

# Anagram, Myth, and the Structure of "Almayer's Folly"

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CONRAD'S first novel was coolly received in some quarters: "The life [of Almayer] is monotonous and sordid, and the recital thereof is almost as wearisome, unrelieved by one touch of pathos or gleam of humour. Altogether the book is as dull as it well could be."<sup>1</sup> That "well" in the final haughty idiom is as cruel as *it* can be, for it accuses the author of unintentionally boring his readers. A writer may legitimately baffle, entice, exhort, even assault his readers, but he must never bore them. Subsequent critics have been not only more sympathetic but also more careful readers of *Almayer's Folly, A Story of an Eastern River* (1895), finding pathos in the hero's collapse as well as genuine comic flashes in the hurdy-gurdy grinding and shuttle diplomacy of the village "statesman," sonorously named Babalatchi. Still, charges of formal inadequacy in the novel should be answered more fully than they have been. Almayer's story is a grim one, but it is neither dull nor sloppily put together.

Critical comments on *Almayer's Folly* have usually stressed one of three important concerns of Conrad and his readers: 1) the good yarn, or more specifically, the exotic Eastern romance based on Conrad's first-hand experience of the women, warriors, and pirates of the Malay archipelago, 2) the jungle-rooted politics of colonial imperialism, 3) the psychological themes of terror in the face of an implacable destiny and loss of faith in one's entire personality.<sup>2</sup> Although the development from first to third has tended to be chronological, the three concerns have quite properly fed one another rather than the later ones displacing the earlier. For example, attention to Conrad's yarn-spinning artistry raises the question for any reader of how the

characters are going to escape the destructive force of the Pantai River and the undercurrents of mercantile plots that flow as dangerously as the river itself. Interracial scheming in turn is linked to the politics of the Dutch-Malay struggle for control of the entire east coast of Borneo, and each character caught in the struggle suffers from the particular limitations of his or her own cultural drives and superstitions. There are betrayals on both sides, and these betrayals are internal as well as external. Dealing with external pressures — say a Malay mother and a Dutch father making contrary demands on their only child — creates inner turmoil, visions of paradise, ecstasy, and exile that are not just temporary circumstances of living but inescapable states of mind.

The formal element in the novel that most clearly organizes its narrative, cultural, and psychological concerns is a trio of character relationships: the foolish Dutch trader Almayer with his half-caste daughter, the Dutchman with the son of a Malayan rajah, and the rajah's son with the white man's daughter. In short the story turns on the ancient triangle of father-daughter-suitor, Almayer-Nina-Dain. The three relationships are dealt with in turn in the three main movements of the narrative defined by the novel's carefully controlled time-scheme. The first words in the novel are the shrill summons of Almayer's wife to the evening meal, a domestic event postponed briefly by Dain's return from some as-yet unexplained adventure. The first five chapters of reminiscence then outline the approximately twenty-year decline of Almayer after his marriage and his new-found hope of escaping from his ruined trading station with the daughter he so dotes on. The next four chapters come back to the setting sun of time-present and trace in detail the destruction of Almayer's relationship with the key agent of his planned escape, Dain Maroola. The last three chapters, beginning with sunset of the second day, present the assignation and escape of Dain and Nina, who abandon Almayer to his rapid decline into a stupor of gin, opium, and self-loathing. The three sections become progressively shorter — five chapters, four, then three — as the pace of action accelerates, the climax occurring when the three characters confront one another in a

moonlit jungle clearing in Chapter 11. The way that Almayer, Nina, and Dain relate to one another and to the narrative, cultural, and psychological developments in the novel is revealed, though not determined, by an ingenious set of anagrams in the characters' names and the richly ambiguous classical myth of Diana.

Almayer is the kind of man who, in trying to please others, never manages to satisfy himself, or indeed anybody else for that matter. He stumbles along in the path of such literary misfits as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, eventually achieving the kind of sympathy aroused by his more famous (and better dressed) cousin, J. Alfred Prufrock. Having made a muddle of the marriage and trading business handed him by his mentor, the pirate Captain Tom Lingard, Almayer has hit upon the idea of discovering the pirate's lost gold mine and using the money to realize a youthful dream and to set up his daughter Nina as a great lady in far-away Amsterdam:

He was gifted with a strong and active imagination, and . . . he saw, as in a flash of dazzling light, great piles of shining guilders, and realized all the possibilities of an opulent existence. The consideration, the indolent ease of life . . . and, crowning all, in the far future gleamed like a fairy palace the big mansion in Amsterdam, the earthly paradise of his dreams, where made king amongst men by old Lingard's money, he would pass the evening of his days in inexpressible splendour.<sup>3</sup>

Nina, we know, will have none of this fantasy and dreams of escaping from her parents' constant bickering. Earlier she had spent some time in Singapore in the charge of the God-fearing Mrs. Vinck, who had become enraged that the half-caste girl was outshining her own daughters and had thrown her out. Thus rejected by white society, she returns to Sambir and the mysterious claims of "the witch-like being she called her mother":

And listening to the recital of those savage glories, those barbarous fights and savage feasting, to the story of deeds valorous, albeit somewhat bloodthirsty, where men of her mother's race shone far above the Orang Blanda, she felt herself irresistibly fascinated, and saw with vague surprise the narrow mantle of civilized morality, in which good-meaning people had wrapped her young soul, fall away and leave her

shivering and helpless as if on the edge of some deep and unknown abyss. (p. 42)

Conrad deftly catches the confusions of adolescent awe and maidenly reticence by juxtaposing the poetic inversion "deeds valorous" with the stuffy qualifier "albeit somewhat blood-thirsty." The Malay warrior who can be both strong and tender is a large order, and he is slow to arrive in Sambir. So, like her father, Nina awaits apprehensively on the brink of the abyss.

During the waiting period a tender father-daughter relationship threads its way through the chilly silence of the proud girl and the voluble whining of Almayer. Nearly aways, though, the tenderness masks an underlying treachery. When, for example, the Dutch officers come to arrest Dain for killing two of their sailors, Nina vilifies all white men save her father:

"I hate the sight of your white faces. I hate the sound of your gentle voices. That is the way you speak to women, dropping sweet words before any pretty face. I have heard your voices before. I hoped to live here without seeing any other white face but this," she added in a gentler tone, touching lightly her father's cheek. (pp. 140-141)

Almayer responds to this caress with a loving, holding gesture, but he does not know, as his daughter does, that her outlaw lover is hiding nearby, ready to take her far from the sight of her father's face forever. Nina displays a similar power over her father in their moving farewell scene, after she has told Almayer that she intends to leave him for good:

She rose to her feet and looked at him. The very violence of his cry soothed her in an intuitive conviction of his love, and she hugged to her breast the lamentable remnants of that affection with the unscrupulous greediness of women who cling desperately to the very scraps and rags of love, any kind of love, as a thing that of right belongs to them and is the very breath of their life. She put both her hands on Almayer's shoulders, and looking at him half tenderly, half playfully, she said —

"You speak so because you love me."

Almayer shook his head.

"Yes, you do," she insisted softly; then after a short pause she added, "and you will never forget me."

Almayer shivered slightly. She could not have said a more cruel thing. (p. 193)

Forgetting is Almayer's only hope at this point; Nina's words are the terrible challenge that her father meets by burning their old house, retreating from human contact, and willing his mind into oblivion and finally death. Even in his last days he is pursued into his isolation by a ghastly "small figure of a little maiden with pretty olive face, with long black hair, her little pink robe slipping off her shoulders, her big eyes looking up at him in the tender trustfulness of a petted child" (pp. 201-202). Some of the tenderness of the early father-daughter relationship remains, though the trust is shattered irreparably. Almayer is now haunted by a girl-spirit that bears his name.

That name — Almayer — had haunted Conrad himself in the spring of 1889 and became the touchstone of his first novel set in the Malay archipelago. He muses tongue-in-cheek over the name in *A Personal Record* (composed 1908-9), imagining how he would respond to the complaining shade of his hero's prototype, should they meet beyond the grave:

"It is true, Almayer, that in the world below I have converted your name to my own uses. But that is a very small larceny. What's in a name, O Shade? If so much of your old mortal weakness clings to you yet as to make you feel aggrieved (it was the note of your earthly voice, Almayer), then, I entreat you, seek speech without delay with our sublime fellow-Shade — with him who, in his transient existence as a poet, commented upon the smell of the rose. He will comfort you. You came to me stripped of all prestige by men's queer smiles and the disrespectful chatter of every vagrant trader in the Islands. Your name was the common property of the winds: it, as it were, floated naked over the waters about the Equator. I wrapped round its unhonoured form the royal mantle of the tropics and have essayed to put into the hollow sound the very anguish of paternity — feats which you did not demand from me — but remember that all the toil and all the pain were mine. In your earthly life you haunted me, Almayer.<sup>4</sup>

An extremely complicated creative process governed the transformation of the real Dutch trader whom Conrad met while chief mate of the steamer *Vidar* in 1887 into the clownish, pyjama-clad figure in *A Personal Record* who is out-witted and down-trodden by a small pony, and into the haunted figure of Almayer whose name echoes "the very anguish of paternity." The visible tip of the creative iceberg is the writer's meaningful adjustments to the name Almayer itself. William Charles

Olmeijer was the name of the eccentric Dutchman encountered by Conrad in a lonely Malayan outpost.<sup>5</sup> Conrad spelled the name *Almayer*, as it sounded and as it suited the associations he wanted to set off in his reader's mind. What's in a name? he asks. Perhaps nothing. The man by any other name would be a fool in his anguish, yet by making the hero's name a close anagram of Malaya, Conrad suggests to his reader at some level of apprehension the dominance of Malaya over the man, the urge toward things Malayan in his half-caste daughter, Nina Almayer, and the hero's resentful dependence on the Malayan warrior, Dain Maroola. The story itself demonstrates these white-Malay relationships; the anagrammatic name may be gratuitous or, indeed, accidental, though as we shall see the device is repeated in the names of the other two major characters.<sup>6</sup> The point here is that Almayer, who hoped to use Malayan power to achieve his own European ends, is bound to fail. Partly because of his own miserable marriage, he has come to hate miscegenation, but he will die in Malaya, watching the native he reluctantly counted on take his only daughter.

The Almayer-Dain link, second of the character relationships used to structure the novel, involves a curious identity of opposites. Both pretend to be commercially interested in the other, while in fact both wish only to serve themselves and the medial character, Nina Almayer. Almayer is after gold to realize "a gorgeous vision of a splendid future existence for himself and Nina":

Guided by the scraps of information contained in old Lingard's pocket-book, he was going to seek for the rich gold-mine, for that place where he had only to stoop to gather up an immense fortune and realize the dream of his young days. (p. 62)

Almayer imagines that Dain Maroola will support the up-river forage into the preserves of the hostile Dyaks. Dain, however, is after Nina:

From the very first moment when his eyes beheld this — to him — perfection of loveliness he felt in his inmost heart the conviction that she would be his; he felt the subtle breath of mutual understanding passing between their two savage natures, and he did not want Mrs.

Almayer's encouraging smiles to take every opportunity of approaching the girl; and every time he spoke to her, every time he looked into her eyes, Nina, although averting her face, felt as if this bold-looking being who spoke burning words into her willing ear was the embodiment of her fate, the creature of her dreams — reckless, ferocious, ready with flashing kriss for his enemies, and with passionate embrace for his beloved — the ideal Malay chief of her mother's tradition. (pp. 63-64)

Fulfilling Nina's dream means crushing her father's, and to make matters more painful, that unfortunate must experience the same defeat twice, once when he and the Dutch officers are tricked into thinking Dain dead, and again when Nina actually chooses her lover over her father.

The gulling of Almayer by the proxy-death is part of Dain's plan to escape the pursuing Dutch officers. He has been caught smuggling gunpowder in violation of Dutch restrictions and has blown up two white men in a trap. He returns to Sambir to report to his powder-smuggling associate Lakamba and to take Nina away with him. Almayer, like a self-deceiving gull from some latter-day Jonsonian satiric comedy, takes Dain's return that stormy evening as proof that their gold-seeking conspiracy is about to go forward, and his hopes are horribly dashed when a battered, faceless body wearing Dain's jewelry is discovered at the river's edge the next morning. Only later do Almayer and the reader learn that it is the body of one of Dain's paddlers, his face pounded beyond recognition, a red-herring for the Dutch officers. The deception gains credibility by being worked successfully on the reader as well as Almayer and the officers. As a result, we perceive Almayer's disappointment not just as an aspect of his folly but as genuine misfortune. He deals with the sudden rupture of his plans with Dain through a kind of psychological distancing mechanism that has become characteristic of other heroes in modern novels. In his fantasy he becomes a spectator of his own battered condition. The passage is worth quoting at length for what it shows of how the novelist can shift the perspective on his isolated character without introducing another commentator into the scene.

A strange fancy had take [sic] possession of Almayer's brain, distracted by this new misfortune. It seemed to him that for many years he had

been falling into a deep precipice. Day after day, month after month, year after year, he had been falling, falling, falling; it was a smooth, round, black thing, and the black walls had been rushing upwards with wearisome rapidity. A great rush, the noise of which he fancied he could hear yet; and now, with an awful shock, he had reached the bottom, and behold! he was alive and whole, and Dain was dead with all his bones broken. It struck him as funny. A dead Malay; he had seen many dead Malays without any emotion; and now he felt inclined to weep, but it was over the fate of a white man he knew; a man that fell over a deep precipice and did not die. He seemed somehow to himself to be standing on one side, a little way off, looking at a certain Almayer who was in great trouble. Poor, poor fellow! (pp. 99-100)

The peculiar floating quality of Almayer's experience, of being detached from all physical surroundings in a state of free fall, is one Conrad returns to in "Heart of Darkness." Marlow describes his helplessness in the face of the outrageously detached Kurtz: "Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air."<sup>7</sup> The scene shares the frustrating dream-quality of Almayer's experience, but it records the storyteller's (Marlow's) feelings, not the sudden translation of an active hero into a passive spectator. A closer analogue to the scene in question is a passage from Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (published just four years before *Almayer's Folly*) in which Tess speaks of being able to project her soul out of her unhappy, unnecessary body:

"I don't know about ghosts," she was saying; "but I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive. . . ."

"A very easy way to feel 'em go," continued Tess, "is to be on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all."<sup>8</sup>

Rather than Hardy's account of an innocent mind naively expanding itself into a dream of freedom, however, Conrad shows us a man shrinking away from himself and from the rest of humanity.<sup>9</sup> The metamorphosis of the falling Almayer into Dain's broken body suggests an identity between the two men, perhaps reinforced by the Almayer-Malay anagram we noted earlier. But Almayer observes the dead Malay with



humorous detachment; this body is simply one of "many dead Malays" he has seen "without any emotion." He has refused all along to understand Dain's special relationship to him through the medial character Nina. He has wilfully blinded himself to the fact, so obvious to Mrs. Almayer and others in the village, that Dain is his daughter's suitor. The object of love that he might truly have shared with Dain to create a new relationship, he has alienated completely, and he seems to stand apart from all humanity, even from himself. Conrad insists in his "Author's Note" to *Almayer's Folly* that "there is a bond between us ['civilized' whites] and that humanity ['savage' Malays] so far away" (p. viii). In the present case the bond is falsified by Almayer's attempted mercenary manipulation and his inability as a father to feel and to share love. Even the physical situation as Almayer perceives it is wrong. Here at the dramatic mid-point of the novel Almayer feels sure that his fate, not his folly, has caught up with him. He has, of course, been fooled, and Dain has been preserved for another, more binding relationship with Nina, a relationship that will exclude Almayer altogether.

The destinies of Nina and Dain are tightly enmeshed from the time of their first meeting. Wearing a black silk jacket, red sarong, jewel-encrusted sword and precious rings, Dain is the dignified half-savage of Nina's dreams. Conrad relies on the romance convention of love-at-first-sight to draw the young couple together in the reader's mind:

Nina saw [Dain's] eyes fixed upon her with such an uncontrolled expression of admiration and desire that she felt a hitherto unknown feeling of shyness, mixed with alarm and some delight, enter and penetrate her whole being . . . .

Dain Maroola, dazzled by the unexpected vision, forgot the confused Almayer, forgot his brig, his escort staring in open-mouthed admiration, the object of his visit and all things else, in his overpowering desire to prolong the contemplation of so much loveliness met so suddenly in such an unlikely place — as he thought. (p. 55)

Despite Almayer's subsequent disparaging remarks about the brazenness of white women, we are struck sympathetically here with the blend of passion and modesty in the characters' re-

actions. Nina veils her face, a sign that however much she wants to identify herself completely with the "ideal Malay chief of her mother's tradition," she will do so within the bounds of her instinctual modesty. Their two beings are spoken of repeatedly as joined at some very deep level:

[Nina] recognized with a thrill of delicious fear the mysterious consciousness of her identity with that being. (p. 64)

And once more Dain, at the feet of Nina, forgot the world, felt himself carried away helpless by a great wave of supreme emotion, by a rush of joy, pride, and desire; understood once more with overpowering certitude that there was no life possible without that being he held clasped in his arms with passionate strength in a prolonged embrace. (pp. 68-69)

This is the positive counterpart to Almayer's terrifying loss of self as he curiously felt himself falling into the abyss only to find Dain's stand-in dead at the bottom. The Nina-Dain relationship, however uncertain its future at the novel's end and however malign the prophecies of Mrs. Almayer, is based on trust and mutual wonder.<sup>10</sup>

Conrad makes the shared identity of Nina and Dain the central relationship of his final three chapters. Near the end of Chapter 9 when the hurt and betrayed girl Taminah rouses Almayer from his drunken sleep, the names of the lovers troop through his half-consciousness, making their anagrammatic identity evident to the reader: "Nina, Dain; Dain, Nina? Dain was dead, and Nina was sleeping" (p. 160). In point of fact, the lovers were alive and together, and the visual impact of their names repeated so often in such close proximity has made the point of their inseparability. Though Conrad never, to my knowledge, drew attention to the anagram, he had not only to choose his heroine's name carefully but to misspell and misconstrue as a name the Bugis title *daeng* to make the anagram.<sup>11</sup> Though the anagram may, once again, be without significance beyond the nominal connecting of the two lovers, one is tempted to see in the Dain-Nina-Dian(a) configuration a mythic resonance that becomes especially strong through imagistic associations in the climactic scene of the lovers' meeting in Chapter 11.

The meeting occurs under the aegis of Diana, goddess of the moon and of chaste love.

Conrad carefully unfolds a love based on proud and fierce purity, one directly opposed to the commercial sensuality that characterizes most relationships in Sambir. Diana's chaste yet passionate influence is expressed in the lovers' violent determination not to be corrupted by domestic materialism. Her primary symbol in myth, the moon, sends a "silver shower of rays" over Dain and Nina as they wrap themselves in introspection and conversation about the power of love. Another kind of light augments the moon in the scene, the "bright hot flame" of Dain's brushwood fire, an external sign of their powerful sexual attraction.<sup>12</sup> Conrad was no prude; he makes sex a large part of this new and hopeful relationship, but he presents it under the aspect of Diana, huntress amid the wild places of Arcadia, in order to stress its militant constancy and purity:

He was hers with all his qualities and his faults. His strengths and his courage, his recklessness and his daring, his simple wisdom and his savage cunning — all were hers. As they passed together out of the red light of the fire into the silver shower of rays that fell upon the clearing he bent his head over her face, and she saw in his eyes the dreamy intoxication of boundless felicity from the close touch of her slight figure clasped to his side. (p. 173)

Conrad exploits romantic cliché in the catalogue of dashing heroic virtues and phrases like "the dreamy intoxication of boundless felicity" and "the close touch of her slight frame," but he deepens his analysis of love by including a dangerous, absorbing, even vengeful side of Dianian chaste love. Ecstatic involvement with the ancient goddess had to be complete, involving a kind of submersion in the watery tides ruled by Diana in her lunar aspect. As Diana rewarded perfect service, her betrayal brought abrupt revenge. Dain and Nina test themselves and each other during their meeting, proving themselves to be courageous and entirely prepared to risk the loss of self that leads to discovery of mutual love. As Chapter 11 begins, Dain resists the temptation to flee into the protective but finally enervating forest;<sup>13</sup> immediately, Nina arrives, dressed as always in white symbolizing her purity:

[Dain] stood silent and motionless like chiselled bronze under the moonlight that streamed over his naked shoulders. As he stood still, fighting with his breath, as if bereft of his senses by the intensity of his delight, she walked up to him with quick, resolute steps, and, with the appearance of one about to leap from a dangerous height, threw both her arms around his neck with a sudden gesture. (p. 171)

The psychological abyss is present for the lovers, just as it had been for Almayer, but they overcome his incapacitating fear by relinquishing themselves to each other.

The terrifying part of Dain and Nina's adventure of loving is captured in the long description of the sea that ends their shared reveries. While the sea is apparently Dain's province, it is linked as well with Nina's mysterious, potentially destructive heart. In their moment of rapture, Dain speaks to Nina "of the sea he loved so well":

. . . he told her of its never-ceasing voice, to which he had listened as a child, wondering at its hidden meaning that no living man has penetrated yet; of its enchanting glitter; of its senseless and capricious fury; how its surface was for ever changing, and yet always enticing, while its depths were for ever the same, cold and cruel, and full of wisdom of destroyed life. He told her how it held men slaves of its charm for a lifetime, and then, regardless of their devotion, swallowed them up, angry at their fear of its mystery, which it would never disclose, not even to those that loved it most. . . . "The sea, O Nina, is like a woman's heart." (p. 174)

The passage is bewilderingly ambivalent, playing off enchanting glitter against capricious fury, enticing surface against destructive depths. Nina responds, "to the men that have no fear, O master of my life, the sea is ever true" (p. 175). Like the sea, she will without qualm destroy any interloper, be it a rival woman or her own father. Her very glance is dangerous, even perhaps to her beloved Dain. Conrad explains in detail the universal significance of "the look of woman's surrender":

It has the same meaning for the man of the forests and the sea as for the man threading the paths of the more dangerous wilderness of houses and streets. Men that had felt in their breasts the awful exultation such a look awakens become mere things of to-day — which is paradise; forget yesterday — which was suffering; care not for to-morrow — which may be perdition. (pp. 171-172)

The passage roughly paraphrases the novel's epigraph, taken by Conrad from the French teacher-sceptic Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881): "*Qui de nous n'a eu sa terre promise, son jour d'extase et sa fin en exile?*" The careful play of time past, present, and future in an eternal moment is to become a significant commonplace of Conrad's later fiction, as is the theme of damnation implicit in the moment of ecstasy. Perhaps Dain is a lost soul from the minute he first gazes into Nina's eyes, but he has the supreme excitement of achieving his personal paradise. This thrill is denied Almayer, who stumbles dully into his own death.

Characteristically Almayer, shrinking from intimate contact with others, at the crucial moment retreats into his self-protective shell. The very banality of his recriminations against Nina provides the universal measure of his despair:

"You never told me," muttered Alaymer.  
"You never asked me," she answered. (p. 190)

We hear in the exchange the flatness of voice that characterizes Joyce's most profound epiphanies. The vanity and emptiness of Almayer's life, especially his relationship with his daughter, is exposed at the end of the novel with a narrative detachment that is both gentle and cruelly unfeeling. When he retreats to Almayer's Folly, the grand but crumbling symbol of his improvident miscalculation of his trading future, he is described as a mannikin or "man-doll broken and flung . . . out of the way" (p. 204). Perhaps more devastating, as Peter Glassman points out, he becomes the ape or gull of his knavish pet monkey, Jack:<sup>14</sup>

The little animal seemed to have taken complete charge of its master, and whenever it wished for his presence on the verandah it would tug perseveringly at his jacket, till Almayer obediently came out into the sunshine, which he seemed to dislike so much. (p. 203)

Conrad presents the reader with the obverse of a healthy human relationship, such as the one between Nina and Dain. The virtue of perseverance in the face of a life-diminishing

struggle with fate (Jack has it, Almayer doesn't) seems to lie at the base of Conrad's implied value-scheme in the novel. The inscription fashioned by the opium-besotted Chinaman Jim-Eng for Almayer's Folly, "House of heavenly delight," like the fatuous come-on of some seedy Tourist Haven, is a terrible travesty of the builder's dream of pleasure. When the "only white man on the east coast" (p. 208) dies, his old Arab trading rival Abdulla comes to see his body. Similar to the aging, one-eyed village stateman who inherited the wraiths of Mrs. Almayer and Taminah once Nina was gone, Abdulla is left without challenge or vitality:

. . . the beads in Abdulla's hand clicked, while in a solemn whisper he breathed out piously the name of Allah! The Merciful! The Compassionate! (p. 208)

One is reminded in the novel's final words of the Beadsman at the end of Keats's romance "The Eve of St. Agnes," who recites his prayers to a divinity that never cared before but is all that is left for old men once youth has departed the scene. Though the Keatsian flame burns in Conrad's first novel, the residue is as always dust and blowing ashes.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Unsigned review, *World*, 15 May 1895, as reproduced by Norman Sherry in *Conrad: The Critical Heritage* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 51.
- <sup>2</sup>John A. Palmer likewise identifies "three different centers of interest" in the novel: "the destruction of Almayer, the romance between his daughter and the native Dain Maroola, and the tangled background of jungle scenery and native intrigue against which these dramas are played out." *Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), p. 51.
- <sup>3</sup>*Almayer's Folly* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), p. 10. I quote from this edition throughout.
- <sup>4</sup>*A Personal Record, Some Reminiscences* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1924), pp. 87-88.
- <sup>5</sup>John Dozier Gordon remarks that "It is impossible to tell why Conrad altered the name when he kept so many real names in the same novel." *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1940), p. 36. See also Frederick R. Karl, *Joseph Conrad: Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), pp. 240-250 *passim*, for pertinent biographical information.
- <sup>6</sup>Such playing with names is neither beneath nor beyond Conrad, who was to transform a real German trader named Klein into the larger-than-life Mr. Kurtz: "Kurtz — Kurtz — that means short in German — don't it? Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life — and death. He looked at least seven feet long." See "Heart of Darkness" in *Youth and Two Other Stories* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1923), p. 140. My colleague Paul M. Bidwell also points out in connection with Conrad's anagrammatic way with names, Nostromo (*nostre plus homo*) and Ossipon (one of the "queer foreign fish" [*poisson*] in *The Secret Agent*).
- <sup>7</sup>"Heart of Darkness," p. 144.
- <sup>8</sup>The College Classics edition, M. W. Steinberg, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), p. 142.\*
- <sup>9</sup>Paul L. Wiley sees in the passage "an allegorical framework for [the] theme of division," but he traces the problematic division to "the corruption of the will by passion," not, as I do, to a failure of love in Almayer. See *Conrad's Measure of Man* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1954), p. 37.
- <sup>10</sup>Peter J. Glassman in *Language and Being: Joseph Conrad and the Language of Personality* (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1976) concludes that the Nina-Dain relationship "is likely to be impermanent because it does not take into account the irreconcilable divergence of individual purpose and needs; nor . . . does it provide protection against the brooding animosity of the unarrogated outer world" (pp. 114-115). If I understand this properly, Glassman is proposing as Conrad's view something very like Mrs. Almayer's cynicism. Daniel R. Schwarz goes a step further, condemning Nina as an escapist dreamer like her father (see "Acts of Initiation in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*," *ARIEL*, 8 [1977], 85-87); I would argue that as a dreamer she is completely *unlike* Almayer, since she dreams of a loving commitment to another person, not of acquiring money and a fine European house. My more positive view of Nina and Dain is closer to that of Royal Roussel, *The Metaphysics of*

*Darkness* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 28-50 and John H. Hicks, "Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*: Structure, Theme, and Critics," *NCF*, 19 (1964), 17-31.

- <sup>11</sup>See David Leon Higdon and Floyd Eugene Eddleman, "A Glossary of Malay Words in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*," *Conradiana*, 10 (1978): "Dain — Although the word appears to be a name throughout the novel, it is actually a Bugis title of distinction — consider Dain Waris in *Lord Jim*. Norman Sherry points out that the term should be spelled *daeng*" (p. 75). William Olmeijer actually had not one but six daughters, none of them named Nina (see Gordon, p. 43). In *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966) Norman Sherry speculates about a ship named *Nina* and a woman named Ninette, both associated with the Lingard and Olmeijer families (pp. 90-91 n.). In the absence of firmer evidence, I think we are safe to assume that Conrad may have chosen the name Nina to work anagrammatically with the name Dain.
- <sup>12</sup>Peter D. O'Conner has argued from a careful study of the novel's iterative imagery that Nina legitimately reaches for light through love while her father moves in precisely the opposite direction, from light into darkness. See "The Function of Nina in *Almayer's Folly*," *Conradiana*, 7 (1975), 223-232.
- <sup>13</sup>I find Glassman's emphasis on the event misleading: "in this momentary weakness, in this desperate urge to exempt himself from himself by 'hiding' from the sun like an insipid little pig, the Son of Heaven testifies to the general instinct of the novel's imagined people to accept escape under any terms from the crippling data of consciousness" (pp. 117-118). Dain does not hide himself either from himself or from Nina; he *rejects* escape when he chooses love.
- <sup>14</sup>See Glassman, p. 107.