

Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity

Robert Hampson

Lecturer in English

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

University of London

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Introduction

I

Thomas Moser, writing in the mid 1950s, referred to 'a new and serious interest in the novels of Joseph Conrad' since the end of the Second World War, that had grown out of the rediscovery of Conrad in the 1940s by M. C. Bradbrook, Morton Zabel and F. R. Leavis.¹ In Conrad's own life-time there were already two book-length studies of his work, and in the decade after his death there was a succession of memoirs and collections of letters.² In the 1930s, critical attention to Conrad's work was already under way with studies by Gustav Morf, R. L. Mégroz and Edward Crankshaw; but J. D. Gordan's *Joseph Conrad: The Making of a Novelist* (1940) marks the start of serious, scholarly study of Conrad.³ Certain critical works of the 1950s, notably Douglas Hewitt's *Conrad: A Re-assessment*, Moser's own work, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*, and A. J. Guerard's *Conrad the Novelist*, were to become very influential: indeed, they created the paradigm within which most subsequent Conrad criticism has been written.⁴

One of the most important parts of the paradigm was a construction of Conrad's writing career in terms of 'achievement and decline', and one of the aims of this book will be to challenge that model by paying particular attention to the early and late fiction. Hewitt, for example, omitted the 'books of the early "Malayan period"' from his 're-assessment' because they were 'not of much intrinsic interest' (p. 7). Moser, similarly, dismissed them as 'apprentice' work (p. 50). Although the early work is now receiving more critical attention, most criticism of Conrad still concentrates on the works produced in the period that begins with *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* and ends with *The Shadow Line*.⁵ John Palmer produced an early attempt to challenge the paradigm in relation to the late novels. As he correctly observed:

The result has been to impose a false symmetry on the Conrad canon: to undervalue some works and overvalue others, and to blur the distinctions whereby we might see how Conrad's later works do and do not represent a decline.⁶

Palmer, however, also sought to assert that psychological, philosophical and symbolic subtleties in Conrad's work were secondary to moral interests: his challenge to the 'achievement and decline' paradigm was a conscious attempt to return to an earlier view of Conrad 'as a simple, rational man with a conservative ethic and love of the sea'.⁷

Ironically, it was precisely Moser's privileging of 'Conrad the moralist' that led him to undervalue Conrad's later work.⁸ Moser's particular case is worth dwelling on for a moment since it highlights a methodological problem for Conrad criticism generally. Moser's negative evaluation of the late fiction was a product of the limitations of his own approach, even though that approach had worked well enough with the fiction of Conrad's middle period. The problem is that a single line of argument cannot readily come to terms with a radical change in Conrad's interests or a radical change in Conrad's techniques. Indeed, Moser complained of the Conrad of the later novels that he 'was looking at things in a new way; he was turning his back on moral judgement' (p. 130). In effect, many critics of Conrad's late fiction have repeated this cry: having developed a critical approach for the middle-period fiction, they are very reluctant to develop a different approach that would be appropriate to the late fiction, and yet such a change is necessary because Conrad in these novels is 'looking at things in a new way'.

II

In *Conrad the Novelist*, Guerard justified psychological explorations of Conrad's work by the argument that the artist dramatises what later theory conceptualises: 'A novelistic portrait may show psychological intuition through its accurate dramatization of mental processes and significant notation of behaviour'.⁹ Guerard's own psychological interests were mainly focused on the idea of a descent into the self, which he combined with the anthropological concept of 'the night journey': 'an essentially solitary journey involving profound spiritual change in the voyager' (p. 15). This approach produced stimulating and suggestive readings of 'Youth', 'Heart of Darkness', 'The Secret Sharer', *The Shadow Line*, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *Lord Jim* and *Under Western Eyes*, but it broke down when it reached *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*, and it was unable to

cope with *Chance*, *Victory*, *The Rover*, *The Arrow of Gold* and *Suspense*. The approach proved to be restricted to the genre of 'spiritual autobiography' and unable to do justice to other kinds of writing. Guerard also flirted with 'the psychology of composition' (p. xii), but this was largely manifested in a tendency to ascribe narrative-techniques to 'temperamental evasiveness' rather than to conscious artistic decisions, and as a way of underwriting the idea of Conrad's 'late novel decline'.¹⁰

Guerard's brief forays into the 'psychology of composition' suggest one of the drawbacks to psychological approaches to literature. The psychoanalytic method developed in relation to personality disorders and psychological malfunctioning, and the application of that method to literature can very easily replace the artist with the neurotic. This is epitomised in Bernard Meyer's *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography*.¹¹ Meyer attempts to use Conrad's fiction as 'source data for a psychoanalytic biography' (p. 10). To do this, he assumes the existence of 'a few standard themes which may be interpreted with a fair degree of confidence' and 'a limited number of symbols which appear to possess universal application to basic biological themes' (p. 11). In other words, Meyer offers a Freudian reading of Conrad's plot situations and a decoding of certain objects or images in Conrad's narratives according to Freudian theories of dream symbolism; he then attempts a psychoanalytic account of Conrad by relating this reading of the texts to certain events in Conrad's life.¹² Meyer is at his best when he is closest to orthodox biography: he produces a suggestive account of Conrad's 1887 'injury' on board the *Highland Forest* and he makes a convincing case for the importance of Stanley's exploits as a context for Conrad's journey to the Congo. However, when he approaches literary commentary, the crudeness of his method becomes apparent. Although he does not present himself as writing literary criticism, his approach obliges him to make literary interpretations. His approach, like Guerard's, valorises the 'journey into the self' (even *The Secret Agent* is discussed in these terms). He praises Conrad's 'willingness to search his inner self', as if this were the single most important feature of the art-work. More damagingly, he penalises work in which Conrad displays an unwillingness to search 'his inner self'. Accordingly, he is critical of deviations from autobiographical truth in *The Arrow of Gold*. And, not surprisingly, he readily accepts the idea of Conrad's 'late novel decline':

Psychologically, it would appear that he could no longer afford those introspective journeys into the self that constitute the greatness of the impressionistic art he created during the years of his close association with Hueffer. (p. 243)

In this approach, there is no place for work that is the conscious exploration of ideas that are not of direct, personal, psychological relevance.

Meyer acknowledges some of the psychoanalytic objections to the psychoanalysis of an author through his work; but it is worth developing the main objections here. First of all, psychoanalysis is based on the utterances of the analysand produced in, and in response to, the analytic situation. Secondly, the relationship of the analyst and the analysand also plays an important part in the psychoanalytic process. Freud emphasises the importance of this relationship for the analysand (in terms of transference), but it is also important for the analyst.¹³ It is clear from Freud's own accounts of case-histories that the analyst's interpretation was influenced by the analysand's responses to his suggestions.¹⁴ The dialectical relationship between analyst and analysand is very different from the imposition of a psychoanalytic reading upon an author through his/her work. At the same time, there are also literary objections to Meyer's project. First, the literary text is not dream-material, nor the product of free association, but an artwork in which whatever is supplied by the subconscious is mediated through various conscious artistic decisions and through various quasi-autonomous literary forms and conventions. For example, Meyer talks about Conrad's 'fantasies of rescue' (p. 83) without taking into consideration the fact that rescue is also a traditional narrative motif. His account of 'The Duel' (pp. 198–201) in terms of a 'loving attachment' between two men who are ostensibly rivals (that is, as an Oedipal conflict which is resolved by minimising the importance of women) reveals more serious limitations. Meyer finds 'little to account for the perpetuation of their feud' (p. 198) because he ignores material that is not amenable to Freudian decoding: in this case, the historical context, with its significant political changes; the geographical, social and temperamental differences between D'Hubert and Feraud; and, above all, their different concepts of honour which trap them within this constantly renewed conflict. Fredric Jameson's account of the Deleuze/Guattari critique of Freudian interpretation is relevant here:

What is denounced is . . . a system of allegorical interpretation in which the data of one narrative line are radically impoverished by their re-writing according to the paradigm of another narrative, which is taken as the former's master-code or Ur-narrative and proposed as the ultimate hidden or unconscious *meaning* of the first one.¹⁵

In his reading of 'The Duel', Meyer ignores non-psychological material encoded in the narrative in order to offer the Freudian narrative as the unconscious but ultimate meaning of the text.

Finally, Meyer's approach (like Guerard's) does not allow for the possibility that Conrad himself might use psychological ideas consciously in his fiction. Richard Brown has written, of a similar issue in Joyce studies, that 'it seems rather demeaning to assign Joyce to a particular sexual personality or unconscious figuration . . . when Joyce himself knows as much of the literature and theory of sexuality as the interpreting critic'.¹⁶ As Frank Sulloway has shown, many of the ideas we think of as Freud's were already in existence in the work of earlier psychologists, criminologists and sexologists.¹⁷ And Paul Wiley pointed out long ago that many of Conrad's psychological perceptions – 'of the division of personality, of the conquest of mind and will by the irrational, of the maladies that inhibit action' – are in close accord with 'the tendencies of mental science in his time, whether manifested in literature or in the casebooks of men like Charcot, Janet, Prince and James'.¹⁸ I would argue that this 'accord' is not merely coincidence: Conrad was aware of both pre-Freudian and Freudian psychology. Galsworthy records Conrad's liking for 'the writings of William James'; Freud's work on hysteria, for example, was available in English in 1912; and Conrad's interest in psychology is also evidenced by the fact that he owned the 1916 English translation of Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*.¹⁹ As I shall show, Conrad's exploration of identity in his early fiction was shaped by certain nineteenth-century ideas about sexuality, and his exploration of sexuality in his later fiction was informed by some awareness of Freudian psychoanalysis. Jeffrey Berman has described *Chance* as 'a kind of encyclopaedia in its detailed case studies of mental illness, including traumas, repressive sexuality, oppressive guilt, Oedipal strife, and hysteria'.²⁰ *The Arrow of Gold*, in particular, has been misread (and consequently undervalued) by the failure to recognise Conrad's conscious use of psychoanalytic theory and

practice in his late fiction. Conrad's late novels have to be placed in the context of the 'heated and sustained discussion' of sexual matters that Richard Brown describes.²¹ In this context, the late-novel concern with the relations between men and women becomes less an old man's reversion to the themes of his earlier fiction and more the mature writer's engagement in the urgent debates of his time.

III

This book has its roots in the work of Paul Kirschner, Zdzisław Najder, Eloise Knapp Hay and Avrom Fleishman.²² Paul Kirschner, in particular, suggested a way of looking at Conrad that drew on psychological ideas without subjecting Conrad's work to the reductionism of earlier psychological approaches:

Critics who interpret Conrad's fiction in the light of psychoanalytic theories often seem more inspired by Freud or Jung than by Conrad himself. . . . I have found it more rewarding to regard Conrad as a great psychologist who knew what he wished to say, and to approach his work as the deliberate expression, in art, of his ideas about human nature.²³

Kirschner argued that Conrad presents 'his own particular vision of the self' through 'a multiplicity of characters and events'.²⁴ Kirschner also argued that there was a continuity between the different phases of Conrad's work:

The political novels may then be seen as a prolongation into society of the principles of individual psychology established in the earlier works. . . . And the later novels may be studied as the application of the same principles to the sexual condition of mankind.²⁵

For Kirschner, these three phases could be classified, in terms of Conrad's 'vision of the self' in each phase, as 'the self in the dream', 'the self in society' and 'the sexualised self'.

Kirschner's emphasis on the continuity of Conrad's fiction had a number of beneficial side-effects: besides bringing Conrad's early and late fiction back into critical consideration, it drew together the

psychological and political dimensions of Conrad's work. Guerard, for example, tended to minimise or exclude the political aspects of Conrad's fiction. He noticed, for instance, the political complexities of the world of *Almayer's Folly*, but he saw this as a defect in the novel rather than as a sign of the 'psychopolitical' cast of Conrad's imagination.²⁶ Eloise Knapp Hay, in the first book-length study of Conrad's politics, noted that 'accidents of national origin and family background' compelled Conrad 'from earliest childhood to see in life a political dimension that strongly affected his perspective of all human affairs'.²⁷ Hay understood the significance of the merchant navy for Conrad ('the organisation of a ship presented Conrad with the model of a stable social order' [p. 53]) and the connection between this 'model' and Apollo Korzeniowski's political ideas, but she failed to make certain psychologically-significant distinctions. She failed to distinguish between the code of honour and the self-ideal in her account of *Lord Jim*, and she similarly failed to distinguish Kurtz from the other colonists in her analysis of 'Heart of Darkness'. Furthermore, she did not provide an adequate account of the changes and developments in Conrad's political ideas. Avrom Fleishman's *Conrad's Politics* showed how, in *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad was exploring, in turn, organicism in relation to neo-colonialism, organicism in relation to contemporary English society, and organicism in relation to both Russian absolutism (whether czarist or revolutionary) and Western 'social contract' democracy. (The further comparison, with American democracy, was dropped from the novel in the course of the final revisions.) However, while Fleishman was right to read *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* as an explicit expression of organicism as an ideal, *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent* are less positive than Fleishman suggested: they register, instead, Conrad's sense of the gap between the organicist ideal and contemporary reality. Furthermore, while Fleishman presented a clear and often penetrating account of the novels as 'dramatic expressions of a complex political imagination' (p. ix), he also underestimated (like Hay) their psychological dimensions. To paraphrase Frederic Jameson, there is no gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, between 'society' and the 'individual'.²⁸ Accordingly, changes in Conrad's political ideas interact with his psychological explorations, and the interaction between Conrad's ideas about identity and his ideas about society will be one of the themes of this book.

IV

The central concern of this book is Conrad's exploration of the nature of identity through his novels, and it is constructed according to the idea expressed by Royal Roussel that the sequence of the novels was not 'the result of a series of arbitrary choices' but rather 'the progressive working out of possibilities which are inherent in the perception from which all the fiction flows'.²⁹ It begins with an analysis of incidents of betrayal (both of one's self and of others) in Conrad's early novels to show how Conrad used these incidents to explore questions about being and identity. Chapter 1 considers *Almayer's Folly* in terms of (a) Almayer's attachment to his self-ideal and (b) Nina's conflict between the identity imposed upon her by her father and an instinctive self she apprehends through her relationship with Dain. Chapter 2 presents an account of *An Outcast of the Islands* in terms of Willems's unshared self-ideal and the subsequent disintegration of his false-self system. Bruce Johnson has analysed the similarities between Almayer and Willems:

Their principle talent is for denying responsibility, for attributing their misfortune to anything rather than to their own failure of will, their own actions or inertia. Ultimately both men create from their enforced isolation a dream of identity requiring no power of will to sustain it.³⁰

These two chapters explore that 'dream of identity' as a context for the later consideration of *Lord Jim*. In Chapter 3, Conrad's failure to complete *The Sisters* and 'The Rescuer' is examined as an important event in his early writing career. It is shown to have a particular significance in relation to Conrad's exploration of being and identity. As Bruce Johnson observed, 'all this early work uses roughly the same model', but, in the manuscript of 'The Rescuer', 'it apparently broke down entirely' to be replaced 'by something rather new in *The Nigger*'.³¹ Chapter 4 then considers *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, 'Heart of Darkness' and *Lord Jim* to show how Conrad uses the first of these works to articulate an ideal code of conduct (and the organicist concept of society on which that code is based) and then sets that ideal code of conduct against, first, the instinctive self (in 'Heart of Darkness') and, then, the ideal of self (in *Lord Jim*). Conrad re-examines, within this newly articulated ideological framework, some of the issues he had explored in his earlier works. Chapter 5 deals

with *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*: in *Nostromo* the ideal code of conduct and the organicist model are brought up against a society dominated by 'material interests'; *The Secret Agent* expresses the disillusionment that follows from this collapse of Conrad's model in its picture of an atomised society characterised by conflicting self-interests. Chapter 6 discusses *Under Western Eyes* as the summation of the central concern of Conrad's earlier fiction: it presents a search for identity explored through acts of betrayal, but this search for identity now takes place within an explicitly corrupt society, whose corruption influences and limits the nature and direction of the search. Chapters 7 and 8 draw on the discussion of being and identity in the earlier chapters to argue for a revaluation of Conrad's later fiction. In his late novels, Conrad turns from the self in isolation and the self in society to a consideration of the sexual self. Chapter 7 examines *Chance* and *Victory* and suggests that they articulate a transition from radical scepticism to a positive attitude towards sexuality. It also argues that these novels represent a continuing willingness on Conrad's part to engage in technical experimentation, and that Conrad's willingness to experiment has to be met with a corresponding flexibility on the part of the critic or reader. Conrad's later novels challenge our preconceptions about his work and force us to change our method of reading. Finally, in Chapter 8, *The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rover* are explored as psychological novels. Their technical achievement is considered, and it is suggested that they represent Conrad's artistic maturity rather than a decline in his creative power.

In Chapter 1, *Almayer's Folly* is placed in the context of late-Victorian ideas about sexuality. Subsequently, to discuss betrayal and identity in Conrad's work, existential psychology is used to provide a conceptual framework and a vocabulary.³² In the opening chapters of *The Divided Self*, R. D. Laing differentiates between existential phenomenology and clinical psychiatry: 'To look and to listen to a patient and to see "signs" of schizophrenia (as a "disease") and to look and to listen to him simply as a human being are to see and hear in . . . radically different ways'.³³

Laing's criticism of clinical psychiatry and its perception of the schizophrenic is analogous to my earlier criticism of Freudian interpretations of literature. In both cases, interpretation is limited to the recognition of 'signs' and the de-coding of those signs according to an *a priori* system. To explain the distortions created by 'objective' clinical psychiatry, Laing uses the analogy of textual interpretation;

the terms of Laing's analogy could, however, be reversed to justify the use of existential psychology to avoid the distortions associated with the Freudian interpretation of literature.³⁴ Furthermore, as Laing states, only existential thought 'has attempted to match the original experience of oneself in relationship to others in one's world by a term that adequately reflects this totality'.³⁵ In general, existential psychology provides a language for the precise analysis of relations within the self and relations between the self and others, which is invaluable for discussing identity and betrayal. The following passage from *The Leaves of Spring* includes and defines many of the terms used in this book:

Identity should be distinguished from being. By *being*, I mean all a person is. By *identity* I mean the pattern of experience and being by which a person is recognised by himself and/or others in his relations with others, i.e. who he is recognised or defined to be.

Persons experience themselves directly and immediately. They also experience themselves through the eyes of others. A person's direct experience of himself is his being-for-himself, or his being-for-self. His experience of himself mediated by the other is his being-for-the-other. A person's definition of himself in relation to others is his identity-for-self. Whom he feels himself to be in the eyes of the other, or who he is in the eyes of the other, is his identity-for-the-other, or what I term his 'altered identity'.

A person may be confirmed or disconfirmed by the others in his experience-for-self: for instance, his identity-for-self may be confirmed by his identity-for-other. John, who sees himself as good, feels confirmed when he sees James seeing him as good.

A person may interiorize or identify with the other's view of him. For instance, if John interiorizes the John he sees James seeing, when he sees James seeing him (John) as good, then John has identified with James's view of him. But this is not the same as confirmation, even if John saw himself as good initially. It is what I call *identification with his altered identity*. And his identity-for-self now comprises an altered component.³⁶

As this passage suggests, the concerns of existential psychology make it particularly appropriate for a study of Conrad's novels.

1

Two Prototypes of Betrayal: *Almayer's Folly*

In *A Personal Record* (1912), Conrad sets out to describe the beginnings of the two major phases of his life: his initiation to the sea and his initiation to the life of a writer. The narrative begins in the winter of 1893–4 with Conrad writing the tenth chapter of *Almayer's Folly*, while land-locked in Rouen aboard the 'Adowa', which was to be his last ship. But, as Guerard has noted, between this beginning which was really an ending and the end, with his first contact with a British ship, which was really a beginning, Conrad's memory flows freely in time and space, and the resulting commingling of the two phases suggests their essential continuity.¹ The question of continuity – in its aspects of consistency, fidelity, identity – deeply concerned Conrad, but it is through its obverse (through dislocation and betrayal) that I intend to approach his work. Conrad's concern with betrayal is evident right from the start of his writing career, and his first two novels provide (in *Nina Almayer* and *Willems*) prototypes for two distinct, though related, forms of betrayal, to which, with their accompanying configuration of motifs, Conrad was to return again and again.

I

Conrad records, in *A Personal Record*, how he wrote that tenth chapter in sight of the Rouen cafe, 'the very one' visited by 'the worthy Bovary and his wife' after their night at the opera.² He indulges in the 'pleasant fancy' that 'the shade of old Flaubert' hovered 'with amused interest' (p. 3) over him as he wrote, and this playful invocation of a 'patron saint' is a clear acknowledgement of the connections between the two works.³ *Almayer*, after the loss of his daughter Nina, is reminiscent of the ageing Charles Bovary, after the death of his wife. But more important are the similarities between

Almayer and Emma Bovary. They have the same ambitious impulse, the same infatuation with a dream. Emma's feeling that she is confined to a sphere too small for her endowments is clearly shared by Almayer – 'the only white man on the east coast' (p. 184) – who is confined to a far more obviously restricted area, the decaying, almost defunct Lingard trading post in Sambir. In their very different situations, each dreams of escape. Emma dreams of fame or, more often, of an intense romantic life, which she feels must exist somewhere. Almayer, in just the sort of exotic environment she longs for, feels he is in a prison, and has 'his dreams of wealth and power away from this coast' (p. 3) in Europe. He too has a dream of success – equally unrealistic – and equally doomed to failure. For, in their infatuation with their dreams, they lose sight of the reality in front of them. They include others in their dreams, without allowing for their otherness. And as Emma feels her dreams founder – first on Charles (on his inability to be other than he is, and on his lack of skill as a surgeon) and then on her lovers and the 'disillusionment of adultery' – so Almayer feels his dreams collapse because of his daughter, Nina, whose character is the unknown factor he egotistically takes for granted.⁴ Because of his lack of love, in fact his disgust, for his 'savage' wife (p. 42), he has tried to forget (indeed, he has effectively forgotten) that Nina, his daughter, is as much part of her mother as of him, as much Malayan as Dutch, and must necessarily share some of her mother's nature. She always appears dressed 'all in white' (p. 17) (whereas the Malays are brightly dressed) and is always in 'European clothes' (p. 29) as part of his attempt to wipe out her mother's portion in her and to 'make her white' (p. 31). This piece of self-deception, so important for his dreams, is, by the same measure, central to their failure.

Nina's 'deception' becomes the focus of Almayer's bitterness. For, just as Emma feels that Bovary humiliated her by the failure of the operation on Hippolyte, and, later blames Léon for her disappointed hopes 'as if he had betrayed her' (p. 272) without ever questioning those hopes, in the same way, Almayer focuses his dreams on Nina, without admitting to himself her real identity, and then feels betrayed by her: 'his faith was gone, destroyed by her own hands; destroyed cruelly, treacherously, in the dark; in the very moment of success' (p. 192).⁵ Flaubert, by his earlier analysis of Emma's behaviour, prepares the reader to understand the particular psychological mechanism behind this sense of betrayal and to question the validity of these dreams. He makes it clear that, in fact, it is Emma who is

betraying Léon, as she did Bovary, with the 'subtle infidelity' of her dream of an ideal man, and an ideal love: 'a phantom fabricated from her most ardent memories, her most beautiful literary memories, her strongest desires' (p. 272). But Conrad, in *Almayer's Folly*, is not *primarily* concerned with this form of betrayal – the betrayals and self-betrayal of the romantic dreamer. Although Almayer, as Nina says, has betrayed his 'own countrymen' (p. 181) by selling gunpowder to Dain and would betray Dain, in turn, to the Dutch, these betrayals are not foregrounded – perhaps because they are only opportunist wriggings in an unprincipled struggle for survival, and are not experienced by Almayer as conflicts in a moral world. Conrad's focus is neither on Almayer, nor on the other romantic dreamer, Tom Lingard, but on Nina. In fact, *Almayer's Folly* is not primarily concerned with the 'dreamer' (p. 35), with the inner relationship of his actual and ideal selves, nor with the betrayals he experiences and causes because of his dreams and his false ideal of himself. Instead, because Almayer's dreams are so much projected on to Nina, the focus shifts from him to her. The narrative follows her quite different problems of loyalty and betrayal.

The opening paragraphs of the novel announce two subjects: Almayer and 'his dream of splendid future' (p. 3) and Almayer's relationship with his daughter.⁶ At this stage, however, this second subject seems to be subsidiary to (or part of) the first. The narrative emphasises the important place of Nina in Almayer's dream, but also the complicating factor of her 'mixed blood' (p. 3) which Almayer hopes to compensate for with his gold. A second complication is introduced in the person of Dain Waris. Dain is initially presented as part of the first subject, but, as the narrative proceeds, Dain is revealed to have a central role in relation to the second subject also. To begin with, however, Almayer's is the dominant consciousness. Almayer's memories of his youth in Macassar, which motivate the first analepsis, emphasise his optimism and ambition: 'Almayer had left his home with a light heart and a lighter pocket . . . ready to conquer the world, never doubting that he would' (p. 5). This romantic vision produces an over-valuation of others as well as of himself:

Almayer . . . would hear the deep and monotonous growl of the Master, and the roared-out interruptions of Lingard – two mastiffs fighting over a marrowy bone. But to Almayer's ears it sounded like the quarrel of Titans – a battle of the gods. (p. 8)