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## Editorial

This is the first production of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* in its new electronic format and we fully expect to expand the Journal's footprint for all future editions. From now on the *Journal* will be available on-line only and accessible at the RLS Website at Napier University (<http://robert-louis-stevenson.org>.) Please do mark this site for future access and spread the word to any and all interested parties. Direct contact with the editors will continue as before, including my own email address at the University of Stirling, during an interim handover period in which I have agreed to continue as acting editor.

This edition contains two essays that deal with wider aspects of Stevenson's engagement with his own cultural background. Morgan Holmes's account of the Highland bagpipe explores the historical roots of that instrument and the cultural and thematic significances of its appearance in Stevenson's work, most especially, of course, in *Kidnapped*. And an intriguing piece of research by Trenton Olsen takes us to Stevenson's own copy of Wordsworth's complete poems, and traces, by way of his annotations and marginal markings just which poems made the most impression on him. All the other essays in this volume have been developed from papers given at the successful international Stevenson conference held by the Centre for Literature and Writing at Napier University, Edinburgh, in July 2107. This was the eighth such Stevenson event and we look forward to the ninth in the series, which will be held at the Université Bordeaux Moutaigne in June 2020, where the theme will be 'Pleasure in Stevenson'.

The chosen theme for the Napier meeting was 'New Perspectives' (an approach already re-alised in the additional essays by Holmes and Olsen), and these perspectives include the close critical attention paid to Stevenson's essays by Lesley Graham and Ivan and Mark Sanderson. Graham's essay on the

later essays explores how Stevenson's more autobiographical 'random memories' are reconstructed in a 'somewhat unsettling' way by moving 'to and fro between real past time, imaginary past time, putative future time and a present that brings them all together, not always explicitly, in the personage of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson the writer, a constantly moving nexus of recollection and projection and a work in progress.' Graham argues that this process is characteristic of how contemporary theory sees modern identity. These insights, and Graham's work as an editor of Stevenson essays for the new Edinburgh Edition certainly do show 'new perspectives' on this genre, too often neglected as a branch of Stevenson's output. By the same token, Ivan and Mark Sanderson offer an illuminating and closely technical analysis of Stevenson's use of chiasmus as it appears in his essays from the start to the end of his career.

Stepping aside from Stevenson's writing *per se*, Hilary Beattie's essay reflects on the curious case of Katherine de Mattos and her complicated relationship with the author, his wife, his friends and the Stevenson family. (Beattie touched on aspects of this in her account of the writing of Fanny Osbourne's story the 'The Nixie' in volume 11 of the *Stevenson Journal*.) Looking still further afield, Ilona Dobosiewicz's essay outlines the translation and critical reception of Stevenson's fiction in Poland from the nineteenth into the mid twentieth century.

Returning to Stevenson's *oeuvre* once more, Nathalie Jaëck, Flora Benkhodja and Harriet Gordon bring more immediately contemporary critical theory to bear on the semiotics of landscape as envisioned by Stevenson. Jaëck looks at *Kidnapped* to argue that 'landscape imagery is a semiotic structure that needs to be historicised, a culturally constructed process and certainly not a neutral and objective reproduction of the land', while Benkhodja explores the hermeneutic complexities and uncertainties of 'reading the runes' in 'The Merry Men'. Harriet Gordon, on the other hand, studies how Stevenson read the

runes of the Californian landscape as a place of global movement, rapid change and modernity, a locus utterly different from the history-steeped hills of his native land.

Equally in line with 'new perspectives' Douglas Kerr uses a link to Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes's case of 'The Creeping Man' to illuminate aspects of *Jekyll and Hyde*, while Jean-Pierre Naugrette invokes Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde, and Conan Doyle once again in his exploration of the tropes used by these writers, and by Stevenson, to convey the labyrinths of the brain and the mysteries of the imagination. In their different ways, each of these essays (and Benkhodja's passing reference to 'A Scandal in Bohemia') suggests a telling comparison between the Holmesian drive for logic and order and Stevenson's more fluid engagement with flux, narrative uncertainty and modernity.

Roderick Watson  
Linda Dryden



## Toing and froing in Stevenson's construction of personal history in some of the later essays (1880-94)

*Lesley Graham*

Stevenson's later essays (1880-94) are marked by a growing nostalgia for his younger self and he regularly weaves into them recollections of childhood and early adulthood experience. He had already written of his boyhood with a more overtly autobiographical style and structure in the unpublished accounts entitled 'Notes of Childhood' (1873) and 'Memoirs of Himself' (1880). In these later essays, however, as his star rises and public interest in his life reaches a crescendo, he fragments the account of his earlier self, scattering clues to the origins and development of his present personal identity across his writing. The discontinuous nature of the account is reflected in the subtitles of certain of the essays – 'Random Memories', 'More Random Memories'.

In this article, I propose to examine the somewhat unsettling effect created by a toing and froing between past, present and future presences; between the actual, lingering and virtual selves dispersed throughout the later essays.

### **Movement**

Despite the structuring image of the thread used by Stevenson in the essay fragment 'Onlooker in Hell' (1890)<sup>1</sup> when he writes: 'I must string together a few random memories, covering nearly three lustres of time, and connected only by the thread on which I string them', the account of his childhood found in these essays is non-linear and unframed. The perspective is unstable. This is not an unusual approach in modern autobiographical essays. Indeed, as Graham Good writes, 'the forms of the autobiographical essay enact the processes of disintegration and reintegration, loss and reinvention, interpretation and reinterpretation, dislocation and

relocation, which are characteristic of the modern identity.<sup>22</sup>

For Stevenson, however, autobiographical time extends to before his birth and to after his death, as he moves to and fro between real past time, imaginary past time, putative future time and a present that brings them all together, not always explicitly, in the personage of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson the writer, a constantly moving nexus of recollection and projection and a work in progress. The great affair, as always, is to move; to zoom in on the moment in time that seems most significant, even if that time falls outwith the author's direct experience, or to zoom out as if observing the scene from the future or from an otherwise external perspective. The autobiographical toing and froing in these essays is not limited to time but is also applied to place, to size and scale, and to personal pronouns and perspective.

The essay form is particularly well suited to this exercise of life writing in short bursts since as Lydia Fakundiny observes 'it is through various foreshortenings and dispersals of narrative that the essay, with its conventions of fragmentariness and provisionality, assimilates to its relatively short span and its characteristically discursive modes the task of recounting the writer's life.'<sup>23</sup> Thus in the autobiographical essay, a single meaningful episode can be explored from all sides and its significance extrapolated to the rest of the life story without having to tie in to the overarching plan required by a complete autobiography.

### **Situated (im)mortality**

In Stevenson's autobiographical essays, that point of significance is very often spatial rather than chronological. Memories are frequently tied up in places and in the essay extracts I am concentrating on here, the setting down of these autobiographical fragments is built up around what appears initially to be an account of a significant place from which Stevenson is, at the time of writing, at some remove: namely Anstruther, Fontainebleau, Edinburgh and Colinton. The significant locale provides a sort

of individual *lieu de mémoire*, a palimpsest of stratified recollections that may be associated with several chronological topoi.

Although autobiography is traditionally primarily concerned with life, we notice that in several of these later essays Stevenson is in fact, just as concerned with death as with the recollection of his earlier life. Stevenson died young but he felt old and he was certainly more aware of impending mortality than most. In 1887, he wrote to Henley invoking the words of the First Gravedigger in *Hamlet*: 'also old age with his stealing steps seems to have clawed me in his clutch to some tune'.<sup>4</sup> In the 'The Education of an Engineer' he recalls the few weeks he spent in Anstruther as a young man inspecting engineering work during the day and writing at night. In this Fife town, for the young Stevenson, as remembered by his older self, if mortality was a given, immortality was the real prize and had to be written towards.

I lodged with a certain Bailie Brown, a carpenter by trade; and there as soon as dinner was despatched, in a chamber scented with dry rose-leaves, drew in my chair to the table and proceeded to pour forth literature, at such a speed and with such intimations of early death and immortality, as I now look back upon with wonder. [...] Late I sat into the night, toiling (as I thought) under the very dart of death, toiling to leave a memory behind me.<sup>5</sup>

As will become evident, this notion of leaving some trace of his essence behind is central to several of the autobiographical essay passages examined here, with Stevenson's reminiscences frequently generating conjecture about the marks that his younger self has left in significant places.

### Shifts of perspective

In 'Random Memories. Rosa Quo Locorum', Stevenson even as he describes his walks in Edinburgh with his nurse, Alison Cunningham, rushes forwards towards the idea of death, while at the same time he darts outside of his past body to experience it from outside: "Death's dark vale" was a certain archway in the Warriston Cemetery: a formidable, yet beloved spot; for children love to be afraid in measure, as they love all experience of vitality. Here I beheld myself (some paces ahead – seeing myself – I mean from behind) utterly alone in that uncanny passage.<sup>6</sup> The shift of perspective leaves the reader wondering just who exactly 'I' is – the boy watching or the one walking?

In the continuation of the passage cited above from 'The Education of an Engineer', the to-and-fro is even more concentrated:

I feel moved to thrust aside the curtain of the years, to hail that poor feverish idiot, to bid him go to bed and clap *Voces Fidelium* on the fire before he goes; so clear does he appear before me, sitting there between his candles in the rose-scented room and the late night; so ridiculous a picture (to my elderly wisdom) does the fool present! But he was driven to his bed at last without miraculous intervention; and the manner of his driving sets the last touch upon this eminently youthful business. The weather was then so warm that I must keep the windows open; the night without was populous with moths. As the late darkness deepened, my literary tapers beacons forth more brightly; thicker and thicker came the dusty night-fliers, to gyrate for one brilliant instant round the flame and fall in agonies upon my paper. Flesh and blood could not endure the spectacle; to capture immortality was doubtless a noble enterprise, but not to capture it at such a cost

of suffering; and out would go the candles, and off would I go to bed in the darkness, raging to think that the blow might fall on the morrow, and there was *Voces Fidelium* still incomplete. Well, the moths are all gone, and *Voces Fidelium* along with them; only the fool is still on hand and practises new follies.<sup>7</sup>

In the space of a few sentences Stevenson moves from the point of view of 'I' the present writer (a 38-year-old living in Manasquan in 1888), travelling back in time to speak to his younger self (to 'him', 'that poor feverish idiot', 'he', 'his'), but then appears to reintegrate the body of that younger self with a move back to the first person and the simple past ('I must keep the windows open', 'my literary tapers'), and then combines them both in the final phrase recognising that the young man has become the fully adult man in the person of the 'fool still on hand' and the present tense. Furthermore, as if to symbolise both the flitting narrative movement and imagined impending death there are the moths constantly fluttering through the text and the smell of the dead roses.

### **Persistence and regression**

In 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters' (first published in *The Magazine of Art* in 1884) the possibility of immortality is predicated not on the persistence of literary production but through the continued presence of a lingering spirit in significant haunts (the word, used as a verb in the passage in question, seems particularly laden with meaning). In the Forest of Fontainebleau, Stevenson imagines his group of artist friends as well as the generations that follow and precede them leaving behind 'A projection of themselves [that] shall appear to haunt unfriended these scenes of happiness.'<sup>8</sup> But this is a reciprocal process and just as the forest shall forever be haunted by their presence so the young people themselves shall forever be inhab-

ited by the forest 'and they will return to walk in it at night in the fondest of their dreams, and use it for ever in their books and pictures.'<sup>9</sup> We notice too, that the persistent presence involves a regression to childhood - the Stevenson that spent time in the forest at Fontainebleau was a young man, but the presence that he imagines leaving there is that of a child: a natural child of fancy; a fetch; an imp; an orphan; a bantling; a pleasant lad; a whipster; the child of happy hours. Paradoxically the future traces of his younger self are imagined to be an even younger iteration of the same self:

One generation after another fall like honey-bees upon this memorable forest, rifle its sweets, pack themselves with vital memories, and when the theft is consummated depart again into life richer, but poorer also. The forest, indeed, they have possessed, from that day forward it is theirs indissolubly, and they will return to walk in it at night in the fondest of their dreams, and use it for ever in their books and pictures. Yet when they made their packets, and put up their notes and sketches, something, it should seem, had been forgotten. A projection of themselves shall appear to haunt unfriended these scenes of happiness, a natural child of fancy, begotten and forgotten unawares. Over the whole field of our wanderings such fetches are still travelling like indefatigable bagmen; but the imps of Fontainebleau, as of all beloved spots, are very long of life, and memory is piously unwilling to forget their orphanage. If anywhere about that wood you meet my airy bantling, greet him with tenderness. He was a pleasant lad, though now abandoned. And when it comes to your turn to quit the forest may you leave behind you such another; no Antony or Werther, let us hope, no tearful whipster, but, as becomes this not uncheerful and most

active age in which we figure, the child of happy hours.<sup>10</sup>

### **Recovered memories**

For Stevenson a place does not have to have been directly experienced to be part of his autobiographical trajectory and consequently a component of his present self. The memory of place can be atavistic and correspondingly the lingering presence can be genetic. In 'The Manse', Stevenson ponders the traits and interests that he may have inherited from his grandfather, and concludes that although he does not recognize anything of his grandfather in himself he nevertheless knows that he carries him around constantly: 'he moves in my blood, and whispers words to me, and sits efficient in the very knot and centre of my being.'<sup>11</sup> Towards the end of the passage, Stevenson the subject and his grandfather merge to become 'we':

The house where I spent my youth was not yet thought upon; but we made holiday parties among the cornfields on its site, and ate strawberries and cream near by at a gardener's. All this I had forgotten; only my grandfather remembered and once reminded me. I have forgotten, too, how we grew up, and took orders, and went to our first Ayrshire parish, and fell in love with and married a daughter of Burns's Dr. Smith – 'Smith opens out his cauld harangues.' I have forgotten, but I was there all the same, and heard stories of Burns at first hand.<sup>12</sup>

In the passage that follows, the toing-and-froing in time and perspective becomes somewhat dizzying, with Stevenson imagining himself being carried around Edinburgh as a 'homunculos' in the bodies of his various ancestors: 'from the eyes of the lamp and oil man one-half of my unborn father, and one-quarter of myself, looked out upon us as

we went by to college'<sup>13</sup> (thus the modest ancestor who could just as well have been labelled as 'us', looks out upon the other 'us'). As he follows backwards the careers of his 'homunculos' and is reminded of his antenatal lives or 'the threads that make me up', the essay shifts to the first person as if the ancestors are just as deserving of that pronoun so tied up are they in his sense of autobiographical self. Thus we read 'though to-day I am only a man of letters, [...] I was present when there landed at St. Andrews a French barber-surgeon, [...] I have shaken a spear in the Debateable Land and shouted the slogan of the Elliots; I was present when a skipper [...] smuggled Jacobites to France after the '15; I was in a West India merchant's office, [...] I was with my engineer-grandfather [...] when he sailed north about Scotland on the famous cruise that gave us the *Pirate* and the *Lord of the Isles*; I was with him, too, on the Bell Rock,'<sup>14</sup> and so on with a shift away from the first person back to the ultimate 'arboreal' ancestor. This establishment of a chain of inheritance linking past, present and future generations through their familiarity with and frequentation of a given place is a familiar move in Stevenson's essays and is also found notably in the dedication to *Catriona* (1892), in which Stevenson addresses his friend Charles Baxter and recalls the Edinburgh of their shared boyhood memories expressing the hope that there exists in Edinburgh 'some seed of the elect; some long-legged, hot-headed youth must repeat to-day our dreams and wanderings of so many years ago; he will relish the pleasure, which should have been ours, to follow among named streets and numbered houses the country walks of David Balfour.'

### **Remembering and weaving the memories into the text**

Anne Colley notes that Stevenson 'unselfconsciously believed in the past's durability' and his own ability to 'gather up the past moments of his being 'as though it were yesterday' <sup>15</sup> Stevenson may have been confident in his ability to call up his boyhood, but he was concerned about the past becoming tarnished through overuse. In 'Memoirs of an Islet' (1887) he writes:

After a dozen services in various tales, the little sunbright pictures of the past still shine in the mind's eye with not a lineament defaced, not a tint impaired. *Gluck und ungluck wird gesang*, if Goethe pleases; yet only by endless avatars, the original re-embodying after each. So that a writer, in time, begins to wonder at the perdurable life of these impressions; begins, perhaps, to fancy that he wrongs them when he weaves them in with fiction; and looking back on them with ever-growing kindness, puts them at last, substantive jewels, in a setting of their own.<sup>16</sup>

While it might be argued that Stevenson is hinting here at the possibility of a full-length autobiography, it seems clear that the ideal setting for these vignettes from the past is, in fact, the essay, a shorter genre in which the reader is willing to make the extra effort necessary to follow several versions of a single self, and to consider those selves from various angles; a genre in which the constraints of narration are neutralised and upturned. In a 'A Chapter on Dreams', the exercise of recollection and reconstruction of the past life is further complicated by the fact that Stevenson is remembering not his lived life, but the mock life of his dreams although the memories attached to his dream sequences are, he argues, just as real as the former.

The past is all of one texture – whether feigned or suffered – whether acted out in three dimensions, or only witnessed in that small theatre of the brain which we keep brightly lighted all night long, after the jets are down, and darkness and sleep reign undisturbed in the remainder of the body.<sup>17</sup>

Again, in this essay, we follow Stevenson's toing and froing, here performed both in relation to the images that are evoked and which the reader is invited to imagine with a mind's eye that zooms in and out with shifting focus<sup>18</sup>: 'When he had a touch of fever at night, and the room swelled and shrank, and his clothes, hanging on a nail, now loomed up instant to the bigness of a church, and now drew away into a horror of infinite distance and infinite littleness' (122-3), and in autobiographical stance when he reveals the nameless dreamer ('the poor gentleman', 'this honest fellow') to be himself and switches from he to I: 'he is no less a person than myself; — as I might have told you from the beginning, only that the critics murmur over my consistent egotism' (127). And yet the brownies, who create the stories and who are just as much a part of his intimate self as his past self since they are the creation of his dreaming brain, never make the shift and are never integrated into the selfhood of the author of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

In this essay we seem to follow Stevenson as he indulges in what Brockmeier calls 'retrospective teleology'.<sup>19</sup> Stevenson recruits episodes from his past, as constituent parts of his life story but in selecting and forming the 'facts' in the light of his present disposition, he gives them contemporary meaning and as the life story unfolds the significance of the fact mutates apace. Rather than being objective autobiographical truths they are the malleable building blocks of one of a range of possible past selves. Thus it is the act of writing, the constantly shifting self-inscriptive process, more than the established event of the past that spins and shapes Stevenson's past life.

In moving back and forth between times, places and perspectives Stevenson as autobiographical agent is accommodating as many facets of himself as he can perceive. The network of essays becomes the distributed locus where the threads of his life histories are selected, highlighted and interwoven.

Lydia Fakundiny, examining the interaction between autobiographical and essayistic genres in the autobiographical essay, observes that 'The essay as autobiographical space attempts to accommodate and to bring into artful relation autobiography's

traditional search, by way of writing, for a significant personal past and the essay's more or less self-conscious immersion in the pleasures and aporias of writing as such.<sup>20</sup> The pleasure of essay-writing for Stevenson is plain in these autobiographical hot-spots and the aporias are clearly present too as he explores the impossibility of conciliating being both himself now and himself then, two identities entangled in the same weave, without flitting between distinct identities.

To conclude, we know the extent to which Stevenson's thoughts at the end of his forty-four years turned to recollection, but as if his one life delimited by birth and death were not enough for him, in his later essays he makes regular excursions outside of the traditional autobiographical framework. The constantly shifting perspective is the sign of a certain shiftiness. By widening the amplitude of his life story to include multiple prenatal and post-mortem existences, and by multiplying the number of texts in which those existences are inscribed, Stevenson ducks and weaves through the pages refusing to be pinned down to any single stable identity or story. I proposed in my introduction to examine the potentially unsettling effect of the toing and froing, the flitting, between various selves in these essays, but I must conclude that despite the darting movement, Stevenson's mastery of the essay form brings the various times and perspectives together in relatively happy, if deliberately random, cohabitation.

## NOTES

- 1 This unpublished essay fragment along with several of the other uncollected essays mentioned in this article will be included in Graham L. (ed.), *The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson, Volume 5: Uncollected Essays 1880-94*, by Robert Louis Stevenson in *The New Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*.
- 2 Graham Good, 'Identity and Form in the Modern Autobiographical Essay,' *Prose Studies*. 15.1 (1992): 99-117, p. 116.
- 3 Lydia Fakundiny, 'Autobiographical Essay' in Tracy Chevalier (ed.),

- Encyclopedia of the Essay*. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), pp. 87-88.
- 4 B. A. Booth, and E. Mehew (eds), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson: Vol. 6* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 71. The note to the allusion reads, "The First Gravedigger in *Hamlet* V. i. 79-80, quoting inaccurately from a poem by Thomas, Lord Vaux (1510-56), "The Aged Lover Renounceth Love."
  - 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Education of an Engineer. More Random Memories,' *Scribner's Magazine*, IV, 636-640, (Nov 1888), p. 636.
  - 6 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Random Memories. Rosa Quo Locorum,' *Essays of Travel*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p. 178. The essay was unpublished during Stevenson's lifetime. The manuscript is held in the Princeton Parrish Collection, Bd MS 125, Co171.
  - 7 "The Education of an Engineer", pp. 636-7.
  - 8 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters II' *The Magazine of Art*, 7, 340-345, (May 1884) p. 343.
  - 9 Ibid.
  - 10 Ibid., p. 343.
  - 11 Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Manse", *Memories and Portraits*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p. 70. First published as "The Manse: A Fragment" *Scribner's Magazine*, I, No. 5 (May, 1887), [611]-614.
  - 12 Ibid., p. 71.
  - 13 Ibid., p. 72.
  - 14 Ibid., pp. 72-3.
  - 15 Anne Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998) p.175.
  - 16 Robert Louis Stevenson, "Memoirs of an Islet", *Memories and Portraits*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912), p. 75.
  - 17 Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Chapter on Dreams," *Scribner's Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, III, 122-128, (Jan 1888), p. 122.
  - 18 See Richard Dury, "Stevenson's Shifting Viewpoint" in *The Bottle Imp*, Issue 12, Nov 2012. He notes that "Stevenson's representations in his works of perception as unstable and constantly varying, can also be seen as serving a meta-artistic purpose: like the 'jump cut' in the cinema, his sudden changes of viewpoint, by surprising the

reader, also call attention to the act of reading.'

- 19 See J. Brockmeier's chapter 'From the end to the beginning: Retrospective teleology in autobiography' in Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh (eds), *Narrative and Identity. Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001).
- 20 Fakundiny, 'Autobiographical Essay', p. 87.

## ‘The strangely fanciful device of repeating the same idea’: chiasmus in Robert Louis Stevenson’s essays

*Ivan D. Sanderson, Mark J. Sanderson*

Chiasmus is a lesser-known but characteristic feature of Robert Louis Stevenson’s essays. Beginning with his earliest published essays Stevenson uses this rhetorical figure to draw attention, please the ear, and develop his arguments. Previous studies on Stevenson’s use of chiasmus have been minimal. F. C. Riedel (1969) identifies an example in Stevenson’s ‘Pulvis et Umbra’ (1888) and describes it as an expression of his ‘juxtaposition of opposites’ in both ‘thought’ and ‘form.’ More recently, *Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric* (2010) identifies a variety of rhetorical figures in Stevenson’s essays and of chiasmus in *Treasure Island*. This paper will identify no less than three types of chiasmus that Stevenson employs in his essays in order to heighten our understanding of his syntax and provide a more nuanced understanding of his writings.

### Introduction

Chiasmus, a form of reverse order parallelism of ‘words or other elements’ in a text, is a lesser-known but characteristic feature of Robert Louis Stevenson’s essays.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with his earliest published essays, Stevenson uses this rhetorical figure to draw attention, please the ear, and develop his arguments.

F. C. Riedel (1969) identifies an example of chiasmus in ‘Pulvis et Umbra’ (1888) and describes it as an expression, in both ‘thought’ and ‘form’, of the ‘juxtaposition of opposites’ common in Stevenson’s essays:<sup>2</sup>

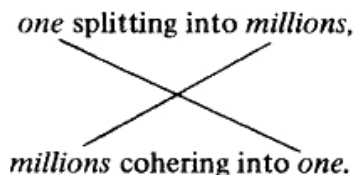


Fig. 1. Reidel, 192.

In this chiasm, initial 'one' corresponds to final 'one' and final 'millions' corresponds to initial 'millions'. Here Stevenson describes an atomic view of life in context of a discussion on the recent advances of science. Specifically, as paraphrased by Reidel, 'the paradoxical impression that life, generally thought of as wholesome and healthy, is on the contrary [...] something like a disease which, as it progresses through varying stages, affects matter in all its atoms and of them forms tumors or organisms'.<sup>3</sup>

To facilitate recognition and interpretation (especially of longer chiasms), examples in this paper are diagrammed according to the ABBA format, as follows:<sup>4</sup>

A: **one** splitting into  
 B: **millions**,  
 B: **millions**  
 A: cohering into **one**,

More recently, *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric* (2011) identifies a variety of rhetorical figures in Stevenson's essays and chiasmus in a description of Mr Arrow in *Treasure Island*.<sup>5</sup>

Watch him as we pleased, we could do nothing to solve it;  
 and when we asked him to his face,

A: he would only **laugh**

B: **if he were drunk**,

B: and **if he were sober**

A: **deny** solemnly that he ever tasted anything but  
water.

This chiasm is based on antithetical relationships in both elements: 'laugh' corresponds to 'deny' and 'if he were drunk' corresponds to 'if he were sober'.

A review of Stevenson's essays reveals chiasmus in nearly all of them. This paper introduces three types of chiasmus that Stevenson employs in his essays: small form (ABBA), extended form (ABCCBA), and long-range structure (consisting of an entire text).<sup>6</sup> This paper then explores three possible literary influences on Stevenson's use of chiasmus: the Bible, William Shakespeare, and French writers (Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, and Michel de Montaigne).

## Part 1: Stevenson's use of chiasmus

### *Small Form (ABBA)*

The most basic type of chiasmus is small form, consisting of two sets of corresponding elements inversely arranged. Stevenson's earliest published writing, 'The Pentland Rising: A Page in History, 1666' (1866), which he wrote when he was sixteen years old and his father had privately printed, features two small form chiasms arranged back-to-back.<sup>7</sup>

Besides this,

A: **landlords** were fined for

B: their **tenants'** absences,

B: **tenants** for

A: their **landlords**,

A: **masters** for

B: their **servants**,

B: **servants** for

A: their **masters**,

even though they themselves were perfectly regular in their attendance.

These chiasms emphasise the religious persecution experienced by Presbyterians at the hands of the government and elicit an emotional response from readers.<sup>8</sup>

As he matured as a writer, Stevenson continued to make use of this rhetorical figure. In his preface to *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), Stevenson uses a small form chiasm to critique his own essay on Henry David Thoreau.<sup>9</sup> He compares his perspective, gained through books, with that of a man who had known Thoreau personally.

A: I was looking at the **man**

B: through the **books**,

B: while he had long since learned to read the **books**

A: through the **man**,

Part of the appeal of chiasmus is that much can be said with a minimum of words; the relationships between the words within the pattern add entirely new dimensions of meaning. In this chiasm, Stevenson simultaneously identifies the crux of their disagreement, explains the common understanding they reached, and expresses the wisdom gained by the encounter.

### ***Extended Form (ABCCBA)***

Extended form chiasmus follows the same pattern as small form chiasmus, but is larger, consisting of three or more sets of elements. In 'My First Book: *Treasure Island*' (1894), Stevenson uses a brief but complex extended form chiasm that uses humour and unrequited love to describe the cold and rainy Scottish

weather that orchestrated the creation of *Treasure Island*.<sup>10</sup>

A: I

B: love

C: my native air,

C: but it

B: does not love

A: me;

In the central element, notice his use of the pronoun ‘it’ for added subtlety.

Applying this pattern to a larger passage, Stevenson uses an extended form chiasm in ‘A Gossip on Romance’ (1882) to describe the experience of an illiterate man who learned how to read and emphasise the dramatic change it brought into his life.<sup>11</sup>

A: A friend of mine, a Welsh blacksmith, was twenty-five years old and could neither read nor write, when he **heard a chapter of *Robinson*** read aloud in a farm kitchen.

B: Up to that moment he had **sat content, huddled in ignorance**, but he left that farm another man.

C: There were **day-dreams**, it appeared,

C: divine **day-dreams**, written and printed and bound, and to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure.

B: Down he **sat that day, painfully learned to read Welsh**, and returned to borrow the book. It had been lost, nor could he find another copy but one that was in English.

Down he **sat once more, learned English**,

A: and at length, and with entire delight, **read *Robinson***.

First, he heard *Robinson Crusoe* read aloud, which contrasts with being able to read *Robinson Crusoe* ‘with entire delight’. Next, he ‘sat content, huddled in ignorance’, which contrasts with when he ‘sat’ to learn Welsh and then English. At the centre, ‘day-dreams’, or fiction, dramatically changed his perspective

about books and motivated him to learn how to read.

Stevenson was also skilful at using both a chiasm and a parallelism in the same passage. In 'Thomas Stevenson: Civil Engineer' (1887), written following the death of his father, Stevenson uses a parallelism followed by an extended form chiasm 'to show [...] the inverted nature of his [father's] reputation', being more highly 'esteemed' outside of Scotland than within, even eclipsing the fame of his esteemed son.<sup>12</sup>

And to show by one instance the inverted nature of his  
reputation,

A: comparatively **small**

B: **at home**

A: yet **filling**

B: **the world,**

a friend of mine was this winter on a visit to the Spanish main,  
and was asked by a Peruvian if he 'knew

A: **Mr. Stevenson** the author,

B: because his works were much **esteemed in Peru.**'

C: **My friend** supposed the reference was to the writer of  
tales;

C: but **the Peruvian** had never heard of *Dr. Jekyll*;

B: what he had in his eye, what was **esteemed in Peru,**

A: were the volumes of **the engineer.**

Notice how he sets up the chiasm like a joke, using 'Mr.' to obscure the identity of the reference. Only at the end do we see it as a reference to his father, 'the engineer'. Here, Stevenson uses humour and self-deprecation to honour his father. This is another example of the 'juxtaposition of opposites' in both 'thought' and 'form' described by F. C. Riedel.

### ***Long-Range Structure***

Stevenson also used chiasmus to organise the long-range structure of an entire text.<sup>13</sup> For example, he uses a chiasm to structure his argument in 'Aes Triplex' (1878).<sup>14</sup>

A: **Death is the worst** possible experience.

B: This belief is **not supported by human behaviour**.

C: **We don't understand life and death**.

D: **We love living** (not life).

D: Awareness of accidents leads to risk and **love of living**.

C: **We don't understand life and death**.

B: Love of living is **supported by human behaviour**.

A: Not embracing life is **worse than death**.

At the beginning, Stevenson introduces the conventional wisdom that death is the worst possible experience, having 'no parallel upon earth', but ends with the opposite view, that not embracing life is worse than death, for '[i]t is better to live and be done with it, than to die daily in the sick-room'. The crux of his argument is that 'we do not, properly speaking, love life at all, but living', and that an awareness of death motivates us to take risks.<sup>15</sup> As this essay illustrates, one of the advantages of using chiasmus to shape the long-range structure of an argument is that it accommodates a 'dialogue' between conventional wisdom and 'the drama of daily life'.<sup>16</sup>

### **Part 2: The Bible**

In seeing to identify literary influences on Stevenson's use of chiasmus we must look to his youth, since that is when it first appears in his writings. A logical starting point is the Bible, since he was a student of the Bible from a young age and since chiastic scholarship began among biblical scholars a century prior to his birth.

**Youthful Biblical Studies**

Robert Louis Stevenson was raised in a devout Christian home where he was daily exposed to the text of the Bible. According to Evelyn Blantyre Simpson in *Robert Louis Stevenson's Edinburgh Days* (1898), his father 'gathered his household for "worship"' after breakfast 'and for this purpose a big volume of the Book stood handy'.<sup>17</sup> She also reports that his nurse, Alison 'Cummy' Cunningham, recalled reading 'the Bible three or four times through to him before he could read' and specifically remembered Isaiah 58 being 'Lew's chapter'. Simpson considers it a 'curious chapter to fix a child's attention', yet, 'the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses' contain a 'rough outline of [...] the gospel as practiced by him'.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Isaiah 58 contains several chiasms, including one in verse 8.<sup>19</sup>

A: Then shall **thy light** break forth as the morning,

B: and **thine health** shall spring forth speedily:

B: and **thy righteousness** shall go before thee;

A: the **glory of the LORD** shall be thy reward.

John Kelman in *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1908) emphasises that he had a 'close acquaintance with the language of the Bible' and 'was literally steeped in its thought and sentiment'. In Kelman's estimation, whereas the biblical influence on other writers may have been indirect or the product of living in a culture where '[t]he matchless power and beauty of its language in the Authorised Version have so permeated our literature', Stevenson 'quotes and alludes to it with a frequency, an aptness, and a sympathy, that bear witness to much first-hand knowledge'.<sup>20</sup> Stevenson himself confirms an early influence of the Bible by including 'the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew' in 'Books Which Have Influenced Me' (1887).<sup>21</sup> However, he does not include the Bible as one of the books to which he 'played the sedulous ape' as he learned how

to write.<sup>22</sup> Since a biblical influence was universal among writers of his generation, perhaps it was not necessary or fashionable to mention, or perhaps Stevenson was focusing only on secular literary influences. Although a familiarity with the Bible does not necessarily correlate with a knowledge of chiasmus, Stevenson was 'steeped' in a text containing extensive chiasmus from a young age and may have developed an appreciation for the logic and thought process inherent in this rhetorical figure.

### ***Biblical Chiastic Scholarship***

Next, let us consider Stevenson's awareness of biblical chiastic scholarship. Beginning in 1741, Robert Lowth, who is credited with the discovery of 'scripture parallelisms', presented a series of lectures on the topic while Professor of Poetry at Oxford. These lectures were later compiled and published as *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753).<sup>23</sup> Lowth's parallelisms followed an ABAB word order. At this same time in Germany, Johann Albrecht Bengel, who is considered the 'Father of Modern Biblical Scholarship', identified parallel figures and used the term 'χιασμός' (transliterated as 'chiasmus') in his *Gnomon of the New Testament* (1742).<sup>24</sup> Bengel's χιασμός included both ABAB and ABBA word orders, which he labelled 'direct' and 'inverted' chiasmus. By Stevenson's lifetime, a century later, scholarship of biblical parallel structures had continued to develop with additional books published on the subject, but terminology was fluid and non-standard. For example, John Jebb's *Sacred Literature* (1820) references both the works of Lowth and Bengel, but rather than use the terms 'chiasmus, synchysis, [or] epanodos', introduces his own term: 'introverted parallelism'.<sup>25</sup>

Stevenson was aware of biblical parallel figures. In 'On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements' (1885), he describes them as 'the strangely fanciful [Hebrew] device of repeating the same idea'.<sup>26</sup> However, he discusses them in a section on poetic forms, not considering them flexible enough to also appear in prose.

This assessment is likely due to the 'poetic' focus of Robert Lowth's influential book, suggesting that Stevenson's awareness of biblical parallel figures is at least partly due to biblical chiasmic scholarship.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, in discussing prose forms in this same essay, Stevenson argues that 'the motive and end of any art whatever is to make a pattern' and describes what he calls 'the web' in terms that recall the x-shape of chiasmus:

[T]he true business of the literary artist is to plait or weave his meaning, involving it around itself; so that each sentence, by successive phrases, shall first come into a kind of knot, and then, after a moment of suspended meaning, solve and clear itself.<sup>28</sup>

Travis R. Merritt (1968), who describes Stevenson's knot as 'the audible interweave of meanings themselves, a sensuous realization of syntax', provides a similar analysis, although he sees it as a description of parallelism:

Stevenson seems to think that such a figuration of the sentence is achieved where the meaning's completion is deferred through the internal elaboration of one or more of its parts. He is not necessarily recommending periodic structure, but rather any structure or tying-together which is a system of linked elements, each contributing to the sense and each associated with its predecessor (or successor, or both) by some similarity in propositional function or form. *Parallelism, both substantive and grammatical, is thus the key to his conception of prose style, because it conduces to moderate elaboration.* (Emphasis added)<sup>29</sup>

Merritt's interpretation is strengthened by recognising that Stevenson structures this passage as the first half of a parallelism – a sort of showing while telling:

A: [T]he true business of the literary artist is to **plait or weave**

**his meaning,  
involving it around itself;**

B: so that each sentence, by successive phrases, shall first come into a kind of **knot**,

C: and then, **after a moment of suspended meaning,  
solve and clear  
itself.**

A: In every **properly constructed sentence**

B: there should be observed this **knot** or hitch;

C: so that (however delicately) **we are led to foresee,  
to expect, and then  
to welcome the successive phrases.**

To Stevenson, the purpose of this parallel pattern is two-fold: (i) ‘to please the supersensual ear’ by leading the reader ‘to foresee, to expect, and then to welcome the successive phrases’ and (ii) ‘to forward and illuminate the argument’ by being logical and neat. Significantly, Stevenson reinforces this second purpose with a chiasm, showing that the parallel pattern of ‘the web’ includes both types of parallelism:<sup>30</sup>

A: **Pattern** and

B: **argument** live in each other;

B: and it is by the brevity, clearness, charm,  
or emphasis of the **second**,

A: that we judge the strength and fitness of  
the **first**.

How do we reconcile Stevenson’s view of chiasmus as a strict poetic form with his practice of using it in his prose? One possibility is that he adapted chiasmus to prose forms, which he viewed as more flexible and needing to be ‘invented’ by each writer, an approach that invites dynamic and innovative prose forms reflecting influences from across the literary spectrum. This fits well into Richard Dury’s (2012) description of Stevenson’s

style, that it ‘partly resides in [...] his ability to take stylistic features from different languages, linguistic registers, and literary traditions and use them to produce a fresh creation that is “Stevensonian”’.<sup>31</sup>

### Part 3: William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is another writer who made an innovative use of chiasmus in his writings. Although separated by three centuries, Stevenson considered Shakespeare his ‘dearest and best friend’ and placed him first in his collection of ‘eternal books that never weary’.<sup>32</sup> His first exposure to Shakespeare as a child was ‘a landmark in the boy’s life’, which he later recalled in detail in a letter to his friend, Charles Baxter:<sup>33</sup>

I remember the day my mother read *Macbeth* to me. A terrible, black, stormy day, when neither of us could go out of the house; and so we both sat over the fire and she read and I had snakes and newts and others to crawl up and down my spine.<sup>34</sup>

It is unclear when Stevenson first began studying Shakespeare’s style, but he speaks authoritatively about it in his first letter to William James in 1884, when he was in his early 30s:

Seriously, from the dearth of information and thoughtful interest in the art of literature, those who try to practise it with any deliberate purpose run the risk of finding no fit audience. People suppose it is ‘the stuff’ that interests them; they think, for instance, that the prodigious fine thoughts and sentiments in Shakespeare impress by their own weight, not understanding that the unpolished diamond is but a stone. They think that striking situations, or good dialogue, are got by studying life; they will not rise to understand that they are prepared by deliberate artifice and set off by painful suppressions.<sup>35</sup>

William Shakespeare, like Stevenson, used chiasmus ‘throughout his writing career’ and learned about it in his youth. William L. Davis (2003, 2005) argues that Shakespeare’s early exposure to chiasmus likely came during his ‘grammar school training’ where he ‘learned rhetoric according to the classical model’, which included chiasmus. At this same time, he ‘would have observed’ chiastic structures in his youthful study of the Bible. Making innovative use of these influences, he ‘constructed his complex chiasms using rhetorical devices from both the classical and Hebrew traditions, merging them together into a unique system which, in many respects, is singularly characteristic of Shakespeare’s work’.<sup>36</sup>

This ‘unique system’ included using chiasmus ‘in the comic repartee between characters’, to ‘reveal the central themes of passages’, and ‘as a structural blueprint for the dialogue in entire scenes and even for the structure of plays’. In addition, Shakespeare ‘constantly manipulat[ed] the complex structures to create new variations, and he often achieve[d] these results by combining a number of rhetorical devices and chiastic patterns into systems that express greater complexity’.<sup>37</sup>

The following example from *Hamlet* (2.2.220-256) is a complex sequence of ten interlocking chiasms. Notice how some chiasms are joined by a common ‘A’ element and how the central element often consists of repeated lines for emphasis.

A: Now **I am** alone.

B: what a **rogue**

B: and **peasant slave**

A: **am I!**

A: Is it not monstrous that **this player** here,

B: But in **a fiction**,

B: In **a dream of passion**,

A: Could force **his soul**

B: So **to his own conceit**

C: that from her working **all the visage wann'd,**

D: **Tears in his eyes,**

D: **Distraction in his aspect,**

D: A **broken voice,**

C: An' **his whole function suiting**

B: With forms **to his conceit?**

A: and all **for nothing, for Hecuba!**

A: What's **Hecuba**

B: To **him,**

B: Or **he**

A: To **Hecuba** that he should weep for her?

A: What **would he do, had he**

B: **the motive**

B: And **the cue** for passion

A: That **I have?**

A: **He would** drown the stage with tears

B: And **cleave the general ear** with horrid speech,

C: Make **mad the guilty,**

C: and **appal the free**

C: **Confound the ignorant,**

B: And **amaze** indeed **the very faculties of eyes and ears.**

A: Yet **I, a dull and muddy-mettle rascal,**

B: **Peak** like John-a-dreams,

B: **Unpregnant** of my cause,

A: And can say **nothing;** no, **not for a king,**

B: Upon **whose property**

B: and **most dear life** a damn'd defeat was made.

A: **Am I a coward?**

B: **Who calls me** villain,

C: **Breaks my pate across,**

C: **Plucks off my beard**

C: and **blows it in my face,**

C: **Twinks me by the nose,**

C: **Gives me the lie i' th' throat** as deep as to the lungs?

B: **Who does me** this? Hah, 'swounds, I should take it;

A: for it cannot be but **I am pigeon-liver'd**

B: And **lack gall** To make oppression bitter,

B: **Or ere this** I should 'a' fatted all the region kites

B: with **this slave's** offal

B: Bloody, bawdy **villain!**

C: Remorseless,

D: Treacherous,

D: Lecherous,

C: Kindless

B: **Villain!**

A: Why, what **an ass am I!**

Davis observes that 'the form of repetition inherent in a complex chiasmic system inevitably deepens the meaning of a text by providing multiple viewpoints of a single idea, making it rich with three-dimensional language and imagery'.<sup>38</sup> In this chiasmic sequence, Hamlet contrasts his own self-judged cowardice with Claudius's apparent ability to persuade and act decisively. This contrast is enhanced by the repetition of lines in the central element of several chiasms, which reveals strong emotion and intense inner turmoil. Shakespeare has a masterful ability to use chiasmus to enhance the emotion of a scene and direct attention to the central theme of a passage.

Like Shakespeare, Stevenson was an innovative writer who experimented with literary forms. His 'one rule' concerning the

‘web’ or ‘pattern’ is that it ‘be infinitely various; to interest, to disappoint, to surprise, and yet still to gratify; to be ever changing, as it were, the stitch, and yet still to give the effect of an ingenious neatness’. To Stevenson, this is ‘style’ or ‘the foundation of the art of literature’.<sup>39</sup>

Stevenson’s use of chiasmus frequently appears in his essays, like in Shakespeare’s plays, as part of an interlocking series of parallel figures. For example, the first paragraph of ‘An Autumn Effect’ (1875) is constructed of an alternating sequence of seven chiasms and parallelisms that emphasises different aspects of the ‘unity of impression’ gained through rapid travel by foot and, perhaps, represents the right-left rhythm of walking.<sup>40</sup>

A: A country **rapidly passed through** under favourable auspices

B: may leave upon us a **unity of impression** that would only be disturbed and

dissipated if we stayed longer.

B: **Clear vision** goes

A: with the **quick foot**.

B: Things fall for us into a sort of **natural perspective**

A: when we see them for a moment in **going by**;

B: we **generalise boldly and simply**,

A: and are **gone**

A: **before**

B: the **sun** is overcast,

A: **before**

B: the **rain** falls,

A: **before**

B: the **season** can steal like a dial-hand from his figure,

A: **before**

B: the **lights and shadows**, shifting round towards nightfall,

A: can **show us**

B: the **other side of things**,

B: and **belie**

A: what they **showed us** in the morning.

A: We **expose**

B: **our mind** to the landscape

A: (as we would **expose**

B: the **prepared plate in the camera**)

A: for the **moment**

B: only during which the **effect endures**;

A: and we are **away**

B: before the **effect can change**.

A: Hence we shall have in our **memories**

B: a long scroll of **continuous wayside pictures**,

C: all imbued already with **the prevailing sentiment of the season**,

C: **the weather, and the landscape**,

B: and certain to be **unified** more and more, as time goes on,

A: by the **unconscious processes of thought**.

A: So that **we who have only looked at a country over our shoulder**, so to

speak, as we went by,

B: will have a **conception of it far more memorable and articulate**

A: than a man who has lived there all his life from a child upwards,

B: and had his **impression of to-day modified by that of to-morrow, and**

**belied by that of the day after**,

A: till at length the **stable characteristics** of the country

B: are all **blotted out** from him

B: behind the **confusion**

A: of **variable effect**.

In this chiasmic sequence, Stevenson argues that rapid travel provides the memory with a 'unified' image of a landscape, rather than the 'confusion' that results from seeing the same landscape under differing weather and light conditions. By using a series of parallel figures, Stevenson makes the reader feel as though they are walking together and conversing as they go. Here, like in the passage from *Hamlet*, the use of parallel figures 'deepens the meaning of [the] text by providing multiple viewpoints of a single idea, making it rich with three-dimensional language and imagery'.<sup>41</sup>

Was Shakespeare Stevenson's introduction to chiasmus? At what point did Stevenson begin studying Shakespeare's style? The available evidence suggests that Shakespeare had an early and significant impact on Stevenson, who developed an appreciation for Shakespeare's style by the early 1880s. Since both writers created large, varying, interlocking sequences of parallel figures, it is probable that Shakespeare had an influence on Stevenson's use of chiasmus.

#### **Part 4: French Writers: Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, and Michel de Montaigne**

Lastly, let us consider the influence of French writers. Although Stevenson made use of chiasmus as early as 1866, his use increased dramatically beginning with his 1874 essays that reflected his travels in France and an interest in French literature.

Harriet Dorothea MacPherson, in *R. L. Stevenson: A Study in French Influence* (1930), argues that Stevenson 'gained the rudiments of his style from the French'. A 'formative period' was the latter half of the 1870s, when he associated with 'the artist colony to which his cousin belonged' in Fontainebleau. Here he 'learned

to think of writing as work' and became 'a serious student of French literature'.<sup>42</sup> In 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters' (1884), Stevenson writes reverentially about the 'technical inspiration' that immersed him in France:

[T]here is something, or there seems to be something, in the very air of France that communicates the love of style. Precision, clarity, the cleanly and crafty employment of material, a grace in the handling, apart from any value in the thought, seem to be acquired by the mere residence; or if not acquired, become at least the more appreciated. The air of Paris is alive with this technical inspiration. And to leave that airy city and awake next day upon the borders of the forest is but to change externals. The same spirit of dexterity and finish breathes from the long alleys and the lofty groves, from the wildernesses that are still pretty in their confusion, and the great plain that contrives to be decorative in its emptiness.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Gustave Flaubert***

In describing how Stevenson 'distilled out and assimilated French literary ideals', J. C. Furnas in *Voyage to Windward* (1952) emphasises Gustave Flaubert's 'doctrine of *mot juste*' or the careful and deliberate effort to find the 'right word'.<sup>44</sup> This attention to detail is reflected in Flaubert's use of chiasmus. The following example expresses the need to maintain a balance between doubt and hope, or optimism and realism.<sup>45</sup>

A: Il faut toujours **espérer**

B: **quand**

C: on **désespère**,

C: et **douter**

B: **quand**

A: on **espère**.

Flaubert not only applied chiasmus to word order, but, similar to Stevenson, used it as a narrative device in structuring stories and the relationships between characters. Jennifer Yee (2011) explains how 'Flaubert's projected modern oriental novel was to be based on a structure of chiasmus: a "civilised" man was to become a "barbarian" and vice versa'.<sup>46</sup> A similar chiasmic structure governs the relationship between the title characters in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881), as described by Michal Peled Ginsburg (1986):

Though the relationship between Bouvard and Pécuchet remains polarised throughout the novel, a process of reversal takes place by which they exchange qualities – a chiasmic movement by which Bouvard becomes Pécuchet, and Pécuchet Bouvard.<sup>47</sup>

Stevenson incorporated *mot juste* into his own style to such an extent that MacPherson considers him 'a Flaubert of English literature' and explains how Stevenson, 'in his early days, [...] revelled in the beauty of Flaubert's phrasing'. Significantly, MacPherson detects a French treatment in 'On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements' (1885), discussed earlier, and specifies how '[i]n its conscious voicing of the elements of a smooth and clear-cut style, this essay echoes Flaubert'.<sup>48</sup>

### **Victor Hugo**

Another French writer who makes significant use of chiasmus is Victor Hugo. Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel (2014) explains that chiasmus was 'over-abundantly used by the Romantics, particularly the French Romantics. Victor Hugo, for instance, made it one of his main rhetorical tools'.<sup>49</sup> Joyce O. Lowrie (2008) describes how Hugo 'used it with gusto, since it formed part of the way in which he expressed his thoughts'. Lowrie then shares the following 'significant example' of chiasmus from Hugo's poem, 'Booz endormi' (1859).<sup>50</sup>

A: Un **roi**

B: **chantait**

C: **en bas,**

C: **en haut**

B: **mourait**

A: un **Dieu.**

Since Stevenson considered Hugo '[t]he great contemporary master of wordmanship, and indeed of all literary arts and technicalities' it is likely that he recognised and admired Hugo's use of chiasmus. Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that Stevenson makes repeated use of chiasmus in 'Victor Hugo's Romances' (1874). The following example emphasises how Notre Dame Cathedral does not dominate the Paris skyline as it does in Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*:<sup>51</sup>

A: **It is purely an effect of mirage;**

B: **Notre Dame** does not, in reality, thus dominate and stand out above the city;

C: and **anyone who should visit it**, in the spirit of the Scott-tourists

to Edinburgh or the Trossachs,

C: would **be almost offended at finding nothing more**

B: than this **old church** thrust away into a corner.

A: **It is purely an effect of mirage**, as we say; but it is an effect that

permeates and possesses the whole book with astonishing consistency and strength

### *Michel de Montaigne*

Writing much earlier in French history, Michel de Montaigne, the French Renaissance essayist, may have played a larger role in Stevenson's use of chiasmus. According to Stevenson's essay,

'Books Which Have Influenced Me' (1887), Montaigne was a major literary influence:

A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived: the *Essais* of Montaigne.<sup>52</sup>

Stevenson included Montaigne in 'the inner circle of my intimates', or the six authors he 're-read the oftenest', and as one of the authors to which he 'played the sedulous ape' as he learned how to write.<sup>53</sup>

Phillip John Usher (2014) describes how Montaigne not only applied chiasmus to 'local word order' but, like Stevenson, to 'long-range structure', including the 'disposition of major themes'.<sup>54</sup> For example, the structure of Montaigne's essay on sexual impotence, 'On the Power of the Imagination' (1580), is chiastic. As Usher explains:

Impotence, argues Montaigne *contra* Bodin and popular belief, is caused by the imagination (Non-impotent state → Talking about impotence → Imagining impotence → Impotence). It can be cured, he advances, through a chiasmic reversal of terms (Impotence → Imagining impotence → Talking about impotence → Non-impotent state).<sup>55</sup>

When diagrammed according to the ABBA format, the essay's chiastic structure is readily observed:

- A: **Non-impotent** state
- B: **Talking about** impotence
- C: **Imagining** impotence
- D: **Impotence**

**D: Impotence****C: Imagining** impotence**B: Talking about** impotence**A: Non-impotent** state

Far from being 'ornamental', Usher shows that the inverted structure of chiasmus allows Montaigne to 'argue against dogmatism', 'unseat knowledge', and reveal 'the inherent multiplicities and uncertainties in the world around us'. In the case of impotence, Montaigne challenges the conventional wisdom of his day that attributes impotence to 'demons and witches' and argues instead that 'man must invert his thinking' and control his 'own psychology'.<sup>56</sup>

As discussed earlier, Stevenson uses chiasmus for the long-range structure of 'Aes Triplex' (1878), which concludes with the position that not embracing life is worse than death. Montaigne touches on similar themes in his essays, 'The Taste of Good and Evil Things Depends on Our Opinion' (1580) and 'On Repenting' (1588). In the first, he writes, 'I grant that pain [rather than death] is the worst disaster that can befall our being', and in the second, 'It is my conviction that what makes for human happiness is not, as Antisthenes said, dying happily but living happily'.<sup>57</sup> With its similarity in thought and form to Montaigne's writings, it is probable that Stevenson's use of chiasmus in 'Aes Triplex' was a result of Montaigne's influence.

Flaubert, Hugo, and Montaigne are a sample of the many French writers Stevenson admired and who shaped his style. Though Stevenson likely did not learn about chiasmus from the French, their influence appears to have enhanced and expanded his understanding and practice. Perhaps this growing awareness of chiasmus helped him recognise or more fully appreciate chiasmus in the Bible, Shakespeare, and wherever else he had encountered it before.

## Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been to demonstrate the significant presence of chiasmus in Robert Louis Stevenson's essays and to present possible literary influences. An awareness of chiasmus in Stevenson's rhetorical style can help us better appreciate why his writings are pleasing to the ear and more fully understand the nuance and structure of his arguments.

Looking forward, further study of the writers who most influenced Stevenson may reveal additional insights into Stevenson's adoption, development, and usage of chiasmus. An understanding of how Stevenson used chiasmus in his writings can aid translators in their efforts to make Stevenson's writings available in other languages. While this paper has focused on Stevenson's essays, preliminary research suggests the presence of illuminating chiasmus in his fiction, as well as unique insights into the dual aspects of Robert Louis Stevenson himself.

## NOTES

- 1 Ward Farnsworth, *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2011), p. 97.
- 2 F. C. Riedel, 'A Classical Rhetorical Analysis of Some Elements of Stevenson's Essay Style', *Style*, 3 (1969), 182-192, p. 192. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42945021>
- 3 Ibid., p. 192.
- 4 The discerning eye will notice that 'splitting into' and 'cohering into' also correspond, although antithetically, creating a third element in this chiasm.
- 5 Farnsworth, p. 108. This passage from *Treasure Island* is found in 'Chapter 10: The Voyage'.
- 6 'Small form' and 'extended form' are terms used by Robert Hariman in 'What is Chiasmus? Or, Why the Abyss Stares Back', in *Chiasmus and Culture*, ed. by Boris Wiseman and Anthony Paul (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 45-68; and 'long-range' is used by Phillip John Usher in 'Quotidian Chiasmus in Montaigne: Arguing Impotence and Suicide', in the same volume, pp. 58, 149.
- 7 'The Pentland Rising: A Page in History, 1666' (1866), p. 4.

- 8 Five years later, Stevenson uses this same back-to-back style in ‘An Old Scotch Gardener’ (1871):

A: The earth, that **he**

B: had **digged** so much in his life,

B: was **dug out**

A: by another for **himself**;

A: and the flowers that **he**

B: had **tended**

B: drew their **life**

A: still from **him**, but in a new and nearer way.

- 9 Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions’, *The Biographical Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson: Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), p. xix, Google ebook.
- 10 ‘My First Book: *Treasure Island*’, *The Biographical Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson: Treasure Island* (1908), p. xxii, Google ebook.
- 11 ‘A Gossip on Romance’, *ibid.*, *Memories and Portraits* (1911), pp. 240-41, Google ebook.
- 12 ‘Thomas Stevenson: Civil Engineer’, *ibid.*, p. 125, Google ebook.
- 13 Alice D. Snyder recognises this same long-range structure in several of Stevenson’s essays, but, rather than focusing on its parallel attributes, discusses it in terms of antithesis. See Alice D. Snyder, ‘Paradox and Antithesis in Stevenson’s Essays: A Structural Study’, *Journal of English and German Philology*, 19 (October 1920), 540-59. Thank you to Richard Dury for making us aware of this article. Although not specified in Snyder’s article, Alfred H. Lloyd includes parallelism as an element of antithesis in his theory of antithesis, which she follows – Alfred H. Lloyd, ‘The Logic of Antithesis’, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 8 (May 1911), 281-89.
- 14 In *The Biographical Edition [...] Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* (1911), pp. 146-163.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 154, 155, 161.
- 16 Phillip John Usher, ‘Quotidian Chiasmus in Montaigne: Arguing Impotence and Suicide’, *Chiasmus and Culture* (2014), p. 157.
- 17 Evelyn Blantyre Simpson, *Robert Louis Stevenson’s Edinburgh Days*

- (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), p. 48. Google ebook.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 129, 130. Simpson sees in these verses the sentiment, 'Be good yourself, make others happy', which his mother described as 'the gospel according to Robert Louis Stevenson'. (Ibid, p. 128).
  - 19 Ivan D. Sanderson, *Isaiah: The Times of Fulfillment. A Verse by Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Westbench Publishing, 2009), p. 579. With Stevenson's frail health, it is understandable why this verse would be part of his personal gospel. In this chiasm, 'thine health' corresponds to 'thy righteousness', the former referring to 'physical wellbeing' and the latter referring to 'spiritual wellbeing'. 'When we are protected by the Lord, our health is sustained and others will know and acknowledge our righteousness'.
  - 20 John Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), p. 87. Google ebook.
  - 21 *Essays and Criticisms* (1903), p. 226.
  - 22 *Memories and Portraits* (1911), p. 57.
  - 23 Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. by G. Gregory, ed. by Calvin E. Stowe (Andover: Flagg & Gould, 1829), preface; John Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1854), p. v. Google ebook.
  - 24 George M. Ella, 'John Albert Bengel (1687-1754): The Father of Modern Biblical Scholarship', *Biographia Evangelica*. <<http://evangelica.de/articles/biographies/john-albert-bengel-1687-1752-the-father-of-modern-biblical-scholarship>> [accessed 29 December 2017]. The term 'χιασμός' is transliterated as 'chiasmus' in the first English translation of the *Gnomon*, edited by Andrew Robert Fausset and published in five volumes in Edinburgh beginning in 1857.
  - 25 John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1820), p. 65. Google ebook.
  - 26 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature', *Essays and Criticisms* (1903), p. 188. When first published in *The Contemporary Review* (1885), this essay was titled, 'On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements'.
  - 27 A review of Stevenson's personal library finds no match with any of the major works on scripture parallelisms. It is possible that he encountered scripture parallelisms through the influence of his grandfather, Reverend Lewis Balfour (1777-1860). In 'The Manse' (1887), Stevenson describes his grandfather's residence as having 'a

library of bloodless books – or so they seemed in those days, although I have some of them now on my own shelves and like well to read them' (*Memories and Portraits*, p. 103). See 'What Stevenson Read – His Personal Library', *RLS Website* <[robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library)>.

- 28 *Essays and Criticisms* (1903), p. 183.
- 29 Travis R. Merritt, 'Taste, Opinion, and Theory in the Rise of Victorian Prose Stylist', in *The Art of Victorian Prose*, ed. by George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 29.
- 30 *Essays and Criticisms* (1903), pp. 184, 185.
- 31 Richard Dury, 'Stevenson's Essays: Language and Style', *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, 9 (2012), 43-91, p. 45.
- 32 'Books Which Have Influenced Me', *Essays and Criticism* (1903), p. 226; 'The Ideal House', *Essays of Travel and in The Art of Writing* (1911), p. 229.
- 33 J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1952), p. 43.
- 34 RLS to Charles Baxter, December 1872 in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* ed. by Ernest Mehew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 29 (footnote).
- 35 Janet Adam Smith, ed., *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 102-103.
- 36 William L. Davis, 'Structural Secrets: Shakespeare's Complex Chiasmus', *Style*, 39 (2005), 237-58, p. 241; William L. Davis, 'Better a Witty Fool than a Foolish Wit: The Art of Shakespeare's Chiasmus', *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23, (2003), 311-30, pp. 320-1.
- 37 Davis, 'Better A Witty Fool', pp. 313, 319; Davis, 'Structural Secrets', pp. 244, 251.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- 39 Stevenson, *Essays and Criticisms* (Boston: Herbert B. Turner and Co., 1903), pp. 184, 187. Google ebook.
- 40 'An Autumn Effect', in *The Biographical Edition [...] Essays of Travel and in The Art of Writing* (1903), pp. 120-21. Google ebook.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- 42 Harriet Dorothea MacPherson, *R. L. Stevenson: A Study in French*

- Influence* (New York: Publications of the Institute of French Studies, Inc., 1930), pp. 9, 11, 12, 36.
- 43 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters', *Across the Plains with Other Memories and Essays* (1907), p. 267.
- 44 Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 112.
- 45 Louis Conard, ed., *Pensées de Gustave Flaubert* (Paris: Louis Conard, 1915), p. 100. <https://archive.org/details/pensesdegustavooflauiuoft> [accessed 19 February 2018]. Thanks to Jacob Stewart for helping us understand this passage.
- 46 Jennifer Yee, 'Undermining Exoticism: Flaubert's Use of Antithesis in *L'Education sentimentale*', in *Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuxiémistes*, 15 (April 2011) 26-36, p. 32. Thanks to Shon D. Hopkin for helping us access this article.
- 47 Michal Peled Ginsburg, *Flaubert Writing: A Study in Narrative Strategies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 156. Google ebook.
- 48 MacPherson, pp. 37, 42, 72. Stevenson does not hide his admiration for French literature in this essay, but openly declares that 'French prose is distinctly better than English' and that the French are ahead of the English in adopting 'the pattern of the web' (*Essays and Criticisms*, p. 200).
- 49 Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, 'Chiasm in Merleau-Ponty: Metaphor or Concept?', *Chiasmus and Culture*, ed. by Boris Wiseman and Anthony Paul (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 92. Robert Louis Stevenson's personal library includes volumes from several French Romantic authors, including: Balzac, Chateaubriand, Dumas, Gautier, Hugo, Musset, Sand, and Stendhal ('What Stevenson Read – His Personal Library', *RLS Website* <[robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library)>).
- 50 Joyce O. Lowrie, *Sightings: Mirrors in Texts – Texts in Mirrors* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), p. 3.
- 51 'Victor Hugo's Romances', *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1912), pp. xiv, 13.
- 52 'Books Which Have Influenced Me', *Essays and Criticisms* (1903), pp. 226-227. Stevenson's personal library includes three copies of Montaigne's essays that feature 'annotations', 'critical remarks', and 'marginal markings' ('What Stevenson Read – His Personal Library' at [robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org/robert-louis-stevensons-library)).

- 53 'A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's', *Memories and Portraits* (1911), p. 212. Stevenson's 'inner circle' includes: 'One or two of Scott's novels [possibly *Guy Mannering*, *Rob Roy*, or *Redgauntlet*], Shakespeare, Molière, Montaigne, *The Egoist* [by George Meredith], and *Vicomte de Bragelonne* [by Alexandre Dumas]'; 'A College Magazine', see *Memories and Portraits* (1911), p. 57. The authors to whom Stevenson 'got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction, and in the coordination of parts' are Hazlitt, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Brown, Defoe, Hawthorn, Montaigne, Baudelaire, and Obermann. In this same essay, he also mentions Ruskin, Robert Browning, Keats, Chaucer, Morris, Swinburne, John Webster, Congreve, Thackeray, and Dumas.
- 54 Phillip John Usher, 'Quotidian Chiasmus in Montaigne: Arguing Impotence and Suicide', *Chiasmus and Culture* (2014), p. 149.
- 55 Ibid., p. 152.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 148, 150, 152, 156, 158.
- 57 Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 59, 920.

# The enigma of Katharine de Mattos: reflections on her life and writings<sup>1</sup>

*Hilary J. Beattie*

Katharine de Mattos, née Stevenson, remains a relatively obscure figure in the Robert Louis Stevenson saga, despite being the dedicatee of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as the unwitting catalyst of the celebrated 1888 quarrel between him and his friend William Ernest Henley. She features but slightly in his correspondence and few of her letters to him appear to have survived, whether by accident or design. Only one portrait of her, a watercolour done in later life,<sup>2</sup> exists in the public domain, and no photographs whatever. She flits in and out of the Stevenson biographies, disappearing almost completely after 1888, and the recent study of Katharine by Jeremy Hodges, which centers on her supposed role in the genesis of *Jekyll and Hyde*, is marred by a lack of references and a propensity to invent where sources fail, so that she emerges as her cousin's neglected muse and innocent victim in a way that obscures the real interest of her long and troubled life.<sup>3</sup> Here I shall try to bring some perspective to that life and the forces that shaped it, drawing not only on the scattered references in Louis's letters and poems, but also on Katharine's own poetry and stories, almost the only direct evidence of her own distinctive voice.

## **Prologue: Family Tragedy**

Katharine Elizabeth Alan Stevenson, the youngest child of Alan Stevenson (1807-65) and his wife, was born in 1851 into unpropitious circumstances. Alan, the oldest of the surviving sons of Robert Stevenson, was a classical scholar, poet, and somewhat reluctant but brilliant engineer who built the most famous of the family's great lighthouses, Skerryvore. Alan's marriage to Margaret Jones (a love match delayed for eleven years by her

Welsh father's opposition) took place in 1844, and from 1846 to 1851 they produced four children, three girls and one boy, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson or Bob (1847-1900). But Alan's life, and his family's, was overshadowed from around 1844 by his ever worsening health, not just the colds, fevers and exhaustion incident on terrible working conditions, but more serious symptoms described variously as rheumatism, crippling lumbago, pain and aching joints, although with intermittent spells of seeming recovery. His worsening pains and "paraplegia" (paralysis of the lower limbs) finally disabled him from work in 1853, but were compounded in 1852 by a "severe nervous affliction," with guilty religious melancholia, all of which led inexorably to his death in 1865.<sup>4</sup>

Alan's illness was unidentified then, but his symptoms are consistent with multiple sclerosis (MS), an occasionally remitting but progressive neuro-degenerative disease that can be accompanied by mood swings and depression. The impact on his family must have been immense, and not only in practical, financial terms, due to loss of income and the cost of his expensive, useless spa treatments, but also psychologically, as any hopes of his recovery were repeatedly dashed. Katharine can hardly have known her father in anything like a normal state, and her mother's emotional energies would have been increasingly absorbed by his care. The brightest spark in the gloom was probably the imaginative, scatter-brained Bob, who at least had the prolonged escapes of school. How much formal education the sisters got is unknown, though Katharine was evidently a reader and acquired a good knowledge of French through some period of residence in France, where Alan had many connections. And there were happier summers when the extended family met up; Katharine recalled playing on North Berwick sands with Bob and Louis,<sup>5</sup> and the three of them riding their ponies headlong through the waters of the Tweed near Innerleithen.<sup>6</sup>

### Marriage, writing, and struggle

Though there were family rumours of a teenaged crush between Katharine and her cousin Louis,<sup>7</sup> and Hodges assumes that Katharine always pined for him, there is no certain evidence of it. A child whose parents are emotionally unavailable often makes their closest bond with an older sibling (which in turn may influence their later loves),<sup>8</sup> and for Katharine this was clearly with her brilliant and adored brother. It could have been through him that she met William Sydney de Mattos, who was a Cambridge contemporary of Bob's and like him a free-thinking atheist. He must also have been a ladies' man, for he was described in later life as a 'serial seducer' and 'satyromaniac'.<sup>9</sup> To the inexperienced Katharine he could have offered an alluring escape from her blighted family, and so (perhaps echoing her mother's struggle against her own family) she braved the Stevensons' collective disapproval to marry him.

Shortly before her wedding, in June 1874, Katharine and her sister Dora visited Louis in on a glorious sunlit day in Swanston, where, with his Balfour cousin Maggie, they lay close together on a shawl in the garden, and 'half pretended, half felt, we had all lost our individualities and became merged and mixed up in a quadruple existence'.<sup>10</sup> There is an erotic quality to this 'half wanton' fantasy, which for Katharine could have anticipated wedded bliss, for Louis quotes her as saying 'the heaven seemed to be dropping oil upon us, or honeydew'. She might well have been echoing the ecstatic closing lines of 'Kubla Khan', 'For he on honey-dew hath fed, | And drunk the milk of Paradise' – but without their earlier warning, 'Beware! Beware!'

Katharine went to live with de Mattos in London, where he was studying law, leaving her mother and Dora in Portobello. She dreamed of becoming a writer herself and was soon sending her efforts to Louis for criticism (*Letters* 2:44). But by October disappointment had set in, as evidenced in her 'paper' about a dismal village whose name had inspired her fancy but which turned out

to be wretchedly disillusioning when she got there. How she felt about Louis's trenchant critique of her 'woolly, hard to follow, and disorderly' style and muddled metaphors we don't know, though his advice to persevere and 'learn to write with the quick of your fingers' was encouraging. But he did catch her mood, saying: 'I know the place; it is called [...] the village of Hope-deferred, and near it goes the river of the Shadow of Suicide' (*Letters* 2: 61-63). His follow-up letter contained further advice, but this time submerged in a litany of his own miseries that left little room for hers. In another merging fantasy Louis now saw Katharine as a 'very small jar' and himself a 'very large jar', of botched pottery, imagining them reduced to potsherds and ending up in the crucible of all matter whence new, radiant forms will emerge (an image borrowed from Gautier's 'Affinités secrètes') (*Letters* 2:79-81). Such condescension and fluidity of boundaries may not have augured well for their future relationship.

By December Katharine's marriage was deeply troubled. Now pregnant and short of money, she wrote to Louis, one of the trustees of her marriage settlement, to ask his help in finding paying work.<sup>11</sup> His reply is lost, but to Fanny Sitwell he claimed that he would get Katharine some book reviewing for a newspaper and essentially ghost-write her efforts (*Letters* 2:89-90). To Bob he said merely that he could fix up whatever 'rubbish' she produced, but he also betrayed annoyance: 'Tell me [what Katharine wants] because I am damnable puzzled what to do on her vague hints' (*Letters* 2:91). Whether Louis's patronizing good intentions came to anything is doubtful, although it seems he helped out with cash when he could.<sup>12</sup> In the long run it was Henley, with his alleged crush on Katharine, who did more to help her find work and see that she got paid for it, especially after he became editor of *London* in 1877, and later the *Magazine of Art*, in the 1880s. Meanwhile Katharine had a daughter, Helen (Snoodie), in 1875, and a son, Richard, in 1877,<sup>13</sup> and somehow got by, possibly aided by her mother who, after Dora married in 1876, took a house in

Chelsea, where Katharine and the children later lived with her.

After September 1876 Louis's attentions were increasingly absorbed by his frustrating pursuit of Fanny Osbourne, although Katharine could never be ignored because of his responsibilities as one of her trustees. His feelings about her seem to have become a mix of sympathy and occasional irritation, especially after the murky episode in September 1878 (after Fanny had returned to California). Katharine, with her daughter, had left de Mattos to travel in France, where they met Louis at the start of his Cévennes travels (Masson, p. 13). Louis, while concealing any contact with her, did comply with her husband's angry requests to send her money but complained to Charles Baxter about Katharine's 'singularly futile delicacy' in waiting till the last minute to let him know she was 'cleaned out', and about Sydney's failure to provide financially (*Letters* 2:290-291). Yet he rose to Katharine's defence in April 1879, when Alec Thomson, soon-to-be ex-husband of her oldest sister, Mab, started spreading scandal about her (*Letters* 2:317). All the sisters made bad marriages, but Louis, raised in relative affluence, did not seem to wonder whether Katharine's reticence might be due in part to shame over her marital failure and her perennial status as poor relation. Even Henley was often in the dark, for in a letter to Louis (in San Francisco) in January 1880, he said that he rarely saw Katharine: 'I've occasional letters from her – vague, exclamatory, interrogative – but in the art of affording no kind of information she yields to none, or, if anyone, then to you only'.<sup>14</sup>

The dynamics of Louis's circle were drastically altered after August 1880 when he returned from the USA now married to Fanny. Katharine was one of the people Fanny set out to win over, with extravagant praise, and even patronage, as when in 1881 she claimed to have rewritten a 'paper' of Katharine's in an effort to 'place it' for her in an American magazine.<sup>15</sup> Late that year Katharine finally left her husband, and Louis, with Charles Baxter's help, pressured her to obtain a legal separation (*Letters*

3:239-240). This move apparently incurred some social disapproval, for in April 1882, concerning his and Fanny's forthcoming visit to England, Louis wrote jokingly to Katharine: 'I hope you know that we both loathe, deprecate, detest and sicken at the thought of you [...] *Can Fanny get rooms beside you? This is the attraction of repulsion*' (*Letters* 3:327). Yet his elaborate jest, which he remorsefully begged Katharine not to take seriously, was hardly kind. In December 1883, after finally yielding to Henley's plea that he and Fanny praise 'poor Katharine' for her *début* article, 'Flowers and flower painters' in *The Magazine of Art*, he ended his letter on another note of apologetic reassurance: 'you must never think that silence is more than selfishness on our part. For I believe my wife loves and admires you, and I know I do from my heart' (*Letters* 4:227).

Katharine's elusiveness may be reflected in the two oddly contrasting poems Louis wrote for her in 1883. The shorter one depicts a sprite of wavering, unstable moods, who is hard to know or get close to:

We see you as we see a face  
That trembles in a forest place  
Upon the mirror of a pool  
Forever quiet, clear and cool;  
And in the wayward glass, appears  
To hover between smiles and tears,  
Elfin and human, airy and true,  
And backed by the reflected blue.

The other poem, harking back to their shared Scottish roots, portrays her romantically as 'A lover of the moorland bare' and of all the forces of nature: winds, rain, brook, dew, frost, mountains, fire and seas, and 'the high-riding, virgin moon'. But the middle stanza offers a harsher image, one of blight, anger, perhaps thwarted sexuality, and flight:

And as the berry, pale and sharp,  
Sprints on some ditch's counterscarp  
In our ungenial, native north –  
You put your frosted wildings forth,  
And on the heath, afar from man,  
A strong and bitter virgin ran.<sup>16</sup>

After Louis and Fanny settled in Bournemouth in July 1884 Katharine and Snoodie became frequent visitors (oddly, Richard is never mentioned). This was a dismal period, marred by Thomas Stevenson's mental decline and Louis's own ill-health and depression, exacerbated by the exhausting process of writing plays with Henley. Fanny could by now pose as a literary expert and fiction writer, whereas Katharine wrote from necessity, mainly journalistic essays and reviews. Her three essays in *The Magazine of Art* (edited by Henley 1881-1886) reveal her to be by now a competent and highly literate professional who was capable of satirical flashes, especially in 'The artist in fiction' (1884). Here she mocks the romantic stereotype of the moody, velveteen jacketed painter who requires support from one of two types of woman, either the simple 'rustic Maiden' or 'an Early Broughtonese or Late Braddonesque young woman [...] rude, red-haired, passionate, detestable', who, after succumbing to his passion, tends to end badly.<sup>17</sup> One might detect a sly dig at family members here, Bob and Louis included, and a variation on this theme was to surface later in Katharine's own fiction.

Not long after a trip to see Thomas Hardy, in September 1885, Louis had the nightmare that gave him the germ of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and soon told it to Katharine (Masson, p. 13). He had suffered a 'dreadful hemorrhage' on that trip, when Katharine was also present, but there is nothing to support Hodges's claim that she could have influenced both dream and story by reading Poe's tales to him during his convalescence, still less that she

could have shown him the MS of a Poe-inspired story of her own (Hodges, p. 54; *Letters* 5:125-129). The question remains, why Louis, who had grown up between two strong mother figures and had a history of tactlessness in relation to rival women in his life, should have dedicated his story to Katharine rather than to Fanny, who had some claim to credit over its reshaping. Clues can be found both in his nostalgic dedicatory poem and in the letter he sent with the book on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886. The poem was part of one Louis had given Katharine earlier that year at his and Fanny's wedding anniversary dinner. It celebrated their shared Scottish childhood, but its first line, 'It's ill to loose the bands that God decreed to bind', seems to imply a risk of estrangement.<sup>18</sup> And in the letter he again insists: 'You know very well that I love you dearly, and that I always will', but ends by saying that the story is sent by 'the one that loves you – Jekyll, and not Hyde' (*Letters* 5:168). So maybe the Hyde side of him did not love her so well, and the dedication was supposed to atone for that.

But contrast all this with Louis's letter to Katharine a month later, when all his frustrations, like Mr Hyde, came roaring back.

My dear Katharine, 'Tis the most complete *blague* and folly to write to you; you never answer and, even when you do, your letters crackle under the teeth like ashes; containing nothing, as they do, but unseasonable japes and a great cloudy vagueness as of the realms of chaos. In this I know well they are like mine, and it becomes me well to write such – but not you – for reasons too obvious to mention. [...] Of your views, state, finances, etc., etc., I know nothing.

He ends, in part: 'How do you like letters of this kind? It is your kind. They mean nothing; they are blankly insignificant; and impudently put one in the wrong' (*Letters* 5:189). Despite the joking tone the last phrase is ominous, suggesting a sensitivity that would be further wounded two years later.

## Rupture

The quarrel that erupted in 1888 between Henley and Louis must have derived at least in part from the latent but unequal rivalry between Katharine and the ever-jealous and ambitious Fanny, the former under Henley's patronage, the latter always relying on her husband to promote her fiction writing. Fanny might not have liked it when Henley in 1886 persistently urged Louis to promote Katharine's writing a Zola-esque comic *nouvelle* about daily life in Bournemouth, deriving from their joint letters (*Letters* 5:309-310; *Henley Letters* pp. 320, 322), and so when Katharine announced her first venture into fiction, 'The Watersprite', it could have exacerbated the tensions. When Henley failed to get it published, Fanny nagged Katharine into letting her rewrite the story to see if she could do better with it (*Letters* 6:163-165). Katharine's story (now lost) was about a young man on a train who meets a girl escaped from a lunatic asylum, whereas Fanny turned the protagonist into a real 'nixie' who lures the hero into a boat trip up the river, away from his stuffy fiancée, and almost drowns him at the end of it. I have explored the implications of this elsewhere,<sup>19</sup> but the plot does resemble aspects of Katharine's later story, 'The Old River House', which also features a river boating excursion that ends at dusk with the hero's devastating rejection by an idolized woman.

The quarrel exploded in March 1888 after publication of Fanny's 'The Nixie', when Henley yet again, chivalrously and tactlessly, stepped in to protect Katharine's literary and financial interests, thereby betraying his longstanding animus against Fanny. Louis's self-righteous outrage at this insult to his wife and himself blinded him to his own complicity, given that he himself had recommended Fanny's story to *Scribner's* and was well aware (as he later admitted) that Katharine had consented unwillingly to its appropriation (*Letters* 6: 67,172). Katharine soon got caught in the ensuing transatlantic crossfire, and her awkward efforts to defend herself only made things worse. Years

later she told Sidney Colvin that Henley had acted unbeknownst to her after she had already written to Fanny, on first seeing the story in print, to say that it was 'well managed', and that she had said the same to their mutual friends. 'I did in fact – though in pain – just what [Louis] would have desired and expected from a friend and cousin. I had no idea that Mr Henley had grudges of his own or that his action was not prompted by wrong-headed kindness to me [...]'<sup>20</sup> But Louis, on receipt of Katharine's few letters with their 'radically different view of the facts' began to see the whole affair as a conspiracy orchestrated by her, and to exculpate Henley: '[...] it was all packed into him by an angry woman whom he admires' (*Letters* 6:172).

In short, anything that Katharine said or did seems only to have hardened Louis's resolve (despite some misgivings), to cut through his ambivalence and cast her off forever (*Letters* 6:194). Henley he still loved and needed; Katharine was expendable, a scapegoat who could be burdened with the faults of deviousness and spite of which he could never accuse Fanny, or even Henley. For Katharine it may have proved how dangerous it was finally to speak less vaguely and betray her justifiable anger and deep hurt. In her dignified final letter she wrote:

I know this can *never* get better, but perhaps nothing can make it worse. So do listen when I once more assure you of my entire ignorance that Mr Henley was writing [...] I was maddened with despair when I read your letter which taxed me with a dreadful preconceived plot. [...] How deeply sorry I am it is useless to try to say and impossible not to remember all your past kindness which has now turned into lifelong distrust of me.' (*Letters* 6, 204; emphasis in original).

From now on Katharine was effectively banished from Louis's life, except as regards inheritance. Under the terms of his father's will Louis was required to 'remember' his uncle Alan's family (*Letters* 5:414), and despite Fanny's opposition did in his own will endow an annuity for Katharine's daughter, who had 'done no ill' (*Letters* 6:181), but this was to come out of Katharine's own share which was to be further reduced in favour of his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne (*Letters* 6: 192-193). In November 1891 Louis took steps to be released from Katharine's marriage trust and that of her sister Dora Fowke (who had unhappily married an alcoholic and bigamist) (*Letters* 7:191). He did continue to correspond intermittently with Bob (who had covertly supported his sister throughout the quarrel), and kept his promise to remember Bob and his sisters in his final will of 1893.

### **Afterlife and writing**

Thus concluded the third catastrophe of Katharine de Mattos's life: first the slow wasting away and death of her father; then the protracted collapse of her marriage with all its hardships, financial and emotional; and now the abrupt, devastating rejection by her admired and idealized cousin. Her subsequent state of mind can only be guessed at from her later writings, but possibly the need to go on working to support her family (mainly by reviewing, and occasional translation) helped her cope. Henley after leaving *The Magazine of Art* in 1886 had recommended her to *The Saturday Review* and at some point in that year she was taken on by the more prestigious *Athenaeum*, where she eventually became one of their major (anonymous) fiction reviewers.<sup>21</sup> Katharine's relationship with Henley was also damaged by the quarrel; she told Colvin in 1902 (NLS MS 9895) that they had had a 'dreadful scene' in which she accused him of dishonourable conduct and Henley said she would be betraying him if she 'vindicated Louis and Fanny in the matter'. Thereafter they met 'seldom' and 'never cordially'.

Katharine could imply that Henley's professional help was also at an end, but the fact that on September 27, 1890 she published a poem in the *Scots Observer*, now edited by him, and that this was paired with one of Henley's own, rather suggests the contrary. Her poem, 'A pauper playground (Chelsea)' begins: 'The river of life goes roaring on, Long is the road and hard' and then describes a charity inmate wandering in a blooming 'graveyard garden', where she smiles dreamily 'o'er the sleeping dead.' It ends:

Do far days haunt her, vanished sighs,  
 Old insults gone and past?  
 Or the fair lawns of Paradise  
 Where paupers rest at last?

If this captures Katharine's own bereft and fatalistic mood in the wake of the quarrel, then Henley's 'Pageant', which celebrates the dancing play of seagulls, may echo its intimations of mortality at the end:

Gulls in an æry morrice  
 Frolicking float and fade...  
 And life is a lapse the nearer  
 The immitigable shade.

(In his later collected poems those final lines read: 'O, the way of a bird in the sunshine, | The way of a man with a maid!', so perhaps the old flame was still secretly alive.)<sup>22</sup>

A few months later, on February 21, 1891, Katharine published another poem in what was now the *National Observer* but still edited by Henley. 'Spring and the wayfarer' describes a woman's journey through life, alone and unheeded, and apparently exiled from its joys, and ends:

Love and the Spring lie close together,  
Telling their tales to each wind that blows;  
One heart, perchance, they both pass over  
Nobody cares for, nobody knows.  
The earth is throbbing, the stars are swaying –  
Death and the dark look on not staying.

Regardless of its literary merit, the poem is poignantly expressive of sadness amid the world's indifference.

Perhaps to avoid risks of further self-revelation, Katharine in 1892 chose to publish her two stories under the name Theodor Hertz-Garten, in T. Fisher Unwin's Pseudonym Library.<sup>23</sup> The first, 'Through the red-litten windows', takes its title from Poe's 'The fall of the house of Usher', but Hodges's idea (pp. 54, 57), that Katharine might somehow have inspired *Jekyll and Hyde* by discussing it with Louis in 1885, seems fanciful and leads him to overlook its real significance. There is no clue as to when she wrote it and its companion, 'The Old River House', but both probably have deep roots in the sorrows of her own life, as is suggested by her pseudonym. 'Theodor' means 'God-given' and 'Hertz-Garten', 'heart's garden', implies something of very personal significance.

The eponymous quotation, 'Through the red-litten windows', comes from the ballad 'The haunted palace', a *mise-en abime* within Poe's tale, 'The fall of the house of Usher', which depicts the doomed relationship of a twin brother and sister, the last of their line, who die in a ghastly *Liebestod* as their decaying mansion collapses about them. The ballad, improvised by the demented brother, Roderick, describes a glorious kingdom ruled by a wise monarch, which falls in ruin when invaded by 'evil things in robes of sorrow' whose 'vast forms' are now all that can be seen through the palace's 'red-litten windows'. Roderick himself is in the terrifying grip of a 'constitutional and family evil'

and prey to a 'morbid acuteness of the senses'; he dreads the loss of his mortally ill sister Madeleine who, a week after her lingering death, bursts from her vault and kills him in her 'now final death agonies'. The fissured house, which inspires only 'insufferable gloom' and 'utter depression of soul' in the narrator, then collapses into the dark and gloomy waters of the surrounding tarn.<sup>24</sup> This Gothic scenario resonates with Katharine's own family tragedy: the once brilliant father doomed by inexplicable physical and mental decline; and the close-knit brother and sister whose lives were irrevocably damaged.

Katharine's story, unlike *Jekyll and Hyde*, is not about the struggle between good and evil in one man, but rather depicts one person's shaky identity being invaded by a sinister, undead other. The hapless narrator is a young man who has fled the evil brother-in-law who cheated him yet 'contrived to put [him] in the wrong'. Wandering aimlessly at night he meets a beautiful but cold and heartless woman who recruits him to help someone who lies close to death, and takes him to wait in an eerily silent, brightly lit house. Here in a drugged trance he witnesses a limp human form being lowered through a widening 'fissure' in the ceiling above and propped up on a stand. After a scene involving various phials and electrical paraphernalia, there is an explosion, a mirror shatters, and the man's body vanishes, apparently leaving the narrator to take its place. Alone and helpless in the house he feels 'haunted' by the faceless and unknowable other; his own 'identity, career and personality' seem annihilated, and he is afraid to seek help lest he sound like a lunatic. In this 'pallid and intolerable existence' which he shares with the dead, his only comfort is a little blind girl who is brought to visit him. But she is at first shocked by the sound of his voice: '[...] who are you? You are not he [...] my friend, the good little father whom without seeing I loved [...] where is he?' But the girl is taken away from him by the cruel and beautiful stranger, perhaps her mother, leaving him alone 'once more in that accursed place, the home of fiends

and “evil things in robes of sorrow” who mock and whisper’ at him. After trying vainly to pursue them he ends up raving, near death, in a hospital.

On the surface this bizarre tale, despite its gender disguises, might express some of Katharine’s dumb horror at feeling helplessly incriminated and robbed of her old identity in the life of the cousin she had loved; at feeling herself the victim of a ‘dreadful preconceived plot’ by an ‘in-law’ and a treacherous woman. But the dreamlike atmosphere of the inescapable house suggests a deeper theme. If the early home, according to Gaston Bachelard,<sup>25</sup> constitutes the topography of our most intimate being, and is repeated in dream and fantasy long after we have left it, then the protagonist’s gradual paralysis of spirit, and possession by the unknown, invalid man who met his inexplicable end there, may also reflect Katharine’s lifelong haunting by the father whose progressive ruin pervaded all their dwellings until his death, and beyond. The narrator’s efforts to understand ‘what this man had been, if a fiend in human shape, or one who had known something of the joys and graces of life’ are futile, and he can only, in despair, try to strangle the increasingly alien image he sees in the mirror. And the shock of the little blind girl at the altered voice of the ‘good little father whom I loved’ suggests his children’s bafflement at the stranger whom no childish act of love could rescue and whose afflicted, dying spirit was destined to haunt them all in turn.

Katharine’s other, more naturalistic story, ‘The old river house’, foregrounds the house itself, based loosely on 16 St. Leonard’s Terrace in Chelsea, the home of Katharine’s widowed mother, ‘Aunt Alan’, and for a time of Katharine herself and her children. The scene is a fashionable tea party for clever, literary and artistic people, which has ‘broken in’ on the house’s ‘shadowy silence, metamorphosing it into the life and tumult of today’. Old Mrs Grey, the nominal hostess, has sunk into depressive apathy ever since the loss of her husband, who was long ago ‘alienated from

her, making shipwreck of what faith and hope she possessed'. In her 'ominous calm' and detachment she shows little interest in her guests or her two children, Leonard, the actual host, a brilliant but erratic composer, and Avis, a shy, withdrawn, musical girl who devotes her life entirely to her mother and brother. Also present are the society beauty Gwendolen Brook, with whom Leonard is infatuated and who tries in vain to 'draw out' Mrs Grey; and an older cousin of the family, Dick Shadwell, whose life is blighted by the madness of his once beautiful wife. He watches Avis at the piano as she sings sadly of her wish to sleep and be spared the world's injustice and pain (a lament by Michelangelo by way of Madame de Stael), while she in turn watches her brother's bewitchment by Miss Brook. Avis's white gown and the flame-coloured flowers nearby are reflected together in the polished surface of the piano, an old-fashioned upright that had belonged to her unhappy father, 'who had found no better refuge than music from the monotony of his fate'. Then daylight fades and Avis's brief spell is broken.

The river itself, from spring to bleak autumn, runs through the story, and is the setting for the fateful boating party when Leonard finally declares his love to the avoidant Gwendolen, while a thrush sings amid the 'rare scent of green and growing life'. She is cold to his pleas, the thrush falls silent: '[...] the sunset pageant was passed, the tender colours had left the sky; already the clouds were like inky banners fringed with tarnished gold. The river lay very pale at their feet, all the charm washed out of it. The people in the boats, impatient to be gone, called to them to hasten, and their voices sounded thin and clear in the vast and gathering gloom'. The mood and setting resemble those at the climax of Fanny's 'Nixie', except that this story continues. The distraught Leonard, unable to bear pain or find consolation in his art, is caught up in 'unconscious perversity and selfishness', as well as opium addiction, and the house, which 'should have been a pleasant and restful place' offers no refuge, since it 'had

never been aught but sorrowful and shadowy to most of its dwellers', and shadows 'are the real owners, the others but shadows'. Eventually, after one despairing, cataclysmic session at the piano, Leonard shoots himself, while 'the pianoforte seemed to take all so pitilessly, giving back – what?'

Thereafter the mother sinks back further into her habitual apathy, while Avis's life 'withers at the source' without him who had given meaning to it. She even renounces her old solace, the piano, which remains locked and eerily shrouded; Dick imagines 'the keys of the piano as great teeth smiling beneath the shroud, a monstrous threatening smile at those who thought to master it'. But one day he hears its voice again as Avis plays a last, spellbinding song of grief, and then dies, but not before telling Dick she had always loved him. In the aftermath Dick accompanies Mrs Grey on silent visits to her children's neglected graves in Brompton Cemetery. 'Sluggish and impassive she had been in her children's life, so she remained, so – he mused – she probably would remain till swept into the universal waste-heap, where even habit loses its dread force'.

Katharine's book received a few brief, polite notices, though that in the *Catholic World* called the stories 'more strange and peculiar than interesting', and 'subjective to a degree that becomes wearisome [...] in spite of their undeniably charming style'.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps that subjectivity was one reason Katharine chose pseudonymity, fearing what outsiders might conclude from the second story in particular, given the clear family references. Leonard's 'wild, ill-regulated imagination and weak will' is a transparent portrait of Bob Stevenson, whom Fanny once described as 'fascinating' but a 'physical, moral and mental coward' who 'gave like putty'.<sup>27</sup> Avis, with her devotion to her brother and the music they share, presumably draws on Katharine herself, while Dick, with his mad wife, may represent aspects of Louis and Fanny, the so-called 'Bedlamite', though Dick is depicted more like one of Henry James's concerned but ineffec-

tual onlookers, who witnesses but cannot prevent the tragedies. The house itself, mournful and shadowy, is haunted at every turn by the mysteriously dead father, whose embodiment, the sinister piano, is the instrument of art and death alike. Omnipresent, and more chilling, is the astonishing portrayal of a mother not only crushed by the inexplicable 'alienation' of her husband, but morbidly immersed in dreary scenes of her 'listless girlhood', where 'no heart could reach hers, no human hand soothe a trouble so deeply rooted and obscure'. It uncannily anticipates what the psychoanalyst André Green has called the 'dead mother syndrome', where a mother is so devastated by earlier emotional loss that she becomes psychically 'dead' for her living children, who in turn can suffer depression and loss of meaning in life.<sup>28</sup> How far that was true of the real 'Aunt Alan' we cannot know, but perhaps Katharine intuited, and even shared, the desolation at her bereaved mother's heart. And both stories together convey something of the strange atmosphere of the family she and her brother grew up in, full of talent and promise but forever smothered in despair by the slow extinction of their doomed father.

Katharine de Mattos published no more fiction. Perhaps she had now expressed all she needed to say, and had no time or energy for more. She did however publish a few more poems, five of them in *Sylvia's Journal*, which had become a progressive forum for women's education and employment, and for the discussion of art and ideas. Of these, 'By the embankment' (1893), struck a distinctly 'modern note',<sup>29</sup> and well suggests the brief hopes and perhaps recurrent depressions of its author's life, epitomized by the river she had come to know so well:

When Thames betwixt its prison walls,  
    Brims strong and high,  
Then with the current of its song,  
    Up Hope doth fly,  
    Bursting her bonds.

Who may say why?  
 Grey mud-flats often span the course,  
 A thin dull thread,  
 And thought crawls on its level way,  
 Bitter yet dead:  
 A sluggish flow,  
 That moves like lead.

Given Katharine's resolute guarding of her personal privacy, it is striking that in the following year she published a poem that directly engages with themes of female anonymity and secrecy. This was 'In a Gallery: Portrait of a Lady (Unknown)', which appeared in the second number of *The Yellow Book*, in July 1894, one of only two that marked the first appearance of female poets in that shrine to homosocial Decadence.<sup>30</sup> Its narrator meets the searching glance of the long dead sitter, trying to divine her 'unseen magic': 'to seek your riddle, dread or sweet, | and find it in the grave? [...] And you were hungry for the hour | When one should understand?'

Your jewelled fingers writhe and gleam  
 From out your sombre vest;  
 Am I the first of those who gaze,  
 Who may their meaning guess,  
 Yet dare not whisper lest the words  
 Pale even painted cheeks?

Here the female observer identifies with the portrait's mute appeal for understanding, but declines to say what she infers, leaving the secrets of both intact.

## Epilogue

Katharine de Mattos lived on until 1939 and became a real literary professional, one of the progressive 'New Woman' writers, making a modest but respectable living as a book reviewer and

occasional translator. At her busiest, in the 1890s, she reviewed in the *Athenaeum* on average over 70 novels a year, to a total of 1300 by 1908, after which she disappeared from its 'marked' files (Demoor, p. 92). She took on some major authors, like George Gissing, and Henry James, whose *What Maisie Knew* (1897) she instantly recognized as one of his most 'remarkable' productions, an 'astonishing drama' which depicts the mind of a child exposed to 'the saddest, the most poignantly melancholy position [...] in which a forlorn childhood can be placed', and yet emerging 'unscathed and triumphantly through the ordeal'.<sup>31</sup> But she never hesitated to castigate daring writers like Rhoda Broughton and Grant Allen, whose work she thought could lead young women astray by sanctioning relationships outside marriage.

Of Katharine's social life in the London literary circles of the decadent 1890s frustratingly little is known, although from her obituary in *The Times*<sup>32</sup> we learn that she was a 'brilliant conversationalist' who frequented some of the leading lights of the 1890s and beyond, including Aubrey Beardsley (who had championed her poem in *The Yellow Book*), the poet and essayist Alice Meynell, Louis's old friends Sidney Colvin and Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, Henry James, and several painters, among them Whistler, Sargent and Charles Conder.

Katharine's estranged husband, who became prominent in the Fabian Society working alongside George Bernard Shaw, even as his unsavoury sexual reputation became an embarrassment to them, emigrated to British Columbia in 1898 and died there in 1929.<sup>33</sup> One of her greatest supports was always Bob, whose death in 1900 was a grievous blow,<sup>34</sup> though Henley's, in 1903, may have been less so. 'She never spoke of the Henley-Stevenson quarrel [...] but was essentially unselfish and remained friends with both sides' (*Times*), which may be why she could meet up finally with her erstwhile nemesis, Fanny Stevenson, who visited England in 1907.<sup>35</sup> One late involvement in the RLS saga had been her correspondence with Sidney Colvin in 1902, com-

miserating over Henley's acerbic review of Graham Balfour's biography (NLS MS 9895). In 1911, when Henley's widow and Charles Baxter conferred with Lord Guthrie about donating the entire correspondence relating to the quarrel, Colvin urged Guthrie to respect if possible Katharine's need for privacy, since 'for years her life was embittered by the consequences of Henley's moves'.<sup>36</sup> It seems she broke her public silence about her cousin only once, to Rosaline Masson in 1922, when, despite being 'loath to write of intimate friends and personal matters', she gave a few brief reminiscences of Louis, and Bob: 'No other men nor other women were ever quite to me what these two were and remained.' (Masson, p. 13). Katharine de Mattos's final years were clouded by dementia; 'having outlived her friends and her intelligence' she died in London at 87, on 13 April 1939, and was laid to rest in the Stevenson family vault in Edinburgh.

### Conclusion

Katharine de Mattos lived her early life in the shadow of men who might have protected her but failed to: her damaged father; her irresponsible, callous husband; her brilliant but self-absorbed cousin; and even her one-time literary mentor and champion. Only her beloved brother seems to have remained true, and his life was one of waywardness, failed promise and early death. Katharine's response was apparently to safeguard her private life, her non-divorced status protecting her from any further marital mishaps. She probably relied most on her mother (who died in 1895), and on her daughter Helen and her family, although they abandoned her in 1912 by moving to British Columbia,<sup>37</sup> while her sister Dora died in 1931. Her son Richard, who became a Catholic priest in the Midlands, outlived her and inherited her estate of some three thousand pounds, but it is not clear how intimate they ever were.<sup>38</sup> Much about her, especially in the last thirty years of her life, remains unknown, and probably unknowable.

From Katharine's writings, where even the most intimate spaces seem menaced, one might surmise a depressive cast to her personality, and in her life she seemed fated to repeat early traumas in later relationships. Yet she became an accomplished, professional writer who clearly heeded Louis's advice to 'learn to write with the quick of [her] fingers', and in fiction her polished style was graced by some poignant turns of phrase and striking imagery. It may be that hardship and reticence inhibited her from developing her creative gifts to the full, but even so she had the energy and determination to maintain her independence through writing, to carve out a modest place in the London literary scene, and long outlive the scandals of her early life.

#### NOTES

- 1 I have to thank Neil Macara Brown for generous help with Canadian Census data, National Probate records and much other information on Katharine's descendants; Caroline Rupprecht for perceptive comments; and members of the Richardson History of Psychiatry Section / Working Group on Humanities and Arts.
- 2 Katharine's portrait, by Percy Anderson, is in the Writers' Museum, Edinburgh. It is reproduced on the cover of Hodges (2017).
- 3 Jeremy Hodges, *Mrs Jekyll and Cousin Hyde* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2017).
- 4 Bella Bathurst, *The Lighthouse Stevensons* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), pp. 193-202; 214-216.
- 5 Rosaline Masson, *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1922), p. 13.
- 6 Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen, 1901), v. I, p. 56.
- 7 Susan Miles (Ursula Wyllie Roberts), *Memoirs of a soldier's daughter* ([www.wyllie.org.nz/documents/memoirs\\_of\\_a\\_soldiers\\_daughter.doc](http://www.wyllie.org.nz/documents/memoirs_of_a_soldiers_daughter.doc)). Ursula Wyllie Roberts's grandmother was the younger sister of Katharine's mother.
- 8 Sander M. Abend, 'Sibling love and object choice', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 53 (1984), 425-430.
- 9 *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters 1874-1897*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence

(New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 359-360.

- 10 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-1995), 2:20.
- 11 Marital trusts were set up by affluent families to protect a married woman's property from passing to her husband. Hodges, pp. 15, 21, assumes that the income from the trust would have been paid to de Mattos, but this seems doubtful, given that these settlements avoided common law requirements, whether in England or in Scotland. See Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 25, 68. It sounds as if de Mattos may have used the (possibly small) trust income as an excuse for not supporting Katharine himself. Under the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, she would have had control over her own earnings however (*ibid.*, p. 76).
- 12 Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), p. 164.
- 13 According to Ernest Mehew (personal communication, 16 October 2009) there was another son, Louis, who 'died young' (dates unknown) but he did not specify his source.
- 14 *The Letters of William Ernest Henley to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Damian Atkinson (High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2008), p. 75.
- 15 Alexandra Lapierre, *Fanny Stevenson: Muse, Adventuress and Romantic Enigma* (London: Fourth Estate, 1995), pp. 350-351.
- 16 Both first printed in *Underwoods* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887).
- 17 *Magazine of Art*, 7 (Jan. 1884), 157-157 (pp. 158-159).
- 18 The original wording was either 'We cannae break the bonds [...]' or 'It's ill to break the bonds [...]. See *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Roger C. Louis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 583. The three variants may imply hesitation.
- 19 Hilary J. Beattie, 'Fanny Osbourne Stevenson's fiction: "The Nixie" in context,' *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, 11, (2014), 127-150.
- 20 Katharine de Mattos, letter to Sidney Colvin, (n.d., presumably 1902). National Library of Scotland, Balfour Correspondence, MS 9895.
- 21 Marysa Demoor, *Their Fair Share: Women, Power and Criticism in the Athenaeum, from Millicent Garrett Fawcett to Katherine*

- Mansfield, 1870-1920* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 90-102.  
She has identified many of Katharine's reviews with the help of the *Athenaeum's* 'marked' files.
- 22 William Ernest Henley, *Poems* (London: David Nutt, 1919), p. 227.
  - 23 Theodor Hertz-Garten, *Through the Red-litten Windows and The Old River House* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892). An American edition, with different pagination, was published the same year by Cassell in New York. Hodges (2017) reprints both stories in full, on pp. 58-75, and 118-152.
  - 24 Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Tales* (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 317-336.
  - 25 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 8-17.
  - 26 *Catholic World*, 54 (Feb, 1892), p. 766.
  - 27 Fanny Stevenson, letter to Graham Balfour. National Library of Scotland, Balfour Correspondence, MS 9896.
  - 28 André Green, *On Private Madness* (London: Karnac, 1997), ch. 7.
  - 29 Linda K Hughes, *Graham R.: Rosamund Marriott Watson, Woman of Letters* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), pp. 177, 179-80.
  - 30 Linda K. Hughes, 'Women Poets and Contested Spaces in "The Yellow Book"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 44 (2004), 849-872 (pp. 853-854).
  - 31 *Athenaeum*, 3654 (November 6, 1897), p. 629.
  - 32 *The Times* (April 20, 1939), p. 19.
  - 33 Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 38-39; *Shaw Letters* (see note 9).
  - 34 Katharine de Mattos, letter to Graham Balfour, July 1900. National Library of Scotland, Balfour Correspondence, MS 9895.
  - 35 Margaret Mackay, *The Violent Friend: The Story of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), p. 523.
  - 36 Sidney Colvin, letters to Lord Guthrie, February 11, July 7, 1911. Writers' Museum, Edinburgh, LSH 155/91.
  - 37 Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, British Columbia, District No. 13. Helen de Mattos in 1902 married Frederick William Dalton and had four

sons. 'Fred' was an engineer and cofounder in 1902 of a short-lived motor cycle company in the Midlands. [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Frederick\\_William\\_Dalton](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Frederick_William_Dalton). Top of Form Bottom of Form

- 38 *National Probate Calendar [for England and Wales]* (London: National Probate Registry, 1939), p. 105. Richard de Mattos (1877-1950) is curiously absent from the sources relating to his mother. It appears he had a religious bent and in 1895 briefly joined an Anglican monastery founded by the eccentric Father Ignatius in Wales. See note 7, and Hugh Allen, *New Llanthony Abbey: Father Ignatius's Monastery at Capel-y-ffin* (Peterscourt Press, 2016), pp. 313-314. He later became a Carthusian in France, was ordained in Nottingham in 1904, and served as chaplain to British forces in the First World War.

## The early reception of Robert Louis Stevenson in Poland

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The aim of the article is to discuss the critical reception of Robert Louis Stevenson in Poland between 1888 when the first Polish translation of Stevenson's work was published and 1939 (the outbreak of World War II). The reception of any author in a foreign culture is always influenced by a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It is not only the quality of the work itself and the quality of translations that shape its reception, but also such external circumstances as the political and social situation or publishing practices in a foreign country. Specific cultural and political contexts have a bearing not only on our critical evaluations of writers and works but also on the choices made by translators and publishers, which determine a text's availability, as well as the choices made by individual readers or literature scholars. To understand the early reception of Robert Louis Stevenson in Poland, one has to be aware of the fact that the country's complicated history had a significant impact on the reception of foreign literature, especially in the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century. In fact, during Robert Louis Stevenson's lifetime, Poland as a sovereign state did not formally exist; the country lost its independence when it was partitioned in three stages in 1772, 1793 and 1795 between its neighbours Russia, Austria and Prussia. The three European imperial powers of the day divided Polish territory among themselves in a series of territorial annexations, and Poland was erased from the map of Europe. For the Poles, the final partition began a period of continuous foreign rule that would endure for over a century. Poland regained its statehood only after World War I under the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles.

Under the partitions, the policies of the Prussian and Russian

governments in particular were aimed at eradicating the sense of national identity, yet despite such policies and practices the Poles living under the three partitions managed to maintain the feeling of national unity, but in order to do so, they needed to find a way of conceiving a nation without a state. In an attempt to cope with the loss of statehood after the third partition and to counteract denationalization campaigns, they relocated the concept of a Polish nation onto a spiritual plane: Poland became an entity that exists as an idea or a feeling – it did not depend on the material form of the state. Such a concept of Poland is reflected in the song written by Józef Wybicki two years after the third partition of Poland, which was adopted as the national anthem when Poland regained independence in 1918. The first line of the song: *‘Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła, póki my żyjemy’* (‘Poland has not perished yet, as long as we live’) clearly conveys the idea that the lack of political sovereignty does not preclude the existence of a nation. National identity can be sustained even without an independent state. Therefore Poland – effectively erased from the map of Europe – cannot be reduced by changing the map. It becomes imagined as a broadly based cultural community encompassing all those who speak Polish and read Polish literature, regardless of the partitions. Thus literature written by Polish authors for Polish readers was charged with important nation-building responsibilities.

Most literary activity in the partitioned Poland in the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century was affected by the political situation, which also shaped the reception of foreign literature along with translations and extended critical discussions (or a lack thereof). In the aftermath of the partitions, Polish writers felt obliged to help maintain national identity by creating works that would strengthen a sense of belonging to a common Polish culture bisected by the artificially imposed partition borders. Literature became a crucial factor in preserving Polish national identity and expressing the national

spirit, and reading books by Polish authors was conceived as a kind of patriotic duty. Polish literature of the period was preoccupied with patriotic themes, had to cope with censorship, and began to spread the idea of 'organic work' leading to economic and cultural self-improvement. In such an intellectual climate, there was little interest in foreign literature, thus few translations were published. Polish publishers felt duty bound to produce books that could benefit the nation by popularizing Polish history, describing lives of eminent Poles, or providing knowledge about various areas of Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Polish literary critics in Stevenson's times viewed literature mainly through the prism of its social and moral functions devoting most of their attention to the works written by their countrymen. New developments in European – mainly French and German – literature were usually presented in survey articles published in periodicals. Rarely did they focus on the nineteenth-century poetry or prose written in English: with the exception of Charles Dickens, who was popular in Poland, other Victorian writers were known from few translations and were not much read or commented on. In her pioneering study of the reception of English literature in Poland in the years 1887-1918, Wanda Krajewska points out that although the names of the best-known English writers of the last decades of the nineteenth century were mentioned in Polish literary journals, the reviewers usually devoted just a few sentences to briefly delineate their literary output. What was missing was a 'detailed analysis and a deeper characterization of their works'.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the above facts, it is not surprising that the first translations of Robert Louis Stevenson's works appeared in Poland relatively late, at a time when the author of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was already at the peak of his popularity in English-speaking countries. Polish readers became acquainted with Stevenson through the translation of the first short story from 'The Suicide Club', 'A Story of the young Man with the Cream

Tarts' which was printed in 1888 in a Warsaw weekly *Wędrowiec* that had a circulation of approximately nine thousand copies.<sup>3</sup> It was followed by *Olalla*, which appeared in a book form in 1889 in a series *Biblioteka Dziennika Polskiego* published in Lviv. *The Merry Men and Other Tales* were serialised in a daily *Gazeta Lwowska* in 1890 (nr 90 and nrs 93-99); each number had an average circulation of a thousand copies.<sup>4</sup> An anonymous free translation was given a rather sensationalised title *Straszne opowieści (Horrrifying Tales)*. *Treasure Island*, whose translator was identified only by initials W. P., was issued in 1892 under the Polish title *Skarby na wyspie (Treasures on the island)*. *Prince Otto*, translated by Cecylia Niewiadomska was published in 1897 in a Warsaw literary magazine *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (circulation: seven thousand copies)<sup>5</sup> under the title *Przygody księcia Ottona (The Adventures of Prince Otto)*. In 1902 anonymous translations of 'The Suicide Club' and 'The Rajah's Diamond' from *New Arabian Nights* were published in instalments in *Ilustracya Polska* (an illustrated weekly magazine produced in Lviv between 1901-1904 by the publishers of the largest daily paper *Słowo Polskie* which circulated ten thousand copies).<sup>6</sup> In 1909 *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* translated by Maria Rakowska appeared as a part of popular series the *Library of Select Works* that had a print run of 6000 copies.<sup>7</sup> In the same year the Polish edition of *The Treasure of Franchard* by an anonymous translator was distributed by the Spółka Wydawnicza Polska publishers. The book was a part of the series called *The New Universal Library* (launched in 1887 as *The New Universal Library of European Literature Masterpieces*) renowned for its high editorial standards, promotions for subscribers, and affordable prices. Although readers were only moderately interested in Polish translations of Stevenson's works, and there were no additional print runs after the first edition, it must be noted that due to the publication of Stevenson's tales in journals and popular series, several thousand Polish readers had a chance to acquaint

themselves with his works.

Critical reception of Stevenson's oeuvre in Poland was shaped by a small group of reviewers whose articles treated new developments in English-language literature in more than a passing manner, and offered a broader and comprehensive perspective on British literature. One of them was Edmund Naganowski (1853-1915), who received his Master of Arts degree from the University of Dublin. He decided to remain in Ireland, where he worked as a teacher in Waterford grammar school. In 1886 he moved to London and was employed by the British Museum. Naganowski became a foreign correspondent of several Polish newspapers and journals, among others *Biblioteka Warszawska*, a prestigious literary monthly published in Warsaw from 1841 to 1914. In 1891 Naganowski published there an extensive article entitled 'English critics and writers' in which he highly praised Stevenson's works. Naganowski maintained that twice as many novels were published in England as in other European countries, commented on the 'omnivorous reading' of Englishmen from all social classes, and discussed English book market as shaped by the growing demand for new 'triple-decker' novels sparked by the circulating libraries such as Mudie's which dominated the trade in novels. He argued that contemporary English literature was 'tyrannised by the narrow-minded British matron – Mistress Grundy' because publishers were unwilling to take risks on books that could offend her prudish sensibilities.<sup>8</sup> Naganowski pointed out that Stevenson, unlike other writers (for example, Kipling, who was better known in Poland at that time) 'avoided the danger' of 'pandering to popular tastes'. Stevenson settled down 'on an island in the Pacific, and there he writes masterpieces which are eagerly read in America, but not in England where his works are not published in affordable editions; Mrs Grundy removed them from her catalogue'.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, Naganowski was unfamiliar with the actual sales figures for Stevenson's works in England. He seems to suggest that the physical distance that separates

Stevenson from England gives him creative freedom: he does not have to follow the rules of conventional propriety and worry about Mrs Grundy's approval, and he can 'choose [...] topics in response to social needs, create masterpieces which give rise to polemics and inspire worthy initiatives'.<sup>10</sup>

Another influential literary critic of the time, Leon Winiarski (1865-1915), wrote about Stevenson in one of his sketches on contemporary English literature printed in *Prawda*, a weekly on politics, society and literature, which appeared in Warsaw from 1881 to 1915. In 1894 Winiarski published an extensive review of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* – a text that remained unknown to Polish readers at the time. He compared Stevenson's novella to Edgar Allan Poe's tales, and maintained that Stevenson's story 'based on a scientific principle' does not inspire fear in its readers, unlike Poe's works, yet it has psychological significance. He characterised Stevenson as a writer who possessed a uniquely contemporary sensibility that allowed him to express deep social fears that an immoral savage resides within even the most civilised individuals. Winiarski pointed out that *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was predicated on the current psychological notion of multiple personality and the coexistence of good and evil within one person. He claimed that Stevenson must have been familiar with modern theories of hypnosis and spiritualism. In the same review Winiarski commented on *New Arabian Nights*, praising Stevenson for paying meticulous attention to literary form and for his philosophical outlook upon human life.<sup>11</sup> Stevenson's poetry, however, was treated with a significant lack of enthusiasm. Naganowski, who earlier admired Stevenson's prose 'masterpieces', in an 1892 article 'Kronika londyńska' ('London Chronicle') published in *Biblioteka Warszawska*, wrote that Stevenson's *Ballads* prove that their author 'did not receive the blessings of the Muses'.<sup>12</sup>

Stevenson's death in 1894 was noted by Polish reviewers: obituary articles by Naganowski, Winiarski, Mściśław Edgar

Nekanda-Trepka, and Michał H. Drzewiecki, a scholar associated with the Jagiellonian University, appeared in literary magazines published in Warsaw and Cracow. Naganowski called Stevenson one of the finest contemporary novelists, echoing the sentiments expressed in the British press. Nekanda-Trepka is slightly more reserved in his evaluation of Stevenson's literary significance: he admits that Stevenson's great popularity, caused primarily by fascinating plots of his novels, is highly deserved; yet he thinks that the British press exaggerated in calling Stevenson 'the finest novelist of the time' and in considering his death 'a devastating loss' for English literature, because English literature is characterised by 'such a wealth of talent that the loss of one – however excellent – writer will not impoverish it'.<sup>13</sup> In his extensive obituary, Nekanda-Trepka provides the Polish reader with an outline of Stevenson's life, and points out that his literary oeuvre encompassed various genres: poetry, travel writing, essays and novels. He appreciates Stevenson's literary imagination and claims that the author of *Treasure Island* 'possessed the rare talent to accompany his presentation of a fantastic and improbable event with such a wealth of realistic detail that it is impossible to tell where truth and fantasy diverge'.<sup>14</sup> He highly values *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for its masterful representation of the duality of human nature. Interestingly, it is Stevenson's essays – the works that were unknown in Poland at the time – that inspire Nekanda-Trepka's greatest admiration; he considers Stevenson to be on a par with the greatest essayist in the English language. He praises Stevenson's nuanced and subtle literary style, and points out that that regardless of the topic, Stevenson always manages to inspire the minds of his readers. His 'harmonious language, vivid imagination and youthful optimism' appeal to everyone.<sup>15</sup>

Eight years after Stevenson's death, Leon Winiarski wrote a review of Graham Balfour's *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* and *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* edited by Sidney Colvin (none of them has been translated into Polish). Discussing

the development of Stevenson's personality and the evolution of his literary style and technique, Winiarski expresses his steadily increasing regard for a protean quality and complexity of Stevenson's oeuvre.<sup>16</sup> It is somewhat paradoxical that Polish literary critics at this early stage of Stevenson's reception in Poland failed to inspire the interest of translators and readers in such features of Stevenson's writing that they valued the most. Their high appreciation for Stevenson's essays or their admiration for the modernist aspects of his narrative technique did not result in any new translations, and the Polish readers at the time regarded Stevenson mainly as the author noted for his adventure stories with sensational plots.

A growing interest in English literature in general and in Stevenson's works in particular as well as a significant reappraisal of Stevenson's position in the Polish canon of English literature became noticeable in Poland in the second decade of the twentieth century. Both may be attributed to the influence of Stanisław Brzozowski (1878 – 1911), a Polish philosopher, publicist and literary critic deeply familiar with the works not only of Polish but also European authors of the nineteenth century, who was recognised as 'one of the most fertile and fascinating Polish thinkers of the twentieth century'.<sup>17</sup> His magnum opus, *The Legend of Young Poland: Studies on the Structure of a Cultural Soul* was published in 1909, two years before his premature death at 33, and the second edition followed in 1910. Considered to be his most important philosophical work, which offered staunch criticism of Polish contemporary culture, known as Young Poland or Neo-Romanticism, *The Legend of Young Poland* galvanised its readers and sparked vigorous debates. As Czesław Miłosz writes in *The History of Polish Literature*, 'within Brzozowski's lifetime, *The Legend of Young Poland* was his only book to have the effect of a bombshell'.<sup>18</sup> According to Stanisław Eile *The Legend of Young Poland* 'represents the most comprehensive denunciation of those forms of the Polish mind,

which, in Brzozowski's words represent "the delusion of cultural consciousness". [...] He was convinced that all humans reflected their economic and social conditions. Therefore Romantic attempts at controlling life from above that is, from high "prophetic" posts of national bards – are regarded as misconceived and deceptive'.<sup>19</sup> As an acute cultural critic, Brzozowski stressed the obligation of artists to engage in diagnosing social reality of their times and in shaping social structure. He maintained that economic relations and working conditions are human products, and not consequences of any objective mechanism; art and literature are testimonies to their times rather than expressions or reflections of the independent mind of the artist.

Brzozowski's interest in English literature was inspired by Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature* which he considered to be a monumental achievement, and to which he devoted his 1902 study *Hipolit Taine jako estetyk i krytyk* [Hippolyte Taine as an aesthetician and a critic]. He shared Taine's belief that race, milieu, and moment constitute the three principal conditioning factors behind any work of art. Brzozowski's own notion of literature as the resultant of the level of culture, economy, and history of a given country owes much to Taine's thought. Brzozowski considered English culture to be the most advanced in Europe and he believed that it reached its superior level due to specific historic and economic circumstances. Britain's high level of industrialisation combined with its role in the colonization processes shaped British sense of responsibility and conviction that a human being can actively shape the surrounding world. Brzozowski's admiration for English literature arises out of such beliefs. He claims that English literature is the richest in Europe, because it is rooted in the most developed culture. Its most important feature is the representation of life as a process; the process created by an autonomous human being who manages to maintain close ties with society and nation. He values English literature for its continuous attempts to synthesise different

intellectual traditions as well as for a reflection of what he calls 'modern productivity.' He writes in a characteristic idiom of the epoch:

English literature has grown in a much closer relationship with an economic activity of a nation than any other European literature. The writer has not been as different from the entrepreneur as it has been the case in France, Germany, or our country. English literature thinks and feels using a steel organ of modern productivity. As a part of his implicit tradition, the English writer shares the sense of connection with the world of economic energy. Perhaps it has happened thanks to sailing and the sea. The sea is the constant epos which permeates every moment of English life: thanks to the sea purely economic values have gained aesthetic dimension. [...] English literature treats economy as a collaborative work for which every individual shares responsibility. [...] English literature treats a human being as an active agent, as a responsible source of energy<sup>20</sup>

Brzozowski considers Stevenson as a writer who embodies what he calls 'superiority of English culture, English national organism' (p. 387). He points out that 'such prosaic objects as marine vessels' influence aesthetics: 'Modern world, woven together through the power of technology and industry' finds a concrete representation in Stevenson's works, for such a world is deeply rooted in his English sensibility.

Another reason for Brzozowski's admiration for Stevenson is his use of the genre of Arabian tale in a Western context. Stevenson's 'masterful' juxtaposition of East and West results in cultural critique and contributes to the knowledge of the self (p. 385). West conceived in the form characteristic of East reveals its pathos and its 'coruscating autonomy', writes Brzozowski, praising Stevenson for his 'profound wisdom and [...] truly Platonic

irony' (pp. 385-6). Brzozowski views the exoticism of Stevenson's tales as a reaction against the excesses of industrialization leading to repetitive routine and mechanization of life. Brzozowski maintains that

Severe and deep truth sounds through the silvery childlike laughter of [Stevenson's] books: wherever you are, you can depend only on yourself, on your strength, on your courage of initiative and action. If you do not understand this, you will not become your own support – you will be governed not by a miracle, but by life that exists beyond you. 'Wherever you are, straighten up in the face of God and act,' act as if no deed, no act of will, ever perished. Sinking to the bottom [...] think in such a way as if your last will were to become a motto and an order for eternity; till your last moment – you, who exist, be a maker, a doer. (p. 387)

He admires Stevenson for representing fictional worlds that are not ready-made constructs but rather environments shaped and transformed by individual agency. Such is Stevenson's 'smiling wisdom,' claims Brzozowski, that his books can dispel 'the tragic fog' that surrounds, for example, literary characters created by Henrik Ibsen (p. 387).

Referring to 'silvery [...] laughter' and 'smiling wisdom' of Stevenson, Brzozowski draws attention to what he considers an essential characteristic feature of English literature, that is its humour. For Brzozowski, English humour is

more than a literary form, it is a certain kind of deeply modern *national religion*, it is a spiritual state which makes it possible [...] to *consciously* participate in the creation of modern life; it is a spiritual state which strengthens our desire to act and does not limit our intel-

lectual freedom. (pp. 371-2)

Humour, claims Brzozowski, allows to invest one's life with just a provisional sense, and thus it leaves space for its further transformation; it teaches how to overcome 'the habit of thinking about oneself in closed categories' and how to advance a more creative attitude towards the world (pp. 378-9). Brzozowski believes that Stevenson's humour can provide a valuable lesson to Polish readers, who should develop a more modern and productive outlook upon life. Another thing that he wants his countrymen to learn from Stevenson is the importance of individual responsibility and collaborative work – a crucial lesson for the partitioned country if it were ever to regain statehood and independence thanks to a conscious and concerted effort of its people.

Brzozowski, who passed away in 1911, did not live long enough to rejoice at Poland regaining its statehood in 1918; neither did he witness a growing interest of Polish readers in English literature. In the decade following the publication of *The Legend of Young Poland*, and an essay by Brzozowski entitled 'On the ennobling effect of English literature' which appeared in 1910, the number of Stevenson's works available to the Polish reader grew to twenty, and they included among others, 'My Shadow' and 'The Isle of Voices'. A broader availability of Stevenson's works in Poland was a part of a larger cultural phenomenon with many new translations of works by English authors being published. However, the quality of these translations left much to be desired. Despite an increased interest in English literature, few people in Poland actually knew the language or were familiar with English culture. French was the most popular foreign language taught in Poland, and there was no significant academic tradition of English studies at Polish universities. The first English Department was established at Jagiellonian University in Cracow in 1911, but the graduating classes usually numbered

fewer than 25 students, most of whom did not choose the career of a literary translator. Lamenting the low calibre of Polish translations of English literature in the early decades of the twentieth century, Witold Chwalewik, an eminent literary critic, wrote: 'no wonder that such translations do little to bring English culture closer to us or to facilitate mutual understanding'.<sup>21</sup>

Against such a backdrop, the publication of a new translation of *Treasure Island* by Józef Birkenmajer in 1925 was a significant event, because of the translation's exceptionally high quality. Birkenmajer (1897-1939), a literary critic, but also a poet and an author of well-received short stories, turned out to be an outstanding translator of English literature. In addition to Stevenson's novels, he translated, among others, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, *Kim*, and *Stalky & Co*. Birkenmajer's translation of *Treasure Island* was included in a best-selling series *The World of Travel and Adventure: The Cycle of Swashbuckling Novels* by the Wydawnictwo Polskie owned by Rudolf Wegner. Noted for the high editorial standards, Wegner was a prestigious publisher of critically acclaimed Polish and foreign literary fiction, known for the series *The Library of Nobel Prize Winners*. The publication of Stevenson's novel by such a top-tier publisher attests to a growing recognition of Stevenson's literary accomplishments in Poland.

Birkenmajer's version of the title: *Wyspa skarbów* is a direct rendition of the English title, and at the same time a catchy and elegant Polish phrase. An earlier translation of the novel – the already mentioned 1892 version by W. P. entitled *Skarby na wyspie* did not enjoy a particularly positive reception, and had never been reissued. The fate of Birkenmajer's work was different. Generally considered to be an excellent rendering of Stevenson's prose, it quickly became very popular. Encouraged by the success of his *Treasure Island* translation, Birkenmajer turned his hand to *Kidnapped*. The 1927 translation, under the Polish title *Porwany za młodu* (Kidnapped as a youth), appeared as

another instalment of *The World of Travel and Adventure* series. Stevenson's novel received positive reviews and enjoyed brisk sales. It is worth mentioning that also in 1927 another Polish version of *Kidnapped* appeared in bookstores. Translated by Stefan Piekarski, the two-volume edition was given a rather clumsy title *Dziecko sprzedane, albo pamiętnik przygód Dawida Balfoura w r.p. 1751* (The Sold Child, or The Memoir of Adventures of David Balfour from 1751 A.D.). The book was issued by a Warsaw publisher Polski Dom Wydawniczy; it could not compete, however, with Birkenmajer's translation of *Kidnapped*, made a loss for the publisher and was never reprinted.

It would be reasonable to expect that after the success of *Kidnapped*, Birkenmajer would turn his hand to its sequel, *Catriona*; yet somewhat surprisingly, the next Stevenson's novel that Birkenmajer chose to introduce to Polish readers was not *Catriona* (its Polish edition translated by Jan Meysztowicz was published in 1956), but *The Master of Ballantrae*: Birkenmajer's translation of Stevenson's novel appeared in 1935. He also made an isolated attempt at familiarizing Polish readers with Stevenson's poetry for children: the poem 'To Alison Cunningham' in Birkenmajer's translation was printed in the 41 number of Warsaw weekly *Prosto z mostu* in 1938 under the title 'Do niani' ('To a nanny').

It is difficult to determine how many copies of Stevenson's books in Birkenmajer's translation were sold in Poland in the early decades of the twentieth century because the publishers did not share their circulation figures. The Retrospective Bibliography of the National Library of Poland does not include complete information concerning individual print runs. On the basis of the available data, it can be estimated that a typical edition of a novel translated from the English language varied between two thousand and two thousand five-hundred copies, while the editions of popular novels by Polish writers numbered as many as fifteen thousand copies. It might be assumed that it

had been more profitable for the publishers to publish translations of several different works in small numbers than to risk a large edition of one book that might not sell enough copies to recoup the initial outlay.<sup>22</sup> However, the first edition of *The Treasure Island* sold out, and the Wydawnictwo Polskie published the second edition in 1930.

Stevenson's novels translated by Birkenmajer were not only popular with the readers but also enjoyed positive critical reception. A number of prominent reviewers, e.g., Zofia Starowieyska-Morstinowa of an influential Catholic monthly *Przegląd Powszechny* and Witold Chwalewik of *Rocznik Literacki* – an annual publication of the Literary Institute of Warsaw – praised Stevenson as the ancestor of the contemporary adventure novel and highly admired Stevenson's insightful characterizations, his masterful style, and his ability to create engaging and exciting plots. In 1930 the second edition of *Treasure Island* translated by Birkenmajer was noted by the highly regarded cultural weekly *Kultura* which first published a review of the novel by Janina Brossowa, and followed with a comprehensive biographical essay about Stevenson written by Stanisław Helsztyński (1891-1986), a distinguished historian of English literature. It is worth mentioning that Birkenmajer's translation of *Treasure Island* has remained popular also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for only in 2013 two different Polish publishers, Buchmann and Bellona, produced new editions of Birkenmajer's work, despite the fact that four different versions of *Treasure Island* by other translators were published in the second half of the twentieth century. Elżbieta Kurowska, the author of a monograph on the reception of English literature in Poland, has pointed out that Birkenmajer's translations of Stevenson's works occupy 'a permanent position in Polish culture'.<sup>23</sup>

It may be concluded that the early reception of Robert Louis Stevenson in Poland was shaped by social and political circumstances, but also influenced by contributions of two men:

Stanisław Brzozowski and Józef Birkenmajer. In the partitioned Poland, scant interest in Stevenson's oeuvre was due to the pre-occupation of publishers, readers and literary critics with Polish literature viewed as a vehicle to maintain national identity threatened by the policies of the imperial powers. Critics commenting on Stevenson's works, some of whom were based in Britain, often reflected the views of the British press. When Poland regained its independence in 1918, in the aftermath of World War I, Polish literature became liberated from its nation-building responsibilities; consequently, reading the works of Polish authors was no longer perceived as a patriotic obligation. As a result, the reading public felt free to explore new literary terrains, which created a steadily growing demand for new translations of foreign works. Yet, the individual impact of Stanisław Brzozowski and Józef Birkenmajer cannot be overestimated. First, Brzozowski, whose high appreciation of English literature in general coupled with his enthusiasm for Stevenson in particular found an eloquent expression in *The Legend of Young Poland*, kindled Polish publishers' and readers' interest in the works of the author of *Treasure Island*. Second, Birkenmajer provided the interested reader with high-quality translations of Stevenson's novels. Birkenmajer was universally praised for his graceful and vigorous prose style, which managed to convey Stevenson's narratives in ways that were attractive and accessible to Polish readers. Thanks to Birkenmajer's seamless rendering of Stevenson's language into Polish, readers felt at home in the world of Stevenson's novels. Yet, at the same time, they were reminded that it is a world other than theirs; a world that is exotic, exciting and thus appealing and intriguing. Birkenmajer almost singlehandedly established Stevenson's canon in Poland. It must be admitted that this canon is severely limited – almost a century after the publication of Birkenmajer's translation of *Treasure Island*, the Polish reader still waits to discover Stevenson's essays or his poetry.

## NOTES

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‘The valley was as clear as in a picture’:  
landscape as an ideological tool to come to  
terms with Scottish identity in Stevenson’s  
*Kidnapped*

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In his dedication to Charles Baxter, Stevenson is quite clear about his intentions in *Kidnapped*: ‘no furniture for the scholar’s library’, the novel is meant ‘to steal some young gentleman’s attention from his Ovid, carry him awhile into the Highlands and the last century, and pack him to bed with some engaging images to mingle with his dreams’.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is right *into* the Highlands that young David is immersed by the shipwreck, projected inside a landscape he cannot decipher: after the liminal zone of the sham desert island has given him a humbling foretaste of what the unknown landscape is going to be, David is extracted from his own comfortable Lowland country and implanted in a radically different and antagonizing territory. As for the ‘engaging images’ then, this is quite debatable.

What I would like to prove in this paper is that in *Kidnapped*, Stevenson stages an evolution in David’s perception of Scottish space, an elaborate mutation of what we could call the rhetoric of landscape: such mutation is a way for Stevenson to vehicle but also to contest and modify territorial power struggles in the Highlands. In the Lowlands, David comfortably views space as *landscape*, from a commanding position, from a distance, ‘as in a picture’ (p.142). He derives artistic pleasure from the contemplation of the fertile and neat hills that are offered to his satisfied glance: this idealised landscape ‘becomes a moral lesson legitimating political authority’,<sup>2</sup> and David denies territorial fights in an encompassing formula, ‘It’s all Scotland’ (p. 126), that reinforces the sense of nationhood. Once in the Highlands, David

is projected into the canvas, and representations are challenged by his direct practise of the land: space becomes contested *territory*, that is to say both a network of social relations, and an experimented, lived-in, practised land.<sup>3</sup> Through the specific encounter of Alan, *national landscape* gradually becomes *vernacular territory* for David, and his artistic panoramic vision is focused into a more geopolitical view: topographical view and artistic *veduta* gradually give way to political vision.

Such evolution in landscape imagery is a way to insist on several things: first and obviously, that 'landscape imagery is a semiotic structure that needs to be historicised, a culturally constructed process and certainly not a neutral and objective reproduction of the land'<sup>4</sup> and that Stevenson highlights the subjectivity and the ideological import of the representation of landscape; second, that David moves beyond classical representations – the Highlands as Romantic Sublime setting and blank barren wasteland are re-historicised as an active site of resistance; and third that *Kidnapped* is a way to return Highland territory to the natives, to challenge English *occupation* through vernacular *appropriation*. 'Landscape imagery is contested political terrain'<sup>5</sup> indeed, and *Kidnapped* is a way to address that issue through an elaborate rephrasing of the rhetoric of landscape.

When David sets off upon his journey from his native Essendean, he presents the readers with what we can call a description of 'official landscape that conveys an image of ideal Britain'.<sup>6</sup>

As the definition makes clear, landscape is crucially a matter of viewpoint, it implies prospect: 'a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance: a piece of country scenery' (OED). David's standpoint, as he surveys his native land, is a panoramic and commanding view. He stands 'to the top of a hill' (p. 12) or 'to the summit' (p. 14), and the landscape is displayed 'round about' (p. 14) to his domineering, all-encompassing and structuring vision. As Pugh developed,

prospect was a definite sign of status in 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape painting: 'a commanding view establishes position and the right to generalise. This of course coincides with ownership of heritable property'.<sup>7</sup> As he is taken up the hill by the woman he meets on his way, it is indeed his future property David is contemplating at the bottom of the valley, in a state of disrepair but nested in the most pleasant surroundings. Despite his young age and inexperience, it is thus proleptically in the typical station of a land-owner and heir that David is positioned:

Those who can comprehend the order of society and nature are the observers of a prospect, in which others are merely objects. Some comprehend, others are comprehended; some are fit to survey the extensive panorama, some are confined within one or other of the micro-prospects which, to the comprehensive observer, are parts of a wider landscape, but which, to those confined within them, are all they see.<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of the novel then, David is situated above the landscape, he comprehends it from the outside, in a position of artistic and political enjoyment, and 'the design of landscape and the mode of its representation become signifiers of the way that the countryside and its workers are controlled and how power is structured and made evident'.<sup>9</sup> He is endowed with the Ruskinian 'gift of taking pleasure in landscape'<sup>10</sup> and indeed the landscape that is spread in front of him is extremely 'pleasant', giving a pastoral sense of timeless harmony and measure:

The country was *pleasant* round about, running in low hills, *pleasantly* watered and wooded, and the crops, to my eyes, wonderfully good. [...] The more I looked, the *pleasanter* that country-side appeared; being all set with hawthorn bushes full of flowers; the fields dotted with

sheep; a fine flight of rooks in the sky; and every sign of a kind soil and climate. (p. 14)

The rural landscape is turned into a national metaphor, as the countryside becomes an emblem of the country. The land is welcoming and hospitable, its physical characteristics are mild and balanced ('kind soil and climate'); it is docile and domesticated, dealt with on the passive mode ('watered, wooded, dotted with'), it is also fertile and yielding – nature is bountiful as the bushes are full of flowers, and the crops and sheep also testify to human labour, though farmers are adequately erased from the picture, as befits the beautiful representation supporting the myth of harmony. In *Little Dorrit*, Arthur Clennam wonders at the anomaly of English landscapes being emptied of people: 'English landscape. The beautiful prospects, trim fields, clipped hedges, everything so neat and orderly – gardens, houses, roads. Where are the people who do all this? There must be a great many of them, to do it. Where are they all? And are *they*, too, so well-kept and so fair to see?'<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in David's mythical constructed countryside, everything is neat and orderly, wild nature is domesticated, 'blackbirds whistling in the garden-lilacs' (p. 7), workers do not enter the canvas, and the landscape becomes an ideological idiom to represent harmonious national identity.<sup>12</sup>

Such ideological idiom is of course heavily questioned as David is abducted by his uncle's accomplice and brutally extracted from his pastoral haven to be thrust into the hostile Highlands, and Scotland abruptly loses the inclusiveness and harmony David had improperly endowed it with: 'It's all Scotland' is undermined by the dire contrast between the two sides of the borders. What is very interesting in *Kidnapped* is there is a gradual mutation in David's depiction of the space around him, a geographic initiation to the difference between landscape and territory.

Still caught into the classical rhetoric, David first remains faithful to an artistic and distanced appreciation of his surroundings:

he merely substitutes an aesthetic category to another, and the Highlands conjure up Burke's Sublime just as automatically as the Lowlands summoned Gilpin's picturesque. David *landscapes* the land, and produces it as a collection of static topoï generated by previous representations.

Note that in the Highlands, David's overhanging vision is defeated, and his preferred standpoint as an enlightened observer does not give him access to the topography of the place. In Earraid, going up the hill is of no avail, and David is unable to structure the landscape. As he 'looks to see' (p. 93) – the near pleonasm highlights the difficulty of the endeavour – the land remains a mystery, 'there was no sign', 'It was nowhere to be seen' (p. 92): 'At this I scratched my head, but had still no notion of the truth.' (p. 93). The panoramic view gives way to fragmented glimpses ('in what I could see of the land' (p. 92), and David is deprived of status, he now regresses to the category of people who cannot enjoy a general vision, according to Reynolds' distinction between 'the ability to grasp things in terms of their relations [...] and the inability to do so, which leaves us focusing, myopically, on the objects themselves, on, as Coleridge puts it elsewhere, "an immense heap of *little* things"'.<sup>13</sup> David is taken from his pedestal in two major ways. First, instead of seeing, David is now in the position of being seen, as the Gaelic sailors look at him from a distance, observe, analyse and comment on his attitude, in a foreign tongue. He is now trapped in the picture, comprehended in it instead of comprehending it. Second, the place on the pedestal is now occupied by a deer, as if nature had taken over: 'This was the day of incidents. In the morning I saw a red deer, a buck with a fine spread of antlers, standing in the rain on the top of the island.' (p. 96) The image of the deer here, in complete command of the vast landscape, is once more quite typical, and reminds the reader of one of the most famous paintings by Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Monarch of the Glen* (1851).



As Anne MacLeod develops, the emphasis here is on possession of the grounds<sup>14</sup> and the Royal Stag, just like Stevenson's crowned specimen, can be seen as a mark of territorial reclaim, as a direct challenge to the authority of King George. From then on, David will no longer be able to access the top of the mountains, he will on the contrary look up to them as landmarks: 'He told me Torosay lay right in front, and that a hill-top (which he pointed out) was my best landmark' (p. 104), and lay low in the landscape: he lays 'in the lower parts of the moorland' (p. 157), while 'the mountains on either side were high' (p. 117), 'a mountain that overhung the loch' (p. 118). Such deprivation of verticality results indeed in a myopic, fragmented and kaleidoscopic vision, as David is no longer able to get the general picture: he can only catch fragments that seem to be selected randomly, bits

and pieces that fail to organise a coherent panoramic picture any more. It is all an indistinct and incoherent mass to him, 'a jumble of granite rocks' (p. 93), 'bog and briar' (p. 107), as the indefinite and the alliteration highlight.

Such defeat of the senses to make sense of the landscape conjures up for David the typical Sublime imagery early travellers to the Highlands had already stabilised, and he remains at first quite depended upon such aesthetic distance to take stock of the landscape. Smout has argued that 'The Highlands began as a canvas on which the outsider could perceive little clearly and the little that was clear was not desirable'<sup>15</sup> and Gilpin summed up the Sublime characteristics of the Highlands in his description of the Pass of Killiecrankie. 'Wide, waste and rude,' he styled the scenery; 'totally naked; and yet in its simplicity often sublime'. The ideas it provoked, he asserted, 'were grand, rather than pleasing,' with the result that 'the imagination was interested, but not the eye'.<sup>16</sup> (Indeed, the view is rather bleak for David, and Stevenson's promise of the 'engaging images' are ill-calculated to elicit pleasure: 'It seemed a hard country, this of Appin, for people to care as much about as Alan did' (p. 117). Across the border, nature is characterised by its ruggedness, its barrenness, its emptiness, its wildness, so many elements that concentrate all the typical features of Burke's enumeration: 'rugged' (p. 101), 'The mountains on either side were high, rough and barren, very black and gloomy' (p. 117), 'It was a rough part, all hanging stone' (p. 127), 'Wild mountains stood around it; there grew there neither grass nor trees' (p. 138), 'A wearier-looking desert man never saw. We went down accordingly into the waste' (p. 155), 'a piece of low, broken, desert land' (p. 154). David's account reads like an echo of Edward Burt's version – he was among the early explorers of the Highlands, along with Daniel Defoe, and painted a bleak picture of the scenery: he trembled at the 'stupendous bulk, frightful irregularity and horrid gloom'<sup>17</sup> of the mountains, and noted the unpleasantness of a country that 'consisted chiefly

of stony moors, bogs, rugged [...] hills, entangling woods and giddy precipices.<sup>18</sup> Turner's painting, *Loch Coruisk in Skye*, captures that same general atmosphere of bleakness and sterility and highlights how the immensity of the landscape dwarfs the characters:



The road on the left hand side reminds the viewer of Burt's 'old ways (for roads I shall not call them)'<sup>19</sup> and David's 'rugged and trackless' ways (p. 101), and speaks for the enduring concern of access in that area, for its enduring inhospitality. The painting is also characterised by the same mist and atmospheric instability David constantly refers to: the unpredictability and unsteadiness of the setting increase the sense of insecurity and transiency, the general unreliability of the landscape. The volatility of the climate is commented upon by David: 'the mist enfolding us like as in a gloomy chamber' (p. 173) as well as the abrupt changes in weather that confirm the Sublime by insisting upon the uncontrollability of the landscape. Once more, one of Landseer's famous paintings, *Lake Scene, Effect of a Storm* (ca 1833) corroborates the image and David's representation documents the Highlands' sublime palimpsest:



Though the lake is still peaceful here, waters are seldom tranquil in *Kidnapped*. While the Lowlands were ‘kindly’ watered by gentle streams, water in the Highlands is certainly not domesticated: it gushes and thunders, swells small harmless brooks into roaring torrential rivers:

The sound of an infinite number of rivers came up from all round. In this steady rain the springs of the mountain were broken up; every glen gushed water like a cistern; every stream was in high spate, and had filled and overflowed its channel. During our night tramps, it was solemn to hear the voice of them below in the valleys, now booming like thunder, now with an angry cry. I could well understand the story of the Water Kelpie, that demon of the streams, who is fabled to keep wailing and roaring at the ford until the coming of the doomed traveller. (p. 174)

The turmoil of water is indeed another Sublime recurrent ele-

ment in visitors' accounts, as is for example obvious in *Fingal*: 'The torrents rushed from the rocks. Rain gathered round the head of Cromla.'<sup>20</sup> David is thus not very original here either, and just like his pastoral images for the Lowlands were borrowed from Gilpin's picturesque, his descriptions of the Highlands seem to be extracted from the Sublime palimpsest, to belong to a sort of collective travel album, as Gustave Doré's *A Mountain Torrent in the Highlands* (1883) further illustrates:



In both cases then, David is made to use typical aesthetic distancing in order to ascertain the order of the world, and to naturalise and hierarchise the differences – needless to say, in his initial (pre)-conception of the Highlands, David shares the prejudices of the age, and the natives, the 'wild Highlanders' 'yon wild hielandman' (p. 61) are seen as primitive, animal-like, childish and uncouth, notably in their speaking English with a strong accent and rather irregular grammar that Stevenson makes a point of inscribing, marking his text with spelling distortions and grammatical twists. Wildness is best transcribed by a proximity between Highlanders and animals, and animalising metaphors

abound: Alan is said to be 'as nimble as a goat' (p. 57), 'a bull, roaring as he went' (p. 68), 'a sheepdog chasing sheep' (p. 68), 'a fair heather-cat' (p. 112), Ardshiel 'has to flee like a poor deer upon the Mountain' (p. 81), to quote but a few.

What is remarkable in Stevenson's text is that in the course of his flight in the heather with Alan, in the course of his wandering or cruising, David is initiated to a different type of vision. As he practises the land, runs on all fours, listens to its language, music and vernacular noises, as he touches and smells the earth, he begins to see the Highlands not so much as landscape but as *territory*, and such mutation amounts to political resistance, as it rephrases the issue of land appropriation. Landscape is marked as 'a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism' (Mitchell 5), and in the second half of *Kidnapped*, it becomes obvious that 'landscape imagery is contested political terrain' (Pugh, p. 2): territory takes over landscape, and native legitimate re-appropriation dismisses the legal occupation of outsiders.

The major change that takes place with Alan is that David has got access to the inside of the land, instead of seeing it as a surface from which he used to be detached. As he follows Alan, his relationship to space is that described by Merleau-Ponty: 'I live space from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me'.<sup>21</sup> This is of course a crucial difference, and in *Kidnapped*, Stevenson is indeed very careful to insert his characters within the land:

'Jouk in here among the trees,' said a voice close by. [...]

Now we ran among the birches; now stooping behind low humps upon the mountain-side; now crawling on all fours among the heather. The pace was deadly: my heart seemed bursting against my ribs; and I had neither time to think nor breath to speak with. (p. 121)

The postposition 'among' is very telling: Alan and David form part of the territory, they belong to it equally with the heather, the tree, the birches, and cannot be dissociated or told apart from the environment. They camouflage easily in protective nature, and this is to be contrasted with the Red Coats, who are literally excluded from the land, marked out by the contrasting green colour of the vegetation, or by the sun that seeks them out and makes them very obvious to their native enemies. A little after we had started, the sun shone upon a moving little clump of scarlet close in along the water-side to the north. It was much of the same red as soldiers' coats; every now and then, too, there came little sparks and lightnings, as though the sun had struck upon bright steel. (p. 117) . Their delusory attempt to blend in is exposed, their very presence on Highland soil is a ridiculous oxymoron as the walking 'clump of scarlet' highlights. They stand out from the land just as much as David and Alan blend in it. Quite tellingly, they are not 'among' the land, they are 'over' it, on the surface, unable to penetrate a territory that is only superficially theirs: 'Little wee red soldiers were dipping up and down over hill and howe, and growing smaller every minute' (p. 127). The Scottish 'wee' taking over 'little' is another way to deny them legitimacy, to reassert linguistic empowerment, and to insist upon their heterogeneousness, as if they were merely sprinkled over the territory.

Outlandishness changes sides or is rephrased: the English soldiers seem to be physically expelled from the territory, or confined to its outskirts. This is reinforced by the fact that as they are not familiar with the territory, they are constricted to the few official roads that are on the map: 'they still stuck to the trail, and doubtless thought that we were close in front of them.' (p. 127) Apart from these few marked roads, the whole expanse of the country, is 'trackless' to them, there is 'no landmark' (p. 101), and indeed, David is similarly at a loss, as he can still 'by no means see how Alan direct[s] himself' (p. 101). As opposed

to that, thanks to their daily practice of their own territory, and to their 'swift judgement not only of the lie of the whole country, but of the solidity of every stone' (p. 145), the locals 'know every stone and heather-bush by mark of head' (p. 106), and are able to find ways that are wiped out for the outsider: 'There may be roads for them that know that country well.' (p. 101).

The Red Coats are condemned to ineffective 'marching and countermarching' and are trained to look at obvious pre-determined lines: 'they only kept a look-out along the banks of the river' (p. 144) – the military vocabulary and the opposition insist on the inefficiency of such surveillance. But in the wake of Alan, David can roam the country, engaged in a 'toilsome and devious travel' (p. 155), cutting across open land, their way 'lying now by short cuts, now by great detours' (p. 138). The Red Coats are thus confined to what Deleuze and Guattari called 'a striated space', a sedentary space that is ordered and methodical, that configures space in a static distinct form. On the other hand, David and Alan envision the Highland as a 'smooth space', a nomadic space, a living network of perpetually reconfiguring links, a rhizomatic possibility of endless, active and random connections.<sup>22</sup>

As they are introduced to David by Alan, the Highlands thus have two major characteristics: they are *lived-in*, practised, and they consist in a mobile network of social links. These are the two essential characteristics of the *territory* as it has been redefined specifically by contemporary cultural geography (Jackson, Cosgrove), and as Guy Di Méo summed them up, saying that there are 'two major constitutive elements in the territorial concept, its characteristic as 'a social space', and its characteristic as a lived-in space.'<sup>23</sup>

The two characteristics are linked of course, and it is both collective insiders' practice and native solidarity that have built the Highlands as a territory. After a while, David thus knows better about control and distance: he acknowledges that overhanging positions are of no avail, that they only reinforce dominant

structures and representations. The soldiers, from their apical standpoint – ‘planted on places of command’ where ‘on the top of a rock there stood a sentry’ (p. 142) – are only helpless and exposed by the sun, ‘with the sun sparkling on his arms’ (p. 142), while David and Alan are better off ‘down in the valley’ (p. 144), viewing *from* their material territory – ‘looking out between the trees’ (p. 127), ‘keeping only one eye above the edge of our place of shelter’ (p. 140), ‘From the mouth of the cleft we looked down upon a part of Mamore’ (p. 147) – and not looking *out* on a theoretical landscape. The landscape is now felt by David, ‘literally felt by his feet and hands and knees as he struggles through it.’<sup>24</sup> He realizes that such constant practice by Alan and his fellow Highlanders have vernacularised the landscape;<sup>25</sup> as such, it is both a refuge and a provider, certainly not the wasteland David initially thought, and his response becomes much more positive, as the rhizome of possibilities emerges just below the opaque empty surface. ‘L’entrelacs des rapports sociaux et spatiaux’,<sup>26</sup> ‘the intertwining of social and spatial links’, is uncovered beneath the surface: seemingly impenetrable mountains open up to provide the natives with stealthy shelters – ‘we reached our destination, a cleft in the head of a great mountain, with a water running through the midst, and upon the one hand a shallow cave in a rock’ (p. 140). The uniform heather proves to hide furtive huts and cabins, and David and Alan can literally disappear into the environment, ‘clapped flat down’ in their ‘lodgement’ on a rock, or able to ‘duck in again’ (p. 140) in burrow-like hides. Even dreary Ben Alder, an impassable barrier to the Red Coats, opens up to the natives ‘through a labyrinth of dreary glens and hollows and into the heart of that dismal mountain of Ben Alder’ (p. 161). Cluny’s cage is the most elaborate example in the novel of an active collaboration between man and nature: his egg-like nest-like clandestine shelter reads like one of Bachelard’s ‘space reveries’ in an inclusive space ‘under the sign of the preposition *in*’ (‘sous le signe de la préposition *dans*’)<sup>27</sup> where man and

nature actively collaborate:

Quite at the top, and just before the rocky face of the cliff sprang above the foliage, we found that strange house which was known in the country as 'Cluny's Cage.' The trunks of several trees had been wattled across, the intervals strengthened with stakes, and the ground behind this barricade levelled up with earth to make the floor. A tree, which grew out from the hillside, was the living centre-beam of the roof. The walls were of wattle and covered with moss. The whole house had something of an egg shape; and it half hung, half stood in that steep, hillside thicket, like a wasp's nest in a green hawthorn.

Within, it was large enough to shelter five or six persons with some comfort. A projection of the cliff had been cunningly employed to be the fireplace; and the smoke rising against the face of the rock, and being not dissimilar in colour, readily escaped notice from below. (p.160)

Both a cave and a nest, both earth and sky, it is a hybrid natural-cultural space: 'It has roots and boughs [...] The powerful tree is the pillar of the house [...] The roof and the walls hold on to the boughs, they let them through [...] The foliage is a roof, above the roof.'<sup>28</sup> The barren wasteland is thus in fact a land of shelter and plenty for those who have developed a material practice of it, for those who can build, but also fish and hunt: 'The burn was full of trout; the wood of cushat-doves; on the open side of the mountain beyond, whaups would be always whistling, and cuckoos were plentiful.' (p. 140)

This house is only one among many for Cluny, who is able to escape the vigilance of the Red Coats thanks to a multiple network of such hiding-places: 'he had caves, besides, and underground chambers in several parts of his country; and following the reports of his scouts, he moved from one to another as the soldiers drew near or moved away.' (p. 162)

The territory thus is lived-in, but also interconnected: Cluny can also benefit from the solidarity of his people, who scout the country to mark the positions of the Red Coats and open a safe line, literally 'a line of escape'<sup>29</sup> among the static points of surveillance. The so-called wasteland unfolds three-dimensionally as a powerful network of neighbouring solidarity, a multiple social space that is utterly invisible to the probing eyes of the outsiders: "Though, upon its face, that country appeared to be a desert, yet there were huts and houses of the people, of which we must have passed more than twenty, hidden in quiet places of the hills' (p. 138). The natives escape the vigilance of the Red Coats through a system of cultural communal signals that are undecipherable to those who do not belong – notes in Gaelic, codes and material signs, whistles, but also a set of mobile warning sentries: "But I dare say he'll have a sentry on the road, and he would ken well enough no soldiers would find the way that we came." (p. 130), and it is really no problem for Alan to 'get some word sent to James' while David cannot figure how it might be achieved, considering that they are 'in a desert place' – "unless ye get the fowls of the air to be your messengers, I see not what we shall be able to do" (p. 148).

In fact, in this instance, David himself is going to be the messenger-bird, trusted with an undecipherable button on a string and 'a piece of wood, fashioned in a cross, the four ends of which [Alan] blackened on the coals' (p. 148): involved and inserted in the ever-evolving and opportunist network, David is taken in, territorialised by the community and inserted in their process of re-appropriation. The initiation through the heather is over, and David can eventually experiment 'continual wonder and pleasure to sit and behold them' (p. 147), no longer from above, but from among the community.

Two sets of space are thus opposed in *Kidnapped*: the smooth 'face' of the land that can be occupied, and the rhizomatic space below the surface, the thick and intertwined arrangement of

social connexions, bristling below the impervious surface, from which a dissident counter-process of re-appropriation can be developed.

As he returns to the Lowlands though, 'within plain view of Sterling Castle' (p. 188), and as he is about to come into his inheritance, it could read as if his initiation in landscape theory had be quite in vain.

Shearers worked all day in a field on one side of the river.  
[...] As soon as the shearers quit their work and the dusk began to fall, we waded ashore and struck for the Bridge of Stirling, keeping to the fields and under the field fences.  
[...] The fields were being reaped; two ships lay anchored, and boats were coming and going on the Hope. [...] It was altogether a right pleasant sight to me; and I could not take my fill of gazing at these comfortable, green, cultivated hills and the busy people both of the field and sea.  
(p. 188)

The return of David's sense of satisfaction at that view is quite disquieting after his being confronted with the Highland: the fertility and greenness of the land, the common open space being replaced with possessed fields, the fences that order space and cannot fail to remind the reader of the policy of enclosures and the Clearances of the Highlands, the imagery of the passivity of the land, and the static return of the adjective 'pleasant' all seem to speak for a mere return to the beginning.

And yet, there is a major difference: these rural pastoral scenes are now peopled, the fields are not only neat and orderly, they 'are being reaped' and the continuous aspect of the verb speaks for the activity of men, while sheep are no longer decorative, they are replaced by active shearers. The landscape is now practised, and Stevenson thus takes part in *Kidnapped* in the contemporary

artistic and political reappraisal of the notion of landscape: he rephrases it as mobile territory, that needs to be practised and *canvassed* while the landscape is marked as an ideal, but static, *canvas*.

## NOTES

- 1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, (London & New York: Penguin Classics, 2007), p. 3, henceforth cited in text.
- 2 Simon Pugh (ed.), *Reading Landscape: country – city – capital* (Manchester and New-York: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 2.
- 3 See Guy Di Méo, *Géographie sociale et territoire*. (Paris: Nathan, 1998).
- 4 Nathalie Jaëck, Xavier Amelot, 'Dickens's pioneering rhetoric of landscape', in *Représentations*, Grenoble, 2016, <http://representations.u-grenoble3.fr/spip.php?article38>
- 5 Pugh, p. 2.
- 6 Eithne Henson, *Landscape and Gender in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. The Body of Nature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 225.
- 7 Pugh, p. 2.
- 8 Ibid., p. 28.
- 9 Ibid., p. 2.
- 10 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ed. by David Barrie (London: Andre Deutsch, 1987), p. 414.
- 11 Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*. 1855. Project Gutenberg. [on line] p. 47. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/963/963-h/963-h.htm>
- 12 Henson quoted in Ephraïm Sicher, *Rereading the City Rereading Dickens. Representation, the Novel, and Urban Realism* (New-York: AMS Press, 2003), p. 24.
- 13 Pugh, p. 24.
- 14 Anne MacLeod, 'The Highland landscape: visual depictions, 1760-1883' in Broun and MacGregor, (eds), *Miorun Mòr nan Gal*, 128-157, p. 142.
- 15 T. C. Smout, 'Tours in the Scottish Highlands from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries', *Northern Scotland* 5 (1983), 99-122, p. 99.
- 16 William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain, Particularly*

in the Highlands of Scotland, 2 vols. London: 1789, p. 171, quoted in MacLeod p. 135.

- 17 Edward Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London*, vol. 1, 5th edition (London: Ogle, Duncan and Co: 1822), p. 286. Accessed at [https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Letters\\_from\\_a\\_Gentleman\\_in\\_the\\_North\\_of.html?id=jVULAAAAYAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Letters_from_a_Gentleman_in_the_North_of.html?id=jVULAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y)
- 18 Ibid., p. 191.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 *The Poems of Ossian the Son of Fingal*, translated by James Macpherson Esq. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1812), vol. 2, p. 40.
- 21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', in Galen A. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetic Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993) p. 138.
- 22 'Le strié, c'est ce qui entrecroise des fixes et des variables, ce qui ordonne et fait succéder des formes distinctes, ce qui organise des lignes mélodiques horizontales et des plans harmoniques verticaux. Le lisse, c'est la variation continue, c'est le développement continu de la forme, c'est la fusion de l'harmonie et de la mélodie au profit d'un dégagement de valeurs proprement rythmiques, le pur tracé d'une diagonale à travers la verticale et l'horizontale.' – Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p. 597.
- 23 Di Méo, p. 34, my translation. 'deux éléments constitutifs majeurs du concept territorial, sa composante "espace social" et sa composante "espace vécu"'.
- 24 Jenny Calder, 'Figures in a landscape. Scott, Stevenson and routes to the past' in Richard Ambrosini & Richard Dury (eds.), *Robert Louis Stevenson. Writer of Boundaries* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), pp. 121-132. Calder's analysis that his response to the Highlands 'is relentlessly negative' (p. 128) thus seems to me to have to be qualified.
- 25 See John B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
- 26 De Méo, p. 94.
- 27 Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1948), p. 12.
- 28 'Elle a racines et frondaisons. [...] L'arbre puissant est le pilier de la

maison. [...] Le toit et les murs tiennent aux branches, laissent passer les branches. Le feuillage est un toit, au-dessus du toit.' Bachelard, p. 95, my translation.

- 29 'ligne de fuite' is a common concept in Deleuze's thinking. See the introduction to *Mille Plateaux*, p. 12.

# ‘We all belong to many countries’: alternative geographical imagina- tions in Stevenson’s Californian writing

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‘There is no foreign land; it is the traveller only that is foreign, and now and again, by a flash of recollection, lights up the contrasts of the earth.’<sup>1</sup>

In 1879, Robert Louis Stevenson boarded a steamship to New York in pursuit of a married woman, who, less than a year later, would become his wife. Despite spanning little more than a year, this period of Stevenson’s life has been seen by many commentators as a watershed moment, for both his literary career and his sense of place in a wider international community. Following Fanny Osbourne, who had returned to California and her husband a year before, Stevenson purchased his ‘second-cabin’ passage across the Atlantic and crossed the plains to California without informing his family and against the bitter opposition of his friends. Travelling with emigrants on a ship to America brought the author into contact with conditions and characters different from any he had experienced before. *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895), the travelogue that records these experiences, spelled a marked departure from his previous picturesque works of travel, as the stark realities he witnessed demanded a new style of writing. This change was not welcomed by Stevenson’s literary contacts back home, resulting in a fractious publication history that did not see the full work in print until after the author’s death. Compared to the stark descriptions of *The Amateur Emigrant*, Stevenson’s essays on California share more features

with his earlier work. Yet, while the essays he wrote in and about the American West conform more to the expected 'Stevenson' style, they nevertheless reveal the influence of his first experiences outside of Europe. Indeed, the insights Stevenson gained during his journey across ocean and continent permeate the texts that follow it, and it is his writing on California on which I focus in this article. Alongside depictions of coastal landscapes and mountain retreats, these essays and travel books reveal a pervasive interest in the dynamic forces of modernity. With a focus on the proliferating and shifting networks that construct place in the late nineteenth century (particularly networks of communication, transport and mass human migration), Stevenson questions the straightforward alignment of place and identity. Driven by the constantly shifting environment of the American West, Stevenson constructs a progressive concept of global space that is not defined by nations and borders, but by the networks of social relations that are connecting places across the world.

During the past decade Stevenson's Californian writing has drawn more critical attention, although still far less than the majority of his other texts. In particular, Jennifer Hayward and Caroline McCracken-Flesher have offered insightful readings, both considering the challenges to ideas of national identity that emerge in this writing. McCracken-Flesher explores the Californian essays in her chapter on Stevenson's travel writing in the *Edinburgh Companion*, identifying, in *The Silverado Squatters*, the 'swinging of international identity round the carefully composed figure of the suffering author in the landscape'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Hayward has argued that these 'early travel writings test boundaries, both national and generic', as Stevenson 'captures the paradoxes of the rapidly changing Californian culture'.<sup>3</sup> In this article I will also consider the questions these texts raise about ideas of national belonging. I hope to add to this discussion, however, by exploring specifically Stevenson's focus on mobility in America, suggesting it is this preoccupation that ena-

bles his insights into the changing relationships between place, culture and identity. Applying a literary geographical approach, I will consider the spatial dimensions of Stevenson's Californian essays, considering his depictions of the state's natural landscape and its newly-formed cities while exploring the recurring topics of transport and mobility in each of the texts. I will also add to recent critical readings of these texts by considering Stevenson's geographical imagination alongside concepts and debates from cultural geography. Drawing particularly on Doreen Massey's theories of place and Tim Cresswell's examinations of mobility, I will suggest it is Stevenson's concern with the proliferating networks of transport and migration, and his exploration of how such mobility changes the nature of place, that leads to the radical insights he achieves in *The Silverado Squatters*, where he questions the significance of national identity and nationhood in an increasingly globalised age.

Stevenson's year in California can be loosely separated into three phases: his arrival and stay in Monterey, from 31 August 1879 until just before Christmas; his stay in the San Francisco area until 22 May 1880; and finally his extended honeymoon in Calistoga and Silverado until the end of July, shortly after which he returned to New York and crossed the Atlantic back to Britain.<sup>4</sup> Out of each of these relationships with specific Californian places Stevenson produced literary texts, reflections on the characters of these locations that have become some of the most neglected pieces in the author's oeuvre. This article will examine the often-overlooked essays from California, 'The Old Pacific Capital' (1880) and 'A Modern Cosmopolis' (1883), as well as *The Silverado Squatters* (1884) and the second part of *The Amateur Emigrant*, 'Across the Plains' (1883). Stevenson's essay on Monterey, 'The Old Pacific Capital', was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in November 1880, and was later included in *Across the Plains* (1892). 'A Modern Cosmopolis', the essay about San Francisco, first appeared in the *Magazine of Art* in

May 1883. The essays were first published together in the 1895 Edinburgh Edition under the joint title 'The Old and New Pacific Capitals', with the names of the two cities given as subtitles.<sup>5</sup> In his 1966 collection of Stevenson's American works, James D. Hart replicates this style from the Edinburgh Edition, and it is as 'Monterey' and 'San Francisco' that I will refer to the essays here.

*The Silverado Squatters* details Stevenson's honeymoon period in the Napa Valley during May and June 1880. As well as covering his stay in Calistoga, the book describes the new family's brief residence in the abandoned Silverado mine on the slopes of Mount St Helena. In 1882 Stevenson rewrote his journal from this period, eventually finding a publisher in Chatto and Windus in early 1884.<sup>6</sup> Despite the four-year hiatus, *The Silverado Squatters* grew directly out of the experiences he recorded during his trip; indeed, Hart asserts that 'what [Stevenson] wrote in the journal [...] is not the raw material of a book; it is the rough draft.'<sup>7</sup>As Hart goes on to explain, these 'sketches' that came out of Stevenson's Californian residence 'were far more satisfactory to [the author's] official literary guardians' than *The Amateur Emigrant*: 'The one on Monterey opens with a softly descriptive, charmingly picturesque view of the lovely natural setting.'<sup>8</sup> He groups *The Silverado Squatters* with Stevenson's two preceding, European travel books, while recognising the evident influence of his recent trip across the Atlantic and the new style of *The Amateur Emigrant*. Hart notes that *The Silverado Squatters* 'has the character developed in the more recent' book of travel, but 'the subject has the charm inherent in the earlier works.'<sup>9</sup> Yet, while all of these texts might represent a return to the 'charm' associated with Stevenson's early writing, they also retain the new attention to modernisation and globalisation, the interest in the concerns of an increasingly mobile, diverse and industrial society, which were fostered during his journey across the Atlantic.

When Stevenson arrived in America in 1879, the nation was

only three years past its centennial and, as Hayward asserts, the state of California ‘was still a virtual *terra incognita*’: ‘The region did not become part of United States’ territory until 1848 and did not achieve official statehood until 1850, after the Mexican-American War.’<sup>10</sup> Yet, while Europeans may have still considered the West an ‘unsettled frontier’ in 1879, the region’s history is far more complex, as Hayward explains:

While Native Americans had inhabited the West Coast for perhaps 14,000 years, Spanish settlers began to colonise the coast only towards the end of the 17th century. In 1821, with the fall of the Spanish empire, the colonised region became the Mexican states of Alta and Baja California. But as the United States rose in power, the territory was increasingly contested, and ultimately ceded to the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.<sup>11</sup>

It is from this point that the state began to change rapidly, particularly after the Gold Rush of 1848-55. Steven Hahn describes how ‘news of the gold discovery not only stimulated the imaginations of people across the globe; it also inspired migrations of such range and rapidity as to reduce the term “rush” to something of an understatement’:

The first to arrive in numbers came, as might be expected, from nearby San Francisco, where according to observers, nearly the entire male population (and the population was already overwhelmingly male) had packed up and headed east to the foothills [of the Sacramento valley] by the end of May 1848. They were soon joined by emigrants from Oregon to the North, the Great Basin to the east, and the Mexican state of Sonora to the south. Then came Peruvians and Chileans, Hawai’ians and Tahitians, Australians and Chinese. A bit later came Americans from the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Southwest, English

and Irish, Germans and French. Before it subsided, the rush may well have been the most culturally kaleidoscopic event in the history of the United States up to that time'.<sup>12</sup>

The patterns of migration during the Gold Rush demonstrate both the widening networks of global transport and communication that had been developing through the nineteenth century and, as Hahn states, 'the reach of a globalizing economy', as the non-native population of California grew 'by roughly twenty-fold within five years'.<sup>13</sup> The completion of the transcontinental railroad connecting East to West in 1869 also led to a dramatic surge in California's population, increasing from about 380,000 in 1860 to just over 863,000 by 1880.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the 1870s saw the country's first major economic recession. As Swearingen notes, 'Stevenson thus writes of a country where internal migration [...] was getting to be as common as foreign immigration, where the promised land in one decade was perceived in the next as best left behind.'<sup>15</sup> Doreen Massey notes the prejudice many societies have historically held towards mobile people. She explains 'how disturbing such mobility, such apparent lack of attachment to a single place, can be [...] to other people's sense of what is "right and proper" – such wandering is a challenge, perhaps, to their own priorities of settledness and establishment.'<sup>16</sup> As Tim Cresswell suggests, however, in the history of America mobility is often seen in more positive terms. He argues that, in fact, 'mobility has often been portrayed as the central geographical fact of American life, one that distinguished Euro-Americans from their European ancestors.' Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier thesis of 1893, for example:

put movement at the centre of American history and identity. [...] The United States was different from Europe, it was claimed, because its people were less rooted in space and time and therefore were free from the shackles of

both feudalism and industrial capitalism. A new American spirit was forged in the movement of people from other parts of the world and within the emerging nation.<sup>17</sup>

Central within this definition of modern American identity was the railroad, with over 166,000 miles of track in operation by 1890.<sup>18</sup> Stevenson's essays from California demonstrate a recurring focus on the railways, considering its impact on the landscape as well as its role in transforming the social and economic composition of the region. To reach California Stevenson travelled the same routes as those emigrating to America: *The Amateur Emigrant* explores the conditions of European migrants crossing the Atlantic, while the account of his subsequent journey 'Across the Plains' reveals the mass internal migration taking place in the nation. The Californian essays share this thematic focus on mobility, so that in the writing produced from his first journey to America Stevenson seems to define the country by trajectories of human movement.

Coming from a nation altered out of recognition after the Industrial Revolution, Stevenson was familiar with the changes wrought on society by major socio-economic upheaval. Yet it is the speed with which changes occur in California that Stevenson seems to marvel at in his essays on the region. The texts focus on places affected by the intense mobility of the people. He writes about the sudden emergence of San Francisco as a 'roaring city', the population of which grew from 1000 to 25,000 between January 1848 and December 1849, and had reached over 230,000 by the time Stevenson arrived in 1879.<sup>19</sup> In *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson describes the abandoned mining towns left behind after workers move on, considering how this rapid and persistent mobility creates 'relics' that are less than ten years old. In fact, in all of Stevenson's Californian writing, there is a pervasive preoccupation with the fluid and dynamic nature of place. Each text from this region engages with the sudden and

continuous changes to the landscape, as the movement of people and pursuit of wealth continue to unsettle the area. Indeed, the American West is depicted in such an insecure and transitional state that this volatility is reflected in the natural world, with even the mountain home of Stevenson in *The Silverado Squatters* liable to collapse at a moment's notice.

It is this focus on the potential instability of place that aligns Stevenson's writing on America with relatively recent theories in geography. Over the last 30 years, cultural geographers have challenged the idea of places as bounded entities with essential characteristics, interpreting place instead as fluid, open and relational.<sup>20</sup> Doreen Massey is one of the key proponents of this conception of place. She does not deny the uniqueness of places, but argues that:

what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.<sup>21</sup>

In this interpretation, which focuses on networks of 'social relations' (human movements and communications across space), 'each "place" can be seen 'as a particular, unique, point of their intersection'.<sup>22</sup> Such a theory, therefore, identifies place as something that is never finished or bounded but is continually being constructed: in short, place is seen as a process. Cresswell summarises this idea, suggesting that 'to think of place as an intersection – a particular configuration of happenings – is to think of place in a constant sense of becoming through practice and practical knowledge.' He describes 'place as an event rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic': 'place as an event is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence.'<sup>23</sup> In Stevenson's Californian essays, his preoccupation with the networks of transport and

patterns of migration connecting and altering the region leads to a portrayal of place as continually being remade, always open to influence and disruption. It is his through his focus on the dynamic forces of modernity in America that Stevenson recognises and depicts such permeability and impermanence, as he locates the openness of place in the intense mobility of people living in and moving through it.

Yet, moving beyond his reflections on this region specifically, Stevenson's experience in California leads him to meditate on the broader nature of place and identity in increasingly globalised times. Eric Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires draw on the networked interpretation of place, conceptualising it as fluid and, particularly as the forces of globalisation increase, susceptible to outside influence. Building on Massey's argument, they question the stability of cultural and national identity in an age of such shifting and increasing global connections. They describe the process by which the modern world destabilises the relation between place and identity:

The forces of new technologies, globalization and 'time-space compression' have together created a sense of information flows, fragmentation and pace replacing what is now perceived to be a previous stability of homogeneity, community and place.<sup>24</sup>

It is exactly a disruption of 'homogeneity, community and place' that Stevenson conveys in his texts from America. In 1880, Stevenson is witnessing the early stages of the intense globalisation that Carter et al suggest is undermining 'the easy alliance of place and identity'.<sup>25</sup> As they explain:

The presumed certainties of cultural identity, firmly located in particular places which housed stable cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective, though

never a reality for some, were increasingly disrupted and displaced for all.<sup>26</sup>

In his writing from California, I argue Stevenson anticipates these ideas about the impact of modernity on the straightforward association between place, culture and identity. Challenging the notion of national belonging in a mobile, globalised age, Stevenson articulates a new geographical imagination, one that privileges the social networks that connect the world rather than the geographical boundaries that divide it.

\* \* \*

The geographical contours of the landscape are central to Stevenson's Californian essays. As Hart states, a 'sense of setting' runs through all of them,<sup>27</sup> immediately evident in each of their opening paragraphs. 'Monterey' begins with a description of the city's 'topography',<sup>28</sup> plotting the shape of the landscape as it appears on a map:

The Bay of Monterey has been compared by no less a person than General Sherman to a bent fishing-hook; [...] Santa Cruz sits exposed at the shank; the mouth of the Salinas river is at the middle of the bend; and Monterey itself is cosily ensconced beside the barb ('Monterey', p. 151).

Stevenson lingers on the geographical and meteorological features of the region, describing how, 'even in quiet weather, the low, distant, thrilling roar of the Pacific hangs over the coast and the adjacent country like smoke above a battle' (p. 151). The first line of *The Silverado Squatters* also immediately locates the book's subject: 'The scene of this little book is on a high mountain', from whose 'summit you must have an excellent lesson in

geography' (*Silverado Squatters*, p. 191). Even in 'Simoneau's at Monterey', a short essay unpublished until Hart's edition in 1966, the opening sentence is a reflection on the nature of place and representation, on the geographical imagination, as Stevenson writes: 'A place does not clearly exist for the imagination, till we have moved elsewhere.'<sup>29</sup>

This preoccupation with the geographical and cartographic is again evident in the opening lines of 'San Francisco', which explains how 'the Pacific coast of the United States, as you may see by the map, [...] is one of the most exposed and shelterless on earth'.<sup>30</sup> In the first paragraphs of this essay, it not only the content but also the text's form that reflects the topographical features of the landscape:

Within the memory of persons not yet old, a mariner might have steered into these narrows – not yet the Golden Gates – open out the surface of the bay – here girt with hills, there lying broad to the horizon – and beheld a scene as empty of the presence, as pure from the handiwork, of man, as in the days of the old sea-commander ('San Francisco', p. 180).

If you consider the region on a map, the dashes partitioning the sentence mirror the 'narrows' that are now bridged by the Golden Gates: the sentence follows the mariner's path, entering the channel formed by the adjacent bits of land, or the horizontal confines of the dashes, passing through these parameters before entering the wider expanse of the bay. Yet, while it describes the landscape as it would have been, 'empty of the presence [...] of man', before the port became a centre of trade, Stevenson's sentence structure in this extract in fact reflects the scene he surveyed in 1880. Far from being 'pure from' man's 'handiwork', his prose is heavily broken up by caesuras and interjections, just as San Francisco's landscape has been disrupted by the changes

of industrialisation.

One of the central developments driving these changes was the transcontinental railroad, connecting the West to the rest of America and facilitating both trade and internal migration. Yet, in addition to the social and industrial developments such improved connectivity enabled, the railroad itself also left its mark on the landscape. Stevenson notes the dominance of the railway in the bleak landscapes he travels through in 'Across the Plains': 'It was a world almost without feature; an empty sky, an empty earth; front and back, the line of railway stretched from horizon to horizon, like a cue across a billiard-board.'<sup>31</sup>

A number of scholars appear to consider this focus on the position of the railway in the landscape, as opposed to the landscape itself, as a failure of the imagination. For instance, Robert Kiely asserts that, when 'confronted with the vast sweep of the Wyoming desert, [Stevenson's] imagination is oppressed, and turns back again and again to the mean but familiar comforts of the railroad.'<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Caroline McCracken-Flesher agrees that the author is bewildered by the 'extensive newness' of this terrain, vast country unlike any he has experienced before. She writes that 'Nebraska, in fact, is so totally and consistently and repeatedly new [...] that it escapes the codes of western romance'.<sup>33</sup> Yet, through its focus is on the railroad, the text does not necessarily neglect or fail to describe the landscape. For Stevenson, the train is a part of this landscape, the 'one piece of life in all the deadly land'. The railway is granted life, assigned agency: 'it [is] the one actor, the one spectacle fit to be observed in this paralysis of man and nature' (pp. 128-9). Here, the modern mobility of the railroad is valorised alongside the 'paralysis' of nature and pre-industrial life. Indeed, if the natural or picturesque aspects of the country escape the codes of western romance, it may be because, in this second part of his stark account of emigrant travel, Stevenson's romantic eye is fixed squarely on the industrial. He imagines:

how the railroad has been pushed through this unwatered wilderness and haunt of savage tribes [...]; how at each stage of the construction, roaring, impromptu cities, full of gold and lust and death, sprang up and then died away again [...]; how in these uncouth places pig-tailed Chinese pirates worked side by side with border ruffians and broken men from Europe (p. 129).

Stevenson declares the railway 'the one typical achievement of the age in which we live, as if it brought together in one plot all the ends of the world'. Far from being deficient in romance, he asserts that these observations, made during his journey across the plains, will offer 'some great writer the busiest, the most extended, and the most varied subject for an enduring literary work' (p. 129).

Compared to the account of the sea voyage in *The Amateur Emigrant*, however, portions of Stevenson's Californian essays do at first appear to represent a return to his earlier focus on rustic but picturesque natural settings. However, the essays are not an uncomplicated reversion to type, and Stevenson does not simply discard his newly developed interest in modernisation. While the opening pages of 'Monterey' are devoted to the natural environment, the descriptions are imbued with a sense of conflict, of nature having to assert its dominance over the land. Stevenson writes that 'the woods and the Pacific rule between them the climate of the seaboard region' (p. 155), but that 'the fogs are in possession of the lower levels': 'Where their shadow touches, colour dies out of the world. The air grows chill and deadly as they advance. [...] It takes but a little while till the invasion is complete' (pp. 157-8). This martial imagery runs throughout the passage: 'the thrilling roar of the Pacific hangs over the coast [...] like smoke above a battle' (p. 151), while 'the whole woodland is begirt with thundering surges' (p. 153). Hayward recognises the opposition between nature and industrialisation that runs through Stevenson's Californian texts, terming it one of 'the

traditional preoccupations of Europeans in the New World': 'the beauty, variety, and immensity of Nature's creations, contrasted against the unsightliness, degeneration, and insignificance of human manufacture.'<sup>34</sup>

While nature and modernity are contrasted, however, it is not in quite such binary terms. Rather than assigning one precedence over the other, Stevenson depicts them in conflict, each battling for control of the landscape. While, in the passage quoted above, the sea is assigned power over the locality, it is portrayed as more eerie and threatening than beautiful: 'the haunting presence of the ocean [...] follow[s] you', a 'sort of disquieting company' that 'sets your senses upon edge' (pp. 152-3). Importantly, this power dynamic shifts through the essays. Far from depicting human manufacture as insignificant, in 'San Francisco', Stevenson marvels at the speed and power with which the city has laid claim to the landscape:

In this busy, moving generation, we have all known cities to cover our boyish playgrounds, we have all started for a country walk and stumbled on a new suburb; but I wonder what enchantment of the Arabian Nights can have equalled this evocation of a roaring city, in a few years of a man's life, from the marshes and the blowing sand. (p. 181)

Here, nature is nothing but 'marshes' and 'sand', engulfed by the 'roaring city'. Thus, triumph of industry is not even considered unsightly, but ascribed the romance and exoticism of a tale from the *Arabian Nights*. Stevenson's writing has developed from picturesque accounts of the European countryside to reveal a new, persistent concern with the dynamic between landscape and modernity, and this focus is evident again in *The Silverado Squatters*. Returning, as he regularly does, to the overwhelming influence of the railroad, he describes how, 'at Castiloga, the rail-

road ceases [...] blockaded by our mountain'. Here, the military language that pits nature against 'human manufacture' recurs: 'Mount Saint Helena is not only a summit, but a frontier; and, up to the time of writing, it has stayed the progress of the iron horse.' (*Silverado Squatters*, p. 194.) While the mountain has halted the development of the railroad, it is merely a temporary triumph. Far from proclaiming the power and immensity of Nature's creations, Stevenson cannot even guarantee that the victory still stands, willing only to state the facts at 'the time of writing' and not prognosticate on the future.

The recurring presence of the railroad denotes a more extensive preoccupation with transport and migration throughout the Stevenson's Californian texts. Indeed, his conception of America seems to be defined by trajectories of human movement. After sailing across the Atlantic with Europeans destined for the east coast of America, Stevenson found himself travelling on a train with emigrants leaving these same places in search of a better life in the west. At the same time, as Claire Harman notes, Stevenson could not help but notice that 'emigrants were also streaming *away* from California', <sup>35</sup> passing him on trains heading in the opposite direction ('Across the Plains', p. 137). In *The Silverado Squatters*, the author describes how '[t]his stir of change and these perpetual echoes of the moving footfall haunt the land. Men move eternally, still chasing Fortune; and, Fortune found, still wander' (p. 209). It is through such 'wandering' – through the intense mobility of people – that Stevenson identifies place as open and unstable rather than bounded and permanent. Following Massey, we can read in Stevenson's texts a recognition that new and growing networks, not just of people but also of transport and trade, are disrupting the idea of place as secure, as internally constructed and defined. Reflecting on the turbulent political history of California since the 1820s, Stevenson declares that 'nothing is stranger in that strange State than the rapidity with which the soil has changed hands' ('Monterey', p. 158). In

*The Silverado Squatters*, it is not to politics that he attributes this unsettledness of place, but to the movement of people driven by capitalism and industrialisation:

One thing in this new country very particularly strikes a stranger, and that is the number of antiquities. [...] The towns [...] grow great and prosper by passing occasions; and when the lode comes to an end, and the miners move elsewhere, the town remains behind them, like Palmyra in the desert. I suppose there are, in no country in the world, so many deserted towns as here in California. (p. 215)

Here, California is paradoxically figured as both young and old: it is a 'new country' that is continually changing, but with 'antiquities' and 'relics' from the recent past, the networks that construct place changing so rapidly that they disrupt the linearity of chronology and time.

Stevenson's writing from this period repeatedly marvels at the speed with which place can change in California, particularly 'San Francisco', which states that, 'in the course of a generation only, this city and its suburb have arisen' (p. 180). Yet, in these essays, Stevenson's preoccupation with the fluidity of place in the region extends beyond the parameters of the manmade to influence his depiction of its natural landscape and geography. After reflecting on the area's sudden industrial growth, Stevenson theorises that 'such swiftness of increase, as with an overgrown youth, suggests a corresponding swiftness of destruction'. He notes that 'the sandy peninsula of San Francisco, [...] shaken to the heart by frequent earthquakes, seems in itself no very durable foundation', adding: 'We are in early geographical epochs, changeful and insecure; and we feel, as with a sculptor's model, that the author may yet grow weary of and shatter the rough sketch' (p. 181). The openness and mutability of place that Stevenson recognises, and which he links

to the sudden influx and mobility of people and trade, is mirrored in the landscape: Stevenson's essays on California are replete with such instances of unstable places. Reflecting further on the erratic terrain on which San Francisco is built, he asserts that 'a trifling subsidence might drown the business quarters in an hour' ('San Francisco', p. 182), burying the centre of finance and capitalism as quickly as it was built. In *The Silverado Squatters*, he witnesses 'a strange, impetuous, silent, shifting, exhibition of the powers of nature', seeing a 'familiar landscape changing from moment to moment like figures in a dream' (p. 254). Here, the mountain scene he is surveying becomes engulfed in 'water (as it seemed so to the eye)', 'true Pacific billows, only somewhat rarefied, rolling in mid-air among the hill-tops' (p. 255). In the form of fog, the sea encroaches upon the land, the dramatic shifting of elements another unpredictable feature of this volatile country. Stevenson's depiction of unstable places stretches even to his own residence. The mine at Silverado is itself a transient site, for, 'as still' as it seems –

at any moment the report of rotten wood might tell us that the platform had fallen into the shaft; [...] or a wedge slip in the great upright seam, and hundreds of tons of mountain bury the scene of our encampment [...] (p. 279)

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Stevenson's Californian essays are preoccupied with the effects of an increasingly globalised world, depicting how the proliferating networks of trade, transport and migration are changing the nature of place in the region. A conception of place as a process, as fluid, porous and susceptible to change, influences the representation of many of the locations in these essays, so that even the natural world is depicted as volatile and unstable. The mobility of the people is a key artery in the networks that

Stevenson sees constructing and destabilising place. In addition to exploring how such movements are changing the landscape of the region, the Californian texts are also concerned with how these unsettled places accommodate and support the various cultural and national identities of the people within them. Anticipating the work of cultural geographers a century later, Stevenson questions the easy alliance between place, culture and identity in a mobile, globalised age. In the texts engendered from his first experience out of Europe, Stevenson presents the cosmopolitan communities that grow from such global connections and travel, groups whose collective identity cannot be accommodated by conventional geographical or cultural categories. Musing on the incompatibility of strict geographical borders and an increasingly interconnected world, Stevenson questions the viability of nation states. He articulates a new geographical imagination, one based on flexibility and inclusion, offering a conception of national belonging as open and fluid as the places he depicts.

In Stevenson's essays, just as the natural world mirrors or contributes to the openness and mutability of place, so does the geographical layout of the city. Stevenson depicts the uniform and linear design of San Francisco, where 'the streets lie straight up and down the hills, and straight across at right angles' ('San Francisco', p. 185). Walking along this 'trenchant pattern' of roads, 'one brief impression follows and obliterates another, and the city leaves upon the mind no general and stable picture, but a profusion of airy and incongruous images' (p. 185). In comparison to the rhizomatic arrangement of London or Edinburgh, the structured layout of a young, purpose-built city appears somehow less real and secure; in its modern design it seems insubstantial, 'airy and incongruous'. The text goes on to describe 'the great net of thoroughfares lying at right angles [...] over the shoulders of Nob Hill', where 'millionaires are gathered together vying with each other in display' (p. 186):

From thence, looking down over the business wards of the city, we can descry [...] the Stock Exchange, the heart of San Francisco: a great pump we might call it, continually pumping up the savings of the lower quarters into the pockets of the millionaires upon the hill. But these same thoroughfares that enjoy for a while so elegant a destiny have their lines prolonged into more unpleasant places. Some meet their fate in the sands; some run into the sea; some perish unwept among pig-sties and rubbish heaps.

Again, the layout of the city reflects the nature of its origins, developing as it did out of the surge of people and trade brought about by developments in transport and the discovery of gold. It is industrial capitalism that led to the sudden construction of the city, and it is the nature of capitalism that is evinced in its layout. The linear structure of the 'thoroughfares' means that those that begin with the mansions of 'Nob Hill' are the same that end in the 'pig-sties' and 'rubbish heaps' of 'poor, forgotten districts' (p. 186), revealing the necessary and direct relation between wealth and poverty in a capitalist society.

This linear layout of San Francisco, however, also supports the integration of the various different nationalities and cultures that have been drawn to the city. Reflecting on the cosmopolitan population of San Francisco, Stevenson declares that almost as 'strange' as 'the rapidity of its appearance, is the mingling of races that combine to people it' (p. 182): 'The town is essentially not Anglo-Saxon; still more essentially not American. [...] Here, on the contrary, are airs of Marseilles and of Pekin. The shops along the street are like the consulates of different nations.' Yet, despite the cultural and national differences of the residents, the composition of this new, urban environment, in particular 'the indefinite prolongation of its streets' (p. 185), supports multiculturalism and integration:

The same street in its career visits and unites so many different classes of society [...]. Thus you may be struck with a spot, set it down for the most romantic of the city, and, glancing at the name-plate, find it is in the same street that you yourself inhabit in another quarter of the town. (pp. 185-6)

One road connects different communities, promoting recognition of a shared, common humanity. Indeed, Stevenson notes that 'for every man [...] that city is a foreign city; humming with foreign tongues and customs; [...] and yet each and all have made themselves at home' (p. 183).

Through his focus on the enhanced mobility of people in the late nineteenth century, Stevenson presents the expanding networks connecting places across global space as disrupting the certainties of national identity. This is particularly true of trajectories of migration. Stevenson describes the dissipation of clearly defined nationality among the geographically mobile:

There is a free or common accent among English-speaking men who follow the sea. They catch a twang in a New England Port; from a cockney skipper even a Scotsman sometimes learns to drop an *h*; a word of a dialect is picked up from another hand in the forecabin; until often the result is undecipherable, and you have to ask for the man's place of birth (*Amateur Emigrant*, p. 8).

Later in his career, when Stevenson travels to the 'contact zones' of the Pacific, fluid and ambiguous national identity becomes a persistent concern in his texts. Here, we can perceive its origins in his first journey out of Europe, when he is first properly confronted with such peripatetic communities and expansive global networks. In his Californian essays, Stevenson reflects on the cosmopolitanism of the American West:

In the group of States on the Pacific coast [...] we may look to see some singular hybrid [...]. In my little restaurant at Monterey, we have sat down to table, day after day, a Frenchman, two Portuguese, an Italian, a Mexican, and a Scotsman: we had for common visitors an American from Illinois, a nearly pure blood Indian woman, and a naturalised Chinese [...] No wonder that the Pacific coast is a foreign land to visitors from the Eastern States, for each race contributes something of it its own. ('Monterey', p. 161)

As Hayward states, in these essays Stevenson 'refuses the easy temptation of asserting Anglo-Saxon racial dominance', offering instead a 'remarkable meditation on the fast-changing identity of the California coast'.<sup>36</sup> It is the mobility of people, enabled by the economic and technological developments often termed globalisation that Stevenson recognises is creating cosmopolitan communities and changing the identity of place in America.

Yet, more remarkable than his focus on the speed with which the identity of place can change, is Stevenson's suggestion that, in a world constructed of moving networks, place may not offer a secure support for identity. As the networks traversing global space expand and the interconnections between places increase, the notion of bounded places with essential characteristics is increasingly less feasible. Cresswell explains that the conception of place as a process, of 'practiced place' –

revises the older ideas of place as the centre of authentic existence with its own neatly circumscribed culture and identity. As an anti-essentialist notion it does not allow for any easy correlation of place and culture.<sup>37</sup>

This is not to suggest that place plays no part in our identification, but that this role is less straightforward than it once was. As David Morely and Kevin Robins explain, 'proliferating information and communication flows' and 'mass human migration [...] has progressively eroded territorial boundaries and provoked ever more immediate confrontations of culture and identity':

Where once it was the case that cultures were demarcated and differentiated in time and space, now 'the concept of a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture must give way to a sense of fluidity and permeability of cultural sets'. Through this intermixture and hybridization of cultures, older certainties and foundations of identity are continuously and necessarily undermined.'<sup>38</sup>

If, in an age of global movement and connection, place is continually being reconstituted and remade, then it can be seen instead as flexible site for the creative production of identity, rather than a homogenous and fixed 'a-priori label of identity'.<sup>39</sup>

It is this idea that Stevenson begins to articulate in his texts from America. As he depicts the assortment of nationalities drawn together by developments in communication, transport and trade, Stevenson formulates imaginary nations of his own to house his cosmopolitan groups of characters. Voyaging across the Atlantic, Stevenson shares a ship with 'Scots and Irish in plenty, a few English, a few Americans, a good handful of Scandinavians, a German or two, and one Russian', this miscellany of nationalities 'all now belonging for ten days to one small iron country on the deep' (*Emigrant*, p. 10). In 'Simoneaus at Monterey', he writes that a 'friendly synthesis of tongues put everyone at home. We spoke neither English, Spanish nor French; we spoke Simoneaucean, the language of our common country' (p. 174). Just as he notes the dilution of fixed national identity among peripatetic peoples, here Stevenson acknowledges that such

global connections and travel creates new communities, whose collective identity cannot be accommodated by the traditional nation state.

Indeed, it is through questioning the relevance of the nation in an era of increasing global mobility and integration that Stevenson articulates his most radical meditation on place and identity. In a passage that seems presciently relevant to the concerns of the twenty-first century, he notes the exclusionary nature of nationalist ideas:

Of all stupid ill-feelings, the sentiment of my fellow-Caucasians towards our companions in the Chinese car was the most stupid and the worst. They seemed never to have looked at them, listened to them, or thought of them, but hated them *a priori*. ('Across the Plains', p. 139)

With an insight that resonates with much of the current rhetoric on immigration, Stevenson recognises that the primary catalyst for this prejudice towards the Chinese is the 'cruel and treacherous battle field of money':

They could work better and cheaper in half a hundred industries, and hence there was no calumny too idle for the Caucasians to repeat, and even believe ('Across the Plains', p. 139).

Such intolerance, Stevenson notes, is not a concern specific to these circumstances of time and place, but is a pervasive, systemic impediment to global integration, one entrenched in the values of nationhood and national belonging:

A while ago it was the Irish, now it is the Chinese that must go. Such is the cry. It seems, after all, that no country

is bound to submit to immigration any more than to invasion: each is war to the knife, and resistance to either but legitimate defence. (p. 139)

Massey and Jess describes the historical opposition to 'the continuous mixing of cultures through the interconnections between places'. They write that it is a reaction against this mixing that has 'resulted in the horrors of ethnic cleansing, the sporadic outbreaks of exclusivist nationalisms and a whole host of jingoistic parochialisms at smaller social and spatial scales.'<sup>40</sup> As the connections between places increase and cultures become more intertwined, Massey posits the need for a readjustment of our understanding of global space and place. She argues that '[t]he alternative to such a reaction might be the imagination and living of a new form of cosmopolitanism – a different kind of geographical imagination.'<sup>41</sup>

A century earlier, Stevenson witnessed for the first time the extent of global connectivity in the late nineteenth century, and recognised its destabilising influence on the presumed certainties of place and identity. Seeing place as open and permeable, his ideas of national belonging become fluid, based on a politics of inclusion rather than exclusion: 'I think we all belong to many countries. And perhaps this habit of much travel, and the engendering of scattered friendships, may prepare the euthanasia of ancient nations.' (*Silverado*, p. 203.) Here, Stevenson articulates the new geographical imagination that Massey calls for over a century later: one that does not privilege the nation state but focuses instead on the networks that construct and connect places, the social relations that bind us together rather than the geographical boundaries that keep us apart. He recognises that, in a mobile and interconnected world made up of permeable places, it is the connections that are important, and deserve our attention.

After travelling 5000 miles to marry an American divorcee,

living on writing sent across the Atlantic to be published in back Britain, and meeting countless other travellers from countless different nations on the way, Stevenson's perception of the world has changed. He concludes that 'there is no foreign land, it is the traveller only that is foreign' (*Silverado Squatters*, p. 229), separating place and identity in a way his literary friends in London were never able to do. By asserting that 'we all belong to many nations', the author foretells the injustice of imposing strict barriers to movement in an entirely interconnected yet unequal world. And in imagining the 'euthanasia of ancient nations', Stevenson conceives of a time when the networks that unite us become so numerous, that the boundaries that divide us will cease to exist.

\* \* \*

Many scholars have noted the shift in Stevenson's writing after his year in America. As Hayward asserts, 'not only Stevenson's sympathies and interests, but also his characteristic themes, style, and literary form, were clearly transformed by his experiences in the New World'.<sup>42</sup> Yet it was style and form that most interested contemporary critics and commentators, as opposed to Stevenson's sometimes radical mediations on identity and location, belonging and displacement. In a review of 'Across the Plains', the *Scottish Leader* ignored the trials of the journey on the emigrant train to focus on 'the author's egotistically gossiping style', remarking on 'Stevenson's "self consciousness" with its "deliberate posing"'.<sup>43</sup> McCracken-Flesher reads 'the reviewers' obsessive focus on Stevenson's art' as an indication of his innovation: 'Critics found it hard to accept – perhaps even to register – the meanings that were erupting through Stevenson's realignments of experience and self.'<sup>44</sup> It is important to state that Stevenson's year in America did not engender a sudden or complete transformation of person or literary output. While arguing that, after his transatlantic journey, Stevenson 'was undoubtedly

a changed man', Christopher MacLachlan acknowledges that the author 'was still capable of the kind of writing he had done before – essays, travelogue and minor fiction'.<sup>45</sup> Equally, the insight Stevenson achieves in *The Silverado Squatters* is not followed consistently through his subsequent writing. Throughout his life he identifies as both British and Scottish, expressing deep, if not uncomplicated affection for his native country. Even as Stevenson asserts that 'a man belong[s], in these days, to a variety of countries', he classes 'the old land [as] still the true love'; 'the others are but pleasant infidelities' (*Silverado*, p. 210).

Nevertheless, the impressions that first emerge in Stevenson's writing from America (the conviction that the world is interconnected, the focus on mobility and its impact on culture and identity) do persist, and become repeated thematic concerns in his writing. Reflecting on the enduring significance of Stevenson's time in California, Hart asserts that 'even after [Stevenson] had formally completed his personal narratives based on his own experiences, the region kept entering and shaping other works'.<sup>46</sup> Yet it was more than just the geographical contours of the landscape that infiltrated the author's imagination after he left America. More significant than the place itself were the changes he saw affecting it, the dynamic forces of modernisation and globalisation that he now perceived to be shaping the world. It was, indeed, a different understanding of the world that Stevenson carried back with him from America, one that would continue to evolve and develop with his own ambitions and experiences. Permeating much of his writing in the following years, this new global sense of place finds its greatest expression after 1888, when Stevenson leaves both Britain and America forever, trading the English-speaking world for the islands of the Pacific.

## NOTES

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given parenthetically in the text.

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## Reading the ‘sea runes’: hermeneutics in ‘The Merry Men’

*Flora Benkhodja*

When defending ‘The Merry Men’ after having received criticisms from W. E. Henley, Robert Louis Stevenson stated in a letter that ‘It’s really a story of wrecks, as they appear to the dweller on the coast.’<sup>1</sup> This unexpected summary does not leave much room to the characters, who only appear as mere instruments filling up the scenery. Indeed, as he was working in 1881 on ‘The Merry Men’, ‘Thrawn Janet’ and ‘The Body Snatcher’ while staying in Pitlochry, he vividly remembered the landscape he admired during his three-week stay on the island of Earraid in 1870. It seems that he cared to pick the atmosphere first, and then added three inhabitants in relation to this tableau, as he explained to Graham Balfour:

I remember very distinctly his saying to me: ‘There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three ways only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly – you must bear with me while I try to make this clear –’ (here he made a gesture with his hand as if he were trying to shape something and give it outline and form) – ‘you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realise it. I’ll give you one example – *The Merry Men*.’<sup>2</sup>

If we care to develop this rather pithy outline, we may give these shadowy characters a little bit more substance and reassemble the family triangle, which is made up by Charles Darnaway, his uncle Gordon, and his beloved cousin Mary.<sup>3</sup> Visiting his family

on Eilean Aros, Charles soon realises that Gordon has pillaged the recent wreck of the *Christ-Anna*. Noticing the shipwreck and a makeshift grave nearby, Charles grows convinced that his uncle has murdered a survivor. As a result Charles, putting two and two together, plays the role of yet another self-appointed detective, while his uncle Gordon assumes the character of the alleged murderer. As we can see, and as Stevenson claimed, the narrative of 'The Merry Men' does stem from the presence of wrecked ships on the bay. This idea must be contrasted to contemporary reviews which sought to make Uncle Gordon the main character – and therefore the main interest – of the short story: 'It is, in a few words, a story of a Hebridean wrecker who has murdered the only survivor from the wreck, and has become touched in the head by brooding over his crime.'<sup>4</sup> Although we cannot understate Uncle Gordon's role in the narrative, as well as the family relations between uncle, nephew and daughter/cousin, it seems crucial here to understand that the actual tale is the one that relies on the interpretation of events. Therefore, the use of the first-person narrative makes perfect sense as it leaves more room to imagination and, more importantly, to (mis)interpretations and errors of judgment. The task of telling the story is left to Charles, who – according to E. T. Cook – 'does not make a particularly definite impression.'<sup>5</sup> If Cook severely criticised the apparent dullness of the narrator, it is precisely because he failed to grasp the idea that, in Stevenson's stories, characters are inferior to events, which prove to be the actual protagonists: 'Drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance.'<sup>6</sup>

If RLS's interest did not lie in the accurate and objective descriptions of the wrecks, it is because he wished to focus on the way they are perceived by the narrator and characters. The act of interpretation is the key to the understanding of the story. As a matter of fact, when reading 'The Merry Men', we might even distinguish three distinct stories that appear like a watermark:

- (i) The untold narrative of the shipwrecks on Eilean Aros.
- (ii) The inscription and impression of the wrecks onto the bay.
- (iii) The reading and interpretation of that phantom-narrative by Charles and Gordon.

Writing a story about wrecks not as they are but ‘as they appear’ to the characters involves leaving spaces and blanks in the narrative for the reader’s imagination to fill up. Marcel Schwob defined Stevenson’s tour-de-force as the art of silence: the art of not saying.<sup>7</sup> Stevenson himself wrote to his cousin Bob that ‘there is but one art – to omit!’<sup>8</sup> We must therefore take great precautions when dealing with his uncle Gordon’s madness and the origins of his insanity. Indeed, if E. T. Cook unblinkingly assumed that Gordon is a murderer, it is worth noting that recent articles also adopt such an unequivocal reading of the story. In the otherwise essential and outstanding *Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, both Penny Fielding and Stephen Arata still assert that Gordon undoubtedly killed a survivor.<sup>9</sup> Maureen Martin’s fine talk at the conference on ‘God, Satan, and the Scottish Ethos in Stevenson’s “The Merry Men”’ also astutely pointed to the fact that Charles, although believing in more modern and moderate religious views than Gordon, must be seen as a somehow unreliable narrator who does benefit, both romantically and financially, from his uncle’s alleged guilt and eventual death. My paper therefore aims at focusing on the first-person narrative of ‘The Merry Men’ and offers to analyse the reading of signs ‘as they appear’ to Charles and Gordon.

### **A proliferation of signs**

The art of omission, as it was put by Stevenson himself, was fully shared by Arthur Conan Doyle in his article ‘Mr. Stevenson’s Methods in Fiction,’ published in February 1890 in the *National Review*: ‘Mr. Stevenson, like one of his own characters, has an excellent gift of silence.’<sup>10</sup> Interestingly enough, Conan Doyle’s

praise for Stevenson's 'gift of silence' can be found in Holmes's mouth, when he tells his narrator in chief: 'You have a grand gift of silence, Watson.'<sup>11</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle and Robert Louis Stevenson, who knew and certainly admired each other as we can read in their correspondence, which spanned from 1893 to 1894, were well aware of the importance of textual deficits in order to build suspense.<sup>12</sup> But not only did Conan Doyle admire Stevenson's 'gift of silence,' he also lauded his gift for 'stamp[ing] the impression upon the readers' mind'.<sup>13</sup> This is what Stevenson himself defined as the 'plastic part of literature':<sup>14</sup> the strength to define characters metonymically thanks to images, which rely on the use of striking details. This explains the propagation of signs in Stevenson's stories – signs that may even become clues when it comes to 'The Merry Men', which, as we have seen in our introduction, bears traces of the detective story. The textual deficit is, ironically enough, very much linked to the proliferation of traces. The blank in the text – or, as I have called it, the phantom-narrative – forces Sherlock as well as Charles Darnaway to find and collect clues in order to reconstruct and read the missing story. In Sherlock Holmes's stories, signs tend to swarm: not only does Holmes bring them out (when, for instance, he notices footprints) but he also manages to make other signs appear, the most famous example being the way he can read the signature out of an anonymous letter in 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (1891):

He threw over a sheet of thick, pink-tinted notepaper which had been lying open upon the table. 'It came by the last post,' said he. 'Read it aloud.'

The note was undated, and without either signature or address. [...]

'The "G" with the small "t" stands for "Gesellschaft," which is the German for "Company." It is a customary contraction like our "Co." "P," of course, stands for "Papier." Now for the "Eg." Let us glance at our Continental Gazetteer.' He took down a heavy brown

volume from his shelves. 'Eglow, Eglonitz – here we are, Egria. It is in a German-speaking country – in Bohemia, not far from Carlsbad. 'Remarkable as being the scene of the death of Wallenstein, and for its numerous glass-factories and paper-mills.' [...] And the man who wrote the note is a German. Do you note the peculiar construction of the sentence – "This account of you we have from all quarters received." [...] It only remains, therefore, to discover what is wanted by this German who writes upon Bohemian paper and prefers wearing a mask to showing his face.'<sup>15</sup>

Holmes masters both levels of signs as they were categorised by Umberto Eco: first, he overcomes natural signs, which are unintentionally produced and which are originating from a natural source, without a human or intentional sender (such as grey clouds signifying an approaching storm, or the symptoms of a patient). Second, he conquers artificial signs, which are consciously emitted and intentionally produced in order to signify (such as language, or a road sign).<sup>16</sup> As we can see, Sherlock Holmes can retrace a story thanks to natural signs such as prints left in the snow or in the mud ('The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb' March 1892, 'The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet' May 1892), but he is also able to decipher artificial signs – such as the coded dancing men – even leading to his appropriation of the secret code, and to its reproduction. With the exception of one case ('The Adventure of the Yellow Face,' 1893), Holmes manages to stabilise signs and their meaning by offering – often arbitrarily – a clear-cut resolution.<sup>17</sup> In this Victorian desire for classification, Charles and Gordon Darnaway will make no exception and will prove eager to gather the traces and symbols which surround them.

### **Temptation to decipher**

In Chapter 2 of ‘The Merry Men,’ Charles and Gordon gaze upon the surface of Sandag Bay and notice what appears to be ‘undecipherable marks – sea-runes’.<sup>18</sup> Doubly illegible, those marks are cryptic, secret, and do not plainly present themselves to the eye; logically enough, the undecipherable sea-runes will need to be deciphered. Gordon wishes not to influence his nephew and asks him to give him his own reading first, and then his own interpretation: “Do ye see yon scart upo’ the water?” he inquired; ‘yon ane wast the gray stane? Ay? Weel, it’ll no be like a letter, wull it?” (p. 21). Gordon’s obvious reluctance to associate these runes with letters implies, as we shall see later on, that they might stand for the metonymies of his own sins. However, unfortunately for Gordon, Charles is already well experienced in the task of reading: before leaving for Aros, he explains that he was ‘set to work on some papers of an ancient date to rearrange and sift of what was worthless’ (p. 8). Already in the position of a reader/interpreter, Charles continues the deciphering process while on the island. Nevertheless, although both characters manage to read the same letters on the sea (‘C’ and ‘M’), their interpretations considerably differ. Indeed, while Charles conflates the runes and the letter C, he explains: ‘I used to suppose, sir, it was for myself,’ said I; ‘for my name is Charles’ (p. 21). Similarly, as he notices the letter M, he reveals that ‘[he] had always thought it to mean Mary’ (p. 21). Therefore, Charles reads the world through the very limited, narrow prism of his own identity. He considers the reading of the sea runes as playful and engages in what is called pareidolia – that is to say the ability to perceive familiar patterns where there is none, for instance recognising an animal in a cloud – as he declares: ‘many a boy must have amused himself as I did, seeking to read in them some reference to himself or those he loved’ (pp. 20-21). If we follow the definition of Umberto Eco, the sea-runes may be categorised into natural signs, as he perceives them as unintentionally produced and originating from a

natural source, without a human or intentional sender. Charles's amusement then offers a striking counterpoint to Gordon's grim deciphering, since he believes the C-rune to be an embodiment of the shipwreck he plundered: 'He heaved a sigh as if heavily disappointed with my answer, and then added below his breath: 'Ay, for the CHRIST-ANNA" (p. 21). Gordon and Charles offer a dual interpretation; an innocuous, childish explanation on the one hand, which must be contrasted with a loaded, bleak definition on the other. This ambivalence is well-established from the start: while the title of the story may remind us of Robin Hood's jolly band also named the Merry Men, it makes no mystery as to the treacherous nature of the island reefs. Towards the end of the narrative, Charles has perfectly understood the double nature of the landscape as he defines the Merry Men's 'portentous joviality' (p. 46). This oxymoron aptly illustrates the playfulness embodied by Charles and the gloominess exemplified by Gordon. Indeed, according to him, the sea-runes as letters assume the form of a theophany; in other words, they are the manifestation of God in sensible form.<sup>19</sup> The world is the product of a divine design, and the objects of nature are therefore the means of communication with men; in Gordon's mind, the sea-runes proliferate and are hypercoded. They are codified as artificial signs, as Umberto Eco called them, i.e. signs that are consciously emitted and intentionally produced in order to signify something.

Obsessed as he is by the Bible, Gordon engages in a literal interpretation of the scriptural texts, as Saint Thomas Aquinas proposed to do.<sup>20</sup> In Chapter 2, when Rorie tells the stories of 'mermen, mermaids, and sea-horses,' Gordon doubts his tales, stating 'I may be wrang; but I find nae word o' mermen in the Scriptures' (p. 19). Charles and Gordon are therefore hermeneuts, in both meanings of the definition: they read and interpret obscure signs (the sea-runes) as well as the Holy Scriptures, which they quote in turns. In Chapter 2, Gordon recites Psalms 65 and 107:

Lord save us a'! but it's an unco life to be a sailor – a  
cauld, wanchancy life. Mony's the gliff I got mysel' in the  
great deep; and why the Lord should hae made yon unco  
water is mair than ever I could win to understand. He  
made the vales and the pastures, the bonny green yaird,  
the halesome, canty land –

And now they shout and sing to Thee,  
For Thou hast made them glad,  
as the Psalms say in the metrical version. No that I would  
preen my faith to that clink neither; but it's bonny, and  
easier to mind. 'Who go to sea in ships,' they hae't again –  
And in  
Great waters trading be,  
Within the deep these men God's works  
And His great wonders see. (p. 15)

Following his uncle's example, Charles too cites Psalm 93:

And then I quoted as solemnly as I was able a verse that  
I had often before fitted to the chorus of the breakers:  
But yet the Lord that is on high,  
Is more of might by far,  
Than noise of many waters is,  
As great sea billows are. (p. 54)

The religious contamination gains ground in the text; Gordon therefore tends to print letters onto the world, which literally becomes literal and needs to be deciphered. In fact, Gordon himself appears physically coded. Suggesting that her father will soon die, Mary tells Charles that 'The mark is on his brow' (p. 43). Referring to Cain, and thus implying that Gordon is a murderer, Mary suggests that her father's face must be read and interpreted the very same way Dr Lanyon, in chapter 6 of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, is said to have 'his death-warrant written legibly upon his face.'<sup>21</sup> Mary is at a crossroads, between religion

(Calvinism) and medicine; being at the same time able to read her father's tragic fate, which is predestined, and being able to pick up the symptoms of his madness.

Charles's and Gordon's highly differing interpretations may lead us to believe that they are both willing to invest meaning in what is, by nature, meaningless. It might remind us of the test Herman Rorschach developed in 1920: the inkblots, as well as the sea-runes, are actually devoid of any meaning. The sign becomes an excuse, and its interpretation says a lot more about the interpreter than about the sign itself.<sup>22</sup>

### **Failure to decipher**

If Charles and Gordon both read the same letters, they fail to reach to the same interpretation, and therefore fail to construe the world in a plain, definite way. Although the world is legible, it does not mean that it is understandable. The initials C and M are obviously polysemic, and offer no stable point of reference. Seeing Gordon's transformation after having read the letter M, Charles tries to read the world through his uncle's eyes and goes through the words which start with the letter M: 'misery, mercy, marriage, money, and the like' – it seems here that Charles has not completely abandoned his glasses, as he plans on marrying his cousin Mary – until he 'was arrested with a sort of start by the word murder' (p. 22). However, all we have is Charles's own interpretation; the nephew and his uncle are unable to understand each other, as each one is absorbed in his own meditation. There is no interconnection between the two: 'But we were each following his own train of thought to the exclusion of the other's' (p. 21). Being an intra-diegetic narrator, Charles lacks omniscience and his experience, as well as his knowledge, is disjointed, fragmented, limited. The reader has no access to Gordon's mind and Charles's explanation is bound to remain dubious. Indeed, should the letter M stand for Murder, or for Madness? As the short story develops, Gordon is less and less referred to in terms

of family bonds or even by his name, and seems to be only recognisable thanks to his insanity. Talking about Gordon's probable murder, Charles explains that 'it was an act of madness no more to be condemned than to be pardoned. My uncle was a dangerous madman' (p. 48). Later on, as his uncle runs away from the black survivor, he wonders '[h]ow to capture the madman' (p. 62) and how to communicate with 'the unhappy madman' (p. 63). Towards the conclusion of the short story, Gordon's flight is eventually defined as 'the madman's last escape' (p. 66). Since he deliberately runs into the sea, should the M stand for the Merry Men? After all, they do give their name to the title and happen to represent Gordon, as he wholly identifies with them and ultimately becomes at one with them – 'I'm wi' the sea, I'm just like ane o' her ain Merry Men' (p. 54).

Reaching a stable signifier for the letter M seems impossible, and all the more risky as Charles is an unsatisfactory hermeneut who failed to understand the warnings of nature, as some sort of belated prophet. In that respect, he may be compared to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus, literally 'the afterthinker': the titan who understands all but too late. Charles's perception of the world is overdue; as he grabs a human bone while trying to find some treasure, he realises:

Mankind is a material creature, slow to think and dull to perceive connections. The grave, the wreck of the brig, and the rusty shoe-buckle were surely plain advertisements. A child might have read their dismal story, and yet it was not until I touched that actual piece of mankind that the full horror of the charnel ocean burst upon my spirit. (p. 33)

The irony here clearly lies in what Ian Watt defined as 'delayed decoding';<sup>23</sup> that is to say the interval between the discovery of the signs and their eventual understanding. Charles's partial comprehension of his surroundings is a crucial narrative device,

since it allows Stevenson to present and to focus primarily on his character's perceptions before providing an interpretation – if any at all. The use of the first-person narrative is absolutely central to the perception of the tale. Relying on a highly subjective view of the story allowed Stevenson to build a 'fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks'<sup>24</sup>, which could not have been accomplished with an omniscient focalisation. Remembering what Maureen Martin said about the unreliability of Charles as a narrator, we can also refer to Douglas Gifford's article on *The Master of Ballantrae*, in which he develops the idea that James Durie's diabolical nature might after all be Mackellar's pure construct of the mind.<sup>25</sup> Evidence of such an evil character partly revolves around subtle and ineffable details (such as a look, a smile or a tone of voice); similarly, Gordon's supposed guilt only relies on Charles's biased point of view. If there was indeed a murder, then 'The Merry Men' appears quite peculiar as a detective story with no corpse, no material evidence and no confession. Charles's blurred judgement is actually rather coherent, if we take into consideration the importance of haze in the text. Significantly enough, in chapter 1, he refers to the mountain Ben Kyaw, which translates as '*The Mountain of the Mist*' (p. 2). It seems that the mist of perception here is directly linked to Stevenson's gift for 'stamp[ing] the impression upon the readers' mind': the elaboration of a somewhat 'literary impressionism'<sup>26</sup> prevents the characters from plainly expressing and communicating their understanding of the world. Sensations must precede sense; 'the physical impression must precede the understanding of cause.'<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

Charles's character, with no hindsight, thus proves unable to take the right hold of his reason, as Rouletabille puts it;<sup>28</sup> he cannot turn the fragmentary links in his possession into one logical chain (of events). As Lestrade or Watson would say, 'I can make neither head nor tail of it.'<sup>29</sup> However, if the doctor and the

inspector are both desperately blind, Sherlock Holmes always clears up the mist. In 'The Adventure of the Empty House', written in 1903 and directly following 'The Final Problem' (1893), Sherlock Holmes survives a murder attempt plotted against him by Colonel Sebastian Moran. After having arrested him, Holmes leafs through his index of biographies and states:

'My collection of M's is a fine one,' said he. 'Moriarty himself is enough to make any letter illustrious, and here is Morgan the poisoner, and Merridew of abominable memory, and Mathews, who knocked out my left canine in the waiting-room at Charing Cross, and, finally, here is our friend of to-night.'

He handed over the book, and I read:

*Moran, Sebastian, Colonel.*<sup>30</sup>

Holmes is successfully able to pin down the world and people into categories. Everything is definable: 'For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information.'<sup>31</sup> Sherlock Holmes evolves in an all-encompassing, stable, Victorian/Edwardian world – so much so that he manages to write a *Book of Life (A Study in Scarlet, 1887)*.<sup>32</sup> Even though Conan Doyle may portray a potentially gothic, threatening world (*The Hound of the Baskervilles* 1902, 'The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire' 1924), the latter always ends up being conquered or overcome by the supreme power of reason. Quite on the contrary, Stevenson's characters are meant to live in a genuinely unsteady universe. Either the letter stands for a Hitchcockian M for Murder or for a Fritz Langian accursed M,<sup>33</sup> this vain quest for meaning emphasises the characters' impossibility to give a simple and unequivocal interpretation of the world, which remains deeply doubtful. The uncertainty surrounding Gordon's sins, or even

his supposed death at the very end of the narrative, will never be cleared up and will be left pending. Robert Louis Stevenson elaborates a world in which signs and clues must be picked up, without giving any solution. His refusal to reveal the key to the mystery might be read as a symptom of a post-Darwinian loss of faith: a place in which God's designs – if they exist – are unfathomable because meaningless.<sup>34</sup> Man is transient, ephemeral and uncertain. Although Sherlock Holmes is able to deduce a client's history thanks to his belongings (a hat in 'The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle', a pipe in 'The Adventure of the Yellow Face'), thus proving that man and object are inherently linked and coherent, it is impossible to reconstruct or read the Darnaway family history through their furniture:

there were chairs in the kitchen covered with strange brocade; curtains of brocade hung from the window; a clock stood silent on the dresser; a lamp of brass was swinging from the roof; the table was set for dinner with the finest of linen and silver; and all these new riches were displayed in the plain old kitchen that I knew so well. (p. 11)

The uncanniness of this scene, as it is felt by Charles, is emphasised by the use of the past tense ('that I *knew* so well') and stems from the overwhelming accumulation of odd, varied and incongruous objects which do not fit in 'the plain old kitchen.' The looted goods create a patchwork of an artificial family memoir and make it impossible for Charles, as well as for the reader, to classify and identify the Darnaways. Therefore, the loss of faith and identity is mirrored once again in the loss of any kind of satisfactory and comprehensive narrative which would explain it all, like some sort of impossible philology.

## NOTES

- 1 Letter to W. E. Henley, Pitlochry, August 1881 in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, to his Family and Friends*, vol. I, ed. by Sidney Colvin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), henceforth cited in text, p. 249.
- 2 Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. II (London: Methuen & Co, 1901), pp. 141-142.
- 3 On the Oedipal triangle and on the fatherly crisis of authority, see Luisa Villa, 'Quarrelling with the Father' in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006) pp. 109-120.
- 4 E. T. Cook, Unsigned Review, 'Athenaeum', 5 March 1887 in *RLS: the Critical Heritage*, ed. by Paul Maixner (London New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 251.
- 5 Ibid., p. 252.
- 6 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance' in *Memories and Portraits* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1895), pp. 247-274, henceforth cited in text, p. 250. See also Michel Le Bris, *Pour saluer Stevenson* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), p. 190: 'Qu'on le veuille ou non, en effet, l'aventure est l'essence même de la fiction'.
- 7 Marcel Schwob, "Essais sur Stevenson" in *Will du Moulin, suivi de Correspondances*, ed. by François Escaig (Paris: Éd. Allia, 1992), pp. 80-81: 'L'art, ici, consiste à ne point dire. [...] Ces espèces de silences du récit [...], Stevenson a su les employer avec une extraordinaire maîtrise. Ce qu'il ne nous dit pas de la vie d'Alan Breck, de Secundra Dass, d'Olalla, d'Attwater, nous attire plus que ce qu'il nous en dit. Il sait faire surgir les personnages des ténèbres qu'il a créées autour d'eux.'
- 8 Letter to Bob Stevenson, Hyères-les-Palmiers, October 1883 in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, to his Family and Friends*, vol. I, op. cit., henceforth cited in text, p. 339.
- 9 See Penny Fielding, 'Introduction' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 5: 'In the novella 'The Merry Men', the treasure-hunting theme becomes murderous as the insane Gordon Darnaway kills the survivor of a wreck to claim the goods from it'. See also Stephen Arata, 'Stevenson and Fin-de-Siècle

Gothic', in the same volume, p. 63: ‘

“The Merry Men” consists of two interwoven narrative strands. The first involves the spectacle of Gordon Darnaway’s descent into madness. His collapse is triggered by guilt at having murdered the survivor of a recent shipwreck for the sake of the goods washed ashore [...].’

10 Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘Mr. Stevenson’s Methods in Fiction’ in *The Living Age* (15 February 1890) pp. 417-424, henceforth cited in the text, p. 422.

11 Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Man with the Twisted Lip’ in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), p. 133.

12 See Hélène Crignon Machinal, ‘Florizel et Holmes : un scandale en bohème’ in *R. L. Stevenson & A. Conan Doyle: aventures de la fiction*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Naugrette and Gilles Menegaldo (Rennes: Terre de brume, 2003), p. 89.

13 Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘Mr. Stevenson’s Methods in Fiction’, p. 423.

14 Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘A Gossip on Romance’, p. 257.

15 Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ in *Sherlock Holmes Selected Stories* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 210-211.

16 Umberto Eco, *Le signe: histoire et analyse d’un concept* (Bruxelles: Ed. Labor, 1988), p. 48.

17 See Nathalie Jaëck, *Les aventures de Sherlock Holmes, une affaire d’identité* (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2008), pp. 18-20.

18 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), p. 20, henceforth cited in text.

19 Umberto Eco, op. cit., pp. 189-190: ‘Et si le monde était le produit d’un dessein divin, qui aurait organisé les objets de la nature pour en faire les instruments d’une communication avec l’homme ? [...] C’est l’hypothèse néoplatonicienne qui sous-tend les premières métaphysiques médiévales : que l’on pense au pseudo Denys l’Aréopagite et à Scot Erigène, qui suit ses traces. Pour eux, l’univers est une Théophanie : Dieu se montre à travers les signes que sont les choses, et, à travers ceux-ci, opère le salut de l’homme.”

20 Ibid., p. 190 : ‘Et dans sa formulation de règles pour l’interprétation

de l'écriture sainte, Thomas d'Aquin précise : les signes de l'Écriture ne sont pas à lire sur le mode allégorique, mais sont rigoureusement univoques ; quand l'auteur sacré dit que tel miracle s'est produit, c'est signe qu'il a bien eu lieu.'

- 21 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, ed. by Katherine Linehan (New York London: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 29.
- 22 Dominique Viart, 'L'Imaginaire des signes à l'aube du XXe siècle' in *The Turn of the Century*, ed. by Christian Berg, Frank Durieux & Geert Lernout (Berlin New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 213-214: '[...] la méthode, elle, conçoit un signe vide de sens afin de mettre en évidence des significations cachées. Elle prouve par son fonctionnement que, si 'la Nature a horreur du vide,' l'homme lui, a horreur du vide de sens, au point d'en attribuer à ce qui n'en a pas. Le test prouve également deux choses essentielles :
- (1) Le véritable 'sens' n'est pas dans le signe, ni impliqué par le signe (la tache), mais dans la forme de sens qu'un individu particulier donne au signe.
- (2) La donation de sens n'apprend rien sur le signe mais apprend beaucoup sur l'individu qui donne ce sens.'
- 23 Ian Watt, *Conrad in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 175.
- 24 Letter to W. E. Henley, Pitlochry, July 1881 in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, to his Family and Friends*, vol. I, p. 247.
- 25 Douglas Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: the importance of *The Master of Ballantrae*' in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp. 62-87.
- 26 Ian Watt, op. cit., p. 172.
- 27 Ibid., p. 178.
- 28 Gaston Leroux, *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 2017), p. 70 : "IL S'AGIT DE PRENDRE LA RAISON PAR LE BON BOUT !"
- 29 Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Three Garridebs' in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 100.
- 30 Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Empty House' in *Sherlock Holmes Selected Stories* (Oxford New York: Oxford

University Press, 1998), pp. 382-383, henceforth cited in text.

- 31 Arthur Conan Doyle, 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' p. 215.
- 32 See Nathalie Jaëck, *Les aventures de Sherlock Holmes, une affaire d'identité*, p. 42
- 33 Fritz Lang's 1931 film 'M' was – conveniently enough – translated in French as *M le Maudit*.
- 34 On this subject, see 'The Suicide Club' in *New Arabian Nights* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), in which a character wants to commit suicide because he cannot bear 'to be descended from an ape,' (p. 21). Also see Gordon being described as an animal, especially towards the end of the story: 'he felled me to the ground, burst from my grasp, leaving the shoulder of his jacket, and fled up the hillside towards the top of Aros like a deer.' (p. 58), 'He fled, and he was silent, like a beast; and this silence had terrified his pursuer. [...] How to *capture* the madman, how to *feed* him in the meanwhile, and what to do with him when he was *captured*, were the three difficulties that we had to solve.' (p. 62, my emphasis).

## The strange case of the creeping man

*Douglas Kerr*

Arthur Conan Doyle's tale 'The Creeping Man' first appeared in the *Strand* magazine in March 1923 and was collected with eleven other stories in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, published by John Murray in 1927. Though it is a post-war composition, the action of the story takes place in September 1903, and Watson, in narrating it, describes it as 'one of the very last cases handled by Holmes before his retirement from practice.'<sup>1</sup> In several interviews given on his tour of America, which started the month after this tale was published, Conan Doyle declared that he had decided to write no more Holmes stories, feeling that he should devote his energies to his commitments to Spiritualism.<sup>2</sup> For a whole year he abstained.<sup>3</sup> Not for the first time, Holmes proved difficult to lay to rest, and more of his cases were to follow. But there are indications that, at least for a while, Conan Doyle thought of 'The Creeping Man' as a last word from, and about, Sherlock Holmes.

'The Creeping Man', a story about a scientist whose bizarre and violent behaviour is discovered to be the consequence of a self-administered drug, has been dismissed as 'a weak reworking of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed Stevenson was something of a model or strong precursor for his fellow Scot, Edinburgh University alumnus, and lapsed professional. 'I never met Robert Louis Stevenson in the flesh,' Conan Doyle was to recall, 'though I owe so much to him in the literary spirit.'<sup>5</sup>

All stories turn on anagnorisis, or disclosure, and in the nineteenth-century fiction on which Stevenson and Conan Doyle were brought up there is a widespread *topos*, so pervasive as to be almost invisible, of the discovery of secrets. Meanwhile, as suggested by the 'strange case' of Dr Jekyll, and the 'case-book' of Sherlock Holmes, the emergence of the professional protocols

of law, medicine, experimental science, and police work were all producing the case as the form in which events or situations could be systematically described and understood. Closure is sought in an explanation which, as desiderated by Utterson in *Dr Jekyll*, 'is plain and natural, hangs well together and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms',<sup>6</sup> so that, to quote Sherlock Holmes in 'The Creeping Man', '[t]he various incidents will now fit themselves easily into the general scheme' (CB, p. 71). These metaphors of structure – hanging well together, fitting into a scheme – themselves disclose the way the solution to the problem is also what enables it to be told as a narrative, in a symbiosis of aetiology and discourse. As Bennett tells the detective at the conclusion of 'The Creeping Man': 'Well, thanks to you, Mr Holmes, it is very clear that we have traced the evil to its source' (CB, p. 70). In comparison, the aetiology of Dr Jekyll's case is more complex and a great deal darker, necessitating a more laboured, difficult, indeed modernist narrative structure. The aim of this essay is to explore the relationship between the Stevenson and the Conan Doyle case, the transformation of the former into the latter. They rest on a similar narrative premise: there is no doubt that one provided inspiration for the other, and these two stories are a part of each other's history. Certainly Conan Doyle felt respect for and kinship with Stevenson, which makes the differences between the tales the more telling. What 'The Creeping Man' does to *Dr Jekyll* turns out to be a strange case of its own.

Both these stories centre on a mystery that is investigated and solved. All the Holmes stories do this, to be sure, but in 'The Creeping Man' Conan Doyle seems to be following the matter of the Stevenson tale quite closely. An eminent man of science, with a reputation for being progressive, materialistic, and rational, is observed behaving oddly, and there are episodes of rage and violence. Somehow he is not himself. His household become alarmed, professional friends or colleagues are mobilised to investigate, the scientist tries to guard his secret but in the end

is revealed to have used his professional expertise to acquire a transgressive knowledge or powers. For the public, the scientist may have been the avatar of modernity, but in both these stories, his quest puts this man of high intellect on a path to regression or degeneration, apparently reversing the Darwinian narrative of the descent of man from the apes. Mr Hyde looks troglodytic (JH, p. 16), and is characterised by 'raging energies' and bursts of 'ape-like fury' (JH, p. 20). In the Conan Doyle story, Professor Presbury's knuckles are thick and horny (CB, p. 67).<sup>7</sup> He is 'overflowing with energy and vitality' (ibid.), and has been seen to go on all fours.

Both these tales about the dangers of research are in the species of cautionary science fiction whose heyday coincided with the knowledge revolution of the late nineteenth century, and was roughly bracketed by these two publications, between the 1880s and the 1920s. Their literary antecedents go back to Mary Shelley's minatory *Frankenstein* (1818), and further to various instantiations of the Faustus story. Dr Jekyll's hubristic investigations conjure up a diabolical force that he is then unable to shake off. But here there is an important distinction to be made. Conan Doyle's scientist is no tragic Faust or doomed Victor Frankenstein. If anything, Professor Presbury's motives belong in traditional comedy, and he is a version of the drooling Plautine *Senex* aspiring to a sexy young girl. This too may be some sort of echo of the Stevenson tale, where the sedentary middle-aged Jekyll transforms himself into the vigorous and satyr-like young Hyde. A widower of 61, Conan Doyle's professor has become engaged to a much younger woman. 'It was not the reasoned courting of an elderly man but rather the passionate frenzy of youth,' Holmes is told (CB, p. 53). But the *Senex*, as ever, is an anxious lover. Alice Morphy is described as 'a very perfect girl both in mind and body'.<sup>8</sup> Her father approves of the match, for Presbury is distinguished and wealthy, but the girl with the perfect body 'had other views' (CB, p. 53). Though she likes the

Professor in spite of his eccentricities, and though it is 'only age which stood between them', she does seem hesitant, and there are several younger candidates for her hand. About this time, Presbury makes a mysterious journey to Prague, and returns, furtive, and 'under some shadow which had darkened his higher qualities' (CB, p. 54). As Holmes later discovers, the professor has acquired, from the disreputable Dr Lowenstein of Prague, a rejuvenative serum derived from a monkey, the black-faced langur, described as the 'biggest and most human of climbing monkeys' (CB, p. 70), to juice up his sexual powers. Back in England, he is kept supplied with the drug by a shady dealer in the East End, a Bohemian called Dorak.

It seems certain this part of the tale has in mind the treatment to restore sexual potency developed in 1918 by the physiologist Eugen Steinach, which became very popular in the early 1920s, and was rumoured, falsely, to involve a serum derived from monkey glands. In Vienna, according to Richard Ellman, a hundred teachers and university professors submitted to the operation, one of them being Sigmund Freud in 1923. This is the same operation performed on W. B. Yeats by the surgeon Norman Haire in April 1934.<sup>9</sup> Conan Doyle was a well-informed man and, of course, a physician, and it is a good bet that in 1923 news of Steinach's treatment for flagging potency, and the monkey-gland rumour that came with it, became ingredients for the monkey-business plot of the tale he wrote about a professor desperate to recover the vigour of his youth. As Conan Doyle broke down and transformed the material inherited from Stevenson, the monkey-gland story, with its disturbing and prurient overtones, was one of the new elements he introduced to the mix, where it grafted easily onto the simian appearance of Dr Jekyll's *alter ego*. Meanwhile in making a desire to recover youth the main motive of his story, Conan Doyle was picking up a definite, if neglected, strand in *Dr Jekyll*, where all the men are ponderous and middle-aged but Hyde, 'that young man' (JH, p. 16) in whose

shape and senses Jekyll 'felt younger, lighter, happier in body' (JH, p. 54).

Though it is developed in the laboratory, Stevenson gives no information about the 'salt' that brings out Mr Hyde from within Dr Jekyll. For the purpose of the story it might as well be a magic potion. Its results, however, are no laughing matter. Our first glimpse of Hyde sees him trample a child in the street, an astonishingly disturbing moment. 'The trampling scene is perhaps a convention,' as Gerard Manley Hopkins guessed; 'he was thinking of something unsuitable for fiction.'<sup>10</sup> Hyde is a sadist, and worse. Later he commits an unmotivated and brutal murder. Criminal, savage, animal, and wicked, 'a soul boiling with causeless hatreds' (JH, p. 65), he is associated with a Gothic vocabulary of extremism, darkness and atavism, and his uncontrollable energy can only be mastered by the suicide of his host.

In Conan Doyle's strange case, however, the transformations of the scientist are remarkably trivial by contrast. In fact 'The Creeping Man' tends to set its face against the inherent horror of its story of a man motivated by sexual desire and transformed into a beast. To put this another way, 'The Creeping Man' seems concerned to draw the teeth of its Stevensonian precursor, to degothicise it, and offer a new version of the story in which, though a grotesque and mysterious transformation does take place, no crime follows and no real harm is done.

Late one night, Presbury's secretary is alarmed to see the Professor scuttle along the corridor on hands and feet. His other actions, when under the influence of the drug, are unsettling but relatively harmless. One moonlit night, he uses a creeper to climb from the garden to his daughter's bedroom window, and peers inside for some twenty seconds, one hand raised as if to push up the window, while she lies in her bed paralyzed with fright. The creeping man creepily climbs up a creeper, to watch his daughter in bed – a strange case indeed, but the girl, though scared, is not hurt.

The professor's antics might be construed in various ways, as the actions of a voyeur, a lover in a bedroom farce, a harbourer of incestuous desires, a predatory vampire like the wall-creeping Dracula, or simply a lunatic.<sup>11</sup> None of these alarming explanations is entertained by either Holmes or Watson, and neither seems inclined to see the Professor's behaviour as truly dangerous.<sup>12</sup> They regard it, prosaically, as little more than a prank. Watson later sees Presbury in the garden, under the influence of the monkey serum, 'climbing apparently in mere joy at his own powers, with no definite object in view' (CB, p. 67), like a boy at play, and Holmes too says he believes 'it was a mere chance [...] that the pastime brought him to the young lady's window' (CB, p. 71). The innocent analogue to Hyde's unmotivated acts of violence, Professor Presbury's monkey business is indulged for its own sake, as Holmes explains it. He regards the Professor's appearance at his daughter's bedroom window as no more than an accidental consequence of his pursuit of the quintessentially, and innocently, boyish pastime of climbing things. Also boyish, no doubt, is Presbury's enjoyment of another night-time escapade, taunting his own dog, a wolfhound named Roy that is chained up in the garden. He teases the animal, trying to provoke it in every possible way, throwing pebbles in the dog's face, prodding it with a stick, and flicking his hands about in front of its mouth. To Watson's observation he is an 'impassive and still dignified figure crouching frog-like upon the ground', goading the dog 'by all manner of ingenious and calculated cruelty' (CB, p. 68). This is unpleasant, but hardly satanic.

The triviality of these misdemeanours, compared with the brutal crimes of Hyde, seems to be in line with Presbury's manifestly selfish and foolish motives for taking the drug, when compared to the altruistic and humanitarian – and Frankensteinian – motivation of Henry Jekyll. Professor Presbury's comeuppance, too, is less radical than Dr Jekyll's. The wolfhound slips its collar and attacks him, causing serious injury but not death. Holmes

will write to Prague to put a stop to this mail-order drug trade, and Presbury's foolishness will be hushed up to avoid scandal; he must learn to be his age. It is as if the Conan Doyle story is intent on denying and closing down the disturbing implications of the situation it inherited from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. A predictable, orderly existence is firmly restored in Holmes's last words. "There is an early train to town, Watson, but I think we shall just have time for a cup of tea at the 'Chequers' before we catch it" (CB, p. 71). This triumphant bourgeois equilibrium closes the story and with it, as Conan Doyle seems to have intended it at the time, the career of Sherlock Holmes.

The transtextual relation between 'The Creeping Man' and *Dr Jekyll* might be characterised, then, as one of what Genette called 'thematic transformation', in this case in the form of containment.<sup>13</sup> The tragedy of Dr Jekyll is repeated, not exactly as farce, but as a grotesque curiosity, with elements of comedy. The story of the raging of the beast within a man is processed to be read as a tale about a man who makes a fool of himself by capering about like a monkey. There is containment in a topographical sense too: the terrifying Edward Hyde freely prowls the dark streets of London, where his worst crimes are committed, while the activities of Professor Presbury are confined to his own house and garden in a quiet university town. Before turning to consider the motivation for this metamorphosis, it should be noted that, as we are used to finding in cases of repression, there are places where the buried resonance of the disturbing material sticks up awkwardly through the more bland surface of the treatment. One such is found in the opening paragraph of Watson's narrative. There he says that, certain unspecified obstacles having now been removed, he has at last obtained permission to publish the singular facts connected with Professor Presbury, 'if only to dispel once for all the ugly rumours which some twenty years ago agitated the University and were echoed in the learned societies of London' (CB, p. 50). While this may recall the important role

of rumour and professional reputation in *Dr Jekyll*, it also raises the question of what these rumours about Presbury may have been. If suspicions about what he did are to be dispelled by the news that he took a love potion and started behaving like a monkey, the rumours must have been of something more damaging and ugly. Watson as chronicler opens this possibility but gives no more information about it. He does, however, go on to hint that even now full disclosure is not possible, and 'a certain reticence and discretion have to be observed in laying the matter before the public' (CB, p. 50). Whatever more unpleasant or discreditable elements Presbury's actions may have contained, Watson announces from the outset that he is going to erase them from his account.

How to explain the way Conan Doyle engages with the Stevenson story in an almost provocative way, yet seems intent on dulling its dark resonance, and disarming its central theme, with such determination? *Dr Jekyll* is a hard act to follow, and Conan Doyle's is not the only *hommage* which seems pale beside its full-blooded original. To be sure, there are sixty Sherlock Holmes narratives and their author must be allowed a few less successful ones. His admiration for Stevenson was unquestionable, and this tale is no doubt a sincere form of flattery. But it may also be at some level a repudiation of the dark intent of the story of Dr Jekyll, a reparation of the theme so as to render it less nightmarish, suffusing it with the reassuring light of day that usually (not always) shines in the world of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. There is selfishness and cruelty in that world, but these things can always be challenged and defeated.

Holmes does not encounter, and probably could not deal with, the kind of metaphysical evil that Stevenson could imagine. Jekyll comes to think of Hyde, 'for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic' (JH, p. 65). Such an entity is not recognised in Baker Street. 'This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground,' Holmes reminds Watson in 'The Sussex Vampire',

‘and there it must remain’ (CB, p. 73). This is an important reassurance, given in 1924, that Conan Doyle intended to keep his Spiritualist interests and beliefs out of the Holmes stories. But as a matter of fact, if the evil embodied in Hyde could have no place in the world of Sherlock Holmes, it was just as incompatible with the Spiritualist worldview to which Conan Doyle had been committed for years. His quarrel with the churches had begun at school at Stonyhurst, where he rebelled against the strict regime of the Jesuits who had ‘no trust in human nature’.<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt that he was drawn to Spiritualism partly because he found congenial its thoroughly benign view of the nature of God and man. The doctrine of original sin was mistaken. ‘Man is not naturally bad. The average human being is good.’<sup>15</sup> Conan Doyle’s spirit advisors had assured him that ‘the average human being goes to heaven’.<sup>16</sup> In Stevenson’s story, Hyde, once released, can never be escaped. But Conan Doyle’s faith told him that no mistake was irrecoverable. In Spiritualist belief, the soul is not punished, though it may have to be re-educated. There are many afterworlds, but there is no hell.

The transgression and tragedy of Henry Jekyll inspired in Conan Doyle a story about the misdemeanours and pranks of Professor Presbury. While ‘The Creeping Man’ doesn’t measure up to *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, it does not rank very highly either among the Holmes stories. It appears to have been written at a low creative ebb. One curious proof of this is the story’s susceptibility to intertextual infiltration, as if it were an infirm patient with a heightened liability to infection. An inspection of the many transtextual presences in the tale can tell us a good deal about Conan Doyle’s intellectual resources, while at the same time confirming the sense that in the undergrowth of ‘The Creeping Man’ there lurk further dark and unacknowledged potentialities.

Apart from the major presence of *Dr Jekyll*, and the rest of the Holmes canon, a cluster of other tales crowd into ‘The Creeping

Man'. Presbury at his daughter's bedroom window under moonlight recalls Bram Stoker's Dracula stalking Lucy Western, or crawling down his castle wall on a hunting expedition. 'With his dressing-gown flapping on each side of him,' thinks Watson, Presbury 'looked like some huge bat glued against the side of his own house' (CB, p. 67). But his boyish curiosity also owes something to Conan Doyle's sometime collaborator J. M. Barrie, whose Peter Pan hovered at Wendy Darling's window – the boy who didn't want to grow old. As well as sharing an enjoyment of gazing into other people's bedrooms, Presbury is linked to Pan in his unwillingness to accept the natural consequences of ageing and (when under the influence of the drug) his anarchic mischief-making. Another narcissist who refuses to age is Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, and like Presbury he leads a double life and appears to get his drugs from the East End.<sup>17</sup> As already noted, a physiologist in love with a younger woman had appeared in Conan Doyle's own 'The Physiologist's Wife' (1890), a story that ends badly. The irascible scientist ejecting the investigating Holmes from his house replays the ejection of the investigative journalist Edward Malone from Professor Challenger's home early in *The Lost World* (1912), and the great hound which tries to tear out the throat of Presbury has its own giant precedent in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902).<sup>18</sup> No doubt other interloping stories have their way with this tale, making an opportunistic appearance but little consequential impact.

A more important part of the picture helps to account for the odd lack of mindfulness of 'The Creeping Man', as well as the way it drains its Stevensonian model of problem and tragedy, of what Auerbach called 'background'.<sup>19</sup> As has been noted, the reason Conan Doyle thought this might well be his last Sherlock Holmes story was his belief that his work for the Spiritualist movement and revelation must take priority over fiction. This tale has a belated feeling. But it also has a rather unexpected conclusion.

Holmes sums up, as he often does, saying the case arose

from the Professor's idea that he could only gain his wish by turning himself into a younger man. 'When one tries to rise above nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny' (CB, p. 70). This is a moral that could conceivably be drawn from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But what Holmes says next is pure Conan Doyle. With Lowenstein stopped:

we will have no more trouble. But it may recur. Others may find a better way. There is a danger there – a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become? (CB, p. 70.)

These are surprising, and surprisingly strong, words. Science, Holmes is saying, might interfere with human progress, 'the straight road of destiny' which ought to be tending upwards from the anthropoid to the angels, and contribute instead to a triumph of materialism. If science finds a way to prolong human life, the most worldly and egotistical will avail themselves of it, while the more spiritual, having less of a stake in the material world, will not be tempted to linger in this life. The implication is that the spiritual are the most fit for survival, and the material, the sensual and the worldly the least fit. (This was the conclusion of Conan Doyle's reconciliation between science and Spiritualism.) But science may find ways of reversing this bias of nature, serving and prolonging the life of the body at the expense of the life of the spirit, increasing the stock of worldliness and materialism in the world and imperilling mankind's spiritual destiny. So the tale is both another triumph for material methods – Holmes's detective protocols and his 'science of deduction' – and a dire warning against the prospect of an irresponsible materialist sci-

ence upsetting the Spiritual telos. Professor Presbury's quest is seen as entirely ignoble, symptomatic of a low selfishness. The drug – which Holmes is now speaking of as an elixir of life rather than a simple aphrodisiac – promises him a self-indulgent juvencence, but represents a threat to the order of both nature and providence, the progress of history and the progress of the spirit.

With these words of Holmes, then, the case is radically altered. After assiduously lowering the stakes of its Dr Jekyll hypotext, here 'The Creeping Man' abruptly raises them again, and an unexpected but actually world-historical theme is revealed. Suddenly, this tale about science going wrong is after all at least as portentous as *Dr Jekyll*, *Frankenstein* and *Doctor Faustus*. Holmes's teleological musings, so oddly inconsistent with the rest of the tale, can be understood in the context of Conan Doyle's thinking and writing at this time, increasingly dominated by what he saw as his Spiritualist mission.<sup>20</sup> He was increasingly impatient with a modernity given over to materialism that had not heeded the new revelation of Spiritualism. The 'real danger to humanity' posed by unbridled materialism was to be found in the Kaiser's Germany, prophesied here in 1903 by Sherlock Holmes, but already in the past for Conan Doyle and his readers in 1923. He had recently given his opinion that the single cause of the cataclysmic Great War was 'the organised materialism of Germany'.<sup>21</sup> The Kaiser's greed for power and wealth, and Professor Presbury's greed for youth, were symptoms of the same thing, and the consequence of both threatened to lead the world towards what Herbert Spencer had called re-barbarization.<sup>22</sup>

Such concerns are entirely absent from, and foreign to, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Further, in the Stevenson tale there is no character who speaks with anything like the authority bestowed on Holmes in 'The Creeping Man', and built up over the whole canon of the Sherlock Holmes stories. In the hierarchy of discourses comprising a Sherlock Holmes story, the detective's own judgements are specially privileged. But the form of *Dr Jekyll*,

with its doublings-back, its blind spots, and its multiple and partial witnesses, seems designed to make such a conclusive pronouncement inconceivable: after Jekyll lays down his pen the tale, you might say, remains strange to itself. In Conan Doyle's hands its hypertextual offspring, conceived as the last case of Sherlock Holmes, is first domesticated and stripped of its Gothic affiliations, and then at the last minute recruited as a cautionary story in its author's campaign for the spiritualization of modernity. It was a strange transformation of Stevenson's fine bogey tale.

Conan Doyle had been careful to keep his Spiritualist ideas out of the Sherlock Holmes stories. The end of 'The Creeping Man' is the point where they come nearest to convergence. It is probably also the point where the case of Professor Presbury story is most estranged from its Stevensonian parent.

## NOTES

- 1 Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Creeping Man' in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 50-71, p. 50. Henceforth cited in the text as CB. It is a curiosity that September 1903, when these events are supposed to take place, was the month of publication of 'The Adventure of the Empty House', in which it is revealed that Sherlock Holmes survived the Reichenbach Falls. *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* itself was published in 1886, a year before the first appearance of Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*, in *Beaton's Christmas Annual* of 1887.
- 2 See editor's note p. 70 (CB, p. 249).
- 3 See Andrew Lycett, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007), p. 406.
- 4 Douglas Kerr, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 87.
- 5 Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), p. 260. 'Spirit' was never a casual word for Conan Doyle, who was pleased to note that Stevenson shared his interest in psychic research.

- 6 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 38. Henceforth cited in the text as JH.
- 7 In this resembling the hands of Edward Hyde, 'lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair'. (JH, p. 58) 'Always look at the hands first, Watson,' says Holmes (CB, p. 7).
- 8 'Alice' suggests youth and purity. Conan Doyle gave the pseudonym Alice to one of the young girls who photographed the Cottingley fairies; his 'The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue' appeared in *The Strand* in February 1923, the month before 'The Creeping Man'. 'Morphy' is Irish, suggesting the wild and passionate nature Conan Doyle ascribed to a Celtic ethnicity. In his story 'A Physiologist's Wife' of 1890, the passionate widow, married to a staid scientist who is unable to control her, is called Mrs O'James. See Arthur Conan Doyle, *Round the Red Lamp*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Methuen, 1894), pp. 108-38.
- 9 See Richard Ellman, 'Yeats's Second Puberty', *New York Review of Books*, 9 May 1985, 10-17.
- 10 Gerard Manley Hopkins, letter to Robert Bridges, 28 October 1886, *Selected Letters*, ed. by Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 243. The obliquity of Hopkins's comment is discussed by Roger Luckhurst in his Introduction to *Strange Case*, pp. xxiv-xxvi.
- 11 Holmes dismisses Bennett's suggestion that the connection between insanity and the phases of the moon might be relevant to the case (CB, p. 59).
- 12 Asked for his explanation of Presbury's quadripedalism, Watson suggests lumbago (CB, p. 56).
- 13 See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 213. In this essay I use the words transtextuality, intertextuality, hypertext and hypotext with the meanings assigned them by Genette in *Palimpsests*, 3-7.
- 14 Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, p. 15.
- 15 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell, 1926) vol. 1, p. 14.
- 16 Arthur Conan Doyle, *Lecture on Spiritualism* (Worthing, *The Worthing Gazette*, 1919), 10. These matters are discussed at greater length in Douglas Kerr, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession, and Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 201-33.

- 17 Stoker and Barrie were friends of Conan Doyle, and he also knew and admired Oscar Wilde, having met him at the famous dinner where *Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four* were commissioned by J. M. Stoddart for *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*.
- 18 Holmes tells Watson he was first attracted to the case because of the unexpected behaviour of the dog. 'Why does Professor Presbury's faithful wolf-hound, Roy, endeavour to attack him?' (CB, p. 52). Holmes says he is contemplating a small monograph upon the use of dogs in the work of the detective. Presumably it would include a chapter on the curious incident of the dog in the night-time, from the story 'Silver Blaze' (1892).
- 19 See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 3-23.
- 20 His activities in the months surrounding the publication of 'the Creeping Man' (March 1923) include the first communications from his spirit guide Pheneas (December 1922), the publication of *The Case for Spirit Photography* (London: Hutchinson, December 1922), an address on 'Psychic Photography' before the London Spiritualist Alliance (January 1923), the publication of 'The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue' (February 1923), two public lectures on 'The New Revelation' (February 1923), and the start of an exhausting tour (March to August 1923) in which he lectured on Spiritualism in some twenty cities in the United States and Canada.
- 21 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Vital Message* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 19. Nor did he believe the Allies who opposed Germany in the war were innocent of a similar materialism. 'The system which left seven million dead upon the fields of Europe must be rotten to the core' – Arthur Conan Doyle, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders, vi: July-November 1918* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 169.
- 22 Herbert Spencer, 'Re-barbarization', *Facts and Comments* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1902), pp. 122-33. A tendency of apparently advanced nations to revert to incivility, robbery and violence, which Spencer called re-barbarization, was a theme not unknown to Stevenson, especially in his South Seas work.

## Revisiting the 'chambers of the brain': Stevenson's 'A Chapter on Dreams' between Poe and Wilde, with Sherlock Holmes

*Jean-Pierre Naugrette*

In Stevenson's essay 'A Chapter on Dreams', published by *Scribner's* in January 1888, the anonymous narrator, soon coming out as Stevenson himself, uses two related images to describe the place where scenes from man's past and his dreams join forces. They indeed provide the primary story-lines to be woven into scenarios by his Little People, or Brownies, which the writer, in the morning, will shape into a story: 'that small theatre of the brain' or, as he also puts it, 'the chambers of the brain'. Together with Richard Dury and Richard Ambrosini in a DVD production entitled *Il Teatro del cervello* (2004),<sup>1</sup> I have already worked on the first 'theatre' image in relation to *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Indeed, Dr Jekyll's amphitheatre, inherited from a Dr Denman,<sup>2</sup> is more often than not referred to as a 'theatre', a place where Jekyll-Hyde can change and shift identities like two different actors playing in turn the same part, or persona on what Lacan would call the Scene of the Unconscious. In 'The Last Night', Poole, Jekyll's butler, keeps on referring to Hyde as having 'a mask upon his face', or 'that thing in the mask'<sup>3</sup> – certainly not his usual master, as he explains to Mr Utterson. The image corresponds to the etymology of per-sona, i.e. speaking through a mask, as Roman or Greek actors used to do: the highly debated issue of voices (who speaks behind the door of the cabinet, for instance) proves to be a key one during this 'last night'. From a literary perspective, conceiving the brain of the writer as a 'theatre' associates the personal theatre and the imagination in a way consistent with Stevenson's essay 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured' (1884), in which he recalls

buying, as a child, the cut-out figures of Skelt's Juvenile Drama from a stationer's shop in the Leith Walk, which prompted his imagination to work out and elaborate on scenarios of adventure.

The second image, that of the 'chambers of the brain', needs a more thorough, literary, critical and philosophical examination. Stevenson's move from the area of Gothic conventions, which was still the case for Edgar Allan Poe or Oscar Wilde, to a more modern, professional one, which is the case of Sherlock Holmes, will not only appear as ground-breaking as far as the rising profession of the man of letters is concerned, but also paves the way for what we today would call the problematics of decluttering.

### **From Poe to Wilde: Gothic 'chambers'**

Stevenson's use of the image at the beginning of his essay is, not so strangely enough, related with theatre, when he argues that past experiences and past imagined experiences have the same status: 'our old days and deeds, our old selves, too, and the very world in which these scenes were acted, all brought down to the same residuum as a last night's dream, to some incontinuous images, and an echo in the chambers of the brain'.<sup>4</sup>

A slightly different association of chamber and memory is to be found in E. A. Poe's famous story 'Ligeia' (1838), which begins: 'I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering'.<sup>5</sup> In that respect, we may read the opening sentence of Stevenson's essay as an echo, if not a pastiche of Poe's style and tone: 'The past is all of one texture – whether feigned or suffered – whether acted out in three dimensions, or only witnessed in that small theatre of the brain which we keep brightly lighted all night long' ('A Chapter', p. 153). Note the same word, 'suffered' and 'suffering', used in both cases (with different meanings: 'endured distress' and 'experienced'). In Poe's story, as in Stevenson's essay, the issue of memory, of being able or unable to

recall the past proves to be a key one: 'There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of the mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact [...] that, in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember' ('Ligeia', p. 28). For Stevenson the interest is in the equivalence of remembered experience or remembered dreams with the mind as a 'chamber',<sup>6</sup> while for Poe the interest is in the frustrated feeling of being close to remembering – but then also of entering a dream-like state which he too then associates with the same suggestive space.

In the second half of the story, i.e. after the death of 'the unforgotten Ligeia', and his marrying Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine, the narrator's imagination focuses on 'that one chamber, ever accursed' (p. 33) in the English abbey where he lives with his new wife. The word 'chamber' is repeated here many times, a lexical focus and nexus of obsession which crystallises and expresses 'The phantasmagoric effect' (p. 34) produced by this typical Gothic room: 'The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device' (pp. 33-34). Like in many Gothic stories, it is the architecture itself that seems to wield an evil influence on Lady Rowena's sudden illness: 'the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself' (p. 35), or 'that fantastic chamber' (p. 36), as the narrator puts it. The chamber here is both *the* Gothic topos of evil influence, and the very place where the memory of 'the unforgotten Ligeia' comes back, with a vengeance, like the powerful, destructive, Freudian return of the repressed: what psychoanalysts Abraham and Török, in *The Shell and the Kernel*, call a 'crypt'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, this Gothic chamber is already a chamber of the brain, the confined place where memory may rush back although the past is seemingly 'lost for ever', and project shadows upon the wall: as Poe's narrator puts it, 'such as might

be fancied for the shadow of a shade' (p. 36). The Gothic 'chamber' of Poe's story is the locus of past memories long dead but still alive, even when reduced to, as Stevenson says in his essay, 'the same residuum as a last night's dream, to some inconspicuous images': it is both the haunting, 'ever accursed' place where the past, as evil influence, is bound to return, but also a place, in the more creative sense, where fancy might try and reconstruct it, even out of a residuum, a chemical image which chimes in with Jekyll's experiments in 'the science of the mind'. In the second chapter of *Jane Eyre* (1848), Jane is locked in 'the red-room' described as 'a spare chamber, very seldom slept in', 'one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion',<sup>8</sup> which is supposed to be haunted. When she faces the looking-glass, she finds a 'strange little figure there gazing' at her: 'I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers' (p. 11). Again, the memory of a dead man – 'I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode [... ] and rise before me in this chamber' (p. 13) – is a haunting one. But the superstition attached to the Gothic 'chamber' is also a means of conjuring up the past, along with past stories: the imp she sees in the glass could well have been induced by those 'passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and other ballads' (p. 7). The name of Bessie's maid, Abbot, also conjures up old gothic novels, and, perhaps, Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Abbot* (1820).

In chapter 11 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), written only three years after 'A Chapter on Dreams', Wilde clearly echoes Stevenson's metaphor in his description of Dorian's nocturnal life when asleep:

There are few of us who have not sometimes wakened before dawn, either after one of those dreamless nights that make us almost enamoured of death, or one of those

nights of horror and misshapen joy, when through the chambers of the brain sweep phantoms more terrible than reality itself, and instinct with that vivid life that lurks in all grotesques, and that lends to Gothic art its enduring vitality, this art being, one might fancy, especially the art of those whose minds have been troubled with the malady of reverie.<sup>9</sup>

Wilde's evocation in the next sentences is clearly post-Jekyllian. 'Gradually white fingers creep through the curtains, and they appear to tremble. In black fantastic shapes, dumb shadows crawl into the corners of the room, and crouch there' (*Dorian Gray*, p. 145), can be read as a reminiscence of Mr Utterson's reverie about Jekyll and Hyde – 'Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled...' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 15), an image which Stevenson obviously derives from the creation of the monster in *Frankenstein*.<sup>10</sup> What matters here beyond the horror related to 'the malady of reverie' is that the phantoms should be 'more terrible than reality itself', that the life of the grotesques should be 'vivid': the 'vitality' of Gothic art is a sure sign and symptom that dreams, although horrible and fantastic, like in Fuseli's famous pre-romantic painting *The Nightmare* (1781), can create enduring 'figures' in the same way as the writer's task, and 'the plastic part of literature', according to Stevenson in his essay 'A Gossip on Romance' (1882), is 'to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye'.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from their common use of the 'chambers of the brain' image, both Wilde and Stevenson share a definition of dreams as able to produce literary phantasies or 'phantoms' which may turn 'the malady of reverie', of Poesque as well as de Quinceyan inheritance, into a more positive conception of literary work. After all,

Mr Utterson's dream, although fatal to Mr Hyde, is creative in the sense that it produces a scenario of its own, a replay or rewriting (for the worse), 'in a scroll of lighted pictures' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 14), of Mr Enfield's first draft. We may thus view Mr Utterson as writing, for and on the screen of his troubled consciousness, a scene which will never be played out in the diegesis, except as a fantasy in the chamber of his brain,<sup>12</sup> no less haunting and enduring because it is never played out. As Stevenson puts it in his essay 'The Lantern-bearers' (1888), which Richard Dury aptly quotes in the DVD *Il Teatro del Cervello* as characteristic of Stevenson's imagination, 'no man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids, but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of his brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls'<sup>13</sup> –note the same adjective, 'phantasmagoric', as used several times by Poe.

### **Sherlock Holmes and the metaphor of the 'brain-attic'**

In December 1887, just one month before the publication of 'A Chapter on Dreams', Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* his first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*. In the second chapter of the novel entitled 'The Science of Deduction', Dr Watson famously cross-examines his new friend in order to assess the scope of his knowledge, his stronger and his weaker points. If Holmes seems proficient and knowledgeable in chemistry, sensational literature and British law, 'My surprise reached a climax', Watson writes, 'when I found that he was ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System. That any civilised human being in this nineteenth century should not be aware that the earth travelled round the sun appeared to be to me such an extraordinary fact that I could hardly realise it'. Smiling at his friend's expression of surprise, Sherlock Holmes answers that now that he knows the theory, he will do his very best to forget it:

'You see,' he explained, 'I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skilful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order.'<sup>14</sup>

In keeping with Locke's definition of memory, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), as the 'store-house' or 'repository' of our ideas (vol. II, chap. 10, § 2), and before Georges Perec in *Thoughts of Sorts*,<sup>15</sup> thinking properly is, for Holmes, about having the furniture of one's intellectual tools 'all in the most perfect order'.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, what Stevenson is doing in 'A Chapter on Dreams' is a thorough survey of the 'chambers of his brain' viewed in terms of a house where the various parts of his psyche would be dwelling, and wondering which one of them is most 'useful' to his trade. Are dreams just so many 'appalling nightmares' or can 'his power of dreams' ('A Chapter', p. 155) prove useful to the writer of tales and stories? Part of the essay consists in removing those 'dream-adventures' into a house which would be the apt metaphor of the writer's consciousness, where his 'nocturnal dramas' (p. 160) would be carefully, and not savagely, staged on the proper scene of writing. STEVENSON REMOVALS LIMITED, as Floc'h & Rivière slyly put it on the cover of their graphic, postmodern and metafictional story *Le Rendez-vous de Sevenoaks*.<sup>17</sup>

Housing one's Little People or Brownies 'in a back garret' ('A Chapter', p. 166) is a way of taking into one's 'brain-attic' the right people, his 'unseen collaborators' (p. 167), thereby shifting Stevenson's original theatrical metaphor in his essay onto a more

utilitarian field – a field on which Holmes had trodden just one month before him. This points to a new approach of the literary profession as partaking of skilful workmanship, and not simply being under the influence of such phantasmagoria as Jekyll still called ‘the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me’ (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 57). It is true that Stevenson’s ‘back garret’ is more a place of professional collaboration than a store of inert ‘tools’: the Brownies are ‘unseen collaborators’ and have a regular business relationship with the writer. Yet, like Holmes,<sup>18</sup> he too sees this collaboration as a way of organizing his creative thinking. Taking stock of one’s potential, viewing one’s brain as a kind of factory, company or, say, start-up where each collaborator is in its right place is a means of putting some kind of ‘order’ into one’s dreams, transforming them into ‘dreamwork’ – or *Traumarbeit*, as Freud would argue a few years later in his *Interpretation of dreams*. In that sense, ‘A Chapter on Dreams’ is about how literary work should stem from dreamwork, and how to get it done in the right order.

What Stevenson describes in his essay is the growing awareness that childhood dreams should not be ‘elbowed’ or ‘crowded out’ but, on the contrary, welcomed into ‘the chamber of the brain’. As such, the Brownies, Familiars or Little People should not be dismissed as uncanny, unwelcome presences. In his essay ‘A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis’ (1917), Freud argues that the ego is not the master in his own house, a kind of psychological vexation at first, but soon to be understood as coming to terms with what looks like an uncanny part of oneself, which the Ego tends to dismiss and expel, while it is part and parcel of the self, which he addresses thus:

Nothing has entered into you from without; a part of the activity of your own mind has been withdrawn from your knowledge and from the command of your will. That, too, is why you are so weak in your defence; you are using one

part of your force to fight the other part and you cannot concentrate the whole of your force as you would against an external enemy [...]<sup>19</sup>

‘This, too, was myself’, Jekyll famously admits when first looking at himself in the mirror as Hyde (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 51). Stevenson’s Scottish version of the problem is to be found in his essay ‘The Foreigner at Home’ (1882), in which he argues that Scotland has often been considered as the obscure, darker, more savage part of the so-called United Kingdom. Coming to terms with one’s other side, channelling the Little People into literary collaboration is another way of saying, from a literary perspective this time, ‘This, too, was myself’ – and putting this other self to work.

### **Towards decluttering**

In the Sherlock Holmes stories, the word ‘chamber’ still retains, at times, traces of its Gothic connotation. In ‘The Engineer’s Thumb’ the inside of the hydraulic press, ‘a particularly unpleasant thing for us if anyone were to turn it on’, as Colonel Lysander Stark explains to young Victor Hatherley, is clearly frightening: ‘The ceiling of this small chamber is really the end of the descending piston, and it comes down with the force of many tons upon this metal floor’.<sup>20</sup> In *The Sign of Four* (1890), ‘Bartholomew Sholto’s chamber’ looks like a kind of Jekyllian ‘chemical laboratory’: what was Bartholomew Sholto exactly doing or rather concocting with his ‘carboys of acid’, which appear to be leaking so that ‘a stream of dark-coloured liquid had trickled out from it’?<sup>21</sup> More disturbing perhaps, at the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson describes Holmes experimenting in chemistry with his ‘fragile philosophical instruments’ (*Study*, p. 25): the adjective ‘philosophical’ still smacks of alchemy, of Frankenstein-like experiments – in which case, Sholto, Jekyll and Holmes would be colleagues in mad science – but the fact that they are ‘frag-

ile' could also suggest, in this very same chapter entitled 'The Science of Deduction', that a tentative, experimental method is about to be defined and put into practice, as it is the case when Holmes's metaphor of the 'brain-attic' emerges on the next page. For Sherlock Holmes indeed, Gothic hauntings should be replaced by new, revolutionary scientific methods of investigation, 'chambers' in the Gothic, Poesque sense with 'chambers' in which a new profession is about to be housed. It is significant that Dr Watson should at times use the word 'chamber' to describe their own 'lodging', 'rooms' or 'apartments' at 221B, Baker Street, like at the beginning of 'A Scandal in Bohemia': 'I rang the bell, and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own'.<sup>22</sup> This 'chamber' is often described as untidy, for instance in the opening paragraph of 'The Musgrave Ritual': 'An anomaly which often struck me in the character of my friend Sherlock Holmes was that, although in his method he was the neatest and most methodical of mankind [...], he was none the less in his personal habits one of the most untidy men that ever drove a fellow-lodger to distraction'.<sup>23</sup> But beyond the apparent disorder of the chamber, what matters more is the tidiness of his brain-attic, the method in the apparent madness. Unlike in *Jane Eyre*, no madwoman, or madman for that matter, is to be found in the attic of Holmes' brain, nor in his lodging, because he has elbowed or crowded out all useless junk of knowledge and memory and only kept the useful material. (In retrospect, we feel that this is what Rochester should have done in the first place.) In a similar way, Stevenson relates in his essay how he managed to relocate and shunt the 'monstrosities and operations' of his original nightmares into potential stories, as in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, a 'shilling shocker' that originated from a creative nightmare providing 'the matter of three scenes' ('A Chapter', p. 167). In a sense, Stevenson declutters the theatre of the brain from its former Gothic, nightmarish, ghoulish actors and associates, and puts them to useful work in a story.

Stevenson's house metaphors (theatre, chambers, garret)<sup>24</sup> in 'A Chapter on Dreams' can be viewed as epistemological ones if read in relation to Sherlock Holmes and Freud as recording the rise of new professions at the end of the XIXth century: a consulting detective in Sherlock Holmes' case, a consulting analyst in Freud's, and in between, no less than a writer, in Stevenson's case, who is fully aware of the tremendous potential of dreams if properly housed and stocked in the theatre or the chambers of the brain. If dreams can contribute to the profession of a man of letters, if the 'amusement of story-telling' is to become 'a business', then the 'little people', who 'played upon their stage like children who should have slipped into the house and found it empty' must now turn into 'drilled actors performing a set piece to a huge hall of faces'. As he explains, 'the pleasure, in one word, had become a business' ('A Chapter', p. 159). For the first time perhaps in the history of literature, a novelist correlates a conception of the human psyche and the economy of writing, much in the same way as Sherlock Holmes, the modern detective, conceives his 'brain-attic' in terms of space saving and careful design, a kind of 'less-is-more' or 'zen' attitude *avant la lettre*. The first stage, where the house is 'empty', is probably a necessary step towards completion and success. 'The Empty House' in which Holmes returns to Baker Street after having allegedly met his death at the Reichenbach falls, even offers a minimalist conception and occupation of domestic space: for all we know, the empty house just across from 221B might well be one the detective's secret haunts in London, a foil or double empty space from which Holmes and Watson watch and peer into the real flat opposite – they can even see a dummy of Holmes, a decoy which will deceive colonel Moran, a kind of theatrical *mise-en-scène* consistent with Holmes' sense of the dramatic. In the story of his escape from the clutch of Professor Moriarty at Reichenbach, Holmes describes himself an expert at baritsu, 'the Japanese system of wrestling',<sup>25</sup> a phrase which (remembering the close

coordination of mind and movement in such Japanese arts) points to a form of conceptual framework, and supports a new philosophy of brain order, evolved by a brain of the first order. In this story first published by *Collier's* in September 1903, his travel for two years in Tibet and visit to the head Lama in Lhasa, contemporary of Kipling's *Kim* (1901), indeed delineate a form of Oriental wisdom.<sup>26</sup>

Today, Marie Kondo's best-selling book *The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* (2014) views tidying up as the practical form of a systematic, 'zen' way of thinking. But decluttering, more often than not, has less to do with tidying up a flat or a house than the brain or the mind: after Holmes, S. J. Scott and Barrie Davenport's *Declutter Your Mind: How to Stop Worrying, Relieve Anxiety, and Eliminate Negative Thinking* (2016) also advocates the 'decluttering' of the mind as a new form of thinking and feeling better. In Season 4 of the television series *Alias* ('Mirage', disc 5), when CIA agents Sydney Bristow and Michael Vaughn break into the empty apartment of Jack Bristow, her father and their superior, a man of few words and many secrets, of cool command and perfect control, Michael says, while surveying the flat, 'Not much for clutter, is he?' – as if the flat were just an objective correlative, the chamber of his brain.

## NOTES

- 1 *Il Teatro del Cervello*, 30mn, DVD produced by the Association 'Le Cercle Rouge', Busca, Italy.
- 2 Which can be read as connoting 'Den/man', the man of the den, i.e. a post-Darwinian image of regression into man's primitive past, as evidenced by Utterson's use of the 'troglodytic' image about Hyde, to be supported by Jekyll's use of the 'cavern' into whose recesses Hyde finds shelter. But one must also bear in mind that Dr Thomas Denman, a famous obstetrician, was the author of *An Essay on Preternatural Labours* (London, 1786). 1786 is the date when the Chirurgo-Obstetrical Society first convened in Edinburgh, Scotland being here, as often, the place where scientific improvements were

made at the time. Stevenson may well have chosen this patronym, associated with images of birth, to signal the advent of Mr Hyde in Jekyll's final discourse, like 'in the agonised womb of consciousness', or 'a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death'.

- 3 R. L. Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (New York and London: Norton Critical Edition, 2003), p. 36.
- 4 R. L. Stevenson, 'A Chapter on Dreams', in *Across the Plains with Other Memories and Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1915), p. 154. Henceforth cited in text.
- 5 E. A. Poe, 'Ligeia', in *Edgar Allan Poe, Selected Tales* (Oxford: OUP, 'World's Classics', 1998), p. 26. Henceforth cited in text.
- 6 A dual French line of influence may be traced here. On a philosophical plane, the conception of the mind and memory as 'chamber' may be derived from Descartes and his French contemporaries, who use the metaphor in order to define memory as a place where recollections may be re-collected, ie. housed and stored. See Florence Dumora, 'Métaphorologie de la mémoire classique', *Littérature* 175 (Sept. 2014) 23-35. It is significant that Stevenson should mention Descartes in 'A Chapter on Dreams' when defining his 'ego': 'For myself – what I call I, my conscious ego, the denizen of the pineal gland unless he has changed residence since Descartes' ('A Chapter', p. 165). Jekyll's impossible *cogito* will be expressed in similar, if inverted terms: 'He, I say – I cannot say, I' (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 59). The image of the chamber may also have been derived from Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage autour de ma chambre* (1794), in which the author views his 'chamber' as the metaphor and space of creative imagination, and proposes an opposition between spirit and animal, which paves the way for Jekyll's statement that 'man is not truly one, but truly two'. See Richard Dury, 'Crossing the Bounds of Single Identity', in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 240.
- 7 N. Abraham and M. Török, *The Shell and the Kernel*, trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). First published as *L'écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Champs-Flammarion, 1978). In her article 'Stormy nights and headless women: heterosexual conflict and desire in the work of Robert Louis

- Stevenson', Hillary J. Beattie makes a shrewd parallel between Stevenson and Poe's 'Ligeia', 'whose final scene (where the shrouded corpse of the fair lady Rowena stirs, grows and is horrifyingly transformed into the hero's lost love, the black-haired Ligeia) is an obvious prototype for the climax of "The Bodysnatcher"' – *Journal of Stevenson Studies* 6 (2009), 73.
- 8 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London & New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2001), p. 10. Henceforth cited in text.
  - 9 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 145.
  - 10 See J.-P. Naugrette, 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde: dans le labyrinthe', *Tropismes* 5 (1988), 9 - 37.
  - 11 R. L. Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance', in *Memories and Portraits* (London: Heinemann, Tusitala Edition, 1924), vol. XXIX, p. 123.
  - 12 See J.-P. Naugrette, 'Ciné-Hyde', *Critique* 795-796 (2013): pp. 654-64. Also see Rosella Mallardi – 'In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Utterson presents Enfield's tale of the horrid encounter with Hyde as a proto-cinematic sequence of pictures, "a scroll of lighted pictures" [...] reminiscent of a magic lantern entertainment': 'Stevenson and Conrad: colonial imagination and photography' in *Journal of Stevenson Studies* 6 (2009), note 2, p. 114).
  - 13 R. L. Stevenson, 'The Lantern-Bearers', in *Across the Plains with Other Memories and Essays*, p. 151.
  - 14 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Pan, 1974), pp. 26-27.
  - 15 First published as *Penser/Classer* (Paris: Hachette, 1985). In our perspective, see 'Trois chambres retrouvées'.
  - 16 Also see 'The Musgrave Ritual' (*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*), in which Holmes dives his arm into the bottom of 'a large tin box' or 'chest' in order to reach for his first case, which he will relate to Watson. Doyle may have been influenced here by the opening of Billy Bones's sea-chest in chapter 4 of *Treasure Island*. In the opening paragraphs of L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953, 1958), old Leo tries to 'sort out' the contents of a 'rather battered red cardboard collar-box' in order to gain access to his old diary, the secret of which depends on his opening 'a small combination lock' (p. 7): those images can be read as a narrator-to-be getting his forthcoming material into shape.

- 17 Floc'h & Rivière, *Le Rendez-vous de Sevenoaks* (Paris: Dargaud, 1977). In which the so-called, sensational, penny-dreadful 'Black Theatre' can also be regarded as a 'theatre of the brain', on whose stage the unconscious of the characters acts out its fantasies.
- 18 That Stevenson had read Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories is evidenced at least by two letters to Doyle from Samoa acknowledging the reception and pleasurable reading of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, one dated 5 April 1893, the other 23 August 1893 (in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mayhew, New Haven & London, Harvard UP, vol. 8, pp. 49-50 and p. 155.) Doyle had written an essay entitled 'Mr Stevenson's Methods in Fiction' (*National Review*, January 1890) in which he praised 'The Pavilion on the Links' as one of the best stories ever written.
- 19 S. Freud, 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. XVII, p. 142.
- 20 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Engineer's Thumb', *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Pan, 1974), p. 229. Doyle is clearly inspired here by Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1843): 'As I arose from the attempt, the mystery of the alteration in the chamber broke at once upon my understanding' (*Selected Tales*, p. 146).
- 21 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, in *Sherlock Holmes Selected Stories* (Oxford: OUP, 'World's Classics', 1998), p. 107.
- 22 'A Scandal in Bohemia', in *Sherlock Holmes Selected Stories*, p. 208.
- 23 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Musgrave Ritual', in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 96.
- 24 It would be interesting to track, in the Victorian period, the 'house' metaphor in relation to writing and the modes of publication – from Dickens's magazine *Household Words* to Henry James's *The House of Fiction*.
- 25 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Empty House', in *Sherlock Holmes Selected Stories*, p. 367.
- 26 See Jamyang Norbu's novel *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* (London: HarperCollins, 1999).

## Ancient, wild, indigenous: Stevenson's bagpipe nation

*Morgan Holmes*

*'As the heather and the thistle to the Scotsman, so are the pibrochs, reels, strathspeys, marches, which only his bagpipe can perform to his entire liking.'*<sup>1</sup>

Is there an object more quintessentially Scottish than a set of Great Highland bagpipes? In shops up and down Scotland's high streets and within its airports and railway stations, shelves are laden with tins of shortbread, fudge, and tea bearing the image of a handsome, kilted male piper, often standing atop a windswept crag. Likewise, it is rare to spend a summer day in Scotland – from Edinburgh to Ullapool – without coming across pipers (singly or formed up into bands) regaling the crowds with bonnie tunes. In the recent past, too, the pipes have taken on a sterner political role in Scotland, with both sides in the 2014 independence campaign harnessing their energy to inspire support for opposed visions of the country's future.

Robert Louis Stevenson seems to have shared something of this notion of the intimate relationship between bagpipes and Scottishness. A prime example appears in his California travelogue *The Silverado Squatters* (1882). When Scots are abroad 'in some far country', Stevenson writes, they put aside the 'local patriotisms and prejudices' that keep Scots at each other's throats back home. The reason for this brotherhood in foreign lands is, Stevenson avers, because 'somewhere, deep down in the heart of each one of us, something yearns for the old land, and the old kindly people'.<sup>2</sup> This claim appears in a chapter entitled 'The Scot Abroad', wherein, in addition to contemplating the 'inscrutable' mystery of expatriates' longing for 'that grey country, with its

rainy, sea-beat archipelago',<sup>3</sup> Stevenson recounts meeting four fellow Scots: two are quiet, serious men; the third, a 'filthy, ragged' Dickensian house-breaker<sup>4</sup>; and the last, a fellow who stands out because 'there never was any one more Scottish in this wide world':

He could sing and dance – and drink, I presume; and he played the pipes with vigour and success. All the Scots in Sacramento became infatuated with him, and spent their spare time and money driving him about in an open cab, between drinks, while he blew himself scarlet at the pipes.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the stereotypical ingredients of Scottish identity are embodied in this most-Scottish of individuals: singing, dancing, drinking, and piping. For the expatriate Scots community in Sacramento, the latter activity served as a particularly weighty reminder of their faraway homeland, as they and their 'vigorous' piper racketed along through the streets of the California capital. This carnivalesque reunion was not to endure, however, for after the piper 'had borrowed money from every one, he and his pipes suddenly disappeared'.

There is the possibility that bagpipes here and elsewhere in Stevenson's oeuvre are merely scenic ornamentation. Henry James seems to point us in that direction when he wrote of the young Stevenson:

How must it not have beckoned on the imagination to pass and repass, on the way to school, under the Castle rock, conscious acutely, yet familiarly, of the grey citadel on the summit lighted up with the tartans and bagpipes of Highland regiments! Mr. Stevenson's mind, from an early age, was furnished with the concrete Highlander, who must have had much of the effect that we nowadays call decorative.<sup>6</sup>

As so often with Stevenson, however, objects, identities, and associations that appear to be transparent – merely ‘decorative’ – become, on closer examination, intriguingly complex. That is certainly the case, I suggest, in Stevenson’s most sustained representation of bagpipes and piping: the musical battle between Alan Breck Stewart and Robin Oig Macgregor in chapter 25 of his 1886 adventure novel *Kidnapped*. Not coincidentally, this novel is also one of the pre-eminent texts by Stevenson that critics mine for insights into attitudes – by the author and, to a lesser extent, his culture at large – towards Scottish national identity. For Claire Harman, ‘the relationship between the volatile, charismatic Alan Breck Stewart and his cautious companion David [Balfour]’ is a ‘way of separating and analysing the two different kinds of Scottishness in Stevenson himself’. The ‘disunity of Scotland is lamented throughout’ Harman argues, and the ‘vision of Scotland that the book projects is essentially tragic’.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Maureen Martin has recently contended that ‘the problem of the national identity of Scotland as a whole is at the heart of the novel’. Stevenson interrogates Scotland’s identity, Martin explains, by counterpoising the Highlands’ ‘wild primal masculinity’ and the urban, feminised masculinity of the Lowlands – a binary that, she notes, is both emphasised as well as disrupted.<sup>8</sup>

There is much to agree with in such accounts, and the reading I am proposing builds on a shared sense that Scottishness is deeply at issue in Stevenson’s novel. When brought into the orbit of material history, however, an examination of bagpipes and piping in *Kidnapped* leads, instead, to an organic, indigenous heterogeneity that profoundly disturbs fixed, easily recognisable identities of nation and nationality. The sense of Scottishness as fluid and uncaptureable by conventional identity markers that I detect in Stevenson’s treatment of bagpipes and piping is glossed in a letter to J. M. Barrie, in which he chuckled at those readers of *Kidnapped* who ‘recognised in David and Alan a Saxon and a

Celt. [...] I deny there exists such a thing as a pure Saxon, and I think it more questionable if there be such a thing as a pure Celt'.<sup>9</sup> A Stevensonian hallmark if ever there were one, rendering normative identities and identifications 'questionable' – dissenting from the fiction of racial purity – is, I hope to show, an intimate effect of his more-than-decorative pipes.

In 2008, one of the leading scholars of Scotland's piping history, Hugh Cheape, published a wide-ranging study entitled *Bagpipes: A National Collection of a National Instrument*. The bagpipe, Cheape notes, 'has become, with tartan, an icon of Scotland and a symbol of nationhood'.<sup>10</sup> The documentary and material evidence I have examined underscores that this attribution of 'national' status for bagpipes – in the nineteenth century as well as today – is a constructed myth of unity that obscures a fascinating history of change and diversity, coinciding with what Jane Bennett theorises to be 'the capacity of things [...] not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.<sup>11</sup> In my work, I have also grappled with Barry Menikoff's argument that in *Kidnapped* (and its sequel, *Catriona* [also known as *David Balfour*]), Stevenson was concerned with depicting 'the loss suffered by the indigenous culture'.<sup>12</sup> While Menikoff's inquiries focus on revealing 'hidden texts' – such as eighteenth-century histories and legal proceedings – within the two novels, my task has been to cast light on a different sort of indigeneity, a native material, craft, and musical tradition about which, quite possibly, Stevenson himself might have been only partially aware.

In order to grasp Stevenson's deployment of bagpipes' actant, ontological ability to denaturalise nation-based cultural and political identities, in this essay I read *Kidnapped* in connection with Donald MacDonald's seminal preface to *A Collection of the Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia* (published ca 1819) and Stevenson's own short essay 'Pan's Pipes.' MacDonald was born

in 1776 and died in 1840, and Stevenson lived his entire life in the nineteenth century; yet, for both men, it is the mid eighteenth-century post-Culloden turmoil in Scottish society and culture that guides their treatments of indigenous pipes and piping.<sup>13</sup>

### Scotland's ancient martial music

A Skye-born soldier, piper, and pipemaker, MacDonald prepared and published the first 'serviceable collections' of Highland bagpipe music. According to Cheape, MacDonald 'may have been the first to describe the Great Highland Bagpipe as Scotland's "national instrument"'.<sup>14</sup> Appearing in 1819 or 1820, MacDonald's initial volume is called *A Collection of Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia Called Piobaireachd*. This book is the oldest printed gathering of piobaireachd, a principal genre of pipe music (the Gaelic word *piobaireachd* is often Englished as pibroch – including by Stevenson – and translates simply as 'piping'). In the past, as today, this kind of music is sometimes also known as *ceòl mòr* (large or great music); it is contrasted with *ceòl beag* (small or light music, such as reels and strathspeys). The most common types of piobaireachd are laments, salutes, and gatherings, and they typically contain a melodic groundwork called the *urlar* followed by several variations of increasing complexity. Some piobaireachds run 5 or 6 minutes, while others can take over 20. MacDonald's *Ancient Martial Music* brings together 23 piobaireachd pieces (hundreds exist, and the form dates back at least to the sixteenth century).

Prompted by a 'patriotic feeling' and operating in the hope that readers will become acquainted with 'the Strains that delighted and animated our Warlike Ancestors', MacDonald makes several claims that have proven foundational to understanding the cultural ecology of the bagpipe and the piobaireachd genre ever since.<sup>15</sup> For the nineteenth century, one of the most influential components of MacDonald's preface was his figuring of anxiety over the potential extinction of a native musical tradition (and

the instrument on which it is played) following Culloden and the dissolution of traditional Highland society. MacDonald saw his role as preserving something truly ancient and fundamentally Scottish, a task he undertook, in part, by interviewing 'those Patriarchs who had so proudly sounded them [i.e., the 'ancient tunes'] at the time of the unfortunate "*Rising*".'<sup>16</sup> This 'wild instrument' is, MacDonald claims, 'perhaps, the only national instrument in Europe. Every other is peculiar to many countries, but the Bag-Pipe to Scotland alone'. Music historians have known for some time that bagpipes are, in fact, not unique to Scotland. The Great Highland version does seem to be a Scottish invention; however, the basic technology has taken many forms over the millennia and has been crafted and played in such far-flung places as Sicily, Galician, Bulgaria, Tunisia, and India. Even Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century Miller played a set while trotting along to Canterbury.<sup>17</sup> Apparently unaware of these deep international roots, MacDonald winds up his preface in full Ossianic/Romantic throttle, exclaiming:

Even Highlanders will allow that it is not the gentlest of instruments; but, when far from their mountain homes, what sounds, however melodious, could thrill round their heart like one burst of their own wild native Pipe? [...] But the Bag-Pipe is sacred to Scotland, and speaks a language which Scotsmen only feel. It talks to them of home, and of all the past; and brings before them, on the burning shores of India, the 'heath-covered hills' and oft frequented streams of Caledonia, the friends that are thinking of them, and the sweet-hearts and wives that are weeping for them there!<sup>18</sup>

### **Maclaren's pipes**

One need not stretch too far to detect a trace of this piping-induced 'thrill' amongst Stevenson's expat Sacramento Scots. In

*Kidnapped*, however, the bagpipes are played in Scotland itself, a place where one might expect them vigorously to reaffirm received identities. Yet, upon closer examination, that does not appear to be the case. A lamp that guides me in this direction is Fanny Osbourne Stevenson's preface to the 1905 edition of *Kidnapped*, in which she notes that her husband's conception for the story was of a boy 'who should travel in Scotland as though it were a foreign country'.<sup>19</sup> A Scot who journeys in a quasi-foreign land called Scotland: amongst all the many strange things David encounters in this disorienting land, the indigenous bagpipes he hears played by three Highlanders during one momentous night stand out for their structural placement in the narrative, their impact on the protagonist's emotions, and their ability to denaturalise seemingly self-evident identities.

Like MacDonald's *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia*, Stevenson's *Kidnapped* is a nineteenth-century response to the 1746 Battle of Culloden and the transformation of traditional Highland society in its aftermath. Set in 1751, the novel features the one starring role for bagpipes in Stevenson's oeuvre: chapter 25 takes place entirely at the Braes of Balquhiddier in rural Perthshire, and is *Kidnapped*'s final extended piece set in the Highlands. By this time in the tale, David is utterly exhausted, and over the course of a month he is nursed back to health in the sanctuary of one of Alan's clan allies, Duncan Dhu Maclaren. This kind host, David recounts, 'had a pair of pipes in his house and was much of a lover of music'.<sup>20</sup>

But piping in *Kidnapped* is more than a twee interlude or decorative bit of ceilidh-making. What I propose is that the very materiality – what Bennett refers to as 'thing-power' – of the greased leather (likely sheepskin) bag, single and double reeds, and 10 to 14 pieces of wood (depending on whether there are two drones or three) that comprise a set of bagpipes produces far more than sound. In a scene that Menikoff points out was 'wholly original' to Stevenson and based on not a shred of historical evi-

dence<sup>21</sup>, Maclaren's pipes and the pieces played on them open a space for apprehending an indigenous Scottishness uninscribed by, and vibrantly troubling to, regional, clan, and sectarian identities. At the same time, they reposition the bagpipe and its music outside the nineteenth century's increasingly tight association of the instrument with empire, militarism, and aesthetic-material uniformity.

Chapter 25 opens with some important scene-setting. The Braes of Balquidder was a dangerous, indeterminate place: 'No great clan held rule there; it was filled and disputed by small septs, and broken remnants, and what they call "chiefless folks", driven into the wild country about the springs of Forth and Teith by the advance of the Campbells' (p. 177). As readers, we expect nothing but further pain and suffering in this seemingly forsaken land. Yet, it is amongst these human fragments that David and Alan find shelter and healing. It is here – in this threatening, politically damaged 'wild' territory – that Stevenson surprises his readers with an harmonious vision of personal and political reconciliation. And it is the music of indigenous bagpipes – indeed, the experience of playing the instrument and hearing Scotland's ancient music – that helps to bring temporary peace to the novel's wayfarers, resolve old inter-clan disputes, and foreshadow the eventual happy resolution of David's adventures (and, to a lesser extent, Alan's).

'There was but one thing happened worth narrating', recounts David. On a certain afternoon near the end of their recuperation in Balquidder, Robin Oig Macgregor, 'one of the sons of the notorious Rob Roy', stopped by Duncan Dhu's home (p. 178). An enemy of both the Stewarts and the Maclarens, Robin had, nevertheless, braved unwelcome in 'the house of his blood enemies' (p. 179) in order to meet David, whom he believed was a kinsman of a man who had fixed his brother's leg, which had been broken while battling government troops in 1745. Disgusted by David's complete lack of familial knowledge – 'I knew no more

of my descent than any cadger's dog' (p. 179) – Robin 'turned his back upon [David] without a sign of salutation' and made for the door (p. 180). At that very moment, however, just as Robin was about to cross the threshold, Alan stepped inside, 'and the two drew back and looked at each other like strange dogs' (p. 180). As Robin and Alan pivoted on the brink of murdering each other with their swords, Duncan Dhu proposed another plan: "Here are my pipes, and here are you two gentlemen who are baith acclaimed pipers. It's an auld disupute which one of ye's the best. Here will be a brow chance to settle it'" (p. 181). The adversaries agreed, and so 'Duncan Dhu made haste to bring out the pair of pipes that was his principal possession' (p. 181).

In the ensuing competition, Robin pipes first, followed by Alan. David reports, 'I had been pleased with Robin's playing, Alan's ravished me' (p. 182). As it turned out, however, Robin – who boasts that "I can pipe like a Macrimmon" (p. 181), referring to one of the great piping dynasties of pre-modern Scotland – had not yet demonstrated the full extent of his art. Alan admitted himself beaten and 'made as if to rise'.

But Robin only held out his hand as if to ask for silence, and struck into the slow measure of a pibroch. It was a fine piece of music in itself, and nobly played; but it seems besides it was a piece peculiar to the Appin Stewarts and a chief favourite with Alan. The first notes were scarce out, before there came a change in his face; when the time quickened, he seemed to grown restless in his seat; and long before that piece was at an end, the last signs of his anger died from him, and he had no thought but for the music. (pp. 182-83)

The effect of Robin's playing is like magic. Alan, a man depicted as emotionally volatile throughout most of *Kidnapped*, is drawn into a trance-like state devoid of all hostility. Indeed, Stevenson

writes that 'his anger died from him', almost as though he were on the brink of being born into a new life characterised, instead, by peace.

In addition to its 'decorative' storytelling role, this scene presents a profound challenge to and dissolution of conventional personal and political identities. To begin, a young Lowlander is 'ravished' by music generated by older Highlanders playing ancient music – both light music as well as *piobaireachd* – on his host's 'principal possession' (clearly an ancient and treasured set). Here, too, as Menikoff notes, Stevenson fashions a musical performance that paints a compassionate portrait of Robin Oig (a fierce outlaw ultimately hanged for his criminal acts) and of a 'peaceful resolution of an intractable hereditary feud' through Robin's magnanimous gesture of performing a *piobaireachd* tune 'peculiar' to Alan's clan.<sup>22</sup>

In response to his adversary's marvellous piping, Alan says, "Robin Oig [...] ye are a great piper. I am not fit to blow in the same kingdom with ye. Body of me! Ye have mair music in your sporran than I have in my head!" (p. 182). With this uncharacteristic declaration of humility, 'the quarrel was made up', and for the rest of the night Mrs Maclaren's 'brose was going and the pipes changing hands; and the day had come pretty bright, and the three men were none the better for what they had been taking, before Robin as much as thought upon the road'. Implied in this scene of festive amity is that even Duncan Dhu – the host to whom Robin would not even doff his bonnet when he arrived at his home – took part in the night's playing of tunes and drinking of brose. This inclusion of Duncan is a stunning act of harmony when one considers that it was Robin who had murdered in cold blood his host's kinsman James Maclaren not long before, an event described by David as 'a quarrel never satisfied' (p. 179).

This night of inter-clan Scottish music and fellowship is a tantalising way for Stevenson to draw to a close David's adventures on what he calls 'the wrong side of the Highland Line' (p. 183).

This scene, which Theodore Watts-Dunton in an early review of *Kidnapped* said ‘ranked with the finest humorous scenes of Scott’, speaks, I suggest, to a thick seam of normative-identity disturbance in the novel and Stevenson’s imagination offered by indigenous materiality.<sup>23</sup> To grasp that point, however, it is helpful first to consider other and foreign matter.

### **Imperial wood**

On MacDonald (and many others’) account, bagpipes tell us something elemental – primordial, even – about the identity of Scotland’s people. Teetering his *Kidnapped* characters on the liminal south-eastern edge of the Highlands, Stevenson channels much of that same ancient, sacred, and wild spirit. But a question I have not heard asked before is what instruments do we think are being played and what do we think we are hearing when we read of this ravishing encounter amongst the Braes of Balquhiddy? And, when we consider the materiality and sounds of the pipes in *Kidnapped*, what might be their immaterial properties and metaphorical resonances within Stevenson’s novel and wider Scottish culture?

The single-droned set of bagpipes (fancifully played by a pig) carved into stone on the fourteenth-century Melrose Abbey is one famous and vivid piece of evidence that Scottish bagpipes have not always appeared in their familiar present form.<sup>24</sup> Today, however, the three-droned (two tenors and a bass) instrument known widely as the Great Highland bagpipe – which, Cheape explains, ‘did not exist before about 1780’, but had already been adopted as the ‘archetype’ bagpipe in the first quarter of the nineteenth century – is the instrument that most often springs to mind in discussions of Scottish piping.<sup>25</sup> From the evidence at hand, it appears that this is the basic (‘standardised,’ Cheape labels it)<sup>26</sup> technology and form that Stevenson’s readers likely also envisioned. Evidence for what some of Stevenson’s early readers imagined – at least visually – with regard to Maclaren’s pipes arises in

the very different illustrations added to early twentieth-century editions of *Kidnapped*. While W. B. Hole depicted Robin Oig standing and playing a set of Great Highland pipes, N. C. Wyeth showed him seated and playing what appear to be half-size Highland pipes (sometimes called reel pipes).<sup>27</sup>

Like the three-drone Great Highland set I play today, beginning from about the late eighteenth-century bagpipes were increasingly fabricated by professional, urban pipe-making firms using the exotic materials of the expanding British Empire – starting with cocus wood ebony from the West Indies, through ebony of India, to the now near-ubiquitous African blackwood.<sup>28</sup> In addition to the pressures of imperial trade and economics, this shift was fuelled by the competitions set in motion by the Highland Society of London in 1781 and the ease of turning dense, tight-grained tropical woods on a lathe.<sup>29</sup>

An important fourth influence was the increasing incorporation of pipers into the British Army. Pipers had been included in the military as far back as the seventeenth century, and the first evidence for Gaelic-speaking regimental Highland pipers occurs with the raising of the Independent Companies in 1725.<sup>30</sup> Following the Seven Years War (1756–63), the role of the military piper took on a more formal position, replacing, for instance, the traditional fifers in grenadier companies.<sup>31</sup> On the brink of hostilities with Russia, the War Office's 1854 authorisation of one pipe major and five pipers for each regiment did much to solidify the martial connection for the modern era.<sup>32</sup> Since then, Highland regiments and piping have gone, barring a few exceptions, hand in glove. An anonymous article in an 1893 issue of *Chambers's Journal*, for instance, calls the Highland bagpipe 'an instrument especially adapted for military uses'.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Stevenson's 1887 ballad 'Ticonderoga,' set at the time of the Seven Years War, gets in on this act, proclaiming:

Where flew King George's ensign  
The plaided soldiers went:  
They drew the sword in Germany,  
In Flanders pitched the tent.  
The bells of foreign cities  
Rang far across the plain:  
They passed the happy Rhine,  
They drank the rapid Main.  
Through Asiatic jungles  
The Tartans filed their way,  
And the neighing of the war-pipes  
Struck terror in Cathay.<sup>34</sup>

However we might balk at Stevenson's verb 'neighing' to describe the sound of the pipes, his portrait of the scope of Highland regiments' imperial duties set to the martial sounds of the pipes is spot on.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, over on the civilian side, many people in the United Kingdom and its former colonies are likely familiar with pipe bands marching down high streets, avenues, and boulevards to help celebrate various public festivals. Emerging in the late nineteenth century, such groups were, in fact, modelled on the 'military band with pipers and a corps of drums'. Like the military model on which they are based, the 'art' of such bands lays in 'unison' playing, 'so that a line-up of twelve or more pipers [is] trained and tuned to sound as one'.<sup>36</sup>

### **Indigenous vibrations**

But this regimented political and acoustic oneness masks a diversity rooted in an earlier, highly local materiality. Peering back to the mid-eighteenth century and before presents the possibility of other pipes at play in Duncan Dhu's home. Perhaps Stevenson gives us a slight clue to follow here when he has David refer twice in chapter 25 to Duncan Dhu's 'pair of pipes' (pp. 178, 181). The adjective 'pair' was a not uncommon way to refer to a set

of bagpipes<sup>37</sup>, but there is the possibility Stevenson's use of that word tacitly signifies a set that, as was common until the early nineteenth century, possessed two rather than three drones.

In any event, whether comprising one, two, or three drones, contrary to the standardised imperial model the sundry individual eighteenth-century pipes MacDonald and Stevenson imagined both sprang out of Scotland's native soil. The *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia* and *Kidnapped* hearken back to a pre-imperial culture and piping tradition that was expressed through indigenous matter. Before there were British Empire pipes, there were Scottish pipes – that is to say, pipes turned by individual makers from hard native woods, including hornbeam, holly, apple, laburnum, and boxwood.<sup>38</sup> The displacement of Scotland's geographically dispersed, frequently rural, independent pipe-makers and their native woods is a story of imperial economics and the British military's growing need for pipers and pipes, as well as an emergent – soon to be dominant – aesthetic desire for a unified tone and pitch to accompany highly trained and coordinated fighting units marching off to global conquest.

In *Kidnapped*'s tacit figuring of indigenous matter and art, I posit a link to Stevenson's own stated literary desire in *Underwoods* (1887) – his collection of 38 poems in English and 16 in Scots – to 'have my hour as a native Maker, and be read by my own countryfolk in our dying language: an ambition surely of the heart than of the head'.<sup>39</sup> In the same prefatory note, Stevenson says, 'I confess that [Robert] Burns has always sounded in my ear like something partly foreign. And indeed I am from the Lothians myself; it is there I heard the language spoken about my childhood; and it is in the drawling Lothian voice that I repeat it to myself'.<sup>40</sup> Not unlike the voices of humans and many other animals, the sounds of a bagpipe arise from the interaction of warm, moist air originating in the lungs and then propelled through pipes and vibrating across tongues (of reeds). The result of this elementary physics, the sounds we hear are directly affected by

the materials out of which stocks, drones, chanters, and reeds are turned and carved. Contrasting earlier, pre-1780 bagpipes with the 'new' Great Highland bagpipe, Cheape observes that the 'surviving material evidence shows that pre-existing instruments were unlike this in every way'. He goes on to surmise that 'the new instrument must have made a new sound, probably subtly different in degree and timbre'.<sup>41</sup> So, again, what do we imagine we see and hear when we consider MacDonald and Stevenson's old, local, indigenous instruments – those 'precious' pre-modern indigenous pipes kept safe in Duncan Dhu's humble Balquhiddy home, but so unlike the militarised Highland regiment pipes Stevenson, his readers, and even his expat Sacramento Scots would have known best?

### **Ecstasies of the goat-footed piper**

For a glimpse of what this ancient woody matter might all mean, I will draw to a close with a short consideration of remarks Stevenson made in a little essay, originally published in 1878, called 'Pan's Pipes'. In this piece, Stevenson extols the pleasures of periodically shedding the 'respectable citizen' identities that 'flee life's pleasures and responsibilities and keep, with upright hat, upon the midway of custom'.<sup>42</sup> Instead, the author recommends opening ourselves to Pan's strange music:

Science writes of the world as if with the cold finger of a starfish; it is all true; but what is it when compared to the reality of which it discourses? Where hearts beat high in April, and death strikes, and hills totter in the earthquake, and there is a glamour over all the objects of sight, and a thrill in all noises for the ear, and Romance herself has made her dwelling among men? So we come back to the old myth, and hear the goat-footed piper making the music which is itself the charm and terror of things.<sup>43</sup>

This goat-footed piper, Stevenson writes, 'trolls out a stave of ecstasy' that he connects to an 'uncouth, outlandish strain throughout the web of the world'.<sup>44</sup> In this encomium to Pan's charming and terrifying piping, I am reminded of Sir John Graham Dalyell's observation, in his survey of Scotland's musical traditions, that 'The sylvan divinity, Pan, who can be identified with Satan of Scottish [sic.] superstitions, is said to appear like his prototype as a performer on the bagpipe'.<sup>45</sup> In Stevenson's imagination, while clearly not Satanic, the bagpipe and those who played it – including the outlaws Robin Oig and Alan, as well as the roaming, roguish Scot who 'blew himself scarlet' way out in California – certainly shared ancient, quasi-mythic roots powerfully at odds with the 'midway of custom' in its myriad forms. In *Kidnapped*, Stevenson provocatively rescues the bagpipe from what David Murray identifies as the 'essentially martial connotation' it acquired from the fifteenth through the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> As *Ticonderoga* shows, Stevenson was well aware of the bagpipe's military history. He might, indeed, have known that the instrument was a staple of the Jacobite army.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps even Alan, who had fought in the 1745-46 conflict, had sounded his pipes in battle. But Stevenson never tells us that. Instead, in *Kidnapped* Alan sheds his soldier persona, playing the pipes through the night within a homely domestic space.

By attending to actant materiality – to thing-power – Bennett says her goal is to 'try, impossibly, to name the moment of independence (from subjectivity) possessed by things'. In order to do so, she turns away from 'the language of epistemology to that of ontology' in order to grasp 'an active, earthy, not-quite-human capaciousness (vibrant matter)'.<sup>48</sup> How perfectly that aim suits the vibrational acoustics of a being half-mortal, half-divine, and how true it is to the indigenous pipes that, in *Kidnapped*, leave a young, rational Lowlander 'ravished', and an ancient clan feud, at least for one night, dissolved.

Returning to my overarching topic of the complexities of

Scottishness, my quest with all this bagpipe matter has been to open a channel to the ‘uncouth’ and ‘outlandish’ in Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* and Scottish culture more generally. Indigenous pipes and their ancient ecstasies: perhaps, through these, with Stevenson as our guide, we catch a glimpse or hear a few notes of the ‘charm and terror of things’ that subverts supposed orthodoxies of people, place, and nation. In a part of Scotland ‘filled and disputed by small septs’ and inhabited by ‘broken remnants’, peace and unity – albeit on a very small scale – come about through ancient music played upon a deeply valued, carefully kept pre-modern instrument crafted from native wood. ‘It would go against my heart to haggle a man that can blow the pipes as you can!’ Alan declares to his former arch-enemy Robin (p. 183). For Alan to go *with* his heart entails setting aside old, deeply rooted, seemingly insoluble internecine feuds, remaking himself from an intractable bitter enemy into a fellow Scotsman. For Stevenson to present this surprising eruption of concord as the ‘one thing [...] worth narrating’ in David’s long sojourn in the Braes of Balquhiddy strongly suggests a vision that locates in Scotland’s indigenous cultural traditions forces that do not arrest time and change but, rather, that are capable of inspiring a future society flexible and confident enough to encompass diverse histories, families, religions, and regions. David concludes chapter 25 by observing that the strange events he narrated in that section of his book were ‘in a manner history’ (p. 183). History, these words seem to suggest, comprises not just pitched battles and bloodthirsty murders, but the slighter, homelier, surprisingly peaceful events that happen in isolated, out-of-the-way parts of the world to people who are neither kings, princes, dukes, or generals. Perhaps that is the kind of local, indigenous history out of which Scotland’s future might be forged.

## NOTES

- 1 R. C. Philips, 'The Scale of the Highland Bagpipe', *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*, September 1901, 841.
- 2 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*, in *From Scotland to Silverado*, ed. by James D. Hart, (Cambridge: the Bellknapp Press of Harvard U. P., 1966), p. 210.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., p. 212.
- 5 Ibid., p. 213.
- 6 *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, ed. by Janet Adam Smith (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 139-40.
- 7 Claire Harman, *Myself and the Other Fellow: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), p. 315.
- 8 Maureen M. Martin, *Mighty Scots: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), pp. 104-5, 99, 88.
- 9 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Meheew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-95), vol. 7, 238-39.
- 10 Hugh Cheape, *Bagpipes: A National Collection of a National Instrument* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2008), p. 25.
- 11 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. viii.
- 12 Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland: The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), p. 3. Menikoff's reading of Stevenson pivots on a contrast with what he calls Sir Walter Scott's 'roseate progressivism' (p. 3). It should be noted that this view of Scott is by no means universally held by other scholars; in fact, recent work on Scott has emphasised the polyvocality and multiplicity of his figurations of Scottish post-Culloden history and society. On these persuasive strands of criticism, which actually overlap in some important ways with my own understanding of Stevenson, see, for instance, Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); and Caroline McCracken-Flesher, *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and The Story of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2005), whose readings place Scott 'within the discourse of an ongoing national difficulty' (p. 14), his texts presenting views of Scotland as 'narrated, multiple, contentious, unfinished, erupting in the future through the anxious reader' (p. 27). An illuminating analysis of *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* in the context of Scott's fiction (especially *Rob Roy*) is Matthew Wickman's *The Ruins of Experience: Scotland's 'Romantick' Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

- 13 Stevenson clearly knew and appreciated Jacobite and Scottish folk tunes, many of which he might have heard played on the pipes. But with his chronically weak lungs, it seems the 'penny piper' stuck to playing tunes on piano, flageolet and whistle. See Stephen Chalmers, *The Penny Piper of Saranac: An Episode in Stevenson's Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916); and J. F. M. Russell's website *The Music of Robert Louis Stevenson* <[sites.google.com/a/music-of-robert-louis-stevenson.org/introduction](http://sites.google.com/a/music-of-robert-louis-stevenson.org/introduction)> [accessed 25 August 2016].
- 14 Keith Sanger and Roderick D. Cannon, 'Preface', in *Donald MacDonald's Collection of Piobaireachd, Volume 1: The Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia (c. 1820)*, ed. by Roderick D. Cannon (Glasgow: The Piobaireachd Society, 2006), p. vii. Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 128.
- 15 Donald MacDonald, 'To the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland', in his *A Collection of the Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia Called Piobaireachd* (facs. repr.; East Ardsley, UK: EP Publishing, 1974), p. 1.
- 16 MacDonald, 'Preface to First Edition', in his *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia*, p. 3.
- 17 Drawing on the international collection of instruments housed at the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, Anthony Baines is still one of the best resources for understanding piping's international roots and distribution; see his *Bagpipes*, Occasional Papers on Technology, 9. Rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). Noting that the bagpipe 'was a late arrival in the Highlands, having spread from continental Europe during the late medieval period', Keith Sanger sheds light on piping in Gaelic culture from the Middle Ages to the end of the sixteenth century ('The Origins of Highland Piping', *Piping Times*, August 1989, 46-52). Cheape reasons that bagpipes might have 'spread to Scotland and then into the Gàidhealtachd [Gaelic-speaking parts of the country] from France and the Low Countries and from

- England, ultimately to be adopted in a culturally upbeat Gaelic society and taking over the instrumental role of the *clarsach* [harp]' (*Bagpipes*, p. 3). See also chapter 2, 'A Distant Past: The Bagpipe Comes to Scotland,' in Cheape, *Bagpipes*, pp. 25-37.
- 18 MacDonald, *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia*, pp. 4-5. For an account of the bagpipe's fanciful connections to the Romantic North during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Vivien Estelle Williams, 'The Bagpipe and Romanticism: Perceptions of Ossianic "Northernness"', *European Romantic Review*, 27.4 (2016), 459-73.
  - 19 Fanny Osborne Stevenson, 'Preface', in *Kidnapped: Being Memoirs of the Adventures of David Balfour in the Year 1751* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. vii.
  - 20 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, ed. by Donald McFarlan (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 178. Hereafter, page numbers are cited directly in the text.
  - 21 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 3.; Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland*, p. 99.
  - 22 Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland*, pp. 99, 101.
  - 23 T. Watts-Dunton, review of *Kidnapped* in the *Athenaeum* 14 August 1886, reprinted in Paul Maixner, ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 245.
  - 24 Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 30.
  - 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 131.
  - 26 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
  - 27 Hole's illustration appears in *Kidnapped* (London: Cassell and Company, 1909), plate facing p. 264; and Wyeth's is in *Kidnapped* (New York: Scribner's, 1913), plate facing p. 238.
  - 28 Barry W. Shears, 'Wood, Horn and Bone: A Survey of Immigrant Bagpipes and Regional Pipe-making in Nova Scotia, 1820-1920', in *The Highland Bagpipe: Music, History, Tradition*, ed. by Joshua Dickson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), p. 69.
  - 29 Cheape, *Bagpipes*, pp. 131, 134.
  - 30 Keith Sanger, 'One Piper or Two: Neil MacLean of the 84<sup>th</sup> Highlanders', in *The Highland Bagpipe*, p. 128.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
  - 32 Murray, *Music of the Scottish Regiments*, p. 121 (on the changing place and official status of pipers in Highland regiments, including

Queen Victoria's 'indirect influence', p. 123, see pp. 47–50, 113–26); and Keith Sanger, "'Highland Piping' from 1775 to 1850: A Period of Change' (Paper presented at the Piobaireachd Society Conference, Birnam, Dunkeld, 22 March 2015) <[academia.edu/12191614/Highland\\_Piping\\_from\\_1775\\_to\\_1850\\_A\\_period\\_of\\_change](http://academia.edu/12191614/Highland_Piping_from_1775_to_1850_A_period_of_change)> [accessed 3 September 2016], p. 5 of 7.

- 33 'The Highland Bagpipe', *Chambers's Journal*, 30 December 1893, p. 827.
- 34 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Ticonderoga', in *Selected Poems*, ed. by Angus Calder (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 189. British forces, aided by American colonists, captured Fort Carillon (subsequently renamed Fort Ticonderoga) from the French in 1759. The fort is located on Lake Champlain in New York State.
- 35 Wildly 'neighing' pipes share odd company with the physician in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, whom Mr Enfield says was 'about as emotional as a bagpipe' in *Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, ed. by Katherine Linehan (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 9.
- 36 Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 4.
- 37 See, for example, John Graham Dalyell, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland with Historical Annotations and Numerous Illustrative Plates* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1849), p. 121, where the author equates saying – in the 'vernacular style' – 'three pair of bagpipes' with 'three pair of bellows' and 'three pair of scissors' when referring to 'three single articles'.
- 38 Baines, *Bagpipes*, p. 134; Shears, 'Wood, Horn and Bone', p. 50.
- 39 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Note', in *Underwoods* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887), p. xii.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. xi.
- 41 Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 136.
- 42 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Pan's Pipes', in *Travels with a Donkey and Virginibus Puerisque*, ed. by H. Bell (London: Ginn and Company, 1936), p. 246.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 246–47. A similar rather fearsome, disorienting piping-Pan shows up again in Stevenson's poem 'Et Tu in Arcadia Vixisti', written about five years before *Kidnapped*. In this text, the poem's dedicatee (Stevenson's cousin Bob) is said to have 'seen / Immortal Pan dance secret in a glade', the deity 'breath[ing], / In his clutched

pipe, unformed and wizard strains. / Divine yet brutal' (Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Et Tu in Arcadia Vixisti', in *Selected Poems*, p. 118).

44 Stevenson, 'Pan's Pipes', pp. 245, 243.

45 Dalrymple, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland*, p. 45.

46 David Murray, *Music of the Scottish Regiments: Cogadh no Sith (War or Peace)* (1994; Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2001), p. 47.

47 Gary J. West, 'Scottish Military Music', in *A Military History of Scotland*, ed. by Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Craig, and Matthew J. Strickland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 655.

48 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 3.

## Robert Louis Stevenson's annotated Wordsworth: a complete transcript

*Trenton B. Olsen*

Sometime during his early twenties in Edinburgh, Robert Louis Stevenson acquired the six-volume Edward Moxon edition of William Wordsworth's *The Poetical Works* (London, 1857), which he kept with him until his death in Samoa in 1894. Now held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, the edition is heavily marked and annotated in Stevenson's hand, reflecting his careful and repeated reading over many years. Though Stevenson's marginalia cannot be precisely dated, the handwriting alongside Wordsworth's poetry ranges from the large slanting script of his early years (1870–1874) to the small, rounded and upright letters he used in the final period of his life (1890–1894).<sup>1</sup> Though George S. Hellman provides a brief and general overview of Stevenson's marginalia in his 1931 article 'Stevenson's Annotated Set of Wordsworth,' he acknowledges that his account is 'hardly more than an intimation' of the source (p. 8). Hellman posits that outside of Stevenson's own writings, the annotated Wordsworth edition is the 'most autobiographically revealing' of all the books in Stevenson's personal library (p. 1). Given the depth of Stevenson's engagement with Wordsworth and the critical neglect of the poet's influence on his work, this note briefly suggests some elements of his marginalia likely to interest Stevenson scholars and provides a complete transcript of Stevenson's markings and annotations.

Stevenson's Wordsworth annotations reveal a deep ambivalence that alternates between praise and criticism. In the first volume's inside cover, Stevenson wrote, 'Wordsworth has written much that life is too short for us to read – much, also, that life is too bare of enjoyment for us voluntarily to miss.'<sup>2</sup> Stevenson's mixed response to Wordsworth is evident elsewhere in his mar-

ginalia. He corrected Wordsworth's grammar, for instance, and wrote the ironic exclamation 'verse!' next to an especially prosaic phrase in *The Prelude*.<sup>3</sup> Then again, he also wrote next to 'Proud were ye, Mountains,' 'I don't believe there is a finer sonnet in the world'.<sup>4</sup> In my article 'Robert Louis Stevenson's Evolutionary Wordsworth' I used Stevenson's marginalia to trace the conflicted intersection of Wordsworthian and Darwinian ideas in his writing, arguing that Stevenson used both Wordsworth's and Darwin's differing ideas to correct and revise each other, retaining and rejecting elements of each. This analysis suggests that Stevenson's markings include both endorsement and criticism and that what Stevenson leaves unmarked can sometimes be as revealing as his markings. For example, Stevenson marked the entirety of Wordsworth's 'My Heart Leaps Up' except the final line expressing the poet's wish that his days will be 'bound each to each by natural piety,' suggesting it is the only part of the poem he cannot identify with or support.<sup>5</sup> (Stevenson ironically alluded to this phrase in an 1884 letter to Bob and Louisa Stevenson: 'My days shall [...] be bound each to each in natural impietee [sic]' (*Letters* 4: 259–60). Having lost his Christian faith after reading the evolutionary writings of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Stevenson did not associate nature with piety.

Rather than discussing select markings or analyzing a particular theme in Stevenson's annotations, I shall note a few general topics that emerge in the marginalia before transcribing their details. Stevenson's frequent travel and relocations to England, France, Switzerland, America, and Samoa help explain the particular interest his annotations reveal in travel, sailing, and exile. 'Extract from the Conclusion of a Poem, composed in anticipation of leaving school', 'Lines written while sailing in a boat at evening', 'I travelled among unknown men', and 'Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go?' are all marked. Place also shapes the Scottish writer's engagement with his English predecessor. Poems dealing with Scottish history ('Song at the

Feast of Brougham Castle' and 'Mary Queen of Scots Landing at the Mouth of the Derwent'), Scottish literature ('At the Grave of Burns' and 'On the Banks of Nith, near the Poet's Residence'), Scottish geography ('In the Pass of Killicranky' and references to Scotland's Stirling Castle and the rivers Tay and Clyde in 'Yarrow Unvisited') are specifically marked, along with other poems from Wordsworth's travels in Scotland, such as 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'Stepping Westward.' Stevenson, who penned *A Child's Garden of Verses*, marketed *Treasure Island* as 'a story for boys,' and described writing as child's play, was also interested in what Wordsworth categorized as his 'Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood.' He marked 'My Heart Leaps Up', 'To H.C. Six years old', 'Three years she grew', the 'Intimations' Ode, and a number of passages in the first two books of *The Prelude* on Wordsworth's childhood and early schooling. Stevenson experienced intense anxieties about his ability to support himself through writing even as he attained celebrity for his work. He marked Wordsworth's descriptions of posthumous literary fame and poets who failed to gain recognition in their lifetimes, including 'After-Thought', 'Remembrance of Collins', and his description of Thomas Chatterton in 'Resolution of Independence.'<sup>6</sup>

Moxon's 1857 edition of *The Poetical Works* comes from Wordsworth's final authorized edition of 1849–1850. The same text formed all subsequent Moxon editions, as well as later publications from Ward, Lock, and Tyler, and all scholarly editions until the comprehensive *Cornell Wordsworth*, which includes earlier versions of Wordsworth's poems. In the transcript below, I have marked Stevenson's pencilled comments in bold with 'RLS.' Where necessary, I have offered explanations. The 'X' represents poems that Stevenson marked with an 'X', generally next to the title. Some poems he marked with 'XX.' Underlined passages are specifically noted, otherwise Stevenson marked with pencilled vertical lines in the margins.

**Transcript of annotations to Stevenson's copy of  
*The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth in Six  
 Volumes* (London: Edward Moxon, 1857)<sup>7</sup>**

**Volume 1: Annotations**

Visiting Card on inside cover of each volume: 'Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson'

RLS: 'Wordsworth has written much that life is too short for us to read – much, also, that life is too bare of enjoyment for us voluntarily to miss.' This comment is followed by Stevenson's later reflection, written some twenty years later: RLS: 'Sententious gentleman!'

'Extract from the Conclusion of a Poem, composed in anticipation of leaving school' (p. 1, lines 11-14 underlined)

'Written in very early Youth' (p. 2, line 1 underlined)

'Lines written while sailing in a boat at evening' **X** (p. 14, lines 5-8 underlined)

'Remembrance of Collins, composed upon the Thames near Richmond' **XX** (p. 15, lines 5-8 underlined)

'My heart leaps up when I behold' **X** (p. 147) \*Stevenson marked the entire poem with a solid vertical line in the left hand margin. The final line, however, has only a faint dash of the pencil, broken off from the rest of the marking.

'To H.C. Six years old' **XX** (p. 171)

'Strange fits of passion have I known' **XX** (pp. 214-15) **RLS**: 'How perfect! No colour. The first verse only is feeble.'

'She dwelt among untrodden ways' **X** (p. 215)

'I travelled among unknown men' **X** (p. 215, lines 11-12 marked by two vertical lines in the left margin)

'Ere with cold beads of midnight dew' (p. 216, lines 5-8 marked)

**Volume 2 Annotations**

The following titles are marked in the table of contents: 'To the Daisy,' 'There was a Boy,'

'Yew-trees,' 'Three years she grew in sun and shower,' 'A slumber did my spirit seal,' 'Song at the Feast of Brougham,' 'Tintern

Abbey,' and 'The Pass of Kirkstone.'

'To the Daisy' ('In youth') (p. 25, lines 9–24, 49–56)

'To A Sky-Lark' ('Up with me!') **XX** (Vol. 2, p. 31)

'To the Cuckoo' (p. 94, lines 3–4)

'Lorton Vale Yew-Trees' (p. 97, lines 16–33)

'Three years she grew in sun and shower' **XX** (p. 102, lines 19–34)

'A slumber did my spirit seal' **X** (p. 103)

'I wandered lonely as a cloud' (p. 104, lines 19–24)

'Resolution and Independence' (p. 124, lines 3–7, 8–14, 43–46)

'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle' (p. 144, lines 118–156,  
161–164)

'Tintern Abbey' (p. 150, lines 76–93, 102–107, 134–159)

'Laodamia' (p. 158, line 72 double marked)

'Dion' (p. 164, lines 73–76)

'The Pass of Kirkstone' **XX** (p. 168)

'To -----, on her first ascent to the summit of Helvellyn' (p. 176,  
lines 15–16)

'On the Power of Sound' (p. 212, lines 7–9, 27, 61–64, 145–160)

**RLS:** 'O!' next to the 'Argument' that prefaces the poem,  
beginning 'the Ear addressed, as occupied by a spiritual  
functionary in communion with sounds, individual, or  
combined in studied harmony.'

'Peter Bell' (p. 220, lines 226–235, 246–250, 254–255, 301–303,  
311–320; lines 228–229 and 231–235 doubled marked)

'Nuns fret not' (p. 260, marked in its entirety)

'To Sleep' (p. 269, marked in its entirety)

'Surprised by Joy' (p. 273, marked in its entirety)

'It is a beauteous evening' (p. 275, lines 1–4)

'Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go?' (p. 276, marked  
in its entirety)

'The World is too much with us' **XX** (p. 276, margin marked in its  
entirety)

'Scorn not the sonnet' (p. 278, marked in its entirety, 'in his hand  
/ The thing became a trumpet' [12–13] underlined) **RLS:** 'Just

as this string of conceits begins to weary, come these three inevitable concluding lines.'

**X** 'With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky' (p. 289, lines 7–14, 7–8 underlined and double marked)

Sonnet XXIX ('Though narrow be that old Man's cares') (p. 293, sonnet marked in its entirety)

'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' (p. 296, marked in its entirety, lines 12–14 double marked)

'A Grave-Stone Upon the Floor of the Cloisters of Worcester Cathedral' (p. 306, lines 7–14)

'Roman Antiquities Discovered at Bishopstone' (p. 320, lines 9–10)

**XX** 'Proud were ye, Mountains' (p. 320, marked in its entirety)

**RLS:** 'I don't believe there is a finer sonnet in the world. It is one gorgeous, equable crescendo.'

### **Volume 3 Annotations**

The following titles are marked in the Table of Contents:

'Stepping Westward,' 'The Solitary Reaper,' 'On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic,' 'Written in London, September, 1802,' 'London, 1802' ('Milton! thou shouldst be living'), 'It is not to be thought of that the Flood,' 'Ode. 1815. Imagination,' 'O Mountain Stream,' and 'After-thought.'

'At the Grave of Burns' (p. 3, lines 31–36)

'Thoughts: suggested the day following, on the Banks of Nith, near the Poet's Residence'

**X** (p. 5, lines 43–48)

'Stepping Westward' **X** (p. 15, lines 8–15)

'The Solitary Reaper' (p. 17, lines 9–24). **X** by 'More welcome notes to weary bands' (10) **RLS:** **X** 'More sweetly to reposing bands' old reading (and better)'

'Sonnet. Composed at ----- Castle' ('Degenerate Douglas!') **X** (p. 24, lines 5–8, 11–14)

'Yarrow Unvisited' (p. 24, lines 1–3)

'In the Pass of Killicranky' (p. 27, lines 4–10)

'On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic' (p. 56, marked in its

entirety)

'Written in London September 1802' ('O Friend!') (p. 59, 5–14)

'London, 1802' ('Milton!') (p. 60, 6–14)

'It is not to be thought of that the flood' **X** (p. 61, marked in its entirety) **RLS**: 'A splendid sonnet'

'Ode. Imagination--ne'er before content' (p. 116, lines 57–102)

Elegiac Stanzas ('Lulled by the sound of pastoral bells') (p.144, 31–36)

'O Mountain Stream' **X** (p. 207, marked in its entirety)

'Return, Content!' (p. 213, lines 1–8)

'Not hurled precipitous from steep to steep' (p. 216, marked in its entirety)

'After-thought' **X** (p. 217, marked in its entirety)

'The White Doe of Rylstone' (p. 267, lines 938–971)

#### **Volume 4 Annotations**

'Walton's Book of Lives' (p. 102, marked in its entirety, lines 2–4 and 12–14 doubled marked).

'Conclusion' ('Why sleeps the future') (p. 123, marked in its entirety)

'Composed in Roslin Chapel during a storm' (p. 224, lines 1–7, underlined phrase 'The wind is now thy organist'[1])

'The Brownie' (p. 232, lines 9–13)

'To the River Derwent' **X** (p. 145, lines 1, 6–14)

'Mary Queen of Scots Landing at the Mouth of the Derwent' (p. 148, line 1)

'Flowers on the Top of the Pillars at the Entrance of the Cave' **X** (p. 165, marked in its entirety)

'Iona' (p. 166, lines 13–14)

'Greenock' (p. 168, 9–14)

'Lines Written in Early Spring' (p. 182, lines 13–20)

'A Poet's Epitaph' (p. 192, 45–52)

'The Fountain. A Conversation' (p. 198, lines 29–48)

'Personal Talk' **X** (p. 200)

'Fidelity' **X** (p. 207, 25–33, 52–53).

'Ode to Duty' (p. 211, 37–40, 55–56)

'Character of the Happy Warrior' (p. 212, 26–27)

'Ode Composed on May Morning' **X** (p. 243, lines 37–40, 55–60)

'To May' (p. 248, 73–76)

'Epistle to Beaumont' (p. 7, line 210).

'Gold and Silver Fishes in a Vase' (p. 11, line 26)

### **Volume 5 Annotations**

'Intimations' Ode (p. 148, lines 1–9, 25, 52–77, 131–191,  
205–208; lines 143, 182–183 double-marked)

*The Prelude* (Book 1, p. 168, lines 269–274, 290–291, 314–317,  
321–325, 330–344, 361–400, 438–463, 472–475, 490–504,  
585–588)

*The Prelude* (Book 2, p. 180, lines 17–18, 57–58, 118–128,  
135–137, 170–197, 339–344)

*The Prelude* (Book 3, p. 194, lines 46–63, 121–139, 181–193,  
395–398, 597, 605–606)

*The Prelude* (Book 4, p. 211, lines 86–92, 150–190, 256–276,  
283–286, 291–291, 319–338)

*The Prelude* (Book 5, p. 226, lines 45–47, 136–138, 337–339,  
364–388, 440–442, 551–552)

*The Prelude* (Book 6, p. 243, lines 158–160, 264–271, 291–294,  
339–341, 358–359, 489–503, 592–616, 621–640, 645–648,  
699–726)

*The Prelude* (Book 7, p. 266, lines 1–4, 17–22, 168–174, 362–365,  
337–441, 450–454, line 747: 'The roving Indian, on his desert  
sands:' **RLS**: tr. \*Stevenson abbreviates 'transpose' and  
removes Wordsworth's punctuation marks.

*The Prelude* (Book 8, p. 287, lines 55–69, 111–120, 470–475,  
526–529)

'On the mountain-tops where first he rose' (475). **RLS**: **X**  
references note at the bottom of the page: 'X see Vol I p 1.'  
Stevenson cross-references a phrase from Wordsworth's  
'Extract from the Conclusion of a Poem in anticipation of  
leaving school': 'A lingering light he fondly throws / On

the dear hills where first he rose,' which is also marked in Stevenson's edition.

'The effect was, still more elevated views / Of human nature.

Neither vice nor guilt' (644–645, MS p. 306). **RLS:** 'verse!'

*The Prelude* (Book 9, p. 309, lines 1–17, 335–338)

*The Prelude* (Book 10, p. 325, lines 78–88, 164–173, 461–462)

*The Prelude* (Book 11, p. 343, lines 105–118, 363–369)

*The Prelude* (Book 14, p. 377, lines 272–275)

### Volume 6 Annotations

*The Excursion* (Book 1, p. 19, lines 249–250, 500–502)

'Oh, sir! the good die first, / And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust / Burn to the socket!' (500–502, underlined phrase)

*The Excursion* (Book 2, p. 50, lines 323–326, 346–348 [triple marked in the margins and underlined], 828–845, 832 underlined)

*The Excursion* (Book 3, p. 79, lines 650–651)

*The Excursion* (Book 4, p. 111, lines 522–525 [underlined], 1062–1070, 1170–1187,

*The Excursion* (Book 5, p. 153, lines 373–389). This is Stevenson's final marking in the edition.

### NOTES

- 1 See George S. Hellman, 'Stevenson's Annotated Set of Wordsworth', *The Colophon*, vol. 7, 1931, 1–8, p. 2 and Gertrude Hills (ed.), *Robert Louis Stevenson's Handwriting* (The Edwin J. Beinecke Collection, privately printed: New York, 1940), pp. 34–43.
- 2 Stevenson's tastes fit more neatly with modern Wordsworth scholarship than Victorian preferences. He heavily annotated *The Prelude* and apparently did not finish reading *The Excursion*.
- 3 Stevenson also criticised Wordsworth's prosaic verse, see his letter to P. G. Hamerton in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (Yale UP, 1994–1995), 8 vols, vol. 5, pp. 91–2.

- 4 *Stevenson's Annotated Set of Wordsworth*, MS Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 6 vols, MS 5.306.
- 5 Trenton B. Olsen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson's Evolutionary Wordsworth', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2016, 887-906, p. 9.
- 6 William Collins's poetry was largely unnoticed in his lifetime, which ended in poverty, alcoholism, and insanity in 1759. Despairing in his failure to achieve sustenance, let alone fame and fortune from his writing, Thomas Chatterton committed suicide in 1770 at the age of 17.
- 7 I wish to thank Kayla Probeyahn – an excellent undergraduate research assistant – for her help with this transcript. The staff of Yale University's Beinecke Library also provided valuable support.

## Contributors

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**Flora Benkhodja** is working on a PhD on Stevenson under the supervision of Prof. Jean-Pierre Naugrette at the University of Paris 3. Her thesis focuses on narrative voices, manuscripts and writing strategies in Stevenson’s novels and short stories, aiming to show how he draws his influence from 18th-century literature while announcing turn-of-the-century modernism, thanks to the elaboration of ‘texts of bliss’ (Roland Barthes) which discomfort and unsettle the reader.

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**Harriet Gordon**, BA MA (Cardiff), is a doctoral candidate in English Literature at Cardiff University. Situated in the field of literary geography, her thesis focuses on the global peregrinations of Robert Louis Stevenson, examining the social networks that facilitated his cross-continental publishing and considering the influence of such movements and networks on his textual productions. Her project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's South West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (SWW-DTP).

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**Trenton B. Olsen** earned his PhD at the University of Minnesota in 2014 and is currently Assistant Professor of English at Brigham Young University–Idaho. His work has appeared in *Victorian Literature and Culture* and *The George Eliot Review*. He received the 2018 George Eliot Essay Prize and the 2018 Idaho Humanities Council Research Fellowship. His first book – *Wordsworth and Evolution in Victorian Literature: Entangled Influence* – is forthcoming with Routledge.

**Ivan D. Sanderson** is a retired geologist and is the author of *Isaiah: The Times of Fulfillment, A Verse-By-Verse Commentary* (2009). He has a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado and MS

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# The New Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson

General Editors: Stephen Arata, Richard Dury, Penny Fielding  
and Anthony Mandal

The New Edinburgh Edition is now gaining speed (if that is the word), as the following titles and dates show: *Prince Otto* (2014), *Weir of Hermiston* (2017), *Amateur Emigrant* (May 2018) and *Virginibus Puerisque* (October 2018). Next year, 2019, should see another two volumes published, maintaining the momentum: *Stories IV: Fables. Island Nights' Entertainments*; and *Essays IV: Uncollected Essays 1868-1879*. And the following year could see four or five additional titles: *Essays II: Familiar Studies*; *Essays III: Memories and Portraits*; *The Dynamiter*; and *Stories I: The Pavilion on the Links and Other Early Stories*; with the additional possibility of *Essays V: Uncollected Essays 1880-1894*. There are other exciting volumes already in various stages of preparation: *St Ives*, *Kidnapped*, *The Silverado Squatters* and *The Black Arrow*.

Each of these volumes has its own special features and interest. *Weir of Hermiston* is based on a fresh transcription of the manuscript and benefits from Gill Hughes's many years of experience as editor for the EUP Hogg Edition and her thorough understanding of Borders history and literature.

*The Amateur Emigrant*, edited by Julia Reid, is based on Stevenson's 1880 manuscript with gaps supplied from the earliest printed editions and contains a full account of its composi-

tion, its suppression when already in proofs, its partial lifetime and then full posthumous publication. The introduction also discusses the work's influences and literary context and the historical context of its composition. An appendix of illustrations includes images of the emigrant ship, a map of the train route and manuscript and proof sheet images.

*Essays I: Virginibus Puerisque*, edited by Robert-Louis Abrahamson, with its Explanatory Notes, cross-referencing to letters and other works by Stevenson, and full account of composition of each essay will be an essential volume for scholars; its forty-page overview of 'Stevenson as Essayist' by the four essays editors will be a starting point for any future studies; and its checklist of essays by date of composition and magazine of first publication will give it additional value.

Bill Gray's volume *Stories IV: Fables. Island Nights' Entertainments* includes Stevenson's *Fables* in the first transcription of the manuscript since 1895, together with the two fables Colvin did not include, and in an ordering that reflects Stevenson's last intentions. The second part of the volume contains the three supernatural tales that Stevenson instructed to be collected under the title 'Island Nights' Entertainments': 'The Bottle Imp', 'The Isle of Voices' (transcribed from the manuscript) and 'The Waif Woman'.

*Essays IV: Uncollected Essays 1868-1879*, edited by Richard Dury, contains the first complete collection of all Stevenson's book reviews, a number of previously unpublished essays and fragments, and the transcription of on-the-spot notes made for two travel essays, 'A Winter's Walk' and 'Forest Notes'. The appendix, with its list of Stevenson's essay titles and essay-volume outlines from the 1870s, will be another useful resource for those studying Stevenson's writing career.

The volumes to follow these are equally varied and interesting: *Essays II: Familiar Studies*, edited by Robert-Louis Abrahamson and Richard Dury, will provide full information

about Stevenson's literary/biographical studies in the context of other such studies of the time and also place them in the development of Stevenson's ethical thoughts and world-view. *Essays III: Memories and Portraits*, edited by Alex Thomson, will include some of Stevenson's finest essays exploring memory, imagination and the experience of literature. The second volume of uncollected essays, edited by Lesley Graham (*Essays V*, which gathers the twelve *Scribner's Magazine* essays together for the first time) contains other important essays and a number of previously unpublished essay fragments.

*The Dynamiter*, edited by Penny Fielding, is an interesting work of narrative Chinese boxes with a number of tales by female narrators first drafted by Fanny Stevenson. This edition will also have an appendix of other stories by Fanny Stevenson. Burkhard Niederhoff's *Stories I: The Pavilion on the Links and Other Early Stories* contains the non-Florizel stories originally published in the second volume of the *New Arabian Nights*. These include 'The Pavilion on the Links', which will also be included in an Appendix in its first version as first published in the *Cornhill*, with an interestingly different narrative perspective.

More on progress can be found in the EdRLS blog at <http://edrls.wordpress.com/>.

Richard Dury, Penny Fielding

## Stevenson: Notes and Queries

The *New Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* and the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* invite brief essays, bibliographical information, and/or Notes and Queries, relating to any of the following:

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- Information and opinions on different editions published during Stevenson's lifetime
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- Mentions of Stevenson's works in letters or diaries of contemporaries, etc.

Alternatively, information not intended for publication may be sent directly to any of the General Editors, who would be grateful for any such material:

Stephen Arata: [sda2e@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:sda2e@cms.mail.virginia.edu)

Richard Dury: [richard.dury@t-r.it](mailto:richard.dury@t-r.it)

Penny Fielding: [penny.fielding@ed.ac.uk](mailto:penny.fielding@ed.ac.uk)

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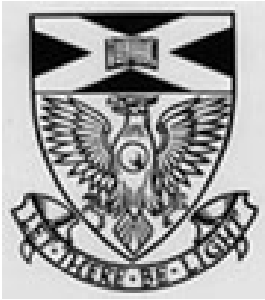
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Dedicated to the life and works of Robert Louis Stevenson, making texts and information about his life and works freely available worldwide, [www.robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://www.robert-louis-stevenson.org) is a primary online resource for students, scholars and enthusiasts alike. Galleries of images of places and people associated with Stevenson, and of RLS, himself are a particular feature of the website. It situates Stevenson firmly in Edinburgh, focusing on the city's, and on Scotland's influence on his writing, while also recognising the international dimension to his work and readership.

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