



# Journal of Stevenson Studies Volume 5







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Contributions to issue 6 are warmly invited and should be sent to either of the editors listed above. The text should be submitted in MS WORD files in MHRA format. All contributions are subject to review by members of the Editorial Board.

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## Editorial

*A new Stevenson edition. Stevenson and the writers.*

Warm appreciation and congratulations must go, as we write this, to Richard Dury and the organisers of the fifth biennial Stevenson conference, which was held to great success at Bergamo in July this year. Volume 6 of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* will contain a selection of some of the best papers from that conference. These international meetings are undoubtedly contributing to the ongoing revival of interest in Stevenson's work – a process that goes back to the pioneering reassessments of David Daiches in the late 1940s and has been slowly gathering strength ever since. The biennial conference series was born, on both sides of the Atlantic, in the millennium year 2000 with William B. Jones's 'RLS 2000' conference in Little Rock, Arkansas and Eric Massie's 'Stevenson and the South Pacific' conference at Stirling. We are pleased to announce that the Stevenson conference for 2010 will be returning to the University of Stirling to complete the circle of the first ten years. In the meantime, we continue to invite academic contributions to the journal and thank the editorial board for their continuing work as referees and advisors.

One of the more exciting events this year has been announcement of the *New Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* from Edinburgh University Press, which will be published in print and electronic formats. It will develop a complete modern edition for the twenty-first century from the work first started by the 1994 'Centenary' Edition. The earlier project had fallen into abeyance because of the then General Editor's failing health and, encouraged by colleagues at the Saranac conference, Rory Watson approached EUP to convey our collective support for reviving the project. Jackie Jones at EUP was most enthusiastic and the upshot is that a completely new edition has been agreed with an impressive advisory board and the establishment of Professors Stephen Arata, Richard Dury and Penny Fielding as General Editors. They have posted a





request for information in our new section *JSS Notes* at the end of this journal, where readers can find out more about the new Edinburgh Edition. Readers and contributors are also encouraged to use the *JSS Notes* in future for any other similar postings, announcements or requests.

Of course Richard Dury's *RLS Newsletter* from his Robert Louis Stevenson website at Bergamo <http://dinamico2.unibg.it/rls/rls.htm> has long been an invaluable forum for the exchange of information and will continue as such, but we can also announce the setting up of a website of Stevenson Studies, with a support grant from the Carnegie Trust, in a project initiated by Linda Dryden at Napier, in collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling. We expect this site to come on line next year. It will be the doorway to Richard Dury's fine website, and also an on-line location for future announcements to do with the New Edinburgh Edition of Stevenson's works. It has been a busy summer all round, and competing professional commitments for both editors has meant that volume 5 is appearing a little later than usual this year.

Edinburgh became the world's first UNESCO City of Literature under a pioneering initiative in 2004 to create a new international network of cities under UNESCO's Creative Cities programme. This led to the formation of the City of Literature Trust, as a charity working with partners to promote literary activity in Edinburgh, champion Scotland's literature, and develop literary partnerships around the world. Thus it is that the City of Literature runs its One Book/One Edinburgh campaign every February in which the city is encouraged to read a book by one of Scotland's best-known authors. The first of these was Stevenson's *Kidnapped* in 2006, and the campaign was launched amidst much press interest and a local focus on RLS. As part of the reading programme twenty-five thousand free copies of *Kidnapped* were issued throughout the city, including copies for all Edinburgh schools. In fact the







City of Literature commissioned three editions of the book: a fresh paperback text edited with notes by Barry Menikoff and an introduction by Louise Welsh; a simplified, retold edition aimed at younger readers; and a graphic novel, adapted by comic book writer Alan Grant and illustrator Cam Kennedy, known for their work on *Batman*, *Judge Dredd* and *Star Wars*.

It was in the spirit of this initiative that the editors decided to invite creative writers to contribute to this issue of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies*. From Stevenson's own time to the present day, writers as diverse as Henry James and Stéphane Mallarmé, Donna Tartt and Cees Nooteboom have acknowledged their love of his prose and a debt to his work. It may well be that no two writers have experienced quite the same Stevenson, but the impact and influence of that first encounter has remained memorable in every case, whether RLS was a childhood inspiration or the sinister messenger of a more subtly dual and dangerous world – or indeed both in the same book.

It is fitting that so many younger Scottish writers answered our invitation, for authors such as Louise Welsh, James Robertson, Patrick McGrath, not to mention Ian Rankin, Iain Banks and Denise Mina, are all masters of a literary art within the generic boundaries that used to be called 'popular' – just as Stevenson himself was. That influence has taken many forms in this issue. Thus, for example, Louise Welsh and Patrick McGrath have written personal critical reflections on Stevenson's work – most especially *Jekyll and Hyde* – and how Louis's dark dreams have haunted them and their own writing. On the other hand Ron Butlin has given us the first publication of his libretto *Good Angel, Bad Angel* for the sixty-minute opera he wrote with composer Lyell Cresswell. Based on 'Markheim', this work was originally commissioned for the Hebrides Ensemble in Scotland, and went on to tour New Zealand to great success in the Spring of 2008. Critics compared its musical employment of jagged metres to Bartok and were particularly struck by the composer's use of





pizzicato to convey the intricate chorus of clock-tickings that are such a feature in the story. At the other end of the cultural spectrum we are grateful to Ron Grosset of Waverley Books for offering us a choice of Cam Kennedy's images for the graphic novelisation of *Kidnapped*. In fact the full text and images of the graphic *Kidnapped*, as well as *Jekyll and Hyde*, which is the 2007 project, will eventually be available online at our new Robert Louis Stevenson website. For the moment, however, the editors are pleased to publish Grant's inimitable account of his creative processes along with a taste of Kennedy's graphic interpretation. Those creative processes feature again in the work of Suhayl Saadi who chose to write in the vein of Stevenson with a hitherto 'lost' manuscript of his, and in the brilliantly concentrated and acerbic spirit of David Kinloch's reflection on the popularisation of Stevenson via the vogue for 'interpretation' in our modern museums and libraries.

The balance between public and private initiatives in the arts could not be better illustrated than by the Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship, founded in 1994 by Franki Fewkes, a Scottish Stevenson enthusiast who was then living in France. Now jointly administered by the Scottish Arts Council and the National Library of Scotland, this annual Fellowship allows Scottish and Scottish-based writers to develop their work and meet other artists for at least a month at the Hôtel Cheillon International Arts Centre at Grez-sur-Loing. Donal McLaughlin, Hamish Whyte and Diana Hendry were all recipients of the Stevenson Fellowship and for this issue they have chosen to record their experiences at Grez, close to the spirit of Stevenson, his cousin Bob, and that momentous meeting with Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne in 1876. The internationally renowned Dutch author Cees Nooteboom has allowed us to publish the first English translation of his own reflections on Stevenson's tomb, which he visited on Mount Vaia, worlds away indeed from the edge of that forest in Fontainebleau. James Robertson begins





our issue with reflections on what Stevenson's work meant to him as a boy in Bridge of Allan, while Barry Menikoff closes the volume with an equally personal account of an intellectual odyssey – which is also an entertaining piece of academic and critical history – from New York to Hawaii, from Henry James to RLS.

Linda Dryden and Roderick Watson

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to Cees Nooteboom and his publisher Schirmer/Mosel for permission to reproduce the passage on Stevenson's grave from *Tumbas* (2006). This was translated specially for the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* by Kerstin Pfeiffer. Our thanks also go to Joy Hendry for permission to reproduce Donal McLaughlin's 'Not Just for the Exercise', which was first published in 2005 in *Chapman* 107. [<http://www.chapman-pub.co.uk>] Finally, our thanks go to all our contributors for the original work, specially commissioned for this issue, with further thanks to the graphic artist Cam Kennedy and Ron Grosset of Waverley Books for permission to reproduce an image from Alan Grant's adaptation of *Kidnapped* (2007).





## Fragments of Stevenson

*James Robertson*

When I was about twelve years old I either bought or was given – I forget which – a collection of Stevenson's shorter fiction. All there was room for on the spine was *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde Etc.* The *Etc.* referred to other stories like 'Thrawn Janet', 'The Body Snatcher' and 'The Bottle Imp', and also to a number of what were described as 'fragments', including 'Heathercat', 'The Story of a Recluse', 'The Great North Road' and 'The Young Chevalier'. I read the latter with a mixture of pleasure and frustration. Why had Stevenson abandoned them? What right had he to start something as intriguing as 'The Story of a Recluse' only to cast it aside mid-sentence? And what was the motivation of the publisher in reproducing these bits and pieces? The book was like a receptacle into which an assortment of oddments had been dumped for want of anywhere else to put them. Clearly whoever had compiled the collection felt there was merit in reprinting these pieces – perhaps to prove how much promise the young fellow Stevenson still showed seventy-five years after his death? Because I had been brought up to believe that once you started a book you should always try to finish it, I read each of the unfinished stories as far as they went and then duly wondered what might have happened next.

I was in fact already quite used to Stevensonian 'fragments', since my home, from the age of six until my mid-twenties, was the village of Bridge of Allan, which Stevenson often visited from Edinburgh until he was in *his* mid-twenties. In his day the village was a spa – 'the Queen of Scottish spas' according to one travel guide – to which the ailing well-to-do from Edinburgh, Glasgow and further afield flocked – ostensibly to take the waters, although the opportunity to socialise in circles outside their usual haunts also seems to have been a strong incentive. The place was littered





with locations associated with Stevenson. There were the former lodging-houses frequented by his family on one visit or another – notably Viewforth, which in my childhood was a nursing-home, and Mine Cottage, where I think he was supposed to have scratched his initials on a window-pane; there was the Queen's Hotel, where he once shared a room for a month with his cousin Bob Stevenson, and where I, in my late teens and early twenties, would spend many hours drinking beer and playing pool; and there was Gray's the Chemists. It had been a chemist's shop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century too, owned by a leading figure in the community, Gilbert Farie – 'the hunchback druggist', according to a memoir Stevenson wrote in San Francisco, who 'was a terror to me by day and haunted my dreams by night'. Some say that Farie was the prototype for Edward Hyde.

Beyond the village, along the path by Allan Water to Dunblane, there was a cave known as Stevenson's Cave. Actually this was man-made, being the opening to a copper mine that had never been developed, but it certainly looked and felt as if it were natural. It was reputedly the prototype for Ben Gunn's cave in *Treasure Island*, just as an island in the river would later be described in *Kidnapped*, and as the extensive garden of Viewforth provided some of the features on the map in *Treasure Island*. All these Stevenson-linked places were familiar to me as a boy.

Before the acquisition of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde Etc.* I had read only one of Stevenson's works, and that was *Treasure Island*. I'd enjoyed the story but had probably struggled a little with the language. This was certainly true of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* on a first reading: the subtler points of this masterpiece evaded me then, but the dramatic moments – Enfield's pointing out of the door, his description of the trampling of the child, the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, the transformation into Hyde as recounted by Jekyll himself – were vivid and unforgettable. I've since reread *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* many times, and regard it as an essential text – one which not only spans the gap between





the Victorian age and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also the gap between serious literature and popular culture. It is also, I think, the only Scottish work of literature to have had such an impact worldwide that people on every continent believe they know the story even though comparatively few have actually read the book.

‘Thrawn Janet’ and ‘The Body Snatcher’, in that same volume of Stevenson, entranced me. The latter was the kind of horror story that I was at a perfect age to relish. So was the former, but it had the added dimension of being narrated in Scots. Scots was not the language spoken in our house, but it was certainly a language with which I was familiar. I heard it everywhere, and I think I found it both thrilling and instructive to realise that it could be just as effective a vehicle for a story printed in a book as it was for talk on the street. Then there were the fragments I’ve already mentioned. But the item that made the deepest impression on me was ‘The Bottle Imp’. It’s a story I still return to once every two or three years, and it never fails both to entertain and to reveal some deep truths about human beings, their capacity for greed, gratification and selfishness and their capacity for honesty, generosity and love. There is something very special in the way Stevenson takes an ancient motif from Germanic tradition – the magic bottle with its bounty and its curse – and transfers it to a new setting in the Pacific. Equally brilliant is the way he manages to build a bridge between a folklorish, mythic form of narration and a modern ironic voice. I have tried to recreate something of this mixture of tone in two or three unpublished stories, and failed each time. ‘The Bottle Imp’ is deceptive: there is an ease and simplicity about it, and yet it is not a simple tale. It seems innocent, perhaps, in comparison with those two brilliantly jaundiced takes on imperialism in the South Seas, *The Beach at Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide*; but like them what it describes, though in a less brutal way, is the *loss* of innocence through bitter experience.

I didn’t come to *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* and *The Master of*





*Ballantrae* – all books at some time or other casually or snob-bishly dismissed as adventure stories for boys – until I was in my twenties. They are, in my view, much more than mere adventures. Stevenson is an artist in a Scottish tradition of historical fiction that undercuts romantic expectations with irony or blasts it with cold reality. Scott began it with *Waverley* and perfected it in *Redgauntlet* – ‘Then, gentlemen, the cause is lost for ever!’ – and it was continued, post-Stevenson, in John Buchan’s Jacobite novels, *A Lost Lady of Old Years* and *Midwinter*. Stevenson is part of this line, signing off the Balfour-Breck partnership at the end of *Kidnapped* with an almost listless sentence: ‘The hand of Providence brought me in my drifting to the very doors of the British Linen Company’s bank.’ Yet that sentence is heavily-loaded, given the relationship that has been delineated in the preceding chapters, and the sense of loss that David feels as he parts from Alan. The plots of *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, lively and entertaining though they are, would be nothing without this cunning investigation of character.

The *good* Scottish tradition of which Stevenson is such a major figure has been misread partly because it spawned a host of poor imitators – but what great literature doesn’t? – and partly because it morphed too easily and often into tartan kitsch. As is well known, it was neither appreciated nor entertained by English critics such as F. R. Leavis and E. M. Forster. Leavis damned Scott as an inspired folklorist rather than a creative writer, and opined that out of Scott a *bad* tradition came which included Stevenson’s taste for ‘literary sophistication and fine writing’. The most obvious conclusion I draw from such views is the absolute necessity of Scottish literature being seen and studied as a discipline in its own right by people who are in touch with the culture from which it springs. It is sad but by no means surprising to find Edwin Muir, as early as 1931 in the *Modern Scot*, declaring that Stevenson ‘is still read by the vulgar, but he has joined the band of writers on whom, by tacit consent, the serious





critics have nothing to say'. For 'tacit consent' read 'conspiracy of exclusion'. I'm with the vulgar on this one. But I digress.

Some time before I got to grips with *Kidnapped*, in my teens, I had read the biggest fragment of all, *Weir of Hermiston*. This is *the* great Scottish novel that never quite was. If concluded, it would have supplied the missing link between the best of Scott, Hogg and Galt and the novels of George Douglas, John MacDougall Hay and Lewis Grassie Gibbon. If you doubt this, read the chapter in which Archie and his father clash over the hanging of Duncan Jopp. The fragmentary nature of Stevenson's legacy is frustrating, but perhaps its very incompleteness left opportunities for the next generation or two, and broke the back of the great, but in some ways debilitating influence, of Scott. Arguably the seeds of the Literary Renaissance of the 1920s and beyond were sown thirty years before, in the work of Stevenson, Patrick Geddes and others.

When I consider Stevenson in relation to my own writing, I am positive there is a deep influence at work, but I'm less sure what it is. To read a writer is one thing; to be influenced by him involves a different, more subtle exchange. Or, as Stevenson himself wrote in his essay 'Books Which Have Influenced Me', the influence of works of fiction 'is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact; we drink them up like water, and are bettered, yet know not how.' I don't think, for example, that it was reading *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (or, come to that, Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*) that led me directly to create the split personality of Andrew Carlin and his mirror in *The Fanatic*, but it would be impossible to deny the common ground or the indelible impression both those books left on it. Likewise, 'the hum of metaphysical divinity' buzzes in the background in my fiction just as it does in theirs, but that is the fault of Scottish Presbyterianism, not of Hogg or Stevenson. And when I wrote *Joseph Knight*, a novel based on historical events that take place between Culloden and the Napoleonic Wars, I was fully aware







that I was stepping into territory well-trodden by Stevenson, but I made my own way, even though I took note of the signs of his passing.

Some of the technical problems which obsessed Stevenson bother me too, and there is a kind of hard comfort in reading his famous cry, 'There is but one art – to omit! O if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge.' Also, having just reread his 'Letter to a Young Gentleman who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art', I have to acknowledge the truth of something he writes there which no doubt enraged Leavis and would cause the lips of a few contemporary writers to curl: 'The consciousness of how much the artist is (and must be) a law to himself, debauches the small heads. Perceiving recondite merits very hard to attain, making or swallowing artistic formulae, or perhaps falling in love with some particular proficiency of his own, many artists forget the end of all art: to please.' Stevenson is right: no writing of seriousness and quality – hard, disturbing, challenging though it may be – can be satisfying only to the writer; it must also satisfy the reader. In the end it is the writer who must suffer for his art, so that the reader does not have to do so. Stevenson has an ally in another writer I admire, Raymond Carver, who says in his essay 'On Writing': 'Too often "experimentation" is a licence to be careless, silly or imitative in the writing. Even worse, a licence to try to brutalise or alienate the reader.' And a little further on: 'If writers haven't taken leave of their senses, they [. . .] want to stay in touch with us, they want to carry news from their world to ours.' Carver and Stevenson: I wonder if Carver knew or liked Stevenson's work.

In that same 'Letter to a Young Gentleman...' Stevenson is at pains to point out the opposite danger, that a writer may fail to be his own harshest critic: 'If you are to continue to be a law to yourself, you must beware of the first signs of laziness. This idealism in honesty can only be supported by perpetual effort; the standard is easily lowered, the artist who says "*It will do*," is on





the downward path; three or four pot-boilers are enough at times (above all at wrong times) to falsify a talent'. The man who has the courage to destroy the first version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and start afresh is a very serious writer indeed.

I am constantly amazed, considering his short life, his recurring bouts of illness, and everything else he packed into his days, at how much Stevenson managed to produce. In his travel writing and essays, his 'style' (another target of critics who consider him lightweight) very seldom obscures accuracy of observation. His *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* is still one of the best tourist guides to the city despite the passage of 130 years, because it not only describes but interprets, but with the lightest of touches (which is very different from being lightweight). His books on travels by canoe and donkey in France, and across America and the Pacific, are also still fantastically fresh. So are his letters. Bizarrely E. M. Forster thought the fact that he wrote 'charming letters' proof of his superficiality. Ach well, I'll not be rushing for a copy of Forster's collected letters. The one area in which Stevenson doesn't really score highly with me is his poetry – but even here there are some pleasant surprises and some perennial favourites. And the 'Songs of Travel', if nothing else, supplied Vaughan Williams with the material for a wonderful song cycle.

I have still plenty of unread Stevenson to look forward to, but it is certainly the case that of all the writers I admire, he is the one whose work I have reread most often. Why is this? Partly, no doubt, it is because of the affinity with him that I felt from an early age, growing up in Bridge of Allan. I knew from the age of six that I wanted to be a writer. Here was one who knew the places I knew, who'd walked the paths I walked, who was Scottish but who explored the world as I wished to do, and whose reputation was still high decades after his death. But there is – there has to be – something more to his appeal than an accident of shared locality. Something about his books welcomes you in. He has style, absolutely. He knows how to tell a story, yes. But he





also has, despite Leavis, Forster and Muir, depth. I am with Italo Calvino when he says, 'There are those who think him a minor writer and those who see him as one of the great writers. I agree with the latter, because of the clean, light clarity of his style, but also because of the moral nucleus of all his narratives.'

And there is something else. Stevenson somehow seems, even as you read him, to be torn between life lived imaginatively and life lived for real. Examine life, he says, but not at the expense of living it. He understands that 'books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life'. What did he mean when he wrote that in *Virginibus Puerisque*? I don't think for a minute he meant 'Don't read'. I think what he meant was 'What is reading without living?' The flipside of that question is 'What is living without reading?' For me, life without reading Stevenson would be hugely diminished.





## Good Angel, Bad Angel

*Ron Butlin*

Composer: Lyell Cresswell

Libretto: Ron Butlin

Based on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic short story 'Markheim', this is a drama for three voices and chamber ensemble. It lasts one hour.

### SYNOPSIS

Set on a Christmas Day towards the end of the nineteenth century, Stevenson's story tells of Markheim, a petty thief, coming to a pawnbroker's shop and killing the owner. In the process of ransacking the establishment he is disturbed by a complete stranger who casually enters the room and offers to show him where the pawnbroker's gold is hidden. The maid will be returning shortly, Markheim is told, and if he doesn't leave soon his crime will be discovered – unless, of course he is prepared to murder her as well.

In the course of their highly dramatic dialogue, Markheim comes to believe that this stranger is supernatural – the devil, perhaps. A tempter certainly. Every so often their talk is interrupted by off-stage noises: Christmas service in a nearby church, celebrations in a nearby bar; revellers come to call on the pawnbroker. As the drama unfolds, Markheim becomes more and more frantic – should he sell his soul in exchange for the pawnbroker's hidden wealth? Having already killed the pawnbroker, what has he got to lose? And all the while, as the visitant reminds him, the girl is approaching ever closer ... Finally she arrives.

### PERFORMANCE

The visitant will be set in present-day Scotland. Stevenson's psychological study of material greed and spiritual emptiness is charged with a dramatic truth that holds good for all ages. Taking





this story as a starting point, *Good Angel, Bad Angel* will explore what hope might exist for us today in a world of relentless consumerism and political spin.

The music drama will be complemented by electronic sounds and visuals – setting the drama in a contemporary pawnbroker's shop offers limitless possibilities. There will be some stage-business involving the singers as actors and the musicians as part of the action.

**Characters:** Markheim, Visitant, Shopkeeper and his Daughter

**Scene:** Curio Shop

**Time:** Christmas Day

## PROLOGUE

*(Stage in darkness)*

**Visitant** *(spoken):*

We begin in darkness,  
like a painter with a blank canvas,  
a musician with silence  
—a man with his soul.

**Markheim:** All his life's journeyings  
will bring him here, today:  
the choices he didn't make,  
the promises he didn't keep,  
the friendships he longed for  
—and betrayed.

His journeyings will come to a dead stop here  
—with nothing beyond, or everything.

*(Stage lights getting turned up)*

Christmas Day. A curio shop filled with the tinsel  
and trash of other lives.

The owner is old and a miser.

His daughter is young and in love.





Two lives so soon could become two deaths  
—for Markheim is coming to call.  
Markheim is coming to kill.

**Daughter:** Christmas Day — my getting-the-hell-out-of-here  
day!

You're happiest when I'm away  
And so am I.

Christmas Day—my getting-a-life-of-my-own day!  
No cleaning the shop, no dusting the stock.  
No washing the floor, no minding the store.  
No being the dutiful daughter,  
saying yes dad, right dad, if you say so,  
dad.

Prefer your precious stones to your own precious  
daughter,  
glittering jewels to my affectionate heart.  
Christmas Day—My grabbing-some-fun-when-I-can  
day!

For smiling and laughing and loving  
with someone who wants me ...  
—and that's where I'm going.  
So have a nice day,  
dad.

**Shopkeeper:** Go

**Daughter:** Good—

**Shopkeeper:** Go

**Daughter:** —Bye

**Shopkeeper:** Go—and leave me to myself.

Leave me to pleasures longer than a day.  
Shut the door, shut the shutters,  
Leave me to enjoy the pearls, the precious stones,  
the necklaces, bracelets, brooches, rings,  
the silver and gold.





These are the give and take of lives that pass away.  
In time, they will outlast life itself  
—for a beating heart will break down.  
in the end, its fragile clockwork wrecked  
for all eternity.

*(Background ticks etc. beginning)*

*(THUMP! THUMP!)*

**Markheim:** Good day.

**Shopkeeper:** Not good. We're closed.

**Markheim:** I wish ...

**Shopkeeper:** We're closed.

**Markheim:** ...to buy.

**Shopkeeper:** Ah!

**Markheim:** A Christmas gift for the woman I love.

**Shopkeeper:** I have pearls and precious stones.

I have necklaces, bracelets, brooches, rings.

Coins of silver and gold.

**Markheim:** A Christmas gift to show my love.

**Shopkeeper:** Might this be of interest, sir?

Look at the gold frame, look at the glass that's clear  
as your fair lady's heart.

Such workmanship. Such elegance.

To see it, sir, is to admire it.

For you, a special customer, a special price.

Look into it, sir. Look.

**Markheim:** A mirror! You show me a mirror!

You show me a conscience.

An accusation.

A glimpse into hell!

Take it away!

**Shopkeeper:** As you wish, sir.

Perhaps the lady might prefer a setting of precious  
stones?





You know the lady, you know her taste.

You can make your choice.

**Markheim:** (*to himself*) Yes, I can choose what I will.

What I will, I can do.

**Shopkeeper:** Some ladies prefer pearls, some amethysts,  
sapphires ...

**Markheim:** What I can do—I must do. And will do now.

**Shopkeeper:** diamonds, rubies—

(*Markheim stabs shopkeeper*)

(*Cacophony of frantic ticking and so on gradually fading*)

**Markheim:** Necklaces, bracelets, brooches, rings, pearls, lacquer, silks. Silver. Gold.

The old man's hidden the silver, hidden the gold.

**A&B:** (*both drunk*) Santa Claus has come to town

—down the chimney, down-down-down.

Mrs Claus will wait at home

keeping Santa's present warm!

she's waiting to tell him to clamber on top,

she's waiting to tell him

—'Up now, Santa, up-up-UP!'

(*THUMP! THUMP!*)

**A&B:** Happy Christmas!

**A:** We met your daughter—

**B:** —with her friend.

**A:** She said you're all on your own.

**B:** So we've invited ourselves round ...

**A:** To wish you—

**B:** To wish you—

**A&B:** Happy Christmas!

**A:** The place is locked up—the old skinflint's gone out.







**B:** The place is locked up— she said he's all on his own.

**A&B:** Happy Christmas!

**A:** He's out visiting friends.

**B:** We are his friends—and he's not visiting us!  
We're visiting *him*!

**A:** He's counting his gold and his silver.

**B:** That's his real friends!

**A:** Are you there?

**B:** He's not there.

**A&B:** Happy Christmas!

**Markheim:** (*joining in to make a trio part way through above*)

Must hurry! Must hurry!

No time to waste

Where has the old man hidden the silver, hidden the gold?

(*Sound of church bells, hint of carols*)

(*Getting more frantic*)

Must hurry! Must hurry!

The silver. The gold! Where is it hidden?

**Visitant:** You called me?

**Markheim:** (*Silence*)

**Visitant:** You are looking for the old man's gold?

**Markheim:** (*Silence*)

**Visitant:** You won't speak? Then listen:

**Daughter:** (*in the distance, repeated over and over—getting louder in the background till she finally arrives*)

Christmas Day is my true love's day.

A day for smiling and laughing and loving  
with someone who wants me.

Christmas Day is my true love's day.





I'm happiest when I'm with him.

Christmas Day is for giving and sharing, for kissing  
and loving.

Christmas Day's for my true love and me.

**Markheim:** *(begins soon after we hear daughter, then into  
duet with Visitant)*

His daughter?

**Visitant:** She's been invited to a party, she's returning to  
change her clothes.

She's coming back—

**Markheim:** Too soon!

**Visitant:** Too soon—for you.

And if you are still here  
—too soon for her.

**Markheim:** If I am still here?

**Visitant:** Then you will have to—

**Markheim:** No.

**Visitant:** You will have to—

**Markheim:** Never.

**Visitant:** You are looking for the old man's gold?

**Markheim:** Who are you?

**Visitant:** Does it matter?

**Markheim:** I don't know you.

**Visitant:** I know you.

I'd like to help you.

**Markheim:** I don't need help, I don't need anyone.

**Visitant:** I could tell you where the old man hid the gold.

**Markheim:** Why would you?

**Visitant:** Why not? Call it an act of kindness,  
an act of friendship.

I knew the old man, and I know you.

I know what you've done.





The old man's gold should be yours.

You deserve it.

**Markheim:** (*duet with above*) You don't know me.

You cannot know me.

**Visitant:** (*smiling*) But I do.

**Markheim:** You cannot know how hard I have tried ...

**Visitant:** (*sympathetic*) But I do.

**Markheim:** With the old man's gold I will be free.

**Visitant:** Of course you will.

**Markheim:** Free, to make a fresh start, a clean break.

Free, I will begin my life all over again.

**Visitant:** Of course you will.

You will begin where you left off.

You'll gamble the money—and lose it.

**Markheim:** I'll keep back half.

**Visitant:** And lose it.

**Markheim:** I'll invest it.

**Visitant:** And lose it.

**Markheim:** I'll keep back half.

**Visitant:** And lose it.

I know you better than you know yourself,  
or would ever want to.

Listen:

**Daughter:** (*still in the distance, but getting louder now*)

Christmas Day is my true love's day etc. etc....

**Visitant:** You must hurry.

Shall I tell you where the old man hid the gold?

**Markheim:** And if you do ...What will happen—to me?

**Visitant:** Why—nothing! Of course, you will  
lose it all.

But that's you. I know you.

**Markheim:** And then?





**Visitant:** You will kill again ...

**Markheim:** No.

**Visitant:** ...and again and again, until you are  
caught. Jailed for life.

Jailed till you're dead.

**Markheim:** No.

**Visitant:** So, shall I tell you where the old man  
hid the gold?

You must hurry.

His daughter is almost here.

Quick. You want the gold?

**Markheim:** I will not kill again.

**Visitant:** You are who you are:

you will do what you must do.

You want the gold? Quick. Quick.

**Markheim:** I have killed—but the gold will let me start again.

I will be free. My life will be my own.

**Visitant:** You believe that? So, shall I show  
you where—?

**Markheim:** Yes, a new start, a new life.

My own life ...mine.

From now on everything will be fine,

I know it.

A new start, a new life:

I will be free to do what's right,

free to be good,

free to be ...myself.

I am a good man. I know it.

From now on I will be good ...as gold.

Good as the old man's gold can make me.

Good as murdering the old man can make me.

Good? Now nothing can stop me.

Who can stop me?





I am a good man? Yes, I know it.

(*THUMP! THUMP!*)

**Visitant:** You will have to let her in.

**Markheim:** The gold. Where is the gold?

**Visitant:** You will kill her?

**Markheim:** The gold. Where is the gold?

**Visitant:** No time. She might go for help.

Quick. You must let her in.

*You must do what you must do.*

**Daughter:** Who are you?

**Markheim:** I'm afraid that your father—

I am afraid that your father is dead.

**Daughter:** My father—dead?

My poor father—dead?

But he was fine when...

You're the doctor?

**Markheim:** I did what I could.

**Daughter:** But how did he—?

**Markheim:** Like this.

**Daughter:** *A knife!*

Oh father, father, father ...

No more will I see you, hear you, touch you.

No more will we share what we have, care for each other.

No more. You're no more, you're no more.

**Visitant:** You will kill her?

**Daughter:** No! Please don't kill me.

Please, I beg you. Don't kill me.

I saw nothing. I'll say nothing.

**Markheim:** Scream—and I will kill you.

**Visitant:** She'll tell. Then—jailed for life.

Jailed till you're dead.





**Daughter:** I won't scream—not till you've gone.

I'll say I found my father lying dead.

My poor father!

I'll say I saw no-one else.

**Visitant:** She can say nothing when she's  
dead.

**Daughter:** Let me go to him.

Please, I'll not scream.

I'll not do a thing.

Not till you're gone.

**Markheim:** And then?

**Daughter:** Not a word about you.

**Visitant:** You will kill her?

**Markheim:** Where is the gold?

**Visitant:** You will kill her?

**Markheim:** Show me the gold.

**Visitant:** You must do what you must do  
—and you must do it quick.

She will start screaming.

Her boyfriend is coming.

**Markheim:** The gold? The gold?

**Daughter:** You must leave.

My boyfriend is coming.

My boyfriend will save me.

**Visitant:** You must do what you must do—  
you must do it quick.  
You must do it now.

**Markheim:** The gold? Where is the gold?

**Visitant:** No time for the gold.

**Markheim:** The gold? Or everything's for nothing.

*(THUMP! THUMP!)*

**Daughter:** *(screams)* Help! Murder!





*Butlin*

25

**Markheim:** Kill her? Then kill her boyfriend?

Or kill myself?

**Visitant:** Do what you must do.

**Markheim:** Time has broken down around me.

This ticking, chiming, senseless din inside me:

hopes and fears and regrets and desires.

How can I stop the clocks, silence the clamour

driving me on and on?

Let in your boyfriend.

Let in the world. I am ready ...

to live.

*END*





## Zombie Writer Guts *Kidnapped!*

*Alan Grant*

### PAGE 1

**Panel 1** Interior, writer's office. Superhero and monster posters adorn the walls, though no detail is seen yet. The writer has his chair tilted back, feet up on his desk, and snores as he sleeps. His computer monitor shows a screen-saver of a zombie face.

CAPTION: THE NAME'S GRANT. ALAN GRANT. I'M A  
COMIC WRITER.

SNORE SFX: zzzzzz

**Panel 2** Closer on Grant. He jerks awake as his telephone rings.

CAPTION: I WAS DEEP IN COMPLEX PLOTTING MODE  
ONE AFTERNOON, WHEN -

PHONE SFX: RING RING RING

**Panel 3** Stay close on Grant, as he holds the phone to his ear.

PHONE BALLOON: HULLAWRERR! IT'S YOUR AULD PAL CAM  
KENNEDY. I'VE BEEN HIRED TO DO THE  
ARTWORK FOR A KIDNAPPED GRAPHIC  
NOVEL.

BALLOON 2 LINK: THINK YOU COULD HANDLE THE WRITING  
ADAPTATION?

GRANT: ME?

**Panel 4** Phone tucked into the crook of his neck, Grant looks at a poster on the office wall. It shows ROBOCOP, shooting several thuggish villains dead.

GRANT: THE GUY WHO ADAPTED THE ROBOCOP  
FILMS INTO COMIC BOOK FORMAT FOR  
MARVEL COMICS?







**Panel 5** View from a different angle. Grant has swivelled his chair to face another poster – this one shows Batman and Robin swinging on their lines through the concrete canyons of night-time Gotham City.

GRANT: THE GUY WHO ADAPTED THREE OF THE  
BATMAN MOVIES INTO CHILDREN'S  
NOVELS FOR WARNER BROTHERS -

GRANT 2 LINK: WHO BROUGHT FLESH-CRAZED ZOMBIES  
TO THE CITY OF THE GLEAMING SPIRES?

**Panel 6** Headshot Grant, still on phone. The background shows his fantasy – Alan Breck and Davie Balfour in typical superhero costume (with a Scottish bias). Both men adopt typical superhero poses as they confront masked redcoat villains.

GRANT: IT'S FORTY YEARS SINCE I READ  
KIDNAPPED. BUT I REMEMBER THE STORY.  
ALAN BRECK AND DAVIE BALFOUR WAGE  
WAR AGAINST THE REDCOATS. RIGHT?

GRANT 2 LINK: A BIT OF BUDDY BONDING, TOO -  
LIKE SUPERMAN AND THE MARTIAN  
MANHUNTER.

**Panel 7** Just Grant on phone, nodding, looking smug.

PHONE BALLOON: SO YE'LL DO IT, THEN?

GRANT: EASY-PEASY, CAM. NO PROBLEMS, PAL!

(End comic script. Start text.)

Then I re-read *Kidnapped*.

My first thought was to call Cam and tell him I'd been wrong. The 276 pages of dense text – with its multiple levels of cultural meaning – couldn't be condensed into a 64-page comic. Especially as the graphic novel was to be painted. This meant, firstly, fewer panels on the page than a normal comic – otherwise the detail gets lost; and secondly, a need for slim captions and word balloons so as not to overwhelm the artist's work. In com-





ics, the text and the illustrations should complement rather than compete with each other.

The story I remembered from my youth was a tale of two men becoming friends while having a bonnie adventure – a staple of any comic book or action movie. What I didn't remember was the cultural divide, the story of two Scotlands that were alien to each other. I'd forgotten too that the murder of the Red Fox was an actual event, and hadn't realised for an instant that RLS virtually constructed the book around this central happening. (For me, the defining image of the story had been towards the end – Alan carrying the fevered Davie, and vowing: 'I will not let you die.')

I didn't see how I was going to accomplish the transition from around a hundred thousands words to maybe five thousand words and a bunch of pictures. And then I realised: at its core, in essence, underneath all the various layers, *Kidnapped* is a story about ...two men becoming friends while having a bonnie adventure. This I could handle.

I joined Dundee publishers DC Thomson in 1967, after short stints as a bank clerk, local government accounts assistant and encyclopaedia salesman. I had no editorial experience. As a child I had always wanted to be an artist, but unfortunately had little in the way of artistic aptitude. I was placed in the General Fiction Department under the auspices of senior editor George Carr, who believed in his charges learning on the job. My first creative work was writing the horoscopes for a certain morning newspaper, under the pseudonym Gypsy Rose Lee. (Time dims the memory. It may have been Gypsy Petulengro.)

It was my second creative job that would have a direct bearing on my handling of *Kidnapped*. Mr Carr threw a book down on my desk one afternoon, a 75,000-word Mills and Boon-type romantic novel. It was to appear in the daily paper in serialised form, running for twelve days at around a thousand words a day. About 80% of the original had to be cut. Where did I start? Adjectives? I wondered naively. So I cut out all the superfluous adjectives.





Approximately a thousand words went. Ditto with adverbs. I still had to find 60,000 unnecessary words.

Obviously, I had to be much more bold. Sentences started to go. Then paragraphs. Pages. Whole chapters disappeared from the story. Characters vanished as if they'd never existed. Themes died before they were born. I became quite excited, as I realised for the first time the incredible power wielded by the editor (or, indeed, the censor).

When I was finished, I flattered myself that the writer would have recognised her story, even shorn of 80% of everything that had actually made it a story. The words were still hers; there were just a lot fewer of them.

I learned an invaluable lesson: any story can be warped, adapted, shortened, lengthened, twisted, moulded, manipulated, sliced up, attacked and beaten with blunt instruments ...and yet emerge as a still-coherent story.

There was no need to call Cam and admit defeat. If I could recapture what *Kidnapped* had said to me when I was a boy, then I could fulfil the brief with which publisher Ron Grosset of Waverley Books had taxed me: to provide a book that would attract kids, particularly teenage boys, who didn't usually read, to read it.

RLS was a master of language – both English and Scots – and I had some anxieties about 'adapting' his words. I could never hope to emulate him, and I decided therefore to use only Stevenson's own language for the entire book. I think I managed to stick to that imposition, with the single exception of a line of dialogue I slipped in that would be more at home in the *Sunday Post* strips 'The Broons' or 'Oor Wullie.'

In all, I read the novel six times – each time excising another sizeable chunk of Stevenson's words – before I started to write the script for the graphic novel. Some things just had to go because they took up too much story time without really advancing the plot very much – the incident with the blind beggar, for





instance. Another scene I hated to lose was the piping contest – but it would have required an extra page of artwork, and that page just wasn't available to us.

George Carr had taught me to be ruthless, and ruthless I was. I stripped the story to its bones, and used as few words as I could get away with.

I'd worked with artist Cam Kennedy on many previous occasions – on Judge Dredd, on Batman, and on our own self-created series 'The Outcasts'. (Which had the distinction of featuring the first superhero to be dissolved into a pool of living slime, who had to be carried around in a bucket.)

The more often a writer works with an artist, the better the rapport they can achieve: they learn to trust in each other's story-telling abilities. So, although my script was fairly rigid, breaking down the story into pages, then detailing the panels on those pages, Cam knew that he was free to make any changes he deemed necessary.

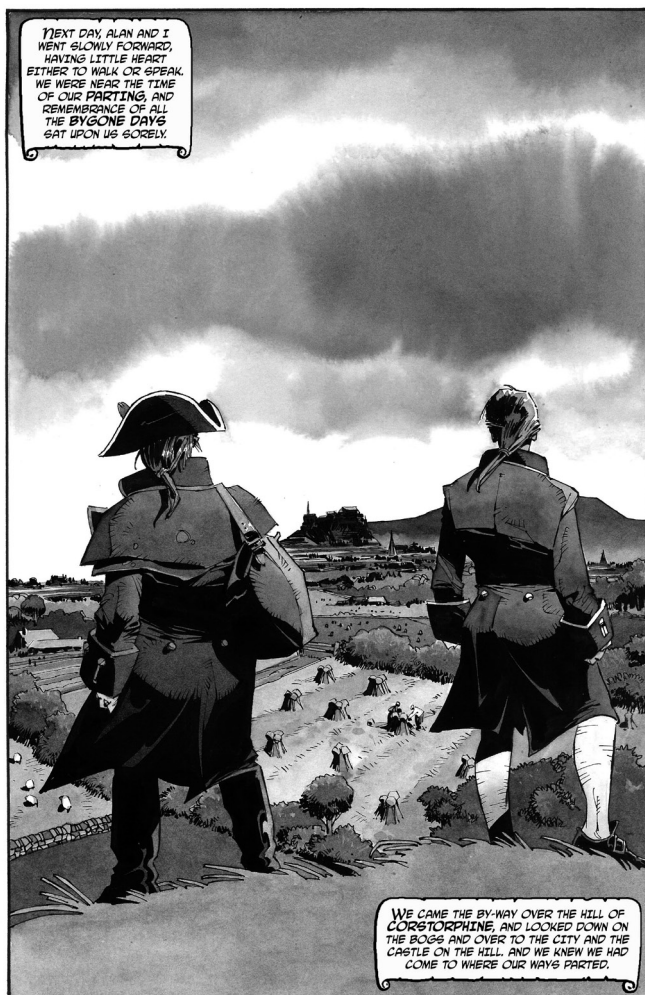
Cam's artwork came as a revelation to me. I was used to seeing him create spaceships and weird aliens waging intergalactic war, or colourful costumed villains as foes for Judge Dredd in bleak Mega-City One. I'd never seen him do 'historical' before. His art is simply beautiful. He captures the colours of Scotland in a way that makes my heart ache; that's why I wanted to be an artist. And the story – of two men becoming friends while having a bonnie adventure – shines through.

It took me six weeks to produce a script I was happy with. That's twice as long as I'd expect to spend on an ordinary comic story of the same length. The extra time can be explained by the fact that I was feart. I was terrified of getting it wrong, of messing up the greatest work of Scotland's greatest writer – of becoming the zombie writer who gutted RLS!

If I didn't, I have George Carr and Cam Kennedy to thank.













## Thyrus

David Kinloch

*'...around this baton, in capricious meanderings, stems  
and flowers twine and wanton'.*

– Baudelaire, 'The Thyrus', *Little Prose Poems*

*'I am Muriel Gray. I'm a writer and broadcaster.'* A child has pressed an interpretation panel on a screen and Muriel leaps into life, her voice loud down the gloomy gallery. You bob between display cases and catch odd words, a phrase: *'his hand round this lovely gnarly stick'*. What stick? You peer through glass at tartan mannequins, a brooch of hare foot, Charlie's, Flora's, *'telling us a bigger story that tells us everything, not just about being Scottish but about the world'*. Muriel unwinds the narrative and you catch a glimpse of her hands clawing air, *'he actually held that, his hand actually went round it'* and then you see the stick itself, Robert Louis Stevenson's walking stick right next to the first Scottish golf club. There is no visible means of suspension and like a tape worm dried from the nation's bowels it floats through viscous air. *'The man that wrote Kidnapped, Treasure Island and it's here'*. It's here, a simple curve of wizened wood right amid ships of the dawn. *'Can you imagine the excitement?'* Knotty carbuncles stand out like ancient button mushrooms from the surface and you can just make out a small heraldic shield. What can it say? Outside, the day star sparkles like a diamond but in here, here at this *'case in point'* deep among the interpretations *'I am Muriel'*. Did he cut this stick *'his hand, it was round this lovely gnarly piece of wood'* himself from Fontainebleau Forest, tramping from Barbizon to Grez? Did the little wild boar nuzzle at its tip and did it swish the emerald undergrowth? Or did it switch a donkey's back, act *'mahlstick'* to Bob's painting of French peasants à la Millet? This virtual world tips tipsily at







its pointed tip. Lean in, lean in *'I'm a writer and broadcaster'* and try, try now for the land breeze that smelt strong of wild lime and vanilla; the wood of the stick exhales it, the memory of sap, of Samoa, the indifferent beach, the gutter, driftwood people it flicked away in ink and spittle. *'This is not the classic Victorian ebony and silver cane. No spats here!'* if you please. Look at the dark gouges in the wood. Look closer at the miniature caverns, which echo to the cries of shipwrecked sailors, seen and lost in the tumbling roost. *'You can't get better than that!'* Take the Georges Pew! No spats! No hats! Twist your gnarly hand in a squall of frenzied tapping. Take the porridge-stick, the stick that would not burn, the stick with which the deed was done, it's evil pewter knob that clicks on stones and skulls. *'He actually held that'*. A great rooty sweetness of bogs is in the air and *'I am Muriel'* and his hand is round this lovely excitement, it's thrilling and it's here, this bigger story of gentle little mutinies, sad little gaities, this stick that, as it were, withered in the growing. *'I am Muriel'*, menseful, a design in snow and ink, piercing the joint of fact, rosy with much port. Keep me, Mr Weir!

In the Beinecke Library at Yale there is a letter from Sidney Colvin which states that Robert Louis Stevenson never owned a walking stick.





## Five Seconds to Midnight

*Suhayl Saadi*

This is a manuscript of writing which was found in the year 2050 CE, in a sealed jar that had been buried beneath a granite slab in what once had been a ruined kirk on the Bass Rock, a small but vertiginous and reputedly diabolic island which constitutes part of the eastern boundary of the Firth of Forth, in Scotland.

It is ascribed to the late nineteenth century author, Robert Louis Stevenson, though its authenticity has yet to be independently verified. The manuscript purports to depict a scene from a previously unheard-of novel, alleged to have been written by Stevenson at some point in either the late 1880s or the early 1890s. In the preamble, the individual who secreted the manuscript claims that during his ultimate sojourn on Samoa, while receiving an honoured visitor in the midst of an acute attack of lung congestion, Stevenson passed the novel through the hands of this visitor to one of his cousins, possibly Sir James Balfour Paul, the Lord Lyon of Scotland, requesting that the book be buried on the Bass Rock and even specifying the exact spot. Perhaps this renders another nuance to RLS's touching auto-requiem:

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me die...

The novel has come into this author's hands through the machinations of a third party, the identity of whom at this juncture this author is unwilling to reveal. Suffice to say that Stevenson claimed that as a youth, many years earlier, he had heard the bare bones of the tale from a certain Mme Desmoulins who had alighted on the North Berwick harbour from a scuttled French schooner and had taken lodging with a family friend of the Stevensons. The manuscript was exhumed one summer's night during the first decade of this, our current, long-hundred,





beneath the gloaming of the lighthouse amidst clouds of blue butterflies.

From the precarious tower of this advanced age of mine, like the Duchess of Albany in the castle of Tantallon or the White Lady of Fidra on the open sea, I gaze with a strange longing towards the unattainable end of a century and I bend to examine the manuscript more closely, in a sudden rush of hubris I detect a whiff of longevity, possibly even of immortality ... but perhaps it is just the sea air mingling with the scent of the old paper. Yet it is truly most exciting to have taken receipt of such a treasure from the hand of the teller of tales of so long ago. No story is ever an island.

An Extract from the previously unpublished novel,

## *Five Seconds to Midnight*

by

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

When I awoke, the room was dark. I removed the petals from my lids. I was lying on a tent-bed and above me, there stretched awnings of white linen and for a moment, I became unsure of whether or not I had removed the petals from my eyes. Partly in order to dispel this uncertainty, and partly in order to survey that place in which I had found myself, I decided to arise and walk over to the window. The bed made a metallic, creaking sound as I got up. From the window, I was able to see the watch-lights dimly glowing and a small length of the street itself, but little more. In particular, the area of the road just below my building was hidden from view. It occurred to me as peculiar that already, I was thinking of this house as, *my building* though I had been here for less than a day and knew nothing about those who lived in it, let alone what connection the young gentleman had with it, though I reasoned that such must be a close one, for him so readily to have





brought me here. Perhaps it was this conjunction of the house, the man and my own longing to be a part of whatever world it was that had formed the first two of these, which accounted for my desire to think of this place in the possessive sense. Or perhaps it had always been this which first, had led me to approach the market-stall that morning and then to scuffle with the rough women and finally, to end up on that bed and to be peering out of this window. I did not know what time it was but from the scarcity of folk outside and the quality of the darkness, I reasoned that it must be late and possibly even approaching midnight. I reached out and with the tip of my index finger, I touched the window. The glass felt warm, as though the night was burning on the other side. It was spring, and the hour was late, and yet, I did not find the hot glass in any sense, odd; it were as though I had grown inured to the strange, the violent, the inexplicable. For if we cannot understand the first thing about ourselves then how, pray, can we possibly imagine that we might be capable of comprehending even the most minute angle of God's Creation? I was not thinking in this manner on the night in question, but during the years which have passed since that time, I have come to regard the whole of my life in this way.

As I looked around the room, I began to sense a lack of fresh air and so I lifted up the window and closed my eyes and allowed the breeze to sweep me into its warm darkness. From somewhere downstairs, or possibly from a house on the other side of the street (there, too a window lay open) I heard the faint sound of a spinet. As I half-listened, the music fluttered through the black so that at times, it became indistinguishable from the noises of the night and I was no longer certain whether a virginal really was being played, or whether perhaps it might have been some dream of mine, turned to sound in this house in which I had found myself. The tune seemed familiar, but I could make out so little, that even a second later, I found it impossible to recall the notes which I had just heard. From time-to-time, however,





a fragment of the words would come to me and I thought that perhaps, they were being sung by the lady of the house.

May my wrongs create no trouble, no trouble in thy breast;

... remember me, but ah!...forget... my fate

... remember me, but ah!...forget... my fate

Returning from the window, I sat on a chair and laid my arm on the table beside it. Beneath my hand, I found a small volume, bound in green leather, lying face-down. I turned the book over, and read aloud:

*The Discourse of Happiness*

by

*Mme du Châtelet*

I opened it, but found it to be in a language which then I did not understand but which I now know to have been French. My eyes flitted across the unfamiliar sentences. I knew the letters – all of them – yet I was unable to comprehend the meaning of even the most diminutive word. It was then that I felt the frustration which surely must have afflicted those men and women who had built the great tower halfway to Heaven, only to watch it being destroyed by a jealous God. I felt like a soprano, screaming atop a broken Babel. I sighed, and put the book down. Beside it, there was a small pile of papers and across the top of each sheaf, was an elegant, cursive heading embossed in gold. It read:

*Daines Pennant, Esquire*

And that was all.

I ran my index finger along the letters, felt their shape through the skin. *Daines Pennant, Esquire*. I wondered about the identity of this man: perhaps he was the young gentleman who had rescued me earlier in the day (which at that moment, seemed to have been so long ago that it might already have been, the day before; but then it occurred to me that since it was now after midnight, my adventure really had begun on the previous day).





Perhaps this was his abode. I had no way of knowing. If it was his house, then who were the women who had bathed me and laid petals on my bruised eyelids? Perhaps they are his sisters, I thought. They had not seemed like servants. But then, as I sat in the near-darkness of the room (the only light there was, issued from the street outside from long, tallow watch lights), I began to wonder whether my memory had not altered the women in some way so that, from being say, servants they had risen in social rank to sisters (or else, the other way around). Perhaps I had dreamt the whole thing. Perhaps I was still at home, in my wooden bed (which was not a tent-bed, but a simple one) and blissfully, was dreaming the night as I had dreamed the day. Such fancies one has, when one is permitted to be alone in darkness! Indeed, I do think that the imaginings conjured up by the sight of a handsome gentleman and the awning of night are greater even than those which might be had by the servant, newly-drunken on bee-wine!

My diversions were ended quite abruptly by the arrival, beneath my window, of horses-and-carriage. I sprang up and made to go towards the window, when all of a sudden, I stopped. Fear gripped me. What if I should be seen? This was odd, because the next moment, I had rushed to the sill, but by then I had missed whoever had emerged from the perch phaeton. Neither was I able to make out who was tethering the horse, but I supposed there must be some-such-one since the beast did not run off, phaeton-and-all, into the night. I could not help but feel a quiver of excitement run through me; such sporting carriages were the fashion of the time and tended to be driven (or to be more accurate, were ridden) by Mohocks, Scowerers and Nickers and other wealthy, if dissolute, young gentlemen. Oftentimes, I do feel that nowadays we have lost something, though I acknowledge that much has been gained, much achieved, since I was young (and here, I am alluding, not to large swathes of pink Empire but rather to the internal being which once was termed, the soul). I feel a sad sobriety has descended upon this nation, the likes of





which we have witnessed sometimes in the past but in different guises. Folks in this century of ours seem to be afraid to shout, and to laugh and to be ribald; there is much to be said for cursing and knocking the block off those servants who would fain not heed one's commands. Where there is an excess of civility, there can lie only hypocrisy and craven lies. 'Tis far to be preferred that one's enemy be hostile to one's face, as it were, than behind one's back. This century of ours (well, perhaps of yours, dear readers for assuredly, 'tis not of mine) is, I'll admit, still a young one, for a period does not acquire its velour till well into maturity and sometimes, only near its end are we able to feel the texture of a time, and yet methinks 'tis well laid in iron and brass and mahogany, for with such wholesome, solid symbols (veils, one might say), there is surely no turning back to the nights of perch phaetons and powdered elegance. No, I think that never again shall I hear the particular dangerous rattle of spring on cobble which those contraptions used to make. But once again, my attentive readers, I do tarry in the pool of philosophy when I should be striding across the sands of reality. But remember that they are sands. I prefer to wade along the line where the one, meets the other. And in a sense, that is what I was doing on that May night in the strange house, for I was half-leaning, half-peering out of the opened window at the empty carriage of some imagined gentleman rake or other, and so distracted was I (in the manner of young women) that I failed to notice, standing behind me, a tall figure.

Good evening, he said.

I sprang back into the room and banged my head on the bottom of the sash. The stinging pain in my scalp did not prevent me from making the observation that the figure belonged to none other than the young gentleman who had so graciously rescued my person from the stinking mob on the morning of the previous day. I made great play over the injury to my head, grimacing (but not in an ugly manner) and rubbing the place, all the while





noting that he was wearing clothes, quite different from the apparel in which he had been accoutred when last he had been in my presence. In place of the pink frock-coat, there was a green garment decorated with tiny gold dots, which reached evenly all around to the tops of his knees; beneath this, was a long, purple embroidered waistcoat and beneath that, an elegant golden shirt. Looped around his upper chest were the twin black straps of a tricornered felt hat which courteously, he had let fall back. His hair was long and black (though, in the quarter-light of the rush torches outside, it might have been mistaken, by one who did not know, for auburn). Noticing my discomfort (it would have been difficult to miss; I did not detect then, the slight curl of his lip), he came forward, made me incline my head and parted the hair to inspect the scalp beneath. His touch was soft and cool, and reminded me of the night lilies which had lain upon my eyelids. I felt the desire to swoon at his feet, but with a great effort (I know not, how), I held my composure.

There is no serious damage, he intoned. You shall recover.

So saying, he stepped back to a decorous distance, removed his hat and bowed before me.

Please forgive me for entering the room so unexpectedly and with such unruly haste, and allow me to introduce myself.

I was about to say, *I forgive you, kind sir, though what, pray, is there to forgive? 'Twas thee who rescued this poor soul from the raging lunatic mob; 'twas thee who, unasked, did bring me unto this house of most solicitous womenfolk and who doth now, with great civility, grace me with thine esteemed presence*, but the gentleman evidently would have had no such praise lavished upon his person and continued his introduction as though I had not spoken (which I believe I had not, yet I do fear that in my dotage, my memory plays tricks on me, for I find that I cannot be sure).

I am George Marco Barrington. Welcome, mademoiselle, to my house.







It was then I realised that his accent, which I had thought inordinately affected was, in fact, that of a Frenchman, albeit one who must have lived in this fair land of ours for many years.

The pleasure, kind sir, is entirely mine.

He smiled, a measured movement of his face. Just as, back in the market square, I had had the feeling that every action of his would be first assessed by some inner homunculus before he dared set it off on its performance, so that even here, in the midst of what he had described as *his house*, the same feeling arose in me. But so enamoured was I, that at the time, I did not countenance it. He indicated the tent-bed where I had slept.

I do hope that you are well rested...

He peered at my face, which must still have been a little swollen, though as one becomes unconscious of one's own bones, I had grown unaware of it.

...and properly healed?

I nodded.

There was then an awkward silence. It occurred to me that for all his manners and kindness, it was highly unusual for a young man to be in the boudoir of a woman, unless he be a very close relation; but I attributed this deficit in etiquette to his foreign-ness. I had heard many things about our southerly neighbours and sometime enemies, and the rumours from Paris of impending doom had circulated even unto those parts wherein until recently, I had been ensconced. It seems that they had not cultivated our English sense of moderation; theirs was a land of extremes. I wondered, during that pause in the dark (the street-torches had flickered down to red embers), whether he, too, might be a man of extremes.

Would you care to partake of some tea, or perhaps, mademoiselle would prefer coffee?

With a barely concealed gasp, I assented to the latter and he led the way out of the room which I had come to consider as mine.

The room led out onto a broad landing and from there, we





descended a curved staircase with balustrades fashioned in the new manner of ferrum. As I moved down the staircase, I realised that from top to bottom, it formed a complete circle. The metal had been carved in a most beauteous pattern of flowers and birds and seemed as though it had been rendered, thus, from a single piece of iron. I wondered whether Jean Tijou, who was then all the talk of the salons, might have designed the staircase; if this were true, then M. Barrington's family must indeed have been very well-off. As I moved, slowly and with no little uncertainty, down those steps, I could not help a tiny flutter from escaping and pullulating around my heart, for no matter how chaste one believes oneself to be, the allure of riches is impossible to dispel. 'Tis indeed akin to a fire which, once lit, becomes difficult to extinguish; in this regard, this desire is akin to love.

The bottom of the staircase opened into a cavernous hall, filled with Greek columns; verily, until that moment, I had never been in such an opulent abode, and I was fair impressed. Marco, however (I shall deign from now on, to refer to him, thus, since in due course that is how I came to know him), moved through the house in manner, almost casual as though he had stridden along its corridors, countless times (and, come to think on't, as it was his house, then I suppose it must have been so).

At length, we arrived in a spacious drawing room. Marco bade me sit, and I sat. He pulled a tassel, and moments later, as he smiled at me, from nowhere (or so it seemed), a negro of diminutive size appeared. In those far-off days, dear readers, beings such as he would be retained as slaves in the houses of the rich; since they have been liberated (no doubt, by the very same forces which wreaked the havoc in France) many of them, having been dispatched by their wealthy masters with nothing but the clothes on their backs, have ended up roaming countryside and town alike, searching in desperation for work which they are always be the last to obtain (after, even, the lunatics and the debtors). Some have taken up wi' women of our own stock (though far





below us in station) and the wax-skinned, sepia progeny of this coupling (which, some say, is ungodly and opposed to nature) have become a common sight throughout the land. Perhaps, through the great mass of our nation, the strain of slavery may fade eventually into delicate white, but this process will take many generations, methinks. And in the mean, their lot shall be little better (and some would say, considerably worse) than it was when they were servi. This particular negro, a young lad dressed in wig and brocade, was carrying a silver tray laden with coffee-cups and decanter, and this he placed on the table before me. Silently, he began to pour the brown liquid (now out-of-fashion, but then, all the rage) into the cups which, I could see, were of finest porcelain. The aroma was heady; I was unused to this beverage, since commonly it would be partaken of by gentlemen, and not by ladies; the latter, perhaps because of their constitutions, preferring tea. It was then I noticed that on the table, there lay a book. It was the size of a woman's hand – of my hand – and was bound in scarlet leather. I picked it up. The leather was soft in my hand. Aware that M. Barrington (Marco, I should say) was watching me, I read aloud, title and author's name:

*Trattato di scienta*

by

*Camillo Agrippa*

Before I could open the diminutive volume, he had begun talking.

'Tis better if one adds a little sugar ...

But sir, I prefer it, without.

As you wish, mademoiselle.

He proceeded to ladle six spoonfuls of the brown crystals into his small cup. The young negro had vanished, gone like the lands he had left behind. Setting the book down, I glanced about the room. The ceiling was so high, I would fain have had to have craned my neck unto the utmost, in order to study it properly. However, even by the lamplight (and new-fashioned, glass-covered lamps had been placed at intervals along the walls) I could





see that the whole was filled with decoration of the most elegant sort; flowers and honeysuckle abounded, while the apses were finished by means of half-domed ceilings, each one seeming to link up with another further along the line, so that as I gazed, the whole seemed to dance far above me, and to perform, in circle fashion, that which had been already enacted on the earth. At each end of the room, Grecian columns led up to semi-circular apses which were similarly decorated with motifs from nature. Marco saw my wonder, and swept his hand through the air; by this one single action, he punctured the pomposity of the room, and returned me to my senses. He had that ability, rare even among the wise, to alter the perception one has of a person or a situation, simply by a flick of his nose, or a toss of his wild, elegant black locks (and in that clearer light, once again they were more fully black than ever). Or perhaps, it was merely that I was besotted with him, I know not.

It was my father's, and now it is mine; it means little to me.

His voice was haughty, over-mannered as though he might have been parodying the fashion of the period. In this way, through the subtle subversion of voice, expression and couture was he able to engage in, and then to step out of, his own time. There were no curtains on the windows but only large, wooden shutters and yet the shutters themselves had been carved and inlaid in white so that Marco's every movement seemed to reflect back into the room and thus, to become accentuated and it was as though we were in a house of light.

I spend most of my time in France. You may have surmised that it is from that fair land that I hail.

I nodded, slowly and sipped the coffee. It was very bitter.

We – my family, that is – had large estates in the region of Languedoc, perhaps you know it?

I did not.

In any case, it is in the south, close to the border with Spain. Until the recent famines, our estate possessed almost the largest





number of peasants in the land. In this respect, we were second only to the Grand Bourbon, himself.

Who is the Grand Bourbon? I asked.

He seemed surprised, but attempted to hide it.

Our King, of course, Louis Seize.

I avoided his gaze, but once again, I felt the blue force of its stream.

Monsieur Marco – may I call you that?

He nodded.

Monsieur Marco, pray tell, how comes it that you are here, in this house and how was it that you were out yester morning, by the old market, buying food? Surely you have servants and slaves enough to perform such mundanities for you.

He sighed.

The ownership of wealth beyond imagining is a double-edged sword, my dear Laura.

When everything is – or can be – done for one then one might find a certain kind of restlessness growing deep within one's soul, like a seed in winter. The absence of danger, of risk, of love, let us say – for surely the first two are the food on which love must thrive – doth serve to water the vine of unhappiness as surely as any other tragedy that might befall the person.

At that moment, I wished that I might partake of his particular tragedy, since it seemed to me that to possess a surfeit of wealth was not merely a desirable state in which to find oneself but was a situation which might bring one as close to happiness as is possible in this fallible world of ours. Such was my ignorance. It did not occur to me that even though I had never mentioned it to him, Marco had known my name, all along.

I have never wanted for any material thing. Nothing have I lacked. Yet my needs are greater than this.

I tried not to grimace; the coffee was so bitter. Perhaps, I mused, this is the penance of the rich.

But you have not yet explained to me how it was, you came to





be at the barrow, at six of the clock in the morning.

Patience, my dear, patience.

Menfolk have been issuing this same word to we women for far too long and what now has become a common name among the bourgeoisie of this country is surely not deserving of such fealty. Patience. I have always considered it, the least of the virtues. My face reddened and for the first time since I had awoken, I began to feel the effects of the assault. I swallowed the last of the coffee in one, great gulp.

I have travelled to lands such as you would not believe...

Sir, I am able to believe as any being, man or woman, is able.

I have no doubt of it, Laura.

How did you learn my name?

It was among your clothes.

Again I blushed, this time not from anger. He must have seen this, for he added,

Amongst the garments you were wearing, the women found a note, written, I presume, in your hand.

And for the first time, I noticed that the clothes which covered my body, there, in that elegant drawing-room, were not those which I had donned at the beginning of that strange day (or rather, at the beginning of the day before the one which surely would soon be dawning); I could not recall whether I had lain down on the bed in my own attire, or in those of another woman. All I knew was that now, I was wearing the apparel of this other, and who that person was, I had no idea. The note which had been found in my own garments had given Marco my name. I fingered the fine, green velvet of the dress.

Whose clothes are these?

Marco smiled, but this time, the smile did not spread to his eyes. The blue misted over and I sensed an immense greyness fill the space between us. He sighed.

They belonged to my mother.

I felt my body ease.





Oh, I see. She must have been of the same proportions as I, since they are such a good fit.

It was only when he glanced at me that I realised that until then, he had been avoiding my gaze. I expected him to reply but he did not; instead, he rose and moved to the hearth where he knelt down and pulled the toasting-dog halfway out, that he might light his cigar on its nose. Puffing several times on the cheroot, he began to smoke it proper, and all the while, he kept his back to me, which I thought was a little rude of him; it seemed surprising, all the more so after the courtesies which earlier he had displayed. I wondered what I should do and so I began to smooth out the folds in the white dress which lay across my lap. When I looked up again, I saw his face and he seemed ten years older than before. His side-boards, far from framing his visage in the style of the latest fashion, now seemed to imprison his skin in a mask of grief which is the real mark of old age. But this lasted for only a second; the moment he noticed that I was watching (and he must have seen my expression), his face relaxed and he became sorrowful, merely, and not cracked with grief. Thin curls of smoke floated upward from the end of his cigar; I followed them as they rose and then were lost in the dance of air within the enormous room. He remained thus, silently smoking and I watched him form one more symmetry in a scene filled with symmetries; and I felt that I must be here for some purpose which in some way, would restore the balance of this house and of its master.

'Tis odd, but when I look back at my youth, it is as though I am gazing through water.

After what seemed like hours (but which cannot have been more than the time it would have taken to smoke a large cigar), Marco came and sat opposite me. Between us, there lay a long, intricately carved table in the manner of Hepplewhite. And yet, because the table was narrow, there was less distance between Marco and I than ever there had been, save when he had rescued





me from the mob. As he spoke, I began to recall this incident which had brought us together with a certain fondness and as is the tendency in such matters, I even began to feel a strange measure of gratitude towards the rough women of the throng, since if they had not attacked me, then perhaps Marco and I should never have met.

Tomorrow, I am to die.

I might have had the idea that he had spoken in jest, had it not been for the way his face had drained of all colour.

Yes, my dear Laura, tonight is very like to be the last night of this miserable existence.

As is often the case when one is lost for words, one tends to say something which is completely inappropriate.

Why miserable, Marco?

Are we not all, reeds waiting to be scythed? Is this not most truly, a dire life?

Yet it is the only life there is.

Today, at dawn, I am to meet my end.

How so?

In a duel.

A duel?

He seemed irritated by my repetitive questioning.

Yes. You have never heard of such a thing? A *bellum duo*, a war between the two. This morning, as the sun rises, I must be at the appointed place, together with my second and there will I meet my opposite, who will also be accompanied by his témoin. And the coin shall be toss'd and we each shall pick a pistol, walk twenty paces, and then turn and shoot. And I will be shot, dead. My second shall have the body removed and will make all the arrangements and two days from now, that which once was George Marco Barrington shall lie beneath a fathom of soil.

I shuddered. I had heard of such things, of course. In those days, duelling was commonplace but it tended to occur largely out of sight and especially, out of sight of the ladies. Often, duels







would be fought over just such a lady, sometimes without her even knowing. Such was the way of honour. Death in the mists of early morning.

How can you be so sure that you will ...

My opponent is Earl Daines of Hallborough.

I was silenced.

Even I, a woman, living where I did, had heard of the Earl Daines. He had fought in the Americas against Lafayette (whom he had greatly impressed) and was rumoured to be the finest swordsman in England, and the most deadly shot. No-one who engaged in a duel with such a man could hope to survive. It followed that only those mad with love or hubris (and some would argue that when disguised in the poor cloak of our bodies, the two become indistinguishable) would dare to parry with the Earl; since they were intent on perishing as martyrs, they would attain their wish and usually ended up, dead at dawn. I could see why Marco was so resigned. But then it followed that some very great tragedy must have overtaken him.

Why, sir, are you duelling, and why, with the Earl?

Again, I felt the force of his gaze upon me, and I fell back onto the arms of the chair. Behind me, the wood was elegant, cold. I was enveloped in the blue madness of his gaze but this time, it was not a comforting lunacy and I felt as though I had been swept away in a river which would not flow into the sea but rather, which would hurl me, as though I were a waterfall, over the edge of a cliff. For the first time that night, I was scared. I wanted to go home; yes, my readers, for until that moment, I had not thought of home, so much had I felt at one with his house, with this man, it was as though I had lived there for many years. The architecture of my life had seemed perfectly suited to the proportions and etheric spirit of this abode. His voice sounded, in slow gunshot.

Because he murdered my love.





*Editor's note: The remainder of the manuscript was damaged beyond recognition.*

### **Afterword**

Well, the truth is...

This summer, for the first time, I went with my family for a few days to North Berwick, totally by coincidence (though maybe not) and discovered that RLS used to stay there as a child over the summer holidays along with his brother, cousins, etc. and that one of the islands off the coast there may have been the model for 'Treasure Island'. Lighthouses... So this set me thinking....

Both the duel and the dual seemed to encompass a particular aspect of RLS's work, together with the historical nature of the fiction (C18th setting) and the French and the playful and almost magical elements, too. I think there's a chance that if he'd lived into the C20th and particularly after WWI, he'd have evolved into something quite different – as did Hardy, for example, though in a different direction. I might extend the piece, eventually, not for this book obviously, it'd be too long, but for the story. I may keep up the pretence, though (as it's obvious pretence) – we're back to Manguel et al.

PS. I also like RLS's velvet jackets.





## The Brute That Slept Within Me

*Patrick McGrath*

*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a short novel that divides into ten chapters, the last of which uncovers the mysteries that have steadily accrued through the previous nine. The most pressing of them concerns the identity of the murderer Edward Hyde, and his relationship to Dr. Henry Jekyll. The first hypothesis that carries any real weight is the one put forward by Jekyll's lawyer, Mr. Utterson. Reflecting on the youth of his old friend, he remembers that the doctor 'was wild when he was young,' and concludes that Edward Hyde must be 'the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede claudo*, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, a bastard love-child of Henry Jekyll's youth has appeared out of nowhere to embarrass and exploit the poor man in the tranquillity of a respectable middle age.

Curiously, the only reason, at this stage at least, that Mr. Utterson concerns himself with Hyde at all is because a cousin of his, Mr. Enfield, saw Hyde literally trample over a young girl as she ran through empty London streets at dead of night on an errand to summon a doctor to her home. Stevenson dwells long on Hyde's deliberate cruelty toward the child, as though to bring to the moral foreground the issue of adult responsibility toward children. Here an adult has violently abused a vulnerable child, and it is easy to imagine that Hyde, quite possibly the lost child of Dr. Jekyll, and himself conscious of abuse, is wreaking some kind of revenge on his natural parent. Mr. Utterson is concerned. He is in no doubt that Henry Jekyll is in 'deep waters' – beholden to this bad seed who, rather worryingly, is sole heir to the doctor's considerable fortune. What will happen, thinks the lawyer, if this violent man discovers the contents of Dr. Jekyll's will and grows





'impatient to inherit'? (p. 18).

By the end of the story we are in no doubt as to Hyde's precise relationship to the doctor: he is 'the brute that slept within me,' (p. 75) and 'the animal within me licking the chops of memory,' (p. 73), and even, in a weird prefiguring of Freud's ideas about the double, 'the thing that was projected' (p. 65). There are places in gothic literature where the double relationship – and no couple is more synonymous in the popular understanding with the idea of the double than Jekyll and Hyde – seems to involve not so much a pair of siblings or twins as *parent and child*; and this repeated image of Hyde residing 'within' Jekyll cannot help but arouse thoughts of pregnancy, of the womb, of Jekyll being in some bizarre sense not Hyde's father but his *mother*.

Some sixty years before Stevenson created these characters Mary Shelley wrote the story of another meddling scientist, Dr. Victor Frankenstein, and the Creature he brings into the world. That Frankenstein and the Creature are doubles – *doppelgangers* – is never in doubt. Frankenstein often explicitly identifies himself with the Creature, as though, to quote more fully Freud's concept of the double, he had 'caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself'<sup>2</sup> – the material in question being pathological mental processes. Frankenstein explicitly recognizes the Creature 'in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.'<sup>3</sup> Later he refers to himself as 'I, the true murderer' (p. 111); confesses that he 'wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible' (p. 113), and that he was 'the author of unalterable evils' (pp. 115-6). Such sentiments could as easily come from the lips of Henry Jekyll. And yet, other than rejecting and vilifying the Creature, Victor Frankenstein is directly responsible for none of the atrocities the Creature commits. So great is his identification with his 'projection,' however, that he assumes the burden of moral responsibility for the Creature's deeds.





There is a further aspect of Victor Frankenstein's relationship with the Creature that throws a sort of lurid, unearthly light on the parallel relationship of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It concerns an extraordinary series of events on the night of the Creature's 'birth', when Frankenstein dreams that he is kissing his fiancée, Elizabeth. But even as he plants his lips on hers, she turns into *the corpse of his dead mother*. This is no mere gothic flourish: it represents on Mary Shelley's part an inspired understanding of the unconscious, for it bespeaks a mind raddled with guilt – the guilt, specifically, of a man who, in creating life, has usurped not only God but Woman too.

When Frankenstein awakens from this nightmare he is overcome with horror; then, in a ghastly travesty of the tender moment when a mother looks in on her sleeping child, he discovers that the curtain of his bed has been lifted, and that the Creature is gazing down at him. He is convulsed with disgust. 'A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch,' (p. 68) he cries. Mummy indeed: and also a direct instance of Freud's primary illustration of the uncanny – that is, of the inanimate object that appears to come to life.

Can we detect in Dr. Jekyll's relationship to his own 'projected material' the tenderness and solicitude of the anxious mother who harbors in her house – or in her very *body* – a child of her own? Certainly in the early chapters the doctor displays an extremely protective attitude toward his mysterious guest. Immediately after the child-trampling incident, when Hyde is forced to come up with monetary compensation for the family of the girl he has injured, he has no trouble securing cash and a cheque from his protector, just as any wild scion of a wealthy family escapes punishment for his misdeeds through the deep pockets of an indulgent parent. Stevenson spends the first three chapters of the book establishing this relationship of protector and *protégé*, all through the eyes of Mr. Utterson; and when the lawyer finally expresses his deep misgivings about the whole





business, Jekyll's response is illuminating: 'I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man,' he says, 'I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here' (p. 21). Against his better judgement Mr. Utterson defers to his client's wishes.

But then Stevenson ratchets the drama to a new level: Hyde commits murder, and no ordinary murder, but a vicious, unprovoked assault upon 'an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair,' who, for reasons never explained, is out and about on the streets of London, near the river, late at night, and who addresses 'a very small gentleman [...] with a very pretty manner of politeness' (p. 22). Close to the end of the book Jekyll describes what happens next, and his account is worth quoting at length:

'Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg.' (p. 71)

This is wonderfully strong, sick, gothic stuff, but how interesting that Stevenson should equate wild homicidal violence with 'love of life'! It is hard not to think that he has glimpsed the true nature of the libido, and understood that desire is morally neutral, subject to civilized norms only by means of socialized mechanisms of internal control. Such mechanisms Edward Hyde does not possess, and it is precisely this freedom from moral constraint that Dr. Jekyll craves when he quaffs the transforming brew – 'which was at first of a reddish hue, [then] began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour' (p. 58). But by





this point in the story we are no longer trying to define Jekyll and Hyde's relationship but to understand, rather, why Jekyll continues to indulge it. The answer is simple: it is beyond his conscious control. He has become addicted to being Hyde.

Until the very last chapter of the book, when he delivers his 'Full Statement of the Case,' we have had only a few hints as to the nature of Jekyll's addiction. For it is a mark of Stevenson's ingenuity that he structures his story in such a way that the information we need in order to make sense of events is dispensed in little enigmatic pellets, serving to tantalize rather than illuminate. Only later, as we re-read the tale, do we understand the significance of what others, usually Mr. Utterson, have witnessed. For instance, the day after Hyde's impassioned murder of the beautiful, white-haired old gentleman, Utterson goes to visit Dr. Jekyll. Hyde has apparently gone to ground, and nobody can find him; we understand why, because we know where he is hidden: deep inside Henry Jekyll. But all we see when Utterson visits his friend is that Jekyll is sitting very close to the fire in his chambers, 'looking deadly sick' (p. 27). Utterson assumes this deadly sickness is a result of moral shock. We know better: Jekyll has binged, and is suffering the consequences.

Then a few pages later Mr. Utterson and his cousin Mr. Enfield, passing Dr. Jekyll's laboratory, are astonished to see the doctor sitting at his window, 'taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner' (p. 37). Prisoner indeed, prisoner of his addiction, for it soon becomes clear that he has lost all control, and after a few moments of conversation 'the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below' (p. 38). He disappears inside, and Utterson and his cousin walk away, profoundly disturbed: 'They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes' (p. 37). What they have seen is a man in the grip of a bodily affliction brought on by a drug which, as Jekyll's butler later remarks, 'is





wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for' (p. 43).

One last example of the dramatic personality change that Dr. Jekyll undergoes as a function of his addiction, before we reach his own 'Full Statement': Mr. Utterson comes upon a book of Jekyll's, 'a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem.' He then sees, to his amazement, that the pages have been annotated – and in the doctor's own hand – with 'startling blasphemies' (p. 49).

It is only in the last chapter that at last all is revealed; and it is indeed a story of addiction, one that moves from an initial moderate indulgence in a drug which liberates its user from irksome habits of discipline, industry and virtue; through a stage of more frequent use, to the point where he frightens himself, and attempts to give it up; to a full acknowledgement that his pleasures while under the influence are not merely 'undignified' but have begun 'to turn towards the monstrous.' He refers to his 'vicarious depravity,' and confesses that his sins are far from victimless, for he was 'drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another' (p. 66).

It is cruelty, then, that represents the nadir of Jekyll's moral descent; and it is cruelty that first marks the portrait of his brother in doubleness and depravity, Dorian Gray. Wilde's novel, published five years after Stevenson's, illustrates the moral degeneration of a beautiful young man who sustains his youth unblemished while his portrait, kept in a locked room at the top of his house, marks his decline. Cruelty is what first disfigures the picture: 'The bright dawn flooded the room, and swept the fantastic shadows into dusky corners, where they lay shuddering. But the strange expression that [Dorian] had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger there, to be more intensified even. The quivering, ardent sunlight showed in the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing.'<sup>4</sup>

For Wilde and Stevenson, as for Mary Shelley, 'the thing that







was projected' – that is, the double, the brute within – escapes the strictures of moral convention and finds its most intense pleasures in cruelty. And it is ever thus with such brutes. Conrad's secret sharer, that fearless, upstanding young mariner, a powerful swimmer whose skill at reefing a foresail saves a ship from destruction – he too is a killer, having murdered a shipmate with his bare hands at the height of a diabolical storm. He hides in the cabin of the narrator of 'The Secret Sharer,' a young sea captain who regards this uncanny stowaway as his 'other self [...]' as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror.<sup>5</sup> The complicated manoeuvres necessary to conceal his 'other self' from the rest of the crew involve the secret sharer squeezing himself into various womb-like, intimate spaces in the captain's cramped private quarters. The captain even gives him his bed, making the secret sharer the brute, in effect, that slept not '*within me*' but '*with me*.'

Poe's *William Wilson* depicts a relationship far less benign than that between Conrad's captain and his secret sharer. Poe returns us to the dichotomy represented by Jekyll and Hyde, by Frankenstein and the Creature, and by Dorian Gray and his portrait: the doubled individual fissured along a moral faultline, the cruel and lecherous brute within attempting to have his way with the higher, constraining self, and often succeeding. There is in Poe's story the same grim *inescapability* that Dr. Jekyll experiences when, sickened by his own depravity, he tries to shun Hyde. William Wilson is constantly pursued, frustrated and exposed by his better self, which triumphs at the end by taking his evil twin with him into death. '*I fled in vain*' cries William Wilson, but whereas in *Strange Case* it is the good doctor who flees his amoral libido in vain, in Poe it is the libidinous Wilson who flees in vain from the machinations of his better self. '*In me didst thou exist,*' exclaims that better self, '*and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.*'<sup>6</sup> In Poe, the man who lacks a conscience lacks





life, and is in effect dead. Stevenson's story is a variation on the theme, diametrically opposed: there, it is the man of conscience unable to constrain his appetites who must die.

And die he does. In a recent essay, 'The Art of Being Found Out,' Colm Toibin describes the spirit of the age in which Stevenson wrote *Strange Case* as one that espoused 'ideas of doubleness, secret selves and the possibility of discovery [...] the need to set down in a story what had been up to then withheld, the need to be found out, for the words of disclosure to offer the comfort of meaning and publicity to what was previously an inchoate experience with a desperate need for no one to know about it.'<sup>7</sup> It is the comfort of disclosure that Dr. Jekyll requires and, in the penultimate chapter of the book, 'Dr. Lanyon's Narrative,' he finds it. Toibin writes: 'because private life and private acts are not enough; the art of loving and wanting involves, even in the most nuanced way, publicity: it needs words' (p. 24). He is talking about Henry James, Lady Gregory, Ford Madox Ford, Charles Stewart Parnell and others of Stevenson's contemporaries, but these ideas go a long way to explaining Mr. Hyde's extraordinary decision to mix his lethal cocktail and drink it in front Dr. Lanyon, Jekyll's old friend and philosophical adversary. Lanyon writes that '[Hyde] seemed to swell – his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter – and the next moment I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror [...] there stood Henry Jekyll!' (p. 59).

And so the mystery is at last explained. It only remains that Jekyll tell the story from his own point-of-view, which he does, tersely and succinctly, in the final chapter. He is lucid about his addiction and the vain attempts he has made to overcome it. He manages a period of abstention during which 'I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience.' But the brute is not dead, far from it; it stirs from sleep, and 'I began to be tortured with





throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught' (p. 70).

In an hour of moral weakness: how clearly we can picture it, the fraught, pacing man, obsessing over the knowledge that the drug he has forsworn can within minutes be within his grasp, temptation spreading across his mind like a great rich carpet, the promise of the pleasures he may imminently enjoy – what smoker, boozier, philanderer, junkie is not familiar with this scenario? Jekyll cracks. Soon he is beyond help: 'It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me to myself; and alas! six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be readministered' (p. 75). He goes on to describe in vivid, even lurid detail the scarifying hatred he feels for the brute within, and the brute's reciprocal hatred of him; and then comes this. Jekyll is speaking about Hyde: 'But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him' (p. 77).

This is genius. After everything, the doctor still finds it in his heart to pity the brute. It is a last instance of the maternal current that has flowed quietly through the story, infusing it with the aching heartbreak of a love that will not or cannot die, no matter how much cruelty or contempt the loved one displays toward his doting parent. The profundity, the spiritual penetration that Stevenson employs in describing the strange case uncovers at the last that it is self-love that wins the day. Dr. Jekyll's narcissistic attachment to his own libidinal energies – the 'love of life' he recognizes in Hyde – remains unbreakable to the end. Fissured, doubled, conflicted and torn he may be, but at the end he is still all of a piece, one being, facing death in a state of the most wrenching, pathetic self-pity.





## NOTES

- 1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 2007), p. 17, henceforth cited in the main text.
- 2 Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, Volume 14, Penguin Freud Library, ed. Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 358.
- 3 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, edition TK, p. 95
- 4 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp. 87-88.
- 5 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and Other Stories* (New York: Tess Press, 2006), p. 110
- 6 Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales, Poems, Essays*, (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1961), p. 38.
- 7 Colm Toibin, 'The Art of Being Found Out', *London Review of Books*, 30, 6 (20 March 2008), pp. 25-27.





## Robert Louis Stevenson and the Theatre of the Brain

*Louise Welsh*

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>1</sup>

It’s an image that David Lynch, Angela Carter or even Hammer Horror might have been inclined to steal: a tiny gas-lit theatre staging nightly performances for a press-ganged audience of one. The plays are sometimes mundane, scenes from everyday life strung together with no concession to entertainment. Occasionally they’re a delight of fulfilled wishes and romantic triumph. But the productions Robert Louis Stevenson explores in ‘A Chapter on Dreams’ are the ones that the hostage dreads – Grand Guignol cabarets, expressionistic flicker shows, shadow acts who pull the captive centre stage and drive him on through scenes whose logic he cannot comprehend, but whose atmospheres are terrifying. Stevenson is concerned with nightmares and the power they have on his own creative life.

The connection between nightmares, and gothic fiction was well established at least eighty-five years before Stevenson’s birth. In 1765 Horace Walpole wrote,

I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream of which all I could recover was that I had thought myself in an ancient castle [...] and on the upper-most banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down to write.<sup>2</sup>





The result was *The Castle of Otranto*, generally credited as being the first gothic novel. Walpole was so unsure of the book's reception that the first edition was issued anonymously. It was an astounding success. The new genre attracted a host of writers, a host of dreamers.

Ann Radcliffe, one of the foremost influences on early gothic discussed the dreams which indigestion brought forth. Henry Fuseli, an associate of Mary Wollstonecraft and painter of *The Nightmare* (which often adorns the cover of her more famous daughter's best known novel) wrote, 'one of the most unexplored regions of art are dreams.' Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley describes *Frankenstein's* initial galvanisation, half dream, half vision:

...saw the pale student of the unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life ...<sup>3</sup>

And if dreams didn't come naturally they could be invoked. Fuseli ate rotten meat before bed Robert Southey inhaled laughing gas, Percy Shelley took laudanum, Byron dosed himself with black drop, Coleridge indulged in opium, and Bram Stoker credited the dream which spawned his single great novel *Dracula*, to a supper of dressed crab.

The fascination with dreams extended to the content of the books. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* both contain long and horrible dream sequences. Frankenstein's creature commits its outrages when the doctor himself is incapacitated by sleep or mental fugues. Jonathan Harker's eroticised, but sadly interrupted encounter with a trio of female vampires is enabled by his dreamlike state.

Robert Louis Stevenson sets the start of his essay before his own famous 'bogie dream'. He presents us with a case study, a man who –

...was from a child an ardent and uncomfortable dreamer.





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, the poor soul was very well aware of what must follow, and struggled hard against the approaches of that slumber which was the beginning of sorrows. But his struggles were in vain; sooner or later the night hag would have him by the throat, and pluck him, strangling and screaming, from his sleep. His dreams were at times commonplace enough, at times very strange: at times they were almost formless, he would be haunted, for instance, by nothing more definite than a certain hue of brown, which he did not mind in the least while he was awake, but feared and loathed while he was dreaming; at times, again, they took on every detail of circumstance, as when once he supposed he must swallow the populous world, and awoke screaming with the horror of the thought. ('A Chapter', p. 152.)

The 'uncomfortable dreamer' is, of course, Stevenson himself. He was an exceedingly sickly child and was administered powerful drugs, regular doses of antimonial wine and strong coffee – the latter given to him in the middle of the night as a cure for insomnia. These stimulants might well have kindled his dreams into nightmares. Another contributory factor was the tales of hellfire and damnation told to him by his nurse, Alison Cunningham, known as Cummy.

Robert Louis Stevenson's father's devotion to religion was to cause many trials later in life, but the child's nurse was a member of the Free Church, a much stricter branch than that of his parents'. Cummy had a talent for storytelling which made her tales of the agonies waiting in the hereafter more potent. Years later Stevenson was to tease her by saying it was her sermons that had sparked his own love of drama (the Free Church considered





theatre to be the mouth of Hell). This combination of imminent damnation (for his parents as well as himself), a strong imagination, frequent illness and stimulants worked on the child at night.

I would not only lie awake and weep for Jesus, which I have done many a time, but I would fear to trust myself to slumber lest I was not accepted and I should slip, ere I awoke, into eternal ruin. I remember repeatedly waking from a dream of Hell, clinging to the horizontal bar of the bed, with my knees and chin together, my soul shaken, my body convulsed with agony.<sup>4</sup>

Stevenson had discovered a talent for dreaming, though he admits that, 'my dreamer would have very willingly parted with his power of dreams.' ('A Chapter', p. 152.)

These night time experiences are only hinted at in 'The Land of Nod', included in his collection of poems for children, *A Child's Garden of Verses*:

...every night I go abroad  
Afar into the land of Nod.  
All by myself I have to go,  
With none to tell me what to do-  
All alone beside the streams  
And up the mountain-side of dreams.  
The strangest things are there for me,  
Both things to eat and things to see,  
And many frightening sights abroad  
Till morning in the land of Nod.<sup>5</sup>

In the Stevenson family house was a large mahogany cabinet<sup>6</sup> made by another dreamer, theatre lover and habitué of the night time realm, Deacon Brodie. Gambling debts and the expense of two mistresses and several illegitimate children led the ostensibly respectable Deacon to abuse his position as locksmith and to provide keys and inside information to a gang of thieves who made him their lookout (whether because they wanted to impli-







cate him or because the Deacon enjoyed the thrill is uncertain). The Deacon was eventually caught, his final words before stepping from the gallows in 1788 were, 'What is it but a leap in the dark?'

Some attributed the Deacon's sangfroid in the face of death to secret knowledge of the gallows. Sightings were reported of him in Paris and he grew from a five-foot criminal with a speech impediment and a love of cruel sports, into a legend worthy of a major accolade – he has a pub, Deacon Brodie's Tavern, on Edinburgh's Royal Mile named after him.

As a child Stevenson spun stories around the Deacon's wooden chest. Later he was to collaborate on *Deacon Brodie or the Double Life*, with his then friend, the writer W. E. Henley, first staged in 1882. The Deacon lives on in the myths of Edinburgh and in Stevenson's imagination. He sees the double-dealer clearly with his 'mind's eye':

...a man harassed below a mountain of duplicity, slinking from a magistrate's supper room to a thieves' ken, and pickeering among the closes by the flicker of a dark lamp.<sup>7</sup>

It could easily be a description of Dr Jekyll and the divide between Brodie's upstanding daytime persona and his night time occupation link the two (or should that be three or even four?)

There is also something of a dream state about the Brodie story, evident in legendary sightings of him 'about his frolics'. An old woman kept from Kirk one Sunday by illness saw the Deacon enter her house, unlock a cabinet and withdraw a large sum of money. He looked at her, silently held a finger to his lips and departed, cash in hand.

An acquaintance of Brodie unable to sleep one night heard a noise in the next room, got up, looked through the false window and saw the Deacon standing there with a lantern in his hand. The impression is of Edinburgh citizens mesmerised by respectability into disbelieving their own senses.





Stevenson's vivid dreams continued throughout adolescence, but the night horrors lessened. He tells us that as he grew older and more informed, his dreams started to reflect his interests in travel and history, both topics that went on to occupy his professional life. Between bed and breakfast 'he masqueraded there [in the land of Nod] in a three-cornered hat and was much engaged with Jacobite conspiracy'. ('A Chapter', p. 153.) This truce with his waking and dreamtime selves wasn't to last and again old Edinburgh has a part to play in a series of nightmares which afflicted him as a student, and which Stevenson claims felt so real and were so sequential, that they forced him to 'lead a double life – one of the day, one of the night' (p. 153). These nightmares were to make him fear for his sanity:

...in his dreamlife, he passed a long day in the surgical theatre, his heart in his mouth, his teeth on edge, seeing monstrous malformations and the abhorred dexterity of surgeons. (p. 153.)

Stevenson's fascination with dramatic theatre is perhaps equalled by his fascination with the dissecting theatre. Two years before *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* introduced Dr Jekyll's laboratory (housed in an old dissecting theatre), Stevenson published a short story, 'The Body Snatcher'. 'Fettes' and 'Macfarlane' are Edinburgh medical students favoured by the eminent surgeon 'Mr K', who makes them his assistants. Their duties include receiving and paying for the cadavers required for K's anatomy classes from men 'since infamous throughout the land'. Mr K was based, of course, on Robert Knox a distinguished Edinburgh surgeon; and the 'ghouls' who delivered the unfriendly relics of humanity' were William Burke and William Hare, who feature in Stevenson's *Picturesque Notes*:

...people hush their voices over Burke and Hare; over drugs and violated graves, and the resurrection men smothering people with their knees. (p. 44.)





Burke and Hare kept up a regular supply of exceedingly fresh corpses to Mr Knox who required them for his anatomy classes at the medical school. They murdered seventeen people before they were uncovered. A feature of the case was the hypocrisy of a system that prosecuted the murderers (Burke hung after Hare gave evidence against him) while allowing the surgeon who supplied the demand, and paid ready cash for the bodies, to go unmolested. After his hanging Burke was dissected by medical students and his skeleton still hangs in the anatomy library of Edinburgh University's Medical School.

The horrors of lawless anatomists and body snatchers cling to Stevenson's nightmares, and become a boon to his fiction. Fettes' morals are eroded through contact with McFarlane: inevitably he crosses the Rubicon and becomes complicit in murder. Nothing seems beyond him now and one evening the pair travel by horse and cart deep into the countryside to 'resurrect' the body of an old woman who has died of natural causes. It's a stormy night but they persist, fogged by whisky through the wet and the mud. Eventually they manage to haul their horrid cargo onto the gig, where it's to travel back to Edinburgh, wrapped in sackcloth and lodged between them:

...their unnatural burden bumped from side to side; and now the head would be laid, as if in confidence, upon their shoulders, and now the drenching sackcloth would flap icily about their faces. A creeping chill began to possess the soul of Fettes. He peered at the bundle, and it seemed somehow larger than at first. All over the country-side, and from every degree of distance, the farm dogs accompanied their passage with tragic ululations; and it grew and grew upon his mind that some unnatural miracle had been accomplished, that some nameless change had befallen the dead body, and that it was in fear of their unholy burden that the dogs were howling. (*Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 82.)





Stevenson writes that Edinburgh 'leads a double existence [...] it is half alive and half a monumental marble' (*Picturesque Notes*, p. 12). It is the old portion of the city that infects his recurring nightmare. In a scene reminiscent of an Escher woodcut, after toiling in the dissecting theatre, the dreamer climbs the endlessly winding staircase of a cramped building, night after wearying night, wearing wet clothes and brushing against other afflicted dreamers as they descend. At every second flight of the nightmare tower, there burns a reminder of his father, 'a flaring lamp with a reflector'. As Claire Harman suggests, 'presumably stamped with the maker's mark, Stevenson and Sons'. (Harman, p. 61.) The place is horrid, redolent of a tall land<sup>8</sup> described in *Picturesque Notes*:

The great hotel is given over to discomfort from the foundation to the chimney-tops; everywhere a pinching, narrow habit, scanty meals and an air of sluttishness and dirt. In the first room there is a birth, in another a death, in a third a sordid drinking bout, and the detective and the Bible-reader cross on the stairs. (*Picturesque Notes*, p. 27.)

Trawls through the city's old town where he drank in rough howffs and consorted with prostitutes, were a feature of Stevenson's undergraduate life. He read Baudelaire, who he said, 'would have corrupted St Paul', experimented with drugs and wrote poems about his adventures:

I love night in the city,  
The lighted streets and the swinging gait of harlots.  
I love cool pale morning,  
In the empty by-streets,  
With only here and there a female figure,  
A slavey with a lifted dress and a key in her hand,  
A girl or two at play in the corner of a waste-land  
Tumbling and showing their legs and crying out to me  
loosely.<sup>9</sup>





His student years were also characterised by crises about his future (he was initially forced to study engineering as a prelude to entering the family firm then, when this failed, law) and rows with his father, including a confrontation that hurt both sides badly after Louis revealed he had lost his faith. For a while this conflict looked like it might turn into a permanent breach, instead it contributed to breakdown in Louis's health that worried his parents so much the disagreement was set aside, if not forgotten. These were the tensions playing on Stevenson around the time of the dreams which –

...left a great black blot upon his memory, long enough to send him, trembling for his reason, to the doors of a certain doctor; whereupon with a simple draught he was restored to the common lot of man. ('A Chapter', p. 153.)

The certain doctor and the simple draught which effects the restoration evoke Dr Jekyll, but it's worth remembering that the essay is written two years after *Jekyll and Hyde's* successful reception and Stevenson is working towards a revelation in regards to its genesis.

Since his cure Stevenson tells us, 'the raw-head-and-bloody-bones nightmare, rumoured to be the child of toasted cheese' (p. 155) – the brand which inspired Fuseli, Walpole etc. – no longer plagues him. He still dreams, but dreaming has become a talent to be drawn on.

Stevenson returns to his opening image of the theatre with a Numbskulls analogy, his dreams are conducted by, 'the little people who manage man's internal theatre', but the mature writer's tiny brownies have more than entertainment in mind. They are as keen as he is to present a story worthy of publication. When money is tight they 'bestir themselves [...] and labour all night long, and night long set before him truncheons of tales upon their lighted theatre.' This is as satisfactory an answer as any to the question creative writers are plagued with, 'where do





you get your ideas from?' And it sets the stage for the arrival of Stevenson's masterpiece, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

The genesis of Stevenson's shilling shocker is the stuff of literary legend. Like those other monstrous gothic tales *The Castle of Otranto*, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, the central vision of the novel came to its author in a dream. Stevenson's wife, Fanny Osbourne, recalls:

In the small hours of one morning I was wakened by cries of horror from him. I, thinking he had a nightmare, wakened him. He said, angrily, 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogie tale.'

Stevenson takes up the story in 'A Chapter on Dreams':

I dreamed the scene at the window and a scene afterward split in two, in which Hyde, pursued for some crime, took the powder and underwent the change in the presence of his pursuers. All the rest was made awake and conscious.

But Fanny claims that when her husband presented her with the finished work she was disappointed, protesting that he'd missed the allegorical potential of the tale: 'he had Jekyll bad all through and working on the Hyde change only for disguise'. Stevenson's stepson Lloyd Osbourne makes his own contribution to the creation myth, recounting that his stepfather responded to the criticisms by flinging the manuscript on the fire. 'Imagine my feelings – my mother's feelings – as we saw it blazing up; as we saw those precious pages wrinkling and blackening and turning into flame.' Satisfying as it is, this flaming passion is open to dispute, and Lloyd's subsequent account of a feverish rewrite, 'sixty-four thousand words in six days' (presumably on the seventh day Stevenson rested), is contradicted by the author's letters, which indicate a six-week period of editing.

The *Times* reviewer conjectured, 'Either the story was a flash of





intuitive psychological research, dashed off in a burst of inspiration, or else it is the product of the most elaborate forethought, fitting together all the parts of an intricate and inscrutable puzzle.' The answer, of course, is that it was both. The nightmare may have provided the essential spark of inspiration but the themes for *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, had been cumulating within Stevenson since he was a boy, and their realisation in this short novel was a result of experience, hard crafting and repeated failure.

'A Chapter on Dreams' was in turn sparked by an interview Stevenson gave to *The New York Herald* after the novel's success. In it he reveals his tendency to dream stories, and the dream origins of *Jekyll and Hyde*. This earlier account differs in one key element to the later essay. Here he is clear that it is himself and no outside force that is responsible for the stories that he composes in his sleep. 'Even when fast asleep I know that it is I who am inventing, and when I cry out it is with gratification to know that the story is so good'. (Harman, p. 298.)

In the subsequent essay he writes:

The whole of my published fiction should be the single-handed product of some Brownie, some Familiar, some unseen collaborator, whom I keep locked in a back garret, while I get all the praise [...] I am an excellent advisor, something like Molière's servant; I pull back and I cut down; and I dress the whole in the best words and sentences I can make; I hold the pen too; and I do the sitting at the table, which is about the worst of it; ('A Chapter', p. 159.)

Why emphasise the story of the dream? Why praise the occupants of 'the theatre of the brain'? Surely any writer would wish to take sole credit for a work of genius, rather than share it with 'his brownies'?

The idea of the tale coming to Stevenson in a dream places





the author and the text into an established tradition of dream-induced gothic successes. It also adds a weird integrity to the tale – a more religious writer might be able to claim ‘divine inspiration’. Clare Harman states that the source of the story’s inspiration –

was always reckoned to be of significance: by the public, for whom it augmented or validated the supernatural content of the tale; by the promoters of the Stevenson myth for whom it proved the author’s super-receptivity to inspiration; and of course to Fanny Stevenson, whose ‘management’ of the dream material illustrated her own pivotal importance in the composition of her husband’s works. (Harman, p. 295.)

It also underlines the concept of the divided self, which Stevenson came to before Freud (though we know Stevenson may have been reading some of the same scientific sources as Freud). Like Dr Jekyll, Robert Louis Stevenson acknowledges that ‘man is not truly one but truly two’, his second self is his dream self; more impetuous, more inclined to the supernatural and without ‘a rudiment of what we call conscience’. It can also be blamed for plot discrepancies. Stevenson teasingly tells us, ‘the business of the powders, which so many have censured, is, I am relieved to say, not mine at all but the Brownies.’ (‘A Chapter’, p. 160.)

But despite being neat and teasing, despite its allegories and inventions, Stevenson’s ‘Chapter on Dreams’ offers a genuine insight into his working practice. The atmosphere of the original bogie dream still pervades *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, a book in which the logic is at times skewed, where letters are enclosed within other letters, where men walk by dark and buildings are weirdly slanted making the dreamer/reader unsure of where doors will lead. *Jekyll and Hyde* arrived at a time when the understanding of psychology was changing and the title became a shorthand for split personality. By discussing







its inspiration in 'A Chapter on Dreams', Stevenson demonstrates the impossibility of ever truly explaining that illusive creative spark, but he also offers us a glimpse into the dreaming depths into which writers, artists, mathematicians, designers, anyone who wishes to create must delve. He encourages us to throw off our daytime self, to travel by night and enter the theatre of the brain.

### **Post Script: Stevenson, *Treasure Island* and Me**

The copy of *Treasure Island* that we'd borrowed from the library looked scary from the start. It had a skeleton and a map on its inside cover. The skeleton was naked (it's hard to think of anything more naked than a skeleton) and I was young enough to find this a little rude. The author looked nice though. He had a drooping moustache and long hair parted in the middle. It was the 1970s so this style was quite familiar to me. I liked his eyes; they were large, dark and somehow sympathetic.

My Dad had explained that, like us, Stevenson grew up in Edinburgh and had been inspired by the city's history – Deacon Brodie, Burke and Hare. I wished that we lived in wicked times so I could be inspired too. I got the feeling my Dad had been looking forward to sharing *Treasure Island* for a while. He'd already taught me part of the rhyme:

Fifteen men on a dead man's chest  
Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest  
Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum.

How big was the dead man? I could easily imagine the fifteen sailors dancing on his body, it was horrible, worse than dancing on someone's grave, did his insides squish out?

My Dad was good at reading bedtime stories, he didn't hold back and we were soon both pulled into Jim Hawkins's adventure. The captain was sinister and when he told young Jim to keep a 'weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg' I was





spooked; but it was blind Pew and the black spot that did for me.

I heard the tap, tap, tap as the blind man made his way to the Admiral Benbow. Jim Hawkins said he, 'never saw [...] a more dreadful looking figure', and I agreed. My father spoke in the singsong voice of wicked Pew, he twisted poor Jim's arm behind his back, forced the boy to lead him to the captain and placed the black spot in his hand.

'What's the black spot?' I asked.

'Wait and see' said my Dad.

Blind Pew skipped out, dreadful in his sudden nimbleness. The captain slowly unclenched his hand. He saw the black spot in his palm and fell down dead. Young Jim burst into tears and I refused to go to bed.

For a few years after that, the concept of the black spot fascinated and frightened me. I wasn't too sure about visually impaired people either.

I still read *Treasure Island* occasionally and Robert Louis Stevenson remains one of my favourite authors. These days I can contemplate the black spot with warmth. Through it Robert Louis Stevenson helped introduce me to the power literature can have on the senses. He's part of what made me want to become a writer.

#### NOTES

- 1 'A Chapter on Dreams' (1888), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 151.
- 2 *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, ed. by W. S. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998).
- 3 'Author's Introduction' in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, with a new foreword by Walter James Miller and afterword by Harold Bloom (London; New York: Signet Classic, 2000), pp. xxiv-xxv.
- 4 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memoirs of Himself*, Vailima edition vol. 26, quoted in Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson A Biography*, (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 24.





- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Land of Nod' in *A Child's Garden of Verses*, first published 1885, (Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1948), p. 28.
- 6 Now housed in the Writers' Museum in Lady Stair's Close.
- 7 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*, first published 1897 (London: Pallas Athene Arts, 2001), p. 45.
- 8 A land: a tall tenement building
- 9 Quoted in David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson and his World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973) p. 23.





## Not Just For the Exercise

*Donal McLaughlin*

The first two months of 2003 were amazingly good to me. First, Scottish PEN selected me as its first-ever Écrivain sans frontières. Weeks later, I was selected for the Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial Award. It's an honour to follow in the footsteps of Dilys Rose, Chris Dolan and Gordon Legge.

The above, from a National Library press release, captures the spirit in which I spent October and November 2003 in Grez-sur-Loing, at Hotel Chevillon, where RLS spent three summers in the 1870s. Unusually for writers from Scotland, I was allocated not Apartment 4, but the Carl Larsson House in the garden behind the hotel. 'Famous Swedish painter', a Swedish translator explained to me – 1853-1919.

From the moment I first stepped into the garden to approach the house, I knew how difficult it would be to leave. The setting was stunning. Shades of green I associated with May in Scotland welcomed me as, down through the trees at the foot, I saw the River Loing, golden in late afternoon sunlight, hardly move, it seemed, beneath the arches, the stone, of the famous, much-painted bridge. In among and just beyond the trees were the knee-high stumps of their predecessors: seats for a group to sit and listen in the sunset; the glade; a magical auditorium.

The House had a terrace looking onto the lower half of the garden. French windows in the living-room opened onto the same. Upstairs, the bedroom's double balcony again looked onto this view. To the right was the Tower of Ganne; from this angle a chess-piece; a grey-sandstone bishop. Ahead was the river; on either side of the bridge were the plains beyond the trees lining the Loing; then more trees. I stretched and breathed, unable





to take it all in. Below was the 'inn-garden' which in Louis' day 'descended in terraces to the river; stable-yard, kailyard, orchard, and a space of lawn, fringed with rushes and embellished with a green arbour'. This was also the setting of the famous photograph of Fanny Osbourne, reclined across an upturned boat or two down by the jetty, surrounded by seven or eight men, behatted, jacketed, with cousin Bob in his striped socks, easily identifiable, and Louis, for some reason, missing.

There were no ghosts, though. The Stevensons, the Glasgow Boys, the Larssons would make their way in later. I was raring to do what I'd come to do – to see what I could make of recent experiences in Latvia. It's mad, I kept thinking. *Short stories* have brought me here; have earned me this. From cluttered desk in my front room to this!

That same evening I begin to read. Alasdair Gray, *The Ends of our Tethers*. The man's in great form; each story a treat. 20kg was my baggage allowance, so Aleksandar Hemon's *The Question of Bruno* and *Nowhere Man* are my only other books – Latvian books, for research purposes, apart.

I set up my PowerBook in the huge artist's studio upstairs. There's a work surface at the window to the street; another, larger still, brighter, beneath the window to the garden. I opt for this; sit down at the Powerbook as if in a huge barn. Ulf, Swedish video-maker, and Paul, Finnish painter, are soon teasing me about having this work-space. 'The biggest and most expensive – and you don't even paint!' I hear, daily.

On Day 5, a birthday breakfast for Ulf brings everyone together. Ulf, his photographer wife, Johanna, and baby son, Otto, are descended upon. Otto, not yet one, steals the show: his plucky attempts at walking; later, to play the piano. The Swedes speak English for my sake. Soon I'm flicking through Gerd's folder: her book in progress. Have received a catalogue of her husband Hasse's work. Paul, Ulf and I will regularly coincide in the TV corner – with the telly off or ignored. Cracking conversations are





had. We young turks agree the Finn is tops: Paul, an avid reader with a wicked sense of humour and hilarious stories galore; who has acted in films, was in Paris in '68 and has worked in Florence, Rome, Paris, New York. Though 20 years our senior, he works out and cycles the canal route to Nemours to do so. Paul, who knows his stuff; whose test we want to pass; who, more than anyone else, brings the different folk here together.

The others remark how quickly I've settled to work. Painters take time to set up their studios, then have to work out what they're going to paint. Ulf has equipment to shift back and forward daily between his studio and car. 'It's easier for writers!' these artists guess. 'You guys just take up your laptop and walk. Set it down somewhere and carry on writing.' I've just done an edit of *Lanzarote* – and there's a danger that the style and voice might colour the new project. Soon I'm re-reading *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, wowed by the man's ability to tell a yarn. Finding *Franklin's Grace*, an Irish short story anthology, soon has me thinking about that form too. The trick will be to break free from what I wrote before.

The library, mainly in Scandinavian languages on Scandinavian subjects, contains works donated by writers who have spent time at Chevillon. The walls are adorned with artworks produced at the Foundation. Everyone leaves something behind, I was told on Day 1 – a point reinforced each time I cross the chessboard floor of the main hall.

In October the first-ever *Journées Stevenson à Barbizon* are held. Saturday 18 October sees the inauguration of *La Promenade RLS* – a walk in the footsteps of Bob and Louis between Grez and Barbizon (the tale is told in 'Forest Notes' of how their walk 'for the exercise' became an ordeal). Bernadette Plissart (who runs Hotel Chevillon) leads our group on a 2.5 hour walk from Grez, Christilla Pelle-Döuel (organiser of the *Journées*) leads a larger group on a 3-hour hike from Barbizon. Readings are held and bagpipes played at the Carrefour des Grands Feuillards. Etienne





Fernagut of French-Swiss radio reads passages by RLS in French. I read the beginning of *Treasure Island* in English. A section of my own story 'aka La Giaconda' is read in English and French.

The next day a panel of five, Swedish novelist Björn Larsson, and writers Jacques Meunier, Anne Vallaeys, Alain Dugrand and Christilla Pelle-Döüel, discusses the importance of Barbizon, Grez and the forest of Fontainebleau for RLS. Michel Le Bris has had to call off. Björn, the author of *Long John Silver* (Harvill), emphasises Stevenson's ability to tell a tale. This Swedish writer acknowledges how he's tried to study Stevenson's technique, only to be sucked in and swept away by the narrative every time. Jacques Meunier offers some abstractions, challenges my knowledge of French. Alain Dugrand responds, with frequent reference to Conrad. Anne Vallaeys answers questions about the forest, then and now. Christilla cannot be beaten when it comes to biography. It's the women who keep this debate anchored.

Etienne and I close the event with a bilingual reading of poetry, Jacques having handed me *Pas moi! (Moral Emblems)* the evening before. It warms the heart to read for Jacques – this *gentilhomme*, this *ethnologue et écrivain*, friend and peer of Chatwin and Bouvier who's contributed to *Le Monde* for 20 years. I'm glad to read for a man who puts me so at ease; who leaned on his stick as he asked about my work, my first impressions of Grez and shared so easily his knowledge of things I didn't, couldn't, know. I lost count of the number of people who whispered to me that Jacques was *très malade*. He told me himself. And that he was undergoing *chimio*. Only months later, his friends are now recalling how Jacques took himself into that forest that day, despite being malade. They take comfort from the fact that his last public appearance focused on RLS; that he lived to see the inauguration of the Promenade. *Lorsque meurt un homme comme ça*, his obituary in *Le Monde* concludes, *c'est le groupe entier qui est lésé, amoindri*. In 2004, the *Journées* will be dedicated to his memory.





The *Journées Stevenson* impact greatly on me: I'm reading RLS from the outset; make excellent contacts and wonderful new friends who offer much in the weeks that follow. Just days later I'm told I've been 'adopted'.

End of Month 1, when Swedish friends leave, I see the *Livre d'Or*. The pressure's on: to design an entry which captures your time in Grez. *Mais seulement si tu veux*, Bernadette stresses. Flicking through the guest books, you realise how much has been created by so many people in Grez. I'm just glad that new things are happening. I see the difference when I revise stuff written before. The forest air works wonders.

In Apt 1, Ingrid (Ingemark) is busy translating: from English, Mary Laven's *Virgins of Venice*; or Norwegian, Lars Saabye Christensen's *Maskeblomstfamilien*. Paul (Osipow) is painting his ruins – or cakes from the local boulangerie. Early evening, if I'm lucky, I'm chosen to eat his models. Hasse (Ekdahl) paints his headless suited men in colourful landscapes, while his wife Gerd works on the book which will combine her tapestries and paintings with text. Batte (Sahlin) arrives to produce watercolour versions of Hill's famous steps. His wife, Birgitta (Gahrton) is a fellow translator. I show them the BOSLIT database; listen to their comments as we view what exists in Swedish. The last Swedish feature on contemporary Scottish writing was done in '96 – something we plan to change.

Ulf (Lundin) is out filming in nearby villages and towns. *Je ne parle pas français*, it's called. If someone agrees to be filmed, he switches on the camera. It's then for them to end the process. Ulf stands back and waits. We discuss the implications; the different reactions of people. This is the man whose camera pried (by agreement) on his best friend's family for a year (*Pictures of a Family*, 1996). Who filmed people sneezing (*Bless You*, 1999). Who watched them sneeze to know when best to film. I sense similar moments in writing – bits of *Lanzarote*; of 'surviving uncertain fates'.







I visit Paris once. At the Louvre, umpteen black-and-white photocopies of the Mona Lisa lead me and a circus of others to *La Gioconda*. The pilgrimage, for me, is necessary (see *Edinburgh Review* No 111). Paris, I can do on penny flights from Prestwick, I decide. I'm happy to stay in one place. It's no hardship when it's so idyllic. I'm reminded of Earl Lovelace, from Trinidad, at the Book Festival in '98 – reluctant to leave the site; happy to view Edinburgh from the spot, the yurt, he'd found.

The walled garden becomes my realm. "There is "something to do" at Gretz', Louis wrote. If there is, we've missed it. There's *nothing* (which is fine; which is the attraction). Ulf teases me about missing the hot-air balloon, the only excitement in his first month. Conversations can focus on the most trivial of details: coping in French; getting from A to B; or where to buy or eat what. Visits to the *boulangerie* become an event. News bulletins are filed regarding the owner, now known as *Madame Baguette*. Her son provides the town's only spectacle: the disco lights in his bedroom. I joke about my world being reduced to my desk, the garden, the river, the ducks. *Il y a de l'eau*, as people have said', Louis wrote. Ingrid, whose apartment looks onto the street, reports on how nothing happens either, on the Place de la République. The so-called square houses the Bar Hotel La Terrasse (due to re-open on 9 November) immediately on the left; the Café de la Poste (Presse/Tabac) further along; the bakery on the right; and Post Office at the far end. It's a street. And as for the alleged population of Grez of over a thousand, we've seen twenty-odd, max. You know it's Wednesday, Ingrid notes, when Mme Baguette's lights don't come on, first thing. On Wednesdays, there's no *pain au chocolat* or *un comme ça* for breakfast. On Wednesdays, Grez is closed-closed.

This slant on the world takes hold and I'm thinking about making use of it when Chris Dolan's email arrives. Is that amazing video still in the library? he asks. The one made in Grez on 9-11? I fish it out and we hold a spontaneous viewing. *Meantime in*





*Grež*. Ylva Floreman, the director, arrived on 9-10. From her apartment, probably, she filmed the street outside, only rarely moving the camera. The film consists of 'stills', on which Ylva superimposes text messages sent to and from Sweden.

*Meantime in Grež*: 12 minutes which offer a breath-taking slant on 9-11 and force you to reconsider how you live and work (a) normally, and (b) in *Grež*. The opening shot shows La Terrasse by night, obviously open when Ylva was here. 'Here at last. Great room. Quaint place. Perfect!' a first sms declares. Images follow which we know: the bakery first thing in the morning, two dogs tied up outside, leaping to greet their owner when he re-emerges with bread; Mme Baguette's son on his balcony, donning his jacket. Images we don't know follow: Baguette junior performing conjuring tricks in the room with the flashing lights; a 'sailor' settling down at white tables and chairs outside La Terrasse; Baguette Jr's face in close-up, bathed in red light. Then the first sign something's wrong: old men in the street pointing, their talk clearly agitated. A message is received: 'plane crashes WTC. turn TV on – Mom'. The white cat on the window sill; the red shutters of La Terrasse; 'don't believe it'.

The drama increases. Eva texts from Sweden: 'check out TV. NY hit by terrorists'. The bent man we recognise drops his crutch to lift litter from the pavement. 'Scary for passengers. for those at WTC. for us. for world.' With his one crutch, he hirlples to the litter bin manages to deposit the litter. 'This is just the beginning'.

We see La Terrasse by night again, next. The streetlights are on. Mme Baguette's son is juggling – balls – in his lit room. 'I want to go home. to Sweden,' Ylva texts – and cats scream beneath Baguette Jr's balcony. The camera registers the boy's alarmed look. A women chases the cats below. Church bells ring out nine o'clock above the deserted square.

Morning dawns again and the bakery prepares to open, its light the only sign of life. 'Don't speak French. TV dubbed. What's up?' The man with the basket ties his dogs to the wall again and enters





the bakery. 'Bush wants to retaliate', Sweden informs Ylva. A man climbs out of the blue car. Two teenagers on rollerblades sail down the middle of the road. 'Will this be World War III?' the next sms asks. The 'sailor' pats the ginger cat, its tail now erect. 'War – Please come home – sis'. Mme Baguette's son looks out over his balcony. A pedestrian waves to a car to slow. 'What if I get stuck down here?' Ylva asks. A man with 2 baguettes crosses the road. The bent man on crutches struggles off to the right.

'Relax Drink Wine Enjoy France Mum' we read as a circus arrives in town. We see lionesses in cages. The tannoy announces a spectacle '*mercredi à 15h*' '*pour tout le monde*'. Four men sit smoking outside La Terrasse. Are still there in the evening beneath the street-lights when guitarists begin to play. Mme Baguette's son's disco lights flash in his room; others jazz up the shutters outside. 'Fear mustn't prevail. No more TV' an sms announces. A man in a T-shirt, smoking, has spotted Ylva's camera; plays to it. At La Terrasse, only the white cat is still outside. A singer's heard from within; then laughter. 'I'll stay put,' Ylva decides.

Another morning. Heavy rain falls on Mme Baguette's son's balcony. The dogs and an erect black umbrella await their owner outside the bakery. The brolly moves in the wind. The dog-owner gets under his umbrella and then frees the dogs. The poodle in the red coat is on its hind legs as, possibly, we hear thunder. A white car works its way down the street. Pedestrians carry brollies which remain down. 'Back home. Grey skies and 50 degrees. What's up?' The white chairs are now stacked outside La Terrasse; aren't needed in the rain. We see the cat outside the restaurant, by night again. 'Life!' comes the reply as Baguette Jr juggles – skittles – bathed in blue light. There's a dog outside La Terrasse as the shutters next door are closed. The guitarist we hear one last time as the final credits roll.

I rise from the sofa – to rewind and remove the video. The odd sensation I feel is shared, exchanged looks would suggest, as –





silent, for once – we return to whatever we do.

Month 2: a new bunch of Swedes arrive whom Paul and I, in Bernadette's absence, welcome. Katarina von Bredow, a children's writer, Åsa Moberg, novelist, journalist, translator of Catherine Millet into Swedish. Åsa's architect partner Bror. And Barbro Öhrling, a painter.

Barbro and I work late; our evening shifts coinciding. We often chat in the library but I don't know what she's painting. I've seen her long white coat by the river and postponed walks not to disturb her. One evening, her door's open. I see paintings on the wall. She's painting *what I see*. Has focused on the same group of trees; their reflection in the water. Suddenly, it feels right to tell her. To discuss what she does. Then Gavin Bowd arrives, fellow Scot, working on Michael Scot, who also knows his Houellebecq. Who speaks, teaches French, whereas Paul and I merely try.

I learn more about the Larssons, about Hill and his tortured drawings (produced on paper bags), dip into books on RLS by Bell, Calder, Knight and Stott. Paul introduces me to Richard Holmes. Soon, I'm reading French. Michel Le Bris on RLS. Alexandra Lapierre on Fanny. Initially, I wanted to be able to answer Swedish questions. Now I'm wondering whether I might set something in Grez. Philippe Delerm's short novel *Sundborn ou les jours de lumière* allows me to imagine Larsson and Co here.

Autumn has arrived. We saw the signs as the first Swedes prepared to leave. Walking in the forest, alone, the eyes in the back of my head peeled for wild boar (or: *sangliers*), I've seen those May greens turn to autumn; leaves take their place on the forest floor; leaves shower down up ahead to form rare splashes of gold; shades of grey now dominate where once were delicate greens: barcodes where once was pointillism. Mistletoe asserts itself in the skeletons of trees; smoke issues from the piles of leaves burning slowly along the canal. Finally, the trees are bare-bare. I see further ahead, around, and sense how foolish I was. The





dreaded *sangliers* could've been anywhere as I savoured what felt like Spring.

Swans fly along the canal, in pairs. The electrifying whoosh of their wingspan is new to me. I see a heron land in a tree. Observe the etiquette of anglers, joggers, dog-walkers. The kid in me kicks his way through a field of chestnut leaves each time I reach Nemours. Light fades rapidly as I return to Grez and so I avoid the forest. The canal keeps me right. The final stretch on the main road I do in darkness, knowing not even headlights scare off *sangliers*. How to react if you encounter one is something I've asked about. Thankfully, the only one I see's a dictionary illustration.

11-30, inevitably, comes. In the days before, Xmas decorations go up in Nemours; are even turned on. Madame Baguette's son has Santa climbing in through his bedroom shutters, too. I've done Halloween and autumn here. It's time to move on. My last ten minutes are spent down by the river; the Hotel, the full length of the garden, behind me. Barbro and her boyfriend are lingering up above, are observing this farewell. My over-heavy suitcase stands upright, outside what was my door.

I study the water, the ducks. The trees that Barbro paints.

I inhale the last of the air.

I've no doubt whatsoever: Grez has been very special. I reflect on the people I've met. Their work, their support and encouragement. The things we have in common. The things we all commit to.

It's time to take that home. To ensure I, too, protect it.





## Louis & Fanny

*Donal McLaughlin*

It is surmised by biographers that it was during this summer that Louis and Fanny floated down the Loing in a canoe, and sealed their relationship.

– Louis Stott, *Robert Louis Stevenson and France* (1994)

### *Hotel Chevillon, Grez-sur-Loing, 1877*

Louis has been back in Grez for a week when he wakes one morning at the usual hour but does not rise immediately. Too little light is filtering through the shutters – and so, as often of late, he remains lying: awake, but not awake; thinking of something and thinking of nothing; focusing, at most, on the birdsong synonymous for him with Chevillon.

Whatever moves a man to get up of a morning asserts itself, eventually. Piano-playing may have contributed, for downstairs, despite the early hour, O'Meara is abusing the ivories; the Irish brogue in which he sings now audible, now not, as he competes, unwittingly, with a duck-quack counterpoint echoing up from the river.

Louis lights a cigarette; catches sight of his reflection as he stands to dress. Pride of the morning, the mirror confirms, is showing little sign of fading. A rare sign of health it is, so he smiles, waits, prepared to be patient; aware he has breeks to cover him, but little besides, in the long dark hall to the bathroom.

Propriety restored, he opens the shutters and daylight floods the room. As most mornings, birds have congregated in a prodigious number in the treetop nearest his window. They distract him but briefly, for his eye is drawn to the stone of the bridge; to the river at the foot of the garden.

From where it is rising, across the Loing, the sun lights the leaves of the lime trees. Some twenty trees stand back from the





river, lined up in twos, like schoolboys. In the gaps between, even from this distance, the water shimmers, silk-like. Louis waves as Madame enters the scene and busies herself in the kailyard. Her husband waves, too – ‘Bonjour monsieur!’ – passing the stables en route to the orchard. The husband’s arrival causes something to stir; concealed, until now, by the trees. The velvet-edged jacket can mean only one thing: Fanny – *sans enfants* – is down at the tail of the garden.

Breakfast, it turns out, is ready to be served.

‘À table, Messieurs!’ comes the cry – before he reaches the bottom of the stairs, even. Arrested by talk from the dining room, Louis stops on the last – stone – step.

Edinburgh Edinburgh Edinburgh. It’s the last thing he wants to think of: Edinburgh.

‘The Athens of the North!’ he hears his cousin agree as he – now more reluctantly – enters. A glance round confirms he is last: the painters have all left him trailing.

‘Bob’s terrible homesick, Louis!’ O’Meara claims, spotting him. ‘And quite desperate to accompany you back now!’

‘What? – To the wedding?’ Louis asks, hopefully.

‘Good God, no!’ the Irishman answers, crossing himself in the manner of Catholics. ‘May the Lord and all His angels protect the future Mrs Baxter from that boy!’

The gallery to which he is playing laughs, the different nationalities now attuned to the banter.

Louis turns to his cousin. ‘Your reputation goes before you, Mr Wolf!’

Bob, those three years older, grins. At ease with, even proud of, the charge.

‘The future Mrs Baxter,’ Louis repeats, almost to himself, when the laughter, presently, fades. Something, clearly, is perturbing him, for when his eggs, milk and rum arrive, he consumes them with little enthusiasm.

‘Auld Reekie’s fine if you aspire to be an advocate – *n’est-ce*





pas, cousin?' Bob tries to tease. But Louis, only half-laughing, cannot be persuaded to answer.

Breakfast over, Louis heads for the garden, hoping he might yet find Fanny.

'LULY!' a voice, from a chestnut, greets him.

'LULY!' a second voice echoes.

He looks up to see Sammy and his new friend waving, precariously high in the branches.

Soon, they are dropping from bough to bough.

'I've a new story for you!' Louis reveals, but only once both boys are safe.

'Out of your head?' the French boy asks.

Louis laughs. 'No, this one's a book –'

He pauses for effect.

'*The Pilgrim's Progress* –' he begins, '*from This World to That Which is to Come*.' He pauses again, to ensure the boys are following. '*Delivered*,' he then continues, '*under the Similitude of a Dream* by John Bunyan.'

The relish with which he says 'dream' conveys his own wonder. The boys are won over, immediately.

'Later,' he promises when they press him to read. 'Tonight! – I need first to speak to your mother, Sammy.'

He proceeds down the garden, in the direction of the river, though Fanny is nowhere in evidence. It is perfectly possible she is rowing, he reckons. If so, she will return to the jetty.

He nears the river to watch for her. The Chevillon shallows are bobbing by the jetty; the upturned canoes side-by-side on the lawn. The fish, as ever, scatter.

The creaks and bumps and rattling chains remind him of the evening last summer when someone suggested they link up the boats and allow the collection to float, 'neath the stars. It is a story still to be written: how they boarded the shallows, undeterred by the darkness, and cast themselves adrift in the moonlight. How contact with waterplants (what Madame calls *nénuphars*)







triggered the *frissons* they longed for. How an array of foreign accents pierced the charmed night air as willows bestowed their caresses.

Louis puffs on his cigarette; lingers, to savour the memory.

They'd bedded down in the shallops – Fanny, with the women, at the fore. Surrounded by the scents of a summer night, someone – a baritone – sang. Some talked about this; some pointed out that; some broached topics of dubious relevance. Intent on watching the river glimmer, he himself had just listened.

Pasdessus, it was, who called proceedings to a halt.

His appointment with Bob beckons, yet the river refuses to release him.

The fish seem loath to return, but ducks, expecting bread, swim towards him; each at the apex of ripples; the reflections of weeping willows in their wake. Ducks, possibly in distress, are one of the things he has heard here: ducks taking off; ducks landing. There are geese, though, too. And times when, from a distance, he cannot distinguish their sounds. *Watch and learn, Louis*, an old voice tells him; a voice he knows from his nursery.

He hunkers down to listen. What he is hearing is magical; is *music*, he decides: the quacking a simple counterpoint to the bumping and scraping of boats. Lapping water – what Madame calls *clapotis* – runs through the composition, too. The honking of geese, the flapping of duck-wings, the sound made when oars enter water, provide further pleasing themes; each, in turn, complementing what is a low, monotonous song.

It is time to meet Bob, but the river will not let him. The images, inverted, intrigue him. His gaze returns to the surface: so calm, so tranquil, it hardly seems to move. Yet water, in abundance, makes its way beneath the bridge; streams through its seven arches. *From north to south, from up to down*, Louis finds himself thinking. *To present on from past*.

He has just replaced his pencil when the garden comes to life. The painters spill from the inn, the jabbering mix of their accents





precedes them. Louis looks up the garden, observes how they tackle the descent. Low and Palmer form the vanguard, as artist after artist shoulders his chattels – his easel, his sunshade, his stool, his paintbox – from stableyard to kailyard to orchard to lawn. The ladies, he sees, will paint today, also. Belle appears first, with her mother in her wake.

‘Bonjour, monsieur!’ Fanny just about sings when, finally, Louis approaches.

‘Bonjour, messieurs, dames!’ he dutifully responds.

Bob, ready to leave, is itching to depart.

First, nonetheless, they watch the painters set up. Desperate to leave though he be, Bob gets involved in discussion. Depth of field is one man’s concern; the angle of viewpoint, another’s; a third contends he *stages* motifs. Such talk delays any painting.

Fanny, like Belle, prefers to be silent.

Waiting, listening, Louis imagines a portrait. *Four Friends*, were he ever to paint it, would depict Baxter (about to marry), Simpson (already married), Henley (the next to marry), and himself, RLS (too fond of the single state). He wonders how the four could be staged. What different constellations might suggest about their pasts. What their demeanours might convey of their attitudes to women. And to marriage, that *great Perhaps*.

Eleven has been gone some time when, finally, the cousins depart. As they round the inn, a magpie swoops – down, across, the bridge. Louis, seeing this, stops; in so doing, alerts Bob, too. A second magpie follows. These two, it transpires, have disturbed a third and a fourth.

From the bridge, the cousins watch the black and white flashes: tumbling, flitting, before the green of the limes. One pair alights before flying off; the other returns to its Chevillon refuge. Nature, too, prefers twosomes to foursomes, Louis notes, wistfully; – reminded of Belle and O’Meara, and Fanny and himself: the four that, with Bob, can be five.

They leave the bridge and take the river path which, ahead,





veers into the trees. The forest pleases them and does them good, the air – this precious freshness – vigorous, pure. Everywhere the cousins look now are elegant tree-forms: the stems, slim and supple; the leaves, pale and delicate.

‘How did the Dane put it?’ Bob asks, laughing.

‘You don’t get many leaves on the trees in the forests where you come from either, I’ll wager!’ Louis quotes – amused, still, by Krøyer’s inferred shared pride in meteorological purgatory.

They reach the canal: walking; talking. Soon, *two* waterways flank their path: the canal dark and gloomy; the river, with sunny reflections. Louis, though hungry for private speech, focuses, initially, on Chevillon.

‘O’Meara & Co. are straining at the leash,’ he ventures, ‘in their contest for young Belle.’

Bob agrees: ‘You can see the very bones and muscles of passions laid bare – ’

Bob becomes personal first; broaches the subject of his ‘Paris girl’. That she is *the most sensual party* his cousin has ever met, a *burning fiery furnace*, Louis knows from previous tête-à-têtes. Part of him, even, is envious. Now, it astonishes him to learn, his cousin’s interest is fading.

Their path twixt river and canal ends but a bridge leads across to the tow-path. The lock – its different water levels – distracts their attention briefly.

As they resume their walk, Bob confesses a new interest:

‘Belle – ’ he reveals, with a laugh.

‘You, at least, have concealed your feelings,’ Louis answers – partly to conceal what he really feels.

‘To think I’m ten years her senior!’ Bob comments. ‘And just seven her mother’s junior ....’

They reach the bridge for Nemours, the town favoured by Louis, yet sensing that streets might inhibit their speech, he starts deliberately to tarry. All the while Bob speaks, he relaxes against the parapet. Only when his cousin falls silent does he





make any attempt to continue.

It is now Bob's turn to tarry. 'What about you, Louis?'

'You and Fanny?' he prods, receiving no reply.

Louis decides to tell. To admit to his recent jealousy.

Just the week before, the others were permitted to sketch her.

'Imagine how I felt as first her ringed hand, tanned foot, and then the Osbourne neck all emerged five-fold before me!'

Bob expresses sympathy.

Louis – encouraged – continues, last night's dream returning as he speaks.

'We closed the match,' he confides, presently. 'And Fanny initiated it –'

'We'd been walking in Grez,' he goes on to explain since Bob remains silent. 'The tension had been intolerable. Then, as we neared Chevillon, Fanny finally erupted: "There's so much to talk about!" she said.'

'And you took it from there?' Bob asks.

'We took it from there,' Louis confirms. In truth, he had woken up – but his heart, he knows, had consented.

'Act on it!' is his cousin's advice. 'Live the dream, Louis!'

'We're not born to be virgins!' Bob adds, with a laugh.

They eat in Nemours. Bob, who has business there, then takes his leave. Louis sets out again for Grez, crosses the canal to regain the path.

The route he is taking is clear. His thoughts are anything but. Bob has sent them spinning, reeling. That love is an illogical adventure, he does not have to be told. That the effect is out of all proportion with the cause, neither. Considerations he has visited before – in writing and print, even – return to be visited again. Concern for the wildings of his heart. Fear of a cold old age. His scruples *vis-à-vis* women. *Natural desire gives no right* etc, he is reminding himself when swans fly suddenly towards him. Their wingbeat is powerful. The whoosh, strong and regulated. Ere long, two more pairs follow. The third time, he stops and





watches, hoping to see where they land.

They are not in Scotland in France, it occurs to him, suddenly. Fanny and he can be *free* here. *Equal*. Fanny, as it were, has her own wingbeat. Is no Edinburgh débutante. He, the good bachelor, and she, the good wife, are the pick of men and women. The best combination, in fact. Such a match, he tries to tell himself, is less of a *Perhaps*.

By and by, he reaches his landmark, and turns to enter the forest. Soon he is enjoying the familiar sound of thousands upon thousands of treetops, swaying. Krøyer suggested he write about this: this whispered speech; or singing. Krøyer, whose *forte* is portraits, but who attempted these landscapes last summer. Krøyer, whom he observed in a clearing – with an invisible canvas, imaginary brushes. Krøyer who *mimed* painting. Repeating the crucial gestures. Practising, rehearsing, the lines of construction. Memorising them, internalising them, for when he got home.

A sequence of paths, committed to memory, takes Louis through the forest. He emerges from the trees to regain the river – the river which leads the way home. Soon Grez – that handful of roofs; those patterns, grey and green – lies just across the bridge.

Halfway over, he stops to look down; to savour the scene in the garden. Fanny, typically, is presiding, from her seat on the upturned boats. Seven or eight of their artist friends prepare to return to the inn. Their easels, sunshades, stools are efficiently bound into fagots. Fanny takes this as her cue; vacates her place on the boats. Palmer abandons his chattels and moves to assist her.

Louis looks on, and looks round, and suddenly, it is clear why he comes here.

‘LULY!’

‘LULY!’

The boys, once again, are upon him. Each takes a hand as they walk down the garden. Fanny, Sammy tells him, has repaired to





her room.

The sun has come all the way round now. Louis spots the shadows on the whitewashed wall. These are shadows, with which he can play.

‘Look, Sammy! Kiki!’ he declares. ‘It’s the Forest of Fontainebleau!’

The boys yelp with pleasure; sense the latest *tingling masquerade*. Sure enough, the wall becomes a shadow theatre. Sammy plays Louis, and Kiki Bob, walking through the forest to Barbizon. What is already a family legend is instantly reenacted. Louis provides the narration; pausing now to fire canons; now to be rain, sheer and strong.

When, in time, Fanny joins them, Louis is well-nigh prostrate. He is impersonating Bob for Kiki to mimic: a drenched, exhausted, and ravenous Bob, arriving – finally – in Barbizon. *Mouillés comme des naufragés*, was how Siron described them. Fanny laughs at the spectacle, not least when an invisible towel is found. Sammy uses it on Louis, then opens his arms to embrace him.

‘Is that for Bob or me?’ Louis asks.

‘You!’ Sammy answers, embracing him again, looking at his mother all the while.

The boys’ bedtime approaches. When the others return to the inn, Louis remains in the garden. The sun will soon be setting on his eighth day back in Grez.

Loitering in the garden, in hope, not expectation, he focuses on the Tower of Ganne. From here, it resembles a chess-piece. About it, birds, normally indefatigable, cease their turning and flitting. They, too, begin to settle, for the night.

The sun, behind the tower now, bathes the willows across the river in the gold of early evening. The silky green of the water is imbued with this hue, too. Vapours begin to rise as Louis lingers, looking; noting every detail of this green and golden landscape.

He strolls down to the jetty, the better to take it all in.





The desire to row besets him and he steps into a boat. Steadying himself, lowering himself, he hears a woman's voice.

'Monsieur Stevenson –'

He turns to see Fanny emerge from the trees.

'Can I come grisly-hunting, too?' she jokes.

He helps her climb aboard.

Without further ado, they push off. Louis rows vigorously, thriving on the rhythm he works to maintain. For once he feels his age, and well. 'Live the dream, Louis!' an invisible coxswain urges as stroke after stroke takes them further from Chevillon; closer to what is to come.

Nary a word is spoken, but their thoughts, Louis senses, are racing.

It is time to close the match. To be as right with the world as they can be.

The last gold flicker vanishes from an oak. The place he has in mind is not far now: a place with roses, of quiet lee.

Anticipating the kisses, he pulls up beneath the arbour. Ere long, tendernesses – too little practised – will have them trembling; trembling *with the same delight*, he hopes.

His *amour* seems to read him like a book.

'Fanny,' he whispers, realising, 'need we really still *not*?'

'You're right, you mad Scotsman!' she laughs. '– We needn't.'

His hands relinquish the oars as he prepares to make his way towards her – the boat rocking, dangerously, not least when he makes to undress her.

'No, you do you,' she urges. 'I'll do me –'

Her eyes remain fixed on him as he does as she bids.

He, to his annoyance, looks away.

On the silk-like surface lilies are floating. Through the gloom below flash fish.





## Indefatigable Birds Glimpses of Grez

*Hamish Whyte*

In 2007 my partner, the poet Diana Hendry, and I had the good fortune to be given Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowships, the first joint venture in the scheme, whose object is to send Scottish writers every year for two months at a time to the Hotel Chevillon in Grez-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau. Grez is chosen for its association with RLS – it was at the Hotel Chevillon in 1876 that he met his wife-to-be Fanny Osbourne. The Hotel is now an artists' and writers' retreat owned by the Swedish Stiftelsen Foundation – there are also associations with the artist Carl Larsson – but the Foundation is happy to accommodate the Scottish writers along with artists from Sweden and Finland – it makes for an interesting mix. When applying, you have to submit a project: ours was to write together a series of poems exploring family relationships, especially the notion of the extended family. This seemed to us a particularly congenial idea for a place with Stevenson connections: RLS himself had acquired a ready-made family – Fanny and her children from her previous marriage – the extended family was nothing new.

**4 May 2007.** Sat under the trees in the garden in the late afternoon. It's hard not to be haunted by RLS and stories of his stay here. So quiet now – there seemed to be so much life about the place then – more social: Fanny in her hammock, the men buzzing round, chatter about boats, flirting, etc. But the birds are certainly a force here – RLS called them 'indefatigable' and they are still: nesting under eaves, dotting about the roofs, hopping on the grass, criss-crossing over the garden, constantly calling: martins, doves, crows, wood pigeons, sparrows – all made an impact on us from the very first day of our stay at Chevillon when







we stood in the gloaming at the foot of the garden looking at the river, bats flitting among the trees.

Gretz lies out of the forest, down by the bright river. It boasts a mill, an ancient church, a castle, and a bridge of many sterlings. And the bridge is a piece of public property; anonymously famous; beaming on the incurious dilettante from the walls of a hundred exhibitions. I have seen it in the Academy; I have seen it in the last French Exposition, excellently done by Bloomer; in a black-and-white by Mr A. Henley, it once adorned this essay in the pages of the *Magazine of Art*. Long-suffering bridge! And if you visit Gretz tomorrow, you shall find another generation, camped at the bottom of Chevillon's garden under their white umbrellas, and doggedly painting it again.

– RLS, 'Fontainebleau' (1883), *Tusitala* 30, 112.

#### GREZ-SUR-LOING

The new artists have arrived, following  
In the footsteps and paint strokes of Larsson,  
Manet, Lavery, Corot. What will they do  
With the old bridge, painted so often  
It's turned into a cliché? Or the trees, taller  
No doubt than in the Impressionists' day  
But still shivering with birds? And the river –  
The wide, sweet Loing with its pale green  
Reflections of willows, how will they renew it?  
How see it as if for the first time, as if  
No-one's ever seen it before and with  
Twenty-first century geese honking a new tune?

– Diana Hendry





## TIMES

Two sisters

on the road to the river

pushing silver scooters:

one pushes with her right foot

the other

with her left –

moving in front

the bigger sister says

‘d’you know a story as old as time?’

as they head

for the bridge

that’s only half.

**9 May.** Walk to les lacs. Watched a squad of Canada geese and goslings marching around.

**13 May.** Fed geese and ducks in morning.

**15 May.** At the lakes. Watched ducks and ducklings, geese and goslings.

Later, in the library (probably the room where RLS first saw Fanny) met two newcomers from Stockholm, Camilla, an artist, and her partner Patrick. She told me that just after they arrived she had a kind of vision at night of a dark man with a moustache who visited her two or three times. I wondered if it was RLS and showed her a portrait in one of the books from the Stevenson shelf. ‘That’s him,’ she said. She hadn’t been afraid, she felt he was ‘just checking me in.’ Maybe it was Carl Larsson – they are staying in his old studio.

**20 May.** Communal meal in kitchen in evening – we all brought stuff. Pirrko tells us about the three o’clock ghost – a





woman's voice singing in their part of the building every night – her son Antti sings it for us, a melancholy, descending melody in a minor key. Tuuli says it's the wind – she hasn't heard it. We speculate about recording it – would the disc be blank? I get Camilla to recount her story of the midnight visitor. Lars brings us back to earth by telling us about Strindberg (another visitor to Grez) who wanted to be an actor but failed because of his high voice – he imitates a slightly strangled speech, to much laughter.

**21 May.** Much talk about the 'peacefulness' of the countryside. The pigeons make a constant hoo-hoo-hoo noise. Camilla and Patrick were woken before the dawn chorus by a screechy baby bird demanding food. 'We tell him we're hunters from Sweden. We are going to shoot him,' Camilla says.

Then there is the loud grass mowing and, from the football pitch, the man with a loudspeaker.

Oh, and the honking geese.

– Diana Hendry (diary)

**21 May.** I'm sitting at a picnic table by the lake among the sunlit trees – no picnic just a notebook – it's peaceful but plenty of honking and quacking from the ducks and geese – natural noise – someone has scratched SARKO in a heart into the wood of the table – some kind of gundog lollops past and splashes in the shadowy shallows – I sit here without purpose, unlike the angler I passed on the way here: grey hair tied back in a pony tail hunched over his rod still as a heron – on the boulder at the end of the path is painted the one word PUNK!

On the way back came across half a rabbit on the path, top half bitten off and missing, bloody stump of spine showing.

**26 May.** Began *Treasure Island*, which I haven't read since a child. Terrific stuff! As an adult I can appreciate the writing more. And read now, it seems surprisingly modern: the casual violence, an ambivalent villain (who escapes at the end).





**2 June.** Reading *Virginibus Puerisque*. Amazingly, RLS was only thirty-one when these essays were published – they read like the work of a wise old man (if it's a pose, it's a good one) – and he's as witty as Wilde – marriage is 'a sort of friendship recognised by the police'. Richard Holmes describes Stevenson's tone as 'ironic, mildly facetious, even slightly misogynistic' and reckons he was terrified by the implications of falling in love with Fanny. (Footsteps, 1986)

**4 June.** Fed ducks. Days-old bread so hard my fingers bled. Heard a cuckoo yesterday though not in Grez – here the nearest is the wood pigeon's hoo-hoo-hoo – and wondered if it was related to Delius's cuckoo, which he must have heard in Grez (his house is just along the road from Chevillon) – unless it was that dratted pigeon and he thought cuckoo would sound better.

**9 June.** Camilla and Patrick had bought a set of boules and organized a game in the garden in the early evening. 3 teams: Blue (Eva and me), Yellow (Diana and Camilla) and Orange (Patrick and Tuuli). Good fun, augmented by strawberry punch. Felt we were recreating a little of the Chevillon camaraderie from RLS's time. Evening sun. Shadows. Laughter.

At last, the day declining – all silent and happy, and up to the knees in the wet lilies – we punt slowly back again to the landing-place beside the bridge. There is a wish for solitude on all. One hides himself in the arbour with a cigarette; another goes for a walk in the country with Cocardon; a third inspects the church. And it is not till dinner is on the table, and the inn's best wine goes round from glass to glass, that we begin to throw off the restraint and fuse once more into a jolly fellowship.

– RLS, 'Forest Notes' (1876) *Tusitala* 30, 129.





**11 June.** Going home soon. Sat at the window for ages watching two pigeons building a nest. The female stayed on the branch hidden in the foliage and received the twigs, dried grass, etc. brought by the male, who made innumerable forays into the garden. Indefatigable indeed.

All day, pigeon brings  
twigs for the nest in the lime:  
eggs will hatch, leaves fall.





## Mount Vaea, Upolu Island, Samoa 1987

*Cees Nootboom*

The following passages are taken from Cees Nootboom's volume *Tumbas* which is a poetic reflection on mortality, fame and obscurity following his visits to the graves of writers and thinkers, his 'beloved dead'. The book is greatly enhanced with photographs taken by his wife Simone Sassen. Nootboom travelled to many locations, including the graves of Keats and Shelley in the Protestant cemetery in Rome, where Goethe's son and the sons of Wilhelm von Humboldt also lie; to Zurich, to stand by the last resting place of Thomas Mann, James Joyce and Elias Canetti; to Balzac, Proust and Nerval at Père Lachaise in Paris; to Brecht and Hegel, who are buried side by side in a small cemetery in Berlin-Mitte; and to Mount Vaea in Samoa to hear the rustle of Stevenson's pages.

RW

### **Robert Louis Stevenson (1850 – 1894)**

Fanny knew that the body had to be buried at three o'clock the following day at the latest as putrefaction sets in quickly in the tropics. It was also clear that Louis should be buried on Mount Vaea as he had wished. There was no path up to the summit. Therefore Fanny sent her servants to the nearby villages to ask the chiefs to clear a path up to Mount Vaea the same night. Immediately, two hundred men came running and spread over the entire way between Vailima up to the summit and set to work with machetes, pick axes, shovels, hoes and mortise chisels. All night the inhabitants of Vailima heard their muffled calls, the creaking of tumbling giants of the jungle, and the Latin prayers the Samoan domestics had





learnt from the missionaries. Whoever was finished with his section of the path ran uphill to the summit to make a clearance for the tomb or down to the beach, to get the white coral gravel and black volcanic rock in which kings and high-ranking chiefs were traditionally laid to rest. In the meantime the servants embalmed Louis' body with coconut oil which was perfumed with the sweet scent of the Ylang-Ylang tree (*Canangium odratum*). Contrary to Samoan tradition, however, he was not wrapped in fine mats, but laid in a coffin according to European custom, which the carpenter Willis from Apia made on the spot that night. He cried while he leaned over Louis' body to take his measurements. Then Louis was dressed in his velvet jacket and finally the Union Jack was spread over his thin frame.

– Alex Capus, from *Reisen im Licht der Sterne/  
Travelling in the Light of the Stars* (Knaus Albrecht, 2005)

We gave the book the title *Tumbas*, perhaps because of the cheerful ring the word has in Spanish. *Tumulus*, *tomb*, *tombe*, grave, grave mound. Whether the latter soars up into the sky in the form of a pyramid or sits humbly on the earth as a little hill, as a negligible elevation which came into being because room had to be made for a dead person below ground – in the Great Book of Symbolism each tomb is a whispered replication of the holy mountains, in which life itself had its seat. For the Greeks of the Mycenaean era and the Egyptians alike, building a tomb as a home for the deceased was something as necessary as the house he or she dwelled in during his or her lifetime. In Africa, however, the tomb is more of a place where the dead are held so that they do not trouble the living. The highly complicated funeral rites of some Aboriginal tribes are rooted in similar notions. For a while, the name of the deceased must not be uttered under any





circumstances, and he or she has to be pleased in every possible way. And in the land of Jung, which can be found somewhere in the area of the twentieth century, the tomb is a female archetype like everything that encloses and embraces. It is the safe place, the place of birth, of growth and of love. In this place, the metamorphosis of body to mind will come about and prepare rebirth; but it is also the abyss where the deceased will disappear in inescapable mists.

Those who often walk along graveyards can by all means make something of all these theories. Mount Vaea, the mountain on which Robert Louis Stevenson is buried, was also holy to the inhabitants of Samoa. Especially for this deceased person, the village elders cleared a path through the jungle and hauled the coffin uphill in the glimmering heat. A hundred years later I came along, on my own. The jungle around me whispered and hissed; the climb appeared never ending. It seemed as if I was on the way to the realm of the dead myself. Should I ever get there, I hope it will look just like on this day. Below me the green, steaming jungle and without, like an endless embrace, the Pacific Ocean. Nobody could be seen. No sound of machines or humans. Up on the summit there was, somewhat raised again, the tomb which reminds a little of a small boat, and inscribed on it the verses he had written himself, long before the Swiss thinker could think up his archetype:

*Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

I kept standing there for a while and tried to image this day in 1894, the people, the colours, the faint Polynesian voices talking, and how everybody went downhill again, when everything was over, and left the deceased on his summit. There was still something else on my mind, a kind of astonishment, and I could not think immediately why I felt it or what caused it. Something







was different. I saw boats on the water far below me, I saw big birds of prey circling above the jungle, and suddenly I knew it: I was on a cemetery without dead people. He was alone, without company. When I had gone, there would be the same silence as in the first night of his death. I have seen other lonely tombs, for example that of Cyrus<sup>1</sup> somewhere in Persia, a monstrosity of a grave which looks like a rock formation in the dry, ancient landscape and thus belongs to nature rather than the human world. The silence that surrounded it was dead; yet the silence at Stevenson's grave was alive. Listening attentively, you could hear a gust of wind from the ocean turn over about a thousand pages at once.

## NOTES

- 1 Persian king of the Achaemenid dynasty (601 – 530 BC), founder of the ancient Persian Empire. His tomb is located near the ruins of Pasargadae.





## From the Baroque to the Plain Style Henry James, Robert Louis Stevenson and a Person of the Tale

*Barry Menikoff*

Give a talk on Robert Louis Stevenson before a general audience and you will invariably be asked how you became interested in the writer. Whether your conversation explored the textual arcana of *The Beach of Falesá*, one of his great fictions – quite a trick to juggle in front of a live audience – or merely traced in vivid color this bohemian's restless tacking from Edinburgh to Apia, the same question recurs. Why Stevenson? Were you held in your mother's arms and read to from *A Child's Garden of Verses*? Maybe you were precocious and riveted by *Treasure Island* at age twelve, just two years younger than Jim Hawkins. Or perhaps you are a cineaste, familiar with the different versions of *Jekyll and Hyde*, and torn between the performances of Fredrick March and Spencer Tracy. Whatever the case, the questioner assumes a connection between you and your subject, a common supposition in the world of trade publishing but one held at a slight distance among academics. It is not that academics are unaware of the factors that drive their choice of subjects; they simply prefer not to dwell upon them lest they be accused of writing personally as opposed to objectively. And even though the current critical climate occasionally exhorts the personal as the professional, in the main scholars are more comfortable cloaking the random quirks that impelled if not determined their writing. To be sure certain topics generate less curiosity as to their origins than others. Few attending a lecture on Shakespeare care about what drew the lecturer to Shakespeare, since study of the Bard exists in a transcendent realm, separated from the sublunary human engaged in the activity. But Stevenson is another matter





entirely. Whether it was the charisma of the man, or the charm of the writing, or the associations that readers attached to the texts, it was never possible to write about him without in some way touching on biography, not to mention the numberless formal biographies that crowd and threaten to collapse the library shelves. No other modern author had his ‘footsteps’ so sedulously followed in France, or across all broad Scotland – even Rudyard Kipling tipped his forelock there to David Balfour – or cruising through the South Seas. This is not a ‘talk’ about ‘Stevenson the man’, but the unending fascination with *his* life occasionally gets transferred in haphazard bits to the lives of those who write about him, and this essay is about that process in my own life, albeit one small part of it. It is about literary giants and academic culture. It is about history and writing. It is about the long flight from New York to Hawaii. And it is about destiny, or perhaps the destiny of chance.

Every good subject, as the saying goes, must be in want of a title. Since I was to trace my causeway from Henry James to Robert Louis Stevenson, it seemed nothing short of inspired to come up with ‘baroque’ as a sobriquet for the Master, while ‘plain’ was one of Stevenson’s own favorite terms. But then I realized that I had only the faintest idea as to what ‘baroque’ meant – it had been years since I ever had to contend with the word. As an undergraduate at Brooklyn College I took a course in ‘Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Art’, and I summoned up from the deep names like Fiorentino and Parmigianino and Caravaggio, such is the flotsam of our minds, if not our educations. Diving deeper I remembered that Caravaggio was ‘anti-Mannerist’, a synonym for ‘baroque’, because I had gone to the Met to study one of his paintings for a term paper, a small pleasure reserved for those growing up in a city where all in the world was taken for granted, and hence unappreciated. Memory took me back to Morris Croll, whose collected essays on ‘baroque’ prose sits on an upper shelf in my university office, where it has lain untouched





for a decade or two. Croll was writing about the seventeenth century, but *Webster's Third* provided a more accessible definition of a style marked by 'complexity and elaborateness of form and by the use of bizarre, calculatedly ingenious, and sometimes intentionally ambiguous imagery.' This meaning tamps down the pejorative strain that spills out from descriptors like *florid* and *flamboyance* and *grotesque*, if it does not eliminate it entirely. Is it a fair characterization of Henry James? Certainly not early James, possibly not even James of the middle years, but yes, it fairly well captures the late manner. Had Croll the disposition to pore over James' style the way he studied Richard Burton's, he would have declared the novelist a true inheritor of the baroque school of writing. But this is not really a discourse on an obscure, aesthetic pleasure – after all, English studies today does not even acknowledge 'style' as a matter of interest. Most professors below a certain age would be bewildered if you asked them to read two passages from different authors and select one for its superior style. My calling James 'baroque' is simply a ploy to call attention to the profound difference in form and manner between two singular artists with signature styles who happened to be devoted friends. The story before us, the 'talk' I am prepared to deliver, is about my navigation from one writer to another, from one radical 'form' of telling to an altogether different and, in a curious way, equally radical telling. An astute reader (or auditor) might ask if I have any literary principles? Or taste? (A much compromised word.) Can I blithely switch from the sinuosity of James' late great syntax to the spare, ledger-book limpidity of the Scot's? And if so, how? And why? Or so goes the tale.

Few would argue with the observation that gender, race and class constitute a bonded trinity in contemporary academic discourse, certainly in the humanities and in much of the social sciences. We could even call it a *rage*, in the sense of its being an enthusiasm or fervent passion, a desire to explain and contain most if not all of literature and history and social behavior and





art within the boundaries of an isosceles triangle. Of course one side always comes up short, but that allows for a bit of elegant variation. At bottom, though, there is a rage to see the world of human achievement as a haphazard if occasionally grand performance designed and sustained by the paradoxically deliberate and fortuitous forces of a holy trinity. It is a complete view for our time. But our time, not to strike a mordant note, is not forever. Every generation has its rages, and to people consumed by them they seem timeless. Did anyone living in the nineteen thirties think that literature and art was anything other than politics and social involvement? All that anti-Fascism and anti-Nazism, all that passion that expressed itself in the arts – Orson Welles and Clifford Odets in New York, Howard Hawks and John Ford in Hollywood, Robert Capa and Gerda Taro in Spain – energized intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic. Politics was the subject of literature – *Homage to Catalonia*, *Bread and Wine*, *Man's Fate* – while literature, as in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, could morph into politics. As for its social sibling, a kind of communitarianism when it was not outright socialism or communism, the most widely recognized example was Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, a book that sold nearly a half million copies in less than a year, and one that furnished Henry Fonda a signature screen role. Even Ernest Hemingway, a man who almost single-handedly defined the stoic hero in the nineteen twenties, had by the middle thirties embraced a social role for Harry Morgan, a captain reduced to smuggling in *To Have or Have Not*: 'a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance.'

It always struck me as curious, perhaps even paradoxical, that side by side with the visceral politics of the nineteen thirties ran a steady and deliberate aesthetic passion.

On occasion these countervailing impulses coexisted comfortably in the same person. Mary McCarthy in *The Company She Keeps* held fast the standard for Trotsky in the manner of Henry James. Who would have thought that Isabel Archer, a nice girl





from small town Albany, could be made over into Margaret Sargent, a transplanted New Yorker who sheds her clothes as easily as she reveals her convictions, and in each case echoes the style if not the spirit of the Master himself? The author who began her career writing for the *Partisan Review* never lost her taste for politics, nor relinquished her practice of burnishing her prose. If McCarthy was a Catholic girl from the Far West whose intellectual life can be dated to her undergraduate days at Vassar College, there was the alternate example of her contemporary Alfred Kazin, a man to the city born, who rode the subway from the easternmost edge of Brooklyn to the upper reaches of Manhattan. Kazin read T. S. Eliot on the train as it moved through an interminable number of stations on its journey to City College, a place known as much for the carmine color of its politics as for the brains and moxie of its first-second generation students. In his memoir *Starting Out in the Thirties*, an older Kazin, looking back on his earlier self, did not miss the irony of a young litterateur whose family language was Yiddish steeping himself in the poeticized Christianity of a barely covert anti-Semite. Of such things – of politics and passion – are literary lives and works made.

But then came September 1939 and December 1941 and the internecine national and cultural politics on college campuses was put aside for *realpolitik*, which of course was real war. I remember a wonderful history professor at Brooklyn College, an exile from Nazi Germany, who recalled with animated nostalgia the battling factions that had enlivened his classes then, in contrast to the political indifference of his Eisenhower era students. Irwin Shaw captures this period well in his early short stories, the turn from the political battles of the late thirties to the start of the war itself, and broadens the tapestry in *The Young Lions*, a braided narrative that follows two young Americans from Hollywood and New York through to the liberation of Paris and beyond, ending with the death of one of the soldiers just before war's end. But





real war did finally end, and those who survived returned home to new rages that stoked trimmer intellectual passions, like the rage for Nietzsche that was reflected in a Viking Portable Library book of his writings. Walter Kaufmann, a Princeton professor who edited the volume, was as close to being a 'star' as academics were capable of in those early days – before postmodernism and pedigree elevated sovereign theorists and their shrewder acolytes to plush chairs and lush lecture fees. The rage for Nietzsche was interlaced with the broader enthusiasm for French thought and culture, for the Parisian world of the cafés, for Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus: in short, it was a rage for Existentialism. Camus' fiction had a genuinely wide audience, but the popular reach of this passion was revealed comically in the flimsiest of forms, the film version of the musical *Funny Face*, which cast Audrey Hepburn as a bookish young woman whose dream was to go to Paris and meet the charismatic promoter of the new philosophy of empathy, or Empathicalism. Fred Astaire, a dapper fashion photographer struck by the young woman's stunning face, makes her dream come true. If the original musical dated from the late nineteen twenties, the plot makeover allowed for the introduction of a motif that enjoyed a minor prominence after the war – Paris as a cultural and intellectual site that had no parallel in North America. (Even Eloise, Kay Thompson's irrepressible six-year old, decamped the Plaza Hotel and showed up on the Champs-Élysées in 1957). The motif repeated an old story: Paris as a center for passionate life in the *fin de siècle* (Henry James' *The Ambassadors*) and as an expatriate refuge for art, sex and booze in the Twenties (Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*). While the 'Lost Generation' has been documented nearly to distraction, far less has been written about the generation that settled in the city not more than five years after its liberation. Richard Wright, James Jones, Irwin Shaw, Art Buchwald, James Baldwin – these writers made the city their own just as their progenitors had thirty years earlier, and stories like Baldwin's 'This





Morning, This Evening, So Soon' and Shaw's *Paris! Paris!* are at once eulogies and elegies to their city of lights.

There were other rages as well, like the rage for Kafka, the spot-on title for Anatole Broyard's unfinished memoir of life in Greenwich Village just after the war. Broyard, an influential critic and book reviewer for the *New York Times* (and the model for Philip Roth's protagonist of a black man passing for white in *The Human Stain*) sought to capture the intellectual and erotic ferment of those early post-war years when art was Abstract and literature Absurd. And of course there was the enthusiasm for J. D. Salinger, whose *Nine Stories* adapted a New York voice to a minimalist style that would have made Hemingway proud, and whose *Catcher in the Rye* was passed around and shared by its readers, as was Holden Caulfield, for neither the novel nor the character was something the professors would bring to class. Yet of all these rages one remained constant throughout, and that was the rage for Henry James. It began in the nineteen thirties, with special magazine issues like *Hound & Horn*, and strengthened in the following years, when major scholar-critics like F. O. Matthiessen, Morton Dauwen Zabel, and R. P. Blackmur began writing seriously about him. If anything can be said to have laid the bricks that built the house that James lived in, it was the elevated status of the critics themselves. It certainly did not hurt that Lionel Trilling's opening essay in *The Liberal Imagination* set James up against Theodore Dreiser, whose material reality and so-called clumsy prose only served to burnish more brightly his antagonist's aesthetic brilliance. By the late nineteen fifties James had become institutionalized – canonized if you prefer – in English departments across the country in North America, as well as across the Atlantic, but that last is another story. And the figure of Henry James himself (along with his shadow artist James Joyce) became the very model of the modern major writer. It was in the middle fifties that Leon Edel won the Pulitzer for the early volumes of his biography, and by the end of the decade no







course in modern English fiction could start without an excursus on James's work, a homily on his influence, and a discourse on his theory of fiction.

In my case, James showed up first in an American literature course taught by a senior female professor with New York attitude and an Irish temper – smart, tough, and unforgiving of the slightest lapse, as I remember to this day. To a boy from Brownsville, the name 'Henry James' could be nothing but a joke, and 'The Portrait of a Lady' a title ready-made for deep somnolence. So much did I know. Turns out, I was riveted by the story – sitting up with Isabel during that long night by the fire when all is gradually and insistently made plain – and the rest, to alter slightly a line from Davie Balfour, is in a way history. I registered for a James seminar in my last term as an undergraduate, taught by a younger professor recently out of Wisconsin, an engaging woman with a hip Village style, eager, exciting, and utterly audacious in her display of cleavage. Gladly would he learn, as the saying goes, and gladder still with the indulgence of erotic images to concentrate the mind. In my first year of graduate school, James was one of the authors that Harry Hayden Clark examined me on during my Master's oral. Clark was an *éminence grise*, one of the founders of American literature as a branch of study within university English departments, and someone who considered all American writing from John Winthrop forward to be his demesne. Pity the poor student who wanted to strike out on his own voyage of discovery. But Clark lives on in Wisconsin as a titled chair – it's probably more like a settee, to borrow Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes' old quip – as do other of my professors who have since metamorphosed into chairs and buildings.

Although I clearly had a strong attachment to James, he was not my first choice for a dissertation, a fact that highlights the powerful hold that received opinion has on intellectual practice. We are familiar with the vise-like grip of opinion when the subject is literary reputation, but it is just as unrelenting in the less





glamorous alcoves of English departments. I wanted to write on Theodore Dreiser, whom I admired tremendously, and whose neglect had the distinct benefit of absolving me from trudging through library shelves of criticism. (I never could understand the graduate students who chose to write on Shakespeare or Milton.) But my supervisor, John Enck, a man as kind and generous as he was dapper and sophisticated, had little taste for Dreiser and a great love for Henry James and James Joyce. Dissertations then, unlike now, were author based, and young scholars were identified as ‘working’ on their authors. The only choice open to us was the selection of a ‘major’ or ‘minor’ figure, although who decided the ranking is a nice question, worthy of an extended riff on the professors of yesteryear. Stevenson did not even qualify as minor – he was simply an absence in that intricate and interlaced world of sainted authors, along with scribes in waiting, and all their books-to-be-read and committed to memory. James was king, or at least one of them, and writing on him conferred a dull sheen of status, not enough to cause friction perhaps, but certainly noticeable. If poring over reams of James criticism was the price for this patina, there were undoubtedly lower circles of hell.

From Wisconsin I went directly to Hawaii. For someone who earlier believed that the western bank of the Hudson River marked the extremity of real American life, I found myself deposited in a place, as Stevenson memorably said of even further archipelagos that knew nothing of Caesar or Charlemagne or any of their descendants. Not that I knew much of them either, tracing my own lineage to *shtetl* dwellers and their Lower East Side offspring. The Roman civilization, or some fragment thereof, that was so bred in the bone of the Edinburgh Scot, existed in Honolulu mainly in stone churches built by nineteenth century missionaries and merchants. But this Honolulu, *my* Honolulu, was not Stevenson’s – it was now the capital of the fiftieth state, flush with money as Americans discovered they could breezily reach the islands without duplicating the hazards of the *Casco*,





and one sign of strutting statehood was pumping up the local university. In a small way I was part of that process. I taught a graduate course on Henry James in my first year, and later introduced a course (in homage to John Enck) on James and Joyce. Here, at last, was success in life: a secure job (as a waiter for years in the Catskill mountains I knew firsthand the vagaries of insecure employment), professional expertise on a major American author, and – to complete and enhance the picture – an island marriage with a succession of children. If I did not invent this story, I cannot help but wonder if it was unwittingly lifted from an old book or two, a bit here from Stevenson, or another from Somerset Maugham. While none of this suggests a South Seas idyll – there was always that pervasive sense of exile that Stevenson knew so well and that a born New Yorker could never quite dissipate – it does convey a picture of quotidian steadiness in love and work, and wasn't that Freud's simplest description of maturity?

In 'A Lodging for the Night,' one of Stevenson's most enduring stories, he indelibly introduced a theme that was to recur in his fiction – 'the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.' While everybody recognizes that *chance*, or as we would say colloquially, *luck*, plays a role in our lives, we tend to minimize its importance, and the more comfortable we become the less does luck have to do with it. Academics are not uniquely prone to this habit, but the nature of the work inclines them to marginalize if not deny it altogether as a factor in life. No one goes into a classroom and says, 'it doesn't matter what you do here, or how hard you work, something may happen that upends all your efforts.' Why would students, who are basically shrewd, and usually more street savvy than their instructors, work for a course, or a degree, if there were no expectation of projected rewards? The great poet of this subject was Thomas Hardy, but the consequences of bad luck in his work are so demoralizing that we deny any correlation between the poet's view of life's happen-





ings and our own daily struggles. So after marvelling at Hardy's genius we put him aside and relegate *chance* to the world of sports and games, like winning the exacta against the odds. It has nothing whatever to do with the deployment of extraordinary means by upscale parents to ensure their five year olds' admission to Princeton. Damon Runyon understood this, and he trumps Burns's proverbial verse about the best-laid schemes of mice and men by marrying luck to preparation in a line he stole from a Chicago newspaperman: 'The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong – but that's the way to bet.' Yet sometimes we find that the opportunity to bet is withheld from us. After settling into my snug coral world, replete with a calabash as a sly wink at James's famous bowl, the University of Hawaii hired Leon Edel as a chaired professor and, as the movie tag line has it, the island was simply not big enough for two Jamesians.

What was to be done? Instead of a character in search of an author, as Pirandello had it, here was an author-to-be in search of a subject. I wandered into the university's limited special collections area and a knowledgeable and generous librarian, Janet Bell, introduced me to the Robert Catton Papers. Catton was an island businessman, a Scotsman who met Stevenson during the novelist's last visit in 1893. The most interesting papers were the letters written to him by Katharine Durham Osbourne, a name storied in Stevenson lore as the daughter-in-law who was bequeathed less than twenty dollars by Fanny Stevenson in her will. Of all this I knew nothing, but my eye was caught by an early letter 'Dear Henry James is gone– He was a good friend to me. When Mrs. Stevenson took Ned Field to Henry James he wrote to someone in San Francisco about it calling Mrs. Stevenson "The old scamp." The heroine of his story of "The Liar" was Mrs. Stevenson. But she always interested him as a "character" always does a novelist and he had a warm heart and didn't expect too much of poor human nature.' This was like throwing a bone to a hungry dog – I was quite familiar with James's stories and could





not recall any note to that point. The James juices were stirred, but I had to remind myself that it was to get away from James that I was in the library in the first place. Well, to reduce a very long story – to omit is the only art – Katharine Osbourne's letters proved riveting. She wrote about Stevenson as if he were a palpable presence in her life (in fact she married Lloyd Osbourne in Honolulu two years after the writer's death), and filled her voluminous correspondence with a screed on the Stevenson and Osbourne ménage as if it were one unending gypsy caravan. Not to mention that her running commentary on Stevenson's work, and on life in general, revealed a keen intelligence and a person of wide reading and broad education.

One would have to have a mind of winter not to pursue this subject, although what exactly *was* the subject was far from clear. I had no experience with letters – what did you do with them? – and my graduate education did not specifically prepare me for archival work, even though Wisconsin had the most esteemed scholars of any English department in the country. And so I retreated into a comfort zone – reading always provided comfort – and checked out several Stevenson volumes. I vividly remember reading the first one, *Catriona*, and thinking with some surprise that this was very good writing, possibly exceptional writing, and wondering why this person was considered a children's writer. If I had to tip my hat to those giants at Wisconsin, which as the years pass I find myself doing more often, one of the nods would be for the 'major/minor' distinction they imposed on us. Writing on a major author made it easier to recognize and evaluate literary merit in others – a habit that, to repeat, was part of a generational understanding of literature. In any case, it enabled me to identify Stevenson as a worthy, for all I knew even significant author, but certainly one I could spend time with and work on without apology. I doubt that I said it to myself at that moment, but unlike Pirandello's characters I found my author. Later, a colleague of mine at Hawaii, Elizabeth McCutcheon,





herself a Wisconsin graduate and a prominent scholar of Thomas More, told me in passing of the Huntington Library in Southern California. A bit of research – how much quicker that is all done today online – the discovery of a major Stevenson collection, and the opening of a brave new world. Thus began my long association with the Huntington and Robert Louis Stevenson. To say again with Davie, the rest is in a manner history, and unlike poor Robert Macgregor, I at least am around to tell the story.

If individual history is a rendezvous with chance and destiny, so too is literary history. Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson had the best and closest relation of any two English-language writers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It began with a series of competitive magazine pieces in the middle eighties about the theory and practice of fiction, and grew to a warm friendship that included regular visits by the American to Bournemouth, where a ‘James chair’ was always ready, a seminal essay on Stevenson’s work for *The Century Magazine*, and most importantly, a rich correspondence that lasted from the time of their acquaintance until Stevenson’s untimely death. Indeed, James’s letters to Vailima extended a lifeline to Stevenson as they provided astute criticism to the ‘exile of Samoa’ on his work, and art in general, by a man whose judgment was as true as his kindness. Considering that James had no natural affinity for Stevenson’s new-found subject – the whole beautiful and tragic history of the Pacific world and the peoples therein – it is a testament to his imaginative generosity that he could read his friend’s work without prejudice and salute it as the performance of a fellow writer. James always said that the artist must be granted his *donnée*, and he remained true to his conviction when he wrote about Stevenson publicly and to him in private: ‘Primitive man doesn’t interest me, I confess, as much as civilized – and yet he *does*, when you write about him.’

But it was not the rare affection and esteem that these two men held for each other that the broader reading population was





concerned about. Instead they focused on all the obvious differences in form and theoretical perspective, differences that gave the magazine debates on 'the art of fiction' in the eighteen eighties something of a buzz in the Grub Street world of letters. Yet despite a seemingly antithetical approach to fiction, James and Stevenson shared something far more substantive in that great nineteenth century subject of money and class. In part this was a consequence of their joint attachment to French language and culture, and in James's case possibly to his reverence for Balzac. But this common interest in a profound contemporaneous theme went largely unrecognized by twentieth century critics. James's work had become inextricably associated with a mode of writing that was identified with 'high seriousness' and that effectively translated itself into 'high art.' Today it is almost impossible to use either phrase without irony, for most work is so suffused with mass popular culture that it requires the patience and skill of a tapestry-worker to disentangle the serious from the specious. But in the middle of the twentieth century the ghost of Matthew Arnold, the high priest of high seriousness, hovered over F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* just as it was the spirit behind Lionel Trilling's early criticism, and both Leavis and Trilling were influential in promoting James as an exemplar of the *serious* modern novelist. Further, seriousness also meant opacity, and for a generation who wanted to be thoroughly modern, writers like James Joyce and Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf were projected back to James, who could now reasonably be called their progenitor. James's work, and almost as importantly his life, symbolized the schism or estrangement between 'high art' and 'low life,' and ironically even among critics who were in their private lives deeply committed to politics and social protest, as were most of the intellectuals writing for the *Partisan Review*, which was – refer back to Mary McCarthy – a site for cultural and aesthetic criticism of James.

Stevenson, as we all know, was Pop Art before Andy Warhol





elevated that label to the level of High Art. His seriousness was concealed within a myriad of popular genres, as the many critics of *Jekyll and Hyde* have amply demonstrated, and he himself paraded a kind of insouciance toward weighty matters, notably in *The Suicide Club* and *The Rajah's Diamond*, that confounded even his most attentive audience. In plain terms, the divide between high art and popular art was not even acknowledged as such. Readers between the two great wars were largely incapable, both psychologically and ideologically, of reading Stevenson against their programmatic understanding of Modernism. If we recall that Virginia Woolf persuaded her 'common' readers, and their successors, that Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy were insufficiently 'modern,' then what hope could there be for R. L. Stevenson? But history, a subject that the Scots writer understood deeply, has its own way of unearthing our most sacred burials. Stevenson was indeed a modernist, as we now all know, as was Henry James, as we always knew, and in a curious way they have come together today in an unexpected and even surprising manner. From the beginning, or at least from the early days of Modernism in the twentieth century, the attraction of James was the fascination with the art – his sobriquet, after all, was 'The Master.' Contrariwise, the fascination with Stevenson was always the attraction of the man, and it was James himself, in a letter to Graham Balfour on the occasion of Balfour's biography, who remarked that in the public's mind the life of the man seemed to have overtaken the artist. Yet now, ironically, we are at a moment when James the man is suddenly experiencing an intense scrutiny of the most intimate details of his life. Colm Toibin's wonderful fictional biography, *The Master*, a huge literary success, is simply the best example among many. Stevenson, on the other hand, finds himself basking in the broadest and most meticulous attention to all aspects of his art, and to the wellsprings of his creative imagination.

When I moved from James to Stevenson I carried with me







an accumulated body of knowledge, and what I learned when I studied James in my salad days I now transferred to my reading of Stevenson. And in a nice symmetry my study of Stevenson generated a deeper interest in James's biography. Art and life, life and art – one of James's great themes, and the inspiration for all those marvellous stories of artists and writers composed during the eighteen-nineties and published in beautifully designed magazines like *The Yellow Book*. Stevenson, to the casual reader, appears to bypass this theme, yet it constitutes a motif in his work from his earliest stories in the *New Arabian Nights* through his last great novel, *David Balfour*. In an odd and ironic way, where James treats the theme head on, Stevenson approaches it obliquely, as if it were a seeming by-way in his fiction. Thus the Baroque writer turns 'plain' – in a manner of speaking – while the plain writer goes a bit opaque, if not Baroque exactly. But both James and Stevenson, each in his distinct way, are among the most deliberate portraitists of artists in their time – with themselves as their primary models. And what, after all, are portraits of artists if not the embodiments in ink of life in art, or art in life?





## Reviews

Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis*

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Halfway through his dense, sometimes frustrating, but always challenging study, Oliver Buckton quotes a remark from Stevenson's essay on Whitman: 'there is a sense, of course, in which all true books are books of travels' (p. 143). Like many other remarks in Stevenson's essays, this one is tightly packed and can be unwrapped in a variety of ways, among them the analogy that precedes it between the poet 'who studies his fellow countrymen and himself' and a 'traveller on the hunt' for literary materials. Buckton's metaphor for the same activities is cruising, and he finds it helpful in considering *Treasure Island*, *The Wrong Box*, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* / *David Balfour*, the Polynesian short stories, and *The Ebb-Tide* as well as *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels with a Donkey*, *In the South Seas*, and *A Footnote to History*.

This refusal to be disheartened by generic fences is most welcome. Reading the fiction alongside narratives of travel and accounts of history and politics makes excellent sense. Despite some factual confusion (more about that later), Buckton's juxtaposition of *Catriona* and *A Footnote to History* in Chapter Six deepens our understanding of both books, the one a fictional scrutiny of mid eighteenth century Scotland, the other an analysis of contemporary events in Samoa, yet both depicting societies scarred by the acids of material interest and tribal disunity. As Barry Menikoff has so ably demonstrated, Stevenson took great care with the legal, geographical, and historical background of the David Balfour novels; the books of travel, on the other hand, are almost as susceptible to the demands of narrative as the novels – and so, Buckton argues, taking his cue from Hayden White, is the *Footnote*. Moreover, this blurring of boundaries





puts Stevenson in the company of other adventurous Victorians such as Borrow and other proto-Modernists such as Conrad, Cunninghame Graham, and Ford Madox Ford. As most scholars now acknowledge, rigid period-making dulls the intellect. Would that more of us felt the same about generic purity.

Buckton gives us several accounts of what he means by *cruising*. The most succinct of these is: 'a method of travel as a pleasurable process and random voyage rather than a means to an end' (p. 82). In his Introduction, he applies this term not only to the method of travel and the literary material it provides, but also to what Stevenson actually does with this material. In this sense, *cruising* is a narrative practice that is not 'constrained by the conventions of realism or the expectation that the narrative should resemble life' (p. 5). His art deals with absence as much as presence, for it involves 'a dislocation from place, a self-conscious awareness of the artifice of all literary representation' (*ibid.*). In a third sense, *cruising* is 'a journey in search of sexual partners and erotic experience' (p. 7). In this sense, of course, the voyage usually sails the waters of a gay archipelago, and perhaps Buckton selected *cruising* as his dominant metaphor precisely for this resonance, since his book, as well as having much to say about colonialism, is the most extensive and ambitious search for a queer Stevenson yet undertaken. Indeed, Buckton goes so far as to suggest that the term 'could possibly have carried a specifically same-sex connotation in the late nineteenth century' (*ibid.*).<sup>1</sup> Whether so or not, Chapter Five becomes a rendezvous for all these interests, bringing colonialism, Polynesian (and Micronesian) sexualities, Stevenson's libidinal impulses, and his seductive designs upon the reader to bear on a reading of *In the South Seas*, *The Ebb-Tide* (scrutinised again in Chapter Eight), and 'The Beach of Falesá'. Buckton rides this swirl of arguments skilfully. Yet the chapter is a turning point, the place where the idea of cruising yields its greatest rewards, but also where it starts to show the signs of stress.





Connotations are unruly, even contradictory. Besides those featured in this volume, *cruising* has staidier associations with floating hotels that offer glimpses of exotic life as likely to confirm as to dispel the prejudices of their guests, and sterner associations with naval patrols or piracy. Indeed, when Buckton turns to the later travels and the writings that came out of them, the mood turns sombre:

Stevenson was not content to rest with the 'pleasure' of the South Seas. Discovering that many of the region's problems, such as disease, depopulation, and war, had resulted from European colonialism, Stevenson would probe beneath the surface of island beauty in his fiction to examine a more sinister reality. (p. 161)

Buckton makes a firm and attractive case for regarding Stevenson as a writer whose understanding of ethics, politics, and culture deepened over the years, particularly after he settled on Upolu. In what sense, then, did the master of Vailima carry on cruising? Buckton's argument is sufficiently thick (in the positive sense of that word) to allow for the ambiguities of identity that even the most sympathetic settler might experience. Nevertheless, in the latter stages of the book, it is the manner rather than the matter of Stevenson's writing that still matches the idea of cruising. Buckton's choice of metaphor (or, if you will, his mode of theorising), enables him to discover the hidden symmetries of narrative pattern and gives him the language to discuss, quite brilliantly, the unexpected starts and stops, the quarrels and collaborations, the restless bodies live or dead, the divagations, the multiplication of variant texts, the reluctance to conclude that characterise so much of Stevenson's writing. 'Travel writing' Buckton argues, 'is a significant forum for challenging the conventions of the Victorian novel, being a significantly more open-ended narrative form that lacks the formal architecture of plot and closural strategies on which the novel, whether gothic or





realist depends' (p. 11).

Before taking issue with some of Buckton's arguments, I must first insist that his aims are laudable and the results provocative, enlightening, and often both. To be frank about an uneven book whose politics you largely share does not come easily; one temptation is to judge it more harshly than something by a less congenial author, another is to look the other way. Buckton, as readers of this review will have guessed by now, draws heavily on theory. The theorists include Barthes, Bersani, Butler, Hocquenghem, Jameson, D. A. Miller, Sedgwick, and Hayden White. Buckton uses their work to good effect, though a touch more Butler would help his arguments about the performance of identity. I hesitate to add yet more to the list by invoking Deleuze and Foucault to correct White's over-lofty gaze, but a tendency to cruise past local knowledges does weaken a mostly admirable volume.<sup>2</sup>

Some problems are linguistic. When Attwater refers to his Cambridge College as 'the old shop', he is not indicating that 'his commercial practice derived from its influence' but using a kind of affectionate disparagement favoured by army officers and classically-educated gentleman reasonably confident that they would never ever have to work in one (see 'shop, *n.*, 4a', in the *OED*). Possibly inspired by Eve Sedgwick, Buckton is always on the watch for puns that might be signalling a homosexual consciousness. The secondary title of Chapter Two is 'Misusing the Ass in *Travels with a Donkey*' and a significant section of the argument rests on poor Modestine's rump (pp. 84-5). But unless he had been talking about buttocks with Fanny Osbourne, wouldn't Stevenson have heard the name for them as the English *arse* or Scots *erse*? These are not homophones of *ass*. (Nor, as Buckton seems to imply, are asses, arses, or anuses solely the playground of gay men.) Similarly the otherwise delicious presentation of *The Wrong Box* and the burial of desire is over-salted by the claim that Finsbury's "we should look devilish romantic shovelling out the sod by the moon's pale rays" 'functions as a





coded representation of sodomy' (p. 50); if this reference to grave-digging is indeed coded, 'shovelling out' hardly seems like a fervent endorsement of 'anal pleasure' (*ibid.*).<sup>3</sup> Without such verbal overreaching, Buckton's arguments for queering Stevenson, such as his diagnosis of the author's gaze or his reading of Alan and David's friendship, would be all the firmer.

Other difficulties involve Scottish or Polynesian history, culture or geography. For example, although he devotes an entire chapter to the colonial, commercial, and libidinal significance of maps, Buckton frequently refers to Samoa as a single island (pp. 183, 192, 197, and elsewhere).<sup>4</sup> To say that David Balfour's travels are 'an opportunity to examine stark differences between English and Highland culture' (p. 127) appears to make an Englishman out of a good Presbyterian who has never even been to England. Likewise, despite his scepticism about the uncanny and his genteel manner of speech, the Reverend Mr Soulis of "Thrawn Janet" is a Scot, not a surrogate Englishman;<sup>5</sup> readers of the *Cornhill*, who already had some experience of rebarbative dialogue (in the serial of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, for instance), were unlikely to take the story as 'an assault on England's cultural hegemony' (p. 28); if anything, its villagers, with their rankling memories of Covenanter martyrdom and their eagerness to burn witches, would have confirmed an English stereotype of Lowland Scots as grim fanatics. Stevenson came to think of himself as a Home Ruler, converted to the cause well before Gladstone, but in the following remark, the 'of course' sounds a little over-confident. 'As a Scot, of course, Stevenson was thoroughly aware of the difference between "an ensign of England" and the "Union Jack": the latter being a flag that proclaims the colonization of the "British Isles" in addition to its overseas territories' (pp. 325-6, n. 36). In fact, the 'red ensign of England', as Stevenson (or Osbourne?) called it, is the flag of the British Merchant Navy, which bears that same provoking Union Jack in its top left quarter. In a monograph that confined itself to nar-





ratology or psychology, these errors would seem few and piffling. Yet they are by no means the only ones, and a work concerned with cultural hegemony might treat its cultures and geographies more attentively. On the discussion of colonialism, these small slips have a cumulative effect; each of them weakens a link in a delicate and convoluted chain of argument.

*Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson* is a book that could, perhaps should have been several books. By the standards of modern academic publishing this is a lengthy volume, but it creates an appetite for even more. It would be good to see a siting of missionary evangelism and freebooting pillage, Buckton's principal examples of colonialism at work, in relation to other kinds of imperial activity such as the growth of large island trading companies or the establishment of crown colonies. It would be good to know why *Treasure Island* belongs to the category of 'commodity-text' (p. 101) while the work of earlier adventure-story writers such as Mayne Reid and R. M. Ballantyne apparently doesn't, for surely they, too, 'produced' their 'own readership' (*ibid.*). It would be good, and helpful, to have a fuller account of 'the conventions of the Victorian novel' (p. 11), since finding enough common ground to justify talk of shared conventions in (for instance) the work of George Eliot, Trollope, G. W. Reynolds, Meredith, Emily Brontë, Charles Kingsley, Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu, Charles Reade, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Margaret Oliphant would be a formidable task even without having to figure out the connections between French realism or naturalism and the work of Henry James or the relation of Stevenson's romances to those of Hugo and Dumas. Above all, it would be fascinating to hear how Buckton would respond to other works by Stevenson. What of *St. Ives*? Of 'Heathercat'? Of *Weir of Hermiston*? Of *The Silverado Squatters*? It is a mark of his flawed but memorable contribution to Stevenson studies that one would truly like to know.

Laurence Davies  
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## NOTES

- 1 In Britain, one of the earliest public appearances of *cruising* in its covert sense must have been the film *Carry on Cruising*, a flamboyant chronicle of adventures on the SS *Happy Wanderer* from 1962. The earliest British citations in the *OED* date from the 1980s, whereas the American ones go back to 1900; these, of course, are from printed sources, but suggest a corresponding time lag in everyday speech. *Trolling*, an equivalent term in the mostly gay argot Polari, had the longer ancestry in Britain. (When Stevenson uses *troll* in the *Inland Voyage* and *Virginibus Puerisque*, however, the context is musical.)
- 2 An exception to this tendency to choose the general over the local is Buckton's ongoing engagement with a recent and important contribution to late nineteenth and early twentieth century literary studies, Nicholas Daly's *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 3 A footnote (p. 285, n. 34) makes an analogy with Wilde's use of 'Bunburying', but, lexically speaking, the latter makes much better sense.
- 4 As, for over a century, Tutuila and several smaller islands have been 'an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the US' (the official designation of American Samoa), it is a pity that a book published by an American university press should get this wrong. The other islands in the group, principally Upolu and Savai'i, constitute the sovereign nation known at its birth in 1962 as Western Samoa (*Samoa i sisifo*) and, since 1997, as the Independent State of Samoa (*Malotuto'atasi o Samoa*).
- 5 For a more nuanced framing of the story in terms of implied readers, English and Scottish, see Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Thinking Nationally / Writing Colonially? Scott, Stevenson, and England', *Novel*, 24, 3 (Spring 1991), pp. 313-18.







Glenda Norquay, *Robert Louis Stevenson and theories of reading. The reader as*

*vagabond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 223 pp., £50 /\$79.95cloth, ISBN 978-0-7190-7386-1

In a letter from Skerryvore to Edmund Gosse in 1886 Stevenson showed little patience for those authors who claim to feel ‘martyred’ by their art. On the contrary, he felt that he and his fellow practitioners had chosen ‘like prostitutes, to live by a pleasure’, and although one might wonder *whose* pleasure Stevenson is thinking of in this simile, he had few doubts about the bottom line for writers such as himself: ‘We should be paid, if we give the pleasure we pretend to give; but why should we be honoured?’ This is a not unfamiliar note, and scores of similar disavowals pepper Stevenson’s correspondence over the years, as each new project is declared to be less than worthy of its inspiration, while its creator – even at the very end of his life – confesses himself to be ‘pretty near useless at literature’. (Letter to Colvin, 5/10/1894.) Glenda Norquay’s new study traces all the ambivalences and anxieties that underlie Stevenson’s attitudes to his own art, haunted by that ‘sedulous ape’, and caught between the claims and rewards of popularity and the more austere demands of his own vision.

I am a fictitious article and have long known it. I am read by journalists, by my fellow-novelists, and by boys; with these, *incipit et explicit* my vogue. Good thing anyway! for it seems to have sold the Edition.

– Letter to Colvin, 6/10/1894.

Yet there is much more here than false modesty, or the fatigue of completion. Norquay traces such thoughts to Stevenson’s Calvinist upbringing in one of the fullest explorations of precisely





what the 'readerly guilt and gratification' of textual pleasure might mean to him, and how this marked his understanding of the difference between 'realism' and 'romance'. More than this, however, *Robert Louis Stevenson and theories of reading* goes on to develop – as advertised – a much deeper examination of his art, how it was received then, and its meaning for us now. (His status as a 'fictitious article', for example, might be seen to prefigure the issues raised in Foucault's 'What is an author?')

Stevenson described his own reading practices as a kind of 'vagabonding', but Norquay argues that he was very far from being either a 'vagabond' or a 'prostitute', and although Foucault's 'author function' does not feature in her case, she generates a fully theorised argument via Iser, Barthes, Gadamer and Ricoeur for taking seriously Stevenson's often ambivalent insights into his craft and for seeing him anticipating what we would now recognise as poststructuralist insights into reader response theory and the nature of fiction itself. Professor Norquay's earlier *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction*, (published by Edinburgh University Press in 1999) offered a critical introduction to a selection of Stevenson's essays on the literary art, especially on the issues revolving around 'A Gossip on Romance', 'A Note on Realism' and 'A Humble Remonstrance.' This new study takes those introductory notes much further, by bringing literary theory to bear on literary history to great effect. On the historical front Norquay contextualises Stevenson's ideas within the literary debates of the day, not least on the question as to whether the affective power of romance (from *Pamela* to Rider Haggard) was a force for imaginative and moral liberation or merely opium (rather than caviar) to the general. Stevenson's engagement with young or relatively unsophisticated readers gave an added dimension to the debate, which Norquay relates to Sir John Lubbock's 1886 *Contemporary Review* essay on the '100 best books' with its vision of reading as a necessary recreational activity for a newly literate artisan class. Norquay associates Lubbock's rec-





ommendation of 'wide ranging and rapid textual journeys' with Stevenson's own metaphor of reading as 'vagabonding' in an activity similar to Michel de Certeau's conception of the 'reader as traveller' or indeed as a 'poacher', whose relationship with the text on the page is a dynamic – and changeable – process of pleasure and appropriation (p. 10 ff.) This is especially relevant to Stevenson's interest in the utterly immediate involvement that children in particular feel when caught up in the pleasures of fiction in ways that echo Northrop Frye's definition of romance as the genre that 'deals with "the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality"' (p. 104). – Hence the power of 'romance', the untutored wisdom of the young reader, and Stevenson's sophisticated interest in both.

In the succeeding chapters Norquay goes on to identify the further reaches of these debates and the generic traces of other kinds of fiction that can be found in selected examples of Stevenson's mature work, although it is not her intention to make a full or representative analysis of these novels in their own right. Nevertheless, we can see, for example, a tension between 'narrative' and 'history' in *The Master of Ballantrae* (Chapter 5), which Norquay tracks back to Stevenson's early exposure to the (highly partisan) Covenanting narratives of the seventeenth century, and a submerged and not so submerged exploration of aesthetic versus commercial priorities in *Treasure Island* and in her brilliant closing analysis of what I would argue is the too-often underestimated achievement of *The Wrecker* (Chapter 7).

This is a stimulating and helpful guide to Stevenson's more profound thinking about the nature of fiction – which has often been somewhat hidden behind that self-deprecating tone, or complicated by his own changing opinions, or illuminated or obscured by memorable passages in his many letters – playfully confessional and seriously analytical by turns. Norquay's opening chapters also contain a subtle and serious exploration of how





much Stevenson was influenced by the tenets of Calvinism and Calvinist thought—far beyond any mere recounting of the killing times that he may have received on Cummy's lap. In *Modern Scottish Poetry* Christopher Whyte warned against the usual clichés and simplifications that surround many discussions of what Calvinism has meant in Scottish culture, and he asked for 'a theoretical model of how religious belief and practice can interact with the creation of fictional and imaginative texts'. Norquay cites this request (p. 44) and has gone some way to fulfilling it. Thus her second chapter, 'The Calvinist configuration', discusses the Calvinist practice of 'reading' the self while still always being unsure as to the final outcome (saved or damned?), and she argues that:

Stevenson's identification of questions around processes of linguistic signification, the structuring of narrative pleasure, the development of the reader through reading and rereading, can be understood as emerging from the simultaneous rejection of and replication of Calvinist modes of thought. (p. 29)

It is from this Calvinist background that Norquay begins to outline the debates of the day and Stevenson's prophetically modern understanding of the nature of fiction and the role of the reader. And that same Calvinist position has more than a little to do with the binary struggle and slippage between the 'real' and 'represented', not to mention the pleasures of guilt and the guilt of pleasure, all of which were to lead to some of Stevenson's most famous formulations of duality. But that is to vagabond into a different and more familiar story.

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Thomas L. Reed, Jr., *The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Victorian Alcohol Debate*

(Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2006), 268 pp., £23.95

Thomas Reed's *The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Victorian Alcohol Debate* adds a new perspective to the wealth of critical readings of Stevenson's novella on human duality. Exploring the plausibility of reading *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an 'allegory of alcoholism' (p. 6), Reed uses evidence from the author's biographical background (indicating that Stevenson himself struggled with the temptations of Bacchus), as well as wider contextual material in order to argue his point. *The Transforming Draught* combines formalist readings and a contextual analysis, demonstrating how Stevenson's language and metaphors suggest an engagement with Victorian discourses of alcoholism and temperance. The motivation and significance of Reed's study reaches beyond its importance for Stevenson studies, however, aiming to open a critical debate on 'the crucial role played by the drink question in a broader range of mid – to late-Victorian texts as well' (p. 7).

The book is divided into twelve short chapters, plus an Appendix identifying a number of key terms and phrases that Stevenson might have taken from 'the lexicon of temperance' (p. 215). The first three chapters focus on Stevenson's text itself, identifying references to addiction and alcohol metaphors in the descriptions of Jekyll's transformation through the 'potion'. Reed suggests that, in the novella, wine is re-coded from 'the traditional drink of the "reputable"' to something that is associated with 'evil' (p. 33); thus, Reed argues, the text also challenges the classist views expressed by many Victorian commentators, that 'drink was overwhelmingly the problem of "the lower classes"' (p. 34). Moving away from a close analysis of the novella's language, the next three chapters consider Stevenson's own experience with





drink (against the broader context of the role of alcohol within Victorian culture), possible literary intertexts for Stevenson's tale, and real-life models for Jekyll's double personality. Reed cites from Stevenson's letters and other works to show the centrality of alcohol in the writer's life, illustrating the author's anxious attempts, even after his move to the South Pacific, to ensure a constant supply of European wines for his household (pp. 54-55). Briefly discussing the representation of drink in English literature by writers such as Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot as a possible horizon that helped shape Stevenson's narrative, Reed contends that the two significant, but largely unexplored, intertexts for *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are the American author and alcoholic Edgar Allan Poe's 'William Wilson', another tale of duality in which 'Bad Wilson' succumbs to drink (p. 67), and Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which was endorsed by the Church of England's temperance journal (p. 71).

Reed discusses the history of the Victorian temperance movement in chapter seven, including numerous illustrations from *Punch* and other serial publications. He notes Stevenson's ambivalent attitude to drink and alcoholism, suggesting that his 'writing on alcohol looks like a palimpsest of Dionysian endorsement and Apollonian restraint' (p. 102). Although Reed concedes that 'Stevenson's attitudes towards the temperance movement are somewhat difficult to pin down', he insists that 'the rhetoric and imagery of the social movement nonetheless left an indelible imprint on the writer and his most famous work' (p. 102). The two subsequent chapters return to close readings of the novella, exploring the role of dreams in the creation of the story and the three acts of violence committed by Hyde, again connecting them with temperance imagery. Whilst chapter ten expands on the role of the temperance movement and Britain's industrial development as a context for Stevenson's novella, chapter eleven asserts Stevenson's 'playful taste for allegory and symbolic representa-





tion' (p. 186) as a necessary basis for the study's argument. Reed here also looks at contemporaneous receptions of the tale, providing, in his own words, 'modest but significant evidence' (p. 195) that some Victorians read the novella as 'somehow about alcohol' (p. 194). Although Reed's language itself already suggests that his argument at this point is somewhat shaky, this must not detract from the larger point of his study, namely, that *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 'can certainly be read as one of the most potent and enduring warnings against substance abuse that exists in our language' (p. 203) and as 'the story of a need for balance' (p. 210).

In his Introduction, Reed acknowledges other critical readings of duality in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for instance those focussing on homo-social or homosexual identities, or fears around degeneration and moral atavism. However, Reed contends that

for all the insight and usefulness of these prior studies, if one stands back from the novella and looks for its most consistent patterns of language, plot, characterization, and imagery, no subtext emerges any more strongly or any more consequentially than the subtext of alcoholism. (p. 3)

Reed's study thus shares the advantages and disadvantages of other strong, tendentious readings – it is compelling and (mostly) well supported in itself, but it also closes Stevenson's text down. Even if we may not wish to accept Reed's reading as the only and most plausible explanation of doubleness in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Reed's book serves as another elucidating and accessibly written entry into Stevenson's tale of dual identity. By identifying alcoholism as yet another possible subtext, Reed's study in fact serves as a useful and powerful reminder of the multiple layers of meanings in this fascinating fin-de-siècle novella.

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## Contributors

**Ron Butlin.** Before taking up writing full-time Ron Butlin was, at various times, a pop lyricist, a barnacle scraper, a footman and a male model. He is the current Makar (Poet Laureate) for Edinburgh, the UNESCO City of Literature. *The Sound of My Voice* was awarded the Prix MillePages 2004 and Prix Lucioles 2005, both for Best Foreign Novel. His several collections of short stories include *No More Angels* (2007). His fiction and poetry have been translated into over ten languages. His recent opera, *The Perfect Woman* (composer, Lyell Cresswell) was commissioned by Scottish Opera. He lives in Edinburgh with his wife, the writer Regi Claire, and their dog.

**Alan Grant** was a writer of women's romantic fiction until he had a brainstorm. He has been a freelance comic writer since 1982, handling British and American comic icons such as Batman, Judge Dredd, Lobo, Strontium Dog, Terminator, The Demon, L.E.G.I.O.N. and Sam Slade, RoboHunter. He has also adapted the R.L.S. classics *Kidnapped* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* into graphic novel format.

Grant has written around a dozen novels – half of which were for children – and has worked on several animated feature films including LEGO's *Bionicles: Mask of Light*, *Action Man in Robot Atak* and more than a dozen episodes of the hit TV show *Ace Lightning and the Carnival of Doom*. His new children's novel, *Prototype*, is released in the US this summer, and he is currently working on the script for a feature-length animated movie to be produced by the German company 4k-animation.

**Diana Hendry** has published three collections of poems, *Making Blue*, *Borderers* (both Peterloo) and *Twelve Lilts: Psalms and Responses* (Mariscat). Her short stories have been published and broadcast widely. She has also written 40 books for children (Whitbread Award for *Harvey Angel*). She has worked







as an English teacher, journalist and creative writing tutor. She lives in Edinburgh. She is currently a Royal Literary Fellow attached to Edinburgh University and has a new collection of poems forthcoming. She and Hamish Whyte recently co-edited *Poems United: A Commonwealth Anthology* (Scottish Poetry Library/Black & White), a collection for children produced as part of Glasgow's bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

**Cam Kennedy** is a native of Glasgow. He worked in commercial art until going freelance in 1967 to draw for D. C. Thomson's *Commando* comics. After a spell in France with his own painting, he returned to Scotland and comic strips, drawing Judge Dredd for *2000AD*. He worked for DC comics in America and produced his own series, *The Light and Darkness War* for Marvell Comics with writer Tom Veitch. He drew Stevenson's *Kidnapped* adapted by Alan Grant for Edinburgh's City of Literature project in 2007, and some of this art has been bought by the National Library of Scotland. The same team produced *Jekyll and Hyde* for the One Book – One Edinburgh 2008 campaign.

**David Kinloch** was born in Glasgow in 1959. He grew up there and was educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford. For many years a teacher of French language and literature, he is currently Reader in English at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow where he teaches creative writing. His publications include *The Thought and Art of Joseph Joubert, 1754-1824* (Clarendon Press, 1992) and three collections of poetry *Paris-Forfar* (Polygon, 1994); *Un Tour d'Écosse* (Carcanet, 2001); and *In My Father's House* (Carcanet, 2005). He was a recipient of the Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial Award in 2004, and recently won a Scottish Arts Council Writer's Bursary.

**Patrick McGrath** is the author of two story collections and seven novels, including *Port Mungo*, *Dr. Haggard's Disease* and *Spider*, which he adapted for the screen, and which was directed by David Cronenberg. His *Martha Peake: A Novel of the*





*Revolution* won Italy's Premio Flaiano Prize, and his 1996 novel *Asylum* was short listed for both the Whitbread and Guardian fiction prizes in Britain. *Ghost Town: Tales of Manhattan Then and Now* was published in 2005. His seventh novel, *Trauma*, was published in July 2008. He is the co-editor of an influential collection of short fiction, *The New Gothic*, and has one other produced screenplay to his credit, an adaptation of his first novel *The Grotesque*. His work is published in more than two dozen countries. He is married to the actor and director Maria Aitken. He lives in New York.

**Donal McLaughlin** was born in N. Ireland in 1961, and has lived in Scotland since 1970. He was Scottish PEN's first-ever *écrivain sans frontières* and is a recent winner of RLS Memorial Award. Donal has represented the City of Glasgow in both Berne ('Scottish Writing Fellow') and Nuremberg. Known for his short stories, he has completed a first novel, *Lanzarote*. His translation work includes a stage version of Bernhard Schlink's best-selling novel, *The Reader* (with Chris Dolan); a bilingual edition of the poems of Stella Rotenberg, *Shards*; and over 30 Swiss writers for important anthologies. He has also edited selections of contemporary Scottish, Slovene & Latvian writing.

**Barry Menikoff** is Professor of English and American Studies at the University of Hawaii. He has published broadly on 19th and 20th century topics, and his most recent book is *Narrating Scotland: The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson* (2005).

**Cees Nooteboom**, the Dutch novelist, poet, playwright, essayist and travel-writer has won numerous European awards (and been proposed for the Nobel prize) in recognition of his work. He has been a traveller for over fifty years and his work, widely translated, has often been derived from these journeys and the poetic reflections and meditations that arise from them. His writing blurs the boundaries of genre, somewhere between essay, poetry and diary, and the passage he has offered us, spe-





cially translated for this journal, comes from the volume *Tumbas*, (Schirmer/Mosel, 2006).

**James Robertson** was born in 1958 in Sevenoaks, Kent, but grew up in Bridge of Allan from the age of six. He studied history at the University of Edinburgh and has lived in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Fife and now Angus. He is a poet, editor, writer of fiction and essayist. His fiction includes two collections of short stories and three novels, *The Fanatic* (2000), *Joseph Knight* (2003) and *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006). He is also a co-founder of Itchy Co., an imprint established in 2002 specialising in books for children in Scots, and is the imprint's general editor and a contributing author.

**Suhayl Saadi** is a Glasgow-based novelist and stage/ radio dramatist. His novel, *Psychoraag*, short-listed for the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, won a PEN Oakland Award and was acclaimed by the Scottish Book Trust and *The List* magazine as one of the Top 100 Scottish books of all time. His work has been adapted for stage and screen; he has edited a number of anthologies and has penned song lyrics for modern classical compositions. He has written extensively for the UK national Press, the BBC and the British Council and currently is working on another novel.

**Louise Welsh** is the author of three novels, *The Bullet Trick* (2006), *Tamburlaine Must Die* (2004) and *The Cutting Room* (2002), all published by Canongate Books. Her most recent award is City of Glasgow Lord Provost's Award for Literature. She was a stipendiat at the Villa Concordia, Bamberg between 2006-2007 and has recently been granted a Civitella Ranieri Foundation Fellowship. Louise has presented radio features on Robert Louis Stevenson's work and life, written a preface to Canongate Books' edition of *Kidnapped* (2007) and even managed to interview the great man for *Zembla*.





**Hamish Whyte** was born near Glasgow where he lived for many years before moving to Edinburgh in 2004. He is a poet, editor and former librarian. He runs Mariscat Press publishing poetry and has edited many anthologies of Scottish literature, including *The Scottish Cat* and *Mungo's Tongues: Glasgow Poems 1630-1990*. His latest poetry publication is the long poem *Window on the Garden* (essence/botanic) and he has a new collection forthcoming from Shoestring Press. He is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Scottish Literature at Glasgow University.





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**Volume One** of the Journal, published in July 2004, contains essays by Richard Ambrosini, Steven Arata, Oliver S. Buckton, Liam Connell, Richard Dury, Vincent Giroud, Douglas S. Mack, Sudesh Mishra, Glenda Norquay, Olena M. Turnbull, Richard J. Walker, Roderick Watson.

**Volume Two** appeared the autumn of 2005, with essays by Hilary J. Beattie, Sara Clayson, Richard Dury, Liz Farr, William Gray, Gordon Hirsch, Jürgen Kramer.

**Volume Three** appeared in the winter of 2006 with a poem by Jim C. Wilson and essays by Giuseppe Albano, Katherine Linehan, Wendy Katz, Katherine Linehan, Laanvanyan Ratnapalan, Roger G. Swearingen, Saverio Tomaiuolo.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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