this chapter, both trilogies in *The Forsyte Chronicles* will be examined. Chapter IV will read Galsworthy's novels above how property and possessions fundamentally shape the class consciousness and identity of the Forsytes, upper-middle-class members, within the dynamics of the capitalist social structure that was dominant from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The focus will be mainly on the first trilogy, *The Forsyte Saga*, in which Galsworthy portrays the class and reveals its consciousness. Focusing on the relationship between Irene and Soames, this chapter will also discuss the reification process since the sense of property brings with it owning people as material properties. Chapter V will examine the class struggle in society. Even though the chapter will analyse the first trilogy, the focus will be on the second trilogy of *The Forsyte Chronicles*, *A Modern Comedy*, because Galsworthy, going beyond the boundaries of his class (the upper-middle class), presents an interclass approach and includes other classes in this trilogy. Chapter VI will be a general summary of the overall discussions conducted in the dissertation, and there will be suggestions that will open the door to future studies to be undertaken.

CHAPTER II

GEORG LUKÁCS'S *HISTORY AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS* AND REALISM

Although recent critical theory has moved toward interconnected frameworks that examine how race, gender, sexuality, and class converge (Alcoff et al., 2006), Lukács's class-focused approach provides the fundamental analysis for understanding how property relations structure and often determine other social identities within capitalist societies. This dissertation therefore aims to initiate a scholarly examination of John Galsworthy's novels of the *Forsyte Chronicles*, applying the foundational theoretical framework of Marxist critic and theorist Georg Lukács. The study will be grounded in Lukácsian concepts, particularly those related to "realism in literature," "totality," "class consciousness," and the idea of "reification." Employing a Lukácsian interpretive paradigm, the study will analyse Galsworthy's portrayal of class and class consciousness within the historical epoch, exploring the dialectical reflections of class conflicts and the intricate interconnection between subjective and objective realities within the novels. Moreover, the underlying objective is to conduct a comprehensive analysis established through historical and social considerations. It expounds the novels' portrayal of social transformation and its complex impact on the class structures and individual spheres. To this end, the marked concepts of Georg Lukács will be subjected to a conscientious examination.

The enactment of Georg Lukács's theoretical framework is affirmed by its efficiency in providing a comprehensive analysis of John Galsworthy, whose thematic emphasis is oriented upon class dynamics, elucidating the reflection of his class consciousness within the specific historical period in which he is located. The endorsement of Lukács's theoretical paradigm is embedded in the acknowledgement that he formulated a realistic literary framework, one that systematically explicates the interaction between historical and social events and the individual's circumstantial placement within the events, thereby epitomising a total comprehension of their dialectical relationship. The most important rationale behind the preference for Lukács's theory is his foundational elucidation of the concept of reification. Lukács

explicates, in a comprehensive manner, how capitalism, particularly those in power, constructs relationships between individuals and their relationships with nature and life; thereby, he endeavours to engender awareness in people and provide consciousness that will beget metamorphic pathways. After all, his determined dedication to the complete improvement of the individual amidst the contradictions, exploitations, and alienation deep-rooted in capitalism and the possibility of achieving full human development constitutes the rationale for preference for Lukács (Lanning, 2009, p. 13). Lukács's insight into consciousness, ideology, and the flowering of human potential remains historically significant and suggests valuable awareness for contemporary movements (Ibid., p. 327).

2.1. Georg Lukács's Place within Marxist Literary Criticism

Marxist literary criticism, in the broadest terms, is a theoretical approach to literature that pursues to understand works of literature in terms of the economic, social, and political context in which they are produced. It employs the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, initially elucidating the principles defined in historical materialism. At its core, Marxist literary criticism suggests that literature, as a form of cultural product, acts like a mirror, manifesting the predominant socioeconomic milieu of the historical period. Marx and Engels' discussions on art and literature are brief, immature, and incomplete perspectives. Hence, Marxist criticism surpasses the basic reiteration of its fundamental concepts, transcending the predominant Western paradigm of the 'sociology of literature,' striving to provide a comprehensive explication of literary works, attained through an accurate examination of their forms, style, and meaning within the context of historical periods. While pioneers like Hegel engaged in historical analysis of literature, the distinctive character of Marxist criticism dwells in its revolutionary conceptualisation of history itself (Eagleton, 1976: 1-2). The foundation for the revolutionary conception is established in a key passage from Marx in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Marx argues that in social production, individuals inevitably engage in specific economic relationships that are both indispensable and independent of their personal will. These production relations correspond to specific stages of material productive development and collectively constitute society's economic structure. This economic foundation supports the legal and political superstructure while corresponding to particular forms of social consciousness. According to this framework, the mode of

production conditions the broader processes of social, political, and intellectual life, with material conditions fundamentally shaping social consciousness rather than individual consciousness determining social being (2014, p. 12).

Terry Eagleton examines Marx's framework and claims that social relations are complicatedly linked to material production, manifested by specific "productive forces" forming relationships, such as feudal relationships between peasants and aristocrats. As the productive organisation develops, new social relations appear involving capitalist and proletarian classes, collectively termed by Marx as the "economic superstructure of society." From this economic base emerges a "superstructure," comprising legal, political, and state forms, devised to codify the power of the ruling class. The superstructure also involves "certain forms of social consciousness" or ideology, serving to codify the ruling class (1976, p. 3). Marx affirms that ideas, culture, law, and these mental systems, are the products of concrete social and economic conditions, wherein the material interests of the dominant social class exercise an inevitable influence on the consciousness of individual and collective existence (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 2005, p. 82).

Terry Eagleton positions art, in Marxist terms, as part of the social "superstructure." It forms part of society's ideology, forming social perceptions to acclimate or conceal power dynamics among classes. Comprehending literature necessitates recognising its immersion in larger social frameworks. Literary works are not mystical creations, but definite perspectives closely connected to the predominant social ideology. This ideology reflects concrete social relations experienced, codified, and sustained within particular times and places, restrained by material necessity driven by the nature and stage of economic production. Therefore, understanding a literary work necessitates realising the intricate connections between the work and its ideological environments, conspicuous not just in themes but also in style, rhythm, imagery, and quality. Additionally, a correct grasp of ideology includes recognising its purpose in society, a historically established system of perception that supports the control of a certain social class (1976, p. 3). Despite being part of the superstructure, it does not simply reflect the economic base. Engels clarifies this point in a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890. According to Engels, while materialist historical analysis recognises economic activity as the fundamental driving force, interpreting this as solely economic causation misrepresents the theory entirely. He argues that although material conditions serve as

the underlying foundation, numerous superstructural components, including political expressions of social conflict, institutional frameworks created by ruling groups and ideological manifestations of these conflicts such as theoretical, legal, and philosophical systems, along with religious beliefs and their doctrinal elaboration, actively shape historical development and often become the primary factors governing specific outcomes (Marx & Engels, 2010, p. 34). Terry Eagleton remarks that Engels aims to refute the idea of a direct, mechanical analogy between the base and superstructure, which are superstructure components that continually interact with and impact the economic base. Moreover, Eagleton suggests that while the materialist theory of history rejects art's autonomous competence to change history, it concedes art's role in actively affecting such changes. Marx, when analysing the base-superstructure relationship, particularly noted art as an example of the intricate and indirect nature of this relationship (Eagleton, 1976, p. 5).

By the acquired discernment from Marx's oeuvre, the Greeks could create significant art due to the primitive nature of their society. Marx asserts that the capitalist division of labour characterised the end of a previous era where artistic and spiritual attempts were interlaced with material processes, and artisans advanced their work with a sense of aesthetics. The division of mental and manual labour interrupted the innate unity of spiritual and material activities, resulting in the masses being immersed in commodity production without the satisfaction of creative involvement in their work, leading to the worker's alienation. Traditional folk art remained rooted in popular expression, while appreciation of high art transformed into a specialised domain, shaped by commercial interests and confined to a privileged segment of the dominant social class (Selden et al., 2005, p. 85).

Within the Marxist literary criticism outlined above, Georg Lukács introduced a perspective on Marxism that highlighted its uniqueness, efficiency in exploring capitalism, and openness to development (Lanning, 2009, p. 10). In his book *Georg Lukács and Organising Class Consciousness* (2009), Robert Lanning examines Lukács within the Marxist tradition and his contributions, claiming that essentially, Lukács discussed the application of historical materialist dialectics within Orthodox Marxism. This includes the masses comprehending theory as a palpable force in their progression (Ibid.). Lukács conceived theory and practice emerging into a comprehensive understanding, conversion from immediate facts to the sophisticated

reality of historical development and future guidance, thereby becoming a historical precondition for the working class (1971a, p. 2).

Through exploration, the fundamental key concepts that construct Marxist literary criticism can be illuminated as “base and superstructure,” “ideology,” “class struggle,” “historical materialism,” and “alienation” within a scholarly framework (Hawthorn 1973; Losurdo, 2016). Georg Lukács has crafted a grounded approach to Marxism and Marxist literary criticism. In his seminal work, *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), Lukács engages in the theoretical description of concepts central to Marxist discourse, including “historical materialism,” “dialectical materialism,” “class consciousness,” “class struggle,” and “reification.” In this book, Lukács also explicates the “subjective” and “objective” realities and the concept of “totality,” which coextensively form the underpinning for subsequent theories on the realist novel. Furthermore, in his other works, such as *Essays on Realism* (1981), *Realism in Our Time* (1964), and *Avrupa Gerçekçiliği* (1987), Lukács systematically establishes the realist literary approach and provides critical insights into modernism. He suggests that realistic work should disclose the innate contradictions within a social order’s hidden design. Consequently, he introduced an exclusive Hegelian approach to Marxist thinking, describing literary works as manifestations of an evolving system (Selden et al., 2005, p. 87).

The work that the dissertation will refer to for fundamental concepts, *History and Class Consciousness*, is considered one of the critical texts in Western Marxist thought, or in Slavoj Žižek’s description, “the founding text of the entire Western Hegelian Marxism” (2000, p. 108). Lukács regulates Marxism into a coherent theoretical framework in this book and presents its basic concepts. In the book, Lukács combines the aspects of Hegelian philosophy with Marxist principles, embodying Hegel’s dialectic method, particularly the idea of historical progression through contradictions. He integrates these elements with the philosophy of Marxist materialism. Lukács examines the impact of Marxism on culture, literature, and philosophy, providing critiques of what he identifies as a fragmented and reified consciousness within bourgeois thinking. The book’s remarkable accomplishment stemmed from its skillful integration of theoretical complexities with practical concerns. It combines German Idealism, historical materialism, and intricate sociological theory with diverse disputes within the socialist movement (Ray, 2018, p. 196). The unique aspect that either draws

interest to Lukács's work or causes opposition is his pursuit of transforming his theoretical viewpoint into a concrete force, whether in the realms of politics or art (Lanning, 2009, p. 11).

Focusing on the concept of "history" in *History and Class Consciousness*, Martin Ray, in his article "Fidelity to the Event? Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* and the Russian Revolution," argues that the emphasis on history in the title is intentional, manifesting Lukács's profound engagement with history both as a methodological necessity and a concrete process. Lukács refused attempts to identify Marx's "historical materialism" with questionable dialectics of nature, criticising even Friedrich Engels. He argued against defining historical materialism as a conventional social science like sociology, emphasising its resemblance to the meaningful narratives of nineteenth-century novelists. According to Ray, Lukács believed that natural history, despite its conditional and excessively determined nature, had an innate structure similar to the aesthetically crafted narratives of great novelists (2018, pp. 198-199). Considering the historical method as a narrative art rather than a social science was central for theoretical reasons and had practical significance for Lukács. Hegel and Marx argued that philosophical contradictions could not be adequately addressed through intellectual means alone but necessitated overwhelming the social relations of real human beings. Historical consciousness, methodologically, went beyond an isolated observer's introspective stand, recognising the observer as a participant in an ongoing historical story. Historically, self-conscious theory is informed by history-creating action (Ibid., p. 199). As Lukács states, proletarian historical consciousness originates from comprehending contemporary conditions through self-awareness of their class position and recognising the underlying forces that shaped this situation. The alignment of origins and historical development as interconnected dimensions of a unified process requires two essential elements. First, all frameworks that structure human experience must function as active determinants rather than mere descriptive tools. Second, the sequence, logical relationships, and interconnections of these frameworks must manifest as integral elements of historical transformation and foundational aspects of current reality (1971a, p. 159). Lukács affirmed that, as active members in history, the proletariat has the potential to construct the future differently from the past. Historical reasoning is central to resisting the reification that naturalises bourgeois social relationships and the paradoxes of

bourgeois thought, treating them as an inalterable “second nature.” Reflections on the roots of existing pseudo-natural relations are crucial, but consequential de-reification necessitates collective action to demolish current bourgeois institutions and practices (Ray, 2018, p. 199).

2.2. Class Consciousness and Reification

The concept of “class” is often affiliated with social stratification, which includes the hierarchical arrangement of individuals or groups based on factors such as wealth, social status, income, education, and occupation. Robert Lanning summarises the term’s usage in sociological and cultural studies and states that the term “class” is commonly applied as a conducive descriptor, often without deliberate consideration. Its application in academia frequently endorses inequality and oppression but lacks an exploration of consequential solutions. In discussing differences attributed to social structure and resources, sociologists depoliticise the concept of class while using “socioeconomic status” to connote the interrelations of income, occupation, and education. This access perceives power discrepancies without focusing on the essential economic relations forming classes in capitalist societies. In class discussions, culture is increasingly underlined for its role in emphasising the diverse aspects of class, such as speech, ideas, feelings, and material remarks in different settings. Some studies reduce class to an “identity site,” replacing a politically informed comprehension of class and collective consciousness with subjective experiences. Depicting experiences as manifestations of oppression is often acknowledged without examining concrete possibilities for understanding and opposition, confirming socioeconomic identity as a product of comparably static circumstances (Lanning, 2009, pp. 6-7).

In the context of Marxist theory, the theoretical substitution of a politically informed understanding of class dynamics and collective consciousness by individual experiences is epitomised by the term “false consciousness.” Robert Lanning directs attention to the flawed application and underlying rationales of “false consciousness”. He asserts that sociological analyses precede subjective impressions, common sense, and deliberate nationality as expressions of class identity and resistance. Rejecting false consciousness means disregarding the notion that individuals may have limited and mistaken knowledge due to restricted information availability and pragmatic computations that discourage a complete critique of the social order (2009, p. 7). In the context of Marxist interpretation, Lanning then cohesively enunciates the class and

class consciousness, indicating that the Marxist perspective on class and class consciousness is composite, emphasising that it transcends mere economic position. Analysing classes necessitates knowledge of their essential prerequisite -capitalism's needs- and identifying that class development is genetically linked to conflicts in establishing subordinate groups to serve dominant aspirations. Essential discussions on class require accepting consciousness as a pivotal factor in describing class, with Marx defining an initial stage as a "class-in-itself." To finalise this process and attain a "class-for-itself," active, contemplative, and organised efforts are necessary to uplift consciousness, leading to imputed class consciousness (Ibid., p. 8).

In his work *History and Class Consciousness*, Georg Lukács delineates the concept of class according to the conceptualisation of Marx and Engels. Lukács complies with the notion that "in Marxism the division of society into classes is determined by position within the process of production" (1971a, p. 46). This definition establishes the groundwork for his formulation of class consciousness. Lukács clarifies that linking consciousness to the overall society makes it possible to construe individuals' thoughts and feelings in a specific situation if they could evaluate both the case and the consequent concerns. Class consciousness comprises "imputed" pertinent and deliberate reactions to a typical position in the production process. This consciousness does not simply represent the sum of individual thoughts. Still, it governs the historically significant actions of the class, providing awareness that can only be understood in connection to this consciousness (Ibid., p. 51).

The central motive in forming class consciousness dwells in the "totality," a comprehensive foundation against which empirical class consciousness requires evaluation. Lukács elaborates on the analysis process, highlighting the innate gap between class consciousness and empirical reality and the psychologically perceptible ideas individuals construct about their life conditions. Simply accepting this gap is deficient; the analysis includes examining diversities in class consciousness among different classes, exploring the practical consequences of relationships between objective and economic conditions, accepted class consciousness, and individual's psychological reflections on their lives. Ultimately, the aim is to reveal class consciousness's practical and historical function (Lukács, 1971a, p. 52). A consciousness detached from totality, characterised by subjectivity and diminished to the immediate, indicates false consciousness. Class consciousness, Lukács explains,

when considered abstractly and formally, implies a lack of recognition regarding one's socio-historical and economic condition, altered by one's class. This condition is a specific structural relationship governing life, and the innate falseness or illusion is directly linked to the objective economic structure. Disclosing this illusion and establishing a genuine connection with the whole of society necessitates detailed historical analysis. If a class, perceiving society from its viewpoint does not capture the totality and cannot penetrate its core, it assumes a secondary status and cannot influence history (Ibid.). Emphasising the false consciousness originating in isolation from totality and based on subjective experiences, Nishad Patnaik, in his article "The Emergence of Class Consciousness: Lukács on 'Objective Possibility,'" also states that false consciousness essentially may seem to appear justified from a definite socio-historical angle. Yet, it fails to objectively comprehend the historically mediated development of the social context in which it resides. This dialectical perspective emphasises the irreducibility of the "objective" and "subjective" movements in historical and conscious formations to mere individual or class thoughts and feelings. It also denies the idea of "immutable," "eternal," or "objective" laws of history, highlighting the pivotal role of consciousness about the social "whole" and the dialectical movement of history (2017, pp. 55-56). The dialectical relationship between subjective and objective approaches to history, which also forms the basis of Lukács's conceptualisation of realist literature, will be further analysed in the context of objective and subjective reality in literature. Consequently, Patnaik continues, class consciousness encompasses the rational thoughts and reactions attributed to a specific "typical" role in the production process. Nevertheless, it becomes palpable that when analysed through the perspective of this transcendental "objective" standpoint, class consciousness has the potential to be "false, immediate, and limited." (Ibid., p. 56).

Lukács asserts that in bourgeois societies, there are two distinct classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. These classes, the bourgeois and the proletariat, thoroughly rely on the progression of current production evolution for their existence and growth. A comprehensive plan for social organisation can only be conceived. The perspective of other classes, such as the petty bourgeois or peasants, is ambiguous or unfertile since their existence is rooted in their role within the capitalist production system and is elaborately connected to remainders of feudal society (1971a, p. 59). Paul Connerton, in his article "The Collective Historical Subject: Reflections on

Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*," derives a comprehensive overview of capitalist society by using Lukács's conceptual framework and articulates that capitalist society is distinct from preceding societies as its economic dynamics growingly dominate the entire social structure, with minimal intrusion from non-economic factors. Marx intended to unveil the financial foundation, expose the state as a tool for economic power and reveal the bourgeois society's structure. Within the capitalist paradigm a collective thread of economic engagement unifies all members, enabling an in-depth sociological analysis of society as every dimension unfolds in the universal monetary system. Decoding this economic language reveals the fundamental commodity structure, an essential challenge in a capitalist society, thus promoting a comprehensive understanding of the whole. The transition towards an economically organised society highlights the transparent nature of economic class interests, fostering the emergence of a distinct class consciousness. Therefore, social conflict becomes a struggle between those uncovering and those obscuring the innately class-based nature of society (1975, pp. 164-165).

As mentioned above, in capitalist societies the mode of production determines consciousness. Henceforth, examining the way of production in capitalist societies formulated by Lukács in the Marxist theory becomes essential. Paul Connerton clarifies the production method in capitalist societies, asserting that within the framework of this society, all aspects related to society, from production to consumption, are translated into the universal language of money. In this economic paradigm, products of human labour are not designed for immediate use; instead, they are produced with the eventual aim of being sold as commodities. The primary mode of communication among isolated producers is indirect, and it happens through exchanging their products. From the perspective of an individual capitalist engaged in the production process, this system's historical and social character remains ambiguous. The capitalist system functions in a way that conceals historical ties between individuals. Human relations, such as bakers baking bread for cobblers or cobblers creating shoes for bakers, continue but occur implicitly, hidden from conscious awareness. Accordingly, the exchange of commodities becomes a mask, veiling the fundamental structure of relationships between people behind a system of appearances and connections between things. Essentially, this aspect accentuates how

human engagements are portrayed through the exchange of commodities while concurrently concealing the true nature of social relations (Connerton, 1975, p. 166).

Within this framework, Lukács points to the limits of bourgeois consciousness as the limits of capitalist production which becomes a “false consciousness.” He asserts that the bourgeoisie’s class consciousness is formally associated with economic awareness. Contrarily, the most thorough level of unawareness, the most conspicuous manifestation of “false consciousness,” becomes evident when there is an advanced understanding of economic phenomena (1971a, p. 66). In other words, as Paul Connerton explains, they find themselves in a difficult situation as they aim to understand their world. Nonetheless, fully disclosing the workings of their social structure is hazardous, as it functions merely for the benefit of a privileged minority. The awareness of the bourgeoisie surpasses being only a falsehood that maintains their existence; it is influenced by their position in the productive process, inducing them to perceive economic life primarily from the perspective of the individual capitalist (1975, p. 167). Moreover, bourgeois thinking is constrained to function on an unhistorical realm of “false consciousness,” confining its concepts to the “immediate” and empirically observable. The notions and history and historical transformations present challenging dilemmas for bourgeois thinking. If bourgeois thought were to transcend the ahistorical immediacy, it would require acknowledging its transitory nature, creating an impassable bridge (Lukács, 1971a, pp. 48-54).

The bourgeoisie encountered historical tragedy as it faced its new opponent, the proletariat, even before defeating feudalism. The political victory transformed the proclaimed “freedom” into a new form of repression. Sociologically, the bourgeoisie tried to erase class conflict from social consciousness despite its being a fundamental aspect of capitalism. Ideologically, while highlighting individual importance, economic conditions and commodity production subverted and eradicated that distinctive individuality (Lukács, 1971a, pp. 61-62). The working class -the proletariat- emerges due to the capitalist social structure. The diverse manifestation of its existence presents a subtle embodiment of “reification” in its most intense and harsh form, leading to extreme dehumanisation. The property-owning class and the proletariat epitomise a mutual sense of human estrangement. However, the former embraces this alienation, finding comfort and assertion within it, apprehending alienation as a tool and controlling the illusion of human existence. In contrast, the

latter recognises its disintegration due to alienation, realising it as a symbol of its vulnerability and the brutal reality of an inhuman existence (Ibid., p. 149). The capitalist mindset often obscures the trustworthy source of surplus value, mainly when depicting the economic structure. The conventional perspective focuses on theoretical aspects like the organic composition of capital and the role of employers, veiling the latent driving forces. In practice, this “mystification” is crucial in understanding the core reality of capitalist society: the class struggle. The bourgeoisie’s dominance expands across society, forming it to serve its interests. It developed a comprehensive economics, politics, and culture theory to hold control. While it is central for the bourgeoisie to elucidate its interests in specific matters, an explicit awareness becomes problematic when spread to a broader social context. The bourgeoisie’s rule, serving a minority, requires the deception of other classes to preserve a vague class consciousness among different classes. This is essential because the bourgeoisie’s rule is innately a minority rule, operated in the interest of that minority (Ibid., p. 64-66). The working class -the proletariat- has the task of transcending both itself and the bourgeois rule of capitalism. This means that the immediate daily struggles of the proletariat must be unified and correlated with the whole totality of class struggle (Ibid., p. 71).

In *History and Class Consciousness*, another essential concept that describes human relationships in societies characterised by a capitalist mode of production is the concept of “reification,” a concept that remains central to contemporary critical analysis (Bewes, 2002). Lukács developed the idea of reification based on Marx’s analysis of capitalism, mainly focusing on commodity fetishism, which is grounded in the fundamental characteristic of “alienation” in capitalism. Johan F. Hartle, in his article “Reification as Structural Depoliticization: The Political Ontology of Lukács and Debord,” assesses the relationship between the concept of commodity and the reification and states that Lukács introduces reification in alignment with Marx’s fetishism theory, depicting it as a type of objectivity innate in the encompassing structure of commodity exchange. Marx asserted that the exchange value of commodities is not only accepted in practical terms but is also consistently reconstructed and verified in social interaction. With the introduction of money, value becomes subjected to a method of ultimate objectification, assuming the appearance of a palpable, “thing-like” reality. This imparts the value of the semblance of an innate

quality intrinsic to the commodity, similar to features like mass or colour, despite its lack of inherent existence in the physical reality of the object. Instead, value embodies a stabilised manifestation of social labour, surrounding the social relations that govern it, thereby acting as a medium of social mediation. The recognition and assertion of value's "objective" reality in practical concerns can be defined as a latent ontological engagement innate in the exchange process. Commodities are not only palpable items for consumption with sensory attributes performing as bearers of service; they also exist as social entities by possessing exchange value (Hartle, 2017, p. 23).

In the section "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" of *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács analyses the reflection of reification onto social relationships through commodity fetishism. He states that the transition of the commodity relationship into a state characterised by "ghostly objectivity" surpasses mere converting all items meant for human satisfaction into commodities. It is prevalent in the totality of human consciousness; personal qualities and capabilities cease to be integral aspects of an individual's identity and become possessions and commodities, similar to diverse material objects. Consequently, no innate composition exists for human relations, and no procedure enables individuals to employ their physical and psychic qualities without an intensifying subjection to this process of reification (Lukács, 1971a, p. 100). In this context, a connection between individuals is perceived as an entity. According to Hannah Fenichel Pitkin's article "Rethinking Reification," this relationship suggests that something fundamental is hidden and misunderstood as a "phantom." Human capabilities remain unrecognised; something innate to human potential seems to operate independently and exercise control over individuals. Therefore, reification becomes a misunderstanding of the world, identified as an "ideological phenomenon" where the actual reality is concealed or deformed beneath a deceitful surface that requires revelation (1987, p. 265).

Lukács refers to the situation where the actual reality is concealed and presented as genuine or natural as "second nature" (1971a, pp. 86-87). As Johan F. Hartle demonstrates, Lukács identifies a "second nature," falsely portraying social relations as innate and unchangeable in the perceived objectivity of social facts. This objectification limits political engagement, cultivating passivity and indifference. Amidst taken-for-granted social realities, individuals perceive their worlds as beyond any intervention, influenced by the ontological fallacy of commodification or, in

Lukács' terminology of reification. Lukács refers to this state as a passive "contemplative" stance, fortifying a perception of social reality as an independent, unalterable entity (Hartle, 2017, p. 28). Within this "second nature," individuals cannot apprehend the concealed actual reality and instead direct their attention to appearances. This phenomenon becomes an indicator of the reified state of mind. Lukács asserted that the 'reified mind' acknowledged the directly observable and empiric demonstrations of economic relations and social activities as accurate representations of human connections and possibilities (1971a, p. 93). Robert Lanning clarifies that the reified mind admits the standardising surface impression of reality as an unchangeable condition, even when recognising unequal relations and limited control over living conditions. This individual lacks the competence and aptitude to conceive a complex future and codifies the existing state without critical analysis, contributing to the extension of the status quo. This suggests that reification is perceived as an inescapable state, similar to Max Weber's concept of the "iron cage of modern life." The reified mind could admit alternative potentialities but considers them practically inaccessible due to immediate needs, frequently overlooked or underestimated (2009, p. 14). Lukács asserts that reification influences both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat objectively. While bourgeois thought remains confined to experimentally verifiable, immediate categories, failing to synthesise a historical totality, the proletariat's historical understanding begins with self-awareness and a clarification of its necessity. The proletariat, confronting the barriers of immediacy, aims to transform them from the outset, intending for a comprehensive understanding of history. Unlike the bourgeoisie, which perceives itself as an independent, controlling subject, the worker's awareness of their objectivity reveals the dehumanising structure of capitalism. Lukács defines this self-realisation as an act of consciousness, eliminating the fetishist deceptions of bourgeois society (1971a, pp. 150-166). A more intricate analysis of the concept of reification will be undertaken in the forthcoming relevant section of the dissertation.

2.3. Realism and Totality in Lukácsian Perspective

In his work titled *Theory of the Novel* (1971c), written before he accepted the Marxist theory, Lukács initially expressed his thoughts on literature, particularly on the novel genre. Despite asserting the abandonment of the text following his embrace of Marxist ideology in his 1962 Preface to the book (pp. 21-22), the decision to continue its

publication has been construed as suggestive of his partial adherence to the ideas articulated therein (Cascardi, 1992, p. 611). Lukács defines the novel in the book as “the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, yet which still in terms of totality (1971c: 56). If the epic realm possesses an internal coherence where every individual action and object mirrors a self-contained totality, the novel, in contrast, mirrors the “transcendental homelessness” deep-seated in the subject of the modern, “post-epic” world. In this world, individuals are “unsheltered,” devoid of the metaphysical comfort provided by gods or access to the natural foundation of desire. Yet, despite its absence, they are bound to seek any ultimate meaning from the world itself (Cascardi, 1992, p. 607). The novel articulates the impassable division separating the individual from the community (Livingston, 1980, p. 5). Moreover, the division between literary and philosophical discourse, indicative of the absence of unified forms, signifies the subject’s fragmentation and characterises the culture of modernity as an “un-totalized” whole. (Cascardi, 1992, pp. 607-608). After embracing the Marxist ideology, Lukács sought totality in realism, initiated studies in realistic literature, and formulated his literary work based on a conceptual framework developed within the domains of *History and Class Consciousness*.

At the foundational essence of Lukács’s conception of realism resides the fundamental notion of “reflection.” Lukács’s concept of “reflection” spreads through his work, departing from the recent European novel’s “naturalism” and returning to a realist perspective that sees the novel not as a surface depiction of reality but as a more accurate, more complete, vivid, and dynamic reflection. In Lukács’s view, reflection involves devising a mental structure transposed into words, encompassing not just the consciousness of objects but a comprehension of human nature and social relationships. Lukács asserts that a correct reflection transcends mere external appearances, challenging naturalism and modernism. He renounces a purely “photographic” representation in favour of a truly realistic work that reveals the artistic necessity and comprehensive totality of images, correlating to the extensive sum of the world. Lukács highlights the importance of capturing the richness and complexity of life, suggesting a formal whole that combines the contradictions and tensions of social existence (Selden et al., 2005, p. 87). Based on this definition, Rodney Livingstone, in his introduction to Lukács’s *Essays on Realism*, compares the understandings of realism in traditional definitions and Lukács and states that realism, in this context,

differs from conventional definitions like George Eliot's aspirations to provide a truthful portrayal of individuals and circumstances as they reflect in her mind. Similarly, it circumvents Erich Auerbach's characterisation as the severe handling of everyday reality. Even though realism is supposed to meet these criteria, Lukács emphasises a vital distinction. What is perceptible is only the surface, as opposed to the profound revelation of the "driving forces" of history by great novelists, forces indistinguishable from immediate consciousness (1980, p. 12).

In a realist novel, for Lukács, the reflection of the comprehensive process is essential for accurate construction because only such a reflection can resolve the obsession with the economic and social structures of capitalist society. Through this, these structures are revealed for what they indeed are, relations between people, particularly class relations. The narrative ought not to transmute its subject matter into a fetish, nor should it reflect it as if it were unchangeable which the reportage literature does (Lukács, 1981, p. 53). Lukács explicates his conception of realism by drawing a comparative analysis with modern bourgeois literature, particularly expressionism, delineating what it is and elucidating its characteristics. Lukács contrasts expressionism, naturalism and surrealism with realism, contending that these movements focus on social appearances rather than revealing the social essence. Influenced by reified consciousness, modernist writers offer fragmented views of reality instead of a comprehensive understanding of events and characters. Lukács criticises naturalism as dehumanising and abstract. Moreover, he claims that modernist techniques, aiming for new artistic expressions, negligently fetishise the reified social surface and remain subservient to commodity fetishism. Art proclaiming radical avant-garde intent solely manifests ideological confusion and artistic frailty (le Roux, 1989, pp. 87-88). For Lukács, realist writer must meet certain requirements. They must overcome the psychological deception of capitalist work division in their depiction and move beyond the false opposition between feeling, experience, and understanding. Only by grasping the hidden, conflicted unity between emotional and rational elements can they achieve the emotional depth necessary for truly significant realist literature (1981, p. 141). He claims that contemporary bourgeois writing simply presents familiar life experiences in a technically sophisticated format, offering nothing beyond what the ordinary individual already understands. However, he maintains that literature's great social strength lies in its capacity to represent human beings

comprehensively, encompassing their complete inner and outer existence, with a concrete specificity that surpasses all other forms of reflecting objective reality (Ibid., p. 143). The realist writer articulates the truth impartially, emancipated from prejudices as illustrated in the case of Balzac, who, despite his royalist inclinations, thoroughly unveils the shortcomings and vulnerabilities of feudal France (Lukács, 1977, p. 20).

The character and characterisation assume a pivotal role as one of the fundamental components within Lukács's theoretical framework of realist literature and conceptualised under the heading of typology. The key to "typical" literary heroes is their distinction from the average or eccentric. In a technical sense, a character is typical when social forces shape their innermost being. The typical hero fully engages their personality with the life of their era. The distinction between the ordinary and the untypical is crucial in politics, where the usual opposes the exceptional and individual. However, many typical phenomena are necessary in art and literature. Unlike in science and politics, every authentic fictional character is in some way typical. What may be an individual trait in nature can become typical in its literary representation. Therefore, the dogmatic application of political concepts in art is restrictively dangerous (1971b, pp. 122-124).

In Lukács's literary theory, irony presents a disruptive force in the novel, introducing structural discontinuities. It derives from the novel's thematic duality, depicting tensions between earthly destiny and a striving consciousness. In his article "Georg Lukács's Theory of the Novel," Paul de Man summarises Lukács's application of irony. He states that the novel's thematic duality, the tension between grounded destiny and an aspiring consciousness, results in structural discontinuities. While totality seeks organic unity, estranged reality disrupts it, giving rise to both "homogenous and organic stability" and "heterogeneous and contingent discontinuity," defined by Lukács as irony. Despite its disruptive nature, the irony reveals the truth of the novel's paradoxical predicament. Lukács states that irony allows the novelist to transcend the acknowledged contingency of their condition within the work's form. By embracing irony as the novel's determining principle, Lukács liberates himself from conventional notions of the novel as a mere imitation of reality. Irony challenges this claim, promoting a conscious awareness of the gap between experience and its understanding, mediating between ideal and natural within the novel's complex paradoxical form

(1966, pp. 531-532). A more detailed examination of these concepts will be conducted in the related section of the dissertation.

Accordingly, a discerning approach will be employed in examining Lukács's oeuvre within this dissertation, prioritising elements that furnish theoretical substantiation and enhanced insights. This selective emphasis aims to contribute to the detailed exploration of relevant concepts instrumental in the comprehensive analysis of John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles*. In this respect, as the dissertation argues, the Forsyte family becomes a miniature of society within the historical and social context. It suggests a sense of "totality", as in Lukács's criticism of society and class. As summarised above, "totality" indicates an integrated understanding of society, history, and culture. These distinct aspects are interdependent and should be studied as a unified whole. Thus, literary works should be considered statements of the totality of social life mirroring the historical conditions and ideological clashes of their time (Lukács, 1977, p. 33). Hence, this dissertation will study the Forsyte family within the totality of the society, history, and culture they belong to. Moreover, the concept of totality will be integrated into Lukács's idea of realism in literature, which suggests reflecting the totality of social life and its conflicts. Lukács claims that literature should not solely illustrate exterior prospects or individual practices. Still, it should also endeavour to apprehend fundamental social structures, historical courses, and class contradictions that form society (Ibid.). Based on these assertions, the dissertation will examine John Galsworthy's realism which introduces his novel series of the Forsyte family with the fascinating portrayal of his time, balanced at the periphery of impending transformation. By combining conscientious depictions of Victorian settings with the poignant upheaval of the twentieth century, he portrays a powerful description of his era. (Durey, 2021, p. 46).

After analysing the novels within the social and historical context using Lukács's concepts of realism and totality, focusing on the Forsyte family, "class consciousness" will be examined again within Lukács's terminology. The "sense of property" that shapes the consciousness of the Forsyte family will be subjected to a detailed analysis, considering the upper-middle class's position within the production cycle, its formation, and its transformation within the historical context. The dissertation also aims to examine the objectification of individuals in the Forsyte chronicles within the framework of the concept of reification, as improved by Lukács, by basing it on Karl

Marx's idea of commodification. As detailed above, according to Lukács (1983, pp. 83-85), reification deals with the procedure by which social relations and human experiences turn into being objectified, adopting an ostensibly free and independent existence. In the series of the Forsyte family, members of the upper-middle-class Forsytes identify the people around them, their wives and children, so that they are not independent individuals but defined according to their material possessions, visibly shaping their relationship and identity accordingly. Therefore, the dissertation will discuss the "reification process" in the Forsyte family chronicles as seen in the upper-middle-class values and worldview, in which people think their material wealth gives them the right to objectify individuals around them. Finally, within the context of Marxist theory, the class conflict in England, where the Forsytes constitute the upper-middle class, will be examined in the context of the relationship between the Forsytes and the lower classes. The relationship between Soames, a family member, and his lower-class wife, Irene, will symbolise class conflict. It will be the main point of departure for the analysis, which will then be extended to the broader social sphere.

CHAPTER III

“THE TRIUMPH OF REALISM”: “SENSE OF PROPERTY” AND HISTORICAL TOTALITY IN GALSWORTHY’S THE FORSYTE CHRONICLES

As a prominent writer of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, John Galsworthy produced his works during a critical period of historical transformation (Durgun, 2024) in England at the turn of the century. This era was marked by the full development of capitalism (Greenfeld, 2001; Kocka, 2014), the distinct social consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the increasing depreciation of human life, and the bourgeoisie’s efforts to legitimise capitalist wealth and the means of production. Galsworthy perceptively observed social changes and reflected them in his literary works. His monumental work *The Forsyte Chronicles* vividly documents this “passing of an age,” offering a compelling portrait of the rise and decline of capitalism. Within the broader literary transition from Pater to Forster (Robbins, 2003), Galsworthy, in contrast to his modernist contemporaries, who turned inward to explore the subjective inner lives as characteristics of the changing novel form (Williams, 1923), directed his attention outward, examining the social realities of his time and particularly the transformations undergone by capitalist society. In line with the eighteenth-century realist traditions represented by Defoe and Fielding, Galsworthy focuses on the everyday life of the bourgeoisie but surpasses mere social observation by presenting the reader with the dialectical contradictions between historical, economic, and social forces and individual experience, thereby embodying the principles of Lukácsian realism.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that Lukács’s theory of realism in literature, particularly his emphasis on realism’s capacity to reveal social relations and historical totality, is exemplified in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, Galsworthy’s six-volume family saga comprising two trilogies that can be characterised as narratives of a period in transition. Embodying the notion of the “triumph of realism,” a concept that Lukács frequently applies with attribution to Engels, Galsworthy, writing during a time when class divisions were especially conspicuous, critically observes the upper class to which he belonged, portraying this propertied class as a source of social injustice

through a vivid and committed realism. Rather than merely documenting socio-historical facts, his literary approach enacts the Lukácsian realist literature and exposes the underlying dialectical forces that define the era. Through the genealogical structure of the Forsyte family (Zucker, 1928), Galsworthy portrays the rise and fall of capitalism and the parallel decline of British imperialism. The gradual disintegration of the family and their conception of property over three generations is depicted as reflecting wider historical processes. This critical portrayal of capitalist society and its effects on human relationships suggests that, although Galsworthy did not explicitly identify himself as a socialist, *The Forsyte Chronicles* can be read as a work written from an implicitly socialist perspective.

In line with Lukács' perception of realism, this chapter critically examines the dialectical interplay between individual, historical, and social dynamics in Galsworthy's work. To accomplish this, the analysis employs Lukács's theoretical devices of "reflection," "historical totality," and "typicality" as analytical lenses. This methodological framework will illuminate how Galsworthy's narrative constructs and reflects the complex structure of social realities within the context of his historical milieu.

3.1. Lukácsian Realism: Theoretical Framework

In order to understand Lukács's realist literary theory, it is important first to examine his understanding of Marxism and the theory of social criticism he developed accordingly in his work *History and Class Consciousness* (1971). In this seminal work, Lukács reformulates Marxism as a methodology intended to uncover the underlying connections within historical processes, contributing to a broader tradition of Marxist literary theory (Jameson, 1974, 1983; Jay, 1982). As he argues in the essay "Class Consciousness", the core of scientific Marxism lies in the recognition that the real driving forces of history operate independently of individual human consciousness, a perspective that remains central to contemporary class analysis (Berberoglu, 2007). These forces are those "set in motion great masses, whole peoples and again whole classes of the people; and which create a lasting action resulting in a great transformation" and his critical philosophy questions the seemingly natural and unchanging structures of social reality from a historical perspective, thus exposing the illusion of a "natural order" presented by the bourgeois worldview (Lukács, 1971a, p. 47). Lukács applies this historical materialist perspective to literature, arguing that

artistic forms must reflect the contradictions inherent in social reality (Jakobson, 1921, 1987; Belsey, 2002; Bloch et al., 1977). This theoretical approach forms the foundation of Lukács's realist literary theory, in which the Marxist concept of "totality" becomes a mode of realism capable of revealing the dialectical relationship between individuals and the broader social forces that shape their existence.

Georg Lukács's theory of realism in literature presents a distinctive analytical approach that differentiates it from other traditions of realist literature. Unlike conventional realist perspectives that primarily focus on mimetic representation or the creation of an authentic appearance of reality,⁹ Lukács emphasises the dialectical relationship between the individual and society, positioning literature as a medium that reveals deeper social realities, reflecting the broader interconnection between literary form and economic structures (Hadley et al., 2019). Lukács asserts that "realism" differs fundamentally from other artistic movements such as classicism, romanticism, modernism, surrealism, and symbolism. All forms of art, including various literary genres, depict social and historical context; however, modern artistic movements tend to present these contexts with greater distortion compared to realism (Antakyalıoğlu, 2013, pp. 50-51; Bentley, 2008). The innate connection between human nature and social reality strengthens the value of literary genres that efficiently illustrate the dialectical interaction between "man as an individual" and "man as a social being." Realism focuses primarily on this dialectical relationship between individuals and society, showing both the inner conflicts people experience living under capitalism and the external social tensions they face. This approach enables a detailed

⁹ In *The Rise of the Novel* (1967), Ian Watt, providing one of the most fundamental definitions of realism, associates realism with the direct description of individual experience and everyday life. Watt's approach places realism on an empirical and observational basis. For related discussions of realism theory, see also Watt & Barthes (2002). Later critics like Barthes (1989) would challenge such approaches by arguing that realism is an artificial "reality effect" rather than authentic representation. For broader context on Victorian realist tradition, see Jaffe (2016). Lukács, on the other hand, defines realism as making the historical totality of an era, its class consciousness, relations and conflicts visible in the novel form. While Lukács's theoretical framework offers a more in-depth historical analysis, this approach may seem more theoretical and can sometimes remain abstract in relation to the text.

examination of the individual experiences and social contradictions that emerge in conjunction with changing economic systems (Lukács, 1971b, p. 75). Within broader theoretical approaches to the novel (McKeon, 2000), realist literature, at its most effective, goes beyond simply reflecting the surface of reality. It becomes a powerful medium for artistically portraying and critically understanding the complex interaction between individual human experience and the historical and economic forces that shape consciousness. Lukács develops several key concepts that establish the theoretical framework of literary realism and provide analytical methods for examining literature's capacity to reveal social realities beneath the surface. In his examination of the dialectic between appearance and essence, Lukács delineates several technical devices, including "historical reflection," "totality," and "typicality," to establish novels within the realm of realist literature. Through these analytical concepts, Lukács articulates how literature accomplishes its social purpose.

3.1.1. "Historical Reflection" and "Totality"

Lukács examines the concepts of "historical reflection" and "totality" as deeply interconnected phenomena. These two notions are of fundamental importance for understanding how Lukácsian realist literature perceives and represents social reality. The concept of "historical reflection" within Lukács's framework emphasises that external reality is perceived through its reflection in human consciousness. While this epistemological principle applies broadly to all forms of apprehending reality, artistic reflection operates in a distinct manner: it transforms the contradictions between appearance and reality into an integrated whole that becomes directly perceptible within the creative domain. Lukácsian reflection is not concerned with documenting every social detail in an encyclopaedic manner, but rather with capturing essential social elements that naturally emerge through the seemingly coincidental intersections of characters' destinies (Lukács, 1977, pp. 201-203). The concept of "totality" refers to a comprehensive understanding of society not "mere sum of facts" (Lukács, 1981, p. 74), but as an organic whole governed by innate laws and developmental tendencies. As Brian J. Shaw further elaborates, "totality" encompasses not only "the extensive totality of objects," but also reveals the "invisible growth and revolutionary upheavals" of capitalist society (1988, p. 555).

The inherent relationship between "totality" and "reflection" emerges when the author profoundly experiences social processes and conveys them within the work. This

reflection is not an encyclopaedic documentation, but rather the apprehension of essential social elements that naturally integrate through the intersection of characters' destinies. As Shaw analyses, in literature, totality is achieved through what Lukács terms "genuine narration" rather than mere description, exemplified in Balzac's *Les Paysans*, where through his expert storytelling and character development, the rural property functions as a concentrated representation of the broader scope of French capitalist society (1988, p. 561). The writer must move beyond fragmented surface appearances to reveal the interconnected nature of social reality. Through this approach, even a limited narrative setting can emerge as a microcosm of broader social and economic systems. In major realist works, "totality" arises organically from the inner reality of life itself, and the artistic qualities of such works function as reflections of the social structures that the artist has personally experienced and inhabited.

In Lukácsian realist literature, "perspective" emerges as one of the main devices used by writers to achieve "totality" in their works. In his *Realism in Our Time* (1971), Lukács argues that "perspective" is the fundamental organising principle that serves structural and ethical functions in creative works. It is the primary mechanism for content selection, narrative coherence and character development, determining which elements are essential and which are incidental. The selective function reflects deeper ethical considerations embedded in the composition of the work. In addition, "perspective" is concretely related to the artist's creative process and directly contributes to the dynamism and expressive power of the literary work. The subtle yet significant connection between character portrayal and the author's perspective constitutes an important factor in determining the artistic success of a literary work. For example, although Thomas Mann was not a socialist, he maintained a critical view of the bourgeoisie in his works. This critical view of bourgeois society became his literary oeuvre's most important unifying element (1971b, pp. 33-55).

3.1.2. "Typicality"

In examining the concept of "typicality," Lukács argues that compelling literary characters emerge at the intersection of social processes and artistic vision. A "typical" character is identified by exhibiting ordinary characteristics of a period while

embodying its core, underlying social inclinations.¹⁰ Great realist writers achieve this by capturing their characters' uniqueness and social typicality. A truly "typical" character must meet three basic criteria. First, they must embody the predominant social dynamics and tensions characteristic of their historical context. Second, the character necessarily emerges from the author's profound comprehension of sociohistorical development. Third, they must embody surface-level social characteristics and the deeper, enduring human experiences and struggles that affect their society. This approach reflects Marx's fundamental notion that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (1970, p. 21). Lukács extends this materialist understanding to literary characterisation, emphasising that truly typical characters demonstrate how social conditions shape individual existence. His conception of identity as relationally fixed is critical to this understanding. In "What is Orthodox Marxism?" Lukács quotes Marx to exhibit the fundamental place of relational identity in dialectical materialism: "A negro is a negro. He only becomes a slave in certain circumstances" (as cited in Lukács, 1971a, p. 13). This radical challenge to identity as self-evident concept suggests that no identity exists outside its historical circumstances (Nadal-Melsio, 2004, p. 71). From a Lukácsian perspective, character typicality therefore represents not an essentialist categorisation but a dialectical relationship between individuals and their sociohistorical conditions. The strength of such character portrayal lies not in dissecting the author's and characters' abstract psychological depths but, in their ability, to perceive and express how social processes create similar difficulties and reflections across different individuals within society (Lukas, 1977, p. 158-166).

Accordingly, Lukács defines his theory of realism and "typicality" in response to modernity's discrepancies. While embracing everyday life and contemporary social tensions, realism distinguishes itself from naturalism by seeking to reveal life's

¹⁰ While realist critics such as Ian Watt (1967, pp. 18-20) focus on "the individuality of particular individuals in ordinary life" and psychological depth, Lukács emphasises the typical character - a figure who embodies the social totality and class dynamics of a given historical moment.

concealed essence (Tihanov, 2000, p. 28). Realist literature functions as a critical empowering force by revealing the complex relationships between social phenomena and their underlying causes in capitalist societies, thus extending beyond mere depiction to capture what is fundamental and significant. It exposes how the capitalist division of labour reifies human consciousness, often reducing individuals to “a tiny cog in a tremendous machine.” While capitalism creates an illusion of autonomy, it simultaneously reifies social relations, dividing people’s emotional and rational experiences while promoting passive acceptance of their situation (Lukács, 1981, p. 129). Therefore, artistic expression, particularly in its realist form, serves to dissolve the artificial construction that obscures genuine reality; the realist artist represents an individual who has overcome mystification and can perceive beyond surface manifestations to grasp underlying truths (Feher, 1979, p. 126). Writers constrained by capitalist division of labour often accept the fragmentation of emotion, experience, and reasoning without questioning it. As a result, they fail to perceive the underlying unity that connects these dimensions of human experiences. This lack of recognition within writers and their writing restricts their capacity to develop the deep emotional and psychological insight they need to create realistic and effective works (Lukács, 1981, p. 141). In Lukácsian realist theory of literature, the main purpose of this effort is to serve the liberation and advancement of humanity. According to him, the distinctive contribution of literature appears in its human-centred orientation, in line with Marx’s idea that understanding arises essentially from humanity. Literature uniquely comprehends the complexity of human existence, encompassing individual and collective realities, in ways that other forms of expression cannot achieve. Through its reflection of social contradictions and conflicts, as they are revealed in human consciousness, literature exposes the interconnections between these forces, providing thorough awareness of social realities even to those already familiar with such matters (Ibid., p. 143). For Lukács, realism is a fundamental literary technique as critiques of capitalism cannot be effectively conveyed through alternative methods such as expressionism, which tends to remain on the surface and ultimately reinforces the interests of capitalism.

Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Chronicles* provides fertile ground for Lukácsian analysis, particularly through its portrayal of the upper-middle class in Britain’s imperialist and capitalist periods. As a member of the bourgeois class but maintaining a critical

distance, whether viewed as “radical Edwardian or proto modernist” (Owen, 2016) or within middlebrow literary culture (Macdonald, 2011), Galsworthy’s work captures what Lukács describes as “the subjectivity of bourgeois man in the imperialist period” (Lukács, 1979, p. 104). Though Galsworthy never explicitly identified with Marxist ideology, his literary approach employs a framework remarkably compatible with Lukácsian principles. His critique emerges from his privileged position as an insider within the bourgeois class who nevertheless developed a critical consciousness toward capitalist social relations. Writing in an epoch where capitalism had begun to reify all human relations and experiences, Galsworthy’s work, while not overtly anti-capitalist, reveals distinctly socialist sensibilities through his ironic portrayal of the upper-middle class and its identity-defining “sense of property.” This Lukácsian analytical framework will guide the subsequent examination of Galsworthy’s realism, focusing particularly on three key concepts: “historical reflection,” as evidenced in his portrayal of late Victorian and Edwardian social transformation; “totality,” achieved through his depiction of the Forsyte family as a microcosm of society shaped by capitalist relations; and “typicality,” embodied in characters like old Jolyon, Soames, Irene, and Fleur who typify or resist the bourgeois “sense of property.” The analysis will specifically examine how Galsworthy articulates the dialectical relationship between individual characters and the broader social context in which they exist.

3.2. “Passing of an Age”: Historical Transformation of “Sense of Property”

In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, John Galsworthy demonstrates how the “sense of property” serves as a dynamic link between individual identity and the socio-historical ethos of the era. In this context, the “sense of property” emerges not only as a mode of existence and personal character, but also a collective identity, shaped by the materialist values of the period spanning from the Victorian era through the Edwardian age and into the early twentieth century, as well as the historical development of capitalism.¹¹ Through this approach, Galsworthy achieves historical totality in the Lukácsian sense by embedding personal narratives within a dialectical structure that reveals the formation

¹¹ For a discussion of the materialist philosophy of the Victorian period, see Workman, C.M. (1942) *Philosophy in the Forsyte Saga* (Unpublished master’s thesis). North Texas State Teachers College. Texas.

of the upper-middle class, exemplified by the Forsyte family, and its evolution over three generations. His mastery lies in linking micro-level personal conflicts with macro-level social and national changes; the Forsytes' "possessive instinct" not only shapes familial dynamics but also reflects the underlying capitalist and imperialist drives behind larger international events such as the Boer War and World War I. Rather than presenting these events directly, Galsworthy conveys Lukácsian "totality" by focusing on characters' experiences and demonstrating how broader forces affect their personal lives. Therefore, this analysis will examine Lukácsian realism in *The Chronicles* through the lens of the "sense of property," as manifested in the Forsytes' perspectives, homes, lifestyles, professions, and interpersonal relationships, particularly through their responses to and experiences of both wars. It will parallel generational shifts within the family with wider historical transformations at the turn of the century, exploring how the dissolution of the Forsyte family mirrors the decline of British imperialism and reflects changing social positions of women throughout the period.

3.2.1. The Forsyte Family and the Sense of Property

Galsworthy introduces the Forsyte family at an engagement party with a striking sentence: "Those privileged to be present at a family festival of the Forsyte have seen that charming and instructive sight - an upper middle-class family in full plumage" (1950, p. 3). This opening immediately positions the Forsytes as observable specimens; their gathering is framed as both a social occasion and a spectacle to be watched. The phrase "in full plumage" stands out as a powerful image, comparing the family to birds proudly displaying their beauty, emphasising how, in Victorian society, wealth and social status are expected to be openly displayed. Galsworthy then depicts the family's collective consciousness: "that mysterious concrete tenacity which renders a family so formidable a unit of society, so clear a reproduction of society in miniature" (Ibid.). With this remark, he emphasises that the Forsytes are not merely a group of individuals, but an organism bound by a coherent and abiding collective consciousness. By describing the family as "a clear microcosm of the whole," Galsworthy establishes a micro-macro relationship in a manner consistent with Lukácsian perspective; the Forsyte family functions as a miniature model of capitalist-imperialist British society of its time.

This engagement party functions as a narrative device through which Galsworthy introduces the materialistic values, class consciousness, and social dynamics of the upper-middle-class Forsytes while establishing the historical and cultural context of late Victorian and Edwardian England. In this scene, Galsworthy discloses various aspects of the Forsyte family and presents their attitude towards death as an important defining characteristic. The narrator ironically observes that while the Forsytes never miss celebrations such as weddings and engagements, they conspicuously avoid funerals. Through this portrayal, Galsworthy illustrates that the Forsyte family's relationship with mortality reflects their fundamentally possessive character. He depicts them as individuals so committed to life and property that they seem to reject death as essentially incompatible with their acquisitive nature and treat any danger to their existence as an unwelcome intrusion upon their possessions (1950, p. 4). Through this passage, Galsworthy vividly illustrates one of the central insights of historical materialism: that socio-economic structures shape social behaviour and the most fundamental human perceptions. In this case, the Forsytes' sense of property extends beyond material possession and becomes an integral part of their ontological being. The materialist values of the age so deeply permeate their consciousness that they transform not only the perception but the very reality of death itself.

3.2.2. Material Culture and Evolving Significance of Houses

With this perspective on death, the Forsytes focus intensely on their lives and the material world. This possession-centred attitude mirrors Galsworthy's comprehensive illustration of Victorian capitalism, which he displays not purely as an economic structure. Instead, he examines how the ownership-driven mentality of the bourgeoisie, shaped by this system, reflects itself, first in their aesthetic sensibilities, and consequently in their way of life, as well as in the houses they inhabit and the places they live.¹² Swithin Forsyte's residence demonstrates how the material possessions of the era reflect upper-middle class consciousness. Every detail revealed the aesthetic appreciation deeply rooted in families that had achieved social standing from modest

¹² For a general historical account of the relationship between places, personal property, and classes in 19th century Britain, see Green, D.R., & Owens. A (2013). For a more specific discussion of the relationship between the Forsytes and domestic space, see Nikitina, S. (2011)

backgrounds. Swithin's dislike of plain things and preference for elegant objects has established his reputation within his social circle as someone of considerable wealth, though perhaps with "somewhat luxurious taste" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 40). This aesthetic sensibility, as indicated with "somewhat luxurious taste," stems from a class-based display of wealth and a deep-rooted sense of property penetrated period. For Swithin, the certainty that anyone entering his room would instantly recognise his wealth provided him with a deep and lasting satisfaction that likely surpassed any other joy in his life (Ibid.), embodying the dialectical relationship between "superstructure" (aesthetic tastes) and the infrastructure (economic relations). Swithin's aesthetic preferences in home decoration are a result of his consciousness of his class position, his desire to reinforce and display it. On the other hand, Soames Forsyte, "the man of property," represents the evolving stage of bourgeois mindset in which ownership still functions as a status indicator, though more importantly, it evolves into a tool for capital accumulation and economic advancement. The idea of being the family member who owned a countryside estate carries little weight for him, since for a genuine Forsyte, emotional considerations, including those related to social standing, were indulgences that could only be pursued once their desire for tangible, material gains has been fulfilled (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 59). This transformation reflects the maturation of capitalist relations, and the increasing abstraction and commodification of bourgeois of the bourgeois relation to property. For Soames, a house is "a first-class investment," valued not for its aesthetic or symbolic significance, but for its proximity to Hyde Park Corner and the expectation of rising property values (Ibid., p. 58). Soames's decision to work with an innovative architect like Philip Bosinney exposes the inherent inconsistencies within his social standing. Bosinney instantly recognises Soames's real intention, perceiving that he desires a conventional, fashionable residence designed for bourgeois comfort, with servants relegated to restrictive upper quarters and architectural features that emphasise social status through elevated entrances (Ibid., p. 100). Bosinney's comment on Soames's underlying intention demonstrates that regardless of Soames's progressive efforts, he remains unable to forsake the traditional upper-class home that reinforces his class position.

Years after Soames, his daughter Fleur's home again expresses the bourgeois consciousness of a later phase of capitalism. Moving beyond Swithin's extravagant

display of wealth and Soames's investment-oriented consciousness, the home for Fleur becomes an apparatus for establishing social appearance and acquiring cultural prestige. The observation that Fleur prioritised gathering individuals in her home over acquiring furnishings or ornamental items (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 23) reveals a transition from physical belongings to social connections and cultural influence as the main indicators of social position. In the context of modern capitalism, rather than material indicators, aesthetic choices, cultural literacy, and social connections have become the determinants of status. Her performative engagement with culture, evident in her preoccupation with appearing knowledgeable about intellectual and political matters (Ibid.), reflects the abstraction of capital and its transformation into forms aligned with the knowledge economy, revealing also the extent to which status in late capitalism is mediated through symbolic and immaterial forms of capital. Through the differing attitudes toward the house across three generations, a Lukácsian perspective reveals how the objective conditions of capitalist society shape class consciousness. The progression from material ostentation to financial investment and finally to cultural performance illustrates the historical evolution of bourgeois subjectivity under capitalism. By depicting the characters' relationship with the material world, the novel provides the concrete manifestation of socio-economic conditions in everyday life and modes of consciousness.

3.2.3. Economic Activities and Occupations Across Generations

The economic landscape depicted in *The Forsyte Chronicles* and the way each generation views property differently mirrors the advancing phases of capitalism. The first generation Forsytes - old Jolyon, James, Swithin, Roger, and Timothy - represent the spirit of early industrial and mercantile capitalism.¹³ The beginning of narrative in 1886 situates this generation as self-made men who obtained their prosperity through commercial dealings, notably in trade, labour, and production rather than through aristocratic inheritance. The narrator illustrates how one Forsyte's cultivated palate led to the development of a successful tea business distinguished by its singular quality and romantic appeal (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 26). This description reveals the entrepreneurial culture of the first generation, based on concrete production and

¹³ For a historical analysis of the rise of industrial capitalism, see Beaud (2021, pp. 127-185).

international trade, during the industrial revolution and imperialist expansion. The focus on superior sensory judgement indicates that their fortune originated not from an abstract financial dealings but from actual manufacturing processes connected to physical experiences. For this generation, property corresponds to work values of early capitalism, conveying security and social position achieved through dedication and commercial sagacity. While material success and property still functioned as key indicators of upper-class status, old Jolyon's nostalgic reflections evoke a conception of wealth closely tied to labour and trade. His memories of the family business emphasise genuine commercial enterprise involving specialised maritime dealings and direct engagement with international markets, representing a form of dignity derived from authentic economic activity that he contrasts with contemporary work ethic (Ibid.).¹⁴ His understanding of ownership differs subtly from that of the next generation, which places increasing emphasis on property accumulation and investment. For old Jolyon and his brothers, property is not merely a symbol of abstract status; it is the concrete reward of personal endeavour and a guarantor of familial stability.

As the narrator remarks, "The possessive instinct never stands still" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 411). In *The Chronicles*, the second generation of Forsytes marks a change from the first generation's financial methods (characterised by a focus on labour and production during capitalism's emergence) and their understanding of property as providing security and status. According to the narrator, this transformation first manifests in England's collective possessive instinct. The narrator describes how historians will document the relatively swift evolution from satisfied provincial isolation to an increasingly assertive but geographically ambitious imperial outlook (Ibid.). In other words, there has been a transition from local capitalism to imperial capitalism,¹⁵ and in parallel with these expanding imperial policies, the individual experience and the

¹⁴ For the characteristics of the bourgeois during this period, see Sombart (2020, pp. 126-150); for its manifestation in Great Britain, see Sombart (2020, pp. 171-174). See also Weber (2005, pp.13-39) for the connection between Protestant ethics and the capitalist spirit. See also, McDowall (2006: pp. 139-154).

¹⁵ For analysis of capitalism during the period, see Beaud (2021, pp. 199-212).

characters' economic approaches have undergone significant transformation. The narrator suggests that the Forsyte family exemplifies this broader societal shift, mirroring the larger patterns of economic evolution. Furthermore, this instinct to possess transcends visible material pleasures such as luxurious homes and social status, penetrating the inner world of individuals, which demonstrates that this "possessive instinct" has been deeply internalised rather than remaining superficial (Ibid.).

The transformation within the capitalist system, shifting from production to property investment and financial speculation as the primary source of wealth, appears most clearly in the second-generation Forsyte, Soames.¹⁶ This change is concretized in his character, as the narrator describes the evolving "possessive instinct," which, for Soames, becomes an identity in itself. His identification as "the man of property" illustrates that ownership is no longer merely a pursuit but has become an extension of himself. Unlike the previous generation, Soames is entirely distanced from the figure of the producer; instead, he prospers through property dealings. Soames's continuous need to accumulate possessions acts as the individual expression of the broader acquisitive mentality, demonstrated through Britain's imperial aspirations in Africa (the Boer War). Following his financial objectives he collects "silver, ... pictures...houses... investments" (Galsworthy, 1950, p.70). To ensure his continuity, he marries a young woman who could give him a son after leaving his first wife whom he had considered as his property, thus reinforcing his dedication to accumulation in both material and symbolic ways.

At the culmination of the possessive instinct, Soames's economic outlook and investment philosophy reflect the solid foundations of his business practices, as seen in his professional reputation as a man of "natural taciturnity" and a "safe man" (Galsworthy, 1950, pp. 161-162). His character integrates traditional values, personal habits, education, and natural caution to create his strong professional reputation. This moral foundation resists corruption because it is based on an inherent reluctance to

¹⁶ Smith (1997/1998, pp. 136-137) analyses Soames's economic activities and the period's understanding of capitalism through the capitalist behaviour that Galsworthy refers to as *Forsyteism*.

take financial risks (Ibid.). This characteristic emphasis on security and reluctance to risk mirrors Britain's self-assured imperial expansion and reveals the bourgeois confidence that assumes a natural claim to any environment it enters. Just as Britain steadily extended its sphere of global dominance, Soames approaches the value of property with similar conviction. When these values are threatened, without the certainty of property's worth, he loses his sense of direction and finds himself lost in turbulent circumstances with no guidance (Ibid., p. 249), demonstrating how the possessive instinct has evolved from a purely economic strategy into an existential compass for the second generation.

With the transition from the second generation Forsytes to the third generation, during a period marked by the aftermath of the Boer War and the First World War, economic activities within the Forsyte family encounter a substantial change, formed partially through the extensive growth of the capitalist framework. The generation of the bourgeois family, embodied in Fleur, represents the final stage of the capitalist evolution - a shift from production to investment and ultimately consumption, which defines her economic outlook and perspective.¹⁷ While Fleur seemingly serves the "god of Progress," she is preoccupied with elevating her social standing and securing her position within society through the mechanisms of a new consumer culture, paying merely conventional tribute to societal advancement (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 300). Accordingly, her approach to economic reality is no longer centred on production or investment but focuses entirely on consumption and status maintenance. Sustained by family fortune, her generation sees wealth not as a vehicle for production or investment but primarily as an instrument of consumption. Fleur's "salon" and social engagements serve as the foundation of her economic activity as she instinctively understands the requirements for managing her social (Ibid., p. 301). Her habit of gathering individuals instead of furnishings and decorative objects (Ibid., p. 24) in that "salon" vividly illustrates the reification of relationships. This transformation observed in bourgeois

¹⁷ For an analysis of the transformation of the "possessive instinct" of Forsytes from material accumulation to consumerism, particularly Fleur's consumerist mindset, see Hulburt (2015, pp.104-107). See also Gagnier (2000, pp. 2-4), for a discussion of the broader economic shift from the classical model of "economic man" as a producer to one centred on consumption.

consciousness marks a progression from the reification of labour to the reification of social relations and individuals. Beginning its course with production and investment, bourgeois consciousness has, through its instinct for possession, objectified the people around it, with relationships inevitably bearing the consequences of this reification. Fleur engages in collecting people and experiences; she consumes rather than contributes, while simultaneously endeavoring to ensure her material ease continues forward. She formulates this perspective through the traditional paradox of wanting to enjoy benefits while preserving them indefinitely, a contradictory principle that she sees as fundamental to all political movements (Ibid., p. 300). While Fleur pursues sustaining the culture of consumption, she is also determined to preserve the source of that consumption, her inherited wealth, motivated primarily by a desire to ensure her son Kit's future. At the same time, Galsworthy criticizes Fleur, who embodies the final generation of the bourgeois Forsyte family as portrayed in the novels and who remains essentially dissatisfied despite her birthright of wealth and access to numerous advantages and privileges. Galsworthy presents this dissatisfaction as the psychological cost of the transition from producer to consumer. As capitalism has reached its final stage in this historical progression, the novels equally examine significant questions and complications surrounding the concept of worth in modern life. The development of consumer capitalism at the turn of the century has created central concerns regarding value and self-worth that transcend traditional social and political paradigms (Trotter, 1993, p. 49). Fleur's character vividly embodies this sense of unease; her inclination to gather people and experiences rather than to produce any form of value reveals the reification of human relations in the context of late capitalism. The transformation of wider economic relations epitomized in this evolution of the Forsyte family over the generations reflects the broader social changes that took place under the impact of the Boer War and finally culminated in the First World War.

3.2.4. The Boer War

The Boer War (1899-1902), occurring during a period of imperial anxiety about racial and national decline (Prior, 2013), is a critical juncture in *The Chronicles*, destabilizing Victorian conventional narratives about imperial supremacy and growth. Exemplifying the "triumph of realism," Galsworthy surpasses the ideological

boundaries of his bourgeois background in portraying the Boer War, as the conflict's socio-political climate fundamentally influences the critical stance of his narrative and *The Chronicles*. Essentially, he enunciates the motivation underlying his writing as “the ferment roused in my spirit by the Boer War and to a simmering revolt against the shibboleths of my home, my school, and my college” (as cited in Barker, 1963, p. 89). Accordingly, The Boer War in *The Forsyte Chronicles* appears as an indirect yet crucial historical backdrop Galsworthy adopts to highlight class dynamics and moral transformations in British society. Instead of explicitly detailing the conflict, he applies it as a viewpoint to examine the Forsyte family's capitalist mentality and ethical contradictions. In *In Chancery* (1920), the second book of the first trilogy, Galsworthy emphasises how this capitalist mindset of the Forsytes transcends class boundaries to manifest in national policy during the Boer War.¹⁸ The narrator characterises the period as a swift transformation from self-satisfied regional separateness to an even more confident but dominating imperial mindset, describing this shift as the nation's acquisitive drive in motion (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 411). This transformation reflects the shift from domestic “sense of property” into expansionist imperial ideology.

Soames, known as “the man of property,” embodies the upper-middle-class's materialist and imperialist values with his support for the Boer War. Soames's imperialist mentality becomes apparent in his reaction to Madame Lamotte's plea for justice and autonomy. Dismissing her humanitarian appeals, he asserts that the Boers lack full civilisation and obstruct progress, insisting that British sovereignty must be maintained (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 492). The “white man's burden”¹⁹ ideology he conveys here mirrors the underlying reasoning of Victorian British imperialism. For Soames, the Boers represent a backward people obstructing “progress” on land that, in his view, rightfully belong to imperial interests rather than to them. His pointless attempt at moderation, “We must be firm without bullying” (Ibid.), is quickly contradicted as he proceeds to displaying his art collection, demonstrating how both colonialism and art express his essential drive to possess and dominate. Soames's

¹⁸ For the relationship between the Boer War and the disintegration of imperial capitalism, see Beaud (2021, pp. 227-239).

¹⁹ See Beaud (2021, p. 207).

reaction upon reading the newspaper announcement of the outbreak of the war reveals his possessive instinct on both imperial and personal levels. Upon encountering the press bulletin announcing Kruger's ultimatum and the declaration of war, his initial response reflects confidence in British superiority, viewing the Boer resistance as self-destructive, while his immediate subsequent concern shifts to protecting his financial investments (*ibid.*, p. 504). This passage obviously demonstrates the link between imperial ideology and the economic interests of the bourgeoisie. While Soames describes the Boers' resistance in defence of their land as self-destructive, his immediate second thought focuses on the impact of the war on his own finances. Moreover, in demonstrating what Lukács terms the unity of socio-historical forces and individual fate, the interchange of personal and political conflict becomes evident in Soames's reaction to the news. When buying another paper near his club, he encounters a headline reporting the Boers' rejecting of British sovereignty. His immediate response reveals how his possessive instinct extends from personal to imperial politics, as he draws a parallel between the Boer's rejection of British authority and Irene's defiance, insisting that his right of ownership remain intact in both contexts (*Ibid.*, p. 500). Soames mentally correlates the Boers' rejection of British authority with his battle to divorce Irene, whom he has tried to possess as a property. This moment demonstrates that Soames's preoccupation with possession at both imperial and personal levels.

Although Galsworthy primarily addresses the Boer War through the perspective of the second-generation Forsytes, primarily Soames, he also incorporates the views of other generations to illustrate both the ideological continuities and rifts across generations. While Soames supports Britain's imperial expansion, James Forsyte, a first-generation Forsyte whose intense possessive instinct epitomizes the family's materialism, views the Boer War primarily through considerations of property and financial gain, even in his declining years. For James, the war is being conducted without proper respect for property by "that rascally Radical" Chamberlain. Defining the period as "an extravagant age," he views the imperial expenditures on the Boer War as improper, particularly unsettling at a time when "the family was breaking up" (Galsworthy, 1950, pp. 482-483). The third generation, Jolly, Holly, and Val, do not adopt either the first generation's paradigm of economic efficiency or the second generation's perspective of imperial ambition in their attitudes toward the war. Making a distinct departure from

their parents' value systems, they actively engage in the war. Although young Jolyon admires his son's decision to join the front, he admits that he could not have done the same, acknowledging his inherent Forsyte characteristics and suggesting that these family traits become progressively weakened across successive generations (Ibid., p. 604). However, upon learning that his children enlisted in the war merely out of personal rivalry, he revises his opinion and concludes that this revelation illuminates the confusion he had been experiencing, recognising that his children ultimately embody the fundamental Forsyte characteristics (Ibid., p. 649). In this context, within the framework of the dialectical relationship between social-historical forces and individual destiny, the third generation continues to maintain the bourgeois identity in different forms despite changing historical conditions. More importantly, their impulsive enlistment in the war for personal reasons, concluded in Jolly's death, powerfully emphasises Galsworthy's critique of war's futility.

Critics describe the Boer War as a crucial point in Britain's shift toward modernity and regard Galsworthy as among the prominent authors who documented these transformations. For Edwardian intellectuals, essential conflicts marked the post-Boer period. While the war substantially weakened Britain's moral and military authority, it also paved the way for liberation from the constraints of the Victorian era (Gindin, 1987, p. 118). In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, the Boer War further foreshadows the First World War. While the Boer conflict fundamentally alters perceptions of British imperial power, the subsequent Great War, portrayed through the third generation in the second trilogy, reshapes the broader social landscape depicted in *The Chronicles*.

3.2.5. World War I and Its Aftermath

The societal changes begun by the Boer War, involving the decline of imperial identity beyond Britain and bourgeois identity within, increased following the death of Queen Victoria, which constituted the symbolic close of an age and came to a head in the chaos of the First World War. In this context, the narrator, through the death of the Queen, ironically emphasises the Victorian era's materialism and class structure, highlighting how the upper class had reached such a position of privilege that even the laws served their interests: With the death of the Queen, the atmosphere of the world's greatest city was heavy with unexpressed grief. Her sixty-four-year reign had favoured the interests of property and securely positioned the upper-middle class, improving and promoting it to the point where it became nearly indistinguishable from the

nobility in terms of manners, morals, language, appearance, habits, and spirit. It was an age that had so glorified individual freedom that those with wealth enjoyed liberty both in principle and practice, while those without means were free only in theory. This era had sanctified pretence, establishing a society where the hypocrisy was sufficient to be considered respectable (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 688). The narrator captures a complete epoch within this passage, stressing, with cynicism, the virtue connected to insincerity during this era. However, with the death of the Queen, the property-based order begins to destabilize, and a growing sense of anxiety takes hold among the bourgeoisie. As a representative figure of the era, Soames articulates with remarkable clarity his unease and awareness that their time is coming to an end. Standing in the crowd with Annette, Soames senses that “Yes! The Age was passing!” The rise of labour politics, foreign influences, and a changing social atmosphere fill him with unease. Like James, he fears that with Edward’s reign, the security of “good old Vicky’s” era is permanently lost (Ibid., p. 690). Soames’s anxieties reveal that property relations are beginning to change, the established order that sustained his class is disintegrating, and the hegemonic position of the bourgeoisie is subject to rising challenges. His concerns that the lower classes desire to claim their possessions reflect the bourgeois consciousness of emerging class conflict, while also indicating that the lower classes are beginning to question the inequalities in the distribution of property and wealth.

Soames’s anxieties seem to have been realised in the aftermath of the First World War. Galsworthy depicts the effects of the war again not through direct reference to the conflict itself, but rather through individual experiences and by illustrating the evolving concept of property and the transformation of social structures accelerated through technological progress. Essentially, the “sense of property” undergoes a significant transformation, and Soames is acutely deeply aware that the very essence of ownership is under threat. He recognises that the traditional Forsyte era of unchallenged masculine dominance over personal, financial, and domestic spheres has ended, replaced by a reality where governmental authority controls investments, women assert independence, and even personal identity becomes questionable. This shift represents the dissolution of what he perceives as a rational and straightforward belief system (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 1041). Galsworthy clearly articulates the relationship between Soames’s state of mind here and broader social changes,

providing the “totality” paradigm. The rise of Labour emerges as a cause of great concern for Soames and his class, and he expresses this concern about governmental control over his financial holdings. He again remembers the changing social position of women, with the new developments and the property rights they have gained, regretting that women now possess autonomy over themselves. While witnessing the irreversible dissolution of the old order, the bourgeoisie seems to lament its diminishing hegemonic control. Michael describes the change in the “possessive instinct” within the third generation by maintaining that a notable transformation is approaching, since the material-oriented principle is ending (Ibid., p. 987). For Soames, still, this idea is entirely inadmissible: “some nonsense about the possessive instinct - shuts up - To let? Silly!” (Ibid., p. 988). When Michael highlights the younger generation’s differing perception of property, Soames insists “Human nature doesn’t change,” thereby continuing to defend the “possessive instinct,” which has become defining notion of his identity. By suggesting that the possessive instinct is, in fact, “increasing those who have none” (Ibid., p. 992) he alludes to his apprehension regarding the rise of the Labour Party and his reaction to the working class’s demands for economic and social equality.

As Michael mentioned, in the third generation, the property relations and values are subjected to fundamental transformations. Fleur’s generation has moved away from the property-oriented rigidity of the Victorian era to a more flexible, consumerist, self-oriented perception and related lifestyle. The existential anxiety and loss of faith, characteristic of the post-war generation, are embodied in Fleur’s expression of profound skepticism toward people and institutions, questioning the very possibility of maintaining belief in anything substantial (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 151). Her husband, Michael, too, is one of the characters who consistently embodies and articulates the sense of meaninglessness and emptiness that characterises the post-war social milieu. Michael expresses the spiritual emptiness of his generation, observing that despite their quickness and confidence, they are restless and dissatisfied, having discarded traditional sources of meaning without establishing new ones (Ibid., p. 222). As Michael’s words clearly demonstrate that a significant change has taken place, and the traditional value system has been dismantled, but individual characters who lack a clear purpose are left alone to confront the chaos of the modern era. The certainties and solid foundations once provided by the Victorian attachment to property have

collapsed with the war, giving way to uncertainty and emptiness, in other words, to disorder. As Lukács theorizes, bourgeois consciousness and ideology are the product of specific historical conditions, and that as these conditions change, the conception of property inevitably becomes subjected to a shift and thus transforms the self-definition and class identity of the bourgeoisie.

While the bourgeois class faces a feeling of purposelessness, the working-class strives for survival amid the challenging economic atmosphere of post-war England. Galsworthy, who predominantly omitted the working classes from the initial trilogy, apparently includes them in his second trilogy situated in the post-war era; he examines their circumstances, struggles, and connections with the middle class thoroughly. Through this narrative evolution, Galsworthy mirrors the actual historical transformation of British society: just as the Victorian era privileged the bourgeoisie both socially and economically, the post-war period witnessed the emergence of working-class voices through labour unions and the rise of the Labour Party. Galsworthy reflects the changing social and economic landscape by giving the lower classes a voice in the second trilogy, which he overlooked in the first. The prominence of the working class emerges as another indicator of the transformation of the period. Through his detailed portrayal of the Bicket family's daily struggles in the narrative, he emphasises the difficulties faced by the working class, and this adapts his literary narrative to social change.

Tony Bicket's theft of some books to sell for his ailing wife powerfully illustrates the desperation of the working class. His subsequent acknowledgment to Michael that while he understands the rational basis of moral arguments, logical principles become irrelevant when facing desperate poverty and survival concerns (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 64), vividly demonstrates the weakness of their condition. His remark concerning the impact of pneumonia on those in poverty (Ibid.) depicts the hardship following his wife Victorine's illness, sheds light on the problem of unemployment and poverty in England after the war. The Bicket family's dream of escaping to Australia serves as a

poignant reflection of the collective sense of despair and disillusionment that permeated post-war British society.²⁰

Through the narrative of three generations of the Forsyte family, Galsworthy portrays the transformation of English society from Victorian imperialism and rigid class structures to post-war disillusionment, adopting a dialectical approach to the individual and collective shifts in the “sense of property.” Thorough contrasting the Bicket family’s quest for survival with the Forsytes’ existential uncertainties, Galsworthy succeeds in capturing the Lukácsian notion of historical totality. This broad portrayal enables an exploration of how individual characters embody these historical changes through the principle of “typicality,” as they simultaneously reflect wider social conditions while maintaining their personal depth.

3.3. The Typicality of Forsyte Characters: Individual Representations of Social Process

While scholars have analysed Forsyte characters from various critical perspectives (Varadharajan & Krishnamurthy, 2012), the Lukácsian concept of “typicality” offers an insightful framework for analysing the characters in Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Chronicles*. In the *Preface* to the first trilogy, Galsworthy himself defines his characters as substantiating “the typicality of that' upper-class 'species” (Galsworthy, 1950: iv). This approach to typicality becomes particularly evident when young Jolyon defines Forsytes through their relationship to property, asserting that a Forsyte type is “a man who is decidedly more than less a slave of property” (Ibid., p. 221). He identifies their distinctive traits as their firm attachment to their wives, their houses, their money, or their reputation (Ibid.). When Bosinney asks why he perceives his own people as a type, young Jolyon responds by identifying two fundamental characteristics that define the Forsyte nature: their inability to commit themselves completely to any cause or relationship, and their obsessive concern with ownership and material possession (Ibid., p. 222). Taking these definitions into account, this section will examine how selected characters from the three generations of the Forsyte

²⁰ For a more detailed analysis of the Bicket family and the conditions of the working class, see Chapter V of this dissertation, the section titled “Manifestation of Economic Exploitation: The Material Deprivation of the Bicket Family.”

family serve as typical representatives of their social conditions and historical developments. It will explore characters such as old Jolyon, Soames, Irene, and Fleur, not just as individual personalities but as reflections of wider social transformations. The analysis will also explore the shifts in women's social roles through the typicality of Irene and Fleur's characters.

3.3.1. Old Jolyon as Typical Victorian Bourgeois

In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, the first generation Forsyte, old Jolyon, stands as a typical representative of Victorian bourgeois values, embodying the principles of property acquisition, strict social conventions, the ethic of hard work, and, accordingly, contempt for idleness. As Christopher Caudwell notes, the late Victorian period saw the strengthening of bourgeois culture, in which property rights, previously limited under feudalism, became institutionalized through constitutional systems (1970, pp. 61-68). This transformation cultivated a social order defined by possessive instinct and a conservative attachment to material wealth, characteristics old Jolyon embodies as the ultimate typical figure of his generation. Galsworthy portrays old Jolyon as a leading figure who embodies values of his family and social status. He appears as someone distinguished by his appearance, restraint, and attachment to material possessions (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 38). Defined by his physical posture, which embodies family, society, and the ideologies associated with them, he represents a collective formation beyond individual traits. His representation of balanced conduct, structured society, and material devotion symbolizes Victorian stability and the persistence of bourgeois values. His perception of the world is filtered through material value: sitting in his heavily furnished study, he muses that even his possessions will appreciate in worth after his death (Ibid., p. 23). This approach influences human connections; old Jolyon holds that individuals cannot pursue affection without giving something in exchange (Ibid., p. 92).

While old Jolyon disapproves of the more property-obsessed members of his class by characterising them as "chattering hags and jackanapes" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 91) and questions the rigidity of his class conventions, he remains deeply attached to those very norms. The most telling example of this is his years-long refusal to visit his son, whom the family had made an outcast for falling in love with a woman from a lower class and abandoning his former life. When old Jolyon finally decides to reunite with his son, he finds himself confronting the challenge of transgressing societal

expectations. His desire to see his son again stems both from pragmatic concerns regarding his business and from a genuine longing for his son. This duality reveals that while old Jolyon conforms closely to Forsyte identity and typicality, he also embodies the capacity for human attachment that still existed among the first generation Forsytes. Through these internal conflicts, old Jolyon emerges as a typical figure of Victorian bourgeois ideology - a character deeply committed to property yet at the same time aware of the repressive effects of that commitment.

3.3.2. Soames as “The Man of Property”

As old Jolyon epitomizes the first generation of Forsyte typicality, his nephew Soames similarly yet more intensely embodies these attitudes in the second generation. Explicitly identified as “the man of property” (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 132), Soames’s character thoroughly corresponds to Andre Chevrillon’s portrait of the nineteenth-century English upper-middle class. According to this portrayal, the upper-middle class is characterised by invincible vitality, “taciturn pride,” “irreducible egotism,” and a significant “passion for property.” Their mindset is distinguished by an inclination to measure everything through financial value, an “open contempt for ideas,” and a notable combination of “jealous individualism” with “superstitious respect for conventions” (Chevrillon, 1923, pp. 161-162). Galsworthy portrays Soames as a product of the late Victorian era and his class, demonstrating all these traits and representing a typical figure that embodies the prevailing values and sensibilities. The widespread preoccupation with property- evident both in Britain’s domestic materialism and its imperialist expansion, finds an individual expression in Soames’s identity as “the man of property” (Gold, 1964).

Beyond merely exemplifying Victorian possessiveness, Soames functions as a guardian of social and moral codes, personifying Victorian morality itself. This moral self-justification is particularly evident in his marriage to Irene. Despite her deep unhappiness and desire for liberation from their marriage, he justifies himself through selective self-perception: he does not drink, get into debt, gamble, swear, act violently, have wild friends, or stay out late; on the contrary, he behaves quite the opposite (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 56). Soames has so thoroughly internalised the moral codes and social conventions of his time that he is unable to comprehend Irene’s feeling as an individual. Guided by his bourgeois false consciousness, he believes in the supposed naturalness and necessity of these social norms, and therefore expects Irene to be

content and accepting, as would be expected from a woman in her position. However, in doing so, as Lukács's concept of reification suggests, Soames does not recognise Irene as a human being but rather diminishes her to a commodity for acquisition. Irene, in contrast, is aware of the alienation that arises from this process of reification, and she engages in a silent resistance. Soames believes that he can overcome Irene's resistance because he perceives himself as aligning with the norms of the period in both his personal characteristics and professional life, and as the most typical representative of the period's professional principles. This conviction of his adherence to social norms sustains his sense of entitlement and superiority in dealing with Irene. He felt confident, molded by conventional values, routine practices, and instinctive prudence, which together created an enduring moral foundation that resisted corruption through his natural inclination to avoid uncertainty. How could he fail when his essence refused the circumstances that would enable a decline, one cannot drop below ground level! (Ibid., pp. 161-162).

This unshakable self-confidence, the conviction from strict adherence to tradition, appears as a problem in adapting to the rapidly changing society around him. Following the First World War, Soames's possessive drives need to adjust to changing economic conditions. In *To Let*, he surveys the loosened morals and financial instability of the post-war world with unease, reaffirming his belief in property as the ultimate safeguard. Soames places his trust in what he considers practical British wisdom, which he equates with the capacity to acquire and maintain material possessions (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 900). He becomes a typical embodiment of preservation in this swiftly changing world, severely adhering to past values. When Timothy Forsyte, the last of the first generation, dies, Soames finds himself alone at the funeral, bearing the burden of being the last custodian of Forsyteism. He feels as though the family's drive has disappeared, with their possessive instinct fading away. The [third] generation seems incapable of making money; they turn to art, literature, farming, or the military, or simply survive off what remains. They lack ambition and perseverance. If they do not act, they will vanish (Ibid., p. 1039). Contemplating the Highgate Cemetery, Soames reflects on the end of the era. He ponders the decline of the Forsyte period, a time when a man had complete control over his soul, his assets, and his wife, without any challenge or doubt (Ibid.). Like an embodiment of investment itself, he rejects fighting against the tide of change that intimidates

Victorian values, property rights, and traditional morals. Instead, with his primitive instinct as a “possessive animal,” he trusts that the raging waters will eventually subside, and new forms will emerge based on “an instinct older than the fever of change—the instinct of Home” (Ibid., p. 1041).

3.3.3. Irene: Resistance and Transformation

Galsworthy portrays Irene as both a typical character who represents the period’s expectations of women and a bearer of historical conflict and the potential for transformation. Irene is not only a product of the Victorian-Edwardian era but also a figure who resists the restrictive structures of her time. Her relationship with Soames most strikingly exemplifies this tension. Soames’s attempt to exercise the “rights of possession” he believes marriage has granted him reveals how this institution could operate as a mechanism of cruelty toward women. Soames’s belief in his entitlement to own Irene by means of marriage, along with his frustration that this ownership extends only to her physical being and not her emotions (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 70), serves as a typical illustration of how Victorian marriage functions as a property transfer system where women are legally passed from father to husband, losing most of their individual rights in the process.

Irene’s silent resistance, however, transforms her from a mere type representing the norms of her time into a historical agent. She remains consistently silent, passive, and politely distant, seemingly fearful that any word, gesture, or expression might indicate to him that she holds feelings for him (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 70). What seems to be ordinary feminine passivity is, in fact, a calculated weapon of silent disobedience. This resistance becomes explicit in her direct challenge to Victorian marriage conventions when she declares, “yes; it was a crime to marry” (Ibid., p. 499). By describing her marriage as a “crime,” Irene expresses a profound rejection of the values of her time. Her refusal to return to Soames with the assertion “I would rather die” (Ibid., p. 544) and her insistence that “I will not give myself again to a man I hate” (Ibid., p. 641) further demonstrate how her personal feelings are elevated above social conventions and material comfort.

What Irene rebels against is basically Soames’s erasure of her humanity through the means of reification. Soames frequently refers to Irene as his property, depicts her as a trapped bird pressing her delicate plumage against the confines of her enclosure

(Galsworthy, 1950, p. 348) and denies her individuality and reduces her to an object to be owned. By escaping from this cage and reification, Irene demonstrates will and initiative, a transformation that Soames acknowledges when he observes that she has undergone a spiritual awakening, displaying a greater depth, with a sense of activity and courage replacing the pure passive resistance that once characterised her (Ibid., p. 497).

What further establishes Irene as a typical character is how her personal conflict illustrates wider historical transitions. Her journey from object to subject parallels the changing status of women in the early twentieth century, particularly after the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, which enabled married women to liberate themselves from the complete legal control of their husbands and become independent owners of property. Beyond merely reflecting this legal transformation, Irene's character embodies the fundamental tension between property and personality, traditional Victorian norms, and emerging female autonomy. Through Irene, Galsworthy establishes an emblematic portrayal of women in a rapidly shifting society.

3.3.4. Fleur: The Modern Bourgeois Woman

As a representative of the third generation of the Forsytes, Fleur embodies Lukácsian typicality by exemplifying three key aspects of her period: the persistence of the Forsytean sense of property in the modern bourgeoisie, the emergence of the liberated woman of the 1920s with her embrace of consumerism, and the subjective bourgeois consciousness grappling with the contradictions of post-war British society. Particularly, Fleur most effectively embodies the crisis in the bourgeois consciousness of her time; this crisis is particularly evident in the tension between the Forsytean sense of property and the desire for individual freedom. This conflict reflects the specific historical reality of the period and contrasts sharply with the Victorian mentality of her father, Soames.

The period in which Fleur lives is perceptively characterised by her father-in-law, Sir Lawrence Mont, who observes that all that had once been ostentatious, grand, or principled had vanished, leaving behind only aestheticism confined to small circles and minor figures, without far-sighted perspectives, great plans, major principles, or significant achievements in religion or art (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 22). Within this atmosphere, her inability to find meaning beneath material life is seen in her ever-

changing surroundings, the shift from a Chinese-style living room to a gold and silver decorative scheme reveals not only changing taste, but also an attempt to fill an inner void through material ostentation. This inner emptiness also manifests itself in her emotional life through her inability to form deep attachments, simultaneously maintaining affection for her husband while retaining feelings for a poet yet still experiencing more profound emotional attachment to another figure from her past. What Fleur seeks to attain is the ideal of modern woman freedom epitomized by the socialite Marjorie Ferrar, who claims that a woman's aim is to fulfil multiple roles simultaneously, excelling as a spouse in one relationship, as a lover in another, and as a parent in a third context (Ibid., p. 143). However, for Fleur, this ideal remains unattainable because she is not modern enough, and bourgeois traditions have, to some extent, become embedded in her identity. Her legal conflict with Marjorie reveals how morality itself has become commodified within the broader social transformation of women.²¹ Despite winning her legal case against Marjorie on moral grounds, Fleur faces rejection by society, which paradoxically demonstrates that society itself no longer functions within Victorian moral conventions although the legal system still functions based on bourgeois moral principles. Following this rejection, Fleur, who was "born with a silver spoon in her mouth" (Ibid., p. 346), retreats into global travel, a move that signifies the ultimate bourgeois strategy of escaping from social crisis. This response to her social predicament reveals her fundamental character dilemma. Caught between her efforts to embody modernity and her inability to break free from traditional bourgeois codes, Fleur becomes a typical figure who fully represents the uncertainties and ambivalence of her era, embodying the tension between the rising new woman and the persistent Victorian moral structure.

Fleur's struggle to embrace modernity manifests not only in her emotional relationships and social competitions but also finds expression in the material conditions of daily life. Galsworthy's realist approach captures this transformation

²¹ The legal conflict between Fleur and Marjorie - stemming from Marjorie's public humiliation of Fleur and the ensuing defamation lawsuit - highlights the transformation of moral values and female identity within high-society. This episode is depicted in *The Silver Spoon* (Galsworthy, 1926/1967), the second novel of *A Modern Comedy* trilogy. See especially pp. 469-552.

through the changing consumer practices of Fleur's generation, which her father Soames scornfully terms "ribbandry," referring to women's bewildering and constant shopping activities (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 772). Through Soames's disapproving gaze, these modern women, including his daughter Fleur, are perceived as displaying casual postures and revealing clothing that offend his traditional sensibilities, whose modern expressions stand in stark contrast to Victorian women who possessed proper social conduct, moral principles, and respect for historical continuity and future generations (Ibid., p. 790). These changing appearances and behaviours reflect a deeper transformation in values and aspirations. The emerging individualism that Fleur typifies becomes connected to consumer choices and material freedoms, as women of her generation prioritise self-ownership over traditional family roles, seeking independence that allows for luxuries like motorcars while limiting childbearing (Ibid., p. 414). Soames's observation that his daughter Fleur would behave frivolously and restlessly like most young women of the post-war era (Ibid., p. 750) concretely illustrates through her character how post-war women's increased mobility and public presence intertwined with both social progress and the expansion of consumer culture.

3.4. Conclusion

This section examined John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles*, comprising the trilogies *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy*, within the framework of Lukácsian realist literary theory. Within the context of the rise and decline of capitalism, it analysed the lives of the Forsyte family members as representatives of the upper-middle class across three generations. This examination employed a selective approach by focusing on Lukács's concepts of "historical reflection," "totality," and "typicality" to frame the analysis. Thus, this chapter illustrates Galsworthy's successful portrayal of the Forsyte family as a "miniature" of society, thereby capturing the evolution of English society from the Victorian period through the aftermath of the First World War.

Throughout the novels, Galsworthy constructed his narrative around the theme of "the sense of property," integrating characters' individual experiences and historical events in accordance with Lukácsian concept of "totality." From old Jolyon's capitalism grounded in production and trade to Soames's focus on property investment and financial speculation, and finally to Fleur's embrace of consumer culture, the story reflects the developmental stages of British capitalism. Although each generation

expressed it differently, from production to investment to consumption, the “possessive instinct” that Galsworthy describes as continuously evolving remained the essence of bourgeois identity throughout the narrative. Galsworthy portrays this continuity and transformation through his technique of indirect narration. Rather than directly describing historical events such as the Boer War and First World War, he achieves a Lukácsian totality by revealing their significant effects on the characters’ identities and lives.

Galsworthy’s development as a satirist (Pallette, 1959) enabled his critical attitude toward his own class. His objective and at times penetrating critique of the class’s sense of property, fulfils one of the key qualities of realist literature that Lukács refers to as “triumph of realism.” Through his character portrayals, Galsworthy critically examines these class values by exposing their destructive effects on human relationships. Irene’s silent resistance to the process of reification and Fleur’s entrapment between postwar meaninglessness, modernity, and the bourgeois codes she was raised with emerge as individual expressions of broader social conflicts.

Although Galsworthy rejected being labelled as a socialist and claimed not to be part of any political formation, his portrayal of the internal disintegration of the bourgeois class as the manifestation of capitalist contradictions demonstrates the “triumph of realism” while suggesting that he wrote from an implicitly socialist perspective. Beyond being merely a family saga, *The Forsyte Chronicles* offers a penetrating analysis of capitalism’s rise, maturation and social consequences. In this respect the work stands as a successful example of realism as Lukács defines it: the exposure of how broader social and historical forces dialectically interact with and transform individual lives, identities, relationships, and everyday experiences. In conclusion, Galsworthy’s work demonstrates the potential of literary realism to understand social reality and develop a critical consciousness by showing the complex relationship between individual experiences, identities and wider historical processes. While showing how “the sense of property” shapes and transforms human relationships, *The Forsyte Chronicles* presents a profound understanding of capitalist society

CHAPTER IV

PROPERTY AND CLASS: THE FORSYTE FAMILY CONSCIOUSNESS IN GALSWORTHY'S CHRONICLES

This chapter aims to analyse the Forsyte family in John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles* as a representation of upper-middle-class consciousness in late Victorian society, with particular focus on the "sense of property" as a defining characteristic of class identity. While preceding chapter examined realism in *The Chronicles* through Lukácsian theories of realist literature, this chapter addresses the ideological foundations of the Forsyte consciousness, particularly regarding class consciousness and reification processes. The central argument presented here is that the Forsytes' acquisitive relationship with material and immaterial property functions as the fundamental organising principle of their worldview and social existence. The chapter explores the following questions: What structural features of bourgeois class consciousness are revealed through the notion of property? In what ways has the sense of property evolved across three generations of the Forsyte family? How is the process of reification manifested in the relationship between Soames and Irene?

The methodological approach of this analysis adopts both sociological aspects, such as the Forsytes' social position, class structure, and economic relations, and philosophical dimensions, including characters' consciousness, understanding of existence, and definitions of identity. Therefore, the analysis will proceed as follows: first, Lukácsian concepts of class consciousness and reification will be summarised. Subsequently, this theoretical framework will be applied comparatively, starting with the class consciousness of the first-generation Forsytes and extending to the changing class consciousness of the third generation, focusing on two main characters from each generation. The generational changes in this property-oriented class consciousness reflect the evolving nature of capitalist values. Beginning with old Jolyon's entrepreneurial attitude as one of the early capitalists, it progresses through Soames's subtle possessiveness. It extends to the consumer-driven relationship with materialism in the younger generation. Lukács makes an interesting observation about *The Forsyte Saga*: "It is no coincidence that novels depicting the collapse of capitalism through the

downfall of the capitalist family emerged in many countries. Thomas Mann wrote *Buddenbrooks*, and Galsworthy wrote *The Forsyte Saga*” (Lukács, 1987, p. 322). The significance of *The Forsyte Chronicles* lies in its portrayal of how economic structures influence relationships and how class identity is formed. The chapter’s final section will explore the reification process in human relationships, as illustrated in the relationship between Soames and Irene, through the perspective of property-oriented class consciousness.

4.1. Lukács’s Theory of Class Consciousness as an Analytical Framework

Although the essential role of class analyses in social theories remains a topic of discussion among critics in the field today, the norms of class consciousness in Victorian-era literature continue to provide valuable perception about identity formation and collective behaviour in modern society. The Forsyte family’s moral compass, formed by property relations, concerns about social hierarchy, and way of life, maintains relevancy in consumer behaviours, educational inclinations, and social interactions of today’s upper-middle-class families. Notably, the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital and its generational transmission continues despite changes in form from the Victorian era to the present. To analyse the class consciousness structure constructed by the social position of the Forsyte family, it is necessary to outline Lukács’s theory of class consciousness and examine its approach to the bourgeoisie class consciousness and identity.

Georg Lukács develops the Marxist conceptions of class and class consciousness through a more comprehensive theoretical framework, extending beyond the rigid economic determinism found in core Marxist analysis. Traditional Marxist theory maintains that social stratification emerges from individuals’ role in productive processes (Lukács, 1971a, p. 46). That is, in Marxist theory, class formation is grounded in the assumption of a shared class condition, defined primarily by a common relationship of functional private property, a similar socio-economic standing, and a coordinated behavioral patterns driven by “objective interest” (Dahrendorf, 1959, p. 24). However, Lukács, in his influential work *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), outlines class consciousness, in its general terms, as the reflection of a class’s historical circumstances, which relates directly to his theories of realist literature discussed in the previous chapter, as well as its economic position, regardless of the psychological state or actual awareness of its individual members.

This sense of consciousness emerges from a class's objective position within the economic framework and its connection to the entirety of society. For Lukács, genuine class consciousness is not determined by people's opinions regarding their social circumstances, but by their ability to understand their historical position and material conditions, beyond mere emotional responses or psychological states. Lukács frames class consciousness as the dialectical connection between "objective possibilities" embedded in social production and their expression within human awareness. As he enunciates, class consciousness fundamentally comprises the logical responses attributed to specific roles within the production system (1971a, p. 51). From this viewpoint, class consciousness transcends the psychological conditions of individuals or social groups, instead representing the subjective exhibition of an objective social status. Nevertheless, individuals' subjective manifestation is not simply an automatic replication of their observations; rather, it constitutes the objective economic potentials of the social classes expressed at the consciousness level of the individuals who comprise that class. Through this mechanism, classes develop the ability to operate according to their objective material interests. However, this ability does not consistently reach complete realisation, since diverse historical and societal influences form the connection between subjective consciousness and objective circumstances. Consequently, in its fullest definition, class consciousness or identity²² represents historically formed patterns of thinking, social connections, and their concrete expressions; in other words, it constitutes a shared comprehension that transcends personal awareness, mirroring a class's position and historical importance (Ibid., p. 47).

As Lukács notes, Marx frames consciousness as essentially bound to historical development, arising from historical dynamics rather than existing autonomously. Consequently, understanding class and class identity, particularly bourgeois class identity, is deeply connected to the historical conditions under which consciousness is

²² For a discussion on class consciousness and class identity being used with the same meaning, see Eidlin, B. (2014). Class formation and class identity: Birth, death, and possibilities for renewal. *Sociology Compass*, 8(8), 1045-1060; also see Nadal-Melsio, S. (2004). Georg Lukács: Magnus Realismus? *Diacritics*, 34(2), pp.71-83.

formed, since the transforming productive relationships fundamentally constitute class consciousness. This phenomenon not only highlights the importance Lukács places on the historical context in his framing of class consciousness but also reveals the tendency of the bourgeois to ignore historical transformation and developments and to take existing social relations and class distinctions as natural laws. During this naturalisation mechanism, capitalist structures are viewed as eternal and immutable, comparable to natural laws (Lukács, 1971a, pp. 49-77).

In contrast to its portrayal as a natural occurrence, classes, and consequently class identity, have been historically constructed through capitalism's evolution. In pre-capitalist societies, class relations were not immediately discernible within society and demanded clarification through historical materialist analysis. Throughout this period, economic interests were hidden beneath ideological concerns.²³ With capitalism's rise, class relations developed into a recognisable feature of historical and social existence, as economic motivations emerged as the fundamental catalyst of historical transformation. These changes enable individuals to develop a clear awareness of class dynamics and their societal consequences, a comprehension that remains unavailable in pre-capitalist societies (Lukács, 1971a, p. 58). In a capitalist context, where class structures are manifestly recognisable, production occupies a central position. However, capitalists focus more on capital expansion than on production itself. This creates one of the essential contradictions of the capitalist; although capital significantly impacts social structures, it is driven by the personal objectives of capital owners. Capitalists are oriented towards profit and accumulation and repudiate or disregard broader social consequences (Ibid., pp. 62-67).

According to Lucien Goldmann, Marx's definition of capitalism maintains its essential validity, and capital continues to be central to analysing capitalist society. However, historical and social transformations have led to an evolution in the conceptualisation of capitalism, which Goldmann consequently categorises into three distinct phases:

²³ For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Lukács, G. (1971a). *History and Class Consciousness*. While class relations in feudal societies were "masked" by religious, cultural, and traditional elements, in capitalism, these economic relations become more exposed and visible. See specifically pp. 55-59 for this comparison.

liberal, imperialist, and organised capitalism. The imperialist period after liberal capitalism is defined by the rise of monopolies and trusts, instabilities in a market economy, successive economic and social crises, world wars, and the Great Depression. The final phase, organised capitalism, or consumer capitalism is marked by state interventions and regulatory mechanisms. Goldmann asserts that “imperialist capitalism” encompasses the modern era, based on the observed persistence and intensification of imperialist traits (Goldmann, 1971, pp. 78-79). In describing capitalism, addressing its transformation and historical phases is essential for comprehending the generational changes within the Forsyte family. Here, only the conceptual framework of capitalism is concisely outlined; the transformation of generations and the resulting evolution of class consciousness will be examined in detail in the following sections.

As previously mentioned, the basis of this class division originates in the ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie is the class that holds ownership of the means of production and thereby controls economic power. Historically, the formation of the bourgeoisie appeared during the transition from feudal society to capitalist society, with the increasing concentration of trade and the means of production in the hands of a privileged group. In particular, the transformation of property relations and capital acquisition played a key role in the bourgeoisie's development.²⁴

Property provides the leading determinant of class formation and social transformation. Within bourgeoisie society, property signifies the private ownership of the means of production, empowering a minority to exercise control over the public wealth. This dynamic enables the conversion of social power into the power of private individuals. The hegemony of the bourgeois class is grounded in property acquisition and capital growth, both dependent on wage labour. Consequently, the relationship between capital and wage labour, as well as between the bourgeoisie and the

²⁴ A more comprehensive examination of this process can be found in David McDowall's *An Illustrated History of Britain*, pp.139-148. See also Neale, R.S. (1968). Class and class-consciousness in Early Nineteenth-century England: Three classes or five? *Victorian Studies*, 12(1), pp.4-27.

proletariat, can be systematically examined through the framework of private property ownership (Dahrendorf, 1959, p. 12).²⁵

Economic consciousness serves as the fundamental basis for bourgeois class consciousness, which develops through their connection to property ownership. Bourgeois thought is limited to the perspective of the individual capitalist when analysing economic life, creating conflict between individual and class interests, and making any logical, theoretical, and practical solutions to problems of capitalism unattainable. The principal contradiction of the bourgeoisie prevails in the necessity of resolving its class interests in every specific issue, while this very consciousness becomes destructive when considering societal totality. Bourgeois rule, in its practical application, manifests as a rule of the minority and serves its interests. As a result, to maintain its power, the ruling class misleads other classes and ensures the uncertainty of their class consciousness (Lukács, 1971a, pp. 59-66). On the contrary, in essence, it is the bourgeoisie class that reveals an inability to generate historical and self-consciousness. The bourgeoisie achieves its class character by integrating various forms of privilege into its mode of existence, thereby forming itself as the class that represents all segments of society. However, the bourgeoisie cannot exceed itself as a class since its existence requires the structural servitude of the proletariat (Meszaros, 1971, pp. 108-109). That is, the bourgeoisie cannot comprehend the true nature of history and its own historically contingent position since that level of understanding would delegitimise and destabilise their position as a social class. However, its blindness and stagnation extend beyond this; it also uncritically accepts the reality of appearances and the “thing-in-itself” without questioning them (Graham, 1986, pp. 46). This blindness and stagnation constitute a direct manifestation of the phenomenon of “false consciousness,” a central concept in Lukács’s theoretical framework.

²⁵ On the determinant role of property in class formation, see Caudwell, C. (1970). *Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature*, pp.38-39. Princeton University Press. Caudwell notes that the bourgeois triumphed over feudalism by replacing direct authority with property rights, concealing social relations through monetary transactions. See also Rogers. A.K. (1917). Class consciousness. *International Journal of Ethics*, 27(3), 338-341.

“False consciousness” is one of the concepts at the centre of Lukács’s theoretical framework. This concept refers to the misperception of a class’s own objective reality, of social and economic conditions, the wider social environment, and relationship with this environment. Especially prevalent in bourgeois thinking, “false consciousness” masks the historical and transformable nature of social relationships, presenting them as inherent and unchanging arrangements instead. In this process, social ties, essentially products of human labour, are regarded as autonomous and governed by objective laws similar to natural phenomena. This ideological mystification constitutes a significant obstacle to social transformation, obscuring the possibility of change. In addition, this illusion is essentially linked to the reification of social relations (Lukács, 1971a, p. 54).

4.1.1. Reification and the Bourgeois Consciousness

The concept of reification, originally developed by Lukács, and reconsidered in contemporary scholarship (Thomson, 2011), is rooted in Marx’s idea of commodity fetishism to illuminate the essential aspects of modern capitalist society. As Lukács himself said, the commodity question should not be examined separately or merely viewed as an economic concern, but rather as the fundamental organisational issue permeating all dimensions of capitalist society. Only through this comprehensive approach can commodity relationship provide a framework for understanding both the material structures of bourgeoisie and their related forms of consciousness (1971a, p. 83). In analysing Marx’s account of commodity fetishism from *Capital*’s first volume, which Lukacs also draws upon, Marx argues that commodities appear enigmatic because the social nature of human work presents itself as an intrinsic quality of the goods themselves. The connection between workers and their shared labour is not recognised as an immediate social bond among people but rather as a link between the objects they produce. As a result, labour’s outputs acquire commodity characteristics. Ultimately, human social relationships transform into materialised forms that appear as autonomous exchanges between things²⁶ (Marx, 1867/2013, p. 47). In Marx’s

²⁶ For details on the process of commodity fetishism, see Marx, K. (1867/2013). *Capital*. pp. 17-62. Moreover, for details on the relationship between commodity fetishism and reification, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

account, the crucial element that Lukács considers vital for comprehending reification theory is that human work transforms into an autonomous and material force, which, through its alienation from the person, starts to control them. According to Lukács's examination of reification, two primary dimensions, objective and subjective, emerge, reflecting the evolution of Lukács's subject-object dialectic (Wei, 2020). From an objective standpoint, material goods and economic processes take on a self-governing existence, operating according to principles that, while identifiable, appear to people as external powers they cannot influence. From a subjective perspective, within a mature capitalist system, human work becomes estranged, transforming into a marketable product that functions autonomously from people, governed by the cold impersonality of social structures (Lukács, 1971a, p. 87).

Through its material and personal dimensions, reification is expressed in two primary areas of social existence: the objectification of human relationships and the framework of market capitalism.²⁷ In the context of the reification of human relations, the mechanism begins with the reification of consciousness. Lukács maintains that reified consciousness treats commodities as the independent reflection of social life and displays no tendency to surpass this condition. As capitalism continually sustains itself at higher levels, reification becomes more firmly embedded in human consciousness. Rather than altering this condition, reified consciousness endeavours to reinforce it through the appearance of objective examination. Therefore, the links connecting individuals to their work potential and outputs disintegrate, producing a mechanised and disconnected social framework (Lukács, 1971a, p. 13).

In their work *In The Social Construction of Reality* (1991), Berger and Luckmann refer to Lukács's notion of the "reified mind" as the transformation of identity or the entire self into reified forms. The writers characterise this phenomenon as the individual's confinement or diminishment of themselves to a defined identity. This condition manifests in the following manner: individuals claim they lack alternatives and must behave according to their social position, whether as a spouse, parent, military leader,

²⁷ The detailed account of the reification that emerges as a result of workers' alienation from their labour and its product within the market capitalism can be found in Lukács, G. (1971). *History and Class Consciousness* (pp. 87-89). MIT Press.

religious authority, corporate executive, criminal, or executioner (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 108). As often mentioned in the descriptions presented by Berger and Luckmann and Lukács, a reified identity considers the socially built “second nature” forced on it as unalterable, rendering it incapable to perceive the potential or requirement to transcend its existing circumstances. When consciousness and identity are reified, human relationships inescapably alter through this process. Lukács characterises this process as substituting theoretical and material frameworks for direct human connections in capitalist society. Once viewed as “natural” and organic, social relationships are reorganised based on market rationality. Individuals stop connecting with one another directly, engaging instead through reified social mechanisms. This change brings about the disintegration and atomisation of social reality, as interpersonal ties weaken and are supplanted by distant, calculable associations. As a result, it becomes increasingly more problematic for individuals to see one another in the completeness of their identity, as social interactions gradually assume an automatic and functional character (Lukács, 1971a, p. 91).

Within these objectified social relationships, Lukács examines how bourgeois consciousness relates to the reification process and argues that it serves simultaneously as the source and outcome of reification. In capitalist system, this consciousness grasps reality in a compartmentalised, systematic, and automated fashion, understanding social relationships through commodity exchange frameworks. This viewpoint treats social processes as natural, thereby hiding their historical development. Through the economic, scientific, and juridical frameworks it establishes, bourgeois consciousness cannot comprehend the social whole, recognising only separate, rationalised pieces. The increasing division of labour within capitalist systems strengthens this fragmented worldview. As a result, bourgeois consciousness treats social relationships not as products of human activity, but as phenomena controlled by external, inherent powers that operate independently of human agency. This reified consciousness hinders individuals from recognising possibilities for transforming social structures, portraying the existing capitalist order as unavoidable and eternal (Lukács, 1971a, pp. 93, 109-110). Lukács’s theoretical framework, whose relevance continues in contemporary analysis of late capitalism (Smulewicz-Zucker, 2020), provides an insightful perspective for analysing the transformation of the class consciousness of the Forsythe family across generations.

4.2. The Forsyte Class Consciousness: Property as Expression of Identity

Before delving into the class consciousness of the first generation of Forsytes in detail, Galsworthy prefers to draw a general social portrait that reveals the collective consciousness of the English upper-middle class using the Forsytes and their standing in society. He asserts that people who have the occasion to view a Forsyte family meeting encounter a striking and instructive exhibition, “an upper middle-class family in full plumage” (1950, p. 3). However, anyone among these observers who possesses analytical insight has experienced a phenomenon that is “illustrative of an obscure human problem” (Ibid.). Through this portrayal, Galsworthy establishes the narrative by highlighting the contradictory existence between the English upper class’s self-consciousness and the reality of their existence. On the one hand, they exhibit a confident sense of class pride, based on an intense awareness of their privileged position “in full plumage;” on the other hand, beneath this extravagant presentation lies a hidden “obscure human problem,” perceptible through a contemplative and critical eye. The discrepancy between the upper class’s view of themselves and their actual nature is highlighted in the conflict between the polished and distinguished appearance presented by the Forsytes and the capitalist, ownership-oriented worldview that insightful observation would recognise. Indeed, in Galsworthy’s work, the Forsyte family demonstrates how a group lacking mutual affection or genuine understanding can still maintain an inexplicable but powerful cohesion that makes such units influential forces within society, serving as concentrated reflections of the broader social order (1950, p. 3). This characterisation, which presents the Forsyte family as a “miniature” of capitalist society (Ibid.), reveals the fundamental aspect of bourgeois class consciousness of the period. Despite lacking compassion and empathy, their inexplicable solidarity remarks on class identity founded on the principle of possession. Their portrayal as a powerful social force reinforces the superior role of the upper class, while their representation as a concentrated version of society demonstrates that property-oriented relationships among the Forsytes reflect broader class structures, thereby representing the innate contradiction of capitalism on a smaller scale.

From a broader perspective, the Forsytes embody a consciousness shaped by the internalisation of the “objective possibilities” afforded by capitalist modes of production, wherein economic and social conditions driven by capital and property

accumulation play a determinative role. Through young Jolyon, whom he presents as his self-representative, Galsworthy demonstrates in his general observations about the Forsyte identity that their consciousness, within the existing economic and social conditions, embodies the materialist outlook of the period. Thus, Forsyte identity can be defined “by their sense of property. A Forsyte takes a practical view of things, and a practical view of things is based fundamentally on a sense of property” (1950, p. 221). As the definition explicitly indicates, from the perspective of Lukácsian class consciousness, the Forsyte, representing the bourgeois subject, grounds their ontological existence and epistemological framework entirely in property. The structuring of their practical worldview around property exemplifies how capitalist modes of production shape and reify consciousness. Moreover, as in the ideological illusion that Lukács criticizes within capitalist societies, the Forsytes tend to present the social order to which they belong as a natural law, an unchangeable principle. As Galsworthy demonstrates, the Forsytes exhibit the characteristic behaviour of their social circle by imposing what they perceive as their legitimate claims over individuals, compelling compliance and transferring their commercial mentality into intimate relationships (Ibid., p. 219). Accordingly, the Forsytes apply the logic controlling the commercial sphere to their personal connections. They act as if this is the natural order of things, never questioning it, for to them, it constitutes “their rights over a man” (Ibid.). The Forsytes believe that the rights they have established must be universal, as they perceive their wealth and security as the foundation of society. In other words, they consider all aspects of society as stemming from their existence and influence, as exemplified in the argument that their material prosperity and stability enable the development of culture, intellectual pursuits, and spiritual practices. Despite their lack of genuine appreciation for these domains, their practical utilization of such endeavours positions them as essential intermediaries and foundational elements of social order, representing all that deserves respect and admiration (Ibid., p. 222). This perspective serves as a literary illustration of another fundamental feature of bourgeois ideology, the strategy of universalising class interests. In line with Lukács’s analysis of bourgeois ideology, the Forsytes present their economic interest and values as essential and necessary for society as a whole, thereby legitimizing their own class position. Consequently, the Forsytes perceive themselves as “They are half England, and the better half, too, the safe half, the three per cent half, the half that counts” (Ibid.). This “half” is not limited to the Forsytes alone. As young Jolyon remarks, the Forsyte

personality represents a prevalent pattern: he observes that this kind of person can be found in large numbers within their social club, walking the streets, and met in all locations (Ibid., p. 221). The first-generation members of the Forsyte family concretely embody this prevailing bourgeois mentality in their characters and behavioural patterns.

4.2.1. First Generation: Security and Identity as Property

The first generation of Forsytes symbolises the rising commercial bourgeoisie of Victorian England amidst the growing influence of capitalism.²⁸ In *Forsyte Saga*, old Jolyon, James, Swithin, Nicholas, and Roger are portrayed as individuals who have acquired wealth through trade and real estate, making property acquisition their governing principle. Without an aristocratic lineage, they ascended the social ladder through dedication and commercial insight, embodying Victorian values.²⁹ As illustrated through old Jolyon's portrayal as "the champion of moderation, order, and love of property" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 38), this generation considered property not merely as material wealth but as a symbol of social status and security. However, within Lukács's framework of collective consciousness, although this first generation shares a common understanding of property, differences in their relationship with property and its impact on their identities become apparent.

Old Jolyon serves as a characteristic depiction of the first generation Forsytes, representing the rising bourgeoisie in Victorian England and their class identity. Displaying a commanding presence and maintaining an air of being above the uncertainties and prejudices of inferior individuals (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 6), he exemplifies the confident bourgeois principles of his time. His personality plainly

²⁸ For the historical context of the rise of the bourgeois class, see Rogers, A.K. (1917). Class consciousness. *International Journal of Ethics*, 27(3), 338-341. See also Thomson, D. (1961). *England in the nineteenth century: 1815-1914*. Penguin Books. For further analysis of historical transition, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

²⁹ For an analysis of the historical transformation of the bourgeoisie, see Sombart, W. (2020). *Burjuva [The Bourgeois]*. Doğu Batu Yayınları. See especially the chapters on "Burjuva Zihniyeti" (pp. 126-150) and "Kapitalist Zihniyetin Kaynakları" (pp. 225-295).

reveals the Victorian upper-middle class work values:³⁰ He had devoted himself fully to that company! People truly laboured during that era! These young people barely grasped the concept of hard work. He had examined every aspect, knew all the operations, and frequently stayed up all night managing it (Ibid., p. 26). His commitment to his work not only secured his financial prosperity as a Forsyte but also reflected the industrious Victorian ethos that distinguished his generation from the later generation of Forsytes, who simply benefited from the privileges of inherited wealth. His attitude toward June's fiancé Bosinney, who maintains detachment from values of property, further reveals his Victorian work ethics and his class consciousness. He has no intention of providing June with substantial funds that would allow someone he barely knows to survive without working. He has witnessed such situations before and understands they always end badly (Ibid., p. 25).

Although he considers himself different from the rest of the Forsytes, whom he describes as "a cranky lot" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 46), he remains equally constrained by and committed to his class identity. His devotion to class values is conspicuous in his separation from his son, young Jolyon, for fourteen years, as he strives to conform to social expectations. Despite his contempt for "Society," those he describes as gossiping busybodies and foolish individuals who presume to judge his family (Ibid., p. 91), and of which James and his son appear as typical examples (Ibid., p. 289), he still complies with these very social norms. His attachment to class identity emerges when he visits his son's neighbourhood. These modest dwellings are all aged and poor-quality buildings cause him indescribable distress to consider that a Forsyte, especially his son, lives in such conditions (Ibid., p. 86). As the incident suggests, as a member of the bourgeoisie with a strong sense of class consciousness, old Jolyon demonstrates concerns that extend beyond individual worry and include the whole Forsyte family and social stratum. The phrase "a Forsyte" underlines collective class identity rather than individual identity. For old Jolyon, his son's living in an inferior neighbourhood is not just an individual disappointment but constitutes a violation of class division and

³⁰ For a discussion on bourgeois work ethics, see Sombart (2020, pp.147-149). See also Weber, M. (1992/2005). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Routledge. Especially the chapter "The Spirit of Capitalism" (pp. 13-38).

a divergence from bourgeois ideals. Furthermore, this illustrates the bourgeoisie's estrangement from environments and ways of life beyond their circle, viewing interaction with them as a type of social degradation.

Furthermore, his rivalry with his brother James and his nephew Soames, whom he names as "the man of property," manifests as a power dynamic centred on ownership. After purchasing Robin Hill, the house Soames had built for Irene through Bosinney, an estate that became the subject of extensive family gossip and ultimately contributed to Bosinney's tragic fate, old Jolyon felt he had achieved a triumph over both James and his nephew Soames, believing he had finally put an end to their interference in his personal matters (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 288). While constituting a significant personal achievement for old Jolyon, this sense of triumph, at the same time, illustrates the profound lack of unity within the Forsyte family members, expressing the internal control mechanisms of the bourgeois class it embodies and the struggle for social position shaped by property ownership. Therefore, old Jolyon embodies the very essence of the Victorian bourgeoisie, who attained power and status through material wealth, exemplifying the dialectical relationship between objective position and subjective consciousness.

James Forsyte, a second-generation Forsyte, young Jolyon depicts as "the perfect specimen of a Forsyte. His sense of property is extreme" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 221), is portrayed in the novel as the other representative figure of the first-generation Forsytes and a concrete embodiment of the rising English bourgeoisie. While Galsworthy characterises old Jolyon as a kind of "historical subject," allowing him the ability to step beyond his class position, critically evaluate it, and question excessive materialism, he consciously withholds these aspects from his brother James Forsyte. James is portrayed as a character with basic clarity, evidently exemplifying the very essence of the bourgeoisie; he functions as the complete embodiment of "false consciousness." Although he maintains a similar connection with property and material wealth as his brother, old Jolyon, this connection is significantly more evident in his example. His determined obsession with material wealth, which prevails until his very end, demonstrates the narrow confines of bourgeois consciousness.

In the opening pages of the *Chronicles*, during June's engagement ceremony, James's comment on Bosinney explicitly reveals James's bourgeois value system. Based on what he can gather, the man [Bosinney] appears to possess no trade, earn no money,

and have no significant social ties; however, he admits his knowledge is limited since no one shares information with him (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 12). In his judgement, an individual's social value is constructed through symbols of financial status and social connections. His association with money creates the essential foundation of his identity. This materialist perspective manifests even in his everyday discourse. His reaction to June's idea of settling in the countryside demonstrates his underlying value system through his dismissive questioning of the practical worth of fresh air (Ibid., p. 50). For James, things without monetary value are devoid of underlying significance, like fresh air. James accuses June of not understanding the value of money. Furthermore, when June declares she has no desire to learn such values, James becomes even more disturbed, as he perceives this as a direct threat to his material worldview, financial security, and investment rights (Ibid.). Having spent fifty-four years in legal practice, maintaining investments at consistently profitable and secure rates while conducting all negotiations through financial calculations of life's relationships, James has developed a worldview centred entirely on monetary considerations. Money has become his guiding principle and interpretive framework, without which he cannot truly perceive or understand reality (Ibid., p. 51). In this context, his dismissive categorization of individuals lacking business credentials, income, or valuable social connections (Ibid., p.12) functions as an internalised embodiment of capitalist value judgements. At the same time, the complaint "nobody tells me anything" (Ibid.) reveals James's main existential anxiety, the fear of losing his property. This fear sustains his constant need for control, as exclusion from information, for James, indicates being susceptible to possible financial risks. As the *Chronicles* progress, James regularly reproduces this anxiety over property and control. These deeply rooted materialist leanings emerge throughout the novel through specific instances. James's response to the Boer War is demonstrative, as he expresses concern about potential imperial fragmentation and collapse. This geopolitical distress was instantly replaced by reflections on government securities trading at 116 (Ibid., p. 450), exemplifying how imperial events are primarily viewed as financial threats. As illustrated by this example, for James, major social and political issues attain significance solely to the degree they affect his private financial stability.

As a representative of a historically specific class, James's consciousness demonstrates a marked inclination toward the reification of social relations. His reactions are

constructed through capitalist exchange principles, reducing concrete relationships to the level of abstract exchange value. This perspective is reflected in his obsession with wills, which he regards as the ultimate transaction involving property, representing a complete catalog of an individual's possessions and the definitive measure of their monetary value (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 286). Accordingly, hereditary anxieties accentuate the transformation of family into commodity; his distress about his unknown future and his hope for a grandson to continue his family line (Ibid., p. 539) demonstrates that heritage is degraded to another form of property requiring protection. His tendency to reify the people and relationships around him mirrors the limitations of bourgeois consciousness, which functions within a fragmented reality. This perspective, by classifying interpersonal relationships based on economic value, status and property, fails to perceive their dialectical relationships or their integrity within a comprehensive social totality.

This epistemological framework is especially evident in his reaction to the crisis in Soames's marriage; his opposition to a scandal does not drive from moral concerns but rather from his class consciousness to safeguard the family as a form of wealth, he fears that public disgrace would harm Soames's standing and future (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 273). James's concern about damage to Soames's reputation highlights that his leading distress is neither Soames's emotional well-being nor the marriage itself but rather the potential scandal's threat to the Forsyte family's social standing and economic value. Therefore, in all its expressions, James's consciousness embodies the structural framework of Victorian bourgeois class ideology. Standing as an individual mirror of collective class identity, his perspective remains confined to the parameters of property preservation and social capital management - an exemplification of a class position that perceives social reality merely through the prism of economic value.

The property-based worldview represented by the first generation is not merely an individual attitude but a reflection of the expanding capitalist order. During this period, Britain's social and economic framework experienced a substantial transformation near the end of the nineteenth century. This process intensified markedly in the early twentieth century, directly affecting the lives and viewpoints of the second generation Forsytes. Although imperial expansion, new phases of industrialisation, and shifting cultural values led to certain changes in the class consciousness of the second-generation Forsytes, it remained fundamentally centred on property.

4.2.2. Second Generation Forsytes: The Persistent Sense of Property in an Age of Social Transformation

Soames Forsyte, the symbolic figure of the second generation Forsyte in Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles*, embodies bourgeois class consciousness driven by the compulsion of ownership. Within Lukács's conception of class consciousness, Soames does not exist as an independent character but as the embodiment of the "objective possibility" of the Victorian and Edwardian bourgeoisie. Within the historical and social conditions of imperial late Victorian and Edwardian England,³¹ he illustrates the bourgeoisie's range of activity, its influence in shaping social movements, and the institutional leanings it might present. Galsworthy therefore presents Soames as a "typical" character, constructed by and manifesting the conditions that define his class. From Aunt Ann's early appreciation of him as "a sure trustee of the family soul" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 16) to his struggle to save his picture gallery from a fire in the final volume, Soames Forsyte's persistent presence establishes him as a living symbol of the English bourgeoisie's historical evolution and intellectual system, centred on their possessive instinct. This tenacious instinct of possession reveals even more firmly in Soames than it did in old Jolyon, who occasionally had moments of self-doubt about his social standing, while Soames never experiences such questioning. The difference reveals how their class's defining commercial wisdom evolved between generations. Galsworthy describes this shift as the evolution from complacent regional insularity to an even more assertive but expansive imperial mentality, noting that possessive impulses continuously evolve according to developmental principles even within families that consider themselves permanently established (Ibid., p. 411), as exemplified in the extreme case of Soames Forsyte.

Soames typifies the culmination of bourgeois class consciousness, wherein the sense of possession surpasses a sheer social tendency and becomes an innate aspect of identity. In contrast to his predecessor, old Jolyon, whose rare reflective moments

³¹ For an analysis of the historical context of Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain during the imperial period, which forms the backdrop for the second generation of Forsytes, see Thomson, D. (1961). *England in the nineteenth century: 1815-1914*. Penguin Books; see also Hobsbawm, E. (1989). *The age of empire: 1875-1914*. Vintage Books.

permitted insights exceeding ownership dynamics, Soames represents the thorough personification of capitalist values as an unquestioned natural order. Throughout *The Forsyte Chronicles*, Galsworthy diverges from the indirect narrative technique he employs for other characters, particularly for Soames's first wife, Irene, and instead depicts Soames through direct characterisation. This narrative strategy not only depicts Soames's character with increased accuracy but also acts as a systematic critique of the values and institutions of the Victorian upper class. To illustrate, Galsworthy explicitly establishes the significance of property for Soames, describing how uncertainty about material values leaves him disoriented and vulnerable. Like a ship lost at sea without proper navigation (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 249). This portrayal represents the essential basis of his reality, property is not merely a collection of possessions but the framework that gives purpose to his existence. Consequently, his class consciousness is formed through this perspective, leading to his conclusive declaration: "Of course, class is everything, really" (Ibid., p. 697). This brief remark reflects his social outlook as a member of the second generation of the bourgeois Forsyte family, for whom consciousness of social standing constitutes a fundamental quality. This possession-oriented class identity spread through every sphere of Soames's life, forming his personal and social relationships, perception of society and social classes, and worldview. It determines his viewpoint on legal constructs, moral principles, and artistic appreciation, along with his stance in historical and social conflicts.

The possessive instinct that characterises Soames's identity is significantly apparent in his relationships with women, particularly his first (Irene) and second wife (Annette). Throughout the *Chronicles*, this attribute is analysed extensively, not only in the context of his interactions with Irene and Annette but also as a reflection of his broader approach to social stratification, especially his perception of the lower classes through his attitudes towards these women. The primary conflict in Soames's relationship with Irene drives from his failure to assert ownership over her, as he does with his other possessions. While he experiences a private and profound satisfaction from his material acquisitions including his valuables, artworks, properties, and financial holdings, he receives no such fulfilment from his relationship with her (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 70). This mindset clearly exposes that Soames regards women as commodities, comparable to his other valuables since it also aligns with the

principles of ownership embedded in his class consciousness. He believed that having wed, dominated, and claimed this woman as his property, it violated fundamental principles of ownership that his control extended only to her physical being rather than her complete self (Ibid.). Soames's inability to establish ownership over her compels him to find reassurance in her financial dependence: "he reflected that Irene had no money... [she was a] beggar. This gave him a strange satisfaction" (Ibid., p. 254). This feeling of contentment indicates that Soames's mindset is primarily built upon financial principles. His gratification with Irene's financial subordination reflects an artificial self-perception, a "false consciousness" grounded in dominance through ownership. Moreover, this dynamic not only places him within the shared ideology of his class, as his father, James Forsyte who also judges people by their material assets, but additionally permits him to use financial authority as an instrument of dominance, despite his emotional connection to his wife.

Irene confronts this dynamic of possession through silence and emotional detachment. Galsworthy does not reveal her standpoint directly; instead, her character is formed through the people surrounding her, mostly through Soames's understanding. However, her silence can be interpreted as a form of subdued defiance. Soames expresses his exasperation by stating that only physical punishment would make her see reason (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 251), but even this intimidation fails to compromise Irene's emotional strength. When faced with her defiance, Soames's concept of the possessive authority becomes ineffectual, situating this crisis of ownership at the core of his identity conflict. (Examined in subsequent sections.)

Following almost twelve years of struggle to regain Irene, or at least to have a son, Soames finally obtains a divorce, yet his second marriage is similarly ruled by the same "sense of property." As a typical representative of English bourgeois class consciousness, Annette serves fundamentally as a means to ensure an heir for him (preferably male). Despite the significant age gap between them, Soames views this marriage purely as a financial arrangement, completely convinced that his wealth will secure Annette's acceptance of his proposal. Soames's pursuit of Annette is driven utterly by economic calculation. He regards his fortune as a persuasive element, believing that Madame Lamotte would not refuse such a prospect for her daughter; Annette would have no choice but to comply with her mother's decisions (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 491). The underlying reason for this calculated method is Soames's longing

to have an heir. His assertions, such as “I want a son” (Ibid., p. 454) and his belief that a son from Irene would have prevented his current pursuit of other women (Ibid., p. 523), clearly disclose the pragmatic purpose he attaches to his second marriage. Moreover, his remark that if he possessed a son, he could continue living as before, since all women are essentially replaceable (Ibid.) again demonstrates his perception of women not as individual subjects but as exchangeable commodities.

For Soames Forsyte, art becomes reduced to merchandise, entering his life mainly through its commercial worth rather than its artistic importance. However, his interest in paintings surpasses their economic value, as they provide him social status and construct his image as a collector, a quality later demonstrated more forcefully in his daughter, Fleur, through diverse approaches to acquisition. Soames’s relationship with art exemplifies both “commodity fetishism” and, accordingly, the process of reification, wherein consciousness is shaped by the system of exchange. As a collector, he receives valuable works from both contemporary and previous periods, gaining pleasure from determining their economic worth and engaging in financial negotiations (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 58). His view of himself as the essential connection between creative artists and the commercial buyers (ibid., p. 827) demonstrates his bourgeois mentality; art becomes a commodity exchanged between buyer and seller. In his later years, the rise of the Labour Party and its visible influence increases Soames’s fears of possible confiscation and reinforces his commodified understanding of art. His answer to this supposed threat is to announce his plan to sell off his whole collection rather than tolerate government appropriation of his paintings, establishing his definite view on private property (Ibid., p. 823). This stance illustrates his continual preference of material security over artistic or cultural worth. In essence, pictures represent more than merely objects of possessions for Soames, functioning as tools that justify his capitalist values, as he rationalizes his art purchases by claiming to support artistic endeavours and serve as a conduit for economic circulation that provides employment, questioning what could be objectionable about such activities (Ibid., p. 899).

Like his relationship with women and his approach to art as properties, Soames’s understanding of historical changes throughout the *Chronicles* is structured by his sense of property. As a representative of the second generation of Forsytes, he seems dedicated to maintaining the “possessive instinct” during an era of significant change

in England. For Soames, the Queen's death and the moment when the capital city is shrouded in collective grief (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 688) denotes not simply the close of the Victorian age, the time he associates with, but equally the weakening of the security that property had formerly offered. He believes that conditions would never again be as secure as they were during Victorian's reign (Ibid., p. 690). The anxieties of the capitalist class extend beyond merely the fading security of Victorian times. While Galsworthy's narrative initially portrays the "possessive instinct" through relationships within and between the bourgeois families, it subsequently widens its social scope. The emergence of classes beyond the bourgeoisie makes the passage of time and change more apparent. This shift, along with the bourgeois perspective on the lower classes, becomes particularly evident during the Mafeking celebrations. Soames encounters an overwhelming crowd in Regent Street, a chaotic, raucous mass of people celebrating with wild enthusiasm. He realises this represents the common people, the complete opposite of refined society and Forsyte values, recognising it as the face of democracy itself (Ibid., p. 632). For Soames, this chaotic gathering suggests that the social structure, the one he believes his class created, faces danger. Galsworthy shows his fear of change through imagery; to Soames, it seems as if someone is removing his legal right to secure ownership, or as if a frightening force from the future is moving closer and already darkening the present (Ibid., p. 633). This monstrous (!) crowd reminds him George Forsyte's observation about the eventual necessity of confronting these increasingly bold individuals, radicals and socialists who desire to claim their possessions (Ibid., p. 634). However, despite these anxieties, he remains confident in the solidity of the bourgeois class, asserting that they constitute the nation's foundation and cannot be easily displaced, while emphasising that ownership provides the strongest legal advantage (Ibid.). His abiding confidence in his class originates from his steadfast belief in the infallibility of his "possessive instinct." In following years, he refutes suggestions that the younger generation is abandoning this "possessive instinct" by stating, "Human nature doesn't change" (Ibid., p. 992). Moreover, when Michael Mont argues that significant transformation is imminent and that the possessive principle is falling into disuse with the entire system becoming outdated, Soames defends his possessive instinct which defines his identity by dismissing such ideas as foolish nonsense (Ibid., p. 988). After all, Soames positions himself as the final defender of the continuity of property consciousness, preserving and maintaining traditional values in an era of transition, as he himself admits, his

uncle, old Jolyon, did not confer upon him the label “the man of property” without reason (Ibid., p. 602).

Another prominent figure of the second-generation Forsytes is young Jolyon, whom many critics identify as Galsworthy’s voice in the first trilogy. The depiction of Jolyon across the novels mirrors specific autobiographical aspects from Galsworthy’s personal experience. Galsworthy witnessed his cousin’s wife’s unhappiness in her marriage and subsequently married her; similarly, young Jolyon takes Irene as his bride, who was the discontented spouse of his cousin. Moreover, similar to Galsworthy, young Jolyon escapes from the confines of his class, becoming an outcast and critically examining his class with the eyes of an outsider.³² In common with other Forsyte family members, young Jolyon acknowledges his class identity and the perspective it generates. Yet, differing from Soames, he perceives the objective possibilities of his class yet intentionally rejects them. Galsworthy expresses Jolyon’s consciousness by noting that while Forsytes typically remain unaware of their own class characteristics, young Jolyon fully recognises his identity as a member of his family (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 217). This signifies that he has the potential to transcend his class’s “false consciousness,” positioning him between a “class-in-itself” and a “class-for-itself,” as reflected in his description of himself as “half-artist and half-Forsyte” (Ibid., p. 473). If he can overwhelm false consciousness, as in the Lukácsian framework, he will transition to be a “class-for-itself” and act accordingly, a struggle he actively engages in. The distance he places between himself and his class and his attempt to transcend false consciousness are manifested in his critical evaluation of the “sense of property” which establishes the foundation of his class identity. He feels confined alongside countless fellow citizens who embody a repulsive aspect of national character, their determined faith in legal agreements and established privileges, combined with their self-righteous satisfaction in demanding these entitlements, which he finds both fundamentally natural yet incomprehensible (Ibid.,

³² For discussions of young Jolyon as Galsworthy’s voice in the first trilogy, see Frechet, A. (1982). *John Galsworthy: A reassessment* (D. Mahaffey, Trans.). Macmillan; Gindin, J. (1987). *John Galsworthy’s Life and Art: An Alien’s Fortress*. Macmillan; see also the “Introduction” chapter of this dissertation.

p. 519). As this demonstrates, Jolyon's attitude towards "sense of property" surpasses personal concerns to include social, economic, and cultural issues. His negative assessment of such conduct as both repulsive and incomprehensible demonstrates that demonstrates that he is able to go beyond the conceptual limits of his background, showing that he completely rejects the moral framework offered by his class. Furthermore, the description of their strong faith in legal agreements and established privileges illustrates how the bourgeoisie, within a capitalist framework that treats people and relationships as commodities, stays trapped in "false consciousness." Still, as the "sense of property" shapes his bourgeois family, he cannot fully escape it, as property-oriented perspectives emerge in his consciousness despite years of financial constraint that failed to diminish his inherent acquisitive tendencies (Ibid., p. 291). This is the fundamental contradiction of Jolyon's personality: while deliberately distancing himself from the ideals of his class, he stays connected to the ownership mentality that defines the Forsyte character.

A significant point of divergence where young Jolyon distinctly differs from his social class and its most immediate representative, Soames, is evident in his approach to women. Where Soames perceives women as part of his possessions, Jolyon explicitly positions himself by expressing "I am what they call a 'feminist,' I believe" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 619). Soames's response highlights their contradictory class consciousness with many other implications: "Does that mean that you're against me?" (Ibid.) Soames's reaction plainly exposes his ideological position, presenting that he perceives feminism not as a broader theoretical system but rather as an immediate challenge to the norms of the class he represents. By this response, he unintentionally reveals his affiliation with patriarchal ownership. Furthermore, it emphasises the inseparability of ownership rights and class consciousness, especially regarding women. Upon hearing Soames's reaction, young Jolyon additionally explains his social and ethical stance, thus defining his perspective on gender relationships with clear and definite limits, expressing his firm opposition to any woman cohabitating with a man she genuinely despises, which he considers morally corrupt (Ibid.). Soames highlights his ownership mentality by persistently referring to Irene as his wife. Conversely, Jolyon's thoughts expose his repulsion: "In a flash of thought...: There it is! Ownership! Well, we all own things. But - human beings! Pah!" (Ibid., p. 479). In contrast to Soames's perspective of ownership, Jolyon's relationship with Irene is

grounded in mutual respect, as her worldview appears to align perfectly with his own, guided more by feelings than logic, surprisingly doubtful, attracted to beauty, and deeply kind and accepting (Ibid., p. 574). The striking contrast between Soames and Jolyon's attitudes both illuminates their individual personalities and signifies the broader shift in social perceptions of women in a changing society.

Similar to the contrast regarding their perspectives on women, young Jolyon's view of social and historical change also delineates a clear difference from Soames's ownership-focused perspective and the principles of the broader Forsyte family. Young Jolyon stands apart from his relatives with his distinct historical consciousness, recognising how historical developments shape and transform individual and collective consciousness. He clearly articulates the evolving character of Forsyte generations, stating that James and his brothers and sisters embodied Victorian England with its commercial principles and secure financial returns, representing a declining era whose departure may not entirely benefit the nation (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 533). While he admits a shift from Victorian ideals, describing his own era as characterised by *fin de siècle* attitudes, unproductive wealth, and personal freedom rather than true individualism, he identifies his son Jon as the one who will initiate the new century's developments (Ibid.). In a conversation with Soames, young Jolyon emphasises the distinction between their generation and their predecessors, acknowledging their diminished qualities compared to earlier generations (Ibid., p. 470). Yet Soames refuses to embrace this assertion, his response exposing his profound attachment to Forsyte values through his adamant rejection to accept inferiority or surrender any aspect of his existence (Ibid.). While young Jolyon recognises and embraces historical transformation, Soames commits to the principle that he retains the identical inherent property instinct as those before him, regarding it as an unchangeable truth. Young Jolyon, however, provides a deeper reflection on the nature of change, emphasising the importance of self-consciousness as a limiting factor, suggesting that while they might live as long as previous generations, self-awareness creates a fundamental difference between himself and Soames (Ibid.). This contrast also exemplifies Lukács's dialectical framework of appearance and essence: Soames is trapped in the surface level of property relations within the capitalist system, whereas young Jolyon comprehends the underlying structures that generate and maintain these relations. In this regard, Soames embodies a "class-in-itself" position,

perceiving socio-economic systems as immutable, while young Jolyon displays class awareness by questioning and analysing his own social standing. His historical consciousness reveals itself through his recognition that the Forsyte identity is undergoing fundamental change, particularly when observing his children's actions. The self-sacrificial nature he witnesses in his children, so contrary to the self-interested Forsyte tradition, leaves young Jolyon both confused and convinced that it represents a significant shift away from the family's established character (Ibid., p. 649). This insight transcends the evolution of individual Forsytes; instead, it indicates a wider acknowledgement of the historical developments affecting the principles and belief systems of the upper-middle-class family that the Forsytes represent. Although young Jolyon revolted against his class and strived to live according to his individual beliefs, he eventually confronts the persistence of class identity when he realises with shocked irony that he and his three children remain fundamentally Forsytes despite his efforts (Ibid.). Passing away in the very armchair where his father had died further demonstrates his unbreakable connection to his origins, revealing that his rebellious stance was never entirely detached from his familial and class roots.

4.2.3. Third Generation: Property Consciousness Transformed

Within Galsworthy's saga, Fleur and Jon, the third and final generation of the Forsytes, personify a post-war perplexing period of England in which historical insight and class identity converge. Their involvement continues throughout *To Let*, the last novel of the first trilogy, and *A Modern Comedy*, the second trilogy. In the *Preface* to the second trilogy, Galsworthy depicts this generation as one that has "decided that everything requires re-valuation;" according to his analysis, this generation's pessimistic outlook regarding the future of both material security and life itself compels them toward a doctrine of living fully in the present (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 15). However, within the context of evolving social values and rapid change, the possessive instinct proves resilient, transforming rather than ceasing to exist completely. Meanwhile, being shaped by their historical and social situation, these characters develop consciousness of their historical position. This generation, which "twirling on the tiptoes of uncertainty" (Ibid., p. 16) simultaneously shoulders the heritage of the past and their class while attempting to construct their identities within an emerging historical moment. Through this process, they assume an active role as individuals who both experience and respond to social changes, emerging as both historical subjects and

objects shaped by the norms of the class to which they belong, as reflected in the *Chronicles*.

Although Fleur and Jon share the same historical period and social class, Galsworthy characterises them as distinct individuations of “objective possibilities” inherent in their class within modernity and the emerging consumer phase of capitalism. The bourgeois possessive instinct, embodied in the character of Soames, manifests itself again in his daughter Fleur, rather than remaining a mere possibility; it materialises and adopts different expressions under changing historical conditions. Preceding the development of Fleur’s collector identity, the early indications of her possessive instinct are observed and formulated by her cousins, Holly and Val: “We think she’s got rather a “having” nature” (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 943). Beyond the early observations of Holly and Val, Fleur’s tendency toward possessiveness is further detailed in the text which establishes her as undeniably Soames’s daughter. She has inherited the same tenacity that simultaneously built and destroyed her father, and her fundamental approach to life revolves around claiming ownership, as she instinctively thinks in terms of possession rather than any other way of relating to the world (Ibid., p. 990). The narrator’s statement about her complete inheritance of her father’s temperament indicates Fleur’s bourgeois false consciousness; her interpretation of the “possessive instinct” as inherent, inevitable, and natural obstructs her ability to question her class position and the structures of consciousness it generates. Moreover, the statement “Instinctively she conjugated the verb “to have” always with the pronoun ‘I’” (Ibid.) exposes Fleur’s self-centred perspective and emphasises the direct relationship she establishes between ownership and identity. Subsequently, Fleur’s identity transforms into that of a collector, and this collecting mentality leading her to view individuals and experiences through the framework of reification. Sir Lawrence’s observation that Fleur has developed a habit of collecting people and that Michael should be cautious (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 20) and Wilfrid Desert’s claim that she gathers people around her just as she collects other things (Ibid., p. 27) demonstrates that Fleur’s character as a collector is no longer hidden but rather openly recognised and acknowledged by those around her.

In contrast to Fleur, Jon, similar to his father Jolyon, chooses to question the “objective possibilities” provided by his class and is able to distance himself almost entirely from the property-based class consciousness of the Forsytes, in which his father still

partially saw himself included. When Jon argues that people's possessive nature leads them to restrict and control things, claiming that the previous generation's obsession with ownership was responsible for the War (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 818), he criticises the property-oriented mindset of the Victorian upper-class Forsytes that preceded his generation. He also exhibits an understanding of the damaging impact of upper-class consciousness. Furthermore, Jon surpasses the self-centred traits cultivated by the property relations of his class - traits which are particularly evident in Fleur - and moves toward an idealised form of class consciousness, that is, imputed class consciousness. During a dialogue with Fleur, when he states that if they were engaged and she fell in love with someone else, he might be devastated but wouldn't deny her that choice (Ibid., p. 886), Jon reveals that, unlike material possessions, he refuses to treat human feelings as something that can be owned. In contrast, Fleur's response expressing that she would deny him such freedom and insisting he must never act that way with her (Ibid.) also demonstrates the possessive tendency inherent in her personality, illustrating her class consciousness. In addition to these, Jon distinguishes himself from the self-centred behaviour typical in his social background, especially of Fleur. He displays understanding for those experiencing and actively considers participating in social issues by acknowledging the world's troubling conditions, particularly the suffering of the hungry, and expressing his sense of moral responsibility to contribute to solutions (Ibid., p. 844). In contrast, Fleur's response highlights her entrenched class perspective, revealing her cynical view of humanity while declaring her determination never to subject herself to unnecessary suffering (Ibid.). Consequently, while Fleur represents the fragmented consciousness typical of her class, Jon demonstrates the achievement of comprehensive social understanding, as he considers the complete panorama of human misery encompassing war casualties, the plight of starving children, wounded veterans, prisoners, and all forms of social outcasts (Ibid., p. 1018), allowing him to rise above the false consciousness of his class.

The third generation, embodied in Jon and Fleur, exhibits strikingly different responses to the historical and social transformations and developments around them. Galsworthy's portrayal of Fleur depicts her as an object of historical circumstances. In contrast to her father, who is cautious about present enjoyment due to concerns about future satisfaction, Fleur, characterized by her intimidating self-determination, vitality,

and resolve to embrace life fully (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 773), lacking an organic connection to the past, emerges as a literary embodiment shaped by emerging consumer capitalism. Her preference for the immediate and momentary is apparent when she declares her belief that beauty is inherently fleeting and expresses her tendency to appreciate art briefly before moving on (Ibid., p. 814). Accordingly, Fleur constructs her identity around a consumer capitalist consciousness as the time offers, characterised by the pursuit of temporary and the consumption of fleeting experiences as a response to the meaninglessness of the post-war era. She claims that life is traditionally considered a puzzle to be solved, her generation has abandoned such pursuits in favour of seeking pleasures and moving swiftly through experiences (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 151). Her identity is essentially ornamental as the narrator observes that her decorative function and ability to create aesthetic pleasures resrepresent the only meaningful pursuit in an unattractive world (Ibid., p. 185). Her claim serves as an explicit indication of her reified consciousness. Her perception of herself as ornamental and her belief that this aesthetic function represents the only significant purpose illustrate the extent to which she has internalised the values imposed by a capitalist consumer society, reducing herself to a commodity similar to the objects around her. The emphasis on creating minor aesthetic pleasures and maintaining attractiveness in an unappealing world (Ibid.) indicates that she consumes frivolous and temporary beauty rather than attempting to change the existing social reality. This false consciousness positions her not as a subject of history, but as its object, the ultimate product of her time.

On the other hand, regarding historical changes, Galsworthy describes Jon as a figure who stands apart from his class and era. Described as “singularly old-fashioned” (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 782) and “by no means typically modern” (Ibid., p. 881), his distinction from his contemporaries is further emphasised by his perception of other young men’s advantages over himself, particularly their confident manner of dress and self-assured demeanour (Ibid.). In a Lukácsian sense, he exhibits the potential for historical subjectivity when he expresses that his generation desires to live authentically but struggles due to the burden of history (Ibid., p. 890), revealing an opportunity to surpass the limitations of his class and age to create transformation. His remark, “Oh! yes, luckily; I don’t suppose I shall be any good at making money” (Ibid., p. 818), highlights his detachment from materialist values. He opposes the property-

oriented value judgments and commodity relations that dominate the capitalist system. In a capitalist society, where consciousness is shaped by commodity fetishism, economic success is often regarded as the sole measure of real achievement. However, Jon's perception of financial success as simply a skill, emphasised by his "luckily" remark, suggests that his consciousness remains distant from reified consciousness and typical social dynamics. Here, Lukácsian historical consciousness also emerges. As Jon appears to possess a level of consciousness that, rather than being entirely shaped by social circumstances, provides him with the potential to confront them. Instead of remaining a passive object of historical and social conditions, Jon demonstrates a critical perspective.

4.3. Marriage as Ownership: Reification in the Soames-Irene Relationship

In examining how Forsyte class consciousness transforms across generations yet maintains its essence, John Galsworthy presents Irene as the primary connecting element throughout three generations of the family. According to many Galsworthy scholars, Irene's narrative draws from the author's personal experience, especially the circumstances of his wife, Ada Galsworthy, who suffered through an unhappy marriage before marrying Galsworthy, her former husband's cousin. While Galsworthy positioned himself as a defender for women's rights, evident in his marriage to Ada and his critique of women's subordination in *The Man of Property*, his structural approach in *The Forsyte Chronicles* reveals a deeper analysis of patriarchal capitalism (Hartmann, 1976). By limiting resistant female characters throughout the *Chronicles* (excluding Victorine's survival struggle), Galsworthy demonstrates how bourgeois patriarchal capitalism systematically controls women's autonomy, making resistance exceptional rather than typical. Galsworthy depicts Irene in a way that she emerges both as an object of reification and a figure who discloses and resists the reified bourgeois consciousness. Her depiction presents a significant demonstration to analyse the effects of reification on self-consciousness and social relationships.

The approach taken by Forsyte family members regarding Irene reveals distinct instances of Lukács's concept of reification within literary representation. From the beginning, Roger Forsyte's observation regarding Irene suggests that Soames will face difficulties with her due to her unfamiliar appearance (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 20), indicating that the family perceives her as "other" instead of one of their own. When

they mainly regard her as Soames's wife, and even as his property, they refuse her an autonomous identity, reducing her to merely an extension of Soames, and devaluing her due to her lack of wealth. James's approach to her becomes a clear example of the reification of Irene. Throughout the first novel, *The Man of Property*, James's references to Irene "She was getting to have opinions of her own" and "He felt that her friends ought to be chosen for her" (Ibid., p. 52) exposes that he perceives Irene not as an autonomous individual, but as an object to be controlled. For James, Irene's value is derived from her role as Soames's wife. When rumours of Irene's unhappiness in her marriage with Soames circulates within the family, James questions why Irene should experience any dissatisfaction (Ibid.) because for him, Soames, with his substantial financial resources and prudent nature (Ibid., p. 51) is the perfect husband. James utterly dehumanises Irene, disregarding her emotional dimension as a human being, and presents her lack of money as an example of Irene's economically vulnerable position: "Luckily, she had no money-a beggarly fifty pounds a year!" (Ibid., p. 53). Therefore, as James assumes, Irene cannot contemplate leaving her marriage because of her economic limitations. Instead, James's comment that it would be better if she had a child to focus on and keep her busy (Ibid., p. 82) reflects a male-dominated viewpoint that not only objectifies Irene economically but also characterises her through her ability to bear children, treating her as a reproductive instrument. This reflects Lukács's claim that capitalist relations of production permeate all areas of society. Consequently, James exemplifies the characteristic Forsyte approach toward those lacking material assets, illustrating the class-based economic determinism that permeates their social evaluations.

Similarly, the way Soames's behaviour toward Irene, mentioned previously, constitutes a typical demonstration of his class consciousness and harmonises with his possessive tendencies, thus developing into an obvious process of reification. His contemplation questions whether a man could possess anything more beautiful than his ornate dining setting or more attractive than the woman seated at it (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 69). This example clearly illustrates how Irene becomes diminished to nothing more than her aesthetic appeal and is fundamentally identified with the expensive and polished items in the dwelling. In his attempts to reconcile with Irene following years apart, Soames reveals once more that his view of Irene continues unchanged, he still considers her exclusively as his possession. He perceives her as an unoccupied

dwelling awaiting his rightful return and control, finding the prospect of quietly reclaiming his legal possession without public scrutiny deeply attractive (Ibid., p. 524). Furthermore, regardless of his emotions for Irene, he continues to fail in separating her from his remaining belongings and completely dismisses her feelings. Within the six-volume *Chronicles*, Soames persistently inquires why Irene does not love him. He considers himself the perfect husband, possessing wealth, status, and the capacity to offer her the life he imagines she deserves. His self-characterisation as someone who is neither physically nor morally deficient, questioning what mystery could possibly surround him (Ibid., p. 545), reveals his lack of consideration for others and his failure to acknowledge Irene's emotions. Subsequent to his internal reflections and the rumours he receives, Soames reaches the extreme point of reification in his treatment of Irene. The narrative describing the morning following Soames's assertion of what he considers his marital rights (Ibid., p. 292) exemplifies the ultimate stage of this process, as Soames normalizes his own actions. His sexual assault on Irene, characterised by George as an "act of property" (Ibid., p. 299), represents the most severe manifestation of matrimonial ideology grounded in possession. Ultimately, he exercises what he believes to be his ownership rights over her physical being, completely disregarding her autonomy. While Galsworthy had not been exposed to Lukács's reification theory during his writing period, he skillfully demonstrates through his work how human consciousness within capitalism reduces other people to objects, as evidenced in this specific case of Soames and Irene.

Irene displays a "silent, passive, gracefully averse" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 70) yet firm defiance against the elaborate reification process enforced by Soames and his family members. Galsworthy clearly declares in the *Preface* to *The Forsyte Saga* that he intentionally depicts her in this particular manner, noting that Irene's character, who appears only through other characters' perceptions rather than directly, represents disruptive aesthetic force challenging a materialistic society (Ibid., p. viii). By depicting her as the "concretion of disturbing Beauty" (Ibid.), he establishes her as a quiet disruption that unsettles the Forsyte realm of ownership. Across *The Chronicles*, she participates in a battle to maintain her position and identity. In Lukácsian terms, this represents a process akin to the rise of proletarian consciousness. Irene's defiance of social conventions and her troubled marriage is revealed through her rarely expressed but meaningful reactions. For instance, her statement expressing

indifference about returning home (ibid., p. 144) turns into family rumours during their meetings, emphasising her estrangement from the Forsyte social standing, household, and marital bond, a world defined by material possession and aesthetic control (Ormond, 1977). She further reveals her marital distress when responding to Soames's controlling questions about her whereabouts by declaring she was in paradise, away from their home (ibid., p. 256). Irene achieves liberation solely when she withdraws from the family bound together through merely ownership-based attachments. Following her departure from Soames, Irene transforms from "sheer passive resistance" to possessing "more of her...something of activity and daring" (Ibid., p. 496). Nevertheless, Soames does not credit this transformation to her discovered individual autonomy but instead to the economic self-sufficiency provided by old Jolyon. For Soames, whose perspective is formed by Victorian societal standards and marriage conventions (Papadopoulou, n.d.), Irene's choice to reside independently is intolerable. However, Irene, by creating garments, attending to medical facilities, performing music, interpreting texts, and collaborating with a literary company, builds the persona of an independent worker, demonstrating a definitive position against the bourgeois expectations forced upon her. Regardless of Soames's continuous proposals and assurances of an independent life in return for giving him an heir, she eventually states her acceptance of being considered morally flawed while firmly rejecting any return to a relationship with someone she despises (Ibid., p. 641), showing her ultimate, resolute refusal to surrender her selfhood and independence. Though people in her circle openly admit that Soames considers Irene his asset and that "Soames once owned [Irene] as a man might own a slave" (Ibid., p. 966), Irene definitively denies this claim of reification. Confronted with all comments and charges, she maintains her silence yet never yields to the reification mechanism inflicted upon her by Forsyte family members. Through this stance, she boldly resists the limiting gender conventions and social demands imposed on women throughout the Victorian era.³³

³³ For an analysis of women's position in Victorian society, see Hamilton, S. (2001). Making history with Frances Power Cobbe: Victorian feminism, domestic violence, and the language of imperialism. *Victorian Studies*, 43(3), 437-460; Langland, E. (1992). Nobody's Angels: Domestic ideology and middle-class women in the Victorian novel. *PMLA*, 107(2), 290-304;

Critical scholarship on gender roles in Galsworthy's work (Omar, 2016; Omar & Alhassan, 2020) confirms this pattern of female resistance to Victorian marriage conventions and property-based relationships.

Galsworthy establishes a compelling irony in the *Forsyte Chronicles* by demonstrating that although Soames and the Forsyte household attempt to reify Irene, they become trapped within the reification mechanism themselves. Soames's failure to control Irene like his remaining possessions plunges him into a deep existential crisis throughout the years, driving him to face the boundaries of his reified mindset. His exasperation shows itself in his anguish as he expresses his intention to eliminate the past and begin anew, but finds himself confronted with emotional responses and silence that create an intangible situation resembling a "spider's web" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 545). In this instance, the "spider's web" operates as a symbol representing Soames's reified mindset. This web of property instinct that forms Soames's consciousness traps him, preventing him from understanding it, recognising other individuals' emotions, and ultimately viewing Irene as a person instead of property. His attitude demonstrates the mentality of a characteristic Forsyte member, who, when faced with abstract feelings that transcend ownership and financial assets, feels unease but stays confined within capitalist principles without examining his own reified mindset. Soames clearly articulates this symbolic trap that encircles him during a moment of inner turmoil, where he yearns to escape his constrained existence and the entrapment he perceives for the first time. He contemplates various conflicting impulses, divorcing and abandoning her due to her indifference, releasing her from further suffering, asserting complete dominance over her vulnerability, or even dismissing the entire situation's significance. His desire centres on acting spontaneously without constantly weighing sacrifices and consequences (Ibid., p. 349). Soames's internal struggle first reveals the restrictions established by his social standing thoroughly and across every dimension of his existence. Furthermore, his contemplation emphasises his yearning to flee from the symbolic "web" encircling him through repeated expressions of longing. Although Soames desires to free himself from all the mental frameworks that restrict him and

Peterson, M.J. (1989). *Family, love, and work in the lives of Victorian gentlewomen*. Indiana University Press.

reify his thinking, along with the moral assessments of his social stratum, his aspiration for freedom stays unreachable since he remains caught within the ownership mentality and possessive urges that form his consciousness. He admits the constraints encompassing him, recognising his inability to escape memories, thoughts, or impulses due to the serious and confining nature of his circumstances, which he perceives as an inescapable prison (Ibid., p. 350). For Soames, this concept of being confined within a prison or web is merely momentary. When young Jolyon arrives at his door, he reverts to the realm of his material priorities. This brief recognition, succeeded by a rapid return to identical ownership-focused attitudes, demonstrates how profoundly rooted his bourgeois identity has become and how completely reified his consciousness persists.

Through this contradiction of mutual reification, Galsworthy reveals a core inconsistency within bourgeois society. Although Soames regards Irene as possession and reifies her, he simultaneously transforms into a commodity within the capitalist framework, incapable of reasoning outside its boundaries. The “spider web” symbol, rather than serving only as a conventional literary technique, mirrors the existential condition of the bourgeois Forsytes, a manifestation of their reified consciousness, as Lukács thoroughly examined in *History and Class Consciousness*. The bourgeois mindset restricted by this framework, even when they briefly glimpse liberation, fails to transcend their distorted perception to challenge reality they inhabit. Soames’s immediate moment of awareness and his subsequent return to his class identity reveal that reification is not merely an economic process, but also a deeply rooted mental captivity. Trapped within the system he himself created the bourgeois subject attempts to construct reality based on superficial appearances, disregarding the underlying essence.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter analyses the formation and manifestation of class consciousness in the Forsyte family across three generations in John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Chronicles* through the framework of Georg Lukács’s theories of class consciousness and reification. This analysis emphasises both the continuity and historical transformations of the property-oriented class consciousness of the English upper-middle class during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

The findings demonstrate that the Forsyte family develops a collective consciousness shaped by a deep-rooted sense of property. The first generation, representing the Victorian commercial bourgeoisie, transforms the property they have acquired through hard work into a symbol of social status. In the second generation, particularly in Soames, the possessive instinct reaches its extreme, as he concretizes it without questioning the objective possibilities that the socioeconomic transformations of late Victorian England presented to his class. At its culmination, this instinct leads him to reify his wife, perceiving her on the same level as his other possessions. His relationship with Irene reveals the extent to which bourgeois identity, fundamentally constructed around property ownership, infuses intimate human connections. Moreover, the findings suggest that in his critique of the property-centric bourgeois class, Galsworthy employs irony to reveal that it is, in fact, Soames himself who has been reified. Through his reified consciousness, Soames becomes imprisoned within the complex 'web' of social expectations and judgements that he has actively contributed to reinforcing. Young Jolyon, on the other hand, demonstrates the potential to question this class consciousness, though he does not entirely transcend it. In the third generation, Fleur's identity as a collector reflects the adoption of consumer society's values, while Jon challenges this property-oriented consciousness in a more radical manner.

Lukács's concept of "false consciousness" is a significant framework for comprehending the class consciousness of the Forsytes. One of the bourgeoisie's fundamental misconceptions - the belief that property relations are natural and unchangeable - is evident in the consciousness of many members of the Forsyte family. They fail to recognise that these relations and value judgements are historically, socially, and economically constructed, artificial, and subject to change. This false consciousness is particularly marked in James and Soames, manifesting most notably in their tendency to reify social relationships, perceiving even people as forms of property. Irene, on the other hand, exemplifies resistance against reification. Described by Galsworthy as a concretized Beauty that unsettles the world of property (1950, p. viii), she questions the restrictive norms of the Victorian era and the prevalent property relations.

Although again Galsworthy explicitly rejected the labels or accusation of being a "socialist" and never identified himself as such, *The Forsyte Chronicles* offers a

critical perspective on capitalist society in a manner consistent with socialist thought, despite his unfamiliarity with Lukács's theories. Especially in its depiction of the destructive effects of "possessive instinct" on individuals and the formation of consciousness, it aligns with Lukácsian analysis. Without engaging in a consciously Marxist analysis, he presents a social critique that explores the human and societal consequences of capitalist property relations. To conclude, Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles* transcends a mere portrayal of a family's shifting class consciousness and its disintegration amidst social transformations; rather, it constructs a social record that exemplifies the evolution of capitalist values in British society and their influence on individual consciousness. Lukács's theoretical framework serves as an effective tool for analysing class consciousness and the phenomenon of reification within *The Chronicles*.

CHAPTER V

CLASS ANTAGONISM IN ACTION: IDEOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL MANIFESTATIONS IN GALSWORTHY'S FORSYTE CHRONICLES

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels begin *The Communist Manifesto* with the statement, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 2007, p. 9). This claim finds a concrete embodiment in John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Chronicles*. In his extensive work about England’s upper-middle-class family - the Forsytes - across three generations, Galsworthy masterfully portrays the changing dynamics and the resulting class conflicts from the Victorian period through the aftermath of the First World War. Galsworthy, by centring the value judgements of the property-owning class whose identity arose from a sense of property and who are named as “men of property,” addresses class conflict in capitalist society both through the individual experiences of the characters and broader societal developments. From the conflict between art and property during the height of imperial economic power, to the postwar economic struggles of the working class, and finally to the collective action of workers during the General Strike, he presents various manifestations of class conflict. Therefore, this chapter explores the varied forms of class struggle represented in *The Forsyte Chronicles*.

While analysing class conflict in *The Chronicles*, this study employs Georg Lukács’s conceptual framework as its theoretical foundation. This section then draws upon Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) as its primary theoretical source, engaging with his *Avrupa Gerçekçiliği* (1987) to examine the representation of social events in literary works, and including relevant secondary sources to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework. Georg Lukács builds his own conceptual framework on the historical materialist perspective of Marx and Engels and develops an in-depth theory that integrates aesthetic and epistemological dimensions and applies it to literary theory. In his analysis of class conflict, as in his conceptualisation of class consciousness, Lukács transcends mere economic determinism by developing a comprehensive theoretical approach that examines cultural, ideological, and cognitive dimensions of social struggles. Working with the concepts of “reification” and “class consciousness” that were examined in detail in previous chapters, this section centres

on class conflict in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, analysing the interactions between characters of different class positions as they reflect and contribute to broader social dynamics. This analytical framework maintains that literary works function not merely as aesthetic objects but as dialectical reflections of social reality. In this context, this chapter examines class conflict through its three primary manifestations and employs it as an analytical framework for understanding both inter-class interactions and social dynamics in *The Forsyte Chronicles*.

This chapter first establishes a theoretical framework based on Lukács's analysis and conceptualisation of class conflict. Following the theoretical foundation, the analysis explores the ideological manifestation of class conflict in *The Forsyte Chronicles* through the relationship between Philip Bosinney and the Forsyte family, examining the dialectical tension between art and property. An analysis of the economic dimension of class conflict unfolds through the example of the Bicket family struggling for survival under harsh post-war London conditions, while the political manifestation emerges through examination of the General Strike's literary representation and the bourgeois class's responses to this large-scale social crisis.

This analysis then aims to demonstrate that John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles* functions as a literary exemplification of Lukácsian theory, moving beyond the superficial appearances of social events to reveal the structural contradictions of capitalist society and reflect class dynamics in depth. From a Lukácsian perspective, Galsworthy's work epitomizes "great realism" as it situates different manifestations of class conflict within a totality of historical process and elucidates the essence behind appearances - the underlying social contradictions - through the individual experiences of its characters. The study demonstrates the profound potential of Lukács's theoretical framework for literary analysis while illustrating the sociological and historical dimensions of Galsworthy's work from a novel perspective.

5.1. Lukács's Theory of Class Conflict as an Analytical Framework

Georg Lukács, building upon Karl Marx's works on historical materialism, class, and class struggle, develops a thorough examination of class conflicts that extend beyond their original formulations, conceptualising the conflicts inherent in capitalist society and the complex structure of contradictions between classes, and provides a comprehensive method for understanding the dialectical reflections of social structures

in literary texts. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), Lukács, through his analyses of class conflict, as in the definition of class consciousness, goes beyond Marx's approach of economic determinism, arguing that while class conflict is initially rooted in economic foundations, it can be conceptualised as a struggle between worldviews, ideologies, and existential positions. This chapter will evaluate the Marxist tradition, regarding class struggle, in general, and Lukas's analysis of class struggle in particular, through the main points such as the nature and roots of class struggle, its forms of manifestation, literary representation, and historical transformations. These discussions frame the understanding of the forms of class conflict represented in Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles*.

Class struggle constitutes a critical framework for analysing socio-economic and historical developments within the Marxist critical tradition and emerges as one of the central analytical structures of historical materialist thought. Following the significant economic and social transformations originated by the industrial revolution, class struggle developed as a fundamental way to analyse societal restructuring. Rooted in the central reorganisation of labour and production, this concept surpassed traditional economic interpretations, revealing the deep-seated antagonisms inherent in capitalist social relations. The class structure, shaped mainly by the division of labour, gave rise to two basic classes depending on the distribution of the means of production: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the dominant and the subordinate. As Dahrendorf states, these classes were initially "characterised solely by the crude indices of possession and nonpossession, of domination and subjection" (1959, pp. 6-7). Thus, the structure of economic relations became the direct determinant of social hierarchy and conflict.

To comprehensively understand and analyse the nature of these complex relationships, it is necessary to explore the core structure of capitalist society. Although capitalism evolves across different periods, it fundamentally remains a class-based society. Lukács aligns with Marx and emphasises the existence of two essential classes in capitalist societies: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As previously mentioned, the basis of this class division originates in the ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie is the class that holds ownership of the means of production and thereby controls economic power. Historically, the formation of the bourgeoisie appeared during the transition from feudal society to capitalist society, with the increasing

concentration of trade and the means of production in the hands of a privileged group. In particular, the transformation of property relations and the acquisition of capital played a key role in the development of the bourgeoisie.³⁴ According to Ralf Dahrendorf interpretation of Marx's theory, capitalist society consists of two major classes: the bourgeoisie, which owns the means of production, and the proletariat, which is forced to commodify their labour. The bourgeoisie owns both economic power and high social status by retaining private property of industrial means of production, such as factories and machinery. On the other hand, lacking private property, the proletariat is subject to the bourgeoisie's control for survival and often lives in poverty. This structural inequality creates a conflict of interest between the two classes, initially at the workplace, then extending to the political sphere. According to Marx, control of private property directly leads to social power. Consequently, in the analysis of such a capitalist social structure, three interdependent structural features emerge: the existence of conflict among different social groups and classes, the presence of an effective private property system, and the dominance and dependency dynamics evident in social relationships (Dahrendorf, 1959, pp. 30-33). Accordingly, for Lukács, this capitalist system, which produces social classes, operates as a structure that suppresses and dominates individuals, consistently lowering the quality of life. Within this framework, all human endeavours for an amicable and effective existence are systematically restrained by society. Especially, the division of labour serves as a foundational process that dissolves human identity (Lunn, 1974, p. 21).

Within this overwhelming and alienating system, class interests play an essential role in converting the fundamental class division into social conflict. According to Istvan Meszaros, in capitalist society, the fundamental difference between the proletariat and the bourgeois lies in the conflict of interests: the bourgeoisie's individual interests are directly aligned with the collective interests of its class, whereas the proletariat's short-term individual interests may conflict with its long-term structural interest in radical transformation. The dominant group supports change only insofar as reforms and

³⁴ A more comprehensive examination of this process can be found in David McDowall's *An Illustrated History of Britain*, pp.139-148. See also Rogers, A.K. (1917, p. 341).

adjustments can be integrated into the existing system that they themselves have established and shaped. In contrast, the subordinate group resists such integration, since these kinds of changes are likely to prolong its own subordination (Meszaros, 1971, pp. 98-99). According to Dahrendorf, class interests, in a sense, precede the formation of classes, as individuals constitute a social class only when they participate in collective conflict against another group, with shared interests serving as the driving mechanism behind class development (1959, p. 14). In addition, Lukács connects class interests with hegemonic power by explaining that a class becomes ready for hegemony when its interests and consciousness allow it to organise the entire society according to those interests. However, he emphasises that the effectiveness of this hegemony depends on how consciously a class performs the actions history has imposed on it. The critical question becomes whether this consciousness is 'true' or 'false,' as the fate of a class rests on its ability to elucidate and solve the problems history presents (1971a, pp. 52-53).

Class consciousness plays a central role in the dynamics of class conflict. As Lukács highlights, class consciousness is more than a simple psychological awareness; it is a dialectical comprehension of the objective position within the totality of social relations (1971a, pp. 6-7). The process of reification experienced in capitalist society fragments and distorts consciousness by disintegrating human relations (Ibid., pp. 31-32). In this process, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat occupy different positions: the bourgeoisie, as Meszaros asserts, takes advantage of reification to develop a "false consciousness" that conceals social contradictions and presents its own class interests as universal, while the proletariat can potentially develop a consciousness that can transcend these disintegrated forms of thought and view society as a coherent whole (1971, pp. 98-99). According to Lukács, this understanding of totality, which perceives the interconnection between the economic, political, and ideological manifestations of class struggle, is a prerequisite for the proletariat's struggle against not only the effects of capitalism but also its root causes (1971a, pp. 23-24).

The theoretical role of the concepts of class consciousness and reification in class struggle requires an analysis of the concrete manifestations of class conflict in various fields. As noted in the previous paragraph, according to Lukács, this conflict first emerges in the economic sphere and then spreads to the political and ideological spheres. In economic manifestation, the everyday interests of the proletariat either

become a step towards the ultimate goal or conceal it. This is the fundamental central difficulty that affects the outcome of the class struggle. As exemplified in the struggle of the Bicket family in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, the working class often finds itself fighting only with the effects of capitalism rather than its causes. According to Lukács's interpretation of Marx, the working class must fight not only the effects of capitalism but also its causes; they must use their organised strength for the eventual emancipation of the class and the complete abolition of the wage (Lukács, 1971a, p. 73), which is directly linked to the political manifestation of class struggle. In political manifestation, the revolutionary workers' council is one of the forms in which the consciousness of the proletariat strives to create. The workers' council represents the political and economic defeat of reification and serves to bring about the victory of the proletariat by combining economy and politics in the synthesis of the real praxis of proletariat (Ibid., p. 80), an attempt at praxis exemplified in the historical event, the Great Strike in the *Chronicles* and in the reactions to this event. On the other hand, the ideological manifestation appears in the field of values, ideas, and worldviews and involves the bourgeoisie's attempt to obscure the class character of society and the proletariat's struggle to expose this false impression of reality (Ibid., pp. 66-67). As Lukács states, the concealment of bourgeois society's true character is essential for the bourgeoisie because exposing the system's irreconcilable internal tensions would force its advocates to make difficult decisions (Ibid., p. 66); thus, the bourgeoisie faces the possibility of losing its control over society if these contradictions become fully visible. To prevent this, he claims that throughout its development, bourgeois ideological thought has constituted a frantic opposition to recognising the actual character of their social system and achieving genuine comprehension of their class position (Ibid.). For the proletariat, the struggle is to defeat these false impressions and to understand the true nature of society, as truth serves as their means to achieve triumph, with greater honesty leading to more decisive success (Ibid., p. 68). In ideological manifestation of class struggle, the proletariat endeavours to transcend the false consciousness created by bourgeois ideology and to accurately grasp the class dynamics of society. According to Lukács, historical materialism gives the proletariat a means to reveal bourgeois beliefs and helps them attain real understanding (Ibid., p. 70). The tension between the architect Bosinney and the members of the Forsyte family in the *Chronicles* emerges as a clear example of this ideological manifestation of class struggle as different value judgements and perspectives come into direct conflict.

Moreover, debates about property, family, marriage, and art also serve as a literary representation of class conflict at the ideological level in *The Forsyte Chronicles*.

The literary representation of class struggle is essential to Lukácsian realist literature. In Lukács's view, true realist literature should portray individual figures not in isolation but rather "typical" manifestations of broader historical forces (Lunn, 1974, pp. 12-13). Great realist literature regards class conflict not as a surface phenomenon, but as a fundamental, underlying aspect of social process. In the authentic, dynamic progression of societal developments (Lukács, 1987, p. 196), Balzac, for example, examines social institutions by completely exposing their false neutrality to reveal their actual purpose: serving as instruments for advancing class interests and implementing these objectives (Ibid., pp. 60-61). Despite being shaped by the historical forces of their society, individuals actively participate in creating their own "destiny." This reality is manifested in the conflicts between characters' social position and their awareness, reaching their most intense expression (Ibid., p. 83). While suggesting the extension of traditional bourgeois realist literary approaches enhanced with a socialist viewpoint, Lukács appears to suggest a way in which class conflict can be represented in literature: by exposing class struggles within historical progression through the personal stories and decisions of particular characters (Lunn, 1974, pp. 12-14). Moreover, for Lukács, class conflict should be illustrated in the dynamic interaction between individual characters and historical-social forces. Great realist writers such as Balzac and Tolstoy depict class struggle through the interactions and conflicts of characters representing different social classes. For the great realist writers, the individual-class relationship is not a given, fixed phenomenon, but a contradictory process (Lukács, 1987, pp. 281-282); characters may take actions that contradict their class interests, but these contradictions themselves disclose the objective conflicts between social classes and the laws of movement of society. According to Lukács, significant artistic works depict comprehensive social reality by resolving the tension between immediate personal experience and broader historical progression (Lunn, 1974, p. 15). This perspective of totality demonstrates class conflicts not as isolated events but as necessary and meaningful elements of the historical process. This approach is part of the struggle against the reification created by capitalism, since the erasure of personal humanity represents the essence of capitalist commodification and requires resistance in literature (Ibid., p. 26). Reality thus demonstrates how, beyond

the personal perceptions of the characters, common problems and representative individuals emerge from class struggle during society's development (Lukács, 1987, p. 159). In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, Galsworthy gives a literary expression to Lukács's theoretical analysis of class conflict, revealing its ideological, economic, and political dimensions through Philip Bosinney's artistic revolt, the financial struggle of the Bicket family, and the collective resistance during the Great Strike.

5.2. Philip Bosinney and Ideological Struggle: The Conflict between Art and Property

John Galsworthy's portrayal of architect Philip Bosinney in *The Man of Property*, the first novel of *The Forsyte Chronicles*, serves as an exemplary illustration of Lukács's ideological class conflict by positioning him in direct opposition to Forsyte values. With his worldview, way of life, and personal appearance, Bosinney represents a total antithesis to the class embodied by the Forsytes. Most significantly, Bosinney's artistic sensitivity, creativity, and his innovative ideas that challenge the upper class's conventional understanding of art come into conflict with the material values of the Forsytes, whose entire identity is shaped by the sense of property. Galsworthy defines this opposition as a struggle between "art and property" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 161), and this dichotomy constitutes one of the central themes of the novel.³⁵ This clash between art and property reveals itself at narrative moments where the Forsyte family engages with Bosinney, consequently highlighting the deeper ideological conflict between Bosinney and the Forsytes.

Bosinney's initial encounter with the Forsyte family occurs through his relationship with old Jolyon's granddaughter, June, and their subsequent engagement ceremony. During this event, a noticeable sense of unease develops among the Forsytes as they instinctively perceive the approaching threat, and this awareness of danger, which reveals the true nature of any group of individual, strengthens their defences and heightens their protective instincts (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 4). In the same context, the narrator also notes that the family experienced an uncommon collective feeling of

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the relationship between art and property in *The Forsyte Chronicles*, see Sheppard, A.J. 1982). Art and Property in *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy* [Master's thesis, McMaster University].

encountering something unfamiliar and threatening (Ibid.). The narrative later confirms that this threatening and unfamiliar element is identified as the individual whom the family has gathered to meet (Ibid., p. 6), directly referring to Bosinney. The Forsytes sense a “latent threat”³⁶ in Bosinney’s presence, though they cannot explicitly define its nature at their first interaction. This instinctive reaction reveals how they come to regard his very presence as a danger to their established system of property, and, consequently, position him as an “other,” an otherness defined against the backdrop of their own typicality.

For the Forsytes, property extends beyond mere material possessions to encompass a worldview expressed through external symbols such as clothing and social behaviour. Galsworthy uses the hat symbol to demonstrate the Forsytes’ class values and Bosinney’s rejection of them. While Philip Bosinney lacked wealth, not unusual for Forsyte suitors, the family felt uneasy due to gossip about his visiting the elderly aunts in a shabby, old grey hat rather than proper formal attire, symbolising his defiance of their social standards (1950, p. 6). The narrator subtly portrays the profound unease and collective anxiety that Bosinney’s hat evokes among the Forsyte men and women over many pages. For the Forsytes, the hat transforms into something far beyond simple clothing - it becomes a socially significant object, an embodied element of class identity, and a determinant of social relations. The narrative revolving around the hat throughout the pages reveals the depth of class anxiety. This particular hat is what causes Bosinney to acquire the new identity “the Buccaneer,” a label that “was bandied from mouth to mouth” (Galsworthy, 1950, p.7). This label not only situates him outside the bourgeois class but also generates a collective anxiety that he will deprive them of something and damage their carefully constructed system and class hierarchy. While June interprets Bosinney’s indifference to appearance and lack of awareness about his clothing as evidence of his artistic focus, the Forsytes cannot accept such an explanation, questioning how anyone could be oblivious to their attire and dismissing

³⁶ Although Lukács does not use the term “latent threat” explicitly, his discussion of class relations often point to tensions that are systematically embedded yet not overtly expressed. This is particularly evident in his analysis of reification and historical necessity in realist literature, where social antagonisms manifest beneath the surface of individual experience (Lukács, 1962, pp. 20-25; Lukács, 1971a, pp. 94-102).

architecture as insufficient justification for such unconventional dress (Ibid., p. 7). This reaction exposes the deeply entrenched boundaries of class consciousness. Bosinney is further described as possessing a sense of private amusement, and the Forsyte family's emphasis on maintaining proper appearances as befitting their elevated social position (Ibid., p. 9) reinforces the function of ideological structures in forming and sustaining class identity, acting as symbols of class differentiation.

The hat embodies the symbolic significance of dress in ideological class conflict, but the Forsytes' judgement extends beyond this single clothing. Soames's thorough analysis of Bosinney, combined with his notes on the architect's bodily characteristics, further heightens this conflict. Soames deems Bosinney's facial features irregular and disturbing, describing them as "this rugged, enthusiastic, careless face with an unpleasant feeling" (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 65). The narrator subsequently depicts how Soames perceives Bosinney, noting that he focuses critically on the architect's crooked necktie, unkempt appearance, and disheveled clothing, suggesting that his profession had apparently depleted his capacity for orderliness (Ibid., p. 99). The narrator's characterisation of Soames proves significant. While Soames criticises the irregularity in Bosinney's appearance, he reveals his "false consciousness," manifested through the rigid boundaries and value judgements of his social class. Soames's remark that the house seems to have consumed all of Bosinney's conventional behaviour further reveals his view of Bosinney. This observation implies that while architecture requires systematic approach and conformity to expectations in one's appearance, Bosinney's artistic creativity transcends these conventional standards. This ironic observation demonstrates the bourgeois expectation that art and creativity must operate within the rules and order established by them, highlighting the limitations of such a worldview.

Another characteristic of Bosinney that disturbs the Forsytes is his lack of a "habitat." When depicting the Forsyte family, Galsworthy asserts that all family members possess protective exteriors and are never observed or would remain unrecognisable without their "habitats," consisting of social conditions, material possessions, social connections, and spouses (Ibid., p. 94). Bosinney presents a stark contrast to this portrayal, with the Forsytes viewing him as having no suitable place or setting (Ibid.). This mode of existence is neither comprehensible nor acceptable for the Forsytes, compelling them to perceive and describe him as an exotic animal: "like foreheads seen in the lion-house at the Zoo" (Ibid.). The portrayal of Bosinney as non-human

continues through recurrent animal imagery: “an alf-tame leopard” (Ibid., p. 9), “the dog to which Swithin had compared him” (Ibid., p. 145). These metaphors illustrate the Forsytes’ perception of him as an untamed, uncontrolled being who resists adapting to their established norms. His attitude toward financial matters intensifies his alienation from Forsyte values, as he demonstrates complete ignorance about monetary concerns (Ibid., p. 25). The repeated reference to Bosinney as “beggar” (Ibid., pp. 132, 141) by members of the Forsyte family, especially old Jolyon and James, reveals their deliberate rejection of him from their social order based on his financial constraints, confirming their possession-oriented mindset. These linguistic constructions of Bosinney’s identity exemplify the ideological dimension of class conflict; moreover, his lack of a “habitat” poses an existential threat to Forsyte principles, which have established their identity through a sense of property.

The class conflict between Bosinney and the Forsytes becomes most evident in the dialectical tension between art and property. What truly disturbs the Forsytes, beyond his appearance and his lack of proper social setting, is fundamentally Bosinney’s artistic identity and his views on art. The conflict clearly manifests itself between the artist and the “men of property.” Although the conflict appears to take place primarily between Soames and Bosinney, first regarding the house project at Robin Hill and subsequently through Bosinney’s romantic relationship with Soames’s wife, Irene, it is, essentially, a reflection of a deeper class-based antagonism. Their collective attitude towards Bosinney, the artist, reveals the fundamental incompatibility between the Forsytes’ property-oriented value system and the artistic ethos embodied by Bosinney. For instance, Roger Forsyte’s observation that young Bosinney will fail to achieve success because of his artistic aspirations and desire to reform English architecture, which offers no financial prospects (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 22), clearly discloses the Forsyte class’s perspective on artistic idealism. Roger’s dismissal of architecture’s financial prospects epitomises the core value system of the Forsyte consciousness: anything that does not generate profit is deemed worthless.

This conflict transforms into a personal confrontation between Soames and Bosinney as the narrative progresses and is explicitly enunciated by the narrator as “that eternal position of Art towards Property” (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 161). The architectural project concretises the contradiction between Bosinney, the artist, and Soames, “the man of property.” For Bosinney, the building is a means of aesthetic expression, as he aims to

create a dwelling that possesses its own dignity and architectural integrity (Ibid., p. 99). In contrast, property relations entirely frame Soames's response, since he thinks living in such a house would improve his social standing (Ibid., p. 101), seeing the residence as a status indicator that works as an investment and can later produce economic benefits through selling. Moreover, this primary disagreement of standards reveals itself in Soames's contradictory views on novelty. Even after ordering a modern architectural design for his house, Soames feels uncomfortable with the word "original," revealing his personal unease and resistance to the notion of originality (Ibid., p. 100). Although he desires innovation, he fears the radical change that innovation would bring. Bosinney directly recognises this contradiction and criticises Soames for wanting a conventional, attractive, and practical dwelling that would confine domestic staff to cramped attic spaces while featuring architectural elements designed to display class position (Ibid., pp. 99-100). This evaluation demonstrates that Soames is truly unable to free himself from the established upper class architectural norms. Even when Soames wants an "original" house, he feels that this originality should follow the existing class structure and values. Bosinney's design, on the contrary, aims to purify the space from class codes, emphasising that the dwelling should provide adequate space for dignified living (Ibid., p. 98). Through correspondence, Bosinney clearly asserts his opposition to interference in his art, particularly against "the man of property," who perceives art primarily through its material value. His insistence on a "free hand" (Ibid., p. 160) in his letter symbolizes the battle for creative freedom. Soames's reaction to this request demonstrates a characteristic Forsyte attitude as he reminds Bosinney that his freedom exists only according to the contract's specifications (Ibid., p. 173), emphasising that this liberty is solely permitted within the boundaries of property relations.

Within this framework, which evolves into a conflict between art and property, Galsworthy provides the artist with intellectual freedom while constraining the property-oriented individual within the consciousness shaped by their social class. Bosinney manages to convey his thoughts with complete liberty, and this very freedom confounds Soames. Although Soames has specific thoughts, he finds himself unable to convey them, restricted by his fear of social judgement and criticism, as these emotions have remained deeply buried within him without ever being articulated (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 62). This limitation suggests that his consciousness has been

reified within the limits imposed by the property values of his class, and the artist's intellectual and linguistic independence disconcerts him particularly because it emphasises the qualities he fails to possess.

When Soames uncovers the developing connection between Bosinney and Irene, he strategically avoids direct intervention, bringing charges of financial misconduct regarding construction expenditures. Soames's strategic approach, specifically his avoidance of direct confrontation, illustrates the indication of class identity, as it demonstrates that the bourgeois class typically channels conflicts into its established institutional structures. This further exemplifies the reification process by which a personal relationship is transferred to the institutional domain and reified. The bourgeois consciousness does not deal with the relationship as a personal matter; instead, it characterises the situation as expenditures and converts it into economic and legal frameworks. The case, by becoming a struggle between property and art, illustrates how class antagonism's ideological aspects penetrate the legal sphere. Presenting the defence on Bosinney's behalf, his lawyer points to Bosinney's constrained financial situation and emphasises his outstanding architectural abilities. The lawyer then makes what he acknowledges as an overly personal plea to the Judge, appealing to his appreciation of the arts and asking him to protect artists from the oppressive force of capital (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 309). In the remaining part of his defence, the lawyer directly shifts attention to the men of property and demonstrates the vulnerable position of the artist in society, questioning what consequences artistic professionals will face if wealthy property owners like Forsytes are permitted to abandon their contractual commitments (Ibid.). In doing so, he clearly articulates the conflict between art and capital, aiming to expose the constraining effects of property relations on the artist.

The court ruling in Soames's favour reveals the institutional system's tendency to protect the bourgeois class, indicating that property owners fundamentally design the system to serve their interests.³⁷ Bosinney's death, suspended between suicide and

³⁷ This institutional tendency to protect bourgeois interest is compatible with Gunn's analysis of how the middle class shaped urban institutional structures according to their interests. As he notes, "the middle class was cast remorselessly as the agent of improvement," with

accident,³⁸ emerges as the tragic result of the conflict between art and property. In this regard, Georg Forsyte accuses Soames, holding him responsible for Bosinney's death and claiming that Soames had destroyed him through that "act of property" which caused the Buccaneer to behave recklessly on that tragic afternoon (Galsworthy, 1950, p. 347). The "act of property" to which George refers to is explicitly connected to Soames's assertion of ownership over Irene. Caught between Soames's claims of ownership over Irene and the house at Robin Hill, Bosinney faces circumstances that make suicide a possible outcome. The Forsyte family, however, chooses to view the death as accidental, thereby deflecting any notion of blame. As the narrator suggests, they would refuse to consider suicide, viewing such speculation as deeply damaging to their reputation, and would prefer to characterise his death as either chance or divine retribution for his assault on their material wealth and domestic order (Ibid., p. 344). In doing so, they not only deny their complicity but rationalise the death ideologically - as if it were a deserved punishment.

Bosinney's tragic end demonstrates how class conflict and property relations can suppress or even destroy the artist and artistic freedom. This example transcends the merely personal sphere and illustrates broader socioeconomic structures and power dynamics inherent in class society. While the Bosinney-Forsyte conflict exposes the ideological dimension of class struggle by way of personal and legal processes, the Bicket family's story reveals how this class conflict finds expression in structural economic inequalities. The hardship faced by the Bickets reveals more clearly the financial deprivation and economic vulnerability as a consequence of the same system that destroyed Bosinney and his artistic ideals. Through their story, Galsworthy shows

institutional systems designed to strengthen class division through both ideological and economic means. See Gunn, S. (2004, pp. 39-40).

³⁸ The ambiguous nature of Bosinney's death is a deliberate choice by Galsworthy. In his correspondence with Edward Garnett, the author explains his intention: "To my mind (and I desire to defeat Forsyteism) the only way to do so is to leave the Forsytes masters of the field. The only way to enlist the sympathies of readers on the other side, the only way to cap the purpose of the book, which was to leave property as an empty shell is to leave the victory to Soames." See Marrot, H.V. (1936, pp. 168-171).

that the systematic protection of bourgeois interests creates not only ideological but also economic barriers that perpetuate class division and exploitation.

5.3. Manifestation of Economic Exploitation: The Material Deprivation of the Bicket Family

In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, notably in the second trilogy, Galsworthy provides an extensive analysis of economic aspects of class struggle during London's post-war social transformation, exemplified by the Bickets' experiences with the upper classes. In this portrayal, he establishes Michael Mont as a spokesperson for his critiques of class differences; Mont's observations, criticisms, and efforts to correct social injustices help to reveal the class conflict within the society. Tony and Victorine Bicket's struggle for survival becomes symbolic of the working class's existential plight amidst the economic hardships of the postwar period, and the Bicket family distinctly shows the precarious conditions that the new economic order has created for the working class.³⁹ The story of the Bickets begins when Tony is dismissed after stealing books from the publishing house to support his ailing wife, a narrative that enables Galsworthy to plainly portray the economic inequalities and widening class division in postwar London.

Tony Bicket's plea to Michael about his inability to survive on his current income given the high cost of living (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 63) indicates that the hardship he endures is not only a personal misfortune but symptomatic of a broader systematic problem. As Galsworthy depicts, the destructive consequences of the post-war economic system fall most heavily upon the working class. In directing his request to Michael, a member of gentry, Bicket reveals the economic vulnerability of the working class in post-war Britain. This appeal across class lines highlights the stark and economic divisions, giving his plea an explicitly classed dimension. In this concise but

³⁹ The Bickets' economic struggle reflects documented historical conditions of post-WWI Britain, when unemployment exceeded 10% throughout most of the 1920s. See McKibbin, R. (1998, pp. 106-114); see also Stevenson, J. (1984, pp.125-142). This material reality aligns with Levin's analysis of how class consciousness develops through concrete economic conditions, where workers must recognise that their hardship is not solely individual but structural within capitalist system. See Levin, M. (1980, pp. 505-506).

revealing dialogue, Galsworthy unveils the fundamental flaws in the prevailing capitalist system. Although Michael displays sympathy for Bicket's situation, he justifies the dismissal by arguing that tolerating theft would encourage others to steal, ultimately threatening everyone's employment (Ibid., pp. 63-64). This explanation of Michael exemplifies what Lukács identifies as "bourgeois rationalisation,"⁴⁰ a concept later integrated within his theorisation of "false consciousness." Human relations and ethical considerations are subordinated to the imperatives of economic utility and systematic coherence. Individual circumstances, such as Bicket's obligation to care for his ill wife, are rendered irrelevant, rationalised in the interest of maintaining the stability and continuity of the system. In presenting his decision as serving the greater good of the workforce, Michael seemingly positions himself as a defender of collective welfare, yet this ultimately upholds and strengthens the systematic logic and priorities of the capitalist order. Bicket's response directly addresses the rationalisation inherent in the system: "Yes, sir, I quite see your point - it's reason; but I can't live on reason" (Ibid., p. 64). As this statement reveals, Bicket voices the failure of the rationalised capitalist economic structure to fulfill essential human needs, thereby exposing the central contradiction within capitalism itself; that is, in its pursuit of economic rationality and efficiency, this system subordinates human needs to a secondary position.

Michael Mont's inner world is explicitly revealed through the Bicket incident. Following his help to the dismissed Bicket, Michael starts doubting his own motives and Bicket's credibility, finding himself in a moment of bitter realisation about the contradictory nature of his actions, essentially compensating someone for stealing while recognising pity's futility (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 65). Essentially, Michael represents a figure positioned between being completely aware of the class injustices depicted in the *Chronicles*, yet remains predominantly incapable of effecting meaningful change, partly due to personal limitations, and partly because he is

⁴⁰ See Lukács, G. (1971a, pp. 64-66). In these pages, Lukács discusses how bourgeois consciousness rationalises contradictions, creating what he terms "false consciousness" that manifest most strongly when the bourgeoisie believes itself to have the greatest mastery of economic phenomena.

reluctant to abandon the comforts of his privileged circumstances. As a member of a family from the landed gentry that has lost its economic standing, he embodies a process of class transition, shaped by both his aristocratic background and his progressive political leanings. As mentioned before, Michael represents Galsworthy's ideological perspective throughout the second trilogy of *The Chronicles*. The social problems and observational insight evident in Galsworthy's biography are reflected in Michael's character, manifested in his visits to impoverished neighbourhoods, his analysis of class divisions, and his critical stance toward his own social environment. In this sense, Michael can be read as a fictional embodiment of the author's critical consciousness of class contradictions. Just as Galsworthy was labelled a socialist, similar characterisations are applied to Michael, but he refuses to accept such a description, arguing that it would be inappropriate for his position (Ibid., p. 222). This reluctance reveals that, despite his sympathy for the working class, he hesitates to transform this sympathy into political commitment. This connection is affirmed by Bicket, who describes him as a gentleman with socialist leanings who has war experience and lacks arrogance (Ibid., p. 122), emphasising Michael's affinity and modesty in the eyes of working-class characters. In relation to the Forsyte family, Michael is Soames Forsyte's son-in-law and the husband of Fleur, one of the central figures of the second trilogy. While this position allows him to observe the property-oriented world of the Forsyte family from the inside, he also connects different social classes through his genuine interest in the working class. Michael's movement between these social spheres and his failure to completely identify with any of them enriches the class tension dynamics throughout the narrative.

In this context, the Bicket family functions as a catalyst that concretizes Michael Mont's class consciousness and moral conflicts. When Michael hosts Bicket at an affluent restaurant, the economic gap between them becomes starkly apparent. When Bicket notes that Michael's lunch equals a substantial part of his weekly earnings, Michael admits to daily moral struggle over such inequalities (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 134), revealing his awareness of privilege and resulting guilt. Michael's comparison between Victorine Bicket and Fleur, where he learns that Bicket's wife is twenty years old and immediately recognises this as his wife's age (Ibid., p. 64), in fact exposes the limits of his class consciousness. His empathy is based on a superficial similarity between the two women, and since it is only through the lens of his own wife that he

can relate to Victorine, this empathy remains innately constrained. Michael can grasp working-class struggles only insofar as they are intelligible within the framework of his privileged world. His thought upon returning home, “Bicket -pneumonia- I hope she’s [Fleur] got her fur coat” (Ibid., p. 73), exemplifies this point distinctly: even when confronted with working-class reality, he processes it through the symbols (“fur coat”) of his own privileged life. This reveals the true limits of an intellectual who attempts to act with class consciousness yet inevitably operates within the interpretive filters of his own privileged position.

Michael’s admission that social inequalities torment his conscience daily results in a series of charitable interventions driven by moral guilt. He donates Fleur’s unused clothing to the Bickets, takes down the address of Henry Boddick (an unemployed man he encounters on the street) to help him find work, visits the destitute Bergfeld family to offer economic aid, and grants Victorine financial assistance. However, he does not grasp that these gestures are not focused on establishing any structural reform within the existing social order but function as acts of personal charity intended to ease his conscience. Indeed, Michael’s admission of overwhelming compassion followed by his dismissive reaction (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 225) reveals the true motivation behind these efforts. The modelling job he arranges for Victorine stands as another of Michael’s philanthropic endeavours and constitutes a compelling symbol of economic inequality.

Victorine Bicket exemplifies a concrete and vivid instance of the economic dimension of class conflict, both before and during her involvement in modelling. Her “unusual” face and appearance became a disadvantage within her class, as her distinctive looks created uncertainty among potential employers who felt uncomfortable hiring someone whose unconventional beauty made them feel inadequate, despite her lack of wealth, social position, fashionable connections, or special talents (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 121). Galsworthy later transforms this unusual beauty, initially an obstacle in the practical world of the working class, into a commodifiable asset within bourgeois artistic circles, ironically exposing class differences. As their circumstances worsen, Victorine accumulates feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Tony’s dismissal from his modest position prompts her determination to improve their situation, revealing the intense anger concealed beneath her passive demeanour and her deep desire to secure better opportunities for them both, particularly for Tony (Ibid.). Her economic

desperation ultimately drives her decision to transgress traditional class-based moral boundaries⁴¹ in search of financial solutions.

Before turning to desperate alternatives, Victorine contacts Michael to discuss the possibility of Tony's reappointment. Michael's response upon learning of Victorine's visit demonstrates the social prejudices rooted in his aristocratic background: "Through Michael passed at once the thought: Money, I suppose" (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 123). Anticipating her need for money, Michael attempts to help by capitalising on what he perceives as her distinctive appearance, yet this assistance transforms her into a commodity. She becomes reified as an exchange value that can be exploited for both aesthetic and economic profit as Michael suggests she could model for an artist creating commercial book covers, presenting this as a potential career opportunity that matches her physical appearance (Ibid., p. 124). Her body becomes a site where class hierarchies are made visible, transformed into an object for exchange, a final asset to be used when all other options have been exhausted. Within the capitalist system, Victorine serves as a paradigmatic example of the commodification of the human subject and the way economic imperatives penetrate and dissipate even the most intimate personal boundaries. Victorine's instant response to the artist's suggestion of posing "altogether," her immediate inquiry about increased payment, exemplifies how thoroughly her body has become commodified. The artist's response, "Yes, half as much again - more perhaps" (Ibid., p. 128), suggests that increased exposure of the body corresponds with greater economic value. In this dialogue, the concept of "altogether" becomes a metaphor for how Victorine's body is transformed into exchange value in the capitalist economic system. While more exposure of the body means more money, Victorine's direct asking for "more money" demonstrates that economic necessity deteriorates private limits.

⁴¹ Victorine's moral compromise reflects the desperate measures many working-class women were forced to consider during the economic hardship of post-WWI Britain. For an analysis of the economic challenges faced by working-class women in post-war Britain and how these pressures converged with class-based moral expectations, see McKibbin (1998, pp. 106-111) and see also Todd (2005, pp. 45-67).

Victorine's internal struggle over her decision reflects the dialectic between material constraints and individual subjectivity. Her anxiety over conventional standards, evident in her concerns about posing unclothed before a stranger and her worry about Tony's potential reaction, is rapidly grounded in the material sphere through her economic calculations as she computes the substantial weekly earnings of four pounds and ten shillings (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 129). Her obsessive repetition of the payment amount as she tries to convince herself reveals the subjective split she experiences in the face of her body's commodification. This internal division becomes visually apparent in the mirror scene, where she wishes her reflection could take her place on the modelling platform while she remains safely hidden (Ibid., p. 165). Rather than moralising about Victorine's choice, the narrative presents it as a forced result of economic pressures, showing her visualisation of Tony's meager balloon-selling efforts and her determination to achieve better financial outcomes (Ibid.). Just as Tony Bicket is compelled to sell balloons under adverse socioeconomic conditions, Victorine's modelling emerges as a manifestation of their class position and the restrictive economic constraints imposed by the capitalist system.

The public sale of Victorine's nude image signifies the culmination of her physical objectification. The complete commodification of her body occurs as it moves beyond artistic raw material into the sphere of bourgeois consumption. Soames Forsyte's act of bargaining over the painting, complaining about the high price and demanding a twenty-pound reduction before agreeing to purchase (Galsworthy, 1967, pp. 217-218), demonstrates that Victorine's body has now become completely commodified, converted into a marketable object with a specific exchange value. Soames's evaluation of the painting primarily in terms of its monetary rather than aesthetic value exemplifies how the capitalist bourgeoisie converts working-class bodies into market commodities. As Victorine pays a shilling to see her own commodified image displayed publicly, her transformation into commodity becomes obvious. As she stands gazing at the painted figure (Ibid., p. 198), she confronts her own transformation into a purchasable commodity. The monetary transaction that mediates her relationship with her own body serves as a paradoxical manifestation of the transformation from subject to object. This process of alienation is not confined to the circulation of Victorine's body within the art market; it also emerges in the clash of class-based perspectives. In Victorine's next encounter with Michael, his comment about the

modelling process, “My God! Money’s an evil thing!” (Ibid., p. 207), reveals the inability of an intellectual from the privileged class to grasp the existential human need for money. This statement further reflects a class perspective that moralises the existential choices imposed by economic imperatives. In contrast, Victorine’s response “The want of it is, I know” and her explanation that she only posed because of their desperate desire to escape their circumstances and her inability to watch Tony selling balloons in harsh conditions (Ibid.) reveals the material constraints of proletarian existence. Her reasoning reinforces how upper-class ethical considerations remain privileges inaccessible to those confronting economic insecurity.

Victorine’s explanation for posing nude, “I only did it because we do so want to get away” (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 207), highlights the shared dream she has with Tony of emigration to Australia. The desire to migrate, on the one hand, functions as a critique of the failure of the capitalist system in which they live; on the other hand, it embodies the impossibility of economic mobility in the industrial metropolis and the psychological need for alternative living spaces. In the text, this longing initially manifests through the image of bodily deprivation, as Tony expresses his desire for Central Australia’s warmth, believing that sunshine would improve their physical condition and bring healthy colour to Victorine’s complexion (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 70). Australia signifies more than a mere economic opportunity; it symbolises a desire for biological renewal of bodies weakened and disciplined by industrial capitalism. This utopian vision of Australia also serves as a bearer of hope for the future and the potential for reproduction, most evidently in their dreams of having children, imagining a healthy, tanned child playing in nature’s abundance (Ibid., p. 199). This pastoral image stands in distinct contrast to Michael’s observations of urban children in London, who appear as a peculiar mixture of weakness and energy, spontaneity and compliance, displaying both childlike innocence and premature maturity while seeming incapable of forward thinking (Ibid., p. 420). This contrast exposes the contradictions inherent in metropolitan capitalism, its shaping of bodies and consciousness, and its effects on the process of social reproduction.

Beyond the Bicketts’ utopian vision of emigration to Australia and healthy children, their immediate material reality presents far more urgent socioeconomic constraints. Tony Bicket tries to overcome the existential crisis caused by unemployment by selling balloons since he faces the grim prospect of either entering the workhouse or

considering suicide if he cannot secure employment within a couple of weeks (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 90). Within a Lukácsian perspective, balloon-selling, with its very low income, temporary nature, and fragile structure, symbolises the illusory character of the working class's aspirations for economic improvement. Tony's encounter with Soames while selling balloons appears as a significant moment of class confrontation and opposing worldviews. Soames's general attitude toward the working class is evident well before this encounter. In earlier dialogues concerning class distinctions, Soames's perspective demonstrates typical bourgeois attitudes. When Michael's father suggests that eliminating class distinctions would simply require improving working-class hygiene, clothing, and speech patterns (Ibid., p. 62), he reduces deep social inequalities to surface-level problems. Soames, on the other hand, explicitly rejects the concept of equality (Ibid.), showing his desire to protect his class privilege. His statement reveals the bourgeoisie defending its class position and trying to justify current power relations. Moreover, his comment, "They've got everything they want" (Ibid.), becomes part of a strategy to reject the demands of the working class. However, his assertion stands in clear conflict with the Bickets' real, material struggles. For Soames, economic inequality appears natural and immutable, demonstrating what Lukács theorised as "false consciousness," the ideological process through which individuals normalise inequalities as aspects of social reality.

In contrast to the "false consciousness" exhibited by Soames, Michael demonstrates an acute awareness of class differences through his critical observations of both his immediate social milieu and the material conditions of those in impoverished urban spaces. His conclusion, "cream for all the cats in Society, muck for all the blowflies in the streets" (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 376), reveals a critical understanding of the stark inequalities that shape society. The balloon-selling activities of Tony and the commodification of Victorine's body highlight the severe conditions that economic hardship creates for the working class. Michael's observations within his privileged circle and in poor districts demonstrate that this inequality is not natural, as many members of the bourgeoisie with "false consciousness" tend to claim, but rather a product of socio-economic construction. The individual experiences of the Bickets constitute a microcosm of the Great Strike, the political manifestation of class conflict, which will be analysed in the following section. When analysed from the Lukácsian framework of class consciousness and class conflict, the depiction of the Great Strike

throughout the Forsyte Chronicles powerfully exemplifies the attitude of the bourgeois class towards the working class, revealing how class conflict serves the interests of the bourgeois class itself.

5.4. Collective Resistance and Class Consciousness: The Political Dimension of the Great Strike

When addressing the unfolding of the Great Strike and interaction between social classes during the process, Galsworthy uses the technique of indirect narration,⁴² choosing instead to convey it through its impact on characters. The most striking aspect of this narrative is that the strike is depicted almost entirely through bourgeois viewpoints, while workers' experiences remain largely invisible. Galsworthy does not directly present the voice of the working class, their demands, and their motivation for resistance; the workers are made visible only through the perceptions of bourgeois characters. On the one hand, this way of telling the story shows Galsworthy's standard narrative technique throughout *The Chronicles*; on the other hand, it suggests that the bourgeois is the originator of the circumstances that force workers into striking, while claiming the right to speak about it. This approach also supersedes Lukács's analysis of the limitations of bourgeois consciousness, whereby workers-whose rights, bodies, and labour are exploited-become represented and judged exclusively within the boundaries of this constricted consciousness.

While the bourgeois characters have somewhat diverse reactions to the strike, these responses unmistakably emerge from a collective class consciousness. When confronted with news of the strike, Winifred Dartie, Soames's sister, responds not by contemplating causes or broader implications, but rather by exhibiting annoyance at the non-delivery of her newspaper. She comforts her unease by questioning the reliability of newspaper reports, dismissing them as untrustworthy while expressing impatience with what she perceives as disruptive union interference (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 566). She criticises the trade unions for their assumed interference in the press; however, she appears indifferent to understanding the actual grievances or conditions that lead workers to organise and strike in the first place. Nonetheless, she regards the strike as an appealing development worthy of discussion. Ultimately, as a bourgeois

⁴² For Galsworthy's use of indirect technique, see Schalit, L. (1929, p. 29).

individual, daily conveniences constitute her main priority; upon learning that essential services would remain unaffected and property would be protected (Ibid., p. 570), the strike becomes only a minor disturbance. Eventually, with the belief that “the Government always did something in the end,” (Ibid., p. 566) Winifred stays assured that officials will safeguard her class interests; she disregards the workers’ pursuit of rights and the hardship faced by other social classes as long as her own bourgeois comfort remains intact.

Similar to Winifred, Fleur, another bourgeois figure, responds to the strike in a comparable manner. Michael anticipates Fleur’s response even before the strike begins with his observation that “she wouldn’t take it seriously” (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 561), demonstrating the predictable nature of bourgeois responses as products of common class ideology. When Michael announces, “The strike is on,” Fleur’s dismissive reply, “What a bore!” (Ibid., p. 562) confirms his earlier assessment of her possible stance. Fleur’s subsequent statement, “I wish we had a Mussolini” (Ibid.), exposes her inclinations towards authoritarian measures against the working class and reveals the extent of her intolerance to democratic labour movements.⁴³ Moreover, Fleur’s statement “I wish we had a Mussolini” appears as not just a sign of intolerance, but the manifestation of a mentality that enquires fascist solutions to class conflicts in the political context of the 1920s. This dictatorial aspiration illustrates the extremes of her class consciousness and position; that is, workers are not only a disruption to her bourgeois comfort and order, but also a danger that requires forceful elimination. Fleur consequently dismisses the workers’ right to strike, their democratic process, and their efforts to be heard. This mindset once again precisely exemplifies the restrictions of bourgeois consciousness, demonstrating Fleur’s inability to comprehend or empathise with the workers’ conditions. Michael resists this longing for authoritarianism by citing historical examples of dictators who ultimately brought destruction to their nations, including leaders from Mexico, Russia, France, and England (Ibid.). This

⁴³ Mussolini (1883-1945) was a fascist leader who held power in Italy between 1922 and 1943. He is known for his suppression of labour unions, banning strikes and authoritarian rule. Fleur’s desire for Mussolini is a reference to the harsh measures taken by Mussolini against labour movements in Italy at the time of the novel was written. For information on Mussolini’s rise to power, see Albert M. Craig et al. (2005, pp. 911-913).

conversation reveals that Fleur's opposition to the strike has reached a point where she is ready to sacrifice even democratic processes, as in those countries.

Fleur exhibits little interest in Michael's patriotic endeavours during the strike. However, she accepts Michael's suggestion to run a canteen for strike-breakers who ensure daily public services continue to operate. Although she initially agrees reluctantly, "All right" (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 564), she later expresses considerable enjoyment, as indicated by her comments "I'm enjoying it frightfully" and "I hope the strike lasts!" (Ibid., p. 584). These remarks reveal that she perceives even a serious social crisis like the strike as a source of personal satisfaction and amusement. The people she works with in the canteen are from her earlier "collection," that is, acquaintances from Society circles. Her selection of Society associates reflects bourgeois solidarity and operates as a counter-response to the workers' struggle. Contrary to Fleur's enthusiasm, Soames disapproves of her involvement in the canteen; his internal expression of unease and instinctive discomfort (Ibid., p. 585) reveals his disapproval of his daughter's contact with the working class, despite being limited to her role at the canteen. To Soames, the canteen signifies a departure from bourgeois comfort and security, and he fears Fleur might contract a disease or, more symbolically, harmful ideas in such an environment, as evidenced by his anxious inquiry about whether she has been infected by anything in that place (Ibid., p. 584). His reaction is consistent with his overall attitude toward the strike.

Soames's attitude toward the strike clearly indicates the bourgeoisie's false consciousness. His conscious avoidance of London's East End illustrates his intent to keep class conflict at a distance, as he associates that area with unpleasantness during periods of labour unrest (Galsworthy, 1967, p. 578). This geographic avoidance reflects the bourgeois inclination to disassociate from the working-class movement and consider it a phenomenon unrelated to their existence. Nonetheless, Soames is inevitably confronted by the strikers when he hears hostile comments directed at a wealthy individual only to realise that he himself is the target of their anger (Ibid.). This encounter represents a direct manifestation of class antagonism. This moment of recognition proves essential as Soames comprehends his role as the target of working-class resentment; he momentarily grasps his social position as perceived by the disadvantaged class he has long disregarded. However, this instance of class awareness does not lead him to acknowledge the structural justifications behind the workers'

protest. On the contrary, his description of the strikers as appearing unfocused and lacking the concentrated determination necessary to make revolutionary action truly threatening (Ibid.), betrays his condescending view, diminishing the collective power and political consciousness of the working class to incompetence and disorganisation. This approach of Soames indicates a reifying attitude towards the working class, similar to his attitude towards other lower classes. For Soames, the working class is not capable of developing collective consciousness and organising meaningful resistance; they are objects to be managed passively, even to be intervened with tanks. Soames first greets the military presence with satisfaction, expecting it to intimidate the workers, yet he subsequently expresses discomfort with the display of force, feeling a sense of inner resistance to such authoritarian tactics (Ibid., p. 585). This internal contradiction unmasks the essential conflict between bourgeois commitment to social stability and disquiet provoked by the erosion of liberal-democratic ideals. His reaction expressing shock that such tactics were being employed in England rather than authoritarian countries (Ibid.) exposes a significant inconsistency in bourgeois consciousness: his approval of military suppression of labour unrest stands in stark contrast to his mutual view of English national identity as inherently opposed to such explicit authoritarian actions. This discomfort stems not from concern for the workers' welfare, but from the threat such measures pose the bourgeois self-image of England as a civilised nation distinct from supposedly more repressive regimes. Soames wants both the suppression of working-class resistance and the preservation of England's liberal façade, an irreconcilable tension within bourgeois consciousness. As the Lukácsian framework of class consciousness and class conflict suggests, this contradiction reflects the inherent limitations of bourgeois consciousness, which is unable to comprehend the structural nature of class struggle and instead interprets it based on national characteristics. Thus, Soames's attitude toward the strike reflects not merely his individual temperament but also demonstrates how broader historical and social forces generate and sustain bourgeois consciousness.

The bourgeois characters' longing for restoration of familiar conditions betrays their preference for a temporary suppression of class conflict and a return to their everyday comfort and order without addressing the underlying causes of the social unrest. Michael regards the suppression of the strike as a victory, celebrating the removal of threat to England and the cessation of a source of satisfaction for the nation's enemies

(Galsworthy, 1967, p. 604). This perspective of Michael overlooks the underlying conditions of the working class, concentrating exclusively on the elimination of the surface manifestation of class conflict. On the other hand, the voice of the working class emerges merely through the filtered lens of bourgeois characters' observations and judgements. This narrative strategy mirrors the bourgeoisie's reification of the working class and denies them the right to be autonomous subjects with legitimate perspectives. Ultimately, the portrayal of the Great Strike offers a distinct exposition of bourgeois attitudes towards workers' resistance, revealing their perception of the strike as a product of bourgeois false consciousness and a strategy for maintaining class hegemony.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined class conflict in John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles* from a Lukácsian perspective, analysing the three fundamental dimensions of this conflict: ideological, economic, and political manifestations. This section analyses the ideological dimension through the tension between Bosinney and the Forsyte family, which eventually reflects the broader conflict between art and property. It examines the economic manifestation of class conflict through the Bicket family's interaction with the privileged classes and the economic difficulties for the working class in post-war London. The analysis also explores the political manifestation of class struggle through the Great Strike, the bourgeoisie's response to this social crisis, and their strategies to maintain class hegemony.

In *The Forsyte Chronicles*, John Galsworthy provides a literary exemplification of Lukács's concept of "great realism" by situating individual experiences within a historical "totality" and connecting characters' personal experiences to the broader contradictions inherent in capitalist social structures. Bosinney's quest for artistic freedom and his ideological and legal struggle with the bourgeoisie; the Bicket family's struggle for existence amidst the burdens of economic hardship and the indifference of the bourgeois class; the conscious collective action of the working class during the Great Strike and the anxieties of the bourgeoisie reflects the internal contradictions of capitalist society on different levels. These contradictions reveal the underlying social relations behind the appearance of individual experiences, as conceptualised through Lukács's theoretical framework of "class consciousness" and "realism."

Another significant feature that emerges throughout *The Chronicles* is a depiction of class conflict only through the lens of bourgeois consciousness, Galsworthy's narrative technique that supports Lukács's theory on the limitation of this class-based perspective. The members of the Forsyte family perceive and interpret the resistance and demands of the working class within the framework of their own class interests and comforts, a "false consciousness" that normalizes the inequalities in capitalist society and fails to grasp the structural causes of class conflict. The attitudes of characters such as Soames and Fleur towards the strike clearly expose the collective consciousness of the bourgeois and its fundamental blindness. In his expansive work, Galsworthy chronicles the Forsyte family and the social transformation they witness across three generations. Through this narrative, he provides a sophisticated representation of the historical transformation from Victorian England to post-World War I society. The distinctive feature of this work lies in its varied examination of class struggle, extending beyond economic considerations to incorporate ideological and political perspectives. In this work, Galsworthy constructs a literary exemplification of class consciousness and class conflict as theorised by Lukács, delivering an in-depth portrayal of both the capitalist society he inhabits and the upper class to which he belongs, embodying what Engels characterised as the "triumph of realism."

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the formation and generational evolution of property-oriented class consciousness through the upper-middle-class English family, the Forsytes, represented in John Galsworthy's trilogies *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy*. Galsworthy's position as a member of this privileged class, having seen its values from within and developed a distant perspective through his alienation from these values, forms the background of the critical attitude seen in his works. In particular, the strong "sense of property" that shapes the class consciousness of his class serves as a determinant force across not only economic but also moral, social, and emotional levels. The study has emphasised how this understanding of property, reflecting the historical developments in late-Victorian and Edwardian England, shapes various societal structures and relational dynamics, including familial relations, the institution of marriage, individual identity formation, and social hierarchies - a critique that Galsworthy develops throughout his works, especially in these two trilogies depicting the upper-middle class.

Both individual life experiences and historical circumstances were key factors in Galsworthy's development of a critical attitude towards his class. His relationship with Ada plays a transformative role in distancing himself from the traditional understanding of family and marriage, and in his criticism of these institutions in his works of fiction. Likewise, his direct witnessing of the living conditions of the lower classes through his father's real estate assignments increased his sensitivity to social injustices. It led him to make social criticism through art. This aspect is one of several factors that position Galsworthy as a writer who simultaneously belongs to and is alienated from his social class.

Building on this complex positioning, the research has considered how the historical and social contradictions of the period in which Galsworthy lived influenced his literary outlook. The social norms of the Victorian era, the new wealth structure created by the Industrial Revolution, the Boer War reflecting England's imperial ambitions, and especially the disruptions brought by the First World War deeply affected Galsworthy's class and his stance toward this social stratum. With an awareness of the interaction of his class with these pivotal historical events, Galsworthy establishes himself as an outside observer and exposes his class's moral

deficiencies, excessive possessive instincts, and sense of superiority. Galsworthy's perspective as an "alien's fortress" - a position that distances him from the class to which he belongs - has carried him to a unique place in English literature.

The study has provided a detailed discussion of the transformation of the class consciousness of the Forsyte family. In the first and second generations, the desire to own and accumulate appears as the primary determinant of class identity; in the last generation, this understanding shifts towards a consumption-oriented lifestyle. However, the transformation stays on the surface, and the essence of the structure of consciousness shaped by their possessive instinct is preserved unchanged. Galsworthy's characters, particularly within the dynamic between Soames and Irene, have proved the objectification of human relations through the sense of property, degrading individuals into mere possessions or commodities.

The study has established the first comprehensive, systematic application of Geor Lukács's realist literary theories to Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Chronicles*, exploring the manifestation of class consciousness through concepts that have not been applied to this work. This theoretical approach represents a significant departure from existing Galsworthy scholarship, focusing mainly on biographical or general social commentary. With a Lukácsian approach, the study has examined the work at the level of individual psychology or family structure and the context of class relations, class conflicts, social structures, and historical transformations of the period. Lukács's theories of class consciousness and realist literature have provided a functional framework, changing the story of the Forsyte family from a mere fiction into an analysis of historical forces, class conflicts, and contradictions.

For the first time in Galsworthy studies, Lukács's fundamental concepts, such as "historical totality," "typicality," "class consciousness," "false consciousness," and "reification," have provided a theoretical basis for analysing the class structures and individual alienations reflected by Galsworthy through the upper-middle-class Forsyte family. These concepts have eased a deeper examination of social realities portrayed in literature. Within the Lukácsian framework, literary realism should be able to reveal the surface appearances of social life and the historical forces and class contradictions behind the surface.

Class consciousness, as conceptualized by Lukács, is not only a form of individual awareness but also an understanding of the historical position of the class and its place in the relations of production. In this framework, the class consciousness of the Forsyte family is characterised by a form of consciousness that is decided by their property ownership rather than their position in the production process. The family members, especially the character of Soames, define individuals through their material possessions and set up their relations with them based on property. When the Forsyte family members normalize their property-based consciousness, embody it as central to their identity, and naturalise it as the valid way of perceiving the world, they manifest what Lukács terms “false consciousness.” The concept of “reification” runs within this context: human relations are perceived as commodity relations; individuals are considered possessable assets, as in the relationship between Soames and Irene. In line with Lukács’s conceptualization of realism, the study has shown that Galsworthy’s novels reflect not only individual and family dramas but also the class structure, historical transformations, and turmoil of the period. The characters and plots of the books, while seemingly presenting individual conflicts, are parts of a wider social structure standing for the contradictions of bourgeois society. In this context, Galsworthy’s narrative illustrates the Lukácsian principle of “totality;” individuals and events are examined through their historical situatedness and class relations rather than as isolated phenomena.

Moreover, Lukácsian theory of realism provides a significant analytical framework for understanding the historical evolution of the “sense of property” in *The Forsyte Chronicles*. The works reflect the historical and social shifts in British society from the late Victorian era to the post-First World War period, tracing the developmental stages of capitalism through three generations. When examined through the concepts of “historical reflection,” “totality,” and “typicality” selected from Lukácsian realist terminology, it becomes clear that Galsworthy portrays the Forsyte family, spanning three generations, as a “miniature” of society that embodies the underlying broader historical forces.

The Forsyte family’s sense of property evolves in parallel with the changing phases of capitalism. Old Jolyon’s capitalist approach, based on production and trade, evolves into Soames’s understanding, based on investment and financial speculation, and finally into Fleur’s consumer culture. The Boer War constitutes a significant historical

episode in this transformation. Soames's identity as the "man of property" and his support for British imperialism show the connection between the individual and national passion for property. The ideology of the "white man's burden" is manifested in parallel in his claim of ownership over both colonial lands and Irene. Furthermore, Galsworthy applies the Lukácsian concept of "totality" by portraying the transformation of women's social roles as the epitome of the dialectic between broader historical forces and individual experiences. He illustrates this by showing how historical events affect his characters' daily lives. Irene's silent resistance to the process of reification and her escape from her marriage to Soames symbolize a rejection of the Victorian institution of marriage as a system of property transfer, as well as a challenge to the reification of women by their husbands and, more broadly, of the lower classes by the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Fleur exemplifies the postwar "new woman" identity, reflecting the contradictions of a modern female figure who merges freedom with consumption.

Galsworthy's critical view of his class elucidates what Lukács called "the triumph of realism." This critical view is most strikingly seen in the relationships of the characters. Soames's feeling of Irene as his property and the resulting relational destruction prove how the sense of ownership reifies human relationships. In the post-First World War period, with the disruption of traditional hierarchies and social structures, this reification of human relationships continues through Fleur, who collects people and experiences as items in her collection, while her position caught between modernity and traditional bourgeois values further reflects the internal contradictions of her class. By portraying the transformation of relationships while retaining the sense of property as their fundamental determinant, and by showing these changes as products of historical development, Galsworthy frames *The Forsyte Chronicles* not merely as a family saga but as a broader narrative situated within the rise and expansion of capitalism and its social consequences. Galsworthy's realist approach offers a deep understanding of capitalist society, revealing the dialectical interaction of broad social and historical forces with individual lives, identities, and everyday experiences. In this context, the property-oriented character of the Forsyte family appears as a concrete representation of the bourgeois class consciousness of the period.

Examination of the property-oriented class consciousness of the Forsyte family within the framework of Lukács's class consciousness and reification has revealed that this upper-middle-class consciousness has continued and transformed over three generations. For the first generation of Forsytes, representing the Victorian bourgeoisie, the "sense of property" forms the basis of a collective class consciousness. Characters such as old Jolyon and James internalize the "objective possibilities" of their economic conditions through the values they attribute to their property, adopting this as a source of status, security, and identity. The possessive instinct intensifies dramatically in the second generation, particularly manifesting in Soames's obsessive ownership-oriented behaviour and his treatment of material assets and personal relationships as properties to be controlled. Accepting without questioning the objective possibilities that late Victorian England's socioeconomic transformations offer his class, Soames embodies the Lukácsian notion of "false consciousness" by perceiving property relations as natural and immutable. This possessive instinct intensifies to the point where Soames places his wife Irene on the same level as his other possessions, fundamentally reifying her humanity into an object he controls. The relationship between Soames and Irene demonstrates how bourgeois identity, which is essentially constructed around property ownership, affects personal human relationships. One of Galsworthy's most striking ironies is that, in Soames's attempt to reify Irene, he becomes the victim of a complex process of reification that he describes as the "spider's web" of social expectations. His urge to possess becomes a mechanism that imprisons others and himself.

Although young Jolyon, another member of the second generation, can critically question the property-oriented values of the Forsyte family, he cannot wholly escape the influence of this class consciousness. His self-description as "half artist, half Forsyte" embodies Lukács's dialectical theory of class consciousness. While he keeps his bourgeois position ("class-in-itself"), he can objectively evaluate his class values without entirely transcending them, showing movement toward, but not achieving, "class-for-itself" status.

In the third generation, the contrast between Fleur and Jon demonstrates the different evolutionary possibilities of property-oriented class consciousness. Fleur represents the possessive instinct seen in her father, Soames, evolved through consumer

capitalism, while Jon develops a more radical opposition to this consciousness. This generation illustrates the search for new identities in the post-war meaninglessness.

When examined in the light of Lukács's theoretical framework, the class conflict in *The Forsyte Chronicles* becomes clear in ideological, economic, and political dimensions. Lukács's interpretation of Marxist theory grounds class conflict in economic relations and within a broader historical totality. The concepts of "reification" and "false consciousness" that he developed in *History and Class Consciousness* provide a robust framework for analysing conflicts in capitalist society. Galsworthy skilfully reflects the internal contradictions of capitalist society through three different dimensions of conflict.

Galsworthy portrays the ideological dimension of class conflict through the relationship between the architect Philip Bosinney and the Forsyte family members. Bosinney's innovative aesthetic sensibilities and creativity directly challenge the materialistic bourgeois traditions embraced by the Forsytes. Every aspect of Bosinney's self-presentation - his characteristic hat, casual clothing choices, aloof demeanour, and determined dedication to artistic freedom - positions him in direct opposition to bourgeois conventions. As an architect, his creative vision for the house at Robin Hill directly conflicts with Soames's perspective, which is still confined within property relations. This tension can be understood as opposition to the commodification of art, ultimately leading to Bosinney's tragic end.

The Bicket family's struggle for survival in post-war London illustrates the economic dimension of class conflict. Tony Bicket's persistent unemployment and his wife Victorine's nude modelling for income illustrate the material hardships of the working class within the capitalist system, while particularly revealing how the body is commodified as exchange value in this economic system. Her dreams of emigrating to Australia represent the hope of liberation from the restrictive conditions of modern capitalism in post-war London. Michael Mont personifies the class contradictions of the intellectual from privileged classes - while sympathetic to working-class struggles and trying small-scale interventions like arranging employment, his position of comfort prevents him from pursuing the systematic changes necessary to address fundamental inequalities.

Galsworthy depicts the political dimension of class conflict through the Great Strike, which is entirely presented through the perspective of bourgeois characters, thereby revealing the innate limitations of bourgeois consciousness when confronting working-class political action. Winifred's discomfort at the non-arrival of her newspaper, Fleur's characterisation of the strike as "how boring," and Soames's intentional avoidance of East London reflect the bourgeois consciousness that perceives the collective resistance of the working class only as a threat to their comfort and order. Fleur's expression, "I wish we had a Mussolini," shows the search for an authoritarian solution to the class conflict.

When Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles* are interpreted through Lukács's theoretical lens, the evolution of bourgeois class consciousness and the contradictions of capitalism become particularly visible across generations. The following section summarises the main findings of this research within this framework.

This study has demonstrated that in *The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy* trilogy, the "sense of property" is an economic concept and a fundamental determinant in forming class consciousness. In turn-of-the-century London, bourgeois class consciousness is essentially structured around the "sense of property" and, while preserving its essential continuity across three generations, goes through formal transformation. The process of reification, exemplified in the Soames-Irene relationship, manifests itself in the reduction of human relations to property relations, revealing how bourgeois consciousness shaped by ownership values penetrates the personal sphere. Ironically, while the bourgeois consciousness subjects others to reification, its members possess a reified mind shaped by class norms and expectations, preventing the development of autonomous subjectivity, as illustrated by Soames's description of himself caught within a "spider's web" of social constraints.

Galsworthy's narrative represents applying Lukács's concepts of literary realism, historical continuity, transformation of the social structure, and class conflicts. Class conflict is apparent in three dimensions: the ideological conflict between Bosinney and the Forsytes; the economic struggle of the Bicket family; and the political conflict that appeared during the Great Strike. Lukácsian concepts - "historical totality," "typicality," and "class consciousness" - are embodied in Galsworthy's work; the Forsyte family, as a miniature of capitalist society, reflects broad historical processes. They illustrate the transformations of values occurring within their class and society

across three generations, while proving the preservation of class positions and their occasional questioning in response to changes. Thus, a dialectical link between individual conflicts and social contradictions is one of the most essential determinants of Lukácsian realism. Historical events (Boer War, First World War) played a decisive role in transforming class consciousness; nevertheless, the essence of property-oriented bourgeois class consciousness was preserved.

While many Galsworthy scholars suggest that his critical approach toward his class softened in the second trilogy due to a more moderate portrayal of Soames, this study has revealed that Soames stays unchanged. Instead, Galsworthy redirects his criticism toward the new generation of bourgeois, represented by Fleur, thereby maintaining the strength of his critique despite the changing social context. Furthermore, as emphasised throughout this dissertation, despite his denials, Galsworthy shows a distinctly socialist perspective in his approach to the Forsyte family, which aligns with Lukács's assertion that a writer should approach their subject matter with a clear perspective. When all these findings have been considered, *The Forsyte Chronicles* emerge not only as the saga of a family, but also as a historical critique of capitalist development and its social consequences, epitomizing the theory of realism that Lukács envisioned.

This dissertation is limited to only two of Galsworthy's trilogies (*The Forsyte Saga* and *A Modern Comedy*) and excludes his other literary works. Moreover, due to the length and scope of the works, the study has had to focus primarily on the main characters of old Jolyon, Soames, Irene, and Fleur. It does not include a detailed analysis of secondary characters such as Timothy, Winifred, and Annette concerning their understanding of property and class consciousness. A more comprehensive analysis of the female characters from a gender perspective is beyond the limits of this study. As for the theoretical framework, the study is primarily limited to Lukács's concept of realism, class consciousness, and reification; different critical approaches such as poststructuralist, new historicist, or feminist theories are not examined. While New Historicist criticism might have addressed additional dimensions of the relationship between *The Forsyte Chronicles* and their historical moment, particularly regarding the circulation of ideological power and cultural discourse, this study's commitment to Lukácsian theory provides a more focused lens for examining class

consciousness as a determining force in both individual psychology and historical development.

This study has analysed Galsworthy's *Forsyte Chronicles* through Lukács's theoretical framework and has revealed the sense of property's central role in forming class consciousness. In line with this dissertation's theoretical framework and findings, the following suggestions can be made for further studies that will analyse Galsworthy's works from different perspectives: Future researchers can conduct comparative analyses between Galsworthy's works and those of other authors. A comparison of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901) and *The Forsyte Chronicles* may offer valuable insights into the transformation of bourgeois families in both works. Gender representations in Galsworthy's *Chronicles* can be explored in more detail, primarily through the characters of Irene, Fleur, and Victorine. A comprehensive analysis of how these characters reflect the changing female identity of the period and an examination of Galsworthy's feminist tendencies through characters such as young Jolyon would be critical. Finally, the reinterpretation of Galsworthy's works to understand possessive instinct, consumption, and class distinctions in contemporary capitalist society offers a rich field of study from both literary and sociological perspectives. Additionally, for future studies beyond Galsworthy's works, Lukács's theory of realism, especially concepts of class consciousness and reification, can provide fruitful theoretical frameworks for analysing literary works from different periods and geographies.

In the end, studies in this field, whether on Galsworthy and his works or the application of Lukács's theory of realism to the works of different authors, will make valuable contributions to the endeavour to understand human beings and society. In these studies, the "possessive instinct" is central to understanding property relations and class identity. Galsworthy states in the *Preface to The Forsyte Saga*: "Human Nature, under its changing pretensions and clothes, is and ever will be very much of a Forsyte" (1950, p. viii). As these words show, "the essential Soames" in human nature will persist regardless of changing external appearances. In this sense, the "possessive instinct" and the class inclinations it generates remain influential in modern life. This study's unique contribution resides in demonstrating how historical analysis of property consciousness offers insight into contemporary societies. Therefore, studying

the “possessive instinct,” class consciousness, and reification continues to be essential for grasping literature and society in the contemporary world.



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- Undergraduate : (2006-2011). International University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Art and Social Sciences, English Language and Literature.

B. ACADEMIC POSITIONS

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D. LITERARY PUBLICATIONS

- “John Fowles’un Koleksiyoncu Romanında Sosyal Sınıflar, Benlik ve Okurun Tutsaklığı” [Social Classes, Selfhood and the Captivity of the Reader in John Fowles’s The Collector], Roman Kahramanları (Nodel Characters), Quarterly Literary Journal, Issue 60, pp. 121-128, October-December 2024.

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