

Journal of
Stevenson Studies

4

Editors

Dr Linda Dryden	Professor Roderick Watson
Reader in Cultural Studies	English Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	University of Stirling
Craighouse	Stirling
Napier University	FK9 4LA
Edinburgh	Scotland
EH10 5LG	
Scotland	
Tel: 0131 455 6128	Tel: 01786 467500
Email: l.dryden@napier.ac.uk	Email: r.b.watson@stir.ac.uk

Contributions to issue 5 are warmly invited and should be sent to either of the editors listed above. The text should be submitted in MS WORD files in MHRA format. All contributions are subject to review by members of the Editorial Board.

Published by
The Centre for Scottish Studies
University of Stirling

c. The contributors 2007

ISSN: 1744-3857
Printed and bound in the UK by
Antony Rowe Ltd.
Chippenhan, Wiltshire.

Editorial Board

Professor Richard Ambrosini
Universita' di Roma Tre
Rome

Professor Stephen Arata
School of English
University of Virginia

Professor Oliver Buckton
School of English
Florida Atlantic University

Dr Jenni Calder
National Museum of Scotland

Dr Linda Dryden
Faculty of Arts and Social
Science Napier University

Professor Richard Dury
University of Bergamo
(Consultant Editor)

Professor Gordon Hirsch
Department of English
University of Minnesota

Professor Katherine Linehan
Department of English
Oberlin College
Ohio

Professor Barry Menikoff
Department of English
University of Hawaii at
Manoa

Professor Glenda Norquay
Department of English and
Cultural History
Liverpool John Moores
University

Professor Marshall Walker
Department of English
The University of Waikato

Professor Roderick Watson
Department of English
Studies
University of Stirling

Contents

Editorial and Introduction 1

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mary B. Hotaling

Trudeau, tuberculosis and Saranac Lake4

Jenni Calder

‘I should like to be an American’: Scots in the USA.....20

Robert Benjamin Stevenson III

Stevenson’s dentist: an unsung hero.....43

II. STEVENSON IN AMERICA

Gordon Hirsch

The fiction of Lloyd Osbourne: was this ‘American gentleman’
Stevenson’s literary heir?52

Wendy R. Katz

Stevenson’s *Silverado Squatters*: the figure of ‘the Jew’ and the
rhetoric of race..... 73

Hilary J. Beattie

‘The interest of the attraction exercised by the great RLS of
those days’: Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James and the
influence of friendship..... 91

Roderick Watson

‘The unrest and movement of our century’: the universe of *The
Wrecker*114

Marilyn Simon

Doubled brothers, divided self: duality and destruction in *The
Master of Ballantrae*..... 129

Richard Ambrosini

Stevenson’s self-portrait as a popular author in the *Scribner’s*
essays and *The Wrong Box*151

III. STEVENSON AND THE SEA

Jürgen Kramer

The sea in Robert Louis Stevenson's writings 168

Ilaria B. Sborgi

'Home' in the South Seas..... 185

Cinzia Giglioni

Stevenson gets lost in the South Seas 199

IV. FABLES, POEMS AND COMICS

R. L. Abrahamson'I never read such an impious book': re-examining Stevenson's
Fables.....209**Dennis Denisoff**Pleasurable subjectivities and temporal conflation in
Stevenson's aesthetics 227**William B. Jones Jr.**'Hello, Mackellar': Classics Illustrated meets *The Master of
Ballantrae*..... 247

Reviews270

Contributors276

Editorial

This issue of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* has been guest-edited by Professors Ann Colley and Martin Danahay, who were the organisers of the 2006 conference at Saranac Lake. Our warm thanks go to them for a memorable conference and also for this excellent edition of the *Journal*.

Stevenson was chosen as the key writer for Edinburgh's City of Literature celebrations in 2007, and indeed many contemporary writers have expressed their admiration for his work. For volume 5 of JSS we have asked a number of distinguished creative writers to give us their reflections on Stevenson, or their creative responses to his work and what he means to them. With this prospect in mind and on the strength of the current edition, may we encourage all contributors and readers to sustain their subscriptions, and persuade their institutions to do the same? If a case has to be made, we would point to the continuing success of the international Stevenson conferences and the developing status of this *Journal* as an outlet for some of the best work in the field.

Linda Dryden and Roderick Watson

Introduction to volume 4

The essays in this special issue of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* are based upon selected papers delivered at the fifth biennial Robert Louis Stevenson Conference, 'Transatlantic Stevenson', held in Saranac Lake, New York, July 18-20, 2006. Saranac Lake is a small town nestled among the Adirondack Mountains. It was both a beautiful and an appropriate setting. Stevenson and his family lived in the community from 3 October 1887 to 18 April 1888. Their residence is now a museum, the Robert Louis Stevenson Cottage and Museum. While there, Stevenson wrote a considerable amount, including two thirds of

The Master of Ballantrae, various prefaces and essays and, with Lloyd Osbourne, an early draft of *The Wrong Box*. Stevenson came to Saranac Lake in order to be under the care of Dr Edward Livingston Trudeau, a specialist in pulmonary disease and himself a sufferer from tuberculosis. Stevenson fortunately enjoyed good health during the cold, winter months of Saranac Lake and did not require care. He and Dr Trudeau, though, became friends. The six or so months in Saranac Lake were important not only because of the writing that Stevenson accomplished but also because they represented yet another transatlantic crossing: the first had been when he had travelled to America as 'an amateur emigrant' in August, 1879. This time the move from his country of birth was a permanent one, for in April, 1888, Stevenson left Saranac Lake by train and went to the west coast where he, Fanny, Lloyd, and sometimes Margaret Stevenson, were to begin a series of cruises in the Pacific Ocean. They eventually settled in Samoa until Stevenson's death in December 1894. Although Stevenson occasionally talked of the possibility, he was never to return home.

This collection of essays addresses the various contexts and consequences of Stevenson's transatlantic experiences. We have divided the essays into four sections: 'The Historical Context'; 'Stevenson in America'; 'Stevenson and the Sea'; and 'Fables, Poems, and Comics'.

The first section, 'The Historical Context,' concentrates, in part, on the immigration and various contributions of Scots to North America: it places Stevenson in a broader perspective of immigration patterns; two essays in this section also focus upon Saranac Lake as a centre for the cure of tuberculosis, as well as upon dental practices of the period. The largest portion of the issue, 'Stevenson and America,' deals with Stevenson's relations to America: his literary correspondence with Henry James; the novels he wrote based upon his experiences in the States, as well as upon the ambiguous anti-Semitism expressed

while he was living in California. Since part of the transatlantic experience has to do with Stevenson's representations of the sea and journeys to other lands, the next section, 'Stevenson and the Sea,' explores Stevenson's reactions to being across the sea and away from home. The final portion of this issue, 'Fables, Poems, and Comics,' looks at both Stevenson's imagination and how others have imagined him. These essays discuss his fables, his poems for children as well as twentieth-century Classic Comic interpretations of his texts.

We are pleased to present this special issue that continues to demonstrate the growing interest in and range of Stevenson scholarship.

Ann C. Colley and Martin A. Danahay

Acknowledgements

The *Journal of Stevenson Studies* has permission to reproduce selected artwork from *Classics Illustrated* No. 82, including cover variants, for illustrative purposes in the academic article "Hello, Mackellar": *Classics Illustrated* meets *The Master of Ballantrae*' by William B. Jones Jr. Our thanks go to Richard Berger, President, First Classics, Inc.

Trudeau, tuberculosis and Saranac Lake

Mary B. Hotaling

'Trudeau, Tuberculosis and Saranac Lake' is the working title of the museum that the Historical Society is developing in the former Saranac Laboratory on Church Street, in Saranac Lake, New York. All three elements, Trudeau, tuberculosis and Saranac Lake, are essential to understanding the context of Robert Louis Stevenson's visit in 1887-88, but the most important is the character of Edward Livingston Trudeau, the medical doctor who was this village's foremost citizen. He treated Stevenson during his visit and became friends with him. He was one of the author's few peers in the community at that time. The disease 'tuberculosis' was of course the reason that both Trudeau and Stevenson had come to Saranac Lake. Trudeau expected to die and found instead a measure of health, while Stevenson came to take advantage of the nascent health resort that Trudeau was founding, and it served him well. In 1887 the term 'tuberculosis' was new, and probably largely limited to the emerging scientific community. In common language, the disease was 'phthisis' (pronounced tis'-is) or 'consumption.'

Saranac Lake in 2006 is not the muddy little community of guides and lumbermen that Stevenson came to in 1887. Nor is it the grander, more prosperous Saranac Lake into which Trudeau's leadership later transformed it, but something in between. It is a village with a glorious past; a village that has had grand buildings and substantial institutions—losing many, retaining others; a village that has recovered from the days when the recession of its one industry, the treatment of the sick, left it almost a ghost town; a village with a tentative, but hopeful future. It is the largest centre of population in a 114-year-old land use experiment, the Adirondack Park, a combination of public and private

lands circumscribed by the so-called 'Blue Line' on the map of New York State.

Lloyd Osbourne wrote that:

In 1888, Saranac [as it was often called in those days—not Saranac Lake] was a little backwoods settlement in which log cabins were common, and venison one of the staples of diet. On the edge of the Canadian border, and encompassed by a trackless country of woods and lakes which had not then been abbreviated to 'the Adirondacks,' but was still called 'the Adirondack Wilderness,' it had in winter the isolation of an outpost of the snows.

Sleighs, snowshoes, and frozen lakes; *voyageurs* in quaint costumes and with French to match; red-hot stoves and streaming windows; guides who spat and looked like Leatherstocking; consumptives in bright caps and many-hued woollens gaily tobogganing at forty below zero; buffalo coats an inch thick; snow-storms, snow-drifts, Arctic cold; the sensation of rubbing snow on your congealed ears and unfortunate nose—of such was our new home in which R L S was hoping to regain his health.¹

From other accounts, I think this is a pretty true picture, at least from the point of view of a visitor. One of the doctors wrote that ambulatory patients at the sanatorium in its earliest days were like inmates of a boarding house under mild supervision. (Incidentally, it's no longer recommended to rub snow on frost-bitten extremities.)

So, who was Doctor Trudeau? Only two years older than his famous patient, he was a happily married man and a father of three. Before the diagnosis of his TB, he had been an accomplished and versatile amateur athlete, who boxed, rowed in the waters around New York City, and race-walked from Fifty-ninth Street to the Battery in a little over 47 minutes. He was a subsistence hunter and a famously quick and accurate shot. Edward Livingston Trudeau was born in New York City on October 5,

1848, the third child of Dr. James de Berty Trudeau and his wife, Cephise Berger Trudeau. James Trudeau, a doctor, was one of the founders of the New York Academy of Medicine. Cephise Trudeau was the daughter of the French doctor Francois Berger, whose ancestors in France had been 'physicians for many generations, as far back as they could be traced,' and his wife, Rebecca Aspinwall, daughter of a rich New York merchant family.² Not long after Edward was born, his parents separated, and James Trudeau returned with his daughter to New Orleans; the boy never saw his father again. From that time on Edward, his brother Francis, and their mother lived with her parents. His grandfather retired to Paris when Edward was three years old and they lived there until 1865; Edward was educated in Paris.

Returning to New York after the Civil War with his grandparents and brother (his mother had remarried and remained in France), 17-year-old Edward spent a few aimless years as the poor relation of a fast New York set, where he met the love of his life—a minister's daughter from Long Island named Charlotte Beare. Unlike his wealthy Aspinwall cousins and their friends, he needed to find a livelihood to supplement the income from a trust that provided him with about \$700 a year. He was about to enter the Naval Academy at Newport when his brother, Francis, was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Edward assumed total responsibility for his brother's care until he died that December—his 'first great sorrow'—and likely became infected himself at the same time.³

Lottie Beare's high expectations caused Trudeau to settle on a plan of life in order to win her hand, and he accordingly matriculated at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, now Columbia University Medical School, in the fall of 1868. No entrance examination was required, and none of his friends cared to bet that he would finish. However, Trudeau finished the relatively minimal course promptly, and on June 29, 1871, he and Lottie Beare were married. They sailed for Europe, visit-

ing London, Paris, Switzerland and Germany, and returned in October of the same year, expecting their first child. But young Dr. Trudeau's prospects, both professional and personal, were shattered in February 1873 by Dr. Edward G. Janeway's diagnosis that 'the upper two-thirds of the left lung is involved in an active tuberculous process' (*Autobiography*, p. 71). At that time such a finding was virtually a death sentence. Following the then-current climatic treatment, the Trudeaus travelled to Aiken, South Carolina, returning early in April with Edward's health unimproved. Their second child Ned was born on May 18, and a week later his father left for Paul Smith's wilderness hotel on Lower St. Regis Lake in the Adirondack mountains of New York, accompanied by a friend. Trudeau expected to die, and chose a destination which he had visited before on a hunting trip only because he loved the wildlife and the woods. Unexpectedly, his health improved.

After he spent the next winter in St. Paul, Minnesota with no improvement in his health, he returned to Paul Smith's in June of 1874, this time with his young family. There he met Dr. Alfred Loomis, a New York physician in camp with a hunting party. Loomis had tuberculosis himself and was particularly interested in the effects of climate on health. He advised Trudeau to spend the winter. At this time conditions in the Adirondacks were very primitive; few people could bear the harsh weather and the isolation, forty-two miles over unbroken roads from the nearest doctor or railroad. The Trudeaus boarded with a reluctant Paul and Lydia Smith at their shuttered hotel through the long winter of 1874-75. The next winter Trudeau rented a house on Main Street in Saranac Lake. By this time he was also treating a few winter tuberculosis cases sent by Dr. Loomis. That fall there was no question of going back to New York: the family returned to Saranac Lake to board with Mrs. Nellie Evans at her cottage on Main Street. Winters in the village and summers at Paul Smith's became the pattern of the rest of their lives. The following

spring the doctor agreed to manage the construction of the first house of worship built in Saranac Lake, the Episcopal mission of St. Luke, the Beloved Physician. St. Luke's was completed in January 1879, and the village grew.

E. L. Trudeau's convalescent life of rest, hunting, fishing and a bit of medical practice began to change in 1882, when he read in his second-hand copy of Anstie's *English Practitioner* about two developments in Germany. Dr. Gustav Herrmann Brehmer opened a sanatorium for pulmonary tuberculosis in 1859 in Silesia, on the theory that high altitude exercise would build up his patients' hearts, strengthening them 'to pump away poisonous accumulations from the lungs.'⁴ Brehmer's student Peter Dettweiler founded his own establishment in the Taunus Mountains in 1876, where he developed a contrary regimen of rest. Trudeau's reading in European medical journals was an avenue of information atypical in American medicine, but perfectly logical for a man who had been educated in France. Though Trudeau saw 'no reference to either Brehmer's or Dettweiler's work in my American journals,' he thought their ideas were worth testing (*Autobiography*, p. 154). That summer he suggested the plan of a semi-charitable sanatorium in Saranac Lake to Dr. Loomis, who immediately agreed to examine and refer prospective patients in New York at no charge. Trudeau began to gather donations for an Adirondack Cottage Sanatorium, which would open in 1884.

On March 24, 1882, in Berlin, Dr. Robert Koch read his paper on tuberculosis, with its startling conclusion that the disease was caused by an identifiable organism, the tubercle bacillus. Trudeau read abstracts of the paper in his journals, and it excited his imagination. He inquired of his friend C. M. Lea, a medical publisher from Philadelphia, what the doctors there thought about it. Though Lea found the American medical establishment almost uniformly indifferent, he gave Trudeau a Christmas present of 'a very full translation' hand-written in a

copybook. Wrote Trudeau, 'I read every word of it over and over again' (*Autobiography*, p. 175).

Convinced by Koch's logic and enchanted by the possibility of a cure, Trudeau determined to learn how to stain and recognize the tubercle bacillus under a microscope in order to try Koch's experiments for himself. He applied to Dr. T. Mitchell Prudden, who taught pathology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and who directed its first laboratory, a new addition since Trudeau's student days. Located in a narrow storefront at the corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue between an ice-cream store and a harness shop, the laboratory struck Trudeau as 'a large, dark room, with a high ceiling [. . .] gloomy, ill-smelling' (*Autobiography*, p. 177). Vibrations from passing brewery wagons frequently interrupted work at the microscopes. A biographical sketch of Dr. Prudden described his workplace:

Prudden partitioned off for bacteriology a small corner of his dark and crowded laboratory with second-hand glass sashes, the wreckage of a livery stable. . . . This was one of the earliest bacteriological laboratories in this country.⁵

By luck, Trudeau had found a like-minded mentor: Prudden published two articles in 1883 demonstrating the presence of the bacillus in tuberculous lesions. With some simple instructions, Trudeau spent several days in Prudden's lab struggling through the difficult staining and decolorizing process until he was confident that he had become proficient enough to work alone.

Meanwhile, the first building at Trudeau's sanatorium was built and occupied by the fall of 1884. Grounded in the traditional concept of climatic treatment, it was a far more acceptable idea than the radical germ theory, and he received immediate and continuing support for it. 'In the fall of 1885, as soon as I had equipped my little laboratory-room,' wrote Trudeau, 'I

began to work.' (*Autobiography*, p. 201.) At first the room was his own eight-by-twelve-foot office in the family house he had built two years before. Coal and electricity were not yet available in Saranac Lake; the house was lighted by kerosene and heated with wood. 'On very cold nights the doctor often had to get up and replenish the fuel,' noted Adirondack historian Alfred Donaldson.⁶ Trudeau wrote:

These quarters were so cramped, however, that I soon built a little addition off my office, and this became the laboratory in which I worked until [. . .] 1893. [. . .] One side of this room was occupied by a long, high, stationary shelf-table [. . .] with shelves underneath the table for glassware, a dry and a steam sterilizer, an oil stove, etc. [. . .] At the other window was a small table with my microscope on it, some bottles of stains, and slides in boxes. By the side of this stood a shelf of books, on top of which was always Mr. Lea's precious translation of Koch's paper. (*Autobiography*, pp. 187-88.)

The extraordinarily cold mountain environment in which Trudeau was working demanded that he improvise special equipment 'in which the high temperature needed for the growth of the germs could be constantly maintained.' He described this equipment in his *Autobiography*:

I had the tinsmith at the hardware store send for some sheets of copper and make a thermostat, which consisted merely of a small copper box about eight inches square inside of a larger copper box, the space between the two being filled with water heated from beneath by a minute kerosene lamp. A tube allowed a large thermometer to be placed in the inner box, and its readings to be taken outside as it emerged through a perforated cork at the top of the apparatus. I soon found this answered fairly well in the daytime, when the temperature of the room varied little, but at night when the fire in the wood stove

went out the violent loss of heat in the room soon caused a corresponding fall in the little apparatus. To obviate this I put the thermostat in three or four wooden boxes, each a little larger than the other, and packed the space between these with wool and sawdust. These boxes all had doors, and by opening and shutting these, according to the temperature outside of the house, I could maintain a fairly regular heat in the inner thermostat. . . .

After some practice I grew quite expert in keeping my thermostat near the right heat, and indeed, it was with this little home-made apparatus that I first succeeded in growing the germ in pure cultures outside of the body. (*Autobiography*, pp. 189-90.)

Not only was it difficult to maintain a steady temperature in which the bacillus would grow, but it had to be maintained for an extraordinarily long time compared to 'any of the disease-producing organisms discovered before it.'⁷ *Mycobacterium tuberculosis humanis* 'reproduces slowly, doubling its numbers only once within fifteen to twenty-four hours.'⁸ Koch 'had to wait nearly three weeks before his medium first showed any sign of culture growth.'⁹ 'After many failures,' Trudeau 'became the second experimenter in the country' to grow a pure culture of the tubercle bacillus.¹⁰ 'With these cultures I repeated all of Koch's inoculation experiments,' Trudeau wrote, and then 'began making original ones.'¹¹

Once Trudeau learned to identify tubercle bacilli, he began to look for them in the sputum of his patients to aid and confirm his diagnoses. When he could not find the bacillus on testing a patient with other symptoms, 'he made carefully controlled animal inoculations with sputum from such a patient. No evidence of tuberculosis developed,' wrote Dr. Leroy Gardner many years later, 'but in control animals infected with sputum filled with tubercle bacilli there was plenty of disease.'¹² This study was Trudeau's first published research, appearing in the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* in October 1885. Two

other short papers followed. These first three studies all used the word 'phthisis' in their titles; Trudeau's next experiment was his first to use Koch's term, 'tuberculosis.' The simple and elegant experiment that made Trudeau's reputation as a scientist was his fourth study: 'Environment in its relation to the progress of bacterial invasion in tuberculosis.' The study on which this six-page classic of scientific investigation is based took place from June to November of 1886, while Trudeau was at his camp on the St. Regis lakes for the summer. He experimented with three groups of five rabbits each. The first five were inoculated with pure cultures of tubercle bacilli; were deprived of light, fresh air and exercise by being 'confined in a small box and put in a dark cellar'; and were underfed.¹³ The second group, free from disease, was treated somewhat differently, as Trudeau described:

A fresh hole about ten feet deep was dug in the middle of a field, and the animals having been confined in a small box with high sides but no top, were lowered to the bottom of this pit, the mouth of which was then covered with boards and fresh earth. Through this covering a small trap door was cut which was only opened long enough each day to allow of the food, consisting of a small potato to each rabbit, being thrown to the animals. So damp was the ground at the bottom of this pit that the box in which the rabbits were confined was constantly wet. ('Environment'.)

The depth of the pit was designed to keep the animals 'as far as possible from any accidental source of bacterial infection.' ('Environment'.) The third group, inoculated like the first five, was turned loose on a small island in Spitfire Lake under ideally healthy conditions. Thus the experiment was set up to separate the effect of the known presence of tubercle bacilli from the effect of the environment on the course of disease.

Four of those rabbits inoculated and kept under poor conditions died within three months, and were found on autopsy to be

'extensively diseased'; in the fifth, killed after four months at the end of the experiment, the disease had made considerable headway. ('Environment'.) Of those living in poor conditions, but free from the bacteria, all survived the four-month test: autopsies showed them to be free of disease. Of the five inoculated animals on the island, one died in just a month and evidence of disease was found. The other four remained in perfect health, with no sign of disease or even of the points of inoculation visible upon autopsy at the end of four months. Trudeau concluded that unfavourable conditions 'are not sufficient of themselves to cause tuberculosis', but that in the presence of tubercle bacilli, the subject's resistance is greatly influenced by environmental conditions.' ('Environment'.)

On January 2, 1887, Francis, the last of the Trudeaus' children, was born. That autumn the doctor's most famous patient, Robert Louis Stevenson, arrived. The two men had much in common in their background: financially comfortable upbringing in professional households; European travel experience; uxoriousness; severe, life-blighting illnesses that drove them both to the Adirondack Mountains; inherited capital (eventually); and obsessive concentration on their own life-work, as each came to define it. What might Stevenson's impression have been at the door of the Baker Cottage when Dr. Trudeau made his first house call?

The historian Alfred Donaldson described his own first meeting with his doctor seven years after Stevenson's visit:

The door [. . .] opened to admit something long, lean and lovable that glided noiselessly into the room, sat down on the edge of my bed, and began telling me it was below zero in the sun.

This most unexpected apparition, flecked with snow and fringed with ice, seemed much more like a devotee of the toboggan-slide than a renowned helper in the human predicament. Despite the intense cold outside, he wore

no overcoat. His costume consisted of a fur cap which had been pulled down over his ears, a sweater that came high up around his neck, trousers folded into long lumbermen's socks, called 'Pontiacs,' and moccasins that gave an Indian silence to his tread.

Above this picturesque apparel emerged a most unusual and impressive head. The upper part seemed abnormally large, for the broad, protruding forehead ran back into the baldness of the crown. The keen but kindly grey eyes were deep set beneath overhanging brows. The cheekbones were prominent, the nose aquiline, and the lower face tapered into a small, sensitive mouth and clean-cut chin.¹⁴

A portrait statue of Trudeau by Gutzon Borglum at The Trudeau Institute confirms this description. Donaldson goes on:

His movements were rapid and lithe, and he was obviously nervous, restless, and high-strung. Yet he brought into the sickroom nothing but soothing and uplifting magic. His voice had much to do with this. It was very smooth and low. His utterance was copious and rapid, but clear and modulated. The words ran from him like silk unwinding from a spool.

He began speaking as soon as he crossed the threshold. He had not phrases of sympathy, and yet he radiated nothing else. In ten minutes he had subtly established a kinship of fellow-suffering between us. This was the bond that brought him so close to all his patients. He made them feel that he was not merely an outsider fighting for them, but an insider fighting with them.¹⁵

Stevenson's arrival in 1887 was a fortunate coincidence for Trudeau's sanatorium and for Saranac Lake's development, as Stevenson's fame, and the newspaper publicity that followed his movements in the US, drew public attention to Trudeau's nascent

sanatorium. Stevenson capitalised on this publicity to Trudeau's benefit through a letter to the *New York Evening Post* praising the 'Adirondack Cottages for the Treatment of Pulmonary Disease.' This letter and some others of his—which are the most interesting to me, revealing details of his stay in Saranac Lake that have otherwise not been mentioned in the biographies—are published in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* edited by Bradford Booth and Ernest Mehew, Volume Six, but not in the *Selected Letters* Mehew published two years later. In this letter, Stevenson enumerates the statistics that Trudeau kept regarding the efficacy of the sanatorium treatment:

Here is a chance offered, on the most modern principles, to those who are not wealthy enough to flee to Florida or Colorado, to the Riviera or Davos. The chance is a good one: out of fifty-one patients treated in the last twelve months, four have been entirely cured, twenty-three have improved sufficiently to return to their friends and their employments, twelve have benefited slightly, and only eleven have been sent home as hopeless.¹⁶

Trudeau was offering—just as Stevenson says—a chance, but only a chance, at a time when there were no other chances. His sanatorium was initiated upon the principles of the climatic treatment to which Stevenson had often resorted—travel somewhere with a different, presumably better, climate than where you are—a treatment as old as the Romans. Trudeau's sanatorium opened in 1884, after Dr. Koch had published his paper on the origins of tuberculosis, but before Trudeau had read it. Soon, though, the climatic treatment yielded to the scientific method: Trudeau began experimenting on his patients with all of the latest proposed treatments—treatments they were glad to try. He used the microscope religiously, to test the sputum of every patient for diagnosis.

He undoubtedly tested Stevenson, as the Scottish writer and TB patient Stephen Chalmers wrote:

‘He did not die of tuberculosis,’ says Dr. Trudeau, ‘as I have made a point of finding out. . . . Yet it is a mistake to say that he never had tuberculosis. Although, while I took care of him, he had none of the active symptoms, such as hemorrhage, or fever, or tubercle bacilli, present, yet he undoubtedly had had tuberculosis. It may have become active again after he left Saranac, so there is no telling just how much that disease may have contributed to his mortal illness at Samoa.’¹⁷

Of his famous patient, Trudeau wrote:

We did not agree on many topics, for our interests and our points of view on many subjects were utterly at variance. My life interests were bound up in the study of facts, and in the Laboratory I bowed daily to the majesty of fact, wherever it might lead. Mr. Stevenson’s view was to ignore or avoid as much as possible unpleasant facts, and live in a beautiful, strenuous and ideal world of fancy. (*Autobiography*, p. 228.)

There were, however, topics on which they had similar outlooks; for example Trudeau wrote that they agreed ‘on so many of the greater things of life that they had to disagree about trivial matters for the sake of something to discuss.’ They actually got into heated argument over the great issue as to which was superior, the American system of transferring baggage, or the British method of handling luggage!¹⁸ Chalmers wrote that:

At one time, I sent a version of the oft-repeated ‘oil’ story to the doctor for confirmation. It was to the effect that Stevenson, after he had written ‘The Lantern-Bearers’ for Scribner’s, went to see Trudeau’s ‘light’ in the laboratory. Stevenson was shown, in the effects of tuberculosis

in guinea pigs, the ravages of the disease that kills one human being in every seven. The sensitive author bolted out of the house, declaring that while Trudeau's lantern might be very bright, to him it 'smelled of oil like the devil.' Fearing that the anti-vivisectionists might make capital of the story, I took the liberty of modifying it. Dr. Trudeau wrote: 'I thank you for your motive in changing the end of the oil story. I had never thought of the anti-vivisectionists. Had I thought, I could have told you a little more about it. Stevenson saw no mutilated animals in my laboratory. The only things he saw were the diseased organs in bottles, and cultures of the germs which had produced the disease. These were the things that turned him sick. I remember he went out just after I made this remark: 'This little scum on the tube is consumption, and the cause of more human suffering than anything else in the world. We can produce tuberculosis in the guinea-pig with it; and if we could learn to cure tuberculosis in the guinea-pig, this great burden of human suffering might be lifted from the world.'¹⁹

Trudeau built two institutions: the sanatorium and the laboratory. Around them, the whole village of Saranac Lake developed as a pioneer health resort that had many parts, medical and social and economic, architectural and artistic—a culture of optimism, a culture of curing. When Stevenson stayed in Saranac Lake, all of this was just beginning to form. His arrival was crucial, in fact, to its formation, because during Stevenson's stay, the Chateaugay Railroad completed laying tracks to Saranac Lake, the first really firm connection between this remote village and the world outside. Though snow-storms that blocked the tracks could still isolate this village for days, the end result was more affordable and secure access for the many to Trudeau's cottage sanatorium, and the private commercial sanatoria that had begun to spring up in the village, just at a time when the

world began to hear about Trudeau's successes here through the agency of his most famous patient.

In 1916, Stephen Chalmers recorded another writer's impressions of Trudeau the man: 'I had come to ask of R. L. S. and remained to admire this hero of innumerable, unnoted battles, —this maker of a City of the Sick, who, because of him, look more hopefully on each successive rising sun.' Perhaps the esteem in which Trudeau was held by his contemporaries can best be understood by noting the implied comparison in the title Chalmers used when writing about him: 'Beloved Physician.' It is the honorific applied to Saint Luke. In the end, Trudeau and Stevenson had one more thing in common: that they were both beloved for their skill—but more for their devotion—to their two very different worlds, in which both accomplished so much. Trudeau wrote: 'We were excellent friends, and I regret constantly that I didn't make more of my opportunities of intimate contact with a man whose writings have meant so much to the world.' (*Autobiography*, p. 229.) Stevenson, on his part, sent Trudeau a unique gift, a specially bound set of his works, each one dedicated to a member of the Trudeau family. Regrettably, they all burned in the house fire of 1893, though the inscriptions were recorded.

This winter idyll in Saranac Lake was the rare and unforeseen conjunction of two stars in the nineteenth century firmament. Each supported the other's goals and each helped the other achieve his own dreams.

NOTES

- 1 Lloyd Osbourne, *An Intimate Portrait of R L S* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 74-75.
- 2 Edward L. Trudeau, MD, *An Autobiography*, reprint (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1934), p. 8.
- 3 *Autobiography*, p. 31. Henceforth cited in text.

- 4 Mark Caldwell, *The Last Crusade: The War on Consumption, 1862-1954* (New York: Atheneum, 1988), p. 67.
- 5 T. Mitchell Prudden, *Biographical Sketches and Letters of T. Mitchell Prudden, MD* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 60.
- 6 Alfred L. Donaldson, 'Trudeau's Life a Rare Romance in Medicine,' in *New York Times Magazine*, 21 November 1915, pp. 4-6.
- 7 Caldwell, p. 161.
- 8 Caldwell, p. 5.
- 9 Caldwell, p. 161.
- 10 E. L. Trudeau, 'The History and Work of the Saranac Laboratory for the Study of Tuberculosis,' in *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin*, September 1901, reprint, p. 2.
- 11 'History and Work,' p. 2.
- 12 Leroy U. Gardner, MD, 'Saranac Lake as a Research Center,' in *Journal of the Outdoor Life*, May 1931, p. 299.
- 13 Edward L. Trudeau, MD, 'Environment in its relation to the progress of bacterial invasion in tuberculosis' in *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 1887. Henceforth cited in text as 'Environment'.
- 14 Alfred L. Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks*, vol 1 (New York: Century Co., 1921), pp. 243-4.
- 15 Donaldson, *A History*, p. 244.
- 16 Letter 2023, 1 March 1888, from *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, VI, August 1887- September 1890, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 60.
- 17 Stephen Chalmers, *The Penny Piper of Saranac: an episode in Stevenson's life* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), pp. 21-22.
- 18 Stephen Chalmers, *The Beloved Physician: Edward Livingston Trudeau* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), pp. 62-63.
- 19 *Beloved Physician*, p. 60-62.

‘I should like to be an American’: Scots in the USA

Jenni Calder

When the poet Thomas Campbell was born in Greenock on the Clyde in 1777, Britain was fighting a war in the American colonies. Scotland took a keen interest in events on the other side of the Atlantic. There were strong economic links—Campbell’s father Alexander had been involved in the Virginia tobacco trade that had transformed Glasgow and made many Scottish fortunes. But it was more than anxiety about cash flow that turned Scottish eyes to the west. There was also an electric interest in the ideas that fuelled the Declaration of Independence and later the US Constitution. Some of those ideas had originated among the thinkers and philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Francis Hutcheson, for example, discussed equality and government by consent, and stressed the right of a colony to resist oppression. His work became familiar to students in the American colonies. ‘That action is best, which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers,’ is one of Hutcheson’s most resounding statements, and has a clear echo in the Declaration of Independence.¹

Although Hutcheson died long before events in the American colonies came to a head, there were other influential figures who voiced their support, or at least their lack of condemnation, of the rebels. ‘I am American in my principles,’ said David Hume, the most luminous figure of the Enlightenment, ‘and wish that we would let them alone to govern or misgovern as they think proper.’² Scots in the colonies—and there were many of them—fought on both sides in the Revolutionary War. One of the bloodiest battles was in the autumn of 1780 at King’s Mountain on the border between North and South Carolina, with each

side commanded by a Scot. Patriot Colonel William Campbell defeated Loyalist troops commanded by Major Patrick Ferguson. At home, there were many who were outraged by the challenge to the British monarchy, but there were also those who were excited by the vista of democracy that American independence opened up, or who felt, like Hume, that the colonials should be left to their own devices.

No one living on or near Scotland's great River Clyde could have failed to be aware of the commercial significance of the transatlantic world. Alexander Campbell, like many others, was ruined by the Revolutionary War, but without the tobacco, timber, sugar and cotton that came from the other side of the Atlantic, Glasgow would not have become one of Europe's greatest industrial and commercial cities. There would have been no Greenock and Port Glasgow, the two Clyde ports created to serve the transatlantic trade, no great Clyde shipbuilding industry, no booming textile industry which initiated Scotland's industrial success story. And America would have seemed a great deal further away. One may also argue that without the Scots, the United States would have evolved differently. Its educational institutions were influenced by Scottish ideas and approaches. Without the Scots, its infrastructure, industry and financial institutions could well have been slower to develop, its frontiers less determinedly settled. Scots in America were prominent as teachers and doctors, merchants and lawyers. They were slave-owning plantation owners and administrators. They were soldiers fighting the French, the Spanish and the Natives, and pioneers carving out a living from the wilderness.

Among less tangible consequences were the influences of Scottish literature and music. Burns and Scott, Macpherson's *Ossian*, James Hogg, Jane Porter's novel *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810) were all very popular in America. When Fenimore Cooper began to publish his novels in the 1820s he was identified as the writer who could project the young nation onto the

world's imagination as Scott had done for Scotland. There was an American market for Scottish books long before Robert Louis Stevenson exploded onto the scene in 1886 with *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Scottish music left a lasting mark. Professor Willie Ruff of Yale has suggested that black American gospel singing was influenced by the unaccompanied Gaelic line singing that Highlanders brought with them to the Carolinas.³ It is well established that blue grass and country music owe much to the Scottish ballad tradition. Some ballads were absorbed almost unchanged into the American folk repertoire.

When Thomas Campbell, a prolific and highly popular writer in his time, said 'If I were not a Scotsman, I should like to be an American' he was voicing the attraction felt by many in Scotland for the young republic on the other side of the Atlantic.⁴ By the time the United States came into being, Scots had been making their homes in North America for over a century. There were Scots in New York when it was still New Amsterdam, before 1664. The first Scottish colony was founded in New Jersey in 1683. The following year there was a Scottish settlement at Stuart's Town, South Carolina. By this time the Scots, barred by the English government from transatlantic trade, were illegally shipping tobacco from Virginia and Maryland. When the Union of 1707 brought the prohibition to an end, the Scots were well positioned to take advantage of the fact that the Clyde ports were significantly nearer than ports further south to America's eastern seaboard.

From the 1730s there were Gaelic-speaking Highland communities along North Carolina's Cape Fear River. Highlanders, with their resilience and military skills, were seen as a useful buffer against the colonies' many enemies, and Scots in general were regarded as excellent settler material. In 1772 Josiah Martin, governor of North Carolina, wrote that the colony's 'prosperity and strength will receive great augmentation by the accession of such a number of hardy, laborious and thrifty people'.⁵ He was referring to the recent arrival of emigrants from the Highlands,

whose legacy in the Cape Fear area is still apparent. If 'hardy, laborious and thrifty' might be read by some as code for requiring little in the way of support or resources, these were nevertheless desirable attributes for intending settlers.

The first significant settlement of Scots in the colony of New York came in 1738, when 83 families from the island of Islay in Argyll settled beside Lake George. The settlement proved contentious, as the claim to land by Lachlan Campbell, the man who organised it, was denied by the colonial government. And the settlers were not happy that Campbell was intending to transplant his rights as feudal laird. Part of the appeal of the new country was the abandoning of old ways. It took decades for the land issue to be sorted out, but eventually Lachlan Campbell's sons were granted land north of Albany, the Argyll Patent. Campbell himself returned to Scotland and fought in the Duke of Cumberland's army at Culloden. He went back to America the following year, but died soon after.

In the same year as Islay families arrived at Lake George, an Ulsterman called William Johnson acquired a large tract of land in the Mohawk Valley. Among those he brought in to settle it were many Scottish Highlanders and Ulster Scots. Over the next 30 years or so the growing community of Scots along the Mohawk was joined by more Highlanders. Among them were large numbers of soldiers, mainly Fraser Highlanders, disbanded at the end of the French and Indian War. Their families and others from Fraser country, Strathglass and Glen Urquhart, joined them. But then they were caught by the next war. As most of them were Loyalists, those who were not fighting for the British departed northwards and made their homes in Upper Canada. The legacy of that migration is still highly visible in parts of Ontario.

Between 1774 and 1776, thirteen vessels arrived in New York (and many more at other ports) from Scotland. One of them was the *Nancy*, carrying mainly Gaelic-speaking emigrants from Caithness and Sutherland. Conditions on board the emigrant

ships could be appalling, and the *Nancy* was one of the worst. After 13 overcrowded, undernourished, stormy weeks at sea, during which a third of the passengers died, the *Nancy* disembarked survivors at New York. According to the *New-York Journal*, they were 'weak and emaciated, thinly clad, some of them sickly, most of them without money, and none knowing where to go', which highlights the dilemma of emigrants arriving with no support system to help them on their way.⁶ A happier experience was had by those who arrived on the *George* that same year. They were from Strathspey, under the guidance of John Cumming—they were almost all called Cumming or Grant, prominent Strathspey names. Cumming paid their passage from Greenock and became a leading member of the community they founded south of Albany.

By the 1770s large tracts of New York were open for settlement, including land north and south of Albany and on either side of Lake Champlain, and three million acres between the Mohawk and the Susquehanna. The departure of Highlanders from Scotland was a consequence of the collapse of the clan system and severe economic difficulty. Recession, bad harvests and the potato blight of the 1840s were all factors in the century or so of evictions that fuelled Highland emigration. Even those who did not have a vested interest in displacing people for sheep were sometimes convinced that life in the remoter parts of Scotland was unsustainable. There was a growing body of literature aimed at promoting emigration. One of the earliest publications, dated 1773, stressed the benefits of North Carolina and encouraged in particular 'tradesmen, mechanics and labourers of all sorts' to settle there: 'hither then they may repair, and no longer remain in a starving and grovelling condition at home'.⁷

It was not only in the Highlands that families were forced to leave. Rapid industrialisation took its toll all over Scotland, displacing traditional farming methods and farm workers, and destroying traditional trades, such as handloom weaving.

Struggling tenant farmers and cotters, and tradesmen without work, were attracted by the prospects of a new life on the other side of the Atlantic. Emigration societies were formed. One of several originating in the Glasgow area was the Scots American Company of Farmers, set up in 1772 in Renfrewshire. They raised money, sent two of their number to reconnoitre, and after an extensive search and careful planning organised a settlement in Ryegate on the Connecticut River, which is now Vermont's Caledonia County.

Although the Revolutionary War forced many Scots to leave the colonies, either for home or for Canada, significant numbers remained, and many of the reports they sent home of the infant republic reinforced an idea of the United States as a place where application and hard work would bring prosperity and—above all—where land could be owned. In a country where ownership of land was confined to a tiny minority, this was a powerful magnet. And of course there were other attractions. The United States offered an environment where a man could not only be free from religious and political persecution, he could participate in the political process. It offered vast empty spaces; the presence of an existing population was not considered an impediment. It offered scope for the adventurous and enterprising as well as a refuge for the oppressed and deprived. Inevitably, also, it attracted misfits and miscreants. There were few people in Scotland who were not touched in some way by this vision of a land of opportunity. There were warnings also, however. An anonymous *Emigrant's Guide* of 1816 cautioned that many had been 'dazzled by the infatuating sounds of democracy, independence, liberty, and equality'⁸ and advised that intending emigrants should 'balance well between the reality of comforts which they now enjoy, and the uncertainty of remote ones they may never possess'.⁹

In the early decades of the nineteenth century many thousands of Scots departed for the US and Canada, or British North American as it was until the dominion was formed in 1867. They

settled in all of the original thirteen states, and they were among the first to cross the Appalachians into Tennessee and Kentucky, and to move on with the frontier to Ohio and Illinois, and south into Alabama and Mississippi. They were prominent among the explorers and fur trappers who penetrated the Far West; the first white man to traverse what would become the main route through the Rockies to Oregon was Robert Stuart from near Callander. They fought at the Alamo in 1836, where a piper called John MacGregor played as General Santa Anna attacked. They ploughed virgin soil in newly opened territories. They were with the first wagon trains that in the 1840s crossed the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, and they maintained many of the forts and trading posts that helped the overlanders on their way: Richard Grant at Fort Hall, Thomas Mackay at Fort Boise, John MacLoughlin at Fort Vancouver. They were ranchers in Texas, Arizona, Wyoming and Montana, and miners wherever there was gold or silver or copper or coal.

When Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850, the USA was still, in Scottish terms, an infant, but an infant that had grown with astonishing speed, in territory, in population, and economically. In the 1800s the US was attracting not only emigrants, but visitors from Scotland who came out of curiosity, who wanted to see for themselves what life in this new republic was like and how it worked. Interest in the US was fed by articles in Scottish newspapers and journals that commented on American topics and issues, and increasing numbers of books about America were published, some specifically aimed at the intending emigrant.

John Galt visited in 1825, on his way to Upper Canada in his capacity as secretary of the Canada Company. He sailed to New York, and then proceeded up the Hudson by steamboat. When in New York City he met Grant Thorburn from Dalkeith, who as a radical activist had been forced to leave Scotland in 1794. He established a flourishing seed merchant's business in New York, and he became the model for the hero of Galt's novel *Lawrie Todd*

(1830). Like Thorburn, Lawrie Todd is a radical agitator and has to leave Scotland hurriedly. He travels steerage on a voyage that takes eight weeks, and arrives in New York, which he describes as a collection of ramshackle timber buildings. He finds that it is 'full of Scotchmen'.¹⁰ He is soon plugged in to a network of his countrymen. But his attempts to make a life for himself and his family suffer all kinds of setbacks and he is forced to start again as a pioneer settler beyond the Mohawk Valley.

The last stage of Todd's journey into the wilderness follows 'a mere blazed line of what was to be a road; stumps and cradle heaps, mud-holes and miry swails, succeeded one another'. All around are felled trees:

hundreds on hundreds of vast ponderous trees covering the ground for acres, like the mighty slain on a field of battle, all to be removed, yea obliterated, before the solitary settler can raise a meal of potatoes, seemingly offer the most hopeless task which the industry of man can struggle with.¹¹

Lawrie Todd builds a log cabin, which is flooded out, and another, which is consumed by a forest fire. He loses two wives and two children. Eventually Lawrie wins through and sees the evolution of a thriving community where he runs a store and assists in the building of a Presbyterian church. He returns to Scotland in style, on a ship that makes the crossing in 22 days: 'what a difference in the equipage of my return home to Scotland, and the caravan of human cattle in which I bade adieu to my native land!'¹² The book was a great success, unlike Galt's own involvement in founding the township of Guelph in Ontario, which resulted in his imprisonment for debt. *Lawrie Todd* was written in jail.

Eneas Mackenzie visited the US in 1818, and wrote a book aimed at:

The industrious labourer, the mechanic, the farmer, the

man of moderate capital, and the father of a family who feels solicitous about settling his children; in short all those who are prepared to encounter the numerous privations and inconveniences of emigration, in order to enjoy the great and acknowledged advantages which America offers to adventurers.¹³

In other words, Mackenzie had in mind people of some substance, not the destitute or the desperate. Like Galt, he arrived in New York, but was not impressed. He found people bad-mannered and indifferent, a consequence he believed of the American brand of populist democracy. He was offended by shopkeepers who 'stand with their hats on, or sit or lie along their counters, smoking segars, and spitting in every direction'.¹⁴ There is considerable negative comment on American manners from Scottish travellers. But Mackenzie was not deterred by rudeness, and his book is full of practical advice on how to travel and what to take. At the time he was in the US, Illinois, Michigan and Missouri were opening up to settlement, and there was a striking contrast between the commercial and industrial vitality of cities in the east, and the frontier in what was then 'the far west'.

To reach the frontier territories involved a difficult journey by river and road, which had to be carefully planned and prepared for. Mackenzie recommended that pioneers be equipped with warm clothing, food—meat, potatoes, bread, sugar, tea, coffee, spirits—tools to repair their wagons and good horses to pull them, cooking utensils, pen, ink and paper, and guns.

A few years after Mackenzie's visit, Thomas Hamilton from Glasgow arrived in New York. His first sight of America impressed him: 'one of the most beautiful prospects I have ever seen [. . .] New York on its island, with its vast forest of shipping, looming in the distance'.¹⁵ But after a little time in the city he was less positive. It was dominated by 'business and bustle, and crowded with a population devoting their whole energies to the arts of money-getting'.¹⁶ He was scathing about the way in which every-

one was judged according to the money they made. He was also appalled by American table manners: 'Each individual seemed to *pitchfork* his food down his gullet, without the smallest attention to the wants of his neighbour.'¹⁷ While many Scots relished the experience of a non-deferential society, others, like Hamilton and Mackenzie, found it uncomfortable, even offensive. Whatever the attractions of republicanism, there was a lingering distaste for the habits of uncouth colonials.

Hamilton went on to make an epic journey west to the Ohio River and down the Mississippi to New Orleans, and his book *Men and Manners in America* (1833) is a vivid account of what he saw and experienced. Like many other Scots, both in Scotland and in the US, he was highly critical of slavery, and highlighted the anomaly of a democracy that disenfranchised a large section of its population. The Reverend Alexander MacLeod, from the island of Mull, refused to take up the call to a ministry in Coldingham, New York, because church members included slave owners. But other Scots had long been part of the fabric of life in the southern states and were deeply entrenched in the slave-owning economy. They fought on both sides in the Civil War. Among many Union regiments with a specifically Scottish identity were two Illinois Scotch Regiments, the Cameron Guards of the District of Columbia Infantry, and New York's 79th Highlanders under Colonel James Cameron, who was killed at Bull Run. On the Confederate side, North Carolina fielded several Scottish units, and there were more from Tennessee, Alabama, Virginia, Louisiana and Mississippi. Families were divided. Alexander Campbell, a stonemason from New York State, found himself facing his brother James from South Carolina, when the Union army attempted to capture Charleston. Prominent commanders on both sides were of Scottish descent: Union generals McClellan and Grant, Confederates Jeb Stuart and Stonewall Jackson.

The Civil War had a huge economic impact on Scotland, of course, disrupting trading activity and particularly affecting

cotton textile production. But the image of America as a land of promise survived. Stevenson was deeply affected by that image: 'For many years,' he wrote, 'America was to me a sort of promised land.' Americans, he felt, lived free of the 'restraint and tradition' that constricted life in Europe. Life in America had not yet 'narrowed into parlours, nor begun to be conducted, like some unjust and dreary arbitration, by compromise, costume, forms of procedure, and sad, senseless self-denial'.¹⁸ This tells us as much about Stevenson's view of his own background as of his anticipation of the United States, fostered by childhood stories and augmented by tales eagerly absorbed as a young man, which evoked:

vast cities that grow up as by enchantment [. . .] the lamps burning far and near along populous streets; forests that disappear like snow; countries larger than Britain that are cleared and settled [. . .] oil that gushes from the earth; gold that is washed or quarried in the brooks or glens of the Sierras; and all that bustle, courage, action, and constant kaleidoscopic change that Walt Whitman has seized and set forth in his vigorous, cheerful, and loquacious verses. (*Amateur Emigrant*, pp. 105-06.)

Stevenson was eager to engage with this vision of America. But it contrasts strikingly with the picture in the mind of a young Scot who had emigrated with his family in 1849. The eleven-year-old John Muir, from Dunbar, longed to experience what he called 'the wonderful schoolless bookless American wilderness'. It was not the growth of vast cities and the kaleidoscope of human activity that appealed, but the prospect of an unsullied natural world:

No more grammar, but boundless woods full of mysterious good things; trees full of sugar, growing in ground full of gold; hawks, eagles, pigeons, filling the sky; millions of birds' nests, and no gamekeepers to stop us in all the wild, happy land.¹⁹

In later life, Muir would campaign passionately against the disappearance of forests and to protect the surviving American wilderness from the human energies that Stevenson found invigorating.

Stevenson had begun an essay on Walt Whitman when he was not yet 23, and rewrote it, toning down his enthusiasm, in 1878, the year before he himself first crossed the Atlantic. He found the breathless enthusiasm of Whitman exhilarating. Here was a voice that seemed loud enough, confident enough, humane enough, to project this new society, 'full of conflicting elements and interests', as Stevenson put it. Both the society itself, and the voice, excited him. If Whitman was able to 'catch and stereotype some democratic ideal of humanity which should be equally natural to all grades of wealth and education', it was because he grew and wrote in an environment that sustained that ideal; or seemed to.²⁰

The notion of a new world that brought out the best in human endeavour, both individual and collective, appealed to Stevenson as it did to thousands of his compatriots. I am quite sure that part of the attraction of Fanny Osbourne was that she was not only American, but also a frontier American. Like so many others, she moved west with the frontier, in her case from Indiana to San Francisco and then to the mining camps of Nevada. It was 1864, the Civil War not yet over. Thousands of Scots and people of Scottish descent had made and were making the same journey.

Kit Carson, whose great grandfather had been a Presbyterian minister in Dumfriesshire, had left Missouri 30 years earlier to become one of the West's most remembered trailblazers and Indian Scouts. Not so well known is Granville Stuart, whose Scots grandfather had settled in Virginia in the 1790s. Stuart's parents moved on to Illinois with their two sons, where they farmed until in 1849 Granville's father Robert lit out for the California gold fields. Three years later, Granville and his brother James followed suit, and five years after that the brothers were trad-

ing oxen and horses in the Fort Bridger area. On one occasion, desperate for reading matter, they rode 150 miles to track down a former Hudson's Bay Company trader called Neil McArthur, who was reputed to have a trunk full of books. They found the books, and came away with copies of Shakespeare, Byron, the bible in French, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and a book about Napoleon. I see this as a characteristically Scottish episode.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the attraction of the West was having its effect not only on Americans already settled, but on Scots who were lured by tales of freedoms to be enjoyed and fortunes to be made. One of those who responded was John Clay, who left his Borders home near Kelso and arrived in Wyoming in 1874. In his memoir he articulates the magnetism of the western frontier, as well as the memory of the old country:

It was another world; the rough, ready, joyous prospect of a broader field on wind-swept plains blotted out for the time being, softer scenes where pleasant meadowlands and fields of golden grain with far-off heather hills lay five thousand miles away.²¹

Clay left Scotland because he felt it to be too limited in opportunity and too bound by class and tradition for a man of his aspirations. Scotland, he wrote, was a place of 'a smothering of ambition, a fierce fight against political independence, the neglect of ability, the silent, sarcastic repression of any forward movement, the absence of a generous uplift' and he condemned 'the extravagance of our landed proprietors and their utter inability to meet adverse times'.²² He pictures a Scotland that Stevenson would have recognised.

While Fanny was in Virginia City, Nevada, Granville Stuart was in Virginia City, Montana. By 1879 he was acquiring 'free range' for cattle—'the only way to hold it is by occupying it,' he said—and beginning a largely successful career as a rancher.²³ At the same time, Stevenson was working on a never-completed novel called

A Vendetta in the West. Perhaps if he had come across Stuart, who later became involved in vigilante activities against cattle rustlers, with a band of men known as Stuart's Stranglers, he might have been inspired to finish it. Stuart ended his life as a highly esteemed figure in Montana, and librarian of Butte Public Library. John Clay in Wyoming became a highly respected ranch manager and advisor on the cattle business, although there is a touch of murkiness in his past also. He, and several other Scots, were implicated in the Johnson County War of 1890, in which the big ranchers brought in hired gunmen to deal with homesteaders whom they accused of rustling.

The year Fanny Osbourne followed her husband Sam to California was the year Kit Carson persuaded the Navajo to accept reservation life near Fort Sumner on New Mexico's Pecos River. Many other Scots were prominent in the Indian wars, perhaps most notably General George Crook, who fought the Sioux and Cheyenne in the north and the Apache in the south. His attempts to be fair to those he was trying to subdue, earned him reprimands from his superiors. Among the troops Crook led into the mountains in the aftermath of Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn, were many Scottish names: Colonel Ranald Mackenzie, Major G. A. Gordon, Captain J. B. Campbell, James Allison, John Hamilton, another Campbell, a Crozier, an Anderson, and others. Crook's favourite scout was a part-Scot, part-Chippewa called Archie McIntosh. McIntosh had learnt his trade from another Indian Scot called Donald McKay.

The year before Stevenson made his 1879 journey across the plains, the famous breakout of the Cheyenne from their reservation in Indian Territory took place. From what is now Oklahoma to Montana the country was in turmoil. General Crook and Colonel Mackenzie were involved in that, too. When Stevenson made his second trip to the US, in 1887, Sitting Bull and Geronimo were still alive. When the episode that is usually seen as the last chapter of the Indian wars took place, the massacre at Wounded Knee

in 1890, Stevenson had left the US and would never return. The order to fire on the Sioux assembled for a ghost dance ceremony was given by a man of Scottish descent, Colonel James Forsyth, who had been on General McClellan's staff during the Civil War.

One of the strongest condemnations of the Wounded Knee massacre came from another Scot, Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham. Cunninghame Graham had a brief and unsuccessful attempt at ranching in Texas at the time Stevenson was making his first journey to California. He gave up when his ranch was raided by Apache, but he remained sympathetic to the plight of the Native American. His view was that they had been 'tricked' and 'plundered'. He argued that those responsible for destroying the beaver and the buffalo and replacing them with whisky and smallpox owed 'some reparation beyond a small-bore bullet', and added:

I am one of those who think that the colour of skin makes little difference to right and wrong in the abstract, and who fail to see so much difference between an Indian sitting over a fire gnawing a piece of venison, and a tailor in the Eastend of London working in a gas-lit den sixteen hours a day for a few shillings a week.²⁴

Stevenson almost certainly never saw Cunninghame Graham's letters on the Indian question, which were published in the *Daily Graphic* in 1890 and 1891. The two men were almost exact contemporaries—Cunninghame Graham was born in 1852, two years after RLS—and their careers as adventurers and writers make an interesting comparison. Not long before Cunninghame Graham was championing the Native American in print, Stevenson was writing letters to *The Times* supporting Polynesian islanders. His observation of Native Americans on his transcontinental train journey, abject figures 'disgracefully dressed out with the sweepings of civilisation', and the mocking reactions of his fellow passengers, may have primed him for his engagement with issues

of colonialism in the Pacific:

The silent stoicism of their conduct, and the pathetic degradation of their appearance, would have touched any thinking creature, but my fellow-passengers danced and jested round them with a truly Cockney baseness. (*Amateur Emigrant*, p. 150.)

Another example of ‘Cockney baseness’ is found in *The Ebb-Tide’s* Huish.

In 1869 and 1870, Stevenson, still at that time an engineering student destined, it was thought, to follow his father’s profession, made trips around Scotland’s coast to inspect lighthouses and harbour works in the charge of the Stevenson family. Just as Thomas Campbell, growing up on the Clyde, could not fail to be aware of the exodus across the Atlantic, Stevenson encountered Highland and island departures, and their causes and consequences. This fed his understanding of Highland communities, and his intention, expressed more than a decade later, to write a history of the Highlands. Out of it would come not a history but *Kidnapped* (1886), in which his hero was to have been transported to the Carolinas and sold as an indentured servant. Shipwreck intervenes, and David Balfour’s adventures, in this book, do not take him out of Scotland, but kidnapping of likely youngsters did occur, and plenty of young lads in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, compelled or by choice, made that journey.

By the time Stevenson himself embarked on the SS *Devonia* at Greenock, steamships had been crossing the Atlantic for over a quarter of a century, so the journey time was considerably less than it would have taken *Kidnapped’s* brig *Covenant*. It was not, however, a comfortable trip, and the experience of sharing space with crammed steerage passengers from all over Northern Europe had a profound affect on Stevenson’s life and writing. The people he encountered were not Whitmanesque bright-eyed adventurers. Although one was optimistic enough to state that ‘in

America you get pies and puddings', his fellow passengers were mainly broken people 'who had been unable to prevail against circumstances in one land, [and] were now fleeing pitifully to another'. (*Amateur Emigrant*, pp. 99, 44.)

Even before he disembarked his vision of the US as a land of promise was beginning to dissolve. As New York harbour took shape on the skyline, stories of what could be expected in the city flew around the ship:

You would have thought we were to land upon a cannibal island. You must speak to no one in the streets, as they would not leave you until you were rooked and beaten. You must enter an hotel with military precautions; for the least you had to apprehend was to awake next morning without money or baggage [. . .] and if the worst befell, you would instantly and mysteriously disappear from the ranks of mankind. (*Amateur Emigrant*, p. 101.)

The 24 hours he spent in New York were dismal. It rained the whole time, his lodgings were hardly salubrious, New Yorkers were rude (although also kind) and he met a young fellow Scot who 'had been three months in New York and had not yet found a single job nor earned a single halfpenny [. . .] I began to grow sick at heart for my fellow-emigrants' (*Amateur Emigrant*, p. 110). His experience of crossing the continent to California reinforced his sympathy for the emigrant—and nearly killed him. He got used to the crowding and discomfort and the inadequate food; what surprised and shocked him more was the incivility of the authorities, the ugly treatment of bewildered newcomers, many of whom spoke no English, and the racism. 'Equality,' he commented, 'though conceived very largely in America, does not descend so low as down to an emigrant.' (*Amateur Emigrant*, p. 131.)

Yet for Stevenson, as for thousands of others, the US did indeed turn out to be the land of opportunity. He married in California, he found material and inspiration for his writing, and he found fame

and fortune. When he arrived in New York for the second time, in September 1887, the success stories of Scots in America were well known, and the popular image of the US as a destination for those desperate for jobs or impatient at the restraints of a class-bound society was as powerful as ever. In 1881 Andrew Carnegie, that icon of the American dream, had made a triumphant return to Scotland, basking in his success and the appreciation of those who had benefited from his wealth. He processed through his home town of Dunfermline, which his struggling family had left in 1848 to make their home in industrial Pittsburgh, amidst the ringing of bells, the beating of drums and the cheering of the populace.

Both ruthless and beneficent, Carnegie epitomised not only Scottish traditions of self-help and American rags-to-riches endeavour, but also precisely the kind of contradictions that Stevenson explored in so much of his writing. Carnegie ground down his workers with one hand, while with the other he handed out millions for libraries, museums and concert halls. Another Scot of the same generation could equally have been the subject of Stevenson's pen. Allan Pinkerton, a Glasgow radical and journeyman cooper, left his home town in haste, pursued by the law. Based in Chicago, he became a leading anti-slavery campaigner, while his later career was built on the pursuit of radicals and the breaking of strikes, including the famous strike in 1892 at Carnegie's Homestead Steel Works.

While Carnegie became an emblem of emigrant potential, for the thousands of Scots who worked in America's mines, mills, factories and shipyards, including Carnegie's own steelworks, there was little chance of moving beyond a hand-to-mouth existence in often squalid conditions. But for some there were rewards, and stories of modest improvement could be as potent as spectacular success. There was a demand for Scottish workers, for miners and quarrymen, for example, who had skills and experience that the United States needed. Some Scots found it profitable to work

half the year in the US, where they could earn enough to keep them going for the rest of the year back home. The Scots, said Neal Dow in 1880, 'bring us muscle and brain and the tried skill and trustworthiness in many of our great industries of which they are managers of the most successful ones'.²⁵

Scots were in the forefront of American banking and insurance, and in providing mortgages for those moving into the western territories. There is a particularly striking connection between financiers from Aberdeenshire and the states of Wisconsin and Illinois, opening up in the mid-century. Among their number were William Scott, Patrick Strachan, George Smith, Alexander Anderson and Alexander Mitchell. After the Civil War, Scots homesteaded west of the Missouri, and became cattle ranchers and sheep farmers: they needed money, too, to buy land, stock and equipment. A huge amount of Scottish money was invested in the cattle business, in real estate, in mining and in railroads. Hundreds of Scots who never left Scotland had fingers in American pies. Some of the largest cattle ranches in the Texas Panhandle were Scottish-owned, including pre-eminently the Matador Ranch, owned by Dundee's Matador Land and Cattle Company registered in 1882, and managed by Murdo Mackenzie from Tain.

When Stevenson spent his few months in New York State in 1887-88, he may have come across the names of compatriots who had made their mark. Ayrshire-born Henry Eckford was a shipbuilder on Long Island, and later Naval Constructor at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. John McComb, also of Ayrshire origin, was the designer of many of the buildings that went up in New York between 1795 and 1830. Henry Burden from Dunblane, near Stirling, developed what became one of America's largest ironworks, in Troy. Thomas Dickson from Lauder, Berwickshire, set up an ironworks on Lake Champlain and became president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal. The chief engineer of the Erie Canal, opened 1823, was another Scot, James Geddes, as was Donald

McCallum, the general superintendent of the Erie Railroad. His assistant surveyor was James Ferguson from Perthshire. During the Civil War McCallum was director of military railroads for the Union. Isabella Graham from Lanarkshire established several charitable organisations in New York to help widows, orphans and prostitutes, and started a school for girls. One of the teachers was Joanna Bethune from Edinburgh. John Greig, from Moffat, practised as a lawyer in New York State before becoming in 1845 vice-chancellor of the State University of New York.

Stevenson was perhaps aware of the Scottish involvement in American publishing and the press. The brothers James and Alexander Robertson, sons of an Edinburgh printer, started the *New York Chronicle* and the *Albany Gazette*. James Gordon Bennett from Banffshire became assistant editor of the *New York Enquirer* in 1826, and by 1835 was editing the *New York Herald*. He was one of the best-known newspapermen of his day. Peter Brown and his wife Marianne Mackenzie arrived in New York in 1837, where Brown started the *British Chronicle* aimed at a Scottish readership. He then moved on to Toronto where he and his son George founded the *Toronto Globe*. And Sam McClure, who commissioned work from Stevenson to run in his newspaper syndicate and serialised his work in *McClure's Magazine*, was an Ulster Scot, whose family had left Glasgow for Antrim before carrying on to America. The readership of Stevenson's work, on both sides of the Atlantic, was undoubtedly affected by the libraries funded by Carnegie.

The year after the Carnegie family left Dunfermline, Daniel Muir, from Dunbar on the East Lothian coast, brought his family to Wisconsin, where they acquired land, built a shanty and learnt the business of farming in the wilderness. Daniel's sons John and David grew up in an environment very different from the smoke-blackened alleys of industrial Pittsburgh. If the relentless task of establishing a homestead was as gruelling as anything undertaken by Pittsburgh steelworkers, it was undoubtedly healthier,

and it did nothing to erode John Muir's passion for wilderness. For him, America offered not the opportunity for financial success, although in the 1880s he proved himself a canny and effective fruit farmer, but the prospect of an inspiring and nurturing environment.

Nearly half a century after the Muirs settled in Wisconsin, a group of families from the Dundee area made their way west to Montana where they made their homes in the Big Belt Mountains. 'Two deep Caledonian notions seem to have pulled them so far into the hills,' writes Ivan Doig, the grandson of one of the settlers, in his memoir *This House of Sky: Landscapes of the Western Mind* (1987), 'to raise sheep, and to graze them on mountain grass which costs nothing.'²⁶ Stevenson was building Vailima while this 'double handful of Scottish families' was struggling to make a go of ranching and survive the cruel Montana winters. Some of the homesteaders, including Peter Doig, were forced to give up. But the Doigs stayed in Montana and the Scottish community survived, in spite of disappointment. As Ivan Doig put it in one of his novels, in which his leading characters are the descendents of Scots: 'Any place you looked you saw people who had put twenty years into this country and all they had to show for it was a pile of old calendars.'²⁷

So far as I have been able to establish, Stevenson makes no mention of Carnegie or Allan Pinkerton or John Muir, all of whom went to the US before he was born and were highly visible individuals in his lifetime. But the three of them represent much of what America meant for Scots in the nineteenth century. All three left Scotland because circumstances in the old country denied them the means of earning a living. All were trying to escape from an oppressive environment. All were quick to recognise and take advantage of the opportunities their new country offered. They all had qualities that are often seen as distinctively Scottish, as indeed did the homesteading Doigs. They were single-minded, tenacious, self-denying, hard-working, although these

traits emerged differently in each of them. If we add Stevenson himself to the list, we have a quartet of Scots who made a huge impact on the United States: on the environment, both positively and negatively, on the regulation of industry, law and order and the taming of the frontier, on the financial climate, on cultural institutions, and on the American imagination. Remove them, and all the other Scots who imprinted the nation's experience, and the wealth of ideas and images, books and songs, language and tradition, originating in Scotland and now woven into the fabric of American life, and the United States of America would look very different.

NOTES

- 1 Francis Hutcheson, *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. by Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), p. 125.
- 2 J. Y. T. Greig, *The Letters of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), II, p. 303.
- 3 Paul Kelbie, 'Gospel Truth: Hebrides Invented Church Spirituals' in *The Independent*, 20 September 2003.
- 4 William Beattie, *The Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2002), II, p. 499.
- 5 Josiah Martin, letter to secretary of state for the colonies, March 1772, quoted in Michael Newton, *We're Indians Sure Enough: The Legacy of the Scottish Highlanders in the United States* (Chapel Hill: Saorsa Media, 2001), p. 93.
- 6 *New-York Journal*, quoted in Bernard Bailyn and Barbara DeWolfe, *Voyagers to the West: Emigration from Britain to America on the Eve of the Revolution* (London: Tauris, 1986), pp. 576-7, n.
- 7 Scotus Americanus, *Informations Concerning the Province of North Carolina Addressed to Emigrants from the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland* (Glasgow: James Knox; Edinburgh: Charles Elliot, 1773), p. 32.
- 8 'An old scene painter', *The Emigrant's Guide, or A Picture of America* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1816), p. 7.

- 9 Ibid., p. 77.
- 10 John Galt, *Lawrie Todd, or Settlers in the Woods* (London: Richard Bentley, 1832), p. 20.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 86, 87.
- 12 Ibid., p. 300.
- 13 Eneas Mackenzie, *An Historical, Topographical, and Descriptive View of the United States of America* (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1819), p. vi.
- 14 Ibid., p. 145.
- 15 Thomas Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1833), p. 10.
- 16 Ibid., p. 14.
- 17 Ibid., p. 43.
- 18 R. L. Stevenson, *The Amateur Emigrant in From the Clyde to California*, ed. by Andrew Noble (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985), p. 105. Henceforth cited in the text as *Amateur Emigrant*.
- 19 John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), pp. 28, 27.
- 20 'Walt Whitman' in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (London: Heinemann, 1923), Tusitala Edition XXVII, p. 58.
- 21 John Clay, *My Life on the Range*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 5.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- 23 Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier as Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart, Gold-Miner, Trader, Merchant, Rancher and Politician* ed. by Paul C. Philips (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1925), p. 144.
- 24 R. B. Cunninghame Graham, 'Three letters on the Indian Question' in *The North American Sketches of R. B. Cunninghame Graham* ed. by John Walker (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986), p. 29.
- 25 Quoted in Bernard Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia: Glasgow and the United States 1820-1920* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), p. 1.
- 26 Ivan Doig, *This House of Sky: Landscapes of the Western Mind* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), p. 23.
- 27 Ivan Doig, *English Creek* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 2.

Stevenson's dentist: an unsung hero¹

Robert Benjamin Stevenson III

In November 1879, Robert Louis Stevenson, who had barely reached his 29th birthday, arrived in San Francisco drained by the long trip from Scotland to California. In December he began coughing up blood but continued smoking cigarettes. San Francisco doctors gave him less than one year to live, and Stevenson wrote the first version of his Requiem. By March he had become bedridden, and moved across the bay to East Oakland. Fiancé Fanny and Dr. William Bamford struggled to keep him alive. Unexpectedly a telegram arrived from his parents promising money from home, and his health improved dramatically. Stevenson was able to get married and went on to write classics like *Treasure Island* (1883). The dental treatment quickly followed the telegram promising 250 pounds a year. Descriptions of the treatment are fairly consistent.

While many medical details of his life are well known, little has been said about Stevenson's dental health. Although many biographers omit RLS's dental troubles, some do note his teeth.² Dental health is as important as any other physical condition. Constant toothaches can drain the immune system and interrupt sleep, which exacerbates other illnesses. Stevenson also suffered from lung disease, dermatitis, poor diet, and depression and was underweight. Serious oral disorders can interfere with vital functions such as breathing, eating, swallowing and speaking, and may undermine self-image and self-esteem, discouraging social interaction. Tooth removal may have improved his health. Finally relieved of endless toothaches, new dentures provided the ability to chew different foods and improved his appearance and self-esteem. It seems Fanny never complained about the result.

Today, patients in such poor physical condition would be referred to a hospital for dental treatment. The dentist in Oakland

performed a virtual miracle in successfully removing Stevenson's teeth without killing him in the process. Stevenson could easily have bled to death or died from infection at the hands of a mediocre practitioner. This dentist's name is not mentioned in any Stevenson correspondence. The unsung hero was lost to history. With help from Roger Swearingen and the Oakland Public Library, we found substantial evidence which points to Russell H. Cool as the dentist who saved Stevenson's life by removing his teeth.

Professional announcements on the local newspaper's front page, among 'Professional Cards', included notices from physicians and attorneys. Cool formerly practiced in San Francisco with his father, George W. Cool, on Kearney Street. The February 9 edition of 1880 marked the first advertisement for Russell H. Cool in the *Tribune*.³ Kearny Street was home to numerous San Francisco dental offices, and soon California's first dental school. Although it is possible that Stevenson travelled across the bay to a San Francisco dentist, several visits were needed, and it seems unlikely that he would choose to travel by boat having had extractions.

Russell Cool's Oakland office was above the Dietz Opera House, a location well known to Oakland's upper crust. Fanny was a resident of San Francisco, and may have previously known of the Cools. Most of the East Oakland dental offices were located on Broadway, which was two blocks farther away from the Osbourne cottage on 18th Avenue. The city directory for 1879 lists twelve dentists⁴ and Bishop's 1880 directory shows 24 dentist's names.⁵

Cool had a pedigree and reputation many other dentists new to the city lacked. *Tribune* advertisements for other dentists, five or six per issue, were on the back pages in the classified section among the 'Lost & Found' and other non-professional endeavours. Cool was the only dentist advertising on page one. Dr. Bamford might have helped Stevenson choose his dentist. Had

Bamford not died in 1881 he might have remembered Cool, or reminded the dentist that he had treated a famous writer.

At the time Stevenson was treated, Cool employed an assistant, a recent high school graduate named Louise (or 'Lou'). By the time *Treasure Island* was published, Russell and Lou were married, but Cool's newspaper ads soon disappeared, and Lou took over the practice herself. Such apprenticeship was still common in the late nineteenth century. The California dental board did not exist until 1890, and Louise was the first female dentist to obtain a license. Her office was on Kearny Street, and according to her newspaper advertisement in the *San Francisco News Letter and California Advertiser* on June 20, 1881, she excelled in cosmetic dentistry and treating children painlessly. The advertisement also refers to her former husband, "The famous Russell Cool of East Oakland."⁶

Because the office was on the second floor, Cool's patients would need to climb a flight of stairs to reach it. Prudent dentists often located on upper floors in that era. The stairs discouraged 'tire-kickers,' i.e. people who shop around for the least expensive practitioner. Also, the climbing provides a mini-stress test to evaluate a patient's general health. Those people whose health permits climbing stairs can probably withstand most dental procedures. Entering a nineteenth-century dental office, Stevenson would likely encounter the odour of clove oil, a medicine (eugenol) that serves to soothe the nerves of teeth with deep cavities or decay.

At the first appointment, financial arrangements were probably full payment in advance. Next, impressions of Stevenson's teeth would be made using plaster of Paris in a metal impression tray. In this procedure, the metal tray is removed first, then the plaster is removed in small pieces, which are then placed back into the tray together as they were in the mouth. A separating medium is painted on the impression, and a harder, more improved type of plaster (gypsum) is then poured into the mold.

After setting, the impression plaster is removed from the cast. The teeth models are then attached to a mechanical jaw called an articulator and sent to a dental laboratory for fabrication of dentures. The denture materials most likely used were porcelain teeth held in dark green 'Vulcanite' rubber bases. There was a dental laboratory in Oakland that made dentures, Lee & Porter, 954 Broadway. Alternatively, Cool may have sent them to the lab in San Francisco used by his father George.

Depending on the skill and judgment of the dentist, the extractions might be performed all at the same appointment, or spread-out over two or more visits. Anxious to get married, they probably wanted the teeth extracted all at once, which would save travel and lower the cost of the anaesthetic. Barring complications, a highly talented dentist could remove all thirty-two teeth in less than two hour's time. However, 'rotten' teeth are prone to break easily, and removing root tips can be tediously slow. Profound anaesthesia is important to reduce patient stress and anxiety, allowing the dentist to work quickly without rushing or hurrying too fast.

The aesthetic might have been chloroform, but it was relatively new at the time. Another possibility is nitrous oxide, or 'laughing gas,' discovered in Edinburgh by Sir Joseph Priestley. Stevenson might have written something about laughing gas if he had experienced it. Sir Humphrey Davy inhaled nitrous oxide in 1794 and wrote about it in a poem entitled 'Nitrous Oxide Experience':

Not in the ideal dreams of wild desire
Have I beheld a rapture-wakening form:
My bosom burns with no unhallow'd fire,
Yet is my cheek with rosy blushes warm;
Yet are my eyes with sparkling lustre fill'd;
Yet is my mouth replete with murmuring sound;
Yet are my limbs with inward transport fill'd;
And clad with new-born mightiness around.⁷

In 1875, William Ernest Henley wrote a collection of poems

titled *In Hospital* (1873-75) while he was a patient in Edinburgh Hospital. Poem four is called 'Before'

Behold me waiting—waiting for the knife.
 A little while, and at a leap I storm
 The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
 The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
 The gods are good to me: I have no wife,
 No innocent child, to think of as I near
 The fateful minute; nothing all-too dear
 Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.
 Yet am I tremulous and a trifle sick,
 And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little:
 My hopes are strong, my will is something weak.
 Here comes the basket? Thank you. I am ready.
 But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle:
 You carry Caesar and his fortunes—steady!⁸

Chloroform was only recently reported in medical literature at that time. More likely Stevenson's anaesthetic was ether, first used by Sir James Young Simpson while delivering babies in 1847. Simpson lived almost next door to the Stevenson family and his son Walter Simpson was a close friend of Louis.

Administration of ether is much easier than nitrous oxide, which requires expensive equipment to produce the gas. Liquid ether is simply poured on a rag and held to the patient's nose. Stevenson's poor lung condition would have made deep sedation unlikely. A twilight or conscious sedation could have been used, in addition to injections of local aesthetic around the teeth, so he could still breathe and swallow without help.

Assuming no previous extractions, there were thirty-two teeth involving fifty-odd roots. The extraction sequence probably began with the upper left rearmost tooth, assuming the dentist is right handed, and proceeding forward to the front teeth until all eight in the quadrant are removed. Next, the lower left eight teeth, back to front, followed by the upper right and lower right.

Uppers are removed first so that pieces of tooth or bone don't fall into fresh sockets below. In a letter written Christmas Day, 1881, after a seven-hour open sleigh ride through snow from Berne to Davos, RLS confessed to having, 'suffered less at the dentist'. (McLynn, p. 207).

After administering anaesthetic, the first instrument used was probably not pliers (forceps) but a periosteal elevator. It is used to loosen the gum tissue and ligament attachments around the necks of teeth at the gum line, both along the inside next to the palate / tongue, and along the outside next to the cheeks and lips. It makes a tearing noise, like ripping cloth or cardboard, and is easily heard because the ear is so near to the back teeth. Next, forceps are likely used. While the dentist (or assistant) braces the patient's head, the dentist places the beaks or tips of the forceps on the tooth, over the crown, past the gum line and as far down the root as possible. Squeezing the handles tightly, the dentist slowly pushes the tooth into the socket, then slowly back and forth, little by little, toward the cheek, then toward the tongue, back to the cheek, etc. This manoeuvre spreads the bony socket wide and wider, separating the root and bone until the tooth comes free. The dentist then proceeds to the next adjacent tooth.

Spreading the socket makes a creaking crepitus noise, like breaking small wooden branches, as the root tears free from the ligament lining the bony socket. When a root tip breaks, there is usually a distinct snap or crack. Sometimes the crown of the tooth breaks off level with the gum line, leaving the entire root in the socket and nowhere to put the forceps. Today, oral surgeons would use a high-speed surgical drill with sterile water coolant to remove some of the bone from around the top of the root. Dental drills available in 1880 were as crude as hand-driven eggbeaters, used mainly to remove decay from large dental cavities. Such drills are unsuitable for delicate bone surgery, because the heat generated could kill the bone cells. A small chisel and mallet would be used to chip away some of the bone around the top

of the root, to provide a purchase point for the forceps to grab the root. With multi-rooted teeth, the mallet and chisel might be used to separate the roots and remove them individually. The chairside dental assistant might use the mallet, while the dentist holds the chisel in one hand and patient's lips with the other.

As teeth are removed, the dentist would inspect the roots carefully to see if any root tips are missing. When tips of roots are left behind they can become infected, so the dentist might need to use a root-tip pick to remove them. The small, pointed end of the root-tip pick is used to pry loose the root tip from the bottom of the socket. The dentist must be careful not to push the root tip up into the maxillary sinus, causing infection, or down into the lower jaw mandibular canal, causing lip numbness. (Another instrument for removing teeth or roots is the French Key, invented in the dark ages. Sometimes it actually works. In France they call it the English Key.)

The inside of each socket would be lightly scraped using a curette to remove bone fragments and sharp corners and to stimulate blood clot formation inside the socket. After all teeth in the quadrant were removed, the dentist would inspect the bone ridge for sharp corners or bulges that could interfere with denture placement. The bone spicules and bulges are would be removed using a rasp (bone file), or *Rongeurs* forceps (bone snips). Once the bone ridge was smooth, the socket walls would be pressed between thumb and fingers to reduce the earlier spreading and return them to their original shape. The row of empty sockets looks a little like someone plucked the tail feathers from a duck, except duck sockets don't bleed. Cotton gauze sponges would be used to sop up blood and help control bleeding. The gum tissue would then be closed over the sockets and sutured together before proceeding to the next quadrant. The sutures were probably removed two weeks later, when the dentures were inserted.

Photographs taken of Stevenson shortly before and after dental treatment do not show much difference, and there are questions

about the correct dates of these photos. When they returned to England in August 1880, his agent Sidney Colvin met the Stevensons at the Liverpool docks, and described Stevenson as 'looking better than I expected and improved by his new teeth'. (McLynn, p. 185.) In 1883 Fanny wrote to her mother-in-law Maggie that her son went to Marseilles, France, for a week to see a dentist. (McLynn, p. 216). New dentures were probably made during this trip, now that his gums were completely healed from the extractions. Apparently, these dentures lasted eleven years, until his death.

In conclusion, RLS might well have paraphrased the final paragraph of *Treasure Island* to read as follows: 'The worst dreams I have, are when I'm in the dentist's chamber, and hear the creaking sound of teeth resurrected, or start upright in bed with the sharp crack of the chisel still ringing in my ears, 'tap-tap, tap-tap, tap-tap.'

NOTES

- 1 This paper would not have been possible without the extensive input and collaboration of Dr. Roger G. Swearingen, and vital assistance from Nicholas Rankin and Professor Richard Dury.
- 2 'He was hungry and unhappy, his teeth rotting, his pocket steadily emptying [. . .].'— J. C. Furnas, *Voyage To Windward, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, (New York: Wm. Sloan Associates, 1951), p. 171. '[I]n December he succumbed to pleurisy and[. . .] as an additional scourge was wracked with toothache and could not afford to consult a dentist.'—Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson, a biography by Frank McLynn*, (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 166. 'His Irish landlady, Mrs. Carson [. . .] was at first suspicious of this scruffy stranger with the rotten teeth'—Hunter Davies, *In Search of Robert Louis Stevenson The Teller of Tales*, (New York: Interlink Books, 1996), p. 122. 'Louis, who had been suffering intermittently from toothache due to rotten teeth, could now afford to have these replaced'—James Pope Hennessy, *Robert Louis Stevenson A Biography by James Pope Hennessy*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1974), p. 161. 'With his father's money he had his badly decayed teeth repaired or replaced.'—Ian Bell, *Dreams of Exile Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*. (New York: Henry

Holt and Co, 1992), p. 140. 'At last Stevenson could afford to go to a dentist with his painfully decaying teeth. The resultant work filled out his mouth and improved his profile.' —Margaret Mackay, *The Violent Friend: The Story of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1968), p. 75. 'An Oakland dentist took all Stevenson's teeth out, and the replacement ones changed the lines on his face.' —Nicholas Rankin, *Dead Man's Chest Travels After Robert Louis Stevenson*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 169. 'All he had to do now, Stevenson wrote, was wait for his new teeth, for he had had his own extracted.' —James Playsted Wood, *The Lantern Bearer, A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), p. 61. See also *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew. 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-1995), III, letters 698, 699, and letter 700 to Charles Baxter in April, 1880, 'I am waiting till I get in my new teeth—the old ones having been gently removed with a pair of pliers—then I go to [marry]', p. 79.

- 3 *Oakland Daily Evening Tribune*, February 9, 1880, p. 1.
- 4 Bishop's Oakland Directory for 1879-80, pp. 684-5.
- 5 Bishop's Oakland Directory for 1879-80, pp. 686-7.
- 6 <http://www.sfmuseum.net/hist11/ladydentist.html>
- 7 <http://www.generalanaesthesia.com/images/davypoem.html>
- 8 <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/henley/inhospital/henley4.html>

The fiction of Lloyd Osbourne: was this 'American gentleman' Stevenson's literary heir?

Gordon Hirsch

Lloyd Osbourne was eight years old in 1875 when he and his mother Fanny first met Robert Louis Stevenson in Grez-sur-Loing. Fanny eventually would marry Stevenson, and for Lloyd this first meeting was the start of a long friendship that would produce various sorts of literary collaborations. *Treasure Island*, for example, was written partly to amuse Lloyd, who was then 12 and had sketched the map of an island. That novel was dedicated to Lloyd Osbourne, 'an American gentleman, in accordance with whose classic taste the following narrative has been designed'.¹

In Davos during the winter of 1881-82, Stevenson and Lloyd developed a printing press for their joint amusement. They lived together and travelled together through much of Stevenson's later life; in the South Seas, in particular, Osbourne took on the role of photographer for the Stevenson party, while Stevenson was the group's ethnographer-author. Toward the end of Stevenson's life, Osbourne became the junior collaborator of the established author. According to Lloyd's own account of that collaboration, summarised in Graham Balfour's biography of Stevenson, the younger man's greatest contribution to the three co-authored texts occurred during the writing of *The Wrong Box* (1889), which readers have variously loved or hated. Osbourne produced much of its story line and typed the first draft, which Stevenson corrected and extended. In the case of *The Ebb-Tide* (1893), Stevenson wrote that Lloyd contributed to the first part of that novella, but had no significant part in the later sections. Lloyd contributed certain chapters and character sketches to

The Wrecker (1891-92), but Stevenson himself seems entirely responsible for such parts of the book as the early, Parisian scenes.² Given the debate over the quality of *The Wrong Box* and given the substantial re-writing and authorial control Stevenson exercised over the other two books, it is no easy task to assess the extent of Osbourne's contribution to these collaborations.³

Some of Stevenson's British friends and contemporaries objected to the pernicious influence of Fanny Osbourne and her family on Stevenson's life, productivity, and literary taste, and this criticism has not receded over time. In the recent biography by Frank McLynn, for example, Fanny and her son repeatedly figure as meretricious influences and parasites, as in this representative summary: 'Lloyd was lazy, self-regarding, snobbish, venal, amoral, and corrupt'.⁴ There can be no doubt that Lloyd benefited from his connection to Stevenson, did not always behave well towards those in his life (including his wife, Katherine Osbourne), and enjoyed the high life of society and clubs. McLynn's dismissal of Lloyd Osbourne may, however, be too facile and absolute. Stevenson scholars have, for example, long recognised their debt to Osbourne's well-written and informative biographical study, *An Intimate Portrait of R.L.S.*⁵

Scholars are, however, much less likely to have read the thirteen volumes of fiction that Lloyd Osbourne published after Stevenson's death, most of them by 1911. The majority of these volumes are novels or novellas, but four are collections of his short stories, stories that originally appeared in venues such as *Scribner's Magazine*, *McClure's Magazine*, *Everybody's Magazine*, and *Cosmopolitan*, a *Monthly Illustrated Magazine*. Despite the quantity of Osbourne's solo publications, he was not at the time generally regarded as a heavy-weight author, though a number of contemporary brief reviews in periodicals like *The Bookman* (London) and *The Critic* praise one or another of his books. What these volumes reveal about Osbourne's qualities as a writer, then, seems a fair question to consider. What,

if anything, did Osbourne learn about fiction from Stevenson? This paper argues that Osbourne did actually learn quite a lot, as evidenced in the best mystery and adventure fiction Osbourne wrote and, more particularly, in the South Sea short stories that were collected in two volumes, *The Queen versus Billy and Other Stories* (1900) and *Wild Justice: Stories of the South Seas* (1906; reprinted with some additional stories in 1921).⁶ In his short fiction set in the South Seas, this paper will contend, Osbourne demonstrates himself worthy of consideration as Stevenson's literary heir.

Romantic tales, motormania, mystery and adventure fiction

Before analysing Osbourne's most interesting solo efforts, however, one must briefly survey his corpus, and that entails acknowledging some serious weaknesses. Indeed, some of Osbourne's fiction is downright embarrassing to read today—in subject, if not necessarily in execution. For example, the collection of short stories, *Love, the Fiddler* (1905), is replete with conventional romantic tales, as its title suggests. Frequently a stunningly beautiful, intelligent and bold heiress is pursued and eventually won by a decent, hardworking American chap, as in 'The Chief Engineer', 'The Golden Castaways', and 'The Awakening of George Raymond'. Or, in the story 'ffrenches first', an apparently unremarkable male suitor pursuing a British 'daughter of the castle' turns out to be the 'awfully, immensely, disgustingly rich' third vice-president of Amalgamated Copper, with his own yacht parked just offshore.⁷

One striking feature of a number of Osbourne's novels and stories is their depiction of the 'craze for automobiling' and that new early twentieth-century character, the 'automobilist' or 'motormaniac'.⁸ In these motormaniacal fictions, it is usually the fellow who can both afford fancy cars and keep them running, since they are always breaking down, who gets the girl. In fact the girl is frequently auto-mad herself and sometimes handy

with a wrench too. In addition to his being the stepson of RLS, motormania was probably Lloyd Osbourne's principal claim to literary fame among his contemporaries. Certainly it is his most persistent and irritating subject, largely because it is symptomatic of a generally disturbing classism in his fiction—particularly the fiction set in America or Britain. These novels are replete with smugness about upper crust 'Anglo-Saxons',⁹ and quite a number contain unpleasant traces of the racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and disdain for immigrants that one commonly finds in American popular fiction of the early twentieth century.

Fortunately, tales of motormania and romantic love among the fashionable set don't comprise the whole of Osbourne's work. Some of Osbourne's mystery and adventure fiction has a more interesting and even Stevensonian cast. I will briefly describe two representatives of this genre, *The Adventurer* (1907) and *Peril* (1929), before turning to Osbourne's South Sea short stories, which in my opinion constitute his strongest claim to consideration as a serious author. *The Adventurer* starts in an oblique, circuitous way, blending mystery and gentle humour in a manner that is reminiscent of Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* stories and even *The Wrong Box*. It gradually morphs into a curious tale that amalgamates, one might say, Rider Haggard, Karl May, and Jules Verne. At the start of the novel, the romance hero ('Kirk') has to prove himself fit for a life of adventure through various trials and ordeals, including a requirement that he return in three days with the £100 note entrusted to him, though he is without any other funds and during that period will be attacked by ruffians and hospitalised. In a *New Arabian Nights*-like episode, Kirk returns with his £100 to the house now *abandoned* by his prospective employers, so he must follow clues to track them down. They agree to employ Kirk for their still-undisclosed project, and he eventually makes his way to South America, joining other adventurers already there. Here Kirk develops resolution and self-confidence to become the expedition's leader,

in Carlylean terms: 'He had become a hero [. . .] The true leader had arisen.'¹⁰ At last Kirk learns the details of the scheme: the adventurers plan to use a wind-powered aluminium landship—with sails, machine guns, and huge wheels (useful for running over attacking 'Indians')—in order to journey inland and bring out a cache of gold ingots stored in bat-filled caves underneath a depopulated citadel. The novel's climactic chase scene reprises one of Osbourne's favourite subjects when hero and heroine race a powerful French automobile to try to catch up with the fleeing landship as it sails across the plains pursued by 'Indians'.

Perhaps Osbourne's most successful book-length fiction in the mystery/adventure genre is the novel *Peril*, in which a copper-magnate, Tim Reardon, disappears from his Long Island home just as he is about to unfold a secret to Hal Curwen, the book's novelist-hero. Initially, Reardon is thought to have drowned. The rest of the book involves solving the mystery and tracking down Reardon, who has fled home carrying suitcases stuffed with money in order to be joined by the love of his life, a stepdaughter half his age.¹¹ In a number of respects this novel resembles the Stevenson-Osbourne collaboration, *The Wrecker*: it involves an unsavoury, mysterious disappearance, flight and pursuit, a sense of continent-trotting if not quite globe-trotting, a murder aboard ship following an unexpected outburst of anger, opium abuse, an artistic protagonist (and, in *Peril*, heroine as well), an overheard telephone conversation, and above all a sense of 'absurd adventure' and 'fantastic chase'.¹² This late Osbourne novel, in other words, has a kind of Stevensonian humorous cleverness—never taking itself too seriously. A nice touch, for instance, is the pseudonym adopted by the book's mysterious heroine, 'Nigma'—derived, as one might guess, from the word enigma.

Osbourne's tales of the South Seas: sex and marriage

As noted earlier, however, Osbourne's most interesting solo work is to be found in his short stories set in the South Seas, collected in *The Queen versus Billy and Other Stories* and in *Wild Justice*:

Stories of the South Seas.¹³ One wouldn't claim for these stories the stylistic precision or the thematic complexity and daring of the best of Stevenson's work employing South Sea settings—such as *The Beach of Falesá* (1892) or the collaborative *The Ebb-Tide*. Still, the best of Osbourne's South Seas' short stories portray in interesting ways the contact between European-American cultures and island cultures, and specifically depict relationships between European and American males and native women. They delineate the various sorts of visitors to the South Pacific—sailors, traders, beachcombers, castaways, fugitives from justice, mutineers, consular officials, and missionaries (themselves divided between competing Catholics and Protestants). A number of these categories, of course, are comprised of individuals who, for one reason or another, don't fit well in mainstream western societies. The settlers and visitors to the islands represent diverse nationalities—American, British, German, and French—and Osbourne delights in illustrating the dialect of the English language each employs, as well as including the occasional word from indigenous languages. There are tensions and quarrels among the natives, particularly in those stories (such as 'The Renegade') set around the time of the Mataafa rebellion. Certain stories (such as 'Old Dibs' and 'The Phantom City') describe greed and adventure in a way that is reminiscent of Stevenson's own excursions into the adventure genre. Some ('Professor No No', 'O's Head', and 'The Security of the High Seas') employ fairly broad comedy, while others are sentimental, like the Christmas story, 'Mr Bob', and 'Amatua's Sailor', which depicts a deep friendship between a young Samoan boy and a British sailor who is threatened by an approaching violent storm. A few of Osbourne's stories include local customs and folklore, as Stevenson did in *Falesá* and some of his Pacific short stories, while other Osbourne tales show the introduction of European ways and technology into the islands; a few actually combine the two, as in 'The Devil's White Man', where the introduction of the telegraph is explained by natives in

the supernatural terms of the story's title. In subject, genre, and tone, in other words, Osbourne's South Sea tales display a variety comparable to Stevenson's.

In order to describe aspects of Osbourne's stories that might be of particular interest to a twenty-first century reader, I have grouped them under four general categories, recognizing that the groupings are somewhat arbitrary since a number of the stories might be considered under more than one heading. The first, rather miscellaneous group consists of stories that are sometimes conventional, sometimes fairly realistic treatments of sexual or marital relations between Europeans and Americans, on the one hand, and natives of the South Seas, on the other. Some of these stories adopt a Euro-centric point of view, while others are more complex.

'Forty Years Between', for example, depicts a British sailor who jumps ship to live with a native woman in Borabora, but who is brought back from this 'moral suicide' (as it is termed) some fifteen months later by a raiding party from his ship (*WJ*, p. 97). He returns to the ship by his own consent, though he promises his native wife that he will eventually come back to her. Forty years later, the protagonist, now commander of a battleship and a K.C.B., does return to Borabora only literally to stumble upon the tomb of his former beloved and to mourn for his lost youth and the passage of time. Though the moral issues involved in Jack Garrard's decision to desert his wife and return to his ship are never fully explored or resolved, the story is sad and moving in its own way.

In 'Captain Elijah Coe', the dauntless title character courts Mrs. Tweedie, though she is already married to a weak and ineffectual missionary.¹⁴ One day a villainous native chief carries her off to the hills; despite her missionary husband's protestations, Coe achieves Mrs. Tweedie's release by dragooning the chief's family aboard his ship and executing one family member per hour. In this story there is neither representation of an indigenous point

of view nor any apparent criticism of Coe's colonial brutality; indeed, Coe's ruthlessness seems implicitly admired in the story, in contrast with the missionary's meekness.

'The Beautiful Man of Pingalap' is the story of a trader and beachcomber who has subjugated, by means of lashing her, an apparently unattractive native woman; he now wishes to sell and desert her. The narrator, an anthropologist and naturalist, first tries to rescue the woman by purchasing and removing her, but, observing her unhappiness, he eventually returns her to the trader—paying the trader to take her back though also thrashing him into the bargain. The woman herself exhibits courage and intelligence, as when she secretly returns her 'sale' price to the narrator who attempted her rescue. This is a rather touching story, then, about the abuse of native women. The woman is given no direct voice of her own, but her return of the narrator's expenditures on her behalf eloquently expresses both her distress and her resistance to abuse.

Another story in this first group, 'The Happiest Day of his Life', describes the thirtieth birthday of Walter Kinross, a trader in Samoa. On his birthday he receives a letter from his uncle promising him an annual income and an inheritance if he will return to Britain. To accept the offer, he must leave behind his native wife, and Kinross prepares to make provision for her in anticipation of his removal as well as going about to reconcile himself with others on the island, both European traders and natives, with whom he has previously quarrelled. These reconciliations do occur, but his native wife voices her fears about Kinross's departure, causing him to change his mind and vow never to leave her or the island. His decision, then, resembles that of the trader Wiltshire's ultimate choice of island life in *The Beach of Falesá*. If the beautiful man of Pingalap stands for the despicable, abusive trader, Kinross represents the trader with good instincts, one who is in the end capable of self-examination, reconciliation, and faithfulness. He rejects the offer of a fortune

should he return to Britain in favour of the personal ties and relationships of island life. The more interesting of this first group of stories, then, deal thoughtfully with the relations between native women and European or American males, a common enough feature of South Sea colonial life and one about which Osbourne had personal knowledge.¹⁵

Empire

A second group of stories conveys Osbourne's reaction to South Sea imperialism. For example, in the story, 'A Son of Empire', once again the narrator is a trader, proud of living in what he calls the 'republic' of Raka-Hanga, 'an independent country, and no flag floated over us but our own—or would have if we had had one, which we hadn't' (*WJ*, pp. 298-99). Interestingly, however, the island is not quite paradise, because it is dominated by a despotic Tongan pastor, David, and a 'bullying, overbearing' and disorderly big Fijian (*WJ*, p. 300). A newcomer, Clemm, deposited on the island by a visiting man-of-war, identifies himself as 'the new Resident Deputy Commissioner' and denounces the threat of annexation by the French by calling upon the islanders 'to assist me raise the flag and annex this island in the name of her Royal and Imperial Majesty, Queen Victoria' instead (*WJ*, p. 303). Clemm wins the Fijian to his cause and lines up support from other islanders, cleverly turning away (by digging mock graves and flying a yellow flag betokening the presence of smallpox) a ship which might have supported the pastor, David, who has grown disgruntled at seeing his authority usurped by the newcomer. Clemm becomes a 'universally beloved' ruler—'kindly yet strict, and always the soul of justice'—until he sails away on the yacht he has required his subjects to build for him (*WJ*, p. 314). Some months later the ship that originally landed Clemm returns to the island, and the captain reveals that Clemm had been set ashore following his deportation 'from the Ellice Islands for sedition, bigamy, selling gin to the natives, suspected arson and receiving stolen goods. [. . .] He [. . .] had no more authority

to annex this island than you have' (*WJ*, p. 315). Competition in the South Seas among the empires is presented as a bugbear, one more opportunity for some Europeans, at least, to deceive and exploit the natives.

'The Queen versus Billy' is a story reminiscent of Melville's 'Billy Budd'. A warship is sent to arrest and try the murderer of a British trader in the Solomon Islands. The murderer turns out to be the young and likeable native, Billy, whose simple, direct, reiterated explanation for the murder is, 'White fellow no good; I kill him' (*Q*, p. 11). Though tried, convicted, and sentenced to be shot, Billy's innocent simplicity increasingly wins over the officers and sailors of the ship, who attempt various stratagems to encourage Billy's escape from custody, but he inevitably returns to the ship 'like a bad penny' (*Q*, p. 25). Finally, though reluctantly, Billy is executed by firing squad. It is clear in this story that the western powers administer a biased and uncomprehending law among a basically honest and straightforward native populace.

Another story depicting the ravages of colonial trade relationships is 'Frenchy's Last Job'. Here the narrator is an eighteen-year-old who, not succeeding at college, signs up to work for a trading company in the South Seas. Young and innocent, he is shocked at what he finds there. The story contrasts two islands, one of which is Lascom, 'an immense atoll which had remained uninhabited until Bibo & Co. took possession of it in the eighties', trying to 'extend its few cocoanut-palms into one vast grove' (*Q*, p. 179). The company originally intended to make the settlement there 'the entrepôt or hub of a huge South Sea system, and from its central warehouses a whole empire of surrounding groups was to have been supplied' (*Q*, p. 182). The company's agent on Lascom, however, has succumbed to sickness, and 'Frenchy', Jean Bonnichon, is appointed to succeed him, which he will agree to do only if he can bring a woman to stay with him on the island, underlining the link between commercial and sexual exploitation. Complying with Bonnichon's demands, the

company ship travels on to a second island, Treachery Island, a South Sea paradise, replete with 'a glorious beach' and 'smiling islanders', one of whom is the 'quarter-carste' [sic] daughter, Elsie, of a racist, drunken, and abusive trader, Tom Ryegate (*Q*, pp. 188, 190). Elsie's affections have already been claimed, however, by a 'half-carste', much to her father's disgust (*Q*, p. 190). Frenchy and the ship's sailors kidnap Elsie and force her to marry Frenchy, intending to carry her back to Lascom. These intentions are thwarted, however, when Elsie leaps over the ship's rail and swims toward shore, with Frenchy swimming in pursuit. He seizes her, but she forces their drowning together. The wise Chinese cook on board the ship blocks an attempt to rescue them both on grounds that it is better Elsie die than be forced to live with Frenchy, and after their corpses are recovered the cook also refuses to let the whites bury Frenchy and Elsie together as if they really had been man and wife. In this story, then, the reader glimpses the lawlessness and exploitation of the native population by colonial enterprise, the variations between nearby South Sea islands, a range of characters who comment on the action, and a sympathetic portrait of a native woman's love, loyalty, and defiance of white domination.

In another story, 'The Renegade', a sailor jumps ship for a native woman, one who is invested with great ingenuity, energy, and strength of will. The sailor marries her, but their life together is ultimately destroyed by the folly of the colonial powers who bombard and destroy their home during the Mataafa rebellion. Osbourne's story fiercely denounces this imperialist episode:

A handful of exasperated whites—treaty officials, missionaries, and consuls—were determined to foist Tanumafili on the unwilling natives of the group, and backed by three men-of-war, they declared Mataafa a rebel and plunged the country into a disastrous and sanguinary war. England and America, in the person of their respective naval commanders, vied with one another in their self-appointed

task; and while the Germans stood aloof, protesting and aghast, our ships ravaged the Samoan coast, burning, bombarding, and destroying with indiscriminate fury. In this savage conflict, so unjust in its inception, so frightful in its effects on an unoffending people, the Samoans showed an extraordinary spirit in defending what all men hold most dear. (*WJ*, p. 31)

For a lighter, satirical treatment of Pacific imperialism, one which is surely indebted to Osbourne's own service as American vice-consul in Samoa following Stevenson's death until 1897, there is an amusing story titled 'The Security of the High Seas'. In it Mr. Skiddy, 'the boyish American consul', is called upon to arrest on charges of barratry or the theft of a ship an older, charming rogue—a 'day-dreaming, well-read, genuinely inventive, highly imaginative, loving-it-for-its-own-sake liar' (*WJ*, pp. 55, 61). The rogue, Saterlee, is convicted and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, but, alas, the consul is denied reimbursement by the State Department for the costs of either custody or lodging his prisoner, so these expenditures must come out of the consul's own salary—presumably for the full ten years of Saterlee's term. Thus when the prisoner escapes on a boat bound for Germany, Skiddy, after considering the matter, decides not to notify the State Department, as 'it would be just like the Department to get suddenly galvanized, and hysterically head Satterlee off at Hamburg. This would mean his ultimate return to Samoa, and a perpetual further outlay of fifty-five dollars from a hard-earned salary. No, he wouldn't worry the Department. . . . Let sleeping dogs lie. There were better ways of spending fifty-five dollars a month' (*WJ*, pp. 84-85).

In these and similar stories Osbourne's critique of imperialism is both interesting and informed. Sometimes it is lightly satirical, other times more barbed. No claim is made for the superiority of western to native culture, and at times the former's ignorance of the latter is appalling. The commercial basis for imperial exploi-

tation in this region is revealed, as are colonialism's effects on the indigenous population.

Indigenous perspectives

A third, small group of Osbourne's South Sea stories is notable for telling their tales primarily from the point of view of a native narrator. 'The Devil's White Man' describes a response to European technology through the medium of South Sea folklore, in this case a 'historical' tale told principally by a native. Patsy, rumoured to be the devil's white man, came to the island when a telegraph cable was laid. Applying a bitter, Stevensonian insight, Patsy, presumably an Irishman, explains his need to settle there as a telegraph operator on the basis that 'the White Country' is 'fuller of men than our beach of grains of sand', and European 'lands, such as they were, belonged only to a few, and those who possessed none must needs seek a living where they could, or die of hunger in the road' (*Q*, p. 217-18). A rivalry for him develops between two native women, resulting in a curse being nailed to his door. The apparent result of the curse is that during a great storm or earthquake, the teller of this tale observes 'Patsy's house rising in the air and darting seaward at the tail of the great rope [the telegraph cable], which, hand over fist, the devil was now pulling in from hell. [. . .] At a broken window [are seen] the faces of the accursed, who with frenzied movements climbed the one above the other, striving to escape like a tangle of worms in a pot, each one pushing away the other, until at last the water closed over them all' (*Q*, p. 234). In a sense, then, the story is about the intersection of European technology, and perhaps also European competitive individualism, with indigenous folklore: colonization via technology is recast in the terms of native myth.

In a second story with a native narrator, 'Professor No No', a wildly independent woman of mixed race, Salesa, falls in love with a peculiar scholarly naturalist (the title character) whose greatest pleasure is to examine 'dead fish through bits of glass'—through some sort of magnifying glass, one supposes (*WJ*, p.

143). The ‘professor’ doesn’t engage well with people and derives his moniker from his attempts to ward others off by shouting ‘No, no!’ at them (*WJ*, p. 143). Attracted to him nonetheless, partly through a kind of intellectual kinship, Salesa deserts her native husband to join Professor No No, giving rise to great conflict, as does a quarrel between Professor No No and his (presumably Indian) servant, Billy Hindoo. This eccentric story of seemingly inexplicable attraction and inextricable dislike has some of the humorous qualities of an engagingly ‘tall’ folk tale. In an effort to settle the conflicts among these four main characters, ‘a meeting of the ancients’ is convened ‘in the speak-house’, at which various council members articulate for the purpose of debate the positions of those involved in the various disputes, but the ‘ancients’ are unable to reach a resolution (*WJ*, p. 154). Eventually they decide to expel the three most disruptive individuals—the ‘professor’, the woman, and the estranged Indian servant—putting them all to sea in a small boat. A reader might take the story as a witty folk tale about how outsiders bring trouble and dissension, though in the end a kind of rough justice, based on the wisdom of the elders and their search for consensus, may be achieved on the islands.¹⁶

Moral complexity at the intersection of cultures

A fourth group of Osbourne’s stories depicts the interesting moral complexity deriving from the unusual degree of contact between cultures, classes, and peoples characteristic of South Sea life. Moral conventionality is questioned or resisted. ‘Old Dibs’, told from the point of view of an American trader, Bill Hargus, who is married to a Tongan wife, belongs in this group. An elderly stranger, Old Dibs, arrives on Manihiki Island with heavy trunks containing loot peculated in Britain. When Hargus becomes Dibs’s landlord and discovers what is in the trunks, a marvellous sense of the trader’s complicated moral stance is communicated:

Think of it! With nothing between it [the treasure] and me but some chicken wire and an old gentleman in a dressing gown! It would have seemed a snap to some people, but I never made a dishonest dollar in my life—except in the way of trade, and then it was to natives (who water copra on you and square the difference); and he was in no more danger of harm than if it [the treasure] had been Lima beans. (*WJ*, p. 228)

Bill Hargus becomes Dibs's protector when Australian detectives arrive months later in pursuit of this fugitive from justice. Hargus and another trader rig a platform sixty feet up in a giant *fao* tree, and, after some close calls, manage to drive the detectives away. Dibs dies, but not before he buries his gold in a native graveyard, which the natives then defend against both the two local traders and other European marauders. It is a story, in other words, in which there is some sympathy for the embezzler, Dibs, who at least befriends the islanders, and for the two traders (one British and one American). The agents of the law are shown to be rapacious and mendacious—bounty hunters, really—as are the agents of the imperial powers (especially the French) who search for the buried treasure. The natives, on the other hand, display fidelity, wisdom, and cleverness—first as they too protect Dibs, and then as they defend their burial ground against all incursions by the Europeans and Americans. Conventional western morality is, then, a sham. To the extent the story has heroes, they are the disreputable traders and the natives.

In 'Ben', an increasingly successful and respectable trader-narrator suffers the setback of the death of his infant son, which prompts increasingly bizarre behaviour in his native wife Rosie. Ben takes in, and eventually makes a pact with, a 'busted doctor' who 'talked like the devil might be expected to talk', agreeing to pay the doctor \$2,000 to be rid of his insane wife (*WJ*, pp. 348, 350). When Ben's wife does actually die, the doctor demands payment, a demand with which Ben complies, despite the fact

that it is unclear whether Rosie died of natural causes or not. The story ends with a series of questions, moral quandaries, that are as much about contracts and Faustian bargains as about murder: Should Ben have refused to pay, since there is no clear evidence that the doctor caused Rosie's death? Does payment of the doctor make Ben complicitous in Rosie's death if the doctor was indeed responsible, or even if he was not? Osbourne revels in the moral complexities of this situation. In this story, Osbourne uses the South Sea setting to explore ethical ambiguities in a gothic, folkloric tale.

In 'The Phantom City', Father Studby, a Marist priest, decides reluctantly to kill a lay brother who has come to stay with him and who has discovered a plentiful source of gold in a stream deep within a ravine. When Studby expresses his concern about what will become of the Samoan natives under these new conditions, Brother Michael cynically informs him that 'they will go [. . .] where the inferior race always goes in a gold rush. They will go to the devil' (Q, p. 267). In contrast, Studby has come to idealise the life on his remote island, and he is moved to shoot Michael largely in order to protect 'the calm of that Samoan life, primitive, kindly, and religious, in which accursed money was unknown' (Q, p. 245). Christian, as opposed to native, myth plays a role in this story, in that Michael is associated in Father Studby's mind with 'the devil himself' (Q, p. 244). Unhinged by his murder of Brother Michael, Studby 'subsequently began to show symptoms of serious mental disturbance, which culminated a few months later in his tragic suicide' (Q, p. 283). Still, the question the story poses is whether so heinous a crime as murder can be justified when motivated by an effort to protect an unspoiled indigenous way of life.

What Osbourne learned about the South Seas from Stevenson

Osbourne's South Sea stories, then, depict places that are exotic, picturesque locales for adventure, though they are also scenes

of lawlessness, conflict, and exploitation. Sometimes the male European or American settlers and visitors are faithful to their native wives and mistresses, and sometimes they are not. Native women in the stories are in general idealised for their beauty, but also frequently for their faithfulness, resourcefulness, and/or resistance to colonial oppression. Generally the narrators of these stories are Europeans and Americans. Many of the stories ('Ben', 'Old Dibs', 'Captain Elijah Coe', and 'Frenchy's Last Job') employ traders as narrators, furnishing them with a colloquial, down-to-earth voice and point of view. Occasionally, natives are the principal narrators, providing an especially interesting perspective. Osbourne makes it clear that native women are frequently purchased as mistresses or wives, and that they may be subject to brutal treatment. The desertion of native women by European and American males is often depicted in a moving way. Significant conflict among the whites living on the islands is registered: between traders and missionaries, between Catholic and Protestant missionaries, between the greedier and the more idealistic colonists, and among colonists of different nationalities. In some stories European-American colonialism and even its brutality are taken for granted, a given, but in other instances colonialism is subject to trenchant critique.

What features do Osbourne's South Sea stories and Stevenson's works also set in the Pacific have in common? Both Stevenson and Osbourne have a good sense of the tone of their narrators and other speakers, and both authors are able to deploy a dry, deft humour in their writing.¹⁷ They are aware of the issues arising from the encounter of cultures—indeed, the contact of multiple nationalities and cultures in the South Seas. This is played out, on the simplest level, in the intersection of the many languages and dialects they represent,¹⁸ and more complexly in contrasting attitudes among the cultures. Both writers are aware of the diverse nationalities and social classes present in the Pacific; both are particularly interested in the traders, missionar-

ies, rogues and charlatans, sailors and naval officers who have come to the islands. Native women are represented as sexual objects and commodities, but they are also frequently credited for their loyalty, integrity, intelligence, and resourcefulness. Europeans and Americans are taken out of their cultural context and presented with new and challenging situations. Stevenson and Osbourne are both aware of the potential for lawlessness and chicanery, as well as the legal and social inequalities, found in this colonial setting. Both have an appreciation for native culture and folklore, and for indigenous institutions and governmental structures as well. Both at times offer powerful critiques of the motives of empires involved in the South Seas and of their blundering obtuseness as they exercise imperial sway. For both writers, in sum, the South Seas provide an opportunity to explore the darker, more realistic, more serious sides of their natures, even as they lace their writing with humour and irony. Both display considerable psychological acuity in their representations of character and social conflict. For both writers, the South Seas are a place where moral complexity must be acknowledged and represented: institutional authority is not always morally correct, scoundrels are sometimes appealing, and good men and women must work their way through to a contingent and situational morality, rather than relying on received opinion or doctrine. Osbourne's South Sea tales undoubtedly represent his strongest and most interesting work. The good stories, and I would place quite a few in that category, are written in a vein that reflects Stevenson's influence, and they represent an achievement comparable to the Stevenson-Osbourne collaborations.

NOTES

- 1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1883), ed. by Emma Letley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. xxii.
- 2 Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1901), II, pp. 32-34. See also *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-95), especially VII, pp. 9-10; and VIII, pp. 155-56, 158, and 364.
- 3 I tend to agree with Susanna Ashton's caution that there is something inherently destabilising, dialogic, and relational about collaborative fiction that ought to give a critic pause before he or she attempts to attribute particular portions of a text to one author or another: 'Collaborative texts would seemingly demand consideration of how this interplay of voices might operate to create the vitality of discourse that characterizes a text. Yet scholarship on collaboration often focuses upon how to identify and isolate one individual's contribution to a work rather than focusing upon such interplay.' *Collaborators in Literary America, 1870-1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 19.
- 4 Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 273.
- 5 Lloyd Osbourne, *An Intimate Portrait of R.L.S.* (New York: Scribner's, 1924).
- 6 Lloyd Osbourne, *The Queen versus Billy and Other Stories* (New York: Scribner's, 1900); and Lloyd Osbourne, *Wild Justice: Stories of the South Seas* (New York: Appleton, 1921), henceforth cited in the text as *WJ*.
- 7 Lloyd Osbourne, *Love, the Fiddler* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1903; repr. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), pp. 110, 132.
- 8 *Baby Bullet: The Bubble of Destiny* (New York: Appleton, 1906), pp. 211, 47, and 46. See also Lloyd Osbourne, *The Motormaniacs* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1905); and Lloyd Osbourne, *Three Speeds Forward: An Automobile Love Story with One Reverse* (New York: Appleton, 1906). Osbourne's motormania apparently was not confined to his fiction. Stevenson's biographer, Frank McLynn, asserts that he 'became a life-imitating-art version of Mr. Toad, with a mindless devotion to fast roadsters' (p. 511).

- 9 See, for example, *Baby Bullet*, p. 239.
- 10 Lloyd Osbourne, *The Adventurer* (New York: Appleton, 1907), pp. 264-65.
- 11 There are resemblances in this fiction to the actual disappearance of Lloyd Osbourne's father, Sam Osbourne, as summarised by Anne Roller Issler: 'The newspapers played up the mystery. [...] There were rumors that he had eloped with one or the other of two young women. The reporters quipped, wondering which had "led him astray". They quizzed his Bohemian friends, who stoutly denied all such rumors and advanced the later held theory of foul play or suicide. [...] A new rumor was circulated to the effect that he had been seen in Africa. But most people were inclined to the suicide theory. A little pile of clothing was found on the beach—too long after to be positively identified, but believed to be his.' Anne Roller Issler, *Happier for his Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), p. 123.
- 12 Lloyd Osbourne, *Peril* (London: Heinemann, 1929), pp. 262, 312.
- 13 Of the South Sea stories mentioned in the remainder of this paper, 'The Beautiful Man of Pingalap', 'The Happiest Day of his Life', 'Father Zosimus', 'Frenchy's Last Job', 'The Devil's White Man', 'The Phantom City', and 'Amatua's Sailor' are, in addition to the title story, collected in *The Queen Versus Billy and Other Stories*, hereafter cited as *Q* in the text. All other South Sea stories are collected in *Wild Justice: Stories of the South Seas* (1921 edition), hereafter cited as *WJ*.
- 14 Ann Colley discusses Stevenson's preference, which Osbourne certainly shares, for brash, rowdy, unconventional missionaries as opposed to 'the meek missionary stereotype'. Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 24-25 and 35.
- 15 Osbourne himself brought a native mistress to Stevenson's house, Vailima, causing the family to strategise how to remove her from her 'vague' position. Katherine Durham Osbourne, who married Lloyd in 1896, was surprised to discover when she visited Vailima that Lloyd already had a Samoan wife. See Stevenson's *Letters* VIII, pp. 8-9; and Margaret Mackay, *The Violent Friend: The Story of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 450 and 482.
- 16 Another story, 'Father Zosimus', also demonstrates Osbourne's clear respect for the wisdom and equity of the native council of chiefs and 'speaking men' (*Q*, p. 162). Here the council essentially overrides

individual objections and endorses Zosimus's request to undertake a hazardous rescue mission.

- 17 Stevenson recognised Osbourne's literary wit when reading his stepson's initial draft of *The Wrong Box*: Lloyd 'has learned to use the typewriter, and has most gallantly completed upon that the draft of a tale, which seems to me not without merit and promise, it is so silly, so gay, so absurd, in spots (to my partial eyes) so genuinely humorous. [. . .] It is strange to find a young writer funny. Heavens, but I was depressing when I took the pen in hand!' (*Letters*, VI, p. 65).
- 18 Roslyn Jolly discusses Stevenson's awareness 'of the nineteenth-century Pacific as a great linguistic melting-pot, in which many different kinds of speech met and modified each other' in her 'Introduction' to Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xxii.

Stevenson's *Silverado Squatters*: the figure of 'the Jew' and the rhetoric of race

Wendy R. Katz

The section of *Silverado Squatters* entitled 'With the Children of Israel' is devoted to the role of a Napa Valley Jewish merchant. It was this man who helped find the disused mining camp on Mount Saint Helena that the newlywed Stevensons occupied for their California rent-free honeymoon site. His name was Morris Friedberg. An immigrant Russian Jew who operated the first general store in Calistoga, the town at the foot of the mountain, Friedberg had once run a branch store in the deserted mining town of Silverado and was sufficiently familiar with property in the area to function as Stevenson and Fanny's 'advisor'. With the exception of Friedberg, called Kelmar in this 1883-84 travel memoir, Friedberg's wife, and an accompanying friend, Stevenson identifies all the people he recalls in *Silverado Squatters* by their real names. This is perhaps a minor point that might go unnoticed were it not for the references to the 'Jew boy' with a ready eye for profit and the 'jolly Jew girls' who accompany him.¹ What to think of this neglected section of *Silverado Squatters* with its racial construction of 'the Jew' remains a question for discussion. Stevenson's resorting to predictable Jewish stereotypes seems incompatible with his expressed tolerance of ethnic and racial differences in the case of the Native American Indians, Chinese immigrant laborers, and American blacks he encounters during this same journey to America. Is such writing about Jews part of a pattern? If not, how do we read Kelmar, this conniving, yet affable, merchant-usurer of Calistoga?

In what follows I will argue that 'With the Children of Israel' combines both received racial discourse that depends on all too familiar Jewish stereotypes and an aestheticised narrativis-

ing that softens the racial epithets. The result is an ambivalent representation of the Jewish shopkeeper, whose individuality struggles to emerge from behind the template of 'the Jew'. I will consider the *Silverado Squatters* section itself, contextualise it within the racially liberal discourse of *Across the Plains*, the travel book that covers Stevenson's train journey to California, and, finally, look at several of Stevenson's references to Jews in his fiction. Following the work of Bryan Cheyette, who has written extensively on literary representations of Jews, I will attempt to avoid what he refers to as 'moralized biographical readings' in favor of a treatment of the complexities of racial discourse that considers both historical and literary contingencies.²

It is perhaps somewhat artificial to separate what I am arguing are two facets of the construction of the Jews in this section of *Silverado Squatters*, the received racial discourse and the playful aestheticising of the Jewish family. However, it is possible to identify the former in passages that are the most obviously disturbing to twenty-first century readers. In relatively short order, Stevenson's description of the kindly Kelmar drifts into language reminiscent of the long established commerce-based racial bias used to describe much of the Jewish population of Europe. Now we see it applied to the immigrant Jews of California. Furthermore, Kelmar becomes one of a group of tyrannical Jewish usurers. Stevenson puts it this way:

But the Jew store-keepers of California, profiting at once by the needs and habits of the people, have made themselves in too many cases the tyrants of the rural population. Credit is offered, is pressed on the new customer, and when once he is beyond his depth, the tune changes, and he is from thenceforth a white slave. I believe, even from what little I saw, that Kelmar, if he chose to put on the screw, could send half the settlers packing in a radius of seven or eight miles round Calistoga. These are continually paying him, but are never suffered to get out of debt. He palms dull

goods upon them, for they dare not refuse to buy; he goes and dines with them when he is on an outing, and no man is loudlier welcomed; he is their family friend, the director of their business and, to a degree elsewhere unknown in modern days, their king.³

The unambiguous bias in this particular observation is especially disturbing to historian Lin Weber, who, in a recent history of the Jews in the Napa Valley, has no qualms about saying that 'the Kelmar passages are clearly anti-Semitic'.⁴ One may add to this that the passage above, so troubling to Weber, is remarkably similar to Stevenson's comment on Jewish shopkeepers in 'The Old Pacific Capital', his 1880 essay on Monterey: 'Jew storekeepers', he says, '[. . .] lead on the farmer into irretrievable indebtedness, and keep him ever after as their bond-slave hopelessly grinding in the mill.'⁵ Extending credit is readily acknowledged as an established business practice among all storekeepers in Monterey, but, in Stevenson's eyes, the Jewish storekeepers fall into a separate class of money-lenders, one that paradoxically both advances and retards commerce in the New World.

At one level, Stevenson's journey with the Kelmars in *Silverado Squatters* becomes an object lesson in how the Jewish storekeepers operate. Stevenson describes the episode as a gradual awakening to the Kelmars' schemes. From the start, he writes, he sensed a degree of duplicity about the merchant: 'I could not help perceiving at the time that there was something underneath; that no unmixed desire to have us comfortably settled had inspired the Kelmars' (p. 241). The Friedbergs offered to transport Stevenson and Fanny up the mountain by wagon, drop them off to reconnoitre the area, and pick them up again the next morning; but profit, Stevenson reveals, was their overriding motive. The Friedbergs arrived burdened with several ship's coffee kettles that they planned to market along the way, a commercial scheme for which the newly-married couple provided a legitimate screen. According to Stevenson, Kelmar's clientele

came under undue pressure to purchase a kettle, an instance of the scheming shopkeeper at work palming off 'dull goods'. But the scale of such 'profiteering' in the 'coffee-kettle scheme' is so remarkably paltry as to make Stevenson's concluding remarks about 'the village usurer' seem excessive. At the end of the section, Stevenson explains the gradual unveiling of the Kelmars' business:

So ended our excursion with the village usurers [. . .]. That all the people we had met were the slaves of Kelmar, though in various degrees of servitude; that we ourselves, had been sent up the mountain in the interests of none but Kelmar; that the money we laid out, dollar by dollar, cent by cent, and through the hands of various intermediaries, should all hop ultimately into Kelmar's till;—these were facts that we only grew to recognise in the course of time and by the accumulation of evidence. (p. 252)

Such 'usury' and 'tyranny' are moderated at the end of the 'Jewish' section; the small-scale creditor, Stevenson concludes, is not to be compared with the millionaire capitalist:

Even now, when the whole tyranny is plain to me, I cannot find it in my heart to be as angry as perhaps I should be with the Hebrew tyrant. [. . .] The village usurer is not so sad a feature of humanity and human progress as the millionaire manufacturer, fattening on the toil and loss of thousands. (p. 252)

As will soon become clear, there was much to like about the Friedbergs and their friend. None the less, the Jewish immigrant buyers and sellers of goods who flocked to California at the time of the Gold Rush and later, escaping anti-Semitic repression in Europe, were clearly perceived as different from the other Californians Stevenson met. Stevenson seems to have used for them a racial discourse he carried over as transatlantic baggage,

handy but not always applicable to his actual experience of the Friedbergs. Our own unpacking of this same baggage reveals that its use creates an image which often seems detached from a real person, 'the Jew' becoming a collective racial term that undermines the identity of the individual.

The second side of 'With the Children of Israel', the transmutation of the experience with the Friedbergs into a narrative, deploys a different vocabulary, one drawn from literature, and one that constructs another kind of Jew. The aesthetic dimension of the Kelmar section was not lost on J. C. Furnas, who remarks that Stevenson's 'character work on the Jewish storekeeper and the poor whites—the best he ever did outside fiction—has the mordancy not of photography but of drawing'.⁶ In his use of the phrase 'character work' and the word 'drawing', Furnas suggests that what Stevenson achieves with the Kelmar passage has more than a little to do with the creation of fiction. Indeed, I would suggest that there is a collapsing of fact into fiction, which proceeds in several ways, first with the decision to use a different name for the Friedbergs, second, with the deliberate narrative structure imposed on the experience, and finally with the elements of fantasy and humour that mitigate but do not entirely dissolve the racial stereotyping.

Stevenson decides on the new name for Friedberg from the first, explaining that his 'principal advisor' in the matter of finding a house 'was one whom I will call Kelmar. That was not what he called himself, but as soon as I set eyes on him, I knew it was or ought to be his name; I am sure it will be his name among the angels' (p. 140).⁷ Kelmar's wife is simply called Mrs. Kelmar, but their friend receives the more disturbingly racial identification 'Abramina'. What is the significance of the name Kelmar other than its almost immediate fictionalizing of the Friedbergs? Why deprive them of their identity while other acquaintances retain theirs? The name has its source in Isaac Pocock's *The Miller and His Men*, a popular melodrama first performed in Covent Garden

in 1813.⁸ Kelmar is the name of ‘an old cottager’ in the play, a stereotype of the ‘good old man’, who has lost his money to the villainous miller Grindoff.⁹ Pocock’s confused Kelmar, once Count Friberg’s richest tenant but now a poor cottager, along with the play’s forest setting—full of ‘ins and outs, and ups and downs, and circumbendibuses’ and a ‘rocky eminence’ suggestive of a mountain—may well have made Stevenson think of the Jewish man, his circumambulating manner, and his Calistoga and Mount Saint Helena surroundings.¹⁰ An additional spur to Stevenson’s memory may have come from Friedberg’s name itself, remarkably similar to the play’s Count Friberg.

A version of *The Miller and His Men* was offered to toy theatre enthusiasts, Stevenson among them. In his essay ‘A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured’ (1884) Stevenson mentions *The Miller and His Men* as one of the plays from Skelt’s Juvenile Drama that he owned as a child. The window display of a theatre that he recalls in the essay, ‘with a “forest set”, a “combat” [. . .] and a few “robbers carousing”¹¹ strongly suggests that this was Pocock’s play, further substantiated by Stevenson’s spelling out of the name of the play’s villain, ‘Grindoff’, among other characters in the shop window. He refers to *The Miller and His Men* three times in the essay, an emphasis that explains why the name of one of its characters would suggest itself so readily in another context. His well-loved toy theatre, Stevenson maintains in ‘A Penny Plain’, left him with not only a fertile writer’s imagination but an abiding spirit of delight:

Indeed, out of this cut-and-dry, dull, swaggering, obtrusive, and infantile art, I seem to have learned the very spirit of my life’s enjoyment; met there the shadows of the characters I was to read about and love in a late future; [. . .] acquired a gallery of scenes and characters with which, in the silent theatre of the brain, I might enact all novels

and romances; and took from these rude cuts an enduring and transforming pleasure. ('A Penny Plain', p. 231)

Clearly, then, selecting a character from one of his toy theatre dramas promises an affection that Stevenson will later claim for the Jewish shopkeeper.

Although the name of a character from a long forgotten nineteenth-century melodrama does not resonate with twenty-first century readers, Stevenson could have probably counted on its familiarity among his own audience. Michael R. Booth, in his introduction to *The Magistrate and Other Nineteenth Century Plays*, asserts that, '*The Miller and His Men* (1813) was the foremost and, for nearly a century both in the live theatre and in children's toy theatres, the most popular example of Gothic melodrama.'¹² Theatre historian and toy theatre specialist George Speaight, in an essay on 'Toy Theatre', claims that *The Miller and His Men* was the 'most popular [melodrama] of all, which appeared in some forty different editions'.¹³ Speaight also accounts for its special popularity among children: 'It is a very jolly play, full of rather confusing disguises and ending with a grand explosion' ('Toy', p. 13). The originator of toy theatres, William West, corroborates this view of the popularity of *The Miller and His Men* among children in an interview with Henry Mayhew: '[it] sold better than any other play I ever published. I wore out a whole set of copper plates'.¹⁴ Clearly, the allusion to Kelmar would not have been lost on Stevenson's contemporaries.

In addition to using a fictional name for Friedberg, Stevenson organises the entire section as a three-part narrative, the first 'To Introduce Mr. Kelmar', the second 'First Impressions of Silverado', and the third, 'The Return'. The introductory descriptions are benignly inoffensive: Kelmar is described as a good-natured Russian Jew, his wife 'a singularly kind woman' (p. 240). There is even a son, someone with 'a dark and romantic bearing [. . . who] might be heard on summer evenings playing sentimental airs on the violin' (p. 240). Having been introduced, the principal

characters propose and approve the journey to Silverado. There is, then, no gratuitous ugliness or unpleasantness in the description of either the man or his family except that these remarks sit cheek by jowl with the comments about tyrannical 'Jew store-keepers', the one side abutting the other.

In the second section of the narrative, the travellers make the journey, and the tone is light hearted and comic: the 'coffee-kettle caper' having a touch of *The Wrong Box*. Although they plan to leave by six in the morning, they don't get away until a more leisurely eight, by which time Stevenson and Fanny, the dallying Kelmars, their friend and her daughter, along with the ship's ornamental coffee kettles stowed behind them have crowded into the wagon like something out of *Pickwick*. They rattle through the valley and ascend the mountain, Kelmar driving 'for all the world like a good, plain country clergyman at home' (p. 242). Arriving at the Toll House Hotel, they meet the landlord, the first to consider one of the coffee kettles, and from the hotel, the party sets out on foot for Silverado, being led by 'a little vile boy' (p. 244). As the adventure proper begins, they wander, smile, and progress unsteadily on their mostly indirect path to Silverado. Stevenson's description, which lingers over the Kelmars' foolishness and vulnerability, is also sprinkled with references to the bargaining Jew and the 'Jew girls':

Kelmar and his jolly Jew girls were full of the sentiment of Sunday outings [and] breathed geniality and vagueness [. . .]. For three people all so old, so bulky in body, and belonging to a race so venerable, they could not but surprise us by their extreme and almost imbecile youthfulness of spirit. They were only going to stay ten minutes at the Toll House; had they not twenty long miles of road before them on the other side? Stay to dinner? Not they! Put up the horses? Never. Let us attach them to the verandah by a wisp of straw rope, such as would not have held a person's hat on that blustering day. [. . .] they proved irresponsible

like children. Kelmar himself, shrewd old Russian Jew, with a smirk that seemed just to have concluded a bargain [. . .], entrusted himself and us devoutly to that boy. (p. 244)

The walk to Silverado takes two hours as these members of ‘a race so venerable’ wander in the woods like children in a fairy tale. Stevenson’s ‘With the Children of Israel’ begins to take on a new meaning: ‘For two hours we looked for houses; and for two hours they followed us, smelling trees, picking flowers, foisting false botany on the unwary. Had we taken five [. . .] they would have smiled and stumbled through the woods’ (p. 245). Stevenson and Fanny ultimately find the Silverado bunkhouse site, and this second part of the narrative ends by entering more fully into the realm of fantasy:

It was a laughable thought to us, what had become of our cheerful, wandering Hebrews. We could not suppose they had reached a destination. The meanest boy could lead them miles out of their way to see a gopher hole. Boys, we felt to be their special danger; none others were of that exact pitch of cheerful irrelevancy to exercise a kindred sway upon their minds: but before the attractions of a boy their most settled resolutions would be wax. We thought we could follow in fancy these three aged Hebrew truants wandering in and out on hilltop and in thicket, a demon boy trotting far ahead, their will-o’-the wisp conductor, and at last about midnight, the wind still roaring in the darkness, we had a vision of all three on their knees upon a mountain-top around a glow-worm. (p. 249)

Here the Friedbergs disappear entirely in the trope of the comical wandering Jews led astray by fairies in the darkening wood.

The last section, set on the next day, completes the narrative journey with the stories of Kelmar, wife and friend, who had been visiting customers and selling kettles. At this stage, Stevenson

refers to his patrons with proprietary interest—and curious indifference to gender—as ‘our Jew boys’ and ‘our Jews’. Oblivious to the slight, he concludes with appreciative remarks about the Kelmars and their friend: ‘Take them for all in all, few people have done my heart more good; they seemed so thoroughly entitled to happiness [. . .] almost they persuaded me to be a Jew’ (pp. 249-50). This being the concluding section to what is essentially a comic encounter, the women tell stories of courtship and young love, although even these are interspersed with racial rhetoric that dwells on the ostensibly natural affinity between Jews and money. The women speak of seeing a young girl with her admirers and share stories of their own marriages ‘with the prettiest combination of sentiment and financial bathos’ (p. 251). Stevenson himself describes Abramina’s narration as ‘simple, natural, and engaging as a kid that should have been brought up to the business of a moneychanger’ (p. 251). The story of her husband’s family refusing the money for her ticket to America until she had sworn not to use it for anything else is characterised as ‘resplendently Hebraic’ (p. 251). Finally, the Stevensons are restored to Calistoga in ‘The Return’, and the journey ends, but not before Stevenson’s confessing to a certain liking for ‘the Hebrew tyrant’ (p. 252).

Surely Stevenson must have perceived the contradictions in his ambivalent portrait of Morris Friedberg, about whom readers actually learn little. Perhaps the effect of establishing distance from and control over an awkward subject was desired. Intentions aside, for the reader, what is most interesting about the text is the way it invites itself to be read aesthetically. With its character delineation, humor and fantasy, this section of *Silverado Squatters* shows an affection for Friedberg which sits uneasily with the unpleasant racial debris, the latter threatening, albeit unsuccessfully, to destroy the more sympathetic drawing.

If we briefly advert to *Across the Plains*, one section that stands out as the exemplary bit of writing by Stevenson on matters of

race, 'Despised Races', reveals him as tolerant, accepting of diversity, and critical of racist behavior. It begins with the observation of his 'fellow Caucasians' on the westward immigrant train from New York to California:

Of all stupid ill-feelings, the sentiment of my fellow-Caucasians towards our companions in the Chinese car was the most stupid and worst. They seemed never to have looked at them, listened to them, or thought of them, but hated them *a priori*. (*Across*, p. 62)

In another place Stevenson defends the similarly abused Native American Indian,

[. . .] the noble red man of old story—he over whose own hereditary continent we had been steaming all these days. [. . . N]ow and again at way stations, a husband and wife and a few children, disgracefully dressed out with the sweepings of civilization, came forth and stared upon the emigrants. The silent stoicism of their conduct, and the pathetic degradation of their appearance, would have touched any thinking creature, but my fellow-passengers danced and jested round them with a truly Cockney baseness. I was ashamed for the thing we call civilization. (*Across*, pp. 66-7)

Interestingly, reference to Jews appears as an addendum to the section on the oppression of the American Indian. Sympathising with the oppressed, Stevenson muses on and justifies historical antipathies:

These old, well-founded, historical hatreds have a savour of nobility for the independent. That the Jew should not love the Christian, nor the Irishman love the English, nor the Indian brave tolerate the thought of the American, is not disgraceful to the nature of man; rather, indeed, honourable, since it depends on wrongs ancient like the race,

and not personal to him who cherishes the indignation.
(*Across*, p. 68)

Notwithstanding the problem with this well-intentioned statement—that ‘history’ runs the risk of becoming ‘myth’ if the ‘personal’ historical present is excluded—Stevenson’s heart is with the oppressed, for whom he constructs redemptive nobility.

Jewish characters that appear in Stevenson’s fiction, on the other hand, have nothing in common with the oppressed in ‘Despised Races’. They are incidental figures—standard in the literary culture of the time—for whom the shorthand of racial stereotypes is repeatedly, and perhaps even unthinkingly, used. In *The Wrong Box* (1889), for example, written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, the worldly effects of the man who dies in the railway accident and whose travelling body is mistakenly thought to be that of Joseph Finsbury ‘would be sold as unclaimed baggage to a Jew’,¹⁵ as if Jews were the natural recipients of bargain-price goods. Still another character in *The Wrong Box*, a creditor of the Finsbury leather business, tells Morris that he has ‘let the credit out of [his] hands’ (p. 128) and into those of a man whose name is ‘Moss’, the standard name for a Jewish creditor, derived from Moshe, or Moses. When Mr. Moss enters, he is described as ‘a radiant Hebrew, brutally handsome, and offensively polite’ (p. 128). In another place he is simply ‘the smiling Hebrew’ (p. 129). After he leaves, Morris thinks of the creditor simply as ‘a Jew’ (p. 128). This is little more than the garden-variety racial shorthand used repeatedly in nineteenth-century fiction. Yet another novel that resorts to the same shorthand is *The Wrecker* (1892), also written with Lloyd Osbourne. One of the characters is stated to have ‘privately presented Carthew as a young gentleman come newly into a huge estate, but troubled with Jew debts’.¹⁶ The language here suggests that ‘Jew debts’ might not even necessarily involve a Jew at all, but function as a simple metonymy for indebtedness. In *The Ebb-Tide* (1893), collaborators Stevenson and Osbourne resort once again to the reductionist caricature

of the Jewish creditor. 'About a year before this tale begins', we are told, Robert Herrick was no longer able to pay his bills, and 'turned suddenly upon the streets of San Francisco by a vulgar and infuriated German Jew, he had broken the last bonds of self-respect'.¹⁷ Although Stevenson's work occurs at a time when a confluence of issues—Jewish immigration, Jewish emancipation, and a spirit of liberal reform—gathered to create an important historical period for Jews, the images in his fiction depend heavily on time-worn stereotypes.

Stevenson himself denied accusations of anti-Semitism in an 1891 letter to Adelaide Boodle in response to something she had written:

What a strange idea, to think me a Jew-hater! Isaiah and David and Heine are good enough for me; and I leave more unsaid. Were I of Jew blood, I do not think I could ever forgive the Christians; the ghettos would get in my nostrils like mustard or lit gunpowder. [. . .] I am bound in and with my forbears; were he one of mine, I should not be struck at all by Mr. Moss of Bevis Marks, I should still see behind him Moses of the Mount and the Tables and the shining face. We are all nobly born.¹⁸

There are several things to note in this passage over and above Stevenson's avowed denial of anti-Semitism. Initially, the construction of 'the Jew' is cultural: the Jewish world of prophets, musicians and poets is the one that is admired. The subsequent allusion to 'Jew blood', however, racialises 'the Jew', while the adjacent reference to ghettos returns to the discourse of culture once again. What is apparent in the passage is a conflation of the concepts of religion, race, and culture that is at the core of much confusion about 'the Jew' and of what Bryan Cheyette calls 'the protean instability of "the Jew" as a signifier' (*Constructions*, p. 8). The specific reference to ghettos in this passage may have come by way of Hazlitt, whose influence on Stevenson is well

known, his writing on Jews less so. Certainly Stevenson would have been familiar with Hazlitt's favorable view of Edmund Kean's performance as a sympathetic Shylock, and he would have known Hazlitt's essay on 'The Emancipation of the Jews' in which Hazlitt comments directly on Jewish ghettos among other practices that have historically excluded Jews.¹⁹ It is arguable from this 1891 letter, the Hazlitt essays, and references in Stevenson's other letters to Matthew Arnold, Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, that Stevenson was well aware of the ongoing discussion of Jewish matters in late-nineteenth-century British culture.²⁰

Just before 'With the Children of Israel' in *Silverado Squatters* is a section called 'The Scot Abroad', in which a transitional passage draws attention to a likeness between the 'Jews and Scotch' for their paradoxical wandering and clannishness (p. 238). The connection continues later in the remark that Kelmar had 'something of the expression of a Scotch country elder, who, by some peculiarity, should chance to be a Hebrew' (p. 240). These are not the only remarks that link Stevenson and Scots to Jews.²¹ Interestingly, Cheyette maintains that many writers have 'a repressed identification with "the Jew"' (*Constructions*, p. 6), a comment that evolves into a discussion of 'the Jew' as a 'semitic "other"' or 'unwelcome double' (*Constructions*, p. 272).²² And, resist as I will, this redoubtable double falls into my lap like one of Kelmar's coffee kettles. Throughout his American journey, Stevenson seems eager to try on the lives and the literary work of others, the working class immigrants on the American-bound ship, for example, and the literature of Thoreau and Whitman, as I have argued elsewhere.²³ It's an effort that clearly benefits the developing writer. But it's also the sign of a generous and sympathetic mind, in this case one straining to deal with difference. I have suggested that Stevenson deals with difference by aestheticising the Jews he meets, but dealing with difference always involves self-identification. Stevenson's construction of 'the Jew'

in *Silverado Squatters* is weighed down by a heavy dose of the received semitic discourse that most of us would just as soon not see, but it is perhaps also yet another tentative ‘trying on’.

NOTES

- 1 *Silverado Squatters* was first published in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* in November 1883 in two instalments and subsequently published in book form by Chatto and Windus in 1884. The edition used here is from Robert Louis Stevenson, *Travels With A Donkey, An Inland Voyage, and The Silverado Squatters*, ed. by Trevor Royle (London: Everyman’s Library, 1993). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.
- 2 The phrase ‘moralized biographical readings’ comes from Bryan Cheyette, ‘Neither Excuse Nor Accuse: T. S. Eliot’s Semitic Discourse’, *Modernism/modernity*, 10.3 (2003), 431-37 (p. 434). Also see Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English Literature and Society, Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Bryan Cheyette, ed., *Between ‘Race’ and Culture: Representations of ‘the Jew’ in English and American Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Further reference to Cheyette’s works is given after quotations in the text.
- 3 *Silverado Squatters* begins with an epigram from Cicero’s *De Officiis* that has been translated, in part, as ‘Such men have had the same aims as kings—to suffer no want, to be subject to no authority, to enjoy their liberty, that is, in its essence, to live just as they please.’ See the title page of *Silverado Squatters* in *From the Clyde to California: Robert Louis Stevenson’s Emigrant Journey*, ed. by Andrew Noble (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985). Both Kelmar and Stevenson seem to share a desire to be king of their respective lives. Stevenson was ‘impatient [. . .] to be about my kingly project’ (*Squatters*, p. 241).
- 4 Lin Weber, *Under the Vine and the Fig Tree: The Jews of the Napa Valley* (St. Helena: Wine Ventures Publishing, 2003), p. 34. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.
- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Old Pacific Capital’, in *Across the Plains* (New York: Scribner’s, 1903), p. 100. This essay was subsequently published along with the one on San Francisco, ‘A Modern Cosmopolis’ (1883), under the title ‘The Old and New Pacific

Capitals' in the Edinburgh Edition. If one wonders at the harm of such commentary, one need only look at the reference to this passage on the unequivocally racist website '1001 Quotations By and About Jews' and the 'Anti-Zion' site of the revisionist Historical Review Press. It is regrettable that this particular passage lends itself to being pilfered for such use.

- 6 J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward* (New York: William Sloane, 1951), p. 179.
- 7 Joan Parry Dutton, in *They Left Their Mark, Famous Passages Through the Wine Country*, 2nd edn, (Calistoga: Sharpsteen Museum Association, 1998), notes that 'Friedberg, who [sic] Stevenson described as "the village usurer" appears in *The Silverado Squatters* as Kelmar, the only pseudonym he used' (p. 28).
- 8 I am indebted to Roger Swearingen for kindly pointing out the source of the name Kelmar and directing me to Stevenson's 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', in which Stevenson refers to *The Miller and His Men*. In addition, Roger Swearingen made available to me a copy of the illustrated 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured' from *The Magazine of Art*.
- 9 Michael Booth, Introduction to *The Magistrate and Other Nineteenth Century Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. xii.
- 10 Isaac Pocock, *The Miller and His Men*, in Booth, ed., p. 115; p. 83.
- 11 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', *The Magazine of Art*, N.S., Part 42 (April 1884), 227-32 (p. 227). This essay, unillustrated, is included in Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits*.
- 12 Booth, Introduction to *The Magistrate and Other Nineteenth Century Plays*, p. xxi.
- 13 George Speaight, 'Toy Theatre', in *Toy Theatre*, ed. by Kenneth Fawdry (London: Pollock's Toy Theatres Ltd, 1980, 9-19 (p. 13). Speaight says that the play owes much to 'the genre established by Schiller's "Die Rauber"', p.13.
- 14 Henry Mayhew, 'William West', in *Toy Theatre*, 21-29 (p. 21). Stevenson maintained his enthusiasm for toy theatres well into adulthood. His visit to Benjamin Pollock's toy theatre shop in London was recalled by Pollock himself. According to George Speaight's essay 'John Redlington and Benjamin Pollock', Pollock remembered 'the visits of the thin, tall Scotsman'. He was most interested in plays

about pirates and highwaymen" (*Toy Theatre*, p. 27).

- 15 Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Wrong Box* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 16. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.
- 16 Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Wrecker* (New York: Scribner's, 1906), p. 542. *The Wrecker* includes a reference to Norton, a Jewish South African immigrant who went to California in the Gold Rush days and was something of a character. 'Of all our visitors', Loudon Dodd explains, 'I believe I preferred Emperor Norton; the very mention of whose name reminds me I am doing scanty justice to the folks of San Francisco. In what other city would a harmless madman who supposed himself emperor of the two Americas have been so fostered and encouraged? Where else would even the people of the streets have respected that poor soul's illusion?' (p. 32) There is, however, no reference to Norton's having been Jewish. Curiously, Morris Friedberg's one-time partner, Henry Getleson, a Jewish-German immigrant, was a man who, like Loudon Dodd, had studied to be a sculptor. According to Lin Weber's *Under the Vine and Fig Tree*, Getleson was in San Francisco in 1866, hoping to resume his artistic career, but he accepted an invitation to go to Calistoga as a shopkeeper (p. 33). Perhaps Stevenson had run across this story.
- 17 Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Ebb-Tide*, ed. by Peter Hinchcliffe and Catherine Kerrigan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 6.
- 18 Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Adelaide Boodle [April or May 1891], in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by B. A. Booth and E. Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-97), VII, pp. 111-12. This letter appears in religious scholar Solomon Schechter's 'Four Epistles to the Jews of England' as an example of a sentiment similar to that of Jews who claim to be 'Englishmen of the Jewish persuasion'. Solomon Schechter, 'Four Epistles to the Jews of England', *Commentary*, 1 (4, 1946), 73-80 (p. 74). Bevis Marks synagogue, built in 1701, is the oldest synagogue in Great Britain.
- 19 William Hazlitt, 'The Emancipation of the Jews', *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, 12 vols (London: Dent, 1904), XII, pp. 461-66. Hazlitt on Kean's Shylock is in VIII of *The Collected Works*, pp. 179-80 and pp. 294-96.
- 20 Regarding the use of the word 'Jew' as an adjective in 'Jew blood', the *OED* says that the use of Jew as an adjective is 'now mainly an offensive

use but not originally opprobrious'. It is not exactly clear when the adjectival use of 'Jew' started to become unacceptable; some of the *OED* references suggest it was so at the time of Stevenson's letter to Adelaide Boodle, but its use in the letter is certainly not intended to be offensive. This is not the case, however, in Stevenson's use of the term 'Jew' in his 15 January 1894 letter to Will Low: 'Pray you, stoop your proud head, and sell yourself to some Jew magazine' (*Letters*, VIII, p. 234). Trollope's unscrupulous Lizzie Eustace uses the term 'Jew boy' in *The Eustace Diamonds* in 1873, remarking to Frank Greystock of Mr. Emilius, "'You used to be very wicked, and say that he was once a Jew-boy in the streets.'" Lizzie, as she spoke of her spiritual guide was evidently not desirous of doing him much honour.' Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 484. Bryan Cheyette, in *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*, writes about the importance of the 1870s in the development of Jewish issues, a period that coincides with Stevenson's own development. He notes in particular the centrality of Disraeli's Eastern Question as a 'catalyst for the widespread public acceptance and use of a racial construction of "the Jew"' (p. 15). He further comments on the important publications of this period: 'It is not insignificant that the popular second edition of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* and *The Prime Minister* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* were all published in the mid-1870s which was the period when, most historians would argue, a revitalized "Jewish Question" entered the British political arena' (*Constructions*, p. 53). For an excellent examination of Jewish issues in Victorian Britain, see David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

21 See note 3 above.

22 In fact, Cheyette insists on 'the Jew' being a double: "'The Jew", like all "doubles", is inherently ambivalent and can represent both the "best" and the "worst" of selves' (*Constructions*, p. 12), a remark that seems to fit the depiction of Friedberg.

23 See Wendy R. Katz, 'Whitman and Thoreau as Literary Stowaways in Stevenson's American Writings', in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 327-337.

‘The interest of the attraction exercised by the great RLS of those days’: Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James and the influence of friendship¹

Hilary J. Beattie

On the face of it, no two more dissimilar novelists could be imagined than Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) and Henry James (1843-1916). One is the short-lived, personally picturesque, Scottish creator of a vast, uneven variety of fiction, poetry, travelogues and essays, and the supreme *auteur* of the adventure story (even if latterly hailed as a proto-modernist). The other is the magisterial and prolific Anglo-American author of one of the most sustained, serious contributions ever made to the modern novel and to literary theory, a writer who perhaps more than any other can be said to have lived for Art's sake. This fundamental difference in their output is probably the reason why critical attention has hitherto been largely devoted to the unlikely-seeming personal friendship between the two men and to their debates, in print, in person and by letter, over the nature of the fictional enterprise itself. The pioneer of this approach was Janet Adam Smith, followed by all their respective biographers, from J. C. Furnas and Leon Edel onwards, and, most recently, Roslyn Jolly.² Smith actually stressed the divergence of Stevenson's and James's aims and methods, their ways of seeing and planning a subject and the relative degree of consciousness of their creative imaginations (Smith 39-43).

Relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which the two authors might in fact have influenced each other's literary productions, despite one or two pioneering studies, notably by Adeline Tintner, Kenneth Graham and George Dekker.³ These, however, have focused on isolated works or themes, including

Stevenson's influence on the development of James's fictional theory, rather than tracing their presence and significance in each other's work over time. My contention is that from 1885 onwards each did indeed borrow themes and methods from the other's fiction, and life, and shaped them in the light of his own personal and theoretical preoccupations. The themes included male friendship and rivalry, doubling, betrayal and the psychology of evil, mediated by the equivocal presence (and absence) of women. I shall focus mainly on their development during Stevenson's lifetime and especially during his brief, fruitful sojourn in James country, in New York State, where he made a new departure in the form of *The Master of Ballantrae*. But I shall also say something about James's continuing, later assimilation of Stevenson's legacy, culminating in his last, great, double story, 'The Jolly Corner.'

My title is taken from one of James's deathbed dictations, disjointed fragments recorded in December 1915, in which the only individual named or alluded to, other than family members or personages from the court of Napoleon, is Stevenson. It reads:

One of the earliest of the consumers of the great globe in the interest of the attraction exercised by the great RLS of those days, comes in, afterwards, a visitor at Vailima and [word lost] there and pious antiquities to his domestic annals.⁴

This imaginary visitor could well be James himself, who had indeed vicariously consumed the great globe through his friend's later wanderings, had often been witness to his domestic annals, and remained 'haunted' by his ghost, 'waving its great dusky wings between me and all occupations' to the very end of his life.⁵

The relationship between the two writers had begun somewhat inauspiciously at a lunch in 1879, after which James dismissed Stevenson as 'a pleasant fellow [. . .] a shirt-collarless Bohemian

and a great deal (in an inoffensive way) of a poseur', though he admitted to being charmed by his *Inland Voyage*, from which he had earlier concluded that Stevenson, like Meredith, was 'a little of a coquette'.⁶ Stevenson two years later wrote James off as a snobbish 'provincial', a 'mere club fizzle [. . .] and no out-of-doors stand-up man whatever', and called *Washington Square* 'an unpleasant book', even if he 'adored' the comic 'Mrs Pennyman' (sic).⁷ He even lampooned James in malicious (fortunately unpublished) verse, as 'a bland colossus', patronizing, 'sentimental' and superior. (*RLS Letters*, III, pp. 244-245.)⁸

Their real relationship began late in 1884 with Stevenson's rapid response, in 'A Humble Remonstrance', to the artistic credo set forth by James in 'The Art of Fiction'. In this published debate about the nature and aims of the novel, each tended to emphasise their differences of outlook. James, in a lengthy, impassioned plea for artistic freedom and integrity, had stressed that the novelist's goal should be a veridical, intensely personal rendering of 'reality', more akin to the writing of history than to self-conscious 'making believe', and that the work should be subject to no arbitrary limitations of genre and morality but ultimately reflect the quality of mind of its producer. Stevenson, in his modern-sounding, far from 'humble' attack on the realist illusion that the novel should 'compete with life', countered that 'narrative' was an inherently artificial craft whose ultimate aim was to create a response in the reader, and that different subjects would inevitably demand differing types of treatment. Each author, moreover, singled out a work by the other which exemplified those differences. James (perhaps deliberately inviting Stevenson's response) chose to mention the 'delightful' *Treasure Island* as a successful representative of the stereotypical romance of 'adventure', though he maintained, in a subtly condescending way, that real adventure was just as much, if not more, to be found in the internal, psychological drama of a child's development (Smith, 80-1). Stevenson then identified

'The Author of "Beltraffio"' (the story of a disastrous marriage between a famous writer and his narrow-minded wife, who lets their son die sooner than be corrupted by his father's work) as representative of the Jamesian novel dealing with the 'statics of character', in which strong passion is avoided or not directly displayed. He carefully denied, however, that he was 'undervaluing this little masterpiece' for its implied refusal to 'break open the closed door' and reveal passion as 'the be-all and the end-all' of the drama (Smith 96-7).

James, taking the next step in what proved to be a dance of mutual seduction, instantly wrote a warm letter of thanks to Stevenson, in which he praised his work and his 'admirable style' and stressed that fundamentally they agreed much more than they differed, especially in their mutual dedication to the art of writing and to the proposition that 'all art is simplification'. He promised to take up Stevenson's 'remonstrance' in the projected (but never written) second part of his essay, wherein 'I shall tickle you a little affectionately as I pass'. (*HJ Letters*, III, pp. 57-58.)⁹ This barely disguised hope of collaborative intimacy evidently flattered Stevenson, who promised a rejoinder 'to woo or drive you from your threatened silence', with the hope that their debate might be life-long. His first step, after praising James's consummate craftsmanship, was to beseech James to cast his 'characters in a mould a little more abstract and academic' (as he had done with 'dear Mrs. Pennyman') and 'pitch the incidents [. . .] in a slightly more emphatic key', as in 'the old [. . .] novels of adventure' (*RLS Letters*, V, pp. 42-43). His concluding offer of hospitality at Bournemouth was not taken up by James until the spring of the following year, 1885, but already their debate was under way. It was destined to be reflected, sometimes surprisingly, in fictional practices that were hardly mutually exclusive, despite persisting undercurrents of tension and criticism.

James, the more established writer, was throughout his life open about his need to appropriate others' work and rewrite it in

his own way, leaving clues in his wake.¹⁰ He was therefore not slow to immerse himself in his new friend's fiction and to benefit from Stevenson's skill at narrative and incident. On May 9th, 1885, very soon after their initial meeting, James triumphantly discovered, to Stevenson's relief, the first positive review of *The Dynamiter* (*RLS Letters*, V, p. 108). It appeared in *The Times* the same day as he had written excitedly to Grace Norton about his ripening friendship with the 'delightful' but sickly Scot, who compensated in the evenings for James's daily attendance on his ailing sister, Alice. He added that he was currently 'hard pressed' with his own new novel, soon to be serialised in the *Atlantic*. (*HJ Letters*, III, pp. 82-84) This was the ostensibly realistic but fundamentally romantic *The Princess Casamassima*, inspired by the same recent political events, bombings and assassinations, as *The Dynamiter*, and for which James had a plethora of characters but as yet no coherent plot. He is known to have drawn on multiple literary sources, from Dickens to Turgenev, but Stevenson's key contribution has surprisingly been overlooked, despite the fact that *The Princess* embodies one of James's prescriptions in 'The Art of Fiction', that the novelist should function as social historian, as well as the controversy over authorship as profession or trade.¹¹ James must rapidly have perceived that elements of Stevenson's anarchic, satirical black comedy, as well as of his earlier *New Arabian Nights* (which he greatly admired) were apt for his purpose. Francis Scrymgeour, in 'The Rajah's Diamond', is, like James's hero, Hyacinth Robinson, the socially isolated, bastard son of an aristocrat and a commoner, who pursues his destiny to Paris and, like Hyacinth, meets the *femme fatale* of his life (daughter of the ex-Dictator of Paraguay) at the theatre where, in James's version, the performance is of 'The Pearl of Paraguay'.¹² The revolutionary intrigues of James's theatrical pseudo-aristocrat, Christina Light, alias the Princess Casamassima, are akin to those of *The Dynamiter's* similarly named Clara Luxmore, with her many aliases, and of her equally

dramatic and meddlesome mother, both of whom also play casually with the destinies of hapless young men. Above all, James may have derived from Stevenson the motive for Hyacinth's suicide, in the story of the disillusioned young revolutionary who flees to Paris in a vain effort to escape his 'irrevocable oath' and takes poison sooner than assassinate Prince Florizel. His partner in the attempt shoots himself and is discovered by Mrs Luxmore much as the Princess discovers the body of Hyacinth, shot through the heart. Whether Stevenson was aware of James's debt is unclear, though he was enthusiastic about *The Princess* as it began to appear, from September 1885. He praised James's 'new departure', his 'low life' character drawing and the unwonted realism of the grimy prison scene, which supplied a 'touch' he had missed in James's former (too refined) work. Possibly he found evidence here that James was beginning to take his advice and produce more immediately engaging and 'interesting' fiction.¹³

The two authors' intimacy soon ripened into a strong attachment, fuelled by need on both sides. James was lonely, still affected by the loss of his parents and suffering the burden of his sister's illness, and in Stevenson he may have found not only literary promise but also echoes of that other 'deadly consumptive', his lost, gallant cousin Minny Temple, as well as something of his brother William's mercurial genius.¹⁴ On closer acquaintance with the erstwhile 'poseur' he was clearly charmed by the man as much as his writings, falling victim to Stevenson's renowned 'power of making other men fall in love with him'.¹⁵ For Stevenson, continually ill and struggling with the decline and impending demise of his own, demanding father (like James's, a depressive given to religious speculation), the older man was a brilliant and sympathetic colleague and mentor who far exceeded the capacities of Sidney Colvin or Edmund Gosse. James was soon addressing Stevenson in letters by his Christian name, Louis, making him almost the only person at this time in his vast acquaintanceship, other than family, to receive this token of

intimacy.¹⁶ While Stevenson remained more formal, he did once, in an excited letter thanking James for the gift of a 'magic mirror' (of all things), start to sign himself 'Henry!' (*RLS Letters*, V, pp. 210-211). In this fervid context of mutual admiration and mirroring it is hardly surprising that Stevenson, in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (where a mirror plays a key role), had earlier used his friend's first name and initial for those of the socially impeccable, middle-aged doctor whose strong, hidden passions were to lead to his undoing. Here was perhaps an unconscious resurfacing of the earlier 'bland', superior, patronizing 'colossus', whose smooth exterior belied the complex depths that Stevenson must now easily have intuited and whose own preferred literary technique was to present passion obliquely and indirectly. James's reserves of 'exceptionally intense feeling' were such as to reveal themselves only to 'intimate knowledge', and he was hurt and upset when Stevenson later violated that privacy by publishing the verses celebrating him and his mirror.¹⁷

James was one of the earliest and most perceptive commentators on *Jekyll and Hyde*, a 'masterpiece of concision' and psychological penetration which achieved its startling effects through his own favourite techniques of indirection and omission. The most conspicuous of the latter was the absence of significant female characters, something that gave James evidence for his repeated contention, in his 1888 essay on Stevenson in *Century Magazine*, that Stevenson's work for the most part excluded women ('so many superfluous girls in a boys' game') and that he achieved 'his best effects without the aid of the ladies.' James did admit the presence of some ladies in *Prince Otto*, as well as a Clara or two elsewhere, though he mistakenly transposed one Clara from *The Dynamiter* to 'The Rajah's Diamond', two works that were for him, as we have seen, closely associated. But he was evidently more entranced by the Stevenson who valued 'making believe' over 'making love', and who did 'not need a petticoat to inflame him'. Along these lines, he chose to emphasise

Stevenson's 'deprecation' of marriage in 'Virginibus Puerisque', and the concluding sadness of 'On Falling in Love', while praising that most Jamesian of Stevenson's stories, 'Will o' the Mill', whose renunciation of love and life makes it almost a prototype for his own, later 'The Beast in the Jungle'.¹⁸

James's own favourite among Stevenson's fictions was always *Kidnapped*, which for him far transcended the genre of boys' adventure story with its acute psychological study of the passionate, contentious, even physical, relationship of a very young man with a somewhat older one, who befriends and protects him. This theme, with its undoubted homo-erotic overtones, was frequent in James's own work, notably the earlier *Roderick Hudson* (1875), whose eponymous hero repeatedly frustrates and disappoints the ardent friend who attempts to promote his artistic career.¹⁹ James effectively re-enacted the theme in life with Stevenson, especially with his conscious efforts, in the *Century*, to 'give his reputation a push', following the death of his father in 1887.²⁰ Far more than a publicity piece, this essay evinced James's real and growing appreciation of Stevenson's exceedingly diverse achievement in fiction, his dedication as craftsman and stylist (though never at the expense of 'life' and 'feeling'), his celebration of the creative imagination and his commitment to 'the difficult art of literature' as the most important way to carry on the 'business of life'. It ended essentially with a challenge, implying that with the signal achievement of *Kidnapped* in showing 'what the novel can do at its best', the author had given 'a delightful pledge' of even greater work to come.

It was the death of his father, in May 1887, that freed Stevenson to make his second transatlantic pilgrimage, this time in search of health, physical and emotional. That October he settled in upper New York State, not so far from the original home of the James family in Albany. Though they never met again, the tensions in the two authors' continuing relationship were to be curiously mirrored in the fiction produced by both in the imme-

diate aftermath of Stevenson's departure, works dealing with ambiguously doubled, male love-hate relationships, the role of women and marriage in mediating such conflicts, and, above all, betrayal and loss. Stevenson, in Saranac, soon immersed himself in a marathon reading of James's novels, perhaps trying to recreate the lost stimulus and intimacy of their Bournemouth friendship. These included *Roderick Hudson*, along with its 'pendant' (because they both feature the *femme fatale*, Christina Light) *The Princess Casamassima*, as well as *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

The first of these thrilled Stevenson, who found it 'very spirited [. . .] sound, and very noble too'. He resonated strongly to *Roderick Hudson's* story and principal characters, especially the overprotective, 'real born mother' who tries to thwart the development of the romantic artist, Hudson, and the friend and patron, Rowland Mallet, who circumvents her by taking him abroad, albeit to eventual disaster. His extravagant praise of this early work 'of limited skill' evoked a mild protest from James, who apparently took it, ruefully, as evidence of his friend's limited taste and suggested that Stevenson was expatiating on it in order to avoid giving longed-for news of 'a still more fascinating hero', himself. He was much more distressed and puzzled by his friend's intense 'scorn' for *The Portrait of a Lady*, which, in 'a burst of the diabolic', Stevenson declared he couldn't bear: 'It may be your favourite work but in my eyes it's BELOW YOU to write and me to read.'²¹ Though the reasons for this detestation were never spelled out, one can only guess that *The Portrait's* pervasive theme of marital disaster, and especially the role of the treacherous, ambitious American widow with the murky past, Serena Merle, may have struck a raw nerve. Perhaps it was the same one that had made Stevenson earlier dislike *Washington Square*, another fiction of failed relationships and emotional cruelty in which the heroine is betrayed by those closest to her. At this time Stevenson's own transatlantic marriage was increas-

ingly contentious, since his American wife, the divorced Fanny Osbourne, hated Saranac and seized on any pretext that winter to leave it. This pressure was soon to find an outlet in a venomous quarrel with Stevenson's old friend W.E. Henley, precisely over what Henley saw as Fanny's treachery and literary plagiarism.²²

Stevenson's major creation of this American winter was *The Master of Ballantrae*, of which he gave a detailed sketch to James in January 1888, boasting that its early parts were 'sound human tragedy' in which he had excelled himself, even if the *dénouement* was improbably 'steep.' (*RLS Letters*, VI, pp. 104-105. It was based on an old idea, with multiple sources, ranging from Marryat's *The Phantom Ship* to the history of the Tullibardine family, as well as 'the devil and Saranac', but the Jamesian contribution has so far gone un-remarked. It might in part have been a response to the implicit challenge in James's *Century* article, a pre-publication copy of which had been shown to him by Will H. Low in New York (*RLS Letters*, VI, p. 16). Specifically, I believe it was Stevenson's attempt to prove to the absent James that he himself was far more than an 'out-of-doors stand-up man' who could write adventures, and to take up the challenge he had made to James during their 1884 debate, that is, to marry their differences regarding 'the design of stories and the delineation of character', by himself writing a novel of incident, but handled with James's 'exquisite precision' and 'sidelights of reflection' (*RLS Letters*, V, pp. 42-43). *The Master* reveals James's presence in multiple ways, both thematic and technical. On the surface there are sly biographical allusions, not least in the fact that the two brothers are named James and Henry, with an adoptive sister/wife, Alison, all of whom vie for the affection and attention of a rather remote and learned father, as the James children did with their eccentric, metaphysically-inclined paterfamilias, Henry Sr.. Furthermore, a key character in the Master's wanderings is an unnamed 'merchant of Albany' (the profession of James's grandfather). There was an erroneous tradition that the James family

had hailed from Ballyjamesduff, in Co. Cavan, and James Durie at one point adopts the name 'Mr [James] Bally'. The James family had, moreover, like the Duries, hedged its bets by sending one half of its boys to war and keeping the other at home.²³

The Master, as was pointed out by the early critics, is a hybrid novel, darker in tone than any hitherto by Stevenson, which perhaps succeeds more as a powerful study of character than as a novel of adventure; it was called both 'a domestic tragedy' and 'a story of adventure with the story left out'.²⁴ It is in one sense a double story whose supposedly 'good' protagonist becomes corrupted, merging ambiguously with the 'bad' one by the end, and is structurally and thematically quite close to *Jekyll and Hyde*. But it is also a story of fraternal rivalry, unusual for Stevenson, the only child whose heroes are mostly only children. It treats overtly of the Biblical story of Jacob and Esau, in which the younger brother deceives their father to cheat the elder of his birthright; James, dispossessed of his estate but always the favourite, repeatedly taunts the unloved Henry with the sobriquet 'Jacob'. Now this was a theme that was persistently re-enacted in the James family between Henry and his older brother William, and which Henry made the disguised subject of several early tales, notably 'A Light Man' (1869), which he liked so much that he revised and reprinted it in 1884 and 1885.²⁵

This tale actually proves to contain the essence of a key chapter (IV) of *The Master of Ballantrae*, close to the last that Stevenson wrote at Saranac.²⁶ Here the hypocritical James returns home, wanting money, to begin a subtle campaign of innuendo to influence their weak and selfish father against Henry, and to seduce the wealthy Alison, by now Henry's reluctant wife. In 'A Light Man', the opportunistic Maximus Austin returns penniless from Europe and accepts an invitation to stay with an old friend, Theodore Lisle, and his wealthy employer, a learned, selfish eccentric who, it is implied, may be the real father of Max and was a close friend of Theodore's father. The drama plays out in the

covert rivalry of the two quasi-brothers, as the hypocritical Max cleverly insinuates himself in the patron's affections in an effort to become the heir, thereby disinheriting the relatively more scrupulous Theodore. The scheme backfires when Theodore is provoked into burning the old will (which was in his favour) and the patron dies before he can make a new one. The story ends with an open confrontation between the unmasked rivals, just as the enmity between James and Henry Durie flares into the open before their duel, as well as with the implication that Max will court the 'discarded niece' who inherits, so as to get the money at last. James's tale is told in the first person, in the cynical voice of Max, but Stevenson in *The Master* (uncharacteristically) adopted the 'delectable invention' which he in 1884 had noted in James's "The Author of "Beltraffio"", where the story is told through the observations of the author's 'young visitor', in order to 'avoid the scene of passion'.²⁷ That is, Stevenson now told his story through a young observer/participant (Ephraim Mackellar) who could enable *him* to have the scenes of passion play out behind closed doors and, similarly, to view his 'heroine from the outside', thereby passing over the 'ugly and delicate business' of 'the Master's courtship of his brother's wife'.²⁸

The other major, Jamesian debt in *The Master of Ballantrae* is perhaps more surprising, and more profound, namely, to the despised *The Portrait of a Lady*. This melodramatic study of the psychology of evil and the corrupting effects of money (especially on relations between the sexes) has a story that unfolds not so much in events as through the evolving moral consciousness of its characters. Stevenson's aim in *The Master* was likewise to chart the moral evolution—or decline—of his 'four characters, two brothers, a father and a heroine', along with their complicit servant, Mackellar, who can all communicate with an indirection worthy of James ('a strange art [. . .] to talk for hours of a thing, and never name nor yet so much as hint at it').²⁹ More specifically, the portrait in chapter IV (where he is at his most odious

and mean-spirited) of the returned James Durie as scheming, Satanic villain owes much to James's depiction of that 'deadliest of fiends', Gilbert Osmond, whose elegant aestheticism also conceals a ruthless and treacherous egotism, and who makes coldly calculating use of his nearest relationships to advance his own financial and social ends.³⁰ The parallel is not complete, however, since Stevenson was never able to suppress an underlying sympathy with his romanticised villain, with whom he avowedly identified, and who by the end of the book has almost reversed roles with Henry, his erstwhile victim and pursuer.³¹ Henry and the Master's other victim, his adoring sister-in-law Alison, partake somewhat of the character of Osmond's wife, the duped Isabel Archer, in that they are unable either to see through him or to speak out because of stiff-necked pride or egotistical blindness. Throughout, Alison's money and New York estates play as great a role in sealing all their fates as Isabel's inheritance does in hers.

The fundamental moral ambiguity of *The Master of Ballantrae* is highlighted in one final Jamesian allusion, in the later ship-board scene of the evasive conversation between the Master and Mackellar, in which the former, ostensibly displaying his own wickedness, hints subtly at the latter's wish to see him dead. The Master tells an odd cautionary tale, which seems almost like an eruption from some other work, about a Count who plays on the curiosity and greed of his enemy, the Baron, to lure him to his death, by a fall into the abyss of a Roman catacomb. The immediate result is Mackellar's own moral downfall, in his failed attempt to push the Master overboard. There are echoes here of revenge tales like Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado' but the enigmatic problem of moral responsibility and the Italian setting, as well as the Master's concluding question: 'Was that a murder?', perhaps point back to *Roderick Hudson*. For Roderick's fatal fall into an Alpine abyss can also be interpreted as a moral murder, by the self-interested friend who had drawn the weak but over-

ambitious Hudson into a situation which ultimately destroyed him.³²

In Stevenson's bleak novel, which contains perhaps his most disparaging portrayals of women, the neglected and exploited 'heroine', whose money makes her a resentful pawn among the men, is finally eclipsed. She is abandoned by the two passionate, male rivals who, in their ultimate quest, end up merging in death, in a wilderness that is as much moral as physical (thereby making *The Master of Ballantrae* a good example of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has aptly termed 'paranoid Gothic').³³ James at this same time produced a contrapuntal tale of male friendship, rivalry and betrayal, in which women play a more actively destructive and divisive role in the idealizing relationship between an older and a younger man. This was 'The Lesson of the Master' (hardly a coincidental title), which he started early in 1888, precisely the time when he was corresponding with Stevenson about *The Master of Ballantrae*.³⁴ The theme of the artist's wife as a hindrance to his career was an old one for James (as in 'The Author of "Beltraffio"'), but this tale, with its multiple Stevensonian echoes, may also betray some of his ambivalent feelings about Stevenson's wife, Fanny, whose controlling nature and combativeness he had clearly observed, even as he managed to remain friendly with her.³⁵ Here a famous author, Henry St. George, is held captive by his wife, 'an important little woman', much older than she looks, who watches over his health and controls the conditions of his writing. She has made him prostitute his gifts by aiming at the popular market and once made him burn a 'bad book'. The Master warns his young, gifted, disciple, Paul Overt (who has earlier travelled to Stevenson's actual or intended destinations of the Riviera, the Alps and Colorado, for the sake of his mother's health) that marriage would ruin his work, and gets him to go abroad, leaving behind the young woman he loves. The disciple much later returns to find the first wife dead, and the Master engaged, to this same, disingenuous young woman.

James's Master of intrigue remains a more ambiguous figure than Stevenson's, protesting his disinterestedness to the last, so that his true role as knight errant or 'mocking fiend' can never ultimately be determined.

As Stevenson continued his restless wanderings ever further west, into the Pacific, James was left to fall back on his memories, augmented by an intermittent but, on his side, fervent, correspondence that continued their old debate on the art of fiction. He missed Stevenson intensely, on both a personal and a professional level, and his letters are full of humorous protests at his friend's endless postponements and final cancellation of plans to return. His old image of Stevenson as teasing 'coquette' recurs, in the context of an awkward apostrophe to 'the male Cleopatra or buccaneering Pompadour of the Deep—the wandering Wanton of the Pacific'. James also regularly lamented Stevenson's disappointing failure to give enough personal news, though he complained more bitterly to Gosse about this than he ever did to Stevenson himself.³⁶

Professionally, James's sense of loss seems to have manifested itself in his continuing appreciation and assimilation of Stevenson's narrative technique, as well as a greater admission of the romantic element in his own work—ironically, as Stevenson's fiction in contrast was becoming steadily more realistic and 'psychological'.³⁷ He also produced a series of stories that exemplify the substance of their debates on fiction, as well as weaving in themes from their personal friendship and Stevenson's life and work. The first of these was 'The Pupil' (1891), a dark tragicomedy that illustrates James's earlier contention that a child's moral and emotional development could prove just as much an adventure as any tale of pirates and buried treasure. It also treats his favourite theme of idealised male friendship, here between tutor and pupil, which, like in *Roderick Hudson* (but unlike *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*, to which it frequently alludes) ends in moral shipwreck and death, as the boy, Morgan,

fears himself betrayed and abandoned by the one adult he had trusted.

If James felt himself increasingly abandoned by Stevenson, his loss was compounded by the shocking finality of Stevenson's sudden death at the end of 1894. One may see James's acute grief at this 'absolute desolation [. . .] the visible material quenching of an indispensable light' (*Letters to Gosse*, p. 121) transmuted, in an oddly ironic, ambivalent fashion, in his avowedly autobiographical, first-person tale, 'The Next Time' (1895). Here the narrator's misguided efforts to save the too-exquisite work of his friend and alter ego, Ray Limbert (note the initials) from the indifference of the vulgar marketplace and the needs of wife and family prove to be literally the kiss of death, as the sickly author, like Stevenson, is felled in the midst of writing 'a splendid fragment' which 'evidently would have been one of his high successes'.

James's own quest for popular, theatrical success in precisely this period was even less fruitful than Stevenson's had been earlier, but his failure led to an artistic retreat that enabled him eventually to write the great novels of his final years.³⁸ By 1899, contemplating the publication by Sidney Colvin of Stevenson's letters from Samoa, as well as that of an authorised biography by Graham Balfour, he was able to reflect wryly that too much authorial fame, especially in the case of a writer who had led as colourful a life as Stevenson, could be detrimental to appreciation of the work itself. He expressed these misgivings on more than one occasion, notably in another story of artistic patronage and friendship, 'The Real Right Thing' (1899). Here a great writer's young disciple is pressured by his 'strange', disagreeable and self-justifying widow, after his sudden death, to write his biography. As he goes through his subject's papers, alone upstairs in his study, the young man is gradually overwhelmed by anxiety as he becomes aware of his master's threatening presence, warning him not to proceed but to let the work stand alone.³⁹ Stevenson's literary executors were not so easily deterred, although James's

regret is deliberately muted in his generous review (1900), of the published letters, which constitutes his other major critical essay on Stevenson. In this piece, ironically, James too seems at times to celebrate his gallant friend's extraordinary life more than the work. Despite his admiration for the 'admirable unfinished thing', *Weir of Hermiston*, he betrays ambivalence in the admission that Stevenson's literary judgment had its 'lapses' and that ultimately his autobiographical essays and travel writings might prove more valuable, 'for perfection and roundedness', than his fiction.⁴⁰

James's final expression of his personal and literary debt to Stevenson, an expression of what he once called 'a state of unconscious obsession or, in romantic parlance, hauntedness',⁴¹ was to come after his return from his own momentous and long-delayed transatlantic voyage, in 1904-5, back to the much-changed scenes of his youth. This was 'The Jolly Corner' (1908), the story of a cultivated expatriate who returns to New York from Europe to the house of his childhood, only to summon there the horrifying ghost of the self he might have been, an 'evil, odious, blatant, vulgar' self, devoted solely to the pursuit of wealth and power. It contains many themes from James's relationship with Stevenson, including the debate over psychological realism versus romance, the tension between the life of action and the life of art, and ambivalence over the corrupting demands of the marketplace. James saw it as his own ultimate adventure story, depicting the inner struggle of the 'spirit engaged with the forces of violence' rather than 'pursuing a bright career among pirates or detectives'. (Preface, p. 1260). But in it he also paid conscious tribute to Stevenson's own two masterpieces of the double and the un-lived life, *Jekyll and Hyde* and 'Markheim' (1886). The latter of these (whose description of its subject's fearful exploration of the upper reaches of a deserted house James surely echoed) also exposed the devastating effects of 'the rank money-passion' on a man's better self, ending on a note of peace and acceptance

at the prospect of death. Where 'The Jolly Corner' differs from both is that its protagonist comes back from a deathlike experience following his confrontation with his odious, repudiated self and is enabled, with the help of his old friend, Alice Staverton, to face himself at last. All the old Jamesian conflicts between narcissistic male ambition and rivalry, aggression, intimacy and homoerotic desire are here consummated into an idealised, longed-for resolution and merger, and this woman makes no rival or erotic demands, but instead offers final healing and acceptance of the maimed, divided, masculine self (truly, Dr Jekyll *with* 'the aid of the ladies!').⁴² It is no coincidence, however, that her name, Staverton, contains in order six of the nine letters of 'Stevenson', the name of the man who had staved a way into James's heart and mind and, as perhaps his ideal 'other', was still to haunt him on his death-bed.

NOTES

- 1 I have to thank Gene H. Bell-Villada, Roslyn Jolly and Caroline Rupprecht for perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
- 2 Janet Adam Smith, *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948); Roslyn Jolly, "A Whole Province of One's Imagination": On the Friendship between Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson', *HEAT* 5, New Series (2003), 177-194.
- 3 Adeline R. Tintner, 'James writes a boy's story: "The Pupil" and R. L. Stevenson's Adventure Books', *Essays in Literature* 5 (1978), 61-73; Kenneth Graham, 'Stevenson and Henry James: A Crossing', in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Andrew Noble (London: Vision Press, 1983), pp. 23-46; George Dekker, 'James and Stevenson: The Mixed Current of Realism and Romance', in *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, ed. by Robert M. Polhemus and Roger B. Henkle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 127-149.

- 4 *Henry James: Letters*, ed. by Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974-1984), IV, p. 812; henceforth cited in text as *HJ Letters*.
- 5 HJ's letter to Gosse, 27 December 1894, in *Selected Letters of Henry James to Edmund Gosse 1882-1915: A Literary Friendship*, ed. by Rayburne S. Moore (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 123.
- 6 *HJ Letters*, II, p. 255, to T. S. Perry, 14 September 1879. James had earlier given his opinion of *An Inland Voyage* and its author to Stevenson's friend, W. E. Henley, *ibid.* p. 183.
- 7 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Meheew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-1995), III, p. 159; henceforth cited in text as *RLS Letters*.
- 8 Both of these letters were written to W. E. Henley from Davos, in February/March and early November 1881. The verses were for publication in a co-authored satire, *Diogenes at the Savile Club*, but were not printed until 1950.
- 9 Also in Smith, pp. 101-102. Smith, pp. 49-51, did not always have complete texts of the letters she reprinted, so it is safer to rely on modern editions.
- 10 Adeline R. Tintner, *The Book World of Henry James: Appropriating the Classics* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), pp. xix-xxiv.
- 11 *The Princess Casamassima* has been called Henry James's 'most derivative book'; see Oscar Cargill, *The Novels of Henry James* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 146-152. For more on its sources (also highly relevant to *The Dynamiter*) see, e.g., W. H. Tilley, *The Background of The Princess Casamassima* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960).
- 12 A tantalizing example of possible influence in the other direction is suggested by Stevenson's ending to 'The Rajah's Diamond' (1878). Prince Florizel's hurling of the 'accursed stone' into the Seine, where it can do 'no more evil', is remarkably similar to the ending of James's earlier story 'Adina' (1874), whose protagonist tosses the 'baleful topaz', the 'curse' of his life, into the Tiber.
- 13 *RLS Letters*, V, pp. 143-144, 28 October 1885. In July the following year (*ibid.* p. 296), Stevenson called *The Princess* 'interesting as a novel never is'.
- 14 *HJ Letters*, III, p. 83; Dekker, p. 143; Leon Edel, *Henry James: The*

- Middle Years* (Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1962), p. 131.
- 15 Andrew Lang, *Adventures among Books* (London: Longmans, Green, 1905), p. 51.
- 16 James's first recorded use of Stevenson's Christian name was on 10 September 1885 (*HJ Letters*, III, p. 100). At this period James appears to have used Christian names in salutations only for family members, boyhood friends like T. S. Perry, and old female friends like Grace Norton and Lizzie Boott. Later in life he corresponded with younger men, like Hendrik Andersen and Hugh Walpole, using Christian names, but he never did this with a very old friend like Edmund Gosse.
- 17 This was Sidney Colvin's opinion, quoted by Wendy Graham in *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 33-34. James complained to his brother William on 5 October 1887 that Stevenson had published two poems privately addressed to him, 'Henry James' and 'The Mirror Speaks', in *Underwoods*, and that they were 'the poorest things in the book'. *HJ Letters*, III, pp. 204-205.
- 18 'Robert Louis Stevenson', in *Century Magazine*, XXXV (April 1888), 868-879; reprinted in *Henry James: Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers* (Library of America: New York, 1984), pp. 1231-1255. For *Jekyll and Hyde* see pp. 1250-1253.
- 19 For the theme of homo-erotic affection in both *Roderick Hudson* and *The Princess Casamassima*, see especially Hugh Stevens, *Henry James and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chapters 4 and 5.
- 20 Letter of 13 June 1887 to Robert Underwood Johnson, of the *Century*, on Stevenson's financial situation following his father's death, in *HJ Letters*, III, p. 186.
- 21 *RLS Letters*, VI, pp. 61-62; *HJ Letters*, III, pp. 205-207 (Edel here suggests that Stevenson 'did not appreciate HJ's art save in its ironic and satiric forms'). According to Dekker, p. 136, Stevenson often found James's fiction 'hard going and succeeded in liking it only by misreading it'.
- 22 *RLS Letters*, VI, pp. 65, 68, 73, 77, 79, 83. The Henley quarrel began on Stevenson's receipt of his letter of 9 March 1888; *ibid.* pp. 129-136 and *passim*.

- 23 R. W. B. Lewis, *The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991), p. 3; Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years: 1843-1870* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1953), pp. 171-173, 184-188.
- 24 Unsigned review, *Dundee Courier*, 11 October 1889; review by George Moore, *Hawk*, 5 November 1889; reprinted in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 348, 354.
- 25 Edel, *HJ: The Untried Years*, pp. 240-252. 'A Light Man' was revised for an anthology of American stories in 1884, and again for volume 1 of James's *Stories Revived* (London: Macmillan, 1885); see *Henry James: Complete Stories 1864-1874* (New York: Library of America, 1999), p. 965. The 1885 collection, which may well have been the one Stevenson saw, also contained another tale of sibling rivalry, 'The Romance of Certain Old Clothes', which has some intriguing similarities with Stevenson's late fable, 'The Waif Woman'.
- 26 Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Hamden, Ct.: Archon, 1980), p. 121. Elsie Noble Caldwell, *Last Witness for Robert Louis Stevenson* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 83, thinks that Chapter IV was the last to be written at Saranac, the story being continued only when Stevenson reached Tautira, in the Pacific.
- 27 'A Humble Remonstrance', in Smith, p. 96. A possible allusion to 'Beltraffio' in *The Master* is that Mackellar is initially struck by Durrindeer's beautiful and expensive gardens (chapter II), just as the young visitor first admires the exquisite old gardens of Mark Ambient's house.
- 28 *Robert Louis Stevenson: Note to 'The Master of Ballantrae'*, ed. by Roger G. Swearingen (Saranac Lake: Private distribution, July 2006) p. 12; also in Caldwell, p. 116.
- 29 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae*, ed. by Emma Letley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 103. Possible parallels with *The Portrait of a Lady* in Stevenson's exploration of moral consciousness and moral ambiguity in *The Master*, have been suggested both by Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996), p. 282 and by Douglas Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction', in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 62-87, pp. 75-76.

- 30 Osmond and the Master may also partake independently of the same tradition of villainy; see William Veeder on Osmond as Gothic villain and Byronic dandy in *Henry James—The Lessons of the Master* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), pp. 119-145.
- 31 '[. . .] for the Master I had no original [. . .] other than myself.' *Note to 'The Master of Ballantrae'*, p. 15. Although Stevenson here gave his most 'adult' account to date of the problem of evil, he seems never to have permitted himself such an absolute and uncompromising view of human corruption and treachery as did James, which may help account for his revulsion at *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Washington Square*.
- 32 The tale was a dream Stevenson had in Papeete, about reading a tale of Poe's; *Note to 'The Master of Ballantrae'*, p. 16; Caldwell, p. 118. For Roderick's death as accident, suicide or murder see Andrew Cutting, *Death in Henry James* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 29-33.
- 33 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 186-187. She sees 'paranoid Gothic' as the genre *par excellence* of homophobia.
- 34 The initial idea was noted on 5 January 1888; *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 43-44. Stevenson began *The Master of Ballantrae* by mid-December 1887 and wrote to James about it in late January; *RLS Letters*, VI, pp. 104-105.
- 35 See e.g. James's diplomatic reply (not in Smith) to Stevenson's letter of late December 1886, describing a fight between himself and Fanny; *HJ Letters*, III, pp. 156-158.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 278-280; *HJ Letters to Gosse*, p. 117. For the best account of this phase of their friendship see Jolly, pp. 181-192.
- 37 Bradford A. Booth, 'Form and Technique in the Novel', in *The Reinterpretation of Victorian Literature*, ed. by Joseph E. Baker (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 67-96, p. 95; Dekker, pp. 135-136, 143-149.
- 38 'The Next Time' was conceived late in January 1895, soon after James's failure with *Guy Domville* and his hearing of Stevenson's death, but drew on his own earlier experiences in failing to please the vulgar public; *Notebooks of HJ*, pp. 109-110, 123-125.
- 39 On James's regret that Stevenson's biography would make him 'too

celebrated for his literary legacy', see *HJ Letters to Gosse*, pp. 192-193, and his letter to Graham Balfour of 15 November 1901; *HJ Letters*, IV, pp. 212-214.

- 40 Review of *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to his Family and Friends* (January 1900), in Henry James, *Essays, American & English Writers*, 1255-1273, pp. 1267, 1270, 1272-1273.
- 41 'Preface to "The Altar of the Dead", etc.', in Henry James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers & the Prefaces to the New York Edition* (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 1246-1268, p. 1263.
- 42 For this observation, and ways in which 'The Jolly Corner' echoes *Jekyll and Hyde*, see Stevens, pp. 135-136.

'The unrest and movement of our century': the universe of *The Wrecker*

Roderick Watson

This paper will propose that *The Wrecker* offers a darkly original vision of culture and capitalism in a wholly modern theatre of transatlantic, Pacific, and indeed globalised travel, business, and ultimately, murder. The book's amoral spirit is equally 'modern' for—despite a closing vision of greed and murder worthy of Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale'—'Our criminals are a most pleasing crew and leave the dock with scarce a stain upon their character.'¹

The Stevenson/Osborne collaboration is a sprawling, episodic adventure story, a comedy of brash manners and something of a detective mystery whose youth-led plot is characterised by a kaleidoscopic versatility, an indefatigable optimism, and an innocent corruption. But the novel also offers a prophetically postmodern vision of a depthless world of travel, exile, novelty and rootlessness; of 'discarded sons' who inherit and confidently inhabit a world they neither fully understand nor fully belong to; of a 'brave new world' in which every character is somehow always already a castaway. It is a black comedy of capitalism and existential absurdity that plays 'art' against commerce, ambition against incompetence and accident against design, all in 'an excellent example of the Blind Man's Buff that we call life.'² Seen in these terms, *The Wrecker* is a significantly underestimated part of Stevenson's oeuvre. (Apart from anything else it contains some of his best writing about the sea, the South Seas and sailing ships.) Its reputation may have been clouded by the collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, or by the autobiographical echoes that recur throughout the book (especially in the Parisian scenes), or by its lengthy picaresque progress; nevertheless, perhaps it is

time to take another look at an almost forgotten Stevenson novel which, for a number of years after its first publication, actually outsold *The Master of Ballantrae*.³

Let us start with Stevenson's own estimate of his theme, from the Epilogue dedicated to Will H. Low:

Why dedicate to you a tale of a cast so modern:—full of details of our barbaric manners and unstable morals; full of the need and the lust of money, so that there is scarce a page in which the dollars do not jingle; full of the unrest and movement of our century, so that the reader is hurried from place to place and sea to sea, and the book is less a romance than a panorama—in the end as blood-bespattered as an epic? (*The Wrecker*, pp. 362-3)

In his correspondence Stevenson has a habit of depreciating his own work, and yet here, as in a letter to Charles Baxter written while he was working on *The Wrecker*, he allows himself a serious note:

I believe *The Wrecker* is a good yarn of its poor sort, and it is certainly well nourished with facts; no realist can touch me there; for by this time I do begin to know something of life in the XIXth century, which no novelist either in France or England seems to know much of.⁴

Stevenson's early distrust of 'realism' may have begun to change ('A Humble Remonstrance' was written in 1884, six years earlier) and the last chapter of *The Wrecker* contains an ironic reflection on such concerns when the crew is faking the log of the *Flying Scud* only to find entries already in it that seem less than convincing:

'Well, it doesn't look like real life—that's all I can say,' returned Wicks.

'It's the way it was, though,' argued Carthew.

‘So it is; and what the better are we for that, if it don’t look so?’ cried the captain, sounding unwonted depths of art criticism. (p. 351)

But Stevenson is still no Balzac, whom he saw as being ‘smothered under forcible-feeble detail’,⁵ and the novel makes significant use of symbolic devices, not the least of which is his consistent liking for using structures of the double, by which Loudon Dodd and Jim Pinkerton play against each other in a manner reminiscent (according to Edwin Eigner) of David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart;⁶ and more especially by his use of Norris Carthew as Loudon’s doppelgänger—a shadowy ‘other’ whom he has to track down, in order to see what he himself might nearly have become:

‘The fact is I think I know the man,’ said I. ‘I think I’m looking for him. I rather think he is my long-lost brother.’
‘Not twins, anyway,’ returned Stennis. (p. 282)

(In Stennis’s wry rejoinder we hear Stevenson’s own voice, in another self-aware art-critical interjection.) And of course Loudon ends up working for Carthew, ending the book as he began it, by playing the aesthete (this time in a lavishly furnished schooner cabin) supported once again by invisible money and an absent partner: ‘He runs me now. It’s all his money.’ (p. 6). (One of the continuing themes in this novel is the author’s often satirical view of the almost parasitical place of art in a world of harsh economic pressures and commerce—reflections born of his own social status, his never-ending financial imperatives and the long wrangle with his father.)⁷

So what *is* the nature of Stevenson’s new found ‘realism’ in this ‘panorama’, in this ‘tale of a cast so modern’? With this question in mind it will be useful to consider the book under three headings linked to economic, symbolic and finally to philosophical issues. The first section will consider Stevenson’s insight into the world of business and the pursuit of profit as it reveals itself

through Loudon Dodd's adventures in free trade. The second section 'Discarded Sons' will explore the symbolic resonance of these adventures as we see how closely Stevenson associates the spirit of capitalist enterprise with a strange kind of orphaned innocence, whose adolescent enthusiasm for getting ahead is blind to the moral implications and the human cost of its actions. In both sections Stevenson's account of the factual intricacies of this brave new world of affairs and profit can be said to have a realistic, if darkly satirical, grounding. In the final section, 'The Blind Man's Buff that we call life', Stevenson's characters' petty engagement with ambition, greed and chance can be seen to reveal a much wider philosophical vision on his part, in what amounts to an existential insight into the cruelty and absurdity at the heart of existence.

(1) Business life in the XIXth Century

In effect the novel is a long 'yarn' retold by Loudon Dodd—including other narratives told within his own—but from the opening and self-consciously romantic scene from which Dodd tells his retrospective tale, the amoral and global economic ethos of the book is made abundantly clear, by Dodd himself, and by the cosmopolitan characters around him, all of whom take it wholly for granted:

The various English, Americans, Germans, Poles, Corsicans, and Scots—the merchants and the clerks of Tai-o-hae—deserted their places of business, and gathered, according to invariable custom, on the road before the club. (p. 4)

The talk turns to trade and affairs, initiated by Loudon's remarks on a recent wreck and the ensuing insurance claim: 'Talk of good business!' he says, 'I know nothing better than a schooner, a competent captain, and a sound reliable reef.' (p. 9)

'Good business! There's no such thing!' said the Glasgow

man. 'Nobody makes anything but the missionaries—dash it!'

'I don't know,' said another; 'there's a good deal in opium.'

'It's a good job to strike a tabooed pearl-island—say about the fourth year,' remarked a third, 'skim the whole lagoon on the sly, and up stick and away before the French get wind of you.'

'A pig nokket of cold is good,' observed a German.

'There's something in wrecks, too,' said Haven. (pp. 9-10)

Stevenson has already remarked at this point that if 'one becomes used to a certain laxity of moral tone which prevails [. . .] on smuggling, ship-scuttling, barratry, piracy, the labour trade, and other kindred fields of human activity, he will find Polynesia no less amusing and no less instructive than Pall Mall or Paris.'(p. 9)

—Precisely: and for the rest of the novel, Stevenson's proposal will be that the true mechanisms of the centres of civilisation can be most clearly discerned out here on the open margins of the new world. This is not a frontier ethic, in other words, but a fair reflection of what lies at home, in London, Paris or New York.⁸ After all, this was exactly what Loudon's early education at the Muskegon Commercial College was about, with its model stock market, to train young masters of the universe in shifting alliances and in the use of power and exploitation in both their personal and their economic affairs. (In this respect Stevenson's novel looks like a forerunner to Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*, 1987, and *A Man in Full*, 1998).

An early review from the *Atlantic Monthly* had no doubts about what was being proposed: 'if a home-truth should be carefully looked for amid all this immorality, it might be found in the similarity of the commercial scenes to the smuggling and wrecking ones.'⁹ The reviewer has already noted that 'It would not do for a Sunday-school prize' and it is as if Long John Silver

has moved from *Treasure Island* to the Bourse, to join Teach from *The Master of Ballantrae*; and indeed Dodd describes his partner Pinkerton by telling us that ‘Reality was his romance’:

Suppose a man were to dig up a galleon on the Coromandel coast [. . .] he should have no more profit of romance than Pinkerton when he had cast up his weekly balance-sheet in a bald office. Every dollar gained was like something brought ashore from a mysterious deep; every venture made was like a diver’s plunge; and as he thrust his bold hand into the plexus of the money-market he was delightfully aware of how he shook the pillars of existence, turned out men, as at a battle-cry, to labour in far countries, and set the gold twitching in the drawers of millionaires. (p. 85)

Here, as in *The Master of Ballantrae*, Stevenson is revisiting and significantly revising his own roots in adventure fiction. Of course *The Wrecker* is aimed at an adult audience and set in contemporary times, but the thrill of business in a free market—as he sees it—is still the adolescent thrill of daring and intrigue. The lantern bearers of Stevenson’s boyhood carried a secret beneath their jackets, and this whole novel revolves around the unravelling of a bloody secret that will end by challenging, daunting and compromising Pinkerton and Dodd, while also defining them, indeed, as archetypally and irrecoverably adolescent.

Yet Stevenson’s achievement (not unlike Tom Wolfe’s) is to make us care about these people and to show us that the interplay between business and personal ethics is by no means as clear-cut as we might like it to be. Nor is family history irrelevant, as we learn about Loudon’s father’s bankruptcy (despite his ‘Big Head’ for business) and his maternal grandfather’s propensity, as a jobbing builder, for using a good deal too much sand in his Portland cement.

The intertwining complexities of morality, loyalty, and prag-

matic self interest are never better explored than in the dialogue in chapter 16 between the emphatically blunt Captain Nares (whom we trust) and Loudon Dodd over the bankruptcy of Jim Pinkerton and his request that Dodd should defraud their debtors by withholding whatever profit he has gained (much less than expected) from the wreck of the *Flying Scud*. With a characteristically defusing frankness, and a not uncalculating charm, the chapter is entitled 'In which I Turn Smuggler and the Captain Casuist'. But Nares's so-called casuistry is challenging, nonetheless, in a long and complex exchange (by no means wholly ironic) in which he outlines how he sees Dodd's position. A few examples will have to suffice:

'The figure's big enough to make bad trouble, but it's not big enough to be picturesque; and I should guess that a man always feels kind of small who has sold himself under six ciphers. That would be my way, at least; there's an excitement about a million that might carry me on; but the other way, I should feel kind of lonely when I woke in bed.' (p. 219)

[. . .]

'As a matter of principle, I wouldn't look at this business at the money. "Not good enough," would be my word. But even principle goes under when it comes to friends.' (p. 220)

[. . .]

'That's an ugly way to put it,' I objected, 'and perhaps hardly fair. There's right and wrong to be considered.'

'Don't know the parties,' replied Nares. (p. 220)

If Dodd has his hectically enthusiastic and naive double in Pinkerton, he is haunted in curiously intimate fashion by another such figure—the shyster lawyer Bellairs, for whom the grey areas and moral swamps of the plot are nothing less than his native habitat. Dodd reflects on the liaison: 'It will be seen that I had fallen into an ignominious intimacy with the man I had gone out

to thwart. My pity for the creature, his admiration for myself, his pleasure in my society, which was clearly unassumed, were the bonds by which I was fettered.' (p. 260). —One of Stevenson's finest creations, fawning and fulminating by turns, as a compromised and iconic figure of modernity, Harry Bellairs is more than fit to stand alongside Dostoevsky's underground man, or Melville's *Bartleby the scrivener*. (Put another way, he plays Gollum to Loudon's Frodo.) When Loudon seems to criticise, and indeed to patronise him, Bellairs responds:

'Excuse me if I seem to press the subject,' he continued, 'but if you think my life erroneous, would you have me neglect the means of grace? Because you consider me in the wrong on one point, would you have me place myself on the wrong in all?' (p. 262)

These are questions that Dodd might very well ask of himself and here (as with *The Master of Ballantrae*, which was written during the same period) Stevenson has further developed the dualities of his earlier work, to the point where all such stabilising assurances of 'right and wrong to be considered' have been confused or compromised by the desperation of hungry men and their driving need to make a living. Bellairs asks Dodd to be charitable in his judgements: 'Surely, sir, the church is for the sinner.'

'Did you ask a blessing on your present enterprise?' I sneered.

He had a bad attack of St Vitus, his face was changed, and his eyes flashed. 'I will tell you what I did,' he cried. 'I prayed for an unfortunate man and a wretched woman whom he tries to support.'

I cannot pretend that I found any repartee. (p. 262)

Bellairs is adrift in the same sea as Dodd and Pinkerton, and in fact the book contains an entire cast of similarly rootless individuals, all marked by the same eager enterprise, not unconnected to

the largely self-centred and immature optimism that Stevenson seems to see as characteristic of late 19th century capitalism—perhaps especially in its North American manifestations.¹⁰ Such rootless mobility is another feature in how Stevenson understands the modern world, located (as Loudon Dodd is in San Francisco) ‘on the extreme shore of the West and of today’ (p. 107). This theme will be taken a little further in the next section.

(2) Discarded sons

It is Norris Carthew, Loudon’s elusive doppelgänger and ultimate benefactor, who is referred to as a ‘discarded son’ in chapter 22 ‘The Remittance Man’ (p. 294); and indeed he has been cast-off by his family and is adrift in Australia at the beginning of his own strange yarn, never quite having grown up: ‘Some men are still lads at twenty-five; and so it was with Norris.’ (p. 290). But in fact the novel turns out to be full of ‘discarded sons’, and what is said about Norris could equally well be said of Loudon and Jim Pinkerton, and also of Norris’s fellow crew members aboard the *Currency Lass*, especially Tommy Hadden and Hemstead, and of Mac, the volatile, violent and sentimental Northern Irishman. Carthew is discarded as a result of family and financial disgrace, having already squandered a fortune, and the early death of Loudon’s father and the failure of his inheritance throw him on to his own resources in similar manner. And Pinkerton has had to fend for himself since the age of twelve: ‘Whether he had run away, or his father had turned him out, I never fathomed.’ (p. 38). Yet Pinkerton sees Dodd and himself as ‘born to be heirs’ of the ‘magnificent continent’ of America, and ‘under bond to fulfil the American Type [. . .] the hope of the world is there. If we fail, like those old feudal monarchies, what is left?’ (p. 39). What is left indeed, for neither of them seems to have gained very much from the ‘feudal monarchies’ of paternal and familial support, despite early promises made to Dodd and Carthew. Nor is Tommy Hadden very different as ‘heir to a considerable property, which a prophetic father had placed in the hands of rigorous

trustees.’¹¹ (p. 296). Within the recurrent ‘doubling’ structures of the novel, Hadden plays ‘Pinkerton’ to Carthew’s ‘Dodd’, and if Jim’s was ‘the romance of business’, then Tommy Hadden, with his creative accounting and boyishly and boundlessly ill-founded optimism, is ‘its Arabian tale’ (p. 298). And his is the moving spirit behind the adventure of the rotten old schooner *Currency Lass* (formerly the *Dream*) and their fateful meeting with the *Flying Scud*.

They sail to the strains of ‘Home Sweet Home’, played on the banjo by little Hemstead, an unemployed minor handyman, fated to have his brains bashed-in by Goddedaal on the *Flying Scud*:

It appeared he [Hemstead] had no home, nor had he ever had one, nor yet any vestige of a family, except a truculent uncle, a baker in Newcastle, N.S.W. His domestic sentiment was therefore wholly in the air, and expressed an unrealised ideal. Or perhaps, of all his experiences, this of the *Currency Lass*, with its kindly, playful, and tolerant society, approached it the most nearly. (pp. 311-12)

In pursuit of the mystery that leads to his own ruin and then to his ultimate salvation (through Carthew), Loudon Dodds imagines this other crew, on a voyage not so very different from his own:

It is perhaps because I know the sequel, but I can never think upon this voyage without a profound sense of pity and mystery; of the ship (once the whim of a rich blackguard) faring with her battered fineries and upon her homely errand, across the plains of ocean, and past the gorgeous scenery of dawn and sunset; and the ship’s company, so strangely assembled, so Britishly chuckle-headed, filling their days with chaff in place of conversation [. . .] the whole unconscious crew of them posting in the meanwhile towards so tragic a disaster. (p. 312)

—Commerce on the high seas and the chimera of easy trade and rootless profit is memorably symbolised here, in a ship of lost boys. Their home from home is a modern ship of fools. Nor is it any coincidence, symbolically speaking, that Loudon's search for wealth should take him to the self-same scene of the crime.¹²

Stevenson's description of the murders on the *Flying Scud* was felt by many contemporary reviewers to be 'quite unnecessarily brutal', permeated by 'the scent of sickening blood and disgust', 'irredeemably unpleasant' or 'diabolical' and a 'dramatic defect.'¹³ Readers today, however, are more likely to claim it as one of his most effective pieces of writing, whose sudden and then shockingly long-drawn out horror is a wholly necessary counterpart to the comedic ambitions of those discarded sons and their children's crusade. Without this weighted and darker conclusion to the book (the murder scenes are only revealed in the very last chapter, after which the narrative seems to come to an abrupt conclusion) the whole novel would be no more than an adventure yarn of commercial ambition and youthful error. Even so, the lighter spirit of the novel still somehow survives its darkest closing pages in a way that is closer to postmodern black comedy than it is to the more soberly grounded fictions of Joseph Conrad, Stevenson's contemporary writer of yarns.

Nevertheless, after such a conclusion (and with the benefit of hindsight) the reader might be forgiven for thinking that there is something more than a little chilling about the urbane complacency with which Dodd introduces his tale in the Prologue. Here is a comfortable and portly man, still dabbling with sculpture (which is what he was doing when his tale began as a young art-student in Paris) reflecting on how his plans to blackmail Carthew broke down:

'Why, what was wrong, then? Couldn't you get hands on him?'

'It took time, but I had him cornered at last; and then—'

'What then?'

'The speculation turned bottom up. I became the man's bosom friend.'

'The deuce you did!'

'He couldn't have been particular, you mean?' asked Dodd, pleasantly. 'Well, no; he's a man of rather large sympathies.' (p. 11)

The moral and physical rootlessness of these discarded sons, clinging together for mutual support, is entirely in keeping with the universe of *The Wrecker*, and this brings us to the final section and a more philosophical note.

(3) '... the Blind Man's Buff that we call life' (p. 34)

I would argue that *The Wrecker* (1891-2) is marked by the same proto-existential vision of a random universe that can be seen in 'Pulvis et Umbra' (1888); *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) and most especially in *The Ebb-Tide*, which was published in 1893. Indeed, the same insight appeared as early as the short story 'The Merry Men' (1881), which tells about another wrecker who is ultimately overcome by his vision of life as a 'charnel-ocean [. . .] out here in the roaring blackness, on the edge of a cliff [. . .]'.¹⁴ If the spirit of *The Wrecker* is lighter-hearted than these texts, it still depicts an utterly contingent universe, in which the vagaries of the stock market and indeed the rise and fall of Fortune's wheel itself are specifically linked to the sign of the dollar.

The Wrecker is a comedy of reversals, of getting and spending and losing and getting again, of inheritances seemingly guaranteed only to be lost and then—absurdly—restored. Loudon's father dies bankrupt, only for Loudon—at a later stage—to benefit from his maternal grandfather's legacy. Carthew is virtually disinherited by his father, only to come into the family fortune (again on the death of the patriarch) at the very moment when his own attempts to fill his coffers have ended in the most ghastly sequence of murders. The mixed record of Jim Pinkerton's commercial career is a hilarious roller-coaster of ups and downs, of ingenious schemes and outright scams. The very plot of the

novel itself operates by way of a similarly fluid conglomeration of coincidences, changing ambitions and confusions of identity, just as its physical settings flit from Paris to Muskegon, from San Francisco to Sydney, from Edinburgh to the Marquesas. It is as if the model stock-market and the free-floating and unstable principles of the Muskegon Commercial College have become a reflection of, or even a template for, the universe at large—the most fitting of all theatres for these rootless boys, cut off from, or at odds with the symbols of stability, continuity and authority (sometimes capricious) as represented by their various fathers.

To conclude: the final vision of *The Wrecker* (and the title is significant) is to see life as a game of blind man's buff, as a matter of amoral existential play. And business, and art, and the business of art, and in the last analysis capitalism itself, are only further reflections of that black comedy. Again and again in this sprawling novel Stevenson gives us little vignettes of this insight, none more telling, perhaps, than the search for opium, which the partners assume must be hidden in the hold of the shipwrecked *Flying Scud*. The symbolic force of this passage is all the greater when we remember that Loudon Dodd had once experienced near starvation in the streets of Paris. *The Flying Scud*, we recall, was carrying a cargo of rice:

It was our task to disembowel and explore six thousand individual mats, and incidentally to destroy a hundred and fifty tons of valuable food. Nor were the circumstances of the day's business less strange than its essential nature. Each man of us, armed with a great knife, attacked the pile from his own quarter, slashed into the nearest mat, burrowed in it with his hands, and shed forth the rice upon the deck, where it heaped up, overflowed, and was trodden down, poured at last into the scuppers, and occasionally spouted from the vents. About the wreck, thus transformed into an overflowing granary, the sea-fowl swarmed in myriads and with surprising insolence. The sight of so

much food confounded them; they deafened us with their shrill tongues, swooped in our midst, dashed in our faces, and snatched the grain from between our fingers. The men—their hands bleeding from these assaults—turned savagely on the offensive, drove their knives into the birds, drew them out crimsoned, and turned again to dig among the rice, unmindful of the gawking creatures that struggled and died among their feet. We made a singular picture: the hovering and diving birds; the bodies of the dead discolouring the rice with blood; the scuppers vomiting breadstuff; the men, frenzied by the gold hunt, toiling, slaying, and shouting aloud: over all, the lofty intricacy of rigging and the radiant heaven of the Pacific. Every man there toiled in the immediate hope of fifty dollars; and I, of fifty thousand. Small wonder if we waded callously in blood and food. (pp. 204-5)

This is both the literal and the symbolic summation of the whole novel, despite the charm of its lost-boy protagonists, and a narrative that is frequently feckless, solemn and hilarious by turns. In an epiphany of slaughter, greed, blood, money and food, the point could not be more powerfully or vividly made.

NOTES

- 1 Letter to Henry James, 25th May 1892, *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 493.
- 2 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Wrecker*, in *Tales of the South Seas: Island Landfalls; The Ebb-Tide; The Wrecker* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996), ed. and introduced by Jenni Calder, p. 34; henceforth cited in text.
- 3 J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward. The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 358.
- 4 Letter to Sidney Colvin, 9 or 10 November 1891, *Selected Letters*, p. 475.
- 5 Letter to Bob Stevenson, 30 September 1883, *Selected Letters*, p. 234.
- 6 Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition*

- (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 98-110. Eigner sees the doubling of Dodd and Carthew as two parallel but quite separate tales: one of 'manners' and one of 'violence'. I argue here for their moral and structural inseparability.
- 7 The Prologue has one of the characters remark that writing sensational fiction is 'as much of a trade as underwriting, and a dashed sight more honest.' (p. 10). William Gray has written well on the play between 'art' and 'real life' in this novel: 'Stevenson's "Auld Alliance": France, Art Theory and the Breath of Money in *The Wrecker*', *Scottish Studies Review*, III, 2, (Autumn 2002), 54-65.
 - 8 Gordon Hirsch has traced some of the historical contexts of the novel in 'The commercial world of *The Wrecker*', *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, II, 2005, 70-97.
 - 9 Anonymous review: '*The Naulahka* and *The Wrecker*', *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol 70, 420, October 1892, 548.
 - 10 London reviewers were perhaps predictably quick to scoff at what they took to be Stevenson's exposé of American mores. In its own review of *The Wrecker*, however, the Boston-published *Atlantic Monthly* also noted 'that curious versatility or aimlessness of the American character by which one man in the course of an ordinary lifetime, goes through seven or more professional ages, being in turn broker, preacher, editor of a paper, inventor of a machine, and head of a college.' It concluded by observing that 'No aspect of our life is more diverting than this to Europeans.'
 - 11 Hadden was based upon Jack Buckland ('Tin Jack') a well-known remittance man and copra trader in Sydney. (*Selected Letters*, p. 418, n. 3.)
 - 12 If the crew of the *Currency Lass* are sailing on a ship that was once 'the whim of a rich blackguard', we might reflect—uncharitably perhaps—that this is no more than Dodd is doing when he sails into the Marquesas on Carthew's schooner to begin the tale.
 - 13 Consecutively: from *The Spectator*, 23 July 1892; from Margaret Oliphant in *Blackwood's*, October 1892, both in *Robert Louis Stevenson, The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 396-407; from the *Atlantic Monthly*, op cit; from *The Globe*, Toronto, 23, 1892.
 - 14 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Shorter Scottish Fiction*, introduced by Roderick Watson, (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1995), p. 193.

Doubled brothers, divided self: duality and destruction in *The Master of Ballantrae*

Marilyn Simon

It may seem strange that a novel that has for its setting the Scottish lowlands, a pirate ship, an Indian house and its exotic garden, and the wilderness of New York, is, for all this, a text about the Scottish psyche. Yet this is precisely the case with Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, a novel that, regardless of setting, explores the repercussions for a 'culture obsessed with the myth of separation, with diabolism, with secret sins'.¹ Douglas Gifford argues that nineteenth-century Scottish fiction in general is 'deeply preoccupied with the exploration of Scottish *psyche*. This major tradition examines deeply embedded dualism and divided loyalties as inherent in the Scottish mind';² Francis Hart, too, asserts that the idea of the double that Stevenson explores in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Master of Ballantrae* has 'been adopted as the myth of Scottish consciousness'.³

Of course, *Jekyll and Hyde* is Stevenson's most famous 'doubling' novel, yet *Ballantrae* is, in many ways, Stevenson's most complex exploration of national and psychic duality. In *Ballantrae* this split is represented not as two sides of the same individual, as it is in *Jekyll and Hyde*, but is instead set up as a split between the two Durie brothers. Yet although the brothers are at first defined as opposites—one a 'Jekyll', the other a 'Hyde'—we soon come to realise that there is no simple division between the fraternal pair; each brother shares characteristics with the other that cannot be defined in terms of a good–evil split. Still, the division between brothers expresses, in Jekyll–and–Hyde fashion, the dual nature of humans, and the result of this division is, again as with *Jekyll and Hyde*, mutual destruction. Stevenson shows that the broth-

ers are more than simply opposed to each other; he demonstrates that they are divided against themselves, for human nature is not split between good and evil but is both these things, and the refusal of each brother to accept his ambiguity leads to his downfall.

Moreover, Stevenson explores the implications of Scotland's national split since 'the Durrisdeer family and estate represents the estate of Scotland'.⁴ James's seeming disdain for middle-class respectability, his charisma, and his aesthetically rich romantic qualities align him with the myth of Scotland's pre-union Jacobite past, as opposed to Henry's social conservatism, his economic prudence, and the materialistic rationale of 'progressive' North Britain.⁵

However, while each brother may possess some of the qualities attributed to him by the other, and by the narrator Mackellar, neither one embodies *only* those qualities. In the end, then, we see the destruction that results when Scots attributes are figured in terms of opposites rather than paradoxical qualities of the same nation. With *Balkantrae* we have, in essence, a story that Mackellar first sets up as a tale of good versus evil, but is in actuality a tale about good *and* evil; for though these two qualities are opposites, they both exist in the brothers and in Mackellar himself. And since this novel follows the nineteenth-century Scottish theme of exploring the 'divided self; the divided family which contains the broken self; the divided nation behind the fragmented family',⁶ we are warned that Scotland will self-destruct if the paradoxes of Scottish nationhood are divided from each other instead of unified into a complex whole.

The story begins in the year 1745, the year that witnessed Britain's last civil war, in which the exiled Prince Charlie rode against the forces of King George, only to be defeated the following year at the battle of Culloden. This setting is, of course, significant since it was this national conflict that divided many families within Scotland. Moreover, the Jacobite Rebellion, argues Cairns

Craig, was redundant at the moment of its inception, for it was linked with the fiction of Scotland's romantic past and Scottish nationalism in the post-union era. The Jacobite Rebellion, then, was—

already wiped out and made irrelevant to the present. Jacobitism is not a politics to be rejected on principle or to be seen as a serious influence on Scottish culture: it is dismissed as without significance to a present that has established a new agenda and a new set of values. Already redundant in the moment of its occurrence it has nothing to link it to the future.⁷

When the tale begins we see the Durie family debating which brother should side with the deposed prince and which should fight for the established monarch. Because the Rebellion is a belated manifestation of Scotland's mythic past, it has a romantic allure that suits the Master's love of danger and risk, and through this Mackellar attempts to distinguish James from Henry, the responsible brother who 'took a chief hand, almost from a boy, in the management of the estates'.⁸ Yet Henry wants desperately to fight with the rebels, as he makes clear:

'And see, James,' said Mr. Henry, 'if I go, and the Prince has the upper hand, it will be easy to make your peace with King James. But if you go, and the expedition fails, we divide the right and the title. And what shall I be then?'

'You will be Lord Durrissdeer,' said the Master. 'I put all I have upon the table.'

'I play at no such game,' cries Mr. Henry. 'I shall be left in such a situation as no man of sense and honour could endure. I shall be neither fish nor flesh!' he cried. (p. 10)

Henry, at this point, seems to understand that if he is forced into the role of Master and responsible landholder, he will occupy a role incompatible with his position as the younger brother, and

though here James promises to forfeit his claim to the Durrisdeer title, we know that he will do no such thing, for, as the older brother he has the rightful claim to the title. Henry's assertion, then, that he will be 'neither fish nor flesh' is equally true for James, for if James has his way, both brothers will be forced into roles that are at odds with their 'natural' positions. Given James's propensity for playing at cards, we are not surprised when he suggests that he and Henry settle their dispute by the 'toss of a coin' (p. 11). Now, Mackellar has already tried to establish Henry as a reasonable, 'honest, solid sort of lad' (p. 9), yet this assessment of his character is undercut by Henry's acquiescence to James's 'arbitrament of chance', a course of action that even the Master admits is his way to express his 'scorn of human reason' (p. 63).

The brothers, then, become opposed to the role the other adopts because it is the position each covets, but at the same time each brother hardens into the position that he has, through chance, been thrust into. Thus the brothers are not so different from each other as one might at first expect. They are, in fact, intimately connected to one another; they are each other's double, set up by Mackellar as having opposite natures, good and evil, but in actuality they are both morally complex. The brothers are much like Dr. Jekyll and his alter ego (or, more precisely, his alter-id), Hyde, who is the incarnation of his own dark desires. As Jekyll admits, 'I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either it was only because I was radically both'.⁹ The brothers, too, share this same duality: James, we are told, embraces only his devilish nature, while Henry, after he is forced into a role which he initially rejected, represses his comfort with desire for rebellion.¹⁰

As the tale develops, Stevenson links the two brothers in increasingly profound ways. This is hinted at when Henry fantasises about joining a band of 'freetraders' at the same time that James is living as a pirate. A no less subtle link is Mackellar's perception

of the brothers' physical similarities. Henry, when he is at his most cunning, wears a 'grim smile upon his face' that resembles the Master's (p. 95). Alone, this similarity has little significance; of course the two look alike, they are brothers. However, later in the text Mackellar describes James's appearance as something ghastly, as unnatural and not quite human:

it [the Master's nature] seemed of a piece with that impudent grossness which I knew to underlie the veneer of his fine manners; and sometimes my gorge rose against him as though he were deformed—and sometimes I would draw away as though from something partly spectral. I had moments when I thought of him as of a man of pasteboard—as though, if one should strike smartly through the buckram of his countenance, there would be found a mere vacuity within. This horror (not merely fanciful, I think) vastly increased my detestation of his neighbourhood. (p. 172)

Here, Mackellar's revulsion at the Master reveals more about the deformity of his too simple characterization of James than it does of the Master himself. It is through his refusal to see any moral complexity in James that this 'spectral', 'pasteboard' character becomes so horrific to the steward.

Thus when Mackellar sees Henry's 'grim smile' as similar to the Master's, the spiritual deformity that Mackellar perceives in the Master is linked with Henry and undermines his perception of Henry as all-good, for it implies that there is darkness within Henry too. In this way, James, and by association Henry, James's double, is aligned again with Hyde, with all that is dark and twisted in the human soul; for Hyde is somehow physically deformed and is, undoubtedly, repulsive to others. The language, in fact, that Stevenson uses to describe the Master is similar to how he characterises Hyde:

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong

with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. (*Jekyll* p. 12)

The relationship between the brothers and their intimacy with evil—with their respective 'Hyde' natures—becomes more pronounced as their relationship becomes more symbiotic, for near the end of the text and as Mackellar's understanding of moral complexity becomes clear, Henry too is described as a spectral and deformed figure:

My lord, I should say, had listened to Mountain's narrative, regarding him throughout with a painful intensity of gaze; and since the tale concluded, had sat as in a dream. There was something very daunting in his look; something to my eyes not rightly human; the face, lean, and dark, and aged, the mouth painful, the teeth disclosed in a perpetual rictus; the eyeball swimming clear of the lids upon a field of blood-shot white. (p. 229)

Again, this passage is reminiscent of the lawyer Utterson's description of Hyde, 'God bless me, the man seems hardly human!' (p. 19). Significantly, both Jekyll and Henry attempt to divide the dark aspects of their own souls from their consciences, but we know that the evil they try to divorce is rooted in their own natures. Yet it is Mackellar's recognition, here, that Henry has come to embody the grotesque spectral figure he previously saw in James that is paramount. It not only shows the self-destruction that Henry has brought upon himself by trying to distinguish himself from the evil he sees in his brother, as Jekyll does with Hyde, it also reveals Mackellar's growing self-awareness; for the steward continues to follow Henry, even though he now sees that his lord embodies the same deformity he previously acknowledged only in James.

Of course, the preceding passage also shows how the Master's fate—his corpse's final expression—is inscribed on the body of Henry, for the language used to describe James's death-face is much like the description of Henry's horrifying visage: 'I have heard from others that he visibly strove to speak, that his teeth showed in his beard, and that his brow was contorted as with an agony of pain and effort' (p. 241). This further expresses the doppelgänger essence of the brothers' relationship, their unity and integration, in spite of their insistence on their fundamental difference and their mutual hatred. Even the Master's appearance emphasises this duality: despite Mackellar's revulsion at the elder brother, when Henry strikes James, he, as Mackellar describes, 'sprang to his feet like one transfigured; I had never seen the man so beautiful' (p. 103). James, then, has the same moral complexities that his brother has, and as Mackellar, after being charmed by the Master, comes to see: 'I do not think you could be so bad a man [. . .] if you had not all the machinery to be a good one' (p. 169). Just as we see this same good-evil duality in Henry, James too is divided. The difference is that the Master himself recognises his own duality and claims to have once had a better nature, 'I was not always, as I am today' (p. 183), 'I was born for a good tyrant!' (p. 184). James here admits to having a dual nature, as the phrase 'good tyrant' suggests, and this again points to the significance of the brothers' initial split and the consequent role each is forced to adopt. Indeed, it is because of his socially powerless position that James chooses to embrace only evil; as he tells Mackellar, his malady is that he does not *want* to be good (p. 169).

More important, though, is the fact that both brothers embrace their simple good or evil self-constructs in order to destroy the other. This becomes their whole purpose in life, even though they cannot live without each other. For, as doubles, they each fulfil the desires of the other: Henry unconsciously reveals the darkness that James embodies, and James covets Henry's position

as husband to his one-time betrothed and lord of the estates he forfeited. Henry, with dismay, recognises his connection to his brother: 'nothing can kill that man. He is not mortal. He is bound upon my back to all eternity—to all God's eternity! [. . .] Wherever I am, there will he be' (p. 130). And James, too, knows that this singular connection is somehow beyond reason and is out of his control: 'The battle is now committed, the hour of reflection quite past, the hour for mercy not yet come. It began between us when we span a coin in the hall of Durrisdeer, now twenty years ago; we have had our ups and downs, but never either of us dreamed of giving in' (p. 183). Indeed, neither brother does give in, and their obsession with destroying the other further ties the two together, even to the point, as we have seen, of uniting their bodies through their final grotesque expressions and, ultimately, through death and their common grave.

As they are drawn together in America, Henry begins to delight in his brother's presence and feeds off his humiliation in vampire-like fashion, just as James has financially bled the family estate dry:

He tasted his neighbourhood, I must suppose, less indirectly in the bare proximity of person; and, without doubt, drank deep of hateful pleasures.

He had no sooner come away than I openly joined him.

'My lord, my lord,' said I, 'this is no manner of behaviour.'

'I grow fat upon it,' he replied; and not merely the words, which were strange enough, but the whole character of his expression, shocked me. (pp. 193-195)

More shocking still is the manner in which Henry—one could argue James, too—dies: 'at the first disclosure of the dead man's eyes, my Lord Durrisdeer fell to the ground, and when I raised him up, he was a corpse' (p. 241). Thus it is that each brother succeeds in destroying the other, which also means destroying

the self.

Stevenson set the brothers' deaths in the New York wilderness, which reflects not only the 'midsummer madness' of Henry but also the frozen, suspended animation of the buried Master: 'Now that the sun and the wind were both gone down it appeared almost warm, like a night of July: a singular illusion of the sense, when earth, air, and water were strained to bursting with the extremity of frost' (p. 235). The journey into the wilderness also functions as a descent into the unconscious, and, for Henry in particular, as an immersion into his heart of darkness. Stripped of all civilizing influences, the brothers' true selves are exposed in the wild.

We see this first with the Master while he is lost in the wilderness with the Chevalier de Burke. Throughout the text, the Master represents himself as an elegant and charismatic individual; he is able to inspire an attraction to his character, his wit and his charm, to which even Mackellar succumbs. But despite his characteristic grace, in the wilds of America we see the Master's most uncouth and unattractive behaviour, and even Burke admits that he 'took a certain horror of the man, for I thought a soldier and a gentleman should confront his end with more philosophy' (p. 62).

The wild shows us Henry's innermost thoughts, too, though for Henry the experience is much more intense—all his thoughts after his arrival in America are located in the wild. Of course, we can see traces of Henry's wild, 'devilish' nature from the opening passages of the novel, yet it is after the midnight duel, and after Henry believes he has killed his brother, as Gifford points out, that guilt poisons Henry's psyche and moves him toward the moral deformity we later see clearly manifested in the wild.¹¹ Edwin Eigner too locates Henry's shift from an apparently good individual to one who is frighteningly evil in the moment of the duel:

His hatred for James continues, but paradoxically he begins now to resemble his brother. [. . .] now he begins

to assume James' character. He becomes more lively, he refuses to dwell on painful matters, and he turns slack in business affairs. Although he still believes that he has murdered his brother, he feels no guilt. The civilised paralysis has entirely passed [. . .] We have already seen Henry move to one extreme of his character; what we witness now is his progress to the other pole.¹²

Undoubtedly, Henry's journey into his heart of darkness began long before he arrived in America, let alone travelled into the 'barbarous country' (p. 159). Yet it is in the wild where Henry's evil force is most apparent and frightening; as Gifford notes, 'By the end, in his employment of the dregs of Albany cut-throats to do away with James, he has paralleled if not outdone James's most suspect deeds.'¹³ Mackellar, too, recognises that Henry's character has been poisoned by this hatred and that he now dwells solely on his dark desires: 'My lord's mind throughout this interval dwelled almost wholly in the wilderness' (p. 211).

The wilderness, then, functions symbolically and shows how Henry's repressed unconscious desires, those parts of his nature that are wild and evil, take over his better self, in the way that Hyde, in time, comes to dominate the 'good' Dr. Jekyll, even without the aid of the transformative elixir. Freud argues that an unconscious desire 'develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression.'¹⁴ Further, he explains that repressed desires are satisfied in the unconscious through fantasy and dreams: 'The unconscious processes pay little regard to *reality*. They are subject to the pleasure principle; their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfil the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation.'¹⁵

Thus when Henry narrates his deepest secret and darkest desire, his 'murder' of his brother, he speaks as though his attack was successful, and thereby reveals the wish-fulfilment fantasy

that he has long cherished in his unconscious:

'I have struck my sword throughout his vitals,' he cried; 'I have felt the hilt dirl on his breastbone, and the hot blood spirt in my very face, time and again, time and again! [. . .] he [Mackellar] kens all, and has seen him buried before now. This is a very good servant to me, Sir William, this man Mackellar; he buried him with his own hands—he and my father—by the light of two silver candlesticks.' (p. 231)

The delight with which he describes this imagined scene shows that this long-repressed wish has indeed proliferated 'in the dark', which is why it now manifests itself in an 'extreme form of expression'. The wilderness, thus, is symbolic of the unconscious and Henry's darkest nature.

It is significant, too, that when Henry narrates this dark and fantastic wish he uses the Scots dialect, something he does only two other times in the text: first upon his return from the duel with his brother when he falls into a fever and begins reminiscing about his and James's childhood:

what have I done? And we used to be bairns together! [. . .] O my lass [. . .] you knew me when I was a lad; there was no harm in Henry Durie then; he meant aye to be a friend to you. It's him—it's the old bairn that played with you. (p. 117)

And later, when he is drunk, Henry again uses Scots as he recalls his happy days as a lad:

Do you call to mind a place, Mackellar—it's a little below Engles—where the burn runs very deep under a wood of rowans. I mind being there when I was a lad—dear, it comes over me like an old song! —I was after the fishing, and I made a bonny cast. Eh, but I was happy. I wonder, Mackellar, why am I never happy now? (p. 208)

In this way, Henry is similar to Soulis in ‘Thrawn Janet’ who, when he is psychologically and emotionally beleaguered by the inexplicable events that surround Janet’s possession, begins to use the Scots language to recall songs and events from his childhood. For Soulis the slip into the Scots dialect and the return to childhood memories signifies his unconscious connection to the irrational. This is true likewise for Henry, but it additionally reveals that he feels his relationship with James was not always so destructive: they once existed in a past in which they had a happy and healthy relationship: “Oh! Father,” he cried, “you know I loved him; you know I loved him in the beginning I could have died for him—you know that! I would have given my life for him and you.” (p. 117).

However, only Henry remembers this idyllic past, and the memory occurs only after he begins to be destroyed by the guilt of ‘murdering’ his brother. What we see, then, is Henry’s obsessive need to define the world and his experience in terms of clear divides: he sees only a golden past and a horrible present, himself as good and James as evil. The problem, of course, is that all of these dichotomies that Henry sees are in fact complex components of the same ambiguous whole. The dissociation from himself of all that he consciously reviles but which comprises part of his character is at the root of his psychic illness and eventual self-destruction. Henry’s retreat, then, to this romantic, mythic, and imagined past points to the danger to the Scottish psyche of a similar simplistic characterization of the complex Scottish past, and, as Gifford argues, ‘When that which is whole is broken into parts, say these novels, then the parts are differently but equally malformed.’¹⁶ And, as Stevenson shows, these psychic deformities lead only to destruction.

Given the novel’s focus on the evil within mankind and on the self-destruction that occurs when a character attempts to ignore his own darkness, *Ballantrae* can be seen as one of Stevenson’s most pessimistic works. Yet the narrator Mackellar shows us

that one is able to recover from the ‘Scottish disease’¹⁷ of duality and division. At first, of course, Mackellar sees only a clear split between brothers, as he says to the Master, ‘Your brother is a good man, and you are a bad one—neither more nor less’ (p. 184). This should not surprise us since he comes to Durrisdeer as a rational-minded (he is an accountant, and a recent graduate of Edinburgh College) and seemingly morally astute man. Yet the events he witnesses challenge his rational understanding of the world. We see this first during the night of the brothers’ duel, a night described by Mackellar as ‘most unseasonable, fit for strange events’ (p. 102), and one that inspires ‘craven superstitions’ in the steward (p. 115).

Later, Mackellar recalls similar superstitions upon hearing the unfamiliar voice and language of the Master’s Indian companion, Secundra Dass. But here, significantly, Mackellar no longer describes the superstitions as ‘craven’, for they actually awaken his interest in the strange voice: ‘An old tale started up in my mind of a fairy wife (or perhaps only a wandering stranger), that came to the place of my fathers some generations back, [. . .] A little fear I had, but more curiosity’ (p. 147). And finally in the American wilderness Mackellar admits that his belief in the irrational nature of the brothers’ relationship determines his actions: ‘I will say so much, that my lord is not so crazy as he seems. This is a strange matter [. . .] We have a natural curiosity to learn the plain truth of this affair; I have some of it myself’ (pp. 232-233). Mackellar, like Charlie in ‘The Merry Men’, has learned that in order to understand the nature of the events he witnesses, he must allow for the possibility that they are inexplicable. He has, in other words, allowed this paradox to inform his perception of the world, and thereby joined two seemingly incompatible qualities—mystery and rationality—into his single and complex worldview.

Of course, we know that Mackellar not only observes the strange tragedy of the Durie brothers, he actually plays a significant role

in it. On the dark and unnatural night of the duel, Mackellar himself, to his shame, becomes involved in the brothers' struggle for dominance. Though he condemns the act, he admits he is too cowardly to stop it and thus accompanies the brothers—indeed, he lights their way—into the forest where they fight. Mackellar, here, is party to a 'murder,' and his own sense of moral astuteness is thus compromised. Moreover, even when the Durie family begins to suspect that Henry is no murderer and that the Master still lives, Mackellar admits his wish that things had gone otherwise: 'nor could any news have reached Durrissdeer more generally welcome than tidings of the Master's death' (p. 131). And years later Henry forces Mackellar to concede that he is unable to forgive the Master, despite the fact that it is God's commandment to do so:

'...Do you forgive the man yourself?'
 'Well—no!' said I. 'God forgive me, I do not.'
 'Shake hand upon that!' cries my lord, with a kind of joviality.
 'It is an ill sentiment to shake hands upon,' said I, 'for Christian people. I think I will give you mine on some more evangelical occasion.'
 This I said, smiling a little; but as for my lord, he went from the room laughing aloud. (p. 136)

Like the brother he serves, then, Mackellar is morally ambiguous, yet he initially refuses to recognise this ambiguity in himself. Indeed, in order to maintain his perception of his lord as righteous—and thus of himself as a loving and loyal servant—Mackellar simply labels James as the 'devil'.

Mackellar's identification with Henry is, in fact, so strong that upon the Master's return he has incorporated Henry's hatred of his brother into this own psyche, and thus he sees James as his personal enemy, not just the nemesis of his lord:

the Master addressed himself to Secundra Dass in

Hindustantee, from which I gathered (I freely confess, with a high degree of pleasure) that my remarks annoyed him. All this while, you may be sure, my mind had been busy upon other matters, even while I rallied *my enemy*. (p. 148, my italics)

The ‘high degree of pleasure’ Mackellar takes in unsettling James reveals the darkness within his own soul. Yet he is blind to the fact that he resembles his ‘enemy’ in this, for part of James’s ‘devilish’ nature is to delight in the torment he causes both Henry and Mackellar.

Mackellar, however, cannot maintain his simple good-evil division of the brothers, for, in spite of his declared aversion to the Master, he begins to feel genuine affection for him. This first begins when he, the Master, and Secundra Dass are left alone together in the Durrisdeer house:

mealtime at Durrisdeer must have been a delight to any one, by reason of the brilliancy of the discourse. He would often express wonder at his former indifference to my society. ‘But, you see,’ he would add, ‘we were upon opposite sides. And so we are to-day; but let us never speak of that. I would think much less of you if you were not staunch to your employer.’ You are to consider he seemed to me quite impotent for any evil; and how it is a most engaging form of flattery when (after many years) tardy justice is done to a man’s character and parts. (p. 165)

And not long after their arrival in America Mackellar offers James five hundred pounds, of his own money no less, in order to see him away from his poverty in New York:

I cannot see you in this poor place without compunction.
It is not my single thought, nor my first; and yet it’s there!
I would gladly see you delivered. I do not offer it in love,
and far from that; but, as God judges me—and I wonder at
it too!—quite without enmity. (p. 199)

Thus it is that Mackellar shows his ambiguity, and his own

mixed feelings:

In so far as regarded myself, I believed him [James] to mean well; I am, perhaps, the more a dupe of his dissimulation, but I believed (and I still believe) that he regarded me with a genuine kindness. Singular and sad fact! So soon as this change began, my animosity abated, and these haunting visions of my master passed utterly away. (p. 185)

It is significant, too, that through Mackellar's narration the reader begins to sympathise with James, who, in point of fact, is innocent of the crime for which he is now under suspicion. In this way, Stevenson complicates the moral ambiguity for the reader, for 'the sympathy we begin to feel for the Master in the last chapters does not stem from any improvement in his character—he still hopes to destroy his brother if he can—'.¹⁸ Thus Stevenson demonstrates the subtleties of moral ambiguity.

Of course, Mackellar's shifting sympathies are not given so freely until he comes face-to-face with his own complex nature. Yes, this is done to a degree when he continues to align himself with Henry after the younger brother has shown himself to be morally corrupted; as Gifford notes, 'in the closing sequences we see Mackellar condemning the fratricidal plans of Henry, but destroying his own moral validity by refusing to separate himself from Henry's cause.'¹⁹ But a more subtle and profound moral compromise occurs during the Master's enigmatic tale of the count and the baron. The tale is about the count's secret hatred for his 'friend' the baron; in order to revenge himself, the count psychologically manipulates the baron and orchestrates the unsuspecting baron's death. This story, masterfully told by James, could easily be read as a tale of wish-fulfilment in which he destroys his brother; obviously, like the count in the tale, James hates his brother whole-heartedly and is determined to see him utterly ruined. In many ways, this tale is also analogous

to the Master's attitude towards himself and one cannot help but feel that James knows his obsession with destroying his brother is as much a self-destructive act as it is a fratricide. As he says, 'The battle is now committed, the hour of reflection quite past. [. . .] when my glove is cast, *life* and honour go with it' (p. 183, my italics). Thus the well into which the baron falls, the pit that is the cause of his death, also forces the count, and thus James too, to face his own mortality as he gazes into the vacant darkness.

So complex, subtle, and ambiguous is the tale that it can support both these readings. It is my argument, however, that this tale is primarily directed towards Mackellar and connects him to his own dark 'pit.' Undoubtedly, the setting of the tale—the vacuous, black well in the 'very secret' woods—hints at the unconscious, and the count's confrontation with death at the well's edge certainly speaks to the 'profound' nature of the pit. Yet it is the count's realization that his encounter with death prepares him to orchestrate the baron's demise that parallels Mackellar's struggle with his own mortality during the early days of the ship's voyage: 'I passed these hours in unbroken solitude. At first I was terrified beyond motion, and almost beyond thought, my mind appearing to be frozen' (p. 173). Like the baron, Mackellar begins to see that his encounter with death provides a solution for how to kill his enemy: 'Presently there stole in on me a ray of comfort. If the *Nonesuch* foundered, she would carry down with her into the deeps of that unsounded sea the creature whom we all so feared and hated; there would be no more Master of Ballantrae' (p. 173). The similarities with the count's realization in the cave are striking: "'Was I sent here to my death?" says he, and shook from head to foot. And then a thought flashed into his mind. [. . .] The count set it [the well's railing] back again as he had found it, so that the place meant death to the first comer' (p. 177). Even the feelings that the count has for the baron and that Mackellar has for the Master are the same: 'my gorge rose against him' (—Mackellar, p. 172), 'his [the count's] belly moved when the man came near him'

(p. 179). This tale, then, connects Mackellar to his dark desire to see the Master dead and inspires him, however unconsciously, to act upon this wish.

Indeed, Mackellar admits that 'this particular tale, I say, took hold upon me in a degree quite singular' (p. 176). This is seen most strongly, of course, in what Mackellar does immediately after the tale's completion: Mackellar finds deep within himself the energy to kill James: 'The words of my own prayer—I *were a liker a man if I struck this creature down*—shot at the same time into my memory. I called my energies together, and (the ship then heeling downward toward my enemy) thrust at him swiftly with my foot' (p. 181). His actual attempt at murder is, however, only the outward expression of his inner desires. Mackellar's profound darkness is revealed more fully by his description of his inner thoughts: 'The thought of the man's death, of his deletion from this world, which he embittered for so many, took possession of my mind. I hugged it, I found it sweet in my belly' (p. 173). The relish with which Mackellar fantasises about the Master's death carries him far beyond the realm of moral ambiguity and into the darker recesses of his soul. Indeed, his appetite for this destruction is, like the evil side of the brothers' natures, like Hyde's appetite for cruelty, which delights him 'like wine' (*Jekyll* p. 63) and causes Jekyll to lick 'the chops of memory' (*Jekyll* p. 71) as he muses on his secret sins.

The Master, as we know, dodges death and leaves Mackellar to ruminate on his guilt: 'I do not know how long a time passed by: I lying where I was upon the deck, overcome with terror and remorse and shame' (p. 181). Lying on the ship's deck, Mackellar is faced with his own murderous action and desire; thus we see him in the same position that Henry was in after the duel, with the exception, of course, that Henry thought he had in fact killed James. Henry, however, cannot accept his own moral complexity; he tries to maintain the distinction between himself and his brother as one of good versus evil. But, as we know, this simple

moral division does not reflect Henry's real nature, and the refusal to recognise his own dark side causes his self-destruction.

Mackellar, on the other hand, does recognise that there is a part of him that is 'devilish'; as James says, 'not every man is so great a coward as he thinks he is—nor yet so good a Christian' (p. 174). And indeed Mackellar acknowledges that James's assessment is correct:

He did not guess how true he spoke! For the fact is, the thoughts which had come to me in the violence of the storm retained their hold upon my spirit and the words that rose to my lips unbidden in the instancy of prayer continued to sound in my ears: with what shameful consequences, it is fitting I should honestly relate; for I could not support a part of such disloyalty as to describe the sins of others and conceal my own. (p. 175)

Thus Mackellar admits to his own sins, and so it is not entirely surprising that after this point the steward is more sympathetic to the Master; for his awareness of his own nature has linked him with the brother he previously described as the 'devil'.

This is why, perhaps, the Master's final 'living' act is to look Mackellar in the eyes: 'I beheld the eyes flutter; the next they rose entirely, and the week-old corpse looked me for a moment in the face' (p. 241). Mackellar's connection to James is a link with his own darkness and exposes his moral ambiguity, but here it is also a link with death. Thus, like Charlie in 'The Merry Men' who has to submerge himself in the 'charnel' sea in order to understand his connection to the irrational, Mackellar's confrontation with death forces him to come to terms with his own paradoxical nature. In Henry we see where this failure to accept ambiguity leads: 'for at that first disclosure of the dead man's eyes, my Lord Durrisdeer fell to the ground and when I raised him up, he was a corpse' (p. 241).

Stevenson, argues Gifford, shows that 'if the results of history

upon Scottish psyche were not just polarization, but repression within each polarised part of its opposite, then the parts destroy each other with an unrealised and sterile longing for each other.²⁰ Thus the two brothers, longing for each other and for the repressed part of the other in the self, are finally united in death and in their 'common' grave; 'common' too, in the sense that Stevenson intends this to signify that what has been dissociated by warping Scottish experience is now once again whole—if, ironically, only in death.²¹ Gifford calls *Ballantrae* 'thoroughly tragic'; yet Mackellar, significantly, survives his encounter with James's corpse. Moreover, he is enriched by it, for he now recognises the good and evil within himself and in turn comes to have sympathy and affection for both brothers, as Francis Hart notes: 'At the end, he [Mackellar] is deeply caring, honestly troubled, loyal but balanced'.²² Indeed, the tombstone he erects for the brothers in the wilderness, with a balanced inscription for each, is a testament to his acceptance of both the brothers' and his own moral complexity. Important, too, is the link Mackellar effectively forms with the future, specifically, with 'the Editor' and 'Johnstone' who read the manuscript one hundred years after the events took place and whose voices frame Mackellar's narrative. Though one could argue that the 'Johnstone'/'Editor' doubles of Baxter and Stevenson show that the future generation has not learned of the danger of splitting oneself into public and private personas, the fact that Stevenson publishes their 'secret' identities and advertises that together they correspond in 'the broadest of broad Scots' (footnote, p. 6) testifies to his acceptance of—indeed, his joy in—his dual nature as an educated and affluent global traveller and a humble Scots Lowlander. Thus while Gifford is correct in labelling the tale a tragedy, Stevenson shows that it is perhaps not as 'thoroughly tragic' as one might first assume, for Mackellar, in his serious way, and 'the Editor', in his serio-comic way, accept their own moral and Scottish complexities.

NOTES

- 1 Francis R. Hart, 'Robert Louis Stevenson in Prose', *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol. 3, *Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1988), 291-308 (p. 300).
- 2 Douglas Gifford, 'Myth Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914', *ibid.*, 217-260 (p. 243).
- 3 Hart, p. 300.
- 4 Douglas Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of *The Master of Ballantrae*', *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1981), 62-87 (p. 84).
- 5 See Gifford, p. 85.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 7 Cairns Craig, 'The Fratricidal Twins: Scottish Literature, Scottish History and the Construction of Scottish Culture', *The Polar Twins*, ed. by Edward J. Cowan and Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999), p. 23.
- 8 *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), p. 9; henceforth cited in the text.
- 9 *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde; Weir of Hermiston* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), p. 61; henceforth cited in the text as *Jekyll*.
- 10 For a discussion of doubles and duality, see Linda Dryden's *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde, and Wells* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- 11 Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction', p. 77.
- 12 Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1966), p. 185.
- 13 Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction', p. 77.
- 14 Sigmund Freud, 'Repression', *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 568-572 (p. 570).
- 15 'The Unconscious', *ibid.*, 572-584 (p. 582).
- 16 Gifford, 'Myth Parody and Dissociation', p. 249.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- 18 Eigner, p. 187.
- 19 Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction', p. 82.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

21 See Gifford, 'Myth Parody and Dissociation', p. 249.

22 Hart, p. 302.

Stevenson's self-portrait as a popular author in the *Scribner's* essays and *The Wrong Box*

Richard Ambrosini

The decision Robert Louis Stevenson took in late February 1888 to rewrite the tontine farce his stepson Lloyd Osbourne had hammered out a few months earlier in Saranac Lake, New York, while practicing on his new typewriter, may well be the most heinous of his many sins against the sanctity of authorship. A close contender would be his insistence on publishing the wages of that sin, *The Wrong Box* (1889), with both names on the cover, pretending they were two literary collaborators, like Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins or, later, Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford. But neither Dickens nor Conrad put aside a *Master of Ballantrae* to indulge a nineteen-year old college dropout, had recently become financially independent for the first time in their life, or ended up writing four fifths of the collaborative work, aside from repeatedly rewriting the twenty three pages of Lloyd's original sketch.¹

The present essay will try to cast some light on this, the strangest case in Stevenson's literary career, by using six out of the twelve essays he wrote for *Scribner's Magazine* (immediately before he started revising Lloyd's story) as an intertextual context for his scandalous decision. These six essays: 'A Chapter on Dreams', 'The Lantern-Bearers', 'Beggars', 'Gentlemen', 'Some Gentlemen in Fiction', and 'Popular Authors', are particularly illuminating because in them he voiced his concerns about having become a popular author beholden to the rules of the literary industry. At times, in these essays, he wrathfully lashes out at the self-proclaimed realist novelists he had duelled with in the past. But mostly, the ironic stance he adopts verges on the self-destructive, as he casts himself in the role of a foolish, greedy mercenary who

brought upon himself such shame by playing irresponsibly with the penny press. Yet, underneath it all in these essays we find an extremely serious commentary on his narrative production up to that point, and on the lessons he was learning in America. And, especially, the extent to which he goes on fashioning himself in the essays as an upper-class author who has betrayed his artistic vocation explains why he wrote *The Wrong Box*. Read in this context, Stevenson's spoof on penny fiction is significant in a reconsideration of his *opus* primarily because, by providing a provisional synthesis of concepts and issues he was tackling at the time, it allows us to isolate within his American essay production a specific corpus of seven essays that constitutes a coherent whole unique in his entire work.²

The first *Scribner's* essay, 'A Chapter on Dreams' (early October 1887), is also the best known, because at the end Stevenson mentions *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an example of how, when he is asleep, 'the little people who manage man's internal theatre' stage stories invariably aimed at the market, which he then edits with an eye to the proprieties expected from a respectable upper-class author.³ Stevenson got the idea for this essay from the questions the *New Yorker* reporters kept asking him about how he first had the idea for *Jekyll and Hyde*. But the meaning of this playful reconstruction of a creative process shamelessly influenced by the 'financial fluctuations' (*Works*, XV, p. 264) is lost if one misses how the progress he outlines—from his youthful nightmares, through the liberation he found when he became a writer, up to his arrival in America—is no less than a way for him to retrace his entire literary career.

Stevenson's account of his little people's venality clearly has a polemical intention. As he will repeatedly do in other *Scribner's* essays, Stevenson pretends here that he is relating experiences of an acquaintance of his, who in reality is himself. If he does so, he eventually explains, it is because he fears incurring in the censure of his critics who 'murmur over my consistent egotism' (*Works*,

XV, p. 262)—a stab, this, at the reviewers back home who were lambasting him for allegedly currying favour with the American popular press with details of his personal life. This friend of his, we learn, was ‘an ardent and uncomfortable dreamer’ as a child, and every time he fell asleep the ‘two chief troubles of his very narrow existence—the practical and everyday trouble of school tasks and the ultimate and airy one of hell and judgment—were often confounded together into one appalling nightmare’ (*Works*, XV, pp. 251-2). If later, ‘in the course of his growth’, his dreams ‘became more circumstantial, and had more the air and continuity of life’, it was because the ‘look of the world beginning to take hold on his attention, scenery came to play a part in his sleeping as well as in his waking thoughts, so that he would take long, uneventful journeys and see strange towns and beautiful places as he lay in bed’ (*Works*, XV, pp. 252-3). It is hard to miss in these youthful dreams a reference to Stevenson’s early walking-tours essays that were supposed to be collected in a volume titled ‘Essays on the Enjoyment of the World’, or his ‘uneventful’ travelogues. His literary apprenticeship had been the means for escaping from the repressive atmosphere of his childhood.

A further change in his writing took place when ‘an odd taste that he had for the Georgian costume and for stories laid in that period of English history, began to rule the features of his dreams; so that he masqueraded there in a three-cornered hat, and was much engaged with Jacobite conspiracy between the hour of bed and that for breakfast.’ Dressed up as a Doctor Livesey, and fleeing across the heather, Stevenson became a professional writer of boy adventures; and, in his new capacity, ‘he began to read in his dreams—tales, for the most part, after the manner of G. P. R. James.’ But, alas, he confesses, these tales were ‘so incredibly more vivid and moving than any printed book’ that his acquaintance ‘has ever since been malcontent with literature’ (*Works*, XV, p. 253). The young man who had freed himself from his personal nightmares by learning to look on to the world, and then had

lived out his day-dreams in Daniel Defoe and Sir Walter Scott settings, had discovered in dreams the pleasure of reading—only to discover that this self-projection into adventure had nothing to do with literature, and instead was associated with the stories written by G. P. R. James, ‘the doyen of hack historical novelists’.⁴

It is still not clear at this point of the essay whether Stevenson is registering a pure coincidence or suggesting a metaphorical reading of his production. This doubt is cleared when he specifies that up to that point ‘this honest fellow’ had put himself to sleep with tales that were ‘irresponsible inventions, told for the teller’s pleasure, with no eye to the crass public or the thwart reviewer.’ But then, his dreamer began to ‘turn his former amusement of storytelling to (what is called) account; by which I mean that he began to write and sell his tales. [. . .] the pleasure, in one word, had become a business; and [. . .] whether awake or asleep, he is simply occupied—he or his little people—in consciously making stories for the market’ (*Works*, XV, pp. 255-7). As the sudden switch to the present tense suggests, if a mercantilist turn there was, it was occurring at the time of writing, in America.

In the essays he had written to enter the literary arena, Stevenson had chosen to adopt the persona of the childish simple-minded purveyor of boys’ yarns—the ‘*école bête*’ in literature—to counter opposite theoretical positions—as is obvious in the title of essays such as ‘A Gossip on Romance’ and ‘A Humble Romance’.⁵ Now, in addressing a new public, he constructed a new essayistic persona that combines the ‘lightness of touch’ of his earlier ‘personal essays’ with something quite different.

His second essay, ‘The Lantern-Bearers’ (early October 1887), starts out with the quaint story of young boys meeting at night on the links, carrying hidden under their coats a smoky bull’s-eye lantern. But this childish game is only a metaphor for the creative scintilla potentially present in each one of us. In everyday life, Stevenson writes, we constantly meet people ‘who are

meat salesmen to the external eye, and possibly to themselves are Shakespeares, Napoleons, or Beethovens' (*Works*, XV, p. 243). A writer of fiction must try to plumb that interior reality, and he can do so only by creating fictional characters endowed with the potentials for inducing the reader's projection into the experiences, trials, and emotions. This has nothing to do with the facile gratification of popular fiction, which Stevenson was to diagnose a few months later in another *Scribner's* essay, 'Popular Authors'; instead, he is arguing for a greater respect for that meat salesman's receptivity to poetry.

Unsurprisingly, for Stevenson it is realist novelists who are unwilling to recognize such receptivity. As 'their books are there to prove', they must have experienced the poetry of life, or at least the 'keen pleasure of successful literary composition'; why then, he asks, do they 'fill the globe' with volumes 'whose consistent falsity to all I care to call existence [inspires me] with despairing wrath'? (*Works*, XV, p. 244). Stevenson insists on calling these authors' books 'romances', and he does so on purpose, 'in the hope of giving pain' (*Works*, XV, p. 246). This is no duel between belletrist gentleman authors, such as he had fought three years earlier with Henry James: this is Stevenson's showdown with the theoretical position culturally hegemonic in the British literary scene of his times. And he chooses the terrain with great care, by setting up an imaginary conversation he then comments on with asides, set in parentheses, addressed to his American readers.

If asked about the absence of any poetry in their novels, these realist authors, he writes, would certainly agree, admitting that 'it was the same with themselves and other persons of (what they call) the artistic temperament'; but, 'in this we were exceptional'—and note that they would include him in this artistic community—they would explain that 'our work must deal exclusively with (what they call) the average man.' At which (imaginary) remark, Stevenson's (genuine) wrath erupts: 'The artistic temperament (a plague on the expression!) does not make us different from

our fellow-men, or it would make us incapable of writing novels; and the average man (a murrain on the word!) is just like you and me, or he would not be average' (*Works*, XV, p. 245). Never in his career the essayist renowned for his 'charm' let his feelings break forth like this.⁶ That he does so while calling for an equivalence between poetry and democracy, and after he has been in America for only one month, suggests that something was happening at the time, and that he felt he was able better to diagnose the class-bound complacency of his British peers.

The three essays that followed between October-November 1887 and February 1888 addressed explicitly the issue of class. In 'Beggars', Stevenson uses two tramps he met in his youth as types for the romantic and the realist artist. One of them, 'the artist, the lover and artificer of words' (*Works*, XV, p. 272), refused to read novels because all he pined for was 'romantic language that he could not understand' (*Works*, XV, pp. 268-9); the other, instead, was the type of 'the maker, the seër, the lover and forger of experience' (*Works*, XV, p. 272), with a 'vulgar taste in letters; scarce flying higher than the story papers'; but, even though he lacked a 'fine sense of poetry in letters', he 'felt with a deep joy the poetry of life.' Listening to him was a pleasure for Stevenson, but only because 'we were a pair of tramps'. But the reader would not have understood: 'to you, who are doubtless sedentary and a consistent first-class passenger in life, he would scarce have laid himself so open;—to you, he might have been content to tell his story of a ghost—that of a buccaneer with his pistols as he lived—whom he had once encountered in a seaside cave near Buckie' (*Works*, XV, p. 271).

Stevenson is here pitting—one against the other—the two genres his name was associated with: namely his virtuoso early essay-writing, and romances like *Treasure Island*, with its contingent of swashbuckling, larger-than-life pirates. Both of them have become an embarrassment—as we realize when the essay evolves into a denunciation of the contempt for beggars the bour-

geois dissimulate by giving to forms of institutionalized charity reserved for the 'Deserving Poor' in the hope, he writes, 'of getting a belly-god Burgess through a needle's eye!' The reason for such venom lies in his condition as a tramp turned successful novelist: 'O, let him stick, by all means', he adds, 'and let his polity tumble in the dust; and let his epitaph and all his literature (*of which my own works begin to form no inconsiderable part*) be abolished even from the history of man!' (*Works*, XV, p. 277; my italics).

In the next two essays, Stevenson proceeds to discuss what it means to be a 'gentleman'. 'Gentlemen' (January 1888) is of limited interest, other than as an expression of the unease he felt in finding himself transplanted into a society in which the social codes operative in Britain did not apply. Even the most consummate gentleman, he writes, 'may be put to open shame as he changes from one country, or from one rank of society to another' (*Works*, XIV, p. 360) —the unvoiced question being, of course, how can the scion of a distinguished Edinburgh dynasty be recognized as a gentleman, especially given his profession of choice? And, more importantly: how will what he writes and publishes reflect his continuing to be a gentleman in these new conditions?

A tentative answer is suggested in 'Some Gentlemen in Fiction' (February 1888), in which Stevenson challenges the notion that a novelist's ability to create gentlemanly figures may serve as an indication of his own gentlemanliness. As evidence he cites the case of 'one writer of fiction whom I have the advantage of knowing' (*Works*, XIV, p. 361)—himself, of course—who can recall how in one of his books 'the characters took the bit in their mouth; all at once, they became detached from the flat paper, they turned their backs on me and walked off bodily.' The book is *Kidnapped*, as we know because in a letter to a reviewer, Walter T. Watts-Dunton, Stevenson described in similar terms how at one point during the writing 'David and Alan stepped out from the canvas, and I found I was in another world' (*Letters*, V, pp. 313-4). As his

friend puts it in the essay, ‘when all was said, how little did I know of them! It was a form of words that [my characters] supplied me with; it was in a form of words that they consisted; beyond and behind was nothing’ (*Works*, XIV, pp. 361-2). A few months after ‘A Chapter on Dreams’, Stevenson is no longer suggesting that ‘little people’ are the subconscious source of artistic creation; instead, we find him claiming that language operates through an autonomous system.

Shortly after he completed ‘Some Gentlemen in Fiction’, the puzzled gentleman author stranded in a log cabin in upstate New York launched forth on his two most ungentlemanly projects—the essay ‘Popular Authors’ and *The Wrong Box*—after having set aside *The Master of Ballantrae*, out of dissatisfaction with his choice of using the Durie estate’s steward first-person narrative to tell the story of James Durie, the novel’s eponymous antihero, who, like Lovelace, whether or not a demon was unquestionably a gentleman.⁷

‘Popular Authors’ opens with a lesson a gentlemanly emigrant learns from a deckhand aboard a ship in mid-Atlantic: the most realistic portrayal of a seaman’s life can be found in *Tom Holt’s Log* (1868), a boy’s tale by a certain Stephen Hayward.⁸ Having chosen as a setting for this lesson his 1879 voyage to America aboard an emigrant ship, Stevenson then relates how he acted upon it once he returned to Britain. Rather than mentioning that in August 1881 he sat down to write *Treasure Island*, he recalls a number of further interviews, in the neighbourhood of Fleet Street, with popular publishers and authors; and retraces how in his youth he had come to be ‘such a student of our penny press’ (*Works*, XIV, p. 336). He then pauses to ask: ‘What kind of talent is required to please this mighty public ... if any?’ Hard to tell, he answers, given that ‘Why anyone should read them is a thing that passes wonder’; of course, he concedes, a ‘plain-spoken and possibly high-thinking critic’ could say the same thing about his own work, but ‘he would have missed the point. For I and my

fellows have no popularity to be accounted for', since 'the reputation of an upper-class author is made for him at dinner-tables and nursed in newspaper paragraphs.' There was a time, he confesses, when he had 'cherished a "genteel" illusion' (*Works*, XIV, p. 340), but those times are gone, after he tried, with *Treasure Island*, to emulate penny writers, only to fail miserably. He has learned the hard way that the class connotations implicit in the distinction between high and low literature make it impossible for a gentleman-writer to reach the millions simply by adopting the conventions of popular fiction. If in 'The Lantern-Bearers' he had questioned, far more radically than in the past, the theoretical dogmas superintending the distinction between realism and romance, through the case presented in 'Popular Authors' of the sailor who went to sea inspired by a penny novel he posits popular fiction as a privileged locus for the study of how readers 'migrate for the time of reading' into another life 'lit up' by writers such as Hayward (*Works*, XIV, pp. 344-5).

Stevenson's line of argument in 'Popular Authors' requires that he berate himself in public. But his deceptively humble stance is in fact a reaction against critics back in Britain, some of them his oldest friends, who as soon as he set foot in the U.S. started accusing him of betraying his artistic vocation in that land of vulgarians.⁹ Stevenson's reply, in 'Popular Authors', is scathing: 'Once I took the literary author at his own esteem; I behold him now like one of those gentlemen who read their own MS. descriptive poetry to wife and babes around the evening hearth; addressing a mere parlour coterie and quite unknown to the great world outside the villa windows' (*Works*, XIV, pp. 340-1). Little wonder that he was willing to don a self-parodic masque in 'Popular Authors' and, in the same days, decide to put at risk his status as an upper-class author by pretending he was writing *The Wrong Box* in collaboration with Lloyd.¹⁰

Even though in his own Haywardesque novel Stevenson has mass-consumption literature and mass media shape the main

characters' individual personalities, *The Wrong Box* is not simply a belated vindication of the experiments with popular subgenres that had led to *Treasure Island*. On the contrary, fully aware as he was that his stepson had been imitating his first such experiments—his 1878 *New Arabian Nights* (*Letters*, VI, p. 65)—in the text he eventually produced he distanced himself from his earlier manipulations of formulaic fiction.

Six years earlier, in the companion essay to *Treasure Island*, 'A Gossip on Romance', Stevenson had written: 'There is a vast deal in life and letters both which is not immoral, but simply non-moral'. What 'lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales' an author could create if he were to select this area of experience. Finally unhindered by the need to draw a realistic psychological portrait of his characters, or to dramatize profound moral issues, he could concentrate on 'the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure', rather than on 'the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience' (*Works*, XIII, p. 329). If he does so, in the process he may succeed in satisfying 'the nameless longings of the reader' by showing him 'the realisation and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men' (*ibid.*). Something, however, must have changed between 1882 and 1888, because in *The Wrong Box* Stevenson chose instead to make explicit the savagery of fictional worlds constructed on the absence of any moral frame of reference or psychological characterization. And by so doing, he questioned the 'unbearable lightness' of his own earlier upper-class revisitations of the Victorian penny dreadful.

In *The Wrong Box*, Stevenson introduces the main characters by pointing out their reading habits. As the plot then unravels, these habits remain the best indicators of how and why they behave in specific ways. Uncle Joseph's reading, we are told, 'was confined to elementary texts-books and the daily papers', and at various times we see the old bore poring over *British Mechanic* (p. 21) or carrying a copy of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (p. 45), one of

the most popular nineteenth-century 'working-class papers.' His younger nephew, John, is 'a gentleman with a taste for the banjo, the music-hall, the Gaiety bar and the sporting papers' (p. 11). He cannot live without his daily fare of the *Pink Un* (p. 22), the *Sporting Times* weekly, and after the train crash the condition he sets for staying behind with the corpse, while his brother Morris returns to London, is that he is sent 'the *Pink Un* and all the comic papers regularly' (p. 22). Joseph's other nephew, Morris, warped as he is by his obsession with the tontine has only one other passion in life, collecting 'seal rings' (p. 13), and is incapable of indulging in the pleasure of reading. (The only time he mentions a work of literature is when he tried to set down on paper the pros and cons of his predicament only to find inspiration in 'Robinson Crusoe and the double columns' [p. 62]—certainly one of the dullest passages in the entire history of the novel.) When he finally 'purchased and dispatched a single copy of that enlivening periodical [. . .] (in a sudden pang of remorse) he added at random the *Athenæum*, the *Revivalist*, and the *Penny Pictorial Weekly*. So there was John set up with literature; and Morris had laid balm upon his conscience' (p. 150). When John next meets his brother he curses him for that 'measly religious paper', and especially for *Athenæum*: 'you must have been drunk' he blasts; it 'was all full of the most awful swipes about poetry [. . .] It was the kind of thing that nobody could read out of a lunatic asylum' (pp. 174-5).

Morris's inability to tell the difference between the *Pink Un* and the *Athenæum* signals his inability to understand others, even only to use them for his ends. This is why he is no match for his cousin Michael Finsbury, a solicitor and the story's *deus ex machina* who will eventually emerge as the winner in the contest over the tontine because he is more intelligent, unscrupulous, and savvy than him—as we have known since the beginning, thanks of course to his literary tastes. Michael is Morris's nemesis, but John is full of admiration for him: 'Michael's a man I like; he's

clever and reads books, and the *Athenæum* and all that; but he's not dreary to meet, he don't talk *Athenæum* like the other parties' (p. 175). Michael too betrays erudition in the field of popular literature, but he does so with class, as when he suggests that a client adopt as a false name 'Fortuné du Boisgobey' (p. 86)—a French author of scandalous novels that Stevenson cited once in a letter as an example of his love for 'low art' (*Letters*, III: 290).

Of another character, Gideon Forsyth, a young barrister who's never put in a day's work, we are told when we first meet him that he had tried once to write an English equivalent of his beloved French detective novels, titled *Who Put Back the Clock?*—even though, following his novel's 'appearance and alarming failure' (p. 114), he later preferred not to claim its authorship. When a mysterious Australian shows up at his flat and assigns him his first case, Gideon sets out on his mission; having reached Waterloo station, he sees a copy of his book, 'in dusty solitude on [a] bookstall', and smiles contemptuously: 'What an idle ambition was the author's', he says to himself—

'How far beneath him was the practice of that childish art!' With his hand closing on his first brief, he felt himself a man at last; and the muse who presides over the police romance, a lady presumably of French extraction, fled his neighbourhood and returned to join the dance round the springs of Helicon, among her Grecian sisters.

Poor Gideon. As proud as he is for no longer being 'a careless young dog [who] cared for nothing but boating and detective novels' (p. 115), in fact he's only the latest victim of one of Michael Finsbury's pranks. As the literary creation of an Advocate at the Scottish Bar who had refused to practice law, if Gideon scoffs at a fiction writer's ambition now that he's engaged in 'real' work he does so at his own peril.

The omniscient narrator is just as incapable as the characters of elevating himself from this fictional world peopled by readers

of popular authors, to the point that he cites in parentheses two of them in two parodic authorial asides. The first time is when Uncle Joseph, Morris and John are about to board the train for London: 'Some days later, accordingly, the three males of this depressing family might have been observed (by a reader of G. P. R. James) taking their departure from the East Station of Bournemouth' (p. 19). Later, in describing a particularly silly prank he stops to comment: 'It has been remarked by some judicious thinker (possibly J. F. Smith) that Providence despises to employ no instrument however humble' (p. 47). In 'Popular Authors' Stevenson contrasts John Frederick Smith, the archetypal 'penny-pressman', with G. P. R. James, 'an upper-class author' (*Works*, XIV, p. 341), but he knew that the latter was by then a figure of fun, notorious for his 'two horsemen openings'.¹¹ They are both questionable authorities, and their use has the effect of underlining how the novel's world is held together only by the abstruse stage machinery of popular fiction.

Stevenson's first book, *An Inland Voyage* (1876), as he defiantly declares on the second page, 'contains not a single reference to the imbecility of *God's* universe, nor so much as a single hint that I could have made a better one myself [. . .]' 'Tis an omission that renders the book philosophically unimportant; but I am in hopes the eccentricity may please in frivolous circles' (*Works*, XII, p. 2). At Eton and Oxford, where the book created a furore, they obviously had no qualms about passing for 'frivolous circles,' and welcomed it instead as a healthy antidote to the Victorian sages' didactic excesses.¹² But in *The Wrong Box*, written twelve years later, and for a completely different audience, the idea of a creation utterly devoid of any meaning acquires sinister overtones.¹³

Nowhere in Stevenson's *opus* do we find such an irresponsibly merciless ending. A man has died, his corpse has disappeared forever, and the only concern anyone shows is for the thief who stole it. What can be done for him? Gideon asks, and Michael answers with the final words of the novel: 'Nothing but sympa-

thize' (p. 181). One wonders what he knows about sympathising, given that two pages earlier he had brought to an end his ruthless management of the wrong-box affair by ruining for life his cousins, and when Morris had appealed to 'the pathos of my situation' he had interrupted him with these chilling words: 'I do wish you would let me add one point [. . .] It's pathetic too—since that's your taste in literature' (p. 179), which of course is not true, but serves as a remainder that in this novel everyone will be judged according to what he reads.

Michael, a 'trafficker in shady affairs [. . .] known to be the man for a lost cause' (p. 16), is an avatar of Henry Jekyll's friend, Gabriel Utterson, whose fortune it was to be frequently 'the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men'.¹⁴ What the two solicitors have in common is their congenital inability to provide a moral solution to any human experience. But in *Jekyll and Hyde*, at least, by adding an allegorical key to the story with the doctor's 'Final Statement' Stevenson made it suitable for a Sunday sermon in Saint Paul's cathedral. In *The Wrong Box*, instead, no comforting glosses soften the author's bleak representation of 'the imbecility of God's universe.'

Which raises the question: what does *The Wrong Box* tell us about what was happening to Stevenson at this point in his career? For all its apparent jocularity, and its play on penny-fiction tropes, *The Wrong Box* remains Stevenson's most disturbing novel. We find here the first signs of the darkening of his imagination which over the next few remaining years of his life resulted in three novels—*The Master of Ballantrae*, *The Wrecker* and *The Ebb-Tide* (the last two, nominally collaborative works)—he would describe, respectively, as a 'human tragedy' (*Letters*, VI, p. 86) 'a tale [. . .] full of details of our barbaric manners and unstable morals' (*Works*, X, p. 494), and 'a dreadful, grimy business' (*Letters*, VIII, p. 103). In the South Seas, he completed his transition from morally neutral 'lively, beautiful, and buoyant

tales' to the engaged realism of his colonial fiction (*Works*, XIII, p. 329). But the first step in that direction had been to cast aside all literary decorum in the *Scribner's* essays and in *The Wrong Box* in order to express his dissatisfaction with his past achievements, his unease at the kind of success they had brought him, and his impatience with his 'high-thinking' British critics. Only Stevenson could have had such temerity. And this is why, even though his American novel, more than any other of his works, contributed to the decline of his reputation, one cannot but admire him all the more for having written it.

NOTES

- 1 For more on Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, the 'college dropout', see Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p. 372. Based on his study of the first manuscript, Ernest Meheuw established that more than four fifths of the novel is in RLS's handwriting, while Lloyd's contribution consists in the initial plot, the characters' names, a sketch of their personality, and a number of dialogues, largely rewritten by Stevenson. The eleven chapters completed by the time Stevenson left with his family for their Pacific cruise comprised one hundred and six pages in Stevenson's handwriting, the first half of which—until chapter nine—are interspersed with Lloyd's twenty three, covered with his stepfather's revisions and additions. In October, in Honolulu, he entirely revised the typescript Scribner had sent to him, and when he received the galley proofs he proceeded to a further revision, adding a new chapter. But by then Scribner had already published the novel, on June 15, 1889, without the author's permission. See Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Wrong Box*, ed. by Ernest Meheuw (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1989), pp. x-xv. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
- 2 His first collection, *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), included fifteen essays published previously between May 1876 and November 1879; his second, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), contained nine which had appeared mainly in *Cornhill Magazine* between 1874 and 1881; and his third, *Memories and Portraits* (1887), had sixteen written between 1881 and 1887. The fourth collection, *Across*

the *Plains With Other Memories and Essays* (1892), was an idea of Sidney Colvin's, and even though Stevenson approved the inclusion of nine *Scribner's* essays along with another three from the early Eighties, he washed his hands of the entire project and wrote to his friend: 'let it be your book, and disclaim what you like in the preface'. See *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Roger G. Swearingen (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1980), pp. 56, 70, 110-11, 164.

- 3 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Chapter on Dreams,' in *The Thistle Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 25 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), XV, p. 256. Further references to page numbers and volumes of this edition are given after quotations in the text.
- 4 John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Longman: Harlow, 1988), p. 325.
- 5 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Meheew, 8 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994-5), V, p. 88. Further references to page numbers and volumes of this edition are given after quotations in the text.
- 6 It had been Sidney Colvin, in a seminal review of RLS's essay in *Athenæum*, who had first introduced 'charm' as a key to his protégé's writing. Alex Clunas, in "'Out of my country and myself I go": Identity and Writing in Stevenson's Early Travel Books', *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 23, 1 (Spring 1996), 54, notes that this 'double-edged word' would have surfaced time and time again in the following decades in both praise of RLS and in attacks on his superficiality.
- 7 'Popular Authors', which did not appear in the original plan for *Scribner's*, is first mentioned *en passant* in the same February 26, 1888 letter in which Stevenson asked Scribner's editor, Edward Burlingame, to return the proofs of a pamphlet printed in England in order to secure copyright. He had decided to do away altogether with Mackellar's first-person narration, and wanted to rewrite the whole thing in the third person (*Letters*, VI, pp. 121-2; Swearingen, p. 119). Burlingame had to go to Saranac to convince him to proceed with the work, and even though the writer eventually complied he nonetheless set aside *The Master* and started revising instead Lloyd's story.
- 8 See Glenda Norquay, 'Trading Texts: Negotiations of the Professional and the Popular in the Case of *Treasure Island*', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and

- Richard Dury (Madison, WC: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 65-7.
- 9 In his autobiography, Sam McClure, the head of a newspaper syndicate, recalled that during a visit to Britain at the time, 'I found most of Stevenson's set very much annoyed by the attention he had received in America. There was a note of detraction in their talk which surprised and, at first, puzzled me.' The only one who showed a 'keen, sympathetic, personal' interest in him was Henry James (qtd. in *Letters*, VI, p. 129 note 1).
 - 10 A confirmation that Stevenson used self-parody to respond to the criticisms levelled at him back at home for choices that supposedly endangered his status as an upper-class author can be found in *The Wrecker* (1892), the collaborative novel serialized in *Scribner's Magazine* that he began one month after completing *The Wrong Box*. Four fifths of the narrative are devoted to a failed artist's first-person account of his descent from the Olympian heights of a loveless version of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* in Paris and Barbizon to the crass exploitation of his figure as 'gentleman-artist' in San Francisco, and finally to the grim landscape of an atoll lost in the Pacific—a *Way of the Cross*, this, which while recreating the scenes of his own travels parodies his own geographical and cultural dislocations.
 - 11 Sutherland, p. 325.
 - 12 See *Letters*, II, p. 260, and *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 8.
 - 13 As he discovered when his fourth *Scribner's* essay, 'Pulvis et Umbra', was published. Several readers were shocked by the nightmarish godless universe he envisaged in this 'Darwinian sermon' (*Letters*, VI, p. 60) that reflects the worldview of *The Wrong Box*. Stevenson responded by commenting: 'it is in such a world (so seen by me) that I am very glad to fight out my battle' (*Letters*, VI, p. 149).
 - 14 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Annotated Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ed. by Richard Dury (Genova: ECIG, 2005), p. 86.

The sea in Robert Louis Stevenson's writings

Jürgen Kramer

I

It is from letters written at Saranac Lake that one can learn a lot about Stevenson's personal relationship to the sea. Shortly after his arrival, in early October 1887, he writes to Henry James and his cousin Bob recalling details of his earlier Atlantic crossing. In the first letter he enthuses about 'the endless pleasures of the sea—the romance of it, the sport of the scratch dinner and the smashing crockery, the pleasure—an endless pleasure—of balancing to the swell'.¹ And in his second letter he confesses:

I have got one good thing of my sea voyage; it is proved the sea agrees heartily with me [. . .]. I was so happy on board that ship, I could not believe it possible; we had the beastliest weather, and many discomforts; but the mere fact of its being a tramp-ship, gave us many comforts; we could cut about with the men and the officers, stay in the wheel house, discuss all manner of things, and really be a little at sea. [. . .] My heart literally sang; I truly care for nothing so much as for that. [. . .] It was beyond belief to me how she rolled; in seemingly smooth water, the bell striking, the fittings bounding out of our stateroom. It is worth having lived these last years, partly because I have written some better books, which is always pleasant, but chiefly to have had the joy of this voyage. (*Letters VI*, p. 17)

Half a year later, near the end of his sojourn here, he writes to Charles Baxter:

I care damned little for what's left of my life (unless I could

get to sea) but I do not want any who still value me to be pained when I am gone. —Unless I could get to sea! Ah, folk can't write you letters there! And maybe I'll manage it yet [. . .]. (*Letters* VI, p. 160)

While the whole phrase refers to Stevenson's quarrel with Henley, sparked by the latter's letter in March 1888 (cf. *Letters* VI, p. 129 seq.), the importance attributed to the possibility of getting 'to sea' is conspicuous.

In what follows I should like to sketch the role of the sea in Stevenson's writings. I shall look at his letters, essays, poetry and, most importantly, his fiction. My interest in this topic stems from my more general interest in *the sea as a culturally constructed space*, which encompasses not only a configuration of whole ways of life, but also the production, circulation and regulation of meaning, i.e. those processes which create, construct and communicate such ways of life.² To come to grips with such a vast subject area, I made myself a kind of mental map to help me find my bearings. As with any mental map, it is anything but complete. On the left-hand side, there are the sea and its dimensions: water, fauna, flora, and the weather. These basic units can then be subdivided: water, for example, can be regarded as an element (with a set of specific features) or as a space (with a different set of features). The subdivisions can, again, be further subdivided. On the right-hand side, we have sea-faring people living on the coast (or beach) or on an island. They build and man ships for voyages—and the concomitant processes produce, circulate and reproduce ideas and concepts as well as norms and values. The dimensions 'ships', 'crews' and 'voyages' can also be further subdivided. Thus *voyages*, for example, can be ones of exploration, trade, or war; they can be successful or end in shipwreck; *crews* are the products of many different and highly contradictory processes, of which factors like class, race/'ethnicity', gender, age, nationality and language present only a preliminary list; *ships* can be rightly looked at as a means of transport, but also as

social systems (or models of society). These two sides have to be imagined as complex networks opening up towards each other so that specific (thematic or theoretical) connections can be made. Moreover, and more importantly, all these natural and social relations as well as processes are flooded with, shot through and informed by innumerable *discourses* (historical, social, political, philosophical, literary, etc.) which reflect and constitute them. It is these discourses I am particularly interested in, and in my paper I want to look at the contributions of one particular author—Robert Louis Stevenson—to them.

II

It comes as no surprise, I believe, that the sea is a frequent topic in the letters Stevenson writes during his Pacific voyages (July 1888 to September 1890). Interestingly, the euphoria he seems to have experienced during his Atlantic crossing (to which I briefly alluded at the beginning of my paper) gives way to more ambivalent feelings. From Tahiti he writes to Sidney Colvin:

It must be owned these climates and this voyage have given me more strength than I could have thought possible. And yet the sea is a horrible place, stupefying to the mind and poisonous to the temper; the sea, the motion, the lack of space, the cruel publicity, the villainous tinned foods, the sailors, the captain, the passengers—but you are amply repaid when you sight an island, and drop anchor in a new world. (*Letters* VI, p. 216)

While here the sea voyage is like an ordeal whose tribulations need to be compensated by an agreeable landfall, in a letter to his cousin Bob, sent at the end of the cruise in the *Casco* (February 1889), Stevenson clearly demonstrates his lust for more:

[T]hough I am very glad to be done with them [i.e. the perils of the deep] for a while and comfortably ashore, where a squall does not matter a snuff to any one, I feel

pretty sure I shall want to get to sea again ere long. [. . .]
I have got health to a wonderful extent; [. . .]. —From my
point of view, up to now, the cruise has been a wonderful
success. I never knew the world was so amusing. (*Letters*
VI, p. 256)

In his letters to Sidney Colvin and Henry James, who deeply
deplored his decision not only to stay longer than planned in the
Pacific but, in fact, to stay for good (including plans to become
a ship-owner and part-time trader [cf. *Letters* VI, p. 328]),
Stevenson obviously feels the need to give reasons for his special
liking. To Colvin he writes on 2 April 1889:

I cannot say why I like the sea; no man is more cynically
and constantly alive to its perils; I regard it as the highest
form of gambling; and yet I love the sea as much as I hate
gambling. Fine, clean emotions; a world all and always
beautiful; air better than wine; interest unflagging: there
is upon the whole no better life. (*Letters* VI, p. 276)

His letter to Henry James (19 August 1890) is no less candid:

I was never fond of towns, houses, society or (it seems)
civilisation. Nor yet it seems was I ever very fond of (what
is technically called) God's green earth. The sea, islands,
the islanders, the island life and climate, make and keep
me truly happier. These last two years I have been much
at sea, and I have *never wearied*, sometimes I have indeed
grown impatient for some destination; more often I was
sorry that the voyage drew so early to an end; and never
once did I lose my fidelity to blue water and a ship. It is
plain then that for me, my exile to the place of schooners
and islands can be in no sense regarded as a calamity.
(*Letters* VI, p. 403)

With these sentiments Stevenson is well in line with the late
Romanticist *Zeitgeist*³—the sea is constructed as an antithesis to

society, a space in which emotions can be 'fine' and 'clean' (i.e. not corrupted by hypocrisy), in which the environment is clear (i.e. not polluted by industrial refuse), and in which a 'better life' in 'a world all and always beautiful' seems possible. Moreover, as a space of the sublime (cf. Steinberg, p. 118) and (as such) as one of the few remaining representations of the 'state of nature', the sea provides a 'true' testing ground for an individual's attitudes, abilities and convictions. We may well speculate why, probably on the same day, Stevenson asks Edward Burlingame to send him ten of Frederick Marryat's novels (cf. *Letters* VI, p. 277). Is it to complement his positive experiences by equally edifying texts? Does he think of emulating Marryat? Or does he already plan to take issue with certain Victorian myths of the sea and the empire as he is to do in *The Ebb-Tide* (1894), when, as Roslyn Jolly has argued, he re-writes Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*?⁴

III

In Stevenson's essays the sea is mentioned several times. I should like to focus on two pieces which differ very much in form and perspective. In his essay 'The English Admirals' (1878) Stevenson suggests that while for the Romans the eagle signified patriotic glory and success, for the English the appropriate symbol can only be the sea. '[. . .] the sea is *our* approach and bulwark; it has been the scene of *our* greatest triumphs and dangers; and we are accustomed in lyrical strains to claim it as *our own*.'⁵ And he continues:

The prostrating experiences of foreigners between Calais and Dover have always an agreeable side to English prepossessions. A man from Bedfordshire, who does not know one end of the ship from the other until she begins to move, swaggers among such persons with a sense of hereditary nautical experience. To suppose yourself endowed with natural parts for the sea because you are the countryman of Blake and mighty Nelson is perhaps

just as unwarrantable as to imagine Scottish extraction a sufficient guarantee that you look well in a kilt. But the feeling is there, and seated beyond the reach of argument. We should consider ourselves unworthy of our descent if we did not share the arrogance of our progenitors, and please ourselves with the pretension that the sea is English. (*Works XXV*, p. 87)

Just as the conservative historian James Froude in *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* eight years later will describe the sea as ‘the natural home of Englishmen’,⁶ Stevenson claims the sea for the English. This idea makes him part of a long tradition which insists not only on the beneficial—defensive—aspects of the sea (as in Shakespeare’s image of ‘this sceptred isle’, this ‘fortress built by nature for herself’, which ‘serves it in the office of a wall, | Or as a moat defensive to a house’ [*Richard II*, II, i, 40-49]), but also includes more aggressive dimensions as in James Thomson’s ‘Rule, Britannia, rule the waves’ (1740) or in the anonymous song ‘The Bold British Tars’.⁷

Crucially, these ideas were linked to more general discursive struggles over the possibility (or impossibility) of owning the sea. The famous ‘Battle of (Legal) Books’ in the first third of the 17th century—between the Dutchman Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese Seraphim de Freitas and the Englishman John Selden, to name just the most important participants—testifies to the intensity of the argument. As is well known, in the mercantilist era profit resulted from commerce, and in this context the sea was a special space which allowed the ‘channelled circulation’ of goods (Steinberg, p. 98): while coastal waters were mostly regarded as part of the national territory and, therefore, ‘closed’ to competitors and permeable only after the payment of taxes, trade routes crossing the deep sea were in the main treated as ‘free’ for all. However, in the same way in which a nation can only guard its coastal waters if it is strong enough to man and equip the necessary fleet, any nation whose strength enables it

to extend its sphere of influence beyond its coastal waters can only be prevented from doing so if its competitors are strong enough to resist such a move. By 1815 Britain had achieved what James Thomson envisaged in 1740: Britannia ruled the waves. But seventy years later the influence of its competitors—the US, Germany and France—could already be felt. No wonder that the ‘navy-mad’ British public reacted by nostalgically invoking the heroic past—first and foremost the Elizabethan sea dogs and, endlessly, Nelson and Trafalgar—in order to steel itself for the battles of the present and the future.

Stevenson differs from most of his more nationalist (even chauvinist) peers, I think, because he tempers his nostalgia with mild irony. The result is highly ambivalent. While the way in which he invokes the man from Bedfordshire and the kilt clearly ridicules nationalist attitudes, he takes the feelings that go with them quite seriously. And later in his essay, his ambivalent attitude is resolved and transmuted into admiration for ‘men brought to the test and giving proof of what we call heroic feeling’ (*Works XXV*, p. 94). Moreover, he continues:

It is not over the virtues of a—curate—and—tea—party novel, that people are abashed into high resolutions. It may be because their hearts are crass, but to stir them properly they must have men entering into glory with some pomp and circumstance. And that is why these stories of our sea-captains, printed, so to speak, in capitals, and full of bracing moral influence, are more valuable to England than any material benefit in all the books of political economy between Westminster and Birmingham. (*Works XXV*, p. 94)

The sea, that is to say, provides a testing ground—where men can prove that they are men—and stories of the sea offer representative examples to be imitated and emulated by their readers. While this links nicely with what we also found in Stevenson’s

letter to Colvin quoted above, we should also remember the biting irony with which Joseph Conrad characterised such 'literature' at the beginning of *Lord Jim*.⁸

The second text I want to discuss presents a totally different view of the sea. In 'A Note at Sea', Stevenson writes:

In the hollow bowels of the ship I hear the ponderous engines pant and trample. The basin gasps and baulks like an uneasy sleeper, and I hear the broad bows tilt with the big billows, and the hollow bosom boom against solid walls of water, and the great sprays scourge the deck. Forward I go in the darkness with all this turmoil about me. And yet I know that on deck— (And the whole ship plunges and leaps and sinks wildly forward into the dark) the white moon lays her light on the black sea, and here and there along the faint primrose rim of sky faint stars and sea lights shine. All is so quiet about us; yet here in the dark I lie besieged by ghostly and solemn noises. The engine goes with tiny trochees. The long ship makes on the billows a mad barbaric rhythm. The basin gasps when it suits it. My heart beats and toils in the dark midparts of my body; like as [sic] the engine in the ship, my brain toils. (*Works XXX*, p. 179)

This is indeed an interesting fragment. It places us (as readers) with the 'I' of the text in the 'hollow bowels' of a ship where we can hear the noises of the engine and of the ship moving in the sea. The writer tries to attract our attention by a variety of means: first by an excess of alliteration, then by a contrast between perception and knowledge concerning the inside and outside of the ship ('the darkness' of the hold vs. the moonlight 'on deck'), and finally by the two-fold identification of the body of the 'I' and the ship *as well as* of his brain and its engine. I should like to add two observations: firstly, when the advent of steam reduced the danger of voyages in the age of sail, the traditional trope of

human life as a sea voyage became weaker. Stevenson, I should like to argue, wants to counter this development by insisting on the almost 'industrial' character of emotional and intellectual labour. Although all of his 'sea fiction' is set in the age of sail, his deep emotional and practical involvement in his 'Family of Engineers' (*Works XIX*, pp. 153-330) makes him anything but a Luddite. However, and this is my second observation, he tells us: 'The engine goes with tiny trochees.' As is well known, this metrical unit (of one stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable) is quite rare in English.⁹ We may well speculate whether this apparently innocent sentence does not point to and indict the hostility to industry and technology which dominated British cultural criticism towards the end of the 19th century.¹⁰

IV

In Stevenson's poetry the sea occupies a variety of 'positions'. In 'A Child's Garden of Verses', the child's bed is imagined as a boat (*Works XXII*, p. 16) whose crossing of the 'dark' of the 'night' alludes to the depth of the sea (and with the return of the day the vessel is safely moored at the pier). Clearly, the dark and the deep represent all the dangers a child going to sleep may be afraid of, while the light and the land stand in for life as it is lived during the day and (as yet) devoid of similar dangers. In 'My Ship and I' (*Works XXII*, pp. 27-8), the boat represents the child's micro-cosmos and becomes a means of growth for him (or her?). The sea and the weather are envisaged as benign, and nothing threatens the child's safe passage to greater maturity.

The ballad 'Christmas at Sea' (*Works XXIII*, pp. 71-3) works on at least two levels. On the one hand, it describes the dangerous tacking of a sailing ship with 'cliffs and spouting breakers [as] the only things a-lee' (p. 71). While having to work with frozen ropes and sheets is no joke at any time, what adds to the crew's distress is that this 'day of our adversity was blessed Christmas morn' (p. 72). The day on which Christians remember and celebrate their salvation threatens to become the crew's day of doom and

destruction. On the other hand, the ballad tells a ‘story’ of initiation: the initial ‘they’ (referring to the crew) is transformed first into ‘we’ and then into ‘I’ (stanza 5). The poetic ‘I’ experiences not only the above-mentioned stress, but does so under the eyes of his parents and the village he was born in. And while the reader may assume that the parents are relieved when the ship ‘cleared the weary headland, and passed below the light’ (p. 73), the ‘I’ realises ‘that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old’ (p. 73). The ideas we find in this ballad are by now familiar: the sea stands in for the world as it is, the individual voyage (i.e. life) of a human being involves physical and mental departures, hard work, and, it is to be hoped, a safe return home.

Stevenson’s sonnet ‘To the Sea’ (*Works XXIII*, p. 201) is quite different.

Thy God permits thee, but with dreadful hand
 Canst churn great boulders into little sand,
 On fruitless tasks to waste thy summer ease,
 In tide washed seaweeds find a childish joy.
 Or—harnessing the unruly force of sea
 To lick smooth stone into a fretted toy—
 From thy great page, turn forth knick-knacks to please
 A Lilliputian fancy—yea, produce
 Such nice laborious fritters as could these
 Old Chinamen whose life, by slow degrees,
 Frayed four-and-twenty peachstones into lace.
 Hence know that in our smallest work God sees
 Some service to himself, or some good use,
 From us yet hidden and our blinded race.

While ‘Christmas at Sea’ is, at least implicitly, critical of the Christian framework of human existence in that it juxtaposes the plight of the sailors and its temporal context (‘blessèd Christmas morn’), the sonnet clearly underwrites God’s rule of the world. Moreover, the rule is envisaged as benign and includes ways of making sense of itself (‘in our smallest work God sees | some

service to himself, or some good use'), even if this sense may escape us because of our ignorance and blindness.

V

Finally I should like to turn to Stevenson's prose fiction. Sea voyage narratives have been with us for almost three millennia. Their singular attraction has resulted from certain qualities which endured, although in historically differentiated forms, at least until the end of the age of sail. (Perhaps also beyond, but that's another story.) These qualities have resulted from the ways in which the sea has been made to stand in for the world in its inscrutability, at times treacherously smooth, at other times churned by storms, but always and everywhere full of rocks and reefs on which a ship can founder. Ships in their corporeality have represented the human body or the body of humanity: the ship as a microcosm as in the ship of fools, the nave and the ship of state. The sail has enabled the ship to move, its rudder has allowed the helmsman to steer (and to keep) a particular course, while the voyage has represented the lifetime of the body.¹¹ In sea voyage narratives these elements have been given a linear structure (with departures and landfalls, i.e. beginnings and endings) and have become stories of initiation, romance, quest and, sometimes, a *Bildungsroman*.

In most of Stevenson's books these categories overlap: *Treasure Island* (1881-2, 1883) is a story of initiation with elements of romance, while *Kidnapped* (1886) is a romance with elements of a *Bildungsroman*. *The Wrecker* (1892), in turn, is a *Bildungsroman* with elements of romance and quest which, however, in the course of events turn sour. What these texts have in common, though, in the context of my deliberations, is that the sea is conceived of as a stage: the necessary background of the personal development of the protagonists.¹² While this applies to *Treasure Island* only in a very general sense—there is nothing of importance in the plot or Jim's character that is 'caused' by the sea—in *Kidnapped* the brig *Covenant* is wrecked,

which gives a very decisive twist to David Balfour's development. He is separated from Alan Breck; he reaches the shore of what he regards as an islet and survives there under pitiful circumstances—overcoming hunger, illness and, eventually, his ignorance that the islet is not more than a tidal islet so that he can enter the mainland. Although David has 'no skill of swimming' (*Works VI*, p. 89), his deliverance from the roaring sea is not without comical elements:

I went down, and drank my fill, and then came up, and got a blink of the moon, and then down again. They say a man sinks the third time for good. I cannot be made like other folk, then; for I would not like to write how often I went down, or how often I came up again. All the while, I was being hurled along, and beaten upon and choked, and then swallowed whole; and the thing was so distracting to my wits, that I was neither sorry nor afraid. (*Works VI*, p. 88)

While David seems to thrive in 'action' and in interaction with other human beings (on the brig, in the water after being shipwrecked), he is unnerved when he is alone, thrown back on himself (on the islet). Apparently, Stevenson puts him into this situation of mental testing and eventual growth not on board ship, but on land. But then, one could argue, is the islet not like a ship, with just one sailor/passenger who has to come to grips with the vicissitudes of solitude?

Although the use of the sea in *The Wrecker* is similar in that it sets the stage to Loudon Dodd's development, the test it provides and the growth it enables are different. They are more in line with ideas of overcoming fear and proving one's manliness in the face of adverse weather at sea. This is from chapter XII in which we follow the voyage of the *Norah Creina* to the island where the *Flying Scud* is beached.

It seemed incredible that any creature of man's art could

long endure the barbarous mishandling of the seas, kicked as the schooner was from mountain-side to mountain-side, beaten and blown upon and wrenched in every joint and sinew like a child upon the rack. [. . .] I stood on deck, choking with fear; I seemed to lose all power upon my limbs, my knees were as paper when she plunged into the murderous valleys; my heart collapsed when some black mountain fell in avalanche beside her counter, and the water, that was more than spray, swept round my ankles like a torrent. I was conscious of but one strong desire, to bear myself decently in my terrors, and whatever should happen to my life, preserve my character: as the captain said, we are queer kind of beasts. (*Works* XII, pp. 190-1)

The relevance of this passage, I think, is obvious. The combination of threatening sea and weather strengthens the identities of our protagonists—Dodd and Nares—and enhances their status. For a day and a half on the verge of shipwreck, they literally ‘scud’ (*ibid.*) to the *Flying Scud*, under the motto that ‘there’s always something sublime about a big deal like that; [. . .] it kind of raises a man in his own liking’ (*ibid.*). Fate—represented by nature (sea and storm)—is successfully fought and, having thus affirmed their identities Dodd and Nares can, at least for some time, forget about the dubious nature of their business. It is as if the survival of the stormy voyage sanctions everything that comes after it.

If the sea brings out the best in men, it also brings out their worst. This happens in ‘The Merry Men’ (1882) where, I should like to argue, Stevenson’s ‘view of the sea’ (*Letters* III, p. 213) contains two complementary aspects. Charles, the I-narrator—as-protagonist represents the sea as a catalytic Burkean object of terror which, because of its wild, endless and unfathomable activity, acquires the status of an independent force (‘the current had them, racing seaward’ [*Works* VIII, p. 56]). In the experience of Charles and Gordon Darnaway the sea becomes a character in

its own right that engages with and, thereby, partly determines their lives.¹³ Crucially, human qualities are ascribed to sea: for one, there are the ‘sea-runes’ (*Works VIII*, p. 18), which suggest that the sea can signify and, thereby, communicate with the two protagonists. Although they may decode the signs differently, there is no doubt that Charles and Gordon react to them (and in their reactions interact with each other). Secondly, the ‘noise’ of the Merry Men, a group of dangerous breakers, is characterised as

almost mirthful, as it out-topped the other noises of the night; or if not mirthful, yet instinct with portentous joviality. Nay, and it seemed even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and, discarding speech, bawl together in their madness by the hour [. . .]. (*Works VIII*, p. 40)

Both, Charles and Gordon are affected by this ‘human savagery’ or ‘savage humanity’ and, as a consequence, both blame the sea for what they do. The former admits that

[t]hought was beaten down by the confounding uproar; a gleeful vacancy possessed the brains of men, a state akin to madness; and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry Men as it were a tune upon a jiggging instrument (*Works VIII*, p. 41).

The latter confesses, “‘I’m a deil, I ken’t. But I think naething o’ the puir sailor lads; I’m wi’ the sea, I’m just like ane o’ her ain Merry Men.”” (*Works VIII*, p. 46)

For me Charles (and not his uncle) is the central character of the tale. In fact, as Edwin M. Eigner stated, ‘the two men are much alike’.¹⁴ Their central aim—to become rich by exploiting shipwrecks—is the same. Whether Gordon is indeed guilty of murder is highly questionable. We have only Charles’s word that (i) his uncle shows signs of guilt, (ii) a mound looks like a

grave and (iii) Gordon is a murderer. On the contrary, one could easily argue that Charles is singularly successful in using the 'trap' (*Works VIII*, p. 6) of Aros to oust his tiresome kinsman and competitor: he represents Gordon as a guilty murderer and madman who, when confronted with his—alleged—deeds, flees and finally drowns in the sea, taking a (possibly irksome) witness with him. The sea collaborates—'if ever they came up again [. . .] it would be ten minutes after, at the far end of Aros Roost, where the sea-birds hover fishing' (*Works VIII*, p. 56)—and Charles (we are not told, but led to surmise) will enjoy the riches and marry Mary Ellen.¹⁵

VI

I should like to stress that this is a report from a work in progress. For the time being I cannot do more than point to the tip of an iceberg. My provisional conclusion consists of three points. Firstly, there is not *one* meaning of the sea in Stevenson's writings. In the great variety of his texts (and of motifs that caused them to be written) the sea is seen in different lights and different roles are accordingly allotted to it. Secondly, despite this great variety, in most of Stevenson's letters, essays, poetry and fiction the roles ascribed to the sea—geopolitically, as a means of defence, philosophically, as an antithesis to society, ethically, as a testing ground, aesthetically, as a stage—are within the traditional range of meanings in contemporary discourses on the sea. However, and this is my final point, with 'The Merry Men' Stevenson transcends the established discourses by radically anthropomorphising the sea and allotting a character role to it. I think it is a great pity that he did not follow up this 'early' perspective.

NOTES

- 1 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth & Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven—London: Yale University Press, 1994-5), VI, p. 15; henceforth cited in text.

- 2 Cf. Jürgen Kramer, 'A Different Perspective for British Cultural Studies: The Sea as a Cultural Space', in *British Literature and Culture: Divergent Views and Attitudes*, ed. by Reinhold Schiffer & Merle Tönnies (Trier: WVT, 1999), pp. 59-68. Cf. Jürgen Kramer, 'The Sea is Culture. Some Systematical Observations and a Glimpse of a Project in Progress', in *Common Ground? Crossovers between Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Bernhard Klein & Jürgen Kramer (Trier: WVT, 2001), pp.101-112.
- 3 Cf. Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 112.
- 4 Cf. Cynthia Fansler Behrmann, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1977); and also Roslyn Jolly, 'The Ebb-Tide and Coral Island', *Scottish Studies Review*, 7, 2 (Autumn), 2006.
- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 35 vols, Tusitala Edition (London: Heinemann, 1923-4), XXV, p. 87. My italics, henceforth cited in text.
- 6 James Anthony Froude, *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies*, 1886 (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1887), p. 26.
- 7 J. E. Patterson, ed., *The Sea's Anthology* (London: Heinemann, 1913), pp. 235-6, 284-7. See also John Keegan, 'The Sea and the English', in *The Sea and History*, ed. by E. E. Rice (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), pp. 143-151.
- 8 Cf. Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim, Collected Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad* (London: Dent, 1968), pp. 5-6.
- 9 Cf. Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 230.
- 10 Cf. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958).
- 11 Hönig, Christoph, *Die Lebensfahrt auf dem Meer der Welt. Der Topos. Texte und Interpretationen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), p. 30.
- 12 According to Jean François Millet, Stevenson 'saw landscape as a background to people' —quoted in Richard Ambrosini, "Painting and Words": Landscape-Writing in R. L. Stevenson's Literary Apprenticeship and Early Essays', *Merope XIV/35-36* (2002), 179-203, (p. 195).
- 13 Taking into account Stevenson's characterisation of his text as a

'fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks' (*Letters*, III, pp. 204, 206), one could also argue that the sea is the primary theme of this sonata form, while the protagonists with their mixture of desires and the feelings of guilt resulting from them make up the second/subordinate one.

- 14 Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 139.
- 15 In her essay 'Quarreling with the Father', in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini & Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 109-120, Louisa Villa provides a fascinating psychoanalytic reading of the story that, to a certain extent, could complement my own. Her reminders that, on the one hand, water is 'traditionally associated with women' and that, on the other, 'the failure of fathers to build barriers against oceans, and the sinking of ship's crews into the tempestuous seas almost inevitably come to represent an (incestuous) collapse of the masculine self into (feminine) shapelessness' could certainly add to our understanding of the text—if they were borne out by it. But to me the limits of Villa's reading lie in the fact that she seems to derive the meaning of the text not so much from the text itself, but from its author's biography. To her Stevenson's troubled relationship with his father is transported into the 'Oedipal triangle' (p. 113) of the text and 'the splitting of good and bad and the doubling of self fairly explicitly occur across the generation gap' (p. 117). This, to say the least, remains doubtful, if we accept the obvious likeness (pointed out above) of the two men.

'Home' in the South Seas

Ilaria B. Sborgi

In this study I will examine Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific travel writing, *In the South Seas* (1896), and its representation of the author's personal investment in the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange. This investment centres on Stevenson's notion of *home* as a means to understand the peoples he encountered in the South Pacific. My aim will be to show how this notion marks the intersection of two relationships of continuity and difference; one between *In the South Seas* and Stevenson's earlier travel writing¹ and the other between the work and the discursive categories of its cultural context. *Home*, I will argue, constitutes both the method (analogy) and the means (storytelling) of the author's textual response to the Pacific colonial world.

On 28 June 1888, Stevenson left San Francisco on the schooner *Casco* and headed with his family towards the Marquesas, in search of better climates and better health. 'It was suggested that I should try the South Seas,' the author recalls, 'and I was not unwilling to visit like a ghost, and be carried like a bale, among scenes that had attracted me in youth.'² After a few months, 'lacking courage to return to my old life of the house and sick room,' he continued his journey across the Pacific on the trading schooner *Equator* and arrived in Samoa towards the end of 1889. By then, Stevenson comments, 'gratitude and habit were beginning to attach me to the islands; I had gained a competency of strength; I had made friends; I had learned new interests; the time of my voyages had passed like days in fairyland; and I decided to remain' (*South Seas*, p. 5). He bought land and built a house on the island of Upolu in the Samoan archipelago, and lived there the rest of his life.³

This change of premises had a great impact on his writing and resulted in a variety of works, both documentary and fiction.⁴

Stevenson felt better in the Pacific yet the islands 'turned out to be more than a simple restorative: they possessed an enormous intellectual and imaginative attraction for the Scots writer.'⁵ It was a completely new life experience which brought new interests and challenges. 'I must learn to address readers from the uttermost part of the sea' (*South Seas*, p. 5), the author wrote at the beginning of his travel account, foregrounding his awareness that spatial and cultural distance could affect questions of address. And yet it was also a matter of finding ways of representing the 'South Seas' to his distant readers:

No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor, and the task before me is to communicate to fireside travellers some sense of its seduction, and to describe the life, at sea and ashore, of many hundred thousand persons, some of our own blood and language, all our contemporaries, and yet as remote in habit as Rob Roy or Barbarossa, the Apostles or the Caesars. (pp. 5-6).

The above passage highlights many of the issues at stake in Stevenson's writing from and about the South Pacific. It refers to the established tradition of travel literature concerning this part of the world, such as the accounts of 18th century explorers (culminating with Captain Cook's voyages), the narratives of 19th century travellers, scientists, militaries, missionaries and traders, but also the adventure books for children and exotic novels.⁶ 'No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor,' hints to this literary tradition. Yet in the following sentence the author gradually moves away from the representation of the exotic 'South Seas.' If the task before him is to communicate the 'seduction' of the islands he was visiting, it is also to 'describe the life' of the many thousands of people who lived there.

This shift from seduction to documentary reflects the binary opposition that confronted Stevenson as he fulfilled the assignment that financed his Pacific travels: a series of letters com-

missioned by Samuel S. McClure for newspaper syndication. On the one hand there was what was expected of him—a personal narrative of his adventures in distant lands. By the time of his voyages, Stevenson was at the height of his fame as the author of *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886), of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and of a number of travel books and critical essays. On the other hand there was what he saw and experienced during his journey, and his residence on many different islands.⁷

In his travels, Roger Swearingen notes, Stevenson found ‘everything he had hoped, writing accounts of his most recent experiences, discoveries and conversations nearly every day during the voyages of the *Casco* (28 June 1888–24 January 1889), the *Equator* (24 June–7 December 1889), and the *Janet Nichol* (11 April–26 July 1890), although in this last voyage he was chiefly occupied with revising earlier material rather than with his day-to-day accounts.’⁸ If the author’s initial task was to write letters for McClure, the gathering of information on the different Pacific cultures and the recording of his experiences in his journals, also provided him with ‘the material for a very singular book of travels,’⁹ which, by the end of 1889, was ‘practically modelled.’ Nobody ‘has had such stuff,’ he wrote to his friend and editor Sidney Colvin on 2 December 1889, ‘such wild stories, such beautiful scenes, such singular intimacies, such manners and traditions, so incredible a mixture of the beautiful and the horrible, the savage and the civilised’ (*Letters*, vol. 6, p. 335).¹⁰

In order to represent this ‘incredible mixture,’ Stevenson chose an anthropological approach to understand the peoples he encountered. Contemporary anthropology provided the authoritative discourse on native cultures that it considered ‘survivals’ of primitive stages of human civilization.¹¹ These ideas not only resonated within the Victorian scientific milieu but also influenced the entire cultural framework and gave scientific backing to Britain’s imperial claims.¹² Stevenson’s use of anthropological

categories, as we shall see, was both supportive and subversive of them. Though he was deeply engaged in the intellectual debates of the time,¹³ he maintained an inquisitive attitude towards any device, method or source that he utilised in his work.¹⁴

When he was confronted with the material realities of the South Pacific, it was soon clear to him that his travel writing should be fashioned as an ethno-historical account. The letters Stevenson sent to McClure were the basis for a much wider project. What 'you are to receive,' the author wrote on 19 July 1890, 'is not so much a certain number of letters, as a certain number of chapters in my book. The two things are identical but not coterminous. It is for you to choose out of the one what is most suitable for the other' (*Letters*, vol. 6, pp. 394-95). This was not what McClure had in mind. The letters did not provide the personal and adventurous narrative that readers sought from him. Both Stevenson's wife, Fanny, and Colvin objected to their impersonal tone. His public, they believed, was not interested in a scientific treatise on Polynesian languages and peoples, but in the author himself, his experiences and impressions of the South Pacific. 'Louis has the most enchanting material that anyone ever had in the whole world for his book,' Fanny wrote to Colvin on 21 May 1889, 'and I am afraid he is going to spoil it all. He has taken into his Scotch Stevenson head, that a stern duty lies before him, and that his book must be a sort of scientific and historical impersonal thing' (*Letters*, vol. 6, p. 303).

Fanny and Colvin's impression effectively anticipated the reactions of the author's public.¹⁵ Although they were serialised in the United States, England and Australia, the letters had scarce success.¹⁶ There was a general consensus that his Pacific travel narrative was 'a complete departure from Stevenson's habitual style and method' ("Problematic Shores", p. 143). It is striking however to compare this negative response with the author's struggle to fashion his writing to the subject matter he was confronted with. The 'job is immense,' he wrote to Colvin in November 1890,

'I stagger under the material' (*Letters*, vol. 7, p. 29). Stevenson repeatedly expressed this difficulty in his private correspondence and, as we have seen, was conscious of the problems it would raise for his readers, the 'fireside travellers' to whom he wanted to convey the complexity and diversity of the Pacific world.¹⁷ Yet despite all his efforts, lack of time, other publication deadlines and Fanny's constant opposition in the end dissuaded him from pursuing his project the way he had planned.¹⁸ The letters were selected and edited posthumously by Colvin in the volume, *In the South Seas*.¹⁹

Rather than focusing on the misunderstanding between Stevenson and his readers or the failure of his attempt to create a 'very singular book of travels,' I'd like to concentrate on the work's alleged departure from the author's earlier travel production and to highlight instead its continuity.²⁰ For this purpose, we should consider the key role of travel in Stevenson's life and work both as 'a personal and cultural exploration, at times even a condition of experience' ("Problematic Shores", p. 142). From *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), which documented his travels through Belgium and France, to his journey towards and within the United States (*The Amateur Emigrant*, 1895), to his voyages across the Pacific, Stevenson's travel accounts constitute a significant chapter in his vast and variegated opus. Sources, especially historical ones, were essential to such texts; however, they were 'invariably concealed.' The author developed from early on 'a method by which he could incorporate documentary information within a narrative that was both readable and personal, one that appeared to be nothing more than one traveller's observation and experience' ("Problematic Shores", p. 143). This contributed greatly to the success of his travel books and fostered what his public expected of him.

The difference they perceived in his Pacific travel account, however, did not lie in the 'stern duty' to provide a scientific

text on Polynesian cultures, as Fanny's words seem to suggest. Serious commitment to his work, extensive documentation and the desire to fashion his writing to the subject matter, were not new to Stevenson. Rather, when it came to his Pacific work, the apparently seamless blend between the personal and the documentary was no longer 'balanced.' We do not know what would have happened had he been able to complete his project the way he wanted. What we do know is that he was challenged by the material he was writing about ('men [. . .] whose fathers had never studied Virgil, had never been conquered by Caesar, and never been ruled by the wisdom of Gaius and Papinian'),²¹ and that he devised a response to this challenge.

The 'articulation of analogies,' Jenni Calder observes, is 'what Stevenson is about [...] The South Pacific, especially, challenged his creativity and dared his capacity for response.'²² In attempting an ethno-historical account of his travels, the author deployed a fundamental device of Victorian anthropology, a comparative method in which the familiar was used to measure the unknown: native cultures were measured in relation to western culture according to a notion of history as a linear progression from savage to civilised.²³ What distinguished Stevenson's scientific approach was the introduction of a *personal* element as the basis for analogy, familiarity and recognition:

When I desired any detail of savage custom, or superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism: Michael Scott, Lord Derwentwater's head, the second sight, the Water Kelpie, —each of these I have found to be a killing bait; the black bull's head of Stirling procured me the legend of Rahero; and what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or of the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the Tevas of Tahiti (*South Seas*, p. 13).

Storytelling was central to Stevenson's experience of the South Pacific; it was his means of cross-cultural encounter, whether he was gathering information for his ethno-historical travel account or attempting to write 'Polynesian' ballads and tales.²⁴ In order to travel, he believed, one must 'rouse and share' a sense of 'kinship' (*South Seas*, p. 13). He was not interested in mere contact; he wanted to make a connection. The recognition of the 'points of similarity between a South Sea people and some of my own folk at home,' he observed, 'not only inclined me to view my fresh acquaintances with favour, but continually modified my judgement' (*South Seas*, p. 13). It is the stories of his own 'folk' that Stevenson barter for Polynesian stories.²⁵ His equation between the European past and the Polynesian present is rendered more complex by his investment of *home*, his cultural heritage, his childhood memories and his love for storytelling in the transactions of cross-cultural encounter.²⁶

In the Oxford English Dictionary, *home* is defined as both a 'place' and a 'state,' a physical and/or figurative location. It can refer to a 'house,' an 'abode,' the 'fixed residence of a family or household,' 'the members of a family collectively' and 'the usual contents of a house.' It can also refer to 'the place of one's dwelling or nurturing, with the conditions, circumstances, and feelings which naturally and properly attach to it, and are associated with it;' 'a place, state, region to which one properly belongs, in which one's affections centre, or where one finds rest, refuge, or satisfaction'; 'one's own country'; 'one's own native land.'

In Stevenson's Pacific travel narrative, *home* covers many of these meanings; it is a travelling signifier whose signifieds shift according to address and reference. *Home* is Scotland, to which the author keeps returning in his memories and writing (*The Master of Ballantrae*, *Record of a Family of Engineers*, *David Balfour*, *Weir of Hermiston*, *St. Ives*); it is his public, his friends, publishers and readers in Europe and the United States; it is Vailima, his Polynesian estate. *Home* also recalls Stevenson's

family, his childhood, the story of Scottish clans, the Bible and the Psalms recited by his nurse, Cummy. It reminds him of his games as a sick child, the 'land of the counterpane,' the tin soldiers, the miniature theatres, the pleasure derived from words, first listened then read; the shock of discovering the pleasure of reading.

In the Pacific, *home* is distant months of travel. Yet it also travels with Stevenson and re-locates in the various houses where he stayed during his voyages and in the house that he built at Vailima, where he transferred the 'contents' of his Edinburgh home and lived with his extended family. Moreover, it represents the cultural baggage the author brought with him and his means of responding to the Pacific. If we look more closely at the stories he traded with Polynesian islanders, we will see that they refer both to Scottish folklore and to a specific moment in 18th century Scottish history: Highland life after the Jacobite rebels' defeat at Culloden in 1746 ('of the Cluny Macphersons, or of the Appin Stewarts'). This is further revealing of the author's personal and poetic investment.

In his study, *Narrating Scotland. The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Barry Menikoff examines the author's involvement in Scottish history and culture, and especially in the period right after the battle of Culloden, which he considered a turning point in the gradual disintegration of the Scottish clan system. At different moments in his life, Stevenson expressed a desire to write a History of Scotland between the 18th and 19th centuries. Though he did not write it *as* history, he masterfully reconstructed the period after Culloden in his two Scottish novels, *Kidnapped* and *David Balfour*. Menikoff's analysis highlights the importance of this historical subject and its recurring presence in Stevenson's work.

Kidnapped and *David Balfour*, however, can also be taken as an example of the author's use of an anthropological approach prior and beyond his Pacific travel writing. In her study *Robert*

Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle, Julia Reid addresses the author's engagement in Victorian anthropological debates and suggests that *In the South Seas* 'exploits and exposes the strains within nineteenth-century evolutionary thought' (p. 143). Reid's analysis, moreover, aims to reconcile 'the divergent readings of Stevenson's Scottish and Polynesian work, showing how an enduring scepticism about progressivist anthropology runs through his oeuvre' (p. 140). The link that underlies both his Scottish and Polynesian writings is given on the one hand by his ethnological approach whether he represented the clash between Highlanders and Lowlanders in his Scottish novels or the complex colonial world in his Pacific travel account, and on the other by his siding with the weaker party in the evolutionary 'battle,' the traditional culture that risked extinction whether it be the Scottish clans or native cultures, thus questioning anthropological and colonial hierarchies (p. 146).

Even if this latter example does not draw a direct connection between *In the South Seas* and Stevenson's earlier travel literature (though *Kidnapped* and *David Balfour* are fictional narratives of travel), it suggests that the author's use of an ethno-historical approach was not new to his writing. It also foregrounds a key element shared by all of his travel accounts: an open attitude to new experiences and other cultures that was intimately connected with his attitude towards life and his idea of travel. In *The Amateur Emigrant*, written almost ten years prior to his journey towards the Pacific, the author comments:

Travel is of two kinds; and this voyage of mine across the ocean combined both. 'Out of my country and myself I go,' sings the old poet: and I was not only travelling out of my country in latitude and longitude, but out of myself in diet, associates, and consideration. Part of the interest and great deal of the amusement flowed, at least to me, from this novel situation in the world.²⁷

Home, was Stevenson's means of responding to the novel situation he encountered in his 'South Sea' travels. It was the vehicle through which 'Scotland helped him to see and understand the Pacific, just as the Pacific sharpened his way of looking at Scotland' ('The Eyeball of the Dawn', p. 17) and, as such, the core of a crucial intersection between the author's (subversive) participation in the discursive categories of late Victorian culture on the one side, and the continuity of his Pacific travel writing with his poetics, on the other. The search for analogies and the pleasure of storytelling (for both the teller and the listener) are two fundamental aspects that underline this continuity. Analogy and storytelling are in fact united in Stevenson's notion of *sympathy*, which is central to his theories on reading and writing. In his 1881 essay, 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters', the author claims that writers have 'only one tool' in their 'workshop,' and 'that tool is sympathy.'²⁸ A year later, in 'A Gossip on Romance', he reflects on the literary effectiveness of 'epoch-making scenes' and declares that it is these scenes which 'put the last mark of truth upon a story and fill up, at one blow, our capacity for sympathetic pleasure,' our capacity to read and 'be rapt clean out of ourselves' (*Stevenson on Fiction*, pp. 56, 52).

Stevenson's representation of *home* in his Pacific travel account reflects both his *sympathy* as a reader/interpreter/observer and as a writer/ethnographer/storyteller. It constitutes his response to the challenges of representation and bears witness to his serious commitment to subject matter ('In all works of art [...] it is first of all the author's attitude that is narrated [...] Everything but prejudice should find a voice through him; he should see the good in all things'),²⁹ and to his public:

Those who write have to see that each man's knowledge is, as near as they can make it, answerable to the facts of life; that he shall not suppose himself an angel or a monster; nor take this world for a hell; nor be suffered to imagine that all rights are concentrated in his own caste or coun-

try, or all veracities in his own parochial creed (*Stevenson on Fiction*, p. 45).

NOTES

- 1 Stevenson had published three travel books prior to his journey towards the Pacific: *An Inland Voyage* (London: Kegan Paul, 1878); *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (London: Kegan Paul, 1879); *The Silverado Squatters* (London/Boston: Chatto & Windus/Roberts Brothers, 1884). He had also written an account of his journey from Scotland to California during the summer of 1879, which was partly published in 1883 ('Across the Plains: Leaves from the Notebook of an Emigrant Between New York and San Francisco', *Longman's Magazine*, 2, July-August) and again in 1892 (*Across the Plains With Other Memories and Essays*. London/New York: Chatto & Windus/Scribner's). The entire account, titled *The Amateur Emigrant*, was published posthumously (1895) in the Edinburgh Edition of Stevenson's works edited by Sidney Colvin.
- 2 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, ed. by Neil Rennie (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 5; henceforth cited in text.
- 3 Stevenson died in his home on the island of Upolu on 3 December 1894.
- 4 In addition to his Pacific travel writing, Stevenson also published a historical report on the colonial situation in Samoa (*A Footnote to History*, 1892), a realistic novella (*The Beach of Falesá*, 1892), two novels (*The Wrecker*, 1892; and *The Ebb-Tide*, 1894), ballads ('The Song of Rahéro' and 'The Feast of Famine', 1890) and tales ('The Bottle Imp', 1891, and 'The Isle of Voices', 1893) set in the South Pacific. See Robert I. Hillier, 'Folklore and Oral Tradition in Stevenson's South Seas Narrative Poems and Short Stories', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 14, 2 (1987), 32-47; and, by the same author, *The South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989).
- 5 Barry Menikoff, "'These Problematic Shores': Robert Louis Stevenson in the South Seas", in *The Ends of the Earth*, ed. by Simon Gatrell (London: The Ashfield Press, 1992), 141-155 (p. 143).
- 6 See Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific. Nineteenth Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Rod Edmond,

- Representing the South Pacific. Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts. The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- 7 Before living in Samoa, Stevenson spent time in Hawaii, the 'Paumotus' (today 'Tuamotu'), Tahiti and the Gilbert Islands.
 - 8 Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1980), p. 141.
 - 9 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-5), VI, p. 312 (June 1889). All subsequent quotations from Stevenson's correspondence are taken from this edition.
 - 10 In this letter to Colvin, Stevenson manifests his intention to call the book, *The South Seas*, and includes a detailed table of contents with chapter headings.
 - 11 See Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871).
 - 12 See Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
 - 13 See Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 111-177.
 - 14 See Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland. The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 5-26.
 - 15 'Of course,' Barry Menikoff comments, 'there were dissenters, occasional readers shrewd enough to insist upon the authenticity and brilliance of Stevenson's discourse on various isolated Pacific archipelagos. But these readers were usually people with firsthand experience of the islands, rather than literary critics or historians' ("Problematic Shores", p. 143). One of the 'dissenters' was Joseph Conrad who preferred *In the South Seas* to *Treasure Island*, while the historian Henry Adams recognised Stevenson's knowledge and wide range of study (*South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson*, pp. 46-48).
 - 16 Thirty-seven instalments were published in the New York *Sun* from 1 February to 13 December 1891; twenty-seven instalments were published in the English periodical *Black and White* from 6 February

- to 19 December 1891 (Swearingen, p. 142).
- 17 Writing to Colvin on 19 May 1891, the author comments: 'A Letter usually takes me from a week to three days; but I'm sometimes two days on a page—I was once three—; and then my friends kick me. *C'est-y-bête!*' (*Letters*, VII, p. 117).
 - 18 On 22 April 1891, Stevenson wrote to Colvin: 'I am now so sick that I intend, when the Letters are done and some more written that will be wanted, simply to make a book of it by the pruning knife [. . .] which will not be what I had still hoped to make, but must have the value it has and be d—d to it. I cannot fight longer' (*Letters*, VII, p. 102).
 - 19 *In the South Seas* was first published in 1896, as volume n. 20 of the Edinburgh Edition of *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894-1898).
 - 20 On the continuity of Stevenson's writings about the Pacific with his poetic approach, see Richard Ambrosini, *R. L. Stevenson: la poetica del romanzo* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2001), pp. 331-335.
 - 21 *In the South Seas*, p. 9.
 - 22 Jenni Calder, 'The Eyeball of the Dawn: Can We Trust Stevenson's Imagination?' in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered. New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by William B. Jones, Jr. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003), 7-20 (p. 19).
 - 23 One of the consequences of the Cartesian revolution, Anthony Pagden notes, 'had been that analogy and homology had become the accepted methods of scientific inquiry.' To further illustrate this point, Pagden quotes Georges Buffon's 18th century *Histoire naturelle*, in which the author stresses how knowledge is acquired "'through the means of comparison. That which is absolutely incomparable is also entirely incomprehensible.'" See Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World. From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 148.
 - 24 In his book, *Representing the South Pacific*, Edmond describes the 'exchange and mixing of stories' as a trait which characterised Stevenson's 'time in every Pacific island he visited' (p. 193). See also Ilaria B. Sborgi, 'Structures of Address in Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Bottle Imp"', *RSV. Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*, 20 (Luglio 2005), 191-207.
 - 25 On the personal element in Stevenson's comparison between Polynesians and Scottish Highlanders, see *R.L. Stevenson: la poetica*

del romanzo, pp. 340-341.

26 I disagree here with Vanessa Smith and Rod Edmond who suggest that the analogy between Polynesians and Highlanders is an opportunistic one in favour of the author's materially stronger culture. See Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 110 and Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 163. See also Julia Reid, pp. 107-110.

27 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Amateur Emigrant*,

<http://www.e-bookshop.gr/gutenberg/files/esstr10.pdf>, p. 93.

28 *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 47.

29 *Stevenson on Fiction*, p. 47.

Stevenson gets lost in the South Seas

Cinzia Gigliani

The first thing one might notice when handling *In the South Seas* is the very title. It reveals much about the way in which the subject is broached. Actually, Stevenson seems lost *in* the South Seas and unable to put a critical distance between himself and these exotic and attractive places and to bring to life the masterpiece he has in mind. Sometimes he seems overwhelmed by the enormous variety and the incredible bulk of the material he has collected and appears incapable of writing *on* the South Seas. The well-known letter Stevenson writes to Henry James helps us understand his feelings and his concerns

[W]hat a strain is a long book! The time it took me to design this volume, before I could dream of putting pen to paper, was excessive. I am continually extending my information, revising my opinions, very soon I shall have no opinion left. And without an opinion, how to string artistically vast accumulations of facts? Darwin said no one could observe without a theory; I suppose he was right; but I will take my oath, no man can write without one—at least the way he would like to [. . .]¹

Stevenson begins to write the letters that will be then published on board the *Janet Nicoll* and carries on during the first ten months of his residence on Samoa. All the letters appear in *The Sun* and some also in *Black and White*. But later (the letters are published between February and December 1891) their publication is interrupted, and in the same sudden way, *In the South Seas* also comes to an end:

The king took us on board in his own gig, dressed for the occasion in the naval uniform. He had little to say, he

refused refreshments, shook us briefly by hand, and went ashore again. That night the palm-tops of Apemama had dipped behind the sea, and the schooner sailed solitary under the stars.²

This is not a proper ending and I will be focusing on this later on. The reader cannot infer from the title of the last chapter, 'The King of Apemama,' nor from the title of the last section, 'The Gilberts—Apemama,' that the story is coming to an end. Actually, the titles of the chapters and sections deserve some attention. They are merely descriptive: each of the five parts corresponds to a group of islands visited by the writer and almost every chapter exhausts and completes its topic. Stevenson states his wish to write a 'document' from the very beginning of *In the South Seas* and a 'document' it is, to the point that the reader's patience is often challenged by far too many details. His natural inclination towards 'the fiction of adventure'³ is also challenged by his urge to classify and catalogue. We ought to bear in mind that in the latter part of the 1880s he is already the famous author of *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in which adventure is crucial.

In the South Seas does not seem to be the proper place in which the author can fine-tune the material he has at his disposal, as I will attempt to prove. The sentence that precedes the last paragraph of the book refers to another text, but this text was never written. 'There is at least a tragedy four-square,' Stevenson writes after a close sequence of questions concerning the plot of a hypothetical story. This is not the first time Stevenson has moved from essay to fiction by employing a question as a literary device: he did this fourteen years before. 'If time had spared us with some particulars, might not this last have furnished us with the matter of a grisly winter's tale?'⁴ This was the question raised in 'François Villon, Student, Poet, and Housebreaker'. The answer was not long awaited and a very few months later⁵ Villon was turned into the main character of a short story, *A Lodging for*

the Night. However, this is not what happens *In the South Seas*, which has no fictional correlative, although it is clearly the main source for all the stories set in the South Seas.

In the last lines, the *Equator* sails from the Gilberts with no fixed destination, just like its guest on board. The lack of a well-shaped and proper ending for *In the South Seas* manifests the absence of a well-defined and planned literary project. Stevenson, a master of style, is bound to be aware of the relevance of balancing a text by providing it with a suitable ending. He reinforces this idea when discussing another genre, the short story, and in September 1891 he writes Sidney Colvin: 'to make another end, that is to make the beginning all wrong' (*Letters VII*, p. 155). For this very reason the abrupt ending of *In the South Seas* reflects Stevenson's mood: he appears to be totally lost in these exotic seas. And because he is lost, he seems to pile up information to the point of becoming boring, suddenly changing his tone and partially contradicting himself. We have further evidence of the above in, for instance, Robert Irwin Hillier's words: he states that *In the South Seas* has a 'disunity which afflicts the book'.⁶ Ann Colley also remarks upon this phenomenon. She writes that it is essentially 'a collage of illuminated spaces and images surrounded by areas of obscurity'.⁷ *In the South Seas* appears to be a collection of fragments of information that the author does not succeed in fitting into 'a harmonious structure of clear and consecutive ideas', to quote *A Humble Remonstrance*. Stevenson staggers and hesitates under the sheer volume of the material collected and its bewildering novelty. He loses his lightness of touch and is led towards that 'pursuit of completion' that he had defined as 'insane' in *A Note on Realism* not many years before. He knows that 'painful suppressions' (*Letters III*, p. 24) are indispensable but is unable to manage a new topic and, therefore, limits himself to arranging it into sections and chapters.

The subtitle of the letters published in *Black and White*, (*A Record of Three Cruises*) is both relevant and meaningful, as

is the fact that pictures often accompany the text. The 'documentary purpose' of this work, underlined by Oliver Buckton,⁸ is outstanding. Stevenson himself, together with his stepson, makes sure that hundreds of photographic plates are loaded on to the *Casco*, as reported in Lloyd Osbourne's *Diary*. These pictures find a written-text equivalent in the dialogues with native people—dialogues of which Stevenson occasionally gives us a complete account. In so doing he makes use of the 'photographic exactitude in dialogue' he had strongly criticised in *A Note on Realism*. The wish to give the reader an eyewitness testimony overrides his concern with style and also the very organization of his material. Stevenson somehow betrays his travel writing policy, the very same policy he had quite distinctly presented in one of his earlier dealings with this genre. As a matter of fact in 1873, in *Roads*, Stevenson claimed that all travel books should be based on 'filtered impressions' and in *Walking Tours* he insisted that in order to get rid of redundancies and obtain 'pure gold', a lapse of time between the journey and the reflections stemming from reporting it, was necessary.

Thus we can, to a certain extent, explain the poor quality of *In the South Seas*. In 1887, in *A College Magazine*, Stevenson wrote about the notebook he usually took with him 'to note down the features of the scene'. *In the South Seas* is more similar to that notebook than to the refined prose of his other works which critics and readers were used to by that time. It is more similar to a collection of sensations and experiences, namely a record, than to a real artistic elaboration of material. Life is absolute chaos, art is rational order. This is the clear message coming from the pages of *A Humble Remonstrance*. In the *South Seas* Stevenson is not yet endowed with the artist's perspective that would have been crucial in order to give the collected material its proper shape. Indeed, he is still a mere visitor taking notes of what he sees.

In his letters Stevenson shows all his discontent and dismay. He writes to Sidney Colvin telling him that it would take him

at least five years to find his way through such a vast bulk of information. Stevenson appears to be split between his will to write about this exciting new topic, the South Seas, and his wish to simply enjoy a working holiday. His cruising in the South Seas becomes a leisurely journey, and may have been planned as such from the very beginning. In any case, the masterpiece Stevenson has in mind and the sedentary life style it requires are incompatible. 'The big book' about the Pacific was supposed to override those written earlier. This is what Stevenson hoped for in his letters to his friends (*Letters VI*, p. 207). This book cannot tally with the kind of journey he prefers. Stevenson enjoys sailing with the tide 'like a leaf in the current', as he wrote many years before in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879). But the seas he faces now are extraordinary seas so that 'where you may have designed to go is one thing, where you shall be able to arrive is another' (*Works XVIII*, p. 223). There is no definite place to reach just as there is no precise genre to which the writer can lead his prose: 'the big book', 'a nice book', 'a long book', 'a singular book of travels' are some of the vague expressions he uses to define the material he has collected. This material takes the shape of a journal, of letters, and even of a historical essay, *A Footnote to History*, and is overtly the source of a string of short stories, ballads and tales. Stevenson touches on different genres but is somehow aware that his achievement is unremarkable.

Let me at this point remind you that although he arrives in the Pacific Ocean at the height of his fame, he seems to be under pressure as far as the writing of *In the South Seas* is concerned. This may be due to the fact that his American publisher is disappointed by the lack of the sense of adventure he and the readers of *Treasure Island* were used to, and his friends and advisors, including his wife, oppose the semi-anthropological approach he has adopted. The letter that Fanny writes to Colvin because she is afraid her husband is spoiling 'the most enchanting material' (*Letters VI*, p. 303) because of what she considers a sort of

scientific fanaticism is well-known: 'suppose Herman Melville had given us his theories as to Polynesian languages [. . .] instead of *Omoo* and *Typee*'. All these people fail to consider *In the South Seas* as the first stage of a literary work which for now just aims at recording data and at reporting the largest quantity of information. To quote Stevenson's words again, from *A Gossip on Romance*: 'it is one thing to remark and to dissect', but to turn this information into art is a wholly different experience. Stevenson is quite explicit in this regard: in March 1891 he writes to Charles Baxter that the letters are but 'drafts' (*Letters* VII, p. 98), and in May he defines them as a 'quarry of materials' (*Letters* VII, p. 128). He even takes the liberty not to address a couple of time discrepancies, and *In the South Seas* does not follow the rhythm of a journal, with a clear temporal sequence; there are few dates, piled up in three chapters, that do not always follow a chronological progression. He seems to be under a sort of spell, and he admits it from the very beginning of the book: 'No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor' (*Works* XVIII, p. 6). The new object he longs for is so attractive that Stevenson loses any critical perspective, and he is so absorbed in this new chaotic reality that he becomes unable to manipulate it from an artistic point of view. However, it is not the author who has undergone a change, but rather the object of his investigation. As a matter of fact, in these same years he is able to produce masterpieces such as *Catriona*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *Weir of Hermiston*. This happens because he narrates tales about Scotland, a well-known subject he can shape as he wishes. But in the *South Seas* he still has to learn 'how to address the readers from the uttermost parts of the sea', as he honestly admits in the first pages (*Works* XVIII, p. 8). Stevenson is testing himself and his art and knows he has underestimated the complexity of the subject. Therefore he is elated by his rich discovery as well as dejected because of his difficulty in carrying his task through.

At the most, his prose manages to offer us realistic sketches and amusing scenes. Stephen Greenblatt in *Marvellous Possessions* underlines how the anecdote is 'the principal register of the unexpected',⁹ and Stevenson in the Pacific is wholly surrounded by the unexpected. His piecemeal approach is disturbing and the numerous data Stevenson accumulates, such as the translation of common words, or the notes of the music of the Gilberts, do not lead to any artistic result, since they are mere information and put to paper in a very impersonal prose. They are so far from the elegant style and fascinating prose of all his previous production that the attentive reader will recognise them as notes and will avoid incurring in any misjudgement. However, people like Oscar Wilde and Sidney Colvin fell into the trap and their critical comments are all the more surprising since made by experts. To them, recognising a draft ought to have come more naturally.

As remarked above, the new object Stevenson is observing changes the characteristic of the observer. When faced with a new world, Stevenson shows an attitude that is, at least at the beginning, as neutral and matter-of-fact as possible. That is the reason why in the chapter entitled 'Characters' we do not find the usual vividness of his characters, even the less important ones, but only some sketches. For example, Captain Chase is only a rough draft of Case, the unforgettable villain of *The Beach of Falesá*. Anyway, points in common between Stevenson's fictional and non-fictional works on the South Seas are numerous and have often been identified by critics. (See, for example, the long list of points presented by Robert Irwin Hillier.)¹⁰

If we can regard *In the South Seas* as being very much like an archive of images and characters, of themes and places, then we may well wonder where its true value lies. One possible answer is Stevenson's excellent quality as a witness. He ventures into what Rod Edmond defines as 'an already extensively textualized Pacific'.¹¹ Stevenson's main aim is to draw a less stereotyped and more honest image of the South Seas than the one usually pre-

sented at the time by missionaries and tradesmen. At this point, we can assume that the very wish to be believed compromises the outcome of his work. Stevenson is still constantly concerned about his works' lack of commitment just as he was at the very beginning of his career. Commitment in writing becomes a pledge to offer an eyewitness testimony. I have chosen a quotation from *In the South Seas* to illustrate this task:

Readers of travels may perhaps exclaim at my authority and declare themselves better informed. I should prefer the statement of an intelligent native like Stanislaο (even if it stood alone, which it is far from doing), to the report of the most honest traveller. (*Works* XVIII, p. 43)

Stevenson does not let his imagination loose, and even in a chapter such as 'Graveyard Stories' he offers us just an analysis of the peculiar aspects of superstition in Paumotus. His anthropological approach and the repeated comparisons with Europe weaken the subject matter. The latter blends and, at the end, fades into too much information. If the readers remember some propitiatory rites or sorcerers, or if they take pity on the natives and their childish greed for the goods coming from the west, then they are more likely to have read *The Isle of Voices* or *The Bottle Imp* than *In the South Seas*.

But when he writes fiction, things change and Stevenson seems to shed his concerns about commitment in literature, and gives life to fascinating prose and some memorable characters. This procedure is surprisingly similar to that followed fifteen years before when that unforgettable short story 'A Lodging for the Night' was derived from an essay on François Villon; in the same manner 'The Pavilion on the Links' was linked to the essay entitled 'Memories of an Islet'; and the tale 'Will of the Mill' was written and published in 1878, the same year as 'Crabbed Age and Youth', both in *The Cornhill Magazine*. One year earlier something similar happened with 'The Sire de Malétroit's Door' and the essay

on Charles d' Orleans.¹² The images and themes of his essays of the late 1870s were typically developed in Stevenson's fiction of those years. It is as if the author simply 'varies his method and changes the point of attack', to quote 'A Humble Remonstrance' once again. However, in the 1890s the world Stevenson finds himself in is no longer Europe but the South Seas. Borrowing Gérard Genette's definition of *transmodalisation* and extending it, we can say Stevenson operates 'intermodal transformations', but these are not simple and easy.¹³ With the exception of *The Beach of Falesá*, the South Seas fiction presents several problems that many critics have already pinpointed. Barry Menikoff, for example, observes that these short stories often 'end abruptly'.¹⁴ Therefore the remarks that opened this paper find further support: the absence of a proper ending reveals the absence of a well-defined artistic project and this is Stevenson's attitude for both fictional and non-fictional works about the South Seas. It is as though Stevenson were able to excel in fiction only when the topic is familiar to him, and the Pacific is not. Therefore he tries to take possession of it accumulating information, quoting eyewitnesses, describing people and places with exasperating details and, in his real life, moving to live there for good.

NOTES

- 1 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994-5), VII, pp. 65-66; henceforth cited in the text.
- 2 *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Andrew Lang, 25 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911-1912), XVII, p.347; henceforth cited in the text.
- 3 See R. Kiely, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
- 4 R. L. Stevenson, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1898), p. 211.
- 5 The essay was published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in August 1877 and the short story in *Temple Bar* in October 1877.

- 6 'In the South Seas', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 23 (1988), p.117.
- 7 Ann Colley, 'Light, Darkness, and Shadow. Stevenson in the South Seas', in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by R. Ambrosini and R. Dury, (WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 186.
- 8 Oliver Buckton, 'Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: The South Seas from Journal to Fiction', in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Writer of Boundaries* (2006), pp. 199-212.
- 9 See S. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
- 10 See 'Folklore and oral tradition in Stevenson's South Seas narrative poems and short stories', in *Scottish Literary Journal*, 14, 2 (November), 32-47.
- 11 See R. Edmond, 'Taking up with Kanakas: Robert Louis Stevenson and the Pacific', in *Representing the South Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 160-193.
- 12 The essay was published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in December 1876 and the short story was published in *Temple Bar* in January 1878.
- 13 Genette notes how the same text can utilise radical changes of point of view or genre. See G. Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1982).
- 14 See B. Menikoff, *Tales from the Prince of Story Tellers*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

‘I never read such an impious book’: re-examining Stevenson’s *Fables*

R. L. Abrahamson

The *Fables* lie in a rarely visited corner of the Stevenson *oeuvre*. Some of the fables, such as ‘The House of Eld’ or ‘The Man and His Friend’ appear in biographies to illustrate Stevenson’s attitudes towards his religious upbringing or his quarrel with Henley, and they occasionally appear in discussions about Stevenson’s ‘philosophy’. Most comprehensive of these philosophical treatments of the *Fables* is perhaps Reginald Blyth’s *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics*¹, where eight of the fables are presented in full and then discussed for their ability to illustrate various aspects of a Zen approach to life. But the *Fables* are more than philosophical statements: as works of literature they present their ‘philosophy’ through complex patterns of language, genres, tone and allusion.

History of the *Fables*

As with many of Stevenson’s other works, the history of *Fables* is hard to pin down. Stevenson worked on this collection over the years, changed his plans about publishing it, and left the tales in manuscript when he died. A few details and a few hypotheses enable us to flesh out this bare outline a little further. Some biographers believe Stevenson worked on the fables as early as 1874, when he wrote to Colvin, ‘I have done no more to my fables.’² But, as Furnas points out, this could just as easily be a reference to his review of Lytton’s *Fables*, which he was working on at the time.³ It does not sound implausible, though, that the sedulous ape should have tried his hand at writing fables while he was engaged in reviewing a book of fables that he (in part) admired. But since Lytton’s fables are in verse and Stevenson’s in prose, does it after all seem likely that they were imitations of Lytton?

The remark to Colvin takes us no further along.

Biographical evidence strengthens this mid-70s date, at least for some of the fables, most notably 'The House of Eld' and 'The Yellow Paint', portraying young men rebelling against social, moral and religious constraints. What other period of his life is more likely to have seen the composition of these tales than this period, when Stevenson, living at home, found himself in almost constant conflict with his parents about his choice of career, his habits of dress and decorum, and, most of all, his religious beliefs? Colvin places these two fables as well as 'The Touchstone', 'The Poor Thing' and 'The Song of the Morrow' at this date, and Swearingen and Mehew both agree, at least about the date of 'The House of Eld' and 'Yellow Paint'.⁴ To make things difficult, however, (and, perhaps, to give the Pentland Edition its own version of things) Gosse declares confidently that the *Fables* were 'begun in Bournemouth in 1887, soon after the completion of "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", of which they were intended to be, in some measure, the supplement. In 1893 Stevenson resumed the task, and closed it with "The Song of the Morrow"'.⁵

Just as the domestic conflict at Heriot Row might date some fables to the mid-70s, so the quarrel with Henley probably dates 'The Man and His Friend' to some period during or after 1888. The reference to the 'great white Justice of the Peace' with its missionary flavour, suggests a date after Stevenson set off for the South Seas in July of that year. The Samoan references date 'Something in It' to the final years in Vailima. 'The Cart-Horses and the Saddle-Horse', also belonging to this period, can be dated even more precisely since Fanny's journal records the incident that must have suggested this fable.⁶

But even without the later fables, Stevenson seems to have had sufficient material on hand to contract Longmans, Green, and Company at the end of May, 1888 for a collection of fables, a project he would have planned to complete while cruising in the

South Seas, to help pay for the voyage. But as Swearingen puts it, 'other projects intervened'.⁷ He speculates that Stevenson 'was at work on and probably further revised these twenty short pieces in 1893–94'. After Stevenson's death, Baxter arranged (against Fanny's wishes) a new contract with Longmans in 1896, and the fables appeared in *Longman's Magazine* in two instalments in August and September 1896. That same year they appeared appended to *Jekyll and Hyde*, and in a separate edition in America. They regularly appeared after that in editions of *Jekyll and Hyde* (as they do, for instance, in the Tusitala Edition where, however, 'The Persons of the Tale' is removed from the other fables and appended to the end of *Treasure Island*), occasionally appearing on their own in illustrated editions.⁸ Furnas completes our story with speculation that the book had never appeared in Stevenson's lifetime because of Fanny's opposition. She 'considered the *Fables* aberrations that Louis had perversely preserved; perhaps it was her braking that kept the book back until he died.'⁹ The provocative tales suggesting a nihilistic emptiness to life were just too much for her, too modern, we might say.

The genre of the fable

As essays like 'A Humble Remonstrance' and 'A Note on Realism' can provide critical angles on Stevenson's approaches to his novels, so one essay in particular can provide some background to Stevenson's thoughts on the genre of the fable. In his 1874 review of Lord Lytton's *Fables in Song*, Stevenson devotes some time to defining the modern fable before specifically addressing Lytton's book. He takes the occasion of reviewing this late work by one of the most respected literary men of the time to introduce his new voice (he was twenty-three years old), calling for a tougher kind of literature appropriate to a more confused, uncertain younger generation.

The fable, Stevenson says, has evolved. The older fables contained cute stories that amused or engaged us, and then attached a moral at the end. When the Victorian loss of faith created 'more

sophisticated hearers and authors' who could not 'deal playfully with truths that [were] a matter of bitter concern to [them] in [their] life', the modern fable moved away from the quaint details (foxes dressed as people, for instance) and, more importantly, did not proceed directly to the moral. The moral comes from the workings of the plot itself, producing 'quite a serious, if quite a miniature division of creative literature'. More importantly, this indirectly expressed moral leaves the reader 'to resolve for himself the vague, troublesome, and not yet definitely moral sentiment which has been thus created'. Not only is the moral less accessible, but it is also has 'become more indeterminate and large'; the fable does not address the small details of a prudent or well-behaved life, but larger questions about our crises of belief, for instance, and it does not dare to find pat answers to life's problems. If the fable is honest, it must remain 'indeterminate'.¹⁰

By the end of his little survey, Stevenson has transformed the fable from an insignificant, frivolous kind of writing—the style that Lytton, as Stevenson politely hints, was still following—to a serious vehicle for expressing modern problems, a form of literature as well crafted as a novel with an organic unity where 'all that is deepest and most suggestive in it' cannot be summarised¹¹—the style that Stevenson was about to develop himself. It was this style of fable that Colvin had in mind when, in his Introductory Note to the *Fables*, he classed the *Fables* with the 'semi-supernatural stories, such as "Will of the Mill", "Markheim", and even "Jekyll and Hyde", in the composition of which there was combined with the dream element, in at least an equal measure, the element of moral allegory or apologue'.¹²

What the young Stevenson has said about fables might also apply in turn to those pieces in the *Fables* that are more properly called fairy tales, those stories with formulaic beginnings such as 'The Poor Thing' ('There was a man in the islands who fished for his bare bellyful . . .') or that gem of nineteenth-century literary fairy tales, 'The Song of the Morrow', beginning 'The King of

Duntrine had a daughter when he was old¹³ These fairy tales, like Stevenson's modern fables, do not offer us (as Lytton's do) a cute tale with a smug moral at the end; they do not create a fabulous otherworld for our amusement, or a sentimental one for our instruction in kindness (like Oscar Wilde's, written at the same time). What moral they have is contained within the workings of the plot itself, is concerned with deep questions of human value or the search for meaning in an apparently meaningless world, and offers us no clear answer to any of these issues. We can read these fairy tales to our children, but we should not expect them to sleep well at night afterwards.

The style of the *Fables*

What characterises the style of the *Fables*? The most obvious thing is the brevity of the individual pieces, with even the longest stories taking up no more than about five pages. The settings of these stories are vague and anonymous, sometimes just 'the islands' as in 'The Poor Thing', sometimes a little more specific as in 'The Cart-Horses and the Saddle-Horse', set in Samoa, or 'The Two Matches', set in California. There are no unnecessary descriptions, no unnecessary objects—a kind of Biblical reticence, in fact. The individuals are not particularised, seldom even described, and, apart from Long John Silver and Captain Smollett, only two (Mr Spoker, the lieutenant of 'The Sinking Ship', and Jack, the 'hero' of 'The House of Eld') have a name.

Everything is done to keep the reader at a distance from the story so that the impact of the story is, as Stevenson said in his Lytton review, 'brought home to the reader through the intellect rather than through the feelings; so that, without being very deeply moved or interested by the characters of the piece, we should recognise vividly the hinges on which the little plot revolves'.¹⁴ One distancing device is the occasional intrusion of the narrator, who suddenly breaks into the narrative to speak in the first person. We learn, for instance, that the main character

of 'The Yellow Paint' was very frightened by witnessing the accidental death of a stranger, 'so that I never beheld a man more earnest to be painted', says our storyteller (*Fables*, p. 22). The 'great philosopher' in the fable 'The Distinguished Stranger' explains to the inquisitive visitor from the neighbouring planet 'what a cow is in scientific words which I have forgotten' (pp. 22, 46). To be deflected from the story itself, even for these brief moments, distances us even further from the narrative, and locates us in some ancient traditional scene, positioned around the storyteller—Tusitala, himself, of course. It's just a story. No chance of sentimentality here.

The language itself distances us with its highly formal, structured diction and syntax. Stevenson's prose always has the knack of surprising us with odd expressions, but never more often than in these fables, where we are reminded perhaps, but not quite, of the King James Bible, or some old-fashioned translation of the Arabian Nights or collection of fairy tales (Campbell's *Popular Tales of the Highlands* maybe). Listen to this sentence from 'The Touchstone' with its Biblical succession of clauses linked with 'and' broken by three subordinate 'so that' clauses:

Now they were come into the dun, and feasted; and this was a great house, so that the lads were astonished; and the King that was a priest sat at the end of the board and was silent, so that the lads were filled with reverence; and the maid served them smiling with downcast eyes, so that their hearts were enlarged. (p. 63)

Or the main character of 'The Poor Thing': 'He was bitter poor in goods and bitter ugly of countenance, and he had no wife.' Or finally, from 'The Song of the Morrow': 'The sea foam ran to her feet, and the dead leaves swarmed about her back, and the rags blew about her face in the blowing of the wind.' (pp. 63, 74, 86).

'In the blowing of the wind'? Who talks like that? There is nothing wrong with these phrases, but they are just unusual enough

to disconcert us, to make us feel we are not quite in our everyday world. Jack, in 'The House of Eld' 'walked at a venture'. The house itself 'was a fine house and a very rambling' (pp. 30, 31). Look for specific antecedents of this kind of language and chances are you will find nothing. It only feels like something we have read before, a long time ago. Look too at a word that appears twice in 'The Poor Thing': 'withinsides'. This must be some archaic word Stevenson picked up in one of those old books he was always carrying around with him when he was young, we say to ourselves as we pull down the OED. But no, to our surprise (to my surprise, anyway) the first use of *withinsides* occurs in 1891, in, of all things, 'The Bottle Imp': 'Withinsides something obscurely moved.' Its use in 'The Poor Thing' is listed as the second use, though if 'The Poor Thing' had been written earlier than 1891, it might be counted as the first use. The only other appearance of the word comes in 1910, in a passage from Kipling almost certainly written with Stevenson in mind: 'That thought shrivelled me withinsides'. No one else has used this word. Why should they?

Diversity of elements

Not all, but most of the stories in the *Fables* allow us multiple approaches. We turn them over and over and discover new things at each turn. The best way to explain this is by considering a specific fable and the different ways we can understand it. Almost at random, let us choose to look at 'The Man and His Friend':

A man quarrelled with his friend.

'I have been much deceived in you,' said the man.

And the friend made a face at him and went away.

A little after, they both died, and came together before the great white Justice of the Peace. It began to look black for the friend, but the man for a while had a clear character and was getting in good spirits.

'I find here some record of a quarrel,' said the justice, looking in his notes. 'Which of you was in the wrong?'

'He was,' said the man. 'He spoke ill of me behind my back.'

‘Did he so?’ said the justice. ‘And pray how did he speak about your neighbours?’

‘Oh, he had always a nasty tongue,’ said the man.

‘And you chose him for your friend?’ cried the justice. ‘My good fellow, we have no use here for fools.’

So the man was cast in the pit, and the friend laughed out aloud in the dark and remained to be tried on other charges. (pp. 40-41)

Our first response might be a biographical one. Here is Stevenson venting his anger at Henley after their quarrel, using fiction to haul Henley up before the Divine Judge to be condemned. But it is not this simple (nothing in the *Fables* ever is). The friend is not condemned, but rather the man, the Stevenson figure. We recoil (in Lanyon-like horror?) to see all that bitterness turned against himself, as, on this biographical level, we watch Stevenson condemning himself for having put his faith in Henley to begin with.

Of course this is not autobiography, but carefully crafted fiction. We have to move on, and we can do so by asking what exactly the man is being condemned for. He is condemned for his pride that thought a man who had a nasty tongue for everyone else surely would not have one for him. He thought he was so special that he alone would be a man the friend would not deceive. He forgot (as Jekyll forgot) that he was a human being like everybody else, good and bad, not some exemplary model whom everyone would admire and respect. We are in the moral world of Samuel Johnson:

Yet hope not life from grief or danger free
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee.¹⁵

Then we might connect the fable to an earlier fable, ‘The Devil and the Innkeeper’, where the Devil tells the innkeeper he cannot be blamed for doing wrong since it is in his nature. (Markheim and the Devil had this discussion too, in a different way.) In the

fable the innkeeper hangs the Devil, knowing that if it really is in the Devil's nature to be evil, then, blame him or not, we want to get rid of him the surest way. The man in the Henley fable takes that situation a step further. If we cannot blame the friend because we know his nature is deceitful, then at least we must blame ourselves if we do not act sensibly on this knowledge. There is, as the Judge declares, no room for fools here. And what about the friend? '[T]he friend laughed out aloud in the dark'—the friend never speaks, but just laughs 'out aloud' (another slightly disconcerting turn of phrase), and in the darkness no less. This is what the condemned man hears echoing behind him as he plummets down into that infernal pit. Here is an image as powerful as any other horror moment in all of Stevenson's works. The friend 'remained to be tried on other charges'. What other charges? Who can be sure? The story is left suspended.

The fable feels like one of those deceptively simple moral tales such as Blake's 'A Poison Tree'—and indeed the *Fables* might be called Stevenson's *Songs of Experience* (with the *Child's Garden of Verses* as his *Songs of Innocence*). The mention of the 'great white Justice of the Peace' reminds us that this is a version of the missionary tale designed to teach orthodox doctrine to the benighted natives—except, of course, there is nothing orthodox being taught here, and who knows whom this story would convert or what it would convert the person to.

There is another narrative situation this fable draws upon: the story of a man standing at the Judgement Seat. Jesus found this scene very useful, as did many theologians, and of course Dante. To us it is usually just the foundation of a joke ('So this man dies and goes up to heaven where St Peter says to him . . .') or the opening scene to one of those sentimental popular films. But here is Stevenson, having grown up when such a story could be taken literally, maturing into a position where it can be used only for grim fiction. We could even see this story as moving beyond the narrative genre altogether. Like so many of the fables, this one

consists almost entirely of dialogue. It is a piece of drama, in fact, much better drama than any of those plays he laboured on with Henley. And once we identify it as drama, we know suddenly that we are in the presence of an early example of theatre of the absurd, with the bare stage, the voices in the darkness, the protagonist sure of his position at the start but having that position reduced to absurdity by the end, the disconcerting laughter from a third party concluding the sketch, and the endless cycle hinted at as the next man is called to the Judgement Seat. Or do we want to call it Kafka-esque? Or proto-existentialist? Or something else? These fables seem able to expand infinitely.

The *Fables* as a whole

What unifies this book of collected fables? Not subject matter, nor character, nor style, nor even genre, but theme. We discover many themes running through these fables familiar to us from other works of Stevenson, such as the crippling effects of conforming to religious and bourgeois moral codes, or the dangers of improving the human condition so far that we destroy the human element altogether, or the casual arrogance of the self-righteous, or of the European dismissal of the native people and culture of the South Seas. But one theme that runs throughout the collection and gives it its unity is the conflict between engaging in the business of life and the impulse to pull back with elaborate intellectual structures to explain life. Both impulses are part of our human make-up but the danger, as Stevenson sees it, is that while the 'philosophical eye' (p. 10) appears to offer us stability amid the hardships of life, it in fact offers nothing of the sort. We construct schemes, rules, moral codes and other systems, but who can prove whether these systems are true or not? They often can be reduced to absurdity, and more often they prove to be very destructive and damaging to ourselves and others.

Most of the fables, then, begin with some kind of engagement with life, then move to some philosophical system arising out of that engagement, and then to some place where the system

breaks down into absurdity, or becomes so threatening that it can no longer be tolerated, or simply dissolves into emptiness. Then what do we do? This is the question the fables ask us time and again. How do we face a world with no intellectual constructs we can trust to give us stability? The twenty fables lead us through various permutations of this problem until they reach a climax with the realisation that the only certainty is ‘the one pin-point of truth’ (p. 56) found in being faithful to our engagements to other people. Let us look at the way this theme is developed through several of the fables.

‘The Persons of the Tale’ introduces us to our theme: the conflict between, on the one hand, the cigarette-breaks of life in which we pause to work out the meaning of life, and on the other, the actual living of life, in this case, the involvement of the characters in the action of *Treasure Island*. Captain Smollett, resting on the certainties of a clear moral system, finds it easy to condemn Long John Silver as a ‘damned rogue’. But Silver knows that, putting aside that moral code (‘we’re off dooty now’), he is much more engaging, and has won the favour of the Author much more than the upright Smollett has:

What I know is this: if there is sich a thing as a Author, I’m his favourite chara’ter. He does me fathoms better’n he does you—fathoms, he does. And he likes doing me. He keeps me on deck mostly all the time, crutch and all; and he leaves you measling in the hold, where nobody can’t see you, nor wants to, and you may lay to that! (p. 5)

The ensuing speculation about how we can know the divine (authorial) mind moves in circles, and ends only because life intrudes in the most imperative way for characters in a novel: the Author picks up the pen and starts writing the new chapter. Philosophy, the first fable announces, is a fine pastime during leisure time, but it comes second to the life prepared for us to live.

If the first story shows us the irrelevance of philosophy when

there is life to attend to, 'The Sinking Ship' shows us the downright absurdity of philosophising when there is a crisis demanding our attention. The ship is sinking and the Captain (known for his 'philosophic eye') calmly discourses about the stoical view of life and the nobility of adhering to regulations. The abstractions become more and more absurd as the ship comes closer to sinking. When the Captain meets an 'old salt' smoking in the powder magazine, he panics, until it is pointed out to him that by his system, all actions carry the same weight and there is no point in doing anything under any circumstances. What is left but to engage in life with as much gusto as time allows? He lights a cigar, and 'Two minutes afterwards the ship blew up with a glorious detonation.' (p. 13). 'Glorious' is ironic only in a small part; it really is a glorious thing, the fable suggests, to throw oneself into life rather than continue in that bloodless stoical calm.

'The Two Matches' picks up the detail of smoking to offer us another view of this conflict. The traveller wants a smoke but his first match fails to light. Before he strikes the second, his philosophic eye projects a fantasy about the devastation that might be caused should some live embers from his pipe fall on the grass and set fire to the whole forest. When the second match also fails to light, the traveller is grateful and continues his journey without the smoke. How absurd to base his gratefulness on a mere intellectual fantasy. And yet, at least that fantasy provided some consolation for having missed out on a pleasant smoke. Maybe the philosophic eye is not quite so bad after all.

Any thoughts that intellectual constructs might sometimes be consoling, however, are dashed by the next fable, 'The Sick Man and the Fireman', which shows us philosophy that is not so much inappropriate or ironically comforting as plain absurd. The strong fireman (so argues the sick man) should not save the sick man but should save strong men instead, so that the strong men can go out and save weak men. Here is an apparently earnest moral argument completely out of touch not just with reality but

with what it is saying itself. The only response is to destroy such foolishness.

Each story, then, enacts an ironic pattern that undercuts in some way the rules, philosophies and social conventions different characters for different reasons pin their faith to. A larger ironic pattern emerges as each story offers a variation of this theme, each variation commenting on or qualifying other variations in previous stories. Thus, for instance, after 'The Yellow Paint' exposes the notion that social and religious custom can guarantee the safety of our bodies and our souls, the next fable, 'The House of Eld', presents a hero determined to liberate his culture from the false social and religious customs that have proved so painful, and though he is for the moment successful, the people blindly (and immediately) adopt another meaningless and painful custom to take the place of the one destroyed, and the hero finds that he has destroyed not only the hated custom but also those he loves most dearly. 'The Four Reformers' follows with a non-narrative dialogue destroying the very possibility of any kind of reformation as long as human beings remain human.

The climax of these variations comes in 'Something in It', where the missionary discovers that his whole religious faith has been false all along and the true religion is a polytheistic South Seas cult. Yet, with all his intellectual certainty destroyed, the missionary finds one thing he can cling to, the 'one pin-point of the truth': he will not break the promise he made to one of his converts. In a world of disillusionment and relativity, our personal engagement with others (the existential choice of the moment) is the only stability we can hope for. And it is enough.

After this climax, the following three fables offer alternative versions of the one pin-point of truth. 'Faith, Half-Faith, and No Faith at All' shifts from the South Seas to 'the ancient days' of Norse mythology to look from a different angle at the certain loss of religious faith. The priest (Faith) and the virtuous man (Half-Faith) smugly debate the truths that support their faith in

Odin, but when they learn that Odin has been defeated by the 'powers of darkness', they reveal their motives as selfish and seek to make terms with the devil. The third companion, a 'rover' who had played no part in the debate about faith (No Faith at All), clings to his pin-point of truth, shoulders his axe and goes 'off to die with Odin' (p. 60). The man of action, not caught up in systems, is the only one not destroyed when faith is destroyed. The 'glorious explosion' of 'The Sinking Ship' is transformed into a heroic keeping of faith with the deity the man had engaged his allegiance to. 'The Touchstone' shows what happens when there are no engagements left to remain faithful to. The older son of the tale discovers that maybe all approaches to the truth are relative: 'How if this be the truth? [. . .] that all are a little true?' (p. 70). When he returns to claim the princess for his wife, however, he discovers she has married his false brother and is false herself. There is no life here to engage in. There are no truths to cling to. All that is left is to accept what life has shown him and turn to what new things come next.

'Oh, well,' said the elder brother, 'I perceive there is both good and bad. So fare ye all as well as ye may in the dun; but I will go forth into the world with my pebble in my pocket.' (p. 73)

The prince began with everything, including a promise from the princess and her father, but the fisherman in 'The Poor Thing' has nothing at all. 'He was bitter poor in goods and bitter ugly of countenance, and he had no wife.' (p. 74). In a world where one has nothing—no faith, no engagements—all one can hold to is what one's ancestors pass on, in this case 'the shoe of a horse, and it rusty' (p. 81). To the poor man, 'one thing is as good as another in this world; and a shoe of a horse will do' (p. 79); he is wiser than the people in the earlier fable who had believed there was some special power in the yellow paint. The poor fisherman is saved by his knowledge that although there is no virtue inherent in the

horseshoe, he must adhere to *something*. To others, however, the rusty horseshoe must be of value (otherwise why would this man cling to it?), and it wins for him the Earl's daughter for a wife. Out of the marriage comes a son (the Poor Thing), who continues the simple life of his fathers. The succession of generations needs no rules or religious systems to keep it going.

The succession of generations appears in a different way in the final fable (or more properly, fairy tale), in my mind one of Stevenson's great masterpieces. 'The Song of the Morrow' offers no clear or cheering answer to anything, and in the archetypal image of the princess it suggests that all human life becomes crippled by our inevitable obsession with 'the care for the morrow' and 'the power upon the hour' (p. 85)—that is, with our intellectual projections and our attempt to control events with rules and systems. The princess, once she awakes to her obsession, passes years in her stone house by the barren sea, first being fed by her nurse, then in the company of the piper, 'the comer', who takes her deeper into thoughts of the power upon the hour but abstracts her further from life. All the intellectual systems, regulations, customs, rules that have haunted the characters in the previous fables are now incarnated in this figure of the piper, the sound of whose pipes 'was like singing wasps and like the wind that sings in windlestraw; and it took hold upon men's ears like the crying of gulls' (p. 90). The dialogue of Smollett and Silver, the Captain's 'philosophic eye', the Californian traveller's pipe dream, the yellow paint, the touchstone, the 'shoe of a horse, and it rusty'—all these meet in this man who pipes the 'song of the morrow' and whose only revelation is emptiness:

Then she cried to him with a great voice, 'This is the hour, and let me see the power of it.' And with that the wind blew off the hand from the man's face, and lo, there was no man there, only the clothes and the hand and the pipes tumbled one upon another in a corner of the terrace, and the dead leaves ran over them. (p. 92)¹⁶

The princess returns to 'the beach where strange things had been done in the ancient ages' and where she as a young girl had met the crone who awoke her to her life-denying obsessions. Only now the princess has become the withered crone herself, and watches the approach of a new princess, who 'had no thought for the morrow and no power upon the hour'. But she soon will. The cycle goes on. We inherit this curse from our parents and pass it on to the next generation.

If this is where the book leaves us, no wonder Fanny refused to have it published. Thomas Stevenson might not have disapproved so strongly, however, recognising the inherited curse even if the redemption from this curse was not expressed in orthodox Presbyterian theology. In fact, the redemption is not expressed directly anywhere. Stevenson fulfilled the definition he had set out at the age of twenty-three in the Lytton review. In the nineteenth-century fable, as we saw above, 'the moral tends to become more indeterminate and large', 'the reader being left to resolve for himself the vague, troublesome, and not yet definitely moral sentiment which has been thus created'.¹⁷ It seems the perfect form for the vision Stevenson offers us. These fables undercutting our faith in clear moral systems never insult us with clear moral lessons. Even those fables with 'the moral' set out in verse at the end give us no certainty and indeed the moral tag in a fable like 'The House of Eld' merely presents us with another troublesome fable, not an easy answer. If one of the fables should, after all this, give us the sense that we have at last found an answer, we can be sure that the next fable in the sequence will set us doubting again.

We are of course looking for the wrong thing if we are looking for answers in the *Fables*. The only pin-point of truth directs us to engage with what lies before us, in this case the rich literary feast of the *Fables*: the variety of miniature genres, the dramatic encounters, the diction and syntax, the layers of irony and the interplay of one story and another. Hurling the book to the floor with the cry 'I never read such an impious book', like the

character in ‘The Reader’, might be a more appropriate response to the *Fables* than to write, or read, articles about it. But then, we are all—you and I—cursed with the very human urge to turn our reading into intellectual discussions, even if these discussions are only ‘like singing wasps and like the wind that sings in windlestraw’.

NOTES

- 1 Reginald H. Blyth, *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1942).
- 2 1 September 1874, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994-5), II, p. 43.
- 3 J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 456 n.3.
- 4 Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1980), p. 15; *Letters*, II, p. 43, n 2.
- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Works* Pentland Edition (London: Cassell, 1907), XX, p. 333. See also Ralph Parfect, ‘Robert Louis Stevenson: “The Clockmaker” and “The Scientific Ape”. Two Unpublished Fables’ *English Literature in Translation 1880-1920*, Fall 2005 48:4, 387-404.
- 6 Fanny Stevenson and Robert Louis Stevenson, *Our Samoan Adventure*, ed. by Charles Neider (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1956), pp. 64-65.
- 7 Swearingen, p. 187.
- 8 See, for instance, the edition with six etchings by Ethel King Martyn (London & New York: Longmans, Green, 1902).
- 9 Furnas, p. 355.
- 10 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Essays Literary and Critical* Tusitala Edition, (London: Heinemann, 1923), XXVIII, pp. 139-40.
- 11 *Essays Literary and Critical*, 140.
- 12 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Fables* (New York: Scribner’s, 1896), p. v.
- 13 Alison Lurie has included this story in her *Oxford Book of Modern Fairy Tales* (1993).

- 14 *Essays Literary and Critical*, p. 139.
- 15 'The Vanity of Human Wishes', pp. 155–56, in *Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Donald Greene (Oxford: University Press, 1984), p. 16.
- 16 So reads the first Scribner's edition. Other editions change 'the clothes and the hand and the pipes' to 'the clothes and the hood and the pipes'.
- 17 *Essays Literary and Critical*, p. 140.

Pleasurable subjectivities and temporal conflation in Stevenson's aesthetics

Dennis Denisoff

For well over a century, Robert Louis Stevenson has been transporting young readers outside of their everyday lives. Some scholars have in the past voiced the opinion that his works' attention to youthful exploration, fantasy, and adventure undermined any possibility of articulating an aesthetic philosophy that adequately addresses the complex concerns of adults. In light of this claim, my interest in locating an aesthetics of subjectivity in works such as *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885)—whose very title denotes a focus on children—might seem futile. But a crucial component of Stevenson's views on art and pleasure are erased if one segregates as too fantastic or too simplistic those of his pieces that acknowledge the young. As I wish to demonstrate, such denunciations themselves over-simplify Stevenson's unique position on the connections among imagination, history, and pleasure, and the impact that people's conception of these relationships has on their subjectivities.

Imagination and adulthood

Stevenson grew up in a society heavily invested in a Romantic ideology that imbued children with imaginations attuned to an eternal, otherworldly realm. As various specialists in the history of European childhood have noted, prior to the late eighteenth century, children were recognised as different from adults but the distinctions were seen primarily as a set of infantile inadequacies that needed to be addressed if a child was to survive, let alone become a functioning man or woman. In accord with this view, John Locke and others encouraged the young's study of external objects with the aim of gaining knowledge for future use, while discouraging the consumption of works that empha-

sised the stimulation of the imagination. Through writings such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), however, Europeans also began to conceive of children not as inchoate adults waiting to be moulded, but as already full-fledged human beings with the right to realise the potential of their natural faculties, the 'most active' of these, for Rousseau, being the imagination.¹ The sense of the imagination as powerful and awe-inspiring continued with the Romantics. William Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1807), for example, presents children's minds as more attuned than adults' to nature and, therefore, more closely connected to the spiritual realm. When he writes, in the poem 'The Rainbow' (1802), that 'the Child is father of the man,' he is referring to the notion that the pleasure and inspiration adults experience through nature is rooted in the happiness and piety they inherently felt as children. In Alan Richardson's words, 'the transcendental child is informed by a divine or quasi-divine nature which renders it superior to adults, and the new-born child can be figured as a prophet or angel'.²

If the idea that the imagination is a pseudo-divine resource of the young continued through the nineteenth century, the imagination was also becoming more readily understood as accessible by adults. As early as 1824, Edgar Taylor, introducing his translations of the Grimm's *German Popular Stories*, directly challenges the distrust that characterises Enlightenment models. 'Much might be urged against this rigid and philosophic (or rather unphilosophic) exclusion of works of fancy and fiction,' he asserts,

and so long as such fictions only are presented to the young mind as do not interfere with the important department of moral education, a beneficial effect must be produced by the pleasurable employment of a faculty in which so much of our happiness in every period of life consists.³

Clearly feeling a need to defend his publication of fairy tales,

Taylor gives particular emphasis to the strong connection between the fancy that some saw as childish and the assumedly more mature sphere of philosophy. The exercise of the imagination, he argues, is a practice to be encouraged in not only the young but also adults, if they wish to maximise their own pleasure.

Similarly, Charles Dickens, in his 1853 article 'Frauds on the Fairies,' commends fairy tales for keeping people 'ever young, by preserving through our worldly ways one slender track not overgrown with weeds, where we may walk with children, sharing their delights'.⁴ '[A] nation without fancy,' he says soon after, 'without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun.' As with Taylor, in Dickens's conception, this 'fairy flower garden' is not the preserve of children but includes the slender track of adult peregrinations that has not been overgrown by the weeds of habit and cultural conformity encouraged by reason. In his reference to the nation's place 'under the sun,' moreover, he punctuates the relevance of both imagination and the adventure of romance for the development of a resilient, energised Britain in the realm of international business and politics. No less than the nation's identity both now and over time—'never did, never can, never will'—relies on the imagination.

Meanwhile, George MacDonald is equally earnest when he gives the imagination a devoutly Christian responsibility. In *The Miracles of Our Lord* (1870), he seems to foreshadow Stevenson's own health problems when he proposes that, whenever an adult recovers from an illness, 'the child in the man is new-born—for some precious moments at least; a gentleness of spirit, a wonder at the world, a sense of the blessedness of being, an openness to calm yet rousing influences, appear in the man.'⁵ While echoing Wordsworth's language, MacDonald's description more fully conflates 'the child in the man' with imagination and openness to the world. Imagination, for MacDonald, heightens one's emotional and spiritual sensitivity and pleasure, and this refreshed

state of wonder eases one back into the machinations of modern life.

The words of Taylor, Dickens, and MacDonald all reflect to varying degrees the fact that the Victorian association of the imagination with children assisted in construing both as subordinate buttresses for an adult-centric socio-economic structure. As Jack Zipes asserts, mid-nineteenth-century Britain felt that 'children and adults needed more fanciful works to stimulate their imagination and keep them productive in the social and cultural spheres'⁶ and so, even in fantastic pieces such as fairy tales, the didactic function remains strong. Addressing specifically the later nineteenth century, when Stevenson was writing, Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb propose that the appeal of children's literature for adults 'indicates the desire to find a reading position that awakened a "childlike" sense of belief increasingly threatened by religious doubt, brought about by social change and the growth in science as the "new religion".'⁷ 'The perceived ability of children to understand, at some innate level, the messages offered,' Thacker and Webb argue, 'suggests a heightened sensibility and a possible rescue for the troubled adult psyche.'⁸ Children's literature is presented as appealing to adults not because it is a catalyst for their own healthy creativity, but because it offers a connection to childhood.

In such analyses, imagination remains inseparable from the young, and work that stirs one's fancy is briskly categorised as non-adult. This makes it more difficult to respect the imagination of adults or to appreciate the role of the imagination in, for example, national politics. At the same time, the association of the young with the fantastic deters scholars' full engagement with the realities of their lives. As Hugh Cunningham's summary of the Romantic child as 'godlike, fit to be worshipped, and the embodiment of hope'⁹ implies, the increasing valorisation of children's imaginations de-humanised them by celebrating them as outside of the mundane, often life-threatening economic

reality in which the vast majority of the young had no choice but to exist. Not only were most children too poor to access the cherubic pleasures envisioned on their behalf, but the false ideal was also busy supporting a middle-class ideology of progress, perseverance, and the inevitable reward for labour and conformity. Judith Plotz argues that the Romantic ideal of childhood that persisted in various forms throughout the nineteenth century and to the present day was never one holistic paradigm but made up of diverse values forced together within a single model—‘a sanctuary or bank vault of valuable but socially-endangered psychological powers: idealism, holism, vision, animism, faith, and isolated self-sufficiency.’¹⁰ Adults construed the young as holding the potential of redeeming the adults themselves of their sins and weaknesses, thereby allowing the adults the manoeuvrability required to pursue their baser drives. With the redemptive function orchestrated by adults imposing qualities onto the young, children were at risk of being idealised out of individual agency and subjectivity.

Stevenson stands out within this nineteenth-century context for his consideration of and respect for the template that imaginative play and exploration offered for aesthetics, philosophy, and politics. His poetry and other writings fuse the imagination—which his society habitually construed as childlike—with what were seen as adult issues. In *A Child's Garden of Verses*, one finds such a conflation even, for example, in the short poem ‘Looking Forward,’ which reads in its entirety:

When I am grown to man's estate
I shall be very proud and great.
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.¹¹

The rhyme opens with the common ageist segregation, the child imagining a future presence in an adult realm. But Stevenson then pithily undermines the split by presenting the future adult self-

identifying through paradigms of play that had been established in childhood. The poet does not present a subject performing or envisioning him/herself in the identity of another, but a person who identifies as another who is at the same time operating by the logic of the first subject. Even a metaphor of circularity is inaccurate because it suggests a sense of movement while, in this poem, the two subject positions are mutually contingent and exist simultaneously.

A number of scholars have recently touched on this characteristic of Stevenson's poetry. Stephen Donovan describes the manoeuvre as a form of role reversal. The poet's writing 'socializes the child by introducing her to the conventions of adulthood through a parallel, imaginary reality.'¹² Meanwhile, his work also 'hold[s] out to this young reader a freedom in which the playing of a role becomes an act of assuming—and perhaps even usurping—authority.' Ann Colley, discussing *A Child's Garden of Verses*, focuses not on the child donning an adult identity, but on Stevenson's sensitivity to 'the child that lives within the adult.'¹³ She proposes that his protagonists often 'move effortlessly back and forth between childhood and adulthood.' More recently Colley has referred to the speaker in his children's poems as 'a child of Stevenson's imagination,'¹⁴ a phrasing that insightfully endows that child with an even stronger independent subjectivity.

Colley's language signals Stevenson's own ambivalence toward age-based subjectivities, and Glenda Norquay suggests pushing the implications of this ambivalence further. In her study, she establishes the connection for Stevenson between children's imagination and romance, emphasizing that 'play is of value in itself, with internal dynamics much more absorbing than the imitation of adult roles.'¹⁵ According to Norquay, rather than claiming that the young perform adulthood in preparation for future authority, Stevenson saw child's play as a self-fulfilling pleasure. If one recognises imagination and play as aesthetic phenomena whose value is not contingent on the shifts of age,

then it is understandable that Stevenson's protagonists' moves between age groups are 'effortless,' as Colley asserts, because a person is in fact never fully situated within one subjectivity or another. An individual develops depth not by shifting *between* age-based subjectivities, but by embodying simultaneously various subjectivities conflated by the imagination.

Despite its Romantic roots, it is therefore misleading to call the Stevensonian imagination a child's imagination, because his work so thoroughly problematises the familiar teleological model of age and experience. He questions the Romantic model not only by giving voice to children's rights to choice and action, but by complicating the notion of the self as consisting of an individual of one age in one place. For Stevenson, imagination is a sustained source of innovation and action for adults as well as children. When the young narrator of 'Historical Associations' informs his uncle of the 'immortal actions done | And valiant battles lost and won' in their garden (*Child's Garden*, p. 121), Stevenson succeeds not simply in fusing the imaginations of a child and an adult. The placement of 'immortal actions' within the family garden overlays histories that extend beyond the characters' own life experiences. A reader can only imagine what might result when, in the poem's last line, the nephew, Robert Bruce, and William Tell arrive at 'the gates of Babylon' (p. 122). Having conflated four historical moments into one, Stevenson leaves it to us to proceed through the gates of the imagination. And for an exploration of the poet's own temporal confluences and pleasurable subjectivities, Babylon offers as good a garden as any in which to begin.

Babylonian wonder and multiple subjectivities

Stevenson is not the only writer who turned to Babylon to explore the relations of time, pleasure, and politics. In Agatha Christie's 1951 novel *They Came to Baghdad*, for example, the young heroine Victoria, an office temp, finds herself in Iraq among a warren of murderous spies. The threat of the scenario into which she has stumbled leads her to draw back to the safety of her childhood

and the soothing words of an old nursery rhyme:

How many miles to Babylon?
 Threescore and ten,
 Can I get there by candlelight?
 Yes, and back again.¹⁶

While the childhood memory allows the heroine at least a momentary sense of comfort, Christie's readers are not so lucky, with the rather histrionic narrator quickly adding 'But she wasn't back again—she was still in Babylon. Perhaps [Victoria] would never get back.' For us, the heroine's introduction of the nursery rhyme makes her appear all the more vulnerable and naïve, intensifying the juxtaposition of her youthful innocence and the violent international politics into which she has plunged.

More recently, the same poem was used again as part of a turn to childhood fantasy as a site of security. In 2006, a U.S. soldier named Allan Wall quoted the rhyme in his Internet dispatches to describe his experience in Iraq and the soldiers' desires to return to their 'families and civilian lives'.¹⁷ According to *World Net News*, its aim in publishing the soldier's chronicles is 'to let our readers vicariously experience what people in his position are going through'. To enhance this experiential transport, the editors encourage readers to 'check regularly for Wall's dispatches' and to invite 'friends and family to do likewise'. While such a mass hypermedia migration would, of course, promote the commercial aims of the site, the editorial language implies a nationalist benefit as well. *World Net News* offers the soldier's dispatches as a 'special service,' the military connotations of the phrase effectively incorporating the site's—and thus its readers'—own special service in Iraq. The implication is that, by reading Wall's words, one becomes viscerally involved in assisting the U.S. army in its endeavours, and collective imagination becomes a source of nation building.

In both Christie's novel and the Website piece, the nursery

rhyme's particularly poignant connotation resides in the naïveté signified by the expectation of a safe return from violent, foreign territory. Wall writes:

I really like the part of the poem that says, 'Can I get there by candlelight? Yes, and back again.' My National Guard unit has arrived in Iraq. We didn't travel by candlelight, but our flight from Fort XYZ to the Middle East employed artificial light, so that metaphorically be [sic] considered candlelight. And we certainly do desire to go back when our tour is ended. To get back to our families and civilian lives. Whatever befalls us in Iraq, we want to get back home someday.

The unpolished language, grammatical errors, and misunderstanding of metaphor imbue the adult's words with an innocent awkwardness that is quite frightening, considering where he has been deployed from the fantastic land of Fort XYZ. To say that he hopes to return home 'whatever befalls' him during a war characterised by a heavy death toll comes across as the height of denial, as if 'whatever' cannot possibly include his own demise. The real potential of never returning home invests both Wall's and Christie's texts with nostalgia for not only the West, but also an age of innocence. While the writing in each case implies an individual's confidence in a safe journey, it also questions the notion of human progress in general. Christie's work in particular challenges the West's self-confidence in Iraqi affairs, depicting Babylon as a conflict-ridden political and rhetorical site that inter-mingles disparate cultures, levels of experiences, and models of human identity.

The name 'Babylon' reflects the difficulties inherent to such a multiplicity of perspectives, conjuring up the Tower of Babel and its signification of the foreignness and misunderstandings among a group of people drawn together by greed and the prospects of commerce and wealth. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon

also come to mind, coupling this image of a land of lucre and luxury with fantasies of exotic gardens and mysterious tales. A number of the verses in Stevenson's *Garden* capture this combination of aggressive mercantilism and verdant dreamscape. In 'Pirate Story,' for example, the young narrator, self-defining as a pirate, chooses Babylon as a potential destination for pillage. The commercial project is proven a fantasy, however, when a fleet of cows scares the speaker and his friends out of the grassy meadow that had been serving as the sea. Even though Stevenson signals early on in the poem what the more realistic perception of the event would be, he nevertheless offers a wonderfully Babylonian experience by leading readers to conflate the familiar pastoral setting with one that is foreign and potentially violent, cajoling us, in short, to adopt the narrator's imaginative position.

Joanne Lewis argues that, with the references to Babylon in *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Stevenson attempted to address a gap between childhood and adulthood.¹⁸ In the poem 'To Minnie,' for example, the narrator declares that children might go to Babylon, but can never return:

The eternal dawn, beyond a doubt,
Shall break on hill and plain,
And put all stars and candles out,
Ere we be young again. (p. 105)

The impossibility of ever being children again in this lifetime suggests to Lewis that Babylon here is a metaphor for adulthood. Stevenson's very interest in exploring age-based identities in these poems, however, seems to question his acceptance of the standard segregating model. When asked 'How far is it to Babylon?', the narrator replies 'Far, far enough from here—| Yet you have farther gone!' (pp. 130-31). If Babylon were simply the maturity toward which the young develop, then how is it that the children in this piece have already gone past it? And how can the adult narrator claim that adulthood is far from here? Such

confusions of distances effectively warp time out of its linearity. In 'To Minnie,' for example, 'here' is presented as an immediate moment occupied by the adult and the children, as well as a stage in human development that, the poem implies, both the adult and children somehow occupy, even though the children have also passed it.

The bounty of popular significations that the word 'Babylon' itself offers up further discourages a reading of the city in Stevenson's poetry as a metaphor for adulthood exclusively. Rooted in the Akkadian words 'The Gate of God,' the name 'Babylon' suggests a more liminal function to the metaphor. This etymology was not common knowledge in the nineteenth century, but the historical region had gained considerable attention at the time due to the British archaeological investigations in Mesopotamia beginning with Sir Austen Henry Layard's excavations around Nineveh in 1842. Publications such as his 1853 *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* were immensely popular. By the time Stevenson was writing 'To Minnie,' Victorian society was well in the grip of these explorations, with their impact apparent in adventure novels, romance literature, and periodical articles, as well as in visual art and home décor. Stevenson's own awareness of this meaning of 'Babylon' when writing *A Child's Garden of Verses* is suggested both by his depiction of a garden wicket as a safe harbour in the last line of 'Pirate Story' (p. 12) and by his reference to 'the gates of Babylon' in the last line of 'Historical Associations' (p. 122).

The Babylonian gates capture the ambiguous liminality so crucial to Stevenson's aesthetic. It is therefore appropriate that when, in 'To Minnie,' he references the same nursery rhyme to which Christie and Wall both turned decades later, his intent is neither as pat nor as reassuring. To the question '*Can I get there by candlelight?*' Stevenson's adult narrator replies 'I do not know—perchance you might—| But only, children, hear it right, | Ah, never to return again!' (p. 131). In this passage, the potential

of even *reaching* Babylon is left in doubt. The only sure thing is that one cannot return; as the speaker explains,

The river, on from mill to mill,
Flows past our childhood's garden still;
But ah! we children never more
Shall watch it from the water-door! (p. 130)

Stevenson means this in a Heraclitian sense. It is not that the characters will never watch the river again, but that they will not watch it from this same particular perspective. Notably, it is ambiguous whether he means that he and his audience are 'children never more,' or that they are children who 'never more shall watch' the river. While most of the poem is addressed to the absent, adult Minnie, at one point, the narrator begins speaking in response to the 'phantom voices' of himself and Minnie as children (p. 130). This active, transhistorical self-engagement constructs the narrator as both child and adult simultaneously. And yet, despite having assumedly experienced much of the life that the child has yet to encounter, the adult narrator is still unable to answer whether the youth will get to the gates of Babylon. The issue is one of situational perspective. To try and unravel the temporal connotations is to fight the spirit of the piece.

One finds the same destabilizing tactic elsewhere in 'To Minnie'. The commas in the phrase 'But only, children, hear it right,' for example, suggest that one read it as a somewhat condescending instruction from a wise adult. Yet the line itself encourages a re-punctuated reading without commas: 'But only *children* hear it right: | Ah, never to return again!' In this sense, it is the young who recognise the false sense of security behind the idealism. It is, after all, adults who, having naturalised a sense of temporal progression to their existence, find themselves in need of such a reassuring stability as that found in the Romantic image of the pure infant. The narrator comes across not only as wistful and melancholic, but also as being as unsure of himself as he had

been in his youth. The children's questions function as gateways to imaginative speculation, but produce no resolutions. As with *A Child's Garden of Verses* in general, 'To Minnie' is anti-Romantic in its refusal to infantilise wonder and the dreams and hopes that it sustains. At the same time, the collection conceives of aimless wondering such as that triggered by the recollection of a nursery rhyme as a valuable force in an individual's life—whether one is an artist, an office temp, or a soldier in Iraq.

Aimlessness and aesthetics

A temporal narrative of existence with no fixed beginning, a drive forever unfulfilled, progress without direction—such paradoxes permeate Stevenson's work. *A Child's Garden of Verses* alone is marked by an obsession with travel, voyages, and exotic lands coupled with a sense of unfulfilling progress. In the piece 'Bed in Summer,' the narrator complains of being sent to sleep, even though he can 'hear the grown-up people's feet | Still going past me in the street' (p. 3). Three poems later, in 'Young Night Thought,' the narrator again declares, 'I see the people marching by, | As plain as day' (p. 7) just as, four poems later, 'Foreign Lands' reminds us that 'The dusty roads go up and down | With people tramping in to town' (p. 14). The repeated image of endless marching can be read as capturing the blind, plodding consumerist and imperialist program of Stevenson's society. It can also be interpreted as reflecting the dehumanizing cultural habits encouraged by the standardised work ethic of the time. In a related sense, as echoed by *Jekyll and Hyde*, the images can be seen to embody a sense of isolation and of going against the flow within the psyche of the modern individual or even the author himself.

But what is one to make, in such readings, of Stevenson's own suggestions that unfulfilled progress and directionless travel can be beneficial—most notably to those invested in art and aesthetics? In his essay 'Walt Whitman,' the author writes that 'There is a sense, of course, in which all true books are books

of travel,¹⁹ with the term ‘travel’—in the larger context of the piece—connoting adventure and exploration. Similarly, a character in ‘Providence and the Guitar’ complements musicians and painters as ‘people with a mission—which they cannot carry out.’²⁰ And in *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson characterises even the least successful of actors as dignified because ‘[h]e has gone upon a pilgrimage that will last him his life long, because there is no end to it short of perfection.’²¹ What is the positive stimulus behind this convoluted progress? What drives this artistic urge doomed to failure? And why—despite the suggestions of inevitable incompleteness or circularity—had Stevenson returned to its defence again and again? One answer lays in the high value he placed on the imagination.

When one takes into consideration Stevenson’s claim that progress can be positive when unfulfilled or even unfulfillable, especially for artists, one recognises the aesthetic philosophy embodied by *A Child’s Garden of Verses*. Its poems capture a notion of subjectivity that is neither individualistic nor collectivist but sensitive to a confused polyphony of beings within the self that together foster the wonder and aspiration behind artistic production. In this sense, the poems are a celebration of what, in *Virginibus Puerisque*, Stevenson describes as the ‘unfading boyishness of hope and its vigorous irrationality.’²² Although the young do, of course, have dreams and aspirations, this description is not characterising them. Rather, the author is personifying hope itself as boyish, as vigorously irrational, and as persisting against all odds throughout life. ‘[O]ur boyhood ceased—well, when?’ he asks in *Virginibus Puerisque*, ‘—not, I think, at twenty; nor, perhaps, altogether at twenty-five; nor yet at thirty; and possibly, to be quite frank, we are still in the thick of that arcadian period.’²³ Later he declares that

We advance in years somewhat in the manner of an invading army in a barren land; the age that we have reached,

as the phrase goes, we but hold with an outpost, and still keep open our communications with the extreme rear and first beginnings of the march. There is our true base; that is not only the beginning, but the perennial spring of our faculties.²⁴

It is not simply memory that Stevenson alludes to in this passage. He is describing something more akin to a community within the individual, a group of identities that can never fully understand each other—the individual as a Babylon. In this quotation, he brings particular attention to the phrase ‘the age that we have reached,’ foregrounding the sense of movement within the metaphor that encourages us to see aging as a progress into a new and assumedly improved identity. For Stevenson, this adventuring model falsely erases the ongoing contribution of youth—‘the first beginnings of the march,’ ‘the perennial spring of our faculties’.

Hope and aspiration arise early in life and gradually become part of the foundation of a person’s character. Those traits that one develops as an adult, such as a materialist drive or an urge for comprehension, are thus relatively new—the offspring of hope and irrationality. The suggestion that the child of hope is father to the man of exploration and adventure is obviously patterned on the Wordsworthian ideal. While Stevenson questions the impact of such idealizations on actual children, he also does value qualities associated with them such as hope, wonder, and imagination. Nevertheless, the idea that hope and wonder are initial catalysts to future pleasurable, unfulfilled progress bestows greater agency on the young than does the Romantic ideology of the child as a passive embodiment of a spirituality situated in another realm and left to adults to acknowledge and define.

Stevenson’s poetry challenges the nineteenth-century construction of childhood and the young as either a first step in a progression toward the greater stage of adulthood or as tools formed and used by adults or even by a macro-economic system.

His identity model addresses boys and girls not only as existing within all of these various age-based categorical constructs but also as participating in their ongoing formation. In his essay 'Child's Play,' for example, Stevenson envisions pain as—

having its own way with all of us; it breaks in, a rude visitant, upon the fairy garden where the child wanders in a dream, no less surely than it rules upon the field of battle, or sends the immortal war-god whimpering to his father; and innocence, no more than philosophy, can protect us from this sting.²⁵

Rather than suggest that the otherworldly fairy land is the product of naïve escapism, Stevenson highlights the construct's presence in and relevance to the adult world of battles and philosophies. The author proposes here that the dominant Western attitude toward economic and international relations is patterned on childhood efforts to make sense of reality through fantasy. 'We make to ourselves day by day,' he writes:

out of history, and gossip, and economical speculations, and God knows what, a medium in which we walk and through which we look abroad. We study shop windows with other eyes than in our childhood, never to wonder, not always to admire, but to make and modify our little incongruous theories about life.²⁶

Although calloused by experience, adults continue to use the same imaginative logic as a structuring force in both social and economic relations. Lest we assume that the later models are more coherent—the refined products of a developmental process—Stevenson reminds us that they remain just as 'little' and 'incongruous'.

Stevenson's aestheticism at play

In *Émile*, Rousseau declares that 'it is only at the flame of imagination that the passions are kindled' but '[i]n everything habit

overpowers imagination.²⁷ Habit is therefore useful, according to Rousseau, in helping overcome fears and anxieties because it reins in the imagination. A century later and Walter Pater has flipped this argument on its head, proposing, in his conclusion to *The Renaissance* (1873), that '[t]o burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.'²⁸ 'In a sense it might even be said,' he goes on, 'that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike.' In this work, Pater suggests his sympathies with the young in his celebration of both innocence and discovery. But while he encourages the experience of as wide a range of subjectivities as possible, he also voices a note of loneliness and isolation:

Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.²⁹

Pater gives emphasis here to the unavoidable influence that individuality has on perception. On the one hand, the imagination can be used to encourage encounters made all the more pleasurable by their diversity; on the other, it is a subjective phenomenon that tinges all experiences of reality with the personal.

Stevenson offers a similar paradigm for perception when he declares, in his 1888 essay 'The Lantern-Bearers,' that 'no man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids, but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of his brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls.'³⁰ Stevenson is also highly aware of the readiness with which the phantasmagoria of individual

perception can be faded by habit. 'There is something stupefying in the recurrence of unimportant things,' he bemoans in his piece on 'Walt Whitman,'

And it is only on rare provocations that we can rise to take an outlook beyond daily concerns, and comprehend the narrow limits and great possibilities of our existence. It is the duty of the poet to induce such moments of clear sight. He is the declared enemy of all living by reflex action, of all that is done betwixt sleep and waking, of all the pleasureless pleasurings and imaginary duties in which we coin away our hearts and fritter invaluable years. He has to electrify his readers into an instant unflagging activity, founded on a wide and eager observation of the world.³¹

As with Pater's *Renaissance*, the passionate voice of this piece, almost a manifesto, is coupled with an anxiety regarding aging and death. Stevenson differs from Pater, however, in proclaiming that the poet is to draw the masses out of their complacency. And, despite the beauty of Pater's work, it is Stevenson's writing that has most often succeeded in fulfilling this act of stimulation. The result is popular art that encourages each individual to embody a Babylon of the self, to adopt through eager, imaginative exploration diverse perspectives rooted in various locations, attitudes, and ages. Stevenson conceived of the individual as such a conglomeration of identities, and his writings continue to fulfil a special service in celebrating the 'unfading boyishness of hope' as the basis of the values and attitudes best suited for dealing with both politics and play.

NOTES

- 1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1955), p. 44.
- 2 Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 11.
- 3 Quoted in Jack Zipes, Introduction, *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves* (New York: Routledge, 1989), xiii- xxix (p. xvii).
- 4 Charles Dickens, 'Frauds on the Fairies', *Household Words*, 184, viii, 97-100 (p. 97).
- 5 George MacDonald, *The Miracles of our Lord* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), p. 19.
- 6 Zipes, p. xvii.
- 7 Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 45.
- 8 Cogan Thacker and Webb, p. 42.
- 9 Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*. (London: Longman, 1995), p. 78.
- 10 Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2001), p. 13.
- 11 Robert Louis Stevenson. *A Child's Garden of Verses. Selected Poems* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909), p. 21; henceforth cited in text.
- 12 Stephen Donovan, 'Stevenson and Popular Entertainment' in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 70-82 (p. 79).
- 13 Ann C. Colley, "'Writing Towards Home": The Landscape of *A Child's Garden of Verses*', *Victorian Poetry*, 35, 3 (1997), 303-18 (p. 305).
- 14 Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), p. 188.
- 15 Glenda Norquay, 'Introduction,' *R.L. Stevenson on Fiction*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 13.

- 16 Agatha Christie, *They Came to Baghdad* (London: Pan Books, 1974), p. 123
- 17 Allan Wall, 'Dispatch No. 43: Mud, Nursery Rhymes and Transitions'. *WorldNetDaily* (10 February 2006, www.wordnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=48771) p. 1.
- 18 Joanne Lewis. 'How Far from Babylon? The Voices of Stevenson's Garden', in *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics*, ed. by Charlotte F. Otten and Gary D. Schmidt (New York: Greenwood, 1989).
- 19 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Walt Whitman', *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1905), 79-110 (p. 87).
- 20 Robert Louis Stevenson, *New Arabian Nights* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1902) p. 328.
- 21 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'An Inland Voyage', *An Inland Voyage and Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (New York, Doubleday, Doran, 1932), p. 119.
- 22 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Virginibus Puerisque', *Travels with a Donkey and Virginibus Puerisque*, ed. by H. Bell (London: Ginn, 1936), 105-48 (p. 121).
- 23 Stevenson, 'Virginibus Puerisque', p. 121.
- 24 Stevenson, 'Virginibus Puerisque', p. 121.
- 25 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Child's Play', *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction*, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 30-39 (p. 31).
- 26 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Child's Play', pp. 31-32.
- 27 Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 100.
- 28 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (New York: Meridian, 1967), p. 222.
- 29 Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 221.
- 30 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Lantern Bearers,' *Across the Plains* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1897), 133-47 (p. 146).
- 31 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Walt Whitman,' p. 83.

'Hello, Mackellar': Classics Illustrated meets *The Master of Ballantrae*

William B. Jones Jr.

Robert Louis Stevenson's place in popular culture was assured the moment people began mispronouncing Dr. Jekyll's name and turning it and Mr. Hyde's into household words.¹ Or one might say that the process began a few years earlier, when Prime Minister Gladstone, among others, stayed up all night savouring the adventures of Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver.² It was enough to make the author, a writer's writer if ever there was one, question his own artistic integrity. 'There must be something wrong with me,' he wrote to Edmund Gosse, 'or I would not be popular.'³ But popular Stevenson was, and popular he remains, whatever the fluctuations in his critical reputation from the era of Swinnerton to the present.⁴ During the twentieth century, such mass-entertainment vehicles as stage, film, radio, and television proved fertile ground for much of the author's fiction.⁵ In this period, two popular sequential-art forms, comic strips and comic books, introduced generations of youngsters to Stevenson's novels, stories, and poems.

The first adaptation of a work by Stevenson in the comic-strip format appeared in 1925. That year, a colourful former U.S. cavalry officer and entrepreneur named Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson produced a syndicated daily newspaper adaptation of *Treasure Island*, drawn by N. Brewster Morse.⁶ In 1935, Wheeler-Nicholson leaped at the opportunity to ride the new comic-book wave and founded National Periodical Publications, which would in time become DC Comics. (Jones, p. 9.) His first comic-book venture, *New Fun*, featured another serialised adaptation of *Treasure Island*, illustrated by Charles Flanders, thereby marking Stevenson's debut in that medium.⁷ The well-loved pirate tale

began a four-issue run, with artwork by Harold deLay, in the *Doc Savage* pulp series in 1940. Another rendition appeared in ten issues of *Target Comics* in 1941-42. *Treasure Island* inaugurated Dell Comics' short-lived *Famous Stories* in 1942, with a sixty-four-page version illustrated by Robert Bugg; it marked the first single-issue abridgment of a Stevenson text.⁸

In the meantime, Albert L. Kanter, a Russian Jewish immigrant, high-school dropout, and New York businessman who loved literature, was working for Elliott Publishing Company. In 1940 the publisher had begun repackaging remaindered comic books in a 128-page format called *Double Comics* (Jones, p. 9). It was the new industry's so-called Golden Age—a period recreated vividly in Michael Chabon's novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Klay*—when fresh series and entire genres were born every few months. Looking at the issues recycled by Elliott and at developments in the market, Albert Kanter had an idea (Jones, p. 7). With an autodidact's fervour, he conceived a means of simultaneously introducing young readers to classic works of literature in a comics-style format while endeavouring to wean them from the superhero fare on which they were spending so much time and allowance money. Kanter would create a comic-book line that would devote each issue to the abridgment of a single literary work. The concept was brilliant in its simplicity and had the merit (and attendant risk) of never having been tried (Jones, p. 9).

With the backing of two business associates, Raymond Haas and Meyer Levy, Kanter launched *Classic Comics* in October 1941 with a sixty-two-page adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* (Jones, p. 9). Two pages at the end were devoted to a biography of the author, Alexandre Dumas. It was the same medium that kids were devouring with a degree of passion now channelled into video games: the difference was that D'Artagnan had been substituted for Superman. Although youngsters never embraced the cocky Gascon with the same degree of enthusiasm reserved

for the Man of Steel, the first issue did well enough to warrant the printing of a second title, *Ivanhoe*, in November 1941. Within a year, sequential-art treatments of such works as *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Moby Dick*, and *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared under the *Classic Comics* banner. Unlike other comic books, *Classics* were not one-shot publications. Instead, most of the titles went through numerous printings, with print runs between 100,000 and 250,000 copies (Jones, p. 9).

Published under the Gilberton Company corporate name and renamed *Classics Illustrated* in March 1947 as part of an ongoing effort to enhance the publication's reputation with parents and teachers, the series was continually beset by controversy. Assorted cultural arbiters—including educator May Hill Arbutnot and anti-comics crusader Fredric Wertham—blasted the adaptations as vulgar corruptions of the literary masterpieces upon which they were based (Jones, p. 1). In his 1954 jeremiad, *Seduction of the Innocent*, Wertham declared that 'Comic books adapted from [. . .] literature [. . .] emasculate the classics, condense them (leaving everything that makes the book great), [. . .] and, as I have often found, do not reveal to children the world of good literature.... They conceal it.'⁹

Bart Beaty has noted the role of *Classics Illustrated* in the mid-century culture wars, which, unlike those of the present day fomented by religious fundamentalists, were largely fought on terrain selected by an intellectual elite promoting a modernist literary canon and sensibility. According to Beaty, this mandarin class, including poet Delmore Schwartz, insisted on a particular way to read and disparaged 'middlebrow' attempts at diluting the proper response to Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Melville, and Dostoevsky.¹⁰ On the other hand, certain comics champions, judging *Classics Illustrated* by the standards of what they knew, which is to say superhero comics, condemned them, in effect, because they were not superhero comics (Jones, p. vii). Even so, *Classics Illustrated* remained a vital part of the popular culture

for thirty years. From 1941 to 1971, the series introduced GIs, bobby-soxers, and their baby-boom children to what the publisher termed 'Stories by the World's Greatest Authors'—an elastic concept that embraced such canonical texts as *Don Quixote*, *Hamlet*, and *Faust*, along with such fading lights as *Lorna Doone*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Beyond those titles were a smaller number of decidedly non-canonical works, including *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, *Soldiers of Fortune*, and *The Hurricane*. By the late 1950s, *Classics Illustrated* had become the most successful and widely distributed publication of its kind in the world, with editions printed in twenty-six languages in thirty-six countries.¹¹

Over the course of its thirty-year history, the original *Classics Illustrated* line dropped its page count from sixty-four to fifty-six to forty-eight, and raised its price from ten cents in 1941 to fifteen cents in 1951 to twenty-five cents in 1968 (Jones, pp. 90, 188). Both artwork and abridgments steadily improved, moving from the crudely drawn and freely adapted in the early-to-mid-1940s to the competently illustrated and mostly accurate in the late 1940s and early 1950s to the superbly rendered and textually faithful in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Jones, p. 6). The title we are considering here, *The Master of Ballantrae*, fell within the second phase and displays some of the strengths and defects of that transitional period, when *Classics Illustrated* had not yet converted to full control over its artists and scriptwriters but was still dependent for content on the Iger Shop, one of the four major New York comics-art houses (Jones, p. 37).

The Master of Ballantrae, No. 82 in the series, was the fifth Stevensonian adaptation in the *Classics* line. Between 1943 and 1954, Albert Kanter's Gilberton Company produced, under the yellow *Classics* banner, seven issues containing eight works by the author: No. 13, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (first edition, August 1943, eight printings; revised edition, October 1953, nine printings); No. 31, *The Black Arrow* (October 1946, fourteen print-

ings); No. 46, *Kidnapped* (April 1948, sixteen printings); No. 64, *Treasure Island* (October 1949, thirteen printings); No. 82, *The Master of Ballantrae* (April 1951, three printings); No. 94, *David Balfour* (April 1952, three printings); No. 116, *The Bottle Imp* (which also included *The Beach of Falesá*) February 1954, two printings. Only Jules Verne (ten titles), Alexandre Dumas (nine titles), and James Fenimore Cooper (eight titles) were represented more often in *Classics Illustrated*.

A revived *Classics Illustrated* series from First Publishing / First Classics in 1990-91 featured new covers and contemporary interiors of two Stevenson works: No. 8, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (April 1990, one printing), and No. 17, *Treasure Island* (January 1991, one printing). (Jones, p. 37.) An edition of *Kidnapped* was planned but never published. In 1997-98, Acclaim Books reissued in digest format four of the *Classics Illustrated* editions of RLS tales: *Treasure Island*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *Kidnapped*. Each was graced with a new cover but retained the original artwork (Jones, Appendix J, pp. 243-44). In addition, the subsidiary *Classics Illustrated Junior* line of fairy tales and mythology featured thirteen poems from *A Child's Garden of Verses*—including 'My Shadow,' 'The Swing,' and 'Windy Nights'—in twelve issues from 1954 to 1956 (Jones, Appendix E, pp. 229-30). If these thirteen poems are added to the seven Stevenson issues in the original *Classics* line, Stevenson exceeds by ten the number of Verne titles represented in the series.

When *The Master of Ballantrae* was issued in April 1951, it was the second *Classics Illustrated* title to be published under the Gilberton Company's new distribution arrangement with the Curtis Circulation Company, a nationwide system that stocked newsstands and grocery stores with *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Esquire* (Jones, p. 90). It was also the second issue to be priced at the rather steep amount of fifteen cents, a boldly counterintuitive

move by Curtis that seemed to many parents a guarantee of greater worth. It was, more importantly, the second title in the series to appear with a painted cover, an innovation suggested by Curtis to enhance newsstand appeal and to set the series apart from other comic books at a time when the industry was undergoing intense legislative as well as parental scrutiny. The painted covers sent the sales of *Classics Illustrated* soaring and provided for the comics a distinctive presence worldwide.

Alex A. Blum, later the Gilberton art director, supplied the first painted cover for *The Master of Ballantrae* (figure 1). It was, in a way, a bit of a spoiler, depicting as it did the nocturnal scene in which Secundra Dass unearths the Master. A line-drawing copy of the same illustration appeared on the cover of the Australian *Classics Illustrated* edition (figure 2). A 1953 British hardcover Deluxe edition substituted the scene of the candlelight duel between the brothers, though the unknown artist apparently drew more inspiration from the recent motion-picture version than from the pages of the *Classics Illustrated* interior (figure 3). In the early 1960s, another British painted cover, this one brightly coloured, showed Teach and company boarding a vessel, undoubtedly leading countless children in the UK and throughout Europe, where it also appeared (figure 4), to assume that they were purchasing a sequel to *Treasure Island*. A final cover variant, by an artist identified only as Syrik, was published in 1968 in the US *Classics Illustrated* series after it had been sold by Albert Kanter to California businessman Patrick Frawley (figure 5). The painting was dominated by a smiling Scotsman of indefinite era; the artist evidently was unacquainted with Stevenson's dark tale of fraternal loathing and apparently believed that he had been commissioned to produce a sunny poster for a community theatre production of *Brigadoon*. Enrique Alcatena designed a considerably darker, highly theatrical cover for the 1997 Acclaim Books *Classics Illustrated* edition of *Ballantrae* (figure 6).

The theatrical always figured in title selection for *Classics*

Illustrated. Albert Kanter's older son, Hal, was a Hollywood scriptwriter, producer, and director.¹² He kept his father apprised of coming attractions well in advance, so that *Classics Illustrated* often had a movie-related title in production well before the film's release date.¹³ Such was the case with *The Master of Ballantrae*, which appeared about a year-and-a-half before the premiere of the Warner Brothers swashbuckler. That celluloid travesty was evidently intended as a boost for Errol Flynn's fading career. The comic book had the distinct advantage of at least resembling the novel of which it was based, while the Flynn vehicle merely borrowed the title and a few characters' names and otherwise abandoned the source material. In fact, Warner Brothers might have done well to junk the embarrassing screenplay by Herb Meadow and Harold Medford and to use instead the *Classics Illustrated* adaptation of *The Master of Ballantrae* for storyboards and script. The Gilberton scriptwriter in question was Kenneth W. Fitch, formerly a writer for Fox's *Murder Incorporated*, who wrote more than twenty faithful, literate treatments for *Classics Illustrated* between 1950 and 1953, including *The Black Tulip*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Call of the Wild*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Fitch's standard practice was to read the work to be adapted and relevant reference works. He then took extensive notes on the plot, the characters, and the historical setting. After outlining the book, drafting background memos that amounted to critical essays, and describing the characters for the benefit of the artist, Fitch would prepare a 40 to 45-page panel-by-panel breakdown (Jones, p. 104). In effect, he acted as a film-director equivalent for the artist, who, to extend the parallel, functioned as a kind of cinematographer.

Children's book illustrator Lawrence Dresser, who had made something of a specialty of historical biography (George Washington and Franklin D. Roosevelt were among his subjects), was ideally suited for the *Ballantrae* artwork assignment. For issue No. 82, he produced a well-researched costume piece,

basing two of his drawings on William Hole's illustrations (of which Stevenson was so fond) that had originally appeared in the *Scribner's Magazine* serialization.¹⁴ (See figures 7 and 8.) The first of Dresser's versions (figure 9) is the page-one 'splash' (the sequential-art term for a single large illustration on a page), which depicts the two brothers' candlelight duel. The second, on page 32 of the *Classics Illustrated* edition, depicts Mackellar's unsuccessful attempt to push the Master overboard during the Atlantic crossing (figure 10). A comparison with Hole's original illustrations instantly reveals Dresser's visual allusions—or, as comics artists put it with refreshing honesty, 'swipes.'¹⁵

Note the text-heavy panels on page 32 as Mackellar describes the voyage to New York and his growing conviction that the Master must be stopped. Only the last panel, the one styled after William Hole, contains a speech balloon. Of the four narrative boxes on the page, three run to five lines in length. This textual density was characteristic of *Classics Illustrated* in general and Ken Fitch in particular.

With the exception of adaptations of Shakespeare, which left the original language untouched, Gilberton scripts during the early 1950s followed the sources closely enough but frequently paraphrased for economy of movement. (That practice changed in 1956, when a feisty twenty-five-year-old editor named Roberta Strauss took charge and began insisting on absolute literary and historical fidelity in scripts and artwork: Jones, p. 139.) But in the meantime the prevailing idea in the editorial offices at 826 Broadway, next door to the Strand Bookshop, was faithfulness to the spirit if not always to the letter of the original. Here are Stevenson's words in which Mackellar recounts his failed effort to send the Master over the side of the ship:

I called my energies together, and (the ship then heeling downward toward my enemy) thrust at him swiftly with my foot. It was written I should have the guilt of this attempt without the profit. Whether from my own uncer-

tainty or his incredible quickness, he escaped the thrust, leaping to his feet and catching hold at the same moment of a stay.¹⁶

In the *Classics Illustrated* version, Mackellar's action is preceded by a narrative box in panel 4, in which he states that 'The thought [of sparing the family] became an obsession. If I could bring about the Master's death, that, too, would prevent his reaching New York'.¹⁷ This compact linking text summarises paragraphs, if not pages, of internal struggle. In panel 4 we see Mackellar extending his foot toward the seated Master. At this point in the novel, James has just finished telling Mackellar the Poe-like tale of the deadly plot hatched by an Italian count to rid himself of a hated German baron, and Mackellar has drawn the parallel with his own feelings for Mr. Henry's elder brother. Mackellar notes that the Master 'sat now with one knee flung across the other, his arms across his bosom, fitting the swing of the ship with an exquisite balance, such as a featherweight might overthrow' (*Ballantrae*, p. 244). For a close reader such as Fitch, the decision to have the artist depict the Master with his back turned to Mackellar was undoubtedly driven by the exigencies of narrative economy. Panel 5 contains neither dialogue nor narrative box; instead, it focuses (observe the spyglass design) on Mackellar's thrust. This is, after all, a comic-book retelling of the story, and sometimes even a scriptwriter as unsparing with words as Ken Fitch must allow the artist to tell part of the tale. Finally, in panel 6, we see the Master's quick response. Although in the novel James is silent for a period of time and then offers a truce, in the *Classics Illustrated* treatment the Master says, 'Aha Mackellar! That was a good try but not good enough! But I must say I think more of you to know you have blood in your veins.' (Fitch, Dresser, p. 32.) In Stevenson's book, the Master remarks, in the course of a longer conversation half-an-hour later, that

'I would have you know you have risen forty feet in my

esteem. [. . .] [Y]ou may think it odd, but I like you the better for this afternoon's performance. I thought you were magnetised by the Ten Commandments; but no—God damn my soul!—he cries, 'the old wife has blood in his body after all!' (*Ballantrae*, p. 246.)

Faced with the need, at the bottom of page 32, to move the 48-page adaptation along, Fitch made the choice to streamline dialogue and telescope time in order to emphasise the Master's bravado and insinuating charm. Thus page 33 represented a chapter break, and the scriptwriter dealt with the ship's arrival in New York and James Durie's reception at his brother's 'very suitable mansion'—a phrase that appears in both Stevenson's text and the adaptation (*figure 11*). The exchange between Henry and Mackellar in panel 3 closely tracks the original. So, too, does Henry's comment, 'There's a long score to pay and now I can begin to pay it,' in panel 4. (Note the repeated spyglass motif for the closeup—a design element intended to balance the similar device on the opposite page.) In panel 5, which closes page 33, the two brothers meet. Mackellar's narrative scroll, on the left, employs Stevenson's language in noting that James 'nodded [. . .] with familiarity.' The dialogue between the two characters in the speech balloons is almost verbatim, although shortened, from the book, with only the word 'here' substituted for 'hither' and the adjective 'evil' attached to 'reputation' in Henry's greeting (Fitch, Dresser, p. 33). Apparently, the scriptwriter wanted to be certain that the young readers of his adaptation would know precisely what sort of reputation had preceded the Master.

Where he deemed it necessary for the understanding of his audience, Fitch would interpolate material that, while not actually corresponding to Stevenson's text, provided amplification of the historical background. For example, on page 4 of the *Classics Illustrated* edition, in panel 5, English Jacobites are shown expressing reservations about the Young Pretender's cause (*figure 12*). Fitch also occasionally converted descriptive narration into

dialogue for dramatic purposes. On page 5, a single paragraph in the novel fills all five panels—encompassing Macconchie and John Paul's discovery of the fateful guinea piece, Tam Macmorland's announcement that 'there were nane to come behind him,' and John Paul's report to the family (more emphatically rendered in Fitch's script), of the Master's presumed death (*figure 13*).

At the top of page 6 in the *Classics Illustrated* version, the scriptwriter took what was, for him, an unusual liberty in changing Henry's response to Alison's 'I know you were a traitor to him' from 'God knows, [. . .] it was lost love on both sides' (*Ballantrae*, p. 11), to the wholly invented 'Can you believe that? Are you not my cousin, too? Did not all three grow up together? Have we no bond of love between us?' (Fitch, Dresser, p. 6: *figure 14*.) One can only surmise that Fitch regarded Henry's original reply as too ambiguous for the comic-book readership—or that he saw an opportunity to deal with some expository matters. Or perhaps he, like Mackellar, had come to sympathise with the thwarted decency of the younger brother and hoped to place him in a better light. In any case, such radical changes were few in Fitch's script. But when they occurred, they certainly stood out. The most extreme interpolation, a joint effort of scriptwriter and artist, appears on page 44, the last in the *Classics Illustrated* adaptation. (*Figure 16*.) In panel 2, Secundra Dass, having unearthed the Master, is given the non-Stevensonian line, 'See? See now? He live!' (Fitch, Dresser, p. 44.) At this point in the novel, Mackellar reports that

I thought I could myself perceive a change upon that icy countenance of the unburied. The next moment I beheld his eyelids flutter; the next they rose entirely, and the week-old corpse looked-me for a moment in the face.

So much display of life I can myself swear to. I have heard from others that he visibly strove to speak, that his teeth showed in his beard, and that his brow was contorted as with an agony of pain and effort. And this may have been;

I know not, I was otherwise engaged. For at that first disclosure of the dead man's eyes, my Lord Durrисdeer fell to the ground, and when I raised him up, he was a corpse. (*Ballantrae*, pp. 330-31.)

In Fitch's rendering of the scene, Mackellar offers his reaction in a narrative box, declaring, 'I was amazed and horrified. The lids flickered for a moment [. . .]'. Then follows a memorable line supplied by the scriptwriter and nowhere to be found in Stevenson's novel. In panel 3 on page 44, James looks at the narrator and says in a speech balloon, 'Hello, Mackellar.' The melodramatic ending that Stevenson found so problematic and that he had attempted to defuse with Hawthornesque evidentiary ambiguity has been ratcheted up another notch. As if that weren't enough, however, Fitch adds, in the narrative box in panel 4: 'Then I heard Mr. Henry cry out. I turned toward him, saw him fall... dead!' (Fitch, Dresser, p. 44.) In Stevenson's novel, as previously noted, Lord Durrисdeer falls silently to the ground. Here, on the last page of the adaptation, Ken Fitch appears to lose faith in both Stevenson's storytelling and the ability of young readers to accept narrative ambiguity.

Speaking as one who encountered the *Classics Illustrated* version of *The Master of Ballantrae* at the age of ten and who, a year or two later, vainly searched a Little Rock Public Library copy of Stevenson's novel for the Master's chilling words of exhumed greeting, I must say that initially I felt misled and even betrayed by the added flourishes. But in time the comic-book adaptation became firmly embedded in my childhood imagination. Certain panels of Lawrence Dresser's lightly sketched, heavily shaded artwork continued to resonate with me as the years passed—on page 2 alone, there was James leaning forward contemptuously toward Henry as he tosses the coin that works all their woe; Alison's well-aimed shot; and her broken-hearted 'O! I hope you may be killed!' (*Figure 16.*)

In the end, Fitch's adaptation and Dresser's illustrations cer-

tainly reached this reader. I was one of the kids who took to heart the admonition at the end of every issue: 'Now that you have read the CLASSICS *Illustrated* edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library.' I'm quite certain that my childhood love of the *Classics Illustrated* version of *The Master of Ballantrae* had something to do with my having read the novel, over the years, more times than any other Stevenson work. Looking back at the *Classics Illustrated* issue after nearly fifty years, I've found that my admiration for it continues to grow. Together, Kenneth W. Fitch and Lawrence Dresser distilled the murky moral atmosphere of this complex tale of fratricidal hatred in a manner that made it accessible and appealing to young readers. Their efforts repay adult attention. The Master, it seems, has more than one way to work his charm.



Figure 1-Alex A Blum, CI (US) No 82.



Figure 2 - Artist unknown, CI (Australia) No 57.



Figure 3 - Artist unknown, CI Deluxe (UK).

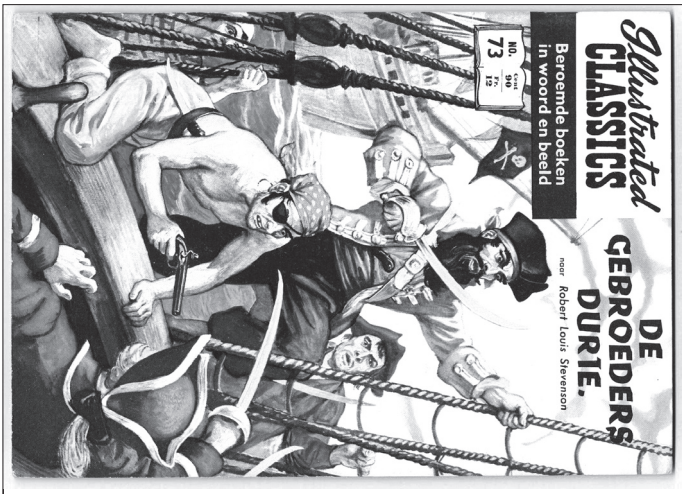


Figure 4 - Artist unknown, Illustrated Classics (Nederland)

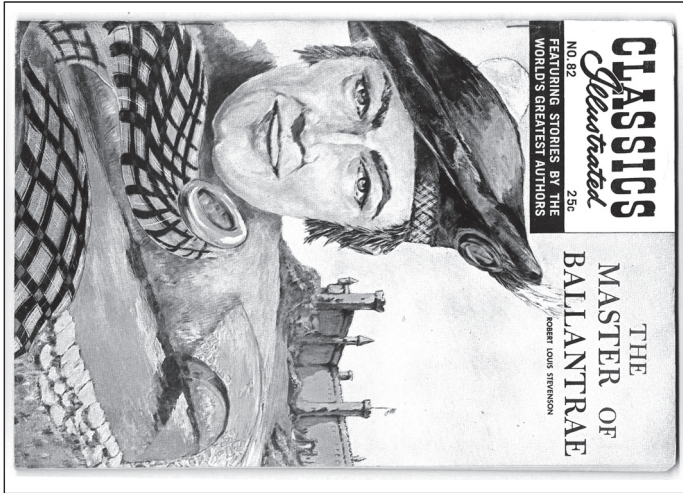


Figure 5 - Syrik, CI (US) No 82.

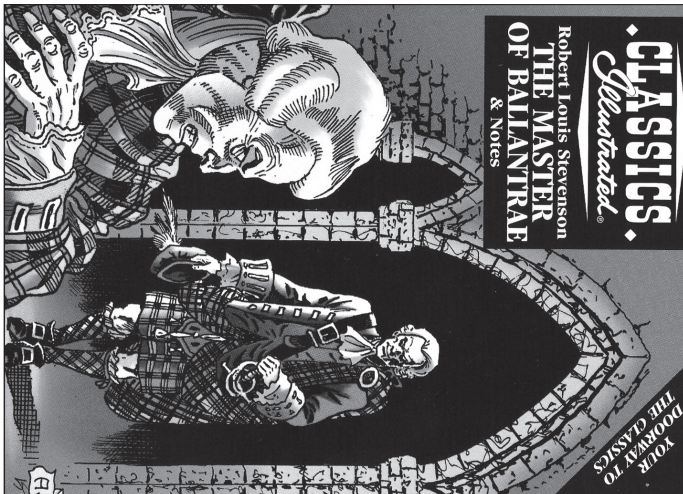


Figure 6 - Enrique Alcatena, Acclaim CI No 46.



Figure 7 - William Hole, 'Beyond doubt he now recognized himself'

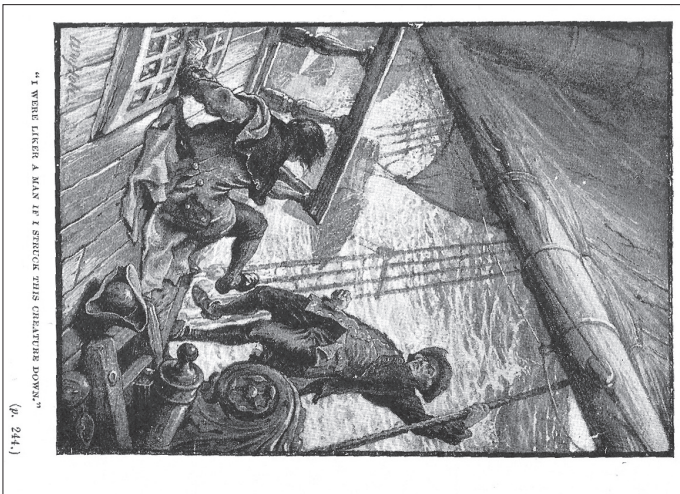


Figure 08 - William Hole, 'I were liker a man if I struck this creature down'

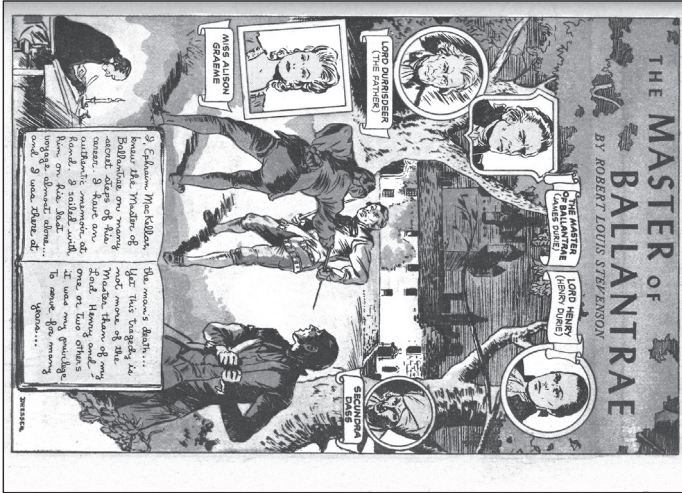


Figure 9 - Lawrence Dresser, Kenneth Fitch, CI No 82.

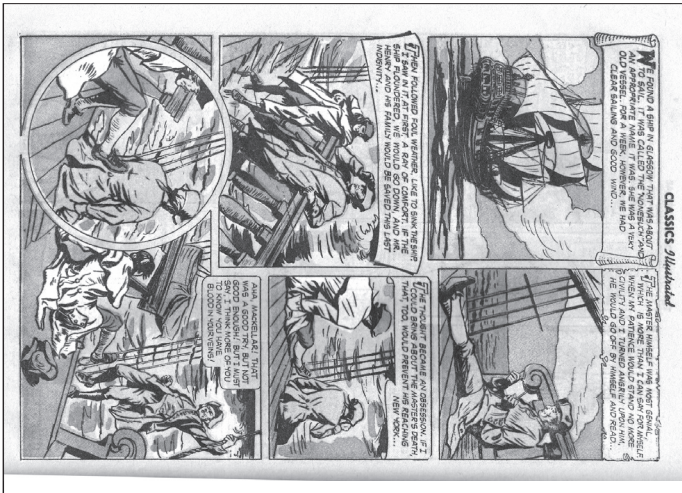


Figure 10 - Lawrence Dresser, Kenneth Fitch, CI No 82.

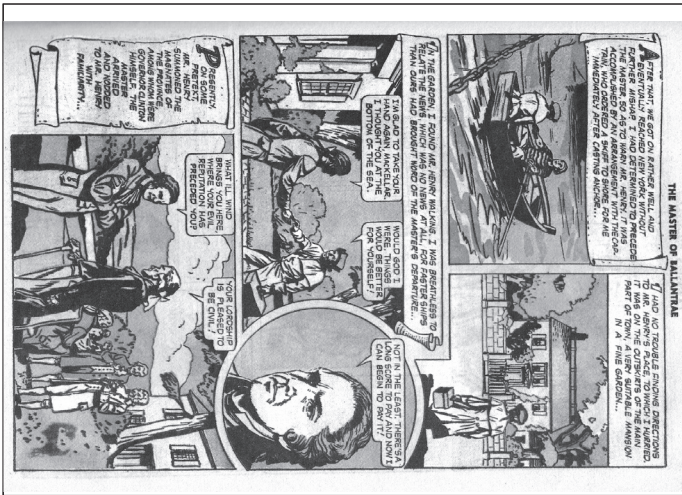


Figure 11 - Lawrence Dresser, Kenneth Fitch, CI No 82.

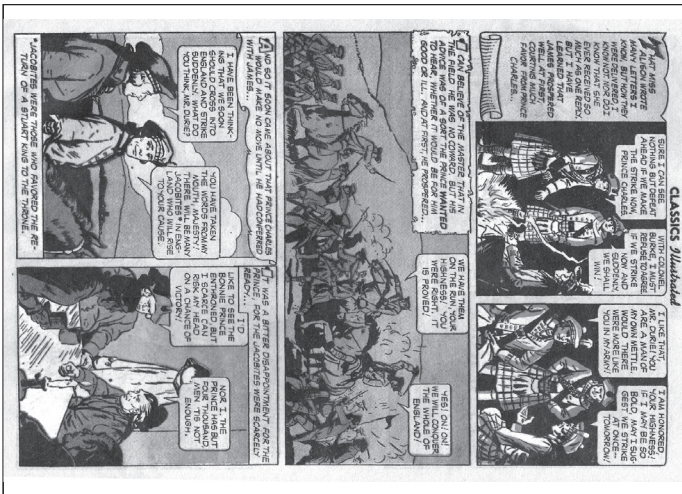


Figure 12 - Lawrence Dresser, Kenneth Fitch CI No 82.

NOTES

- 1 Claire Harman, *Myself and the Other Fellow: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), pp. 307-308.
- 2 J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1951), p. 198.
- 3 Robert Louis Stevenson to Edmund Gosse, 2 January 1886, in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Ernest Mehew (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 300.
- 4 See, for the beginnings of the negative critical reception, *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 488-518.
- 5 For a thorough examination of film treatments of Stevenson's works, see Scott Allen Nollen, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Life, Literature and the Silver Screen* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1994).
- 6 William B. Jones Jr., *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, with Illustrations* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), p. 9; hereafter cited in the text as 'Jones'.
- 7 Ron Goulart, *Ron Goulart's Great History of Comic Books* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1986), p. 58.
- 8 William B. Jones Jr., 'Forty-Eight Pages and Speech Balloons: Robert Louis Stevenson in *Classics Illustrated*,' in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by William B. Jones Jr. (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), p. 228.
- 9 Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rhinehart & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 36.
- 10 Bart Beaty, 'Featuring Stories by the World's Greatest Authors: Classics Illustrated and the "Middlebrow Problem" in the Postwar Era,' *International Journal of Comic Art*, 1:1 (Spring/Summer 1999), 122-139.
- 11 Jones, 'Forty-Eight Pages and Speech Balloons,' p. 229.
- 12 For an amusing and insightful self-portrait, see Hal Kanter, *So Far, So Funny: My Life in Show Business* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999).
- 13 Among the 1950s *Classics Illustrated* movie-related titles were *Joan*

of Arc (No. 78), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (No. 79), *Men of Iron* (No. 88), *King Solomon's Mines* (No. 97), *The Red Badge of Courage* (No. 98), *From the Earth to the Moon* (No. 105), *King—of the Khyber Rifles* (No. 107), *Knights of the Round Table* (No. 108), *The Talisman* (No. 111), *Rob Roy* (No. 118), *The War of the Worlds* (No. 124), *Davy Crockett* (No. 129), *Kim* (No., 143), *Ben-Hur* (No. 147), and *The Buccaneer* (No. 148).

- 14 Adrian Poole, 'Introduction,' in Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale*, ed. by Adrian Poole (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996), p. xi.
- 15 Jones, 'Forty-Eight Pages and Speech Balloons,' p. 235.
- 16 Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1905), p. 245; hereafter cited in the text as *Ballantrae*.
- 17 Kenneth W. Fitch (scriptwriter), Lawrence Dresser (artist), Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae, Classics Illustrated* No. 82 (New York: Gilberton Company, Inc., April 1951), p. 32; hereafter cited in the text as 'Fitch, Dresser'.

Reviews

Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 240pp., £45 / \$65. ISBN 1-4039-3663-3

The publication of Julia Reid's *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* in Palgrave's series *Studies in Nineteenth Century Writing and Culture* is testimony to the fact that after decades of exclusion from serious literary debates, Stevenson is now receiving due critical attention. Much scholarly effort has recently been expended on revisionist biographical approaches to Stevenson, notably the new biographies by Claire Harman and Bill Gray, but this volume continues the excellent recent work of other scholars in positioning Stevenson within the context of the intellectual and cultural climate of the *fin de siècle*. Stevenson scholars have long been frustrated by the perpetuation of the author's reputation as a writer of boys' adventure fiction, somewhat after R. M. Ballantyne, G. A. Henty or Rider Haggard. Reid's reading of Stevenson distances him from the romance/adventure mode, and positions him more appropriately within a sceptical, ambivalent literary tradition that anticipates and prefigures literary modernism. Although she rarely states as much, Reid's argument concerning Stevenson's destabilisation of accepted cultural and anthropological norms places him much closer to Conrad than it does to the likes of his compatriot Ballantyne.

This volume is a sustained critique of Stevenson's most influential novels and stories, divided into three parts, containing six chapters in total. Reid identifies her overall thesis as focusing on 'Stevenson's transactions with the new evolutionist sciences' (p. 6), and thus Part I deals with evolutionary psychology, Part II with degenerationist theory, and Part III with anthropology. The three theoretical perspectives are intrinsically linked, and through them Reid is able to 'reconcile' Stevenson's 'Scottish and

Polynesian work' (p. 175). Her overall aim is neatly summed up in the closing sentences of the Introduction:

[Stevenson's] involvement in evolutionist debates [. . .] illuminates the creative intersections and complex interweavings between late-Victorian literary and scientific discourses: Stevenson was able to engage critically and dynamically with evolutionist thought, both affirming and—importantly—challenging its assumptions. At the heart of this challenge was his revaluation of contemporary evolutionist notions of the 'primitive', and his belief in the enduring heritage of savagery in modern life. (pp. 11-12)

Engaging, therefore, with essays such as 'A Gossip on Romance' and 'A Humble Remonstrance', and drawing on Stevenson's relationship with his father, Reid argues in Chapter 1 that Stevenson regarded innate savagery as constituting part of the impulse towards romance: he evokes 'antenatal' lives to 'erode barriers between individuals, connecting them together in a cross-generational psychological narrative' (p. 21). Traces of our pre-civilised past are thus seen as forming the recuperative properties of romance, offering a 'cultural curative' for the malaise of modernity (p. 24).

Chapter 2 'Romance Fiction: "stories around the campfire"' deals with Stevenson's ambiguous adventure/romance, *Treasure Island*, asserting that, despite its apparent romance credentials, this novel reveals Stevenson's reluctance to embrace the affirmative tropes of the genre, opting instead for a perspective that unsettles and challenges confident notions of progressive civilisation. The chapter reveals that his experiences in the Pacific fostered in Stevenson a growing sense that romance could be a destructive rather than a meliorative force: the result being the anti-imperialist novella *The Ebb-Tide*. The point here is that, despite its misgivings about romance, *Treasure Island*

is characterised by a yearning for a lost past of romance and adventure. *The Ebb-Tide* on the other hand, 'moves beyond the adventure genre, deftly weaving together naturalistic realism with political allegory and a proto-modernist symbolism' (p. 43). Reid's assessment of Stevenson's wariness of the promises of traditional romance inevitably reminds us that Conrad could be regarded as the inheritor of Stevenson's vision. For example, she states: 'The protagonists ambivalent responses to Attwater point to the sinister allure of the code of heroic masculinity—an allure which sustains and buttresses the malign forces of adventure, mission endeavour, and capitalist imperialism' (p. 52). Many critics have noted the similarities between this novella and *Heart of Darkness*, but Reid's comments here suggest even further parallels with *Lord Jim*.

Before embarking on a sustained evaluation of the psychological and degenerative influences of Stevenson's own life, the introductory section to Part II places his literary imagination within the context of contemporary discourse on degeneration and psychology, as well as positioning him within the orbit of other writers who dealt with the uncanny, such as Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells. Chapter 3 subsequently charts Stevenson's own tendency for 'nervous morbidity' through his childhood and into adulthood, making a convincing case for his doubts about his own virility. Reid argues that Stevenson sought explanations for this 'nervous morbidity' in heredity, viewing himself as 'the degenerative offspring of an active, vigorous line' and acknowledging a 'family strain of melancholy' (p. 64). Furthermore, he 'shared widespread *fin-de-siècle* apprehensions about the essential unhealthiness of the writer' (p. 68). Throughout we are reminded of Stevenson's preoccupation with duality, whether it be in the form of a morbid psychology, a conflict between the civilised and the savage self, or in his struggles to understand and control artistic inspiration. The implications of this ambivalence for his Gothic fictions are significant: 'his apprehension that such works

constituted a degenerate genre was rooted in concerns about their effect on the reader's morality, their æsthetic integrity, and their place in a commercialized literary market place' (p. 74). Reid thus claims that the Gothic genre marks a distinct departure from his, albeit problematic, relationship with the romance and adventure tradition.

Chapter 4, "Gothic gnomes': Degenerate Fictions,' focuses upon 'The Merry Men,' 'Olalla,' 'Markheim,' and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Here the emphasis is on how 'questions about heredity, will and environment [find] fictional form in his neo-Gothic tales' (p. 77). Reid sees 'The Merry Men' as a fictional expression of the perils of religious mania, while 'Olalla' draws attention to 'the psychological dangers of a denial of free will' (p. 83). The discussion of both stories is compelling and it is particularly pleasing to find such a sustained evaluation of stories that have received relatively little critical attention. The discussion of 'Markheim' anticipates the preoccupations with the psychological traumas of the divided self that lie at the heart of *Jekyll and Hyde*. However, Reid contends that, like 'Olalla,' this story revolves around questions of free will and is ultimately ambiguous in terms of Markheim's decision to surrender himself. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to *Jekyll and Hyde*. It must be said that it is difficult to find new approaches to such a critically over-burdened text, but among some of the more familiar critiques to the story, Reid manages to break new ground by alerting us to the tensions in the text between the hereditary degeneration and the influence of environmental conditions. Ultimately, Reid asserts that the 'same concerns about psychological disintegration that haunt his letters reverberate through the cluster of neo-Gothic fictional narratives which Stevenson wrote in the first half of the 1880s' (p. 105).

The final part of this volume concerns itself with Stevenson and anthropology, and some of his later works written in Samoa. This is perhaps the strongest of the three parts of the volume

in that it brings into the critical frame an aspect of Stevenson's engagement with contemporary science that reaches back into his Scottish cultural heritage: here Reid argues that it is Stevenson's own sense of his Scottish inheritance that allows him to imaginatively engage with Polynesian culture. As with the other chapters, Reid's concern in Chapter 5 is with Stevenson's ambivalence, in this case towards the dominant discourse of anthropology, which contends that evolution was a progressive, positive force. Reid applies this approach to two stories, 'The House of Eld' and 'Thrawn Janet,' and to two novels, *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae*. While the discussions of the two stories are interesting, it is the attention to the cultural and anthropological dimensions of the novels that is most arresting here. Reid focuses on the historical tensions in both novels, noting that they represent a tragically divided nation whose schism can be traced back to the act of Union. A further fascinating discussion centres on the use of Scots language and the cultural rifts and prejudices that the characters' use of dialect betrays. Finally, Reid makes the important point that the novel 'figures the gradual dislocation of Mackellar's narrative by the untameable and purportedly primitive forces of orality and superstition' (p. 132), thus anticipating a longer discussion in of Stevenson's use of oral cultures in *Catriona* and *Weir of Hermiston* in the next chapter.

Chapter 6, ' "[T]he clans disarmed, the chiefs deposed": Stevenson in the South Seas', deftly manages to unite Stevenson's Scottish and Polynesian fiction through the suggestion that they shared an 'enduring scepticism about progressive anthropology' (140). The thrust of the argument on *In the South Seas* is that 'its insistence on the value of cultural difference destabilizes Victorian anthropology's unilinear model of cultural development' (p. 143). Reid emphasises Stevenson's sense that Polynesian culture was being destroyed by the forces of imperialism, and as such she aligns him more closely with other writers of Empire whose concerns were with the effects of imperial incur-

sions upon indigenous peoples: one thinks, of course, of Conrad, but also of some of Haggard's non-fiction and of Hugh Clifford's fears for Malay peoples. The discussion of 'The Beach of Falesá' concerns Wiltshire's slow realisation of the value of Polynesian culture and the consequent shift in his loyalties. An excellent discussion of oral cultures segues this debate into Reid's analysis of *Catriona* and *Weir of Hermiston* where she makes her pivotal point that these novels are informed by Stevenson's experiences of cross-cultural encounters in the Pacific. Both novels are seen as focusing on the clash of cultures and traditions, old and new, and resonating with '*fin-de-siècle* doubt about cultural progress' (p. 171). Linking the novels and stories discussed in Part III, Reid contends that 'Stevenson proposes a bleak understanding of evolution, emphasising the pain and violence inherent in the struggle for survival, and the tragic repercussions of the loss of tradition, custom, and belief' (pp. 172-3).

The value of the statement above is that it unites Stevenson's *oeuvre* within an anthropological frame and indicates the serious debates that informed his fiction. One of the many strengths of this volume is how its discussion of evolution, degeneration and anthropology affords us a clearer picture of Stevenson's development as a writer, and as a serious critic of cultural conflict and change. Stevenson scholars will be gratified to see his work receiving serious critical attention within these more theoretical approaches to literary studies, and indeed the focus of this volume moves beyond the familiar territory of Stevenson and the Gothic to place him firmly within the scientific discourse of critiques of imperial fiction. As a result, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* is a welcome addition to Stevenson studies: it thoroughly deserves its place amongst the burgeoning number of critical works on Stevenson that are finally finding their rightful place on university library bookshelves.

Linda Dryden

Contributors

Robert-Louis Abrahamson is Collegiate Professor of English with the University of Maryland University College's European Division. Among other literary areas, he lectures on myth, spirituality and fairy tales. He has been a devoted reader of Stevenson since a child, and has a special affection for the *Fables*. He is featured on the short film about the *Fables* produced by the Associazione Culturale le Cercle Rouge in Bosca, Italy: *Ai minimi drammi—Tales of Moralities*.

Richard Ambrosini is Professor of English literature at the Università di Roma Tre. He has written two books on Conrad: *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* (1991) and *Introduction to Conrad* (1991) as well as translating two of his novels into Italian. His work on Stevenson includes a translation of *Treasure Island*, numerous essays, a monograph *R. L. Stevenson: la poetica del romanzo* (2001) and a co-edited collection of essays (with Richard Dury) *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries* (2006).

Hilary J. Beattie is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City, and is on the faculty of the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry as well as the Columbia Psychoanalytic Centre. Her research interests are in psychoanalytic approaches to literature and the Scottish contribution to psychoanalysis. Her publications include three papers on Stevenson: 'A Fairbairnian Analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'; 'Father and Son: The Origins of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'; and 'Dreaming, Doubling and Gender in the Work of Robert Louis Stevenson: The Strange Case of "Olalla"'.

Jenni Calder has written extensively on various aspects of English, Scottish and American literature and history, including

RLS: A Life Study (Hamish Hamilton 1980), numerous articles on Stevenson and several Stevenson editions, *Scots in Canada* (Luath Press 2003) and *Scots in the USA* (Luath Press 2006). *Scots Out West: Scottish Experience on the American Frontier* is due out in October 2007 (Fort Publishing).

Ann C. Colley is Professor of English at Buffalo State College, and her most recent critical work is *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Ashgate, 2004). Her main interest is in Victorian literature and she has published essays in many of the leading journals in this field as well as monographs on *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), *Edward Lear and His Critics* (1993), *The Search for Synthesis in Literature and Art* (1990) and *Tennyson and Madness* (1983).

Martin Danahay is Professor of English and Graduate Director at Brock University, Ontario. He is the author of *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity* (Ashgate, 2005) and *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in Nineteenth Century Britain* (SUNY Press, 1993), as well as numerous articles on Victorian literature and culture. He has edited the Broadview Press edition of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1999) and, with Alex Chisholm, *Jekyll and Hyde Dramatized: The 1887 Richard Mansfield Script and the Evolution of the Story on Stage* (McFarland Press, 2004).

Dennis Denisoff is a Research Chair at Ryerson University in Toronto. His recent monographs include *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody* (Cambridge UP, 2001) and *Sexual Visuality from Literature to Film* (Palgrave, 2004). He is the editor of the forthcoming collection of essays *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Ashgate, 2008).

Cinzia Gigliani is Research Grantee in English Literature at the State University of Milan, where she obtained her PhD in

2002. She has articles published and forthcoming on James Joyce, Robert Louis Stevenson and Iris Murdoch. Her research interests include genre criticism and fictional devices in non-fictional writings, such as R. L. Stevenson's essays or James Joyce's Italian articles.

Gordon Hirsch is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota and in spring 2007 was a visiting professor at the University of Graz, Austria. He is co-editor of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), and he has recently published essays—one of them in *JSS*—discussing two of the three novels on which Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne collaborated. He is currently researching developments in cognitive neuroscience and their application to the study of nineteenth-century fiction.

Mary B. Hotaling is the Executive Director of Historic Saranac Lake, a not-for-profit historic preservation organization. She works on preserving and interpreting the history and architecture of the village as a centre, founded by Dr E. L. Trudeau, for treatment and research on tuberculosis. It was Dr Trudeau's reputation that drew Robert Louis Stevenson to Saranac Lake for the winter of 1887-88. Ms Hotaling holds an M.S. in historic preservation from the University of Vermont.

William B. Jones Jr. is an independent scholar, writer, teacher, and attorney. He is the author of *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History* (2002) and the editor of and a contributor to *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives* (2003). Bill organised and chaired 'RLS 2000: Celebrating 150 Years of Robert Louis Stevenson in Literature and Popular Culture,' an international conference held in Little Rock, Arkansas in November 2000.

Wendy R. Katz is Professor of English at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. She has taught and published

in the area of Victorian literature. She has written articles on Stevenson and is the editor of *Treasure Island* for Edinburgh University Press.

Jürgen Kramer is Professor of British Cultural Studies at the University of Dortmund (Germany). His main research areas are the history of the British Isles and the British Empire, the sea as a cultural space, transatlantic slavery, literature of the Pacific, cultural memory, anti-colonial resistance, Joseph Conrad and, of late, Robert Louis Stevenson. Among his publications are *Cultural and Intercultural Studies* (1990), *British Cultural Studies* (1997) and *Britain and Ireland. A Concise History* (2007); from 1994 to 2006 he co-edited the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*.

Ilaria B. Sborgi is a Research Fellow in English literature at the University of Florence, Italy, where she got her PhD in 2004. She has published essays on Robert Louis Stevenson, detective fiction, feminist history, and the English writer Dorothy Nevile Lees.

Marilyn Simon is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto. Currently, her main research focus is on Shakespeare's drama and his representation Christian charity. She has an ongoing interest in Robert Louis Stevenson's work and in late-Victorian constructions of national communities.

Robert Benjamin Stevenson III, BS, DDS, MS (Dental Surgery), MA (Journalism) is a Fellow of the American College of Dentists, and a Fellow of Pierre Fauchard Academy. His private practice is limited to prosthodontics, the specialty that bridges all gaps. He is Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Restorative and Prosthetic Dentistry at Ohio State University.

Roderick Watson is a Professor at the University of Stirling where he is Director of the Centre of Scottish Studies. He co-edits the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* with Linda Dryden and was General Editor of the Canongate Classics from the start of

the series in 1987. His publications include *Hugh MacDiarmid* (1976; 1985); *The Poetry of Norman MacCaig* (1989); *The Poetry of Scotland* ed., (1995); *The Literature of Scotland* (1984; 2007). His most recent collection of poetry is *Into the Blue Wavelengths* (2004).

About The Journal of Stevenson Studies

Committed to the study and wider implications of the work of Robert Louis Stevenson as a popular writer, ***The Journal of Stevenson Studies*** seeks to offer new insights into the moral, psychological and cultural ambiguities of his vision.

Volume One of The Journal, published in July 2004, contains essays by Richard Ambrosini, Steven Arata, Oliver S. Buckton, Liam Connell, Richard Dury, Vincent Giroud, Douglas S. Mack, Sudesh Mishra, Glenda Norquay, Olena M. Turnbull, Richard J. Walker, and Roderick Watson.

Volume Two appeared the autumn of 2005, with essays by Richard Ambrosini, Stephen Arata, Oliver Buckton, Jenni Calder, Richard Dury, Gordon Hirsch, Katherine Linehan, Douglas Mack, Barry Menikoff, Glenda Norquay, and Marshall Walker.

Volume Three appeared in the winter of 2006 with a poem by Jim C. Wilson and essays by Giuseppe Albano, Katherine Linehan, Wendy Katz, Katherine Linehan, Laanvanyan Ratnapalan, Roger G. Swearingen, Saverio Tomaiuolo.

To order a copy of any of these volumes, including the current one, please contact Rory Watson at the address overleaf, with details of which issue you wish to buy.

Volume Five will appear in 2008, as a special issue with contributions from many creative writers giving their responses to Stevenson and what his work means to them.

To subscribe to the Journal, or to order a copy of volume five please use the subscription form.

The Journal of Stevenson Studies

**The Journal is available annually
by subscription only.**

Subscription rates 2008 (all rates inclusive of postage)

	Personal		Institutional	
	UK	Overseas	UK	Overseas
1 Year	£15	£17	£25	£27

I wish to subscribe to *The Journal of Stevenson Studies* as a
Personal UK/Overseas* subscriber

Institutional UK/Overseas* subscriber

*please delete as applicable

I enclose a cheque for £ made payable to
The University of Stirling

Please return orders to: Journal of Stevenson Studies
English Studies
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA
Scotland

Name _____

Address _____

Contributions to future issues are invited and should be sent to either of the editors listed below as MS WORD files in MHRA format. All contributions are subject to peer review by the Editorial Board.

Editors

Dr Linda Dryden
Reader in Cultural Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences
Craighouse
Napier University
Edinburgh
EH10 5LG
Scotland

Tel: 0131 455 6128
Email: l.dryden@napier.ac.uk

Professor Roderick Watson
English Studies
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA
Scotland

Tel: 01786 467500
Email: r.b.watson@stir.ac.uk