

RLS2006: Abstracts of Papers Richard Dury Missed

These are abstracts, in alphabetical order, were submitted some months before the conference by those speakers that I was unfortunately unable to hear because at the RLS2006 conference I was 'in the other room'. They are mostly proposals rather than summaries of finished papers, but should give some indication of the areas and arguments covered. Three asterisks marks no abstract available– Richard Dury

Abigail Burnham Bloom (New York University) 'The Portrait of the Doctor in Jekyll and Hyde'

In Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, we don't see Dr. Jekyll perform as a doctor. Although his home was established with a laboratory for the work of a doctor, no one consults him or mentions his past work. All of his medical effort moves towards transforming himself into Mr. Hyde.

Dr. Jekyll's will states that he is, "Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.," indicating that he has been trained as a doctor and a lawyer, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society, and who knows what else. Stevenson appears to be poking fun at his credentials. Dr. Lanyon's account states that they have been separated almost ten years, since the time that Dr. Jekyll, "began to go wrong, wrong in mind," indicating the time at which Dr. Jekyll started to believe that he could separate his selves. Indeed Jekyll uses his life of study as an excuse to become Hyde, "I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study."

In several of the movies adapted from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll's life as a doctor is given prominence. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920) begins with Dr. Jekyll in his laboratory, looking into a microscope. He suggests to Lanyon that man is on the verge of much scientific knowledge. On the table next to Jekyll is a skull. Here, while suggesting an interest in science, sits a reminder of death. Leaving his laboratory, Jekyll goes to his free clinic where so many patients await him that it would seem that he could never deal with them all.

In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932) we see Dr. Jekyll lecture

to medical students, schedule an operation in the poor clinic, encourage a young woman to throw away her crutches and walk, perform an on the spot inspection of a young woman's injuries, and, later, treat her in his home. Even while he creates his potions with his medical equipment, the camera lingers on his scientific work.

We learn from Stevenson's novel that Dr. Jekyll is an idealist and philanthropist, but the reader knows little of the reality of Jekyll's past. During the twentieth century doctors became more respected than they were during the Victorian era. The movies present Dr. Jekyll as a cutting edge scientist and as a doctor to the poor (particularly poor women) so that he will have further to fall and he will consequently be more of a contrast to Mr. Hyde.

Mark Dunphy (Lindsey Wilson College), 'Robert Louis Stevenson: Diagnosis of *Leaves of Grass* as a 19th-century Health Spa'

Mary Hotaling (Historic Saranac Lake, Executive Director), 'Trudeau, Tuberculosis, and Saranac Lake'

Wendy Katz (Saint Mary's University, Halifax, NS), 'Stevenson and the Children of Israel: The Discourse of Race'

In *Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson devotes an entire chapter, suitably called "With the Children of Israel," to a Napa county Jewish merchant and his family. Kelmar, the name Stevenson gives to the merchant, is based on Morris Friedberg, an immigrant Russian Jew who operated the first general store in Calistoga. With the

exception of Morris Friedberg, Stevenson identifies all the people he recalls in this memoir by their real names, perhaps a minor point that might go unnoticed were it not for further references to the “Jew boy” with a ready eye for profit and the “jolly Jew girls” who accompany him. What to think of this section of *Silverado Squatters* remains a question. Does Stevenson, who seems admirably tolerant of racial difference in his encounters with American blacks, native Indians and Chinese immigrants during this same journey to the United States, fall back on predictable racial stereotypes in the case of Jews? If so, is this part of a pattern in his work? If not, how do we read his insistence on the conniving, if affable, merchant/usurer of Calistoga?

Following the important work of Bryan Cheyette (*Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English Literature and Society*), I will attempt to free myself from what he describes as “moralized biographical readings” in favor of a frank discussion of the complexities of racial discourse. It should be clear that my intention is not to make of Stevenson an unpleasant anti-semite; indeed I plan to resist altogether the easy lure of the binaries of “philo-” or “anti-semite.” I propose to consider the *Silverado Squatters* chapter, contextualize it within Stevenson’s first American journey and the racially liberal discourse of *The Amateur Emigrant* and, if time allows, look at several other of Stevenson’s references to Jews in both fiction and non-fiction.

Steven Koskela (University of Minnesota), ‘ “A Modern Cosmopolis” and *The Wrecker*’

Stevenson’s *The Wrecker* is a novel about the conflicts between art and commerce and between ethics and commerce. This essay reads *The Wrecker*’s portrait of San Francisco through the lens of Stevenson’s 1883 essay “San Francisco, A Modern Cosmopolis.” In doing so, it reveals that in *The Wrecker*, art, ethics, and commerce are much more entangled with one another than originally seems to be the case. In particular, this essay argues that Stevenson’s artist is a largely amoral figure, a person who though

repulsed by both the crassness and exploitation of the marketplace is nevertheless drawn to its adventure and, indeed, finds artistic inspiration in the danger of the market. Despite this, Stevenson's artist possesses a worldliness, a patient appreciation of life's complexity that provides him with a moral insight that the businessman lacks.

Jürgen Kramer (University of Dortmund, Germany), 'The Sea as a Culturally Constructed Space'.

Unfortunately, JK was unable to attend, but the text of his paper was distributed and the overview and conclusions of the opening and closing paragraphs were read out at the appropriate session.

Caroline McCracken-Flesher (University of Wyoming), 'Cross-Channel Stevenson: *David Balfour* and the Problem of Scottish Return'

Long before, and well after his furthest medical exile—to Samoa—Robert Louis Stevenson obsessed about the problem of return. But Scots needed to return not so much to their homeland as to themselves. This problem, schematized across *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, motivates the wanderings even of that stolid hero, David Balfour.

This paper will draw on *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* to argue that David's travels pose for him not the difficulty of getting home, but the more complex problem of his strangeness to himself. In *Kidnapped*, the orphaned David leaves an Ettrick given literary texture and cultural familiarity by Scott and Hogg in search of an inheritance elsewhere. But the House of Shaws, while his own house, as David climbs within it, perhaps toward its secrets, turns inside out to eject him. Kidnapped, disoriented by a voyage into the loss of identity that is slavery but that in fact merely takes him around Scotland, David is shortly returned to a land that is

also his own, but one he cannot recognize. He crosses from Earraid to a homeland suddenly made strange—and that reveals the strangeness in himself. Similarly, in *Catriona*, an obsessively adolescent David struggles between self-control and confusion as he is exiled into the strangenesses of politics and first love. Now, the disjunctions of subjectivity are enacted at further and further removes, when David is precipitated onto the Bass rock, and then displaced not just into love but to the distance of Holland.

David's displacements might be seen within the context of enacting Scottish politics across the land in the mode of Walter Scott, with ever-broader stretches of water simply clarifying the trope's schematics. But this paper will invoke theories of self- and nation formation to understand Stevenson's nineteenth-century reformulations of Scottish literary tropes from the distance of early globalism. Far from the times and politics that initially motivated what had become a Scottish literary cliché, Stevenson turns the small geographical displacements of a *Waverley* into large cultural dissociations so that the Scot can never quite come home to land or self again. This accounts for the uneasy tone of David's concluding family narrative, and its odd relation to the split stories *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*. What for Scott expresses a problem may be a strategy of un-Scotching and un-selving for the peripatetic Stevenson.

Barry Menikoff (University of Hawaii), 'From the Baroque to the Plain Style: or, I Lost Henry James and Found Robert Louis Stevenson'

Marilyn Simon (University of Manitoba), 'Division, Destruction, and the Limits of Rationality: Exploring Scottish and American Paradoxes through *The Master of Ballantrae*'

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