

Conference Programme RLS2006: *Picturesque Notes* **By Richard Dury**

Monday - Arrival

A strange place, America: so many things familiar from films, yet so many things that are different. The border crossing on the Montreal-Albany road, for example—a bare prefab shed by a lonely road; a strange mixture of efficiency (scanner for fingerprints) and ordinary chaos, the stock public furnishing, the trailing cables, the human delays and miscommunication. Somehow it didn't fit with the familiar movie images of absolute efficiency: this didn't seem to be the familiar land of perfect service that we thought we knew so well.

Anyway, with immigration control behind us, we drove along in a disciplined flow of traffic (and this was a positive aspect of American culture also not appreciated from films—perhaps we were half-expecting to see a car-chase), and then took the road into the Adirondacks proper—low, glacier-rounded hills, forests, lakes, houses with 'porches', each with its few chairs evocative of old-timers watching the clouds and the occasional passer-by. More clouds than passers-by, I reckon.

And then there it was: Hotel Saranac, a six-floor brick shoebox standing above the two-storey wooden houses, its 1927 modernity now preserved as a quaint period feature. Inside there is a definite mountain-town atmosphere: the type of hotel that is a kind of friendly but slightly disorganized staging-post of arrivals and departures, stacked skis and the stamping of boots in the winter, hikers and climbers gathering for early breakfast in the summer.

We checked in and then went across the road to find a group of Stevensonians gathered round a table: Barry Menikoff and Wendy Katz and others, and were soon chatting happily away. The magical joy of meeting old friends!

Tuesday

At breakfast in the pleasant restaurant with its streetfront window-tables where you could contemplate the unhustle and unbustle of

Main Street, I had fruit and yoghurt, having seen the American size of other servings, and chatted briefly with Julia Reid and husband Dan and—for his first Stevenson conference appearance—baby Callum.

The conference took place on the first—sorry, second floor of the hotel: a rectangular pillared Ballroom panelled in light wood, with white and peach stucco and a green carpet; and next to that an even longer Grand Hall, a huge open space, hung with chandeliers and with french windows out to the plain terrace.

In the Ballroom, where huge fans (another vintage ‘modern’ feature) hummed away to remind us of the humidity, Ann Colley opened proceedings by summarizing the significance of Saranac Lake in Stevenson’s life, and reading extracts from some of the letters written here. Susan Allen of the RLS Society of America, very much involved in organizing the notable local contribution to the conference, then gave a brief address. She was followed by Mike Delahunt, burly, in a Hawaiian shirt who gave a rambling but *simpatico* outline of the history of the Saranac Stevenson Museum. (We later heard rumours of disagreements between the RLS Society and the Stevenson Museum, but if these were true they were not made public at the conference.) Mary Hotaling, President of Historic Saranac Lake (an architectural preservation society), followed, with Caroline McCracken-Flesher ending for the Association of Scottish Literary Studies, giving news of a proposed volume on Stevenson in the ‘MLA Approaches to Teaching...’ series, and asking for contributions.

With the three of the most important contributions to Stevensonian studies in the past fifty years coming from non-academics (Furnas’s biography, Swearingen’s bibliography and Mehew’s edition of the Letters) there was no sense of incongruity in a mixture of academics and non-academics at the conference. Prominent among these is Nick Rankin, BBC radio producer, whose *Dead Man’s Chest* (1987) has been justly praised as the very best of the in-the-footsteps biographies. So it was a great pleasure to hear his fascinating unscripted introductory talk about the Fables. Tall, charming, in a pale suit and cream shirt he explained (he is a natural raconteur) how stumbling on these narratives in 1983 changed his life. The short ones reminded him of haikus,

koāns or sufi stories, while others reminded him of Borges in their metaliterary character, or because of their Norse or Anglo-Saxon flavour. When Rankin met Borges in 1983 and he decided to offer to read to the now-blind writer, he took along some essays by Stevenson (Borges asked for ‘A Chapter on Dreams’) and the book of Fables (Borges asked for ‘The Touchstone’ and thanked Rankin by giving him a pebble, which was shown to us). For Rankin, ‘all Stevenson’s art aspires to the Fables’, it’s the key to what he does in *Jekyll and Hyde*, ‘Markheim’, ‘The Bottle Imp’—indeed, a fable is ‘the bite at the heart of *Ballantrae*’.

The Fables continued to be the subject in Robert Louis Abrahamson’s brief but elegant presentation of his script of a dramatized version, which was then given a reading by a group of delegates. This, like all good translations and derivative versions of a text, threw a new light on the original version: one realized how much they are based on dialogue first of all, and then the rhythmic repetitions and alliterations and all the interesting strangenesses of the text were well brought out. An excellent beginning to the conference.

After a coffee break in the Grand Hall, we had to divide into parallel sessions. I went to hear Julia Reid (petite, in a crisp, striped cotton shirt, speaking with a slight Scottish accent) talking about ‘Stevenson, Degeneration, and Hereditary Determinism’. She placed Stevenson’s thoughts on degeneration in the context of the debate over the relative importance for personality of environment (culture), heredity (biology) and free will. Stevenson was interested in heredity (the dominant explanation of personality in the late nineteenth century) when analysing his own personality, which he saw as a product of his ‘gloomy family’ or in terms of Celtic characteristics. Galton’s *Records of Family Faculties* (1884) was in the Vailima library and Fanny filled in its questionnaires (the handout included a copy of the one for Thomas Stevenson: ‘choleric, hasty, frank’). However, concerns about heredity were tempered with an idea of individual will as necessary for restraining the irrational mind. ‘Olalla’, though often seen as a drama of hereditary degeneration, displays ambivalence towards such determinism. Olalla’s quasi-Galtonian speech at the end of the story (‘the hands

of the dead are in my bosom'), can be seen as a warning about the dangers of hereditary determinism, in particular the way the denial of free-will has a tragic self-fulfilling nature.

I then switched to the other room to hear Rory Watson talk on *The Wrecker* as a postmodern text. At RLS2004 in Edinburgh, Stephen Arata had talked of *The Wrecker's* narrative line as full of breaks, departures on a tangent and lost lines, with foregrounded generic signals, and a text open to many readings. Watson also referred to the fluidity and instability of the plot-line and its moral indeterminacy: the reversals and abrupt changes, the getting and losing, the coincidences and mistaken identities ('The Blind Man's Buff that we call life'). This existential and narrative instability places the text closer to postmodern comedy than the yarns of Conrad, with two late 'pictures' (the rabid search for opium on the wreck, and the horrific massacre on the 'Flying Scud') casting a dark shadow over the general absurdity.

Richard Walker in black T-shirt and bushy-bushy hairdo gave us an insight into Stevenson in the context of the incipient Modernity of the nineteenth century, starting from the observation of Henre Lefebvre that every culture creates its own version of the Devil. In Stevenson we find three kinds: (i) the folk devil of 'Thrawn Janet' and 'The Merry Men', related to the haunting rural presence that we find in Hogg; (ii) Milton's Satan, reflected in James Durie: proud, strong, and seeing through all things (as when he observes that Mckellar is as much a devil as he is); (iii) an 'imp of the perverse' that we find present throughout Stevenson, but especially in *The Dynamiter*, a devil that (as Lefebvre puts it) reveals 'the underside of official histories'. Zero is a failed version of this third kind of devil and also a failed artist-terrorist after the pattern of Baudelaire.

Lunchtime coincided with a downpour so most people went to A.P. Smith's Restaurant with its friendly American waitresses (Hi, and how are *you*, today?) and views of tranquil Main Street outside or to the pubby Boathouse Bar.

The afternoon started with parallel sessions again and I missed Mary Hotaling's talk, but later managed to get a copy of the

interesting handout 'What Stevenson Saw: Saranac Lake, 1887-80'. I went instead to hear the paper by Tim Hayes, an adapted chapter of the PhD dissertation he is writing, on 'Imperial Stories and the Preservation of Identity in *The Ebb Tide*'. At the beginning of the story, the three beachcombers write letters home in which they place themselves within the mythology of heroism and imperialism. Towards the end, Herrick realizes that the idea of suicide as a possible meaningful choice is a 'fairy tale' and as a consequence 'he had no tears, he told himself no stories... the process of apologetic mythology had ceased', yet the importance of pretending and storytelling runs through the whole narrative. Pretending and storytelling are shown to be a means of imperialist control and also a strategy of passive survival amid existential difficulties.

The most unusual paper of the conference came next in the adjoining room: portly grey-bearded Bob Stevenson (of Ohio State University School of Dentistry) on the extraction of all Stevenson's teeth in East Oakland in April 1880 (probably by Dr Russell H. Cool). Most of the talk was an audio-olfactory recreation of the ordeal that Stevenson would have gone through: sprays in front of a whirring fan diffused evocative chemical smells; sound-effects were ingeniously produced to evoke tearing and crepitant noises associated with extraction, and even the popping noise produced when a root breaks off. In this case a 'French key' was inserted between the tooth and the bone and turned. The speaker commented drolly: '*Sometimes* this works. [Pause] In France it is called the English key'. Stevenson's new dentures were noticed by Colvin on his return and new ones were probably made a few years later by a dentist in Marseille, following normal retraction of the gums.

I then managed to catch the end of the paper on 'Falesá' by Joris Verdonk (based on a chapter of his M.A. thesis at Leuven University). This valuable application of modern critical methods, though sometimes difficult to follow, produced a series of interesting enlightenments of aspects of the text: the opposition but equivalence (familiar from Doubles stories) of Wiltshire and Case; Stevenson's exposure of the bogus linguistic authority and dehumanising rhetoric of capitalism, religion and imperialism. The

speaker attributed the non-closure of the story to two rival and unresolved readings of the ending, as: (i) the defeat of exploitative imperialism and a new state of cultural harmony, (ii) the essential continuance of the dominant imperialist ideology.

After the mid-afternoon break in the Grand Hall (which became at these moments a pleasant bazaar of book exhibition, Stevenson Society stand, coffee table, milling and chatting delegates), we had a short undivided session, starting with the organizer of RLS2004, Linda Dryden, who talked about Stevenson's nostalgic imaginative revisitation of Edinburgh and the Borders in his late works ('travel writing in reverse'). His early 'virtual tour' of Edinburgh in *Picturesque Notes* betrays mixed feelings, but the elements of rancour are missing from the later recollections, in which he seems to be deliberately revisiting all the important places of his youth. Though both *Weir of Hermiston* and *St. Ives* are set in the safe past (around 1800), the description of places could be true of the present or only recent past. Indeed, when Stevenson comes to describe the village of Hermiston and the moors of southern Scotland, he switches to the present tense ('The road to Hermiston runs for a great part of the way up the valley of a stream...') as if to evoke an unchanging scene that resists the passage of time.

Cinzia Giglioli from Milan University came next with a provocative paper on *In the South Seas*. The danger of automatic non-critical praise of the favourite artist was summed up in an Italian film a few years ago (*Ho fatto splash* (1980) with Maurizio Nichetti) in which an accident-prone character is involved in a performance of Shakespeare's *Tempest* directed by cultural icon Giorgio Strehler. As a result of his mistakes everything goes wrong with the opening storm, which ends with misdirected storm-effects and collapsing scenery. As the scene ends in total chaos, a woman in the audience turns to another with a little smile and says 'Eh già, Strehler è sempre Strehler!', which we might translate as 'You can always tell the Strehler touch, can't you?' Giglioli's paper was a salutary attempt to make us avoid making the same mistake, putting to the test a reluctance of Stevenson scholars to call *In the South Seas* a (partial) failure. So we were reminded of what is undoubtedly true, that Stevenson was 'overwhelmed by his

subject' and worked without 'a well-defined artistic project' or a model to follow, leading to a dismay that he himself confessed in his letters. Stevenson here does not follow his early rule that travel writing should be based on 'filtered impressions' (as he writes in 'Roads') but piles up information (which for Giglioli becomes 'boring', and a sign of Stevenson being 'lost in chaotic reality'). At his most successful he gives us sketches of the unexpected, and a less stereotyped picture of the Pacific than that established by romantic convention. However, perhaps the speaker underplayed the achievement of Stevenson's semi-anthropological and documentary approach in the absence of previous models and of his cultural relativism in the context of dominant imperialist ideology. And I actually find the work fascinating. E già, Stevenson è sempre Stevenson!

And that was the end of the day, but shortly after, at 5.30 we gathered outside the hotel for a procession with pipers (from Canada) to the Stevenson Cottage Museum for a reception offered by the Stevenson Society of America. This was advertised as 'wine and cheese' but turned out to be centred on haggis, toasted in whisky and accompanied by Burns-Night ceremonial conducted by the chief piper. The little garden was crowded and the local organizers were rightly pleased at adding this ritual and social event to the conference programme, marking a memorable occasion in the history of the museum.

The linking of the celebration of Stevenson with a celebration of Scottish traditions and ethnicity was continued in the evening lecture in Saranac Lake Free Public Library by Jenni Calder speaking on the history of Scots immigration into the USA. Drinks followed this and, while mingling, we were able to look at the little exhibition at the back of the hall devoted to the early editions of Stevenson owned by the Library, the gift of Trudeau's colleague Dr Lawrason Brown (the set of works with verse dedications that Stevenson sent to Dr Trudeau were unfortunately destroyed in a fire in 1893). The exhibition was accompanied by a 14-page pamphlet prepared specially for the conference by Ann Colley ('The Robert Louis Stevenson Collection and the Edward L. Trudeau Papers at the Saranac Lake Free Library'), containing a

list of Stevenson editions in the Library, a list of the works he wrote in Saranac, and information on Brown and Trudeau (with quotations from the latter's autobiography).

Wednesday

After a long first day we had a morning off, so I went along to the Stevenson Cottage where Nick Rankin (who was staying there, having made friends with Mike Delhunt from when he visited years before while writing *Dead Man's Chest*) gave a guided tour to three of us—a rare privilege as he combined enthusiasm with communicative skills and a thorough knowledge of Stevenson and the museum.

The afternoon opened with Maria Zuppello, vivacious and enthusiastic, introducing and showing her documentary film on Stevenson in Samoa which gave us inspiring pictures of the island and its coast, and included interviews with a descendant of the Stevenson family living there, an Italian *principe* who worked there as a doctor most of his life and so knows Samoan culture and traditions very well, and the Swiss writer Alex Capus, whose *Reisen im Licht der Sterne* I had found a well-written series of linked stories about the Pacific including what I thought was a clever partly fictional biography of Stevenson. (In the interview, however, he *seemed* to take seriously the idea that Stevenson found the famous 'Cocos Island treasure', which some say inspired *Treasure Island*, on a Cocos Island near Samoa.)

Then I gave my talk on 'Stevenson in Italy and in Italian'. This started with a reminder of the unique parabola of Stevenson's critical reception, from adulation to virtual exclusion from the literary canon in the middle of the twentieth century. A study of translations of Stevenson into Italian by decade shows, however, that this story only really applies to Anglo-American critics: Stevenson translations take off in 1920 and continue steadily with 20-30 new translations each decade, with a peak in the 1960s and then from the 1980s onwards. These were not just popular translations: before the War they were frequently by established writers and after they were often introduced by literary critics. But numbers are perhaps not so fascinating, so I ended my talk with some illustrations (from Italian versions of *Jekyll and Hyde*) of how

translations can be used as commentaries and interpretations of the original text and how the study of such translations can draw our attention to aspects of the text we might not otherwise have noticed.

After the coffee break we had a high point of the conference in the form of ‘A Conversation about *The Master of Ballantrae*’ between Roger Swearingen and Nicholas Rankin. This worked wonderfully and the two speakers dialogued together and also stimulated a series of contributions from the audience. Nick Rankin acted as dramatic commentator and continuity man, while the centrepiece was Roger Swearingen’s presentation of a remarkable present for all delegates: a 30-page booklet with a scholarly but readable introduction followed by a transcription of the two MS drafts of Stevenson’s ‘Note to *The Master of Ballantrae*’: (i) the draft written 1890/91 possibly for a projected second series of Scribner essays (often reprinted with Colvin’s title ‘The Genesis of *The Master of Ballantrae*’), (ii) the draft written in early 1894 as a preface for the Edinburgh Edition, but only published later and in two separate parts (and the first of these without the three paragraphs carried over from the first draft). Swearingen’s text is the first time this second draft (which clearly must be the copy text for the ‘Note’ from now on) has been printed as a continuous text. Nick Rankin then went on to suggest that MoB draws from three genres: (i) the fable (‘A father has two sons...’), (ii) the epic novel, the adventure novel on a vast canvas (that he’d already proposed in ‘Victor Hugo’s Romances’), and (iii) the opera (in the unashamedly stagey actions). The gloomy world-view of Stevenson in MoB is also found in ‘Pulvis et Umbra’ written at the same time. Richard Ambrosini said that MoB can be seen as referring to his previous adventure stories, like *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, and ridiculing them. Barry Menikoff commented on how Stevenson, ever a man of opposites, was attracted to the vast canvas of Dumas but also to a modernistic concision of ‘less is more’ that we find in the fables.

That was the end of the day and we dispersed to rooms, terrace or town to reappear, washed and combed, for the drinks reception in

the Grand Hall offered by Ashgate Publishing (mingling to music from the Celtic band Inisheer), followed by the Conference Banquet in the Ballroom, an archipelago of round tables, permitting island-hopping towards the end and so a chance for my first long chat with Roger Swearingen after several years of correspondence. As the evening wore on, the terrace became a leisurely place to meet others around one of the tables in the cooler evening air, to chat of Stevenson or, letting the conversation run as it will, of anything and everything, enjoying the relaxing play of talk in itself, like kittens playing with a ball of wool.

Thursday

Thursday morning was pleasantly sunny, with trees moving in the breeze. Inside, the morning programme began with a cruelly divided programme: Jekyll and Hyde to one side, some old friends with interesting papers to the other (Beattie, Katz and Menikoff). With great difficulty I chose the former and so was able to hear two interesting and (appropriately) complementary papers. Kristen Guest spoke on 'Jekyll and Hyde and Economic Man', pointing out how Hyde can be seen as a monster but also a symbol of selfishness, of the violence of economic competition, trampling on everything in the path of personal advantage—already present in professional middle-class society but hypocritically denied. Hyde and Jekyll, apparently separate, are linked by memory, handwriting, the capacity to assume gentlemanly detachment and measured language ('No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene') and also by Jekyll's money and by refined tastes. In Hyde's elegantly-decorated Soho house, Utterson wrongly supposes the 'good picture' must be a gift from Jekyll. Stevenson's correspondent, Myers, objected to this overlapping of Jekyll and Hyde—like Utterson, he wanted to keep them separate. However, in the end, Utterson is substituted for Hyde in Jekyll's will: he is the final link in the chain of money that involves educated and ethical professionals with Hyde, and with the aggressions and selfishness of capitalism.

Andrea White (of California State University, Dominguez Hills, and President of the Joseph Conrad Society of America) also saw Stevenson's tale as about denied socio-economic aggression

but turned her attention to Imperialism. Jekyll initially sees his identity as a 'fortress', yet ironically Hyde has Jekyll as his 'city of refuge' so is already 'within the gates', and Jekyll comes to understand that identity is neither static nor unified, nor can be stabilized by separation. Jekyll's view of a part of his personality as 'alien' (appropriately Hyde has a house in Soho, the area of poor immigrants) in order to maintain his identity reflects the social division of London and, on a larger scale, of Empire into civilized and primitive. Stevenson's story shows how the 'civilized' capital city of Empire (symbol of progress and civilization), like the personality, also has its dark and primitive side.

By rapid movement between the two rooms I was able to catch some of Hilary Beattie's talk on the 'Mutual Influence of Stevenson and Henry James', in which she concluded that from 1885, both influenced each other in stories about the psychology of evil and male friendship and rivalry. *The Master of Ballantrae* seems to be Stevenson's attempt to write an adventure novel with the 'exquisite precision' he admired in James. The novel contains winking allusions (the names of the two brothers, and the meeting with 'a merchant of Albany', who could be James's grandfather), and the story of fraternal rivalry reminds one of James's difficult relationship with his brother William. In James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) Hyacinth Robinson shares many traits with Francis Scrimgeour (*New Arabian Nights*, 1882), and his Christina Light has affinities with Stevenson's similarly-named Clara Luxmore (*Dynamiter*, 1885). Some short stories by James also betray his interest in Stevenson and his works: ambivalent feelings towards Fanny Stevenson seem to be contained in 'The Lesson of the Master', 'The Next Time' and 'The Real Right Thing', while 'The Jolly Corner' (1908) contains many themes from James's relationship with Stevenson and some narrative similarities with Stevenson's 'Markheim'.

Jekyll and Hyde continued after coffee with David Rathbun, an independent scholar, on the 'Incident and Observation' in the novella. He started by commenting on its unusual fragmentary structure that reflects the fragmented personality of Jekyll and so creates a unity of theme and form. He then made the interesting

observation that the chapter titles ('Story of...', 'Incident of...' etc.) seem to promise incidents, yet often contain little definite action. Indeed, the first decisive act that is described in any conventional way is the vivid and precise account of the breaking down of the door towards the end of the novella (yet the suicide it reveals is not witnessed) and the first account of a transformation comes a little later and 85% of the way through the text. The final chapter then retells most of the story again thereby adding to the narrative complication and helping to create the feeling of incompleteness in the end since the climax has already been described but cannot here be re-told.

Anne Stiles, who just finished her PhD thesis at UCLA (one of the four young scholars who spoke at the conference) placed *Jekyll and Hyde* in the context of contemporary theories of the brain and personality. The 'paper... in a French scientific journal on sub-consciousness' that Fanny says partly inspired the tale may well have been on the Félicité case reported in a series of articles in the *Revue Scientifique* in the 1870s, but Stiles suggested that Stevenson may have learned about this and other famous cases of dual personality through articles in *Cornhill Magazine* in 1875 and 1877 (in the same period in which Stevenson's *Cornhill* articles were appearing, from 1874 onwards), where double personality is related to theories of the double brain. Unbalance of the two hemispheres was seen as leading to mental illness including dual personality disorder and the right hemisphere was associated with a series of negatively-connotated personality-traits (the instinctive, feminine, savage, criminal and insane!), all of which can be seen in Hyde. The cases discussed in the articles (Félicité, Sergeant F.) have interesting affinities with the Stevenson's 'Strange Case': the painful transition from one consciousness to the other; the morally less-controlled second state, and Félicité's change from morose to cheerful (like the first transformation to Hyde). Stevenson even uses some of the language of the scientific article but ironizes the detachment of the scientist by making the doctor and patient the same person.

I then hurried down to the ground—sorry, first floor to a series of slightly untidy back rooms used by Paul Smith's University as classrooms, to catch the last half of the report by

Gordon Hirsch (tall, resonant voice, twinkle in his eye) on his reading of all Lloyd Osbourne's fiction (well, someone had to do it...). After Stevenson's death, Osbourne published mainly short stories, collected in volumes, some 'embarrassing to read today', such as the numerous stories of a rich heiress pursued and won by a hardworking American young man (in a sub-series the heiress is won thanks to the hero's possessing or being able to repair an automobile). For Hirsch, Osbourne's most interesting solo works are the short stories set in the South Seas. The best of these have affinities with Stevenson's South Seas fiction, depicting the meeting of cultures, the lawlessness of the non-native incomers, and exploitative relationships between Euro-American men and native women (the latter sometimes shown as resourceful and intelligent; in Osbourne's stories they are inevitably abandoned, but 'in a touching way'...).

I stayed in 'The Academy Room' (grand name for quite a bare room with chairs) to hear another tall speaker with a vibrant voice, Richard Ambrosini, who was looking at the metanarrative references in Stevenson's most problematic novel, *The Wrong Box*. In this grotesque tale he portrays a sinister and savage universe without morality that we can link up with the increasingly dark writings of his later period: *The Master of Ballantae*, 'Pulvis et Umbra', *The Ebb-Tide* and *the Wrecker*. It is also a work with many references to popular literature, and which uses popular literature's clichés and 'stage scenery'. These undoubtedly relate to Stevenson's unease concerning the closeness of his adventure romances to popular genres: in this sense, WB is a rejection (through ridicule) of such formulaic fiction. Yet at the same time Stevenson seems to have been piqued by the criticism of 'friends' (about forgetting literary decorum and about going to vulgar America), so the text also 'cocks a snook' at them through its provocative play with the same formulaic fiction.

After the last coffee break we started the last session, again with two parallel sessions. I chose to start with Dennis Denisoff on the *Child's Garden of Verses* as a text for adults (and Jacqueline Rose has argued that all 'children's literature' is for adults). The poems are often dominated by a fear of the unknown or anxieties of being

'left behind', and images of people 'marching by' or crowds 'tramping' past seem to echo fears of pointless repetition or unfulfilled progress. The voice in the poems shifts between child and adult betraying an adult uncertainty of roles. Childish wonder here is deromanticized but can still offer a redemption in a view of life as activity and hope.

Before leaving to hear the last talk in the 'Academy Room' I was able to hear half of Bill Jones's talk on *The Master of Ballantae* in the comic-book versions of *Classics Illustrated*. This series of comic books each dedicated to a single 'classic' work of fiction was published between 1941 and 1971; in the late 1950s it was the most successful publication of its kind in the world. Stevenson was actually one of the most popular authors adapted in the series, with seven works adapted between 1943 and 1954. The talk then went on, with illustrations, to look at the interesting strategies of 'translation' used by the scriptwriter and the visual echoes of the original William Hole illustrations in the artwork.

I had to tear myself away from this talk as there was another Jekyll and Hyde paper in the 'Academy Room' on the floor below. Jason Pierce (who looks as if he might have played American football) ended the conference with an excellent talk on the often-repeated idea that of *Jekyll and Hyde* is only 'ostensibly set in London', while 'very unmistakably happening in Edinburgh'. This unexamined axiom has become a commonplace, reflected in cover illustrations, film adaptations, 'The Lonely Planet' guide to Edinburgh—even to the University of South Carolina's 'online Stevenson exhibition' that Jason Pierce helped to create in 1996. With admirable clarity the speaker then pointed out the weaknesses of the 'Edinburgh thesis': it's 'ad hominem' reasoning (the appeal to irrelevant biographical detail about the author) and 'petitio principio' (the assumption that Scottish authors write about Scotland); what is lacking is evidence from the text: the street descriptions in no way evoke Edinburgh and the square of handsome houses could remind one of many cities. Only biography supports the Edinburgh setting and even then Stevenson had spent much time in the previous decade in London. For Pierce the unquestioned acceptance of this interpretation is probably connected with a desire of Scottish scholars to locate

Scottishness in the best-known work of one of the greatest Scottish writers.

After the coffee break, we went along (in the now sultry afternoon heat) to St Luke's church hall just down the street, where Martin Danahay introduced a reading performance by the local amateur dramatic society of a play specially written about Thomas Sullivan coming to Saranac to discuss his stage melodrama of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* with Stevenson. This included the reading of five scenes from the play by the two characters, the first time they had received any kind of performance for many years. Then after a sociable buffet in the hotel restaurant, the 1996 film of *The Wrong Box* was shown at St. Luke's again.

Next day was departure day. A breakfast business meeting at 8 was a relaxed discussion among the perfumed steams of coffee: we had good news about the possible relaunching the Edinburgh University Press edition of Stevenson and about the Journal of Stevenson Studies; we thanked Ann and Martin for the splendid conference at this significant place. Unfortunately, we had no eager applications for the next conference, so I suggested that if no proposals came before December that I would organize it in Bergamo in 2008: a conditional offer that was greeted with unconditional enthusiasm... And so we finished. Breakfast in the luminous restaurant next door was still proceeding slowly as if people were reluctant to leave., multiple goodbyes were said at the crossing point by the reception desk.

Less than four days before we had experienced the magical joy of meeting old friends, and now it was already time for sad goodbyes. It didn't seem fair! Hey, why don't we just sit down on these chairs here in the porch for a decade or two and watch the clouds pass by and let the conversation go where it wants, like kittens playing with a ball of wool...