ISSN: 1744-3857

Journal of Stevenson Studies

Editor

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STIRLING CENTRE
FOR
SCOTTISH STUDIES

No. 1

Printed in England by Antony Rowe Limited

Acknowledgements

The Journal of Stevenson Studies has been produced with the support of the Centre for Scottish Studies at the University of Stirling. Thanks are due to Professor Rory Watson, Director of the Centre and Head of Department of English Studies, for his assistance in securing financial aid and for his enthusiastic support of the project.

The editor acknowledges the massive contribution of Karen Millar, Eleni Dragoni, and Caroline Short in the production of the Journal. James McCall, Deputy Director of the Centre for Publishing Studies at the University of Stirling provided invaluable information with regard to editorial and production issues.

Editorial Board

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'You cannot fight me with a word': *The Master of Ballantrae* and the wilderness beyond dualism.

Roderick Watson

This paper proposes *The Master of Ballantrae* as a transitional work between Stevenson's earlier texts of landscape, adventure and the ambivalence of character, and a later, darker, and more radically modern vision of existence. In *The Master of Ballantrae* Stevenson draws on familiar techniques of symbolic dualism only to deconstruct them in favour of a vision of life as existential wilderness, which led him to *The Beach of Falesá* and most notably to *The Ebb-Tide.*

> The full truth of this odd matter is what the world has long been looking for...

The very first line of *The Master of Ballantrae* begins with misdirection. Ephraim Mackellar offers to explain everything, and seems to believe that he has done so, but I think that we are left even more in the dark than we were when we began what Stevenson called (on the title page) his 'winter's tale'.

Andrew Lang wrote of 'this elaborate, melancholy, and almost hopeless book', and concluded that it possesses a 'very modern gloom'. (*The Daily News*, 5 October 1889). W. E. Henley enthused about the author's great skill, but he deplored its final effect, calling it 'a masterpiece in grime', and concluding that it left a 'bad taste in the mouth of the reader', leaving one 'in the end with an impression of unreality. You feel as if you had been awakened from a sinister dream. . .'(*Scots Observer*, 12 October 1889.)

What Henley and Lang say about *The Master of Ballantrae* shows that they were close to understanding its true nature. They just didn't like what they saw. Henley sums it up:

> The Master is a romance that differs from the romances of Sir Walter as a black marble vault differs from a radiant palace.

It was meant as a criticism, but it's an acute insight, and it is where I want to begin.

Henley and Lang had trouble with the book for two reasons, and both have to do with what I take to be its deliberately contradictory and ultimately nihilistic nature. First of all: *The Master of Ballantrae* is a romance that subverts romance. And secondly: *The Master of Ballantrae* is a novel deeply given over to dialectical oppositions, in both its theme (the Romantic dualism of a struggle between two brothers who are opposites in temperament) and also in its structural techniques. And yet its final effect is to subvert all such dialectical principles, and we are left with utter, terrifying, blankness. (A rock and two epitaphs in the wilderness.)

I would argue that the 'very modern gloom' of *The Master of Ballantrae* is the first of Stevenson's most mature engagements with existential blankness, and in this respect it prefigures Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (published thirteen years later) and leads directly to Stevenson's finest novel of modernity *The Ebb-Tide*, whose first drafts he and Lloyd Osborne were wrestling with at the very time of writing 'The Master'.[1]

So what is this 'sinister dream'? Let us begin with the novel as a subversion of romance and then consider how it offers a most elaborate structure of Romantic dualism (a seemingly psychological and even a metaphysical struggle between the two brothers) only to subvert that, too. In the process of discussing these two sides to the novel, I hope my third contention will become apparent. That is, that the novel depends at every level on a structural principle of dialectical (or binary) ordering. And yet this strategy, (a fundamental literary device for creating order and meaning), has been subverted at every turn, leaving us in the end with that 'impression of unreality' which so disturbed Henley.

A Romantic Novel Subverting Romance

The first half of the book belongs to the material world of 1745, an extrovert tale of adventure, romance and Scottish Jacobite history. Or rather we are shown the prevailing myth of that history, revealed by Stevenson as nothing less than a sentimental cancer at the heart of the Scottish psyche.

He had already explored such history (in much kinder terms) with *Kidnapped*, published three years earlier. Much has been made of the partnership of Alan Breck and David Balfour and the symbolic claims of the heart and the head or 'romance and responsibility' – drawing no doubt on similar critical claims about the work of Walter Scott. I'm not supporting this critical position, but it's a familiar one, I cite it only to point out that it is certainly not what we find when we turn to *The Master of Ballantrae*.

Yet 'Ballantrae' does seems to offer all the ingredients for a repeat performance, and at first glance the Durie brothers might well be taken for new versions of Alan and David. A closer look, however, shows them to be irreconcilably divided. The house of Durrisdeer has decided, quite deliberately, to take out insurance in what threatens to be a civil war, by joining both sides. It is Henry who sees how shameful this really is

> '...what are we doing? Cheating at cards!' (p. 23)

And who is the head of this family? He is man grown prematurely senile, who sits by the fire reading his books all day, a man blind to the failings of his elder son and careless of the virtues of the younger. He is a man with plans to boost his 'deeply mortgaged' estate by marrying his elder son to a wealthy orphan girl Alison Graeme, who has been entrusted to his care. And when James is presumed dead at Culloden, the old lord sets out to persuade her, by what Mackellar calls 'quiet persecution', to marry Henry, even though she loved James:

> ...the one brother being dead, my lord soon set his heart upon her marrying the other. Day in, day out, he would work upon her, sitting by the chimney-side with his finger in his Latin book, and his eyes set upon her face with a kind of pleasant intentness that became the old gentleman very well. If she wept, he would condole with her like an ancient man that has seen worse times and begins to think lightly even of sorrow; if she raged, he would fall to reading again in his Latin book but always with some civil excuse; if she offered, as she often did, to let them have her money in a gift, he would show her how little it consisted with honour... (p. 27)

The golden guinea flung through the windowpane (smashing the family crest), is later discovered in a holly bush, and the servants who find it spend it on drink. Mackellar calls it 'the root of all the evil'; doubtless remembering a Biblical injunction against the love of money and this seems a fair judgement on old Durrisdeer and his schemes. But that guinea lies at the root of the affair in a different sense, in that all that follows in the novel (and all questions of loyalty) were first decided by nothing more than the toss of a coin.

The 'romantic' image of James, that bold young cavalier for a lost but honourable cause, is equally compromised by his less than gentle treatment of Alison (whose letter he drops into the mire at Carlisle), and his dishonourable treatment of Jessie Broun whom he seduced and left destitute with his child (p. 28). We learn that he was one of the Prince's flatterers, and that in councils of war he 'thwarted my Lord George upon a thousand points'. (p. 26) This was Lord George Murray, a professional soldier, and the ablest of Prince Charlie's counsellors, whose good advice, as a matter of historical fact, we know to have been ignored in favour of the young pretender's own vainglorious preferences. And when we are finally given the Chevalier Burke's account of the Master's behaviour after Culloden, what we discover, reading between the lines, is a tale of the most single-minded and selfish flight. 'I have

always done exactly as I felt inclined' says James as he abandons his fellows on the shore and sails away to safety in the Sainte-Mairie-des-Anges. (Note the name)

And how is this adventure perceived by those at home? We find Tam Macmorland, drinking and weeping and ever sure of listeners as 'the only man in that country who had been out – or rather, who had come in again – .' (Mackellar's dry qualification about coming 'in' again, as opposed to being 'out', is a wonderfully witty grammatical deflation of a whole syntax of Jacobite sentimentality.) In no time at all, Tam is fabricating stories of betrayal, with Henry as a Judas who had promised reinforcements and then changed sides. Jacobite sentiment turns almost immediately to a self-pitying sentimentality, full of references to 'bonnie lads' and 'mony a cold corp amang the Hieland heather!' (p. 27) Jessie Broun, seduced and left with child by the Master, joins the drunken chorus in praise of those now sanctified by a futile death. She throws stones at Henry (who has been sending money for her support), crying 'Whaur's the bonny laddie that trustit ye?' And when he raises his arm to protect his face, she fills the countryside with tales of how she was beaten by him. Even a family servant, John Paul, 'a great professor of piety', believes the tales and treats Henry with contempt, only to be forgiven all when he pulls 'his weeping face' to make lamentation for 'his laddie'. (p. 28, p. 32)

Songs and tales about the Prince in defeat (often referred to as a lost suitor and a 'bonnie laddie') are at the heart of Jacobite romance. In *The Master of Ballantrae* Stevenson paints this tradition as a matter of lachrymose sentimentality, utterly self-serving and, at the same time, profoundly self-deceiving. Three years after writing *Kidnapped*, he has redrawn the fierce pride and the loyalty of Alan Breck into a picture of something positively morbid. In fact he recognises this evolution, by having the Master meet Alan Breck in his travels, only to find it politic to run away from him. (p. 43)

We see the cancer of such romance plainly at work in the house of Durrisdeer, when the old lord and Alison (now married to Henry) refuse to allow him to mend the missing window pane,

which was a representation, after all, of the family shield. Desiring neither the old identity renewed, nor a new identity defined, the pair prefer the mutual seclusion of the chimney-side, where they chatter and weep together, jealous of their private heartache, watched over by blank space (p. 37) – as a comment on the sentimentalised myth of the 45, and in view of how the novel ends, this is a most appropriate heraldry.

Nor should we forget that the pane was broken by the Master's coin – the coin he tossed to decide the fate of them all. Such dedication to random chance is the ultimate wild, romantic gesture, and it is one he will use again. Certainly it impressed the Chevalier Burke when they first met (they toss to decide whether to fight or make friends) and Burke calls it an example of 'how the old tales of Homer and the poets are equally true today – at least, of the noble and the genteel.' (p. 44) Burke has aspirations to be 'noble and genteel' but he is too easily impressed. For someone of the Master's undoubted intelligence the gesture smacks of something much darker and more nihilistic. It is indeed an absurd gesture in the fully philosophical sense of the word, and it seems to invite, from the very first, the chaos, the blankness, the impasse that marks at the novel's end.

The final step in what I have been calling Stevenson's subversion of romance, takes for its source another of his own books, *Treasure Island*, written six years earlier. In this tale of pirates we see the Master of Ballantrae's true character at work again. Ballantrae is charming or cruel, ruthless or pliable, courageous or cowardly, all as the occasion demands. It is this mixture of flexibility and wit, and the non-stop calculation of his own interest above all else, which makes him such a formidable opponent and a born survivor. These qualities will be seen at work again at the end of the novel, during James's adventures in the North American wilderness, but, for the moment, I want to focus on how Stevenson uses narrative technique itself, and then the story's actual physical settings, to comment further on his reappraisal of romance.

First of all, it is a tale told by the Chevalier Burke. If the dull and worthy Mackellar is an appropriate narrator of plain Mr

Henry's trials, then surely the Chevalier Burke is the very man for a yarn of pirate adventure on the high seas? Faced with the pirate Teach's capacity for random and pointless violence, the bold Burke becomes 'Crowding Pat' (fiddling Pat) in order to survive by ingratiating himself with his captors. This vulgar parody of his own Irishness is all the more appropriate in the face of Teach's own vulgar, and indeed positively infantile parody of 'wickedness", as he appears in a cloud of sulphur with his face blackened and his whiskers curled, chewing glass and shouting 'Hell, hell!'. (p. 48) Life under Teach's command (he is not even the 'real' Teach, we are told) is a series of bungled and fruitless pursuits, with episodes of cowardly and brutal cruelty to those who are too slow to escape. Apart from their own indiscipline, Burke observes that '...the most dangerous part of our employment was to clamber up the side of the ship' when they were attacking, and he goes on to note that 'I have even known the poor souls on board to cast us a line, so eager were they to volunteer instead of walking the plank. This... made our fellows very soft.' (p. 52) – Soft or not, and slow in the chase or not, they still put their captives to death, including the one crew (with women passengers) which did offer genuine resistance, until Ballantrae's 'gallantry', as Burke puts it, carried the day (p. 51). And all for what?

> We found many ships and took many; yet few of them contained much money... what did we want with a cargo of ploughs, or even of tobacco? – and it is quite a painful reflection how many whole crews we have made to walk the plank for no more than a stock of biscuits or an anker or two of spirits.
> ...an observation falls to be made: that in this world, in no business that I have tried, do the profits rise to a man's expectations.

Henley complained that the pirates in Treasure Island 'are sober, cleanly, almost respectable mariners, compared to the raving, loathsome miscreants who formed the crew of the Sarah' and

this is exactly the point. Stevenson is retelling his pirate tale in a darker key, and his mature understanding of where romance leads us, can be found in his physical descriptions of where the Master ends up: in the steaming swamps and the shapeless estuaries of the Bermudas; and finally in the night-time terrors and the frozen wilderness of North America. This is the ultimately and wholly appropriate destination for one who decides his fate by the toss of a coin – trackless, inchoate and deceptive:

> Some parts of the forest were perfectly dense down to the ground, so that we must cut our way like mites in a cheese. In some the bottom was full of deep swamp, and the whole wood entirely rotten. I have leapt on a great fallen log and sunk to the knees in touchwood; I have sought to stay myself, in falling, against what looked to be a solid trunk, and the whole thing has whiffed away at my touch like a sheet of paper. Stumbling, falling, bogging to the knees, hewing our way, our eyes almost put out with twigs and branches, our clothes plucked from our bodies, we laboured all day, and it is doubtful if we made two miles. What was worse, as we could rarely get a view of the country, and were perpetually justled from our path by obstacles, it was impossible even to have a guess in what direction we were moving. (p. 64)

In such conditions, which even a map could not resolve, reason, judgement or principles are of little use in deciding one's next step. Burke and Ballantrae encounter a group of Indians who may be friendly or hostile, and which they are and whether to make themselves known or not, would have 'puzzled the brains of Aristotle himself', as Burke puts it. Of course Aristotelian logic is useless in such a case, and the Master, almost in despair and at his lowest point in the whole adventure, makes one last characteristic gesture:

> ...he suddenly plucked out his coin, shook it in his closed hands, looked at it, and then lay down with his face in the dust. (p. 66)

And here, with absolute narrative mastery, Stevenson uses Mackellar to interrupt the Chevalier's story, and to leave the Master so to speak, with his face in the dust, as a final and memorable symbolic comment on those principles of adventure and wilful, selfish romance by which he has chosen to live his life. The subversion is complete.

This brings us to the second part of this essay, to the mystery of the Master's personality, and to Stevenson's teasing use of Romantic dualism, only to subvert it in the end.

A Dualistic Novel Subverting Dualism

As a matter of psychological drama this theme belongs to the second half of the novel, but it can be identified as a structural device in its own right throughout the whole work.

In the passage just quoted we left the Master in a frighteningly unstable physical world. The pursuit of romance has brought him to a place where what looks like 'a solid trunk' is 'whiffed away' at the merest touch, like 'a sheet of paper'. (Like a page from *The Master of Ballantrae*, indeed!) I believe that this is one of the novel's most potent symbolic moments – like the blankness of that broken window-pane, and the 'blankness' of the two epitaphs (without context and lost in a wilderness) at the very end of the tale. To this end I want to make some prefatory comments on blankness and on dualism as one of the rhetorical or conceptual structural devices by which we try to make meaning out of the chaos of experience.

The experience of 'blankness' is to be confronted by something that offers us nothing. It may seem like something we can write upon, upon which we can inscribe meaning as we construct narratives or pursue our personal goals, and yet in itself it is inert unapproachable, unsayable, unreadable, and

ultimately unwritable – a challenge indeed for any writer. The 'inscrutability' of the jungle in *Heart of Darkness* marks one writer's engagement with this blankness in what has become a key text for modern literature. Whether Conrad's jungle symbolises a modern understanding of the unconscious or a buried racism, or a fear of regression to the primeval, or simply the terror of the Lacanian 'real', it defies articulation and can only be hinted at – hence the overdetermined nature of the text, or the rhetorical over-emphasis on unspeakability that Leavis found so intrusive in the novel. Against such shapelessness, Marlow is saved by 'rivets', but neither the Master nor Henry has any such existential foundation. The '45 was mere adventure to James, and the only anchor in the latter part of Henry's life is hatred for his brother, a man already revealed as a fluid and insubstantial figure.

The concept of the double is a familiar trope in the literature of Romantic dualism. It is a structural convention which seeks to deal with the fluidity and the multiple complexity of our inner lives by setting up a more formal system, indeed a binary system, of doubles, dopplegangers, or psychological counterparts. In Dostoyevsky's short novel, *The Double* (1846), the unstable nature of Golyadkin's psyche is symbolised by the appearance of Mr Golyadkin Junior – a petty clerk even more shameless in his divided aspirations to swagger like an independent man, while simultaneously licking the boots of his superiors at the office. In *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Raskolnikov is haunted by an alter ego in the form of the suave Svidrigaylov – a man who revolts him, and yet who seems to fit every one of the young student's theories about being beyond the obligations of law and morality. We have already mentioned Stevenson's own account of the divided Scottish psyche, caught somewhere between David Balfour and Alan Breck. And of course his most famous fable on this theme was published in 1886 as *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.*

This is the context against which we must judge *The Master of Ballantrae.* Again (as was the case with romance) all the ingredients seem to be there. The brothers Henry and James Durie do seem to complement each other, for Henry is 'neither very bad nor yet

very able, but an honest solid sort of lad'; while his other, James, is very able and very bad, not exactly honest, and (as we shall see) not at all solid. Nor can they be separated, for as Henry cries out in despair, even as he thinks that he has killed James: 'Wherever I am, there will he be.' (p. 116) At first sight one might well expect these counterparts to function as thesis and antithesis in a tale, out of which some synthesis or final resolution might derive. But there is absolutely no sign of reconciliation between them, nor does the novel offer any middle ground (any other character, for example), to bridge the gap.

Nor does the narrative structure make it any easier, for the tale comes to us via unreliable secondary characters each of whom shares something of their champion's personality. And yet despite this, in the first half of the novel we think the worse of the Master, even as his exploits are admired by the Chevalier Burke; while in the second half of the book we gain a surer sense of James's charm and his pain, even as recounted by his enemy Mackellar.[2] It is not surprising that readers should suffer an occasional attack of vertigo in this book. So who are these brothers, and what can possibly explain their terrible enmity?

The final literary convention in matters of Romantic dualism is to enlist one's characters in a larger battle between the forces of order and chaos or of good and evil. And certainly (as in every previous convention that this novel has evoked) there is much to support such a point of view: 'He is not mortal' cries Henry of his brother, 'He is bound upon my back to all eternity – to all God's eternity!' Nevertheless, having first suggested it, Stevenson goes on to subvert even this construction. Of course it is not hard to find the Master's literary prototype in saturnine figures of Romantic rebellion or pride. His good looks, his wit and his wickedness have a distinctly Byronic flavour, most notably when 'Mr Bally' lands, mysteriously immaculate, on the shore of the Solway Firth:

> ...a tall slender figure of a gentleman, habited in black, with a sword by his side and a walking-cane upon his wrist... he

> waved... with something of grace and mockery that wrote the gesture deeply on my mind. ...swarthy, lean, long, with a quick alert, black look, as of one who was a fighter, and accustomed to command; upon one cheek he had a mole, not unbecoming; a large diamond sparkled on his hand; his clothes, although of the one hue, were of a French and foppish design; his ruffles, which he wore longer than common, of exquisite lace... (pp. 76-7)

Poor Henry... virtue seems so dull by comparison.

James's pride, furthermore, is nothing less than Satanic, and Stevenson seems to go out of his way to associate him with Milton's great hero-villain: 'He had all the gravity, and something of the splendour of Satan in the "Paradise Lost"' says Mackellar (p. 134), and indeed Ephraim, a religious man, repeatedly refers to Henry as 'my lord' and to James as 'my enemy' seeing him as 'diabolic' or 'devilish' or as a 'serpent' seducing, almost in a sexual sense[3], young Alexander (Henry's son) with tales of romance and adventure. (pp. 137-8) Something of a 'magician' of the elements, James can also 'cast a glamour' (p. 137) on those around him. He confesses to Mackellar that 'I never yet failed to charm a person when I wanted' (p. 159); and a single stern look from him makes the courage run out of the trader Mountain 'like rum out of a bottle' (p. 185). This is a man who seems to keep coming back from the dead, so perhaps it's no surprise that in his final return he should be accompanied by Secundra Dass at his elbow, like some 'familiar spirit' (the words are Mr Henry's) (p. 195). On a more abstract, moral level, James's cry of 'I would not take a blow from God Almighty!' (p. 95) echoes the original rebel angel; and his debate with godly Mackellar on board the ship is no less than a version of the temptation of Christ on the mountain:

> Cast your lot with me tomorrow, become my slave, my chattel, a thing I can command as I command the powers of my own limbs and spirit – you will see no more that dark side that I turn upon the world in anger. I must have all or none. (p. 158)

The Master of Ballantrae is indeed the Master of Lies, and it is undeniably tempting to see him as the very model of Satanic pride.

But I do not think that such a reading can be sustained, despite the fact that Stevenson clearly did favour a Satanic element in his make-up. In a letter to Sidney Colvin, for example, written two years before the novel was completed, Stevenson had this to say:

> ...the Master is all I know of the devil. I have known hints of him in the world, but always cowards; he is as bold as a lion, but with deadly, causeless duplicity.
>
> (24 Dec. 1887)

In a later manuscript, however, he gets a little closer to the true source of such 'causeless duplicity':

> For the Master I had no original, which is perhaps another way of confessing that the original was no other than myself. We have all a certain attitude towards our own character and part in life; we desire more or less identity between the essence and the seeming... and the secret of the Master is principally this, that he is indifferent to that problem. A live man, a full man, in every other part a human man, he has this one element of inhumanity.
>
> Cited by Elsie Noble Caldwell, *Last Witness for RLS*, (Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 118.

James evinces a total indifference to the need for any identity between 'the essence and the seeming'. Note that he doesn't deny a link between how things are and how they appear; nor does he invert it – crying 'evil be thou my good'. According to Stevenson, he is simply indifferent to it. This is crucially reminiscent of another figure of literary modernity, namely Svidrigaylov in *Crime and Punishment*, who is neither wicked nor good, but simply pursues his own will, indifferent to his effect upon the world, or

its opinion of him. In this respect, perhaps the Master is indeed the worst that might be imagined to haunt Mr Henry, whose sober Scottish Presbyterian values have so much to do with making clear distinctions between good and evil and in the careful management of money and reputation in a stable and fully material world – 'I love order', Henry confesses to Mackellar. (p. 67) Literary critics love order too, and the binary sets of Henry and James, of Jekyll and Hyde, Michael and Lucifer are undeniably seductive. But this is the novel in which Stevenson moves away from the persuasive power of such conceptual or ideological structures to confront a fully modern world view (even perhaps a postmodern one) where such easy distinctions do not and cannot apply. To speak figuratively, we are no longer seeking a balance between the Highlands or the Lowlands, romance and responsibility, but find ourselves instead on that most liminal and spectral of all modern landscapes – the beach at Falesá, or Attwater's lost island, caught on an ebb tide.

Stevenson's comment on the Master's indifference goes to the heart of James's terrifying fluidity. From such a point of view, everything is relative, and indeed might just as well be under the influence of chance. He has a particularly chilling and calm conversation with Mackellar, just after the aged servant has failed to murder him:

> 'Life is a singular thing', said he, 'and mankind a very singular people. You suppose yourself to love my brother. I assure you it is merely custom. Interrogate your memory; and when first you came to Durrisdeer, you will find you considered him a dull, ordinary youth. He is as dull and ordinary now, though not so young. Had you instead fallen in with me, you would to-day be as strong upon my side. (p. 156)

There is a scepticism here as profound as that of David Hume (if a good deal more cynical) for was it not Hume who proposed that even the apparently binding laws of cause and effect might be no

more than a matter of repeatedly observed impressions made upon us, a matter in other words (and Hume's words), of 'custom'. 'I have always done exactly as I felt inclined', (p. 45), and 'I go my own way with inevitable motion', (p. 78), the Master said to Burke and then to Mackellar on earlier occasions, and indeed nothing seems able to withstand such a shameless, fluid and flexible progress. Mackellar senses this about him (for a moment), during their voyage, when he glimpses an 'impudent grossness' under 'the veneer of his fine manners'. And then he sees something else:

> ...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 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. (p. 148)

This passage is a striking precursor to the same moment of recognition that afflicts Marlow in front of Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Faced with the severed heads which Kurtz has set up around his house Marlow reflects:

> ...the wilderness had found him out early... I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude – and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow to the core. (*Heart of Darkness*, p. 148)

These echoes are, I believe, fully intertextual, and very revealing. The brickmaker of the Central Station shares the same distinguishing condition in a passage that might almost be a direct quotation from *The Master of Ballantrae*:

> I let him run on, this papier-mâché Mephistopheles, and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe. (*Heart of Darkness*, p. 92)

Retold now in psychological terms, the 'man of pasteboard' passage is an exact counterpart to that lost landscape in the Adirondacks, where solid logs turn to dust at a touch. Both are matter but also insubstantial, both are essentially hollow.

A similar fluidity and a similar terror of amorphousness appears in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, when Jekyll meditates on the hellish energy of Hyde which is also something paradoxically 'inorganic', as if 'the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned' as if something that was 'dead and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life.' And the same horror of the shapeless and the inert can be found in the imagery which Stevenson ascribes to the intractability of matter at its most basic in the essay 'Pulvis et Umbra' – Dust and Shadow – published in 1888 just as *The Master of Ballantrae* was appearing. Stevenson's aim in this extraordinary essay is to make the triumph of man's spirit all the more remarkable given his origins as nothing less than a 'disease of the agglutinated dust'. 'What a monstrous spectre is this man...?' he asks, and sees him indeed as '...a thing to set children screaming', except that the human spirit raises us above the brute indifference of the Kosmos. Yet the blank indifference of matter is always there for him as the final horror, an existential horror akin to Sartre's nausea in a universe without God.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

So the blankness of the Master, his fluidity and vacuity is not the face of the devil, but simply an encounter with the wilderness of matter. This is no Manichaean confrontation with the power of darkness, but a recognition instead of spectrality, of nothingness,

of an existential and moral emptiness. Such emptiness is akin to Eliot's 'Hollow Men' and to what Hannah Arendt called 'the fearsome word and thought-defying banality of evil'[4] – a much more modern insight (indeed it is the insight of modernity) than the comfortable binary sets of Romantic or Gothic dualism. And this too is the symbolic point that the novel is making by way of the Master's continual resurrection. The Master seems to die no less than three times in the course of the novel and we, like Henry, begin to fear that nothing can kill such an insinuating, intangible, word-defying, paradoxically essenceless essence.[5] (Everything is a weapon in James's quest to prevail, even his own degradation. It turns out, for example, that when poor Henry thought he was witnessing his brother in extremity, working as a tailor, he was confronting only another gambit intended to embarrass himself. The Master laughs and gives up the pretence, seemingly giving Henry the best of it for once, although in fact he has further corrupted the poor man, by giving him such an unhealthy appetite – 'I grow fat upon it' – for gloating revenge.)

From such a position, we cannot say that the Master speaks for Romantic disorder as opposed to the staid virtues of his brother Henry and the whole inheritance of lowland Scotland. But neither can we claim that he speaks for darkness as opposed to light.

He speaks for whatever suits him, whenever it suits him, and with whatever it takes to get his way – courage, cowardice; charm, terror; loyalty, treachery; pride, humiliation; honesty or deceit, all are the same to him, and we have seen him use them all in the course of his adventures, simply as tools to get his own way. 'Oh! there are double words for everything', he says to Mackellar, 'the word that swells, the word that belittles; you cannot fight me with a word!' (p. 158)

The Master follows his own will, and everything else in the universe, that whole system of verbal and moral differences and distinctions by which we order our own perceptions and beliefs, is simply incoherent to him, and even inchoate in his eyes. For him the signified is always and wholly in subjection to the signifier – and the signifier can be changed. If one word or one identity

offends or inconveniences, then change it for another – (Jacobite/ Loyalist; pirate/ gentleman; sophisticate/mountain man). 'There are double words for everything... you cannot fight me with a word'. And that 'me', in symbolic terms, stands for something akin to what Peer Gynt (in another key text of early modernism) encountered as 'the Great Boyg' whose motto was 'go round about', a force of the solipsistic self, formless, and inoppugnable, another version, indeed, of the heart of modern darkness. In such a universe rational distinction and judgement are no help at all. One might as well spin a coin. And the natural setting for such an amoral, visionless vision, is the wilderness. This is not the familiar trope which offers us a 'moral wilderness' as opposed to 'cultivated landscape', for that would be to erect another binary set. The Master's wilderness is free of all such constructed meaning. It is simply, a trackless place, unmapped, undifferentiated, spectral, blank.

This is the final reason for the novel's setting on the ocean, in the Bermudas, and in the primeval American forest. And this is the final meaning of that symbolic landscape where everything is 'whiffed away' at one's touch, 'like a sheet of paper'; where the Master lies (if only for a fleetingly symbolic moment), with a coin in his fist and his face in the dust. Here too, I think, is the symbolic reason behind the icy cold that seems to follow him in the key scenes which witness his second and then his third and final death. It is the Master's isolation that takes him far beyond all human warmth. It is indeed a kind of suspension and a model for death itself – the very death that he rehearses so many times in the novel.[6]

If we seek a dialectical order to this novel, some sense of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, we will seek in vain, despite the book's dependence on symbols of binary opposition, and the Master's own roots in the literary conventions of Satanic rebellion and Romantic dualism. His true heraldry is the heraldry of that blank windowpane. And the true moral of the tale is equally blank, for although Mackellar thinks he has explained 'the full truth of this

odd matter'; we are left with only an inscribed boulder, lost in the wilderness.

Stevenson's engagement with that wilderness was to reach its finest expression in the deceptively beautiful shorelines of the South Seas, with *The Beach at Falesá* and especially *The Ebb-Tide*.[7] But the first steps towards those symbolic shores were taken by two Scottish brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae*. The spectral unreality of the Adirondack woods became the mirrored shore line of Attwater's lost island in *The Ebb-Tide*, where the 'fringe of cocoa-palm and pandanus extended desolate, and made desirable green bowers for nobody to visit, and the silence of death was only broken by the throbbing of the sea.' (p. 74). Here Herrick, cast adrift from his past, meets all that he or the mature Stevenson finally knows of a universe without a devil, and without God too.

There are no satanic or sacred counterparts in *The Ebb-Tide*, nor can the three protagonists of the first half of the novel be called evil, unless evil can be said to reside in the weak, the hungry, the petty, the ineffective and the immature. (And once again Hannah Arendt's words spring to mind.) God and the devil are not at war in this trackless place, although the last vestiges of that ancient duality are replayed in Stevenson's prose in a teasing deconstruction of all such easy tropes and symbols. So it is that we are once again reminded of the Master's Teflon spirit when Attwater, in the grip of a truly Calvinist zeal, likens God's grace to a diving suit which will let the wearer 'come up dripping and go down again' in the sordid affairs of the world (which is to say: pillaging pearls from the sea bed) 'and all the while the fellow inside as dry as toast.' (p. 88) If there is a god on this terrible island (presided over by the inscrutable whitened icon of a ship's figurehead and the Union Jack) it is Attwater himself, who became 'a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge; I was making a new people here; and behold, the angel of the Lord smote them and they were not!' (p. 90). And if there is a devil it is the petty selfishness that passes between the unholy trinity of Herrick, Davis and Huish, until that moment when Huish decides to throw the vitriol at Attwater, the moment as Stevenson puts it

when 'the devil . . . looked out of Huish's face' and Attwater shoots him dead. But by this stage we are in no doubt that this is just a figure of speech, a metaphorical devil – or at the very most 'Satan' has been evaporated, to be revealed as no more than petty human weakness, greed and spite. In either case, this cruel and sordid moment is scarcely the victory of God (or Michael) over Lucifer, and the atheist Herrick has the right of it when he regards Captain Davis with contempt, as he crouches canting and praying on the beach at the end of the tale, a reformed Christian, a 'pet penitent'. If Attwater's diving suit metaphor is a shattering critique of the Calvinist concept of grace, the whole book goes further still, to undermine the oldest of dualisms by deconstructing, in effect, the very concepts of 'God' and 'the devil' alike.

Coda

There is one final mystery in *The Master of Ballantrae*, of course, and that is to seek the origin of such enmity and 'causeless duplicity'. This question was there from the very start, and I don't think that Stevenson offers us an easy answer, or even, perhaps, an answer at all, despite his teasing hints of a diabolic presence. (How else would one expect Mackellar and Henry Durie to speak of the unspeakable, after all? They are both products of Scottish Calvinism, and a deeply dualistic Scottish religious tradition, which tends to see all opposition, or even just what it doesn't understand, as 'the work of the devil'.) There is one hint which the book does offer, however, and it takes us back to the beginning of things, to first principles – to the book of Genesis, in fact, from where it interrogates nothing less than the concept of God Himself.

In the very first reported exchange between the two brothers, we hear James refer to Henry as 'Jacob': 'Would you trip up my heels – Jacob?' said he, and dwelled upon the name maliciously.' (p. 24) The relevant verses from the Bible invoke to Isaac's plea to God to give his barren wife Rebekah a child:

> And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.
>
> And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord.
>
> And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be the stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.
>
> And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb.
>
> And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.
>
> And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.
>
> And the boys grew: and Esau [James] was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob [Henry] was a plain man, dwelling in tents.
>
> And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.
>
> (Genesis 25, 21-28)

Only a couple of points remain to be made but perhaps they will serve to reveal a last insight into Stevenson's profoundly modern scepticism.

Firstly, the Biblical model tells us that these brothers were born to be in conflict. There is no necessary moral scheme behind it,

it is simply a given of the text itself.[8] Furthermore, these are key verses in Calvinism's understanding of original sin, election and predestination. (Fionn MacColla, for example, makes telling use of them in his novel *Move Up, John*, p. 105.) In this respect it is no less than the prime mover, God himself, who sets all in motion – curing Rebekah's barrenness only to give her two sons fated to be at war with each other. But to our modern eyes (and to Stevenson's mature judgement) such causeless enmity – far from being the will of God (and certainly not a product of the devil), is nothing more (or rather, nothing less) than a confrontation with 'Providence' or, more brutally, with chance, with contingency, with nature, with the wilderness of mere being.

Attwater has seen this wilderness most clearly, though his madness is to call it 'religion': 'religion is a savage thing, like the universe it illuminates; savage, cold, and bare, but infinitely strong.' (pp. 89-90) This is the universe that Stevenson glimpsed in 'Pulvis et Umbra' and he had an early vision of it in the short story 'The Merry Men' (1881) when he saw it as a hostile void, a 'charnel ocean'.[9] It is this universe which is the ultimate theatre of the brothers' rivalry, and this is the meaning embedded in those recurring images of night and cold. This too is the final context of the Master's character and the Master's indifference: in a world conceived of as a trackless place, a place beyond words and beyond the familiar tropes of dualism, a place of being without meaning: an undifferentiated, undifferentiable, wilderness.

End Notes

1. According to Roger Swearingen, *The Master of Ballantrae* was written between December 1887 and May 1889 (published 1889), while *The Ebb-Tide* (then called 'the Pearl Fisher') was being drafted in the Spring of 1889, before being set aside for *The Wrecker* (summer 1889 to January 1890). By *1890 The Ebb-Tide* was half done, but set aside until picked up again in February 1893 and completed in June of that year (serialised November 93 to February 94) and published in July 1894.

2. The paradoxes multiply: for when Burke suggests an act of cowardice on the Master's part, Mackellar is at pains to disbelieve it (p. 66); and on the home front, sober Henry's case is supported by the drunken Macconochie, while the cad James finds a fan in the pious John Paul. (A similar instability is generated in Hogg's incomparable *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, but unlike the earlier text, neither of the protagonists in 'Ballantrae' is given a voice of his own.)
3. He compares the little boy to 'Eve', and likens James to Aeneas wooing Dido.
4. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report On The Banality Of Evil* (London, 1963). My emphasis.
5. Stevenson's essay on the genesis of The Master mentions this succession of resurrections as one of the most compelling elements in his original inspiration.
6. Consider the existential force of another passage from 'Pulvis et Umbra': 'And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror under the imminent hand of death...'
7. *The Wrecker* has its own vision of commercial greed and exploitation in the South Seas (among many other settings) but it reads more like a black comedy on capitalism, self-improvement and the naivete of young men, closer in spirit to 'The Misadventures of John Nicholson'.
8. Stevenson plays his own subversive variations on the Biblical model, for his brothers are not twins; it turns out to be the younger (Henry) who serves the elder; and James lies when he accuses Henry of being like Jacob, for when Henry finally strikes him, it is James who confesses 'I have hated you all my life.' (p. 95)
9. See Roderick Watson, 'Introduction' Robert Louis Stevenson, *Shorter Scottish Fiction* (Canongate Books: Edinburgh, 1995), pp. xi-xiv.

R. L. Stevenson and the Ethical Value of Writing for the Market

Richard Ambrosini

Treasure Island marked a departure not only from the themes, but also from the implied audience of Robert Louis Stevenson's previous experiments with fiction. In August 1881, announcing this 'change of tack' in a letter to W. H. Henley, Stevenson could not refrain from chiding his friend, who had repeatedly voiced his worries about the risks of betraying the promise of literary achievement he had shown in his personal essays, travelogues, and short stories. He was now working, Stevenson explains in the letter, on a 'boys' adventure story' having a particular publisher in mind, which he felt was ideally suited for the project. He asks: 'would you be surprised to hear, in this connection, the name of *Routledge?*' (*Letters:* II, pp. 244-5) – at the time a by-word for literary mass-production, following the great success of this publisher's 'Railway Library', a series of cheap reprints of 'classics' aimed at commuters. Today, at the end of a century in which less than a dozen critical monographs in English have been written on Stevenson – while Routledge has become a superpower in the academic publishing world – the joke would more likely work the other way around. It is easy to imagine a literary editor at Routledge telling a colleague in the Sales and Marketing Department that he is thinking of accepting for publication a monograph, and asking: '...would you be surprised to hear, in this connection, the name of *Stevenson?*'

Stevenson adopted, for *Treasure Island* and his other novels, psychological strategies and narrative techniques derived from the sub-genres of popular literature in order to induce in his upper-class readers the pleasure-creating effect which was for him the principal aim of fiction (but not of the other forms of writing in which he had excelled so far). This paper will argue that

Stevenson's experiments are grounded on his view of the market as a testing-ground for his ideas on fiction – a view ultimately based on his ethically-informed notion that writing was a profession. His openness toward the challenges posed by the publishing market led to several of the twists and turns which characterise his literary career, and to statements set forth in some of his essays which have scandalised the upholders of a reputed sacredness of the 'artistic' novel. But in fact, never did the market become the creative horizon of his writing. He might have failed at times while walking the line dividing entertainment and art, but this does not mean – as I hope to demonstrate – that he compromised the artistic and moral integrity which guided his attempts.

The irreconcilability between the choices Stevenson made when he started writing novels and the aesthetic and ideological premises which shaped the formation of a Modernist canon was the main cause of the 'Fall of Stevenson' diagnosed by Leonard Woolf already in 1924 (Maixner [ed.] 1981: pp. 514-8). In analysing some of the key moments in his confrontation with the challenges of the market, this paper will also try to explain why these moments have furnished in the past as many arguments employed to describe Stevenson as a writer who betrayed his artistic vocation by catering to the masses' tastes. Refuting these arguments is important not simply in view of a belated re-evaluation of Stevenson, but because by so doing his case may provide us with a chance to rethink some of the most ingrained mechanisms of validation and authorisation operating in our discipline.

It is no coincidence that Stevenson's gradual marginalization coincided with the rise of English Studies, the new discipline which systematised the key tenets of the Modernist movement, combining them with Matthew Arnold's educational theories (Baldick, 1983) and a new militancy aimed against what Josh Ortega y Gasset defined as 'the revolt of the masses' (Carey, 1992: pp. 3-22). In Great Britain, Modernism was largely a reaction against the new, vast reading-public, hungry for newspapers, romances and sub-genres, created by the 1870 Education Act, which had introduced compulsory primary school education. At

the turn of the century, an élite of writers and intellectuals took on the task of preserving, by means of difficult techniques and obscure narrative languages, values supposedly endangered by the voracious appetites of the newly literate masses. At the same time, in Great Britain and the United States, some major universities began to offer courses in 'Modern Fiction' which provided users' instructions for the artistic novels and obscure poetry written by the Modernists – thus guaranteeing 'the survival of the best fiction' (Keating, 1989: p. 456). With the appearance then, in the twenties and thirties, of a new generation of English professors, a moral urgency and idealistic motivation was brought to the rescue from oblivion of works written outside commercial circuits. Already the title of F. R. Leavis' first book, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930), is a clear indication of the 'us/them' polarization underlying the juxtaposition between popular sub-literature and 'high' literary artifacts which had a crucial role in the establishing of a professional élite that considered literature to be important not only in itself, 'but because it encapsulated creative energies which were everywhere on the defensive in modern "commercial" society' (Eagleton, 1983: p. 32).

Once set in its cultural and historical context, the demise of Stevenson's critical fortune appears almost as an inevitable price to be paid, once the new caste of professional literary scholars elevated writing fiction from the status of work to that of artistic creation. This demise was at first largely the result of a 'reflex action' against the shameful commercial operation conducted by Stevenson's family and friends; but it went beyond that, to become, with Frank Swinnerton's 1914 *R. L. Stevenson: A Critical Study*, (Swinnerton, 1923), 'the response of a generation with different values, sensibilities, and critical attitudes' (Maixner [ed.], 1981: pp. 42-3). But it was not simply a matter of change in tastes. Stevenson had been a model-writer for the first-generation holders of Chairs in English Literature at Oxford and Cambridge: Sir Walter Raleigh (Merton Chair, Oxford, 1904), author of one of the first major studies on his style (1895); and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (King Edward VII Professor, Cambridge, 1912), who wrote

the final chapters of *St. Ives*, a novel Stevenson left unfinished at his death (see Gross, 1992: p. 194, p. 200). These quintessential late-Victorian men of letters' reputations had been made in the field of literary journalism – and their successors in the academy later rebelled against what they (rightly) perceived as their amateurish approach to literary criticism. Now that literature had been freed from the market, the men whose profession it was to teach it gained a new self-awareness of having become professional readers. As a result, ironically, they could no longer accept that a writer could be a professional: he had to belong to the empyrean world of art, which the professors were modelling according to their critical premises. And in that world there was no space for Stevenson, the professional writer beloved by amateur professors.

Chief among the reasons why the formation of a Modernist canon came to coincide with the decline of Stevenson's critical status was the adoption of the Modernist preconception toward the mass literary market as a measuring stick to gauge Stevenson's relative *gravitas* or *levitas*. But if his attitude toward the market (the dangers and potentialities of which he discovered, when he was already an established figure in Great Britain, during his first stay in America) varied from that of other contemporary writers, it was in part because of the emotional investment involved in his decision to become a writer, at the cost of breaking away from the tradition of the Stevensons, who had been lighthouse builders for three generations. Still in 1886, when his American publisher Charles Scribner committed the *faux pas* of calling Stevenson's father a 'sea-light inspector', he unwittingly called upon himself a fierce reprimand on the part of the son, who responded by listing the achievements of his father, and ending: 'I might write books till 1900 and not serve humanity so well; and it moves me to a certain impatience, to see the little, frothy bubble that attends the author his son, and compare it with the obscurity in which that better man finds his reward' (Swearingen [ed.], 1995: p. iii). The inner conflict he felt over abandoning his father's work, so useful and beneficial to mankind, in order to pursue his artistic vocation,

lasted throughout his entire life and found expression in one of his best poems:

> Say not of me that weakly I declined
> The labours of my sires, and fled the sea,
> The towers we founded and the lamps we lit,
> To play at home with paper like a child.
> But rather say: *In the afternoon of time*
> *A strenuous family dusted from its hands*
> *The sand of granite, and beholding far*
> *Along the sounding coast its pyramids*
> *And tall memorials catch the dying sun,*
> *Smiled well content, and to this childish task*
> *Around the fire addressed its evening hours.*
> (*Thistle XVI*: p. 152)

If the aspiring young writer succeeded in taking this step it was only because he had convinced himself, as he wrote to his cousin Bob, that 'I am entering a profession... which must engross the strength of my powers and to which I shall try to devote my energies' (*Letters*: I, p. 166). Later in his life, in replying to the attacks and criticisms of Henley and other friends, he would always reaffirm this his basic tenet – that writing ought to be a profession which enables a person to support himself and his family. And therefore, novel-writing could be defined as a commercial transaction through which the novelist exchanges the pleasure he derives from writing for the money paid by the reader to receive, in turn, pleasure from reading.

Certainly, one should resist the temptation of evoking a Presbyterian matrix to explain every cultural phenomenon in Scotland; but in this case, we have the testimony of the Scottish writer and critic, Edwin Muir, who in condemning Stevenson for his 'boyish irresponsibility' sets it however in the context of the Calvinistic influence on Scottish literature. In a country, he writes, whose culture is almost exclusively religious, 'conscience finally becomes a matter concerned with only two spheres, the

theological and the crudely material. There is no soil on which an artistic or imaginative conscience can grow, and no function for the novelist therefore except that of a public entertainer' (Muir, 1982: pp. 229-31).

Given the preeminence of the novel as a form of art – dating from the late-Victorian age – the significance of Muir's specifying 'no function for the novelist' might easily be missed. For Stevenson, however, who published his first novel on his thirty-third birthday, the distinction between artistic prose and novel-writing was very vivid. Paradoxically, he felt free to use the sub-genres of popular literature precisely because his identity as an artist in words was not founded on novelistic practice but on a literary prose both elegant and free of an explicit moral burden. When Stevenson, in his mid-twenties 'came into his fantastic critical and popular prominence', he contributed to the style-vogue brought about at first by Walter Pater and George Saintsbury, 'well beyond the confines of academic appreciation' (Merritt, 1968: p. 27). His first travel book, *An Inland Voyage* (1878), was adopted at Eton for translations from English into Latin, and a society at Oxford chose the slim volume as 'the "best specimen of the writing of English of this century"' (Maixner [ed.], 1981: p. 8). This success – and its clear class connotations – should be borne in mind when one considers the virulent criticisms Henley and other friends voiced against Stevenson's choices when he turned novelist.

And yet, the reasons for these choices were already implicit in the role Stevenson assigned to fiction in a series of essays written in the seventies. In several of these essays, Stevenson elaborated on the notion that the value of fiction lies first and foremost in its potentiality to bring new life to myth. His first opportunities to state publicly these views were a review-essay on Victor Hugo and a review of Lord Bulwer-Lytton's *Fables in Song*, both written in 1874. In the former, he structures his argument in such a way that an equivalence emerges between the artistic quality of Victor Hugo's novels and what he defines as their 'epical value' (*Thistle XIV*: p. 26); in the latter, the short-story form is described as a post-Darwinian version of classical fables. In the very same

months, in 'On the Movements of Young Children' he focuses on the playing of children that exemplifies a beauty that 'turns... upon consideration not really aesthetic', and of 'a sincerity, a directness, an impulsive truth... that shows throughout all imperfection... a reminiscence of primitive festivals and the Golden Ages' (*Thistle XXII*: p. 98). When he himself started creating narratives, his main effort was to develop the myth-making potentials of fiction.

Stevenson's most cogent discussion of this view of fiction can be found in 'A Gossip on Romance', an essay he wrote in February 1882 – significantly, at the time when he was deciding to rewrite *Treasure Island* for an adult readership. The problem for the novelist, he claims here, is how to evoke in the reader that 'sympathetic pleasure' which is proper only to 'epoch-making scenes' capable of conferring on the page 'the quality of epics' (*Thistle XIII*: pp. 332-3). One sentence in particular of 'Gossip' – 'Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child' (*Thistle XIII*: p. 340) – has attracted endless criticism; but once set in its proper context it means that fiction can express all its evocative power only if it touches something ancestral in the human soul: the reading-model he set out in 'Gossip' was founded on a pleasure which was 'infantile' in an orthogenetic, not phylogenetic sense.

Five years later, in another essay, 'Pastoral', Stevenson reformulated the same idea to illustrate the difference between novels and romances. Novels, he writes, 'begin to touch not the fine *dilettanti* but the gross mass of mankind, when they leave off to speak of parlours and shades of manner and still-born niceties of motive, and begin to deal with fighting, sailoring, adventure, death or child-birth'. It is not *Masterman Ready* or *The Coral Island* he has in mind, but *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *Anna Karenina,* and the subliminal echo evoked by 'ancient outdoor crafts and occupations, whether Mr. Hardy wields the shepherd's crook or Count Tolstoi swings the scythe'. It is these scenes, Stevenson concludes, which only have the power 'to lift romance into a near neighbourhood with epic' (*Thistle XIII*: p. 238).

The publishing market which exploded in the seventies to meet the demands of the 'gross mass of mankind' became for Stevenson a further testing ground of the universal quality of romance. In his most extended reflection on the reasons behind the success of working-class fiction – his 1888 essay 'Popular Authors' – he constantly refers to the analogy drawn by Victorian anthropology between proletarians and children in order to explain to his bourgeois readers the wish-fulfillment mechanisms underlying popular fiction. (The same analogy proved useful when it came to assess the intellectual development of the South Sea islanders, which he considered to be equivalent to that of a fifteen-year-old European.) By so doing he was playing on an inveterate mental habit which in the same years brought about one of the most fascinating socio-cultural phenomena of the Victorian age: the re-emergence of the term 'penny dreadful' – coined in the thirties for the gory Gothic tales which were the first examples of working class fiction in England – to define the boys' adventure stories extolling the gestes of bloody outlaws (i.e. the direct competitors of *Treasure Island*).

It was precisely because Stevenson's notion of fiction was founded on the imperative of attaining a universal appeal that he could not ignore the questions posed by his feeling – as he wrote to a friend a few weeks after completing 'A Gossip on Romance' – that 'we all live in a clique, buy each other's books and like each other's books; and the great, gaunt, gray, gaping public snaps its big fingers and reads Talmage and Tupper [a compiler of commonplaces called *Proverbial Philosophy* and an immensely popular American preacher]' (*Letters*: III, p. 297). It is no coincidence that this awareness led to his becoming a novelist after his first stay in America – an experience that added a new moral urgency to what had been, up to then, theoretical considerations on the potentialities of fiction.

Stevenson had left for the United States in the summer of 1879 to win back the woman he loved, after she had returned to her husband in California. He disappeared from his Edinburgh home, with very little money, and had to travel in a second-class

cabin, in the steerage of an emigrant ship. This voyage marked for Stevenson an exit from his social sphere. In a sort of log book which he kept during the crossing, and which was to become *An Amateur Emigrant,* he recorded his discovery of the 'Labouring mankind', their misery and their nobility, which, he wrote, 'I had never represented... livingly to my imagination'. Once in America, to his London friends who implored him not to betray his artistic vocation in that land which they considered the epitome of vulgarianism, Stevenson replied that in working on *An Amateur Emigrant,* 'My sympathies and interests are changed. There shall be no more books of travel for me. I care... not a jot for the picturesque or the beautiful, other than about people' (*Letters*: III, p. 60). The 'Unknown Public', evoked with apocalyptic tones by Wilkie Collins and many other Victorian writers (Keating, 1989: pp. 401-2) started losing the undistinguished feature of the masses, and acquiring the human traits of individuals with common needs and aspirations. This is why in his letters from the Unites States we find a new commitment: he would try to offer to a suffering mankind the same relief that he, as a chronic invalid had found in *Arabian Nights* or *Les Trois Mosquetiers.* (*Letters:* III, pp. 61-2). His fascination with popular fiction allowed him to investigate the mechanisms underlying the pleasure of reading, from which he derived a model largely based on the sub-genres of the adventure novel. And the first result of this work was *Treasure Island,* in which he reduced to a zero degree of essentiality conventions and narrative strategies taken from adventure stories, producing a purity of forms that conferred upon his narrative a mythical quality.

One year after his return to Scotland, we find Stevenson intervening publicly with an article in the *Fortnightly Review* the organ of the Victorian progressive intelligentsia – to censure the levity with which certain writers declared they wrote novels only to make money. In this article, 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters', we find an urgency previously unknown in his public voice. He feels he must clarify the moral basis from which a young aspiring writer should move, and the reasons why in writing for

the great public one has to contrast the 'public falsehood' of journalism – so much more dangerous now that, 'The total of a nation's reading, in these days of daily papers, greatly modifies the total of the nation's speech'. If he brings as an example American reporters or Parisian *chroniquers,* he explains, it is not because they are 'so much baser' than English journalists, but because they are 'so much more readable... [and] ...their evil is done more effectively, in America for the masses, in [France] for the few that care to read'. The lesson he has drawn from his experiences in the United States is that whatever motivations lie behind the decision to write for the general public – and whatever the talent of a journalist, a novelist, or a poet – since the 'art of words' has become by now 'the dialect of life', that art 'comes home so easily and powerfully to the minds of men; and since that is so, we contribute, in each of these branches, to build up the sum of sentiments and appreciations which goes by the name of Public Opinion or Public Feeling' (*Thistle XXII*: p. 278). As a result, the artist in words is faced with a moral duty which obliges him to be aware of his public role – and to be at the same time both accurate and morally impartial in his writing.

Other novelists – such as Joseph Conrad – would have later appealed to a greater verbal precision or fidelity to facts (Ambrosini, 1991: pp. 47-9, pp. 56-63) – but only to emphasize the distance between an increasingly elitist literature and the world of newspapers and popular fiction. Stevenson, the celebrated standard-bearer of prose stylism, approached instead the novel-form as a way of contrasting the rising power of the media. In so doing, he sought a way to intervene in the new reality created by the changes in the literary market without renouncing his aesthetic and ethical principles, but rather reformulating them in order to find a new, more effective role for the artist in words. In trying to reconcile the various metamorphoses Stevenson underwent in his Protean literary career, it is crucial therefore to find an interpretative frame that explains choices which appear so unlikely given the nature of his literary debut. But once the ethical significance of writing for the market is taken into consideration,

these choices are as many indications of his awareness of the transformation the writer's role was undergoing at the end of the nineteenth century.

Two factors have contributed to this awareness going largely undetected: Stevenson's resorting, in order to revivify myth, to particular sub-genres which have relegated his treatment of romance into the precincts of 'children literature'; and his addressing the issues raised by the market after his return to the United States in the summer of 1887 – a move which, as Paul Maixner notes, 'marked the decline of his critical fortune' (1981: p. 30). In both instances, crucial moves in the evolution of his novelistic practice were met with critical gestures which eventually damaged his reputation.

If *Treasure Island* was sent to a boys' paper – and not to Routledge – it was, ironically, as a result of the first critical judgment to which it was subjected. A few weeks after the letter to Henley quoted above, the Scottish author and scholar Alexander Hay Japp, visiting Stevenson in the cottage in the Highlands where he was working on the story, heard the writer reading a chapter to the congregated family, and – transforming the game into reality – suggested that he would take the fifteen chapters written so far to a friend of his, the editor of *The Boys' Own Paper.* There are a number of reasons why in Great Britain at the time, writing an adventure story having an adolescent as a protagonist did not interfere with the author's prestige. Especially, given that the version of *Treasure Island* published in book form in 1883, far from being a commercial venture, was an artifact worthy of the darling of the literary world that Stevenson still continued to be. For a few more years, Stevenson went on creating novels and short stories which were all revisitations of different sub-genres, all characterized by a hyper-literary language which allowed him to reconcile class identity and writing practice. He could afford to do so – his father supported him, and the reviewers coddled him, as long as he did not step out of the market niche he had obtained for himself in Great Britain.

All this changed with the success of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, from which Stevenson himself recoiled in horror – 'There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular' (*Letters*: V, p. 171) – although in abstract he had argued in favor of writing for 'the gross mass of mankind'. Little did he know yet what it meant to 'be popular'. He would discover it one year later when, after his father's death, he left Europe and returned to the United States. Not only was he lionized by the press, but the American papers started competing with lucrative offers for collaborations. Joseph Pulitzer offered him ten thousand dollars for a weekly column in the *New York World*, and eight thousand dollars for the serial rights of his next book-length story (three times more than what he had earned with his first six novels), but he refused. Faced with such a commodification of his literary fame, Stevenson reacted with uneasiness and almost distaste, and sought asylum in a log cabin in the woods around Saranac in upstate New York. He agreed to write twelve essays for *Scribner's Magazine*, his American publisher's monthly, which brought in a contract for 'barely' three thousand five hundred dollars – which to him appeared as 'princely sums', while for any established American author it would have been nothing but 'peanuts' (McLynn, 1994: p. 281). Aside from the twelve essays for 'Scribner's', in Saranac Stevenson also wrote the opening chapters of *The Master of Ballantrae* and started revising a story by his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, which became in his hands *The Wrong Box*.

The popular press's '"creative" promotion', as Maixner notes, 'of a popular myth, legend or fable out of the admittedly interesting circumstances of his life' (1981: p. 30), damaged Stevenson irrevocably back in Great Britain. Stevenson's reception in the US offered to British reviewers a chance to voice criticisms which were also being made in private by some of Stevenson's closest friends. In that redoubtable Edinburgh institution, *Blackwood's Magazine*, for example, Mrs. Oliphant transformed her review of 'Underwoods' (a collection of poems which came out after Stevenson had moved to the United States), into an opportunity to rap the American upstarts on their knuckles for daring to

decide the value of a British author: 'that is the cause of it all', she writes, 'America which thrusts in her little reputations upon us' (quoted in Maixner [ed.], 1981: p. 284). And Stevenson had just arrived in the US. When later she reviewed *The Wrong Box* (1889), Stevenson's only 'American' novel, she defined him a 'rash young man' to whom 'much applause has, we fear, turned his head', and cautioned her countryman from trying to ingratiate the American public, whose applause, 'though it is sweet', has 'a certain idiocy in its roar'. Among the American cultivated classes, added Mrs. Oliphant, one may find the most refined taste in the world, but certainly, 'the caterers for the American literary market do not belong to these high circles, and the overtures and incitements which they offer to a successful author are, when he is moved by them, too apt to lead to folly' (quoted in Maixner [ed.], 1981: p. 31). But then *The Master of Ballantrae* appeared, and reconciling the idea that Stevenson had written his masterpiece in the US with the lamentations over the folly of his catering to the taste of the American masses proved impossible for Mrs. Oliphant and other scandalized reviewers. She had to admit that she was 'grateful and joyful now to find him in his right name' – and Stevenson commented: 'Mrs. Oliphant seems in a staggering state: from "The Wrong Box" to "The Master" I scarce recognise either my critic or myself' (Maixner [ed.], 1981: p. 360).

The twelve essays for 'Scribner's' have not attracted much critical attention, but once they are examined in the light of the author's views on the market they reveal the crucial importance of the year Stevenson spent in the US. If we leave aside three essays deriving from older material and two written for specific purposes[1], the remaining seven constitute a coherent corpus of writings that express the perplexities of an upper-class British writer concerning his adjustment to the American publishing market. In the first two essays, 'A Chapter on Dreams' and 'The Lantern Bearers', he anticipates themes which will return in the other five: respectively, 'what role does a writer's awareness of his market play in artistic creation?' And, 'how can fiction awaken the scintilla of poetry present in each individual and not become

instead a mirror-game between a naturalistic conception of reality and the reader's rationality'. The third essay, 'Beggars', starting from the reminiscences of two beggars presented as prototypes of different ways of being an artist, ends with an invective against the selfishness of the bourgeoisie, and the hypocrisy of institutional charity, offered, he writes, 'in the hope of getting a belly-god Burgess through a needle's eye!' – and adds, 'O, let him stick, by all means; 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!' (*Thistle XV*: p. 277, emphasis added). In the fifth and sixth, 'Gentlemen' and 'Some Gentlemen in Fiction', what begins as a parlor-game on what it means to be a 'gentleman' gradually acquires a more interesting focus, when he proceeds to examine the 'verbal puppets' (*Thistle XIV*: p. 370) created by some of the major English novelists, in an attempt to understand what kind of novels does a gentleman write.

The most interesting of these essays is 'Popular Authors', a reflection on the mechanisms which allow hack writers to represent the daydreams of ordinary people. Implicit in this reflection is the issue of whether a gentleman-writer can reach the millions by adopting the conventions of popular fiction – and at what price, given the class connotations implicit in the distinctions between high and low literature. Such was the erudition that Stevenson displayed on the topic of popular fiction, that after completing the essay he wrote to the editor of 'Scribner's': 'I am ashamed of it. I am doubting whether you should only give me half-fare for it, as a failure... as a calamity'. But after having covered his head with ashes, he finishes off the letter by admitting that 'the point is fine' (*Letters*: VI, pp. 162-3). (That 'Popular Authors' reflects Stevenson's own uneasiness in this phase of his career is confirmed by his decision to add it to the original plan of the twelve essays after beginning work on another 'ungentlemanlike' project: *The Wrong Box*. The result was a self parody of his own status as successful novelist, in which his uneasiness is also expressed through his metafictional treatment of the related themes of

money and popular fiction, obsessively interweaving throughout the narrative.)

Half way through his last essay for 'Scribner's', 'A Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art', Stevenson admits to his having 'little sympathy with the common lamentations of the artist class', who pretend to 'give the public what they do not want, and yet expect to be supported'. And he adds: 'It is doubtless tempting to exclaim against the ignorant bourgeois, yet it should not be forgotten, it is he who is to pay us, and that (surely on the face of it) for services that he shall desire to have performed'. It is, for Stevenson, 'a question of transcendental honesty', which has nothing to do with commercial aims, since, as he admonishes the 'young gentleman', 'If you adopt an art to be your trade, weed your mind at the outset of all desire to money'. In fact, the 'idealism in honesty' which should guide the aspiring writer is that 'the end of all art [is] to please' (*Thistle XIV*: pp. 284-5).

But Stevenson obviously had problems in reconciling trade and pleasure. And this is the reason why, in pursuing his argument, he could not refrain from conceding that to 'live by pleasure is not a high calling', because:

> it involves patronage, however veiled; it numbers the artist, however ambitious, along with dancing girls and billiard markers. The French have a romantic evasion for one employment, and call its practitioners the Daughters of Joy. The artist is of the same family, he is of the Sons of Joy, chose his trade to please himself, gains his livelihood by pleasing others, and has parted with something of the sterner dignity of man. (*Thistle XV*: p. 285)

Read in its immediate textual context – and in the context of the other essays written expressly for 'Scribner's' – Stevenson's provocation appears as an extreme attempt to reconcile the double claims of his strongly felt work ethics and artistic ideals. Unfortunately, however, the comparison not only obscured his

argument; it also provided his contemporary and future detractors with a terribly effective weapon. Fourteen years later, when Joseph Conrad had to defend himself from his agent's repeated scolding – and his reminders of Stevenson's greater professionalism – he replied that he did not envy his forerunner, even if he was punctual, because, he wrote, 'I am no sort of airy R.L. Stevenson who considered his art a prostitute and the artist as no better than one' (to James B. Pinker, January 8, 1902, in Karl and Davies [eds], 1986: II, p. 371).

Controversies over the essay, in fact, began even before its publication. Will Low, an American painter whom Stevenson had met in France in the Seventies, was so scandalized when he read an early draft of the 'Letter to a Young Gentleman' that he wrote a reply, 'Letter to the Same Young Gentleman', which appeared together with the essay in the August 1888 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*. Three years later, Stevenson dedicated *The Wrecker* to Low, and appended to the novel an 'Epilogue', addressed to his friend, ostensibly to explain why his name appears 'on the stern of our poor ship'. Especially, Stevenson admits, given that, 'If you were not born in Arcadia, you linger in fancy on its margin; your thoughts are busy with the flutes of antiquity, with daffodils, and the classic poplar, and the footsteps of the nymphs, and the elegant and moving aridity of ancient art'. It may come to a surprise to him, then, to discover he is the recipient of '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... of the unrest and movement of our century'. The painter owes this doubtful compliment to his being 'a man interested in all problems of art, even the most vulgar'; and this is why, Stevenson adds, he feels he might be interested in knowing about the 'genesis and growth of *The Wrecker*' (that is, its progression from 'novel of manners and experience' to Dickensian 'police novel') and the 'theory' behind it (*Thistle X*: pp. 494-7). Low had been incapable of viewing the ideas set forth in the 'Letter' as part of an attempt Stevenson was making to enlarge the scope of his work, both in terms of technique and of readership. By the means of a tongue-in-cheek

rhetorical ruse, the writer is in fact setting forth in the 'Epilogue' a metafictional counterreply to his friend's hasty condemnation. His later experiments with fiction in the South Seas, he felt, were validating his search for new tools, suited for rendering the 'barbaric manners and unstable morals' of the contemporary world.

Once he moved to the South Seas, Stevenson's awareness of the interdependence between the novelist and the market led to his decision to settle in Samoa, rather than in some remote island, 'because of its position on the mail route between Sydney and San Francisco, which enabled a relatively direct correspondence with both America and Britain' (Smith, 1997: p. 16). And yet, his South Seas works prove that this awareness did not become a capitulation to money-making. Instead, he refused to render in exotic colors the world of the islands and dedicated himself to an anthropological treatise and a history of the colonial wars in Samoa. And when he returned to fiction, he found for the first time the courage to rebel against the laws of the publishing market and their custodians in the boardrooms of publishing houses in Great Britain and the United States. The results were the two first colonial novels in English literature, *The Beach of Falesà* and *The Ebb-Tide.*

In conclusion, even though Stevenson was – given his social class, tastes, and implied readership – an upper-class writer, once he became a novelist, he chose to walk the fine line dividing entertainment and artistic self-expression, addressing a number of questions concerning the mechanisms and conventions of literary mass production. His experiments with the sub-genres of popular literature led him to contaminate his pure prose with sensational plots, and by so doing he ended up contradicting the hierarchization of literary forms which we have since then learned to consider as natural. This is why he may represent a central figure for rethinking our conception of the study (and teaching) of literature as a defense of the artisticity of the word. Certainly, today the role of the media is far more pervasive and powerful than in his own times, but it is also true that our discipline, thanks

to new approaches and new methodologies, has acquired a greater self-assurance, and can enlarge its boundaries without feeling the need to perform ritualistic exorcisms. Rather than crying out for Stevenson's re-evaluation, therefore I think it would be more useful to draw a lesson from his exclusion from the canon, in order to set forth a transitionary model – alternative to that set up by Modernisn – from the Victorian to the twentieth century novel (and other narrative forms, such as cinema, or tv fiction). The motivations behind his double challenge to the market and to his literary peers can then be extremely relevant for those of us who still believe in the value of studying literature, now that we have to face further challenges ahead.

End Notes

1. Epilogue to *An Inland Voyage*, *Contributions to the History of Fife: Random Memories* and *The Education of an Engineer: More Random Memories* were French and Scottish materials dating from the previous decade, while *A Christian Sermon*, was commissioned for the December issue, and *Pulvis et Umbra* is a set-piece – a 'Darwinian sermon' (*Letters*: VI, p. 60) which marks a return to his earliest exercises in stylistic prose.

E.J.B. and R.L.S.: The Story of The Beinecke Stevenson Collection.

Vincent Giroud

The greatest of all Stevenson collectors, Edwin John Beinecke was born in New York City in January 1886, the second of the four sons of Johann Bernhard Beinecke and Johanna Elisabeth Weigle. On his mother's side, the family origins were Balingen, Württemberg. His father, of mostly Westphalian stock, was born in the Rhineland town of Elberfeld and emigrated to New York in 1865 at the age of nineteen. Bernhard Beinecke's rise to fortune, from driving a butcher's wagon to the wholesale meat business, was nothing short of dazzling. In 1876 (he was then thirty) his company supplied meat to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. By 1890, when it absorbed three of its chief competitors, it could be described as the most successful produce venture in New York. Ben Beinecke – as he was known – then moved into banking. He was one of the founders and first directors of the Plaza Bank, later to become the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, and one of the early directors of the Germania Bank (rebaptized Commonwealth Bank in 1918), which in 1927 merged into the Manufacturers Trust Co. Even more successful was Ben Beinecke's career in the hotel management business. In 1890, at the age of forty-four, he was a founding partner of the Hammond Real Estate Co., one of the earliest hotel chains in America, which ran the Plaza Hotel in New York. It was at his instigation that the hotel was demolished in 1905 to be replaced by the present building. He became the president of the operating company of the Plaza. He was also involved in the construction of the Copley Plaza in Boston. It was in his New York Plaza apartment that Ben Beinecke died in 1932.

The family of Ben Beinecke's wife, whom he married in 1875, had emigrated from Germany in the wake of the 1848 revolution and operated a company called the Metropolitan Dye Works in

New York. The Beineckes spoke German at home and their children grew up bilingual. There were seven of them, one of whom died in infancy.

One is used to thinking of the Beineckes as three brothers (perhaps because of the text engraved on the bronze door that greets the visitors to the library which bears their name) but there was a fourth, the first-born, Bernhard Jr., who, after working for a while in his father's hotel business, moved West, first to Montana and eventually to Southern California. Of the two daughters who reached adulthood, one (Alice) emigrated back to Germany and the other (Theodora, known as Theo) fell into depression following the death of her daughter and committed suicide by throwing herself from the window of her Plaza apartment in 1940. Shorlty after this family tragedy, the hotel was sold to Conrad Hilton.

Like his elder and his younger brothers, E.J. Beinecke first went to school in Manhattan and then attended the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, one of the most exclusive of the New England private schools. From that period dates a rather Stevensonian anecdote recorded by his nephew Bill (William S.) Beinecke in his memoir, *Through Mem'ry's Haze*, privately published in spring 2000:

> Edwin Beinecke was in the Class of 1903 and had lived in one of the large Victorian rooming houses along Main Street. A student in that house named Leeds was given a pistol as a gift from his father, and as Leeds was looking at his new present, he said to my uncle, "You know, I bet you I could hit you with this." My uncle replied, "I bet you fifty dollars you can't." Fifty dollars was a fortune in those days, particularly for a boy. "All right," said Leeds, "let's go out in the driveway." Uncle Edwin went outside, put his hands on his hips, and said, "Go ahead and shoot." Fortunately Leeds didn't dare but fired three shots in the air instead, and Uncle Edwin collected the fifty dollars. My father used to shake his head when he told that story, because Leeds might very well have tried to wing Uncle Edwin's ear and shot him

> in the head by mistake. It was an early indication of Uncle Edwin's iron daring and steely nerve – qualities that would be amply displayed in his business career.[1]

Once again following in the footsteps of his brother Ben, Edwin Beinecke entered Yale in 1903 as a member of the class of 1907. It was in the 1890s that Yale began to rival and to some extent supplant Columbia as the university of choice for the well-to-do New York families. (At the time of writing, a third-generation Beinecke is on the Yale Corporation, the university's governing body, and at least three fourth-generation Beineckes have already graduated.) Two years later, however, he left the university without graduating to enter the George A. Fuller Construction Company, which was just undertaking the building of the new Plaza Hotel. This was one of the most ambitious architectural projects in New York to date; more than five decades later, the same George A. Fuller Company built Gordon Bunschaft's equally ambitious Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. E.J. Beinecke quickly rose in the company from assistant material clerk to assistant to the president, and later to chairman of the board. In 1909, he married Linda Louise Maurer, a fellow New Yorker. They had two children, Sylvia (later Mrs John N. Robinson), born in 1910 and Edwin, Jr., born in 1913.

Between 1921 and 1923, E.J. Beinecke was president of his father-in-law's business, Henry Maurer & Son, manufacturers of firebricks. Besides the Fuller Company, he served as chairman of the boards of the U.S. Realty & Improvement Company, the Plaza Hotel Company, and the Patent Scaffolding Company. His many directorships included those of Manufacturers Trust (a position he held for 35 years), the Hoving Corporation (department store operators), the Bonwitt-Teller department stores, Tiffany's, Savoy Plaza, Inc., the Waldorf Astoria Corporation, Curtiss Wright, and quite a few more. But it was the Sperry and Hutchinson Company, where he became a director in 1918, with which he remained most closely associated until the end of his life. Incorporated in 1900, S. & H. was immensely successful, Fritz (Yale 1909), was elected

to the board two years after him and their younger brother Walter (Yale 1910), joined them in 1922. By January 1923, the Beineckes had assumed complete control of the company and E.J. Beinecke became chairman of its board, a position he retained until his retirement in 1967.

Having served during the First World War both in the American Red Cross and as a captain in the US Army, E.J. Beinecke returned to service in October 1942. He was first appointed regional executive, then deputy commissioner of the American Red Cross in England, where he remained until December 1943. One of his chief responsibilities was to set up Red Cross service clubs for the well-being of American servicemen involved in combat, first in North Africa, then in continental Europe. For his distinguished World War II service, he was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 1947, the most prestigious honour awarded to civilians in the United States.

From 1908 until the end of his life, E.J. Beinecke was an active member of the New York freemasonry, in which he attained the highest grade in 1965.

In the 1930s, E.J. Beinecke had purchased a house in Greenwich, Connecticut, which he duly named Skerryvore in Stevensonian devotion. When it was destroyed by fire in 1936, E.J. Beinecke, who never learned to drive a car, went to Europe with his wife on one of the early flights of the 'Hindenburg' Zeppelin (which exploded and crashed the following year) and had the house rebuilt during their two-month absence. Over the years, he made Skerryvore one of the most famous gardens in New England with some eleven-thousand rhododendron and azalea shrubs planted on its grounds. It was in nearby Mt. Kisko that he died on 21 January 1970.

E.J. Beinecke's collecting interests were by no means limited to Robert Louis Stevenson, nor even to bibliophilia: his collection of enameled German glass and stoneware was donated in 1957 to the Corning Museum of Glass in south central New York State. Interestingly, the first mention of his name in the Yale University Library Gazette is not in connection with Stevenson: the April 1946 issue contains a note by the great Yale bibliographer

Donald G. Wing, recording E.J. Beinecke's gift of several Boswell and Johnson titles as well as a Book of Hours printed in Paris in 1491-92. Indeed, in later life, he developed a strong interest in early books and manuscripts, and the Yale Library owes to his generosity many of its finest acquisitions in this area: some forty Elizabethan and Restoration plays in 1949; four years later, a collection of sixty-nine incunabula; and some of Yale's most renowned illuminated medieval manuscripts. It was E.J. Beinecke, in the spring of 1964, who presented Yale with one of its great treasures, the so-called Nancy manuscript of Antonio Pigafetta's account of Magellan's voyage around the world, and the following year an even more famous acquisition, known as 'Thomas More's Prayer Book,' also came to Yale through his generosity and that of his brother Fritz.

Like Harry Elkins Widener, another great Stevenson collector, E.J. Beinecke discovered the Scottish writer when he was an undergraduate. He later recalled having owned a set of Stevenson at Yale (possibly the Thistle edition, twenty-four volumes of which were published by Scribner's between 1895 and 1899) and reading with delight *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. But it seems that it was his discovery of Father Damien in 1927 that prompted him to collect Stevenson. In the words of Gertrude Hills, whom E.J. Beinecke hired as his personal librarian in late 1931 or early 1932, 'As he closed the pamphlet, admiration for and curiosity about the writer impelled him to seek to own not only everything written by, but also everything written about him'. This was achieved to a large degree in the course of a lively buying campaign, particularly active in the years 1929-32, on both sides of the Atlantic, chiefly through the agency of Maggs Brothers in London and Thomas J. Gannon, Inc. in New York, or in the auction rooms. At the Jerome Kern sale in 1929, which is still remembered for the extraordinary prices it set, the same year as the Wall Street crash, E.J. Beinecke was the successful bidder on several items, such as the issue in cloth of *New Arabian Nights* (Beinecke, 325), the first American edition of *In the South Seas* (Beinecke, 526), and the first French edition of *Treasure Island* inscribed to Mrs Will H. Low (Beinecke, 248). It was

also at auction that he acquired the manuscript of *The Wrong Box* (Beinecke, 7186) at an American Art Gallery sale in March 1930.

E.J. Beinecke was equally eager in his attempts to negotiate by private treaty with individual collectors, such as Charles Glidden Osborne of Marlow-on-Thames, most of whose exceptional Stevensoniana, acquired chiefly from his wife May, the widow of Francis S. Peabody, eventually entered the Beinecke collection. Contacts were initiated when E.J. Beinecke visited England in September-October 1935. Hills herself examined the collection on a trip to England in the fall of 1938 and a first purchase (including *Penny Whistles*) was concluded in December of that year. E.J. Beinecke then tried to persuade Osborne to sell him the rest of his collection, but negotiations stalled over the price of a group of 120-odd letters from Stevenson to Colvin ('two thousand pounds and not a damn cent less').

Institutions were also approached. In 1936, E.J. Beinecke entered into discussions with the Savile Club in London, which led, later that year, to one of his most spectacular acquisitions. Known then as 'The Savile Club Gift', it consisted of close to two-hundred and fifty letters from Stevenson to his lifelong friend and business adviser Charles Baxter, together with additional correspondence and manuscripts which had been deposited at the Savile Club in 1906 when Baxter, to quote Hills, resisted 'the temptation to sell them after an "astral" visitation from the author begging him not to'.

At Christmas 1939, E.J. Beinecke, 'in response to many requests by visitors', had a twelve-page description of the collection written by his librarian and privately printed in Washington, D.C. by the Saint Albans Press. Though modest by comparison with the future six-volume catalogue of the collection by George L. McKay, Hills's booklet provides a useful overview of the collection as it stood ten years or so after its inception. It then included, as noted by Hills, all but about twenty of the numbers recorded in the seven parts and appendices I and Ia of Prideaux's bibliography revised in 1917 by Mrs Luther C. Livingston, in addition to many items not recorded by Prideaux. It was in fact E.J. Beinecke's intention at the

time to publish his own Stevenson bibliography. The project is mentioned as early as 1932 in Hills's correspondence preserved in E.J. Beinecke's files in the Beinecke Library, and it was presumably one of the main reasons why he recruited her. In January 1938, the Reverend A.E. Claxton (whom we remember as one of Stevenson's bêtes noires in Samoa) wrote to E.J. Beinecke that he hoped to see his 'great book on R.L.S.' before he died. And in 1939, Hills notes hopefully: 'In due course the bibliography, now in preparation, will reach the printer's hand'. What did reach the printer's hand shortly thereafter was another, fifty-page booklet by Gertrude Hills, *Robert Louis Stevenson's Handwriting*, published in New York in 1940 under the imprint 'The Edwin J. Beinecke Collection', and illustrated with facsimile reproductions of fragments of handwritings from the collection, not just Stevenson's, but also Thomas Stevenson's, Sidney Colvin's, W.E. Henley's, Fanny Stevenson's, Lloyd Osbourne's, and Isobel Strong's. As for the projected bibliography, the research begun by Gertrude Hills was eventually used by McKay for his catalogue, which in effect has superceded Prideaux.

Among the bibliographic treasures singled out by Hills in her 1939 booklet are the collection of documents relating to the cruise on the Equator (Beinecke, 504); the copy of *Penny Whistles* annotated by Stevenson with additional comments by Sidney Colvin and Henley (Beinecke, 191, the Peabody-Osborne copy); the copyright issue of *The Beach of Falesà* (Beinecke 563); the trial issue of *The Beach of Falesà* and *The Bottle Imp* published together (Beinecke, 564, also from the Peabody and C.G. Osborne collections); *The Bottle Imp* as published in Samoan by O Le Sulu Samoa (Beinecke, 1086); the copyright issue of *In the South Seas* (Beinecke, 523); the first issue of *The Charity Bazaar* (Beinecke, 3); *An Appeal to the Clergy* (Beinecke, 11); *The Hanging Judge* (Beinecke, 441); and the trial issue of the copyright edition of the poem *Ticonderoga* (Beinecke, 464). Little did Hills and Beinecke know (they never did) that the last item was a Wise forgery: indeed it had been exonerated by John Carter and Graham Pollard in their 1933 *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*. The definitive exposure did not come about until 1983, when Nicolas Barker and John Collins published

their Sequel to 'An Enquiry'... *In Addition to Ticonderoga*, of which they manufactured two more 'issues' (Beinecke, 465 and 466), T.J. Wise and H.B. Forman produced six other faked Stevenson editions, all of which found their way into E.J. Beinecke's library.[2]

Hills's 1939 booklet reports the presence in E.J. Beinecke's collection of 'over forty volumes' from Stevenson's library, including his set of Wordsworth's Poems (Beinecke, 2607) and his 'Martial' (Beinecke 2558). It also lists various images of Stevenson. The main one is the oil portrait by Girolamo Nerli which E.J. Beinecke acquired in 1932. The Sienese-born Nerli, who emigrated to Australia and New Zealand, painted Stevenson from life in Samoa in August-September 1892. The painting exists in three versions, the other two being in the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland and in the Lord Guthrie Collection at the Robert Louis Stevenson Club in Edinburgh. E.J. Beinecke's is now thought to be a later copy painted by Nerli between 1902 and 1904.[3]

In 1934, E.J. Beinecke had acquired the charcoal sketch done by John Singer Sargent in preparation for his two oil portraits of Stevenson. To these were added the bronze medallion by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and his oblong plaster model for the monument in St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh – later supplemented by a plaster model of the medallion, which Professor Frank Hersey of Harvard gave to E.J. Beinecke in 1942; the bronze head by Allen Hutchinson (and, subsequently, his cast of Stevenson's hand); the duplicate of Gutzon Borglum's 1915 plaque for the veranda of the Stevenson Cottage at Saranac Lake;[4] and, just acquired in the spring of 1939, the bronze statuette of Stevenson, seated, by John Tweed.

Besides the manuscript of *The Wrong Box*, Hills lists manuscripts of seventeen poems (among many more), including 'To the Hesitating Purchaser', the verse dedication of *Treasure Island* (Beinecke, 7060), 'To Andrew Lang' from *Ballads* (Beinecke, 6992), and 'The Land of Story Books' from *A Child's Garden of Verse* (Beinecke, 6488).[5] As for autograph letters from Stevenson, apart from the Savile Club Gift, E.J. Beinecke had amassed by 1939 a large number of family letters (Stevenson to his parents and other

relatives, notably to his cousin Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson) and more than one-hundred and fifty letters to Sidney Colvin and Frances Sitwell, among them a number of 'Vailima letters' retained by Colvin in 1913 when he sold part of the correspondence to Harry E. Widener's grandfather with a view to their presentation to Harvard. Other important correspondences represented in the collection as of 1939 were letters from Stevenson to Mr and Mrs Walter Ferrier and Mr and Mrs Charles Fairchild. Scarcely less important are the letters sent over a period of more than thirty years by Fanny Stevenson to her confidante Mrs Virgil Williams as well as her letters to Sir Sidney and Lady Colvin. Also mentioned by Hills are Thomas Stevenson's 1879-1880 letters to Colvin, letters from Henry James and Graham Balfour, and much correspondence from Henley. Finally, Hills notes the presence of transcripts of letters from Colvin to Baxter, spanning the years 1879-1894. According to McKay, these were presumably made when the originals were in the possession of Edward Verall Lucas in the early 1920s: they were later joined by seventeen holograph letters from Colvin to Baxter, all from the year 1899.

'The preservation of the Beinecke Collection as a whole is assured,' writes Hills at the end of the booklet; 'it is finally to be placed where all who admire Robert Louis Stevenson as an author or a man may come into more complete and truthful contact with him and his work than formerly has been possible.'

This statement is both cryptic and tantalizing since it appears that no formal connection existed at the time between E.J. Beinecke and the Yale University Library. In fact, E.J. Beinecke's files provide clear evidence that by the summer of 1939 his intentions were to donate or bequeath his Stevenson collection to the New York Public Library, whose lawyers were already discussing with him the terms of a gift.

That E.J. Beinecke's Stevenson collection eventually came to Yale was due primarily to the friendship he formed shortly thereafter with a remarkable man, James Tinkham Babb (1899-1968). A member of the Yale class of 1924, J.T. Babb was the university's assistant librarian from university librarian,

the position he occupied until his retirement in 1965. He was himself a collector (of William Beckford in particular, but also of Joseph Conrad and William McFee), but it has been said that he was above all a collector of collectors – for the greater glory of the Yale Library. Like E.J. Beinecke, he was a passionate fisherman and to the friendship which developed between them (and with E.J. Beinecke's younger brother Fritz) Yale owes not only the gift of the Stevenson Collection but also the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which was officially opened on 11 October 1963. Its first librarian, Herman Warwell Liebert (1911-1994), known familiarly as Fritz, was a member of the Yale class of 1933. A Samuel Johnson collector, he returned to Yale in 1948 to become Babb's assistant and in 1955 succeeded Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Yale's first Keeper of Rare Books, as curator of the Rare Book Room in the Sterling Memorial Library. He too developed with E.J. Beinecke and his younger brother a long-lasting friendship.

The opportunity for Babb to become acquainted with E.J. Beinecke was evidently provided by the exhibition of Stevensoniana from the latter's collection which was held at the Grolier Club in the fall of 1941. No catalogue or checklist was apparently published and no documentation (except a handful of labels) seems to have survived from that event, not even the remarks made by E.J. Beinecke at the opening on October 23. What is clear is that even before he left for England in the fall of 1942, E.J. Beinecke had made up his mind to give his collection to his alma mater and had begun a close association with the Yale Library, which was consecrated in 1946 when he became a trustee of the Yale Library Associates; he remained one until his death. The following year, he was one of the twenty-seven donors who contributed to the purchase by Yale of the 'Bay Psalm Book'.

If by 1939, E.J. Beinecke's Stevenson collection was probably the largest ever assembled, some major additions were made during the next decade, beginning in 1940 with the manuscript *Silverado Diary* (Beinecke, 6844) and the *St. Ives* manuscript (Beinecke, 6804). The former was eventually presented by E.J. Beinecke to the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino.

The ties that E.J. Beinecke renewed with Yale in no way diminished his collecting appetite. In fact, from the mid-1940s onwards, many additions to his collection were made directly for Yale or by the University with his financial support. In 1944, the Chaucer Head Book Shop in New York offered for sale as one lot an important group of material still in the possession of Stevenson's stepdaughter Isobel Strong (since 1914 Mrs Edward Salisbury Field) and her son Austin Strong, who had started making overtures to E.J. Beinecke, via the Parke Bernet Galleries, in the fall of 1941. This formed in effect the largest amount of Stevensoniana to come on the market since the 1914-16 Anderson Galleries sales following the death of Fanny Stevenson. It contained more than one-hundred and thirty letters from Stevenson to his parents, autograph notebooks, copybooks, and miscellaneous drafts and manuscript fragments, about fifty letters from Fanny Stevenson to Thomas and Margaret Stevenson, various letters addressed to Stevenson and his parents, memorabilia (such as Stevenson's penknife and cigarette holder and a pair of candlesticks from Vailima), and one-hundred and twenty volumes from the library at Vailima, including books by members of the Stevenson family and the copy of *Edinburgh* with a presentation inscription from Margaret Stevenson to Fanny and some annotations by Stevenson (Beinecke, 24). In 1946, a further three-hundred French books from Vailima were purchased from the same New York bookstore. In 1947 came the manuscript of 'The Go-Between' (Beinecke, 6255), the 1893 watercolour portrait by F.P. Spence, and yet another group of letters from Stevenson to his mother.

1949 can be singled out as the annus mirabilis of E.J. Beinecke's Stevenson collection. In May and in November, the remainder of the manuscripts in the possession of C.G. Osborne came up for auction at Sotheby's in London. At the first sale, E.J. Beinecke acquired for Yale the letters from Stevenson to Colvin and no small amount of miscellaneous manuscript material, such as four pages from the manuscript of *The Master of Ballantrae* (twenty pages of which are now at Yale). The second sale included the holograph

drafts of the *Inland Voyage* (Beinecke, 6452) and *The Amateur Emigrant* (Beinecke, 5956) as well as many manuscripts of poems and several notebooks. Still in 1949, the Rosenbach Company in Philadelphia sold to E.J. Beinecke the manuscript of *Catriona* (Beinecke, 6078, an earlier version than the one in the Widener Collection) and a considerable number of manuscripts, including *Monmouth* (Beinecke, 6587) and the incomplete intermediate draft of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, originally in the collection of Harry Glemby (Beinecke, 6934). E.J. Beinecke had already acquired separately four individual pages of the manuscript of the later version of *Jekyll and Hyde*: these he presented in 1952 to the Pierpont Morgan Library, which already held most of it. And at the same time, the Morgan introduction, chapters 1 and 2, and most of chapter 3 to complement their manuscript, an earlier draft than the Yale version; the latter is entitled 'The Justice-Clerk' and is chiefly in the hand of Isobel Strong (Beinecke, 7116).

The following year a large group of letters and manuscripts owned by Katharine Osbourne, the widow of Stevenson's stepson (who had died in 1947) was purchased from the San Francisco bookdealer Warren R. Howell.

E.J. Beinecke's first donations to Yale from his Stevenson collection were made without any publicity. Thus, the presentation of the twelve bound volumes of the Savile Club Gift was announced as an anonymous gift in the April 1948 issue of the library Gazette. One year later, the anonymity had disappeared when the April 1949 issue reported the gift of the proof copy of *The Beach of Falesà* and thirteen early letters from Stevenson to his cousin Bob, 'finely bound in full morocco'. In 1950, two-hundred and fifty titles (not annotated) from the library at Vailima were transferred to Yale. (McKay, who limits himself to books from Stevenson's library containing inscriptions or annotations, lists one-hundred and thirteen in his 1952 volume; thirty-six more figure in the 1964 Addenda volume. The present number in the Beinecke Library is close to five-hundred.)

The gift of E.J. Beinecke's entire Stevenson collection to Yale was made in 1951. The deed of gift is dated February 13 and

is in the shape of a letter to James Babb: 'Dear Jim, tomorrow my chauffeur will deliver to you seven cases of Robert Louis Stevenson manuscripts embodying novels, poems[,] essays, letters, etc., in which R.L.S.'s various items made their first appearance in print. The total shipment is twelve cases. [...] A considerable number of the manuscripts are already yours through gifts of the manuscripts themselves or through gifts of money to be used for the purpose of purchasing others. I now make a gift of the balance of the manuscripts to the Yale University Library.' This gift was officially announced by the University on 16 May 1951; articles reporting the donation appeared in the *New York Times* for 17 May 1951 and in the *New York Herald Tribune* for May 21. An exhibition, arranged by Marjorie G. Wynne, was held in the Sterling Memorial Library from 18 May until 24 September of that year. Its opening on 18 May was marked by a lecture by David Daiches, who was then teaching at Cornell University. Later in the same year, this lecture was privately printed in New York, a publication evidently commissioned by E.J. Beinecke, under the title 'Stevenson and the Art of Fiction' (Beinecke, 1275). 'There is no doubt,' Daiches says in his opening remarks, 'that Yale will become the Mecca of all those who are anxious to get new and first-hand information about Stevenson, and to study afresh his life, his personality and his work. (...) From now on, there will be no excuse for anybody's perpetuating the false notions about Stevenson's life and character that have been so current among both enthusiasts and iconoclasts. The substantial truth about Stevenson, both as man and as artist, can now be fully determined at Yale.'

On the same day, 18 May 1951, appeared the first part of the catalogue of the collection, 'A Stevenson Library: Catalogue of a Collection of Writings by and about Robert Louis Stevenson, Formed by Edwin J. Beinecke'. Its compiler, George McKay, then librarian of the Grolier Club, had been working on it since the summer of 1948: in effect, he succeeded Gertrude Hills, whose trace we lose after 1941. The catalogue bears the imprint of the Yale University Library. The three volumes originally planned grew to six. Volume one was devoted to 'Printed Books,

Pamphlets, Broadsides, etc.' as was Volume two, which came out in 1952. Volume three contained 'Autograph Letters by Robert Louis Stevenson and his Wife', whilst Volume four was 'Letters to and About Robert Louis Stevenson', in 1958; Volume five, 'Manuscripts by Robert Louis Stevenson and Others,' in 1964; and Volume six ('Addenda and Corrigenda;) in 1964. A twenty-page description of the collection by Marjorie Wynne, who became the curator of the collection from its arrival at Yale until her retirement in 1987, was published in the library Gazette for January 1952: a comparison with Hills's 1939 account reflects the collection's impressive growth.

McKay's catalogue was prepared independently from the Yale Library. It was not even done in New Haven. The items described in Volumes two to six, including the manuscripts, were simply shipped to the Grolier Club when needed and returned to the Yale Rare Book Room once the work was done (such were the days). This mode of proceeding resulted in two consequences. The first is that the catalogue is an inventory but not a locator. McKay's numbers are not shelfmarks. It is true that when cards were produced for the items shelved in the Rare Book Room, those numbers were recorded (and are now preserved in the online records as part of the ORBIS catalogue, though, at this stage at least, not in a searchable field). But the fact is that the entire printed collection was not retained in the Rare Book Room. Of the seven-hundred and thirty-six items recorded by McKay in the first volume, five-hundred and nine were kept, at least one-hundred and sixty-one were sent to the general stacks of the Sterling Memorial Library, where it is to be hoped that they still are, and even though E.J. Beinecke's bookplate is affixed in them, the library cards that were produced for them bore no mention of their provenance or the corresponding McKay number. Furthermore, thirty or so duplicates, generally listed by McKay as 'another copy' or 'a third copy', were disposed of by the Rare Book Room and are now either in private hands or in other institutions (and it would be interesting to know whether they still have the Beinecke bookplate). No manuscripts, of course, were 'disposed of', but

McKay's descriptive system has created difficulties which every scholar who has worked on the collection is familiar with. To sum up, McKay decided to catalogue the manuscripts as abstract bibliographic entities rather than bibliographic objects. In other words, his catalogue regroups manuscripts of poems, and assigns them sequential numbers, no matter whether they were alone on a single leaf, or on the reverse of a sheet with an unrelated draft of the verso, which in turn was assigned a totally different number in the sequence, or even in a notebook that might contain thirty drafts or more of various poems or verse fragments: to that single notebook is attached not one, but thirty different McKay numbers! This not altogether happy situation is the one we all, librarians and scholars, have had to live with since. Plans are currently being made for an online version of the manuscript component of the Beinecke Stevenson collection which will both incorporate McKay's numbers while providing a better sense of the physical location of the items.

After its transfer to Yale, E.J. Beinecke continued to enrich the collection, as often as not at the deft prompting of Babb, Liebert, and Marjorie Wynne. In September 1952, Austin Strong died. A few months later, Chaucer Head offered for sale on behalf of his widow the final portion of Stevenson's papers still in the hands of his family. It included one-hundred and ten letters from Andrew Lang, about ninety letters from W.E. Henley, forty-two letters from Henry James (among them his twenty-six-page letter of condolence to Fanny), and further correspondence from Charles Scribner's Sons, Colvin, Fleeming Jenkin, George Meredith, Auguste Rodin, Walter Simpson, Leslie Stephens, John Addington Symonds, more notebooks, miscellaneous manuscripts, and memorabilia, including locks of R.L.S.'s hair in 1854 and 1894.

Additions, large and small, to the collection in the 1950s and 1960s are chronicled in the library Gazette: in 1953, *The Silverado Squatters* inscribed by Stevenson to his mother (Beinecke, 231), *Underwoods* inscribed by Stevenson to Dr Dobell (Beinecke, 7227), *A Child's Garden of Verse* inscribed by the illustrator Charles Robinson (Beinecke, 201), and the bronze medallion by

Saint-Gaudens; in 1954 an 1891 letter from Stevenson to Baxter, which had apparently gone astray, and one to his parents, a variety of manuscripts purchased at Sotheby's, London (among them a sixty-eight-page corrected typescript for the 'Eight Islands' section of *The South Seas*, (Beinecke, 6436) and an important collection of material from Scribner, including seventy-one letters to Stevenson from Charles Scribner and E.L. Burlingame, and the proofs for *The Wrong Box* (Beinecke, 7589); in 1956, the manuscript of 'The Body Snatcher' (Beinecke, 6020); in 1960, the Gutzon Borglum plaque; in 1962 a ten-page letter to Baxter dated September 1 [1890] (Beinecke, 7939); in 1962 a presentation copy of *Ballads* (Beinecke, 7598); in 1963, Austin Strong's manuscript account of his life at Vailima, together with a collection of photographs, some annotated by Stevenson.

It seems that E.J. Beinecke seldom resisted the entreaties of his Yale librarians. 'I am glad,' he wrote to Marjorie Wynne in September 1956, 'that you liked the manuscript of "The Body Snatcher". Don Wing [Donald G. Wing, Yale's senior cataloguer and the author of the short-title catalogue of books published in English between 1641 and 1700] bludgeoned me into buying it and now that the bruise is almost healed I am glad he did.'

One important item entered the collection in 1964 not through the intermediary of E.J. Beinecke but that of his brother Fritz: the large tapa cloth which once hung in a special room at Vailima and now adorns the west side of the lobby of the library. It was made from Paper Mulberry bark in 1890 by the Samoan natives in the backyard of the first cottage built by Stevenson on the island, and presented to him in honor of the house. Since the natives had never seen a house with windows, these are the principal decorative motif of the tapa. Stevenson later gave it to a Sea Captain in gratitude for some favor and the Captain, in turn, presented it to the father of Dr Gregory Stragnell, who in 1947 gave it to Mr and Mrs Stratter Day of Short Hills, New Jersey, from whom it eventually came to Yale at Fritz Beinecke's urging.

That E.J. Beinecke maintained an active interest in the collection's growth and well-being until the end of his life is

amply documented in his correspondence with the Yale Library. The only sign that his collector's appetite may have been waning is that Marjorie Wynne failed to arouse his interest in purchasing from the University of California, Los Angeles, a group of ca. 25 manuscripts, mostly poetic, in the spring of 1966. These all came from the Peabody-Osborne collection and had been acquired in 1949 at Sotheby's. When the U.C.L.A. Library, then in financial difficulties, decided to deaccession them, Yale was first approached by Wilbur Smith, head of the U.C.L.A. special collections. The high asking price, especially compared with the 1949 values, must have been a factor, combined with the consideration that the poems had all (or nearly all) been published, first by Hellman in 1916 and lastly by Janet Adam Smith in 1950. In any event, E.J. Beinecke declined to purchase what must have been one of the last substantial collection of R.L.S. manuscripts and they were sold piecemeal by Sotheby's later that spring.

In a 1939 letter to Gertrude Hills in which he discusses the final disposition of his Stevenson collection, E.J. Beinecke made two points very clear. The first was that the collection deserved to be housed in a building of its own. The second was that once it had left his ownership the collection should not be considered closed, but, on the contrary, regularly enriched by additions from other sources. In the fullness of time, those two wishes have been carried out, both in a metonymic and a literal sense: the Beinecke Library (as E.J. Beinecke's Stevenson collection was once known) has found its permanent home in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where it continues to grow for the present and future benefit of Stevenson scholarship.

Works Cited

Besides the various publications quoted above, this account is based on information gathered in part from the Beinecke Family Records compiled in twenty-one albums by Fred L. Mayer for presentation to E.J. Beinecke Jr. on his sixtieth birthday in 1973 and donated to the Beinecke Library by his widow following his death in 1982. I

have also relied on material from the still unprocessed collector's files of E.J. Beinecke, which contain a wealth of information on the history of his Stevenson Library. Finally, I have greatly benefited from the personal reminiscences and comments of Marjorie G. Wynne, to whom I wish to convey my gratitude, as are grateful to her the many Stevensonians who have used the Beinecke Collection over the years. The bracketed Beinecke numbers throughout refer to McKay's catalogue, A Stevenson Library...

1. Beinecke, William S. with Kabaservice, Geoffrey M.; *Through Mem'ry's Haze: A Personal Memoir*, (New York: Prospect Hill Press, 2000), p. 49.
2. The spurious Edinburgh 'Ticonderoga' has evidently not lost all its cachet since a copy was available for sale at the 1997 New York Antiquarian Book Fair, priced at $850 with no mention of its tainted origin. On 'Ticonderoga', see also Lewis, Roger C.; *Thomas James Wise and the Trial Book Fallacy*, (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 214-218.
3. See Peter Entwisle, Michael Dunn and Roger Collins; *Nerli: An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, (Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1988), especially pp. 50-51 and pp. 131-132.
4. In the 1920s Borglum sculpted a bust of Bernhard Beinecke: see Beinecke, *Through Mem'ry's Haze*, p. 7-8.
5. One of the manuscript poems, listed by Hills as 'I Have Been Young,' is in fact a fragment of 'Dark Women' (Beinecke, 6137). I am grateful to Roger Lewis for identifying it.

Ghost Writing: Stevenson and Dumas

Glenda Norquay

The material available on Stevenson's activities as a reader – the frequent demands in his letters home for a particular book, or usually a list of books – his comments on those books as he read them, his literary productions as reviewer and essayist, even the borrowing records in the Advocates Library – make him a particularly rich field in which to trace the intertextual dynamics between reading and writing practices.[1] Stevenson's desire to adapt, imitate, experiment in different genres, to play – in the unfortunate phrase that has returned to haunt his writing – 'the sedulous ape', or more positively, as Italo Calvino suggested, to write the kinds of books he would have liked to read',[2] makes him an even more interesting case through which to explore the relationship between a reader's writing and a writer's reading. As Calvino implies, the recreation of particular narrative pleasures was a powerful motivating force in Stevenson's fiction, and in his essays, with their reflections on the work of other novelists, Stevenson extended his sophisticated articulation of pleasure and desire.

My concern, however, is not with the identification of 'sources and influences' interesting as that might be; nor do I want to work with the model of 'misprision' advanced by Harold Bloom, in which the 'strong' poet swerves from or kills his forefathers[3]; for a number of reasons this combative image of the 'intellectual' reader does not appear appropriate to Stevenson who, as others have suggested, tends to present himself as eclectic, if not indiscriminate, in his reading tastes. Moreover, the complexity of writing-reading relations, as Paul Ricoeur has pointed out, cannot be compared to the speaking-answering dynamic of dialogue:

> Dialogue is an exchange of questions and answers; there is no exchange of this sort between the writer and the reader.

> The writer does not respond to the reader. Rather the book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides, between which there is no communication. The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer.[4]

Perhaps the most useful image of the fluid and complicated relationship between reader and text is to be found in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in which he considers what we might call the practices of the 'general' rather than intellectual reader – and in many of his most interesting essays on fiction Stevenson constructs himself in exactly this role, although it is only one of several parts he plays. The reader, de Certeau, suggests:

> Insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralises himself into it like the internal rumblings of one's body. ...Words become the outlet or product of silent histories. The readable transforms itself into the memorable: Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text, the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news. The thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces. A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place. This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment.[5]

This model of writing, with its dual play of pleasure and appropriation, attractively avoids fixity of the text or of the reading process, thus freeing the idea of a process of exchange.

De Certeau continues with yet another memorable image: readers are travellers; they move across land belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write...[6] This concept of the reader as poacher, as traveller, engaging in a process of bricolage, collecting bits and

pieces, which are then transformed in use and function, finds a particular resonance in relation to Stevenson. In one of the many biographical celebrations of his life, *Last Witness for Robert Louis Stevenson* (1960), Elsie Caldwell describes his wanderings around the Scottish countryside, talking to the locals of the history of their area, and comments: 'He was merely vagabonding, consciously or unconsciously seeking health in the open air because of that insistent call of starving lungs.'[7] Vagabonding for Stevenson is not only an image he favours in his poetry but also becomes both a physical and a literary activity, as he travels within texts, transforming them for his own purposes.

These depictions – the reader as poacher, the (perhaps slightly less 'transgressive') reader as vagabond – offer then, a framing image of Stevenson's relationship to the texts he read, and it is that dynamic that forms the basis of this essay. The complexity of such 'ruses of pleasure and appropriation' can be clearly demonstrated by focusing upon the textual strategies of one of Stevenson's own essays. Stevenson's essays theorizing fiction have been neglected on two accounts: what he has to say seems always to be overshadowed by Henry James; and even if what he has to say is recognized, the complex methods used to say it are rarely appreciated. 'A Gossip Upon a Novel of Dumas's', one of several essays produced in the late 1880's, reveals both the sophistication of Stevenson's perception of the reading process, and the subtlety of his textual strategies.[8]

While Ricoeur may assert that the exchanges of writer and reader cannot be compared to dialogue, some kind of relationship is nevertheless established between the activities of reading and writing even if it is not one of 'communication'.[9] Indeed, for Stevenson, texts not only speak to him, but he, in a certain sense, seeks to speak back to them. Gaston Bachelard offers a more helpful consideration of the reader as writer: attempting to trace this complicated relationship between reading and writing he suggests that in relation to those texts we admire, and re-read: we become, in a sense, ghost writers, in the very act of reading: 'In this admiration, which goes beyond the passivity of contemplative

attitudes, the joy of the reader appears to be the reflection of the joy of writing, as though the reader were the writer's ghost.'[10] Moreover, he suggests, when those texts that we most admire, that we feel most engagement with and sympathy for, are also those that we recognize as flawed, the relationship is further complicated and, to an extent, liberated: the dynamic by which reading becomes a means both of nurturing and repressing the desire to write is subtly altered: 'All readers who have a certain passion for reading, nurture and repress, through reading, the desire to become a writer. When the page we have read is too near perfection, our modesty suppresses this desire. But it reappears nevertheless.'[11] Describing the style of Alexander Dumas, in the novel of his he most loved, Stevenson talks of it as being: 'with every fault, yet never tedious; with no merit, yet inimitably right'.[12] Both the text and the authorial figure of Dumas may be seen then as performing for Stevenson exactly that function described by Bachelard: repressing yet nurturing the desire to write, engaging the reader in a complex process of admiration and estrangement.

The essay itself, written in 1887, after what Furnas describes as a 'foul winter' for Stevenson in which his father is declining and he is coming to terms with the death of Fleeming Jenkin, reflects a general and long-standing admiration of Dumas.[13] As he admitted to Henley, whom he had urged to write a biography of the author: 'Dumas I have read and re-read too often', and he makes frequent reference to the writer in his essays and letters.[14] Indeed in January and February 1886, when Henley and Stevenson are planning a collection entitled 'Masterpieces of Prose Narrative', most of Stevenson's letters to Henley are dominated by his agonizing over which piece of Dumas to include in the anthology. (He even goes so far as to write to George Saintsbury for advice, remembering an article Saintsbury had written eight years earlier for the *Fortnightly Review*.)[15] It is clearly important to him that Dumas is well represented. Stevenson loved Dumas for a number of reasons: he figures large (in every sense) in Stevenson's imagination, both as a literary model and as a person. As Henry James, noted, 'It is...my impression that he prefers the author of "The Three Musketeers"

to any novelist except Mr. George Meredith...I should go so far as to suspect that his idea of the delightful work of fiction would be the adventures of Monte Cristo related by the author of Richard Feverel.'[16]

The focus of Stevenson's particular admiration is that novel he read again and again, and to which he devoted 'A Gossip upon a novel of Dumas's': *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*. The more famous romance, *The Three Musketeers*, was first serialized in *Le Siècle* 1843-4 and the musketeers saga was then continued in a number of volumes. Under the title of *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* Stevenson appears here to refer to the last three Musketeer novels, now published as *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Louise de la Vallière* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. What made that final musketeer adventure, serialized between October and January 1850 such a significant site for re-reading? What ghostly writing activity did this novel promote in Stevenson? And, if we look for Dumas in Stevenson, what can we see of Stevenson in Dumas for, as de Certeau writes: 'Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text; the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news.'[17] Dumas's fiction, it could be argued, does find a place in Stevenson's own writing through 'influence': we might find elements of it in the late and unfinished romance, *St Ives: being the adventures of a French prisoner in England*, in which a French narrator and a prison escape are relocated in Edinburgh and Swanston; much could also be said about the relationship between the Musketeers saga and *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, about their shared tropes and concerns – the complications of romantic ideas of heroism, the tension between honour and pragmatism, the interconnections of dress and performance, the concern with masculinity and with male bonding, action and violence, the importance of islands and the traversal of distance, but it is in some respects more interesting to look at the essay itself and the ways in which it becomes a space in which Stevenson reconstructs his role as a reader, and reads himself as a writer.

In the course of the 1887 essay Stevenson makes clear what he admires about Dumas as a man and a professional writer: his

amazing energy, his rate of production, his appetite for success and for life, are all strongly attractive to him. As a novelist, Dumas's handling of plot, the characters he creates, the use of dramatic incident, and his rather variable success in creating female characters (a problem he was all too familiar with himself) drew Stevenson to him. At several points in the essay, therefore, Stevenson adopts a comparative approach, positioning himself very much as an author writing about a fellow 'craftsman', a tactic which is most clearly manifested in his aside on this troublesome business of delineating heroines: 'Authors, at least, know it well; a heroine will too often start the trick of "getting ugly" and no disease is more difficult to cure. I said authors, but indeed I had a side eye to one author in particular with whose works I am very well acquainted, though I cannot read them, and who has spent many vigils in this cause, sitting beside his ailing puppets and (like a magician) wearying his art to restore them to youth and beauty.'[18] The technique here, of developing increasingly overt references to his own status as writer and as author of the essay, is a common one for Stevenson in his essays, and particularly obvious in 'A Chapter on Dreams'.

Coexisting, however, with this explicit acknowledgement of his own 'writerly' interest, is Stevenson's fabrication of himself as a reader and the essay consistently plays upon these two different levels of response. Moreover, as do most of Stevenson's literary essays, this one contains a narrative within the disquisition; in this case, the story of how the young reader forms an acquaintance with the book and his subsequent revisiting of it. His experience of the novel then is situated not only in relation to his own experiences as a writer but also to key moments of his development as a reader. It is in the depiction of scenes from the novel on dessert plates in a hotel in Nice that he first makes acquaintance with the figures from the Musketeers story – and the significance of this othering, through the pleasurable associations of France, of holiday, perhaps even of pudding should be noted.[19] (We might also consider the extent to which the association of French literature with pleasure might be read into his dislike of Zola and, continuing in culinary

metaphor, 'the rancid school of realism'.[20]) But he was already, he admits, familiar with the name of d'Artagnan through reading a novel of Miss Yonge's. The novel in question has been identified as *The Young Stepmother*, in which one of the younger male characters is caught reading 'one of the worst and most fascinating of Dumas's romances', becomes terrified that his father will find out, and is advised that 'there are some exciting pleasures that we must turn our backs on resolutely. I think this book is one of them.'[21] Not unfamiliar with a censorious paternal presence, this image of transgressive pleasure must surely have spoken to Stevenson, and offered a 'frame' with which to approach the text. And when he acquires a copy himself again there is an undercurrent of the illicit in it being 'one of those pirated editions that swarmed for a time out of Brussels, and ran to such a troop of neat and dwarfish versions.'[22] Again there are overtones of alterity in the associations of pirates and dwarves.

It should be noted, however, that he does not include in these recollections the judgments expressed in a letter to Bob Stevenson written in 1866:

> I have read Bragelonne. The conversations are certainly wonderful, but the strength of the plot is frittered away and the whole story is lengthened out to a most unconscionable and dreary extent. The strength of Porthos and the furiously acute intellects of Aramis and d'Artagnan are singularly overdone. There are too many conversations in which the latter braves the King, and when he has thoroughly failed in his object, succeeds all at once by shamming that he is going to stick himself, or throwing up his situation. Had I been Louis, I should have had his brains blown out for one half of the cheek which he gives.[23]

This critical insight is not part of the narrative of 'reconstructed' readings we find in the essay, which takes a far more positive tone. It is also ironic, given his initial depiction of the book as dangerous, that the reason Stevenson offers for his continuing

enthusiasm is a defense of its morality. The morality which, he acknowledges, may not appeal to everyone, nevertheless offers a model of 'truthfulness', to be found in particular in d'Artagnan: 'his conscience is void of all refinement, whether for good or evil; but the whole man rings true like a good sovereign.'[24] Of course, as with his highly 'moral' list of reading in 'Books which Have Influenced Me', we might not want to take such rectitude at face value, but as a defensive strategy it is significant that he also feels the need to claim an educative value for the book.[25] At first reading, however, Dumas is exciting, dangerous, 'other', so the essay again plays two different responses against each other: the desire for dangerous pleasures and the articulation of 'moral value'.[26]

His next recalled reading pulls the novel more firmly to his personal and domestic self, although an element of estrangement is still evident: reading it alone while in a cottage in the Pentlands, it is described as part of the comforts of home, along with dog, slippers and warmth, which await him on his return from the cold countryside. But even within this domestic interior, he experiences a kind of bifurcation of place, one familiar to any reader, as he moves between fictional location and place of reading:

> ... would rise from my book and pull the blind aside, and see the snow and the glittering hollies chequer a Scotch garden, and the winter moonlight brighten the white hills. Thence I would turn again to that crowded and sunny field of life in which it was so easy to forget myself, my cares and my surroundings: a place busy as a city, bright as a theatre, thronged with memorable faces, and sounding with delightful speech.[27]

The oppositions of moonlight and sunlight, silence and noise, solitude and throng, reflection and performance, are clear but the explanation of 'forgetting himself' and his cares through the book seems an unsatisfactory way of accounting for that striking sense of disruption and dislocation described, by which the world of the

novel brings into being, through a process of chiaroscuro, a more sharply etched and more alienating world of the reader.

Stevenson is, of course, addressing an important aspect of the reading process that others have tackled in more technical terms. Writing of this business of 'involvement' with the literary in his book *Frame Analysis*, which stresses the 'mediated' nature of all experience, the sociologist Erving Goffman notes: 'the matter of being carried away into something – in a word, engrossment – does not provide us with a means of distinguishing strips of untransformed activity from transformed ones: a reader's involvement in an episode from a novel is in the relevant sense the same as his involvement in a strip of "actual" experience.'[28] Stevenson's view of the world outside his text is in some ways more 'unheimlich' and less 'real' than the fictional world to which he returns.

From a more obviously literary engagement with narrative analysis, Wolfgang Iser also talks of what he calls 'entanglement' in a text: this, he suggests, carries several effects simultaneously:

> While we are caught up in a text, we do not at first know what is happening to us. That is why we often feel the need to talk about books we have read – not in order to gain some distance from them so much as to find out what it is that we were entangled in... The more "present" the text is to us, the more our habitual selves – at least for the duration of the read – recede into the "past"... This does not mean, however, that these criteria of our past experience disappear altogether. On the contrary, our past still remains our experience, but what happens now is that it begins to interact with the as yet unfamiliar presence of the text. ...[29]

Drawing on John Dewey's ideas from *Art as Experience*, Iser sees the conjunction of new and old as a 'recreation in which the present impulsion gets form and solidity while the old, the 'stored' material is literally revived, given new life and purpose through

having to meet a new situation'.[30] But through an awareness of discrepancies in these gestalten, Iser suggests, the reader is also detached from his own participation in the text: 'The ability to perceive oneself during the process of participation is an essential quality of the aesthetic experience: an observer finds himself in a strange halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved.'[31] Although in his description of reading in the Pentlands Stevenson appears to polarize escape into the warmth of fiction and the reality of the cold world outside, the effect of that description upon the reader is quite different. In this section of the essay, through a complicated negotiation of the present of the text with a number of his past reading selves, Stevenson enacts for his readers that very process of engagement and observation of engagement, of participation and detachment described by Iser: the tale becomes part of his familiar world, but also makes that world – through the activity of reading – other. The essay, moreover, becomes actively engaged with two fictionalized worlds while simultaneously reflecting on the processes of engagement.

Characteristically, Stevenson both plays out, and critiques through his performance, the pleasures of the text. Beyond that layering effect however, the moment also brings into play another dimension of his relationship with Dumas's novel, for in the narrative recollection of experience there is also an element of nostalgia, of going back to the past, of revisiting and reviewing the pleasures it contained, pleasures which were then less informed by his own literariness ('I understood but little of the merits of the book') and were somehow more 'innocent'.[32] Nostalgia is, of course, central feature of this part of the Musketeers series and Stevenson loves *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* in particular because here the musketeers are old, placed in a new and changing society, clinging to what are increasingly seen as outmoded values, remembering past glories and a previous innocence. Writing about reading Dumas also allows Stevenson both to become an 'innocent' reader again, and to view with detachment, his earlier reading self – which as I have indicated, is already a selective and fictionalized self.

Significantly, it is also nostalgia that forms part of the appeal of Dumas himself, a figure whom he refers to most of the time in his letters as 'Old Dumas' (as opposed to the way in which he talks about the 'Master Balzac'.)[33] Nostalgia operates not just in the association with a literary figure who played a part in his past, but also in his construction of Dumas as an 'excessive' writer who was less 'cautious' in his profession than the denizens of Stevenson's literary milieu had become, who belonged to an older and more exciting world: 'Chastity is not near his heart; nor, yet, to his own sore cost, that virtue of frugality which is the armour of the artist'.[34] Dumas then is both more 'productive' but also less 'professional' in his profligacy than Stevenson's fellow writers; again this perspective allows Stevenson both to acknowledge and denigrate his own status as a 'professional' writer. This dynamic between pragmatism and passion is, as Stevenson notes, also played out in the novel between the characters of Fouquet, the charismatic, generous, yet corrupt, superintendent of finance, and Colbert, his pragmatic and calculating replacement. It is Stevenson's own observation on the depiction of Fouquet – 'Dumas saw something of himself and drew the portrait more tenderly' that points to how we should 'read' his own presentation of (and identification with) Dumas.[35]

From that time on, he tells us he has returned to the book often, and has just 'risen from my last (let me call it my fifth) perusal, having liked it better and admired it more seriously than ever.'[36] But now the relationship has changed again: from being either a writerly compatriot of the author, or an avid reader of the text, Stevenson now presents himself as being 'read' by this novel: 'Perhaps I have a sense of ownership, being so well known in these six volumes. Perhaps I think that d'Artagnan delights to have me read of him, and Louis Quatorze is gratified, and Fouquet throws me a look, and Aramis, although he knows I do not love him, yet plays to me with his best graces, as to an old patron of the show.'[37] So while Stevenson possesses the book he is also a possession of it; he has become, he suggests, its ideal reader – perhaps an implied reader, perhaps Riffaterre's super reader – for whom the

characters perform at their best. He has become, as it were, the point at which these characters are most themselves, offering a coherence to the novel, a reinforcement of identity. Any more thinking along such lines, he observes, and he will become like George IV at the Battle of Waterloo and 'may come to fancy the Vicomte the first, and Heaven knows the best, of my own works.'[38] (George IV liked to claim that it was through his efforts Napoleon was defeated.) In his joy of reading Stevenson does not indeed appear to have become the reader as the 'writer's ghost.'

From his confidence in this role, Stevenson then goes on to enumerate the values of the novel, of the character of d'Artagnan, and of the 'ventripotent mulatto' Dumas himself, before concluding with the point that one of the most striking features of the novel is that it educates by anticipating the end of life, seeing beyond the present moment to failed ideas, to the death of friends: 'to read this well is to anticipate experience'.[39] (And Stevenson, as he has demonstrated, reads well.) Looking forward himself, the essay does not go 'beyond' the novel towards 'experience' but ends instead with anticipation of another reading, a reading that will lead forward into a world of familiar romance but also fresh possibilities: 'Yet a sixth time, dearest d'Artagnan, we shall kidnap Monk and take horse together for Belle Isle!'[40] The piece closes therefore with the novel still open for re-reading, returning us – revived as it were – to the fiction and away from the author of the essay.

There is however another complex process of revivification being enacted in this piece of writing. Theorists of the phenomenology of reading frequently depict the central relationship between writer and reader in terms of life and death: Ricoeur writes: 'to read a book is to consider the author as already dead, and the book as posthumous. For it is when the author is dead that the relation to the book becomes complete and, as it were, intact.'[41] While Alberto Manguel states: 'The primordial relationship between writer and reader presents a wonderful paradox: in creating the role of the reader, the writer also decrees the writer's death, since in order for a text to be finished, the writer

must withdraw, cease to exist.' Even de Certeau describes a process of exchange in terms of a usurping of roles: 'a different world, the reader's, slips into the author's place.' In this essay, by describing his consumption – and continued, active consumption – of *The Vicomte de Bragelonne,* Stevenson is repeating, enacting again and again, that closure of writing, that 'death' of the author, of which Manguel and Ricoeur speak. Yet the essay itself revives, gives life, in two ways: it recreates for us d'Artagnan, and what he is for Stevenson – 'none love I so wholly' he writes, and while we read that d'Artagnan stands before us again, animated not only by the character invested in him by his author but by the virtues accorded, read into him, by the literary persona of Stevenson. Dumas, too, it 'brought to life', a figure taken out of his text, placed again on what the essay calls 'the battlefield of life', and invested with all the qualities – 'the great eater, worker, earner and waster, the man of much and witty laughter, the man of the great heart and alas! Of the doubtful honesty' that no portrait has yet done justice to. Of course, in the very act of 'reading' d'Artagnan, Stevenson is also writing the death of Dumas as author and, in putting words on the page depicting Dumas, is enacting his own 'death' by giving life to his readers. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that the novel he selects for such special treatment, is a novel about the death of friends, is a novel about the breaking of bonds, of also, to an extent, letting go of beliefs and ideals. It is also appropriate that it is a novel in which the eponymous hero is no hero, is someone who – because he is boring – becomes for the reader a blank: 'I may be said to have passed the best years of my life in reading these volumes and my acquaintance with Raol has never gone beyond a bow.' *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, which may at first seem a novel that speaks to the thematic interests of Stevenson and may usefully be read in that way, also becomes the site in which the dynamic of reading and writing, recovery and loss can be played out. In that final gesture, 'yet once more, dearest d'Artagnan', Stevenson attempts to return to being a reader, yet his words fix him as writer, and liberate us into being his readers – and at the same time, the ghosts of his writer.

Stevenson's short essay presents therefore what we might call a performative analysis of the act of reading, but also produces a piece of text which ensures that the reader will seek a return to the words of not one, but two writers. 'A Gossip Upon a Novel of Dumas's' is characteristic of many of Stevenson's essays on fiction: deceptively simple in its enthusiasm, seductive in its delightful 'plot', but with a highly sophisticated structure which allows Stevenson to play out and reconcile a number of different roles as writer, reader and critic.

End Notes

1. This paper is part of a larger project presenting a series of case studies in which the processes of 'narrative exchange' between Stevenson's reading and writing are explored.
2. Calvino, Italo; *Introduction to 'I Nostri Antenati' (Our Ancestors)*, (London: Picador, 1980), pp. vi-vii.
3. See Bloom, Harold; *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*,(Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
4. Ricoeur, Paul; *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. Thompson, J. B., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 146-7.
5. de Certeau, Michel; *Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Rendall, Steven, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984; 1988) p. xxi.
6. Ibid, p. 174.
7. Caldwell, E. N.; *Last Witness for Robert Louis Stevenson*, (Oklahoma: Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 74.
8. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip Upon a Novel of Dumas's', *Memories and Portraits* (London: 1887), Tusitala 29, Repr. ed. Norquay G.; *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). All page references are to this edition.
9. Ricoeur, P; *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. Thompson, J. B., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p146.

10. Bachelard, Gaston; *The Poetics of Space*, tr. Jolas, Maria; (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. xxii.
11. Ibid. xxii.
12. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip Upon a Novel of Dumas's', p. 122.
13. It is difficult to date the essay. Swearingen suggests spring/ early summer of 1887. There is no mention of it in the list of essays originally to be included in *Memories and Portraits*, although it appears on a second list submitted in August. (See Nash, Andrew; 'Two Unpublished Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson', *Notes and Queries*, 245:3, September 2000.)
14. Mehew, Ernest; *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson,* vol. IV, Letter 1287 (June 1884), p. 307.
15. Mehew, Ernest; *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. V: see Letters 1524, 1539, 1544, 1545, 1546. He also wrote to George Saintsbury (Letter 1536) asking his advice on the subject. Saintsbury had published a long essay on Dumas in the *Fortnightly Review,* 1 October 1878. Henley had also written an article describing Dumas as a 'master of modern art' in the *Saturday Review,* November 10 1883.
16. James, Henry; 'Robert Louis Stevenson', *Century Magazine*, April 1888, written in 1887 and shown to Stevenson in the autumn.
17. De Certeau, Michel; *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Rendall, Steven; (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984; 1988) p. xxi.
18. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 121
19. 'My acquaintance with the Vicomte began, somewhat indirectly, in the year of grace 1863, when I had the advantage of studying certain illustrated dessert plates in a hotel at Nice', Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 119.
20. 'To afford a popular flavour and attract the mob, he adds a steady current of what I might be allowed to call the rancid', Norquay G; 'A Note on Realism', 1883, p. 67.
21. Yonge, Charlotte M; *The Young Stepmother*, (1857-60), Chapter IV.

22. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 119
23. *Letters,* Vol. I, Letter 36, November 1866, p. 112.
24. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 124.
25. 'Books Which Have Influenced Me', *British Weekly*, 13 May 1887, 28:11, pp. 17-19.
26. It would be simplistic to understand this as part of a 'Scottish duality'; the explicit construction of such oppositions, however, does seem to acknowledge a negotiation of different literary hierarchies.
27. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 119.
28. Goffman, Erving; *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 346. (But see also James, William; *Principles of Psychology* Vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1950), pp. 292-3, on *Ivanhoe*).
29. Iser, Wolfgang; *The Act of Reading, A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) pp. 131-2.
30. Ibid. 132, quoting Dewey; *Art as Experience*, (1934; 1958) p. 60.
31. Ibid. 134.
32. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 119.
33. 'This I think is a term of endearment, and not simply a distinction of Dumas père'.
34. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 123.
35. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 124.
36. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 120.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 125.
40. Stevenson, R. L.; 'A Gossip On a Novel of Dumas's', p. 125.
41. Ricoeur, Paul; op cit., p. 147.

He, I say – I Cannot Say I: Modernity and the Crisis of Identity in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.*

Richard J. Walker

> Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.
>
> (Marx and Engels: pp. 85-86).

In his essay on identity, history and modernity, 'Nietzsche's Cattle', Francis Barker describes the eponymous cattle of the German philosopher as wandering in a 'bucolic pastoral', without any apprehension of a past or future'; for Barker they are therefore freed from any 'historical burden of responsibility' for either of these temporal locations. Barker equates the cattle with the fragmented and decentred disidentical subject of modernity: the bucolic environment offers a form of happiness, a blissful ignorance that voids the subject of 'any sense of the temporal complexity of the present'. In short Nietzsche's grazing cattle, like the disidentical subject, are happily devoid of a 'sense of history' (Barker: p. 93). At risk of playing somewhat loosely with Barker's instructive essay, his understanding of the dislocated and disidentical subject, certainly in nineteenth century modernity, is one that I would like to take to task: Matthew Arnold, for example, in his lyric 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse' (1855) is profoundly and self-consciously aware of the historical displacement of the disidentified subject, finding himself 'Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born' (Arnold: p. 89). Arnold is a nineteenth century figure who I will return to in the course of this paper and whose writing informs my assessment

of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in interesting ways. For the present Barker, like many other critics, traces the origins of the emergence of the western individual to the work of Rene Descartes. Descartes' writing asks important questions that haunt the literature of duality in the nineteenth century: what is the relationship between mind and body, are they distinct entities, if so are we (whatever that may be) divided or unified beings? Descartes' questions posit this problem of potential self-division in intriguing configurations, particularly when we consider that the emergence of the Cartesian equation ('Cogito ergo sum') which apparently constructs and affirms self-hood brings its own crisis of identity in the form of a disidentical doppelganger. Barker, in his skeptical interrogation of the emergence of the 'modern' individual, argues that:

> one of the persistent and central problems with this history of identity is...that as soon as the punctual and self-possessed individual appeared on the stage of history, so did his opposite, the dispersed and fragmented disidentical, alienated, critical persona whose existence consisted at best in an unstable play of masks and guises. Descartes... emblematises the problematic. In one sense he is the author of the self; in another sense the Cartesian subject is already deeply divided in and from itself. It is not only separated from its body, but from that self which it utters as self at every moment that it confirms its self-hood by self-pronunciation (Barker: p. 95).

What Barker suggests is that concurrent with the construction of a unified autonomous self in modernity we witness the emergence of its alter ego: the 'fragmented disidentical' self. The Cartesian equation is ambivalent in essence; as much as Descartes suggests the notion of an autonomous self, this coherent subject is deeply divided. This division is not only manifest in a body-mind opposition, but also in the very summoning, uttering and confirmation of self-hood; in short to speak the self is to objectify

and therefore split the self. The result is a cunning if fragmented hall of mirrors, one where self reflects and establishes difference with self simultaneously. Like Marx and Engels' bourgeois sorcerer in *The Communist Manifesto* – an important document for later modernity – the Cartesian cogito, summoning up self-hood by means of an incantation, is no longer in control of the powers that it has called up by its spell. This complex interaction between illusion, reflection and division is crucial to the literature of duality in the nineteenth century.

The duality intrinsic in the modern subject unfolds in more recent developments in modernity. Marshall Berman, in describing a 'second phase' of modernity, by which he means one which 'begins with the great revolutionary wave of the 1790s', argues that the experience of modernity involves an 'inner dichotomy...[a] sense of living in two worlds simultaneously'. This dichotomy, which echoes and resituates Matthew Arnold's alienation alluded to earlier, incorporates a consciousness of 'living in a revolutionary age, an age that generates explosive upheavals' yet remembering 'what it is like to live, materially and spiritually, in worlds that are not modern at all' (Berman: p. 17). This sense of division in nineteenth century modernity is intensified when we consider the experience as represented by writers of the time. Matthew Arnold, in the 'Preface' to the *Poems* (1853), what Isobel Armstrong calls his 'brilliant but limited diagnosis of modernity and its problems' (Armstrong: p. 492), describes a malaise in modern culture of the nineteenth century where 'the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves'. Arnold spells out an inner division in the creative subject epitomized by 'doubts' and 'discouragement' which is almost Cartesian in its objectifying of the mind and the establishment of a dialogue with it (Arnold: p. 115). Dualism is of course not just the province of cultural discourse; Alfred Wigan, in *The Duality of the Mind* (1844), is one of many doctors of madness in the mid-nineteenth century who explore the possibility of a state of self-division; Wigan speaks of:

> [D]elusions (that) are familiar to every medical man conversant with insanity. Two contradictory and incompatible convictions. Here is no defective government of moral or sensual propensities, but two distinct acts of the thinking powers destructive of each other. It seems to me absolutely impossible to conceive any other explanation than the possession of two distinctive minds – results of two distinct origins of thought (p. 26).

This accumulation of instances of dualism can also be traced in the often contradictory ideas of degeneration theory found at the close of the century. Without entering too closely into an area that is fraught with all sorts of inconsistencies, degeneration theory posits a binary equation dependent upon establishing a difference between the normative and the 'deviant', a homogenized collective of quite evidently discrete groups from the criminal to the decadent artist. What is significant here is that many of the symptoms of degeneration, in particular 'hysteria and neurasthenia', are as applicable to the 'urban condition', as William Greenslade puts it, of the supposedly ordinary bourgeois city dweller of the fin de siecle (Greenslade: p. 18).

What becomes clear is that the dualism implicit in the emergence of modernity, from Descartes onwards, by no means involves the establishment of a stable or clear-cut series of binary oppositions. The ubiquitous presence of doubles in Gothic and Sensation fiction of the nineteenth century is evidence that duality renders any sense of determined, coherent or autonomous identity fluid. Indeed Judith Halberstam, in her analysis of nineteenth century Gothic in *Skin Shows*, argues that the genre dramatises the fragility of duality. For her 'the monsters of the nineteenth century metaphorised modern subjectivity as a balancing act between inside/outside, female/male, body/mind, native/foreign'. The Gothic makes effective 'mincemeat of any notion of binaries' and, like degeneration theory, becomes unlocated in nature – a contradictory site of discourse (Halberstam 1: p. 179). This blurring of boundaries in nineteenth century modernity can be

taken further and pushed into the hemisphere of a 'High' contra 'Low' debate about culture, for the populist and sensational tone of late nineteenth century Gothic fiction echoes and troubles 'high' cultural discourse. Indeed the morbid and inward ruminations on self-division found in Stevenson's 'shilling shocker' arguably crystallise Arnold's disillusioned description of modern culture's introspective learnings towards the 'dialogue of the mind with itself'. Moreso Arnold's famous lyric of 1852, 'The Buried Life', apparently slips into Gothic territory. Here Arnold's compulsion towards seeking an 'authentic' buried self finds itself bound up in all manner of masks and disguises, one where to reveal this buried self is met with 'blame'. In short the quest to seek a 'genuine self' in the 'crowded streets' of the modern metropolis – that symbol of nineteenth century modernity – is reliant upon an 'unspeakable desire', suggesting the transgressive and taboo elements that characterise the Gothic (Arnold: p. 84-85). Ultimately Arnold's 'high' cultural lyricism calls to mind the late nineteenth century Gothic tropes of shame, guilt and the instability of identity intrinsic to having a buried life. As Oscar Wilde puts it in his 'Preface' to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, '[t]hose who go beneath the surface do so at their peril' (Wilde: p. 22).

What emerges with regard to the uncertain nature of identity in modernity and the blurring of boundaries between the apparent binary opposites of duality is that fluidity is a central feature in nineteenth century constructions of self-hood. Indeed fluidity is arguably the key to the experience of modernity both in terms of constructions of identity and the way in which this is represented. For Charles Baudelaire – symbolist poet and devotee of the peripatetic flaneur who figures so often in fin de siecle Gothic fiction – the defining aesthetic for modernity can be found in 'the ephemeral, the contingent' as he puts it in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (p. 2). In addition, Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, state in a now familiar phrase, that '[a]ll that is solid melts into air...and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life and his relation with his kind' (p. 83). Marshall Berman, in his interrogation of Marx and

Engels' maxim, sums up both perspectives effectively in stating that these notions of insubstantiality define 'the distinctive quality of modern life'; indeed '[f]luidity and vaporousness will become primary qualities in the self-consciously modernist painting, architecture and design, music and literature, that will emerge at the end of the nineteenth century' (p. 144). The monstrous Hyde of Stevenson's *Strange Case*, doubling and troubling stable identity as he does, and eminently able to melt into the ephemeral air of a foggy late nineteenth century London, would seem to epitomise a crisis of identity in modernity in interesting and dynamic ways.

Stevenson's fictional meditation upon a possible crisis of identity clearly steps aside from the 'bucolic pastoral' of disidentity found in Francis Barker's reading of Nietzsche. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is emphatically located in the urban metropolis of late nineteenth century London and frequently deals with the impact that this environment and its institutions have upon identity. Indeed some of Stevenson's most evocative writing can be found in his descriptions of the modern city. In a passage, where the lawyer Mr Utterson takes Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard to Hyde's lodgings in Soho after the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, Stevenson depicts morning in the metropolis:

> It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that...Mr Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness,

> seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers which may at times assail the most honest. (p. 48)

Like so many descriptions of the nineteenth century city (the opening of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* springs to mind), what defines the metropolis is fog. This fog, in conjunction with the flickering of the Soho gas lamps and the wind which consistently shifts and reconfigures the cityscape, gives the environment a shifting, insubstantial and unreal feel. In effect the 'embattled vapours' of fog that mark the city call to mind the 'fluidity and vaporousness' that constitute the defining aesthetic of modernity as described by Berman. This sombre and threatening environment, with its emphasis on darkness and dilapidation, becomes an appropriate setting for brutal murder, and one where the criminal can disappear into impenetrable fog. In short the metropolis, certainly in its more insalubrious parts, is like 'some city in nightmare'. In such a sinister and disorientating location the effects upon the individual are transparent: Utterson's thoughts, echoing the sable appearance of the city itself, are of the 'gloomiest dye'. Furthermore, the city induces a deluded sensation of guilt as Utterson becomes 'conscious of some touch of that terror of the law' that can affect even the most honest. In many ways Utterson becomes the victim of the prevailing and morbid city sicknesses of the late nineteenth century experienced by both respectable, bourgeois individual and degenerate type, namely neurasthenia, hypochondria and nervous paranoia. He may be innocent but he circulates in an environment that presumes and therefore actively induces the emergence of guilty secrets. In the labyrinthine contradictions of this fluid, indefinable and yet defining setting, the criminal Hyde thrives, quite literally able to hide himself from his pursuers.

Compared to many Gothic villains, particularly in doppelganger narratives, Hyde's presence in *The Strange Case* is unequivocal; the various testimonies in the text, not least Jekyll's own, attest to Hyde's material manifestation. As a result the monstrous in Stevenson's text is no ambivalent presence that can be explained away and therefore contained as the product of a fevered imagination, but a tangible thing that can be communicated with and, as *The Strange Case* goes on to prove, attract the attentions of the law. Yet the Gothic clearly performs a metaphoric function, opening up a series of interpretative possibilities when reading monstrosity, particularly as monstrosity itself taps into anxieties that are themselves fluid, determined as they are by modes of thought – social, cultural, political, scientific, or otherwise – that are dominant at a particular moment. As Judith Halberstam puts it, in her succinct reading of the monstrous, '[m]onsters are meaning machines... [t]hey can represent gender, race, nationality, class, and sexuality in one body' (pp. 21-22). Stevenson's Hyde is clearly one of the most resonant of these 'meaning machines'; like Frankenstein's creation he is stitched together from a variety of different parts, here critical perspectives, and at the same time defies, through this multiplicity of meanings, clear classification. Indeed Hyde, like Bram Stoker's Dracula after him, has inspired a veritable industry of academic readings: whether embodiment of barbaric primitivism intruding upon fin de siecle London, the urban individual 'gone native', the repressed progeny of late nineteenth century hypocrisy, Semitic stereotype, atavistic throwback or androgynous deviant it is clear that Hyde seems to function as an alter ego that both reflects and disrupts the notion of the normative and respectable bourgeois individual at the end of the nineteenth century, in a way similar to that in which the disidentical self disrupts the autonomous and apparently coherent self in the emergence of the individual during early modernity.

What seems to be apparent is that Hyde speaks more about the fears and anxieties of the fin de siecle bourgeoisie than monstrosity. Nonetheless Hyde remains, appropriately enough, a deeply contradictory figure – both evolutionary throwback or trace

of civilization's barbaric origins and a peculiarly modern monster. He is, paradoxically given his unlocated nature, evidently at home in the modern city, particularly as the modern city is itself deeply contradictory. Stevenson notes that Jekyll's home/laboratory, from which Hyde is seen to emerge, is found in:

> ...a square of ancient handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate, and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and...wore a great air of wealth and comfort. (p. 40)

The area is shabby genteel, it is 'ancient' and 'handsome' yet 'for the most part decayed'; in addition it is occupied by the respectable Dr. Jekyll, but decidedly unrespectable and even unspecified practices are taking place in immediate proximity to his house. Such an inconsistent environment suits and is reflected by Hyde who, as Jekyll points, is 'younger, lighter, happier' and 'livelier' than him and yet bears 'an imprint of deformity and decay' (pp. 83-4). Indeed the contradictions of Hyde largely reflect the city as a whole.

Initially it is Hyde-as-a-criminal who appears particularly at home in the fin de siécle metropolis. The reader's first encounter with Hyde consists of an account of an event given to the lawyer Utterson by his relative and companion Richard Enfield. The account is indirect and Hyde's first appearance becomes almost anecdotal:

> I (Enfield) was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o' clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep – street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession, and all as empty as a church – till at last

> I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastwards at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross-street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned juggernaut. I gave a view halloa, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group around the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. (Stevenson: p. 31)

The scene as described by Enfield is eerie enough – it is the middle of the night yet the streets are 'lighted up as if for a procession', however within this environment there is nobody to be seen. Such an atmosphere seems to be particularly effective in leading Enfield's thoughts to crime because he 'begins to long for the sight of a policeman'. The subsequent criminal act is, as a result, appropriately strange and difficult to locate; what Enfield sees is a 'little man...stumping along' and a young girl who was 'running as hard as she was able' towards him; 'naturally' they collide. It is, in itself, an understated occurrence; indeed it 'sounds nothing to hear'. Nonetheless the account transcends its initially subdued anecdotal impact; although it may sound insignificant, Enfield states that it 'was hellish to see' as the small man trampled calmly' over the body of the girl 'like some damned juggernaut'. What we are presented with is a profoundly problematic event. Enfield is forced to justify relaying it by privileging seeing the collision over merely talking about it, and Utterson has to take his word that it is sufficiently strange to recount. Its impact lies in its contradictory nature: the streets are at first completely deserted

and then crowded, the small man 'stumping along' becomes an impassive 'juggernaut', the apparently sadistic trampling is undertaken 'calmly' by a composed gentleman who nonetheless offers Enfield a look ugly enough to disturb him. The account of the event is inconsistent enough to prevent Utterson and the reader arriving at a clear impression of its – and therefore Hyde's – nature. David Punter argues that the crime is unsatisfactory in nature; understated to such a point that it is not easy to picture, it 'does sound nothing to hear...[i]t does linger in the memory, but only because of its strangeness' (p. 4). Stephen Heath also notes the uncertain qualities of Enfield's story, stating that '[o]n the face of it...it would sound something to hear; the report in the text, however, has no confidence and so it can end up sounding nothing, prompting Enfield's unease' (p. 93). In effect it is not so much the trampling that Enfield objects to but Hyde itself.

Perhaps the most unsettling feature of the account lies in Hyde's own composure during the whole affair. It is this calmness which is uncanny for it betrays nothing in terms of motive or emotion; it is an act of manifest indifference. The other criminal act explicitly attributed to Hyde is the murder, again by trampling, of Danvers Carew; the description of this provides a marked contrast with the trampling of the girl:

> The old gentleman (Carew) took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr Hyde broke out of all bounds, and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. (Stevenson: p. 47)

As instances of trampling, these two violent acts obviously echo each other. However it is the difference between the two crimes that is significant, the first is performed calmly and indifferently, the second with an 'ape-like fury' as Hyde breaks 'out of all bounds'. This disparity problematises attempts to define Hyde's

criminality; the first is understated and therefore unsettling, the second obviously psychotic, a full-blown murder, yet neither has an apparent motive. In many ways what Hyde embodies is Foucault's homicidal maniac: it is uncertain if Hyde is criminal or insane, both acts suggest both interpretations, as a result the easiest way to contain him is as that 'entirely fictitious entity' of nineteenth century psychiatry, the homicidal maniac whose 'crime...is nothing but insanity' and whose 'insanity...is nothing but a crime' (Foucault: p. 132). What does occur though is that Hyde becomes an appropriately modern monster for the nineteenth century, representing anxieties about the effects and symptoms of modernity. In short, individual identity can be lost or at least troubled within the structures, institutions and symptoms of modernity. It is this anxiety that Stevenson's *Strange Case* would seem to address, the fragility of identity within the nineteenth century experience of modernity.

At the heart of the novel lies the reasoning behind Jekyll's compulsion to instigate the emergence of the ultimately monstrous and murderous Hyde. The explanation that Stevenson gives Jekyll in his testimony suggests an instance of clear-cut, of consequently illusory, dualism. The creation of Hyde is based upon Jekyll's consciousness of conflicting imperatives within himself; Jekyll states that:

> ...the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection...I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations, than any particular

> degradation in my faults, that made me what I was and... severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. (Stevenson: p. 81)

In many ways the stimulus for the emergence of Hyde is unspecified, the closest that we come to it being Jekyll's description of an 'almost morbid sense of shame'. What is apparent though is that his experiment arises from an acute awareness of the oscillation between public and private – a desire to appear to have a 'grave countenance' in the sphere of the former and yet to be conscious of a certain 'gaiety of disposition' that, although he accepts it can make other men happy, contradicts the public inclination. Stevenson's depiction of this dilemma is reminiscent of Arnold's *The Buried Life* with its contrast between an internal, authentic self and the external, disguised self, a dichotomy that is effectively mirrored in a Gothic context though Jekyll's wavering between public and private. Due to his 'high views' and 'imperious desire' to appear respectable, Jekyll takes to concealing or repressing his pleasures, regarding them as shameful. Guilt, consequently, is at the heart of his sense of self, yet guilt inspired by the nature of his 'aspirations' rather than any 'particular degradation'. It is this consistent vacillation, between public and private, external and internal, and social respectability and pleasure that leads Jekyll to arrive at the conclusion that human beings have a 'dual nature'. That said, what would really seem to define this conclusion is the nature of social expectations, albeit ones generated by Jekyll himself. A form of conditioning with regard to identity is in operation, and one from which Jekyll deviates in his creation of Hyde.

The experiment with Hyde is designed to unshackle Jekyll's moral instinct from his propensity for pleasure. Jekyll takes the analysis of his condition further, stating that:

> Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged

> in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of the day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to [the] truth...that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point...and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. (Stevenson: pp. 81-82)

Stevenson depicts Jekyll's dilemma in a discrepant way; Jekyll describes himself as a profound 'double-dealer' yet 'in no sense a hypocrite'. As a result the beginning of the collapse of an integrated and cohesive identity starts to take place as binaries begin to break down. This fragmentation can be detected in the comparison between the public self, who labours 'at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering', and the private self who cast off 'restraint and plunged in shame'. Jekyll states with regard to this comparison that 'I was no more myself' in either environment; the primary reading of this point of comparison is that neither self is more authentic than the other, yet it also suggests that an integrated sense of identity is being lost – Jekyll by implication is no longer himself. What Jekyll deduces is significant; he states that the human is not a unified entity 'but truly two', yet adds the reservation that 'I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point'. In this context the individual becomes a fundamentally fragmented being, consisting of 'multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens'. In spite of this apparent splintering of identity, Jekyll's scientific predicament revolves around his desire to divide the self of public duty and that of private pleasure:

> If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together – that in the agonised womb of consciousness these polar twins should be continuously struggling. (Stevenson: p. 82)

This statement reveals the extent of Jekyll's hypocrisy. Initially his intentions seem to be morally sound; he desires to create 'separate identities' in order that the upright self can perform the 'good things' synonymous with the 'exacting...aspirations' of the moral instinct. However, this moral intention merely shadows the main rationale for the experiment which is Jekyll's desire to avoid the 'disgrace and penitence' that private pleasure induces. In effect Jekyll's scientific ambition merely masks an indulgent wish to eradicate the guilt and 'morbid' shame that haunts his need to wear the 'grave countenance' of his public life.

This shifting to and fro – between public and private selves, moral, intellectual and scientific paradigms, and varieties of motivation – leads to a profound consciousness of the insubstantial qualities of self-hood and in particular those of the body. Jekyll finds that:

> I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. (Stevenson: p. 82)

Jekyll's perception of the 'transience' of the body indicates the fragile and insubstansial nature of the self in a way that echoes Marx and Engels' maxim – '[a]ll that is solid melts into air'. This perspective is supported by other accounts of the appearance of Hyde, the figure who renders cohesive identity fluid. Utterson, in a dream inspired by Enfield's story, pictures a face that 'baffled him and melted before his eyes' (pp. 37-8) and Dr Lanyon, in an account where he witnesses the transformation of Hyde back to Jekyll, finds that 'his features seemed to melt and alter' (p. 80). Jekyll's discovery also initiates a correspondence between shifts in identity and the city itself, a position which consolidates the suggestion that Hyde is eminently at home in the urban metropolis. Stevenson's city, in the description cited earlier, is shrouded in a fog that is constantly in a state of flux, shaped and re-shaped by the wind just as the body, for Jekyll, becomes 'mist-like' and can be changed 'even as wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion'. Similarly, Jekyll notes in the early stages of his experiment that Hyde 'would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror' (p. 86). In effect the body becomes like the city and the city like the body. This correlation is emphasised in another description of the urban environment by Stevenson:

> The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind (pp. 53-54).

Stevenson compares the city to a body with arteries; it is in this vast and macrocosmic body that the pleasure-seeking self of Jekyll, like Charles Baudelaire's dandy flâneur as described by Walter Benjamin, can find 'a refuge... among the masses of the big city', and into which Hyde enters circulation (Benjamin: p. 66). What is evident is that the shifting and shifty buried self emerges in a city submerged in fog, and flows through its arterial streets in a form that is as transient and 'mist-like' as the environment itself.

It is the consistent intrusion of the elements, symptoms and aesthetics of nineteenth century modernity that renders Stevenson's Gothic vision distinctive and which points to the symbolic resonance of the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde. Arguably Jekyll's compulsion to 'create' Hyde stems from his overwhelming feelings of guilt with regard to pleasure and from a desire to appear publicly respectable; in many ways Hyde's nature and characteristics are determined by the latter predilection. Indeed the fragile egotism intrinsic to Jekyll's sense of public self and identity can be attributed to the status of the scientist in the later decades of the nineteenth century. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels note that:

> The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers. (p. 82)

Jekyll, as 'physician' and 'man of science', finds himself a 'paid wage labourer' in two contexts and therefore doubly stripped of his halo. In many ways his experiment with Hyde, designed to allow him to walk on the 'upward path' doing 'good things', becomes an attempt to reclaim the lost halo of the physician who was previously regarded with 'reverent awe'. This desanctification of the scientist is a significant issue in contextualising and attempting to arrive at a reading of the metaphoric monster in Stevenson's novel because, ironically enough, it is through the emergence of Hyde that Jekyll seems to become explicitly stripped of his halo. The process can be detected in Jekyll's own description of events; referring to his motives with regard to inducing the transformation into Hyde he notes that:

> Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. (Stevenson: p. 71)

Jekyll, acknowledging the flaws in the reasoning behind his scientific ambition, indicates the manner in which he is stripped of his halo. This decanonisation is stressed when Utterson breaks into Jekyll's laboratory after his death; among the debris of Jekyll's profession, Utterson is:

> ...amazed to find ...a copy of a pious work for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies (p. 71).

The implication is that Jekyll, in his antisocial guise as Hyde, has provided this blasphemous gloss upon the 'pious' text. In many ways what the hypocritical Jekyll does, in his attempts to divert his own impious inclinations, is create the transient Hyde to hide his own uglier self and thus regain his halo. However, if we consider that the monstrous alter ego of Jekyll emerges in a cultural and social climate preoccupied with the notion of degeneration, Hyde represents what William Greenslade calls a 'permanent secularised "fall" from grace' (p. 16); the emergence of Hyde effectively symbolises Jekyll's irrevocable desanctification. It is no wonder then that in Enfield's anecdotal encounter with Hyde the location perversely reflects the moral vacuum in which Jekyll's halo is lost, for the streets of London are 'as empty as a church'.

In spite of his efforts to present an appropriate gravitas to the public, the loss of Jekyll's halo is of fundamental significance when the emergence of Hyde is considered. Regardless of his supposed moral intentions, Jekyll becomes a 'wage-labourer' in the complex matrix of capitalism in the nineteenth century. However, through the creation of Hyde the baser aspects of this process can apparently be filtered off and Jekyll assumes that he can follow the 'upward path'. Marshall Berman, in his reading of Marx, indicates the way in which modern experience in the nineteenth century is divorced from any conception of transcendental or spiritual value under capitalism:

> Nothing is sacred, no one is untouchable, life becomes thoroughly desanctified...modern men and women may well stop at nothing, with no dread to hold them back; free from fear and trembling, they are free to trample down everyone in their way if self-interest drives them to it. (p. 115)

In effect Hyde encapsulates this modern product of capitalism, 'thoroughly desanctified' and therefore prepared to 'trample down' everything in his way, thus allowing Jekyll the ultimate spurious pleasure of 'doing...good things'. Judith Halberstam argues that the inability of other characters in Stevenson's novel to positively identify Hyde suggests that he 'cannot be classified, he has no place in the order and history of things' (p. 67). However, if we consider Berman's resonant reading of the modern bourgeois individual as one 'prepared to trample down everyone in their way', Hyde is very much inside history, an idea that seems to contradict Francis Barker's conception of the extra-historical disidentical self. As Jekyll's control over a cohesive identity erodes, Hyde emerges as bourgeois 'self-interest' incarnate, rather than the Savage Other or atavistic throwback suggested by many critics. This is evident when Marx and Engels' reading of identity within modernity is reflected upon; what distinguishes the 'bourgeois epoch' from prior historical moments is 'uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation' (p. 83). For Berman this environment dictates that identity must 'take on the fluid and open form of this society', and that the modern individual 'must learn to yearn for change', to 'demand (it), actively to seek (it) out and carry (it) through'. Compulsive transformation of identity is at the core of the bourgeois experience for Marx and Engels as far as Berman is concerned, a notion that can be detected in Jekyll's apprehension of the 'mist-like transience' of the human body. Identity becomes fluid in such a context as Hyde begins to epitomise an uncontrollable lust for transformation. Given his scientific leanings towards the 'mystic and transcendental', Jekyll becomes the bourgeois sorcerer of Marx and Engels, no

longer in control of the occult powers summoned by his spells. What Jekyll has basically summoned up is the dark alter ego of bourgeois individualism, the self-interested, ruthless, destructive and protean Hyde. It is a creation that Jekyll is unable to control, for he notes of his hold over a cohesive identity that:

> ...in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to the other side. All things therefore seem to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worst. (Stevenson: p. 89)

Transformation of identity becomes a relentless, uncontrolled and compulsively addictive process for Jekyll, reflecting the fluidity of identity that Berman detects at the root of the modern experience. In addition, just as Jekyll becomes the bourgeois conjurer, caught through the loss of his halo in the 'gigantic means of production and of exchange' created by industrial capital and unable to control the powers that he has summoned up, Hyde embodies the diligent bourgeois individual's doppelganger: the dandy. This identification again locates the disidentical Hyde as the epitome of bourgeois self-interest. Richard Dellamora notes that the dandy:

> As a popular phenomenon is middle-class...Dandyism was associated with middle-class uppityism...dandyism also reflects a loss of balance between the dual imperatives of leisure and work incumbent upon Victorian gentlemen. The dandy is too relaxed, too visible, consumes to excess while producing little or nothing. (pp. 198-9)

In spite of the many correspondences established between Hyde and bestial or primitive behaviour, ones emphatically opposed to this 'relaxed' archetype, Hyde can manifestly be read as middle-class dandy. With the transformation from Jekyll to Hyde becoming increasingly biased towards the latter, the pleasurable

and indulgent 'gaiety' that Jekyll attempts to conceal in Hyde becomes more and more evident, suggesting the imbalance in imperatives that the dandy epitomises. Hyde can consequently be read as the unbalanced, uncontrollable and parasitic opposite of Jekyll's 'paid wage-labourer'; he 'consumes to excess while producing little or nothing'. This reading of Hyde as the dark side of bourgeois progress does not necessarily need to contradict other interpretations of Stevenson's representation of monstrosity; nonetheless, as Judith Halberstam points out, there is a clear affinity between the nineteenth century Gothic text and its immediate socio-economic climate, and it is this affiliation which allows a multiplicity of meanings to emerge:

> The ability of the Gothic story to take the imprint of any number of interpretations makes it a hideous offspring of capitalism itself. The Gothic novel of the nineteenth century...(is) obsessed with multiple modes of consumption and production, with dangerous consumptions and excessive productivity, and with economies of meaning. (p. 3)

What we have is another series of interpretative mirrors: just as Jekyll reflects Marx and Engels' bourgeois sorcerer whose spell has spun out of control due to the excessive demands of production and exchange, the multiple readings of Hyde evoke the 'multiple modes of consumption and production' and the 'dangerous consumptions and excessive productivity' of capitalism. Consequently Hyde represents a microcosmic and metonymic version of the nineteenth century Gothic novel, a 'hideous offspring of capitalism itself'. Just as Hyde can be equated with the modern metropolis in a variety of different concatenations, and the city (as capital) can be equated with capitalism, ultimately Hyde himself ends up evoking aspects of bourgeois capitalism.

Capital is at the heart of Stevenson's troubling of identity. Indeed, the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde becomes one that is based upon money; Jekyll notes in his testimony that, after

achieving success with his transformation into Hyde, 'I next drew up (a) will...so that if anything befell me in the person of Dr Jekyll, I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss' (Stevenson: p. 86). This will perplexes Jekyll's friends and colleagues; they suspect, unsurprisingly, that Hyde is blackmailing him and, in a phrase that conflates both social status and capital, Utterson's main concern is to 'save his (Jekyll's) credit' (Stevenson: p. 73). However, Hyde's relationship with Jekyll's money is far more complex than a mere hint of parasitic blackmail. Jekyll takes a house for Hyde in Soho. This property, when discovered by Utterson and Inspector Newcomen, proves significant:

> Mr Hyde has only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste...At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked...on the hearth there lay a pile of grey ashes...From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt end of a green cheque book, which had resisted the action of the fire...A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification. (Stevenson: p. 49)

Another contradiction can be found here: the boorish, philistine Hyde occupies an apartment that is furnished with 'good taste' and yet which is located in Soho. As with Jekyll's own house, the effect is again one of inconsistency: Hyde inhabits the disreputable part of London, yet his apartment is tastefully furnished. If Hyde stands in for the unbalanced middle class dandy who consumes to excess', then the apartment is an appropriate location for his adventures, indicating visible opulence and yet offering no evidence of work or diligence. However, what is most significant is the relationship between Hyde and capital itself. Newcomen, upon finding the bank funds lying to Hyde's credit, claims that he can now catch Carew's murderer because 'money's life to the man' (Stevenson: p. 50). A complex relationship between Hyde, identity, capital, and the city is established. What Newcomen

suggests is that Hyde's self-interest is motivated by material greed; after all, as sole beneficiary to Jekyll's will, he is 'heir to a quarter of a million stirling' (p. 48) However, there is also the suggestion that Hyde is symbolically made of money – that identity and money are interchangeable things for him. In this sense Hyde, like capital, circulates through the arteries of the metropolis in indefinable ways. Similarly, the fragmented ashes and the butt of the cheque book found in the hearth of the Soho apartment have melted into air. If Hyde, as bourgeois self-interest incarnate, is symbolically made up of capital then, as well as circulating in the blood-stream of the city, he is, like the ashes found in his hearth, capable of melting into air. What we return to is the incident of the trampling of the young girl that introduces the reader to Hyde. As noted already, Marshall Berman's reading of Marx suggests that in a disanctified mode of existence the modern individual is 'free to trample down everyone in their way if self-interest drives them to it'. However, the trampling itself possesses an interesting financial dimension which suggests that the freedom of 'self-interest' can prove to be a spurious quality; everything has its price. Hyde, when apprehended after the trampling of the girl states '[i]f you choose to make capital out of this accident...I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene...Name your figure' (Stevenson: p. 32). For Hyde the trampling is tied up with financial interest, something that involves the making of a profit, and he therefore establishes himself as 'gentleman' in a fiscal marketplace of competing cash interests. Ironically Stevenson's own description of his text as a 'shilling shocker' allows him to make capital out of Hyde's 'accident'.

Duality in Stephenson's *Strange Case*, does not result in a series of clear binaries, confirm the original self, or ultimately liberate the 'upright' public self as Jekyll hoped it would. Instead what we witness ultimately is the fragmentation of identity. This collapse of self-hood is represented in terms that evoke inheritance and familial relationships. In one of his final moments of insight, Jekyll, using the third person to indicate his sense of distance from self, states:

> He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community...he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that the insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidences of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. (Stevenson: pp. 95-6).

This description of a network of relationships is extraordinarily complex. Jekyll renders Hyde even more uncanny by referring to himself in the third person and therefore to Hyde as the objectified and apparently externalised 'it' and 'that creature'. In addition, the equation between Hyde and capital becomes more resonant through the depiction of the former as 'inorganic'; like blood both circulate through the metaphoric arteries of the city, yet both are ultimately inorganic and inhuman (quite literally in-human in Hyde's case). The result is an uncertain and disorientating oscillation between human and inhuman, living and dead, dominant and subordinate. However, it is in the familial relations established by Stevenson that Jekyll's disintegration and Hyde's polymorphous subversion are most explicit. Hyde, as the 'unjust' twin of Jekyll's original scientific experiment, the beneficiary of his will, and as his rival for consciousness is described, in terms reminiscent of sibling rivalry, as the 'co-heir' to death who seeks to 'usurp the offices of life'. The intimacy of their association is stressed with Hyde regarded as 'closer than a wife'. Most disturbingly Jekyll perceives Hyde as 'caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born'. The relationship has already been described in parent-child terms; as Jekyll puts it

he 'had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference' (Stevenson: p. 89). However, here Hyde becomes a monstrous embryo locked in Jekyll's body in a representation that blurs gender boundaries; the 'mist-like transience' of the human body apparently extends to rendering Jekyll maternal. As much as Jekyll tries to objectify Hyde, keeping him at arms length, he is also an internalised thing, troubling the Cartesian equation between mind and body because Hyde would seem to be the equivalent Descartes' authentic and internalised 'thinking' self, a problem that is compounded by the fact that Jekyll cannot decide if Hyde is physical or non-physical. Jekyll's sense of inner-division and disintegration results in an inability to speak the self that echoes and almost parodies the cogito of Descartes. In a statement of chilling self-negation and awareness of disidentification, he can only utter of Hyde '[he], I say – I cannot say, I' (Stevenson: p. 94). Stevenson's description of Hyde as embryo, as disturbing as it is, is ultimately an apposite one. As noted already, Judith Halberstam describes the Gothic novel as the 'hideous offspring of capitalism itself'. Similarly David Punter, reading the Industrial Revolution as 'some kind of birth trauma', views the bourgeoisie as 'the child of a curious miscegenation of class' that stems from this birth (p. 205). In this context the simultaneous emergence of the Gothic novel and of the industrial bourgeoisie in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century provides an explicit instance of doubling. If Hyde, by the fin de siécle can be read as metaphorising bourgeois self-interest to such a point that capital is literally 'life' for him, then, as Gothic monster, he also effectively dramatises this interaction between literary genre and social class. In Hyde Stevenson creates a monster who, at home as he is in the city, unlocatable in such a way that he eminently lends himself to the variety of meanings that monstrosity generates. However, as monstrous and disidentical doppelganger, it is in his interaction with capital, his unseen circulation through the city, and his indulgent self-interest that the fragility of bourgeois identity in the nineteenth century is exposed.

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The Campness of the *New Arabian Nights*

Richard Dury

A strange text, Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* (NAN) is a difficult text to classify not only in the context of its time but also, at first sight, in the contexts of the author's works: to Lang (1891: p. 25) it seemed the work of another, 'like the work of a changeling'. The NAN stories, written between March and September 1878, come in the very middle of the period of Stevenson's sunniest, most charming and debonair authorial persona, the voice of Mozartian poetical lightness of *An Inland Voyage* (written 1877), *Virginibus Puerisque* (written 1876-9), *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (written 1874-81), of *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (written from December 1878 to January 1879).[1]

The stories themselves have eluded definition by both early and later commentators: they contain 'weird and elusive forms of humour, in which the analytic mind loses itself' (Bunner, 1883/ Maxiner, 1980: p. 120); 'no one form of comedy may be sufficient to describe all of the collected tales' (Saposnik, 1974: p. 66).

Descriptive terms applied to all or some of the stories vary a great deal as though in an unsuccessful attempt to pin down an elusive and changing essence: to Lang they are 'freakish' (1895: p. 25), to Saintsbury 'fantastic... extravagant... preposterous' (Maixner, 1980: p. 107); other contemporary reviewers see them as 'magnificent extravagance', 'grotesque romances', 'far-fetched and improbable... even silly and frivolous' (Maixner, 1980: p. 109, p. 117, p. 118). Saposnik (1974: pp. 68-9) characterises them as 'midway between fantasy and reality' and then as 'melodrama... farce... fantasy' and Sandison (1996: p. 118) as a 'virtuoso mix of light hearted parody, irony and burlesque'.

It is my proposal that the term 'camp', used as a critical term,[2] may cover many of the qualities just listed and so give us an economical way of discussing this strange text. I am not the first to sense this association. Vanessa Smith (1994: p. 23) says of 'The

Suicide Club' 'it takes no feats of hyper-interpretation to see this trio of camp tales as a parable of the homosocial'. Tom Hubbard (1995: p. 39) sees NAN as in the 'genre of genial camp... eccentric manipulations of late-Victorian reality'.

Sandison (1996: p. 100) calls NAN 'a text which, from beginning to end, constantly calls attention to itself: posing, impersonating, playing stylish tricks', and this he calls 'the spirit of the dandy'. It is clear that 'camp' and 'dandyism' are close allied, yet I would prefer the term 'camp' to 'the spirit of the dandy' for several reasons: dandyism, first of all, we can see as a nineteenth century phenomenon connected with Romanticism (and Wilde can be seen as already imitating earlier cultural forms),[3] and while it can be rendered a broader term, it is by stretching it; camp, on the other hand, exists both before and after Stevenson and does not need to be widened in meaning – it is therefore a more appropriate term for discussing connections of Stevenson with subsequent cultural phenomena and semantically more economical.

The question 'what is camp?' is a little like the question 'what is Zen?' – the question one should not answer, since both refer to elusive phenomena and attempts to define are doomed to failure.[4]

The term is commonly used to refer exclusively to effeminate upper-middle-class homosexual identity, which we can see as arising after 1895 when a typical Wilde-like behaviour (in dress, gestures, speech) was adopted by homosexuals. The performance of these codes of behaviour becomes known as 'camp' (Meyer, 1994: p. 105).

However, an exclusively homosexual association of camp attempts to give a stable and definite meaning to a concept centred on instability and indefiniteness and to a word that seems to have been current for some decades before the Wilde trials[5]. The restored complexity of meaning adopted (from Cleto, 1999) in this paper is centred on the idea of self-conscious performance. Camp involves 'an engagement with the orthodox, but in a way that is 'theatricalised', the performer is:

> ...at the centre of the ritual and its ideology... and at the same time substantially outside of the system of values which construct and infuse it. What emerges is a powerful sense of the provisionality of all appearance... a provisionality which allows for dramatic playfulness in the process of self-representation (Grantley, 1996: p. 224).

This performance takes place on temporary stages, 'camp' itself can be seen as a building 'whose walls are erected, dismantled and moved elsewhere, as soon as their performing ends are accomplished' (Cleto: p. 36), it is an 'ephemeral apparatus' that creates 'a dressing-up party space' for camp performance (ibid. p. 33).[6]

Along with the idea of the unique and continuous self, camp undermines other categories of serious dominant culture and replaces them, – temporarily[7] – with playful 'multiplicity, diversity, instability, change and surface' (Cleto, 1999: p. 13). One fundamental aspect of conventional culture chosen for such undermining is that of clear gender distinction: by confusing and reversing what the dominant culture tries to maintain (earnestly but absurdly) as a basic clear distinction, the camp performer not only suggests that gender is a construct but questions all fixed binary oppositions.[8] Other oppositions called in questions by incongruous mixtures and reversals are 'original' vs 'copy', 'identity' vs 'difference', and 'natural' vs 'artificial', 'sacred' vs 'profane', 'high art' vs 'low art'.

The camp performance does not try to be taken as natural, but brings itself forward *(il se campe)* and so becomes associated with incongruity, exaggeration, artifice and extremity (cf. Bergman, 1993: pp. 4-5), and as a result with parodies of popular genres that use conventions of strong feelings, sharply defined personalities and clear sentiments (as in modern camp parodies of horror films). The exaggeration may be (paradoxically) quite subtle and confined to the foregrounding of style and form or of perfect aristocratic style of manners.

Camp performance is narcissistically self-referential, a kind of indulgent self-mockery, wavering between parody and self parody (Sontag, 1964/Cleto, 1999: p. 58), or a making fun of (or rather: out of) those things that in fact one feels are important (Isherwood, 1954/Cleto 1999: p. 51), hence its adoption as a defensive strategy by homosexuals and others with a double life or a life involving changes of acted-out roles.

The relationship created between the camp performer and the audience is one of ironic complicity, 'a coded ironic "wink", a knowing glance shared between a cognizant perceiver... and a performative agent' (Piggford, 1997/Cleto, 1999: p. 298). It therefore involves 'the ellipse that is dear to all preciosity' and one can call camp 'an aesthetic of presupposition' (Mauriès, 1979: p. 78). The unexpressed secret is clear to all but is rendered unimportant by a mocking discourse which almost – but never quite – reveals all. As Mauriès says (1979: pp. 96-7) camp can also be defined as 'an aesthetic of bluff'.

Camp allusiveness and parody creates an in-group feeling that can give power to the marginalized, and the same end is pursued by the 'camp obsession with images of power' (like modern camp's apotheosis of cinema divas and all those involved in exaggerated role-playing) which create a parodic mythology 'producing a structure of negative and deviant knowledge' with new standards of beauty, importance and meaning that excludes the otherwise dominant (Cleto, 1999: pp. 31-2).

Camp and dandyism are similar in the emphasis on performance and style and the constructed non-essential personality and because both question orthodox ideology (including gender distinctions) from within.[9] They differ, however, in the association of camp with exaggeration (including a more explicit questioning of gender distinctions); in camp's 'necessary inconclusiveness and mobility' (Cleto, 1999: p. 3); and in its adoption and parody of popular exaggerated artistic styles.

The first reference to camp is in a 1909 dictionary of slang, whose title *Passing English of the Victorian Era*, shows that it was not seen as a 'new word' but one that had been more widespread

previously (Ware, 1909: p. 61).[10] It is defined in terms of theatrical gestural excess: 'actions and gestures of an exaggerated emphasis' (which already identifies two related elements in 'camp': theatricality and excess). Ware adds perhaps a reference to homosexual associations: 'Used chiefly of persons of exceptional want of character'.

An earlier example of the derived form *campish* is found as early as 1869 in a letter from Frederick Park to his fellow transvestite Lord Arthur Clinton: 'My campish undertakings are at not present meeting with the success they deserve. Whatever I do seems to get me in hot water somewhere. But n'importe. What's the odds as long as you're happy?' (Bartlett, 1988: p. 169/Cleto, 1999: p. 182). From the context, we can interpret part of the meaning of 'campish' here as 'entertainingly transgressive', but since the writer's 'campish undertakings' involved transvestite appearances in public the word could also mean 'involving off-stage theatricality'.[11]

Although an origin in the French *se camper* 'strike an attitude' has been proposed (Booth, 1983/Cleto, 1999: p. 75), the word could also derive from Northern dialect camp meaning 'to chatter' or could be connected with a camp of soldiers, miners, navvies, actors, gypsies: a temporary base where the structure of meaning and control given by permanent institutions is partly absent. Military display and swagger could be described as 'campish' and clearly has connections with the theatricalisation of the self.[12]

Sontag sees camp originating in 'the eighteenth century relish for artifice' and 'the aristocratic pleasure of over-refinement' re-emerging in the aesthetic movement (Cleto, 1999: p. 46) and others have seen connections with Mannerism, the insubstantial pageant of seventeenth century court-life, with préciosité and coquetterie. As for the word, the evidence suggests it was in use on the margins of conventional society in the second half of the nineteenth century.[13]

The settings in NAN can be considered as temporary spaces for acting. Cleto's metaphor of camp as a temporary theatrical space (Cleto, 1999: p. 9, pp. 33-6) reminds us immediately of

the 'The Adventure of the Hansom Cabs' in which Lieutenant Brackenbury accepts an anonymous invitation to 'gentleman's party' with the air of 'a private gambling saloon' in an elegantly decorated house, complete with floral decorations an busy with servants offering refreshments. After and hour or so he walks into the hall to find that:

> The flowering shrubs had disappeared from the staircase; three large furniture waggons stood before the garden gate; the servants were busy dismantling the house upon all sides; and some of them had already donned their great-coats and were preparing to depart. [...] First, the guests, who were no real guests after all, had been dismissed; and now the servants, who could hardly be genuine servants, were actively dispersing.
> 'Was the whole establishment a sham?' he asked himself.
> (NAN: p. 65)

The provisionality of the space extends to those within it (guests and servants are not 'real' or 'genuine') and undermines the whole solid appearance of the social structures it should reinforce, so that 'Was the whole establishment a sham?' could easily be applied to a whole social or semantic system. The performances that take place within such a space take on a campish air, especially in view of their excessive mode of expression.

'The Suicide Club' too has is a temporary space for its members and its smoking room 'papered from top to bottom with an imitation of oak wainscot' (NAN: p. 16) is an indication of its distance from the solid permanence of middle-class furnishing, and its similarity to a stage-set.[14] The opening of the story in the oyster bar 'in the immediate neighbourhood of Leicester Square' also involves a theatricalized space as the Young Man enters as onto a stage to perform his ritualized part.

Even the sentence can become a space in which a word can temporarily put on 'old fashioned clothes' of meaning, as when Brackenbury finds that the house of the party is now empty

and 'he remembered with astonishment its specious, settled and hospitable air on his arrival' (NAN: p. 65). Here we have a typically Stevensonian trope exploiting two different meanings of the same word: *specious* can have the old meaning 'pleasing to the eye, beautiful' or almost the opposite 'having a fair or attractive appearance...but in reality devoid of the qualities apparently possessed'. The context that Stevenson provides forces us to accept the possibly obsolete[15] and less familiar meaning, yet the reader is aware of the second meaning which undermines the assurance of Brackenbury and the narrator. The word *specious* with its old-fashioned meaning related to that of the Latin *speciosus* and used for elegant praise, is shown to be a 'specious' word itself, and the elegant user is shown as working in mere appearances. This might remind us of Jekyll's 'I stood committed to a profound duplicity of life' in the early part of his 'statement' where he is trying to present his conduct as morally-neutral: he wants the reader to accept the Latinate meaning of *duplicity* as 'divided nature', so he is attempting to deceive the reader by manipulating a word that normally means 'deception'.[1]

Stevenson himself often struck those he met as continually changing roles and poses in his brilliant conversation: Lang, for example, says 'He was like nobody else whom I ever met. There was a sort of uncommon celerity in changing expression in thought and speech' (Adventures Among Books, 1905, qu. Stott, 1994: p. 35). Balfour (1901, II: p. 174) says his talk was characterized by rapid and striking alterations 'wit, humour, and pathos; the romantic, the tragic, the picturesque; stern judgment, wise counsel, wild fooling, all... followed each other in rapid and easy succession' and elsewhere (in Masson, 1929: p. 283) he talks of 'his list of natural roles' that he enjoyed playing. Colvin (qu. Terry, 1996: p. 202, n2) says that 'he seemed to contain within himself a whole troop of singularly assorted characters'. Moors (1910/n.d.: pp. 81-2) refers to his theatrical conversational style in Samoa, and a conventional Englishman reports an after-dinner conversation in Davos in which one man was maintaining that German women (in contrast to English women) were less prone to fall in love

with a man instantly: "'What?", cried Stevenson, with a theatrical outfling of both hands. "Do you talk of German women? I tell you, this neck is wet with the tears of German women!'" (Hammon, 1910: p. 63). Play-acting is a common metaphor of action especially in the three 'Suicide Club' tales. The Young Man has 'played many farces' that day and declares 'life is only a stage to play the fool upon' (NAN: p. 6, p. 9). Geraldine has 'hit exactly on the manners and intonations that became the part he was playing' and, masquerading as Mr Morris, is 'playing the householder for a single night' (NAN: p. 9, p. 65). Florizel, 'accustomed to play the host in the highest circles', wonders whether Geraldine's brother imagines that 'we are all playing comedy?', yet for him the duel with the President of the Suicide Club 'is but a farce...and... will not be long a-playing'. In the final paragraph it is revealed that he 'has played the part of Providence' in many strange events (NAN: p. 16, p. 36, p. 75, p. 77).

Indeed, the most obviously self-constructed personality in the tales is Prince Florizel. He habitually dresses up in disguise for his equivocal 'adventures' ('The Prince had, as usual, travestied his appearance by the addition of false whiskers and a pair of large adhesive eyebrows'; NAN: p. 2), assumes a different name and allows himself a different type of behaviour. His mutability undermines the basis of his power since it shows that even his 'sincere' pronouncements are an act, helped by a change of clothes ('An hour after, Florizel in his official robes, and covered with all the orders of Bohemia...') (NAN: p. 30), and by the conventional overemphatic and melodramatic form and moralistic content of speeches full of appeals to gentlemanly and honourable codes of conduct. His personality is constructed by his gestures and his words (i.e. not the product of an interiority).

Being a symbolic central character, a symbol of authority, with an alias (Theophilus Godall) that twice recalls a divine originator, his mutable and constructed character can be seen as a general comment on the non-essentiality of conventional social and ideological systems. Camp acting does not attempt to seem natural, hence Geraldine is delighted that, disguised as 'a person

connected with the Press in reduced circumstances', he is taken for 'a nobleman in masquerade'. Though a person in disguise normally wants that to be taken for his real identity, Geraldine smiles to see that the disguise is detected but no real identity is detected among his multiple and unconvincing masks.

Above the characters is the puppet-master of the narrator and above him the author, both of which are clearly acting a part in an exaggerated way. 'The Arabian author', frame narrator and author double the thoughts and words of characters in indirect speech, as in 'Geraldine could scarcely repress a movement of repulsion for this deplorable wretch' (NAN: p. 20), but then assume an ironic distance (Mallardi, 1989: p. 276), without however assuming a consistent moral position. The narrator does not guarantee his own sincerity: he refers to 'the Arabian author' in the codas of the various stories and then denies his existence in the last coda section (Menikoff, 1990: p. 343). The text of NAN is 'constantly...posing, impersonating, playing stylish tricks', on almost every page there is 'extravagant posing' (Sandison, 1996: p. 100, p. 101). The text itself, and not just the fictional world it represents, constitutes a series of spaces for self-conscious play-acting.

The NAN mocks conventional and self-deceptive 'chivalric' ideals of the Victorian age. Florizel (the name of a medieval chivalric hero) and Geraldine (not the name of a medieval chivalric hero) as knightly, brave, generous, and loyal to each other – and yet all their knightly virtues are incongruously applied to ambiguous rambles in the city at night:

> Now and then... he would summon his confidant and Master of the Horse, Colonel Geraldine, and bid him prepare himself against an evening ramble. The Master of the Horse was a young officer of a brave and even temerarious disposition. He greeted the news with delight, and hastened to make ready (NAN: p. 1)

The reader has difficulty in seeing the connection between 'a brave and even temerarious disposition' and 'an evening ramble'.

Then reading on, we learn that this evening out requiring bravery (according to the narrator) is not faced with noble resolve and dignity, but is 'greeted... with delight'. This then leads on to the move to 'make ready' for the adventure, which could mean 'make military preparations', but we find from the next sentence that Geraldine just runs to get dressed up. This incongruous mixing deprives the dominant code of high ideals of any validity.

One overarching incongruity is the use of highly artistic style for stories of a sensational nature, a mixing of high and low styles, which calls into question the institutions and structures of literary discourse, also directly confronted in the contrast made between 'Thackeray's novels' and 'life': 'By life... I do not mean Thackeray's novels' (NAN: p. 107).

A central area of dominant ideology parodied by camp is that of fixed and clear gender distinctions. Sandison (1996: pp. 98-101) refers to 'the remarkable incidence of gender-reversal' in NAN. The implied male reader of Victorian fiction is made to feel uncomfortable, when he finds male rather than female characters described in terms of physical attractiveness and then given feminine characteristics of charm and grace:

> Silas identified a very handsome young fellow of small stature... He observed a person of rather a full build, strikingly handsome...seated at table with another handsome young man, several years his junior, who addressed him with conspicuous deference. (NAN: p. 35)

> A young man, slender and singularly handsome, came forward and greeted him with an air at once courtly and affectionate... Brackenbury... was unable to resist a sort of friendly attraction

> for Mr. Morris's person and character... he was not so much like a host as like a hostess, and there was a feminine coquetry and condescension in his manner which charmed the hearts of all (NAN: p. 61, p. 62, p. 65)

The most obvious gender-indeterminacy is found in Harry Hartley, who has feminine looks and manners 'Blond and pink, with dove's eyes and a gentle smile, he had an air of agreeable tenderness and melancholy, and the most submissive and caressing manners'. He also has feminine interests and tastes: he pursues 'petty and purely elegant accomplishments', has 'the prettiest ways among women, could talk fashions with enjoyment, and was never more happy than when criticising a shade of ribbon, or running on an errand to the milliner's'. His theatricalized effeminacy is made clear by the fact that he was 'pleased to exhibit himself before other men, who derided and despised him, in his character of male lady's-maid and man milliner' (NAN: p. 78, p. 79, p. 80).

We even get an indirect hint of exaggerated camp linguistic emphasis when we learn that 'Harry was transferred to the feminine department, where his life was little short of heavenly' (NAN: p. 80), though we do not know if this 'Heavenly!' comes from Harry (in indirect free speech) or from a slightly camp narrator.

The camp performance does not attempt to be taken for natural and its exaggeration can be seen as forwarding that aim. Typical camp excess can be seen in the device for choosing two volunteers as seconds for a duel by first persuading single gentlemen to be taken by cab to a house temporarily set up as a private gambling club: a preposterous situation which undermines Geraldine's speech to the chosen few in terms of trust, honour, gentlemanliness and devotion.

Excess can also be seen in the parody of melodramatic modes: the gestures:

> The next instant he was on his knees... 'Father!' he cried.
> (NAN: p. 137)

and the heightened language expressing a world of clear moral oppositions:

> 'Merciful heavens!.. Can such things be possible among men born of women? Oh! infamy of infamies!' (NAN: p. 21)

We can also see exaggeration in the relation between cause and effect when the agitated Silas exclaims:

> 'Tell me speedily, Doctor; for I have scarce enough courage to continue to exist' (NAN: p. 45)

And in the insouciance of Lady Vandeleur when she orders Harry to take a cab because 'I cannot have my secretary freckled' (NAN: p. 82).

Camp exaggeration also helps us to understand a detail of the very first incident, when the Young Man enters the oyster bar, accompanied by two commissionaires with trays, and politely and ceremoniously offers a cream tart to each of the customers. He does this 'with an exaggerated courtesy'[17] and 'with a profound obeisance', but strangely 'proffering the tart at the same time between his thumb and forefinger' (NAN: p. 2). Such an indelicate way of offering among so much courtesy could be seen as an indication of badly-hidden hysteria, but could also be seen as camp incongruous excess, a means to indicate clearly that this is all a representation.

In Stevenson, the style is always foregrounded, and the NAN stories are no exception. For the Lathbury's 'Mr. Stevenson tells a story in a style so finished and so admirable, that it constitutes a distinct enjoyment in itself (1882/Maixner, 1980: p. 113) and Purcell a few years later says 'in "New Arabian Nights" ...the art is phenomenal... art so carelessly, roguishly exposed, that it charms by its very audacity' (1886/Maixner, 1980: p. 196).

An elegant and aristocratic style in manners is also typical of camp or dandy individuals, including several of the characters in NAN, including the mannered politeness of Florizel and the rather feminine attentiveness to guests of Mr Morris/Geraldine.

Both camp and dandyism are narcissistic, but camp is more clearly self-mocking.[18] The incident of the cream tarts could be seen as mockery of the writer himself:[19] a 'young man' offers his goods to 'the lees of London' but is unconcerned if they accept or not. The self-mockery continues if – remembering Stevenson's fondness for literally-translated Gallicisms[20] – we see what he offers, 'a cream tart',[21] as an allusion to the French idiom 'une tarte à la crème', defined as 'formule banale, répétée à tout propos; lieu commun', or 'formule vide, argument rebattu par lequel on prétend avoir réponse à tout'.[22] He offers only moment of pleasure (and in his letter to Gosse of January 1886 (Booth & Mehew, 1994/5: p. 170), he says of writers 'we are all whores'), a pleasure with no meaning ('une tarte à la crème'), a mere object of consumption (and in the same letters he refers to the reading public as 'the beast whom we feed').

In NAN, as in *Jekyll and Hyde,* Stevenson often uses words with transgressive colloquial meanings, 'with the context suggesting (but never authorizing) that the reader should take this 'non-official' meaning as the right one' (Dury, 1993: p. 39). We also find ambiguous syntax, unusual names, and hints at sexual behaviour ('anonymous desires and pleasures', Stevenson 1882b: p. 121) used in a similar creation of complicity with the reader. This suggestive allusion that attracts attention to itself is also found in Meredith, who refers in *Richard Feverel* (1859) to 'jokes delicately not decent, but so delicately so, that it was not decent to perceive it' (qu. L. Stevenson 1976: p. 188).

Florizel's Master of the Horse is referred to thirty times as 'Colonel Geraldine', and forty-five times (by both the Prince and the narrator) as 'Geraldine'. The use of a common female name for a 'brave and even temerarious' officer is already strange, and it becomes even stranger as we learn of Geraldine's taste for ambiguous night-time adventures and his hostess-like gracefulness. However, both Florizel and the narrator pretend that they do not see the incongruity. All irony creates a relationship of complicity; irony either involving sexual identity or naughty-but-nice sexual allusions can be seen as creating a camp complicity.[23]

A nudging sexual reference found in the word 'back door', *Back-door work* being slang term for 'an unmentionable vice', according to slang dictionaries of the period.[24] This makes the following dialogue between the pert Prudence and the effeminate Harry (BB: pp. 90-1) rather troubling:

> 'Do you think I would keep you here if I were not sure to save you? Oh, no, I am a good friend to those that please me! and we have a back door upon another lane. But,' she added, checking him, for he had got upon his feet immediately on this welcome news, 'but I will not show where it is unless you kiss me. Will you, Harry?'
> 'That I will,' he cried, remembering his gallantry, 'not for your back door, but because you are good and pretty'.
> And he administered two or three cordial salutes, which were returned to him in kind.
> Then Prudence led him to the back gate, and put her hand upon the key.
> 'Will you come and see me?' she asked.

We are reminded of similar hints in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde:* 'the back passage' (Stevenson, 1886: p. 65) to the door which is 'a back way to Dr Jekyll's' (ib. p. 34).[25]

Another shared allusion to sexual matters concerns Florizel's cultivation of sensation and 'adventures': his 'rambles', 'adventures' and unusual and 'agreeable modes of passing an evening' are similar to sexual adventuring in their activities involving lack of control in areas below the regulated surface of life. A key word near the beginning of the text that sets off thoughts in this direction is 'ramble': 'Now and then... he would summon his confidant... Colonel Geraldine, and bid him prepare him against and evening ramble' (NAN: p. 1). Johnson's Dictionary (1755) derives *ramble* from a Dutch verb meaning as 'To wander loosely in lust' and we may remember Rochester's licentious 'A Ramble in St. James's Park' (cf. Patterson, 1981; Road, 1986) and John Dunton's *Voyage Round the World* (1691) where the word becomes a 'running

joke', appearing repeatedly in a wide variety of grammatical and typographic forms. Utterson and Enfield in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* also go together on 'rambles' through the city (Dury, 1993: p. 64). It is clear that the word led a double life with an official and a transgressive meaning for several centuries.

Another collusive reference near the beginning of the text involves the oyster bar:

> The bar was full of guests, male and female; but though more than one of these offered to fall into talk with our adventurers, none of them promised to grow interesting upon a nearer acquaintance (NAN, CT: p. 2)

It is clear that the female 'guests' who approach and talk to the strangers are prostitutes, a piece of collusive knowledge shared with the reader.[26] In addition, 'more than one of these' would normally refer to both male and female guests – an alarming prospect of propositions from male guests, until one realizes that this must be a Latinism or Gallicism for 'more than one of the latter'.[27]

The fictional world of the NAN contains a number of characters who give camp performances or are interpretable in a camp way. The Young Man with the cream tarts has a certain camp traits: he takes the oyster bar as a temporary stage, displays perfect manners and exaggerated courtesy even when addressing low-life characters in the bar, and he makes fun of what is important to him. Florizel shares some of the qualities that Wilde fashioned into his public persona: a 'vaguely disconcerting nexus of effeminacy, leisured idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence and aestheticism' (Sinfield, 1994: p. 118). Florizel is effeminate in the softness of his manners and apparent detachment from sex (though he has a taste for dangerous adventures), he indulges in leisured idleness, takes no notice of morality as far as his own actions are concerned, is rich and can afford the luxury of the expense of playing a godlike role, is above all wonderfully insouciant, and shares in decadence and aestheticism to the extent

that he values experience and actively seeks new kinds of stimulus. He has a taste for 'adventures' that have affinities with sexual adventures, on 'rambles' through the city with his male friend who he usually calls 'Geraldine'.

We also have a series of strong women who recall camp divas such as Mae West and Marlene Dietrich: Madame Zéphyrine, the vamp who inveigles Silas, and Lady Vandeleur.

What distances NAN from camp is that fact that the farce is tragedy in disguise, in a Meredithian comic mixture. The rather campish incident of the Young Man leads up to his declarations, which have a certain seriousness about them:

> From the whole tone of the young man's statement it was plain that he harboured very bitter and contemptuous thoughts about himself. His auditors were led to imagine that his love affair was nearer his heart than he admitted, and that he had a design on his own life. The farce of the cream tarts began to have very much the air of a tragedy in disguise. (NAN: pp. 6-7)

If camp is a kind of theatrical foolery, then the Young Man says he is beyond it: 'life is only a stage to play the fool upon as long as the part amuses us' (NAN: p. 9).

The 'Saratoga Trunk' story starts with a mocking of sexual desire (exposing the fluidity and doubleness of moral behaviour) involving a campish Mae West-like Madame Zéphyrine, but the corpse in the bed leads to a violent and dangerous situation that lacks the insouciance and control of camp.

The self-mockery of Stevenson and his characters is not perfectly insouciant and there are disquieting aspects (such as when the Young Man crushes 'the nine remaining tarts into his mouth, and swallowed them at a single movement each' (NAN, CT: p. 4)), which go beyond camp excess.

Taking 'camp' as a critical term helps us to understand in a unitary way a great deal of the NAN stories. The 'spirit of the dandy' which Sandison uses in his interpretation is very close to

camp, but perhaps camp can add a little more to our understanding, not only in those areas shared by dandyism (self-representation, undermining of dominant ideology, foregrounding of style) especially in the areas of the theatricality of excess, emphasis on gender indeterminacy, self-mockery and winking complicity with the reader.

By adopting what we see as a camp approach to social reality, Stevenson is able to confront, through frivolous mockery, his difficult relationship in this period with bourgeois and patriarchal authority and with the literary marketplace. In this text, camp humour allows Stevenson to express his feelings of marginality, to defy a dominant ideology through frivolity and irony and the presentation of Being-as-Playing-a-Role (Sontag, 1964/Cleto, 1999: p. 56): existence as performance.

End Notes

Note: I have used the texts of the stories as printed in the first edition and then republished in the Tusitala Edition (vol. I); I have used the abbreviation NAN and the title *New Arabian Nights* to refer to the 'Florizel Stories', even though the first edition does not explicitly identify them with this name, which applies also to the short stories in the second volume (however, the 'Florizel Stories' are implicitly associated with the title by references in the text to the 'Arabian author', and the Tusitala and other editions identify them specifically with it).

1. Information on the dates of composition from Swearingen, 1980.
2. Taking the lead mainly from Cleto, 1999.
3. For the end of dandyism see Barthes, Roland (1968) 'Le dandysme et la mode', Rpr. in Carassus, 1971.
4. A proposed definition of camp 'like attempting to sit in the corner of a circular room' (Mehurst, 1991 qu. Cleto, 1999: p. 4) even has a Zen-like clusiveness about it. Isherwood (1954/Cleto, 1999: p. 52) makes a similar analogy when he says

'[camp] is terribly hard to define. You have to meditate on it and feel it intuitively, like Lao-tze's *Tao*'. For the indefinability of camp, see also Cleto, 1999: pp. 5-6, 37n6, and Mauries, 1979: p. 65.

5. For the essentially gay definition of *camp* see Meyer, 1994; for the rejection of this thesis see Cleto, 1999: pp. 16-22.
6. The 'off-stage theatricality' of camp is relevant to homosexuals because of often having to act the part of a non-homosexual (Cleto, 1999: p. 90).
7. 'If [camp's] transgression of boundaries ever threatened to produce the redefinition of [boundaries], the *frison* would be lost, the thrill of "something wrong" would disappear' (Britton, 1978/Cleto, 1999: p. 141)
8. The feminine and a-sexual may also be imitated for another reason: as types of the marginal (Booth, 1983/Cleto, 1999: p. 141)
9. The dandy feels 'le besoin ardent de se faire une originalité, contenu dans le limites extérieures des convenances' (Baudelaire, 1863/Natta, 1989: p. 204)
10. Meyer (1994: p. 75) interprets Ware's 'passing English' to mean 'ephemeral English' (though it could also mean 'disappearing'); Meyer sees the dictionary as 'documenting the jargon of his decade', i.e. the first few years of the century. Since it supplements Farmers *Slang and its Analogues* (1890, 1904) he assumes that it contains words that have appeared since then (though it could easily include words previously extant but simply omitted by Farmer). The title's reference to the 'Victorian era' (not 'the late Victorian era' or 'the Edwardian era') suggests clearly, however, that the disctionary was intended to cover usage of quite a broad period. The reason for Meyer's interpretation is later made clear: 'Wilde's own signifying codes of dress, gesture and speech that were built upon and preserved as the signifier of the new identity. I suggest that the performance of these codes is what became known as "Camp", a *new word that appeared along with the identity during the years immediately following the [Wilde] trials*' (Meyer, 1994: p. 105; emphasis added) The word

camp therefore by this definition has to be post-1895. I would say, however, that though *camp* as 'homosexual performance of signifying codes' is very probably post-1895, the word with its wider and not specifically homosexual meanings could well be earlier (as the 1869 use of *campish* suggests).

11. Another possible early allusion may be in Meredith's short story 'The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper' (1877): Lady Camper is a dominant comic Lady Bracknell type who inverts gender distinctions, has an overbearing authority, considers herself above convention and is associated with the transgressive hints of the text.
12. The Oxford English Dictionary has an entry for *campish*, defined as 'Savouring of the camp, in manners, etc.' with only two quotations, one unproblematic from 1581, and the following from 1868: 'He was of military tastes, not a little campish in his licence', which suggests a self-consciousness in performance in the word 'tastes', an over-fastidious precision in 'not a little campish' and a disregard for normal behaviour in 'licence'. The whole quotation reminds us that the military camp was a temporary theatre where men played roles, indulged in sartorial display and – though bound by rules – were beyond the normal rules of everyday society.
13. 'camp' is a 'queer(ing) semiotic' that probably emerges 'around 1860' (Cleto, 1999: p. 44)
14. Saposnik (1974: p. 69) remarks that 'the Suicide Club... is merely a stage setting of cardboard flat and painted tableau', where actions are 'gestures in a make-believe world'.
15. The first definition, is marked '? Obs.' in the volume of the OED published in 1913, and without the question mark in the second edition of 1986.
16. A similar case of 'flickering' meaning created by exploiting a normal and a rare meaning of the same word can be seen elsewhere in *Jekyll and Hyde: quite* in the title 'Dr Jekyll was Quite at Ease'. A related technique is the use of the standard meaning and a transgressive colloquial meaning (cf. Dury, 1992: p. 39).

17. James refers to 'the strange politeness of the young man, leading on to circumstances stranger still' (1887/J.A. Smith: p. 153).
18. 'the tales... mock themselves' (Samson, 1926: p. vviii)
19. This point was first made by Mallardi, 1989: p. 272.
20. Reviewers noted the number of Gallicisms in this text, see Maixner, 1980: p. 107, p. 118; cf. also Dury, 1993: p. 92 n18.
21. An early translation of 'The Arabian Nights' seems to have included 'cream tarts' in one of the stories: Walter Scott refers to 'Bedreddin Hassan, whom the vizier, his father-in-law, discovered by his superlative skill in composing cream-tarts with pepper in them' *(Heart of Midlothian* ch. 49). The more accurate translation by Burton (1885-88) refers to recognition via the preparation of 'a conserve of pomegranite grains' ('Tale of Nur al-Din Ali and his son Badr al-Din Hasan'). Stevenson has just taken an element from the original story without any attempt to follow any other part of the narrative at all; this borrowed element could easily have been attractive because of its meaning as a literally-translated French phase.
22. Definitions from *Trèsor de la langue française* (Gallimard), and *Le Robert* (Robert). The phrase derives from Molière's *École des femmes* 1.1.97-100 where it is the silly reply in a word-game that shows you have not understood the rules and are 'd'un ignorance extrême'.
23. 'camp exists in the smirk of the beholder' (Hess, 1965 qu. Cleto, 1999: p. 278)
24. Barrere and Leland (1889), Farmer (1890).
25. Here, one may remember the equivocal play on 'the back way' in Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), p. iv, p. iii.
26. James (1888/J.A.Smith: p. 153) says 'the company that we guess, given the locality' and the Baedecker guide to London of 1899 lists Edwin Scott in Coventry Street and Blue Posts in Rupert Street (both near Leicester Square) as oyster bars and adds 'Pas de dames le soir dans les deux maisons'.
27. Oxford English Dictionary, THIS, 3b

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'All life that is not mechanical is spun out of two threads'; Women Characters in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Catriona* (1893)

Olena M. Turnbull

Stevenson's contemporaries describe his works as 'manly'[1], Sir Arthur Conan Doyle refers to Stevenson as the father of 'the modem masculine novel' (Conan Doyle: p. 264), and a consensus of critical opinion argues that Stevenson's male characters are infinitely stronger than his women characters, although representations of women become increasingly more important in his later works. However, Katherine B. Linehan[2] argues that it is time to 'revalue' male-female relations in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, claiming that 'The quantity of Stevenson's attention to male-female relationships is indeed readily defensible, especially once one looks beyond the famous triumvirate of *Treasure Island, Kidnapped,* and *Jekyll and Hyde*' (Linehan: p. 34). Linehan makes the excellent point that 'Stevenson put marriage or courtship at the centre of three novels *(Prince Otto, David Balfour* (or *Catriona),* and the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston)* and over a dozen works of short fiction (ibid.). J. C. Fumas tells us that '1892 saw [Stevenson] writing *Catriona,* embarking on *The Young Chevalier,* planning *Sophia Scarlett* (to involve three heroines), and making early drafts of *Weir of Hermiston* – all containing love affairs and each (except *Sophia Scarlett,* which was never begun) notable women' (Furnas: pp. 423-424). Stevenson himself writes in an essay entitled 'The Lanter-Bearers' (1888) that 'All life that is not mechanical is spun out of two threads' (Stevenson: *Essays,* p. 310). This paper, in two parts, contends that 'masculine' rather than 'feminine' terms have been over-emphasized in critical commentary of Stevenson's works and examines women characters in *Catriona.*

Both the Scottish psyche and the psyche of the Victorians from the mid-century onwards have been described in terms

of fragmentation and division[3], and it seems to me that these presumed rifts have been depicted in a manner reminiscent of the same types of binary oppositions that relate to gender difference. The post-structuralist French feminist, Helene Cixous, asks a particularly probing question about logocentrism, namely 'Is the fact that logocentrism subjects thought – all of the concepts, the codes, the values – to a two-term system related to "the" couple man/woman?' (Marks and de Courtivron: p. 91) Stevenson's writings, bound up as they are with 'contrast and counterpoint, juxtaposition and antithesis, paradox and parallelism' (Bold: p. 2), suggest that Stevenson was very much aware of opposed couples within a two-term system and the ways in which these operate at all levels of language and he, like David Balfour, was inclined 'to set the ladies the first'[4] (p. 269).

Stevenson's stepson Samuel Lloyd Osbourne writes that his stepfather held some fairly radical views about 'The Woman Question' and social reform. Osbourne states that 'Stevenson was emphatically what we would call today a feminist,' and that 'Women seemed to him the victims alike of men and nature (Tusitala Edition, I: p. XV). His stepson further remarks that, in this respect, Stevenson was 'far ahead of his times' (ibid). Unfortunately, Osbourne proceeds to undermine these fascinating insights into his stepfather's political ideas when he comments that 'many of Stevenson's strongest opinions failed to find any expression in his books' (ibid). Osbourne 'imagines' that this was so because Stevenson may have thought that 'there was no audience for such opinions' (ibid.). Whatever Osbourne's imaginings may have been, it seems to me that his comments do little justice to Stevenson either as a writer or a thinker, although Osbourne himself may have felt that he was protecting Stevenson's 'manly' literary reputation. The threat of civil unrest was very real at the time Stevenson was writing. A reactionary British government had dropped its earlier *laissez-faire* policies to intrude into the lives of its citizens more forcefully than it had ever done before, and radical political views were firmly suppressed. If Stevenson was a supporter of women's rights and social reform as Osbourne claims,

then it is unlikely that the preponderance of pro-establishment male critics and commentators would have chosen to find any expression of Stevenson's 'strongest opinions' in his books. Stevenson himself speaks of the 'painful suppressions' which are an essential part of the writer's experience. However, he makes the point that 'such facts as, in regard to the main design, subserve a variety of purposes, [the writer] will perforce and eagerly retain'.[5] Surely it is inconceivable that Stevenson would have suppressed his 'strongest opinions' and most deeply-held beliefs in everything that he wrote?

Numerous of Stevenson's commentators and critics remark upon historical and political aspects of his writings but, all too often, they arrive at the conclusion that Stevenson's works are both ahistorical and apolitical. However Emma Letley for example recognizes that, 'Both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* have their genesis in Scottish history, both in their characterization and their employment of historical fact'. She comments that '*Catriona* is a much more political book than its predecessors' and that 'The concerns that inform the text are crucial to *A Footnote to History*' as both texts are 'concerned with the ways in which politics, rhetoric, and biased [sic] judges cloud the process of justice'.[6] Subscribing to the view that Stevenson, like the rest of us, felt himself to be involved in the historical process does not necessarily preclude one from agreeing with critics like Cairns Craig who has recently argued in *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (1999) that 'In the work of the historical novelist of the nineteenth century what was being created was a national imagination' (Craig: p. 9). In an earlier work entitled *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture* (1996), Craig contends that 'The structural experiments which the major Scottish writers engage in are not refusals of the demands of history, but challenges to the confining truth, to the limits of the historical and the real' (Craig: p. 81), and his observation that 'Counter-history is the inevitable product of a history that [...] leaves so much out of history' (ibid.) seems apt in relation to the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. If one views history as a process, then history is not merely concerned with the

past, it is also concerned with the present and the future. Stevenson undoubtedly believed in history as a process. Stephen Arata has noted that 'a radical historicizing of character' is a central narrative strategy of many *fin-de-siecle* writers (including Stevenson) which permits them to 'set their own critical discourse in opposition to the various diseases' (Arata:p. 22) – and dis-eases – that were perceived to beset late-Victorian society, while Jenni Calder states that 'Stevenson's fiction was, inevitably, a product of time as well as place. [...]: it was very much a series of experiments in locating, understanding and coming to terms with the present. And the present was deeply disturbing' (Calder: p. 28). The subject of Stevenson's *Catriona* is, to borrow Craig's phrase, 'the imagining of the nation as both the fundamental context of individual life and the real subject of history' (Craig: p. 9). If Scotland is 'a country under erasure whose past offers no relationship with the present' (Craig: p. 20), then Scottish history would seem to share a good deal in common with women' s history since many feminist writers argue that women' s history has also been subject to constant erasure. Henry James clearly understood that Stevenson's incorporation of Scottish historical characters and events was central to his design in *Kidnapped* and comments that such passages read 'like a series of inspired footnotes on some historic page' (Noble: p. 172). The same could be said of *Catriona*, and there would seem to be some playful irony at work in Stevenson's decision to entitle his factual history of Samoa in 322 pages *A Footnote to History* in 1892.

Fanny Stevenson tells us about the physical conditions in which Stevenson wrote *Catriona,* remarking that 'Never was a novel written in more distracting circumstances' (Vailima Edition, Introduction, X: p. 4). She comments that 'the natives [were] on the verge of war' (ibid.) and that Stevenson lived and worked amid the most kaleidoscopic political changes, uncertain as to what moment his personal liberty might be restrained, his every action misconstrued and resented' (ibid.). That Stevenson includes threats to individual liberty and a mass of historical and political content in *Catriona* comes as little surprise given the circumstances in which the book was written. Add to that the fact that 'the New Woman' debate was

at its height, and the result is a text which, like those highlighted by Joseph A. Kestner, namely Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883), George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1981) and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), demonstrates what Kestner refers to as 'the force of literature to engage and advance the parameters of the gender debate during the 1880s and 1890s'; a novel which interrogates 'the concept of separate spheres for men and women and [...] patriarchal constructions and attitudes' (Kestner: p. 7).

Viewed in the light of 'the New Woman' debate, it is surely no coincidence that *David Balfour* (renamed *Catriona* when it was published in Britain in book form the following year) was first serialised in the British Girl's magazine *Atalanta* in 1892, since Atalanta is the mythical Greek maiden who agreed to marry any man who could outrun her. She is defeated in a race by the deceitful Hippomenes who drops three golden apples which Atalanta pauses to pick up. Letley considers Stevenson's placement of *David Balfour* in *Atalanta* odd. However, if one reads *Catriona* as a kind of complex palimpsest, then the Atalanta myth becomes central to the meaning of Stevenson's text. Annette Federico has remarked that 'Some modern readers [...] have found it difficult to accept that Stevenson's stories do not have an ideological agenda' (Federico: p. 128). She contends that '[Stevenson's] later commitment to activism only affirms a commitment present in the adventure stories by "R.L.S." written for boys – boys who will inherit and so possibly reform the privileges belonging to men' (ibid.). Contained within the Atalanta myth, there is an obvious reference to the Fall which occasions the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (and to which David Balfour refers on page 23 of Stevenson's text), there is possibly an assumption about the supposed avarice of woman, and perhaps there is also the implication that a woman's favour can be bought. However, it is interesting that in the Classical myth, man is the tempter who wins his power over woman by deceit, and that this tale basically inverts the respective roles of man and woman in relation to 'original sin'. Since numerous commentators on the Victorian period have noted, as Masao Miyoshi does, that 'border crossings

among genres is one of the important features of Victorian writing' it could be argued that *David Balfour* or *Catriona* is as much a moral fable for girls as it is an adventure story for boys. It is also a moral and political indictment of a Victorian, imperialist, patriarchal society, more than half of whose members are disinherited, disenfranchised and treated as an underclass. In describing *Catriona*, Francis Russell Hart refers to it as an 'argumentative and ironic book' (Hart: p. 160), and he perceptively comments that David Balfour 'has become quite sophisticated; unpolished still, but bravely ethical in a world where simplicity and adolescence are duped and endangered' and where 'a desperate realpolitik' prevails (ibid.). Hart considers the 'more romantic problem' in the book to be Catriona's rather than David's, and he highlights the fact that David recognises Catriona's problem to be 'an extraordinary and dangerous innocence, which in a corrupt and compromised world isolates and immobilizes her' (ibid.). Stevenson obviously believes that innocence is dangerous because it makes dupes out of those who lack the knowledge to defend themselves. In *Catriona* – as the myth of Atalanta – innocence is not bliss and knowledge is power, which is why feminists of the period saw education to be 'the key to a broader range of freedoms' (Levine: p. 26).

Recalling Fanny Stevenson's account of the circumstances in which *Catriona* was written, David Balfour – that 'tall strong lad of about eighteen [who speaks] like a Lowlander and has no beard' (p. 28) – and all of the women characters in the book live, like Stevenson himself, amid 'kaleidoscopic political changes, uncertain as to whether [their] personal liberty might be restrained, [their] every action misconstrued and resented' (See reference above). Stevenson's text draws numerous parallels between his situation in Samoa and that of women who, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had been agitating for political reforms that would alleviate the injustices they were obliged to live under. In *Catriona,* young people of both sexes are portrayed as being moulded as much by their environments and social conditioning as by hereditary factors[7], and the laws concerning Scotland and women are put under a microscope. While Robert Kiely may have

thought that Stevenson's text contains 'incidents without serious moral implications, characters without psyches, politics without issue, and history without consequences' (Kiely: p. 96), the personal is political in *Catriona* and this is marked by the shift from the public sphere of Scottish political life in the first part of the novel to the private, domestic sphere in the second. Moreover, the topic of law is introduced early on in Stevenson's text (p. 21) in David Balfour's curious encounter with that 'weird old wife' Auld Merren. Merren is sitting under a gibbet where her 'twa joes' or sweethearts, are hanging for stealing 'twa shillin' Scots frae a wean' (that is, for stealing a small sum of money from a child), and the punishment would seem to be rather harsh considering the sum involved is so insignificant. Although Stevenson appears to be commenting upon the fact that the punishment seems somewhat inordinate in relation to the crime, perhaps thus emphasising the need for legal reform, he may also be referring obliquely to the events that led up to the Act of Union in 1707 when some other apparently insignificant sums changed hands and a nation's children were effectively disinherited. It would be true to say that after the Act of Union, not just the currency of Scotland, but all things Scottish including its history and literature, were effectively 'devalued'. Auld Merren is as enigmatic a character as Jennet Clouston in *Kidnapped*. W. W. Robson states that Jennet's presence in Stevenson's earlier text is 'inexplicable', and he concludes that she must be 'a genre-signal: a sort of musical quotation from the old kind of romance (Calder ed.: p. 94). Both Jennet Clouston and Auld Merren could be interpreted as a kind of genre-signal just as Robson suggests. A good deal of humour, pointed irony, and parody marks much of Stevenson's best works, so the fact that Jennet and Merren recall some of Sir Walter Scott's wilder and more "romantic" creations such as Madge Wildfire or Meg Merrilies (a sort of quotation from the old kind of romance indeed) is probably an intentional ploy on Stevenson's part. However, Jennet is an old woman who has been 'harried out of house and home' by Ebenezer Balfour, the representative of a corrupt and decayed patriarchy, while Merren is described as a 'daft' old woman. Both of these women are portrayed as victims – 'the victims alike of men and nature'.

Apart from Auld Merren and the two, main female protagonists – Catriona Drummond and Barbara Grant – there are a number of other women who, in Linehan's phrase, 'haunt the margins' of Stevenson's novel. These include Alison Hastie, Barbara's two sisters and aunt, the redoubtable Lady Allardyce, 'two-three lasses on the braes' (p. 185), Mrs Gebbie, and the merchant's wives. Moreover, there is a veiled reference to the mythical Helen of Troy in some lines of Alan Ramsay's (p. 39), and some rather more explicit references to the historical personages of Catherine Douglas, Lady Grange and Jean Key,[8] all of whom were the victims of abuse or abduction at the hands of self-seeking men who sought political or financial gain by their actions. In *Catriona,* James More MacGregor exploits his daughter for financial gain, while Lord Advocate Prestongrange exploits all of the 'young folk' – David Balfour, Catriona Drummond, and his own daughters – for political ends. Indeed, after his experience of politics, David Balfour cynically remarks that, till the end of time young folk (who are not yet used with the duplicity of life and men) will struggle as I did, and will make heroical resolves, and take long risks; and the course of events will push them upon the one side and go on like a marching army' (p. 173). Older women such as Barbara Grant's aunt and Lady Allardyce comply with and are exploited by the patriarchy in that they fulfil the set roles assigned to them. Catriona Drummond is, as Hart claims, a comparative innocent because she has had few positive role models to turn to in her life. However, Barbara Grant is an interesting study in that she has a thorough knowledge of the rules of patriarchy and, in the process of learning them, has discovered that she can bend them to suit her own purposes. David Balfour comments of her 'that there was something rather alarming about the young lady, and papa might be more under her domination than I knew' (p. 130).

Catriona is a book about the clash of cultures – male/female, Highland/Lowland, Scottish/Dutch/Other – in which the innocent and uncorrupted, unconventional and untutored are juxtaposed against the corrupt, sophisticated, conventional, and socially – and politically – aware. Leslie A. Fiedler considers

Catriona to be a 'failure' in terms of its representations of women and sexual love, but he rather seems to miss the point that David and Catriona are immature and sexually-inexperienced, and it is no part of Stevenson's project to depict sexual love between these two characters. Fiedler argues that, prior to *Weir of Hermiston,* Stevenson's women characters are 'sickly or wooden' (Fiedler: p. 88), but Catriona is neither, as her lonely, nocturnal hillside rambles carrying food to her proscribed father and uncles, who were in hiding from redcoat soldiers (p. 184), and her daring leap from a ship into a small boat (p. 191) attests. She is a courageous and athletic young woman. In fact, in that respect, Catriona bears a striking resemblance to Alison Hastie who is referred to only as 'a bold, bonny lass' in *Kidnapped.* Kiely comments of Catriona's dream that she 'should have been a man-child' (p. 79) that this is 'an avowed case of sex envy' (Kiely: p. 96). However, what Catriona wants is to 'have the best of it' just like David and Lieutenant Duncansby and to make 'fine speeches all through just like Mr David Balfour' (p. 79). In other words, she wants the opportunity to act and to be heard. Catriona's history (that is, women's history) is subsumed into the tale of David Balfour 'in twa-three pages' (pp. 184-185), in the same way that the history of Scotland is subsumed into British history but, just as Stevenson could not permit eight years of trouble in Samoa to go unrecorded, neither does he suffer Catriona' s history nor the history of Scotland to undergo erasure. By inscribing Scotland and women into the text of *Catriona,* Stevenson effectively writes what might be termed an alternative or counter-history.

The ostensibly conventional ending of Stevenson's novel in the marriage of Catriona Drummond and David Balfour has been the cause of much argument among critics, but Stevenson's views about the representation of women and marriage were arguably just as complex as his views on everything else. In a letter to Sidney Colvin about his projected novel *Sophia Scarlett,* which was to be a regular novel in two parts dealing with the story of three women, Stevenson comments that 'The first start is hard, [...]. The problem is exactly a Balzac one, and I wish I had his fist [...]. Three

people have had it, the real creative brush; Scott [...] – Balzac – and Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*' (Booth and Mehew, 7: pp. 231-232). Having read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel Without A Hero* (1847), Stevenson would have been familiar with the following passage:

> As his hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then; the doubts and struggles of life ended; as if once landed in the marriage country, all were green and pleasant there; and wife and husband had nothing to do but to link arms together, and wander gently downwards towards old age in happy and perfect fruition (Thackeray: p. 250).

In *Catriona,* 'the drama' and 'the doubts and struggles of life' continue because, as David Balfour tells his children, they 'will be not so very much wiser than their parents' (p. 269). Stevenson's definition of marriage as 'one long conversation chequered by disputes' is well-known, but perhaps not so well-known is his contention that 'in the intervals [between the disputes] the whole material of life is turned over; ideas are struck out and shared; the two persons more and more adapt their notions one to suit the other, and in process of time, they conduct each other into new worlds of thought' (Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits/Other Essays' and Reminiscences*: p. 102). Stevenson's 'border-crossings' are not merely confined to questions of genre. Written in Samoa at a turbulent time in that nation's history, *Catriona* turns 'the whole material of life' over (that is, fact and fiction liberally embroidered with Classical, Biblical, and literary allusion), and the reader is conducted 'into new worlds of thought'. As national myth, palimpsest, and counter-history, *Catriona* provides evidence of the fact that Stevenson could imagine a future for a united Scotland, whether inside or outside of a united kingdom of Britain, just as he could envisage roles for men and women other than within the conventional scenario of heterosexual love and marriage. George MacDonald Fraser comments of Barbara Grant that 'she appears

to be still unmarried at the end of the book, and for all her charm, we are not surprised' (Fraser: Introduction, p. vi), but he does not feel similarly obliged to comment on the marital status of the 'immortal' (ibid, p. x) Alan Breck Stuart. Stevenson, however, is aware that duality is an intrinsic element of human language and the human condition, and that 'feminine' terms are just as important as 'masculine' ones. If Alan and David are 'immortal', then so too are Catriona Drummond and Barbara Grant; so too is Scotland itself.

Jennie Calder astutely comments of Stevenson that he 'was fascinated by what he saw as the split personality at the heart of Scottish character and Scottish experience and struggled all his life 'to confront and explain his own background and the country that had shaped him' (Watson and Calder: Introduction to *Catriona*, p. xi). On the other hand, and illustrating Stevenson's contention that 'All life that is not mechanical is spun out of two threads', one cannot but agree with George MacDonald Fraser's final comment in his Introduction to *Catriona*. Fraser states that the text 'shows [Stevenson's] gift for language, his mastery of style, and his genius for capturing human nature, burning as bright as ever' (Fraser: Introduction, p. x). It seems to me that each of these perspectives – the masculine and the feminine – complements the other and is therefore equally valid. Perhaps in time they will lead us 'into new worlds of thought'. As Linehan argues, there is a need to 'revalue' women characters in Stevenson's works. There is a need too, as many scholars currently recognize, to 'revalue' and re-evaluate the history and literature of Scotland. In writing to Henry James on 5th December 1892, Stevenson joked that he was 'an Epick writer with a k to it, but without the necessary genius', and confided that 'you don't know what news is, nor what politics, nor what the life of man, till you see it on so small a scale and with your liberty on the board for stake. I would not have missed it for much' (Booth and Mehew, 7: p. 449). Stevenson's hard-won insights make *Catriona* one of his most powerful and intriguing novels. As Fiedler remarks, 'It makes a difference [...] whether one thinks of the World Across the Border as Faerie or Frontier, fantasy or history'.

End Notes

1. Paul Maixner's *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) provides a representative sample of contemporary reviews.
2. See Linehan's article 'Revaluing Women and Marriage in Robert Louis Stevenson's Short Fiction' which appears in *English Literature in Transition,* Volume 40 No.134-59.
3. Re: MacDiarmid, Muir, Craig, Daiches, Naim, McCrone, Crawford and others for the Scottish context, and the work of Buckley, Briggs, Bergonzi, Miyoshi, Sanders, Sutherland, Coote and others for the Victorian context.
4. All textual references are to Watson and Calder's Canongate Classics Edition of Stevenson's *Catriona* (page numbers included in the text). See 'List of Works Cited'.
5. See 'A Note on Realism' in *Letters and Miscellanies of Robert Louis Stevenson: Sketches, Criticisms, etc.* Volume XXII (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 271.
6. Consult Letley's Introduction to *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* in the World's Classics edition of Stevenson's texts, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. vii-xxvii, particularly p. xii, p. xix, and p. xx.
7. Stephen Arata provides a good summary of the range and scope of the heredity versus environment debate in 'Strange Cases, common fates: degeneration and fiction in the Victorian fin-de-siecle' in *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin-de-Siecle,* pp. 22-27.
8. Aside from available histories of Scotland, consult Ian Galbraith's invaluable notes in the Konemann Classic Edition of *Catriona,* printed in Hungary in 1996, for further information. See also *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from* 1080 *to* 1980 by Rosalind K. Marshall (London: Collins, 1983) and Sir Walter Scott's Introduction to *Rob Roy.*
9. See *Cross the Border - Close the Gap* by Leslie A. Fiedler (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1972), p. 72

'Faithful to his Map': Profit and Desire in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*

Oliver S. Buckton

In August 1894, four months before his death, Robert Louis Stevenson – by now one of the world's most famous authors – published an article entitled 'My First Book' offering advice to young writers on the best route to literary success. The 'first book' of the essay's title is, of course, *Treasure Island.* Wendy R. Katz points out that this essay offers 'RLS's reconstruction of events surrounding the text' in which the 'crucial elements of map, island, sailing ship and pirate are all part of RLS's retrospective account of his first book' (p. xix). Yet, while Katz does not contest Stevenson's curious designation of *Treasure Island* as 'my first book,' it is remarkable how the full title of the essay: 'My First Book: Treasure Island' discreetly erases six previously published works from his *curriculum vitae.* In fact, Stevenson's first published book was *An Inland Voyage* (1878), an account of his canoe trip along the canals and waterways of France and Belgium. This was immediately followed by a study of the history and culture of his native town, *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (1878), and the following year Stevenson published another travel narrative, *Travels with A Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879). One explanation for the remarkable erasure of his literary origins as a travel-writer in 'My First Book' can be found in Stevenson's disclaimer: 'I am not a novelist alone. But I am well aware that my paymaster, the Great Public, regards what else I have written with indifference, if not aversion; if it call upon me at all, it calls on me in the familiar and indelible character; and when I am asked to talk of my first book, no question in the world but what is meant is my first novel' (p. 277). If the public is his 'master' then he is the obedient servant – indeed the hired hand – who recognizes the economic necessity of giving the public what it wants.[1] Ironically, Stevenson had turned to travel writing at the

beginning of his career specifically to free himself from financial dependence upon his father.[2]

Throughout this late essay, in fact, Stevenson's recollections of his early literary labours are inextricably intertwined with the profit-motive: his initial pleasure in writing *Treasure Island* – described by Stevenson as the 'funds of entertainment' (p. 279) derived from characters such as John Silver – becomes inseparable from the pecuniary funds he hoped to realize with a successful transition from travel-writing to fiction. The turning point in the conception of his first novel, Stevenson makes clear, was the drawing of the imaginary map. 'I made the map of an Island; It was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression' (My First Book: p. 279). Moreover, it is only after the map has been drawn that 'the future character of the book began to appear there visibly among Imaginary woods' (p. 279). The map serves as an inspiration for the creation of the novel and, thus, lies at the origin of *Treasure Island* itself – as Stevenson states 'I had written it up to the map. The map was the chief part of my plot' (p. 282) – and thus serves as a guide both to the buried treasure in the story and to literary success itself. Indeed, Stevenson concludes his essay with this advice to the young writer: 'it is my contention – my superstition, if you like – that who is faithful to his map, and consults it, and draws from it his inspiration, daily and hourly, gains positive support, and not mere negative immunity from accident' (p. 283).

The profitable results of this fidelity to the map are recollected in a particularly telling passage, where Stevenson writes of abandoning his collaboration with his wife Fanny on 'a joint volume of bogie stories' (p. 278) for a new kind of collaboration with his stepson Lloyd Osbourne, for whom the romance is designed. Realizing, in the midst of writing *Treasure Island,* that he had for the first time produced a valuable literary commodity, Stevenson welcomes Alexander Japp as a visitor *'ex machina'* (p. 281) who 'carried away the manuscript in his portmanteau' (p. 281) and arranged for its publication in *Young Folks.* Japp's role

in guiding Stevenson to a new audience is crucial in the author's creation of his first commodity-text.

The commodity-text, according N.N. Feltes's valuable study *The Mode of Production of Victorian Novels,* should not be confused with the category of 'best seller' which 'simply indicates value accrued through distribution and exchange, rather than through the production process' (pp. 9-10). Nor can the notion of writing to a formula, for a pre-fabricated audience, accommodate the concept of the commodity-text, for Feltes maintains 'whereas a formula novel takes its value from something reduced and mechanical, and prior to its production, a commodity-text takes its value from the labor power ("imagination") expended in the very process of interpellation' (p. 9). The key to the commodity-text is that, rather than appealing to a pre-existing audience, it produces – or interpellates – its own readership, and this work of interpellation is the 'labor' the text performs.[3] Within this capitalist mode of production, the map functioned as what Benedict Anderson has termed a 'logo map' which 'could be wholly detached from its geographic context' and thus 'entered an infinitely reproducible series' (p. 175). In this case, the map was both an indicator of the commodity-status of *Treasure Island* – it became, in effect, the logo for the book and 'penetrated deep into the popular imagination' (p. 175) – and a trace of Stevenson's earlier travel-writings: unprofitable journeys from which he had nevertheless learned the importance – and marketability – of location, adventure, and the quest for profit.

The 'imaginary' journey in *Treasure Island,* made by RLS's fictional protagonist Jim Hawkins, is at once materialistic, collective, and carefully-mapped. This new dependence on the map – no longer as a childish plaything but as an essential guide to success – points to a dramatic contrast between the unstructured journeys of the travel narratives, and the disciplined, profit-driven venture of Jim Hawkins, Dr Livesay and Squire Trelawney in *Treasure Island.* A key to Stevenson's realization of the profit from his travels was the interpellation of a new audience of 'boy,' the readers of *Young Folks.* Yet this group also included adult readers

– important literary allies such as W.E. Henley, Andrew Lang, and Edmund Gosse – who were willing to revert to boyhood, thereby joining a homosocial coterie through the guise of 'romance'. Crucial to this process, the map gives direction both to Stevenson's career in fiction and to Jim's journey to a carefully-concealed 'treasure': a new audience of 'boys'.

Identifying his stepson Lloyd as the original audience of *Treasure Island,* Stevenson writes in 'My First Book' of a surprising addition to this privileged circle: 'I had counted on one boy, I found I had two in my audience. My father caught fire at once with all the romance and childishness of his original nature' (p. 280). Thus, from its very inception the power of *Treasure Island* to interpellate, indeed to seduce, adult males (including the stern patriarch, Thomas Stevenson), by appealing to the 'childishness' of their 'nature' is crucial to its success. The potent fantasy-appeal of the map for adult men is again vividly captured by Henley's vignette of one Professor Beesley, discovered by his family while secreted in his study, 'his history books thrown by [...] his Herbert Spencer all forgotten, sunk to the throat in 'Treasure Island'. He had a magnifier at his eye, and through that magnifier he was (historian-like) a-studying the map of Captain Flint' (Maixner: p. 142). The reference to the studious Beesley absorbed in the perusal of the map discloses the key to the romance's success in the secret cartographical pleasure of the text in this Victorian 'study'.[4]

Martin Green has commented on the importance of the map in *Treasure Island* to 'changing the conventions of adventure': 'the story began with the drawing of the map and [...] it was told to his stepson, with his father's collaboration. It is palpably the fantasy of men-being-boys' (p. 228). While Green explores the ideological force of this fantasy for the expansion of empire, he does not emphasize its homoerotic implications. The map, however, is not only a selling point for readers, but becomes an object of desire for characters within the narrative – the pursuit of which involves a flagrant interest in or invasion of other male bodies. Jim discovers the map while searching Billy Bones' chest with his mother, for payment of the dead pirate's bill. Yet Jim can

only gain access to this chest by violating Bones's corpse. While Mrs Hawkins asks with distaste, 'who's to touch it I should like to know' (p. 31). Jim, despite professing 'a strong repugnance,' proves eager: 'I tore open his shirt at the neck, and there, sure enough, hanging to a bit of tarry string [...] we found the key' (p. 31). The last object they remove is an 'oilskin packet' which Jim takes to 'square the account'. Yet the immediate outcome is not to square but the squire, as Jim immediately proceeds to Trelawney's house. Here the bundle that Jim has excitedly snatched from the dead man's chest, becomes an object of desire for the older men, a desire then displaced onto Jim's body: 'The doctor looked it all over as if his fingers were itching to open it' (p. 41). So aroused is the doctor's interest in the contents of Jim's 'packet' that he immediately announces his intention 'to keep Jim Hawkins here to sleep at my house' (p. 41).

Both men revert to boyish pleasure under the influence of the map, and fantasize about immeasurable wealth: Jim narrates that 'brief as it was, and, to me incomprehensible, it filled the squire and Dr Livesey with delight. "'Livesey" said the squire, "you will give up this wretched practice at once. Tomorrow I start for Bristol [...]. We'll have favourable winds, a quick passage, and not the least difficulty in finding the spot, and money to eat – to roll in – to play duck and drake with ever after"" (p. 44).

It is perhaps not surprising that Jim should confuse this eroticised masculine interest in the map with a desire for himself. Enchanted by the attentions of John Silver, for example, Jim declares him 'the most interesting companion' (p. 55); yet is soon jealous as Silver's attentions are redirected to another 'young seaman': 'You may imagine how I felt when I heard this abominable old rogue addressing another in the very same words of flattery as he had used to myself' (p. 68). Seeking to attract the new boy to a life of piracy, Silver admits, 'I've [...] never denied myself o' nothing heart desires' (p. 68). Yet what Silver's heart 'desires' is neither Jim nor his rival, but the map to which both boys might offer access: as when Captain Smollett produces a map 'Long John's eyes burned in his head as he took the chart;

but by the fresh look of the paper, I knew he was doomed to disappointment. This was not the map we found in Billy Bones's chest, but an accurate copy' (p. 74). Even in the presence of this copy, however, Silver experiences a rejuvenation as he looks at the island – 'You'll bathe, and you'll climb trees, and you'll hunt goats you will [...]. Why it makes me young again. I was going to forget my timber leg. It's a pleasant thing to be young [...].' (p. 74). Like many readers of the novel, Silver is able to indulge the fantasy of 'men being boys' – though only in the presence of one who, he later says, 'is the picter of my own self when I was young and handsome' (p. 168).

Stevenson treasured the map as the key to attracting a homosocial clique of readers. Hence, what distinguished his new project is its strictly limited appeal to a specialized audience or 'class' of readers, a choice that in turn dictates the style of the work: 'It was to be a story for boys; no need of psychology or fine writing. And I had a boy at hand to be a touchstone. Women were excluded' (My First Book: p. 279). This abrupt dismissal of 'women' from the scene of the fiction is a declaration of Stevenson's new fictional manifesto and foreshadows the extent to which women are excluded from (or at least marginalized in) many of his fictional ventures. The woman – at least, the invading 'mother' – is seen as a threat to the romance of the boyish collaboration with Lloyd, and so must be 'excluded' from it.[5] Stevenson's sexual passion for his wife is here displaced by this quasi-erotic fascination for maps: 'I am told there are people who do not care for maps, and find it hard to believe. The names, the shapes of the woodlands, the courses of the roads and rivers, the prehistoric footsteps of man still distinctly traceable [...] here is an inexhaustible fund of interest *for any man* with eyes to see' (p. 279, emphasis added). Stevenson inevitably foregrounds the gender-specific appeal of the work for his imaginary community of map-obsessed men – precisely the audience interpellated by Stevenson's commodity-text – inspiring both admiration and emulation in fellow-writers such as Henley, Haggard, Lang, and Kipling. Marking the location of an imaginary boundary separating the

domestic domain of women – as wives, mothers, readers – from the external spaces of male empire and adventure, the map of this 'romance' inevitably takes on a specifically masculine, indeed homoerotic significance.[6]

Yet membership of this community entailed a willingness to surrender to the childish pleasures of treasure hunting. The exclusivity of this imagined community founded on boyhood, romantic adventure, and profit is again foregrounded in 1884, when, Henry James's influential paper praises 'the delightful story of *Treasure Island*' because 'it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts' (p. 209), while also criticizing the story's lack of realism, pointing out that 'I have been a child, but I have never been on a quest for buried treasure' (p. 209). In his famous rejoinder, 'A Humble Remonstrance,' Stevenson described James's statement as a 'wilful paradox; for if he has never been on a quest for buried treasure, it can be demonstrated that he has never been a child' (p. 218). Stevenson identifies the fantasy of such a quest as the defining fact of childhood, a literary map from which James is thenceforth barred: 'There never was a child (unless Master James) but has hunted gold, and been a pirate, and a military commander, and a bandit in the mountains' (p. 218). James' lack of a boyhood disqualifies him, in Stevenson's account, from the community of men committed to romance, those who, he relates, 'have ardently desired and fondly imagined the details of such a life in youthful daydreams' (p. 218). Stevenson admits that he has calculatedly exploited these 'daydreams' of boys and childlike men for profit: 'the author, counting upon that, and well aware (cunning and low-minded man!) that this class of interest, having been frequently treated, finds a readily accessible and beaten road to the sympathies of the reader, addressed himself throughout to the building up and circumstantiation of this boyish dream' (pp. 218-19).

Stevenson's repackaging of the narrative of journey for the 'boy' reader rested on his success in 'both accepting and changing the conventions of adventure' (Green: p. 228), by writing a book that was a recycling of his own rejected travel writings. Jacqueline

Rose argues that the breakthrough of *Treasure Island* is a technical one, involving the adaptation of travel writing for a reader interested in 'colonialist venture': '*Treasure Island* is remarkable for the way it perfects this form for the child reader [...] the way that it conceals the slide between nature study and suspense.' (p. 80). Rose's is over-literal in identifying the implicitly naive 'child reader' as the target of this technique. Indeed, *Treasure Island* is a work that provoked and produced desire in its adult male readers, a desire that the text re-routed from potentially subversive masculine desire towards the 'innocent' object of colonial venture and buried treasure. Stevenson – who wrote in 'A Note on Realism' that the romancer 'must [...] suppress much and omit more' (p. 267) – produces 'romance' as an art of sublimation, its desire being 'buried' with the treasure and subsequently excavated by its adult male readers posing as boys, or its boy readers posing as pirate-adventurers. Indeed, the novel's homoerotic investment in the map and treasure is blatant throughout, its divestment from the 'moral purity' ethos of childhood all-but-absolute. The treasure itself though referred to as 'hidden' and 'buried' (p. 42), is declared at the outset of the narrative as having already been found – 'there is still treasure not yet lifted' (p. 11). Hence, as the pirates discover when their search party stumbles upon 'a great excavation, not very recent' (p. 197) the promise of 'discovering' the treasure has always been foreclosed. The map, despite being a highly-charged object of desire, proves quite useless as a guide to the treasure. Yet the secret of the treasure's location cannot be disclosed because, as Livesay tells Silver, 'it's not my secret, you see' (p. 185).

Stevenson was confident of profiting from his powers of stirring desire in 'boy' readers, writing Henley: 'I believe there's more coin in it than in any amount of crawlers [...]. If this don't fetch the kids, why, they have gone rotten since my day' (Maixner: p. 124). What would 'fetch the kids,' among other things, is that the narrator is 'one of them': as Green observes, 'what is new about it [*Treasure Island*] in a generic way is that a boy plays the leading part and tells the story' (*Dreams*: p. 228). This Stevenson's own ability to revert to boyhood, in constructing his narrator, is part of

his resolution that 'I'll make this boy's business pay' (Maixner: p. 125). In 'A Humble Remonstrance,' Stevenson describes 'himself [as] more or less grown up' (p. 219) and it appears that the adoption of this persona, 'the boyish man', author of boys books for men, is a carefully-calculated move to exploit a growing market in fiction. Stevenson's public persona, increasingly associated with his adventure stories, also featured a boyish love of exploration and demonstrated 'the compulsion [...] to live out something of an adventure himself' (Green: p. 228).

However, the boyhood romance ends not with a dream but a nightmare, as the desired destination promised by the map becomes the last place on earth one wishes to return to. Disillusion with the outcome of the journey is one feature that carries over from the travel narratives, as Jim finally confesses that 'Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts, or start upright in bed, with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"' (p. 208). The acquisition of profit, which has been the sole purpose of travel, now makes further travel unnecessary and, in Jim's case, abhorrent. By May 1883 Stevenson was celebrating the sale of *Treasure Island* to Cassel's in language worthy of Squire Trelawney himself: 'There has been offered for *Treasure Island* – how much, do you suppose? [...] A hundred pounds, all alive oh! A hundred jingling, tingling, golden, minted quid. Is not this wonderful?' (*Letters:* pp. 119-20). Abandoning his collaboration with Fanny to write a story that excludes women, Stevenson substitutes being 'faithful to his map' for marital fidelity. Yet this assertion of loyalty is firmly rooted in commercial self-interest, the map offering a 'mine of suggestion'. As another source of profit, the 'mine' of boy readers proves far from exhausted: as with the famous Island itself, there is 'still treasure not yet lifted' (p. 11).[7]

End Notes

1. Stevenson writes with disdain of these early literary efforts in 'My First Book,' 'I had written little books and little essays and short stories; and had got patted on the back and paid for them – though not enough to live upon' (p. 277). Hence, the works that have not been profitable enough 'to live upon' are simply discarded from the record.
2. As Paul Maixner notes, 'Accounts of travel were then in vogue and judged against other examples these volumes were clearly superior, though they did not rank high in Stevenson's own opinion, having been written according to him chiefly because they could be turned out easily and might be profitable' (p. 8). In actuality, they earned little for him although the reviews were generally favourable. Hence, the travel narratives are retrospectively dismissed as wasteful digressions, and included among 'the succession of defeats [that] lasted unbroken till I was thirty-one' (My First Book: p. 277).
3. Feltes insists that the actual format of the work is less significant than this (capitalist) mode of production and extraction of surplus value: 'whether the commodity-text is to take the particular form of a series of books, a magazine serial, or a part-issue novel, series production, by allowing the bourgeois audience's ideological engagement to be sensed and expanded, allows as well the extraction of ever greater surplus value from the very production (or "creative") process itself' (p. 9).
4. So important was the map for interpellating the adult reader as boy, that when H. Rider Haggard wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in 1885 – a work produced in direct competition with *Treasure Island* and also published by Cassells – he not only dedicated the book 'To all the big and little boys who read it' (p. l), but also included a map leading to the treasure, in this case the diamond mines of King Solomon (p. 27).
5. As Koestenbaum writes, 'Male writers revered Stevenson's "books for boys" because they omitted women. Henry James, in particular, celebrated the absence of women from Stevenson's

fiction' and 'claimed that Stevenson had "given to the world the romance of boyhood"'(p. 36). Of the collaboration with his stepson Lloyd, Koestenbaum writes, 'Stevenson and his stepson share a romance of boyhood involving a map to a fictional country' (Shadow: p. 41).

6. Reviews of *Treasure Island* commented on the novel's likely appeal to men as well as to boys. Henley writes that 'Primarily it is a book for boys [...]. But it is a book for boys which will be delightful to all grown men who have the sentiment of treasure-hunting and are touched with the true spirit of the Spanish Main' (Maixner: p. 132). Lang, asking, 'will *Treasure Island* be as popular with boys as it is sure to be with men who retain something of the boy?' has no hesitation answering in the affirmative (p. 138).

7. Interestingly, the reviews of *Treasure Island* were not fully supportive of Stevenson's transition to boys' author. Publicly judging that Stevenson's fiction was 'even stronger than [his] humorous and sentimental journeying' (Maixner: p. 139), Lang went on to urge that, 'After this romance for boys he must give us a novel for men and women' (Maixner: p. 139). Similarly, the reviewer for *The Graphic,* who found 'passages in this romance surpassing in power anything that Mr Stevenson has yet done' concluded by stating, 'Yet we want no more boys' books from Mr Stevenson' (p. 141).

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More Than a Library: the Ethnographic Potential of Stevenson's South Seas Writing.

Liam Connell

The concern of this paper is with Stevenson's South Sea's writing and the use that has been made of this writing as ethnographic material by commentators, critics, and, it is tentatively suggested, the common reader. Given the diversity of Stevenson' s writing about the Pacific, its use in this way is not wholly surprising, especially in the case of the amorphous *In the South Seas.* Literary critics have noted the generic indeterminacy of these 'letters' (Hillier, 1988; Menikoff, 1992) but in many ways they resemble much of the writing about other cultures written by amateur observers during the late Victorian period. Stevenson himself was familiar with the work of the missionary Robert Codrington on *The Melanesians,* who had attended lectures by Tylor at Oxford and whose writing is now regarded as typical of ethnographic material of the period (Codrington, 1891; Stevenson, 1998: p. 28; Stocking, 1992: p. 18). Much like Stevenson's South Sea 'letters,' Codrington's book offers 'no unified interpretive hypothesis' and is comprised of a series of 'low-level genalizations and the amassing of an eclectic range of information' (Clifford, 1988: p. 27). Stevenson's technique of arranging diachronic details around a single topic mirrors Codrington's work, which provides comparative information on a given topic for all of the island groups of 'Melanesia'. Despite British anthropology's attempts, from the mid-1880s, to improve the nature of the material that it relied upon – seeking to direct the nature of enquiry and eschewing explicitly fictional texts – it would be some fifty years before the trained field-worker became the established source of ethnography. In the 1890s it was highly conventional for anthropologists who had never left the metropole to use writing such as Stevenson' s *In the South Seas* as the chief evidence supporting anthropological conjecture. In this

context, it comes as no surprise to find Stevenson's friend, Andrew Lang, citing Stevenson's 'letters' as evidence to support his own position in regard of *'tapu'* in *Magic and Religion* (Lang, 1901: p. 268). Indeed, as Robert Crawford has hinted (Crawford, 1992: p. 156), Stevenson's friendship with Lang may prove a useful route into understanding his writing and this is particularly true of *In the South Seas*. Lang provided one of the most complete versions of the work for the Swanston edition of the *Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Stevenson, 1912a; Swearingen 1980: p. 138) and *In the South Seas* displays all the ambivalence contained within Lang's shift from Tylorian evolutionary-anthropology to a more modern, relativist, conception of human mentality (Stocking, 1995: pp. 50-63).

It may be this ambivalence that produced what is now taken for generic uncertainty and it is useful to think of Stevenson as engaged in a dialogue with the disciplinary limits of anthropology at that time. *In the South Seas* frequently questions the means of acquiring evidence about Pacific cultures used by other writers, comparing his own experience with that documented elsewhere, and seeking authority for his own native informants – even if he is sometimes overly credulous about the information he receives. Interestingly, in hinting at Lang's influence on his thinking about Pacific cultures, Stevenson appears to offer a mild rebuke of the Victorian anthropologist's disinclination for travel. Noting the assistance that 'the effigies of Mr. Andrew Lang' provided him in communicating with the Marquesans, Stevenson comments that:

> [here] is a place for him to go when he shall be weary of Middlesex and Homer. (Stevenson, 1998: pp. 11-12)

Stevenson seems to be urging the Victorian anthropologist into the field in a particularly modern way and, in so doing, effectively stakes a claim for the value of his own account. This claim was one that Stevenson was to make quite explicitly in a letter to Charles Baxter after less than two months among the Pacific islands:

> I shall have a fine book of travels, I feel sure; and will tell you more of the South Seas after very few months than any other writer has done – except Herman Melville perhaps. (Stevenson, 1912b)

It is not immediately clear whether Stevenson is parading his ability as a writer or his sensitivity as an observer but the claim that he is capable of providing greater insight into Pacific culture than any other writer is virtually categorical. It may be this certainty which distinguishes Stevenson's ethnography from other contemporaneous examples, and it should be remembered that when he made the statement Stevenson had no knowledge of the local languages. Indeed, despite an active interest in the structures of the languages he encountered, Stevenson's linguistic competence remained limited during the period that he wrote *In the South Seas.* This is significant, since Victorian anthropology's preference for amateur accounts such as Stevenson's depended to a large extent on the linguistic knowledge that these resident-informants possessed (Clifford, 1988: p. 26, p. 27). Stevenson's lack of linguistic expertise would have undermined the value of *In the South Seas* for late-Victorian anthropology. However, it also appears to anticipate modern fieldwork-anthropology's belief that the ethnographer 'could efficiently "use" native languages without "mastering" them' (Clifford, 1988, pp. 30-31). Notably, although in his first encounter with Pacific islanders Stevenson is concerned that 'Not one soul aboard the *Casco* ...knew, except by accident, one word of any of the island tongues' (Stevenson, 1998: p. 6), he is quick to point out, at the start of the next letter, that 'the impediment of tongues was one that [he] particularly over-estimated', the local languages being 'easy to smatter' (Stevenson, 1998: p. 10).

This combination of a lack of linguistic ability and his insistence that his account of the South Seas is authoritative produces one of the most enlightening glimpses of the core assumptions behind *In the South Seas.* In a frequently cited passage Stevenson recommends a sort of *quid pro quo* where the traveller offers the

indigenous population stories from his or her own culture in order to encourage them to respond with their own tales in return.

> I hit upon a means of communication which I recommend to travellers. When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of 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 the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the Tevas of Tahiti. The native was no longer ashamed, his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened. It is this sense of kinship that the traveller must rouse and share. (Stevenson, 1998: p. 13)

The emphasis upon 'kinship' at the end of this passage is what most attracts critics to it, and it is often cited as proof of Stevenson's identification of affinities between Pacific culture and the Scottish Highlands: although the suggestion that the islanders should be 'ashamed' of these stories is never fully interrogated. Robert Hillier simply glosses Stevenson's account, stressing his 'eagerness to tell them sagas of the Scottish Highlands' (Hillier, 1987: p. 32). Similarly, Rod Edmond identifies a 'series of parallels between Marqueasan and Scottish Highlands culture' as 'Stevenson's most frequent method of settling the unease provoked by strangeness' (Edmond, 1997: p. 163). Edmond remarks of this particular instance that:

> In this way the problem of communication which had so frustrated Stevenson on his arrival is partly overcome. (p. 164)

While it needs noting that Stevenson initial frustration is more linguistic than cultural, it seems more important to acknowledge that Stevenson's interpretation of the responses he received gives them a status that may not have been intended by his informants. Although he implies a fair exchange of his stories for theirs, the significance that is attached to these stories is not equal. Bluntly, he offers stories, which he explicitly identifies as historical, in return for what he takes to be 'custom' or firmly held 'belief'. Not only does his 'method', if we may call it that, make an equation between a Pacific present with a Scottish (and barbarous) past, but it also seems to rely upon a collapse of the fictional with the factual: Stevenson treats the islanders' stories as literal expressions of local culture.

For literary critics there may be nothing contentious about this, especially given the prominent assumption of a corollary between the literary and culture in general within literary studies. Nevertheless, the temptation to interpret fiction as ethnography must be tempered by a generous acknowledgement of the imaginative potential of fictional texts.[1] Stevenson's willingness to interpret the stories that he was told as informative about the nature of Pacific culture seems to derive from two sources. In the first instance it is a consequence of his earnest desire to testify to the veracity of his accounts, to present himself as a reliable witness to the South Seas and a singularly gifted chronicler of what he saw there. But, perhaps more importantly, it appears to be born of a profound belief in the revelatory potential of fiction. Both these impulses are perfectly combined in Stevenson's own estimate of his novella, *The Beach of Falesá*, of which he most famously wrote that it was the 'first realistic South Sea story', through which it was possible to 'know more about the South Seas ...than if you had read a library' (Stevenson, 1912b, XXV: p. 103). In his 1883 'Note on Realism' Stevenson distinguishes between the 'tendency' towards 'the extreme of detail', which for him characterises realism, and 'the fundamental truth' that is arrived at by other means (Stevenson, 1912c), and his insistence on the 'realistic' quality of *The Beach of Falesá* seems to be based upon his having captured the 'details' of

Pacific life (Stevenson, 1912b, XXV: p. 103). This was a point he had already made in an early reference to the story when he told Colvin that it was 'really good, well fed with facts [and] true to the manners' (Stevenson, 1912b, XXV: p. 76). In light of this it is not wholly surprising that critical commentators have been inclined to read Stevenson's fiction as ethnographic material about the Pacific region, effectively imitating Stevenson's collapsing of fact and fiction in relation to the stories that he heard in the Pacific islands. The main bulk of what follows comprises a consideration of the serial publication of *The Beach of Falesá* as 'Uma: or the Beach of Falesá (Being the Narrative of a South-Sea Trader)' in the *Illustrated London News (ILN)* in an effort to identify why this might have happened (Stevenson, 1892b). It suggests that the material surrounding Stevenson's story would have encouraged its readers to interpret *The Beach of Falesá* as ethnographic material which allowed its incorporation into the imperial propaganda that was the mainstay of the *ILN*. Finally, this interpretation is supported by a demonstration of how Stevenson's biographers have similarly read 'The Bottle Imp', allowing them to use it as the basis for unsubstantiated anthropological judgements about non-European cultures.

The ethnographic potential of *Uma: or the Beach of Falesá*.

Although the critical response to *Island Nights' Entertainments* was mixed, contemporaneous reviews both emphasised the realistic portrayal of the south Pacific and Stevenson's growth as writer due to his travels in the region (Maixner, 1981: pp. 408-422). Undoubtedly, the fact that Stevenson persistently used his physical presence in the Pacific to lend authority to his accounts would have encouraged these types of readings, and reviews of *Island Nights' Entertainments* often made reference to Stevenson's polemical writing from the Pacific. Of course, the literal presence of Victorian authors in the colonial locations from which they wrote was commonplace and it seems likely that part of the pleasure gained from reading works by writers such as Kipling, Henty,

Haggard and Stevenson derived from the conviction that their work bore witness to British imperial possessions: as Phillips has argued, adventure fiction imaginatively mapped the empty spaces of Empire (Phillips, 1997: p. 13). It has already been argued that, wittingly or otherwise, Stevenson's letters home supported such a belief and that he understood his fictional work, just as much as his ethnography, to have an instructive element. Certainly his frequent correspondence with the *Times* between 1889 and 1894 on German conduct in Samoa constantly asserted his position as an authoritative witness (Swearingen, 1980: pp. 128-29). This is often implicit but, in the case of the letter dated 22 June 1892, published in the *Times* on 23 July, Stevenson vigorously defends himself against the accusation of 'a New Zealand paper' that if the 'curious conspiracy which Mr Stevenson appears to have unearthed... had any real existence... [it] would be known to everybody on the island' (Stevenson, 1892a). Yet even without access to Stevenson's letters it is possible to see how the publication of his fictional material similarly encouraged his Victorian readers to interpret it as containing factual, ethnographic, information about the South Seas. The publication of 'Uma' in the *ILN* can be seen to emphasise meanings for the text that have not been generally recognised by surrounding the text with material more in tune with the dominant mode of imperial propaganda.

The most notable difference between the serial publication and the version of *The Beach of Falesá* that is now most frequently available are the illustrations by Gordon Browne which were also used in the 1893 edition of *Island Nights' Entertainments* (Stevenson, 1893). Arguably, these illustrations contributed to the censorship of Stevenson's story as described by Barry Menikoff in his edition of *The Beach of Falesá* (Menikoff, 1984). Given the fact that in the nineteenth century physiological features such as the shape of the skull were as significant as chromatic gradients as indicators of race (Cowling, 1989: p. 55; Street, 1975: pp. 50-55), Uma is depicted as relatively Caucasian despite her exotic dress and the darkness of her skin. If Mary Cowling is correct to argue that painted figures in the Victorian era were composed

and read within the prevalent assumptions of physiognomy and phrenology, then Browne's illustrations may be felt to soften the impact of the story's miscegenation by gently erasing, or at least diminishing, Uma's racial difference. This is most evident in the depiction of her in the final instalment, published on 6 August 1892, where Uma is shown collapsing after having been shot by Case. Unlike the earlier images and in contradiction of the textual insistence that she had 'nothing on but her kilt,' which is retained, she is now fully clothed in a manner resembling Greco-Roman dress (Stevenson, 1892b: pp. 169-170). The decision to clothe Uma in this instance may be due to the parabola of her fall, with the publishers being unwilling to depict the naked form in such arched activity. However, it is possible that her newly clothed status may have been intended to signal Wiltshire's civilising influence upon the savage native, since they are now legitimately married. Certainly, one effect of this picture is to further erase the markers of racial difference and so undermine Stevenson's critique of colonial activity.

Stevenson was not entirely happy with the illustrations, particularly those of Uma (Swearingen, 1980: p. 155), but if we are to read this as a resistance to censorship it is important to be aware of the extent to which Stevenson's own text undoes the controversy surrounding miscegenation by subtly depicting Uma as racially superior. The Victorian reader of *The Beach of Falesá* would have been well aware of the implications of Wiltshire first description of Uma's 'long face' and 'high forehead' (Stevenson, 1996: p. 7). Despite the declining significance of physiognomy, the distinction between 'the white or Caucasian race, identified as markedly orthognathous' – that is, displaying a large cranium – and 'the prognathous "savage" races' – that is, with a prominent jaw and receding forehead – was still well established in the late nineteenth century (Cowling, 1989: p. 60). It is highly likely that Victorian readers of Stevenson's novella would have immediately understood the description of Uma's skull as a signal of her superior intellect and, however unconsciously, would have associated this with the white 'race'.[2] Such a reading would have been consistent

with a nineteenth century understanding of Polynesian societies, which were characterised by the attractiveness of their women and their relative proximity to European 'civilisation' in comparison with neighbouring Melanesian island-groups (Thomas, 1989). If Browne's illustrations undermine the novella's challenging engagement with miscegenation, it must also be recognised that he took his cue from textual prompts in Stevenson's original.

The illustrations for the serial publication of 'Uma' have an additional significance in so far as they harmonise Stevenson's story within the general style of the *ILN*. This is achieved effectively and, due to the manner in which discrete items are set out on the page, results in some blurring of Stevenson's story with the surrounding material: in particular, the positioning of illustrations often sees different items merging with one another typographically. On 2 July 1892 for example, the first instalment of 'Uma' ends at the bottom of column two on page 11 and is followed in column three by an interview with 'Prince Bismark At Friedrichsruh'. An illustration relating to this item, of Bismark with 'Emperor William I', is positioned in the centre of the page, breaking column two and indenting column one. Although this illustration is a retouched photograph, a technique commonly used in the *ILN* at this time but which distinguishes it from the illustrations of Stevenson's story, the fact that it occupies the space allocated to Stevenson's story makes it difficult to read 'Uma' in isolation from the surrounding material. While it is reasonable to suppose that the Victorian reader would be more adept at *reading* the layout of this magazine, it still seems likely that the relatively smooth transition from Stevenson's story into other items would have led them to connect Stevenson's story to the general imperial ethos espoused in the magazine. Additionally, an inattentive reader of Stevenson's story would gain a more immediate impression of it from the illustrations than the text and, if John Mackenzie is correct in asserting that the *ILN* was seen by large numbers of people who were probably only able to *read* the illustrations (MacKenzie, 1985: p. 21), then this effect would be exaggerated.

The contribution of the *ILN* to the propaganda of empire is well documented and the assimilation of Stevenson's writing into its general content must be seen as having a transforming effect upon the meaning of his text. As a consequence of the 1892 General Election the issues of the *ILN* in which 'Uma' appeared pay less attention to colonial matters than one would usually expect. Nevertheless such territories still have a prominent presence within its pages. For instance, on 2 July the regular column, 'Hampshire Vignettes' a, presumably, fictionalised account of Hampshire life contains a tale of a wild local boy who, as an indication of his maturity joins the navy:

> The unforeseen result of his training had been to refine as well as to develop him ('The author of "Mademoiselle IXE"', 1892).

The suggestion that the boy's waywardness may be due to 'gypsy blood' perhaps indicates that this story is a glorification of empire-in-miniature, with British institutions performing a civilising function by quelling his natural instincts. The motor for the story is the young man's death by disease – 'that invisible foe who, more persistently than bullet or blade, thins the ranks of our two great armies' – in 'the far South,' which is probably an unspecific reference to the Pacific region. His death, however, is not presented as tragic but is rather ennobled by his grave in that far away place:

> For when we remember by whom, as well as to whom, the pile was raised, that everyone from the captain to the shipboy gave... his stone to the cairn, that it stands a memorial not only of what was loveworthy in the lad himself, but of what was loving and reverent in his shipmates, of that tenderness which... goes hand in hand with the highest daring, of all, in fact that makes the typical English sailor the darling of the English heart – why then we feel that the end of our

> sailor's poor little story is not such a lame and impotent conclusion after all.

In this final paean the story transforms the danger of military service into martyrdom and an effective endorsement of the naval life. The fact that this martyrdom occurs in the same location as Stevenson's story is merely coincidental, but the extent to which acts of heroism in such settings were a mainstay of imperial propaganda is illustrative of how radical a critique *The Beach of Falesá* was of this tradition. The rough, hypocritical, and possibly murderous Wiltshire is a striking contrast to the young seaman of the 'Hampshire Vignettes'. However, just as the excision of the back-story at the start of *The Beach of Falesá* can be interpreted as censoring the novella by removing some of the ambivalence behind Wiltshire's motives (Menikoff, 1984; Stevenson, 1996, XXXV: p. 260), the physical proximity of 'Uma' to overtly colonial material must surely have further softened its critique. It seems likely that, for the Victorian reader turning from the 'Hampshire Vignettes' to 'Uma', Stevenson's story would have appeared to compliment the former tale by offering details of the possible worlds that they might visit should they too choose the naval life.

Of course, the reverse is possible and Stevenson's critique may have upset the imperialist impulse of the *ILN's* propaganda. However, the sheer quantity of such propaganda makes such a proposition less likely. Instead, it seems probable that the publication of 'Uma' in *ILN* severely altered the manner in which it was read by its Victorian audience. Such a conclusion is supported by the similarity of Stevenson's representation of his material as instructive to the dominant mode of presentation adopted for the content of the *ILN*. In particular, it seems enlightening that one constant of that presentation, especially for material that concerned colonial territories, was an insistence upon the physical presence of British writers as witnesses to the Empire. This had two impulses: first it allowed the *ILN* to present itself as a reliable source of information, whose account could be trusted because it was provided by firsthand sources; second, it constituted an acting

out of the sort of imperial competition which characterised late nineteenth century European foreign policy. In the context of frequent journal articles detailing the expansion of other powers across the globe, including the Pacific region (n.a., 1893; Rees, 1888), the physical presence of writers in these locations acted as an indication of British imperial success to the detriment of its competitors such as Germany, Russia and the United States. Since Stevenson's movements overseas were well publicised, the prominent use of his name in the title-piece to each episode at once traded upon his reputation as a writer and testified to the presence of the author in the South Seas. To that extent the presentation of Stevenson's story matches the presentation of a great deal of the *ILN*, including much genuinely ethnographic material. A few examples will suffice.

In the *ILN* from 23 July 1892, which contained the fourth episode of 'Uma', the material that immediately preceded Stevenson's story includes illustrations of 'Kangaroo Hunting in Australia' and sketches from East Africa. Both items employ the same dynamic of presence and authenticity as Stevenson utilised throughout *In the South Seas*. For instance, in the description of the Australian illustrations, the *ILN* explains that the sketches are 'by one who has shared in these Australian hunts' and, in doing so, it positions its illustrator as an authoritative source of information about such events: his depiction can be trusted because he was present as a witness to that which he represents (Illustrated London News, 1892a). Similarly, on the following page, the magazine carried a series of 'Sketches in Equatorial Africa, by Bishop Tucker' which it again attributes to the man on the spot:

> At this anxious crisis in the prospects of the combined effort made by the Church Missionary Society and by the British East Africa Company to maintain establishments for promoting civilisation, English trade and Christian instruction in the troubled Kingdom of Uganda, fresh illustrations of the region of Africa, or even of the route from the sea-coast to Lake Victoria Nyanza, possess more

> than ordinary value. We are favoured by the English Bishop of Equatorial Africa, the right rev. Alfred Robert Tucker, D.D., who is an accomplished artist, with a few sketches made by him in January and February last, during his journey to visit the mission stations of Taveta, Mochi and Chagga, which are situated just south of Mount Kilimanjaro, near the frontier line dividing the German and the British territorial jurisdictions from each other, perhaps a hundred and sixty miles inland from the seaport of Mombasa.
>
> (Illustrated London News, 1892b)

Not only does this explanation precisely locate Bishop Tucker within Africa, testifying to the reliability of his depictions by the specificity of its description, but it also places him at the 'frontier' of the British Empire to act as a safeguard against German expansion. British treaties with local rulers in Uganda were little more than eighteen months old and it would be another two years before the British government declared Uganda a protectorate. In a political climate in which a British presence was still tenuous, the Bishop's location in the region is explicitly figured as an activity that can protect British interests. The combination of 'civilisation, English trade and Christian instruction' hints to the fact that the civilisation and Christianity to be preserved are similarly national. Even more important perhaps is the suggestion that the reader of the *ILN* is in some way engaged in a similar act of preservation by viewing the sketches that the Bishop has sent home. The paper suggests that the illustrations themselves, 'possess more than ordinary value' because of the political context in which they were drawn. Their value resides in the information that they supply: information that is necessary for the preservation of British interest. As a witness to the region Tucker is able to send back dispatches – in the form of sketches – that provide important information for controlling the region. However, implicit in this equation is the information's recipient, the audience that can utilise these sketches to form an understanding of the Ugandan

situation. In this way, the *ILN* implicitly constructs a relationship between its texts and its readers in which its readers are positioned as witnesses safeguarding the British Empire.

In this context it is revealing to consider the type of information that the Bishop's sketches convey. There are three sketches on the page: 'Mount Meru, from the Mochi Mission Station', 'Bridge at Taveta', and 'Native House, Taveta'. While the first of these sketches provides some topographical information, showing 'Mount Meru, which rises west of Chagga, about 9000ft. above the surrounding plain', and the second illustrates something of the local infrastructure, the last of these has a primarily ethnographic function. The picture shows a dome shaped grass-hut outside of which sits the said 'native' and a few domestic implements. In fact all of the sketches contain depictions of Africans so that even the two pictures, which seem chiefly intended to provide geographical information, also offer details necessary for a typology of the indigenous population. A similar tendency is evident in an item from the issue of 30 July on 'The Volcanic Eruption in Sanguir' (Illustrated London News, 1892c). This item recounts how reports were 'recently brought to Borneo' of 'the total destruction of the island', a Dutch colony in the Malay Archipelago, 'and its inhabitants'. While the article is mainly concerned to explain the reason why volcanic activity is so prevalent in the region, the five illustrations predominantly depict native physiological characteristics and details of native life. In addition to the sketch of 'Sanguir from the Sea', showing the smoking volcano, the sketches are titled 'Houses of Natives', 'A Native of Sanguir', 'Natives of Sanguir' and 'A Native Boat'. While these illustrations clearly provide background detail for a story with little available particulars, they also serve a crucially ethnographic function by illustrating classificatory features of the indigenous population. In the late nineteenth century ethnographic enquiry was still largely concerned with the classification of racial typologies and determining the boundaries of cultures as racial classifications (Thomas, 1989: p. 27). The extent to which these pictures would have performed that function is doubtless limited by their

appearance within a popular magazine, which was primarily concerned with entertaining its readership. However, the extent to which 'reading' corresponded to 'the acquisition of information' for the Victorian reader (Stocking, 1991: p. 759) and the frequency with which pictures in magazines such as the *ILN* were doctored so that they might more adequately represent British imperial dominance (Ryan, 1997; p. 220), suggests that there existed the potential for such pictures to perform a dual function – at once entertaining and instructing the reader as ethnographic material. These pictures are different from the illustrations to Stevenson's story. Their style is quite distinct, with the former being precisely drawn, seeking to mimic photographic exactitude, and the latter having a more fluid, expressive quality, attempting to capture something of the drama of Stevenson's tale.[3] Additionally, the use of titles perform quite separate functions: Browne's illustrations all use quotations from the text in order to refer to some incident in the story and to borrow from it some dramatic moment; by contrast, the ethnographic material that surrounds Stevenson's story uses short precise descriptive titles that indicate the instructive, classificatory, nature of their content. Nevertheless, even accepting the fact that Stevenson's story occupies a quite different generic position from the other material printed alongside it, it is difficult to see how the context for 'Uma' would not have influenced the manner in which it was read by its Victorian audience. The fact that so much of the *ILN*'s content equated location with authority must have encouraged its contemporaneous readers to imagine that Stevenson's story contained valuable information about Pacific culture, a reading which Stevenson himself encouraged. Moreover, while Stevenson may have been anxious for his readers to identify the manipulation of the indigenous population by European imperialists amongst those facts, the general support for Empire within the *ILN* must have fatally hampered the impact of his critique. Instead, the physiognomic depictions of Pacific people in and around Stevenson's story would have combined with a general system of belief that understood the location of British subjects within imperial territories to guarantee the integrity of

the British Empire. Crucially, this guarantee depended upon a stream of information from the colonial territory back into the metropolis. In this context, irrespective of any critique it may contain, Stevenson's story helped to support the imperial carapace by serving as the testimony of a witness to British expansion.

Reading 'The Bottle Imp' as ethnographic material.

Evidence to support the suggestion that the publication of 'Uma' in the *ILN* encouraged interpretations of that story as an ethnographic record of Pacific culture may be found in precisely that sort of reading of 'The Bottle Imp' by a number of Stevenson's biographers. Critical responses to this story have largely been biographical, with even Hillier's treatment being most concerned with a correspondence between Stevenson's biography and details of the story (Hillier, 1987: pp. 41-46). Typical of these responses is that of Frank McLynn in his 1993 biography of Stevenson. Here, McLynn identifies the story's 'greatest impact' as that which it exerted on 'the natives' following its translation for a Samoan paper:

> At once the Samoans were able to solve a riddle that had long puzzled them: how could a mere teller of tales be wealthy? Knowing nothing of the simultaneity of world-wide communication made possible by books, and regarding stories... as the expression of naturalistic truth, the Samoans naturally assumed that the source of RLS's riches was this exact imp that he kept in a bottle. The seeds of his later reputation as the thaumaturge 'Tusitala' were already being sown. (McLynn, 1993: p. 371)

McLynn's characterisation of Samoan belief chimes neatly with nineteenth century evolutionary theories of culture, defining it as a lack of knowledge rather than as a culturally different relationship to art. His assertion that the Samoans literally believed Stevenson's story is repeated by a number of Stevenson's

biographers who all explain that during a visit to his house some Samoan dignitary would summon the courage to ask the whereabouts of 'the bottle' (Balfour, 1901, II: p. 109; Furnas, 1952: p. 328; Moors, 1910: p. 99). Crucially, none of these biographical accounts provide a source for this particular information, although Moors and Balfour imply that their presence testifies to the veracity of their accounts. However, evidence of their source exists in a common lexicography and a structural proximity to an account of such events in a letter from Stevenson to Conan Doyle, written in August 1893. In this letter Stevenson explains the difficulties involved in re-narrating Doyle's story *The Engineer's Thumb,* and the effect that the story had upon his audience once this was achieved. He concludes by suggesting that Doyle should 'disabuse' himself of the idea that he would be thought the author of the tale should he come to Samoa:

> They do not know what it is to make up a story. *The Engineer's Thumb* (God forgive me) was narrated as a piece of actual and factual history. Nay, and more, I who write to you have had the indiscretion to perpetuate a trifling piece of fiction entitled *The Bottle Imp.* Parties who come up to visit my unpretentious mansion, after having admired the ceilings by Vanderputty and tapestry by Gobbling, manifest towards the end a certain uneasiness which proves them to be fellows of an infinite delicacy. They may be seen to shrug a brown shoulder, to roll up a speaking eye, and at last secret burst from them: 'Where is the bottle?' (Stevenson, 1912b, XXV: p. 340)

This passage requires close attention because, although it insists that the Samoan's had no conception of the literary, it implies that the nature of Stevenson's narration both presupposed and reinforced such a belief. Stevenson explains that he 'narrated' *The Engineer's Thumb* as if it was 'a piece of actual and factual history' but this narration serves as proof of the Samoan's interpretation of it as such. As with Stevenson's response to the islanders' stories,

he erases the distinction between fact and fiction in order to provide ethnographic details about Pacific culture.

Yet, what is perhaps more interesting, is the fact that so many of his biographers have taken Stevenson at his word. Indeed, in the case of McLynn, Stevenson's claim becomes the source for a more general speculation about the nature of belief among 'traditional peoples' throughout the world. In attempting to explain the respect that the Samoan people had for Stevenson, McLynn attributes it partly to Stevenson's reputation as a 'Warlock' and concludes that:

> Since it was a common perception among traditional peoples in Africa, Asia and Oceania in the nineteenth century that the white man was a spirit and came from the land of the dead, RLS's status as magus and thaumaturge had three main components: he was an *aitu* himself, he commanded a spirit in a bottle and he had as a wife a woman who was an important witch in her own right. (McLynn, 1993: p. 400-1)

Given that McLynn's only source for the Samoan belief that Stevenson 'commanded a spirit in a bottle' appears to derive from Stevenson's letter, it is curious to find him comment with authority about the nature of beliefs throughout 'Africa, Asia and Oceania'. Nothing in McLynn's biography indicates an alternative source for such knowledge. The use that his biography appears to make of Stevenson's writing replicates the relationship between Victorian anthropology and the amateur ethnographer of the nineteenth century: that is, McLynn uses 'The Bottle Imp' and the accompanying letter as ethnographic material sufficient for constructing general theories about human cultures and classifying racial typologies.

The similarity of McLynn's discussion of 'The Bottle Imp' to that of other biographers indicates something significant about the way in which Stevenson's claims to authority have shaped the interpretation of his Pacific material. Stevenson's representation

of his presence in the South Seas as a guarantee of the insight of his observations can be seen as altering the status of his fiction by positioning it as ethnography about remote and unfamiliar cultures. Although the relationship between nineteenth century anthropology and amateur ethnography would have encouraged a reading of his Pacific writing in this way, its apparent value as ethnography over a century later suggests that there is something in the structure of the text which encourages such a reading.

This paper has argued that Stevenson's repeated claims for the accuracy and faithfulness of his depictions coincided with the identification of testimony as a consolidation of British imperialism in the Victorian popular press. The publication of 'Uma' alongside more explicitly ethnographic material was capable of emphasising the story's ethnographic potential because both texts shared a common belief in empiricism: the connection between presence and authority. Extraneous details such as the illustrations to Stevenson's story, a blurring of the discreteness of Stevenson's material and that which surrounds it, and a vigorously imperialist ethos throughout the magazine, all serve to blunt the edges of Stevenson's critique of Empire. However, this effect is complimented by textual evidence and Stevenson's presentation of his texts as libraries on the Pacific. The argument of this paper, then, is literary critics keen to assert Stevenson's critique of Empire in his South Seas writing must be sensitive to the extent that these texts conform to the dominant late-Victorian discourses of Empire and to the extent that contemporaneous contexts of readership were further capable of incorporating his texts into these discursive modes.

End Notes

1. I have written elsewhere about the dangers of reading so-called magic realism as a transparent representation of pre-modern systems of belief (Connell, 1998).
2. Support for this physiognomic reading of Wiltshire's description of Uma may exist in the manuscript version,

where her 'shy, strange, blindish look, between a cat's and a baby's' was originally written as 'sly' (Stevenson, 1996: p. 261). The identification of character attributes in physical appearance is the very cornerstone of physiognomy and the comparison of human and animal appearance was a constant feature of physiognomic writing (Cowling, 1989: p. 14). In this light, the description of Case's 'hawk's nose' may also be instructive (Stevenson, 1996: p. 5), as is Stevenson's reference to physiognomy in his attempt to describe the Marquesans' response to his family photograph album (Stevenson, 1998: p. 11).

3. Although Browne's illustrations have a more realistic quality to them than the companion pictures by W. Hatherell in *Island Nights' Entertainments* (Stevenson, 1893).

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'Can the Subaltern Speak?': Stevenson, Hogg, and Samoa

Douglas S. Mack

In considering 'Stevenson, Hogg, and Samoa' this essay will focus on two texts written during Stevenson's South Seas period, *The Beach of Falesá* and *Weir of Hermiston*. It will also suggest that the early-nineteenth century Scottish poet and novelist James Hogg ('the Ettrick Shepherd') is a strong presence in *Weir of Hermiston*. However, let us begin, not with Hogg (to whom we shall return), but by approaching Stevenson's time in the South Seas in the 1890s by way of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, which was first published in monthly numbers in 1847-48.

Like *Weir of Hermiston*, Thackeray's novel is set in the Britain of the 1810s;[1] and like *The Beach of Falesá* it is much concerned with Imperial themes. In *Vanity Fair*, engagement with Empire emerges in the novel's central focus on the British Imperial triumph at Waterloo, and also in its more oblique comments on Jos Sedley's activities as a servant of Empire in India. Additionally, an Imperial dimension can be seen in Thackeray's depiction of the rich young West Indian heiress, Miss Swartz. Like the children of Wiltshire and Uma in *The Beach of Falesá*, Miss Swartz is of mixed-race parentage. Here is what Wiltshire has to say about his 'half caste' children in the final paragraph of *The Beach of Falesá*:

> My public house? Not a bit of it, nor ever likely; I'm stuck here, I fancy; I don't like to leave the kids, you see; and there's no use talking – they're better here than what they would be in a white man's country. Though Ben took the eldest up to Auckland, where he's being schooled with the best. But what bothers me is the girls. They're only half castes of course; I know that as well as you do, and there's nobody thinks less of half castes than I do; but they're

> mine, and about all I've got; I can't reconcile my mind to their taking up with kanakas, and I'd like to know where I'm to find them whites?[2]

Here Stevenson uses Wiltshire's voice to strike some troubling, uncomfortable notes, but *Vanity Fair* takes us into territory that is still more uncomfortable when the crass *nouveau riche* merchant Mr Osborne urges his son George to reject the recently impoverished Amelia Sedley, with a view to marrying Miss Swartz instead:

> 'I ain't going to have any of this dam sentimental nonsense and humbug here, sir,' the father cried out. 'There shall be no beggar-marriages in my family. If you choose to fling away eight thousand a year, which you may have for the asking, you may do it: but by Jove you take your pack and walk out of this house, sir. Will you do as I tell you, once for all, sir, or will you not?'
> 'Marry that mulatto woman?' George said, pulling up his shirt-collars. 'I don't like the colour, sir. Ask the black that sweeps opposite the Fleet Market, sir. *I'm* not going to marry a Hottentot Venus.'[3]

Thackeray provided his own illustrations to *Vanity Fair*, and the text is embellished by a portrait of Miss Swartz that seems to be thoroughly in tune with George's dismissive views:

At all events George waxes eloquent to Amelia on the subject of Miss Swartz:

> 'My sisters say she has diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs,' George said, laughing. 'How they must set off her complexion! A perfect illumination it must be when her jewels are on her neck. Her jet-black hair is as curly as Sambo's. I dare say she wore a nose-ring when she went to Court; and with a plume of feathers in her top-knot she would look a perfect Belle Sauvage.' (pp. 244–45)

And there is more to follow:

> 'Diamonds and mahogany, my dear! Think what an advantageous contrast – and the white feathers in her hair – I mean in her wool. [...] Her father was a German Jew – a slave-owner they say – connected with the Cannibal Islands in some way or other. He died last year, and Miss Pinkerton has finished her education. She can play two pieces on the piano; she knows three songs; she can write when Mrs. Haggistoun is by to spell for her; and Jane and Maria [George's sisters] already have got to love her as a sister.'
> 'I wish they would have loved me,' said Emmy, wistfully. 'They were always very cold to me.'
> 'My dear child, they would have loved you if you had had two hundred thousand pounds,' George replied. (p. 246)

Again, confirmation of George's view seems to be provided by one of Thackeray's illustrations:

According to Thackeray's narrator, Miss Swartz's wealth is real and substantial: she owns many plantations in the West Indies and has 'a deal of money in the funds'. Furthermore, it seems that various people in *Vanity Fair* set a high value on her two hundred thousand pounds, and later in the novel we are told that old Osborne (a widower) 'had proposed for Miss Swartz, but had been rejected scornfully by the partisans of that lady, who married her to a young sprig of Scotch nobility' (p. 535), the 'Honourable James McMull' (p. 537).

What are we to make of all this? Clearly, George Osborne's comments on Miss Swartz are racist, but unfortunately this does

not seem to be simply a case of the dreadful George expressing his own dreadful views. Setting out to describe the scene depicted in the second of the illustrations reproduced, the narrator records that George:

> had then been to pass three hours with Amelia, his dear little Amelia, at Fulham; and he came home to find his sisters spread in starched muslin in the drawing-room, the dowagers cackling in the background, and honest Swartz in her favourite amber-coloured satin, with turquoise-bracelets, countless rings, flowers, feathers, and all sorts of tags and gimcracks, about as elegantly decorated as a she chimney-sweep on May-Day. (p. 252)

The narrator here seems almost as racist as George, and indeed the whole weight and authority of the text seems to be attempting to point a moral to the effect that Osborne *père* and James McMull (the rapacious 'young sprig of Scotch nobility') are so shockingly lost to human decency that their overwhelming greed makes them willing to ally themselves by marriage to a West Indian woman, the daughter (it seems) of a union between a 'German Jew' and an African slave. Clearly, and to put it mildly, *Vanity Fair*'s presentation of Miss Swartz is deeply unpleasant; and it seems equally clear that this problem has something to do with the ways in which Britain's Imperial power-structures operated. Like Wiltshire's children, Miss Swartz has to confront real difficulties as a 'half caste' within Imperial society.

Nevertheless, a distinction can be drawn between the presentation of Miss Swartz's dilemma in *Vanity Fair* (a text of the 1840s) and the presentation of the dilemma of Wiltshire's daughters in *The Beach of Falesá* (a text of the 1890s). As she sits at her piano, we are invited to regard Miss Swartz as less than fully human: she is only able to play two pieces, she only knows three songs, and, in short, she has nothing whatsoever to commend her other than simple-minded good nature and her two hundred thousand pounds. In inviting its readers to deplore the willingness

of old Osborne and McMull to marry this 'Hottentot Venus' for her money, Thackeray's novel seems to take it for granted that Miss Swartz cannot possibly be admired for anything other than her wealth. In *Vanity Fair* it is assumed that the sub-human Miss Swartz is of no possible interest in and for herself. This novel's mental world simply does not have room for the notion that a sympathetic account might be given of the dilemmas, insights, and experiences of Miss Swartz as she moves from her life in the West Indies into a difficult and disturbing encounter with the London of the 1810s. However, things were less straightforward for Stevenson when he was writing *The Beach of Falesá* in the South Seas in the early 1890s. The crass Imperial assumptions of the 1840s no longer remain unquestioned in this text, as can be seen in Wiltshire's account of his mock wedding with Uma:

> She was dressed and scented; her kilt was of fine tapa, looking richer in the folds than any silk; her bust, which was of the colour of dark honey, she wore bare only for some half a dozen necklaces of seeds and flowers; and behind her ears and in her hair, she had the scarlet flowers of the hybiscus. She showed the best bearing for a bride conceivable, serious and still; and I thought shame to stand up with her in that mean house and before that grinning negro. I thought shame I say; for the mountebank was dressed with a big paper collar, the book he made believe to read from was an odd volume of a novel, and the words of his service not fit to be set down. (p. 123)

The jarring phrase 'that grinning negro' calls to mind the way in which Miss Swartz is portrayed in *Vanity Fair*, but at least Uma is being taken seriously in *The Beach of Falesá*. Nevertheless, Wiltshire goes through with the ceremony, and he goes on to describe how Uma is given a marriage certificate which reads:

> This is to certify that *Uma* daughter of *Faavao* of Falesá island of _____, is illegally married to *Mr John Wiltshire* for one night, and Mr John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next morning.
>
> John Blackamoor
> Chaplain to the Hulks.
>
> Extracted from the register
> by William T. Randall
> Master Mariner.
>
> That was a nice paper to put in a girl's hand and see her hide away like gold. A man might easily feel cheap for less. But it was the practise in these parts, and (as I told myself) not the least the fault of us White Men but of the missionaries. If they had let the natives be, I had never needed this deception, but taken all the wives I wished, and left them when I pleased, with a clear conscience. (p. 124)

Here Wiltshire is revealing much more than he realises. This is powerful stuff, and in the description of the mock wedding in *The Beach of Falesá* Stevenson provides a devastating image that sums up the nature of Imperial exploitation of Polynesians in the South Seas.

It may be that postcolonial theory will help provide an insight into the nature and significance of the ways in which Polynesians are portrayed in *The Beach of Falesá*. In the early 1980s Ranajit Guha made what has proved to be a fruitful and influential distinction between what he called 'the elite' and what he called 'the subaltern classes'. Writing about Indian society in the days of British Imperial rule, Guha suggested that a dominant elite then operated in tune with the interests of the British raj, and contained 'foreign as well as indigenous' groups. The foreign elements included British officials, industrialists, missionaries, planters, and merchants, while the indigenous elements included 'the biggest feudal magnates, the most important representatives

of the industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and the native recruits to the uppermost levels of the bureaucracy'. Contrasted with this Imperial elite, Guha writes, were 'the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people'.[4]

Following on from Guha's distinction, 'Can the subaltern speak?' has become a famous question in the debate about Imperial-era and post-colonial texts. Among other things, this question suggests that the power structures of Empire set out to silence the subaltern voice, in order to establish the validity of an Imperial (rather than a subaltern) account of the process of colonisation. In the official Imperial story, the Empire is presented as being engaged in bringing the light of progress and civilisation to 'dark' places still enmeshed in 'savagery'. Naturally, the people on the receiving end of this process would tend to take a very different view of the arrival of Empire, but were they in a position to give voice to that view? At all events, it was very much in the Imperial interest to silence their alternative stories. Edward Said makes the point as follows:

> Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.[5]

To what extent and in what ways is the Imperial story being challenged in *The Beach of Falesá*? To what extent does Stevenson's

text allow the subaltern Uma to speak? It may be useful here to consider a West Indian woman in a novel published (like *Vanity Fair*) in the 1840s – Bertha Mason, the first Mrs Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847). In Charlotte Brontë's novel, Bertha is the madwoman in the attic, and she is like Miss Swartz in that her story does not get a hearing. Famously, however, the madwoman's story *is* told in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Because it is willing to look at events from Bertha's point of view, Jean Rhys's novel is able to question and subvert aspects of *Jane Eyre*. In the process, these two texts become competing narratives. Each narrative offers its own perspective, its own version of events. Each narrative seeks to establish and validate its own version of the truth.

This paper will argue that *The Beach of Falesá* and *Weir of Hermiston*, in their different ways, grow out of Stevenson's response to his disturbing encounter with the operations of Empire in the South Seas. On this view, *The Beach of Falesá* is in some sense an attempt to enable the subaltern voice of a colonised people to be heard: unlike Miss Swartz in *Vanity Fair* and Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, Uma does get a hearing, her story does get told. However, what exactly is the nature of the hearing that Uma's story gets?

The Beach of Falesá (1893) has been seen as a precursor of *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Famously, Conrad's novella challenges the official Imperial story by offering a devastating critique of the situation created by the European Imperial presence in the Belgian Congo towards the end of the nineteenth century, a situation Conrad had experienced at first hand during his visit to the Congo in 1890. There is certainly a case to be made for the view that Stevenson anticipates aspects of Conrad's critique of Imperialism in *The Beach of Falesá*. Indeed, there may also be a case for arguing that Stevenson's story actually goes beyond *Heart of Darkness* in some ways, not least in its willingness to try gain a hearing for a subaltern story, and not least in its openness to the possibility that there was real value in the pre-Imperial cultures of peoples the European Empires tended to dismiss as 'savages'.

In spite of the powerful anti-Imperial strand in Conrad's novella, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe has argued that

racist Imperial assumptions are present, both in Conrad himself and in *Heart of Darkness*. In 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', Achebe writes:

> Conrad was born in 1857, the very year in which the first Anglican missionaries were arriving among my own people in Nigeria. It was certainly not his fault that he lived at a time when the reputation of the black man was at a particularly low level. But even after due allowance has been made for all the influences of contemporary prejudice on his sensibility there remains still in Conrad's attitude a residue of antipathy to black people which his peculiar psychology alone can explain. His own account of his first encounter with a black man is very revealing:
>
> > A certain enormous buck nigger encountered in Haiti fixed my conception of blind, furious, unreasoning rage, as manifested in the human animal to the end of my days. Of the nigger I used to dream for years afterwards.
>
> Certainly Conrad had a problem with niggers. His inordinate fondness of that word itself should be of interest to psychoanalysts.[6] (p. 258)

For Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* is 'a book which parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today'. Achebe goes on to argue that Africa, in *Heart of Darkness*, operates as a setting that 'eliminates the African as human factor', and he also writes of Conrad's novel's 'dehumanization of Africa and Africans' (pp. 259, 257).

It is possible to accept the thrust of Achebe's case with regard to Empire and Africa, while still feeling that a defence of *Heart of Darkness* is possible. For example, Wilson Harris has written:

> Achebe's essay on 'the dehumanisation of Africa and Africans' by 'bloody racists' is, therefore, in the light of western malaise and postimperial hangover, a persuasive argument, but I am convinced that his judgement or dismissal of *Heart of Darkness* – and of Conrad's strange genius – is a profoundly mistaken one.[7]

Whatever case might be made for *Heart of Darkness*, however, it seems clear that Achebe's hostility towards Conrad's novel draws its strength from an entirely convincing perception that *Heart of Darkness* does not show any willingness to recognise the existence of a valuable pre-Imperial African culture. Achebe does not necessarily demonstrate that *Heart of Darkness* is a failure as a work of art, but he does demonstrate that *Heart of Darkness* remains entangled in the crass old Imperial assumptions about the sub-human status of the peoples Kipling described as 'lesser breeds without the law'. *The Beach of Falesá*'s openness to pre-Imperial cultures, and its willingness to let the subaltern voice be heard, are great achievements in the context of the 1890s.

While these achievements are real, however, it remains possible to question the extent to which a genuine subaltern Polynesian voice can be heard to speak in *The Beach of Falesá*. At this point, let us consider *Weir of Hermiston* (1896) as another text of Stevenson's Samoan years. *Weir* is about Scotland, of course – but my suggestion is that Stevenson, having encountered the elite / subaltern problem in its severe South Seas manifestation, turns in *Weir* to an exploration of that problem in its Scottish manifestation.

In *Weir*, there are many representatives of Scotland's intellectual, legal, and social elite: people such as Adam Weir and Lord Glenalmond, who are well able to operate comfortably within the power structures of the Imperial Britain of the 1810s. However, Stevenson's novel also finds a place for the Elliotts of Cauldstaneslap, representatives of a subaltern Scotland whose roots lie in the old oral culture of the ballads. Like the Polynesians of *The Beach of Falesá* (who are likewise products of an old oral

culture), the Elliotts are presented in *Weir* with a sympathy that is very real as far as it goes. This sympathy emerges, for example, when we learn that the dark-haired brothers of the Elliott family (the four Black Brothers) have avenged the death of their father in a heroic exploit that seems to belong to a former age: 'Some century earlier the last of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight and chase'. (p 79)

The Elliotts are introduced in detail in 'A Border Family', one of the sections of the chapter in *Weir* entitled 'Winter on the Moors'. We learn that this subaltern family has become moderately prosperous, but nevertheless the narrator stresses that 'scarce the breadth of a hair divided them from the peasantry' (p. 88). Revealingly, it appears that marriage between elite and subaltern has the potential to problematic, not only in the South Seas of *The Beach of Falesá*, but also in the Scotland of *Weir of Hermiston*. Exiled to the moorland estate of Hermiston because of his rebellion against his father, Archie Weir falls in love with Christina Elliott of Cauldstaneslap. Problems arise, however, for a relationship between the son of the Lord Justice Clerk and a young subaltern woman scathingly described as a 'milkmaid' by the fashionable young lawyer, Frank Innes. Indeed, Innes puts to problem to Archie with a brutal clarity:

> There are two horns to your dilemma, and I must say for myself I should look mighty ruefully on either. Do you see yourself explaining to the four Black Brothers? or do you see yourself presenting the milkmaid to papa as the future lady of Hermiston? Do you? I tell you plainly, I don't! (p. 148)

It is at this point that we return to James Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd, because it has long been recognised that Dand Elliott (a shepherd, a poet, and one the four Black Brothers) is modelled on Hogg. With an echo of well-known passages about dogs and storms in Hogg's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Stevenson tells us that 'nobody could train a dog like Dandie; nobody, through the peril

of great storms in the winter time, could do more gallantly' (p. 85). Like Hogg, Dand makes Robert Burns 'his hero and model'; and (again like Hogg) he helps Walter Scott collect old ballads for publication in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (p. 86). Indeed, Dand and Hogg know each other: 'The Ettrick Shepherd was his sworn crony; they would meet, drink to excess, roar out their lyrics in each other's faces, and quarrel and make it up again till bedtime' (p. 86).

As one of the General Editors of the Stirling / South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg, I confess that I find Dand somewhat irritating as an oblique portrait of Hogg. It is, of course, entirely apt to place Dand / Hogg in the 'Homeric' context of the old ballads – but Stevenson makes it very clear indeed that Dandie is no Homer. The damningly faint praise is: 'No question but he had a certain accomplishment in minor verse' (pp. 85–86). The portrait of Dand Elliott in *Weir of Hermiston* is much more sympathetic and perceptive than the portrait of Miss Swartz in *Vanity Fair*, but there seem to be limits to the extent to which Stevenson is willing to take his subaltern bard entirely seriously.

One wonders if 'a certain accomplishment in minor verse' is wholly adequate praise for a figure apparently based on the author of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). However, and revealingly, it seems that Stevenson could not quite bring himself to believe that Hogg was indeed the author of that remarkable novel. In 'Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*', Eric Massie has argued cogently that *The Master of Ballantrae* owes a significant debt to Hogg's novel.[8] As part of his argument Massie points to a letter written by Stevenson to George Saintsbury on 17 May 1891. In this letter Stevenson comments on Saintsbury's recently-published *Essays in English Literature 1780–1860*, a book in which the suggestion is floated that the Oxford-educated John Gibson Lockhart may have collaborated with Hogg in writing the *Justified Sinner*'.[9] Stevenson's comment is as follows:

> I particularly like your Hogg, and your admirable quotations from the unequal fellow. Your theory about the *Justified Sinner* interests and (I think I may say) convinces me; the book since I read it in black, pouring weather on Tweedside, has always haunted and puzzled me. One felt it *could not* be Hogg. I had heard Lockhart mentioned, and much as I admire *Adam Blair*, it seemed beyond the reach of Lockhart. But with the two together, it is possible.[10]

'One felt it *could not* be Hogg'. By the 1890s, Hogg had come to be generally regarded as a rather boorish 'peasant poet' who no doubt had 'a certain accomplishment in minor verse', but who certainly did not deserve to be taken entirely seriously. At this period people like Stevenson and Saintsbury had the intelligence to perceive the value of the *Justified Sinner*. This placed them in a dilemma, however, because they assumed that Hogg was a boorish peasant whose real but decidedly limited talent did not – indeed, *could not* – go beyond 'a certain accomplishment in minor verse'. The Ettrick Shepherd, wrapped in his plaid while herding his sheep, might well have been able to dream up some pretty lyrics, but obviously such a man *could not*, unaided, have produced a novel as complex and sophisticated as the *Justified Sinner*. Stevenson and Saintsbury therefore cheerfully assumed (without any supporting evidence) that the peasant poet must have had the assistance of a gentleman (Lockhart, for example) in creating that remarkable work. This subaltern shepherd-poet might to some extent be able to speak, but clearly there were limits to what such a man could say if unaided by one of his betters.

In 'Father and Son', the second chapter of *Weir of Hermiston*, Lord Glenalmond speaks to Archie:

> " [...] Yet I would like it very ill if my young friend were to misjudge his father. He has all the Roman virtues: Cato and Brutus were such; I think a son's heart might well be proud of such an ancestry of one."

> "And I would sooner he were a plaided herd," cried Archie, with sudden bitterness.
> "And that is neither very wise, nor I believe entirely true," returned Glenalmond. "Before you are done you will find some of these expressions rise on you like a remorse. [...]" (pp. 26–27)

It does not seem very likely that Archie is being rebuked here (either by Glenalmond or by Stevenson) for his manifest unfairness to 'plaided herds': on the contrary, Glenalmond's rebuke is concerned with Archie's unfairness to the Lord Justice Clerk. In *Weir*, such subaltern figures as Dand Elliott and James Hogg may be admirable in their way: they may indeed have 'a certain accomplishment in minor verse', and they may even rise to involvement in Homeric adventures. However, it is clear that, in the world of Edinburgh's elite, one would not wish one's father to be such a person; and one would not wish one's daughter to marry one. Such attitudes are not very far removed from Wiltshire's views (already quoted) about the marriage prospects of his 'half caste' daughters: 'I can't reconcile my mind to their taking up with kanakas, and I'd like to know where I'm to find them whites?'.

Perhaps Stevenson's inability to accept Hogg as the author of the *Justified Sinner* connects with a rigid and inflexible application of the elite / subaltern distinction. On such a view a plaided herd is a plaided herd, and a South Sea islander is a South Sea islander—and while such people may be admirable in their own ways, they must necessarily operate within the limitations of their subaltern status and nature: they do not and cannot operate at the same level of sophistication as a university-educated nineteenth century gentleman. In this context, when an author like Stevenson tries to speak from within the elite on behalf of the subaltern, what readers tend to hear is the voice of an elite ventriloquist, rather than a genuine subaltern voice.

However, the elite / subaltern distinction can be more interestingly complex than is suggested by the neat and uncomplicated binary opposition outlined above. The example

of the Ettrick Shepherd may be relevant here. In one of the most valuable books on Hogg so far published, Douglas Gifford makes a celebrated distinction between what he calls 'Ettrick Hogg' and 'Edinburgh Hogg'.[11] I would like to focus on a similar but not identical distinction, between 'Hogg's Ettrick world' and 'Hogg's Edinburgh world'. In order to open this matter out, it will be useful to quote from that wonderful book, David Daiches's *Two Worlds: An Edinburgh Jewish Childhood.* One of Daiches's two worlds was the Scotland he experienced as an Edinburgh schoolboy, and later as a student at Edinburgh University. The other was the Jewish culture he experienced through growing up in the home of his father, Dr Salis Daiches, Rabbi of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation from 1919 till 1945 and one of the most important figures in the religious life of Scotland during the twentieth century. In *Two Worlds*, David Daiches writes that the competing claims of his two worlds became strongly felt during his years as a university student:

> The change which resulted in my life when I left school and entered Edinburgh University was enormous, and had far-reaching consequences. At school I had done my work and gone home, taking no part in sports or other extra-curricular activities. But the University was different. There was a great variety of social and intellectual life outside the lecture room, and it was not mostly confined, as non-academic school activities were, to Friday night and Saturday; I found myself joining societies, writing for the student magazine, making friends among my non-Jewish fellow students. [...] The sense of liberation was intoxicating. I had not realised before how narrow and indeed lonely my life had previously been.[12]

Nevertheless, the pull of the Jewish world remained strong; and Daiches writes of returning one winter evening from a happy and lively meeting of a university society to attend a Friday night service at the Synagogue.

> There was only a handful of people, old men mostly, at the service, and as the slow and melancholy notes of the concluding hymn *Yigdal* rose thinly up to the roof, I thought of the centuries during which this hymn had been sung, of long dead Jewish congregations in Provence, the Rhineland and Poland, who had held so steadfastly to their Jewish way of life and passed their heritage unchanged on to their children. I thought of the long roll of Jewish martyrs, those who had given their lives for 'the sanctification of the Name'. I thought of my own ancestors, of my grandfather and of *his* father, Aryeh Zvi Daiches, whose picture I had seen on the wall of my grandfather's study, a noble looking man in a fur-trimmed cap, one of the innumerable Jewish scholars and teachers from whom I was descended.[13]

Hogg, like Daiches, put down roots that drew nourishment from two very different worlds. In Hogg's case, one of these worlds was the post-Enlightenment Edinburgh of the heyday of Sir Walter Scott – the Edinburgh of *The Edinburgh Review* and of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. This elite Edinburgh world can fairly be described as one of the major centres of cultural production in early nineteenth century Europe, and it liked to claim for itself the title of 'the Athens of the North'. It provided the mature Hogg with the core of his audience, and it was through this world that he got in contact with the institutions that published his writings. Access to this intellectually vibrant world no doubt brought to the Ettrick Shepherd the same kind of liberating excitement that Edinburgh University provided for the young David Daiches just over a century later. In the final analysis, however, Hogg's loyalty to the oral and ballad-based subaltern culture of his native Ettrick meant that he could not wholly share the assumptions of the elite Edinburgh intellectual world in which he began to move. Indeed, it can be argued that this subaltern's best writing is driven by his need to explore and speak about his areas of disagreement with an elite Edinburgh world which he understood well, and in which he was able to operate effectively (although not always comfortably).

It is clear that Stevenson was in sympathy with the Scottish subaltern world of Dand and the other Elliotts in *Weir of Hermiston*: that sympathy can be seen very strongly in (for example) the account of the conversation between Archie and the older Kirsty in the chapter entitled 'A Nocturnal Visit'. There were limits to that sympathy, however. Wonderfully, the portrait of Uma in *The Beach of Falesá* is much more perceptive and sympathetic than the portrait of Miss Swartz in *Vanity Fair*—but nevertheless one cannot imagine Uma, any more than Dand Elliott, rising to authorship of a complex and sophisticated novel such as *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. In short, Stevenson to some extent remained enmeshed in the Imperial assumptions of his time about 'native' peoples and their cultures: as Jenni Calder has observed, he was a man of his time, someone who 'seems to have shared the belief held by even the most enlightened investigators that tribal societies represented a primitive stage in human evolution which would inevitably give way to "civilisation"'.[14]

We have already quoted Edward Said:

> Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.

The Beach of Falesá and *Heart of Darkness* take part in this battle of the stories from an interesting perspective. These are not stories (like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, say, or Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*) through which a colonised or subaltern people find their voice and 'assert their own identity and the existence of their own history'. The colonised subaltern does not fully find a voice in *The Beach of Falesá*, and is still less able to speak in *Heart*

of Darkness. Instead, these novellas by Stevenson and Conrad do something else, and something of great value: they draw on direct and disturbing personal experience to question the Imperial story from a position within the Imperial project. These two texts emerged at a pivotal moment when the European Empires were beginning to lose the self-confidence, the certainty, and the moral blinkers that had helped to sustain the great European Empires in earlier years. In its devastating critiques of Empire, *The Beach of Falesá* stands alongside *Heart of Darkness* as one of the most powerful and significant stories of the past century and a half.

End Notes

1. At Hermiston, Archie Weir 'stirred the maidens of the county with the charm of Byronism when Byronism was new': Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston: An Unfinished Romance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1909), p. 66. Subsequent page references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
2. Menikoff, Barry; *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': A Study in Victorian Publishing, with the Original Text* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 186. Subsequent page references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
3. Thackeray, William Makepeace; *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. by John Sutherland, World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 259. Subsequent page references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
4. Guha, Ranajit; 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', in *Subaltern Studies*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 1–8 (p. 8).
5. Said, Edward; *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. xiii.
6. Achebe, Chinua; 'An Image of Africa: Racism is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', in Conrad, Joseph; *Heart of Darkness*, Norton Critical Editions, 3rd edn (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 251–62 (p. 258). Subsequent page references are to this edition, and are given in the text.

7. Harris, Wilson; 'The Frontier on which *Heart of Darkness* Stands', in Conrad, Joseph; *Heart of Darkness*, Norton Critical Editions, 3rd edn (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 262–68 (p. 263).
8. Massie, Eric; 'Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 10 (1999), 73–77.
9. Massie, p. 73.
10. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994–95), VII, 125-6.
11. Gifford, Douglas; *James Hogg* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head, 1976), pp.9–30.
12. Daiches, David; *Two Worlds: An Edinburgh Jewish Childhood*, Canongate Classics 7 (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), p.142.
13. Daiches, *Two Worlds*, p. 146.
14. Stevenson, *Tales of the South Seas*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), pp. xiv–xv.

Stevenson Reading

Stephen Arata

Stevenson was a very good reader, a gifted one. He was also an extremely interesting theoretician of reading. In that respect he was very much of his period. In the history of reading practices, the 1880s mark a moment of significant transition. The activity itself of reading – what it is, how it is best done, and to what ends – comes under increased, and increasingly sophisticated scrutiny. Not that there weren't sophisticated and self-conscious readers prior to this period. But if one peruses literary essays and reviews in the periodical literature of, for example the 1820s or the 1850s, and compares them with those written in the 1880s and '90s, what they may find is a subtle but significant shift in emphasis. Roughly speaking, where earlier the focus was on What to Read, later the emphasis more often falls on How to Read.

The importance of this shift is usually not fully recognized. We are still living and working in its aftermath. How to Read – or rather, How to Read Well: that's an issue that all scholars and teachers are continually engaged with in their professional lives. Indeed, the bulk of their professional activities as academics might be said to originate in the belief that a wide gulf separates simply reading from reading well. Implicit here too is the claim that knowing how to read well is itself a fundamental virtue, one that provides the necessary ground for the cultivation of other virtues. Certain habits of attention, of intellectual rigor, the refinement of sensibility and emotional response, as well as of the ability to analyze, to synthesize, to discriminate, to evaluate: the development of these and other positive character traits has for us been bound up for a long time now with the cultivation of close reading skills.

But when did that become true? At what point did the practice of close reading, as we now understand it – assuming, that is, that we do understand it even now – when did that emerge as an

ideal? The fact is that 'close reading' has a history. Thus, a form of 'contextual reading' is required to begin to make sense of it. It is clear that the 1880s is a key moment in that history, when the cluster of virtues mentioned previously begins to coalesce under the sign of Reading Well. What also happens is that the relationship between reading on the one hand and virtue and vice on the other begins to be refigured. Reading, especially reading fiction, has of course always been viewed with suspicion precisely because of its assumed effects on one's character. One reads a vicious book and, unless they happen to be of sufficiently sound mind and sturdy soul, they run the risk of being infected by that vice. Traditional defences of fiction and its moral beneficence tend simply to invert the terms of the same argument. In either case, the act of reading was viewed in relatively unproblematic ways. If one could read at all, they could read well enough to be open to whatever influences, baleful or otherwise, the text might contain. Near the end of the century, however, that situation started to change. As reading itself became an object of critical attention, critics began to posit that the virtues inherent in a text, or at least in some kinds of texts, might be available only to certain kinds of readers – the kinds of readers who took seriously the practice of reading, and who did it well. In the same way, the practice of good reading could render inert whatever contagion an 'immoral' text might harbour. As all professional readers still implicitly believe, such skills provide one with immunity even in the company of the most heinous works.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, secular reading was invested with a new level of importance, a new seriousness. For example Meredith, or Pater, or James, place a lot of moral weight on the art of reading. Pater's key essay, 'Style,' for instance, argues that literature exists precisely at that place where the artistry of the writer meets what Pater calls 'the willing intelligence' of the reader. The writer's artistry has 'for the susceptible reader the effect of a challenge for minute consideration; the attention of the writer in every minutest detail, being a pledge that it is worth the reader's while to be attentive too'. In James's essays as well there is often the sense that it hardly matters what one reads so long as they

read it with sufficient intensity and purpose. James's exasperation with Trollope or with Walter Besant is precisely that, as writers, they deflect attempts to read them seriously, proceeding instead on what James in 'The Art of Fiction' calls the 'comfortable, good-humoured feeling that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that our only business with it [is] to swallow it'.

Stevenson is a fascinating writer to contemplate in this context, if only because he moves within so many different orbits. Dispersed throughout his essays, periodical pieces, and letters of the 1880s are some extremely interesting and sophisticated meditations on reading; at the same time, he can be an exuberant, unrepentant gourmand of the pudding school of fiction, as well as a proponent of its value. Indeed, an essay such as 'A Humble Remonstrance' shows him in both modes. Here we see a willingness to engage and dispute with James on his own terms coupled with the impulse, occasionally indulged, to say to James, in effect: lighten up. Stevenson is unusual among writers of this period for the conspicuously divided nature of his literary loyalties. Like Haggard or Lang or Conan Doyle, he wrote (and championed the value of) light entertainment in the form of adventure tales, seeing such tales not only as an escape from the moral earnestness of much High Victorian fiction but also as an antidote to the occasionally oppressive seriousness of the period's high art. It is perhaps his casual dismissals of the impulse to sacralize art that has led Stevenson to be relatively neglected by twentieth century theorists of fiction, at least in the United States. Consistently, Stevenson puts pleasure at the centre of his theories, and even today that would be enough to generate the suspicion of more high-minded critics. 'In anything fit to be called by the name of reading', Stevenson writes in 'A Gossip on Romance', 'the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images'. We dig in a text for our pleasures, he writes, 'like a pig for truffles'. That last is a great image, and one it's hard to imagine occurring to many other critics either then or now.

Like pigs, too, we snuffle for what is rare and valuable in any given text. The truffle-digging image is successful in part because it provides us with a transition to the cluster of topics that will be covered in this essay: reading as searching, digging, uncovering: grubbing after pleasure and meaning. Our way in is through the literary detail, and what Stevenson has to say about it. 'In literature', Stevenson writes in 'A Note on Realism', 'the great change of the past century has been effected by the admission of detail'. By 'detail' Stevenson here means the naturalistic 'fact', the accumulation of which distinguishes the nineteenth century novel from earlier kinds of prose fiction. He traces this kind of thick description back to Scott and Balzac and sees, as did many others, its apotheosis – which is also clearly a perversion – in the work of Zola. Where once prose fiction trafficked in the general and the representative – the stories of Voltaire, he says, were as 'abstract as parables' – now it revels in the particular. Like others, Stevenson worries that the fetishizing of details for their own sake is bad for art. Taken singly, each detail is a potential distraction from the overall pattern of an artwork; taken together, details in their sheer proliferation threaten to overwhelm readers with mere information. Balzac, Stevenson wrote in an 1883 letter to his cousin Bob, 'smothered under forcible-feeble detail... He would leave nothing undeveloped, and thus drowned out of sight of land amid a multitude of crying and incongruous details. Jesus, there is but one art: to omit! O if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an Iliad of a daily paper'.

The Modernist note is distinctly audible here. According to Stevenson, the function of literary art is not to reproduce 'life' but to make a pattern, a pattern whose relation to external reality will always be asymptotic. The status of the detail within the artwork is also changed. A fact or bit of information whose only purpose is to contribute to the text's air of verisimilitude is, strictly speaking, extraneous, Stevenson claims. The only details that ought to be allowed into a genuine work of art are those than can be made to serve multiple functions. As one can read in 'A Note on Realism':

'The artist has one main and necessary resource which he must, in every case and upon any theory, employ. He must, that is, suppress much and omit more. He must omit what is tedious and irrelevant, and suppress what is tedious and necessary. But such facts as, in regard to the main design, subserve a variety of purposes, he will perforce and eagerly retain. And it is the mark of the very highest order of creative art to be woven exclusively of such. There, any fact that is registered is contrived a double or treble debt to pay, and is at once an ornament in its place, and a pillar in the main design... Nothing would be allowed in such a story that did not, at the same time, expedite the progress of the fable, build up the characters, and strike home the moral or the philosophical design'.

To suppress much and omit more is not to diminish the significance of the literary detail but instead greatly to augment it. Everything must tell, and tell multiply. But of course each detail 'tells' only in the presence of sufficiently attentive readers. Indeed, texts that work by suppression and omission are not, Stevenson acknowledges, likely to find favour among casual readers. The kind of close, attentive reading required to make sense of such works does not come naturally. It is a difficult craft – a word Stevenson often uses when he discusses aesthetics – a craft analogous to that of writing and one that in effect completes it. One aim of essays such as 'A Note on Realism', 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature', and 'A Humble Remonstrance' is to delineate strategies of effective reading, strategies that are geared largely towards elucidating the literary functions of the detail. In her 1987 book, *Reading in Detail*, Naomi Schor traces the history of the detail as it has been theorized from Hegel to Barthes and Derrida. While Schor does not say so explicitly, her account makes clear that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century discussions of the detail are to be found not just in high philosophical and aesthetic discourse but also – and more and more frequently – within the pages of periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Contemporary Review* or the *Westminster Review* (Stevenson wrote for all three).

Even in the popular press then, increasingly firm distinctions begin to be drawn between the inattentive or lazy reader and

the good reader, the reader who reads closely and who thus is sensitive to the text at its minutest level. One may recall that 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature' moves from a discussion of the balance of one sentence against another, to a discussion of the meaningful placement of individual words within sentences to, finally, a discussion of the patterns of sounds within and between words or even syllables. 'We begin to see', Stevenson writes in conclusion, 'what an intricate affair is any perfect passage; how many faculties... must be held upon a stretch to make it; and why, when it is made, it should afford us so complete a pleasure. From the arrangement of according letters, which is altogether arabesque and sensual, up to the architecture of the elegant and pregnant sentence, which is a vigorous act of the pure intellect, there is scarce a faculty of man but has been exercised'. The faculties being exercised, it is worth emphasizing, are those of both careful writer and close reader.

On the one hand, this and other of Stevenson's essays on style clearly situate themselves in a tradition of classical rhetorical analysis. But they also lay the groundwork for some distinctly modem forms of reading. The reader will have noticed, for instance, the importance Stevenson places on being able to read not only what is in the text but also some things that are not there. The artist suppresses much and omits more: he omits what is tedious and irrelevant but only suppresses what is tedious but necessary. The distinction between omitting and suppressing is something that needs to be highlighted. In both cases something is made absent from the text, but when it is suppressed its absence is felt; we are required to note and then to try to account for such absences. Suppressions, in other words, leave discernable gaps which readers are invited to fill. Much Modernist writing of course works by way of just such suppressions: for example, teaching stories by Katherine Mansfield and Ernest Hemingway, one can spend a lot of time discussing what is left unwritten in these stories. We assume, and not without justification, that the meanings of such texts reside largely in their silences, their suppressions. This mode of reading – what students always refer

to as reading between the lines – is so familiar to us that we often forget to note its oddity, or stop to recall how recent a practice it is.

For Hemingway and Mansfield, or for just about anyone writing or reading after Freud, what is suppressed is precisely what is most important, most telling. Stevenson by contrast says that the writer suppresses things that may be necessary to his story, but are tedious. For Stevenson, omission and suppression are important primarily because they are the tools with which a writer makes of his work a pleasing artistic pattern. What makes it artistic is just that: its patterning. Putting aside the distinctions separating the different arts, Stevenson writes, 'it may be said... that the motive and end of any art whatever is to make a pattern; a pattern, it may be, of colours, of sounds, of changing attitudes, geometrical figures, or imitative lines; but still a pattern. That is the plane on which these sisters meet; it is by this that they are arts'. In passages like this – and there are many in Stevenson's essays – it is interesting how decisively he turns away from representation as the primary end of fiction. Over and again he will claim that literature is not an effective medium for imitating life, and so it should not make imitation one of its first goals.

This is his most fundamental disagreement with James in the 'Art of Fiction debate. Art does not 'compete with life', as James had insisted. Indeed, 'the whole secret is that no art does "compete with life" ...The arts, like arithmetic and geometry, turn away their eyes from the gross, coloured and mobile nature at our feet, and regard instead a certain figmentary abstraction.' Literature in particular 'pursues an independent and creative aim' that is quite apart from the claims of mimesis. It might be said that, like James, Stevenson directs our attention to the figure in the carpet, but for him that figure is purely a formal design; its interest and value resides in that, whereas James teases us by implying that the figure, once we discern it, will be the portal to some further (and more important) revelation. James is acknowledged, for obvious reasons, as an indispensable figure in the history of reading practices, but here at least it should be noted that the more radical position is

Stevenson's. It's Stevenson who is saying that 'literary' readers attend first to what Joseph Frank would later, and influentially, call 'spatial form' in modern literature, and only secondarily to plot or thematic material.

A while back there was reference to one of Walter Pater's essays. Pater and Stevenson are not often spoken of together, but in fact Stevenson's essays form an important intertext for some of Pater's better-known meditations, particularly his 1888 essay, 'Style'. Like Stevenson, Pater argues that literary writers and readers are first and foremost "lovers of words" for their own sake; they recognize, too, the historical density of English, which is, in Pater's words, 'product of myriad various minds and contending tongues, compact of obscure and minute association, a language [with] its own abundant and recondite laws'. Language is thus not a transparently expressive medium; the writer recognizes that 'the material in which he works is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble'. Stevenson makes this identical point in 'Technical Elements' and again in 'A Note on Realism'. For both men, 'style' denotes the idiosyncratic way in which a particular writer manages and manipulates the recalcitrant material at his disposal. For Pater, style is signature: to apprehend fully the elements of a writer's style is to gain access to the 'soul' of that writer, since it is by means of his peculiar, his unrepeatable, style that the writer conveys not a picture of the world but of his sense of the world. This is one way Pater attempts to overcome the solipsism that haunts his writings, to break out of those solitary dreams of the world to make a connection. Stevenson, on the other hand, moves in a different direction, away from the idea that style is a form of self-revelation. For him, the more fully-realized a writer's style is, the more impersonal it becomes. In general, Stevenson defines good reading as an ever more refined and sophisticated attention to the surface elements of a text. One is not trying to read through the text to get at something else. Here again Stevenson is taking up the more radical, or at least the less common, theoretical position.

From what has been said so far, a strong case can be made for Stevenson as an important and highly innovative theoretician of reading – one who helps move us toward High Modernist writers such as Eliot or Woolf and, beyond them, to post-modem theorists such as Roland Barthes – even though only a small selection of his essays have been studied here. Over and against the pieces quoted from, could be set numerous essays with, collectively, a completely different theoretical agenda. Essays such as 'Popular Authors', 'A Gossip on Romance', 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', 'Talk and Talkers' and many others are memorable for their often joyous accounts of what we – not Stevenson – might call the 'lower' pleasures of reading, particularly the pleasures of plot and incident. Few essayists have written so engagingly on the virtues of popular fiction. If in this essay there was an effort to locate and trace a different thread in his work, that's because it has gone largely unnoticed, or at least not fully appreciated. A full account of 'Stevenson Reading' would need to bring together the Stevenson of 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature' with the Stevenson of 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured'. This cannot be covered here, though one thing that links the two Stevensons is their shared emphasis on pleasure, on good reading as necessarily an 'absorbing and voluptuous' activity.

There is also one further, and quite significant, connection between the 'high' and the 'low' Stevenson, and that's their shared distrust of, or perhaps just lack of interest in, reading 'in-depth' or below the surface. The notion that close reading involves reading through the surface of a text to get at underlying meaning or truth is, of course, very deeply (so to speak) engrained in us. Our touchstone here is probably Freud rather than Pater. But Stevenson doesn't read in that way, though of course he is often read in that way.

No Sign is an Island

Sudesh Mishra

An island is the irreducible third, the ineffable name, the metaphor. It is the yoking together of two unlikely figures to forge a third that defeats nomenclature. Yet this 'yoking together' is not tantamount to an act of 'soldering' involving the conjugation, the conjugal union, of two parts and of two partners. The noun is built on an error, a slip of tongue that lends to the syllable *ile* the muted gravity of the consonant 's', hence *isle*. Before and beyond this is an etymology based on a series of mutations as *ile* turns to water and *land* to *terra firma*. Instead of serenity the coupling of water and land inspires a strife that is ruinously fertile, both on the epochal and semantic scales. As magma ejaculation in the sea generates a miasma that fades into metaphysic, so the violent conjoining of water and land engenders a symbol verging on the sublime, the unattainable third possibility. Island, as sign, is dispatched by the skirmishing and duelling of its constituent parts (water; land) to a semantic clearing that lies beyond the congealed, hybrid noun, beyond the name *as it is,* vanishing into the spindrift mistiness of allegory, symbol, metaphor, or fetish - this last exemplified by the ubiquitous postcard evoking the tropical sublime.

Island as sign is always the other of the sign 'island'. Since this other is the fugitive third, achieved through the sublation and sublimation of wet and land, brine and rock, the sign can only propagate substitutes or envoys for its semantic evasions. The envoys serve as metaphors in that they stand in for the sign itself and also as metonyms in that they supply the part that suggests the whole. Such envoys are *symptropes*. They are symptoms that camouflage and supplant the original etymological trauma and also tropes that, by venturing into the figurative domain, signal that which cannot be bounded by the sign. Symptropes are heterogeneous sites, including but not strictly confined to topography. Symptropic sites can be corporeal and ethical,

cultural and metaphysical, economic and disciplinary. They can be spaces as well as values. It is not rare for a symptrope to trespass on the site of another symptrope. For instance, the tatau (tattooed body) is a corporeal symptrope aspiring to the aesthetic; the cyclone is a climatic symptrope verging on the ethical; the beach is a topographic symptrope often reduced to the touristic; and the tabu (tabooed object) is a quasi-religious symptrope inextricably (and sometimes inexplicably) linked to tropes of scarcity and anthropophagy. Like a ronde enacted around a talismanic being, symptropes waltz around the third fugitive possibility shadowed in the sign 'island'. Since it is not the thing itself, the sign of the third possibility, the symptrope is a figure of evasion. On the other hand, since it 'steps in' for the sign 'island,' rift as it is by an ancient internecine strife that withholds the third possibility, the symptrope is a substitute masquerading as the third possibility, disguising the evasion. This proem (a paper as prelude to a poem) is a voyage into four distinct symptropes. Let me begin with the most obvious one.

The Beach

A beach symptropically defines an island. It is the limit point necessary to any attempt at mapping an island. Even when there is no beach in sight, the crag, the scarp, the mangrove swamp and the littoral rocks are potential beach sites. This potentiality may be epochal in that the bruising struggle between water and land throws up a beach, or it may be economic in that the tourist industry will carve out a beach where there is none (often by vandalizing another beach), or it may be philosophical (or recreational, if you like) in that the roving eye (mind, nose, ear) 'surfs' the extremities for signs of a beach. A beach is born as a result of a physical act or action. Sent on an errand by Degei, creator of islands, Rokomouto drags his lavalava along the foreshore and beaches spring up behind him.

As a limit point the beach is, however, obstinately protean. Even as the cartographer's hand traces the contours of an island

- and the beach is a point in an island's contour - the beach site demonstrates the vanity of the ambition by obeying the law of tidal flows. When we think it is a part of the land, the flood-tide converts the beach to water; and when we think it is a part of the ocean, the ebb-tide proves us wrong again. In this sense at least, the two symptropes – the beach and the lagoon - are swappable sisters. They both defy inscriptions of immutability, the finality of diagrams, charts and maps. Either sea or land, neither sea nor land, the beach is that grainy, pointillistic, terraqueous tissue (composed of salt, decayed coral, a mishmash of bones and skeletons, but also of soil, leaves, shingles and assorted telluric debris) that makes the definition of an island at once possible and impossible. As a mutable space, constantly appearing and disappearing, the beach is the evanescent home of beachcombers, who, since they are neither upright citizens nor usurping rebels, stay 'beached' until some inner urge or a passing ship persuades them to renew their aimless peripatetic calling. The beach is ruled by neither time nor telos; it is an abstract limbo rendered earthly. The beachcomber sprawls on the beach, waiting, but this waiting is emptied of temporality, history and significance. On the beach, existence itself is in abeyance. A creature spawned in the nineteenth century, the beachcomber is a maritime rover for whom the beach affords a lull to his peregrinations. More often than not, he is an ex-tar from a whaler who has violated his vessel's articles through voluntary shipwreck. For this bedouin, the beach is the limbo space of gentlemanly leisure based on a rejection of commodity values. The shore provides him refuge from the indefatigable pursuit of commodity aboard whaling or trading ships. Sometimes this choice leads to his destitution. A vagrant is, as the expression goes, a bloke *on the beach.* Undoubtedly the beach is also the site where goods are exchanged (copra, banana, sandalwood, breadfruit, nails, muskets), but it is the trader and not the beachcomber who figures here. The modern tourist cuts an entirely different figure. For the tourist (who is no defiant, peripatetic nomad), the beach is the limbo space of simulated pleasure saturated by commodity values. The beach is commodity.

One inhabits a golden curvature inside a travel brochure.

Yet the beach is not always a packaged, non-minatory site. There is a distinction to be drawn between touristic beaches that resemble oases untainted by the quotidian, where each transient has a homebound ticket, and desert beaches that proffer no such solace for the castaway. The touristic beach is populated by a glib transitory species that has a stake in the values of the enclave. The solitude of the touristic beach is stage-managed in a way that unfailingly reminds us of the artifice of modernity into which we, the transitory subjects, are comfortably gathered. For this reason, the touristic beach is rarely menaced by the other, although the other is perpetually there as servant and mirror. The solitary footprint on the sand may induce textual nostalgia, but is unlikely to inspire panic, anxiety or alarm. Initially the castaway (who is no tourist) may be lulled by the music that creeps by upon the waters, allaying untold furies and terrors, but in the end the preternatural solitude, by withholding the other necessary for self-recognition, besieges the mind with a battery of wraiths and voices. All signs, including those concerning the nature and purpose of solitude, are exhausted of the unknown for the touristic subject. The tourist *expects* the pleasures of *déjà vu*. His island is bereft of the terrors generated by new encounters. For the castaway it is otherwise. Newly marooned, he has an insufficient grasp of the signs around him. Endeavoring to unravel the marks in solitude but lacking a community that may prove or disprove his project, the castaway loses control of both reason and narrative. A paranoid schizophrenic, he is startled by his own shadow. Signs become exaggerated, sounds become amplified. *Cracking a sea-louse, I make thunder split.* A lone footprint sets him wildly speculating about sprites, devils and cannibals. In the end he cannot tell whether the footprint belongs to him or to some other. Is he frightened by the chimera of his own imagining or does the spoor betray a second being? At the back of his mind the castaway suspects the presence of a dangerous double. His desire wills the other into being; his terror wishes his away. Like all who are visited by the muse of madness, the castaway propagates imaginary beings. He

converses with the air, alternately calming and scaring himself with the conversation.

For both sailor and castaway apparitions merely delay the fact's appearance. Dreaming of a concupiscent sea-nymph, the sailor wills her to appear *in flesh* on the beach - and succeeds. The siren (who is also an odalisque) lures him with her legendary wiles and a meretricious lei of flowers. She too is spellbound by the news of newness; the other is a novel bearer of exotic commodities. The sailor succumbs to the solicitation. The sea-nymph succumbs to syphilis, measles, smallpox and, more contemporaneously, AIDS. Whole communities are decimated. The beach is the deadly contact-point between bodies, moralities and practices. A noxious floating isle, the ship unleashes a thousand devils upon the beach, the gateway to the rest of the island. Germs and gendarmes, rodents and radioactivity, cockroaches and Christ. However, the ship is not merely a bearer of bad gifts; it bestows good gifts as well. If it receives gifts of breadfruit, shelter and sex, it also gives gifts of iron, medicine and seed. It goes without saying that gifts, good or bad, may be received equivocally. The beach is the site of an ambivalent transaction. Seen from afar, the figure on the beach may be a tawny beauty or an aficionado of long-pigs. Amatory desire may yield enigmatically to the terrors of anthropophagy. An exchange of gifts may end in a bloody skirmish. The castaway is as likely to stumble upon the crushed petals from a lory-lory as he is upon the charred remains of a cannibal feast. The first ignites a fit of delight, the second prolonged retching and flight. It is for this reason that the castaway never build his house on sand; he settles on a less exposed site, less prone to forays from the interior - a cave or a cove, or he bolts, pursued by furies real and imagined, straight for the anonymity of the bush.

The Bush

A bad bush is better than an open field. When one enters the bush from the beach via a river or a pig-run, one switches symptropes. If the beach is the skin-tissue of an island, oozing allegories

of exteriority and exposure, the bush is its most important organ, pulsating with a tenebrous interiority. The bush has an indecipherable heart, but it knows no limit point and certainly no frontier. It violates its own definition, turning into wilderness or waste or, at its most extreme, impenetrable jungle. Not being a border between sea and land, the bush is disdainful of contact. The message in the bottle is never found in the bush. If pursued, the mutinous seaman makes for the bush, thereby setting off a quest into himself. He *goes bush,* that is to say he goes native. He swaps one value-system for another or, rather, he attempts to convince us, in what is no doubt an aporia, that he can convey his *going native* in novelistic prose. Sometimes he is admitted into the tribal fold and becomes a puissant warrior and chief but more often he becomes the long-pig of his own overheated fantasy. It is as likely for the runaway to stumble upon a hospitable valley as it is for him to encounter the kai cola, the unredeemed cannibal. If he has the fortunate role of the narrator, he survives on wild berries, eventually gaining the shore where a passing ship ferries him back to civilisation; if he is a minor figure, a sidekick, his body parts end up among the lovo stones. Rovers, traders, missionaries - all have declared in extensive tracts their fascination for the epicures of human flesh? An island plot worth its salt is driven invariably by a suspicion of anthropophagy.

Yarns are spun about the bush, but the bush does not spin yarns. What appears on the beach (castaway or cannibal), disappears into the bush. Often irredeemably. To venture into the bush is to court silence and silent fears. That said, it is by plodding through the bush and scanning the seascape from a promontory that one discovers an island - and the self enisled. What the mind surmised on the beach, the eye, having penetrated the bush (as distinct from beating about it), having undergone the customary trials and tribulations, now ratifies as fact. An island is laved on all sides by the sea. This island, *my* island, is pickled and preserved in brine. It promises the insularity of a moated castle; or an olive. A summit makes an emperor of any fool; it is customary to lay claim to all that one descries from an imperial height: bush, savage, beach,

lagoon, sea, sail, even the sad oil-heavy bulk of the cachalot - an island unto itself. No man is an island, says the poet, but forgets to mention that every knave will own one. An odyssey through the bush may end in knowledge, but not necessarily self-knowledge.

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord. It is tempting to put the old courtier on an elevated part of the island-stage. What follows the remark is a delirious, dishonest elaboration, charged with contraries, for no society based on sovereignty is ever utopian. And yet an island is more or less than the *thing* that is observed. Seen from the vantage point of one who has braved the bush (and hence acquired a type of sovereignty), the island is potentially a plantation, a prison, a resort or a leper colony. (Although the perspective alters when one studies the same scene through the seasick eyes of the *girmitya,* prisoner, leper. The island becomes *narak,* hell.) When it has served its primal function, the rite of passage or initiation, the bush is ripe for domestication. *Had I plantation of this isle, my lord* - what comes next has the predictability of a potboiler. The taro patches of a subsistence economy are displaced by cane farms, copra groves, ginger fields, cement factories; the savage dawdling eternally in the bucolic shade of the palmetto is made into a conscientious worker and, failing that (and all natives know the danger attendant upon this failure), slaves and indentured servants are imported as substitutes; the vital organs of the island are ripped out in the merciless pursuit of minerals (phosphate, gold, copper); the village itself is banished to the outskirts of the intended city, not far from the festering rubbish tip; the sacred haunts of the island dryads are converted into rugby fields and golf greens; the soft glow of the tagimoucia, that rarest of blossoms, is extinguished by the gusts of nuclear storms; the sea-dreams of the mighty dakua are reduced to a handful of woodchips; and all the beautiful noises are smothered in the general roar of trade and traffic. Thus tamed, the bush is no longer a symptrope for interiority, the cause and refuge of primal desires and fears associated with islands. There is little of the bush in the purchaseable humour of a curio stall bedecked with tongue knives and brain forks. The bush survives here and there, but as

a relic from the past affording the postmodern rover the nostalgic pleasures of ecotourism.

Tapu; Tatau

It is no new thing to say that an island is a laboratory, an experimental chamber or a site where *difference* is rendered in experimental terms, as something to be classified and described or to be cured or destroyed. An island may be a botanical or zoological hothouse, a Galapagos of unique life-forms; it may be the site of improbable genetic accidents and afflictions, giving rise to a society of *maskuns* or colour-blind people; it may be the breeding ground for fabulous creatures such as the Rukh, which lays an egg so enormous that Sinbad mistakes it for a gigantic dome; it may be an atollic organism exposed to the insanities and abominations of a nuclear age; or, finally, it may be an ark stranded in prehistory, inhabited by tribal units whose *peculiar* practices form the subject of tomes authored by a horde of self-appointed specialists.

It is impossible to extricate the islandness of an island from the cultural symptropes of the islander. Any attempt to describe an island's particularity entails an account of the peculiarity of the islander. It is no cheap rhetorical ploy to profess that the islander is the isle, the isle the islander. An islander loitering in New Bedford, *some twenty thousand miles from home, by the way of Cape Horn,* bears the telltale signs of an island upon his body. What dread tales of isolation and insularity, privation and depravity - in short, otherness - are told in the hieroglyphic profusion on the visage of a savage! Is the island savage born after the fact of his body or before? The tattooed visage tells us what we already know about islands, even as it rouses the suspicion that the marks mask an unutterable secret. The swagger and hauteur in a savage moves us to comment on his dignity or annoys us to the point of derision. The dangerous, disfiguring currents run beneath his skin, yet he is as self-possessed as a rock. The non-islander cannot decide on the precise value ascribable to the decorated body. When offered

the gift of the tatau, he reels back in horror at the prospect of the ruin of his 'face divine'. Is the work of the creator flawed that the savage wants to improve it? The encounter between man and god rules out art, artfulness, artifice. The tatau betrays the heretic, the turncoat, the fiend. To accept the gift would entail the forfeiture of a *face* that makes possible the homeward journey. Yet, when accosted with a detailed representation of birds, crabs and fishes *on the face of the other,* he wonders if the tatau is an aesthetic elaboration on corporeal matter. Is the body a pictorial museum, an archival tapestry? Could the epidermis of a human being constitute a perishable, portable canvas? Has the savage attained the ultimate artistic dream of transforming life into an artefact? If so, it follows that nature is culture, the savage is civilised, the island is a state. Beneath all the wisecracks about the wandering professors of the fine arts, there is this grudging admission - that the savage is not a savage at all.

On the back of this admission rides the anthropologist, flogging a dead horse. The *mana* of the *tatau,* a notion bordering on the sublime, is harnessed to a desultory thesis. *Curious to say, the tools of the tattoo are a shark's tooth, a wooden mallet and a coca-bowl of dye extracted from vegetable matter: it appears that the more luxuriant the tattoo, the greater the social rank and masculinity of the subject, which is why the chief stands out like a fanned peacock among chickens or a variegated rock in the sea; it is worth noting that women are sparingly adorned in conformity with the lowly status of their gender; the tattoo can also be regarded as a rites of passage for the impetuous stripling; and, somewhat inexplicably, it is an offense to gaze upon the body while it is being tattooed, or upon an island while it is being formed.* What is inexplicable here, what eludes the predatory prose is precisely that which no sign can domesticate: the mana of the islander-as-island.

Another symptrope that inspires the non-islander to attempt the impossible, to say the unsayable, is the tapu. *It is a customary law of prohibition.* The translator is a traitor in that he annihilates even the memory of the proper name, all the while imagining that his manoeuvres guide him ever so closer to the thing itself. The sign-moths flit about the flame of final significance, singeing papery

wings. It is said that the chiefs person is tapu, *for he is the sacred one and also because the taboo diminishes the risk of assassination;* that the tapu groves are off-limits to non-warriors, to infants and to women, *for on this site weighty tribal matters are decided and the mana of fallen enemies appropriated;* that the tribal emissary, rendered untouchable by the tapu, *has a freedom of movement not enjoyed by the rest of the island;* that the tapu *bequeaths a similar freedom to the fool's incessant tongue;* that the tabooing of the breadfruit tree in the wake of a storm or the reef-cod after a bout of unrestrained fishing *demonstrates the rational side to the practice;* that the injunction against men's presence in the affairs of women - such as tapa making - is *based on the sexual division of labour;* that the injunction against women approaching the drua *is on the whole absurd;* that the tapu *covers the whole field of law and propriety;* that it can be used to *safeguard and deify on the one hand and to outlaw and outcast on the other.*

To describe the indescribable, to seize the unseizable, to say the unsayable - these aporias are already built into the symptropes of tatau and tapu. The tattooed body belies the islander and the non-islander fills him with all the anxieties and desires reserved for islands. Similarly, the tabooed thing bears about it the imprecise aura of an island; and this imprecision returns us to the third (unsayable) possibility with which I began this paper.

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