

الاستعمار و البدائية و العنصرية في رواية (حماقة ألماير) ل جوزيف كونراد

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ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث موضوعات الاستعمار و العنصرية و البدائية في رواية جوزيف كونراد (حماقة ألماير). ألماير هو مستعمر أبيض يتزوج من امرأة ملاوية و هي ابنة لينغارد و التي تتجرب له ابنة يسميها نينا و هي مزيج من اللونين الأبيض و الأسمر. يعاني ألماير من لون ابنته و يرسلها الى سنغافورة ليتم تربيتها على الطريقة الأوربية بعيدا عن "الشعب البدائي". ألماير عنصري يؤمن بأن ابنته يجب أن تتزوج رجلا أبيضاً و ليس رجلاً "متوحشاً". إنه ضحية الوهم بأن القيمة المالية هي الوحيدة التي تكمل طريق الوقار و الاحترام. لقد ورث من عائلته البرجوازية انحيازه العنصري. إن هدفه هو الحصول على ثروة في جزر الإنديز الشرقية تحت السيطرة الهولندية ليجبر المجتمع الأرستقراطي في هولندا على تقبل احترام ابنته نينا. كذلك نجده يريد أن يحصل على ثروة ضخمة من التجارة مع أهل البلد الذين يحتقرهم. و يسحره رنين العملة الفضية عندما يقوم الموظفون الصينيون بعدها. أهل البلد بدائيون و هو يكره لونهم: يمثل ألماير العالم الغربي بصورته المبتدلة عن الوحوش و من جهة أخرى هناك نينا و التي تثبت حالتها الاجتماعية من قبل أصولها في العالم الثالث.

كلمات مفتاحية: الاستعمار, العنصرية, البدائية, حماقة ألماير, انحياز عنصري, أمير ملاوي, الوحوش, الطبيعة المتوحشة.

Colonialism, Primitivism and Racism in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*

Abstract

This research explores the themes of colonialism, primitivism and racism in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*. Almayer is a white colonizer who comes from Holland and marries a Malay girl, the daughter of Lingard, and gets Nina who is half-breed. He suffers because of her color and sends her to be brought up in Singapore far from the primitive people. Almayer is a racist who believes that his daughter must marry a white man not a savage man. Almayer is the victim of the illusion that material value alone constitutes the way of dignity and accomplishment. From his "burgeois" family he also inherits his racial prejudice. His aim is to make a fortune in the Dutch East Indies to compel the aristocratic society of his home country, Holland, to accept and even do homage to his half-breed daughter Nina. His dreams of immense wealth are to be gained through trade with the natives whom he scorns. He is charmed by the clink of silver guilders being counted by the Chinese clerks. The natives are seen to be primitive and he hates their color. Almayer represents the Western World and its stereotyped image of the "savage". On the other hand, there is Nina, whose social status is fixed by the Third World origins.

Key words

Colonialism, racism, primitivism, *Almayer's Folly*, social prejudice, Malay prince, savages, savage nature.

Colonialism, Primitivism and Racism

in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*

This research explores the themes of colonialism, primitivism and racism in Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*. *Almayer's Folly* describes the failure of Almayer due to a defect of character as well as economic and political forces. His colonial upbringing is the root cause of his confusion concerning dream and reality, power and authority. Also at the root of his failure is his inability to grasp the cultural and historical displacement that distorts his aspirations. *Almayer's Folly* deals with the conflicting psychologies of the native Malays and Europeans and of wealth and dream. The world in which Almayer dreams of living is the antithesis of the one in which he now lives which is a world of darkness, savagery, and ignorance. It is a world quite different from the civilized European one. Andrea White, for example, grapples with the matter by saying: "Conrad's first two novels-- *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands—The Rescue*, many of his early stories, *Lord Jim*, and *Victory*, depict the complex and competing racial and cultural relations of native Dyaks, immigrant Chinese, Malay sultans, Arab rajahs, and Dutch and English traders."(187). Also, George A. Panichas states that "Conrad's novels are in the end great meditations on the condition of life ." (vii)

Almayer builds a house hoping to receive the British colonizers in it. But when he learns that they are not coming, he stops building it. People nickname the house "Almayer's Folly." Almayer is a failure in his homeland and he is sent outside so he may earn his living and get some money for his marriage. Edward Said states, "various colonial possessions, apart from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe, were useful as places to send

wayward sons...poor people and other undesirables."(*Orientalism* 12).

Conrad analyzes the deterioration of the European civilization among the white colonialists that were isolated in the jungle of the tropics. The "colonymania" of lordship is what Almayer suffers from . His dreams of eventually inheriting Captain Lingard's wealth and finally settling down in a mansion in Amsterdam are expressed as follows:

The consideration, the indolent ease of life-for which he felt himself so well-fitted –his ships, the warehouses, his merchandise... and crowning all, in the far future gleamed like a fairy palace the big mansion in Amsterdam, that 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 splendor."(Conrad 10).

Almayer has been the victim of the illusion that material value alone constitutes the way of dignity and accomplishment. From his bourgeois family he also inherits his racial prejudice.

Almayer's father's attitude was identical to that of the colonialists who were either administrators or supervisors. I think they never worked or showed an example of what had to be done as far as mental work was concerned. They would stand with their colonial helmets, a stick, or a whip in their hands, ready to strike at any worker trying to have fresh air. One should think they were shepherds guarding sheep most of the time, the so-called supervisors assigned the supervision to a native, commonly known in as (foreman), entrusted with authority for whipping and reporting everything to the white man. If there were no reports, the foreman was a liar who would be whipped. At noon, all the white men-officers, workers, engineers, or whatever-had to go home for lunch

and a nap, while the natives kept working. For two hours no native could walk in the European residential area. Not a sound could be heard. It is colonization and racism at the same time.

Kasper Almayer was born in a world of privilege and "the indolent ways of life-for which he felt himself so week-fitted"(Conrad 10). Used to being served, Almayer, as his mother, abandons himself to his dreams. For Almayer, it is the dream of living rich and respected in Europe with his daughter Nina. To reach his goal he has to find the gold mine. All his thoughts "were often busy with gold, gold he had failed to secure , gold the others had secured-dishonestly , of course—of gold he meant to yet secure, through his own honest exertion, for himself and Nina(Conrad 1).

Almayer is not alone in his search for treasure or wealth. Most white men in the novel are obviously in pursuit of selfish material ends, principally economic interest. They seek to attain this at the expense of the natives, whom they totally ignore. The European white men suffer in the colonies. Edward Said observes that "Not only were immense hardships endured by the colonizers, but there was always the tremendously risky physical disparity between a small number of Europeans at a very great distance from home and the much larger number of natives on their home territory"(*Culture and Imperialism* 10).

Lingard, whom we meet early in the novel, is a pirate who has annihilated a whole tribe of natives in search of gold mines and business profits. Hudig, the owner of a commercial hall full of "gin cases and bales of Manchester goods" debases the very workers, "Chinese, neat, cool, and sad-eyed" (Conrad 7), who make his business prosper. Mr. Vinck, the "Cashier, the genius presiding in the place, the right hand of the Master "turns a blind eye on every native worker and clerk, including Almayer. All he sees are "the guilders" that will provoke Almayer's heartburn (Conrad 7).

Thus, it is among these people that Almayer has spent most of his life, a people who came from Europe "to woo fortune in the godowns of Hudig" (Conrad 2). They all share one goal: amass wealth and die happily in Europe. And what is the part of the natives in these activities? none, if not that of serving.

Almayer's ambition, according to Osborn Andreas, is "to make a fortune in the Dutch East Indies so large that it would enable him to compel the aristocratic society of his home country, Holland, to accept and even do homage to his half-breed daughter Nina"(5). Almayer's dreams are of immense wealth to be gained through trade with the natives whom he scorned. While he dreams of conquering the world, he is intoxicated by the material wealth of the place. Above all, he is charmed by the discreet and continuous clink of silver guilders being counted by the Chinese clerks.

Lingard, perceiving Almayer's weakness, and noting that he is being seduced by Hudig's possessions, offers him his adopted daughter, the little girl he took when he killed her parents during his piratical search for his gold on the river Sambir. For Almayer, this poses the possibility of inheriting Lingard's immense wealth because the girl is presumed to be his sole heir. By marrying Lingard's daughter, Almayer would automatically become Lingard's business partner (Conrad 10).

Lured by flattery, Almayer leaves Hudig to work for Lingard. With Lingard, as John H. Hicks puts it, "Almayer is soon entangled in a maze of grandiose and individual allegiances-created by the moral pretensions and false assumptions that typify Lingard's charity"(20).

Almayer sees in that offer a fulfillment of his dreams, but how could he marry a primitive Malay girl, a "legacy of a boastful

of pirates"? (Conrad10). He hesitates. Anticipating his reaction and knowing his racial prejudice, Lingard tells Almayer:

And don't you kick because you're white! None of that with me! Nobody will see the color of your wife's skin. The dollars are too thick for that, I tell you! And mind you, they will be thicker yet before I die. There will be millions, Kaspar! Millions, I say! And all for her---and for you, if you do what you are told (Conrad 10).

Startled by the unexpected proposal, Almayer thrills. He sees in the proposal the crowning of his imagination. He sees a bright future and dreams of palaces in the paradise of Amsterdam. The obstacle, if any, remains that "primitive girl." He remains confused, as the narrator tells us:

There was only within him a confused consciousness of shame that he, a white man-still, a convent education of four years—and then she may mercifully die. He was always lucky, and money is powerful. Go through it. Why not? He had a vague idea of shutting her up somewhere, anywhere, out of his gorgeous future. Easy enough to dispose of a Malay woman, a slave after all, to his Eastern mind, convent or not convent, ceremony or no ceremony (Conrad 10-11).

As he decides to go for both, Lingard makes him more than a business man partner. He becomes his son, and Lingard even asks Almayer to call him father: "Call me father, my boy, she does" (Conrad 11).

Lingard's bribery of Almayer soon melts away. His fortune disappears in bankruptcy because of Arab competition. He vanishes

in England while attempting to raise capital to develop a gold mine which he has discovered in the interior of Borneo.

When the novel opens, Almayer is already a defeated man who refuses to accept his defeat. He dreams of old Lingard's treasure and will not face the reality of his sordid existence. He only sees wealth in his future. He "absorbed himself in his dreams of wealth and power away from this coast where he had dwelt for so many years, forgetting the bitterness of toil and strife in the vision of a great and splendid reward" (Conrad 5). And when the story opens, only three possessions are left in Lingard's house that shows without precision the approximate location of the gold mine, and a partly completed pretentious house named Almayer's Folly.

The consuming passion with which Almayer desires the stamp of social acceptance in spite of his act of miscegenation causes him to overreach himself to such an extent that he defeats his own purposes. The risks he runs, ostensibly to gain wealth for his daughter, are so great that he loses both daughter and wealth . The miscalculations which ruin him are rooted in his guilt feelings at having married a Malay woman. His judgment is undermined by his own overweening ambition. He wants to gain a place of dignity "beyond the pale of which he felt his marriage to a Sulu woman had cast him (Andreas 8). His folly leaves him a permanent resident of Sambir, a place where expediency, sensuality, and self-interest flourish. His only consolation in Sambir is his daughter Nina.

Educated in an English school, boarded and roomed in an English family home there, dressing and talking like a member of the white race, Nina is his pride and his only joy. Almayer convinces himself that "nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth"(Conrad 5). Because of her, "he would grow young again and would forget

the twenty-five years of heart breaking struggle on the coast where he felt like a prisoner"(Conrad 5). Almayer appears satisfied at the apparent accumulation of his daughter.

Indeed, at the age of six, Nina had been taken away from her parents to be educated in Singapore by the Vincks, a bourgeois family settled in India. But away from home, Nina's life was made miserable by young men and her educating guardians. The former wanted to court her, the latter despised her because of her mixed parentage. One of the guardians talked to Almayer in these terms:

You know, Kasper ...it is decidedly awkward to have a half-caste girl in the house. There's such a lot of fools about. There was that young fellow from the bank who used to ride to the Vinck's bungalow early and late...Fact is, I heard of this affair and took the girl to my wife...and upon my word we would have kept the girl for you, only she would not stay. Now then! Don't flare up Kaspar. Sit still. What can you do? Let her stay with you; she was never happy over there. Those two Vinck girls are no better than dressed up monkeys. They slighted her. You cannot make her white.(Conrad 26).

Here we see a white man questioning the wisdom of depriving a child of parental guidance, nurture, and instruction in favor of Western civilization. Those who are in the system are not better than those coming from inter-racial marriages, or simply from the primitive milieu. Nina is described by her guardian as a good girl: "She is a good girl for all" (Conrad 26). But for Kaspar Almayer, her coming back home meant a refusal to get "civilized," it does not take him long to explode in anger at seeing that all his efforts had been futile. He says to Nina:

You stand there as if you were only half alive and talk to me...as if it was a matter of no importance...you never cared, you saw me struggle, and work, and strive, unmoved, and my suffering you could never see. No, never. You have no heart, and you have no mind or you would have understood that it was for you, for your happiness I was working. I wanted to be rich. I wanted to get away from here. I wanted to see white men bowing low before the power of your beauty and your wealth. Old as I am I wished to seek a strange land , a civilization to which I am a stranger...(Conrad 80).

In fact Nina's father blames her for not being obedient. She does not care too much for her father's ideal world. It is a world he has never seen except in dreams and imagination, as he once told Nina: "I myself have not been to Europe, but I have heard my mother talk so often that I seem to know all about it. We shall live a ...glorious life. You shall see"(Conrad 16). Nina feels that her father is oblivious to her natural feelings and desires. She is ignored as her mother had been; her father does not even ask her what happened in Singapore. He could not infer any wrongdoing from a socially superior family such as the Vincks. Noticing this lack of superior conversation between father and daughter, Mrs. Almayer begins her work of indoctrination. Here, Conrad is introducing the reader to the world of primitivism, she instructs Nina in tribal tradition, the heroic deeds of her kinsmen before the white man, their past glories, how she, the mother, has come from a royal family. The teaching slowly causes Nina to see herself as closer to her mother than to her father. She starts joining the primitive world of her mother, forgetting her Western heritage and education. As the narrator puts it:

Nina, brought under the Protestant wing of the proper Mrs. Vinck, had not even a little piece of brass to remind her of her past teaching. And listening to 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 Blands, 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 as if on the edge of some deep and unknown abyss (Conrad 35).

Nina sees, in her mother's stories, the antithesis of her father: valiant men, brave warriors, men of high probity and honor who are responsible, respectable, and faithful—all that her father is not. She is fascinated by those barbaric tales, but though she likes to hear those stories, she is not totally involved in the primitive life of her mother and kinsman. She splits her days between her father's house and her mother's, and she does not totally belong to silent community. This is Conrad's way of introducing the cultural antithesis between Western and Malayan civilization. Nina feels no clear distinction between the two groups, as we read in the following passage:

It seemed to Nina that there was no change and no difference. Whether they traded in brick godowns or on the muddy river bank; whether they reached after much or little, whether they made love under the shadows of the great trees or in the shadow of the cathedral...Nina saw only the same manifestation of love and hate and of sordid greed chasing the uncertain dollar in all its multifarious and vanishing shapes. (Conrad 36).

Nina ,then , perceives no difference in the feelings of love and hate between Europeans and Malays. She is basically in a kind of balance, a coexistence, between the civilized world of her father and the primitive world of her mother. They are all greedy, they are all after money they all do things alike. His attitude once pushed the mother and Babalatchi to say, "Nina is half-white...she is like a white woman and knows no shame"(Conrad 100).

The event that shifts Nina totally to the "Primitive" side is the coming of a young Malay prince who appeared as a rich intinerant, followed by a piratical crew and a lot of ships. She sees in him the personification of her mother's teaching, that is to say, the type of chivalric, intrepid man her mother has described. From then on she prefers Malays because they seemed less blind in the presence of the forces of love and evil, money and family, and finally, less hypocritical "to the polite disguise , to the virtuous pretences" of the white man(Conrad 55).

Once opportunity opens with Dain, Mrs. Almayer overtly tells her daughter:

Give up your old life! Forget that you ever looked at a white face : forget their words, forget their thoughts. They speak lies. And they think lies because they despise us that are better than they are...Forget their friendship and their contempt, forget their gods. Girl, who do you want to remember the past when there is a warrior and a chief ready to give many lives –his own life—for one of your smiles? (Conrad 119).

Here, Mrs. Almayer rejects the world of the Vincks, their system of values. At the same time she avenges her own suffering at the hands of Captain Lingard and her husband, Mr. Almayer.

Descendant from a royal family, she can only encourage her daughter to go with Dain.

Defying her father and dreaming how she would be the wife of a great Raja, Nina submits herself to the advances of Dain, whom she instantly recognizes as the ideal Malay chief of her mother's tradition. She feels that "the bold-looking being who speaks burning words into her ears is the embodiment of her fate , the creature of her dream." She sees Dain as reckless and ferocious. She feels that her life has meaning in his presence. Her father, however, sees him exclusively as a business partner with whom to share profit and go to Europe "into the great white clouds away to the westward, where the paradise of Europe was awaiting the future Eastern millionaire (Conrad 51).

Almayer innocently accepts Dain as his last hope for happiness after Lingard leaves Sambir. He anxiously awaits Dain's return. The latter has arrived unexpectedly on the scene in command of a trading vessel. The arrival was opportune for Almayer who was seeking a means of transportation to the probable location of the gold mine and'the treasure.' As Stephan K. Land states, Dain "is to be Almayer's passport to Europe"(18).

Dain proves friendly to Almayer, but he requires that Lakamba, a local ruler who hates the white colonialists and who is an enemy of Almayer's, be made party to the undertaking. He also requires that the three cooperate in a profitable, but illegal, deal in gunpowder. The character of Lakamba is introduced to remind the white man that distrust in mutual. By rallying to the group, Almayer plunges further into the deep troubles from which he wishes to escape. The agreement brings bad luck to Almayer because Babalatchi, one of Lakamba's ministers, plots constantly against Almayer. Their alliance draws the attention of the Dutch colonial authorities who are in the process of pacifying and

subjugating the area. Dutch Naval officers, suspecting Almayer, lead an inquiry into his affairs.

All the members of this wretched alliance are, in one way or another , undermining Almayer's efforts. A man like Lakamba represents the least impressive aspect of Malay culture, much as Almayer exhibits some of the least desirable characteristics of Western man. Lakamba , a former warrior and adventurer, has become Raja of Sambir by intrigues, crimes, and accident. He is as rapacious and unscrupulous as Almayer. The point the narrator tries to bring out here is that adventurous people are found in both cultures.

Finally, this alliance intensifies the paradox of Almayer's situation. His last effort to control his fate fails in the hands of adversity. The man in whom he places his ultimate hope ceases to be his potential savior and becomes his executioner or tormentor by stealing his only beloved daughter, Nina.

In fact, it never occurs to Almayer that his daughter could fall in love with anyone but a white man. When he discovers the truth later, he gets shocked and angry. He roars at his daughter in these terms" what made you give yourself to that savage, for he is a savage. Between his and you there is a barrier that nothing can remove" (Conrad 140). And in his wrath , Almayer vows that he will never forgive her for falling in love with a "wretched Malay". Nina responds to her father:

What is there to forgive?...Can I not live my own life as you have lived yours? The path you would have wished me to follow has been closed to me by no fault of mine.

"you never told me" muttered Almayer.

"you never asked me," she answered. "and I thought you were like the others and did not care. I bore the memory of my humiliation alone...I knew you could not avenge me."(Conrad 140).

Nina , whose education ends in an outburst of contempt from whites , is torn between a sincere affection for her father and a fascination with the savage ravings of her mother . Nina does not love her father : "I love you no less than I did before." But she sees in Dain the promise of life and in the sterile dreams of her father captivity and death, as she says to her father: "I mean to live. I mean to follow him...I shall never leave him, for without him I cannot live"(Conrad 141). Nina wishes to escape with Dain to a land unpolluted by white men. While her father dreams of wealth and Europe , she dreams of leaving him behind, and her dreams are inevitably the destruction of his. Nina's love for Dain is to a point , mysticised, she practically worships him. The narrator tells us that "she was thinking already of moulding a god from the clay at her feet . A god for others to worship"(Conrd 135-136).

In worshipping Dain, Nina is transferring her father's feelings for her to Dain. Surah Raval comments that: "She was unintentionally aiming her father's attitudes toward her, a touch of his hyperbolic imagination"(12). During her dispute with her father concerning Dain, she says:"I shall make him great, His name shall be remembered long after both our bodies are laid in the dust" (Conrad 110). Here the reader clearly understands that she is unconsciously repeating her father's wishes about her, another *Almayer's Folly*, a folly of imagination (Raval 12).

In the novel, a dualism is created from the antithesis and confrontation between European and Malayan cultures. *Almayer's Folly* focuses on the contrasting movements of Nina, Almayer, and Mrs. Almayer. Trapped in Borneo, Almayer suggests increasingly

to escape to Europe, while his daughter, having received a poor impression of European ways, returns to the remote Sambir where she finally identifies herself with natives, and especially, the primitive ways of her mother.

In this novel, Conrad contrasts the values of the decayed Western world, represented by a greedy and materialistic Almayer, with the primitive integrity and unrestrained savagery of the jungle, embodied in Mrs. Almayer. Indeed, Mrs. Almayer, the savage woman, burns Almayer's civilized furniture to return to her traditional mat: "She was burning the furniture and tearing down the pretty curtain in her unreasoning hate of those signs of civilization"(Conrad 15). Under Lingard's influence, she was placed at odds with her native people and yet was never successfully absorbed into the Western community in which Lingard and Almayer moved. Christian ideals, despite her convent training, remained foreign and incomprehensible to her. She was bewildered by the Christian theories of love and tolerance which were taught, but not practiced, at the convent; "She learned the language very easily, but understood but little of the new faith the good sisters taught her, assimilating quickly only the superstitious elements of the religion"(Conrad 13). This is Conrad's way of asserting the failure of colonial endeavors through Mrs. Almayer. Her marriage, despite her vows, provided her with neither a loyal partner nor any incentive to build the loyalties. Resentful of these disappointments, she turned informer against Lingard and Almayer to help Lakamba, a Malay trade competitor who enlisted her for his profit and his pleasure when she was neglected by Almayer. Her search for a coherent purpose in her life, suspended between white and Malay world, ended in frustration(Hicks 30). Deceived and abandoned, she had no alternative but to return to her ancestral ways, her native heritage: "Primitivism." Peter D. O' Connor writes "We can regard Mrs. Almayer as a symbol of native –physically dark,

uncontrollable, timid"(231). Mrs. Almayer functions in the novel as the point of cultural clash and as the silent voice of the Third world , rather like Babo in "Benito Careno". She is sexually ignored by Lingard, used and abused as a plaything by Almayer, merely a pastime before his triumphant return to Europe.. Relating her miseries to her daughter, she once told her:"I was a slave, and you shall be a queen"(Conrad 117).

The most illustrative case showing how she was ignored occurred when Tom Lingard dragged Nina to Singapore without forewarning or advising Mrs. Almayer. Almayer thought about sending his daughter to the Vincks. He feared his wife's reaction and thought:

She will poison me, thought the poor wretch well aware of that easy and final manner of solving the social, political, and family problems in Malay life.

To his great surprise she took the news very quietly, giving only him and Lingard a future glance , and saying not a word. This, however, did not prevent her next day from jumping into the river and swimming after the boat in which Lingard was carrying away the nurse with the screaming child...yet after two days spent I wailing, she returned to her former mode of life, chewing nut, and sitting all day amongst her women in stupefied idleness.(Conrad, 23-24).

Besides describing Mrs. Almayer's reactions , the narrator is also alluding to her emotional side, which is characteristic of the uncivilized mind. Her reaction is purely instinctive, and animal-like:no arguing, no reasoning. She also quickly forgets as would an animal.

Primitive sensuality comes through over and over in her speech. She once told Nina: "remember men's strength and their weakness. Tremble before his anger, so that he may see your fear in the light of the day, but in your heart you may laugh, for after sunset he is your slave"(Conrad 93). The last part of this citation is an explicit allusion to the manipulative power of sensual behavior. Also Mrs. Almayer's alliance with Lakamba is described by the narrator as treacherous and immoral.

Described as worshipping treasure and money, Mrs. Almayer also symbolizes the victim of Western materialistic corruption. Another motive for encouraging Nina to marry Dain, besides their cultural similarities, is the possibility of making a lot of money for herself. The narrator reports that one night Nina gets surprised to find her mother engaged in counting money:

She saw Mrs. Almayer had deserted the pile of mats serving her as bed in one corner of the room, and was now bending over the opened lid of her large wooden chest. Half a shell of coconut filled with oil, where a cotton rag floated for a wick, stood on the floor, surrounding her with a ruddy halo of light shining through the black and odorous smoke. Mrs. Almayer's back was bent , and her head and shoulders hidden in the deep box. Her hands rummaged in the interior, where a soft clink as of silver money could be heard. She did not notice at first her daughter's approach, and Nina, standing silently by her, looked down on many little canvas bags ranged in the bottom of the chest, where from her mother extracted handfuls of shining guilders and Mexican dollars, letting them stream slowly back again through her claw-like fingers. The music of tinkling silver seemed to delight her, and her eyes sparkled with the reflected gleam of freshly minted coins. She was muttering to herself. "And this, and

this, and yet this ! soon he will give more—as much more as I ask. He is a great Raja –a son of Heaven. And she will be a Raneer—he gave all this for her?"(Conrad 53-54).

Besides her passion for love, description hints at the savage nature and savage belongings of Mrs. Almayer. Words such as "mats," "wooden chest," "shell of coconut," "cotton rag," "black and odorous," "her claw-like fingers" suggest a rude, uncivilized character and setting. The alliteration is suggestive of the clinking sound made by the coins, a pleasant sound to the "primitive" mind that likes cacophonies or music.

Mrs. Almayer, also, dreams of wealth and influence; ironically, she achieves her goal while Almayer fails. So, primitive or civilized, man shares the same needs. Mrs. Almayer stands as a symbol of Almayer's inability to cope with natives, to overcome the savage necessities of his existence.

Primitivism in the novel is also represented by the savage union "of mutual understanding passing between...two savage natures," those of Dain and Nina. H. M Daleski comments that:

In *Almayer's Folly*, passion is seen as a matter of unrestraint, and freedom from trammeling inhibition of equated with savagery. When Dain declares his love to Nina in 'burning words' he is said to give up to her "the whole treasure of love and passion his nature is capable of; the inhibited self, indeed, is a lost self, for while Dain speaks, Nina abandons herself to a feeling of dreamy happiness. Conrad may be describing here the love of a man and a woman, but the stakes are civilization and savagery. The implicit view here of a self-possessed restraint as a mark, almost an index, of civilization is one that Conrad will be led to modify somewhat in his presentation of Marlow's cannibal crew in *Heart of Darkness*.(20-21).

To understand primitivism , we must understand Nature. Nature in *Almayer's Folly* functions as a primitive and savage environment. The Sambir river with its " mud soft and black, hiding fever,, rotteness , and evil under its level and glazed surface," prefigures the river Congo in *Heart of Darkness*. Under these jungles of Pantai and Congo lie idyllic cultures in a state of innocence, the atavistic influence it casts upon white men. The savage nature is brought to climax in the several encounters between Dain and Nina in the jungle. Much like the forest in *The Scarlet Letter*. All of nature participates in the action, as the text reveals:

Earth , river, and sky were wrapped up in a deep sleep from which it seemed there would be no waking. All the seething life and movement of tropical nature seemed concentrated in the ardent eyes , in the tumultuously beating hearts of the two beings(Conrad 69).

The narrator continues:

...with a rhythmical swing of their bodies they walked through the light towards the outlying shadows of the forests.(Conrad 136).

The image of nature is overstated and overdrawn in the above passage. What Dain ad Nina are doing is being transferred onto nature. Their passion is described as violent, inferring the nature of a savage love.

The river Pantai also has its function. It bears a direct symbolic relationship to Almayer's story. As the novel opens, Almayer, engrossed in his dreams of wealth and power looks at the river which flows past his house:

There was no tinge of gold on it this evening, for it had been swollen by the rains, and rolled an angry and muddy flood under his inattentive eyes, carrying small driftwood and big dead logs , and whole uprooted trees with branches and foliage, amongst which the water swirled and roared angrily.(Conrad 5-6).

The description speaks for itself. The flood does not merely irrigate or inundate; it is an irresistible current that sweeps away everything its path. It uproots s and carries away trees in the same way that Almayer's force uproots his wife and daughter in a cultural sense. The river rushes headlong past Almayer's house to the ocean, the way Dain Maroola carries Nina to the Ocean before Almayer's very eyes. The river is a symbol of active and realistic life—sometimes cruel, sometimes gentle (Boylee 31).

Paul L. Wiley suggests that *Almayer's Folly* is influenced by Conrad's reading of Falubert's *Madame Bovary*(28). The point I am trying to make here is that Conrad, as Allan Hunter demonstrates, is indebted to his public , which in turn was influenced by Charles Darwin and Henry Drumond, these two scientists are known for their theories of race that claim superiority of the white race over the rest. But Baudelaire, who Conrad profoundly admired, wrote that a poet should be above his audience(Wiley 28). Conrad does not seem to have adopted such an attitude in *Almayer's Folly* and *Heart of Darkness*.

Finally, *Almayer's Folly's* main theme is that of a colonialism that ignores the otherness, the possessors, and the owners of the land and the wealth. The novel is Conrad's mockery of the Western arrogance that underestimated other cultures. Primitivism is one of the characteristics of the Malay society and people . Racism is one of the characteristics of the colonizers . They look down at the natives, their customs and traditions. The white

colonizers see themselves as superior to the black. Another point is the paradox of the mulatto in modern society. In fact *Almayer's Folly* is significant for confronting the perplexity and the complexity of children born of interracial marriages. Often those children are rejected by those groups. In the novel, Babalatchi speaks of Nina as a white girl without decency (Conrad 77)

Conrad focusses in *Almayer's Folly* on the dilemma of mulatto who are often rejected by their white fathers. But Almayer's adoration of his daughter is one of his great qualities in the novel. He considers Nina to be white to the point that he refuses to deliver Dain to the Dutch authorities for fear that they will discover a white girl going with a savage, "No. it cannot be...white men finding my daughter with this Malay" (Conrad 112).

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