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978-0-521-43205-4 - Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River

Joseph Conrad

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THE  
CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF  
THE WORKS OF  
JOSEPH CONRAD

Cambridge University Press

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JOSEPH CONRAD

ALMAYER'S FOLLY

A STORY OF AN  
EASTERN RIVER

EDITED BY  
Floyd Eugene Eddleman  
AND  
David Leon Higdon

INTRODUCTION BY  
Ian Watt



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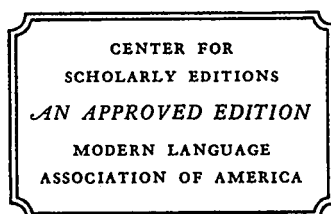
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## PREFACE

JOSEPH CONRAD's place in twentieth-century literature is now firmly established. His novels, stories, and other writings have become integral to modern thought and culture. Yet the need for an accurate and authoritative edition of these works remains. Owing to successive rounds of authorial revision, transmissional errors, and deliberate editorial intervention, Conrad's texts exist in various unsatisfactory and sometimes confused forms. In his last years he attempted to have his works published in a uniform edition that would fix and preserve them for posterity. But though trusted by scholars, students, and general readers alike, the received texts in the British and American collected editions published since 1921 have proved to be at least as defective as their predecessors. The Cambridge Edition, grounded in thorough research on the original documents, is designed to reverse this trend by presenting Conrad's novels, stories, and other prose in texts that are as trustworthy as modern scholarship can make them.

The present volume contains critical texts of *Almayer's Folly* and of the 'Author's Note'. The Cambridge text of *Almayer's Folly* is based mainly on the revised typescript (though the manuscript provides copy-text in several chapters), but it incorporates readings drawn from the first English edition as well as editorial emendations. The text of the 'Author's Note', which also incorporates a few emendations and variant readings, is based on the manuscript. The 'Introduction' provides a literary history of the work focused on its genesis, development, and reception and its place in Conrad's life and time. The essay on 'The Texts' traces its textual history and that of the 'Author's Note', examining the sources of the texts and explaining the policies followed in editing them. The apparatus records basic textual evidence, documenting the discussion of genealogy and authority in 'The Texts' as well as other editorial decisions, while the 'Notes' comment on specific readings that require glosses or involve special textual problems. Although they may interest the great variety of readers, the 'Introduction' and 'Notes' are written primarily for an audience of non-specialists, whereas the textual essay and apparatus are intended for the scholar and specialist.

This volume follows certain policies and conventions observed throughout the Cambridge Edition. The pages of the text contain line

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## PREFACE

numbers in the margins which will facilitate reference to the 'Notes' and other editorial matter. Conrad's other works are cited from volumes of the Cambridge Edition already published, or else from the Doubleday collected edition in its Sun-Dial printing (1921) or in the Dent printings (1923 and subsequently). Superior letters (e.g., 'M') in the original documents have been lowered (i.e., to 'Mr'). The beginnings of paragraphs are represented by standard modern indentation regardless of the various conventions of the documents, and Conrad's '——' is reduced to simple inverted commas. Dashes of variable lengths are printed as one-em dashes. Other typographical elements in the texts and titles of the original documents (e.g., display capitals, chapter heads, running titles) have been standardized.

The texts and apparatus in this volume were prepared with the aid of computers. Those interested in data and documentation not published here should contact the Chief Executive Editor.

In addition to those named in the Acknowledgements, the editors wish to thank the Trustees and beneficiaries of the Estate of Joseph Conrad and Doubleday and Company and J. M. Dent and Company for permission to publish these new texts of Conrad's works. The support of the institutions listed on p. vii has been essential to the success of the series and is gratefully acknowledged.

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For their support of the Edition we also wish to express our gratitude to present and former administrators of Kent State University, including, in alphabetical order, Rudolph O. Buttlar, Carol A. Cartwright, Cheryl A. Casper, Alex Gildzen, Charlee Heimlich, Dean H. Keller, Sanford E. Marovitz, Thomas D. Moore, Terry P. Roark, Michael Schwartz, Carol M. Toncar, and Eugene P. Wenninger. Acknowledgement of special support goes to the staffs of Kent State's Libraries (Don L. Tolliver, Dean) and Computer Services (William E. McKinley, Jr., Director).

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## CHRONOLOGY

Joseph Conrad's life may be seen as having several distinct stages: in Poland and in Russian exile before his father's death (1857–69); in Poland and the south of France under the care of his maternal uncle (1870–79); in the British merchant marine, mainly as junior officer sailing in the Far East (1880–early 1890s); after a transitional period (early 1890s), as writer of critical esteem (1895–1914); as acclaimed writer, though perhaps with his greatest work achieved (1914–24). After 1895 the history of his life is essentially the history of his work. Publication dates given below are those of the London editions, except for those of the present volume.

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1857 December 3     | Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (Nałęcz coat-of-arms) born in Berdichev, or vicinity, in the Polish Ukraine to Apollo and Ewelina (or Ewa), née Bobrowska, Korzeniowski |
| 1862 May            | Korzeniowski, his wife, and son forced into exile in Russia                                                                                                              |
| 1865 April          | Ewa Korzeniowska dies                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1868                | Korzeniowski permitted to leave Russia                                                                                                                                   |
| 1869 February       | Korzeniowski and Conrad move to Cracow                                                                                                                                   |
| May                 | Korzeniowski dies                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1870                | Conrad, under care of uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, begins study with tutor, Adam Pulman                                                                                      |
| 1873 May            | Visits Switzerland and northern Italy; first view of the sea                                                                                                             |
| 1874 October        | Takes position in Marseilles with Delestang et Fils, bankers and shippers                                                                                                |
| 1875                | Apprentice in <i>Mont-Blanc</i>                                                                                                                                          |
| 1876–77             | In <i>Saint-Antoine</i>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1878 February/March | Attempts suicide                                                                                                                                                         |
| April               | Leaves Marseilles in British steamer <i>Mavis</i>                                                                                                                        |
| June                | Lands at Lowestoft, Suffolk; first time in England                                                                                                                       |
| July–September      | Sails as ordinary seaman in <i>Skimmer of the Sea</i> (coastal waters of British Isles)                                                                                  |

| xvi                 | CHRONOLOGY                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1878–80             | In <i>Duke of Sutherland, Europa</i>                                                                                                                       |
| 1880                | Meets G. F. W. Hope, Adolph Krieger                                                                                                                        |
| June                | Passes examination for second mate                                                                                                                         |
| 1880–81             | Third mate in <i>Loch Etive</i>                                                                                                                            |
| 1881–84             | Second mate in <i>Palestine, Riversdale, Narcissus</i>                                                                                                     |
| 1884 December       | Passes examination for first mate                                                                                                                          |
| 1885–86             | Second mate in <i>Tilkhurst</i>                                                                                                                            |
| 1886                | Submits perhaps his first story, ‘The Black Mate’, in <i>Tit-Bits</i> competition                                                                          |
| August              | Becomes a British subject                                                                                                                                  |
| November            | Passes examination for master; receives ‘Certificate of Competency as Master’                                                                              |
| 1886–87             | Second mate in <i>Falconhurst</i>                                                                                                                          |
| 1887–88             | First mate in <i>Highland Forest</i> , in <i>Vidar</i> ; meets Charles William Olmeijer                                                                    |
| 1888–89             | Captain of barque <i>Otago</i>                                                                                                                             |
| 1889 Autumn         | Begins <i>Almayer's Folly</i> in London                                                                                                                    |
| 1890 February–April | In Poland for first time since 1874; has at least reached the beginning of Chapter 4 of <i>Almayer's Folly</i>                                             |
| May–December        | To the Congo as second-in-command, then temporarily as captain, of <i>Roi des Belges</i> ; <i>Almayer's Folly</i> completed at least through Chapter 4     |
| 1891 January        | Returns ill to London; manages warehouse of Barr, Moering, London                                                                                          |
| May–June            | Works on Chapters 5–7 while convalescing at Champel, Switzerland; Chapter 8 after returning to London                                                      |
| 1891–93             | First mate in <i>Torrens</i>                                                                                                                               |
| 1893                | Meets John Galsworthy, Edward L. Sanderson while aboard <i>Torrens</i> ; shows manuscript of <i>Almayer's Folly</i> to W. H. Jacques, a young Cantabrigian |
| Autumn              | Visits Bobrowski in Polish Ukraine and mislays, but retrieves, manuscript in Berlin's Friedrichstrasse railway station; writes Chapter 9                   |
| November            | Signs on as second mate in <i>Adowa</i> , which never makes voyage                                                                                         |

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|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| December       | In port in Rouen, begins Chapter 10                                                         |
| 1894           | Meets Edward Garnett, Jessie George                                                         |
| January        | Ends career as seaman                                                                       |
| February       | Bobrowski dies                                                                              |
| March          | Completes MS of Chapter 10                                                                  |
| April          | Completes MS of Chapters 11 and 12                                                          |
| July 4         | Submits <i>Almayer's Folly</i> typescript to T. Fisher<br>Unwin under pseudonym of 'Kamudi' |
| August         | Begins <i>An Outcast of the Islands</i>                                                     |
| October        | <i>Almayer's Folly</i> accepted for publication                                             |
| December 24    | Begins receiving proofs of <i>Almayer's Folly</i>                                           |
| 1895 January 4 | 'Author's Note' for <i>Almayer's Folly</i> completed,<br>but not published until 1921       |
| April 29       | <i>Almayer's Folly</i> published in London (3 May in<br>America)                            |
| 1896 March     | <i>An Outcast of the Islands</i> . Marries Jessie George;<br>honeymoon in Brittany          |
|                | Settles in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex                                                          |
| 1897           | Begins friendship with R. B. Cunninghame<br>Graham; meets Henry James                       |
| December       | <i>The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'</i>                                                        |
| 1898           | Meets Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford, H. G.<br>Wells, and Stephen Crane                          |
| January        | Alfred Borys Conrad born                                                                    |
| April          | <i>Tales of Unrest</i>                                                                      |
| October        | Moves to Pent Farm, Stanford, Kent, sub-let<br>from Ford                                    |
| 1899           | Begins association with J. B. Pinker                                                        |
| 1900 October   | <i>Lord Jim</i>                                                                             |
| 1901 June      | <i>The Inheritors</i> (with Ford)                                                           |
| 1902 November  | <i>Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories</i>                                             |
| 1903 April     | <i>Typhoon and Other Stories</i>                                                            |
| October        | <i>Romance</i> (with Ford)                                                                  |
| 1904 October   | <i>Nostromo</i>                                                                             |
| 1905 June      | <i>One Day More</i> staged in London                                                        |
| 1906           | Meets Arthur Marwood                                                                        |
| August         | John Alexander Conrad born                                                                  |
| October        | <i>The Mirror of the Sea</i>                                                                |
| 1907 September | <i>The Secret Agent</i> . Moves to Someries, Luton,<br>Bedfordshire                         |

| xviii              | CHRONOLOGY                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1908 August        | <i>A Set of Six</i>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1909               | Moves to Aldington, Kent                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1910               | Moves to Capel House, Orlestone, Kent                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1911 October       | <i>Under Western Eyes</i>                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1912 January       | <i>A Personal Record (Some Reminiscences)</i>                                                                                                                                         |
| October            | <i>'Twixt Land and Sea</i>                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1913 September     | <i>Chance</i> , with 'main' publication date of January 1914                                                                                                                          |
| 1914 July–November | Visits Poland with family; delayed by outbreak of First World War; returns via Austria and Italy                                                                                      |
| 1915 February      | <i>Within the Tides</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| September          | <i>Victory</i>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1917 March         | <i>The Shadow-Line</i>                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1919 March         | Moves to Spring Grove, near Wye, Kent                                                                                                                                                 |
| August             | <i>The Arrow of Gold</i>                                                                                                                                                              |
| October            | Moves to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, Kent                                                                                                                                |
| 1920 June          | <i>The Rescue</i>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1921               | Visits Corsica. Collected editions begin publication in England (Heinemann) and in America (Doubleday) with <i>Almayer's Folly</i> , including the 'Author's Note' for the first time |
| February           | <i>Notes on Life and Letters</i>                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1922 November      | <i>The Secret Agent</i> staged in London                                                                                                                                              |
| 1923 May–June      | Visits America, guest of F. N. Doubleday                                                                                                                                              |
| December           | <i>The Rover</i>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1924 May           | Declines knighthood                                                                                                                                                                   |
| August 3           | Dies at Oswalds (Roman Catholic burial, Canterbury)                                                                                                                                   |
| September          | <i>The Nature of a Crime</i> (with Ford)                                                                                                                                              |
| October            | <i>The Shorter Tales</i>                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1925 January       | <i>Tales of Hearsay</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| September          | <i>Suspense</i> (unfinished)                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1926 March         | <i>Last Essays</i>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1928 June          | <i>The Sisters</i>                                                                                                                                                                    |

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## ABBREVIATIONS

[London is the place of publication unless otherwise indicated]

- CEW* Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge University Press, 1966
- CH* Norman Sherry, *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973
- Enc. Brit.* *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 11th edn. Cambridge University Press, 1910–11
- Garnett *Letters from Joseph Conrad, 1895–1924*, ed. Edward Garnett. Nonesuch Press, 1928
- Gordan John Gordan, *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940
- Karl Frederick R. Karl, *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979
- Keating *A Conrad Memorial Library: The Collection of George T. Keating*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1929
- Keppel Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy*. 3rd edn. 2 vols. Chapman & Hall, 1847
- Letters* *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies. 4 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1983–
- LL* *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, ed. G. Jean-Aubry. 2 vols. Heinemann, 1927
- Mursia Ugo Mursia, 'The True "Discoverer" of Joseph Conrad's Literary Talent and Other Notes on Conradian Biography', *Conradiana*, 4 (1972), 5–22
- Najder Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd edn. Oxford University Press, 1989
- Reid B. L. Reid, *The Man from New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968
- Wilkinson Richard James Wilkinson, *A Malay–English Dictionary, romanised*. 2 vols. Macmillan, 1959

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ABBREVIATIONS

**Locations of Unpublished Documents**

|      |                                                                                      |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Berg | Berg Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor,<br>Lenox and Tilden Foundations |
| NYPL | Manuscript Division, The New York Public Library                                     |

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Beginnings: Borneo, 1887 and London, 1889**

IT WAS IN London and in 1889 that a thirty-one-year-old ship's officer whom the world was to know as Joseph Conrad began to write his first novel. One fine autumnal morning he did not, as usual, dawdle after his breakfast but instead summoned the landlady's daughter to clear the table. Conrad told the story some twenty years later, in *A Personal Record*; that book's 'immediate aim', he explains, was to present 'the feelings and sensations connected with the writing of my first book and with my first contact with the sea'.<sup>1</sup> As regards writing his 'first book' Conrad insists on the obscurity of his sudden impulse: 'I was not at all certain that I wanted to write, or that I meant to write, or that I had anything to write about' (p. 70); nevertheless, Conrad concludes, 'What I am certain of is, that I was very far from thinking of writing a story, though it is possible and even likely that I was thinking of the man Almayer' (p. 74).

Conrad had met 'Almayer' some two years earlier. A back injury had forced Conrad into a hospital at Singapore in the summer of 1887; and when he was better he shipped as first mate on the *Vidar*, an 800-ton steamship which traded in local products in various islands of the Malay Archipelago. On one of its routine stops at an isolated settlement of Eastern Borneo Conrad had dealings with a Dutch trader called Charles William (or William Charles) Olmeijer.<sup>2</sup> *A Personal Record* gives a memorable account of their first meeting: alongside the little wharf on the edge of the jungle Almayer emerges through the mist clad 'in flapping pyjamas of cretonne pattern (enormous flowers with yellow petals on a disagreeable blue ground) and a thin cotton singlet with short sleeves' (p. 74). He is to take delivery, oddly enough, of a riding pony; but as soon as it touches ground the pony knocks Almayer down and takes off

<sup>1</sup> P. xxi. References to Conrad's works are usually given in the text, preceded when necessary by a shortened title. (See the 'Preface' for editions cited.) Where there are several quotations from the same or immediately contiguous pages, only the first is given a reference.

<sup>2</sup> On Conrad's life, see Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography* (1960); Karl, Najder, and Jeffrey Meyers, *Joseph Conrad* (1991); these and other authorities disagree about the order of Olmeijer's Christian names.

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## INTRODUCTION

into the jungle. After relating some memories of their subsequent encounters – extending at most to four visits of a day or two each (Najder, pp. 97–98) – Conrad makes the singular assertion that ‘if I had not got to know Almayer pretty well it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print’ (p. 87).

The casually preposterous hyperbole is characteristic of how, whereas he presented his career as a British mariner as much more purposeful and successful than was in fact the case, Conrad liked to maintain that he had become an author by pure accident. Actually, it seems probable that some years before, in 1886, Conrad had already written a short story, ‘The Black Mate’; he thought later that it was ‘for a prize competition, started, I think, by *Tit-Bits*’ (*LL*, II, 264).<sup>1</sup> This story, which now exists only in the presumably much-rewritten form of its publication in 1908, is amusing but trivial; it only faintly qualifies Conrad’s assertion that ‘*Almayer’s Folly* may keep its place as my first serious work.’

We need not, however, wholly believe Conrad’s statement that ‘the ambition of being an author had never turned up amongst these gracious imaginary existences one creates fondly for oneself at times in the stillness and immobility of a day-dream’ (*A Personal Record*, p. 68). Conrad may well have found ‘the coming into existence’ of his first book ‘quite an inexplicable event’ (p. 90); but it was a good deal less inexplicable than it would have been for most sailors. Few of them elect to spend their shore leaves in rooms where there are books ‘lying about’ and where pen and paper are also at hand; even fewer of them are, like Conrad, the son of a distinguished writer, as his father, Apollo Korzeniowski, had been.

Still, why it should have been a few chance encounters with ‘Almayer’ that precipitated Conrad into authorship is not easy to explain. To begin with, what little we know about the actual Olmeijer makes it clear that *Almayer’s Folly* is in no sense the story of his life. Unlike Almayer, the original Olmeijer was not of pure Dutch parentage, but an Eurasian of mixed Dutch and Malay ancestry; and so was his wife. It is true that he was a trader on the Berau River (then, as in the novel, usually called the Pantai); but unlike Almayer, Olmeijer was apparently a fairly successful and respected one, at least in 1893, when he was reported to be ‘the head of the area’, whose counsel was sought by various local sultans; and he apparently died back home at Surabaya in 1900<sup>2</sup> – that is, five years after publication of *Almayer’s Folly*.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the facts and myths of this episode, see Keith Carabine, ‘“The Black Mate”: June–July 1886; January 1908’, *The Conradian*, 13 (1988), 128–48.

<sup>2</sup> See Gordan, p. 38; *CEW*, p. 113.

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There is no first-hand testimony about Olmeijer's character; and virtually all we have to go on to explain his appeal to Conrad is Conrad's account in *A Personal Record*. There he is an extraordinary combination of ambitious dreamer and habitual defeatist. Thus Conrad comments that 'What he wanted with a pony goodness only knows, since I am perfectly certain he could not ride it; but here you have the man, ambitious, aiming at the grandiose' (p. 76). At the same time, when Almayer asked, 'I suppose you haven't got such a thing as a pony on board?', he was 'hardly audible: and spoke in the accents of a man accustomed to the buffets of evil fortune'. Behind this lack of conviction, however, Conrad became aware of Almayer's abiding sense of his own importance: 'the worst of this country', Almayer later mumbles, '“is that one is not able to realise ... very important interests ...” he finished faintly ... “up the river”' (p. 86).

Conrad tells us that his 'pathetic mistrust in the favourable issue of any sort of affair touched me deeply' (p. 77), but he adds that he found 'nothing amusing whatever' in Almayer (p. 84). What he did find was probably the vast disparity between the extravagant hopes of Almayer's inner life and the petty actualities of his achievement, a disparity which Conrad was familiar with, no doubt, in himself. This kind of identification would at least be consistent with a passage in *A Personal Record* where Conrad imagines himself placating Almayer's aggrieved shade for the 'very small larceny' of his name, and for having given him a fictional incarnation which was 'not worthy of your merits' (pp. 87–88). At first, Conrad's defense is jocular and ironical, but he goes on to disclaim any intention of mocking Almayer's aspirations: 'What made you so real to me was that you held this lofty theory with some force of conviction and with an admirable consistency.'

For the novel Conrad invented an action which remorselessly broke down the 'admirable consistency' of Olmeijer's megalomania; but part of that action was based on two kinds of historical reality.

One of them begins in the fact that, in so abandoned a spot as Tanjung Redeb, three other whites were present, and one of them was called Jim Lingard. He was apparently the nephew of William Lingard, a very famous trader and adventurer. This William Lingard had special interests on the Eastern coast, the least developed part of Borneo; in particular he had long ago discovered a channel for navigating the labyrinthine estuary of the Berau River; and, at Tanjung Redeb (the novel's Sambir) had set up its first permanent trading post.<sup>1</sup> Lingard

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Lopian, 'The Sealords of Berau and Mindanao: Two Responses to the Colonial Challenge', *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 1 (1974), 143–54.

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had apparently helped the Sultan of Gunung Tabor, just across the river, either in a sea battle with a neighboring sultan or by forgiving him his debts or supplying rice (at a fairly high price) during a famine. As a reward the Sultan ceremonially named him Pangeram ('Prince') and Rajah Laut ('King of the Sea'); and he also, probably at Lingard's request, ceded him a piece of land on which he built a store and living quarters. The Dutch authorities were annoyed that one of their sultans should receive a foreigner without their permission, and in February 1863 sent a gunboat up the Berau River to investigate. Its commander made a report which showed that the Sultan apparently had more or less cleared himself; but thereafter Lingard learned that it was wiser to keep on good terms with the Dutch.

Olmeijer had been William Lingard's representative in Tanjung Redeb for some seventeen years; and the two men had apparently both prospected for gold further upriver and dealt in contraband arms and gunpowder with the Dyaks, the more primitive inhabitants who had preceded the Moslem Malays and Arabs in the occupation of Borneo. But Lingard's fortunes had declined; his monopoly of trade in Berau had been broken and his last ship, the *Rajah Laut*, was put up for sale in 1884.<sup>1</sup> There are few records of him between his return to England in 1883 and his death in 1888.<sup>2</sup>

In the novel Conrad invents a picturesque plot from these materials. Charles Olmeijer becomes Kaspar Almayer, the son of a minor Dutch official in Java; he leaves home to work as a clerk at the port of Macassar in the Celebes, and there he meets a famous English trader called Tom, not William, Lingard. Tom Lingard proposes that Almayer marry his ward, a native girl who is to inherit his fortune. Though he has no feeling for the girl, and is ashamed to be marrying a Malay, Almayer agrees because he believes that he will then be able to realize the 'earthly paradise of his dreams' – make a huge fortune and live in a 'big mansion in Amsterdam'.<sup>3</sup> The main action of *Almayer's Folly* occurs some twenty years after the marriage. Lingard has disappeared, apparently trying to raise further capital somewhere in Europe; the trading post is derelict because Lingard's secret channel for navigating the Pantai River has been betrayed to rival Arab traders; and the splendid new house on

<sup>1</sup> See *CEW*, pp. 107, 110, which gives by far the fullest account of William Lingard (pp. 89–135).

<sup>2</sup> Hans van Marle, 'Jumble of Facts and Fiction: The First Singapore Reaction to *Almayer's Folly*', *Conradiana*, 10 (1978), 165, nn. 10, 12.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 10; subsequent references to the text of this edition appear in round brackets.

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which Almayer has wasted his last resources in the vain – and momentary – hope that his trade would flourish again, and that the British Borneo Company, not the Dutch, would take over Sambir,<sup>1</sup> has now been mockingly dubbed ‘Almayer’s Folly’ by his trading rivals.<sup>2</sup> It now stands unfinished, untenanted, and already much decayed; while its universally despised master is suffered to live on by the Malay and Arab leaders merely because they believe that only Almayer can tell them the secret of Lingard’s rumored mountain of gold inland.

There may, then, be some faint historical basis for the character and actions of Tom Lingard in the novel; but a second and much more general historical process pervades the moral world of *Almayer’s Folly*, and it supplies another possible reason why Conrad found ‘nothing amusing whatever’ in Olmeijer.

What has really foreclosed the dreams of Almayer is that he has pinned all his hopes on Lingard’s monopoly of trade at Berau; but that monopoly has in fact been condemned by the coming of steam, which has made river navigation much easier and fostered the development of regular coastal trade routes.<sup>3</sup> The Malay Archipelago had seen two generations of heroic individual achievement: that of Sir Stamford Raffles (1781–1826), founder of Singapore, and then that of Sir James Brooke (1803–68), who became the rajah of Sarawak, in north-eastern Borneo. Later, some of their merchant-adventurer successors in the 1850s and 60s, such as William Lingard, had at least become figures of legend. One man who met Lingard in 1887, W. G. St Clair, describes him as ‘a personage of almost mythical renown, a sort of ubiquitous sea-hero, perhaps at times a sort of terror to evildoers, all over the Eastern waters from Singapore to Torres Straits, and from Timor to Mindanao’ (*CEW*, pp. 315–16). But this ‘type of the adventurer-

<sup>1</sup> In 1844–45, officers of both the Dutch and British navies had almost simultaneously negotiated agreements with the Sultan of Berau; but both governments soon lost interest (Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* [1955], pp. 154–55). However, there is no evidence that by the time of Lingard Britain was ever seriously interested in annexing parts of Eastern Borneo as far south as Tanjung Redeb; its main differences were with the Spanish claim to the Sulu Archipelago, which had been accepted by Britain and Germany in 1895 on the condition of free trade there, and the acceptance of the British Protectorate over Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo. The Dutch had accepted this settlement mainly because they were forced to acknowledge that they were unable to colonize all of Borneo themselves. See L. R. Wright, *The Origins of British Borneo* (1970), pp. 13, 133–34, 140–41, 159–60, 201.

<sup>2</sup> There is a photograph of Olmeijer’s house, taken in 1903, in Najder.

<sup>3</sup> For the revolution in far-eastern trade created by steamships, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, see Francis Hyde, *Far Eastern Trade, 1860–1914* (1973), pp. 16–26.

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skipper' was now 'quite extinct'. As the Western powers set up coaling stations for the new steamships, and their men-of-war put down piracy, opportunities for individual enterprise declined; and so on the whole the merchants and sailors of the seventies and eighties were a much more humdrum lot.<sup>1</sup> Even Borneo, one of the last areas to be taken over by the Western colonial powers, had been largely settled by the 1880s.

That Olmeijer was, in the simplest sense, the victim of history, no doubt gave him his appeal to Conrad, who was another. The effective partition of Borneo and the coming of steam had sealed Olmeijer's fate exactly as the partition of Poland and the coming of steam had Conrad's. Conrad went up the Berau in 1887 on a steamship which was owned by the very Arab traders who had supplanted Olmeijer and Lingard – the Singapore firm of Syed Mohsin Bin Salleh Al Jooffree; while the whole period of the writing of the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* (from 1889 to 1894) was when Conrad was discovering that, in the world of the steamship, he himself no longer had a dependable future as a sailor.

During his first voyage to the East in 1879, Conrad had written from Australia to his uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski, 'with the greatest enthusiasm' about the 'beauty and wealth' of the area, and had even talked of taking up a position there, which he said he had been offered by a famous captain and shipowner whom he had met at Sydney.<sup>2</sup> Nothing came of the project, and when, in 1883, 1885, and especially in 1887, Conrad actually went to Southeast Asia (which he had not done when he wrote to Bobrowski), he must have seen that he had come East too late; too late to share the dreams of William Lingard or even those of his foolish protégé Olmeijer; and yet the disappointment continued to rankle.

**The Writing: 1889–95**

*Almayer's Folly*, then, reflects both large historical processes and Conrad's personal experience of them; but although we have more physical evidence to document its writing than we have for most first

<sup>1</sup> For further information see, Hans van Marle, 'De rol van de buitenlandse avonturier' (The Role of the Foreign Adventurer [in nineteenth-century Indonesia]), *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 86 (1971), 32–39; G. J. Resink, 'The Eastern Archipelago under Joseph Conrad's Western Eyes', in his *Indonesia's History between the Myths* (1968), pp. 305–23.

<sup>2</sup> *Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends*, ed. Zdzisław Najder (1964), p. 180.

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novels, these records reveal very little about Conrad's unique experiences. Nonetheless, the records have their own intrinsic, and very considerable, interest and importance.

*The Manuscript: 1889-94*

The first of the documents is the manuscript, complete except for Chapter 9. It is extant only through a series of lucky chances, many of which Conrad describes in *A Personal Record*. For instance, the manuscript survived the misfortunes and perils of Conrad's 'canoe' journey on the Congo; and between its beginning in the autumn of 1889 and its completion four and a half years later, also in London, it shared Conrad's various other travels – to Australia (twice), to the Ukraine (twice), and to Belgium, Switzerland, and France (pp. 3–26, 68–69). Later, the survival of the manuscript depended on a further and rather commoner vicissitude. Like many writers, Conrad sometimes destroyed his first drafts after a new revised or typed version was completed, but the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* was apparently kept hidden away by Conrad's wife, Jessie. As a result it survived to be sold, some eighteen years later, along with many of his other manuscripts, to John Quinn, a wealthy New York lawyer who was an enlightened patron of the arts with modern tastes. Quinn's collection, which contained the manuscripts of many writers who were later to become celebrated, including those of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce,<sup>1</sup> was sold at auction by the Anderson Galleries in 1923. Conrad's fame was then at its peak, and the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* fetched \$5,300, compared to only \$1,975 for *Ulysses*. The buyer was a colorful magnate of bookdealing, Dr A. S. W. Rosenbach; and he ensured that the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly*, together with many others, can now be seen in one of his houses, which has become the Philip H. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia.

Two incidental features of the manuscript bring us fairly close to Conrad's life during the time of the writing. First, the back of the fourth leaf of Chapter 3 records the familiar nervous distractions of the writer unable to write: there are a number of 'K's and 'Konrad's; sketches of four ships, of a hansom cab, and – in a premonitory adumbration of what was to be a continuing obsession of Conrad's poverty-threatened career as a writer – pictures of English coins from a penny to a

<sup>1</sup> Reid, pp. 73, 124–27, 169, 602.

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half-crown. Second, some of the other occasional notes fill in a few details of the chronology of the novel's composition. Conrad wrote that *Almayer's Folly* was written 'line by line, rather than page by page' (*A Personal Record*, p. 19); but despite this, Conrad's early progress was rather rapid. There is a letter written in Polish on the back of the first leaf of Chapter 4 which suggests that Conrad had progressed that far early during the winter of 1889–90, when he was largely unemployed. There presumably followed a pause during his voyage to the Congo in the last half of 1890, but work was resumed on his return. Conrad went to convalesce in Switzerland, at Champel, near Geneva, between 21 May and 14 June 1891; and on the back of the fourth leaf of Chapter 6 (originally folio 6 of Chapter 7) there is 'a computation of 536 francs for five weeks' board', and a word which John Gordan interpreted as 'Genève' (though it may be 'Guineas'), followed by the words 'Receive from London 375 fr.'<sup>1</sup>

Conrad probably finished Chapter 7 while at Champel and 8 after his return to London, but then progress again slowed down for the next two years. This period was mainly occupied by Conrad's two voyages as first mate of the sailing ship *Torrens*, beginning mid-November 1891. He recounts how, on his second voyage, which began on 25 October 1892, he showed the manuscript to its first reader, a passenger named W. H. Jacques. 'Would it bore you very much reading a MS. in a handwriting like mine?' Conrad asked him, and was told, 'Not at all' (*A Personal Record*, pp. 15–16). Next day Jacques returned the MS, silently. Finally Conrad asked him: 'Well, what do you say? ... Is it worth finishing?' 'Distinctly.' 'Were you interested?' 'Very much!' But a westerly blow was coming on, and Conrad had time only for one more question: 'Now let me ask you one more thing: Is the story quite clear to you as it stands?' Jacques, Conrad tells, 'raised his dark, gentle eyes to my face and seemed surprised', but he answered: 'Yes! Perfectly.'

They never mentioned the tale again, and Jacques soon died, either in Australia, or on the homeward journey; but, from the way Conrad refers to this episode as 'these quiet rites of Almayer's and Nina's resurrection', we can probably take it that there had earlier been some hesitation in Conrad's mind as to whether he should go on with the novel. Even during that voyage, 'not one line was added to the careless scrawl of the

<sup>1</sup> See Gordan, p. 179; see 'The Texts', pp. 160–62, for more detailed analysis. Chapter numbers given here are the final ones of the manuscript (and of all subsequent documents), not the ones Conrad originally used for the first seven chapters. It is unclear whether Conrad was thinking of the original or final sequence in his comments in *A Personal Record*, p. 14. Gordan cites the original numbering.

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many pages which poor Jacques had had the patience to read'; but although, as Conrad writes, 'the purpose instilled into me by his simple and final "Distinctly" remained dormant', it was 'alive to await its opportunity'.

The opportunity was nearly lost forever. Conrad recounts that, after leaving the *Torrens* late in July of 1893 to pay his last visit to Tadeusz Bobrowski that autumn, 'on an early, sleepy morning, changing trains in a hurry', he left his Gladstone bag in the refreshment room of the Friedrichstrasse railway station in Berlin (*A Personal Record*, p. 19). Luckily it was retrieved by a porter; and at that time the manuscript had only 'advanced ... to the first words of the ninth chapter'. However, in the period of enforced leisure which followed Conrad's return from the Ukraine, the last four chapters were finished in a relatively sustained burst of energy. Chapter 9 was written in the autumn of 1893; and the next chapter was begun in the inactivity of Conrad's berth on the steamship *Adowa*. He had accepted the position of second mate, and sailed with the *Adowa* from London to Rouen, arriving on 6 December 1893. Conrad wrote that 'the shade of old Flaubert ... might have hovered with amused interest over the decks' as he penned the opening lines of the new chapter (*A Personal Record*, p. 3). Conrad also remembered that, as he wrote the tenth chapter's first sentence on 'the grey paper of a pad which rested on the blanket of my bed-place', he was interrupted by the 'cheerful and casual' young third mate, who asked, 'What are you always scribbling there, if it's fair to ask?' Conrad 'did not answer him, and simply turned the pad over with a movement of instinctive secrecy'; the story was then 'put away under the pillow for that day'.<sup>1</sup> The *Adowa* never made its voyage, and Conrad returned to London, not knowing that he had experienced his 'last association with a ship' (*A Personal Record*, p. 7).

Before leaving Rouen, however, Conrad had mentioned *Almayer's Folly* in his correspondence with the main confidante of his early years. Marguerite Poradowska was then the beautiful forty-six-year-old widow of the refugee first cousin of Conrad's maternal grandmother. She came from a distinguished Belgian family, and had already published three novels. Their friendship had begun early in 1890, and she was the first author that Conrad knew personally. Conrad's extant letters contain frequent praise of her works, but the first mention of his own novel is not

<sup>1</sup> *A Personal Record*, pp. 3–5. The absence of this grey paper from the manuscript leaves now extant shows that Conrad was revising his text even at this stage. See 'The Texts', p. 163.

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until 7 January 1894. On that day he ends a letter (written as usual in French): 'If you are a well-behaved little girl, I shall let you read my story of Almayer when I have finished it' (*Letters*, I, 144). Conrad's reference is so brief, and without any other explanation, that we can assume that Marguerite Poradowska had already learned of the project at one of their meetings, although she had not yet seen the manuscript.

The tenth chapter seems to have taken Conrad about three months to complete. One cause for the delay was his depression at the death of his guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski on 10 February; another was that he was still looking for a job at sea. Conrad seems to have finished Chapter 10 only by late March 1894. He wrote to Marguerite Poradowska, either on 29 March or 5 April:

Forgive me for not having written sooner, but I am in the midst of struggling with Chapter xi; a struggle to the death, you know! If I let go, I am lost! I am writing to you just as I go out. I must indeed go out sometimes, alas! I begrudge each minute I spend away from the page. I do not say from the pen, for I have written very little, but inspiration comes to me while gazing at the paper. Then there are vistas that extend out of sight; my mind goes wandering through great spaces filled with vague forms. Everything is still chaos, but, slowly, ghosts are transformed into living flesh, floating vapours turn solid, and – who knows? – perhaps something will be born from the collision of indistinct ideas.

(*Letters*, I, 151)

The letter is characteristic of many later ones in its preoccupation with the extreme difficulties he found in composition; it also shows Conrad was obviously putting great pressure on himself to finish. On 16 April he wrote to Marguerite Poradowska that 'Chapter xi is completed (9000 words) – longer but much worse than the others. I am beginning Chapter xii in a quarter of an hour' (*Letters*, I, 152). Conrad wrote this last chapter at a furious pace, in nine days. This appears from a letter to Marguerite Poradowska where Conrad describes writing the end of the novel and his feelings about it:

24 April 1894

11 a.m.

My dear Aunt,

I regret to inform you of the death of Mr Kaspar Almayer, which occurred this morning at 3 o'clock.

It's finished! A scratch of the pen writing the final word, and suddenly this entire company of people who have spoken into my ear, gesticulated before my eyes, lived with me for so many years, becomes a band of phantoms who retreat, fade, and dissolve – are made pallid and indistinct by the sunlight of this brilliant and sombre day.

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Since I woke this morning, it seems to me I have buried a part of myself in the pages which lie here before my eyes. And yet I am – just a little – happy.

(*Letters*, I, 153–54)

*The Typescript, Acceptance, and Publication: 1894–95*

The manuscript of *Almayer's Folly* is a remarkably finished production for a beginner's draft; still, it is only a working copy, and the extant typescript, which is obviously later, stands as vital evidence of Conrad's creative intentions in the crucial period between the completion of the manuscript and the novel's publication.<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about the early history of the typescript. The first mention of typing comes in Conrad's letter to Marguerite Poradowska of 24 April 1894, announcing that he had finished the manuscript. Conrad added: 'I shall send you the two chapters as soon as typed' (*Letters*, I, 154). These were 11 and 12; and in the next few weeks Conrad repeated the promise regarding Chapter 12 in three other letters (*Letters*, I, 156, 158, 159). But as late as his 4 October letter to his publisher, T. Fisher Unwin, Conrad says that although 'last June' Marguerite Poradowska had seen the manuscript and 'proposed to me to translate it into French' for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he also says that she had 'not even seen the last 2 chapters which were not written at the time' (*Letters*, I, 176). Conrad, then, had not sent her the chapters even by the time *Almayer's Folly* was about to be submitted to Unwin for publication.<sup>2</sup> A letter probably written on 17 or 24 May, which gave as his excuse for the delay that the 'manuscript' was 'in the hands of a rather distinguished critic, Edmund Gosse' (*Letters*, I, 158), may supply some indirect evidence. The excuse itself is unconvincing, as Conrad would surely not have left himself without any copy, especially since he was probably still completing his revisions;<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, it suggests that at least one typed copy of each of the chapters existed by late May or shortly before.

One confusing element in the testimony concerning the history of the typescript may be due to the fact that, as here, when Conrad said 'manuscript', he may have meant what we should now call a 'typescript'; the latter term did not come into common use until a decade later.<sup>4</sup> We can surmise that Conrad may have had the first ten chapters

<sup>1</sup> For more detail, see 'The Texts', pp. 167–68, 170–71.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad's 8 September letter (*Letters*, I, 174) provides further confirmation, at least for Chapter 12.

<sup>3</sup> See 'The Texts', p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> *OED*, under 'type'; the first English citation is dated 1906.

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typed by the time he visited Marguerite Poradowska in March of 1894 (*Letters*, 1, 150) and showed her the novel. That so much was in typed form is further implied when Conrad, in a letter of 29 March or 5 April, says that he is sending her 'the first page (which I have copied)' of Chapter 11 'to give you an idea of the appearance of my manuscript', and that this is only fair 'since I have seen yours'. This only makes sense if one assumes that what she had seen previously was typewritten.

The whole had almost certainly been typed in some form by the time Conrad wrote that the novel was in the hands of Gosse, and thus probably by late May. Only the typing of 'the twelfth and last chapter', according to a later letter to Marguerite Poradowska, seems to have been delayed (*Letters*, 1, 159), but this probably involved the second typing of that chapter (see 'The Texts', p. 169). The wrapper on the manuscript says that the 'T.S.' was 'finished on the 22 May 1894', though Conrad may have got the date wrong.

The transition from the manuscript to the typescript continues the verbal and stylistic improvements found in the revisions in the manuscript. Some of these were probably suggested by friends, and particularly by Edward Lancelot Sanderson – another friend from the *Torrens* – with whom Conrad spent about ten days in the middle of April 1894. The Sandersons presumably played a significant role in one important aspect of the process of revision. John Galsworthy's sister recalled: 'I remember that both Ted [Sanderson] and his mother ... took a hand, and considerable trouble, in editing the already amazingly excellent English of their Polish friend's "Almayer" manuscript, and in generally screwing up Conrad's courage to the sticking-point of publication.'<sup>1</sup> One effect of their discussions may have been the reduction of gallicisms – as when 'rapprochement' became 'reconciliation' (p. 45) and 'entremise' was replaced with 'agency' (p. 31).

The history of the extant revised typescript after May 1894 is relatively simple. It was sent to Fisher Unwin on 4 July 1894 (*Letters*, 1, 172). Next, it served as printer's copy for setting up the novel. It was later returned to Conrad, who in 1912 sold it to John Quinn for £5.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> At the 1923 sale of Quinn's collection the typescript, Lot 1,781, was purchased for the then remarkably large sum of \$650. Finally, in the early 1970s the typescript, together with that of *Chance*, was offered for sale by the House of El Dieff, New York City, on behalf of W. B. Leeds, and bought for approximately \$25,000 by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. See *Complete Catalogue of the Library of John Quinn* (1924), p. 166; Gordon Lindstrand, 'An Unknown Conrad Manuscript and a Record Price Set for Conrad Typescripts', *Conradiana*, 2 (1969–70), 152.