

*Journal of
Stevenson Studies*

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Editorial

The *Journal of Stevenson Studies* is dedicated to the study and critical appreciation of Robert Louis Stevenson, a writer whose work has offered so many prophetic insights into the moral, psychological and cultural ambiguities of the modern world.

RLS is not without ambiguity himself. He was a writer of popular fiction who understood the divided and unstable self; he was an elegant essayist who condemned colonial exploitation in the South Seas; his stories of youth and adventure echo to the sounds of storm and surf with an undercurrent of chaos, betrayal and existential despair. Yet in his own time he rarely received the serious scholarly attention he deserved. By the early twenty-first century things are beginning to change, not least in our universities, although as Barry Menikoff has observed, it is ‘ironic that it took postcolonialism to “find” Stevenson’s work in the Pacific and to acknowledge his focus on matters of race, class, and gender. How ironic, too, that it took the legitimization of popular culture to recognize early modernism’s most sophisticated theorist of popular culture and its linkages with high art.’ —This was not news to his fellow writers, however, for from the very start he enjoyed the admiration of Henry James, Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, William James, Stéphane Mallarmé and many others. His tales of duality inspired writers as diverse as Oscar Wilde and Joseph Conrad while modern writers such as Italo Calvino, Jorge Luis Borges, Candia McWilliams, and A. L. Kennedy have all acknowledged an admiration for his work.

The seeds of this Journal were planted in the lee of

the Ochils, with a conference at the University of Stirling on Stevenson, Scotland and Samoa, organised by Eric Massie in the year 2000. Fired by a millennial spirit and the success of the occasion the participants were keen to repeat the experience and the biennial international Stevenson conferences were duly inaugurated as a moveable feast, sponsored by different institutions around the world: at Gargnano in 2002, Edinburgh in 2004 and now Saranac in 2006. We also began to talk about an international journal—an annual publication—dedicated to Stevenson and his work. Richard Dury's RLS website was providing an invaluable forum for scholarly exchange and a regular newsletter. Might there be a place for a Journal as well? Dr Massie produced and edited the first issue of the ***Journal of Stevenson Studies*** and when this was launched at the Edinburgh conference Linda Dryden (Napier) and Rory Watson (Stirling) agreed to continue the project by working together as co-editors. We foresee guest-editorships in the future in the expectation that this periodical will be truly international in its outreach and impact—something that would have pleased the widely travelled man whose name it bears.

In that spirit, the editors would like to invite further submissions for future issues. Articles on Stevenson's life and works are warmly invited, and we welcome essays with an interdisciplinary and comparative approach. We would particularly like to encourage new scholars to submit articles for consideration. All submissions are peer-reviewed by members of the editorial board.

Acknowledgements

We owe a debt to Dr Eric Massie, whose energy and enthusiasm were such vital factors in getting both the initial conference and then the Journal under way. Our thanks also go to the distinguished board of Stevenson scholars who have refereed submissions and given their enthusiastic support. The Centre for Scottish Studies at Stirling and the University of Napier have helped to underwrite the production and editorial costs and we are especially grateful for the editorial assistance of Caroline McDougall at Napier and the page-setting expertise of Claire Abel and Katy Duff, postgraduates from Stirling's Centre for Publishing Studies under the guidance of Jim McCall. Jacqui Harrop in English Studies at Stirling has handled the orders and subscriptions with unfailing good humour. The Edinburgh RLS Club were quick to offer help and Richard Dury's advice has been invaluable as our consulting editor. Finally our thanks go to the contributors whose work can be found within.

Dreaming, doubling and gender in the work of Robert Louis Stevenson: The strange case of ‘Olalla’

Hilary J. Beattie

‘Olalla’ (1885), a Gothic romance set in early nineteenth century Spain, falls well outside the usual range of Stevenson’s work, and has never received much critical attention. When they have noticed it, critics have tended to dismiss it as ‘misbegotten’, or worse.¹ According to Daiches it is ‘romance without irony [...] humourless, wooden and conventional [...] a complete failure [that] shows very clearly what happened when Stevenson took a theme from the schoolboy side of his talent and inflated it with an eye on an adult audience’.² These adverse judgments were in some measure shared by the author, who lamented in an 1887 letter: ‘The trouble with ‘Olalla’ is that it somehow sounds false [...] and I don’t know why, nor did I feel it when I worked at [it]; indeed I had more inspiration with ‘Olalla’ [than with ‘Markheim’], as the style shows. [...] I admire the style of it myself, more than is perhaps good for me: it is so solidly written. And that again brings back (almost with the voice of despair) my unanswerable: Why is it false?’³

I believe that Stevenson’s question is not unanswerable, and that by taking a psychoanalytic approach to the text of ‘Olalla’, anchoring it in the context not only of other work of this period but also of crucial episodes in its author’s life,

it may be possible to see this story as key to understanding Stevenson's persistent and well-known ambivalence over the treatment of women and romantic love. Not only was this the first of his very rare attempts at depicting passion between the sexes, but it was written in exactly the same period of illness, misery and creative ferment as the more famous *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and was, like its twin, conceived in a dream. I say 'twin', because 'Olalla' can be shown to be itself the double of *Jekyll and Hyde*. The two stories are organically connected, and 'Olalla' not only affords clues to what was elided or repressed in *Jekyll and Hyde*, but also offers a starting point for exploration of the hidden, conflictual subtexts of sexuality, doubling and gender ambiguity discernible elsewhere in Stevenson's fiction. These were being worked through right up to the end of his life, particularly in *Weir of Hermiston*, which, in its reprise of the themes of 'Olalla', throws further light on what baffled Stevenson about his earlier story.

Our major source for Stevenson's own thoughts about 'Olalla' and *Jekyll and Hyde* is his 'A Chapter on Dreams', in which he gave us an extraordinary window into his creative life. We should remember that the dreams presented here were retroactive, literary reconstructions, described in the context of thinking about his most recent work, particularly *Dr Jekyll*, and it is safe to assume that they all, even the earliest, have some connection to that work. The essay falls into two parts. The first recounts an early dream life of anxiety and terror, beset by fears of Hell and damnation, and by worries over sexuality and the body, made worse by subjective confusions over fantasy, reality and dream, to the point where the adolescent dreamer led a 'double life', with no means of proving his night-time one to be false. Only in the second part, when he has found means to master his

fears and find 'some form of words' to describe them, does Stevenson admit that the dreamer is himself, and go on to describe how he consciously, and cleverly, came to use the night-time productions of the 'little people' in the 'internal theatre' of his mind as the basis of his published work.

As a transition from the first to the second part of the essay Stevenson singled out one later anxiety dream that interested him precisely because it still left the dreamer terrified and utterly unable to carry it 'to a fit end'. This dream is of central importance to my thesis. In it, the dreamer found himself at an upstairs window in an isolated, rough hill-farm, whose furnishings showed 'some poor efforts at gentility'. He looked down upon a bare, disused farmyard, amid a 'great uneasy stillness', in which there was not a single living being except an old, brown, curly dog, a retriever, dozing against the wall. Despite its harmless, 'dull and dusty', broken-down appearance, the dreamer became convinced that this was 'no proper dog' but 'something hellish'. 'Presently the dog thrust forth his paw, caught a fly in his open palm, carried it to his mouth like an ape, and looking suddenly up at the dreamer in the window, winked to him with one eye.'⁴

Stevenson was unable to say why this dream was so singularly horrifying, although the dog is itself a perfect specimen of the uncanny, a phenomenon that Freud thought occurred when a repressed infantile complex is suddenly re-aroused in an old and familiar context. Freud emphasised the role of the castrating father in engendering such repression (as well as the guilt that is projected in fear of the envious and punishing 'evil eye' – like the eye of the hellish, winking dog), but he seemed at the same time to be avoiding – while alluding to – more primitive anxieties about maternal functions.⁵ Whatever might have

been the original meaning of this dream for Stevenson we have no direct means of knowing, though we do know that the everyday world was for him always endowed with a sense of uncanny menace: 'I seem to have been born with a sentiment of something *moving* [my italics] in things, of an infinite attraction and horror coupled'.⁶ There can be no doubt that his uncanny dog was associated with infantile fears, for it is brown, 'a certain hue' of which he had always 'feared and loathed while dreaming' and it commits an act of oral destructiveness, reminiscent of his being awoken in childhood by the horror of having to 'swallow the populous world'.⁷ We may speculate that the helpful 'Brownies', the unseen 'Familiars' who later supplied the author with his tales, are a defensive transformation of both the hellish but *collusive* brown dog and the sinister, amorphous colour brown.

The major result of Stevenson's collaboration with his Brownies was *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which had arisen from his repeated, conscious efforts 'to find a body, a vehicle, for that strong sense of man's double being which must at times come in upon and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature'. Though three of its crucial scenes were 'given' him in a dream, he stresses that the 'meaning of [this] tale' was his alone and had 'long pre-existed in [his] garden of Adonis'. This was not the case with the 'not very defensible story of "Olalla"', which he distances himself from by insisting that it was almost entirely given by his dream:

Here the court, the mother, the mother's niche, Olalla, Olalla's chamber, the meetings on the stair, the broken window, the ugly scene of the bite, were all given me in bulk and detail as I have tried to write them; to this I added

only the external scenery (for in my dream I was never beyond the court), the portrait, the characters of Felipe and the priest, the moral, such as it is, and the last pages, such as, alas! they are. And I may say that in this case the moral itself was given me; for it arose immediately on a comparison of the mother and the daughter, and from the hideous trick of atavism in the first.⁸

'Olalla' is that rare thing, a double story in which the doubles are women, and it is the male characters (other than the narrator) who are ancillary. The original dream has the hero (disguised as a convalescent English officer, wounded in the Peninsular wars) confined in the oppressive world of the two women, in their isolated, decaying ancestral residencia in the Spanish sierras. He looks down into the deserted courtyard, planted with red-blooming pomegranate trees and covered in falling 'mountain dust', and is reminded of 'the sleeping palace of the legend'. The only living being in the court is an imbecilic-seeming older woman, the mother, who lies all day in her niche beside an ever-blazing fire, brushing her copious, copper coloured hair and watching the birds (the only things that excite her), as she soothes the hero with her inconsequential talk and 'dull, almost animal neighbourhood'. The turning point of the story is the arrival of a harsh, 'black', dust-laden wind that makes the mother restless and irritable and upsets the whole household. That night the hero is awoken by atrocious cries and moanings, 'ravings worthy of hell', as of someone being 'fouly tortured', which suggest to him that the other woman of the household, the daughter, Olalla, is held prisoner by reason of insanity. Later, he sets out to explore the dusty, empty, spider- and fly- infested rooms of the residencia with their decaying ancestral portraits, which prompt him

to meditate on the mysteries of heredity and 'the parable of family life', including his own, as he traces his features in a mirror. On finding a devotional poem in Olalla's bare and 'ascetic' room he begins to imagine her as a wasted saint, but is disabused of this notion when he suddenly meets her on the stair, glowing in the shadow, 'a gem of colour'.⁹ They fall instantly, passionately in love but, despite the consummation of one intense embrace, Olalla resists his advances and repeatedly begs him to leave. Notwithstanding his misgivings over the sight of the mother and the dangers of mere animal passion, the hero is 'unmanned' by the idea of losing her. Suddenly, 'like one in a dream', he puts his hand through the windowpane and then rushes down to the court, where he asks the mother's help for his bleeding wrist. Her expression changes sharply as she sees the dripping blood, and the next moment she has seized his hand and 'bitten [him] to the bone'.¹⁰

This was the essence of the original dream. Stevenson added the stock ancestral portrait of a beautiful but cruel young woman, with which the hero falls in love, but which loses all life after he meets Olalla. He also gave Olalla a brother, Felipe, good-looking and pious, but half-witted, who repels the hero with his dark hairiness, sensuality and sudden cruelty, when at one point he tortures a squirrel he has captured in a tree. It is Felipe who pins down the mother and struggles with her 'for a long time' after she attacks the hero with the same bestial cries that had horrified him in the night, while Olalla carries him away, in a state of 'trance-like weakness', to tend to him. The padre, Olalla's confessor (like the doctor who had originally sent him there to convalesce), refuses to enlighten the hero about the family's terrible secret and the hellish fate of the muleteer who fathered Felipe and Olalla, and it is left to Olalla herself to explain

that she has to renounce her body, with its evil heredity. At their final meeting, at a lonely crucifix in the mountains, she leaves him with the bleak consolation of Christ's expiation of human sin.

Thus we are left with Stevenson's own question, 'Why is it false?', which is echoed in his dismissive judgment of the moral and the final pages. Part of the reason may be that 'Olalla', unlike *Jekyll and Hyde* (whose literary sources are not obtrusive), is so immediately and obviously derivative, not merely of Stevenson's adolescent reading in Darwin and Herbert Spencer, but of a host of other fantastic and gothic fictions. 'Olalla' falls within the general romantic tradition of the vampire woman and the *femme fatale*, embodied in 'Christabel' and 'Lamia' and numerous works of one favourite poet of Stevenson's adolescence, Swinburne. It also bears traces of more specific, perhaps unconscious influences. These include, on the French side, Nodier's *Inès de las Sierras* (1837), with its Napoleonic officers who encounter a mysterious young woman in her ruined, seemingly haunted ancestral castle in Spain, and also Gautier's 'La morte amoureuse' (1836), with its undead, vampire courtesan who sustains herself on her unwitting lover's blood. There is also Flaubert's 'Hérodiad' (1877), in which a seemingly innocent and beautiful daughter, in a mountain fortress setting, is manipulated by her murderous mother into bringing about a man's decapitation (it is worth recalling that Stevenson at around twenty wrote a gruesome comic poem, 'The daughter of Herodias', and here he has his narrator vow to make Olalla his, 'were she the child of Herod').¹¹

On the Anglo-American side, there is much of Poe, particularly 'The Oval Portrait' (1842), and perhaps 'Morella' (1835), where a dying mother is uncannily reincarnated in

her daughter, not to mention numerous other stories of mysterious mansions and demonic women, such as 'Ligeia' (1838) and 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839). There are traces of Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860), particularly the parallels between Donatello and Felipe, but perhaps more of his 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844), in which the beautiful Beatrice, immured in her walled garden, embodies the literally deadly perils of sexuality and knowingly sacrifices herself sooner than endanger her lover.¹² Another potent influence must have been Lefanu's *Carmilla* (1871–2), whose sexually predatory, vampire heroine with the conniving mother also 'lives' in a beautiful, ancestral portrait. The scene in which the hero, 'like one in a dream', cuts his wrist by thrusting his hand through the casement window, echoes the dream scene in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) where Lockwood breaks the casement window and rubs the wrist of Cathy's ghost on the broken pane 'till the blood ran down'. Above all, 'Olalla' borrows from Bulwer Lytton's *A Strange Story* (1862), in which the strangely doubled characters of Margrave and Lilian anticipate aspects of Felipe and Olalla (and whose depiction of the conflict between rationalism and 'transcendental medicine' is reflected also in *Jekyll and Hyde*); it was here that Stevenson got the incident of Felipe torturing the squirrel.¹³ Even some of the scenery in 'Olalla' is borrowed, from George Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* (1843), a book which Stevenson numbered among his 'dear acquaintances'.¹⁴

These borrowings in themselves cannot be the only reason for the alleged 'falsity' of 'Olalla'. Its predecessor, *Jekyll and Hyde*, is also a story about atavism and the nature of evil, but, despite its strong sexual implications (not for nothing did it germinate in the garden of Adonis), mystery and horror are heightened by a deliberate exclusion of

women and the sexual (something that Henry James was one of the first to point out).¹⁵ The few, minor, female characters in *Jekyll* are suggestively split (as in 'Olalla') between the young and/or innocent versus the old, evil and treacherous. But beneath *Jekyll's* surface of male rivalries and father-son relations, as I have suggested in two previous papers, there are hints of an earlier, shadowy, female presence, perhaps epitomised by the crucial, transformative powders supplied by the chemist 'Maw', a name with strong oral and maternal connotations.¹⁶ I would surmise that the dream material of 'Olalla', with its all-female cast and quite overt sexuality, had emerged from even deeper levels of the repressed than did *Jekyll*, which constituted a first line of defence against it, and that it proved so threatening that Stevenson, despite his avowed 'inspiration' and his professed admiration for his own style, was much more awkward and ambivalent in his treatment of it. The smouldering, sexual imagery of the dream is doubly contained, both within a rather conventional narrative structure (dismissed by Daiches as its 'preposterously artificial action') and by the conventional, puritanical morality of the protagonists' rationalised renunciation of passion.¹⁷ (It does not help that the language of the love scenes verges on the purple. Its closest parallel in Stevenson's writing of this period is with some of the stories of *The Dynamiter* [1884], where the lush renderings of exotic females like the 'fair Cuban' are clearly intended as parody; indeed, the only place in which the phrase 'a gem of colour' is used in the rest of Stevenson's work is to describe this lady.)¹⁸

Further clues to Stevenson's unease about 'Olalla' are to be found in its central image, the dreamlike, deserted court with its dust, decay and silence. Here is a striking evocation of the old nightmare of the dog in the deserted

farmyard. There are many parallels; the dreamer at the upstairs window, the isolated, hill farm, with its 'poor efforts at gentility', the 'great, uneasy stillness' and, dozing against the wall, the old, brown, dusty dog that at first seems 'right enough' but suddenly turns into an uncanny menace. But in the dream the dog is male, whereas in 'Olalla' the corresponding creature is female. She is the mother, who dozes with animal sensuality against the wall; has copper coloured hair and a disturbing gaze; is 'excited' by flying things; and opens her mouth to the hero, first in a yawn, but later to swallow him with murderous desire as the dreamer's protective distance vanishes.

Our reading of this scene will be enhanced by turning to *Jekyll and Hyde*, where a version of it also occurs. The farmyard nightmare resembles one of its original, dreamed scenes, 'Incident at the window', where Jekyll is sitting looking sadly down into the bare courtyard below.¹⁹ Jekyll's smile is succeeded by 'abject terror and despair', as he suddenly disappears, in the throes (as we learn later) of his by now involuntary transformation into Edward Hyde. Jekyll is looking down at Utterson, elsewhere described as 'dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable' (note the recurrence of 'dust' and 'dusty' in all these scenes and images, words evocative, in general, of death and transience, but perhaps carrying unknown personal associations for Stevenson).²⁰ Utterson, the family lawyer, like the 'dull and dusty' dog, is both a guardian and a retriever, who turns from helpful protector to a figure of menace, as he hunts down the secret of Jekyll/Hyde, bringing destruction on them in the process. And he is himself a double or sibling rival of Hyde, who inspires uncanny fear and horror, like the dream dog. Hyde's base, animal nature is manifested in 'apelike tricks' and 'spite' and is described, doglike, as 'licking [its] chops'

and 'growl[ing] for licence'.²¹

The essence of this scene in *Jekyll and Hyde* is the terrifying transformation and dissolution of identity that we do not see. Such scenes are not infrequent in Stevenson's work, and often involve gender confusion and even outright gender change. In *Jekyll and Hyde* itself we find contrasting descriptions of the 'smooth-faced', feminised Jekyll and dark, apelike, masculine Hyde, epitomised in the famous scene of the first involuntary transformation, where Jekyll is horrified to see on the bedclothes, instead of his own 'large, firm, white and comely' hand, the dark and hairy hand of Hyde, an image rife with sexual implications. (These include masturbation and the disturbing physical transformations of puberty, adolescent torments that seem to be directly alluded to in Stevenson's early, autobiographical poem, 'Stormy Nights', itself only one of many references to the 'great winds' and storms that haunted, literally and metaphorically, the black nights of his childhood.)²² In a somewhat later fragment, 'The Story of a Recluse', Stevenson reused this image, with the difference that here a young man, the son of a disapproving minister, wakes up from an amnesiac, drunken stupor in a bed and bedroom identical to his own, but wearing, instead of his nightshirt, 'a woman's chemise, copiously laced about the sleeves and bosom'.²³ In the earlier 'Thrawn Janet' (1881) the sinister housekeeper of the minister of Balweary proves to have been long dead, but all the time animated by the 'Black Man', the devil she had forsworn.²⁴ In 'The Body Snatcher' (1884), two medical students, on their journey back to Edinburgh with the body of an old farmer's wife, find it terrifyingly transformed into that of the dark-haired young man they had earlier murdered to obtain his corpse for dissection.²⁵

In 'Olalla' we have another such gender transformation, in which the dreamer's projected self is now an older woman (like Janet or the dead farmer's wife) who is herself doubled with a younger woman. It is as if the rivalrous and destructive male doubles who occupy centre stage in *Jekyll and Hyde* have here been thrust aside by a monstrous and overwhelming female presence that fully embodies both sides of the split and attenuated female images (evil versus innocent) that had been squeezed to the margins in the earlier story, or only hinted at in the shadowy figure of 'Maw'. The doubles in 'Olalla', whether maternal or virginal, both at first (like the dog in the dream) seem 'right enough', but they suddenly converge when the rejected narrator performs the symbolic defloration of smashing his hand through the window. But he is the one who bleeds, savaged by female passion in an obvious representation of the vagina dentata. The female realm in 'Olalla' is full of sinister, sexual imagery, starting with the red blooms of the pomegranate trees, 'veiled' with dust, with their multiple allusions to sex mingled with death, allusions both to the Biblical language of love in *The Song of Solomon* and to the classical underworld, whose goddess, Persephone, was held prisoner there through her eating of the pomegranate seeds.²⁶ (There may be a further allusion here to Stevenson's 'garden of Adonis', for Adonis, who was worshipped in gardens of rapidly sprouting and withering plants, was the fruit of an incestuous union between a father and daughter, and was held prisoner alternately by the goddess of the underworld and the goddess of love.) The courtyard, spellbound like 'the sleeping palace of the legend', is the site of an ever-burning fire, swept at night by the 'black' wind that arouses obscure physical impulses, and haunted by bestial cries and moans that evoke the primal scene, but one in which the woman is

the aggressor, devouring, like the 'bloated' spider, any male foolhardy enough to venture into her clutches.²⁷

The men whom the author invented to counteract the overwhelming presence of the two women are hardly a reassuring crew. The hero's double, Felipe, who represents repudiated aspects of his own masculine sensuality, is at best a savage and uncertain ally (note how the hero is disgusted by Felipe's rubbing his cheeks with 'a grossness of content' on the bed sheets, and fears that he will 'set the bed on fire' with his candle).²⁸ He exhibits features of the dark, hairy and apelike Edward Hyde, as well as of his 'probably arboreal' ancestor, whom Stevenson had earlier located in his own family tree.²⁹ Felipe's torturing of the squirrel and prolonged overpowering of the mother seem like a sexually sadistic (even incestuous) revenge against the female, though he himself, in his cruelty and his remorseful piety, resembles both the mother and Olalla. The older, celibate men, the doctor and the Padre, in fact endanger the hero, the former by giving him into the women's keeping, the latter by refusing to tell him the family's real history. The only safety lies in Christian renunciation of sexual pleasure and procreation, though it should be noted that it is the woman, not the man, who is made to renounce.

Some of the details in 'Olalla' seem to derive from Stevenson's relationship with Fanny Osbourne, who, when he first met her, was a sensuous, older, married woman with an attractive, almost grown-up daughter, Belle (both of whom shared the dark, exotic colouring which he later gave to Olalla). Early in their acquaintance there occurred an incident that must, whether unconsciously or not, have influenced 'the ugly scene of the bite'. According to Fanny, Stevenson was given to fits of hysterical laughing and could only be brought to himself by having his fingers bent back.

When she once refused to do this for him, he threatened to bend her fingers back and break every bone in them, at which, she said: 'I only saved them by biting his hand till he bled, when he immediately came to his senses and begged pardon'.³⁰ Clearly, conflicts over dependency and aggression in relation to powerful women were hardly confined to Stevenson's fiction.³¹ 'Olalla' perhaps reflects the price to be paid for unmediated possession of a sexually desirous woman, and its mountain scenery, with rushing torrents and roaring winds, is not merely 'cardboard' but recalls that of the California sierra where Stevenson and Fanny started married life and where Fanny nursed the fragile author back to some semblance of health.³² The deserted mining camp of Silverado with its tattered debris, 'sifted in by mountain winds [...] in a sea of red dust', was described, in *The Silverado Squatters*, in terms similar to the residencia, and they even found there a bag of a mysterious 'giant powder' which they feared could be dynamite and which they fearfully swept out after Fanny told the story of a prospector who thriftily used a can of oil that he found in a deserted mine to fill his lamp; he was at once blown to smithereens, since it proved to contain nitroglycerine.³³ (It is tempting to see here a precursor of Maw's mighty powders, in a context suggestive of the destructive effects of sexual passion.) The local inhabitants were degenerate 'poor whites', described as 'loutish', 'somnolent' and 'cunning'. One of the men was 'an unknown quantity between the savage and the nobleman' (like Felipe), while the women had names like 'Leanna, Oreanna'.³⁴

The name of Stevenson's heroine seems to have had some special meaning for him, for he boasted in a letter: 'tis a fine name, is it not?'.³⁵ It could owe something to the eponymous heroines of its predecessors, Poe's 'Morella'

and Lefanu's *Carmilla* (whose protagonist is also known anagrammatically as Mircalla). Visually, it is reminiscent of the French 'O! là! là!', perhaps an unconscious allusion to Stevenson's courtship of Fanny in France. But Olalla also has a nursery sound to it, recalling 'lalla' or 'lullaby' (from Latin, 'lallare'; cf. German, 'lallen', 'to babble like a baby'). Moreover, 'Lallan' or 'Lallans' is the lowland Scots dialect which Stevenson learned first from his nurse, Alison Cunningham, and which he was to write so superbly in his Scottish stories and novels. Thus the associations in 'Olalla', like in *Jekyll and Hyde*, lead back to infancy and to the origins of the split female images in Stevenson's life, the dark, intensely religious Cummy, whose obsession with sin and damnation engendered many of his childhood nightmares, and the fair, bland, conventional but possessive mother who seemed so rejecting of her son's darker feelings.³⁶

The 'Olalla' nightmare warned of what happens when men disappear or cannot afford protection from the seemingly benign women whom they leave in power. The desire which women arouse is a monstrously dangerous thing that leaves the 'fortress of identity' shaken, engendering both mistrust of the body and sexual impulse as something bestial and primitive, and fear of retaliation and engulfment by the female. The only safety lies not in aggression, which is swiftly punished (as the hero punishes his double, Felipe) but in detachment and avoidance (as exemplified in Olalla). Stevenson could not make narrative sense of his nightmare fantasies until he began to use his father's techniques of self-soothing through story-telling, but the resulting stories were largely ones of adventure and aggression among male sibling- and father-figures. Oedipal conflict and sexual rivalry were barely alluded to. It was only in the mid 1880s, when his father was slowly dying,

threatening to leave him in guilty possession of the estates and at the mercy of the womenfolk, that the repressed themes began to break through more insistently, even if the material of 'Olalla' seemed to be beyond Stevenson's ability to handle convincingly at that time.

For a more complete answer to Stevenson's question about 'Olalla', 'Why is it false?', we have to turn to the very end of his life and career, when he had been able to act out his romantic fantasies of travel and adventure and was finally established as a patriarch, surrounded by the women of the family and a troop of male retainers, in his own island domain of Samoa. In the intervening period, Stevenson had begun to introduce strong female characters and a significant love interest into his fiction, to the point where he claimed he now had 'no fear' of depicting a woman and even that he had 'nothing in [his] foolish elderly head but love stories'.³⁷ This was a period of great stress for Stevenson, not least because of the conflict and jealousy between his aging wife and her daughter, Belle Strong, who, in short order, got rid of her ne'er-do-well husband and then, late in 1892, forged a close tie with her step-father by becoming his amanuensis. Fanny was subject to fits of severe emotional breakdown (perhaps depression with psychotic features) that led at times to her having to be physically restrained by her husband and daughter, aided by her son.³⁸ Stevenson may have unconsciously worsened the conflict by doubling the two women as 'my beloved pair', and 'my pair of fairies, plump and dark' and symbolically wedding them both with identical topaz rings, as well as a mildly erotic dedicatory love poem.³⁹ But it was Fanny, the older woman, who toiled over *their* 'hill-farm' at Vailima, whom he described as digging 'like a demented beast'.⁴⁰

If this uncannily echoes some of the scenes of 'Olalla'

(a case of life imitating art that would have delighted Oscar Wilde) it is not surprising that the same should be true of Stevenson's last major work, *Weir of Hermiston*, which he dictated to Belle, and which was conceived as the story of two women, an older and a younger, and the man they both desire. Here Stevenson brought together the themes of evil and doubling, sexuality and heredity, that had haunted him all his life, but this time set close to home, where the principal characters all speak the lowland Scots dialect of Alison Cunningham.⁴¹ The plot of *Weir* in fact embodies many of the elements of 'Olalla': the stress on heredity, of an old family come down in the world; the doubling of the two heroines, both named Kirstie, now aunt and niece rather than mother and daughter (the aunt, Archie's adoring housekeeper, seductively brushes her copious golden hair just as the mother does in 'Olalla'). There is the savage 'black brother', now multiplied into four; and the remote and isolated moorland setting where the 'wounded' hero takes refuge (the Elliotts' farm evokes that in the dream of the dog). Even the period is the same, and Archie, the hero, at one point begs to be allowed to go fight in the Spanish Peninsula.⁴² But instead of the stark split between savage sexual desire and ascetic renunciation, the conflicts, passions and jealousies between the two women and the hero are more realistically portrayed, as is Archie's struggle with his overpowering, but secretly admired father (who sends him to the isolated house on the moors) and his treacherous double, Frank Innes (in perhaps a reprise of that other dream which became *Jekyll and Hyde*). Stevenson seems to have struggled over how the story was to end. In the romantically optimistic version supplied by Belle Strong to Colvin, Archie was to defeat his father, kill his double and flee with his surrogate mother's and her

brothers' help, ultimately finding fulfilment with the love of his choice, even if she had first to be deflowered by another man, Frank (who dies at Archie's hands in consequence). In a more tragic version, Archie was to die at the hands of the law (as represented by his father, the judge), after learning in prison that his lover had been impregnated by his rival.⁴³ Either way, sexual passion and possession can lead to death for those fated to succumb to them.

As it is, *Weir* ends abruptly at exactly the same point as 'Olalla' does, with the lovers' meeting at a rocky gap in the hills that has religious sanctification. In the one case, this is provided by a life-sized crucifix and, in the other, by the grave stone of the Praying Weaver of Balweary, associated for Archie with his dead mother as well as with 'battles long ago' (and, for the reader, with another housekeeper, the grim 'thrawn Janet' of Balweary).⁴⁴ But there is a difference, in that in 'Olalla' it is the pious heroine who warns of the perils of local rumour and decisively ends their love in the name of religion, whereas in *Weir* it is the man who struggles with ambivalence and fear, and the opinions of others, and is forced to confront in a much more psychologically plausible way the passionate desires of the woman he loves. 'There arose from before him the curtains of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is [...] It seemed unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of brute nature . . .'.⁴⁵ This is the more powerful, honest and convincing ending that makes it clearer why Stevenson was so uncomfortably aware that 'Olalla' sounded 'false'. Of course this should not have been the ending of *Weir*, but only became so because Stevenson died suddenly the same day he dictated those words. (Even the ending of the 1892 MS of *Weir of Hermiston*, which carries the story a little further into this same scene, bogs down in the midst of Archie's conflict,

fear and ‘horrible weakness’.)⁴⁶ It might be simplistic – or perhaps not – to conclude that his death was hastened by the strain of more openly confronting in fiction some of the deepest fears and conflicts of his own life, when those conflicts were being acted out daily with the two women closest to him, when he had protested, despairingly:

[...] day by day I become more of a bewildered child. I cannot get used to this world, to procreation, to heredity, to sight, to hearing; [...] the sight of Belle and her twelve year old boy [...] is enough to turn my hair grey; as for Fanny and her brood, it is insane to think of. The prim obliterated polite face of life and the broad, bawdy and orgiastic – or maenadic – foundations, form a spectacle to which no habit reconciles me [...].⁴⁷

You might say that Stevenson had spent all his life trying to bring the nightmare of that uncanny, devilish brown dog to some ‘fit end’, and that in the end the struggle defeated him.

NOTES

1. J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: William Sloane, 1951), p. 244.
2. David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1947), p. 15.
3. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994–1995), Vol. 5, pp. 365–6.
4. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘A Chapter on Dreams’ (London: Heinemann,

- 1924), Tusitala Edition 30, 41–53 (pp. 44–5).
5. Sigmund Freud, "The "Uncanny"" (London, Hogarth Press, 1955), Standard Edition 17, 217–56 (pp. 240–1, 249). Freud, p. 245, traces the ultimate source of (un)heimlich feelings to the original Heim of all human beings, the womb. Some disquieting implications of this are explored by Robin Lydenberg in 'Freud's Uncanny Narratives', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 112: 5 (1997), 1071–86 (pp. 1077–8).
 6. Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen, 1901), Vol. 1, p. 51. For further discussion see Hilary J. Beattie, 'Father and Son: The Origins of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*', *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 56 (2001), 317–60 (p. 324).
 7. 'A Chapter on Dreams', p. 42; Balfour, Vol. 1, p. 34.
 8. 'A Chapter on Dreams', pp. 51–2.
 9. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Olalla' (London: Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 8, 121–67 (p. 146).
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
 11. *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Roger C. Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 254; 'Olalla', p. 149.
 12. Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 201–3, 211.
 13. Eigner, pp. 201–2. Eigner fails to notice the many other possible influences on 'Olalla'.
 14. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's' (London: Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 29, 110–18 (p. 110).
 15. Henry James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson' (1888). In *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature: American Writers: English Writers* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1231–55 (p. 1252).
 16. Hilary J. Beattie, 'A Fairbairnian Analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*', in *Fairbairn, Then and Now*, ed. by Neil J. Skolnick and David E. Scharff (Hillsdale, NJ, The Analytic Press, 1998), 197–211 (p. 209); Beattie, 'Father and son', p. 347. See also William Veeder, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy' in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde after One Hundred Years*, ed. by William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 107–60 (pp. 128–9).
 17. Daiches, p. 15. Stevenson's unease about 'Olalla' is also reflected in his apologetic description of it as: 'very 'orrid I think: a vile, little tale; but picturesque and odd; too odd, no doubt'; see Letters, Vol. 5, p. 152.
 18. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Dynamiter* (London: Heinemann, 1923),

Tusitala Edition 3, p. 146.

19. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ed. by Richard Dury (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 38–9.

20. *Ibid.* p. 7.

21. *Ibid.* pp. 72, 73, 68, 69.

22. *Collected Poems*, p. 257–58; cf. letter to Fanny Sitwell, 21 October 1874, in *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 66. For further discussion see Beattie, ‘Father and Son’, pp. 323–4; Richard Dury, ‘The Hand of Hyde’, in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by William B. Jones, Jr. (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Co., 2003), 101–16 (pp. 108–9). That *Jekyll and Hyde* alludes indirectly to that terror of Victorian boyhoods, masturbation, is suggested by a (later excised) sentence from the Notebook Draft: ‘The iron hand of indurated habit plunged me once again into the mire of my vices’ (William Veeder, ‘The Texts in Question’, in Veeder & Hirsch, 3–13 [p. 11]). The phallic equivalence of Hyde emerges in the following: ‘That part of me which I had the power of projecting had lately been much exercised and nourished; [...]the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though [...] I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood’ (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 65). An erection, for the adolescent male, is generally something he has to hide.

23. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Story of a Recluse’ (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 16, 239–42. Roger Swearingen, in *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (Hamden, Connecticut, Archon Books, 1980), p. 198, dates this fragment to the late 1880s, possibly to the stay at Saranac Lake during which Stevenson also wrote ‘A Chapter on Dreams’.

24. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘Thrawn Janet’ (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 8, 107–20 (pp. 118–20).

25. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Body Snatcher’ (London, Heinemann, 1923), Tusitala Edition 11, 181–203 (pp. 202–3).

26. ‘Olalla’, p. 134.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 140. The ‘black wind’, according to Felipe, makes you ‘feel as if you must do something, and you don’t know what it is’. The hero comments: ‘Felipe had sometimes a strange felicity in rendering into words the sensations of the body’.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

29. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Manse’ (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 29, 52–8 (p. 58).

30. Jenni Calder, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Life Study* (New York, Oxford

University Press, 1980), pp. 110–11.

31. The split between sex and aggression, sexuality and the maternal, had been evident earlier, in Stevenson's relationship with Fanny Sitwell, another older, married woman, whom he took to addressing in letters as 'Madonna', but whom he also begged, in the guise of Medea, to slay or rejuvenate him (*Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 374). It was to her that he poured out his confused fantasies about the 'three, great, headless Madonnas' (the Three Fates) of the Elgin marbles, in which he seemed to envisage Woman as simultaneously huge, phallic and enveloping, yet also remote, castrated (i.e. headless) and passive (*Letters*, Vol. 2, pp. 65, 71, 76–7). These fantasies are an earlier version of that which became nightmare in the 'Olalla' dream, where the three women are differentiated into the sensual maternal, the pure virginal, and the safely dead and immobile portrait.

32. Daiches, p. 15.

33. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters* (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 18, 151–247 (pp. 196–8).

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 203–5.

35. *Letters*, Vol. 5, p.152.

36. For further discussion see Beattie, 'Father and Son', pp. 323–6, 332, 345–7.

37. Fanny Stevenson, 'Prefatory Note to *St. Ives*' (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 15, vii–xvii (p. xii); R. L. Stevenson, letter to Edmund Gosse, *Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 399.

38. Margaret Mackay, *The Violent Friend: The Story of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson* (Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, 1968), p. 417; cf. *Letters*, Vol. 8, pp. 39–41.

39. *Collected Poems*, pp. 287, 282 ('Mother and Daughter'); cf. Mackay, p. 418.

40. *Collected Poems*, p. 285.

41. Even in 'Olalla', despite the hero's emphatically English nationality, a repressed Scottishness occasionally breaks through, notably 'thoughts of Scottish superstition and the river-kelpie', evoked by the 'wild river' en route to the residencia (p. 127). Towards the end the hero is taken away by Felipe to 'the mountain village, which was, as we say in Scotland, the kirk-town of that thinly peopled district' (p.161).

42. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. by Catherine Kerrigan (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 36.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxii–xxxiv; Sidney Colvin, 'Editorial Note to *Weir of Hermiston*' (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 16, 125–36 (pp.

125–9); *Letters*, Vol. 7, p. 414.

44. The elder Kirstie's kinship with her sinister predecessor, thrawn Janet of Balweary, is hinted at when her niece describes her as: 'A bitter, thrawn old maid that's fomented trouble in the country before I was born' (*Weir of Hermiston*, [1995] p. 114).

45. *Weir of Hermiston*, (London, Heinemann, 1924), Tusitala Edition 16, 1–124 (p. 124).

46. *Weir of Hermiston* (1995), pp. 115–17.

47. Letter to Bob Stevenson, *Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 362.

Strange language of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Richard Dury

Readers have often commented on the pleasure of reading Stevenson's prose, the most famous of these being Jorge Luis Borges who, listing the things that please himself rather than 'Borges the writer', ends with 'el sabor del café y la prosa de Stevenson'.¹ For him, the pleasure is probably related to a kind of writing that can be 'savoured', as suggested by the interesting juxtaposition with 'el sabor del café'. We might say that Stevenson encourages a metalinguistic kind of reading, where aspects of textual organisation, word order, rhythm, sound and choice of words are all observed and enjoyed. As Gerard Manley Hopkins says (in a letter in which he discusses *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*), 'Stevenson is a master of consummate style, and each phrase is finished as in poetry.'²

Stevenson gives the reader a similar experience to that of hearing or reading a strange but perfectly understood dialect or familiar foreign language. There is a pleasure in noticing that things are different (deriving from unexpected sequences and from a fresh way of conceptualising the world) while you are nevertheless still able to follow the language and the ideas perfectly. In what follows, I will look at some of the techniques used by Stevenson to make language new or strange, with particular attention to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

The slight strangeness that makes the reader linguistically-aware starts with the title of this work, where we feel an initial definite article would be more normal, as in Conan Doyle's chapter title 'The Strange Story of Jonathan Small' (in *The Sign of Four*, 1890). This lack was already noticed by an early reviewer, who says that the author 'refrains from even the exactitude of the definite article. It is "Strange Case,"—a wholly disconnected imaginary succession of events—not "The Strange Case," implying a certain experimental knowledge'.³ Alan Sandison refers to 'the missing definite article' in the title and says that this suggests 'the detective's cryptic jottings (perhaps as these are translated in the newsboys' sensationalising placards [...])'.⁴ Although the suppressed article might suggest a newspaper headline or the note-like title on the cover of a dossier, we know that this is a fictional narrative, so it also seems unusual.

Variation in the use of articles is familiar to us from different languages and dialects ('Vive le sport!', 'the Gaelic'), so when Lanyon says that Hyde 'was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria', it is reminiscent of other linguistic systems (French or Scots or older English usage) and it certainly poses no problem in understanding; at the same time, however, it is unexpected and odd.

Another simple technique that Stevenson uses to render his texts slightly strange is to change the preposition that we would be expecting in a certain position. Prepositions do not generally display much variation in the standard language, yet at the same time we know that they can vary across time (in Shakespeare we find 'repent at' but also 'repent in' and 'repent of'), between dialects of the same language ('pouring with rain' in many varieties of English but 'of rain' in Scottish English) and between related languages ('at sea' in English,

but 'en mer' in French).⁵ Such variations do not cause any problem in understanding, since the context defines the relationship of the words, but the less familiar variant will still seem slightly strange. In the case of Stevenson, where words of this kind are not expected, the result for the reader is the philological pleasure of observing linguistic variation. In *Jekyll and Hyde* (and the *New Arabian Nights* stories of 1878 and 1885) such unusual variants of function words are combined with alarming subject matter and a general indeterminacy on various levels (the personality of the characters; the nature of the actions referred to; the moral stance of the narrator; the interpretations of the story elements). Here the pleasure of interpretation is combined with the production of a feeling of uncanniness from words that seem both familiar and unfamiliar.

An example of preposition variation in *The New Arabian Nights* is 'I mean to catch you up and come neck and neck into the winning post'; here, 'into the winning post' seems an invention or a great rarity: it gets only one internet hit (apart from this text), from a Hong Kong newspaper, while 'at the winning post' gets 751 and 'to the winning post' 1830.⁶ In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* we find 'at all hours of solitude or concourse, the lawyer was to be found on his chosen post,' where 'at his post' is by far the most common collocation.⁷ In this case, however, an internet search shows Stevenson's variant to be military usage, not an invention of the writer, therefore, though still strange by virtue of its rarity and adoption from specialised English. Sometimes the uncanny quality of the unfamiliar preposition is strengthened by an inability to arrive at a final meaning, as when Jekyll recalls 'when I had walked with my father's hand' (p. 62). Here the reader searching for meaning does not come up with any single interpretation of the unexpected preposition: the

context suggests perhaps ‘at my father’s hand’ (‘alongside my father’) or ‘with my father’s hand *in mine*’ or even ‘*in accordance with* my father’s hand’ (under my father’s control). One critic calls it ‘an aptly odd turn of phrase’.⁸

In this last example there is another slightly unusual element: ‘when I had walked with my father’s hand’ sounds as if it could be an idiomatic phrase, yet it turns out not to be one. On other occasions Stevenson takes a known collocation and changes it slightly. Deliberate variation here is similar to variation in function words: we know that such idioms cannot normally be changed (we ‘*lead* someone up the garden path’, we cannot use the verb ‘take’), and yet some variation is possible (we can ‘let the *political* cat out of the bag’) and we know that idioms vary in different regional dialects. As a result, variation here may also seem like dialect variation, as when in the first chapter of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* the narrator says ‘It was a nut to crack for many’ (p. 8): the meaning is clear (‘many found it difficult to understand’), but the reader is left uncertain as to whether it is a legitimate derivation from the idiom ‘a tough/hard nut to crack’ (‘a difficult problem’), and could imagine it existing in some other dialect.⁹

Another example of idiom variation, produced by substitution rather than omission, is ‘as empty as a church’ (p. 9), where ‘quiet as a church’ is the common idiom. Changing the idiom has the additional effect of undermining the ideology behind the orthodox form: the church is no longer typically ‘quiet’, ‘sacred’ and ‘holy’, but ‘empty’; useless and meaningless.¹⁰ In the same chapter Enfield says ‘I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o’clock of a black winter morning’ (p. 9), to which Sandison comments ‘The idiom he uses, as so often in the text, is just sufficiently unusual to draw attention to

itself. Why “at the end of the world” when the received idiom is “at the ends of the earth”?¹¹

On another occasion, Stevenson uses an idiom formally unchanged, but with an unusual meaning. When Enfield says ‘I [...] took to my heels’ (p. 9), the context shows that he ran towards Hyde to take hold of him, while the normal use of the idiom is to indicate escape, not pursuit (all the other examples in the OED conform to this use and the definition given is ‘to run away’). At the end of the first chapter, Enfield says ‘Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again’ where ‘let us agree never to refer to this again’ would be more normal (‘to make a bargain’ normally involves preliminary negotiation and two different but reciprocal commitments).

We now move on to a slightly different case of unusual language: not variation in more-or-less fixed linguistic elements, but the use of slightly unusual individual lexical words. Here we have the advantage of being able to refer to Stevenson’s own theoretical writings. Between 1881 and 1885, he wrote five essays on literary theory that have been called ‘probably the most original series of reflections on the art of the novel of this period’.¹² The last of these, ‘On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements’, published in *The Contemporary Review* in April 1885, was described by Stevenson in letters as ‘path-breaking and epoch-making’ and as ‘a sort of start upon my Treatise on the Art of Literature’, a work several times announced but never written.¹³ For Richard Ambrosini this essay ‘anticipates the analytic methods of New Criticism. There is nothing similar to this in any nineteenth-century criticism, with the possible exception of the theoretical writings on poetry of Edgar Allen Poe.’¹⁴ For Italo Calvino, Stevenson in this essay ‘anticipates the phonetic and phonological analyses of

Roman Jakobson'.¹⁵

The essay is all the more innovative because it makes little use of rhetorical or linguistic terminology, trying instead to examine the interaction of form and meaning in a totally fresh way. Despite its businesslike division into four numbered sections, it is typically Stevensonian in its marriage of stylistic brilliance with an argument that is partly pulled by associations into a conversation-like non-linear progression. The first aspect of literary art that he discusses is the choice of individual words and their revitalisation through use in context. Then he goes on to analyse how 'meaning' (or 'argument') combines with 'form' (or 'stylistic pattern') to produce a 'web' of interrelated form and meaning. This is achieved by means of the artful ordering of elements of meaning in such syntactic and rhetorical figures as (i) the 'knot' of suspended meaning; (ii) the interweaving of different elements and views; and (iii) 'designed reversals' of normal ordering. Apart from this fundamental 'web' of form and meaning, literary art also involves two types of patterning of purely formal elements of sound: the rhythm of the phrase and the concordances of single sounds.

The 1885 essay shows Stevenson's interest in the rhetoric of prose texts in the year before the writing of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and it also helps us understand the 'strange' language of the text. Indeed, the first section of his analysis in the essay deals with a technique, which Stevenson used in all his writings, of creating new meaning through the original use of words that are defined by their context.

Henry James saw Stevenson's prose style as 'curious of expression' and other early critics see it as marked by 'novel and piquant forms of speech', and by a 'continual slight

novelty'.¹⁶ A more recent critic remarks on how Stevenson gives his reader 'sharp little stylistic shocks, for instance, by using words in somewhat unusual senses or contexts'.¹⁷ A fellow-student at Edinburgh University gives us the idea that his speech had these characteristics even in his early days:

He seemed to attach great importance to the use of words which from association carried with them a fuller connotation than a mere dictionary one; and to the effectiveness of words and phrases in everyday use when employed in a not altogether usual connotation.¹⁸

Stevenson habitually forces new meanings on both familiar and unfamiliar words; his texts are characterised by new word/meaning relations resulting from the contextual creation of meaning and the contextual revitalising of vocabulary. We can see this approach as related to socio-cultural theories of language, such as Wittgenstein's idea that 'The meaning of a word is its use in language' – i.e. language is not fixed by authority, not fixed at all, but is social and constantly in flux, defined by its use in what Wittgenstein calls 'language-games'.¹⁹

Stevenson was probably in part rebelling against an excessive definition of language use and word-meaning, and the view of language as a fixed system. In a discussion of Stevenson's innovative language-use, his contemporary admirer Marcel Schwob says

Today, when words are fixed and rigid, fully dressed in all their letters, correct and polite in their unchangeable spelling, they—like people in evening dress—have lost their individuality of colour. People used to wear clothes

of different kinds of cloth: now, words, like people, are dressed in black. It's no longer easy to tell one from the other.²⁰

In the first section of 'On Style in Literature' ('1. Choice of Words') Stevenson declares that

the first merit [...] of a good writer [...] is the apt choice and contrast of the words employed. It is, indeed, a strange art to take these blocks, rudely conceived for the purpose of the market or the bar, and by that tact of application touch them to the finest meanings and distinctions; restore to them their primal energy, wittily shift them to another issue.²¹

This passage (in a way that we find elsewhere in Stevenson) self-reflectively illustrates in itself what it discusses: 'strange' by its context is made to assume the archaic (therefore strange) meaning of 'wonderful'.²² And, in 'by that tact of application touch them to the finest meanings', we find unusual meanings for 'tact', 'application' and 'touch': 'by that keen sense of discrimination [*tact*] in bringing things together [*application*], bring them by touch [*touch them*] to the finest meanings' where the sudden emergence of the simple and sensual *touch* after the unusual and abstract 'by that tact of application' seems to almost suggest a sexual meaning, certainly restoring to the words a 'primal energy' of meaning, recreated by use. At the end of the sentence, 'wittily shift them to another issue' shows the word 'issue' being itself wittily shifted to mean 'meaning', i.e. 'outcome, product (or issue) of the action of manipulating meaning'. In the same paragraph Stevenson also comments on the 'singular justice' of words in Shakespeare, Tacitus and

Montaigne, forcing on 'justice' the meaning 'rightness' or 'aptness' – though, as in the previous examples, it is the context which does this, so the meaning is easy to understand, even though the words remain slightly strange.

Stevenson's 'curious' style (perhaps more visible in the early works and essays) not only raises consciousness in the reader about the creation of meaning but also functions as a conspicuous artistic contribution, a direct trace of the artist's hand, irrespective of the subject matter, calling into question the distinction of serious and trivial things.

The process of meaning creation in context involves the active collaboration of the reader, who arrives at an unexpected and obscure word or phrase and – assuming that it was chosen deliberately – makes an inferential search for meaning that will be coherent with the surrounding context. The pleasure of reading Stevenson is very much involved in this collaboration – a philological pleasure of textual interpretation that may involve a search for meaning among etymology or cognate words in other languages, but is ultimately dependent on the contextual use alone. So, in 'singular justice' (for 'peculiar aptness'), a knowledge of French *justesse* or the obsolete English meanings of 'justness' may help, but the reader starts and ends with a search for meaning guided by the context.

The words that Stevenson revivifies with 'primal energy' are often familiar words used in strange ways but which seem to acquire a rightness of specificity about them through their fresh new use, examples being 'sensible darkness' ('[w]eighed upon by the opaque and almost sensible darkness', in 'Nuits Blanches'), 'the same punctual instant of time' (in 'Edinburgh, Picturesque Notes'), and 'the rumour of the turbulent sea' (in 'The Education of an Engineer').²³ As we have seen before, these new meanings

also make a subtle allusion to French: *sensible* ('tangible'), *ponctuel* ('point-like') and *rumeur* ('confused or distant murmur', 'clamour'). Perhaps two things are going on here (accounting for the pleasure experienced): a word is revived with a new meaning by its contextual use, and at the same time there is a winking allusion to French. Although it is not normally allowed to use English words with French meanings, we are amused by the nonchalant boldness – as was Henry James, when he said that Stevenson writes 'with a kind of gallantry—as if language were a pretty woman and a person who proposes to handle it had, of necessity, to be something of a Don Juan.'²⁴

Sometimes the bright new meaning is arrived at by a combination of the familiar meaning with one that is created by the context, as when (in *Travels with a Donkey*) he says that '[the ox] followed us with a ruminating look', which suggests a thoughtful look while chewing, or when (in 'A Plea for Gas Lamps') he says that 'a sedate electrician somewhere in a back office touches a spring', a choice of word that suggests someone who is both seated and quiet and slow.²⁵

A phrase in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* that stimulates interpretation is Jekyll's comment on Hyde in the last chapter: 'he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded' (p. 72). Here, we find Stevenson's predilection (already mentioned) for making the linguistic form reflect the meaning: 'resented' at the beginning is mirrored in the passive 'was [...] regarded', and the doubled subject is represented by 'he [...] himself'. A specifically philological pleasure is created as we experience the way that the word 'regarded' is revived to mean 'looked at *in return*', with its first syllable re- becoming, through Stevenson's use, a meaningful prefix again.

When Jekyll refers to his early ‘profound *duplicity* of life’ (p. 58), the reader finds another example of self-reflexive language and an unusual use of a word. In this case, Jekyll uses the word *duplicity* in its less common morally-neutral sense, imitating, we might say, the creative manipulation of language in use of Stevenson himself, though not here with an artistic aim, but from a desire to present himself in the best possible light – a kind of deceit involving the deceptive use of a word usually meaning ‘deception’.²⁶

Some of the uses of words in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* are so unusual as to contribute to the text’s atmosphere of strangeness. An example occurs in the last chapter, when Jekyll says of himself ‘my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion’ (p. 62). Stevenson’s correspondent Myers says ‘I don’t understand the phrase [‘kept awake by ambition’] [...] I thought the stimulus was a different one’, and indeed why should ‘a desire for social eminence or for something advantageous’ (the normal definition of ‘ambition’) keep alive a desire for evil acts—acts which are a continuation of Jekyll’s concealed ‘pleasures’, not aimed at helping him to rise in the social or professional scale.²⁷ The context therefore *excludes* the normal meaning of ‘ambition’ and forces us to look for a more appropriate one. Stevenson probably intends an etymological meaning from the Latin *ambitio* ‘going around’: Jekyll’s evil is stimulated by urban rambles. Such a discovery by the reader is not totally unlikely, since we may be aided by our knowledge of words like ‘ambit’ and ‘perambulation’, but most readers probably stop halfway in this process and are simply left with a feeling that something is unusual about the sentence. Another example of this technique that produces a slight feeling of strangeness is Utterson’s ‘strong, superstitious prevision of success’

(p. 16), in which ‘superstitious prevision’ must be interpreted, after some thought, as an ‘irrational presentiment’, with ‘superstitious’ taking on a new meaning by its contextual use, yet remaining strange enough to be omitted by some translators.

On another occasion, the unusual word is too important to be passed over in this way. A good example is the word ‘trample’ at the very climax of the story recounted by Enfield in the first chapter:

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 (p. 9).

Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1886 sees the trampling as ‘a convention: he was thinking of something unsuitable for fiction’²⁸ and a recent critic says that the scene is not easily imagined – it remains in the memory, but only thanks to its strangeness.²⁹ Stevenson’s ‘trampled’ could be ‘repeatedly trod heavily over (= over the whole surface) and flattened’ (which fits in with the crowd’s later murderous reaction and the normal meaning of the verb ‘trample’), or it could be ‘stepped over (= passed from one side to the other) and went on his way’ (which fits in with the idea of a straight line of movement for Hyde and the unhurt state of the girl). The expression creates an uncomfortable voyeuristic need to imagine the violent and erotically charged scene. In the end it remains opaque and one suspects that either Enfield or the author are hiding something.

The reader in his inferential search for meaning in this passage has to consider a metaphoric sexual meaning of the mysterious event (as did Hopkins in supposing ‘something

unsuitable for fiction’). Another example of vagueness combined with sexual innuendo is found in the description of the by-street in the first chapter of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*:

The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger (p. 8).

The shops with ‘an air of invitation’ like smiling women sound like prostitutes; the street veiling its ‘charms’ reminds one that ‘charms’ is a euphemism for ‘sexually attractive parts of a woman’s body’ (and that ‘unveiling charms’ usually refers to erotic undressing); in this context even ‘comparatively empty of passage’ takes on a sexual meaning. We can also once again see language reflecting what it describes, since the ‘by-paragraph’ resembles the ‘by-street’: both are characterised by decorative ‘surplus’ and sexual suggestiveness.³⁰

So far I have dealt with the way Stevenson brings ‘primal energy’ to words through their use in context and how the extra meaning that is added in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* also contributes to the general strangeness and

indeterminacy, is occasionally opaque (suggesting that something is being hidden), or slightly disturbing (in the case of sexual innuendo). I will now look briefly at two other formal techniques used by Stevenson in the text: repetition and fragmentation (which are related, since repetition itself breaks the text into fragments).

Repetition takes many forms in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. From local patterns of alliteration and assonance in single passages and echoed words between characters in dialogues, to wider contexts of repetition distributed through the whole text: the repetition of verbal formulas and of references to mirrors, doubling, devils and death, and the repetition of narrative situations involving characters in similar spatial configurations.

Alliteration characterises numerous passages of heightened description, drawing attention to what might be important meaning, as in 'labyrinths of lamplighted city' (p. 15) and 'a certain sinister block of building' (p. 8) and 'a common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless' (p. 69). Its function of drawing the attention to a significant passage adds to the other invitations to interpretation that we find in the text (but, like them, it is an interpretation that leads to no simple answer).

Repetition of words across dialogue turns is found eight times in the text, as in the following example:

'We have common friends', said Mr Utterson.

'Common friends?' echoed Mr Hyde (p. 17).³¹

This technique suggests an equivalence or double-relationship between the two characters and also adds to the chaotic structure produced by repetition in the text at various levels.

The text is notable for its patterned repetition of narrative situations: two men at a door, characters near a fire, the drinking of wine, two investigative visits to banks, two horrifying scenes under or at a window, two forced entrances to Jekyll's cabinet, and two accounts of a transformed Hyde crossing the courtyard. We mention them here because although not linguistic they are further examples of the formal figure of repetition.³²

In addition to all these repetitions, the text is further broken up by other types of discontinuities: the chapters seem potentially separate documents, the strange words already mentioned stand out from the text, and dialogues have non-coherent turns. An effect of fragmentation is also produced by the frequent use of the semicolon, which juxtaposes two sentences but does not promise any causal link. In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* the ratio of semicolons to full stops in the text is high, just over 1:2. Of the 519 semicolons, an amazing 203 examples are followed by the conjunction 'and'. Nabokov apparently noticed this, as in his teaching copy of the book he rings semicolon and following 'and' in three examples in the first two chapters.³³

Sandison remarks on 'those odd notes' that are struck in the dialogues 'which so often alert the reader of this book to ulterior significance'.³⁴ Often these 'odd notes' are produced by two turns in a dialogue not fitting together, not sharing the same presuppositions. When Utterson tells Enfield that he knows the name of the person who lives in the house of the 'story of the door', Enfield says 'you might have warned me', though it is impossible to identify the danger or difficulty that Enfield should have been warned against. He goes on to say 'I have been pedantically exact, as you call it', though Utterson has not used the words 'exact' or 'pedantically exact' (p. 12).

Though the ‘strange’ language of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* contributes to the text’s puzzling lack of simple meaning, it is also associated with the philological pleasure of interpretation, with an awareness of the language and of its differences from normal language and an active role in the determination of meaning. The text can be read quickly, as a horror-mystery, but also more slowly, savouring the unusual choice and arrangement of words; it is a text where, despite the roughness of discontinuities and unexpected language-use, ‘each phrase is finished as in poetry’.

NOTES

1. ‘Borges y yo’ (1957), collected in *El hacador* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960). Borges’ declaration is all the more striking for being made in the 1950s when Stevenson was still ignored by most literary critics. The Spanish word *sabor* not only means ‘taste’ or ‘flavour’ but has connotations of ‘sensual pleasure’ and ‘joie de vivre’.
2. In *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 231.
3. *The Washington Post*, early 1886, in Stevenson’s Mother’s Scrapbook 3 (1886–7), Stevenson Cottage, Saranac Lake.
4. Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 218.
5. N. F. Blake, *Shakespeare’s Language* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 111.
6. Robert Louis Stevenson, *New Arabian Nights* (1882) in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Tusitala Edition* (London: Heinemann, 1923–4) Vol. I, p. 7. (Further reference to this edition will henceforth be indicated by ‘Tus.’.)
7. *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ed. by Richard Dury (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 16. (Further references to the text in this edition will henceforth be given by page number in the text.)
8. Stephen Heath, ‘Psychopathia Sexualis: Stevenson’s Strange Case’, *Critical Quarterly* 28 (1986), 93–108 (p. 101).
9. A web-search for the string ‘nut to crack’ produced over 15,000 Internet pages, almost all of them with ‘a tough/hard/difficult/easy nut to crack’. Apart from irrelevant records (representing a different structure) only two

had 'nut to crack' by itself, one in an Australian ballad by early-twentieth-century Australian poet Edward S. Sorenson ('tis a nut to crack, / Where old Bill Brown is now') and another in the early nineteenth-century Dublin song by Michael Moran ('Which shows that co-in-ci-dence is a nut to crack'), which suggests that Stevenson's variant could be dialectal.

10 Cf. Wolfgang Mieder and Anna Tóthné Litovkina, *Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs* (Burlington, VT: The University of Vermont, 1999). Many adapted proverbs have ambivalent meaning that subverts the source idiom.

11. Sandison, p. 233.

12. Michel Le Bris, *Pour saluer Stevenson* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), p. 173.

13. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. By B.A. Booth and E. Mehw (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994–5), Vol. V, pp. 53, 89.

14. Richard Ambrosini, *R. L. Stevenson: La poetica del romanzo* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2001), pp. 176–7.

15. Qu. Ambrosini, p. 177n. In contrast, E. F. Benson in his highly critical 1925 article calls the essay 'utterly baffling to the enquiring mind' (E. F. Benson, 'The Myth of Robert Louis Stevenson', *The London Mercury* 12. 1925, p. 372).

16. (i) Henry James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson' (1888) in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson. A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, ed. by Janet Adam Smith (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), p. 126; (ii) Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Mr Stevenson's Methods in Fiction' (1890) in *Stevensoniana. An anecdotal life and appreciation of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by J. A. Hammerton (Edinburgh: Grant, 1910), p. 244; (iii) C. T. Copeland, 'Robert Louis Stevenson' (1895) in Hammerton, p. 168.

17. Graham Good, 'Rereading Robert Louis Stevenson', *Dalhousie Review* 62(1) (1982), 44–59 (p. 51).

18. David M. Lewis in *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Rosaline Masson (Edinburgh/London: Chambers, 1922), p. 23.

19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations / Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), §43.

20. Marcel Schwob, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', *Spicilege* (1896) in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Michel Le Bris (Paris: L'Herne, 1996), p. 310. 'Aujourd'hui que les mots sont fixes et rigides, vêtus de toutes leurs lettres, corrects et polis, dans leur orthographe immuable, comme des invités de soirée, ils ont perdu leur individualisme de couleur. Les gens s'habillaient d'étoffes différentes: maintenant les mots, comme les gens, sont habillés de noir. On ne les distingue plus beaucoup.'

21. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements' (1885) in *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical*

Essays, ed. by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 94.

22. For example, later in the same essay, 'You may follow the adventures of a letter through any passage that has pleased you: find it, perhaps, denied awhile, to tantalise the ear' ('On Style in Literature', p. 104), where the word *perhaps* itself delays or 'denies awhile' the development of the sentence and the established alliteration of 'passage [...] pleased [...] perhaps' is at that point 'denied' and replaced by the alliteration of 'to tantalise'.

23. 'Nuits Blanches' (1896), Tus. Vol. XXI, p. 164; *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (1878), Tus. Vol. XXVI, p. 160; (1888). 'The Education of an Engineer' (1888), Tus. XXX, p. 22. Some more examples can be found in William P. Chalmers, *Characteristische Eigenschaften von R.L. Stevensons Stil* (Marburg: Elwet, 1913), pp. 13–14.

24. Henry James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson' (1888), in Janet Adam Smith (ed.), *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson. A Record of Friendship and Criticism* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), p. 127.

25. *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879), Tus. XVII, p. 163; 'A Plea for Gas Lamps' (1878), Tus. XXV, p. 131.

26. The morally neutral meaning of 'profound duplicity' is further undermined by 'so profound a double-dealer' a few lines later, where the same adjective 'profound' is associated with a word that clearly means 'deceiver'.

27. Maixner, pp. 216–17.

28. Maixner, p. 229.

29. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror. A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980); Italian translation *Storia della Letteratura del Terrore* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1985), p. 206.

30. Other sexually-suggestive passages are the moonlit scene with Sir Danvers Carew (ch. 4), the description of the moon on her back (ch. 8) and the detailed description of Jekyll's hand (ch. 10). Discussions of these are found in the Introduction and notes to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ed. Dury.

31. For the other examples of this 'structural rhyming' (Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 41), see *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, pp. xliii–xliv.

32. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, pp. xlv–xlvi.

33. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, pp. xlvii–xlviii. Nabokov's teaching edition of the text with annotations is in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.

34. Sandison, p. 235.

‘Steadfastly and securely on his
upward path’:
Dr Jekyll’s spiritualist experiment

Sara Clayson

The central theme of Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is, of course, the divided self – ‘man’s dual nature’ – and, as such, has been the focus of much of the criticism of this novella.¹ I aim to bring a fresh approach to the discussion of this theme by placing Stevenson’s tale within the context of a contemporaneous phenomenon that was similarly concerned with doubleness and division – the ‘craze’ of Spiritualism. It is clear from his correspondence that Stevenson – member of the Society for Psychical Research and a self-proclaimed ‘Spookist’ – recognised the significance of Spiritualism to notions of a divided self, even writing to the prominent ‘psychical researcher’ Frederic Myers to communicate his own strange experiences of an ‘other fellow’ who seemed to be attempting to usurp control of his body.² So, by putting this most famous of tales of ‘split personality’ in the context of Spiritualism, an historical reading of the double in *Jekyll and Hyde* can be offered that takes us beyond psychoanalysis, which has tended to dominate criticism concerned with this theme and reads division purely in terms of repression. More specifically, tracing the language of Spiritualism through this novella enables a reading of the double that engages

with post-Darwinian evolutionary discourse with alarming consequences, demonstrating that the 'atavistic' Edward Hyde also represents a monstrous vision of *future* human evolution. Moreover, by simultaneously considering Spiritualism in the light of Stevenson's novella, a re-evaluation of this movement can be made that rescues it from accusations of mere oddity by demonstrating its contribution to late-nineteenth-century discourses of the divided self and its significance to the various ways that Darwinism was explored during this difficult period for some evolutionary scientists – troubling even for the co-discoverer of 'natural selection', A. R. Wallace – still reeling from the materialist implications of Darwin's work.

As has been frequently noted, the central theme of the divided self in *Jekyll and Hyde* seems to be particularly receptive to psychoanalytical models of criticism – Rosemary Jackson goes as far as to claim that the novella 'exemplifies Freud's theory of fantastic narrative as telling of a return of the repressed'.³ Indeed, *Jekyll and Hyde* is a novella that does centre on repression, uses confession as its narrative form, and has been interpreted in various ways as 'hysterical': Elaine Showalter focuses her discussion of Stevenson's mysterious story on the notion of the 'male hysteric' and homosexuality, while Marion Shaw sees hysteria in the text itself, arguing that the text echoes one of Freud's case studies.⁴ Furthermore Mr Hyde seems to be easily read in terms of the uncanny. The dual meanings in Freud's conception of the uncanny seem to have particular significance in Stevenson's tale in which Dr Jekyll's hidden self is unveiled transforming the familiar, respectable doctor, into the unfamiliar, and indescribable Mr Hyde. However, by focusing on interiority, psychoanalytical criticism has tended to ignore or even dismiss history. Yet,

as some recent critics such as Robert Mighall have shown, historicist approaches enable new readings of the novella that offer different insights into familiar Gothic themes such as the ancestral return or the survival of the past.⁵ However, I would like to argue that by locating *Jekyll and Hyde* within the historically specific discourse of Spiritualism it is possible to extend and enrich the psychoanalytically inspired reading of the double, thereby bringing together these two critical models.

In his essay 'Diagnosing Jekyll: The Scientific Context to Dr Jekyll's Experiment and Mr Hyde's Embodiment', which accompanies one recent edition of the text, Mighall usefully draws on the late-Victorian theories of 'degeneration' in psychiatric, criminological and sexological discourses to show parallels between Stevenson's text and contemporaneous scientific thinking, reading Jekyll/Hyde as an example of the condition 'morbid psychology' as it was classified at the time (pp. 145-61). Thus, reading *Jekyll and Hyde* against the background of these discourses reveals Hyde as a return to a lower, and past, stage of evolution in specifically post-Darwinian terms. As David Punter also argues, Hyde 'is the reversion of the species, the ever-present threat that, if evolution is a ladder, it may be possible to start moving *down* it'.⁶ But, of course, behind this notion of degeneration – a slippage down the evolutionary ladder – the persistent belief in evolutionary *progress* lies, and it is this dichotomy that lies, at the heart of post-Darwinian evolutionary theory. As evolutionary science in the 1880s was still coming to terms with Darwin's troubling *On the Origin of Species* – Darwin's theory of natural selection had implied that progress was *not* an inevitable result of evolution – the resistance to his theories that had come from some quarters ever since 1859 only increased, leading

some to search for an evolutionary theory that could also encompass the notion of progress that had marked earlier attempts to describe the evolutionary process. Darwin had provided the mechanism for evolution but its implications made problematic the dominant teleological model of evolution, which saw a purpose behind evolutionary change. So, while the criminologists and sexologists were rewriting Darwinian evolution into a theory of degeneration in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as Mighall shows, others were similarly re-envisioning Darwin's mechanism for evolution – natural selection – into a theory that could be more compatible with the notion of a divine plan with human perfection as its goal. The theories of the Spiritualists offered one way for this reconciliation of ideologies to take place and were embraced by many late-Victorian thinkers who attempted to re-imagine evolution within an area 'between science and religion' and saw the future evolution of the species in a realm beyond the grave.⁷ My argument here is that Stevenson's tale of 'degeneration' is complicated by this other contemporaneous use of Darwinism that sought to reconcile Darwin's theory of natural selection with the theory of human progress, so that *Jekyll and Hyde* can be interpreted in terms of both degeneration and progress simultaneously. The relationship between degeneration and progress in this period is a complex one, riddled with ambiguities as J. Edward Chamberlin points out, and Stevenson's novella contributes to this 'uneasy issue' by disrupting the dichotomies that seem to underpin post-Darwinian conceptions of evolution – progress/degeneration; body/soul – by drawing on the language and beliefs of the Spiritualists.⁸

Although Stevenson's novella blurs the boundaries between the scientific and the supernatural it does draw

on contemporaneous discourse revealing that Jekyll's science is far from fantastical. Indeed a review of *Jekyll and Hyde*, which appeared in *The Times* very shortly after its publication in January 1886, countered any accusations of the improbability of Jekyll's science by reminding its audience that 'we are still groping by doubtful lights on the dim limits of boundless investigation; and it is always possible that we may be on the brink of a new revelation'.⁹ This echoes the concerns of some who believed Darwinian materialism was failing to offer full explanations of those mysteries that still troubled the Victorians – writing in one periodical in 1884, Edmund Gurney and Frederic Myers spoke for many when they claimed that materialism 'has failed to commend itself as a complete or ultimate solution of the problems without and within us'.¹⁰ Indeed, in *Jekyll and Hyde* Stevenson refers explicitly to this resistance to materialism in the contemporaneous 'scientific' discourse of psychical research and the scene in which Jekyll/Hyde performs his transformation before Dr Lanyon dramatically illustrates this underlying debate between scientific naturalism and those that saw Spiritualism as a possible new branch of science. Lanyon represents the objective and reasonable voice of scientific naturalism and had parted company with Jekyll many years previously over scientific differences: Lanyon accuses Jekyll of 'unscientific balderdash' (p. 12); Lanyon is 'an ignorant, blatant pedant' counters Jekyll (p. 19). In this scene, Hyde recriminates Lanyon in words that are indistinguishable from Jekyll's own, snarling at him, 'you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors – behold!' (p. 53). With those words Jekyll/Hyde defies the dominance of materialist science

and echoes those limitations of naturalism asserted by the Spiritualist scientists such as Myers, William Crookes and A. R. Wallace. In fact Wallace himself refers to ‘that partial mental paralysis, the result of a century of materialistic thought, which renders so many men unable seriously to conceive the possibility of a natural continuation of human life after the death of the body’.¹¹ Indeed, Lanyon’s earlier account of his relationship with Jekyll recalls that between Darwin and Wallace after Wallace had converted to Spiritualism. Jekyll ‘began to go wrong, wrong in mind’ according to Lanyon and the older man and mentor, Darwin, had felt similarly towards his friend Wallace who had gone wrong, in Darwin’s opinion, as soon as he gave Spiritualism any credence (p. 12). Furthermore Hyde’s defiant performance before Lanyon can also be seen as paralleling the many attempts by Spiritualists to provide empirical evidence to support their claims – Crookes’ experiments documented in his *Quarterly Journal of Science*, which sought to give Spiritualism scientific authority by providing unquestionable, observable proof, are typical of the work of these psychological researchers.¹² But Lanyon’s response to Hyde’s transformation reveals the difficulty Spiritualists had in proving the existence of spirit phenomena to those who just could not accept its possibility: ‘I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it and I cannot answer’ (p. 54). To the frustration of the psychological researchers, many simply could not believe their eyes and required still further proof.¹³

Jekyll is a self-styled transcendental scientist – as he says, ‘the direction of my scientific studies [...] led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental’ (p. 55) – but more significantly Stevenson also uses the language of

the séance to describe Jekyll's experiment with clear parallels in Spiritualist discourse. In that dramatic scene before Lanyon, as Hyde effects his metamorphosis back to Jekyll, Stevenson recalls the many similar scenes played out at drawing room séances during this period in which 'mediums' claimed to channel spirit manifestations through their own bodies – the medium D. D. Home was a prominent example of this phenomenon, performing both in public and private venues almost nightly.¹⁴ It was believed by Spiritualists at this time that during a séance the spirit form took its matter from the medium so that eventually the medium's body disappeared: one writer in *Spiritualism*, a popular Spiritualist journal, explained how 'as materialised spirit hands, heads, and bodies grow heavier it follows that those of the medium grow lighter, until at last there may be no medium at all'.¹⁵ This has clear echoes in Stevenson's novella in which Jekyll brings forth the physical presence of his own evil spirit, completely disappearing himself. Thus Hyde could be read as a 'spirit materialisation' – the physical embodiment of the spirit – with Jekyll acting as a 'medium' in Spiritualist terms. So when Jekyll refers to 'the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired' he echoes the experiences of mediums who claimed that their bodies were used by the spirits to materialise before the sitters at a séance (p. 56). Of course, Jekyll acts as the 'medium' for his own spirit, and Hyde saps his vitality in order to take physical shape. It was well-known in Spiritualist circles that the process of allowing a spirit to use one's 'life-force' to appear in physical form would leave the medium exhausted and shaken: one medium describes this exhaustion as 'not muscular fatigue, but a sense of *deadness*, as if every drop of nervous energy had been suddenly taken from me'.¹⁶ This

phenomenon is recalled as, after witnessing Hyde drink the potion, Lanyon says ‘there before my eyes – pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death – there stood Henry Jekyll!’ (p. 54). These spirit materialisations were known in Spiritualist circles as spirit ‘controls’ and the distinction between medium and control was often blurred: the identity of the medium Florence Cook, for example, at times blurs seamlessly with her control, ‘Katie King’. Indeed, according to Alex Owen, in Spiritualist writings a spirit control such as ‘Katie King’ was often referred to as ‘the double’ and this blurring between medium and double gives a striking new angle on the figure of the double in Stevenson’s tale, taken to its extreme in *Jekyll and Hyde* in which the self and double are one.¹⁷ In addition, this Spiritualist notion of the double also gives more significance to the repetition of the word ‘double’ in Jekyll’s notebooks as he records his experiments to bring forth his evil spirit (p. 50).

As the identity of the medium and spirit double conflated, the Spiritualist press was at pains to emphasise the differences in appearance between the medium and spirit, usually by pointing out the disparity in size between the two. Thus it is interesting that the differences between the appearances of Jekyll and Hyde are emphasised in the novella, especially their relative sizes: Poole does not believe that the man in his master’s rooms could actually be Jekyll because the doctor ‘is a tall fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf’ (p. 41). However, traces of the medium could still be seen in their spirit double: Elizabeth D’Ésperance, a late-nineteenth-century medium who wrote extensively about her experiences, describes the appearance of her spirit double and, despite the physical differences, she is still able to recognise herself in the spirit.¹⁸ Jekyll too

is able to see traces of himself in his 'double' – he describes Hyde's features that were so different from his own but 'none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul' (p. 57).

Of course, Jekyll gives life to his Hyde primarily to allow him to indulge in certain 'pleasures' and in the guise of his double he is able to 'spring headlong into the sea of liberty' (p. 60). Significantly, the blurring of identities between medium and spirit allowed a great deal of transgressive behaviour in respectable middle-class homes. Mediums were often young women who were able to behave much more freely in their guise as a spirit double, often transgressing class and gender boundaries and making unrestrained physical contact with the sitters during the séance while simultaneously avoiding censorious accusations and keeping reputation intact: Marlene Tromp describes the provocative displays of Cook's double 'Katie King' who was 'unbound by the rules of Victorian society'.¹⁹ While it was asserted by Spiritualists that a medium's spirit double could be 'mischievous' or even evil – one medium points out that the process of allowing a spirit to take control of one's physical presence made the medium vulnerable to 'evil or mischievous spirits, whose delight it was to create disturbances' – the medium entirely abdicated responsibility for the spirit's behaviour.²⁰ Some of Hyde's 'undignified' behaviour recalls the incidents of these unsavoury spirits: Owen says that 'there were numerous reports of unfavoured sitters being beaten around the head, kicked, insulted, and robbed'.²¹ It is also significant that Hyde's tricks included scrawling 'blasphemies on the pages of [Jekyll's] books' (p. 69), as the phenomenon of spirit writing seemed to be a favourite manifestation of evil spirits who used the medium 'as a platform for blasphemy and irreligion'.²² Although some Christian groups took issue with

Spiritualism – despite Hyde’s association with Satan in this novella – Utterson claims to see ‘Satan’s signature’ on Hyde’s face (p. 16) – according to Janet Oppenheim, Satanism was not the main contention with Spiritualism for most Christians. In fact the main issue that many Christians had with Spiritualism was simply that it was ‘devoid of religious content’ and by setting itself up as a pseudo-religion, some Christians felt that Spiritualism was simply blasphemous.²³ Stevenson exploits this aspect of the Spiritualist debate when he has Hyde using his ability to write in Jekyll’s own hand as a platform for blasphemy: Utterson reports finding in his rooms ‘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. 46). But, like the Spiritualist medium, Jekyll too is able to cast aside responsibility for his evil spirit’s behaviour by simply returning to his respectable guise: ‘whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home’ would be Henry Jekyll (p. 60).

As we all now know the ‘mystery’ of Stevenson’s strange case is that Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde are actually the same man. Jekyll’s spirit ‘double’ comes from within – a projection of an aspect of himself. But, significantly, this too echoes the passionate discussion surrounding the Spiritualist phenomenon of spirit materialisations. The blurring of identities between medium and spirit double had inevitably provided fuel for the critics of Spiritualism, who simply did not believe that these ‘materialisations’ could possibly be actual spirits. Indeed, one writer in *Quarterly Review* vehemently argued that the spirit materialisations must be the result of some kind of group psychology that had led sitters at a séance to believe that they had witnessed a spirit presence, concluding that ‘the so-called spiritual

communications come from *within*, not from *without*, the individuals who suppose themselves to be the recipients of them'.²⁴ Thus, it was argued, the Spiritualists had somehow projected the belief in spirit manifestations, convincing the circle that the medium had actually transformed into a spirit double, in a manner similar to Jekyll's projection of his evil self. Furthermore Stevenson's use of the spirit double also exploits accusations that Spiritualism was mere trickery. The scene in which an angry crowd surrounds Hyde after he has trampled over the little girl echoes the attempts by some disbelievers to discredit Spiritualism by capturing the supposed spirit and exposing it as the medium in disguise.²⁵ In this incident Hyde, too, is threatened with exposure and the destruction of his reputation but this time manages to keep the secret that he is indeed the medium, Jekyll, in disguise (pp. 7–8). Indeed, Jekyll himself refers to Hyde as a disguise: he says 'I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde' (p. 59). The theatrical imagery in the narrative suggests the trickery involved in some Spiritualist circles – writing in *Fraser's Magazine*, one critic sneers that the spirits 'attended as regularly as the salaried performers of a theatre' at D. D. Home's public séances.²⁶ In fact, many mediums were actors before discovering their 'gift' and Stevenson's use of masks and costumes – Poole asks 'if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face?' – suggests a reference to this association between the performance of the theatre and that of the séance (p. 41).

So then, by tracing Stevenson's references to the language of Spiritualism in his novella a specifically historical notion of the double in the late nineteenth century can lead to a richer understanding of the double in *Jekyll and Hyde* than psychoanalysis has previously allowed. But what makes this

more interesting, and leads to startling new readings of *Jekyll and Hyde*, is how Spiritualism was incorporated by the likes of A. R. Wallace into evolutionary theory. Some scientific thinkers who still had doubts about Darwinism had begun to turn to areas outside the, still recently formed, boundaries of science in the search for an evolutionary theory based on Darwinian 'natural selection' that also supported the earlier models of evolutionary progress that Darwinism had appeared to undermine. Wallace was one such scientist who was dissatisfied with the way evolutionary science appeared to be going after Darwin had published his theory. For Wallace, the process of natural selection could not account for man's sense of morality. He believed that altruism could not have emerged as part of human evolution as it essentially undermines the notion of 'survival of the fittest' by allowing the 'unfit' to continue breeding. Consequently Wallace concluded that 'the minimum hypothesis commensurate with the facts required the introduction of the supernatural' and was drawn to the Spiritualist movement in his search for the soul in evolutionary theory.²⁷ Spiritualism appeared to offer a perfect reconciliation of his belief in progress with evolution – as Oppenheim says the Spiritualists 'did not emphasize whence humanity had come, but looked instead whither it was going' (p. 270). So on converting to Spiritualism, he developed a theory of human evolution that could also accommodate his altruistic beliefs and his vision of human progress – as Frank Turner describes it, 'Spiritualism furnished Wallace with a scientific explanation for the development of man's moral nature and brought man's total being under the rule of rational cosmic law' (p. 88). Spiritualism allowed Wallace to position the physical process of evolution onto his belief in an independent spirit – to superimpose a theory of the body over a theory of the

soul. His belief in the after-life enabled Wallace to conceive that the development of morality in man signified a further stage of evolution after the death of the body, arguing in his *Defence of Modern Spiritualism* of 1874 that 'Progressive evolution of the intellectual and moral nature is the destiny of individuals' (p. 801).

By considering Stevenson's novella in the light of Wallace's Spiritualist vision of human progress – his notion of 'cosmic evolution' – Jekyll's flawed experiment can be read as an attempt to precipitate his own evolution by removing his 'unfit' spirit leaving his improved soul to ascend to higher levels of virtue *before* the death of his body – while body and soul are still one. So that when Jekyll tries to explain his desire to separate man's dual nature into two identities so that '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', he echoes Wallace's notion of 'cosmic evolution' which asserted that in the next stage of evolution man is rid of his corporeal temptations (p. 56). However, while Wallace saw this process reaching fruition in the 'spirit world', Jekyll aims to achieve this level of perfection while still Earth-bound. Thus Jekyll attempts to improve his soul via a process of 'spiritualization' while still living, echoing the words of one of D. D. Home's spirit doubles who predicted that in the future 'the upper portions of the brain will become more fully developed, the lower parts being neglected will become less and less, the animal nature weaker, and man will no longer find the same pleasure in the gratification of his lusts and passions; man will become spiritualised'.²⁸

By situating Stevenson's novella firmly within the discourse of Spiritualism, specifically Wallace's contribution

to evolutionary theory as it grappled with the implications of Darwinism in the late-Victorian period, Hyde needs to be read as disrupting the duality inherent in post-Darwinian discourse that tended to map evolution onto a progressive model – that could lead up or down – by unsettling the notion of atavistic degeneration, the survival of a past evolutionary state, and simultaneously offering a vision of a future state of humanity. Certainly, Hyde is described as atavistic in language that echoes evolutionary discourse – there is ‘something troglodytic’ about him (p. 16), something ‘ape-like’ (p. 22). Darwin concludes his *Descent of Man* with the words ‘Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin’.²⁹ So, as Jekyll’s own words echo Darwin’s – Hyde bears ‘the stamp of lower elements in my soul’ – he seems to refer to the survival of a previous evolutionary state (p. 57). But if we read this novella in the light of Wallace’s notion of spiritual evolutionary progress then it follows that Hyde is also a vision of *future* human evolution with devastating consequences. Because whereas Wallace believed human progress after death would be helped by the development of one’s higher faculties, the intellect and moral nature, while still living in the material realm – ‘happiness in a future life can be secured by cultivating and developing to the utmost the higher faculties of our intellectual and moral nature’ writes Wallace (p. 806) – Jekyll’s attempt to precipitate his spiritual evolution while still on Earth allows the development of his ‘lower elements’. And Jekyll himself recognises his mistake: ‘Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment 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’ (p. 59).

In fact, far from leaving Jekyll to ascend to higher levels

of virtue, Hyde threatens to supersede him in a battle for the 'survival of the fittest'. In the final scene of Stevenson's novella, Jekyll and Hyde are locked in this battle for supremacy as Jekyll no longer controls when he transforms into Hyde, slipping from Jekyll to Hyde involuntarily, and can only return to the guise of Jekyll through the use of his potion. In an interesting Darwinian twist, Jekyll's secret potion turns out to be the result of an impure chemical – a chance mutation in Darwinian terms – and he is unable to replicate this unknown impurity. Consequently his supplies of the drug are running out and Hyde grows stronger and stronger. Indeed as Hyde becomes stronger, Jekyll begins to die out: 'the powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickness of Jekyll' (pp. 68–9). And whereas Hyde began life as a transitional being he is now becoming more distinct as a person: as Jekyll says 'I would leap almost without transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked)' (p. 68). Thus Hyde threatens to take over at any moment: Jekyll 'heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life' (p. 69). Indeed the only thing stopping Hyde from winning this battle for the 'survival of the fittest' is the necessity to hide from the consequences of his crimes within the disguise of Jekyll, forcing him to 'return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person' (p. 69).

Moreover, while Jekyll faces death, Hyde has come to embody life itself. As Tromp rightly points out, Spiritualism – particularly spirit materialisation – allowed for the insertion of the spiritual into the material because, after all, Spiritualism 'did not and could not replace the material lives of the Victorians with lives in the spirit realm alone – indeed that would be death itself.'³⁰ The phenomenon of

spirit materialisation enabled Spiritualists to experience the spirit-world in physical form and became the focus, as seen in the materialisations of D. D. Home, for a belief in a better, more 'spiritualised' world here on Earth. In fact, ultimately the 'spirit materialisation' of Hyde represents the only form in which Jekyll can express his physical vitality; when, as Hyde, Jekyll says 'I felt younger, lighter, happier in body' he seems to recognise that his vitality only realises its potential in this 'materialised' form, in which the spirit is made physical (p. 57). So, when Jekyll says 'but his love of life is wonderful' he seems to not only pity him but to envy him also (p. 69). Hyde is vital, full of life, in a way that Jekyll could never be and this vitality seems to be key to Hyde's dominance in this battle for the 'survival of the fittest'. It is his love of life that gives him strength, even making him appear to have 'grown in stature' (p. 62). So, Jekyll's attempt to 'spiritualise' himself ultimately concludes with his 'animal nature' – the purely physical – stronger and more fully alive, thus offering an alarming vision of the future 'spiritual' evolution of the human species and simultaneously revealing the complex and contradictory relationship between the physical and spiritual in Spiritualist discourse.

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, then, is saturated with references to the language and concepts of Spiritualism. In Jekyll and Hyde, Stevenson invokes the phenomenon of the medium and his spirit 'double', allowing transgressive behaviour while maintaining reputation and esteem. In his exploitation of Spiritualism, with the continuing clash between scientific materialism and other conceptions of humanity's place in nature referred to directly in Jekyll's sparring with Lanyon, Stevenson comments on the wide-ranging and passionate debate the phenomenon provoked so that blasphemy, psychological projection, theatrical

performance and trickery all find their way into the text. But, most disturbing, is that Wallace's notion of 'cosmic evolution' leads to a much more specific understanding of Hyde's monstrosity – which can seem to be expressed in such veiled and vague terms in the text – as a possible, future, reconfiguring of the human species. Nineteenth-century evolutionary theory is often described in terms of a ladder, which human life progresses up to greater perfection or slips down in a process of degeneration. However, in *Jekyll and Hyde*, the discourses of evolutionary progress and degeneration seem to be much more interwoven than this simplistic linear model suggests. And, through his use of Spiritualist discourse, Stevenson seems to resist that linear model in the figure of Edward Hyde, who is both an atavistic return to the past and a terrifying vision of the future on the verge of winning that battle for the 'survival of the fittest'. While many critics have exposed the instability of dichotomies in Stevenson's tale, by reading *Jekyll and Hyde* in the context of the wider evolutionary discourse of Spiritualism, Stevenson's novella also seems to explore a notion of human progress that resists the dichotomies that underpin the evolutionary theories of the period. Indeed, the fusion of a theory of the body – evolution – with theories of the soul and an after-life in Spiritualism's 'cosmic evolution', itself blurs the dichotomy of body/soul that, on the surface, seems to be at the heart of *Jekyll and Hyde*. Thus, by recognising the novella's engagement with the Spiritualist phenomenon, *Jekyll and Hyde* is reinvigorated, loosening the grip of psychoanalysis that has kept the complexity of its late-nineteenth-century notions of the double firmly within the cliché of the repressed Victorian doctor and his secret desires.

NOTES

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14. Viscount Adare, *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr D. D. Home with*

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19. Marlene Tromp, 'Spirited Sexuality: Sex, Marriage and Victorian Spiritualism', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31 (2003), 67–81 (p. 73).
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21. Owen, p. 54.
22. Pearsall, p. 106.
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The commercial world of *The Wrecker*

Gordon Hirsch

In recent years scholarship has renewed its attention to the gothic and romantic Robert Louis Stevenson. Studies of the gothic side of Stevenson's work have forged the way, led by interest in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which has now made its way into a popular anthology of British Victorian literature. Stevenson as a writer of romances has not lagged far behind, and we have a new and appropriate respect for this aspect of the author as well. This essay proposes to recover yet another side of this author who, even in one of his most 'romantic' works, is still fully engaged with and implicated in the economic life of his time.

The Wrecker, a collaboration between Robert Louis Stevenson and his stepson Lloyd Osbourne published in 1891–92, is a strange and fascinating novel. It certainly has many of the hallmarks of forms usually identified as romance, sensationalism, and the adventure novel. One early reviewer noted that 'the skeleton of the story is a tale of the sea, full of shipwreck, murder, and sudden death'; and another contemporary reviewer observed that the story 'flies' improbably from one spot on the globe to another on the opposite side, and then back again'.¹ Despite the sense that this novel is set in 'that region of romance where the

rules that govern this work-a-day and prosaic world of ours are overridden and set at naught' (Strachey, in Maixner, p. 399), Stevenson himself asserted to his friend Charles Baxter that *The Wrecker* 'is certainly well nourished with facts; no realist can touch me there, for by this time I do begin to know something of life in the XIXth century.'²

One could argue about the sorts of 'facts' Stevenson had in mind. But this essay is most interested in establishing the relation of the novel to a number of important nineteenth-century economic realities that are brought into this admittedly episodic and fantastic narrative; the essay interweaves research findings about relevant economic history with an account of the plot development of the novel. The first section of the paper deals with the adventures of the novel's American protagonist, Loudon Dodd, who seeks refuge in the Parisian art world from his commercial background and education, only to discover the commercialisation of art which did in fact occur in Paris during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Dodd decamps from Paris for San Francisco, where his friend, modelled on the American entrepreneur S. S. McClure, involves him in schemes reflecting other commercial ventures of the day – a public lecture, picnic entertainments, and the speculative purchase of a wrecked ship auctioned by its insurers. The ensuing voyage to the wreck leads our protagonist to the tale of how his British double, Norris Carthew, participated in a sharp-trading scheme among the Pacific islands, culminating in violence aboard the wreck. Opium discovered on board leads Loudon Dodd to smuggle opium, a widespread phenomenon of the time, following the diaspora of Chinese labour. The novel's 'dollar hunt' then, which begins with comic misadventures in the Paris art market, comes to look increasingly grim and

sanguinary in the context of colonial Pacific commerce. The essay concludes by focusing on the way the novel's prologue and epilogue represent the irreconcilable tension between commerce and art that is at play throughout the book.

1. An American in Paris

The narrator and protagonist of *The Wrecker*, Loudon Dodd, begins his 'yarn' with an account of the commercial success of his father, 'Big Head Dodd,' in the American 'State of Muskegon': 'he fought in that daily battle of money-grubbing, with a kind of sad-eyed loyalty like a martyr's; rose early, ate fast, came home dispirited and overweary, even from success; grudged himself all pleasure, if his nature was capable of taking any, which I sometimes wondered.'³

Loudon himself is sent to college at 'the Muskegon Commercial Academy' (p. 43), though he feels from the start that 'I never cared a cent for anything but art, and never shall' (p. 42). At the Commercial Academy 'the talk was that of Wall Street' and 'the gist of the education centered in the [mock] exchange, where we were taught to gamble in produce and securities' (p. 44). Initially Loudon's speculations succeed, but then his luck turns sour and he is able to win his father's consent to study art in Paris, particularly when the commercial success of artists like the American landscape painter Albert Bierstadt and the French academician Ernest Messonier, whose pictures would sell for 'many thousands of dollars,' is brought into the conversation (p. 51). In fact, Loudon's father, 'with a mixture of patriotism and commercial greed both perfectly genuine' (p. 53), insinuates himself onto committees planning the construction of the new state capitol of Muskegon. Big Head Dodd imagines a potential commercial as well as aesthetic success for his son if he were to study sculpture in Paris and produce statuary

for the new capitol, for which the elder Dodd has won the contract, so he tells Loudon: 'It meets your idea [of pursuing a career as an artist]; there's considerable money in the thing; and it's patriotic' (p. 57) – combining the best of all possible worlds.

Loudon thus becomes an American in Paris, studying sculpture and art, and he actually does follow his father's plan of producing a sculpture intended as 'the Genius of Muskegon,' which Stevenson and Osbourne describe tongue in cheek as an improbable artistic *mélange*: 'I had represented Muskegon as a young, almost a stripling, mother, with something of an Indian type; the babe upon her knees was winged, to indicate our soaring future; and her seat was a medley of sculptured fragments, Greek, Roman, and Gothic, to remind us of the older worlds from which we trace our generation' (p. 85). While in Paris, Loudon enjoys *la vie bohème*, fraternising with other Latin Quarter students, drinking a little too much Roussillon wine, and as a consequence mistakenly winding up late at night intruding on the bedchamber of a young lady.

The other encounter Loudon has in Paris is of considerably longer-lasting importance, his acquaintance with his fellow-American and fellow-student of art, Jim Pinkerton, who was modelled on S.S. McClure, the American newspaper publisher and magnate, about whom more later. Pinkerton reinforces the elder Dodd's message of the pre-eminence of the commercial, even in the field of art. Beginning as a tintype photographer, Pinkerton's real aim is 'to get culture and money with both hands' (p. 80). When Loudon deprecates Pinkerton's artistic talents, Pinkerton is momentarily dispirited, but he soon bounces back, leading Loudon to conclude, 'I began at last to understand how matters lay: that this was not an artist who

had been deprived of the practice of his single art, but only a business man of very extended interests, informed [...] that one investment out of twenty had gone wrong' (p. 84).

Turning to another of his varied business activities, Pinkerton writes a wildly enthusiastic article about his friend for the American Sunday papers – a mixture of puffery and human-interest story. Though Loudon's father loves the piece, Loudon himself is chagrined by its extravagance and its deflection of attention away from his art onto his personality (p. 91). For Pinkerton, on the other hand, the story encapsulates the American dream: he can imagine his own younger self, 'tramping around' and 'eating tinned beans beside a creek,' inspired by this depiction of an American artist in Paris (p. 92).

Big Head Dodd fails at business, Loudon's allowance is interrupted, and his father dies soon thereafter. Pinkerton continues to exhort Loudon that 'it's a man's duty to die rich, if he can' (p.108), and he proposes a business partnership on these terms: 'I have the capital; you bring the culture' (p.106). Loudon resists for a time, preferring 'the romance of art' to 'this romance of dickering' (pp.107–08). He does, however, consult his old Paris master, who admits at last that, although Loudon has artistic talent enough for the son of a rich man, it will be insufficient to support a penniless orphan (pp.122–23). Loudon sells the *Genius of Muskegon* and his other work, and accepts Jim's invitation to follow him to California: 'I penned my farewell to Paris, to art, to my whole past life, and my whole former self. "I give in," I wrote' (p.129). In debt, with his statues rejected for sale by dealers (p.128), Loudon makes 'a moonlight flitting' from Paris: 'And then all came back to me; that I was no longer an artist, no longer myself; that I was leaving all I cared for, and returning to all that I detested, the slave of debt and

gratitude, a public and a branded failure' (p.131).

Loudon Dodd's sense of the growing commercialisation of art and his feelings of self-doubt as an artist lacking commercial success are now familiar tropes in histories of nineteenth-century art. Vincent Van Gogh is only the best-known example of such failure and personal despair. Whereas previous generations of artists had relied almost exclusively on private patronage, the middle of the nineteenth century saw the rise to prominence, particularly in Paris, of such art dealers as Paul Durand-Ruel and Vincent's brother, Théo Van Gogh. —After Dodd disparages Pinkerton's artistic talents, Pinkerton's reply is, 'then I can always turn dealer,' a 'monstrous proposition which was enough to shake the Latin Quarter to dust' (p. 83) presumably because of its conflation of commerce and art. In his definitive study of this change in the commercial status of art, Robert Jensen notes that the art produced by the generation of Barbizon painters associated with the *École de 1830* – Courbet, Millet, Corot – was aggressively marketed by Parisian dealers in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴ This phenomenon was effectively a precursor of the similarly hot market in Impressionist paintings following the Impressionist Exhibitions of 1874 and 1876. For modernist painters, dealers became more important than the French academic/Salon system, and various independent and commercial exhibitions eclipsed the state-sponsored Salons. Dealers tried to snap up all the works of the most popular painters, in turn selling them to wealthy collectors from America and elsewhere (Jensen: pp. 49–54, 62, and *passim*).

By the late 1880s the signs of this diaspora of French art became manifest everywhere. [...] The most famous, internationally-celebrated auction of all was the Sécrotan

auction in May 1889. It was the high-water mark for the market value of the *École de 1830*. [...] The enormous prices paid for artists such as Delacroix and Millet provided an important stimulus to the already-growing stature of the commercial gallery exhibition. As much as any single event could, the Sécretan auction announced the victory of the marketplace over the academic/Salon system. (Jensen; p. 62)

In the same year, in other words, that Stevenson and Osbourne set to work on *The Wrecker*, an *international* art market was flourishing and promoting what Jensen describes as ‘the dialogue of money and art’ (p.10), a phrase that the novel’s authors would have understood perfectly well. Stevenson himself, of course, had similar anxieties about his viability during his experiments as a painter in France in the 1870s. As a writer, too, he continued to feel uncertain about whether his success in popular literary forms precluded him from becoming a serious, heavyweight author.

Many of Stevenson’s essays touch on this potential conflict between popularity and aesthetic value. His review of an edition of Edgar Allan Poe’s works, for example, praises Poe for his strengths as a story-teller, colourist, and psychologist, but complains that he was ‘not conscientious. Hunger was ever at his door, and he had too imperious a desire for what we call nowadays the sensational in literature. And thus the critic [...] dare not greatly praise lest he should be thought to condone all that is unscrupulous and tinsel in these wonderful stories’ (*Works* 24: pp.116–17). Stevenson even wrote an essay on ‘Popular Authors’ in which he noted that ‘the most of them have not much hope of durable renown’ (*Works* 12: pp. 326–27). Among his most

interesting statements of aesthetic principles and concerns is his 'Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art'. Here he warns his correspondent that the artist or writer 'must look to be ill-paid' (*Works* 12: p. 355):

To give the public what they do not want, and yet expect to be supported: we have there a strange pretension, and yet not uncommon, above all with painters. The first duty in this world is for a man to pay his way; and when that is quite accomplished, he may plunge into what eccentricity he likes; but emphatically not till then. Till then, he must pay assiduous court to the bourgeois who carries the purse. And if in the course of these capitulations he shall falsify his talent, it can never have been a strong one. (*Works* 12: p. 352)

Later in the same essay, he acknowledges the need for even the artist to pay the butcher:

Some day, when the butcher is knocking at the door, he may be tempted, he may be obliged, to turn out and sell a slovenly piece of work. If the obligation shall have arisen through no wantonness of his own, he is even to be commended; for words cannot describe how far more necessary it is that a man should support his family, than that he should attain to — or preserve — distinction in the arts. (*Works* 12: p. 356)

Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle have discussed brilliantly how Stevenson's concern about 'the wheels of Byles the Butcher' — again, paying the butcher — at the same time he wished to write a literary masterpiece produced the uneasy compromise between mass market 'shilling shocker'

and serious allegory that came to be *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.⁵ These ambivalences and tensions between commerce and the aesthetic persisted throughout Stevenson's career, and they are manifest in *The Wrecker* in his depiction of the American artist in Paris.

2. San Francisco ventures

After being 'down on my luck in Paris', a phrase used in the title of the fifth chapter (p. 112), Loudon makes his way to his old friend and champion now residing in San Francisco, Jim Pinkerton, though with a certain amount of hesitation about immersing himself in the world of commerce that awaits. 'What new bowl was my benignant monster brewing for his Frankenstein?' Loudon wonders (p. 147), as he re-connects with the man he refers to as 'the Irrepressible' and 'the Irresistible' (pp. 147, 151).

As mentioned earlier, Jim Pinkerton is modelled on the Scottish-born American businessman, S. S. McClure, famous for creating in 1884 the McClure Syndicate in order 'to furnish serial and short stories for simultaneous publication in syndicates of leading newspapers'.⁶ Stevenson openly avowed his use of McClure as the original; in a letter to Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson claimed that his wife Fanny can 'now call [McClure] nothing but Pinkerton' (*Letters* 7: p. 13), and in a letter to his friend, Charles Baxter, Stevenson referred to 'Pinkerton *alias* McClure' (*Letters* 8: p. 53). Stevenson confessed the fact to McClure himself, though softening it somewhat (letter to McClure recalled by the latter, according to Lyon: p. 107n.; see also Stevenson's *Letters* 7: pp. 13 and 35).⁷ The entire relationship between McClure and Stevenson is complex and is discussed at length by their biographers. Stevenson repeatedly managed to extract large sums from McClure, who generally coughed them up

before receiving Stevenson's literary product. At the same time Stevenson protested McClure's business practices. His ambivalent feelings about McClure are evident from his letters: 'In the first place McClure is not a dishonest man, although his shambling hand-to-mouth expedients might any day tip him over the margin into the penitentiary. In the second place he has put a vast deal more money into my hand than ever I had before, his offers having been the first thing to make me raise my charges' (*Letters* 7: p. 440). Stevenson could begin a sentence in a letter to Charles Baxter praising McClure's behaving 'in a rather a [sic] handsome way', and then interject, 'though as a business man he is a weasel, a snare and as annoying as the itch' (*Letters* 8: p. 29).

McClure was undoubtedly a wheeler-dealer. In a letter to newspaper editors, he trumpeted the claim that 'over fifty newspapers [...] have signified their intention to enter this plan' of syndication, when, in fact, in the words of his biographer, 'it would have been more accurate to say that "over fifty newspapers" had answered his letters' of inquiry (Lyon: p. 59). In the early years of his syndicate, McClure was over-extended due to his generosity toward Stevenson and other writers of quality and reputation, while he stretched out the payments due to others of less renown in order to avoid being swamped by debt.⁸ Stevenson himself fretted about McClure's solvency (*Letters* 7: p. 258). As Jim Pinkerton suffers multiple bankruptcies in the course of the novel as a result of his speculations, McClure acknowledges in *My Autobiography* that he too teetered 'on the edge of bankruptcy' when the start of *McClure's Magazine* happened to coincide with the panic of 1893 following the publication of *The Wrecker*, (McClure pp. 207 and 210–23). McClure's situation remained precarious for the next three years, as it had been, he confesses, for quite some time: 'We

began the year 1896, then, \$287,000 in debt. I was thirty-nine years old, had been out of college fourteen years, and I had never been out of debt' (pp. 223).

Jim Pinkerton also encompasses positive aspects of S. S. McClure, who is described by his biographer as 'one of the most effervescent talkers in an age that abounded in men who loved to gab. Words bubbled up in him and boiled over in a froth of ebullience. [...] In part, his charm was due to his lack of ceremony. [...] He was as straightforward as an exuberant puppy' (Lyon: p. 79). McClure's syndication of American and British authors did indeed open up a new audience for these writers among newspaper readers. Like Jim Pinkerton, McClure devised innovative methods for promoting his clients, for example hyperbolically publicising Stevenson's *The Black Arrow* in a circular featuring red ink as well as black, an act of hucksterism for which Stevenson never forgave him (Lyon: pp. 90–91).

In *The Wrecker*, when Loudon Dodd arrives in San Francisco, Pinkerton already has many schemes afoot, including a plan to have Loudon deliver a public lecture on 'Student Life in Paris, Grave and Gay' (p. 148). In fact, practically the first words out of Pinkerton's mouth upon Loudon's arrival are, 'I've been booming you already' (p.148) – i.e. promoting the public lecture to be delivered by 'H. Loudon Dodd, the Americo-Parisienne Sculptor' (p. 149), even though the lecture has been ghost-written by a hired newspaperman, who 'had a gallant way of skirting the indecent [...]; and he could be sentimental and even melodramatic about grisettes and starving genius' (p. 151). The lecture proves a disaster – as the audience yawns and stirs while Loudon skips over three pages at a time, desperately trying to reach the end – but the talk gets good notices in all the papers thanks to Pinkerton's astute

cultivation of the columnists.

Stevenson and Osbourne thus introduce into the novel this popular form of nineteenth-century entertainment, the public lecture. In both Britain and America, the public lecture was a way of 'educating' the middle and, to some extent, the working classes. In America, for example, the Lyceum was founded in 1826 as 'Associations of Adults for Mutual Education' and grew into a touring circuit of urban centres.⁹ Later, lectures were indeed delivered by itinerants 'who spoke without formal sponsorship by hiring a hall and buying an advertisement'.¹⁰ The Chautauqua, a stationary version of the public lecture, began in western New York in 1874. Lectures were, in short, money-making enterprises, and, of course, such star performers as Henry Ward Beecher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Horace Greeley, and Oscar Wilde went on the circuit. At first, speakers took scientific and other educational issues for their subject, but they turned toward travel lectures and overseas subjects as the century wore on.¹¹ So a topic like Dodd's, 'Student Life in Paris,' would have seemed quite ordinary.¹² McClure himself pictured Stevenson's voyage to the South Seas, which he in effect sponsored, as eventuating in a series of lectures complete with recorded effects: 'We planned that when he came back he was to make a lecture tour and talk on the South Seas; that he was to take a phonograph along and make records of the sounds of the sea and wind, the songs and speech of the natives, and that these records were to embellish his lectures' (McClure: pp. 191–92). With respect to the public lecture, *The Wrecker* merely held its mirror up to the nature of American commercial reality as epitomised by S. S. McClure.

The novel's account of Loudon Dodd's renewed association with Jim Pinkerton in California is in fact

replete with catalogues of the latter's various business and commercial ventures. The title of chapter seven is 'Irons in the Fire'; Pinkerton 'wallowed in his business. [...] Every dollar gained was like something brought ashore from a mysterious deep; every venture made was like a diver's plunge' (pp.155–56). Pinkerton produces the 'Thirteen Star Golden State Brandy' as well as a pamphlet, 'the Advertiser's Vade-Mecum' (p. 156). He runs an advertising agency and fishing excursions; he speculates in real estate, anticipating 'the Depew City boom' (p. 187); and he purchases wrecks and vessels condemned by Lloyd's agent, irresponsibly sending them to sea again under aliases, flying the Bolivian or Nicaraguan flag (p. 158). He smuggles weapons and cigars (p. 158), and he becomes a dealer in art, to Dodd's chagrin (p. 160). Pinkerton asserts nonetheless that business is 'just the same as art—all observation and imagination; only more movement' (p. 161). 'No dollar slept in [Pinkerton's] possession; rather he kept all simultaneously flying like a conjurer with oranges' (p. 157). Loudon finds Pinkerton 'all sunk in money-getting [...] he never dreamed of anything but dollars. Where were all his generous, progressive sentiments? Where was his culture?' (p. 167). 'I'm becoming materialized,' Pinkerton himself admits (p. 168), while Loudon feels 'just base enough to profit by what was not forced on my attention, rather than seek scenes' of confrontation with his business partner (p. 166).

One of the more striking Pinkerton-Dodd enterprises is 'Pinkerton's Hebdomedary Picnics,' Sunday commercial entertainments featuring 'the well-known connoisseur' Loudon Dodd as 'manager and honorary steward' (p. 170). The excursions sail from San Francisco to 'the Saucelito [*sic*] or San Rafael coast' (p. 172) at a cost of \$5 per person, ladies free. The picnic spot varies, but the steamer, hampers, and

a band to play music for dancing are always provided. Dodd himself plays celebrity, singer, entertainer, and charmer. Theme picnics are devised: 'the Gathering of the Clans' Scottish picnic, 'Ye Olde Time Pycke-Nycke,' and the like (p. 175).

Before long Loudon Dodd is toting up the earnings, Ben Franklin or Robinson Crusoe-style, derived from the picnics, the lecture, miscellaneous 'profit and loss on capital in Pinkerton's business', and a huge gain in shares acquired in the Catamount Silver Mine (p. 182). 'Dollars of mine were tracking off the shores of Mexico, in peril of the deep and the guardacostas; they rang on saloon-counters in the city of Tombstone, Arizona; they shone in faro-tents among the mountain diggings: the imagination flagged in following them, so wide were they diffused, so briskly they span to the turning of the wizard's [i.e. Pinkerton's] crank' (p. 183).

The culminating San Francisco Pinkerton-Dodd venture involves the purchase of the wreck of the *Flying Scud*. Stevenson and Osbourne display their recurrent interest in insurance matters by having the wreck auctioned off 'as she stands' by the Lloyd's agent in San Francisco, though, characteristically, the bidding has been rigged by a syndicate to which Pinkerton belongs, and no member of the syndicate is supposed to offer over \$100. Complications develop, however, when an unknown bidder enters the fray, represented by Harry D. Bellairs, a 'shyster lawyer' who has been twice nearly disbarred. The bidding for the wreck rises rapidly from \$100 to \$50,000, and Pinkerton infers that the cargo must include, not just tea, silk, nut-oils, and rice, but also opium: 'This must be the secret. I knew that scarce a ship came in from any Chinese port, but she carried somewhere, behind a bulkhead, or in some cunning hollow of the beams, a nest of the valuable poison' (p. 219).

There is a secret, of course, but it is other than Pinkerton supposes: it is a secret involving an attempt at extortion, a sailor's violent reaction to this, and the murder of the entire crew of the *Flying Scud*. Thus Loudon Dodd's immersion in the commercial world of San Francisco drifts from harmless advertising and entrepreneurial schemes, through rigged auctions, to scenes of opium smuggling and slaughter on the seas.

3. Pacific commerce: the island trade and the opium trade

There is a complicated back-story to the wreck of the *Flying Scud*, which emerges only gradually in the novel, through much backing and filling. Loudon Dodd, the American with artistic yearnings, has a British double, Norris Carthew, who has a similarly well-to-do background and similar artistic aspirations.¹³ Dodd even says of Carthew, 'I rather think he is my long-lost brother' (p. 467), and later takes great pains to rescue him from the 'shyster lawyer' Bellairs, who is seeking to track Carthew down in order to blackmail him. Carthew is the scion of a wealthy family, whose family seat at Stallbridge-le-Carthew, Dorset, is a mansion with a battlemented wall, a park, and 'a façade of more than sixty windows' (p. 446). He attended Eton, Harrow, and Oxford, from which he was 'sent down' in his second year. Carthew 'sowed insolvency' (p.478), accumulating debt, until he is sent to Australia, where he is encouraged to stay by having a 'remittance man' pay him a quarterly allowance, supplied by his family. In this new environment Carthew, formerly 'the idler, the spendthrift, the drifting dilettante' (p. 486), discovers the joys of manual labour by working on the railroad. Next, he and some friends decide to charter a schooner to trade among the Pacific islands: 'He was a kind

of Pinkerton in play', Loudon Dodd remarks; 'I have called Jim's the romance of business; this was its Arabian tale' (p. 493).

The schooner's name, the *Currency Lass*, is apt for a trading vessel sailing out of Sydney, expressing Australian national pride via a commitment to commerce. 'Currency' was a term used in nineteenth-century Australia to denote the local medium of exchange, as opposed to sterling, against which colonial notes were discounted. In time, native-born non-Aboriginals proudly referred to themselves as 'currency lads' or 'currency lasses' to distinguish themselves from British-born immigrants or 'sterling' (Ramson: pp. 186–87).¹⁴ In *The Wrecker*, Carthew and his shipmates are frequently called 'the Currency Lasses'.

Stevenson himself had, of course, hatched an island trading scheme, and Carthew's history draws on Stevenson's knowledge and experience. There is some discussion in the novel of the earlier items of such commerce – sandal-wood and coconut oil – being replaced by the trade in copra, the dried, oil-bearing kernel of the coconut (p. 495). It isn't entirely clear from the text what items of trade are carried by the *Currency Lass*, beyond the fact that the ship carries 'two thousand pounds' worth of assorted trade' (p. 511) and that some of this trade consists of foodstuffs like beef, flour, and biscuit (p. 519). Earlier in *The Wrecker*, the authors are more expansive, recounting Loudon Dodd's reading in a San Francisco paper about island schooners 'steal[ing] out with nondescript cargoes of tinned salmon, gin, bolts of gaudy cotton stuff, women's hats, and Waterbury watches, to return, after a year, piled as high as to the eaves of the house with copra, or wallowing deep with the shells of the tortoise or the pearl oyster' (p. 192).¹⁵ Only twenty-eight days out of Sydney, the *Currency Lass* arrives at Boutaritari in the

Gilberts (today called Kiribati), where, to their good fortune, there has been a large gap between the arrival of ships from the resident trader's company, and he is desperate for the arrival of any well-provisioned vessel.¹⁶ Shrewdly taking advantage of the resident trader's misfortune, the *Currency Lass*es quickly clear £1300 profit in specie on their £2000 investment in supplies.

An antiquated and decrepit bark, however, the *Currency Lass* is dismayed by a storm off Midway Island. The large profit in specie then turns into a burden and a threat. First the shipmates gamble at cards, which becomes a potential source of division. More ominously, a passing trading ship, the *Flying Scud* out of Hull, stops to interrogate the castaways. In contrast to the *Currency Lass* plying its island trade, the *Flying Scud* is a 'trading brig' (p. 384), 'a deep-water tramp, who was lime-juicing around between big ports, Calcutta and Rangoon and 'Frisco and the Canton River' (p. 316). Its captain, Jacob Trent, speaks of his having been 'nine months the prisoner of a pepper rajah' and having 'seen service under fire in Chinese rivers' (p. 549). Not surprisingly, then, the ship's cargo consists of rice, teas, silks, and, indeed, some opium.

Unfortunately for the *Currency Lass*es, Captain Trent is a scoundrel, an exemplar of the motto he proclaims, 'All's fair in love and business' (p. 551). He considers himself to have been a banker, 'a financier in Cardiff' (p. 549), though in reality his business is 'an unlicensed pawnshop' (p. 543). In a chapter titled 'A Hard Bargain' (p. 542), Trent notices the weight of the species-containing chest the *Currency Lass*es try to bring aboard the *Flying Scud* and attempts to extort the full amount of the *Lasses'* profits as compensation for taking the castaways along to San Francisco. Trent justifies his extortion, in fact, by citing the advantage the

Lasses took of the situation of the Boutaritari trader from whom the profits derived. This prompts a murderous attack on Trent by Mac, an Irishman who is the most labile of the Currency Lasses, followed by the Lasses' general slaughter of the officers and crew of the *Flying Scud* in an effort to cover up the original violence. In a sense, this is the tragic culmination of the unscrupulous business practices that have circulated through the novel from the beginning, now encountered in the setting of colonial trade. (The chapter following 'A Hard Bargain' is titled 'A Bad Bargain', emphasising the commercial context of this violence.)

The Currency Lasses burn their own schooner, and when they spot a passing man-of-war en route to San Francisco, they adopt the identities of the officers and crew of the *Flying Scud*, all of whom have been killed and thrown overboard into the lagoon. That ship is auctioned on behalf of the insurance underwriters in San Francisco, and is bid up by Norris Carthew, who has come into his inheritance, out of fear that evidence on board will reveal the bloody slaughter of the crew. The ship fetches a bid of \$50,000, in other words, not because of its opium or any other cargo, but because it is a crime scene; Carthew and the other Lasses are attempting to suppress evidence of the murders they committed. The insurance underwriters – 'a crowd of small dealers at Lloyd's who took it [the ship] up in syndicate' – prosper mightily from the auction of the wreck, though they are incredulous at the high price the ship fetches (p. 471).

Actually, the guess at opium is not an unreasonable one, given the extent of the trade in the late nineteenth century and the fact that about \$10,000 worth – but nowhere near enough to justify the \$50,000 winning bid for the wreck – is eventually found secreted on board in twenty 'mats' of rice. The opium trade developed in the late eighteenth century as

a result of a balance of payments deficit in the East Indian trade. The British had taken to importing Chinese tea and silk, but in the Chinese economy there was little demand for anything British or, for that matter, Indian, until the British started to transport opium produced in India to China, where opium was smoked. Private shippers – including British-owned Jardine Matheson¹⁷ and the American firm Russell & Company, headed by Warren Delano II, grandfather of F.D.R. – purchased opium in Calcutta and shipped it to China for sale, developing fast-running ‘clipper’ ships for the purpose in the 1830s.¹⁸ By the 1830s opium represented ‘no hole-in-the-corner petty smuggling trade, but *probably the largest commerce of the time in any single commodity*.’¹⁹ (Chinese officials resisted this growing importation of opium, which resistance triggered the British response of the two Opium Wars, 1839–1842 and 1856–1860. Both wars ended in treaties humiliating to the Chinese – legalising opium importation, protecting Christian missionaries, ceding Hong Kong, opening other trading ports, and requiring indemnification for damages to British property. Following the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, Hong Kong became the major depot for receiving and warehousing opium.²⁰ ‘Without opium,’ Martin Booth writes, ‘Hong Kong would not have evolved. [...] It had become the main opium trading centre on the China coast’ (p. 139).

By the 1880s, opium use was widespread in China, and domestic poppy cultivation had risen to meet the demand, so importation from India became less significant. In fact, Chinese emigration to the California gold fields and to build America’s railroads, as well as to the London East End docks, produced a demand for the shipment of Chinese opium to the American west coast and to Britain.²¹ In *The*

Wrecker, Loudon Dodd, as he traipses across San Francisco, calls attention to a street traversing 'China Town, where it was doubtless undermined with opium cellars.' (p. 237). Indeed, Martin Booth reports 'twenty-six [opium dens] operating in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1885. [...] Opium smoking reached its summit [in the U.S.] in 1883 with the importation, mostly through San Francisco, of 208,152 pounds of smoking opium.' (Booth, pp. 194–95).

Opposition to the opium trade had also developed by the time Stevenson and Osbourne were writing *The Wrecker*. In Britain, for example, one of the first steps at control was the requirement in the 1868 Poisons and Pharmacy Act that opium, which could still be sold by pharmacists to anyone, had to be dispensed in containers labelled 'poison'.²² The Council of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade (S.S.O.T) was founded in 1874, and the Royal Commission on Opium was established and held hearings in 1893 and 1894.²³ Writing about the French-controlled Marquesas in his book, *In the South Seas*, Stevenson criticised the French for encouraging and profiting from the sale of opium to native inhabitants long after the original customers, Chinese immigrants, had left the plantations where they had worked. But he also acknowledges, 'those that live in glass houses should not throw stones; as a subject of the British crown, I am an unwilling shareholder in the largest opium business under heaven' (*Works* 16: p. 100).

When Loudon Dodd discovers opium on the wreck of the *Flying Scud*, he heads for Hawaii to meet the smugglers, Sharpe and Fowler, to whom by prearrangement he will sell the opium. This adventure, too, is based on historical fact. At the centre of the Pacific's contraband trade, Hawaii 'was potentially a smuggler's paradise', as one historian notes.

²⁴ Many Chinese labourers had been brought to work in

the sugar fields, and with them came opium. When the sale of opium was prohibited except for medicinal purposes in 1874, the Hawaiian opium traders resorted to smuggling, which was easy to do given ‘the islands’ long stretches of unguarded sea coast’ and ‘a small, poorly-equipped Customs force’ (De Lorme: p. 72). Loudon Dodd suggests that one of the smugglers has bribed the Customs officers (p. 367), which seems of a piece with the report of the Collector-General of Customs for Hawaii a few months before American annexation in 1898 that his department was ‘inadequate to meet the most ordinary demands’ of law enforcement (quoted by De Lorme: p. 73).

This is the upshot, then, of the business risks Loudon Dodd undertakes in pursuit of financial success and the opportunity to help his friend, Jim Pinkerton. He takes the risk of sailing into a gale to avoid the possibility of a rival reaching the wreck of the *Flying Scud* before him (pp. 292–93). He is prepared to smuggle opium, in full consciousness of what this means:

Smuggling is one of the meanest of crimes, for by that we rob a whole country *pro rata*, and are therefore certain to impoverish the poor: to smuggle opium is an offence particularly dark, since it stands related not so much to murder, as to massacre. (p. 257)

The commercialism infecting the art world of Paris evolves into the business of opium smuggling in the Pacific. The site of Pinkerton-Dodd enterprise moves from metropole to colony, its scale alters, and the darkness deepens.

4. ‘Loose ends’²⁵

Given these constant allusions to, and critique of, the

economic life of Stevenson's time, what are we to make of the values embodied in this book? What is its thematic content with respect to commerce? To answer these questions, it is necessary to look closely at the frame of the novel, its prologue and epilogue, and the way these address and comment on the 'romance of business' which 'stirred my dilettante nature', as Loudon Dodd puts it (p. 278). It is worth emphasizing, again, that both the 'heroes' of the novel, Loudon Dodd and Norris Carthew, begin their stories as aspiring artists and connoisseurs of art. Both prologue and epilogue are set more-or-less in the present – presumably sometime close to the book's publication – and the rest of the novel, Loudon Dodd's retrospective 'yarn' (p. 38), explains how Dodd and Carthew arrived there. Dodd is introduced in the prologue as a trader, sailing on the South Seas trading schooner which his business partner and present-day benefactor, Carthew, owns. Dodd insists, however, that 'I began life as a sculptor' and he is surrounded by his own bronzes, including a bust of his wealthy partner. When he is asked whether he is 'interested in California real estate', Dodd unravels the pun: 'Interested? I guess not. Involved, perhaps. I was born an artist; I never took an interest in anything but art' (pp. 29–30). Explaining the splendour of his cabin – with its busts, Venetian mirrors, 'Old English' walnut bookshelves, and Renaissance French books – Dodd notes that the decor derives from Carthew's 'money, my taste' (p. 29). When the visitor inquires how such a trading operation – 'you carry so much style' – can pay its way, Dodd replies nonchalantly, 'I don't know that she does pay. [...] I never pretend to be a business man. My partner appears happy; and the money is all his, as I told you – I only bring the want of business habits' (p. 31). Dodd distances himself from commerce, in other words, even as he engages in it. Perhaps Dodd and

Carthew have discovered what Stevenson himself is said by his wife Fanny to have learned about the ethical problems involved in South Sea trading, as she wrote in her 'Prefatory Note' to *The Wrecker*:

It slowly became evident to him that if he wished to make a success of the *Northern Light* [his projected trading vessel], and earn any kind of interest on his investment, he must necessarily do many things contrary to the dictates of his conscience. South Sea trading could not bear close examination. (p. 13)

The epilogue consists of a first-person narrative, from an unknown person's point of view, but that speaker must be close to Stevenson, since the epilogue is dedicated and addressed to the American artist, Will H. Low, who became Stevenson's friend when he went as a young man to Paris and Barbizon.²⁶ The reader is given a brief summary in the epilogue of the later lives of some characters in the novel: Pinkerton is involved in additional ventures – fruit, cereals, real estate, newspaper publishing, politics, and the like – resulting predictably in 'Jim's last bankruptcy' (p. 593). Further adventures of some of the Currency Lassies are also described.

Then the epilogue turns to an account, purportedly for the benefit of Will Low, of the origins and aesthetics of the novel itself:²⁷

Why dedicate to you a tale of a caste so modern; —full of details of our barbaric manners and unstable morals; — full of the need and lust for money, so that there is scarce a page in which the dollars do not jingle; — full of the unrest and movement of our century, so that the reader is

hurried from place to place and sea to sea, and the book is less a romance than a panorama; —in the end, as blood-bespattered as an epic? (p. 596)

The answer Stevenson supplies is that Will Low is ‘a man interested in all problems of art, even the most vulgar’ (p. 596), so he will be curious about the origin and aesthetic of this book, representing as it does a hybrid genre which Dickens is here credited with developing – the ‘very modern form of the police novel or mystery story’ interwoven with ‘the tone of a novel of manners and experience,’ so that ‘our mystery seem to inhere in life’ (p. 598).²⁸ *The Wrecker* is, in other words, a combination of romance and realism, or, I would say, a combination of the novel of mystery and adventure with fiction informed by the personalities and economic realities of the time.

The reality of the commercial world is everywhere recognized in this novel, but there is a repeated and continued insistence that ultimate value resides in the aesthetic. Commerce begins in frolic but may result in something as horrific as opium smuggling, risking all ‘for a very large amount of a very deadly poison,’ leading to ‘massacre’ (pp. 294, 257). Though at various times Loudon Dodd is caught up in ‘the romance of business’ and ‘the dollar hunt’ (pp. 278, 598), at other times he can justify his participation only in terms of loyalty to a ‘bosom friend’ (p. 37) like Jim Pinkerton or Norris Carthew. In the end, the narrator of the epilogue argues, ‘our hero [...] partly stand[s] aside from those with whom he mingles, and [is] but a pressed man in the dollar hunt’ (p. 599). Like many a nineteenth-century sailor, Loudon Dodd has been pressed into this kind of service; he will never be a true believer, even though he feels he must participate.

The thematic materials of art, commerce, and friendship are thus riven with ironies and characterized by extreme ambivalence. Jim Pinkerton, too, is positioned somewhere between unscrupulous scoundrel and lovable friend. Some of the darkest moments in the novel occur when transactions take place in a colonial setting or among traders on the lawless seas. The authors, then, are quite right to see this book as ‘a tale of a caste so modern; —full of details of our barbaric manners and unstable morals’ (p. 596); it is a novel, in other words, of Victorian commerce.

NOTES

1. J. St Loe Strachey’s review in *Spectator*, 23 July 1892, in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* ed. by Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 399; followed by Lionel Johnson in *Academy*, 6 August 1892, *ibid.*, p. 405.
2. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994–95), vol. 7, p. 192.
3. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Vailima Edition, 26 vols. (London: Heinemann; New York: Scribner’s, 1922), vol 17, p. 41. All quotations are taken from this edition.
4. Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
5. ‘The Education of Edward Hyde: Stevenson’s “Gothic Gnome” and the Mass Readership of Late-Victorian England’, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde after One Hundred Years*, ed. by William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 265–82.
6. McClure letter of 4 October 1884, in Peter Lyon, *Success Story: The Life and Times of S.S. McClure* (New York: Scribner’s, 1963), p. 57. As he does with Jim Pinkerton in the novel, Stevenson also called McClure ‘irrepressible’ and ‘the Irresistible’ in letters to his friends (*Letters* 6, p. 246 and 8, p. 234). Writing Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson referred to McClure as ‘the commercial force’ (*Letters* 7, p.13); compare Loudon Dodd’s sense of being ‘yoked to a commercial force like Pinkerton’ in *The Wrecker* (p. 201). There are many echoes from life in the fiction.
7. It is worth noting, however, that the best-known real-life ‘Pinkerton’ of Stevenson’s time was the Scottish-born Allan Pinkerton (1819–1884), founder of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Although he had been a militant Chartist before emigrating from Scotland in 1842, his American detective agency soon became associated with corporate capitalism. As

- early as 1855 Pinkerton supplied 'spotters' for the railroad companies to expose dishonest and lazy conductors and pare losses. In 1873, a Pinkerton operative infiltrated the Molly Maguires, a secret society of Irish-American coal miners accused of vandalising company property, and gathered enough information to bring nineteen Molly Maguires to the gallows. Strikes and lockouts increased in the latter decades of the century, and Pinkertons spied on labour, guarded coalfields, and protected strikebreakers. The notorious use of three hundred Pinkerton detectives to break the strike at the Carnegie Steel Company in Homestead, Pennsylvania occurred in July 1892, some eight months after *The Wrecker* was completed. See Robert M. Smith, 'Industrial Espionage Agencies: Capital's Ineffective or Deadly Anti-Union Weapon?', *Mid-America: An Historical Review*, 80 (1998), 93–121; and Robert P. Weiss, 'Private Detective Agencies and Labor Discipline in the United States, 1855–1946', *The Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), 87–94.
8. S. S. McClure, *My Autobiography* (New York: Stokes, 1914), p. 215; see also Lyon, p. 66.
9. John S. Gentile, 'The One-Person Show in America: from Chautauqua to Broadway', *Studies in Popular Culture*, 9 (1986), 23–38.
10. Donald M. Scott, 'The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America', *The Journal of American History*, 66 (1980), 793.
11. Scott, p. 803. See also Michael D. Stephens and Gordon W. Roderick, 'Middle-Class Non-Vocational Lecture and Debating Subjects in 19th-Century England', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 21 (1973), 198–199.
12. Donald Scott notes that 'the travel lecture was less a travelogue than a kind of comparative ethnography,' and he describes the popular lecturer, Bayard Taylor, as the exemplar of this form of participant-observer (p. 803). Scott's descriptions of Taylor's interest in 'comparative ethnography' seem quite consonant with Stevenson's intentions writing *In the South Seas*.
13. Like a number of characters in this complicated novel, Carthew goes at various times by other names or assumed identities, including Dickson, Goddedaal, and Madden.
14. I am indebted to Roslyn Jolly for calling my attention to this Australian colloquialism.
15. In his study of the resident traders in Tuvalu (called the Ellice Islands when Stevenson visited) Doug Munro cites 'the interarchipelago trade in copra, bêche-de-mer [sea cucumber], and pearlshell' Doug Munro, 'The Lives and Times of Resident Traders in Tuvalu: An Exercise in History from Below', *Pacific Studies*, 10 (1987), 73. In her book on *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol'*, Fanny Stevenson mentions trade in tobacco, mats, calico, chickens, eggs, pigs, tortoise-shell, and copra (*passim*). The articles of island trade were various.
16. Munro discusses the crucial role of such merchants in the Pacific islands: 'Resident traders served to stimulate local production by being on hand to barter goods for [coconut] oil, which they would store until

it was collected by the company ship. [...] This was more efficient than itinerant trading for speculative cargoes, where the vessel would lie idly at each point of loading while the crew went ashore for a cargo, quite possibly offending local sensibilities in the process' (p. 77).

17. Jenni Calder points out to me that, like many other actors in the economic history that figures in this paper, William Jardine and James Matheson, founders of the largest and most successful of the opium-trading firms, were both Scots. The firm Jardine Matheson, now registered in Bermuda, is even today one of the largest Asia-based conglomerates.

18. See Martin Booth, *Opium: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 117. One of the most famous wrecks of the century was that of the Baltimore clipper, the *Frolic*, wrecked in Mendocino County, California, 25 July 1850. The *Frolic's* ports of call included Bombay, Canton, Hong Kong, and San Francisco. It had been active in the opium trade, and carried the same bewildering mix of currency and coinage as the *Flying Scud*. See also Hunt Janin, *The India-China Opium Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1999), pp. 89–90; and Thomas N. Layton, *The Voyage of the 'Frolic'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 105 and *passim*.

19. Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 104. Italics in original.)

20. Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 103.

21. The Chinese diaspora in fact became global, driven by population pressure. 'Between 1848 and 1888 two million Chinese, mostly young men, left for the Malay peninsula, Indochina, Sumatra, Java, the Philippines, Hawaii, California, and Australia. [...] Chinese districts [sprang] up in [...] New York, London, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam', David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 35.

22. Terry M. Parssinen, *Secret Passions, Secret Remedies: Narcotic Drugs in British Society 1820–1930* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983), p. 70.

23. See Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane; New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 176–88.

24. Roland L. DeLorme, 'Revenuers in Paradise: the Advent of United States Customs Regulation of the Hawaiian Trade', *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, 15 (1981), 70.

25. 'Loose ends' was the original chapter title of the epilogue to *The Wrecker* (Letters 7, p. 121).

26. Low, in addition to Stevenson himself, was a source for Loudon Dodd, as Stevenson explained in a letter to Low's wife: 'The point is this: Loudon Dodd, the narrator of the tale, is drawn a good deal from the degenerate WHL: some of his adventures and some of mine are agreeably mingled in the early parts; and the thing might seem too near the truth for him to

care about the connection' (*Letters* 7, p. 132).

27. Stevenson prided himself on 'packing into one [chapter] a dedication, an explanation, and a termination' (*Letters* 7, p. 224).

28. I would gloss this tip of the hat to Dickens by quoting that novelist's staking of his own claim to having created a hybrid genre in the final brief paragraph of the preface to *Bleak House*: 'In *Bleak House*, I have purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things' (p. 4).

The incomplete fairy tales of Robert Louis Stevenson

William Gray

The volume that appeared in 1893 as *Island Nights' Entertainments* was a far cry from Stevenson's original intentions. The title, with its allusion to *The Arabian Nights*, had originally been intended for 'a volume of *Märchen* [or fairy tales]' that Stevenson had planned 'slowly to elaborate', and of which, as he wrote to Sidney Colvin in December 1892, 'The Bottle Imp' was to have been the '*pièce de résistance*'.¹ However, because 'The Beach of Falesá' was too short to be published on its own, Colvin had earlier that year taken the unilateral decision to lump it together with 'The Bottle Imp' in one volume. By the time Stevenson found out about this initiative in August 1892, it had got as far as being advertised in *The Scotsman*, which incensed him so much that he would not communicate directly with Colvin about the matter. As he later admitted to Colvin, he had been 'much too disappointed to answer', and 'annoyed' about the use – actually the misuse – of 'The Bottle Imp' (*ibid.*). In August Stevenson had asked Charles Baxter to tell Colvin that: 'The B. of F. ["The Beach of Falesá"] 'is simply not to appear along with 'The Bottle Imp', a story of a totally different scope and intention' (L7 350; Stevenson's emphasis). Nevertheless, Colvin had by this time arranged for Cassell's to print the two pieces together, in the so-called 'Trial Issue'. By December, Stevenson had given in to the

demands of Colvin and Cassell's; he agreed to use the title *Island Nights' Entertainments* for the whole volume that contained both 'The Beach of Falesá' and 'The Bottle Imp', as well as one or two other stories. However, Stevenson stipulated that 'The Beach of Falesá' was to be separated from the other stories by a 'fresh false title: ISLAND NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS' (L7 436). Stevenson's wishes were not respected even in this matter, for in the edition published by Cassell's there is no separation and no false title.

Barry Menikoff has written a book about the myriad cuts and alterations made by the publishers to the manuscript of 'The Beach of Falesá'.² Less attention has been paid to another casualty of the pressures of Victorian publishing: Stevenson's volume of *Märchen*. With this, Stevenson insisted, 'The Beach of Falesá' had absolutely nothing to do, being 'the child of a quite different inspiration' (L7 436). While Stevenson admitted in the same letter to Colvin that 'that volume [of *Märchen* or fairy tales] might never have got done' (L7 436), it is tempting to wonder what such a volume might have looked like if Stevenson had managed to complete it.

The lexical choice of '*Märchen*' is itself interesting. '*Märchen*' is a German term that has no exact English equivalent, hovering between the English 'fairy tale' and 'folk-tale'. Stevenson does use the term 'folk-tale', for example, calling 'The Song of Rahéro' 'a perfect folk tale' (L7 187) and in the 'Graveyard Stories' chapter of *In the South Seas* referring to a Dr. Sierich 'whose collection of folk-tales [he] expect[ed] with a high degree of interest'.³ Since Stevenson was ready to use the term 'folk-tale' when the occasion demanded, it is interesting that he chose to use the phrase 'a volume of *Märchen*' (L7 461). This suggests that '*Märchen*' is being used not so much in its meaning

of 'folk-tale' as in its alternative meaning of 'fairy tale'. As Mary Beth Stein points out in her article on 'Folklore and Fairy Tales' in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*: 'In German academic and popular usage *Märchen* refers to the literary fairy tale as well as the traditional folk-tale'.⁴ (Thus *Märchen* can mean *Kunstmärchen* (literary fairy tale) in distinction to *Volksmärchen* (traditional folk-tale), though that distinction does not of course preclude the former from taking and elaborating elements from the latter. And that, I would suggest, is precisely what Stevenson is doing in his *Märchen* or *literary* fairy tales 'The Bottle Imp' and 'The Isle of Voices' (and arguably also 'The Waif Woman').

Much ink has been spilled in trying to define the relationship between the fairy tale and *fantasy* writing. One of the characteristics of the *literary* fairy tale, which aligns it with fantasy literature rather than the traditional folk-tale, is the tendency to set the magical elements (often a magical other world) in some tension with the real world. This tension seems to derive particularly from the historical connection between the literary fairy tale and German Romanticism. Thus, at the beginning of George MacDonald's groundbreaking *Phantastes* (1858) (which Stevenson refers to in a letter of 1872), MacDonald places a lengthy quotation from the German arch-Romantic Novalis about the nature of the *Märchen*.⁵ *Phantastes* arguably mediated into British literary culture the German Romantic emphasis on magical other worlds which seems to characterize so much British fantasy literature (from MacDonald's friend Lewis Carroll through E. Nesbit to C. S. Lewis and beyond). In this genre, the magical elements and the other worlds are played off against *this* world, realistically depicted. Nineteenth-century fantasy and fairy tales developed in tension with, and almost as an uncanny double of, nineteenth-century Realism. While

Stevenson was critical of Realism, and promoted Romance as a genre, in his later works written in the South Seas there was a tendency towards an ever grittier realism, for example in *The Ebb-Tide* and also in 'The Beach of Falesá', the work Stevenson so determinedly (but in the end vainly) wished to *exclude* from his 'volume of *Märchen*'. A tendency towards realism is also evident *within* Stevenson's *Märchen*, though this is entirely consistent with a genre that plays off this-worldly trivia against other-worldly charms. Thus Stevenson is insistent that what characterizes his *Märchen* is that '[t]hey all have a queer realism, even the most extravagant, even 'The Isle of Voices': the manners are exact' (L7 436).

In Stevenson's *Märchen*, however, what is opposed to the world of magic is not the quotidian world of Dresden, London, or Oxford, but of Hawaii. 'The Isle of Voices' does not take place (like the arguably derivative chapter 'The Island of the Voices' in C. S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*) in some kind of fantasy realm such as Narnia; on the contrary, it is set with considerable geographical precision in the South Seas. We know from the first paragraph of 'The Isle of Voices' that Kalamake, the father-in-law of the hero Keola, is a wizard who would go 'into the region of the hobgoblins, and there ... lay snares to entrap the spirits of ancient'; nevertheless, the setting is resolutely nineteenth-century *petit bourgeois*, complete with a photograph of Queen Victoria on the parlour wall and a family Bible on the table. Although supposedly located on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, Kalamake's parlour is actually based on that of ex-judge Hahinu, at whose home in Hookena, on the Kona coast of the island of Hawaii, Stevenson had stayed in April 1889. As Stevenson later wrote 'all that I found in that house, beyond the speech and a few exotic dishes on the table, would have been familiar and exemplary in Europe'

(T20 183). There is also a precise geographical location for the mysterious island that Kalamake (along with sorcerers from all ends of the earth) visits on a magic mat to collect shells that mysteriously turn into silver dollars. This island is in the Low or Dangerous Archipelago, that is, the Paumotu Archipelago where Stevenson had heard Donat-Rimarau – who is actually referred to in ‘The Isle of Voices’ – narrate many of the ‘Graveyard Stories’ in *In the South Seas*. With a delightful twist of logic, Stevenson has Keola and his wife Lehua consult an atlas to check whether Kalamake, who can make himself swell to gigantic proportions, will be able to cover the distance from the Dangerous Archipelago back to Molokai.

There seems to be no *particular* source for ‘The Isle of Voices’. In her Prefatory Note to *Island Nights’ Entertainments* Fanny Stevenson claimed that, when writing ‘The Isle of Voices’, her husband had had in mind the stories told to the Stevensons by M. Rimareau (sic) in Fakarava in the Paumotu Archipelago. Roslyn Jolly has noted a couple of allusions to motifs from Hawaiian myth and legend, some of which may derive from Stevenson’s study of King Kalakaua’s notebooks for his *Legends and Myths of Hawaii; The Fables and Folk-Lore of a Strange People*.⁶ In fact Stevenson’s approach in ‘The Isle of Voices’ seems to be fairly typical of the writer of fantasy or literary fairy tales (*Kunstmärchen*) according to Maria Nikolajeva in her article on ‘Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales’. Nikolajeva describes how fantasy is eclectic, taking what it needs from a variety of sources, and ‘focussing on the clash between the magical and the ordinary, on the unexpected consequences of magic when introduced into everyday life.’⁷

In the case of ‘The Bottle Imp’ the situation is rather different. In her Prefatory Note, Fanny Stevenson explains

RLS's somewhat cryptic note that replaced the original subtitle: 'A Cue from an Old Melodrama'. The melodrama in question was a version of 'The Bottle Imp' that Stevenson had come across in the collection of plays belonging to their thespian Bournemouth neighbours, the Shelleys. The fact that Stevenson used the term *Märchen* in connection with 'The Bottle Imp' suggests that he was aware that the melodrama was 'adapted from an old German legend', as Fanny puts it in her Note, even if he was unacquainted with the originals. These earlier versions of 'The Bottle Imp' include an 1810 version by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué as well as a version in Grimm's *Deutsche Sagen* (1816–8). These ultimately derive from the seventeenth-century picaresque novel by von Grimmelshausen, *Trutz Simplex* (1669), set during the Thirty Years War and featuring the adventures of the same Mother Courage who would later appear in the play by Bertholt Brecht.⁸ In chapter 18 of *Trutz Simplex*, Courage buys a bottle which she may only sell at a loss, which contains a familiar spirit that will bring wealth and success, but to die in possession of which means going straight to Hell. Courage takes maximum advantage of the bottle before fobbing it off (in chapter 22) on one of her many lovers. The main elements of Stevenson's *Märchen* are already present in the seventeenth century German version. The story seems to have a particular fascination for Germans. In the last few years 'The Bottle Imp' has gone the way of many fantasies and has become the basis for a card game. Interestingly, although the game was developed in Germany, under the name 'Der Flaschenteufel', it is Stevenson's version of 'The Bottle Imp' that is foregrounded, despite the fact that all the essential ingredients are already present in the German sources.⁹

In Stevenson's 'The Bottle Imp', the traditional German

tale is relocated into late nineteenth century Hawaii. Indeed the tale explicitly mentions the house of Nahinu, the ex-judge whom Stevenson stayed with at Hookena, which provided the model for Kalamake's parlour in 'The Isle of Voices'. Circumstantial details from San Francisco to Papeete are presented with such verisimilitude that a 'reality effect' is produced, and thus, as Fanny pointed out in her Prefatory Note, a sense of uncertainty is induced in the reader's mind (*T13* xii). Without going into the intricacies of Todorov's discrimination of the various shadings in the spectrum running from 'the marvellous' through 'the fantastic' to 'the uncanny', it would seem that Rosemary Jackson's reading of Todorov's 'fantastic' seems to fit 'The Bottle Imp' pretty closely. According to Jackson: 'Fantastic narratives confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic. They assert that what they are telling is real –relying on the conventions of realistic narrative to do so– and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what –within those terms– is manifestly unreal.'¹⁰

In her article on 'Fantasy and Fairy Tales' already cited, Nikolajeva suggests that 'fantasy is closely connected with the notion of modernity' (151). While this would be true of 'The Isle of Voices' and especially 'The Bottle Imp', it seems less obviously the case in the third candidate for Stevenson's volume of *Märchen*, 'The Waif Woman'. Although this was finally rejected, apparently at the instigation of Fanny, RLS originally saw it as a companion piece to 'The Bottle Imp', even sharing the same kind of sub-title: 'A Cue from a Saga' (*L7* 436). 'The Waif Woman' is based on Stevenson's enthusiasm for the literary work of William Morris. In November 1881 Stevenson wrote to Henley that Morris's narrative poem *Sigurd the Volsung* was 'a grrrrreat poem' (*L3* 253). Ten years later Stevenson drafted a somewhat

sycophantic, if ‘very impudent’, letter to Morris, addressing him simply as ‘Master’, and acknowledging his indebtedness to Morris’s poetry, especially to *Sigurd*. Stevenson adds that Morris has now ‘plunged [him] beyond payment’ with the *Saga Library*, that is, Morris and Magnússon’s translation of the Icelandic Sagas (*L7* 236), though he also criticises Morris for his use of archaic English (*L7* 237).

Stevenson based ‘The Waif Woman’ on Morris and Magnússon’s translation of ‘The Story of the Ere-Dwellers’.¹¹ As a reason for rejecting ‘The Waif Woman’, Fanny raised the spectre of plagiarism (somewhat rich, coming from Fanny, after the traumatic ‘Nixie’ affair!).¹² Stevenson was rather, in his own phrase, taking a cue from the saga just as he took a cue from the legend of ‘The Bottle Imp’, and was re-working the Icelandic folk-material in much the same way as he re-worked the originally German folk-material. There are significant differences, however. In the case of ‘The Bottle Imp’ the folk-material is transposed to the South Seas, and the names of the protagonists are changed accordingly. ‘The Waif Woman’ remains set in medieval Iceland, though Stevenson changes the names of all the characters except the central character Thorgunna. While much of the saga’s action is retained, Stevenson nevertheless did make some significant changes, not the least being that Aud, the main protagonist next to Thorgunna, dies at the end of Stevenson’s version; in the saga, by contrast, Thurid, the character on whom Aud is based, ‘got better of her sickness so that she was healed’ (translation by Morris and Magnússon). This may have been one of the changes to the saga that did not, to Fanny’s mind, ‘improve the thing’ (*L7* 437 n.8) though perhaps Fanny’s judgment was not entirely disinterested. Furnas has taken G. S. Hellman to task for suggesting that Fanny had ulterior motives in wishing to

suppress 'The Waif Woman', but she does seem rather self-righteous when she accuses it of being 'too cheap an affair to meddle with at the best'.¹³ Perhaps she was uneasy with Stevenson's very unsympathetic portrayal of the greedy and manipulative wife Aud. The key moment in the Saga comes when Thurid inveigles her husband into disobeying Thorgunna's instructions to burn her bed-stuff after her death. This crucial piece of *action*, which provokes the post-mortem 'walkings and hauntings' that are the real subject matter of the saga, is developed by Stevenson into a substantial *character* sketch – or indeed a character assassination (literally as well as figuratively, since unlike Thurid, Aud dies). Stevenson's elaboration of motivation and character adds a modern note of realism to the saga, although RLS saw that quality in the originals as well, writing about them to Burlingame: 'talk about realism!' (L7 296).

The question whether the exclusion of 'The Waif Woman' from *Island Nights' Entertainments* was artistically right was perhaps settled in advance by Colvin's unilateral decision (so bitterly resented by Stevenson) to publish 'The Bottle Imp' alongside 'The Beach of Falesá'. Stevenson wrote to Colvin that 'The Waif Woman' and 'The Isle of Voices', though not up to the rank of 'The Bottle Imp', 'each have a certain merit, and they fit in style' (L7 436). In *Island Nights' Entertainments* as published, 'The Waif Woman' would doubtless have stood out awkwardly since it is not set in the South Seas; however, it might well have fitted nicely into the 'volume of *Märchen*' that Stevenson had intended, but for the interference of Colvin, 'slowly to elaborate'.

What else may have found its way into such a volume is a matter of speculation. Apart from whatever new stories Stevenson might have produced, there is also the question

of other material whose final destination was still undecided in 1892. Other *märchenhaft* pieces that might have been candidates for inclusion would surely include some of the tales collected under the rather elastic title *Fables*, and published posthumously in 1896 as an appendix to *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Of the history of these *Fables* very little is known, other than that Stevenson first mentions them in the summer of 1874 and was still working on them twenty years later. According to Balfour, Stevenson worked on the *Fables* in 1887, and approached Longman's about their publication in 1888, though he does not seem to have come back to them till near the end of his life. We do not know with any certainty the order in which they were written over that twenty-year period. According to Colvin's guess, some of the earliest written include 'those in the vein of Celtic mystery, *The Touchstone*, *The Poor Thing*, *The Song of the Morrow*' (T31 174). Balfour, however, writing of the years 1891–94, suggests that 'the reference to Odin [in *Fable* 16] perhaps is due to [Stevenson's] reading of the Sagas, which led him to attempt a tale in the same style, called 'The Waif Woman'. But I could find no clue to any fresh study of the Celtic legends, that would have suggested the last and most beautiful fable of all, called "The Song of the Morrow."' Balfour seems to be suggesting that 'The Song of the Morrow' came out of roughly the same context as 'The Waif Woman'¹⁴. Had Colvin's precipitate action not in a sense forced Stevenson's hand, and narrowed his options in terms of a 'volume of *Märchen*', then some of those stories 'running to a greater length, and conceived in a more mystic and legendary vein' – as Colvin puts it in the Prefatory Note to the *Fables* (T5 77) – might perhaps have found their way into Stevenson's sadly incomplete book of fairy tales.

NOTES

1. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, eds, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* in 8 volumes (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994–95), vol. 7, 461, 436, henceforth given as *L 1-8*.
2. Barry Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': A Study in Victorian Publishing* (Stanford University Press, 1984).
3. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Tusitala Edition in 35 volumes (London: Heinemann, 1924), vol. 20, 173, henceforth given as *T 1-35*. Sierich's folk-tales were published as 'Samoanische Märchen' between 1900–04 in *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*.
4. Mary Beth Stein, 'Folklore and Fairy Tales' in Jack Zipes (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 167.
5. In a letter to his cousin Bob (*L1 255*), RLS refers to a scene in chapter 23 of *Phantastes* where 'wooden effigies' of men trample on a little beggar girl (*Phantastes*, 1915 Everyman edition, pp. 219–22). The image of a huge wooden automaton walking over a little girl seems uncannily similar to the beginning of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* where Hyde 'trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. ... It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut' (*T5 3*). See my forthcoming article: 'Amiable Infidelity, Grim-Faced Dummies and Rondels: RLS on George MacDonald' in *North Wind: Journal of the George MacDonald Society*.
6. Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: OUP World's Classics, 1996), pp. 276–7, note 111.
7. Maria Nikolajeva, 'Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales' in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, p. 151.
8. Hans Jakob Christoph von Grimmelshausen, *Trutz Simplex oder Die Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landstörzerin Courasche* [1670] <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/grimmels/courasch/htm>
9. Another example of the absorption of 'The Bottle Imp' by popular culture is its appearance in Terry Brooks's fantasy novel *Wizard at Large*. A substantial passage from 'The Bottle Imp' appears as the epigraph to Brooks's novel, which is derivative of the fantasy tradition running from the German Romantics via George MacDonald. Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Bottle Imp' are explicitly referred to in the novel (London: Macdonald/Orbit, 1988, p. 46), but in fact the imp, renamed as a 'Darkling', is only another version of the genie in the lamp. The distinctive feature of 'The Bottle Imp' tradition going back to Grimmelshausen, that of the need to resell at an ever-diminishing price,

is not used by Brooks.

10. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen/ Routledge: 1981), p. 34.

11. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, trans., *The Saga Library, vol. II: The Story of the Ere-Dwellers* [1892] chaps. 50–55.

12. Katharine de Mattos, RLS's cousin and dedicatee of *Jekyll and Hyde*, had written a short story for which she was unable to find a publisher.

Fanny Stevenson appropriated and reworked Katharine's story, re-titling it 'The Nixie' and securing its publication in *Scribner's Magazine* in the year the magazine featured a monthly article by RLS. On the appearance of 'The Nixie', Henley wrote to RLS: 'It's Katharine's; surely it's Katharine's?' Henley's (not unfounded) suggestion of plagiarism provoked a furious response by RLS, which in effect ended his friendship with Henley, as well as with Katharine and her brother, Bob Stevenson. For further details of this episode, see my *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Literary Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 104–6.

13. J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward* (Faber & Faber, 1952), p. 404.

14. Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen, 1906), p. 360.

Unity in difference – A comparative reading of Robert Louis Stevenson’s ‘The Beach of Falesá’ and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

Jürgen Kramer

1. Introduction

This paper will focus on areas of convergence between Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad. Both knew the meanings of exile, empire, and the exotic. Their exiles were enforced: Stevenson had to leave Britain for reasons of health; Conrad went to France and, later, Britain because he wanted to go to sea and escape Russian oppression and military service. Their knowledge of imperial relations was complex and their experiences of being both a colonial and a colonialist caused deeply ambivalent feelings. In Stevenson’s work, the Scottish legacy of being subordinated to English political interest and the actual knowledge of being part of the colonial ventures of the British Empire can be as clearly felt as in Conrad’s texts the contradictory experiences of a Polish *szlachcic* in nineteenth-century Ukraine exposed to Russian oppression while exercising domination over the Ukrainian serfs. For both of them, the exotic was not something they just wrote about, but something they had experienced from within. Moreover, both put regions, which had hardly featured as fictional subjects before, on the map of British literature. It is true

that Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1841) and R. J. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858) are set in the Pacific Ocean but they are didactic children's classics whose charm is mostly owed to their authors' versatile handling of the genre's formulaic nature. Equally, Herman Melville's Polynesian books *Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847) and *Mardi* (1849) are literary landmarks, but their quality lies in a rather strange mixture of ethnography, travelogue and philosophical reflection. In contrast to this, Stevenson (in his Samoan phase) and Conrad wrote 'realist' fiction about the South Sea and the Malay Archipelago which assiduously avoided the kind of 'sugar candy sham'¹ and 'sea-life of light literature'² they wholeheartedly despised. Finally, both wrote romances of adventure which questioned, subverted and denied the nature of that genre. To both of them, the imperial adventure whose 'appeal lay in the ability to transport its readers away from everyday concerns and to immerse them in uncomplicated exotic romance' had gone sour.³ Traditionally, as in the books by Frederick Marryat, W. H. G. Kingston, George Alfred Henty, and Henry Rider Haggard, the imperial romance required a youthful hero who, accompanied by a faithful friend or a surrogate father, went abroad, acquired wealth, allegedly pacified and civilised foreign cultures, had his moral fibre tested in this process, and eventually emerged victorious, 'asserting his racial superiority, the potency of Christian morality, and the soundness of English imperial values' (*ibid.*, p. 38). Stevenson, who had contributed to the genre with *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886), and *Catriona* (1893), came to severely criticise this imperial ethos in 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894). In Conrad's case, although he sometimes (re-)lapsed into the more traditional modes of romance, as in 'The Lagoon' (1896) and 'Karain: A

Memory' (1897), this critical 'shift continued' (*ibid.*, p. 50); his Malay and African fiction was 'deeply sceptical of the claims made by the imperial romance' (*ibid.*).

In addition to these more general similarities a much more impressive picture of the two writers' affinity emerges from a close reading of particular texts. Although, for instance, the geographical distance between Stevenson's Samoa and Conrad's Congo was thousands of miles, the temporal distance between the publications of 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892) and *Heart of Darkness* (1899) was a mere seven years. The readerships of the magazines in which these tales were first published – the popular, widely circulated *Illustrated London News* and the conservative, pro-imperialist *Blackwood's Magazine* – overlapped sufficiently to form a conservative middle-class audience with a keen interest in imperial matters. Indeed, a parallel reading could bring the texts even closer together. So far we have only had a few tantalising suggestions which hint at possible connections between them. Albert J. Guerard⁴ and Edwin M. Eigner⁵, from their different perspectives, compared the two stories and found Stevenson's wanting. Patrick Brantlinger, however, contended that Stevenson's 'Beach' offered 'as powerful a suggestion of the decadence of the imperial adventure as anything in Conrad'⁶, and Elleke Boehmer more generally observed that Stevenson's Pacific tales 'fed into a colonialist lineage which connected him to Conrad'⁷. Katherine Linehan and Rod Edmond more cautiously agreed in regarding 'The Beach' as an 'antecedent'⁸ and a 'precursor'⁹ to Conrad's novella. Andrea White characterised Stevenson as 'another "romancer" turned "realist"', who 'meant to disabuse a misinformed home audience through his "grimly realistic" "tough yarns"', and concluded that, 'while *Almayer's Folly* seems to take

up in certain ways where *The Beach of Falesá* leaves off, Conrad's criticism extends beyond Stevenson's'.¹⁰ Linda Dryden, in her meticulous and stimulating study of the imperial romance, saw 'a radically new perspective' coming into its own in the late Stevenson's 'dissenting voice' which, then, 'finds some sympathy in Conrad's early work' (Dryden 2000, pp. 52–3). She concluded: 'If the romance and adventure fiction of the later Stevenson challenged some basic beliefs about imperialised subjects, Conrad went further by questioning the essential values espoused by the romance and adventure genre itself.' (*Ibid.*, p. 53)

What interests me in this paper, however, is not whether Stevenson's tale can be regarded as heralding Conrad's or Conrad's as surpassing Stevenson's, but rather what happens if these two texts are read side by side, as complementary rather than competitive efforts in understanding that particular 'moment' in the history of the British Empire, when its political climax (most palpable in the celebrations of Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees) was counterbalanced and subverted by increasing self-doubt and self-criticism. Both texts reflected as well as constituted this 'moment' by representing – and, thereby, bringing into focus – central aspects of 'standard rationales used to justify imperial domination'¹¹: the economic needs of the colonial centre and its political will to see them satisfied ('trade follows the flag'), the cultural ('racial') superiority of the white colonisers ('survival of the fittest'), their declared 'civilising mission', and their individual as well as collective desire to earn military glory and administrative prestige. And although the two writers dealt with and negotiated different colonial worlds, the combined effect of their two texts was to seriously question some of these rationales, above all by destabilising the traditional 'imperialist

opposition between civilisation and barbarism' (Kucich, p. 16), and by employing modes of narration which offer their readers sceptical positions *vis-à-vis* both the narrators and their narratives (cf. *ibid.*, p. 17).

In the main part of my paper I shall make a number of comparative observations concerning the two texts with a focus on their *dramatis personae*. In the *coda* of my paper I shall proceed from comparison to what I call reciprocal elucidation.

2. The Narrators-as-Protagonists

In both texts male white I-narrators-as-protagonists – Wiltshire, a copra trader, and Marlow, a master mariner, respectively – tell us about processes of discovery which not only lead into the uncertainties of particular foreign territories (a Pacific island and the Congo) but also into the imponderable inner selves of the narrators and which, in the end, raise more questions than they provide answers. Needless to say, these discoveries and conquests can (and should) be read as 're-enactments of the indomitable will-to-conquest' (Kucich, p. 7) typical of imperial exploration and domination. Furthermore, both narrators have to deal with opponents who are also alter egos: Case and Kurtz are both traders, one in copra and the other in ivory. Both narrators tell us that they are equally fascinated *and* disgusted by their alter egos and that they fight them bitterly – Wiltshire with his fists and his knife, Marlow, expressly mentioning his 'natural aversion' to 'fistcuffs', with words – so that the idea suggests itself that they are also fighting parts of their own selves.¹² They do so successfully: they continue to live whereas their opponents have to die, and they repress whatever they have in common with them. But they do not survive unscathed: Wiltshire limps 'to this day' and Marlow

lies about Kurtz's end.¹³ Their dead opponents, that is to say, have indelibly inscribed themselves onto the bodies and into the minds of the narrators. These traumatic legacies, I think, are the narrators' reasons for telling their respective stories in the first place.

This point deserves further comment. Marlow tells his audience:

You know, I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies – which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world – what I want to forget. (Conrad 1990, p. 172)

But then he has to tell them when and how he learnt that lying is not only associated with dying but, perhaps more painfully, with surviving. The latter may depend on re-fashioning one's code of conduct, while maintaining it may prove honourable but fatal. (I shall return to this point in section 4.) Wiltshire's limp signifies a different (though related) kind of knowledge. In the Book of Genesis we are told that Jacob wrestled with God who 'touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint', but this experience earned him God's blessing and a new name: 'Israel' (32: 25, 28). From the Greek myths we learn that Oedipus carried his inability to walk properly in his name ('swell-foot') because his father had 'thrust a spike through his feet', presumably to counter the oracle's prophecy.¹⁴ These two examples are representative of a suggestive tradition which has understood limping as the result of a particular experience with a power from beyond the human sphere.¹⁵ Such a rite of passage has been thought to provide a new perspective on life and its vagaries. Its

distortion of the normality before the limp imparts the new perspective; the body is out of joint. This may signal a loss, but also provides an opportunity. As in Oedipus's case the 'price' (or the 'prize') of the limp was not great enough for a 'new life', it had to be 'complemented' by the act of blinding. But when Oedipus put his eyes out, he did more than destroy his eyesight: he castrated himself.¹⁶ Thus, in the Oedipus myth, the limp and the act of castration are inseparably combined, and in its secularised form, the limp, resulting from a struggle over life and death, is still a sign of castration.¹⁷ This reading of Wiltshire's limp, however, seems to be balanced (if not denied) by the fact that he has a family. But then, what *kind* of family is it? Does not his limp point to his hybrid children, his love for them, *and* his impotence to improve their lot as 'only half-castes'? (Stevenson 1996, p. 71)

The two narrators also differ decisively, particularly with respect to class, language, and their relationships to the indigenous populations on the one hand and women on the other. While Wiltshire is a simple, half-educated trader, which places him at the lower end of the range of socially acceptable occupations, Marlow is at least a master mariner, although he may have seen better days. In Wiltshire's case we have to deduce this from the context in which he moves, while in Marlow's case we also have his audience: four men who once shared 'the bond of the sea' (Conrad 1990, p. 135) and whose social position is distinctly middle-class. Both narrators repeatedly demonstrate their need to tell their tales and to tell them orally to an audience: Wiltshire addresses the reader directly; Marlow's friends know that they are 'fated [...] to hear about one of [his] inconclusive experiences' (*ibid.*, p. 141). The effects of these different modes of narration are quite distinct: while Stevenson

allows Wiltshire to court the reader's sympathy by his good-natured rascality, Conrad has Marlow's voice mediated by an anonymous frame-narrator who, implicitly and explicitly, questions and rejects Marlow's judgments. These qualifications, conversely, enable and encourage Marlow to give free reign to his irony, sarcasm and excessive loquacity.¹⁸ In Wiltshire, Stevenson constructs a single consciousness that attempts to involve the reader by its questions and self-questioning. Conrad, apparently, has no faith in any single consciousness: Marlow's narrative, 'a complex interplay between breakdown and rescue, deconstruction and restoration', is *framed* in order to, paradoxically, dramatise its openness and incompleteness.¹⁹

Wiltshire's language is colloquial: direct, racy, and full of swearwords, with small doses of Beach de Mar (the jargon of the Western Pacific) and indigenous expressions thrown in. In Wiltshire 'blindness and insight coexist side by side' finding their contradictory expression in a character that can be imagined as taking his interlocutors by their lapels, while Marlow's pose is that of a Buddha.²⁰ The fact that he is without a lotus flower demonstrates that whatever revelatory qualities his tale may have, they have to be regarded as 'inconclusive' (Conrad 1990, p. 141). And although his language is 'gentrified' as compared to Wiltshire's, at times he gets carried away by his emotions and is duly rebuked by one of his listeners (*ibid.*, p. 184). Moreover, both narrators arouse the readers' distrust. While Wiltshire's limited single consciousness sends the readers on a roller coaster of coexisting contradictions, Marlow's intermittent use of irony and his framed narrative demand his audience's (and, consequently, the readers') constant vigilance.

While both, Wiltshire and Marlow, regard the respective indigenous populations as inferior human beings (and

cannibals to boot), they behave differently towards them. Wiltshire adopts the attitude of a 'well-meaning' coloniser (cf. Stevenson 1996, p. 24) and becomes the lawful husband of an indigenous woman (cf. *ibid.*, p. 29); Marlow keeps the Africans at a distance. Although he sympathises with their lot under rampant colonialism (cf. Conrad 1990, p. 156) and shows a grudging, but genuine admiration for his helmsman, his basic feeling is fear. This fear, however, does not so much spring from the possibility of being killed by them in a fight, but rather from the insight into their common humanity. Keeping the Africans at a distance, exercising 'restraint' (*ibid.*, p. 195), something that Kurtz failed to do (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 206, 234-235), enables Marlow to survive and tell his tale. At least this is what he thinks.

The most striking difference between Wiltshire and Marlow, however, lies in their relationship to women and, by implication, to marriage and children. Wiltshire transcends the boundaries of 'ordinary' nineteenth-century colonial masculinity by admitting his love of Uma (cf. Stevenson 1996, pp. 13, 29), legalising their mock marriage, having children with her and, most importantly, by openly discussing the resultant problem of miscegenation. The final paragraph of the story is worth quoting in full:

'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 the whites?' (*Ibid.*, p. 71)

A better demonstration of the personal as the political is hardly conceivable. Wiltshire, whose aim had been 'to make a fortune' as a trader, and 'go home again and start a public-house' (*ibid.*, p. 17), is caught in his feelings as a husband and father. His avowed hatred of Kanakas and half-castes is transformed into compassion for his children. It is all too clear to him that if he takes his family to England, it will mean misery not only to them, but to him as well.²¹ Although he is able to send his eldest son to school in New Zealand, he cannot do anything for his daughters. Trapped in his own prejudices he can imagine only white spouses for them.²² Allegedly, he does not know where to find them, but even if he found white men, would he not presume from his own experiences that they would hate half-castes and try to cheat them? This paragraph, one of the most finely written in the tale, closes the story, but also opens the readers' eyes to a change (though a very slight one) in the male colonial self.

In contrast, Marlow remains within the limits of 'ordinary' nineteenth-century colonial masculinity.²³ His view of the female sex – be it European or African – is determined by fear and contempt. Both, the African (most probably Kurtz's indigenous partner) and Kurtz's Intended, overawe Marlow by their physical attractiveness, mental single-mindedness, and overall power of resilience. Obviously Marlow feels that he is no match for either of them. (I shall return to this point in greater detail in section 4.)

3. The Antagonists

At first sight, there are astonishing parallels between Case and Kurtz. Of the former, Wiltshire tells us that

[n]o man knew his country, beyond he was of English speech; and it was clear he came of a good family and was splendidly educated. [...] He could speak, when he chose, fit for a drawing-room; and when he chose he could blaspheme worse than a Yankee boatswain, and talk smart [smut] to sicken a Kanaka. [...] He had the courage of a lion and the cunning of a rat [...]. (Stevenson 1996, p. 5)

Somewhat later, Wiltshire admits that Case ‘had the brains to run a parliament’ (*ibid.*, p. 24). Compare this to Marlow’s view of Kurtz: ‘The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, [...]. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz [...].’ (Conrad 1990, p. 207) On his return to Europe, Marlow learns that people (who claim to have known him) regard Kurtz not only as ‘a universal genius’, but also as a man who could electrify ‘large meetings’ (*ibid.*, p. 244). These two men, that is to say, are conceived of as eloquent, multi-national European colonisers, dedicated to their jobs.

Their unwavering single-mindedness – driven by their combined lusts for profit and the exercise of power – is most clearly demonstrated by the way in which they deal with their competitors and subjugate the indigenous people. Case apparently frightened his competitors, killing those who did not clear out quickly enough. With the islanders he used ‘devil-work’ (cf. Stevenson 1996, chapter iv) (Aeolian harps, carved idols, luminous paint etc.) to exploit

their superstition. Kurtz did not tolerate competitors in trade, either (cf. Conrad 1990, p. 218). In his relations to the Africans, however, he 'outdid' Case in his capacity to intimidate and enslave the indigenous people. Kurtz 'came to them [the Harlequin tells Marlow] with thunder and lightning' (*ibid.*), and although Marlow later tries to make fun of his arms, calling them 'the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter' (*ibid.*, p. 224), he cannot disregard the heads on the stakes, the Africans' grief about Kurtz's departure, and the latter's attempt to return to them. Of course, the supreme irony of both stories lies in the fact that Case and Kurtz use modern technology, a result of rational thought, to credit themselves with magical powers. This is indeed a particular 'dialectic' of the Enlightenment.

The major difference between Case and Kurtz seems to be that Case commits his atrocities innocently, as it were, and they leave his inner self untouched. It is only logical that on his death we hear no more than a 'little laugh' and a 'long moan' (Stevenson 1996, p. 67) because he is without the slightest qualms of conscience. Kurtz's monstrosities, on the other hand, which are made to appear incomparably greater are not only committed against his opponents, but endanger, undermine and eventually engulf his inner self. And so, although the power of his voice has left him, he cannot die without crying breathlessly and enigmatically: "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad 1990, p. 239) Kurtz's famous last words sum up (without resolving) several issues of *Heart of Darkness* and can be understood as *either* condemning 'as horrible his corrupt actions' (and, by extension, the 'inner natures of all mankind' as well as 'the whole universe', which he deems horrible) *or* to regard as 'hateful but also *desirable* the temptations to which he has succumbed'²⁴. And Marlow's reactions to Kurtz's words

demonstrate that all these meanings reverberate in him, with 'restraint' (standing in for all conceivable secondary virtues) providing his last anchor.

To read Case's death, in contrast, as unsatisfactory and shallow because, as Peter Gilmour has argued, his character is but 'an inadequate incarnation of the malign', is as rash and thoughtless as maintaining that '[n]othing of Case survives; all evil has died with him'.²⁵ Nothing could be further from the truth. There is enough evil in Wiltshire left to destroy a whole culture and society. It is all there in the final paragraph: the feeling of superiority, the routine domination of others, the greed for profit and, above all, the blatant racism. Wiltshire alleges not only to have promised to 'deal fairly with the natives' (Stevenson 1996, p. 70) but also to have kept his promise. But, he tells us, 'I used to be bothered about my balances [...] and, though I did well in Falesá, I was half glad when the firm moved me on to another station' (*ibid.*, p. 70) where, it is implied, he could cheat with a better conscience. In a colonial situation doing well is the exact opposite of doing good.

4. The Female Characters

The female characters in *Heart of Darkness* are bound by the 'flight-from-marriage' tradition of the male quest romance.²⁶ Similar to, for example, Henry Rider Haggard's treatment of the relationship between Foulata and Captain Good in *King Solomon's Mines*, Kurtz's relationship to the African is neither openly acknowledged nor allowed to develop.²⁷ Both women represent the territories of their cultures, which are discovered, penetrated and taken possession of but left behind or disposed of when they are no longer useful.

Although the African is represented as a 'real' woman, she acquires unreal traits through the way in which she is

described by Marlow.²⁸ The description of her appearance alone, with words like 'bizarre', 'barbarous', 'savage', 'ominous', 'mysterious' etc., demonstrates the cultural distance and difference which Marlow feels. He simply does not understand her (cf. Sedlak, p. 456); he can only report his culturally specific impressions. More specifically, he gives us his perception of 'a wild and gorgeous apparition' (Conrad 1990, p. 225) which captivates him: in the original manuscript and in the *Maga* publication the first paragraph of the African's description ended with an additional sentence: 'And we men looked at her – at any rate I looked at her.'²⁹ Moreover, Marlow identifies the African with erotic desire as well as with the threat it represents. He tries to ignore her body by reducing it to its ornaments or, even more revealingly, to its exchange value: 'She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her.' (*Ibid.*) He relates the African woman to the surrounding wilderness and, thereby, the woman comes to symbolise the jungle, the country, the Dark Continent as a whole, signalling desire and detestation, light and darkness, life and death:

[...] in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul' (Conrad 1990, p. 226).

Conversely, somewhere else in the text the landscape is characterised as something that has to be possessed, penetrated, and conquered (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 182–3, 185–6). Patriarchal and imperialist interests combine and interact: their common aim is to exclude, colonise and exploit

the female and cultural other. Finally, the African is not allowed to have a say in the matter: Marlow represents her as nameless and dumb. Even if he let her say something it would be discredited through her association with Kurtz whose defection from European cultural norms and values was, at least in part, due to the fact that he was, as we are led to believe, completely under her spell. What this really means, *we* have to imagine. Marlow's bewildered question 'Do you understand this?', when on his departure from the station with Kurtz he comes face to face with the African woman for a second time, is only answered by Kurtz's 'Do I not?' (*ibid.*, p. 236), thus leaving a wide space open for Marlow, his audience and the readers to fill with their anxieties and wishes, fear and desire.

Kurtz's Intended is also deprived of a partner because Kurtz dies during his quest and Marlow, who is clearly attracted to her, flees from her because he is afraid of her. This woman has at least one thing in common with the African: she remains nameless. Marlow calls her 'the Intended'. Whether she had any intentions of her own besides being Kurtz's intended wife, we are not told. At first sight she seems to fit the Victorian ideal of a middle-class woman: Marlow describes her as passive, in need of loving care, chaste, a real guardian of Victorian morality and virtues.³⁰ Marlow says she said she knew Kurtz 'best' and 'had all his noble confidence' (*ibid.*, p. 248). Now that he was dead she grieved for him boundlessly: 'What a loss to me – to us!' [...] 'To the world.' (*Ibid.*, p. 249) But slowly, very slowly indeed, her tone changes or, rather, Marlow's perception of her (and her tone) changes:

'I cannot believe that I shall never see him again, that nobody will see him again, never, never, never.'

She put out her arms, as if after a retreating figure, stretching them black and with clasped pale hands across the fading and narrow sheen of the window. Never see him! I saw him clearly enough then. I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live and I shall see her too, a tragic and familiar Shade resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness. (*Ibid.*, pp. 250–1)

Some critics have read Marlow's association as an attempt at taming and (perhaps) repressing the seductive and tantalising image of the black woman through that of the pure, spiritual and, consequently, not threatening European. This may be true. But I think it is more important to realise that the changing behaviour of the Intended is the cause of Marlow's association. The way in which the Intended not only fills the social role allotted to her by supporting the man she loves, but rather exceeds it by pushing and pressing Kurtz (and, through him, Marlow) into positions which they would not want to occupy of their own free will, makes Marlow suspect she might want to change the accepted role distribution between men and women. The following passage merits close scrutiny:

'Ah, [...] I believed in him more than any one on earth – more than his own mother, more than – himself. He needed me! Me! I would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance.'

I felt like a chill grip on my chest. 'Don't,' I said in a muffled voice.

'Forgive me. I – I – have mourned so long in silence – in

silence. ... You were with him to the last? I think of his loneliness. Nobody near to understand him as I would have understood. Perhaps no one to hear ...'

'To the very end,' I said, shakily. 'I heard his very last words ...' I stopped in a fright.

'Repeat them,' she murmured in a heart-broken tone. 'I want – I want – something – something – to – to live with.'

I was on the point of crying at her, 'Don't you hear them?' The dusk was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in a whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of a rising wind. 'The horror! the horror!'

'His last word – to live with,' she insisted. 'Don't you understand I loved him – I loved him – I loved him!'

I pulled myself together and spoke slowly.

'The last word he pronounced was – your name.'

I heard a light sigh and then my heart stood still, stopped dead short by an exulting and terrible cry, by the cry of inconceivable triumph and of unspeakable pain. 'I knew it – I was sure!' ... She knew. She was sure. I heard her weeping; she had hidden her face in her hands. (*Ibid.*, pp. 251–2)

Marlow's lie to the Intended has often been understood as some heroically protective feat he undertakes in order to spare the poor woman's feelings, as if he dared not confront her with the truth of Kurtz's life and death. But perhaps he has other motives: perhaps he lies – thus accepting a minor violation of the cultural order – in order to save this particular cultural order as a whole. For, he may not have thought but perhaps indistinctly felt, what would happen if the Intended were capable of facing the truth about Kurtz?

If she possessed a mental and/or psychological strength which she was not supposed to have within the existing cultural order, would this not question the cultural order as such? Thus, it is possible to argue that Marlow lies to protect himself and not the Intended. And he lies for all men in the 'heart of darkness' whether in Africa or Europe or both to save its patriarchal social order. He does not allow the Intended to develop any intentions of her own; he denies her 'the empowerment of knowledge' because he is afraid of the possible outcome of this development, her 'coming out' as it were.³¹ However, apparently there is some truth in every lie. When Marlow says that Kurtz's last words were her name – and we know what Kurtz said –, he articulates in what he regards as a lie the truth that, to him, women who violate the traditional cultural order represent 'the horror'.³²

In 'The Beach of Falesá', the focus of the story shifts from the imperial adventure (with its Gothic garbs, frequent all-male milieu, and 'flight from marriage') to the domestic domain – a shift openly acknowledged by Stevenson himself (Stevenson 1994-5/VII, p. 161). Wiltshire's masculinity, as we have already seen (cf. section 2), is transformed: he courts Uma 'as though she were some girl at home in the Old Country', although to do that he has to 'forget' himself 'for the minute' (Stevenson 1996, p. 12), he puts Uma before the profits from his job (cf. *ibid.*, p. 29), and he repeatedly shares domestic activities with her (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 29–30, 37). Most importantly, Wiltshire's decides 'to face the emotional and social responsibilities that follow from sex and fatherhood' (Jolly, p. 472), although without Uma's spirit and resolution there would be nothing for him to decide. It is *she* who tells him of and explains the taboo, she translates in his important talk with Maea, and she eventually overcomes her superstitious fears, warns him of Case's approach in the

bush and thereby saves his life. Wiltshire's dream of a public house in England is transformed into a different, candidly acknowledged reality, in which Uma is an irreplaceable – though unequal – partner.

It may be rash to regard their mixed-race marriage as successful, but there can be no doubt that 'the story endorses miscegenation' (*ibid.*). Jolly convincingly argues that the real challenge of 'Stevenson's generic swerve' lies in the fact that 'a woman of another race, and children of mixed race, are brought within the domain of the domestic novel, from which they were conventionally excluded' (*ibid.*). Stevenson squarely faced what Victorians regarded as miscegenation *and* demonstrated that if there was a problem in it, it lay in their attitudes towards foreign cultures rather than in the cultural differences themselves. Given the particular historical context, more was hardly possible. If, as Jolly suggests, 'the plot device of the local taboo' can even be seen as 'a displaced version of the actual taboo at the heart of the story: the ban on miscegenation' (Jolly, p. 473), this may remind us of the fact that the 'heart of darkness' can be found in Africa as well as in Europe. Stevenson and Conrad succeeded in deconstructing socio-cultural prejudices and taboos by reflecting them back onto the contexts from which they originated. By the standards of their time this was a highly critical attitude indeed.

5. The Indigenous People

If the tales succeed in destabilising the traditional 'imperialist opposition between civilisation and barbarism' (Kucich, p. 16), they do so most clearly in their characterisation of the indigenous people. In 'The Beach of Falesá', the islanders are presented not 'as agents capable of acting' but as colonial subjects.³³ However, Wiltshire also repeatedly refers to

attitudes which colonisers and colonised apparently have in common, although he avers that the intelligence of a 'Kanaka' corresponds at best to that of a fifteen-year-old white (cf. Stevenson 1996, pp. 54–5).

Wiltshire's view is derived from some basic ideas of nineteenth-century anthropological thought, which combined an interest in 'cultural differences between societies' with an exploration of the 'biological origins of humans and other species'.³⁴ In the explanation of cultural differences two approaches were dominant: 'degenerationism' and 'progressive social evolution'. According to the former, God had initially graced humankind with one civilisation but had later punished human hubris (graphically captured in the narrative of the tower of Babel) by differentiating this one civilisation into more advanced and more 'degenerated' ones. Social evolutionary thought, in contrast, did not stress the descent of some cultures, but rather the ascent of others. All human life had been 'primitive' in the beginning, but some cultures had developed better and more quickly. Human history could be divided into three major 'ethnic periods': savagery, barbarism, civilisation. These were conceived of as stages of technological development through which all societies were believed to evolve, eventually progressing toward civilisation. Victorian society represented the latter in its highest currently extant form, while other contemporary 'primitive' cultures were thought of as 'living fossils' (or earlier stages) of human development. Needless to say that if 'more advanced' and 'less advanced' cultures came into contact, the former were regarded as destined to dominate, to civilise or, should this be impossible, to destroy the latter. The related idea of the 'survival of the fittest' (coined by Herbert Spencer) was a convenient element in any imperial

philosophy in that it not only justified such a domination of one culture by another but, in fact, demanded it as if required by natural law.³⁵

In *Heart of Darkness* the opposition between civilisation and barbarism is more directly thematised. Marlow tells his audience:

The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories. (Conrad 1990, p. 186)

While at first Marlow's ideas seem to chime with Wiltshire's, later a new tone enters his thoughts:

The earth seemed unearthly. [...] It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. [...] what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (*Ibid.*, p. 186)

Marlow's fear and dismay, that is to say, align him with his audience, while his basic insight inevitably subverts the process by which imperialism fashions its own self-image. And while Marlow characterises this idea of kinship as 'ugly', he does not shy away from its implications:

Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend. (*Ibid.*)

Although he does not succumb to the lure of going ‘ashore for a howl and a dance’, he knows that only ‘a fool [...] is always safe’ (*ibid.*, p. 187). Marlow is saved by his ‘restraint’ and his work ethic, but the fragility of his composure, his doubts and self-doubts can be acutely felt in his emotionally charged narrative whose structure at this point verges on collapse and can only be reasserted and regained by an excessively recurrent use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ – ten times in fourteen lines (cf. *ibid.*).

6. Reciprocal Elucidation

I should like to round off my reading of ‘The Beach of Falesá’ and *Heart of Darkness* with one final train of thought which goes beyond the kind of comparative approach I have followed so far. In two examples of what I should like to call *reciprocal elucidation* I should like to read the two texts through each other’s eyes (or from each other’s point of view).

(i) I have already referred to Kurtz’s final words: ‘The horror! The horror!’ (Conrad 1990, p. 239; cf. above), whose enigmatic multiplicity of meaning has occupied critics since the text appeared in print. In ‘The Beach of Falesá’ we are told (by Case) that John Adams, one of Case’s predecessors, ‘went into the horrors’ (Stevenson 1996, p. 19) before he died. Of course, ‘the horrors’ here stands for *delirium*

tremens. Now, while this is perhaps not what is in Kurtz's mind, if we assume that he is still able to think clearly, the raving nature of his ideas does associate him with someone in *delirium tremens*. However, if we return to Stevenson's text with Kurtz's cry in mind, Adams's fate – which is also to be Captain Randall's (cf. Stevenson 1996, pp. 8, 70) – can be read as an indictment of the destructive role of alcohol in interpersonal as well as imperial relations. Roughly speaking, people addicted to alcohol try to avoid conflicts and the necessary psychic efforts to deal with them. Alcohol helps them construct an ideal world in which neither class barriers nor inhibitions exist. Whatever stands in the way of such an ideal state has to be 'washed down' or away. In the colonial empires, alcohol was (next to guns) one of the most important commodities in trading with the indigenous populations, and it certainly served to make the customers addicted to it, thereby increasing their dependence and exploitability. In 'The Beach of Falesá' (as well as in *The Ebb-Tide*) the destructive power is crucially turned against the colonisers: Wiltshire is turned 'sick and sober' (*ibid.*, p. 8) by Randall's behaviour so that he pours away a whole case of gin (*ibid.*, p. 13). He thereby consolidates his relationship with Uma and rids himself of a profitable commodity, accepting short-term (economic) losses in return for what he hopes to be long-term gains (in his individual life-style). This development undoubtedly contributes to Stevenson's attempt at transforming the colonial male protagonist's role.

(ii) In the final 'night in the bush', Wiltshire fights Case, 'giving' him the knife again and again. 'The blood came over my hands, I remember, hot as tea; and with that I fainted clean away, and fell with my head on the man's mouth.' (*Ibid.*, p. 68) While the first part of this quotation has repeatedly

been commented on by critics pointing out the vividness of Stevenson's imagery or, alternatively, its domestic nature, I am more interested in its second half. What does Wiltshire's falling with his head on Case's mouth mean? Why there of all places? To strike him dumb, to shut him up? To receive a brother's kiss, or give him the kiss of death or, as John Kucich has argued, to illuminate 'the erotic dimension of colonial male bonding, while also fiercely disavowing that eroticism through Wiltshire's killing of Case' (Kucich, p. 20)? While I find this latter idea persuasive, I would like to suggest something else. When Marlow sees Kurtz for the first time, the latter is carried on a stretcher from his hut to the steamboat. As the Africans apparently do not want to let him go, Kurtz has to speak to them. This is how Marlow perceives the scene:

I could see the cage of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arm waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him. (Conrad 1990, p. 224; cf. also p. 245)

To my mind, this passage from Conrad's novella does – however indirectly – shed some light on the passage from Stevenson's tale. We have good reason, I think, to conclude that – in a fine reversal to the many travellers' tales about cannibalism in the Pacific as well as in Africa – the true cannibals are the competing traders devouring each other and everything that stands in their way.³⁶

Interestingly, voraciousness is also an addiction.³⁷ Life

can be understood as a metabolic process by which food *and* intellectual stimulation are constantly received by and integrated into our body and consciousness. What we need, however, is a 'balanced diet': lack of intellectual stimulation or lack of love, for example, may lead the body to fill its felt inner void with more and more material foodstuff. The result is voraciousness or gluttony. Kurtz's 'insatiability' can be regarded as caused by a particular emptiness – 'he was hollow at the core' (Conrad 1990, p. 221) – which, in turn, makes him 'devour' ever more ivory, 'gulp down' ever more adoration, and 'embrace' ever more 'unspeakable rites'. Thus Kurtz, to whose 'making' all of Europe had contributed (cf. *ibid.*, p. 207), in his insatiability becomes a 'symptom' of Europe's central social nexus: profit maximisation. As Dr. Monygham tells Mrs. Gould,

There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle.³⁸

7. Conclusion

This paper has focused on areas of convergence between Stevenson and Conrad. In providing parallel readings of 'The Beach of Falesá' and *Heart of Darkness* my aim has been to point out their complementary efforts in representing and making transparent a particular moment of the history of the British Empire: when the romance went sour, when the traditional male and female roles broke down, and when the alleged superiority of the British was exposed as imaginary. In two instances of 'reciprocal elucidation' I have tried to

read the two texts through each other's eyes because, to my mind, such an approach adds to the meanings of both stories. To benefit from such a procedure one has to find texts which deal with similar individual and social topics. Reading them in parallel (or even with the help of reciprocal elucidation) allows us not only to compare their ways of representing their particular problems, but also to compare the solutions they offer to them. Practising such an approach may invite the charge of not sufficiently historicising the texts under consideration. It is true that there is a certain danger in that respect. However, who can claim to forget (or have forgotten) *Heart of Darkness* (plus all the secondary sources dealing with it) when he or she reads (or teaches) "The Beach of Falesá"? In that sense, the approach suggested here attempts to legitimise what, hermeneutically speaking, we have been doing all along.³⁹

NOTES

1. Robert Louis Stevenson, ed. by Bradford A. Booth & Ernest Mehw, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 8 vols. (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1994–5), VII, p. 161.
2. Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim: A Tale* (1900) (London: Dent, 1968), p. 6.
3. Linda Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 2.
4. Albert J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 42–43.
5. Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 216–217.
6. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY–London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 40.
7. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 46.
8. Katherine Bailey Linehan, "Taking Up With Kanakas: Stevenson's

Complex Social Criticism in “The Beach of Falesá”, *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 33 (1990), 407–422 (p. 407).

9. Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific. Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 177.

10. Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 197. Interestingly, White did not point to any connections between ‘The Beach of Falesá’ and *Heart of Darkness*.

11. John Kucich, ‘Introduction’, in *Fictions of Empire*, ed. by J.K. (Boston – New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 1–22 (p. 8).

12. Joseph Conrad, ‘Heart of Darkness’, in *“Heart of Darkness” and Other Tales*, ed. by Cedric Watts (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 233.

13. Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Beach of Falesá’, in *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 69.

14. Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 195.

15. Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, *Hexensabbat. Entzifferung einer nächtlichen Geschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990), p. 243; Maria Kublitz-Kramer, *Frauen auf Straßen. Topographien des Begehrens in Erzählttexten von Gegenwartsautorinnen* (Munich: Fink, 1995), p. 145.

16. Cultural historians have convincingly argued the relationship between the ‘look’ and sexuality, the eyes and the genitals which can be reconstructed from the early Greek tragedies via Nicolas of Cusa’s (1401–64) remark ‘*Amare tuum est videre tuum*’ to Bing Crosby singing ‘To see you is to love you’ and Rick telling Ilsa in *Casablanca* ‘Here’s looking at you, kid’. Cf. Hartmut Böhme, *Natur und Subjekt* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 223–4; Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols. (Bern – Munich: Franke, 1969), II, p. 406.

17. Freud insists that the ‘fear of death’ is a ‘development of the fear of castration’; cf. Siegmund Freud, *Pelican Freud Library*, 15 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973–86), XI, p. 400. There are quite a few characters in colonial fiction whose limp might repay closer scrutiny; Trejago in Kipling’s ‘Beyond the Pale’ is just one of the more prominent cases; cf. Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1890) (London: Macmillan & Co, 1898), p. 159–66.

18. He explicitly challenges his audience by saying ‘I have a voice [...] and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced’ (Conrad, p. 187).

19. Michael Greaney, *Conrad, Language, and Narrative* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 61.

20. Roslyn Jolly, 'Stevenson's "Sterling Domestic Fiction": "The Beach of Falesá"', *Review of English Studies*, New Series, 50 (1999), 463–482 (p. 481).

21. Conrad follows a similar motif when, in 'Karain: A Memory', he lets his eponymous hero ask his white friends to take him to Europe (cf. Joseph Conrad, 'Karain: A Memory', in *"Heart of Darkness" and Other Tales*, ed. by Cedric Watts, p. 78).

22. This theme is also taken up by Conrad. In *Almayer's Folly* (Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* [1895] London: Dent, 1961), the protagonist wants to find a white husband for his half-caste daughter, Nina. When her decision falls elsewhere, his life is shattered.

23. Cf. Jürgen Kramer, 'Lying as Surviving: Colonial Masculinity in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 3 (1996), 133–147.

24. Cedric Watts, 'Explanatory Notes', in *"Heart of Darkness" and Other Tales*, ed. by C.W., 251–277 (p. 274).

25. Peter Gilmour, 'Robert Louis Stevenson: Forms of Evasion', in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Andrew Noble (London–Towota, NJ: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1983), 188–201 (p. 193).

26. Cf. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy. Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), pp. 81–82.

27. Cf. Henry Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) (Ware: Wordsworth, 1993), pp. 223–226.

28. Cf. Valerie F. Sedlak, "'A World of Their Own": Narrative Distortion and Fictive Exemplification in the Portrayal of Woman in *Heart of Darkness*', *College Language Association Journal*, 32/4 (1989), 443–465 (p. 456).

29. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Robert Kimbrough (New York–London: Norton, 1988), p. 60, note.

30. Peter Hyland, 'The Little Woman in the *Heart of Darkness*', *Conradiana*, 20/1 (1988), 3–11 (p. 5).

31. Ruth L. Nadelhaft, *Joseph Conrad* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 56.

32. In his two-volume study *Männerphantasien* (Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 vols. [Frankfurt/Main: Roter Stern, 1977–8]) Klaus Theweleit analysed mainly autobiographical writings of German pre- and proto-fascist men with a particular focus on how they described and characterised women. He found two main 'types' whom he called the 'white' and the 'red' women. The 'white' woman represented no emotional threat; she was sufficiently domesticated not to shatter the male emotional armour: this woman was a suitable candidate for marriage. But the other one was regarded as dangerous: she could arouse feelings in a man which

threatened to dissolve his identity, he could become her slave, or he had to kill her. In *Heart of Darkness*, we meet these two types of women as products of Marlow's perception and fantasy. Kurtz's fate, as described by Marlow, demonstrates an exemplary disintegration of a male identity under the spell of a powerful 'red', i.e. an attractive and seductive, woman. Marlow himself stands for a different solution: he avoids women. Other characters are even more rigorous. The harlequin says after the first appearance of the African woman, "If she had offered to come aboard I really think I would have tried to shoot her" (Conrad, p. 26). Later, when the ship leaves the station with Kurtz, the other men on board fire at the African and her companions (*ibid.*, p. 237). The way in which Marlow reacts to Kurtz's Intended – a 'white' woman – shows how precarious his male identity is: it can only be safe-guarded through yet another domestication of the female.

33. Darren Jackson, "'The Beach of Falesá' and the Colonial Enterprise', *Limina*, 6 (2000), 72–84 (p. 78).

34. R. Jon McGee & Richard L. Warms, *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (Mountain View, CA– London–Toronto: Mayfield, 1996), p. 5.

35. Cf. McGee & Warms, pp. 5–10; Thomas Barfield, ed., *The Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford–Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 172–77.

36. Paul Kirschner noted Kurtz's 'insatiability' (Paul Kirschner, *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist* [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968], p. 46), and Linda Dryden his cannibalistic nature (Linda Dryden, 'Heart of Darkness and Allan Quatermain: Apocalypse and Utopia', *Conradiana*, 31/3 [1999], 173–197 [p. 192]).

37. The German word for 'addiction' is *Sucht*, the related adjective 'addicted' is *süchtig*; both words are suggestively etymologically connected to the German verb *suchen* (= to seek, to quest). Whoever is addicted to A may be regarded as in fact seeking B; he or she has stopped with some surrogate (A) before having found what he or she is really after (B). The surrogate, however, cannot still the hunger; in fact, while pretending to do so, the hunger is increased. This may have fatal consequences if not some radical re-orientation and self-contemplation eventually lead out of this quandary.

38. Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard* (1904) (London: Dent, 1966), p. 511. Cf. also: 'It is that whole system of appetites and values, with its deification of the life of snatching to hoard, and hoarding to snatch, which now, in the hour of its triumph, while the plaudits of the crowd still ring in the ears of the gladiators and the laurels are still unfaded on their brows, seems sometimes to leave a taste as of ashes on the lips of a civilization which has brought to the conquest of its material environment

resources unknown in earlier ages, but which has not yet learned to master itself.' (Richard Henry Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* [1922] [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972], p. 280)

39. Taking my cue from Cedric Watts's comparison of *The Ebb-Tide* and *Victory* (Cedric Watts, 'The Ebb-Tide and Victory', *Conradiana*, 28 [1996], 133–137) my next 'object of desire' will be a parallel reading of *The Ebb-Tide* and 'An Outpost of Progress'.

Surpassing the love of women: Robert Louis Stevenson and the pleasures of boy-loving

Liz Farr

In April 1887, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a letter to his close friend and sometime literary collaborator, W. E. Henley, confessing his confusion regarding his feelings for his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne:

Perhaps as we approach the foul time of life, young folk become necessary? 'Tis a problem. We know what form this craving wears in certain cases. But perhaps it is a genuine thing in itself: the age of paternity coming, a demand sets in. Thus perhaps my present (and crescent) infatuation for the youth Lloyd; but no, I think it is because the youth himself improves so much, and is a dam, dam, dam fine youth.¹

In attempting to determine the nature of his 'craving', Stevenson suggests a number of possible discursive explanations, from the natural biological impetus to procreate to more sinister pederastic intentions. He was not alone in his late-nineteenth-century reflections on the potentially precarious nature of his sexual identity, which as Michel Foucault has shown, in *A History of Sexuality*,

was symptomatic of a period in which biology, psychology, education and the law contributed to a discursive proliferation on the subject.² Areas of particular anxiety included the sexuality of the adolescent boy, relations between adults and children, and the identification of the homosexual as a species.³ Although Stevenson was writing prior to the Wilde trial in 1895, he was living in a period of growing awareness of a range of sexually deviant types, including the homosexual, who was often stereotyped as 'a corrupter of youth'.⁴ At the same time, as Denis Denisoff has shown, from the publication of W. H. Mallock's *New Republic* in 1877, aesthetes, of whom he was one, were increasingly identified with immorality and sensual pleasures.⁵

A century later, Wayne Koestenbaum quotes parts of this letter selectively in his study of the erotics of literary collaboration between men at the turn of the nineteenth century. For him such documents are evidence of the homosocial and homosexual desire between Stevenson and Lloyd, which he suggests was played out in a process of literary collaboration as a form of double writing.⁶ Stevenson and Lloyd wrote three romances together, *The Wrong Box* (1889), *The Wrecker* (1892) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894). For Koestenbaum the letter serves as corroborating evidence which allows Stevenson to be 'outed' as a purveyor of romances which mask a hidden desire to 'court the boy reader with a tale of adventure while hiding its pederastic intent'.⁷ A number of other recent appraisals have similarly hinted that homosexuality might be 'the truth' of Stevenson, fuelling a search for *double entendres* with which Stevenson's texts have proved to be liberally dotted: words such as 'queer', 'cruise' and the 'down-going men' being just a few examples, along with his predilection for back passages in the street-settings for *Strange Case of Dr.*

Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886). These critical methods deploy late-nineteenth-century sexological categories as a counter discursive practice, turning them back upon the heterosexual powers that invoked them.⁸ What may previously have been read as innocent literary texts are revealed to be exceedingly queer.

However, in this paper I want to argue that such readings of Stevenson are potentially conservative, merely reinforcing the categories they seek to appropriate in reductive ways. By situating desire only according to sexual models they discount the multiple relationships and investments an individual might seek to transact.⁹ Others have cautioned against ahistorical readings that ignore the ways in which individuals might resist, or simply be disinterested elements in a larger cultural structure and the ways in which they might attempt to articulate their desires for themselves.¹⁰

In Stevenson's letter he measures his desire for his stepson against a series of discursive explanations: paternity, pederasty or simply his overwhelming envy for the boy's youth. It is the latter suggestion that I wish to examine in relations to Stevenson's own brand of late-nineteenth-century aestheticism, particularly in the light of Henry James' observation that Stevenson was not attracted to childhood as a parent, uncle or educator of children, but was merely absorbed in his own game.¹¹ By exploring his aestheticist investment in the figures of the child, and particularly the older boy, as objects of desire it is possible to suggest an alternative reading of this letter which sheds light on a particular construction of nineteenth-century masculinity.

1. Art for Art's Sake: The Instinctive Aestheticism of the Playing Child

In his depiction of childhood Stevenson drew upon earlier Romantic models reworked according to late-nineteenth century developmental theories to depict an inner core of boyishness, the location of a capacity for aesthetic pleasure available to all middle-class men. In this way he recast earlier Romantic interests in the child as a potentially transcendent figure, instead depicting him as a psychologically developing organism and agent of an immanent social critique.

Two writers particularly influenced Stevenson's conception of childhood and later boyhood, Friedrich Schiller, and Herbert Spencer. They each epitomise key moments in the development of understandings of childhood in the nineteenth century, as it became recognised as an increasingly important stage in the development of the individual adult and the civilised society of which he was a part. Stevenson was particularly drawn to these writers because, as I shall go on to outline, each focussed on the activity of play as the basis of an aesthetic education which functioned to bridge the gap between child and adult, nature and culture, the individual and civilisation.

Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* published in 1795, were written in response to the Terror of the French Revolution, and suggested that aesthetic activity, as a form of play, rather than violence, would establish a state governed by equality and heal cultural fragmentation.¹² Play, for Schiller, was the process by which the individual was able to learn to curb his innate response to the world as a form of unbridled consumption of sensuous impressions by employing the forces of Reason to give them formal shape and thereby gradually achieve emancipation, and harmony both internally and with other men

Schiller's faith in the civilising potential of play influenced the psychological account of aesthetics produced over half a century later by the evolutionary psychologist Herbert Spencer. In *Principles of Psychology* (1855), he biologised Schiller's Romantic philosophy to provide an optimistic account of the ways in which playful aesthetic development aided human progress.¹³ He located the evolutionary development of the psychology of the individual according to his or her particular family genealogy and inherited traits that he simultaneously placed within a larger universal model of social and racial development, by which each human being negotiated the same path. Charting this course as a move from the homogenous simplicity of the instinct to an increasingly complex and ultimately perfect heterogeneity of the faculties, Spencer foresaw a glorious endpoint to this process, the perfect civilisation, when each individual would effortlessly integrate his own concerns with those of the larger society.

Individual consciousness was therefore located in a chronological framework common to all organic life, by which inherited intelligence and capabilities lie as traces in the organism to be subsequently developed and built upon. The traits of one's ancestors were seen as important components of an individual's identity, not only in terms of his particular family genealogy but also the larger racial genealogy to which he belonged. By biologising Schiller's conception of play, to describe the psychological development of aesthetic activity in man, he was able to suggest that art served as a means to vent pent up energies which in a civilised society were no longer required in the struggle for existence.¹⁴ According to Spencer, humans need to give formal shape to their desires, acting them out as a form of aesthetic play, as demonstrated in the way

that girls play with dolls or boys wrestle and imprison each other, both games that serve as theatrical rehearsals for adult life.¹⁵ As such these are only idealised expressions of the traits which were necessary in the evolutionary struggle for existence. Because the civilised adult has less need to draw upon such survival skills, Spencer argues that they are increasingly released as playful aesthetic activities.¹⁶

The influence of these models of childhood can be found in both Stevenson's essays on the subject, 'Notes on the Movements of Children' (1874) and 'Child's Play' (1878), and in his classic volume of children's verse *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885).¹⁷ In these texts he attempts to recapture the pleasures of early childhood, either by vicariously watching children at play, or by resorting to his own childhood memories. In 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children' he deploys Schiller and Spencer's models of play to describe two incidents of child watching. The first, that he witnessed in a hotel in France, involved the clumsy and comical efforts of a middle-class girl attempting to emulate the poised movements of some older children under the instruction of their dancing teacher. Stevenson finds this scene of aesthetic failure repeated on another occasion in a London street, where he observed the youngest of a group of 'quite common children', who had 'a mottled complexion and a big damaged nose' try to join in a skipping game with her older sisters.¹⁸ By juxtaposing these two incidents, Stevenson depicts early childhood as a feminised universal stage, a pure point of origin yet to be differentiated by gender or class, social identities which become significant in later years.

In both cases the ungainly movements of the children are comical, but Stevenson maintains, they also have a certain charm and a significant beauty of their own, because

they prefigure something more sophisticated in the future. He likens this indication of future growth to the aesthetic difference between the rough sketch and the finished masterpiece.¹⁹ What the sketch lacks in its roughness is made up for in 'the bluntness and directness of the thing'. The aesthetic immaturity of these playing children, in essence, demonstrates how their sensuous enjoyment of movement for its own sake, as matter, to use Schiller's term, has yet to be brought under the governing influence of the formal drive, which will ensure that the body is disciplined to attain the tutored proficiency of the older girls who in their turn prefigure the mature expressions of grace executed by their adult instructor. Childish spontaneity and the ability to dance or play for one's own sensuous pleasure must be curbed as children learn to shape their performances to socially approved notions of what Stevenson characterises as 'ostentation and conformity'.²⁰ However, while Stevenson, the philosophically-informed observer can laugh at the failed spectacle of the young skipping or dancing child, at the same time his sense of social and aesthetic superiority is tinged with feelings of loss and nostalgia for the pleasures of a past authenticity, an unrecoverable Golden Age, the prehistory of art and civilisation.

In his second essay on childhood 'Child's Play', and in his collection of poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Stevenson continues to evoke the charm of early childhood as a period of sensuous amoral play, but rather than recording incidents of child watching, he draws upon recollections of his own childhood. In the essay he describes how, as children, he and his cousin inhabited a world of 'golden mist', again indicating the child's undeveloped capacity to reason, and his equally rudimentary senses, which contribute to his self-absorption.²¹ The child views the world only in terms of its

ability to provide materials for play, rather than as a source of basic needs, such as hunger. Objects such as coal-scuttles are co-opted according to these profoundly hedonistic principles, as props for acting out fictional romances such as *The Arabian Nights* or *Robinson Crusoe*.²² According to Stevenson this is why the child can be understood as inhabiting a 'mythological epoch', a feminised and primitive space outside modernity, which characterised many late nineteenth- and twentieth-century conceptions of women and children.²³ Both were positioned beyond industrial and technological forces, nostalgic embodiments of a lost Golden Age, whose simplicity, spontaneity and authenticity must be relinquished by the adult male who simultaneously experiences this loss as self-estrangement and homelessness. Stevenson, following Schiller and Spencer, locates the distance between the enthusiastic immediacy of the child and his response to spectacles and the cooler mature detachment of the adult male as the incremental product of a sophisticated intellectual and moral education. Significantly, as I shall go on to discuss, he figures this process as the gradual interposition of a series of increasingly complex visual mediations or 'coloured windows', by which the adult comes to view the world 'through theories and associations...never to wonder, not always to admire, but to make and modify our little theories about life'.²⁴

While his essays seek to depict childhood from an adult perspective his collection of verses for children attempt to capture this immature stage of psychological development from the point of view of the child. Like his primitive ancestors the child is shown to animate frightening aspects of the natural world such as the wind or his shadow. His propensity for fantasy and rapacious desire to cross boundaries of time

and space in order to consume impressions, come together in poems such as 'From a Railway Carriage', where his primitive mind and undeveloped senses cause him to delight in the kaleidoscopic visual overload of the journey and its potential for associative play. In this response he differs from the majority of adult Victorians, including Ruskin, who were less enamoured of this means of travel, and found it potentially traumatic inducing railway neurosis.²⁵ To them the train appeared to function as a projectile whose velocity tended to diminish the passenger's visual perception, forcing him to ignore certain details if he was to make sense of the rapidly passing landscape through the window of the carriage.

Other poems, such as 'The System', demonstrate the late-nineteenth-century aestheticist interests in William Blake, as the child's ignorance of the larger intellectual and social structures causes him to innocently parrot received homilies while at the same time ironically underlining the ethical poverty of these adult instructions. This ignorance of the social gradations of class and gender is apparent in yet another poem, 'The Lamplighter', where the child describes his admiration for an adult lamplighter, a romantic figure who lights up the darkening streets and thereby provides security by dispelling the impending darkness:

The Lamplighter

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at tea-time and before you take your
 seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the
 street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;

But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to
do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with
you!²⁶

While the young child is able to fantasise and act out future professions, there is a naivety about his romantic projections towards this working class man, which is obviously at odds with the career aspirations and class affiliations of the middle-class male. The unsuitability of this projected relationship between the child and the older man, not least in terms of class and in Maria's case, gender, shows how childish aspirations and desires are distinctly at odds with and potentially subversive of middle-class conformity and concerns for professional status.

However, 'The Lamplighter' also had more personal resonances for Stevenson, demonstrating his ambivalent relationship to the middle-class values his family epitomised. The lamplighter was a particularly significant figure in terms of the ways in which he understood his own identity as the evolutionary product of his particular family genealogy of lighthouse builders, by which each subsequent generation built on and refined the achievements of the one before. This prehistory dated back to his great grandfather Thomas Smith whose main business had been lamp making and who devised innovative reflectors for his system of street lighting in Edinburgh's New Town.²⁷ These optical refinements led to his appointment as first engineer of the Northern Lighthouse Board, and laid the foundations of the family firm. Here and elsewhere, Stevenson read his family's scientific achievements romantically, and they furnished him with a range of optical tropes to figure his own development and practice as an artist.

Early childhood emerges from these accounts as a feminised universal stage, as the child is confined to the domestic spaces of the house and the garden. It also marks a pure point of origin, a primitive space outside modernity, yet to be differentiated by social demarcations of gender and class. This lack of developmental sophistication is both the child's attraction and his handicap. While he inhabits a world of 'golden mist', his rudimentary senses and undeveloped capacity for reason, are balanced by the spontaneity with which he is able to pursue sensuous impressions, and act out fantasies as romantic fictions. In this sense, Stevenson argues, the child is closest to the aesthete for "art for art" is their motto', as he judges the world, not according to its utility or by any moral sense, but purely as a source of materials for pleasurable fantasies and impressions.²⁸

Taken together, these writings on early childhood fasten on the figure of the child to explore the necessary distance between art and life, individual desire and social integration. By employing romantic and evolutionary notions of play as a means of aesthetic development, growth is depicted as the unavoidable outcome of a biological imperative to negotiate a series of stages on the journey from child to adult, savagery to civilisation. It is easy to see why Stevenson might feel nostalgia for the loss of this childhood spontaneity and innocence, for the child is, he asserts, closest to the aesthete, being able to abandon himself solely to the solipsistic pursuit of pleasure of art for art's sake, whereas the philosophically-informed mature artist must employ a cool disinterest in his work. Called upon to supply abstract and impersonal representations, the adult writer becomes increasingly decentred from his own production. The social and intellectual harmony which Schiller, and Spencer had assumed would derive from an

aesthetic education only becomes publicly available in socially approved cultural spaces, divorced from everyday life. The child, on the other hand is permitted to act as an amoral hedonist whose anti-utilitarian activities focus solely upon the subjective selection of impressions which he shapes in picturesque fashion as materials for his romantic fictions, rather than having to concern himself with any realistic representation of the world. The mature male, by contrast, must be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and constraints upon his behaviour curtail his ability to act out his desires and fantasies in waking life. Stevenson bemoans the lack of an outlet for such impulses in adult life, as the scope for acting out personal desires and fantasies becomes increasingly circumscribed, so that they can only be indulged in the privacy of one's mind, where you can triumphantly rehearse dialogues with your enemies, which you can never act upon. Such activities must be confined to the fireside or the bedroom 'where we may rouse hot feelings for which we can find no outlet'.²⁹

For Stevenson the gap between adult consciousness and the consciousness of the child functions as a crucial aporia, a sign of his fissured identity which is simultaneously constituted by, yet distinct from his childhood self and the activity of play. Childhood is forever hedged in by the garden, or as in the final poem of the volume 'To Any Reader', only viewed as a ghostly spectre through the barrier of the glass:

As from the house your mother sees
You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you but look
Through the windows of this book,
Another child, far, far away
And in another garden play.

But do not think you can at all,
 By knocking on the window, call
 That child to hear you. He intent
 Is still on his play-business bent.
 He does not hear, he will not look,
 Nor yet be lured out of this book.
 For long ago, the truth to say,
 He has grown up and gone away;
 And it is but a child of air
 That lingers in the garden there.³⁰

Stevenson's interest in childhood and youth was not confined to his poetry and essay but also fuelled his interest in the romance as a literary genre. All of these texts should therefore be understood as an attempt to close the gap between child and adult, work and play, and popular fiction and aesthetic sophistication. Aesthetic production was for him an attempt to envisage subjective coherence in the face of this radical disjunction. Stevenson locates his hopes for that coherence in the liminal figure of the older boy, suggesting that while early childhood is beyond the reach of mature adult, boyhood as an internalised psychic structure continues to endure in all middle-class men who are 'lantern-bearers', which he describes in his essay of that name.

2. 'The Lantern-Bearers': The illicit pleasures of flashing

'The Lantern-Bearers' (1887), opens with his personal recollections of his holidays with a group of middle-class boys in the small fishing village of North Berwick. Now unleashed from the confines of the garden, these boys are free to explore a wilder nature of cliffs, sand dunes and

the perilous seaboard. While they employ themselves in approved recreations such as golf and fishing, they also take advantage of this freedom to escape surveillance of their 'subsidiary parents', with whom they consent to lodge, and take up surreptitious smoking in hollows in the sand dunes, and persecute old women by climbing their garden walls.³¹ By now fully aware of their gender and class, these boys are on holiday from school, having reached a stage in their development which the anthropologist Andrew Lang described as a form of tribal savagery, similar to a secret Irish brotherhood, which functions according to its own rules, involving casual violence and bullying, defining itself in opposition to adults and the law.³²

Having set the scene, Stevenson goes on to recall one activity which at the onset of autumn preoccupied the boys, when they would each purchase a tin bull's eye lantern and wear it concealed beneath their coats suspended on a cricket belt. No longer powerlessly confined to the nursery to await Leerie with his lamp, these older boys have the potential to illuminate the darkness for themselves. Rather than having to adapt domestic objects that they come across, they can now select and purchase such commonplace utilitarian items and transform them into 'shibboleths' for the tribal group.³³ Although the lanterns give out an appalling smell, provide only inconstant illumination and burn their fingers, Stevenson says that this is nothing to the boys, for whom the pleasures of lantern-bearing are 'merely fanciful'. In trying to recollect the source of the romantic associations which made the lanterns so appealing, he suggests that the boys did not seek to emulate their use by fishermen or the police, but drew upon their association with the more subversive figure of the burglar and romantic characters from the past depicted in 'certain story books'.³⁴ Lantern-bearing is

a badge of tribal status, signifying secret amoral pleasures and imaginative power, marked by a ritual greeting: “Have you got your lantern?” followed by a gratified “Yes!” and prohibitions, ‘to keep our glory contained’.³⁵ The boys’ attempt to avoid authority in the form of adult surveillance dictates that the secret of the lanterns is only exposed when groups of four or five meet in the security of a hollow in the sand dunes or a the hull of deserted fishing boat:

There the coats would be unbuttoned and the bull’s-eyes discovered; and in the chequering glimmer, under the huge windy hall of the night, and cheered by a rich steam of toasting tinware, these fortunate young gentle-men would crouch together in the cold sand of the links or on the scaly bilges of the fishing-boat, and delight themselves with inappropriate talk.³⁶

This literal and figurative flashing is a sign of the bonds between boys, structured according to romantic fantasy, where a shared knowledge of the possession of a form of speculative energy provides the focus for illicit talk. By deploying the bull’s-eye lanterns to light up ‘the huge windy hall of the night’, the boys are able to distort the empirical world to suggest a series of romantic spectacles and phantasmagoric effects. Stevenson inverts the meaning of the lantern as a symbol of British scientific and commercial progress, in which his own family played a significant role, preferring to emphasise the ways in which lighthouse technology could be put to more frivolous uses. In this way lantern-bearing offers a model of covert aesthetic production more akin to magic lantern shows and theatrical spectacles. As an audience these boyish spectators are complicit in the willed suspension of disbelief, drawing upon a residual

childishness which imaginatively is able to cross boundaries of time and space, but unlike the younger child, they are aware that such spectacles are merely technological effects of their own making. As Jonathan Crary argues, the democratisation and mass dissemination of these techniques of illusion vest power in the modern subject, 'transforming each observer simultaneously into the magician and the deceived'.³⁷ While the lanterns might offer an aesthetic opportunity to heal the divisions between men, as they come together under the sign of the lantern to witness this magical shaping of the world, this popular or debased form of entertainment seeks to provide only the comfort of an imaginative release. It attempts to elude the moral and rational impetus of Schiller's formal drive by courting more attractive spectres of criminality in the form of burglars and illicit talk. Rather than a sign of an increasing sophistication of civilised taste, the aesthetic preoccupations of boyhood play involve less elevated forms of imaginative pleasure, indicated by the backward-looking nostalgia for popular romances and a return to an earlier savagery.

Having sketched out the delights of this shared boyhood activity, Stevenson goes on to explain that the *real* enjoyment of lantern-bearing is actually a more solitary affair. Meeting with other boys in order to reveal one's 'glory' is only an accidental consequence of a far more pleasurable activity, which lantern-bearing provides the individual as he walks alone:

The essence of this bliss was to walk by yourself in the black of night; the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned; not a ray escaping, whether to conduct your footsteps or to make your glory public; a mere pillar of darkness in the dark; and all the while down in the privacy of your fool's

heart, to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt; and to exult and sing over that knowledge.³⁸

The real significance of the lantern is not therefore its power to confer communal allegiance on a tribe of boys, meetings with other lantern-bearers are mere 'accidents', and talk is but a 'condiment'. Its potency lies rather in the secret subjective knowledge of undetected possession, a means by which the solitary individual is able to carry a form of internal illumination, a central subjective core of authentic aesthetic enjoyment that belies the conformity of outward appearances. For the remainder of the essay Stevenson outlines the ways in which lantern-bearing continues as a psychological and developmental model of the inner aesthetic potential of all middle-class men as an authentic and residual boyishness which resists conventional preconceptions and social strictures. He argues that while outwardly conforming in buttoned-up coats, even those who are meat salesmen to the external eye are able to project themselves as heroic figures of their own fantasies as 'Shakespeares, Napoleons or Beethovens'.³⁹ Romance realises this inner psychic potential, because unlike realism or science it does not simply reduce individuals to external details and judge them according to conventional standards, but knows that every man will have some kind of secreted lantern hanging from his belt.

No longer inhabiting a world of golden mist, the pleasurable yet naïve world of the younger child, the older boy has internalised a means of romantic illumination, which is a sign of his potential aesthetic agency and power, which he nonetheless withholds. In this sense the boy stands midway between the imaginative spontaneity and simplicity of childhood, which is impotently confined to the

effeminising domestic spaces of the house and garden, and a mature masculinity which must be productive and feels itself decentred and homeless. While the infant is encouraged to indulge his unbridled hedonism and sensuously consume the world through play, the internally-riven adult male is under the exhortation to face up to the cold realities of productive work and through sober and restrained behaviour adopt the social and moral codes appropriate to his gender and class. No longer the forward-looking child, speculatively playing at a number of professions as fantasies of his own construction, the adult prefers to look back, diverting his gaze from the future where death is the only destination. Consolation is to be found not in infancy, innocently immured behind garden walls, but by regression to this intermediate stage of boyishness that endures as an internalised psychic configuration. Towards the end of the essay Stevenson draws upon a figure which epitomises the culmination of his own family's successful development, the lighthouse, to indicate the ways in which lantern-bearing might continue in adult life. The lantern is now enclosed by heavy masonry, revolving screens and coloured windows which ensure that an intermittent light can emerge in concentrated bursts, while the perpetually burning core at its centre is shielded from the outside world.⁴⁰

As a result of his investment in aesthetic immaturity Stevenson was less interested in the ways by which, following Schiller and Spencer, the mature adult could exercise increasing discrimination and refined tastes. He preferred to hold on to an arrested boyishness, understood as a form of non-productive amateurism and an inner space for the solipsistic enjoyment of a fantasy life. Understood according to Spencer's model of psychological development, this form of juvenile arrest is wilfully incomplete, refusing to give up the

pleasurable consumption of matter for its own sake in order to submit to the disinterested abstraction and complexity of mature scientific and philosophical perspectives. The ideological bias already inherent in Schiller's conception of the formal drive, by which aesthetic development, rather than revolution, would provide the instrument for mankind's political and intellectual emancipation is both endorsed and resisted. While happy to subscribe to a progressive model of aesthetic development, Stevenson's romance with the past locates true aesthetic pleasure in a residual stage of boyishness as a form of immature consolation, rather than a politically emancipatory project of mature self-governing individuals in a rational State. Unable to envisage a world free from divisions of gender or class, boyishness provides mature men with a means to revisit a familiar and less alienated space, a retreat from a fragmented world.

*In memory of Luke Aaron Farr. 03.06.78–10.11.04
(who was always a bit of a girl.)*

NOTES

1. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), V. (April/May 1887), p. 404.
2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1. trans. by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 36–49
3. See Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton, New Jersey: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 154–93; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 96–121; *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan

- (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), and *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).
4. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, p. 107.
 5. Denis Denisoff, *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody 1840–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 30–42.
 6. Wayne Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 143–51.
 7. Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*, p. 149.
 8. See, for example, Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), pp. 106–26; Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 187–95; Stephen Heath, 'Psychopathia Sexualis: Stevenson's *Strange Case*' *Critical Quarterly*. 28 (1986), 93–108.
 9. As Christopher Lane has pointed out, critics preoccupied by Wilde's iconic status as a gay man say nothing about his love for his wife and children. See Christopher Lane, *The Burdens of Intimacy: Psychoanalysis and Victorian Masculinity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999). Lane offers a useful corrective to narrow or reductive applications of Foucault's genealogical method which fail to take account of the difference of the past, but at the same time he also draws upon twentieth-century psychoanalytic models of desire which similarly negate the radical alterity of history and the insights it might yield.
 10. Denisoff, *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody*, pp.30–42.
 11. Henry James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', *Century Magazine* (1888), reprinted in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of a Friendship and Criticism* ed. Janet Adam Smith (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 132–3.
 12. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
 13. Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*. 3rd edn. (New York: D. Appleton, 1897).
 14. Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, pp. 627–8.
 15. *Ibid*, p. 631.
 16. It is perhaps less consoling to know that in a civilised society, primitive aggression is playfully manifested in the literary expression of wit. The play drive is disinterested in that it does not serve the demands of the ego, or a later-developing altruism, so that impressions of colours, sounds etc. are enjoyed for their own sake, a process which he charitably remarks, can even be detected in the rudimentary dances of savages. Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 583.

17. 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children' was first published in the *Portfolio Magazine*, 5 (August 1874) 115–17, and 'Child's Play' was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, 38 (September 1878), 352–9. Both were subsequently included in *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881) republished in a collected edition of Stevenson's works as Tusitala XXV (London: William Heinemann, 1924). *A Child's Garden of Verses* was first published in 1885 and republished in *Poems I*, Tusitala XXII. All references in this essay refer to the Tusitala edition of Stevenson's works.
18. 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children', pp. 196–201.
19. *Ibid*, p.196.
20. *Ibid*, pp. 200–1.
21. 'Child's Play', p. 107.
22. *Ibid*, pp.110–11.
23. Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.35–90.
24. 'Child's Play', p. 108.
25. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p.60.
26. 'The Lamplighter', *A Child's Garden of Verses*, pp.15–16.
27. Bella Bathurst, *The Lighthouse Stevensons: The Extraordinary Story of the Building of the Scottish Lighthouses by the Ancestors of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Harper Collins, 1999).
28. 'Child's Play', p.111.
29. 'Child's Play', pp. 111–12.
30. 'To Any Reader', *A Child's Garden of Verses*, pp. 51–2.
31. 'The Lantern-Bearers', was first published in *Scribner's Magazine*, 3 (March 1888), 380–4, and republished in *Across the Plains* (1892) and later in Stevenson collected works, Tusitala XXX pp.29–40.
32. Andrew Lang, 'Boys', *Cornhill Magazine*, 47 (March 1883), pp.284–91.
33. 'The Lantern-Bearers', p.33.
34. *Ibid*, p.33.
35. *Ibid*, p. 33.
36. *Ibid*, pp. 33–4.
37. Joanthan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), p. 133.
38. 'The Lantern-Bearers', p. 34.
39. *Ibid*, p. 35.
40. *Ibid*, p. 39.

Reviews

Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), £45 / \$79.95. ISBN: 0 7546 3506 6

This book by Ann Colley is a collection of studies of RLS in the South Seas, his relations with colonialism in general and with 'the missionary culture' in particular. Colley has researched in the archives of the London Missionary Society and London University's School of Oriental and African Studies and has much of interest to say about the social and cultural structures established by missionary groups and their interaction with local and colonial power structures. This is not so much a story of historical forces moving inevitably towards colonial control, but more one of individuals in specific situations making decisions with apparently contradictory results. Thus the missionaries are involved in the double action of conservation and destruction, describing and collecting in order to understand and preserve but also in order to control; while Stevenson himself is antagonistic to colonialism, yet also at significant moments supportive of colonial institutions. The emphasis is on intricate, interconnected, and complex reality.

In Chapter 1 Colley records Stevenson's interest and support of missionary schools and reminds us that, despite his critical stance regarding colonialism, he was ultimately a defender of the missionaries as the only force able to resist the most detrimental forces of colonialism. Typical of Stevenson's complex personality was the way he was fascinated by commanding and authoritative missionaries living adventurous lives (like Tarleton in 'Falesá').

At the same time, he was impatient with the narrow-minded attitude of many ordinary missionaries and their insistence on conformity to superficial norms of clothing and behaviour. Indeed, this missionary policy of 'proper clothing' is the starting point for Chapter 2, which relates to Stevenson's dress as an expression of his interaction with colonial society. His loose striped jacket and trousers (pyjamas) and frequent lack of shoes were overt signs of not belonging to official western society and amount to a deliberate confusion of boundaries between civilized and uncivilized. Yet RLS also 'dressed up', often wearing a red sash, which Colley identifies (p. 58) as a symbol of royalty in the South Seas. He also dressed up for photographs as others did, but felt no temptation to model indigenous costume for the camera—unlike many western travellers—including Lloyd Osbourne, in two priceless photographs that radiate self-contented vanity (pp.65-6).

The following chapter examines the missionaries' custom of collecting exotic artefacts and studying local languages—destroyers and preservers of native culture, they collected objects as trophies (displayed in the London Missionary Museum) but also to prevent their total disappearance. The central part of the chapter (pp. 81-9) is an excursus in which Colley uses collected artefacts as a metaphor to explore the connection between memory, loss of the past and the mutability of recollection: memory depends on things being broken up and destroyed in time with only certain elements 'preserved' (like the collected artefacts, alienated from their contexts, transformed in meaning in a museum). Though Colley admits that 'one cannot claim an exact parallel' (p. 82) she sees such affinities as a way of understanding our relationship with our own memories. Memory—like a collection of artefacts—is not a stable

entity; a conscious recollection is a 'commodity', which, like a curio in the museum of memory, is produced by alienation and also paradoxically creates it. Stevenson, though he collected ethnographic information, disliked the amassing of 'curios' (though his family did so), filling his Samoa house instead with artefacts of his life in Scotland and England. Stevenson's memories of Scotland were stable (despite the general rule of memory's instability) and contrast with his fascination with the unstable present, with the phenomena of transition and change in his South Seas fiction.

Chapter 4 looks at Stevenson's 'enduring fascination with patterns of light and darkness' (p. 111), further stimulated by the black nights and sparse artificial illumination in the South Seas. Colley perceptively sees this as a visual correlative to a typically Stevensonian world-view focusing on incomplete knowledge, unconnected elements and stark juxtapositions, where 'the recording of experience, if it is to be close to subjective truth, must be full of interruption' (pp. 110, 130-1). The link with the missionary/colonial theme is more tenuous here (pp. 100-6), though the discussion it leads to is interesting: 'light' is frequently used in missionary discourse as a symbol of spiritual truth, and the ability to produce and manipulate light gave power to missionaries and colonizers. One has only to think of the entertainment and indoctrination of the magic-lantern shows and the warship searchlights used to control shoreline territory. Photography (capturing light and shade) was an important activity for Stevenson and his family: Colley carefully documents the plans and preparations to incorporate photographs in Stevenson's book on the South Seas (pp. 113-25), and also describes the magic lantern shows (much like those given by missionaries) presented to islanders during the *Equator* cruise, as well as the plans for a more

varied entertainment with music and with a diorama to be painted by Joe Strong (pp.115-6, 126-7).

Chapter 5 ('Stevenson's Political Imagination') looks at Stevenson's political activities in Samoa, which to some extent conform to imperialist patterns, yet (seeing parallels with Scotland) he increasingly expressed support for Samoan rule, culture and ownership of land. Interested in politics and geopolitics since University days, Stevenson enjoyed the possibility to become a political actor, not only in acting out a romantic role (as in the Lady Jersey adventure) but also (through letters, meetings and draft proposals) in businesslike organization directed against the faults of white administration. The second section of the chapter (pp. 153-71) is dedicated to the story of Stevenson's 'vindictive' and 'high-handed' behaviour towards the Rev. Alfred Claxton in 1892-3. As Natives' Advocate on the Samoan Land Committee, Claxton had apparently written a letter to a Samoan chief saying that the Land Commission was guilty of 'studiously disregarding the interest of the natives' (p. 159). In *A Footnote to History* Stevenson presents this as an irresponsible exploitation of the Samoans' resentment after Claxton had 'lost some cases on which he set importance' (suggesting that Claxton was moved by wounded vanity). Yet Stevenson could be seen here as losing sight of larger issues in his immersion in local politics: the letter in question had been written to Laupepa, the Protestant candidate for king supported by the LMS and opposed to the Catholic Mataafa, who Stevenson saw as the rightful king. Claxton had also apparently suggested in conversation that Mataafa could be arrested in Apia where he had been invited by the American consul. On Stevenson publicly accusing him of plotting to lure the king into a trap, Claxton charged him with libel. Colley is able to report

on the matter in detail thanks to her study of the London Missionary Society correspondence and the minutes of the hearings of the case, at which Stevenson had to admit that he had given credence to a mere rumour. She concludes that Stevenson, like Lord Hermiston, seemed occasionally to get pleasure from attacking those he thought in the wrong—yet also had a ‘discreet, empathetic, and fragile side’ which seemed to clash or alternate with this, giving the sense of ‘a personality who can be described adequately only through a long list of often incompatible adjectives’ (p. 171). The whole story is made more fascinating by the fact that Claxton, who had translated ‘The Bottle Imp’ into Samoan in 1891, does not mention the conflict (which led to his having to leave Samoa) in his 1908 memoir *Stevenson as I Knew Him*, and that later, when he retired to England in 1921, he became President of the Robert Louis Stevenson Society.

Chapter 6 shows how *A Child’s Garden of Verses* makes constant allusions to the commonplaces of the verse in juvenile missionary magazines for British children: in particular the repeated references to children in other lands as part of a worldwide juvenile community, and the reminders that the readers were more fortunate than the children in other lands (‘Oh, don’t you wish that you were me?’ in *CGV*). At the same time, the world-view in *CGV* is interestingly different from that of the missionary verses: while the missionary authors see the necessity of a choice between opposites (like ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’), Stevenson is able to imagine their coexistence. He also lacks the missionary sense of guilt about play. The very irregularity of his metres seems to reflect a childish freedom and to imitate the graceful clumsiness that Stevenson noted in ‘Child’s Play’. The way Stevenson plays with the missionary ethic in these verses enables us to understand his ‘bold but

tolerant imagination' (p. 200).

This collection of studies gives a good idea of the social and political activities of protestant missionary associations (especially the LMS) in the South Seas in the late nineteenth century and of how Stevenson interacted with them. In addition it illuminates various aspects of Stevenson's relation to colonial mind styles in the South Seas. It is very much a 'bottom up' study, not dominated by theory of any kind but rather trying to convey an idea of individuals making decisions in complex contexts. Colley is clearly a person who finds everything of interest and so we get a certain amount of progress with detours and some links by association of ideas—the kind of conversational style that we find in Stevenson's own essays, but married here to the interesting results of archival research. The chapter on 'Lighting Up the Darkness' is an example, but also the chapters on clothing and the collection of curios. In contrast, the first overview chapter, the account of relations with Claxton and the mapping of the intertextuality between *A Child's Garden* and the missionary magazine verse for children are closely argued with a clear sequence of exposition.

The book contains the fruit of much research, not only in the LMS archives, but also in the Beinecke and the Huntington Libraries, the National Library of Scotland and The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh. The discussion of late nineteenth-century photography and magic lanterns also gains authority from interesting research in these areas. There are twenty-six illustrations, including the Lloyd photos already mentioned and an interesting drawing of a room in Vailima by Isobel Strong and the haunting but disturbing jacket illustration of the chief of Marakei in the Gilbert Islands, with a child, a native judge and two beachcombers (previously published in Roslyn Jolly's edition of *The Cruise*

of the Janet Nichol), which seems to sum up the uneasiness and alienation felt by both sides, as well as the conflicting assumptions of authority embodied by the standing chief and the confidently-seated beachcomber.

This valuable addition to Stevenson studies gives us a series of pictures, rather like Stevenson's descriptions of scenes in incomplete light, of Stevenson in the South Seas and his relationship with missionary culture. It throws light on such questions as the degree to which this critic of Western influence on traditional Pacific society (in the resonantly challenging opening to *The Ebb-Tide*, for instance) also accepted some of the presuppositions of colonialism and sometimes saw the missionaries as the 'least bad' of the political forces available. We also learn of the missionaries' opinion of Stevenson through correspondence in the LMS archives. And the collection ends with an essential guide to a previously overlooked cultural context of *A Child's Garden of Verses*. The whole study is side-lit by Colley's acute but understated comments such as the one that follows the description of King Tembonok's useless accumulations of Western goods (sewing machines, clocks, umbrellas, blue spectacles etc.) as described in Part V, Chapter 1 of *In the South Seas*. Colley perceptively sees these as 'King Tembinok's collection of foreign curiosities' (p. 94), and recognises them as 'an exquisite version and reversal' of the European vogue for cabinets of wonders.

Richard Dury

Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: a biography* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), £25.00 / \$75.00. ISBN: 0007113218

Claire Harman's biography of Robert Louis Stevenson will be a useful resource for anyone, student or general reader, approaching Stevenson for the first time. This is a well-written addition to a growing collection of recent life studies and it stands comparison with earlier valuable contributions such as Calder's 1980 biography and McLynn's comprehensive analysis of the life and works published in 1993.

Harman, in common with earlier biographers, is strong on the early life and on the troubled father-son relationship. She also emphasises the importance of duality in Stevenson's early years, exploring the nocturnal perambulations of the young RLS in some of the less savoury vennels of Edinburgh's old town. Stevenson's oddness is highlighted: his bizarre dress code and long, lank hair mark him out as a creature apart from his bourgeois roots. From this starting point it is logical that *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* constitutes a significant part of the analysis of the literary output. If ever a writer was thirled to one text it is the Stevenson -Jekyll and Hyde connection that readily springs to mind. Harman rightly describes 1886 as Stevenson's *annus mirabilis* citing the publication of *Kidnapped* and *Jekyll and Hyde* as a hugely significant stage in the author's development.

The travels across Europe and the United States are described fully and emphasise Stevenson's tendency to wanderlust even from an early age. The relationship with Bob Stevenson during the cousins' time in the artists' colonies at Barbizon, and subsequently at Grez-sur-Loing,

is indicative of RLS's adoption of a thoroughly bohemian lifestyle that was to cause further strain between father and son. Indeed, Stevenson's return to Edinburgh is described by Harman as 'painful' (p. 121) and there is no doubt that under Bob's influence Stevenson began to break his ties with his home town.

The principal catalyst in this process was Fanny Osbourne whom Stevenson had met in France and had then followed to California. Contrary to the hostility towards Fanny that characterises McLynn's biography, Harman treats her subject with much more sympathy. While maintaining an accurate awareness of Fanny's shortcomings, she portrays Stevenson's life partner as an admirable figure and a woman of substance. Harman's portrayal of the gun-toting, roll-up smoking Fanny offers a timely antidote to the hagiographic nonsense of Adelaide Boodle's *RLS and His Sine Qua Non*.

This is a modern life of Stevenson written with the benefit of a major resource unavailable to earlier biographers. The eight-volume Yale University Press *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, edited by Bradford Booth and Ernest Mehw has provided Harman, and Stevenson scholars in general, with the ultimate research base for a life study. Harman has used this resource intelligently and the outcome is a more informative, less opinionated work than, say, the McLynn biography. The letters, especially those written during the Stevenson entourage's time at Vailima, show RLS's complex view of Scotland and Harman shrewdly notes this far from uncritical stance. Stevenson's exposure to the workings of Empire during his time in Samoa is a research interest of the present writer and therefore it is not surprising that a critical note may be sounded in this regard. Harman is an elegant writer and a perceptive biographer but the glossing of a turning-point in Stevenson's literary development is,

perhaps, the singular flaw in an otherwise excellent study. The process of turning from a writer of adventure fiction into an outspoken critic of British and American imperialism is encapsulated in two important texts, 'The Beach of Falesá' and *The Ebb-Tide*. That doyen of Stevenson scholars, Barry Menikoff, contributed the instructive 'The Beach of Falesá: A Study in Victorian Publishing' back in 1984 and in the *Introduction* he writes persuasively of the turn-around in Stevenson's attitude towards the grand narrative of British imperialism. Harman writes accurately about Stevenson's Unionist sympathies while resident in Britain, citing the Curtin case as an example (p.319), and it would have been interesting to see her treatment of a significant change in outlook such as is evidenced especially in *The Ebb-Tide*. (The symbolism of the beached Britannia-figure on Attwater's uncharted island is worthy of examination as a significant trope in Stevenson's new-found modernist technique and underpins a harder-edged criticism of the colonial endeavour.)

However, with that stated, this is a hugely enjoyable read and while it most surely will not be the last word on this enigmatic writer, it represents the new wave of interest in Stevenson and his works more than adequately. It may be argued that this due in large part to Harman's enthusiasm, indeed to her obvious affection for her subject. The tone is often one of admiration for an unconventional Victorian and here, once again, we are faced with the contradiction that is Stevenson, the sensual Calvinist, the anti-imperialist Tory, the Jekyll and the Hyde.

To summarise, this biography provides, with exceptional clarity, a first class introduction to Robert Louis Stevenson and his fiction, poetry, and travel writing. Harman also highlights Stevenson's contribution to aesthetics and to

literary theory. The unusual thing about Stevenson is that he mastered each of these literary genres and his exclusion from what was once the Leavisite canon is, therefore, quite bizarre. Perhaps the only weakness, if it is indeed so, is the missed opportunity to emphasise the literary turning-point brought about by direct exposure to the working of Empire experienced during the South Seas anabasis and, later, on Samoa. This biography deserves to appear in multiple copies on university library bookshelves and on the bookshelves of all who share an interest in 'Stevenson'.

Eric Massie

Contributors

Hilary J. Beattie is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City. She is on the faculty of the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry and the Columbia Psychoanalytic Centre. Her research interest in Stevenson dates back fifteen years and has so far resulted in two published articles, 'A Fairbairnian Analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*', and 'Father and Son: The Origins of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'.

Sara Clayson is studying for a PhD at the University of Birmingham, researching the intersection of androgyny and evolution in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. She is an Associate Lecturer at the Open University in the West Midlands.

Richard Dury was born in Bristol in 1947. After finishing University (at Manchester, where he studied Medieval and Modern History) he moved to Italy. He has taught English language and linguistics and occasionally English literature at Bergamo University since 1977.

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Jürgen Kramer is Professor of British Cultural Studies at the University of Dortmund (Germany). His main research areas are the history of the British Isles and the British Empire, the sea as a cultural space, transatlantic slavery, literature of the Pacific, cultural memory, anti-colonial resistance, Joseph Conrad and, of late, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Eric Massie has research interests in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and American writing and in literary theory. He has carried out research at Oxford, Yale, and Virginia universities. He founded the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* at Stirling University and initiated the biennial Stevenson Conference in 2000. He is currently on secondment to the Scottish Funding Councils as advisor on tertiary education policy.

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*RLS 2006: Transatlantic
Stevenson*

**The Fourth Biennial Robert Louis
Stevenson Conference,
will be held in Saranac Lake, NY, USA
July 18-20 2006.**

Stevenson spent the winter of 1887-1888 in Saranac Lake, before he left for his final journey to the South Seas. While in Saranac Lake he was treated for his lung complaint by Dr. Edward Trudeau, founder of the Trudeau Clinic. The conference is organized in association with the Robert Louis Stevenson Society of America and it will be held in the historic Hotel Saranac.

The conference will examine Stevenson in the context of his life, his literary works, the Transatlantic movement of people and cultures, and the development of medical spas and clinics during the nineteenth century. Papers are invited on:

Robert Louis Stevenson
Adaptations of Stevenson's works
Stevenson and nineteenth-century travel
Nineteenth-century transatlantic culture
Nineteenth-century health spas and resorts
Dr. Edward Trudeau and the Trudeau Clinic
Nineteenth-century Scottish migration
Nineteenth-century Scottish-American culture

The closing date for submissions is 1 December 2005

Conference website:

<http://www3.uta.edu/english/rls2006/main.aspx>

Please submit proposals or full papers to the conference organizers.

Email submissions are preferred.

The conference organizers and their contact addresses are:

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