



# Journal of Stevenson Studies Volume 7





ii

*Journal of Stevenson Studies*





## Editors

Professor Linda Dryden  
Centre for Literature and  
Writing  
School of Arts and Creative  
Industries  
Napier University  
Craighouse  
Edinburgh  
EH10 5LG  
Scotland  
Tel: 0131 455 6128  
Email: l.dryden@napier.ac.uk

Professor Emeritus  
Roderick Watson  
English Studies  
University of Stirling  
Stirling  
FK9 4LA  
Scotland  
Tel: 01786 475971  
Email: r.b.watson@stir.ac.uk

Contributions to volume 8 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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University of Stirling





## Contents

Editorial .....	1
<b>Jean Taylor</b>	
Vailima .....	4
<b>David Annwn</b>	
‘The Gnome’s Lighted Scrolls’: consumerism and pre-cinematic visual technologies in <i>The Strange</i> <i>Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> .....	9
<b>Dana Fore</b>	
Snatching identity: ‘passing’ and disabled monstrosity in Stevenson’s <i>Jekyll and Hyde</i> and ‘The Body Snatcher’ .....	33
<b>Sara Wasson</b>	
Olalla’s legacy: Twentieth-century vampire fiction and genetic previvorship .....	55
<b>Jeremy Lim</b>	
Calvinism and forms of storytelling: Mackellar’s parental voice in <i>The Master of Ballantrae</i> .....	83
<b>Glenda Norquay</b>	
‘Squandering names’: place, nomenclature and cultural identity .....	107
Uncollected Stevenson	
<b>Roger G. Swearingen</b>	
‘On the Art of Literature’ (1880) – a reading text.....	131
<b>Caroline A. Howitt</b>	
Stevenson and Economic Scandal: ‘Our City Men No. 1 – A Salt-water Financier’ .....	143
<b>Reviews</b> .....	157
<b>Contributors</b> .....	163
<b>JSS Notes</b> .....	169







## Editorial

The essays in this, the seventh volume of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, demonstrate how different fields of discourse can bring new insights to bear on Stevenson studies. David Annwyn's piece on pre-cinematic visual technologies and Dana Fore's engagement with how we relate to physical disablement each offer fresh perspectives on *Jekyll and Hyde*, while Sara Wasson's reflections on vampirism and the Gothic are discussed in the light of genetic and medical theory both past and present. Glenda Norquay's essay on nomenclature and identity develops insights into how place and place-names resonate with 'excess signification' for Stevenson, while Jeremy Lim's study of *The Master of Ballantrae* builds on some of Professor Norquay's own insights to say still more on the echoes of Calvinism to be found in the Scottish author's work and thought.

The poems that open this issue come from a creative writing workshop for adult students tutored by Stephanie Green. Under the remit of a 'Sense of Place: Edinburgh' the class visited, among other venues, the National Museum of Scotland, The Royal College of Surgeons' Museum and the Phoebe Traquair Mansfield Centre. But it was the photographs in the RLS collection at the Writers' Museum, and one print in particular, that inspired Jean Taylor's 'Vailima' sequence. Our thanks are due to Jean Taylor and also to the Writers' Museum, Edinburgh Museums & Galleries for permission to reproduce the photograph in question. This and many other prints from the collection can also be accessed on the RLS website.

This editorial is written in the afterglow of a very successful conference on 'Locating Stevenson' which saw the biennial event return to the University of Stirling ten years after the first conference was held on 'Stevenson, Scotland and Samoa'. With plenary speakers Stuart Kelly and James Robertson, 50 papers and 76 participants this was a full programme and the editors





are requesting submissions from the conference for publication in volume 8 of the *Journal* in 2011. Submissions should be in WORD files, in MHRA format (with endnotes, please, rather than footnotes) and we require material to arrive with us by 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011. As always, every essay received will be sent for review by members of the editorial board. In the event that we cannot find space for papers that have been accepted, we may ask if publication in the next volume of the *Journal* would be acceptable to the author.

The Stirling conference ended with a discussion about where the next one should be held in 2012, with suggestions made for Samoa, California and France. Perhaps the proposal for a South Pacific venue had more glamour than feasibility, but in any case no clear commitment was made in the end, pending further canvassing and further consultation between individuals and their institutions. Potentially interested scholars or institutions are strongly encouraged to get in touch with the *Journal's* editors if they wish to host this popular and productive event, and we will be glad to act as a clearing house and a source of advice to organisers in the preliminary stages.

This volume introduces a new series of occasional submissions under the running title 'Uncollected Stevenson', which will feature previously uncollected notes, essays or fragments from Stevenson's output, many of which may eventually appear between the covers of the New Edinburgh Edition. One contribution per issue will probably be the norm, according to its length, but we are pleased to launch the project with two submissions. 'On the Art of Literature' is introduced by Roger Swearingen and edited by himself and Richard Dury. It is a fascinating draft outline of a book proposal, from one of Stevenson's notebooks, never published, but clearly relevant to the aesthetic theories put forward in 'A Gossip on Romance' and 'A Note on Realism' from the early 1880s. Swearingen, currently writing a full-length biography of Stevenson for Faber and Faber, needs no







introduction as a major Stevenson scholar and bibliographer, and Dury is, of course, our consulting colleague on the *Journal* and one of the series editors for the New Edinburgh Edition. Caroline Howitt is a much younger scholar working on a thesis on 'Aspects of Romance in the Prose of Robert Louis Stevenson' at the University of St Andrews, and she introduces a Stevenson article from *London* in 1877, noting that the financial scandal he describes may echo those in recent years. In fact Stevenson's writing for this short-lived periodical shows a continuing interest in economics and the stock market —a theme that would certainly come to feature again in his late novel *The Wrecker* that wonderful black comedy of capitalism.

Finally, you may note with relief that subscriptions for the *Journal* can now be taken in Pounds Sterling, Euros, US or Canadian dollars, and other currencies by agreement.

Roderick Watson and Linda Dryden





## Vailima

Three poems on the photograph

'Stevenson with his wife, step-daughter and mother, Sydney 1893'

*Jean Taylor*



### 1. Margaret

How did I fetch up here  
in my black bombazine  
my stiff white lace?

Heat drips from the palm trees,  
drizzles down my northern spine.

He has made me a wanderer,  
my Louis – always tuppence-coloured,  
never penny-plain.





See where he stretches his long bones  
along the rattan couch  
still just a child, playing  
with his pen and paper.

His stories remind me  
of that brass kaleidoscope.  
He spins their pretty coloured pictures  
into pirates, wicked uncles,  
treasures and tontines.

How did I fetch up here?

The vegetation is excessive.  
Burr grass sprawls across the yard.  
Lianas writhe around  
the posts of the verandah.

Hibiscus flowers bloom scarlet  
like blood dripping on counterpanes.

His wife is loose, unguarded;  
her lassie crowds too close.

They call him Tusi Tala, Teller of Tales.  
I am here because he is my only child  
and I will always be his first mother.

## **2. Fanny**

God, it is hot.  
Even in the shade of the verandah  
there is no relief.





Heat drips from the palm trees,  
swells and leaks  
from the bruises of pineapples.

It rivers below my breasts,  
melts its way down the nubble of my spine.

My daughter blooms in this damp heat:  
lush, ripe, glistening;  
at one with the vegetation.

Burr grass splurges across the yard.  
Lianas convulse themselves  
around the uprights of the verandah.

Belle braids their tendrils into her hair.

Hibiscus open their scarlet jaws  
in the sunlight, spilling  
their bloodied petals across my path.

### **3. Belle**

I love this island  
the way the light shimmers at dawn,  
colours as vivid as parrot feathers;  
leaching bone white at noon.  
Night falls early and sudden.

Mother is slackened by the heat.  
It is unstitching her brain.

I love the humming birds,  
the smell of the ylang ylang  
the sweet melt of bananas on my tongue.





Louis seems to breathe more easily.

The burr grass is exuberant,  
luxuriant, full of its own joy.  
The lianas insinuate themselves  
like anacondas, around the house.

‘Aunt Maggie’ watches me.  
She is a sooty tern  
ready to strike  
with her long black beak.

It is so hot. Louis is frail:  
a loose-hinged crane hobbling  
on his house of stilts.

I try to keep things pretty;  
take down his words  
wash the blood from his handkerchiefs.







## ‘The Gnome’s Lighted Scrolls’: consumerism and pre-cinematic visual technologies in *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

*David Annwn*

For Elizabeth McCarthy

His friend and correspondent, Henry James, called Robert Louis Stevenson ‘the only man in England who can write a decent English sentence.’<sup>1</sup> James would certainly appreciate the Scottish writer’s exacting skill in occasionally producing Janus-faced sentences, especially to embody a devilish complacency. Utterson, Dr Jekyll’s lawyer, a ‘cold, scanty’ man who never smiles is, it seems, nonetheless ‘somehow lovable’:

At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beacons from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face.<sup>2</sup>

The word ‘beacons’ strikes one as welcoming as does ‘something eminently human’. Yet as the opening description develops, the reader is surely right to feel uneasy at the duplicity of the language:

But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. ‘I incline to Cain’s heresy,’ he used to say quaintly: ‘I let my brother go to the devil in his own way.’ In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the





last good influence in the lives of downgoing men. (*Jekyll*, p. 7.)

The references to ‘approved tolerance’ and ‘help’ sound laudable in such a ‘buttoned-up’ character, but in reading ‘help’ and ‘in any extremity’ we are prompted to question the kind of help and extremity involved. Read carefully, the *laissez-faire* moral in his ‘quaint’: ‘I let my brother go to the devil in his own way’, (humorous though it might at first seem), acquires an unsettling menace. To be the ‘last good influence in the lives of downgoing men’ makes the reader probe the irony here, to wonder whether Utterson’s pride in his forbearance is well founded. In the face of such self-destructive tendencies, is this faculty admirable or damnable in its reticence? This alignment of ‘last reputable’, ‘acquaintance’, the plural of ‘downgoing men’ and the frailty of ‘good’ might indeed give us pause. After all, if Utterson is so ‘good’ why does he wait to be ‘last’? Perhaps we might begin to wonder if Utterson, (nominally marked out as the ‘son of ‘Utter’ as in ‘carried to the utmost point’, or, as a verb, ‘to speak’), is, actually, a very subtle but extreme type of ‘reputable’ monster.



In *Caligari’s Children*, S. S. Prawer sees the description of the lawyer’s nightmare as offering proleptic hints at a media which was, at the time of writing, unknown:

What is so remarkable here, in our context, is the cinematic imagination already at work before the cinema had become a reality: those ‘silent symbols of the [. . .] face will become one of the staples of early films, after Griffith had shown what meaningful uses could be made of close-ups. But Utterson’s own imagination, too, is presented in a way that makes it for us recognizably cinematic<sup>3</sup>

Such claims are neither new nor made exclusively toward







Stevenson; for example, Grahame Smith makes a case for Charles Dickens's perceptions and metaphors anticipating the development of film.<sup>4</sup> Prawer does, of course, contextualize his words here; he makes it plain that, in making these statements, he is thinking back retrospectively from a book about Weimar horror cinema. In back-tracking to a work of 1885 from the viewpoint of a critic considering 1920s and 1930s cinema, he is finding anticipatory imagery, imagery that foretells the films of Griffith, or perhaps, even closer to home, that prefigures the Lumières' films of 1895. Of course, literature can prove technically proleptic in such ways; we think of Jules Verne's depiction of a kind of FAX-machine in Paris in the Twentieth Century and William Gibson's prophetic SF novels on the threshold of an age of cybernetic implants and virtual avatars.

Of course, one could adopt a culturally-inclusive approach and answer that it is not only *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* which manifests the 'cinematic imagination already at work before the cinema had become a reality', but the multifarious visual technologies of the West which are predictive in this way. Yet that would be to blur important distinctions within those media. To take one example of such blurring, Prawer's relation of Stevenson's 'silent symbols of the [. . .] face' with Griffith's close-ups, seems to pass over in silence the fact that magic lantern slide-show studios, such as that of Auguste Lapierre, had been using 'close-ups' of faces, 'medium shots', 'establishing shots' and 'long pans' since the 1850s.<sup>5</sup> In such terms then, Stevenson's novella no more anticipates cinema than it reprises, looks back on and looks sideways to pre-cinematic media.

The section where Prawer finds 'Utterson's own imagination' presented in 'a way that makes it for us recognizably cinematic' deals with the lawyer's restless nightmares after hearing of Hyde's brutality and also being aware of the existence of his client Dr Jekyll's, will, which unaccountably favours the mysterious Hyde:





It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness and besieged by questions.

Six o'clock stuck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson's dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, *Mr. Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures.*

He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding.

The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming.<sup>6</sup>

The italics are Praver's own. He comments: 'No wonder that film-directors and script-writers were fascinated by Stevenson!' <sup>7</sup> Indeed, from such a viewpoint, if mental images passing 'before his mind in a scroll of lighted picture' strike one as proto-cinematic, why not the overview of the city





as ‘great field of lamps’, the sudden voyeuristic view into a bed-room, the ever-accelerating figure of Hyde and endless multiplication of the violent act across the nocturnal city?

Yet ‘scrolls of lighted pictures’, (that is, lit through an aperture by sunlight), had long been well-known features of popular peep-show amusements, the *vues d’optiques*. Newer technologies had also been developing the idea of pictures on ‘scrolls’. On the 27th June 1884, the Americans George Eastman and W. H. Walker had patented the positive and negative paper which was to prove so important for the chronophotography movement, and Étienne-Jules Marey in particular, in obtaining images on long strips of sensitized paper.

To follow the challenge of Jerome McGann, Stephen Greenblatt and others in their work on re-locating and evoking Modernist texts and textural reception in time and context, I would like to suggest a change to Praver’s cinematic formulation and, in doing so, re-position Stevenson’s tale culturally and in terms of contemporary consumerism. In these opening sections of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, I would argue that Utterson’s own imagination is presented in a way that makes it for us recognizably *pre-cinematic*. My aim in re-focalising this critical approach is three-fold. I do not think that, given the recent great resurgence of interest in pre-cinematic technologies, especially over the last decade, that we can sustain such an ahistorical monocular view of visual technology and its impact on writing without considerable strain. Secondly, I do think that Praver’s view, (in the context of this new appreciation of pre-cinematic media), seems to permit if not encourage the elision of a vitally distinctive age, (say, 1850-1885), of labourers in emergent visual cultures, and this tendency invites challenge. Marey and Émile Reynaud and their visions were emphatically not the same as those of the Lumière brothers or Thomas A. Edison and Griffith, and this is a vital distinction. Thirdly, an understanding following on from such a theoretical adjustment, brings with it new insights





into the relations between Stevenson's visual imagery, lantern technology and consumerist culture as it was developing in the 1880s. Such insights might even serve to change our sense of the novel as a whole.



In his essay, 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', Stevenson writes of his childhood fascination with Skelt's toy theatre involving cut-out characters, sets and an exciting storyline, but in the late 1850s new competition to this medium began to burgeon.<sup>8</sup> New entertainments made the toy theatre look pedestrian compared to the technical gadgetry of the Praxinoscope, Zoetrope, Kinetoscope, Chromatrope, Magic Lantern and other similar projection devices.

Stevenson became a life long enthusiast of the magic lantern. In his youth, he mounted his own impromptu phantasmagoria and undertook to make his younger cousins see ghosts and spectres produced by means of a magic lantern worked by threads passing out under the door.<sup>9</sup> Richard Holmes remarks that, later, Stevenson had a magic lantern machine 'with which he loved to entertain his visitors as he travelled round the globe'.<sup>10</sup> In an 1892 letter of 4th September 1892 to Miss Adelaide Boodle's students in England, Stevenson describes officers from an English ship in harbour who:

very good-naturedly gave an entertainment of songs and dances and a magic-lantern show [. . .] The great affair was the magic-lantern. The hall was made quite dark, which was very little to Arick's [a young Samoan boy] taste. He sat there behind the housekeeper, [. . .] and his heart beating finely in his little scarred breast. And presently there came out on the white sheet that great bright eye of light that I am sure all you children must have often seen.<sup>11</sup>

Stevenson knows he is writing to boys well versed in the opera-





tion of the lantern. As late as 1889, Ann C. Colley has shown that Stevenson, Charles Baxter and Lloyd Osbourne were working together on a photographic record, (of the Islands), for dioramic or panoramic display.<sup>12</sup>

In an earlier groundbreaking essay on Stevenson's art of recollection, Colley specifies the importance of optical references in his work and, in particular, the kaleidoscope, the mirror, the thaumatrope and magic lantern as primary metaphors for the processes of recollection. She develops her argument:

The figures of the kaleidoscope, the mirror, and the thaumatrope seem to belong to a more conscious act of remembrance. One has to twist the images in the kaleidoscope, to choose to look into the mirror, or to pull the toy's strings. The lasting image that emerges is one, therefore, that appears gradually, after preparation. As with the filtering hour glass of time, one has to let the image detach itself from the chaos and arbitrary arrangement of particulars around it. The figure of the magic-lantern slide, though, suggests a different kind of experience, one in which images from the past unconsciously and suddenly flash brightly into the mind's eye.<sup>13</sup>

We have been told of Mr Utterson, that 'something eminently human beamed from his eye', an image which of course reminds us of Stevenson's lighthouse-keeper's father, but also of the beam projected by a man's gaze. Such metaphors linking human vision with the camera obscura and the magic lantern are as old as Kepler and Julien Offray de La Mettrie's 1747 text *L'homme machine*. Thus describing Utterson's act of seeing as a transmitter of light, should alert us to the fact that, later, in his imaginatively-enslaved, restless consciousness, trapped between insomnia and nightmare, 'images from the past' will 'flash brightly into the mind's eye'.





Stevenson's poem 'To My Old Familiars' straightforwardly relates human consciousness to the magic lantern:

So, as in darkness, from the magic lamp,  
The momentary pictures gleam and fade  
And perish, and the night resurges—these  
Shall I remember, and then all forget?<sup>14</sup>

The 'scrolls of lighted pictures', seen by Utterson in his troubled insomnia and sleep will successively reveal: 'a great field of lamps of a nocturnal city', 'the figure of a man walking swiftly', 'a child running from the doctor's', the assault, and then 'a room in a rich house', the sleeping Jekyll 'smiling at his dreams' awakened by the powerful stranger.

The narrator tells us that these sensations comprise 'two' basic 'phases'; when Utterson dozes, the scenes seem to coalesce in a way that resembles the spinning action of a thaumatrope, moving more and more swiftly 'even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming.' Both the thaumatrope and the whirling effect of a zoetrope's pierced barrel are evoked in the final sentences.



We become aware that the depiction of Utterson's visions draws upon methods involved in operating a veritable assemblage of pre-cinematic optical technologies, also noting that the *modus operandi* of these visual entertainments are here made to clash and blur with each other. The fluctuating viewpoint, the leaps from the city, (long shot), to close-ups of figures, to the room, to Jekyll, and back to city are suggestive; surely in these examples of what we might today call 'jump-cuts', we actually do see the hints of Prawer's 'cinematic imagination already at work before the cinema had become a reality'?

Yet, in fact, another optical technology contemporary with





Stevenson's creation fully explains the link between the cuts to overview, the city nightscapes and the 'scrolls of lighted pictures'. As I've written above, peepshows and projections featuring Eastman's paper consist of scrolls but the other technology involved more than any other here is the panorama. Moving panoramas, from the most enormous of pictures to the children's hand-held toys were 'peristrepic': the unrolling painting was pulled across a very slight convex, (curving outward) surface, adding an extra sense of movement. 'The great field of lamps of a nocturnal city' and 'lamplighted labyrinths' shift us into wide-focused urban scenes captured from above as in the bird's eye view of London exhibited at the Colosseum panorama in Regent's Park.

Crucially, by the time he was writing *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the widespread panorama revival was in full spate:

New rotundas were erected in London, Paris, Brussels, Rotterdam, the Hague, Berlin and St Petersburg.<sup>15</sup>

The exhibitions and clusters of lectures and articles associated with Eadweard Muybridge's panorama of San Francisco were contemporary with Stevenson's stay on the West Coast of America. True, the writer was largely debilitated by illness during the first part of that visit but he can hardly have been unaware of the cultural furore surrounding this work. As in the case of the magic lantern and as Colley has described, Stevenson's interest in this media's resurgence is well attested. He had written that the vast span of life itself was 'Life's enchanted scroll'. He even linked the condition of some of the longer-standing panoramas with human fate:

When the generation is gone, when the play is over, when the thirty years' panorama has been withdrawn in tatters from the stage<sup>16</sup>





It is to these vast canvasses that we turn when we read of the scrolled pictures of a 'great field of lamps of a nocturnal city' and 'wider labyrinths of lamplighted city'. It is true that Stevenson had in reality viewed many cities from above, Edinburgh's lamp-lit streets in particular from 'craggy' hills and with 'a bird's eye view'. Though he was fascinated by balloon-flight, his mind's eye had no need of Nadar's aerial photography.

Indeed, in *Picturesque Notes*, the Calton Hill chapter suddenly focuses upon:

Holyrood Palace, with its Gothic frontal and ruined abbey,  
and the red sentry pacing smartly to and fro before the  
door like a mechanical figure in a panorama.<sup>17</sup>

Utterson's mind envisages Hyde's figure running 'through wider labyrinths', crushing a child at each corner. The uncanny blurring and multiplication of the Hyde-figure till it commits its violent act on each street corner, closes with a mystery:

And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him, and melted before his eyes; [. . .] If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away. [. . .] And at least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy (*Jekyll*, p. 16).

Hyde's ubiquity, his spectral multiplication is accompanied by a facelessness, or the notion of a face that melts away. Of course, thwarted curiosity, an urgent need to see his client's companion is the ostensible trigger for these visions but the narrator stalls and repeats himself as if puzzled: 'even in his dreams, it had no face'. In all other respects, Utterson's oneiric vision seems preternatural in scope, but there is this lacuna in perception. An







obscured or hidden face is not the same, of course, as 'no face' or a face that melts away.



To consider Stevenson's politics is a complex matter and the issue needs to be approached carefully. Despite having, as a young man, embarked on training for the generally conservative profession of law, he had rebelled against this lifestyle. At times in later life he described himself as 'a communist' and thought that, as Jenni Calder writes: 'Morally socialism was the only decent route for mankind.'<sup>18</sup> Though receptive to the aristocratic and socialistic quietism of Tolstoy, in the light 'of the incoherence and incapacity of it all', he sometimes leaned towards the 'imperialist conservative' ethos which he found in 'Dostoevsky'.<sup>19</sup> He had also known considerable poverty in his life. When we do see political enthusiasm seize his imagination, it comes in the form of a strong association with the underdog, as in his feelings regarding the victims of mob violence in Ireland.<sup>20</sup> The author of 'The Foreigner at Home' was also stunned by his first view of the English peasant class in situ:

The dull, neglected peasant, sunk in matter, insolent, gross, servile [. . .] A week or two in such a place as Suffolk leaves the Scotchman gasping. It seems incredible that within the boundaries of his own island a class should have been thus forgotten.<sup>21</sup>

The urban poor fared no better as we see from the tramps, doorstep-trading children, 'slatternly passengers' and mothers 'passing out' for a breakfast of gin in *Dr Jekyll*. Stevenson was particularly damning about the Oxford and Cambridge educational system which served to separate the English upper class future policy-maker even 'further from the bulk of his compatriots'.<sup>22</sup>





In probing the reasons for Hyde's uncanny multiplication, (which isn't simply a case of double-identity or a doppelgänger but of a Hyde on every London street-corner), and his facelessness, or face that melts away, I want to return to the description of the area in which the figure first appears:

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

This is a deal of detail to devote to shops in this 'bogy tale' of a 'Gothic gnome'.<sup>23</sup> It is close to these establishments that 'a certain sinister block of building thrusts forward its gable onto the street.' The proximity of these shops, 'laying out the surplus of their grains in coquetry', to the entrance of the savage, faceless Hyde is striking. It is here that Enfield's story begins: 'Street after street, and the folks asleep – street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church' (p. 9.) We note the empty church here; it is no mere accident that it's a church-bell that chimes in Utterson's nightmare. After having heard Enfield's tale, Utterson will become a fixture of this small corner of the business world in his search for Hyde:





From that time forward, Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the by-street of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon when business was plenty, and time scarce (p. 17.)

Such scenes might bear comparison with another description of commerce:

Two allegorical figures, two laughing women with bare breasts thrust forward, were unrolling a scroll bearing the inscription: *The Ladies' Paradise*. [. . .] There in this chapel built for the worship of woman's beauty and grace were the clothes [. . .] There was something for every whim, from evening wraps at twenty-nine francs to the velvet coat priced at eighteen hundred francs. The dummies' round bosoms swelled out the material [. . .] whole mirrors on either side of the windows had been skilfully arranged to reflect dummies, multiplying them endlessly, seeming to fill the street with these beautiful women for sale with huge price tags where their heads should have been.<sup>24</sup>

This scene from a translation of Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames / The Ladies' Paradise* (1883), also makes Stevenson's link between shopkeeping and sexual allure, a mirrored multiplication and an absence of human facial features in the display. If we have wondered about the almost Blakean fervour of Stevenson's imagery of shops blazing in contrast to their neighbourhood, like 'a fire in a forest', Brian Nelson reminds us that Zola too was keen to stress the power of electrical illumination of these new waves of expanding department stores, even at the expense of historical accuracy.<sup>25</sup> Stevenson famously hated electrical illumination in contrast to gas lighting and, of course, a fire destroys the forest it feeds off.





In citing Walter Benjamin's celebrated study of the Parisian arcades, and his linking of the sale of commodities to the vocabulary of optical spectacle or phantasmagoria, Nelson writes of the Second Empire stores that –

If commodities had first promised to fulfil human desires, now they created them; dreams themselves became commodities.<sup>26</sup>

There's no mistaking the impress of Marx's theories of Surplus Value on Stevenson's cool, disapproving analysis of street capitalism: 'The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their grains in coquetry'. The Scottish writer also, he tells us, played 'the sedulous ape' (*Memories*, p. 43), that is, a diligent and persevering imitator of Baudelaire, that same Baudelaire who wrote of the lure of commodity and its accompanying commodification of women. As Anne Friedberg maintains regarding Baudelaire's image of women with 'eyes lit up like shops' to lure their trade, 'the woman is almost a shop mannequin' who borrows her power of allure from 'the luxury item in the shop window' and, as a result, 'carnal commodities on sale...'<sup>27</sup> In a reverse form of parataxis, Stevenson's inviting shops are 'like rows of smiling saleswomen'. Hyde issues from these environs and Utterson envisions him multiplying seemingly endlessly and trampling down a little girl on every corner of the city. The commercial ironies are very clear. Stevenson's treatment of the commodification of women and the use of sexual allure in the market-place also bears comparison with a flurry of novels engaging with such themes, such as Wilkie Collins's *No Name* and Anthony Trollope's *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robertson*, both from 1862.

The multiplication of the 'crushed child' also reminds of Susan Buck-Morss's thoughts on Benjamin and Baudelaire:





The mass produced article had its own allure. Benjamin observes: 'With the new manufacturing processes that leads us unto imitations, an illusory appearance [*Schein*] settles into the commodity.' Baudelaire was not immune to its intoxication. He wrote: 'The pleasure of being within the crowd is a mysterious expression of the delight [*jouissance*] of the multiplication of numbers.'<sup>28</sup>

She goes on to quote from Baudelaire's 'The Seven Old Men', a poem which Benjamin claims 'exposes the human physiognomy of mass production. It takes the form of an 'anxiety-filled phantasmagoria,' a 'seven-times repeated apparition of a repulsive-looking old man.'

To what infamous plot was I exposed,  
Or what evil luck humiliated me thus?  
For seven times, as I counted minute to minute  
This sinister old fellow multiplied!<sup>29</sup>

Continuing Stevenson's oneiric blurring of different visual media, Hyde's multiplying, repeated image is also symptomatic of a post-photographic age, an age which was quick to use the camera to protect the bourgeois classes against perceived social threat:

Repetition in photography comprises a wide range of manifestations that have formed a significant part of photographic practice from the early development of the medium. Repetition figured in the use of photographs in racial and criminal studies (in which the repetitive use of portraits was used to identify what were thought to be the physiological foundations of traits and behaviors)<sup>30</sup>

In case we don't quite glimpse the author's implicit outrage at the





destructiveness of the exploitative commercial system manifest in the bright stores, the narrator describes the children who 'kept shop upon the steps' of Hyde's door, capitalism here glimpsed in microcosm and used for survival by just some of its myriad victims. If we have missed the implications, later we are given a detailed picture of these children's home lives:

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass (*Jekyll*, p. 27.)

Here, James's R. L. Stevenson ("The only man in England who can write a decent English sentence") satisfies himself with simple emphasis by means of understated repetition: 'many ragged children', 'many women', 'many nationalities'; Utterson's friends are a sparse circle of privileged solitaires in comparison. Then the fog intercedes and the impoverished masses are cut from the view of the wealthy lawyer again. The fog itself proves a reminder of industrial-scale coal pollution. Timothy L. Carens writes convincingly of the suspicions of an increasing number of novelists from the late Victorian period that 'savagery lurked within the English state and subject.'<sup>31</sup> This poverty is the necessary by-product of exploitative consumerism and this 'gin palace', 'eating house' and retailer of 'penny numbers', (perhaps Stevenson's grim joke against his own 'low' tale of fear), the horrific counterpart of the bright street of emulous shops mentioned earlier. Such perspectives give new bite to the thought:





This, (Soho), was the home of Henry Jekyll's favourite; of a man who was heir to a quarter of a million sterling. (p. 27.)



In Stevenson's story 'Markheim', a visitor with murderous intent visits a pawnshop, and feverishly challenges its owner, 'the dealer':

'Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving; unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?'<sup>32</sup>

Deranged as the protagonist clearly is, one cannot miss the passion of his rage at the dealer's profession. In a sinister updating of Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the visitor kills the dealer. That is, the character's response to the first rule of capitalistic exploitation, 'a hand to get money', is one of extreme violence. In 'The Body-Snatcher' young medical students pay for the corpses of their freshly murdered acquaintances – humans are seen as commodities again. The implication that runs through these stories is overwhelmingly the denigration of humanity to commodity: What price a life?

The dream vision of Hyde's endlessly recurring violence against the girl is symptomatic of a society which destroys the vulnerable. Mayhew wrote:

The analysis of the return of the coroners' inquests held in London, for the five years ending in 1860, shows a total of 1130 inquisitions on the bodies of children under two years of age, all of whom had been murdered. The average is 226 yearly. Here we have 226 children killed yearly by their parents<sup>33</sup>





By the 1880s, Donald Thomas tells us that ‘Prostitution, which had appropriated the term “gay” to describe itself twenty years earlier, became largely synonymous with child abuse and white slavery.’<sup>34</sup>

Utterson with his complacent *laissez-faire* moral conscience seems a living embodiment of the *laissez faire* economics and Social Darwinism rampant from the 1860s onwards in the metropolis and which we glimpse at work in the Stevenson’s story. In his nightmarish vision he is forced to confront the monster of the self-replicating, faceless demon, Hyde. The demon’s missing face, like Zola’s headless female dummies, is redolent of the destructive de-personalising power of a consumerism based on sheer profit. At the mercy of such savage energies, humanity will become ‘a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, independent denizens.’ (*Jekyll*, p. 62.) Stevenson had watched as, within his lifetime, the makers of contemporary visual technologies, the magic lanterns, zoetropes and panoramas vied and competed with each other with increasing ingenuity. The optical entertainments became both purveyors of spectacle and part of the consumerist spectacle itself, their evolving myriad forms helping to condition the ways in which their audiences perceived experience.

Envisioned through a dazzling array of pre-cinematic visual devices, Hyde in Utterson’s dream becomes the lawyer’s monstrous *alter ego*, (“If he be Mr Hyde,” he had thought, “I shall be Mr Seek.”) This presence manifests itself with the increasing ferocity of a machine and with the impetus of industrialization: a damned Juggernaut, a ubiquitous destruction-machine. It will destroy the redundant, ‘beautiful’ and ‘old’ aristocracy of Sir Danvers Carew as surely as it seeks to destroy the vulnerable poor.

‘If he be Mr Hyde [. . .] I shall be Mr Seek’ might remind us of Wilkie Collins’s novel *Hide and Seek* of 1854; it also revives our sense that Utterson too is already fatefully bound to the young







miscreant, seeker bound to hider. Stevenson uncannily pairs the sleeping Utterson in his curtained bed with the internalized vision of Jekyll, dreaming behind his curtains. Both images draw upon the notion of passive observers viewing a curtained show, (a screen, a stage and the subconscious); both men are drawn on by Hyde.

In the second volume of Alan Moore's graphic novel, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, Allan Quatermain implies that Hyde Park is named in honour of Mr. Edward Hyde, perhaps as a wry registration that the reverse connotation might be true. The Great Exhibition of 1851, that seminal moment of Victorian capitalist display and stock-taking, was sited in Hyde Park. Thomas Richards writes that, at the Exhibition:

the means for producing the world became the means of representation. Thus the Victorian stage put machines on the stage, and after a time the machines *became* the stage. The great innovation of the Great Exhibition [. . .] was that it took this technology of representation to its logical conclusion. [. . .] By placing a spotlight, not only on the means of producing the world (machines), but rather on the things produced (commodities), the Exhibition proposed that the ends of production, the things produced by all the burgeoning forms of industrial technology, become the ends of representation.<sup>35</sup>

In Utterson's nightmarish vision, we witness a Hyde figured in the mind of a sleeper whose optical-cognitive processes mimic the *modus operandi* of contemporary visual spectacles. It is as if, in conceiving this epitome of the violence of *laissez-faire* Victorian economics, a range of methods of optical display are engaged in an attempt to project this evil; magic lantern and peepshow are juxtaposed and coalesce into a zoetrope's blur, the scrolling panorama's images scatter into replicating photographic prints





of violence.

If Hyde Park was a by-word for Imperialist display, for Stevenson it was also famous for the riots which followed the locking out of the Reform League in 1866. The crowd broke down the park railings and fought with police. When there were renewed clashes in 1867, Spencer Walpole, the home secretary, was forced to resign.

Hyde can, in the end, make the right decision to commit suicide and so, on one level at least, rid the world of a truly murderous threat. Reformers can contest the worst bourgeois excesses of the exploitative capitalist industrial system and bring about gradual change. Utterson, who seems such a prig of ruinous complacency at the opening of the novella, can be drawn out of his indifference to 'put' his 'shoulder to the wheel' and into actions to assist those around him. 'Things cannot continue as they are', he ponders but little thinks of how such sentiments might apply to the sleepless children huddled in doorways next to Hyde's Soho home.



Until he knows Jekyll's secret, the young man's will spectrally haunts the lawyer's inner eye: 'For once more he saw before his mind's eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will.' (p. 21.) As Richard Dury has reminded us, 'transparency' here could either refer to a painting on glass or a diorama in which, depending on the source of light, one scene gradually gives way to another.<sup>36</sup> In Jekyll's last scene in a public space, the penitent young man sits in Regent's Park caught between the changing natural signs for winter and spring. For the first time, here, in full public view like a dioramic display, he is openly transformed into Hyde. Regent's Park had, by Stevenson's time, become a zone of defunct visual spectacles, chief amongst them Arrowsmith's Diorama and the immense Colosseum panorama, the buildings of which had long been converted to other uses.<sup>37</sup> Jekyll is increasingly trapped in a bestial physical state, no longer part of the orderly seasonal cycle. His power to transform





himself at will is ebbing; he will become arrested in Hyde's body, an opaque 'transparency', a broken-down diorama. The ironies relating to visual media and consumerist discourse are compelling.

Stevenson actually outlived the advent of moving pictures, as glimpsed in Louis Le Prince's 'Roundhay Garden Scene' (1888), by six years; there is no doubt, had he lived a few years longer, the news of the much more celebrated debut of the Lumière brothers would have excited his interest. Yet Utterson's dream bears witness to a lifetime's fascination with magic lanterns, panoramas, zoetropes and dioramas, media which he had every confidence would continue, as his plans with Baxter and Osbourne attest. It needs to be remembered that if, as I've written elsewhere, Sheridan Le Fanu's novels included the most numerous and detailed references to magic lantern shows, Stevenson's life exhibited the most practical engagement with these visual media.

In fact, actual literary references to the new art of cinema were slow to emerge in English, waiting until Ambrose Bierce's film reviews made the medium respectable. Three years after Stevenson's death, Bram Stoker was to focalise Dracula's first appearance on British soil through dioramic effects. Fourteen years earlier, the visual repertoire of the extant optical media had proved more than sufficient to express the distorted evil of Hyde and brutal Victorian consumerism. Ann Colley quite rightly emphasises Stevenson's enthusiasm for these viewing machines which, for Stevenson, helped recollect time past; yet the disordered visual technologies of Utterson's nightmare also stress the demonic weight and responsibility of a savagely contemporaneous society. Essentially, the optical arena of the 1880s was so rich in scope that Stevenson's imagination had no need of the cinema.





## NOTES

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## Snatching identity: 'passing' and disabled monstrosity in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and 'The Body Snatcher'

*Dana Fore*

When asked about the effect of chronic illness on his writing and personality, Robert Louis Stevenson responded in a letter:

To me, the medicine bottles on my chimney and the blood on my handkerchief are accidents; they do not colour my view of life, as you would know, I think, if you had experience of sickness; they do not exist in my prospect; I would as soon drag them under the eyes of my readers as I would mention a pimple I might chance to have [. . .] on my bottom.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent critics have taken Stevenson at his word, promoting the view that his work is a refuge from his illness and that his art represents the triumph of mind over physical suffering. In 1910 biographer J. A. Hammerton confidently declared that 'in all the extraordinary variety of his writing Robert Louis Stevenson is the consistent preacher of courage and cheer. The writer's own brave and most pathetic life was, as the world knows, a consistent practicing of what he preached'.<sup>2</sup> This view making Stevenson's awareness of his illness essentially incompatible with the greatness of his art has changed little since Hammerton's time, finding an echo in Jenni Calder's assertion that if Stevenson had 'ever more than temporarily accepted the bleakness of his situation, he would never have written himself into men's minds'.<sup>3</sup>

Borrowing concepts of identity from the field of disability studies and applying them to Stevenson's work reveals a more complex psychological dynamic within his writing – one that adds an unexplored facet to Stevenson's well-known fascination





with 'doubles' and double lives. The absolutism of his declaration that disease does 'not exist in [his] prospect' or 'colour' his life suggests that Stevenson is what researchers call a 'super cripp' – a person living with an illness or disability who is acutely aware of the prejudices of able-bodied people and who is therefore driven to perform in some extraordinary manner in order to prove his 'normality' to those around him.<sup>4</sup> Such people never 'overcome' their disabilities in the sense that the term is commonly understood. The silent endurance read as inspirational 'triumph over adversity' by the rest of the world is in fact a form of 'passing' that masks the supercrip's profound anxieties about the fragility of his self-image and public identity.<sup>5</sup>

The supercrip's paranoid sense of corporeal experience is a key influence on *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It also energises the short story 'The Body Snatcher' and makes the minor piece a more personal and uncanny work than has been generally recognised.

Biographer Frank McLynn is unique among Stevenson's critics for his willingness to believe that much of *Jekyll and Hyde* was influenced by Stevenson's illness. McLynn finds that Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde represent 'the man [Stevenson] was – an invalid [. . .] and the man of action he wanted to be'.<sup>6</sup> However, McLynn stops short of a fuller analysis of Stevenson's illness, rendering it into an abstraction instead. He finds that the novel dismisses any real hope for 'vault[ing] free of the prison of the body,' but concludes that Stevenson uses deformity and illness to create a broad analogy between health and illness and 'art and life'.<sup>7</sup>

Stevenson clearly capitalises on his lived experience with illness to energise the novel, but it seems less certain that he ultimately succeeds in effacing this experience by turning it into an abstract symbol for the artistic life. The novel's obsession with bodies on the threshold of collapse makes it more likely that Stevenson is exploiting fears of disability – his own and those







of an able-bodied public – by adding universal physical vulnerability to the broad list of scientific and religious influences that have been examined in the novel by critics such as Richard Dury, Patrick Brantlinger, Richard Walker, William Gray, Stephen Arata and Linda Dryden.<sup>8</sup>

A sensitivity to the nuances of ‘disability identity’ seem all the more likely if, as Claire Harman persuasively argues, Stevenson was both a man to whom the idea of dying from tuberculosis was an ‘overwhelming preoccupation’,<sup>9</sup> and someone with an ‘insatiable appetite for attention and affection’.<sup>10</sup> It seems probable that a writer of this sort would readily exploit the myriad stereotypes attached to illness and disability, given the ways these stereotypes can be manipulated to provoke intense positive or negative reactions from an audience.

For the sake of clarity, a brief examination of *Treasure Island* is helpful at this point, since the pirate tale introduces Stevenson’s typical strategies for engaging with ableist stereotypes, and these strategies help to develop the more complex view of illness and disability presented in ‘The Body Snatcher’ and *Jekyll and Hyde*. What emerges from *Treasure Island* at first glance is that much of the novel’s suspense is generated by blatant reinforcement of negative stereotypes of disability. Evil is linked to illness and deformity on a graduated scale, where the degree of a character’s villainy is reflected by some physical defect – and the more obvious the abnormality, the more monstrous the character. And so the terrifying (but primarily loud and obnoxious) Billy Bones is graced with only a ‘saber cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white’;<sup>11</sup> in contrast, blind Pew is a ‘horrible, soft-spoken, eyeless creature’ who threatens Jim Hawkins with violence and seems to have the power and inclination to carry out his threat (p. 26); and Silver, who far exceeds both of these men in terms of cunning and murderousness, is an amputee. Silver’s pathological behavior confirms the ancient notion that inner evil is reflected by an external mark that can be easily recognised by astute viewers.





This idea is underscored by the use of dramatic irony: the reader knows immediately that the ‘pleasant-tempered landlord’ of the Spy-glass is the ‘monstrous’ one-legged sailor from Jim’s dreams even if the boy is fooled at first (p. 53; p. 13).

Yet after sketching out his villains in broad strokes, Stevenson takes pains to include positive testimony about Silver’s character that goes beyond simply establishing the buccaneer’s talent for duplicity: Silver, for instance, is educated and can ‘speak like a book when so minded’, he is a brave fighter and fastidious worker who moves around deck as ‘quickly as another man could walk;’ and who keeps his station ‘as clean as a new pin’ (p. 64). That Silver is not simply a psychotic killer is further emphasised when he recognises the futility of his quest later in the book and actively works to save Jim Hawkins and himself from the wrath of the remaining pirates.

These admirable qualities in Silver’s character reflect Stevenson’s skill as a realistic writer and his sensitivity to disability stereotypes, insofar as they make Silver a more well-rounded figure, and they begin to suggest that disability stereotypes may oversimplify the personalities of people with illnesses and injuries. Yet they are also significant as registers of a supercrip’s fear of social diminution, since they call attention to Silver’s mental and physical power in a past life when he was able-bodied. This past stands in dramatic contrast to his present life as an amputee, where despite his ability perform admirably at suitably ‘masculine’ work, he will still be regarded as less than his former self by the able-bodied people around him, to the extent that even ‘some of the men who had sailed with him before [express] their pity to see him so reduced’ (p. 64).

In the Swiss sanitarium of Davos, Stevenson expressed the supercrip’s horror of such social ‘reduction’ with an image that suggests being dwarfed by a world that seems to rise up to isolate outcasts: the Alps, he declared, were ‘about [him] like a trap’.<sup>12</sup> This same sense of a universal, hidden force conspiring to isolate





the sick or injured emerges from *Treasure Island* if one views the story from Long John Silver's perspective. At the beginning of the story, Silver has found his social niche among the pirates and is at the height of his powers. The able-bodied characters are dependent upon *him* to get what they want: they must meet him on his ground at the Spy-glass; they rely on his crew to sail the *Hispaniola* – a ship that becomes readily 'handicapped accessible' with the addition of extra lines and 'Long John's earrings' to facilitate his movement (p. 64). Able-bodied readers get a sense of a Stevenson's world that rises up 'like a trap' when Jim stands mute, surrounded by the sinister crew singing at Silver's command (p. 62).

Yet despite Silver's power and charisma, the supercrip paradise that he controls is a fragile one: the crew that respects him as a leader and a man is destroyed by their own greed, gluttony and propensity for violence; the ship that he rules is easily waylaid and beached by the machinations of a boy. The triumph of Jim and his friends also represents the triumph of an able-bodied majority that isolates the ill and disabled and treats them, in Martha Stoddard-Holmes' words, as objects that are 'both pitiable and detestable'.<sup>13</sup> That Stevenson recognises something tragic in the fall of Silver and his world is suggested by Jim's description of Long John at the end of the treasure hunt when he is safe among his captors: he has become 'the same bland, polite, obsequious seaman of the voyage out' (p. 203). The terms 'bland' and 'obsequious' here seem to resurrect the same sense of past glory and lifelessness that Stevenson saw in the patients at Davos – beings who were like 'gone-up, damp fireworks in the human form'.<sup>14</sup>

In 'The Body Snatcher' and *Jekyll and Hyde*, Stevenson returns to the idea that the ill and disabled live in a separate worlds, and he exploits the power of negative stereotypes of deformity. Furthermore, he makes his Gothic stories horrific by giving full reign to his fear of physical decline and ostracism: he suggests not only that the borders between the worlds of the





disabled and the 'normal' are permeable, but also that 'normal' people who cross over into the realm of the 'abnormal' will never be able to return to the life they knew.

To create a nexus between the supercrip's paranoid worldview and the ableist assumptions of his readership – a bridge that also foregrounds the 'doubled' nature of existence for disabled people living on the margins of able-bodied society – Stevenson introduces the concept of distorted empathy into the novel, through scenes where characters experience profound ambivalence triggered by the physical appearance of people around them; these characters are then driven to act based on these feelings of ambivalence.

To understand more clearly how and why the ostensible virtue of empathy enters the novel as a threatening force, it is helpful to examine portions of *Jekyll and Hyde* in conjunction with Stevenson's 1874 essay 'Ordered South,' a work that describes a stay at a sanatorium in the south of France. This essay represents the single instance where Stevenson talks about his chronic illness in depth. In this short travelogue, he depicts disability not as a descent into insanity, rage or violence (as stereotypes of 'degeneration' would have it,) but as a growing physical and mental numbness, combined with a gradual disconnection with society as the body weakens and the invalid becomes more isolated.

During his stay at the sanatorium, Stevenson finds that disability does not erode the essence of his personality as much as it seems to *dislocate* it while deadening its sensitivity. His sense of being 'outside' his body is reflected through a consistent negation of the first-person narrative voice: the essay begins by discussing what 'we' as humans generally experience when confronting nature's beauty;<sup>15</sup> then it shifts to a focus on what 'the sick man' and 'the invalid' feels (p. 124; p. 126).

This attempt to distance himself from his disabled body suggests that Stevenson did have a supercrip's fear of being ostracised and labelled as deviant by an able-bodied public; thus it comes





as no surprise that this essay generally describes the effects of his illness in very subtle terms. Indeed, it takes pains to point out that even ‘the invalid’ is still capable of having profound artistic and intellectual insights while enduring his sickness. ‘If it is only rarely,’ Stevenson notes –

that anything penetrates vividly into [the invalid’s] numbed spirit, yet, when anything does, it brings with it a joy that is all the more poignant for its very rarity. There is something pathetic in these occasional returns of a glad activity of heart. In his lowest hours he will be stirred and awakened by many such; and they will spring perhaps from very trivial sources.<sup>16</sup>

These inspirational moments come at random, like flashes of insight, during rare moments of bodily equilibrium, the ‘happy agreement of [. . .] many elements’ and the ‘harmonious vibration of many nerves’ (p. 133).

Stevenson’s characterization of health and happiness as the result of ‘harmonious [. . .] nerves’ suggests his familiarity with contemporary theories of ‘nerve force’ that helped legitimise and perpetuate ambivalent attitudes toward ill and disabled people in the nineteenth century. In *Shattered Nerves: Doctors, Patients and Depression in Victorian England*, Janet Oppenheim explains how nerve-centred views of the body gradually replaced blood-centred, ‘humoral’ theories of physiology left over from the Early Modern period, thus popularizing the belief in ‘nerve force,’ a substance sharing both electrical and fluid properties which could affect the health and (inevitably) the moral nature of individuals according to its balance or imbalance within the body.<sup>17</sup> In its mildest form, an imbalance of nerve force could create ‘lethargy’; in severe cases (as advocates of eugenics pointed out later in the century), nerve disorders could transform people into threatening ‘less evolved’ beings whose very humanity was





eroding from within.<sup>18</sup> In general, theories of this sort helped to stigmatise any kind of illness, disability or deformity by popularizing the idea of a totalizing flaw – the notion that even a minor, invisible physical anomaly could upset – and then overwhelm – the body's delicate balance, ultimately eliminating any positive traits in a person's character.

Stevenson's awareness of these 'degenerationist' stereotypes explains why the primary trope for disability in 'Ordered South' is *numbness*. Viewed in the light of nerve science, such a state implies not only a symptom of physical disorder, but also a lack of inner movement, a condition of stasis as physical and mental sensations are prevented from 'travelling' along the nerve pathways. This sense of being 'frozen,' in turn, allows Stevenson to deflect audience suspicions about his 'de-evolution:' he admits that his physical state is less than ideal, but he lets the attentive reader know that at least he is not moving *backwards* because of his disability.

The invalid's sense of bodily and spiritual numbness, punctuated by only 'occasional [. . .] glad activity of heart' from 'trivial sources' finds a parallel in *Jekyll and Hyde*'s early descriptions of Utterson, a 'cold,' 'dreary,' 'austere' and 'undemonstrative' man who remembers the joys of theatre attendance mostly from memory, and who manages to have 'something eminently human [beacon] from his eye' during meetings, if the necessary stimulant of wine is 'to his taste'.<sup>19</sup> As Brantlinger and others have noted, ascribing similar characteristics to most of the other 'normal' people in the novel, including Utterson's 'dull' kinsman Enfield exploits and intensifies cultural fears of 'degeneration' for dramatic effect. Stevenson also reintroduces the idea of 'numbness' as a kind of internal stasis as well, but he explores the pathological implications of this idea through the characters of Jekyll and Hyde. In the case of the good doctor and his villainous alter ego, 'numbness' distorts the capacity of these men to make sound ethical decisions. Their inability to feel or 'move,'





mentally, beyond a pathological self-centeredness makes them oblivious (or indifferent) to the effects of their actions on others.

But such ambiguous or paradoxical descriptions also reflect the 'invalid's' drive toward wish fulfilment here, beyond the degree outlined by McLynn. By undermining the mechanisms by which an able-bodied audience can separate the healthy 'Us' from an unhealthy 'Them,' Stevenson recognises what modern disability researchers call the universal condition of 'temporary able-bodiedness,' by confirming that everyone is vulnerable to potentially destructive, invisible forces. The disabled universe of *Jekyll and Hyde* thus becomes a supercrip's utopia, insofar as it creates a world where someone like Stevenson need never worry about his ability to pass as normal, since everyone else's bodily conditions invite more curiosity than his own.

Foundations for the trope of distorted empathy that appears in *Jekyll and Hyde* are established in 'Ordered South' during a discussion of illness likening the disability experience to an encounter with a doppelgänger. Describing 'the invalid' amidst the beauties of southern France, Stevenson explains that the sick man is like 'an enthusiast leading about with him a stolid, indifferent tourist. There is some one by who is out of sympathy with the scene [. . .] and that some one is himself' (p. 128). In *Jekyll and Hyde*, the physical and social implications of being 'out of sympathy' are explored to their fullest extent, in ways that turn back negative stereotypes of disability onto an able-bodied audience, in much the same way that Stephen Arata finds the novel reversing class stereotypes of degeneration and 'linking gentlemanliness and bourgeois virtue to various forms of depravity'.<sup>20</sup>

The paradoxes created by socially constructed concepts of disability become apparent by re-examining the novel's most vivid moment of failed 'sympathy' – Hyde's murder of Sir Danvers Carew. On one hand, this scene reinforces disability stereotypes by introducing a figure that Leonard Kriegel defines as the 'Demonic Cripple.' In 'The Cripple in Literature,' Kriegel





explains that this type of character is one of the most resilient and popular stereotypes of disability in literature, one that tends to justify (by ‘naturalizing’) the kind of visceral fear and resentment able-bodied people sometimes feel toward those with disabilities. The Demonic Cripple is a (typically) male figure – Ahab is a prime example – who has suffered some sort of catastrophic injury and is unable to cope with his loss of status among ‘normal’ people. These characters are essentially driven insane by their injuries, becoming pathologically aware of their outsider status and frequently driven to take revenge on a monumental scale.<sup>21</sup> Hyde is the shadow (rather than McLynn’s ‘action’-oriented opposite) of Stevenson’s pathetic invalid: like the patient at the French sanatorium, Hyde has access to an inspirational environment, but his freedom is limited, and joyless – he is a bitter and murderous, rather than an ‘indifferent tourist’.<sup>22</sup> In Hyde’s case, being ‘out of sympathy’ indicates a simultaneous inability to feel emotions that are appropriate to his surroundings as well as a lack of empathy for other human beings.

However, even while he seems to confirm Darwinist notions of congenital malevolence with Hyde’s moment of ‘ape-like fury’ (p. 452), Stevenson also attempts to humanise his disabled villain by resurrecting shadows of the invalid’s experience from ‘Ordered South’ and dramatizing issues related to ‘good death’ that the sick narrator contemplates at Menton.

At the sanatorium, what disturbs Stevenson more than disability’s potential to create physical discomfort is the impaired body’s power to disrupt social ties. For Stevenson, these social connections are literally what make life worth living. Their value is established when the invalid contemplates the isolation he faces if his sickness should intensify. At first he sounds a note of stoicism: the sick man, he claims, will ‘[look] on with a patriarchal impersonality of interest’ at the ‘quietude and desertion of other men’ (Stevenson, ‘Ordered South,’ p. 138). And yet fear of this universal isolation triggers the essay’s one moment of







unalloyed despair. Letting the mask of the supercrip fall away, Stevenson declares that if life continues to '[withdraw] and [wither] up from round about' the sick man, and it becomes clear he 'has outlived his own usefulness,' then he will 'pray for Medea: when she comes, let her either rejuvenate or slay' (pp. 139-40).

The universal question about impairment that Stevenson raises here – whether a life with disability should be endured or cut short – disturbed him enough that to settle this issue (if only temporarily), he found it necessary to create a 'doubled' persona within the essay by adding a postscript. In his response, Stevenson ascribes his valorisation of suicide to the naïve trivialization of life that a young man will indulge in when he feels he is 'one too many in the world' and a person without a 'calling' or 'obvious utility' ('Ordered South', p. 144). Now older and wiser, Stevenson argues that even the most 'useless' life is given meaning by interacting with the rest of humanity – playing 'an effective part in the affairs of life' is the 'career' that is one's 'only business in this world' (pp. 144-5). Despite the confident tone of this conclusion, the question of whether disability was (or could become) a kind of living death reappears again in *Jekyll and Hyde* and 'The Body Snatcher,' which suggests that Stevenson's anxieties about these matters were not so easily settled.

The meeting of minds that Stevenson enacts between his younger self and his older self in 'Ordered South' is replayed again in bloodier style when Hyde encounters Carew. The scene is calculated to make readers reconsider what bodily weakness represents or 'deserves.' Like Stevenson's youthful 'invalid,' Hyde is functional, but still undoubtedly aware that he is physically marked as different, which stokes his resentment. If, when he encounters Carew, Hyde notices – like the maid in the balcony – that the older man is not only 'aged' but 'beautiful' in his old age (p. 452), then this serves as an intolerable provocation: it suggests that Carew has successfully passed through the rigors of aging in a way that Hyde will never be able to do. The older





man's physical and social grace signifies that he has established the kind of relationships that Hyde can only aspire to, since the younger, 'deformed' man (p. 443) acts from a conviction common to demonic cripples – to paraphrase Kriegel, he agrees with the ableist assumption that his deformity 'is his essence'.<sup>23</sup> Enraged, Hyde takes action according to cultural narratives that equate age with weakness, and makes weakness worthy of death.

Confronted by an image that refutes the masculinist and ableist ideals he has internalised, Hyde becomes the Medea-like symbol of pathological jealousy and revenge: he cannot 'rejuvenate' himself; so he 'slays' Carew.

Stevenson does not leave such melodramatic stereotypes of disability unchallenged. Through the character of Utterson, he recognises what disability scholars define as a 'social model' of disability – the idea that the attitudes of able-bodied people are equally responsible for creating disabling conditions for those with nonstandard bodies. To introduce this idea, he places Utterson's search for Hyde within the context of a less-than-virtuous curiosity: in the lawyer's recurrent dreams of Hyde's crimes, we sense a vicarious thrill operating in tandem with ostensible concern for his friend Jekyll, and what finally spurs him to action is the fact his voyeuristic gaze (rather than his moral indignation) is left unsatisfied:

And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde (p. 446).

Thus cast as the product of invasive curiosity, Utterson's search for truth reveals that he too, in his own way, is 'out of sympathy': in this case, we see that Hyde's indescribable (and therefore exotic and fascinating) 'deformity' is enough to short-circuit any sense of caution and decorum that this 'lover of the





sane and customary sides of life' (p. 445) might accord to 'normal' people. He becomes an antagonizing figure all too familiar to those with disabilities: the bearer of a dehumanizing stare, the 'ordinary' person who, in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's words, wants to 'gawk with abandon at the prosthetic hook, the empty sleeve, the scarred flesh, the unfocused eye, the twitching limb.' Garland-Thomson explains that no one with a disability can feel comfortable around such people, since 'Even supposedly invisible disabilities always threaten to disclose some stigma, however subtle, that disrupts the social order by its presence and attenuates the bond between equal members of the human community'.<sup>24</sup>

Such recognition of what Simi Linton calls the 'disabled identity'<sup>25</sup> uncovers a new level of paradox in *Jekyll and Hyde*: as Stevenson gives voice to the tensions inherent in life as a supercrip, he transforms the novel into a narrative of 'passing' that requires two nightmare figures in order to provide catharsis for both Stevenson's able-bodied readership and himself. The 'deformed' figure of Hyde confirms the worst ableist stereotypes about what disability does to personalities and justifies what historian Henri-Jacques Stiker identifies as an ancient and enduring impulse of able-bodied people to destroy those with atypical bodies.<sup>26</sup> Yet Hyde is also a blessing in disguise for Stevenson the supercrip: by making such indisputable links between deformity and evil, Stevenson confirms his solidarity with an able-bodied majority rather than a disabled minority, and he achieves his goal of passing as 'normal.'

However, Stevenson the invalid rankles under the injustice of such stereotypes, so he links Utterson's search for Hyde to the prurient curiosity of the 'respectable' freak show patron. Thus he establishes a 'disabling' dialectic between what Hyde 'deserves' because of his violence, and what Jekyll suffers simply because his body has transformed into something uncontrollable. It is Utterson's invasive fascination with deformity as much as Jekyll's





monstrous body that drives the doctor toward isolation and suicide, because Utterson's type of curiosity is never sated. Even if 'deformity' is hidden, the ableist gaze will continue to search for signs of it, thus making 'passing' impossible. (Stevenson's revulsion over such intrusive curiosity also helps to explain his sharp critique of 'realistic' writers in his earlier essay 'A Note on Realism,' where he decried the fashion among his contemporaries for including 'extreme[ties]' of sordid or 'rancid' details in their writing in order to give their works a 'popular flavour'.)<sup>27</sup>

It is Jekyll and Hyde's sense of helplessness before an undefined bodily power, combined with the fear of lost human interaction that Stevenson articulates again to create the haunting qualities of 'The Body Snatcher.' The plot of the story is deceptively simple. The opening introduces the character Fettes, a dissolute man with a shadowy past: the only thing his cronies know with certainty is that he has enough money to live in 'idleness,' and he may have had some medical training.<sup>28</sup> One night at a local inn, Fettes unexpectedly crosses paths with Dr. Wolfe Macfarlane, a colleague from his youth who has now become an eminent London physician. The doctor is clearly disturbed by the meeting, but pretends otherwise. Fettes rebuffs his former friend's pleasantries and traps him momentarily in the lobby, provoking a 'dangerous glitter' in the doctor's eyes. Violence is averted, however, because so many witnesses are present. The doctor tries to flee, darting toward the door 'like a serpent' Fettes, however, manages to restrain Macfarlane just long enough to ask, 'Have you seen it again?' (p. 328).

The question terrifies Macfarlane: 'The great rich London doctor cried out aloud with a sharp, throttling cry; he dashed his questioner across the open space, and, with his hands over his head, fled out the door like a detected thief' (p. 329). These descriptions introduce the theme of hidden and uncontrollable bodily power that becomes central to the rest of the story. The doctor's carefully constructed persona crumbles under pressure





and his hidden crimes are exposed by the reactions of his own body: it is appropriate that Macfarlane's gait and posture mark him as a 'detected thief,' because he is. We later discover that the great doctor and Fettes were once partners: as medical students, they snatched newly buried corpses for use in anatomy labs; and it is fitting that Macfarlane flees with a 'sharp' and 'throttling' cry, because he was also willing to commit murder to keep himself in business.

The conclusion of the story identifies another uncontrolled body – the one that inspires such guilt and terror in both Fettes and Macfarlane. Soon after establishing his ghoulish trade in medical school, Macfarlane murders an associate, Mr. Gray, for publicly insulting him. He delivers Gray's corpse to the tender mercies of the dissection table, and Fettes becomes an accomplice by accepting payment and remaining silent about the crime (pp. 333-6). Not long after Gray's murder, the pair makes another nocturnal visit to an isolated rural cemetery to claim the freshly buried body of an old woman (pp. 336-7). The ghouls successfully steal the body and race back to the city in a coach, amidst a violent storm. As the pair drives through the rain, with the corpse sitting upright in a sack between them, they sense that a change is occurring in the body. Overcome with curiosity, they untie the sack to gaze upon the face of the corpse. They leap from the coach, terrified, when they see that it is the visage of the 'dead and long-dissected Gray' (pp. 339-40).

Most critics concur with Frank McLynn that 'The Body Snatcher' is an interesting but minor tale, Stevenson's attempt to capitalise on the Gothic scare tactics of Edgar Allan Poe.<sup>29</sup> Readers who do see something more complex here trace the story's power to Stevenson's well-known ambivalence toward the British upper-classes and their mores,<sup>30</sup> or the haunting effects of Stevenson's Scottish Presbyterian upbringing: For William Gray it represents 'the triumph of irrational demonic forces over rational Enlightenment values';<sup>31</sup> for Jenni Calder, it shows





‘susceptibility to the devil as inherent in human nature itself’.<sup>32</sup>

I agree with the critical stance that asks readers to take a broader, more allegorical view of this Gothic shocker, because the characters and events convey a sense of Poe-like horror or Christian morality only imperfectly. Considering the blunt ways in which he tries to re-ignite public rage and revulsion over the infamous deeds of real-life body snatchers William Burke and William Hare, Stevenson seems to set up – and then fails to deliver – a tale that requires extreme, Poe-like violence in its conclusion in order to be emotionally satisfying. Winking to the reader, Stevenson lets us know that the fictional Fettes and Macfarlane worked for a well-known ‘Mr. K—’. This is an obvious allusion to Dr. Robert Knox, the eminent Edinburgh anatomist who benefited from Burke and Hare’s murder spree. This detail complements Stevenson’s uncharacteristically explicit description of the ghouls’ final delivery, the body of a farmer’s wife who is ‘to be rooted from her grave at midnight and carried, dead and naked to that far-away city that she had always honoured with her Sunday best [. . .] her innocent and almost venerable members to be exposed to that last curiosity of the anatomist’ (p. 337). But this passage is as close as Stevenson comes to the kind of visceral description that Poe uses with greater confidence.

Although it is possible to see the casual blasphemer Macfarlane and the amoral Fettes as representatives of an inherently corrupt humanity distanced from God, any sense of a greater power overseeing their actions and avenging their victims is unconvincing. The story’s sense of justice seems flawed and disproportionate, since the murderous and serpent-like Macfarlane escapes, presumably to continue his career as physician to the rich and famous.

In contrast, Fettes – who has only abetted Macfarlane and never killed anyone – seems to have suffered a more serious post-traumatic stress disorder, becoming a drunken eccentric who is ‘[absent] from church’ and full of ‘crapulous, disreputable vices’





(p. 326) simply because he has gazed upon the transformed face of a corpse. And the revenge of the murdered Gray (a character who shares the name of key prosecution witnesses in the Burke and Hare trial)<sup>33</sup> seems trivial: his supernatural re-appearance triggers nightmares in Fettes and Macfarlane, but he remains, finally, a corpse, rather than an otherworldly being with power to enact a more appropriate form of retribution against those who have caused his death and defilement.

The story's logic achieves greater coherence, however, if one examines the unique way Stevenson uses the supercrip's fear of physical and social ruin to shape the narrative. The tale becomes uncanny because Stevenson replaces a God-centred universe (which operates according to familiar rules of right and wrong, crime and punishment) with a body-centred universe where traditional concepts of order no longer apply. The helpless bodies of the dead are given un-definable and malign powers similar to those traditionally ascribed to the blind, the scarred, and the deformed. Stevenson foreshadows that there will be punishment for defilement of corpses, but there are no angels or demons to clarify the nature of the retribution, and the signs of divine wrath are at best ambiguous.

According to Freud, one of the most powerful aspects of an uncanny story is the idea that ancient, 'animistic' forces exist within the reality we know, giving 'carefully graded magical powers to alien persons and things'.<sup>34</sup> The dead are counted among these powerful 'alien persons': according to old superstitions, the dead are dangerous because of their pathological envy: Freud describes the 'old idea that whoever dies becomes the enemy of the survivor, intent upon carrying him off with him to share his new existence' (p. 149).

Stevenson's variation on this struggle between the living and the dead draws power from his personal battle with another threatening body – his own. By comparing key passages from 'Ordered South' to those in 'The Body Snatcher,' one can see





Stevenson making connections between the experience of disability and that of death or living death. Like the bundled corpse of Gray, Stevenson the invalid exists in a 'muffled' and 'veil[ed]' state he is alive, yet simultaneously more of an object than a being – an 'unimpressible body' and a '[burden]' ('Ordered South', p. 128; p. 129.)

But the key sign of Stevenson's disability experience can be seen through his reformulation of the traditional role of the re-animated corpse. Acting in ways unusual for an 'enemy' of the living, the resurrected Gray does not murder his killer and whisk the guilty men to the underworld; instead, he ruins their personalities and – at least in the case of Fettes – destroys their social lives, condemning them to live on the periphery of society. Such punishments are not typically associated with the vengeful departed; however, they are central to the paranoid worldview of the supercrip. Gray is a symbol for the disabled body; his uncanny qualities exaggerate what Stevenson finds personally unsettling about physical impairment. For Stevenson, to experience disability is to become vulnerable to undefined and uncontrollable forces within one's own body, forces that rob an artist of his ability to be 'quick and delicate and alive' ('Ordered South', p. 129).

*Jekyll and Hyde's* monstrous view of disability is foreshadowed in Stevenson's shorter Scottish 'crawler.' By making 'The Body Snatcher' a horror tale where the 'monster' is a symbol for disability, whose primary supernatural power is the curse of isolation, despair and a ruined career, Stevenson dramatises the findings of disability researchers like Erving Goffman, who finds that the physical suffering associated with impairment is often less troubling to disabled people than the tendency of an able-bodied society to treat them as if they are 'not quite human'.<sup>35</sup>

As he does in *Jekyll and Hyde*, Stevenson the supercrip expresses his fears of rejection by projecting them onto his characters. In 'The Body Snatcher,' the character of Fettes suffers most because he has broken the supercrip's cardinal rule: he has







made it obvious to the outside world that the disabled body has become his obsession, that it has 'colour[ed] his life'.<sup>36</sup> Fettes's decline mimics the classic symptoms of 'nervous breakdown' through unbalanced 'nerve force': the nature of his disabling trauma is vague, but his relatively trivial shock has unsettled him enough to create a totalizing flaw that affects him not only physically but also mentally and morally.

But even more than Fettes, the figure who embodies the darkest of Stevenson's fears is the corpse of Gray. This undead figure symbolises Stevenson's worst-case scenario, where he is either overwhelmed by his physical weaknesses, or considered by the world around him to have succumbed to his illnesses and therefore cast into obscurity – bringing grim reality to the story's final image of a body, inert and alone as it hurtles down an unknown road into endless darkness.

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- 12 Harman, p. 208.
- 13 Martha Stoddard-Holmes, 'An Object for Compassion, An Enemy to the State,' *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 102. This chapter identifies key cultural narratives that create supercrippism and that drive supercrips to assimilate and succeed at all costs. Analysing debates over welfare reform and key texts like Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, Stoddard-Holmes finds that attitudes towards people with illnesses and disabilities are inevitably linked to their ability to remain independent and perform work that is perceived as 'useful.' Only children are allowed the luxury of being completely 'dependent,' since this enhances their status as 'innocent' beings; adults who cannot perform socially acceptable tasks frequently end up as beggars and are quickly stigmatised as inherently weak and immoral frauds.
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## Olalla's legacy: Twentieth-century vampire fiction and genetic previvorship

Sara Wasson

Although Robert Louis Stevenson's short story 'Olalla' does not use the word 'vampire' at any point, it contains a cluster of motifs that have led critics to identify it as a vampire tale: specifically, a character addicted to drinking human blood and an ancient family fallen into decline. 'Olalla' is unusual, however, in that it features a very different conception of vampirism than that popularised by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and which has become canonical to vampire literature since. This article differentiates between the *Dracula* and the 'Olalla' models of vampiric reproduction, and argues that although the *Dracula* framework dominated the twentieth century, the 'Olalla' model has re-emerged in intriguing ways in recent decades. This paper identifies the tale's literary legacy, suggesting that the 'Olalla' model foreshadows a recent trend in vampire story: vampirism as genetic inheritance.

To date, literary criticism of 'Olalla' tends to use the tale to throw light on more famous Stevenson texts: Irving Massey, for example, reads 'Olalla' as illuminating *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in its depiction of human duality and the need to resist base animal desire, and Hilary Beattie makes a similar move, arguing, 'Olalla' can be read as 'itself the double of *Jekyll and Hyde*'.<sup>1</sup> Given that it is one of Stevenson's relatively few works to foreground a woman's experience, the tale has also inspired critics to examine its engagement with gender. Ellen Rees argues that 'at the heart of [...] Stevenson's [story][...] lie[s] patriarchal terror in the face of female sexuality', and Massey notes that the mother is described in terms which emphasise her base, animal nature.<sup>2</sup> Beattie notes that 'Olalla' 'falls within the general romantic tradition of the vampire woman and the femme fatale', and argues that the tale can be read in terms of





profound, archaic repression of experience of the maternal body, 'a monstrous and overwhelming female presence'.<sup>3</sup> Common to all these approaches is interest in the story's depiction of atavistic subhuman or pre-human states, and this preoccupation is no accident: Linda Dryden and Ed Block go to the heart of this atavism when they suggest that the story is symptomatic of late nineteenth-century anxieties over evolutionary degeneration.<sup>4</sup> Valuable though all these approaches are, the story can also be read as a prescient commentary on late twentieth- twenty-first century concerns, specifically the emergence of what has been called genetic 'previvorship'. First, I will summarise the way in which 'Olalla' exemplifies the evolutionary anxieties of the moment in which it appeared, and then I will show the lacunae of such a reading, instead connecting the story to trends in twentieth-century vampire fiction and culture.

### **I: Degenerative horror: collective racial decline**

The name of Stevenson's heroine invokes St Eulalia, a devout young woman who was horribly tortured for refusing to recant her Christianity in the face of Roman decrees. Two versions of the martyrdom tale exist: St Eulalia of Barcelona and St Eulalia of Merida – and in both stories, Olalla is tortured in highly sexual ways, her breasts severed and her body exposed. The combination of the maiden's sexual innocence and the violence wrought on her body makes it an apt inspiration for a story so ambivalent about the purity of bodily pleasure. Dread of evolutionary degeneration dominates 'Olalla'. The unnamed first person narrator of the tale is an English officer who has been injured in Spain during the Napoleonic era Peninsular war.<sup>5</sup> His doctor recommends that he travel to the countryside to convalesce from his illness, and arranges for him to reside with an impoverished, once-aristocratic family, whose mansion holds traces of lost glory. The first member of the family the narrator meets is the son Felipe, physically strong but mentally weak, who delights in torturing





animals. The mother, too, seems mentally deficient, somnolent, sun- and warmth-worshipping, and oddly lacking in human intelligence. As the days pass, the narrator roams the mansion in search of novelty, and finds a scrap of devout, religious-themed handwritten poetry that he guesses must belong to the daughter of the house, Olalla. He soon meets her and falls in love. Although Olalla seems to reciprocate his feelings, she inexplicably resists his courtship. In despair at the fear of losing her, he smashes his hand through a windowpane, and when he shows the wound to the mother she falls into screaming frenzy and bites his hand until blood spurts forth.

The narrator is rescued by Olalla and Felipe, and after he recovers Olalla explains the situation to him. Her mother and brother suffer from a hereditary taint that has caused their intellect to degenerate, and although her own mind is not afflicted she carries the same inherited propensity, and so has resolved never to have children. Thus although she loves the narrator, she cannot marry him, and she begs him to leave, renouncing earthly happiness for herself with Christ as a model. The narrator eventually leaves her, their love unconsummated.

The story's preoccupation with the degeneration of a once-noble family invites readers to draw links to Darwin's evolutionary theory.<sup>6</sup> By the late nineteenth-century, Charles Darwin's concept of evolution outlined in *The Origin of Species* (1859) had become highly influential on art and literature.<sup>7</sup> Evolution was not a wholly encouraging theory, in that it held out the prospect of degeneration as much as progression up a ladder of increasing mental sophistication. Dread of physical degeneration informed much horror of the time, particularly that of the 'ab-human', to use a term coined by fantasy author William Hope Hodgson.<sup>8</sup> Abhuman bodies are horrifying, liminal, disintegrating or metamorphosing, as Kelly Hurley says, they are 'human bodies that have lost their claim to discrete and integral identity, a fully human existence. They are in contrast liminal bodies: bodies





that occupy the threshold between two terms of an opposition like human/beast, make/female, or civilised/primitive, by which cultures are able meaningfully to organise experience'.<sup>9</sup> Fears of physical degeneration underpinned many representations of grotesque corporeality. Even more significant than the fear of physical decline, however, was the fear of psychological degeneration. Cesare Lombroso, for example, argued that criminals have a distinctive physiognomy, a weakening of morals being accompanied by physical degeneration.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Max Nordau argued that mental degeneration could be seen in city-dwellers and artists, seeing the artistic movement of 'Decadence' as fundamentally a symptom of psychological deterioration, and arguing that that the typical city dweller 'presents a strange and repulsive mixture of incompleteness and decay'.<sup>11</sup> He identifies many groupings in contemporary culture comprised primarily of 'dwellers on the borderland between reason and pronounced madness'.<sup>12</sup> Anne McClintock notes that women, too, were often depicted atavistically, as 'childlike, irrational, regressive and atavistic, existing in a permanently anterior time within modernity'.<sup>13</sup> The horror of all these atavisms is that they apply to human collectives; not merely tragic individual cases, they are read as symptomatic of collective decline, ultimately of a whole nation and empire.

In response to these anxieties, literary texts of the period depict evolutionary degeneration in terms of both corporeal and mental devolution: corporeal devolution into ape-like forms and mental devolution into earlier, more primitive, atavistic modes of thought. David Punter suggests that *fin-de-siècle* literary representations of human and animal emerge 'from the attempt to deal with Darwinian revelations about the nature of evolution'.<sup>14</sup> Stoker's *Dracula* is often read as exemplifying psychological degeneration: as Dr Van Helsing says, 'The count is a criminal and of a criminal type. Norday and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind'.<sup>15</sup>

Similar evolutionary notions are also writ large in 'Olalla'. The







narrator muses that, ‘The family blood had been impoverished, perhaps by long interbreeding [. . .] No decline, indeed, was to be traced in the body [. . .] But the intelligence (that more precious heirloom) was degenerate’.<sup>16</sup> Later, Olalla herself describes her family’s fall:

‘Man has risen; if he has sprung from the brutes, he can descend again to the same level. The breath of weariness blew on their humanity and the cords relaxed; they began to go down; their minds fell on sleep, their passions awoke in gusts, heady and senseless like the wind in the gutters of the mountains [. . .]. [Y]ou have seen for yourself how the wheel has gone backward with my doomed race’. (pp. 190-191.)

Even the family name itself seems to have faded into obscurity. In the first paragraph, the doctor tells the narrator, ‘[T]hey were once great people, and are now fallen to the brink of destitution’ (p. 143). The dilapidated *residencia* (family mansion) itself is symbolic of this familial decline:

It was a rich house, on which Time had breathed his tarnish and dust had scattered disillusion. The spider swung there; the bloated tarantula scampered on the cornices; ants had their crowded highways on the floor of halls of audience; the big and foul fly, that lives on carrion and is often the messenger of death, had set up his nest in the rotten woodwork, and buzzed heavily about the rooms. (p. 168.)

As in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’, the collapse of a family line is echoed by the collapse of their ancient dwelling.<sup>17</sup> Just as evolution can translate to collective progress and improvement, it can also translate to col-





lective decline. Stevenson's tale invokes that anxiety of collective deterioration.

'Olalla' responds well to such analysis. Block, for example, argues that 'most of the characters including the soldier-narrator show [. . .] tendencies to recapitulate primitive modes of consciousness. In different ways all three members of a once-great Spanish family exhibit the decline of their race'.<sup>18</sup> Dryden argues that 'Olalla', like *Jekyll*, is a tale of atavistic duality, in which a primitive form of mind threatens to subsume more advanced modes of thought achieved in evolution:

Her exterior appearance may speak of beauty and 'breeding', but Olalla knows her family's terrible secret. Through careful instruction and prayer, Olalla keeps her 'beast' at bay, but vows to remain childless so as not to perpetuate the family line. [. . .] When she says that 'Man has risen; if he has sprung from the brutes, he can descend again to the same level', Olalla gives voice to current theories of atavism.<sup>19</sup>

These readings by Block and Dryden are persuasive, but when the tale is recognised fully as a tale of genetic vampirism, a subtly different locus of horror is unmasked. I suggest that emphasis on late *fin de siècle* fear of evolutionary racial degeneration risks missing another real horror in the tale: the personal horror and sense of helplessness at being in the grip of one's individual genetic inheritance. This dread increasingly preoccupies vampire film and fiction and is becoming increasingly salient in today's gene-sequenced world.

## II: Genetic Horror: individual genetic inheritance and recent vampire fiction

'Olalla' has had several retellings, most of which focus on the gender dimensions of Olalla/Eulalia's experience. In 1934 Isak





Dinesen used Stevenson's tale as a springboard for her subversive tale 'The Dreamers', which challenges nineteenth-century notions of female identity.<sup>20</sup> In 1928, Spanish writer Federico García Lorca's poem 'Martirio de Santa Olalla' developed the original saint's story's blend of sex and violence.<sup>21</sup> The specifically vampiric dimension of Stevenson's tale, however, does not at first glance seem to have imitators. For the bulk of the twentieth century, the dominant model of vampire reproduction was *Dracula*, where vampirism is a matter of infection rather than genetic legacy. The *Dracula* model has been hugely influential, inspiring, among others, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and its thirteen sequels, a bestselling series of vampire 'autobiographies' which re-imagined the vampire to be less demonic 'other' than tormented fellow being.<sup>22</sup> Rice's work not only influenced other writers of vampire fiction, but also inspired a new kind of story-telling: the game company White Wolf Publishing devised narrative role-play based on the Stoker/Rice mythologies of vampiric transformation.<sup>23</sup> As such, the model was duplicated in houses around the world when gaming groups gathered to tell their own stories. None of these particular bestselling stories used the Olalla model, of vampirism being acquired through genes rather than infection and death. Nonetheless, the model of vampirism presented in Olalla is oddly prescient, in that it prefigures recent twists to vampire myth. To demonstrate this prescience, I will examine two literary successors to the trope: Tanith Lee's novel *Blood Dance* (1991), and Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992), both of which deploy the 'Olalla' model of vampiric reproduction as genetic legacy.

The mystery of 'Olalla' lies not only in the way a great family can decline/degenerate. It is also, more specifically, about the mystery of the individual emerging from a genetic mix. Viewing the family's portraits, the narrator reads a fascinating 'parable of family life':





Never before had I so realised the miracle of the continued race, the creation and re-creation, the weaving and changing and handing down of fleshly elements. That a child should be born of its mother, that it should grow and clothe itself (we know not how) with humanity, and put on inherited looks, and turn its head with the manner of one ascendant, and offer its hand with the gesture of another, are wonders dulled for us with repetition. But in the singular unity of look, in the common features and common bearing, of all these painted generations on the walls of the residencia, the miracle started out and looked me in the face, and an ancient mirror falling opportunely in my way, I stood and read my own features a long while, tracing out on either hand the filaments of descent and the bonds that knit me within my family. (pp. 168-9.)

This reverie celebrates the marvel of an individual emerging from the genetic material of ancestors, but Olalla herself sees the process less favourably. She asks him:

‘Have you [. . .] seen the portraits in the house of my fathers? Have you looked at my mother or at Felipe? Have your eyes never rested on that picture that hangs by your bed? She who sat for it died ages ago; and she did evil in her life. But, look again: there is my hand to the least line, there are my eyes and my hair. What is mine, then, and what am I? [. . .] [N]ot a tone of my voice, not any look from my eyes, no, not even now when I speak to him I love, but has belonged to others [. . .] Others, ages, dead, have wooed other men with my eyes; other men have heard their pleading in the same voice that now sounds in your ears. The hands of the dead are in my bosom; they move me, they pluck me, they guide me; I am a puppet at their command; and I but reinform features and attrib-





utes that have long been laid aside [. . .] in the quiet of the grave'. (pp. 189-90.)

Fear of a threat from the past returning to haunt the present is a structuring trope of the Gothic. Chris Baldick, for example, defines the Gothic as fundamentally about:

invok[ing] the tyranny of the past (a family curse, the survival of archaic forms of despotism and of superstition) [in ways that] stifle the hopes of the present [. . .] within the dead-end of physical incarceration [. . .] a set of 'historical fears' focusing upon the memory of an age-old regime of oppression and persecution which threatens still to fix its dead hand upon us.<sup>24</sup>

In 'Olalla', Stevenson offers an intriguing adaptation of that figure, in Olalla's dread of her own genes as the dead hands of the past.

Julia Reid persuasively argues that the story 'Olalla' is not only about racial degeneration, but also about 'the psychological dangers of a denial of free will', specifically, the denial of free will involved in believing in genetic determinism.<sup>25</sup> Olalla laments that she is 'an impotent prisoner [. . .] carried about, and deafened by a mob that I disown' (pp. 188-9). Instead of marvelling at the way her body recalls her ancestors, Olalla is gripped with horror at the way she believes her body has been shaped by their bodies, now dead. The horror of the story lies neither in the mother's vampire attack on the narrator, nor even the slow degeneration of a noble line as in Poe's 'Usher'. Rather, the horror of the tale is Olalla's sense of personal helplessness and fatality linked to genetic inheritance. Both familiar and yet unfamiliar – quintessentially uncanny – Olalla's own body has become strange to her. Elsewhere, I have defined the uncanny as fundamentally a crisis of narrative, a sense of being part of a story over which one has





no control.<sup>26</sup> Genetic predestination can trigger such a sense of powerlessness and narrative inevitability.

Similar evidence for the significance of genetic horror in the tale comes from the relatively few moments it chooses to use the language of the supernatural. The tale's few hints of supernaturalism cluster around the genetic threat as experienced by the individual, Olalla herself. There is nothing supernatural about the mother's vampirism, the narrator presenting mother's blood-drinking act as mere madness in a degenerate family. The only supernatural reference in the story is in the vague warnings one of the peasants gives the narrator, invoking the devil: "There are neither men nor women in that house of Satan!" (p. 198.) However, the story does offer the supernatural in the form of metaphors, specifically in the metaphors Olalla uses to describe her emotional response to her genetic inheritance:

[Y]ou have seen for yourself how the wheel has gone backward with my doomed race [. . .] And shall I – I that dwell apart in the house of the dead, my body, loathing its ways – shall I repeat the *spell*? Shall I bind another spirit, reluctant as my own, into this *bewitched* and tempest-broken tenement that I now suffer in? Shall I hand down this *cursed* vessel of humanity, charge it with fresh life as with fresh poison [. . .]?' (pp. 190-191, italics mine.)

Olalla uses the lexis of curses and magic to convey genetic predestination; it is a 'spell', bewitching and cursing helpless descendants. Lurid though this speech may sound, over a hundred years later Olalla's speech has been joined by a veritable chorus of voices describing the emotional challenges ensuing on the knowledge of one's genetic code.

Darwin was by no means the first to suggest that organisms pass down biological traits to descendants. Hippocrates, Aristotle, Linnaeus and Kölreuter all theorised such transmis-





sion prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> As in all other fields of scientific endeavour, the nineteenth century saw a surge of attempts to make sense of the specific mechanisms of biological inheritance. By the *fin de siècle*, general consensus among the scientific community was in favour of inheritance as a matter of blending or averaging between the traits held by each parent: i.e. that a tall father and a short mother would lead to offspring of medium height. Taken to its logical conclusion, such a theory implies that variations become more scarce over generations, a hypothesis clearly disprovable. Darwin and others were dissatisfied with this theory, but had little to offer as an alternative. In *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868) Darwin offered an alternative theory he called 'pangenesis' which assumed that all the organs within any organism's body might regularly shed 'minute granules which are dispersed throughout the whole system.'<sup>28</sup> He called these granules 'gemmules' or 'pangenes', and thought they were carried through the organism's body and deposited in the sex cells, where they eventually become the building-blocks for embryos. His cousin Francis Galton was inspired by Darwin's work to investigate whether and how human traits might be transmitted genetically.<sup>29</sup> Galton's work was known to Stevenson.<sup>30</sup> In his book *Hereditary Genius* (1869), Galton wrote that Darwin's theory of gemmules is:

of enormous service to those who inquire into heredity. It gives a key that unlocks every one of the hitherto unopened barriers to our comprehension of its nature; it binds within the compass of a singularly simple law, the multifarious forms of reproduction, witnessed in the wide range of organic life, and it brings all these forms of reproduction under the same conditions as govern the ordinary growth of each individual.<sup>31</sup>





In later work, Galton tried to prove Darwin's theory of pangenesis by experimenting with transfusions of blood between animals.

Contemporary understandings of genomics have advanced beyond Darwin's hypotheses. It took Gregor Mendel's research into the reproduction of peas to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the heritable information encoded in reproductive cells beyond the notion of 'blending'. Mendel discovered that interbreeding peas which bore white flowers with peas which bore purple flowers did not result in purple and white blossoms, as the blending hypothesis would suggest. Instead, the resulting peas bore unequivocally purple flowers. After further research with both plants and insects, Mendel hypothesised that the cells of every organism hold two 'factors' for any trait, but only one of those traits will win out to serve as a blueprint for the inheriting organism's body. Some traits are dominant and will always win out (e.g. purple pea-plant flowers); other traits are recessive and only win out if they occur alongside another recessive trait (e.g. white pea-plant flowers). However, the recessive genetic information is still there and can be transmitted to subsequent generations. In other words, all organisms carry some trait information that does not govern their own body but that could be passed to offspring. Mendel's paper 'Experiments on Plant Hybridization' was published in 1866 but the brilliance of his formulations was not recognised until 1900 when Hugo de Vries and Carl Correns separately rediscovered his work. Mendel's formulations inspired scientist William Bateson to coin the term 'gene' to describe the specific biological units that carried the information (Mendel had used the term 'factor'). The next piece of the genetic puzzle was provided by Thomas Hunt Morgan, 1933 winner of the Nobel Prize for Genetics, whose work revealed that the gene pairs map onto particular places in the particular protein-rich cellular apparatus of the chromosome. Subsequent research showed that the particular material that holds genetic information is DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). Although DNA was







first identified in 1869, its role in reproduction was not recognised until twentieth-century research revealed its chemical composition and structure. In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick published research suggesting DNA is structured as a double helix, and this model enabled genetic research to move forward apace.

Since 1990, the human genome has been extensively researched by such projects as the international Human Genome Project and its (largely commercial) inheritors. Therapeutic and commercial applications of the knowledge have proliferated. Genetic testing is becoming increasingly widespread, and in some cases specific gene sequences have been identified as inclining the possessors to develop a disease later in life. The most famous such genes are the gene governing Huntington's disease and the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes implicated in breast and ovarian cancers. Huntington's disease is a slowly fatal degenerative disease afflicting the nervous system. In the words of activist and geneticist Nancy Wexler, the disease:

affect[s] just about everything that makes you human – how you think, move, and feel. It causes different kinds of uncontrollable involuntary movements in all parts of the body. It can also cause severe cognitive problems: loss of memory, loss of judgement, loss of the capacity to organise oneself. [. . .] [Sufferers] recognise the loss of their capacities – their ability to do the kinds of simple things that gave them an identity and some sense of satisfaction and self-worth. [. . .] [Sufferers] also lose the ability to speak. [. . .] People have linked it to a time bomb in a coil of DNA because you just don't know.<sup>32</sup>

As with Olalla, such genes do not mean the disease is inevitable: penetrance varies, 100% penetrance indicating all possessors of the gene will develop the illness and a lower level of penetrance





indicating a lesser likelihood. The gene for Huntington's disease has 100% penetrance, i.e. if you have the gene you will develop the illness. In the case of breast cancer, many cases of breast or ovarian cancer are environmentally caused and do not involve the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, but women with those genes are at significantly increased risk of those cancers, with 60%-80% penetrance.<sup>33</sup> Many people identified as possessing such genes as these will have seen relatives afflicted by the linked disease, perhaps fatally. Alongside Olalla, some might cry, "The hands of the dead are in my bosom; they move me, they pluck me, they guide me; I am a puppet at their command; and I but reinform features and attributes that have long been laid aside [. . .] in the quiet of the grave"(pp. 189-90.)

Learning one is positive for dangerous genes can itself be a traumatic event. Cheryl Crotser and Marcia Boehmke go so far as to use the term 'survivorship' to describe the emotional challenge of coming to terms with such knowledge:

Survivorship is a term typically associated with those who have lived through a trauma, such as a life threatening illness. Webster's College dictionary describes survivorship more broadly and includes not only being alive, but a person who 'continues to function or manage in spite of some adverse circumstance or hardship, to endure or live through an affliction, adversity or misery'. Learning that one is a carrier of a mutation that substantially increases risk of illnesses that could be disfiguring and life threatening fit the definition of a hardship or adversity.<sup>34</sup>

The position of an individual diagnosed with a genetic predisposition is peculiar. They have not manifested the disease, and indeed it may never occur, but the knowledge of the likelihood nonetheless changes the subject's experience of her health. Testing can blur the line between disease and possibility. To illus-





trate this blurring, Crotser and Boehmke quote one study participant who declined genetic testing because “it would be hard to distinguish the breast cancer gene from the disease itself”.<sup>35</sup> People in this position – possessing painful knowledge – have to make hard choices, and online communities have emerged in which participants try to help each other come to terms with the knowledge and even find some agency within it.

The websites Facing Our Risk (FORCE) and Be Bright Pink are two examples of such communities. FORCE coined the term ‘previvor’ to describe people in this situation, and defines the term as follows:

‘Cancer previvors’ are individuals who are survivors of a predisposition to cancer but who haven’t had the disease. This group includes people who carry a hereditary mutation, a family history of cancer, or some other predisposing factor. The cancer previvor term evolved from a challenge on the FORCE main message board by Jordan, a website regular, who posted, ‘I need a label!’ As a result, the term cancer previvor was chosen to identify those living with risk. The term specifically applies to the portion of our community which has its own unique needs and concerns separate from the general population, but different from those already diagnosed with cancer.

The medical community uses the term ‘unaffected carrier’ to describe those who have not had cancer but have a BRCA or other cancer-predisposing mutation. The term applies from a medical perspective, but doesn’t capture the experience of those who face an increased risk for cancer and the need to make medical management decisions. Although cancer previvors face some of the same fears as cancer survivors, undergoing similar tests and confronting similar medical management issues, they face a unique set of emotional, medical, and privacy concerns.<sup>36</sup>





Gilbert Cruz rightly notices the hope in the term when he defines previvor as a 'person who does not have cancer but possesses a genetic predisposition to develop the disease; a presurvivor'.<sup>37</sup> But previvorship does not extend merely to a positive attitude in the face of risk. Practical steps can also be involved, with some women opting for preventive bilateral prophylactic mastectomy as a preventive measure. As a result, *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines 'pre-vivor' as 'an individual who takes extreme preventive measures to assure survival that indicates more extreme level of proactivism. Pre-vivor also denotes specifically to women at risk of developing breast cancer who choose pre-emptive bilateral mastectomies'.<sup>38</sup> Defining bilateral prophylactic mastectomy as 'extreme' ignores, however, the fact that it can make a substantial difference to a woman's chance of developing the disease.<sup>39</sup> These are difficult choices, and Be Bright Pink and FORCE try to help individual women work out their own decisions from the array of medical knowledge currently available. Through the lens of these contemporary developments, Olalla's solitary struggle seems strikingly prescient.

Fundamentally, the struggles of previvors are struggles for narrative agency: they wish to resist the grim dénouement implied by their genetic inheritance. Narratives of illness are a significant preoccupation of the emerging interdisciplinary field of medical humanities, a field which can be defined in several ways but which fundamentally hinges on the interface between the arts and medical science. One of the valuable things that literary criticism brings to such explorations is alertness to narrative structure and the way that scientific discourse itself decrees narratives for patients. It is noteworthy – and disturbing – that a significant medical response to genetic testing is the broadening of models of illness to include a 'latent' or 'pre-symptomatic' stage. Medical researchers John Rolland and Janet Williams, for example, have formulated a 'Family System Genetic Illness model' model which 'expand[s] the definition of disease to





include the time prior to clinical diagnosis'.<sup>40</sup> The language and very structure of their model implies that all genetic predispositions translate into disease, despite the fact many genetic profiles have non-100% penetrance. In other words, even in cases where no illness ever manifests, carriers of specific genes are wrongly built into an extraordinarily limited story. People defining themselves as 'previvors' are engaged in a fight over narrative, striving to write an alternative ending onto their own bodies. Similarly, the emergence of pre-implantation genetic screening is enabling in-vitro fertilised embryos to be screened for particular genetic predispositions before they are implanted into a womb, and destroyed if found to contain them. In this way, too, contemporary genetics is about shaping narrative – specifically, the narratives of what embryos are allowed to be born.

Olalla herself seeks to break the narrative of generational transmission, by renouncing her body in order that her genes not be perpetuated. She beseeches the narrator, "Suffer me to pass on my way alone [. . .] it is thus that I shall be the most happy, having taken my farewell of earthly happiness, and willingly accepted sorrow for my portion" (p. 200). This renunciation of the body connects with a very common vampire twentieth-century vampire fiction theme: the struggle to resist one's destructive hungers. Rice's *Interview* depicts a reluctant vampire tormented by taking life, and White Wolf's vampire role-playing games emphasise the challenge of resisting animal craving in all their plethora of publications. Today, the *Twilight* franchise and TV series like *Being Human* feature vampires describing their cravings as addiction and deliberately refraining from human blood.<sup>41</sup> However, reading 'Olalla' simply as yet another vampire abstinence metaphor fails to notice the specific anguish installed at the heart of the story. For it is specifically reproductive restraint that Olalla exerts over herself: the choice not to have children. Today, too, Crotser and Boehmke note that a key reason for testing given is 'determining risk to children';





one of the key consequences of genetic knowledge is a sense of obligation to unborn children.<sup>42</sup> Again, this dimension emerges most clearly when recognising the story as a tale of individual genetic horror, rather than merely a tale of collective evolutionary decline.

The Olalla model of vampiric reproduction differs in multiple ways from the *Dracula* model, which has been so influential on horror fiction. In Stoker's *Dracula*, a human becomes a vampire through infection and death: the death of the human body is integral to the vampiric transformation. The *Dracula* form of reproduction draws a sharp distinction between the living human body and the dead vampiric body, marked by a specific traumatic event – attack and death. As a result of this division, the vampiric body is radically different from the human, having extra abilities and extra constraints. For example, the vampires of *Dracula* can turn into mist, among other freedoms; on the other hand, they cannot walk in daylight and must sleep on the earth of their homeland. Diurnal division is the most dramatic example of their otherness: in the horror canon, vampires walk in darkness, the night a symbol of their exclusion from human fellowship. Such narratives of vampirism offer a reassuringly stable eschatology, in that human and vampire are different even if they share a common origin: the vampire has been transformed into something radically alien.

In stories using genetic models for vampirism, however, there is no such reassuring distinction: any human holding the genetic taint has the potential to develop vampiric hungers. The vampire is not an other form, reached through infection or death, but is rather a seemingly ordinary human whose body holds a particular genetic code. As a result, the vampires of tales such as 'Olalla' are not differentiated by diurnal division. In Stevenson's tale blood-drinking mother is a sensual sun-worshipper, seeking it out and bathing in it daily. Similarly, in Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992), the young teenage protagonist Nothing seems to





be – and at first thinks he is – an ordinary human, having no difficulty walking in sunlight and eating, sleeping and existing like a human. As events unfold, however, he gradually realises that he has darker hungers than those for human food.

In Brite's novel, vampires are born, not made: they are genetically similar enough to humans that they can interbreed, but are nonetheless radically other. A bitten human being does not become a vampire. The novel is a dark take on a *Bildungsroman*, in which Nothing gradually realises he is not human. The novel begins when his mother gives birth to him, for in Brite's work, all mothers die when bearing vampire children, for the foetus eats its way out rather than being born conventionally. A compassionate vampire called Christian hatches a plan to try to help baby Nothing to escape his genetic destiny, and takes him far away to be left on an anonymous suburban doorstep, a completely different milieu from the goth subculture of New Orleans where he was born. Christian's goal is to help Nothing escape what his genes have decreed: 'Nothing might escape the hunger for blood, might be human, might be whole'.<sup>43</sup> The pessimistic word play of that sentence – indicating both 'Nothing' the boy and 'nothing' as in 'no one' – foreshadows the fruitlessness of Christian's effort. As Nothing matures, his genetic predisposition takes hold. Fascinated by blood, unable to feel real kinship with the people around him, Nothing's path unfolds in the way his genes dictate.

A similar discovery structures Tanith Lee's *Dark Dance* (1991), in which a young woman gradually realises she has some inherited trait that will cause her body to degenerate strangely and cause her to become emotionally separated from other people. The protagonist is Rachaela, a young woman who lives alone. Her mother is dead, and her father abandoned them when she was a small child, but her mother always told her of her father's strange, remote family, a tribe somehow 'darkly ominous [. . .] wielding a whip of intent'.<sup>44</sup> Rachaela has lived in dread that one day they would summon her to join them:





Had she always been afraid these [. . .] would one day reach out for her? Why was the idea so dreadful – for it was, it was horrific. [. . .] [Her mother] must have told horror stories now too recessed and entrenched to come forward to the light, embedded like black fossils in Rachaela's subconscious. For she was afraid of the tribe of the Scarabae. (pp. 18-19.)

One day that dread comes true. The Scarabae write to her and hire a lawyer to contact her, asking her to join them, and when she refuses they deliberately snap all the threads of her life, persuading her landlord to sell the building where she lives and persuading her employer to fire her. Rachaela succumbs, but less for pragmatic reasons than due to a sense of inevitability, of help-less predestination.

Like the beetles from which their surname comes, the Scarabae vampires live a dry, rustling life. They are all very thin, bony, and oddly insectile (55), wasp-like (61), 'all fragile as the chitinous wings of grasshoppers, and predatory as locusts' (pp. 55, 61, 63). The twenty one related vampires live a strange nocturnal life in a shared mansion, a 'collective' of 'ancient beetles [who] crept and slipped about their shadowy pursuits'; 'They were all one, and twenty-one in number' (pp. 24, 48-9). Rachaela learns that she is genetically predestined to become like them: 'It was in her bones'; 'Here was her destiny' (pp. 48-57). All the windows of the house are covered with lurid, brightly-coloured stained glass, so no white daylight can enter. At first she craves daylight, longing to leave the weird community, but very quickly her body alters to resemble theirs. When she dares to open the door to walk out into daylight, the sunlight hits her like an assault:

As she opened the door a violent smack of whitest light burst over her. It made her mind reel, almost she shielded her eyes. Daylight – already foreign. So quickly the house







has blinded and steeped her in its ichors. (p. 67.)

Rachaela notices her body change with alarm, and realises her body will increasingly alter to resemble theirs. 'She would grow ancient, gaunt and friable and tough, like them [. . .] eyes [. . .] concentrated and feral' (p. 70). She gradually finds herself degenerating into an inhuman mass of hunger, merging into one of the spooky hive.

Like Olalla, Rachaela comes to believe early on that her fate is to be alienated from the rest of the world. When the taxi drives her to the remote house of the Scarabae, she falls into contemplation of the differences she intuitively feels between the driver's future and her own:

She thought of the driver [. . .] running his shabby car home to an electric fireside, a warm semi littered by children's toys and washing, beefburgers for tea, a warm wife and two lively kids, perhaps a toddler. She was jealous a moment, passionately, furiously jealous of this easy normality. Only the mortgage to worry him, the long odd hours of his work, but the warm wife to come home to and the procreative results of former love. *And what am I? How then do I see myself?* She had a vision of a black moth battered through the night, a deer hastening between the fraught shadows. Dramatic, fearfully apt. No warm fireside for her. (p. 28.)

Like Olalla, Rachaela feels excluded from the possibilities of ordinary human communion. She suspects her genetic inheritance has marked her out for alienation.

In all three tales – 'Olalla', *Lost Souls*, and *Dark Dance* – the cause of becoming a vampire is not infection, the consumption of blood, or mortal death, but rather the secret logic of the genes. As such, they both engage contemporary fears of individual genetic





destiny. It is interesting that the texts by Brite and Lee date from the early 1990s, a few months after the Human Genome Project (HGP) began the mammoth task of sequencing the human genome. An international project, the HGP involved laboratories in the USA, UK, Japan, Germany and more. By 1991 the HGP had established the human chromosome mapping data repository and in 1992 the HGP published a low-resolution genetic linkage map of the entire human genome.<sup>45</sup> Over the years that followed many of the sequences of the human genome were isolated and mapped, until the project was declared complete in 2003. Media excitement attended the project's launch and its progressive discoveries, 1991 and 1992 seeing headlines like, 'Biologists Seek the Words in DNA's Unbroken Text' and 'Breaking the Code'.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, however, the textual metaphors of those headlines have a grim corollary: genetic sequencing is about predicting – even restricting – human stories. The implications of this were immediately evident even in 1992, when insurance agencies, employers, adoption agencies and even police forces began planning to use gene sequencing to make decisions about particular people –whom to insure, whom to hire, whom to accept as an adopter parent, whom to track as potential criminals.<sup>47</sup> The emotional cost of discovery was also a concern, geneticists fearing depression or suicide.<sup>48</sup>

Today, genetic testing is becoming increasingly available, and popular depictions of the technologies often imply (wrongly) that genes can straightforwardly depict disease. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that vampire mythologies are morphing to echo the 'Olalla' rather than the *Dracula* model. Often, vampires-from birth exist alongside infected vampires, as in the *Blade* film trilogy (1998-2004) and Kim Harrison's 'Hollows' series, beginning with *Dead Witch Walking* (2004-2010). Richelle Mead's 'Vampire Academy' series (2006-2010) and Peter Watts's novel *Blindsight* (2006), too, feature genetic vampirism. Such texts increasingly imagine vampirisms to be as much about genetics





as infection. The increasing sensitisation of genetics in cultural life suggests that the Olalla model of vampirism is due to only increase. Roger Salomon argues that 'atavistic' figures ultimately denote the sheer impossibility of meaning in the modern age: 'Like other dimensions of horror narrative, atavism moves us finally not to explanations but to mystery'.<sup>49</sup> In these stories, the site of malevolent mystery is individual genetic code. As such, Olalla's legacy is arguably not only genetic, but literary – prescient of twenty-first century dreads.

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## Calvinism and forms of storytelling: Mackellar's parental voice in *The Master of Ballantrae*

*Jeremy Lim*

Biographers and critics have identified an aspect of Stevenson's writing that challenges a monolithic 'Presbyterian heritage with its idea of predestination and sense of sharply overdefined opposition between good and evil'.<sup>1</sup> There is also a tendency to emphasise Stevenson's theological disputes with his austere Calvinist father, Thomas Stevenson, by focusing on *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and by reiterating the claim that Jekyll's metamorphosis reflects Stevenson's 'transgression of the contemporary naturalist taboo of textual integrity' within the constraints of the literary tradition of nineteenth-century realism.<sup>2</sup> This notion of aesthetic rebellion is seen as part of Stevenson's attempt to undermine patriarchy, which in turn is read as part of a conflict with Thomas Stevenson's Calvinism exorcised in narratives that indulge in the 'desire/rage of Oedipal emotions and in the guilt consequent on them'.<sup>3</sup>

This essay gestures towards the limitations of more simplistic Oedipal or purely iconoclastic readings of Stevenson by arguing that any rebellion against patriarchy is infused with a loyalty to an equivocal Calvinism that he had identified with his beloved nurse and surrogate-mother, Alison Cunningham. The three parts that follow, which contain different takes on the role of Calvinism in Stevenson's life and work, seek to reflect his engagements with complex relationships between Calvinist doctrine and Presbyterian views of language, rhetoric and artifice. The first part attempts to represent Stevenson's views of Calvinism by referring to his biographical essay on John Knox, which traces the development and rise of Scottish Presbyterianism back to periods of political instability in Scotland's past.<sup>4</sup> Drawing





on a few critical studies of the role of language and the arts in Calvinism, I emphasise Stevenson's awareness of Knox's complex views of the relationship between figurative language and God's Word. The second part of this essay emphasises the influential role that Cunningham plays in bridging, for Stevenson, doctrine and fiction-writing. The essay then examines the portrayal of the paternalistic family servant, Ephraim Mackellar in *The Master of Ballantrae*, to discuss how ideas of surrogate parental authority in general, and Calvinist conceptions of storytelling in particular, allow Stevenson in his own fiction to represent a poignant fidelity to certain strictures of tradition.

### Presbyterianism and the Calvinist Suspicion

In 'John Knox,' Stevenson's evaluation of Knox's attitude towards Calvin's theology presents a positive account of the Scottish reformer's political and religious ideals, and it can be argued that Stevenson differentiates between the two men's theological views by emphasizing the accommodation of the arts – in particular, the ability to manipulate language to reinforce moral and religious instruction – as one of the merits of Knox's Calvinism.

According to Stevenson, Calvin had repudiated Knox's brazenly indiscreet political tract, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, which attacked the government of Mary of Guise and Mary Tudor. Stevenson seems critical of Calvin's toleration of the Catholic Queen Mary's persecution of Protestants, describing his recoiling from 'political affairs as from something unclean' as 'a spirit necessarily fatal in the long run to the existence of any sect that may profess it; a suicidal doctrine that survives among us [Scots] in narrow views of personal duty'.<sup>5</sup> By juxtaposing Calvin's 'passive obedience' and Knox's aspirations to denounce Queen Mary's divine right to rule in Scotland (p. 307), Stevenson has done more than account for the misogyny in Knox's view that the 'government of women was a deviation from the original plan and proper





order of nature, to be ranked, no less than slavery, among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man' ('John Knox', p. 306). In particular, by accentuating the sense of intimacy in Knox's friendship with Elizabeth Bowes and Anne Locke, as well as his marriage to Marjorie Bowes, the biography emphasises the discursive exchanges that occurred between Knox's creation of the *First Blast* and the *First Scottish Confession* and the 'circle of admiring women, eager to hear the new paragraph' (p. 328). Stevenson therefore identifies the dynamic interactions between the Church and secular society as one of the strengths of Scottish Presbyterianism. Such a claim concurs with historical studies of Calvinism, including John T. McNeill's, which notes that the Scottish Reformation was unique as it was 'deeply rooted in the life of the people' (p. 307).

Furthermore, for Stevenson, the theology of Geneva should be distinguished from the theology of Presbyterian Scotland, where the historical and political development and establishment of Calvinism paradoxically produced a vernacular literature and storytelling tradition in spite of the Presbyterian mistrust of the arts.<sup>6</sup> While an analysis of Stevenson's appraisal of Scotland's historical Calvinism will involve an investigation of what Calvin and Knox could mean for Stevenson's own time, we could seek recourse to the work of certain Calvin scholars to explain a more specifically religious aspect of Stevenson's views of literature and the arts. Leslie P. Spelman has quoted the following passages from *The Institutes of Christian Religion* and *The Tracts* to reveal Calvin's condemnation of the use of, specifically, the visual arts in the church:

Do not men pay to images and statues the very same reverence which they pay to God? It is an error to suppose that there is any difference between this madness and that of the heathen. For God forbids us not only to worship images, but to regard them as residence of his divinity.





I know that it is a very common observation, that images are the books of the illiterate. Gregory said so; but very different is the decision of the Spirit of God, in whose school had Gregory been taught, he would never have made such an assertion. For, since Jeremiah pronounces that 'the stock is a doctrine of vanities,' (Jer. X. 8) since Habakkuk represents 'a molten images' as 'a teacher of lies,' (Hab. II. 18) . . . certainly the general doctrine to be gathered from the passages is, that whatever men learn respecting God from images is equally frivolous and false. (*Institutes of Christian Religion* Bk 1, Chapter 11: 5.)<sup>7</sup>

By mentioning that Knox had acquired the reputation of having 'browbeat[en] Queen Mary' and broken 'beautiful carved work in abbeys and cathedrals,' Stevenson's biographical essay thus acknowledges that Knox's Calvinism shared Calvin's suspicious attitude towards the ecclesiastical employment of the visual arts ('John Knox', p. 316).

An investigation of religious views of the arts in relation to Stevenson needs to emphasise the status of language and literature. There is, indeed, an area in Calvinism scholarship that attends to aesthetic and linguistic concerns, specifically in relation to Biblical interpretation and Calvin's critical attitude towards how art – in particular the equivocal nature of rhetorical language – can please and even manipulate the reader. According to Spelman, the anti-artistic impulse in Calvinism stems from the veneration of the Bible as the basis of the Christian religion in the Protestant Reformation, which historically disassociates itself from the Roman Catholic heritage of liturgic art and music. He adds that, unlike Martin Luther who kept much of the arts (architecture, hymns, and organ and choral music) in the service of the church, Calvin 'went as far as to allow nothing which was not expressly approved by the Bible'.<sup>8</sup> Spelman's emphasis on Calvin's 'legalistic' humanism exemplifies the common tendency





(in popular understanding) to associate Calvinism with ‘religious tyranny,’ ‘logic and cold reason’ (p. 246). Likewise, Stevenson’s portrayal of Knox’s disagreements with Calvin – concerning the interpretation of the Bible – is written in a way that is not prejudiced in Calvin’s favour. A closer look at Calvinism, in Calvin’s own terms, points towards the limitations of Stevenson’s critique of his view of the arts and Biblical interpretation. A fairer assessment of the role of the arts – in particular, the complex definitions of rhetoric – in Calvinism can be found in William J. Bouwsma’s evaluation of Calvin in relation to sixteenth-century humanism. Bouwsma concedes that Calvin was disturbed by the ambiguities that can be found, for example, in the parallel between ‘the sudden intervention that had transformed the despair of Abraham into joy and the *deus ex machina* of various pagan myths’.<sup>9</sup> Calvin subsequently ‘attributed the similarity to Satan, who, “by figments of this kind, has endeavoured to obscure the wondering and amazing interventions of God”’ (Bouwsma, p. 115). However, Calvin’s humanism went deeper than a dogmatic distrust of the ‘figurative language’ of myths and stories, because he believed that ‘[r]hetoric’ had a ‘mysterious affinity with divinity’ (p. 117). He was not troubled by the view that authors of the Gospel were ‘artists’ even as they were ‘annalists,’ recognizing that a level of interpretive distortion was unavoidable because ‘the Evangelists’ had ‘transfer[red] units of Christ’s teaching here and there to different places as the occasion demand[ed]’ (p. 121). For Calvin, according to Bouwsma, the ‘Bible is throughout a rhetorical document and a work of interpretation’ (p. 121). Following Bouwsma’s analysis, such a view of the Word was also held by Renaissance humanists who looked to ‘orators, poets, and historians’ for inspiration, and ‘rejected Scholastic education, which depended primarily on logic, the art of organizing truth into rationally intelligible systems of thought’ (pp. 113–14). Calvin’s *Institutes*, in fact, relied on pagan literature, and cited ‘Cicero and Quintilian, Homer and Virgil, Plutarch and Seneca,





Horace, Juvenal, and Ovid, the authors most cherished by humanists,' because the writer wrote for readers who 'loved these authors,' but also 'because he loved them himself' (p. 115). The reformer clearly welcomed the powers of suggestive communication ('digression, repetition, embellishment, amplification, and passages of great emotional intensity') as long as the impact of his messages was increased (Bouswma, p. 126).

Although Stevenson's biographical account focuses on Knox's theological beliefs as well as his personal life and idiosyncrasies, the historical research does deal with Calvinism's complicated tolerance of interpretive ambiguities in figurative language. In particular, the account pays attention to how religious doctrine could, in Scotland, ironically produce a tradition of oral narrative. When Stevenson emphatically states that Knox's revolutionary Protestantism parallels the Puritanism that led to the execution of Charles I, there is the suggestion that the political fervour of Knox's Calvinism was infused into Scotland's folk storytelling tradition ('John Knox', p. 307). During the seventeenth century, such an uncompromising Calvinism was exercised by certain Presbyterian ministers who amassed popular support for the National Covenant, which pledged to maintain the true religion of Scotland against English influences. This led to the formation of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643.<sup>10</sup> However, when Charles II attempted to re-establish episcopacy in Scotland, the Covenanting ministers left their manse and churches in rebellion, believing firmly, as a historian notes, that they were 'good Calvinists' 'predestined to grace and so were the more eager to die for their faith'.<sup>11</sup> In their heroic but failed attempt to rebel against English proscription, the Calvinist Covenanters left behind an undying legacy, not the less for Stevenson who was, as biographers remark, an 'heir of the Covenanters' gripped 'all his life' by stories that embodied that patriotic moment in Scotland's past.<sup>12</sup>

There is, however, a more significant way in which Stevenson





understood the contradictory impulses in the need to revive the awe-inspiring spirit of the Covenanters through rhetorical devices of storytelling, despite his awareness of their austerity and mistrust of art and pleasure. From the Covenanting tradition as incited no less by Knox's repudiation of episcopacy and eagerness to displace Roman Catholicism from Scotland, Stevenson had also inherited an awareness of the troubling tensions between language – and by extension, literature – and the centrality of 'the Word' in a system that emphasises one's individual relationship with God as well as one's duty to the local Church. Once again, this privileging of 'the Word' in Presbyterian Scotland is traceable to the contrasting attitudes of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches towards the employment of the arts in worship. Stevenson's biographical account of Knox exemplifies this key doctrinal difference by mentioning that Knox had emphasised 'the first transgression and certain strong texts in Genesis and Paul's Epistles' to invalidate Queen Mary's accession ('John Knox', p. 304). Calvin had frustrated Knox by rejecting his reading of the Bible's conception of Eve and her daughters and Queen Mary's divine right to rule; and yet, as Stevenson suggests, Calvin's own emphasis on 'the Word' and the authority of the local church paradoxically enabled Knox to legitimise his theological and political convictions, at least within Edinburgh. As stated in *Calvin's Institutes*:

Wherever we see the Word of God *purely preached and heard*, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists [cf. Eph. 2:20]. For his promise cannot fail: 'Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them' [Matt. 18:20].

But we may clearly grasp the sum of this matter, we must proceed by the following steps: the church universal is





a multitude gathered from all nations; it is divided and dispersed in separate places, but agrees on the one truth of divine doctrine, and is bound by the bond of the same religion. Under it are thus included individual churches, disposed in towns and villages *according to human need, so that each rightly has the name and authority of the church*. Individual men who, by their profession of religion, are reckoned within such churches, even though they may actually be strangers to the church, still in a sense belong to it until they have been rejected by public judgment. (IV.i.9, my emphasis.)

Therefore, Calvin respects the autonomy of the individual 'human need' that is legitimised by the local church, which is sanctioned to preach God's Word. In other words, Calvin's emphasis on the congregational participation in the service of worship and the reading of the Bible allows local variations. There is certainly the risk that the local may regard itself as the standard, and Stevenson is aware of this, because according to him, Knox felt completely justified in using the Bible to condemn Queen Mary in spite of Calvin's theological reservations and disagreements. However, even though Stevenson does mention the limitations of Knox's patriarchy in Edinburgh, the biography portrays a largely sympathetic account of Knox's political and theological convictions. We are told that the reformer understood 'the world and his own heart, not so much under any very steady, equable light, as by extreme flashes of passion, true for the moment, but not true in the long run' ('John Knox', p. 316). At the same time, we are told by Stevenson that Knox found loyal friends, two of them being his own wife and mother-in-law, to whom he wrote sensitive and passionate letters. Part of the provocative claim, here, is that Knox's establishment of his own model of Geneva, the 'Presbyterian paradise' in Scotland, involved a careful manipulation of language, which is permissible so long as the Calvinist







authority inspires moral belief in his followers (p. 327).

### Cummy's Calvinism

In this section Stevenson's self-conscious view of language and literature is explained in terms of his affinity to a peculiar conception of storytelling that Alison Cunningham mediated to him in his childhood – a model that supports Thomas Stevenson's Calvinism in complex ways.

As biographers and critics have noted, Stevenson's upbringing sensitised him to an aspect of Calvinism that complicates the relationship between language and religious study. Thomas Stevenson, the austere father, often scrutinised a kind of language with intense Calvinist rigour:

For Thomas Stevenson the study of God's Word, and the millions of words contingent upon the Word which were shaping the Scottish publishing industry, was the highest pursuit. It was an age of tracts, commentaries and concordances, and Thomas was a fan.<sup>13</sup>

An extension of the view that the Word needs to be studied in highly disciplined ways is his belief that one deviates, when one reads and enjoys fiction, from the religious pursuit. Although Thomas Stevenson clearly enjoyed Scott's novels and participated in Stevenson's writing of *Treasure Island*, his rigorous Calvinism caused him to perceive a marked distance between the language of religious and moral instruction and the language of fiction. Hence, replying to a letter that Stevenson wrote which asked the question of whether reading the Waverley novels was more enriching for the soul than being edified by Lockhart's *Life of Scott* (which is nevertheless 'worth reading, as all things are from time to time, that keep us nose to nose with fact'), Stevenson senior wrote: 'I have read the latter [Lockhart's work] and have rather a pleasant recollection of it. But I admit *the end*





is not a pleasant recollection – the fact is Sir W. did not cultivate religion'.<sup>14</sup> Underlying this quarrel between Stevenson and his father, who saw Scott's novels as somehow falling short of Lockhart's biographical work, is a theological dispute that associates moral instruction with plain 'fact,' and fiction with distraction from the 'truth.'

While biographers have tended, as Hennessy notes, to 'under-rate Thomas Stevenson's very human characteristics' as they emphasise his suppression of his son's ambition to become a writer, the dour Calvinism is perhaps consistent with Calvin's suspicious view of the arts.<sup>15</sup> There is an aspect of Thomas Stevenson's mistrust of fiction that echoes Calvin's highly critical view of rhetorical uses of language, as discussed in the first section of this essay. The Calvinist worldview of Stevenson's other parent, his 'second mother' Cummy, seems similarly conditioned. Biographers have treated her Calvinism in ways that are consistent with their presentations of Thomas Stevenson's austerity, insofar as they highlight how *both* parents had indoctrinated in Stevenson's consciousness a sharply defined opposition between fiction and God's Word. Stevenson himself had reflected on (in *Memoirs of Himself*) how Cummy was troubled by certain literary devices that could be found in edifying stories, such as when she unwittingly intoned one of the 'Songstries' in a way that drew attention to a seductive artifice as they fell distractedly 'into a loose irregular measure with a tendency toward the ten-syllable heroic line' (as quoted in Norquay, p. 13).

And yet, biographical discussions of Cummy's influence have given more attention to Stevenson's indebtedness to her love for storytelling. In particular, accounts of Stevenson's Calvinist indoctrination is often characterised, perhaps in sentimental ways, by his deep gratitude to Cummy's role as a caregiver, whereas Thomas Stevenson's authority was more simply oppressive. Ian Bell remarks that it is difficult –





[to] understand why Stevenson always held his nurse in such high regard. He was aware, of course, that her influence had been both good and bad. But with his mother often ill, in bed, or both, and his father often away, she was all he had, and in her way she cared more for him than for anyone else in the world. Cummy, 'second mother', was always there, especially in the night, that period forever associated in his mind, and often in his art, with disorientation and a world out of order. (Ian Bell, p. 50.)

Through her read-aloud stories, Cummy cared for Stevenson during his invalid childhood. The stories included a range of religious, edifying, as well as secular material: newspaper articles on the crimes that occurred in Edinburgh and London, the Bible, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Scottish folklore and Covenanting histories. Daiches has noted that Cummy represented for Stevenson 'a peculiar Scottish blend of strong imagination' with her 'great love of rhetoric and dramatic speech, and a strict adherence to the narrow Covenanting version of Scottish Presbyterianism'.<sup>16</sup> The characteristics of Covenanting Calvinists, with their partisan views of the unity between the World and the moral historian's words, will be attended to in the next section which discusses Norquay's analysis of Stevenson's Scottish historical novel, *The Master of Ballantrae*. For now, suffice it to say that Cummy's passion for storytelling becomes complicated when it is considered in relation to Thomas Stevenson's mistrust of fiction, or in relation to the Calvinist sensitivity to the possibility of deception that lurks in rhetorical language.

A closer look at the father's strict Calvinism that nevertheless accommodates the nurse's storytelling forms a suggestive context about Stevenson's own view of the relationship between fiction and religious instruction. Critics have discussed Stevenson's life and work by emphasizing complex interactions between apparently incompatible realms of language. For example, in discuss-





ing Stevenson's childhood experience of Cummy's conflicted enjoyment of light fiction and his adult conception of 'romance' (as opposed to 'realism') as a genre, Norquay emphasises certain inversions that would nurture Stevenson's ability to distance himself from simplistic notions of the child's imagination:

Stevenson indicated [in *Memoirs of Himself*] that his nurse was far from happy in having to deny herself the pleasurable but worrying delights of *Cassell's Family Paper*. He thus recognised the irony in this play of readerly guilt and gratification: for the child it is the light fiction (and guilt at enjoying it) which produces the fearful dreams while the fanaticism of religious martyrdom offers a temporary sense of safety; for the nurse, her own sense of religious responsibility both denies her alternative reading matter and returns her to texts most likely to upset the imagination of a sensitive boy. (Norquay, pp. 33-34.)

By re-emphasising the Presbyterian mistrust of the arts, we may also appreciate unique views of language and literature that were mediated to young Stevenson by a caregiver who, although a brooding Calvinist like the father, was yet a fervent storyteller. The environment that Cummy created promoted subversive interactions between the experiences of reading light fiction and serious religious text. Within a cycle of pleasurable transgression and religious experience, the enjoyment of light fiction provokes a self-denial that necessitates a religious engagement with accounts of martyrdom; and yet, some of these accounts were so emotionally-charged that they could intensify the over-imaginative child's need for stories. This interaction that could both reinforce and blur the line between enjoying fiction and receiving religious instruction appears acceptable within Thomas Stevenson's household despite his strict study of the Word. As Bell notes, Cummy's grim storytelling was 'not





discouraged in a household whose head later became the author of *Christianity Confirmed by Jewish and Heathen Testimony and the Deductions from Physical Science*. (Bell, p. 48.) Another biographer wonders whether ‘a salutary measure would have been the dismissal of ‘Cummy’ and the provision of a properly trained nurse with some common sense’.<sup>17</sup> And yet, the complexities of Cummy’s equivocal Calvinism and storytelling, which at once disrupts and supports a conservative religious authority, created enabling conditions for Stevenson’s writing career.

### **Moral Authority in *The Master of Ballantrae***

The role of Scottish Calvinism in influencing Stevenson’s writing of *The Master of Ballantrae* has been well examined by Norquay, who examines the links between Stevenson’s Calvinist worldview and his contributions to late-Victorian literary debates about the aesthetics of fiction and about the generic conditions that define ‘realism’ and ‘romance.’ Apart from tracing his aesthetic theories back to his Calvinist upbringing, Norquay draws attention to another kind of Calvinist inheritance: Stevenson’s metaphysical consciousness of God as the author of the World. If Stevenson’s fiction presents ‘unreal’ worlds that provide escapist and pleasurable ‘moments of involvement,’ this is not the least because he had internalised a Calvinist view of the Word that problematises the written word (Norquay, p. 43). Following a strict Calvinism, Norquay argues, the novelist is highly wary of producing fiction that is ‘seen as offering representational insights into how to live in this world,’ because such fiction may undermine the authority of the Bible and one’s individual relationship with God (p. 43). The Bible is a ‘self-interpreting text – not one which needed external authority’ even as Protestant faith pushes ‘the individual reader increasingly towards the search of textual meaning, a search for truth’ in an ‘individual negotiation between the sinner and God, the sinner and the Word’ (pp. 29-30). This search for textual meaning is motivated by an anxious need for an assur-





ance of salvation, which is created by Calvinism's doctrine of predestination and election, even as Calvin 'warned that confidence in the interpretation of signs could be a danger' (Norquay, p. 30).

In discussing the role of documentary accounts in shaping Stevenson's writing of *The Master of Ballantrae*, Norquay's study shifts away from familial and metaphysical contexts and examines Stevenson's fascination with Scotland's Covenanted history. Closely reading certain partisan narratives that came out of Scotland's Covenanted era, her discussion demonstrates Stevenson's sensitivity to certain problems concerning documentation and representation.<sup>18</sup> His complex view of the relationship between history, politics, and narrative form is thus analyzed in response to criticisms that emphasise the unreliability of the novel's main narrator:

Within the novel [*The Master of Ballantrae*] the 'shaping' role is played by the main narrator, the loyal servant of Henry Durie, that collector of documents, Ephraim Mackellar, a character who has been viewed with increasing critical suspicion as a figure of manipulative narratorial 'control', someone who seeks to conceal his own part in events and present a particular version of 'history'. His role as narrator, however, might also be understood in relation to the different narrative modes Stevenson found within Covenanted literature. Mackellar would like to be the 'Howie' of this tale: to amplify emotions, to understand character, to draw moral lessons and to interpret for the reader. (Norquay, p. 132.)

Following Norquay's analysis of narratives, my discussion of the novel will move away from 'suspicious' readings of Mackellar's character, although I attempt to add another layer to Norquay's discussion of the Covenanted context by emphasising Stevenson's sympathetic portrayal of the Calvinist steward.





I will argue that Stevenson critiques and ultimately supports Mackellar's authority and his right to rigidly control the lives of the Duries and their estate.

*The Master of Ballantrae* tells a story of a landed family living on the Solway Firth. There is a pair of lowland brothers, James and Henry Durie, whose lives seem overdetermined by vestiges of clan tradition in Scotland. At the core of the novel is the intense fraternal hatred, tinged with love, that James and Henry harbour against each other. Mackellar faces tremendous difficulties in his task to restore some state of normality within the Durie household, particularly at a time of political turmoil and Jacobite unrest, when opposing political claims threaten the security of the household and estate that he has been hired to manage on the behalf of failed lairds – the frail Lord Durrissdeer, and later, the anxiety-ridden Henry, who lacks conviction in his status as a master of Ballantrae. Even though Mackellar fails to prevent the brothers from eventually ruining each other, he manages to preserve the family's honour within a memoir that fluctuates between patriarchal judgment and the registers of storytelling (for example, in the use of rhetorical questions to provoke empathy or speculation):

Was the man [James] moved by particular sentiment against Mr Henry? or by what he thought to be his interest? or by a mere delight in cruelty such as cats display and theologians tell us of the devil? or by what he would have called love? My common opinion halts among the three first; perhaps there lay at the spring of his behaviour an element of all.<sup>19</sup>

Such a preoccupation with trying to reconcile understanding and judgment accounts for why the final text of the epitaph is situated at the end of the memoir, not earlier. The narrator seems to predestine the lives of James, the 'savage hunter,' and Henry,





his 'fraternal enemy' (*Master*, p. 219) by using biblical archetypes – the 'hairy' and 'hunting' Esau and his brother, Jacob, who 'supplanted' his elder brother and 'took away [his] birthright' (Genesis 27:23, 36). This sense of highhanded judgment evoked in the final text has, of course, been anticipated throughout Mackellar's narrative, '[s]o that the plot, by its own scope and progress, furthered and confirmed itself' (p. 79). However, it is important to note that even though the Presbyterian steward does not see himself as a novelist, Stevenson's writing compels us at some level to read the writing as a more affective version of moral instruction (even as the reader may have reservations about the cryptic evasions in Mackellar's writing). Mackellar's narratives may be read in the light of Scotland's Covenanting tradition: the Presbyterian historian distrusts art and aims for simple documentation, even though art or artifice can emerge when certain stylistic devices 'draw attention to the quality of writing, to the text as text' (Norquay, p. 124).

Perhaps, another way of appreciating Mackellar's authority is by associating it with Alison Cunningham, rather than with Stevenson's grimly Calvinist father. Her social role occupies a unique position in Stevenson's upbringing insofar as she situates herself interstitially between the roles of insider and outsider, both brooding Calvinist and lover of stories, servant and surrogate mother. Mackellar's position is just as subversive. On the one hand, his professionalism and education in Edinburgh College suggest that he can comfortably represent the lowland Whig standards that are legislated by the city's judiciary. And hence, he has the ability to 'ride to Edinburgh, and there raise a new loan on very questionable terms to keep the old [loan] afloat' (*Master*, p. 64). On the other, there is a humane flexibility in the way he fathers, even mothers, the Durie family in Cunningham's manner. The sense of social and fiscal determinism in his writing thus does not conceal his own struggles as a guardian to maintain Henry's status as the official heir, in particular by relentlessly







making accommodations and personal sacrifices as he honoured the contract that was established by the brothers' coin toss in the year 1745. Apart from offering James five hundred pounds from his own savings, Mackellar exceeds his duty to the family by sailing across the stormy Atlantic Ocean and trekking through the wintry Adirondack wilderness. His willingness to incorporate an extract from Colonel Burke's memoirs into his memoir reflects his admiration of James's bravery in the way he single-handedly subdues a group of feckless pirates. As well, Mackellar commemorates James's death by accentuating the pathos in his shameful defeat as he strays away from the Jacobite cause, and is forced to 'toil' among the 'barbarous' wilderness en route to French Canada to seek amnesty (p. 55). It almost seems as if Mackellar, as a writer, cannot but express his paternalistic sentiments, even as his basic duty is to document the facts within the memoranda that are 'designed for edification' (p. 32).

Of course, Stevenson's writing is also at pains to establish a narrative voice and perspective that belongs to the Durie family and as such distinct from Mackellar's biblical typologies and retrospectively determined narration. For instance, during the three weeks of Mackellar's absence when he leaves for Edinburgh to request a loan on the family's behalf, Alison Graeme is given the chance to become a better wife and mother, and she does become 'greatly wrapped up in Miss Katherine' (p. 64). Alison's maternity is eventually determined, however, because Mackellar contrasts the change 'in her demeanour' against Henry's incompetence and willed depression (p. 64). And yet, in this retroactive analysis, Mackellar's writing is not prejudiced much in her favour. A similar critique surfaces to subvert Mackellar's narrative control when Henry takes Alexander to the shrubbery, where he and James once fought in a moonlit duel. Mackellar briefly recognises that this is an idyllic moment of intimacy between father and son, as the language tries to depict: 'It was at that time of year when the woods are all in their spring colours, and thorns





all in flower, and the birds in the high season of their singing' (p. 122). And yet, he proceeds to warn him that a 'wise father' would not spoil his son (p. 126). Similarly, Mackellar protests too much when James returns to his family, and dotes on his nephew, as he doted on his niece during his previous return. As Mackellar acknowledges, the uncle is 'full of matter the most pleasing in the world' for Alexander's 'youthful ear,' such as 'battles, sea-disasters, flights, the forests of the West, and (since his latest voyage) the ancient cities of the Indies' (p. 143). This moment echoes, perhaps, the writer's memories of his father, who took young Stevenson 'into the world of pirates and highwaymen that he always loved' by 'feign[ing] conversations with guards or coachmen or innkeepers' (as noted in Norquay, p. 18). And yet, James's fathering (however unreliable and insignificant it really is) is almost lost in Mackellar's biblical abstractions: 'there was the Eve in our perishable paradise; and the serpent was already hissing on the trail' (p. 144). It is thus not surprising that the fictionalised editor once intrudes to disrupt the steward's moralistic logorrhoea: 'Five pages of Mr Mackellar's MS. are here omitted. I have gathered from their perusal an impression that Mr Mackellar, in his old age, was rather an exacting servant' (p. 125). That the censorship also works to conceal disputes between Mackellar and Alexander Durie in later life could suggest that Stevenson's need to emphasise the limitations of the steward's narrative and parental control; however, I would still like to argue that the novel ultimately compels us to appreciate Mackellar's authority, precisely because the steward is not wholly conscious of his need to make provisions for the family at a more intimately-involved level.

Without reading too much sinister intention into Mackellar's narrative performance, however, (as most critics tend to) we can see his social function as being overdetermined by the vestiges of the feudal, class, and religious systems as well as the threats of political rebellion in Scotland.<sup>20</sup> Mackellar exists





as a figure of continuity and stability, and we may thus excuse the restrictive cultural identity that history has bestowed on him. Nonetheless, in terms of Stevenson's critique of social adaptation and fiscal determinism, Mackellar's paternalism is not immune to Stevenson's critique of a patriarchal Calvinism. Mackellar's existence is codified, and Stevenson's writing draws attention to the rigidity by portraying his moral crisis during his sea journey to New York. On the ship *Nonesuch* that is tossed about by the stormy sea, he describes James and his own psychological state in terms of indeterminable signs and blurred categories: 'sometimes my gorge rose against him as though he was deformed – and sometimes I would draw away as though from something spectral. I had moments when I thought of him as of a man of pasteboard' (p. 156). This Jekyll-like transformation that Mackellar's imagination imposes on James ironically brings about the collapse of the steward's patriarchal assurance as, one moment, the sea's horizon becomes the ceiling and the next, swings down under his feet. Within this 'hurricane' (p. 157) of moral confusion that moves Mackellar to a numb speechlessness (p. 163), James is allowed to become the dominant narrator as he tells the story of a count who murders his enemy, a case in which no evidence can prove that there has been criminal intention (p. 163). And yet, as soon as we are told that the ship arrives at New York, the land steward resumes taking narrative control, and the 'former prejudices will revive' (p. 169). Briefly, however, Mackellar is seduced by James's own storytelling. This is the same steward who has thus far relentlessly proscribed the air of adventure and romance that James, as a Jacobite renegade (and later, an English spy) breathes (p. 36).

Mackellar's sea-journey provides one of the most memorable scenes in his memoir, since it humanises the steward in James's eyes and shows that 'the old wife has blood in his body after all' (p. 165). However, it is also an embarrassing moment. The reader cannot but feel that the sober Calvinist has become a victim of





textual irony as he falls flat on the ship's deck with a 'childish fixity,' precisely because he does not like us to second-guess him (p. 163). To be fair to Mackellar, however, his moral crisis in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean is severe. The Atlantic tempest seems to occur in the blind spot of British colonial and mercantile expansion, the only place where a lowland Calvinist can fall victim to outlawry. Nonetheless, despite the lapse in judgment, there is perhaps something commendable in the way the seasick steward instantly recovers when he arrives in New York, and proceeds to his lord's house at 'top speed' (p. 170).

Having discussed how Stevenson's writing subverts Mackellar's authority in an isolated incident, I would like to return to the reliability of the steward's surrogate-parenting and professional narration. We should note that the other character who falls victim to outlawry in the novel is, of course, Henry Durrisdeer, and even though Alison Graeme frequently castigates Mackellar for being meddlesome, it seems fairly clear that Henry is dependent on Mackellar's professionalism to function as the laird. It may even be said that of all the male lowlanders portrayed in Stevenson's Scottish novels, Henry most closely resembles Henry Jekyll in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and it is hardly surprising that Stevenson has given them the same first names. Like Jekyll perhaps, Henry cannot and will not detach himself from the pains of brotherly betrayal as he adheres rigidly to the rule of primogeniture, which the coin toss of 1745 formally invalidates. He may well agree to represent his family's loyalty to the Whigs, but he does not give himself a chance to dissemble his role as the rightful laird of Ballantrae. He either morbidly 'prove[s] himself a man of dry nature, immersed in money-getting' (p. 112), or abdicates responsibility by clinging, 'with a passion of a child,' to a nostalgia for the past that has never existed for the sake of a future (p. 106). The gold coin that Alison flings into the family shield, shattering the stained glass box that houses it, suggests that Henry's literalism is determined





by vestigial clanship traditions as well as by James's inability to exercise financial and moral restraint. Within seven years, he allows James to siphon more than eight thousand pounds from the Durrisdeer, at the expense of his own children, Alexander and Katherine. In this crisis, Mackellar's professional intervention and surrogate-fathering indeed become indispensable, to maintain the estate and the family's tradition and honour on the heir's behalf. Whereas Henry seems to assume that stability is almost impossible to achieve as he descends into bouts of severe depression, Mackellar is a figure of stability and changelessness, although he recognises that change is inevitable, and adaptation, difficult. The family does not allow Mackellar to mend the broken crest, but the steward has accomplished as much as he can in his documentary writing.

## NOTES

- 1 Michela Vanon Alliata, "Markheim" and the Shadow of the Other' in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 300.
- 2 Nathalie Jaëck, 'The Greenhouse vs. the Glasshouse: Stevenson's Stories as Textual Matrices' in *Writer of Boundaries*, p. 48.
- 3 William Veeder, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy' in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), p. 122.
- 4 The biography presents Stevenson's historical awareness of how Calvin's teachings were built into the theological and ecclesiastical foundations of the Church of Scotland when it was reformed in 1560, under mainly Knox's direction.
- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'John Knox' in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (London: J. M. Dent & Son, 1929), p. 307.
- 6 It can be said, perhaps, that Stevenson believed that the storytelling tradition had brought religion closer to the hearts and minds of the Scots, whereas in Geneva, the Church and the demotic realm were not necessarily bridged through the arts.





- 7 Leslie P. Spelman, 'Calvin and the Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol 6, 3 (Mar., 1948), 246-252, p. 247.
- 8 Leslie P. Spelman, 'Luther and the Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol 10, 2 (Dec. 1951), 166-175, p. 166.
- 9 William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 115.
- 10 Even though the Covenant failed to fulfil the larger purpose of establishing a uniformity of worship in the United Kingdom, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was compiled and approved based on Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This *Confession* was to become the 'principal article of Calvinist theology in Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries': Douglas Thorpe, 'Calvin, Darwin, and the Double: The Problem of Divided Nature in Hogg, MacDonald, and Stevenson', *Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada*, vol 11, 1 (1985) 6-22, p. 7.
- 11 Fitzroy Maclean, *The Concise History of Scotland* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), p. 136.
- 12 See David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson and His World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 28; and Jenni Calder, 'A Spirit Intense and Rare' in *The Robert Louis Stevenson Companion*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1980), p. 10.
- 13 Ian Bell, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Dreams of Exile* (London: Headline Books, 1993), p. 29.
- 14 As cited by Glenda Norquay in *Robert Louis Stevenson and Theories of Reading* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 36-7.
- 15 James Pope-Hennessy, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p. 28.
- 16 Daiches, p. 11.
- 17 Richard Aldington, *Portrait of a Rebel. The Life and Work of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Evans Brothers, 1957), p. 22.
- 18 The works of Covenanting historians that Stevenson read include Robert Wodrow's *The History of the Suffering of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revelation*, James Kirkton's *The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Year 1678*, Patrick Walker's *Biographia Presbyteriana*, and John Howie's *Biographia Scoticana, or a Brief Historical Account of the Lives, Characters and Memorable*





*Transactions of the most Eminent Scots Worthies.*

- 19 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), p. 77.
- 20 For example, Alan Sandison argues that Mackellar's 'perception' of the brothers must be 'suspect since, as a deeply committed Presbyterian, his particular theology will present him with a dualistic universe salvation will depend upon his recognizing the speciousness of surface appearances and penetrating to the truly significant moral substance which lies beneath': *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 278. My emphasis, however, is that Mackellar is all the more reliable as a surrogate-father and as a narrator *because* of his Covenanting Presbyterianism.









## ‘Squandering names’: place, nomenclature and cultural identity

*Glenda Norquay*

An anonymous review of *Catriona*, published in 1893 in *The Bookman*, notes: ‘There is [...] one source of delight of which the Southerner cannot avail himself – the topographical nomenclature.’ Representing Stevenson as possessing a typically Scottish predilection for listing places names, creating an effect alien to the non-Scottish reader, the reviewer argues:

Mr Stevenson evidently shares with his fellow north-angles their pleasure in the mere repetition of local names. The book abounds in them. Most of them are to the unprejudiced eye painfully ugly in print, though free from the aggressive defiance of Welsh spelling. In sound they are far from Italian and their derivation and meaning too often suggests a *mesquin* provincialism. But the North-angle loves them – how far the Celtic Highlander shares this feeling I do not know – and this affection is respectable, for it is connected with his ingrained territorial instincts. To him a list of Scotch railway stations and village post offices is quite as good as a novel.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, he concludes, the book ‘will find most favour north of the Tweed, where David’s itinerary can not only be traced but its innumerable halting places and landmarks pronounced with loving cacophony.’ This article examines the preoccupation with names in Stevenson’s writing, a characteristic that has both aesthetic and philosophical significance but also, as the reviewer implies, is linked to larger questions of cultural and national identity. It does so through a particular focus on the 1887 essay ‘Pastoral’ and brief consideration of Stevenson’s late fiction.<sup>2</sup>





Stevenson's philosophical interest in naming as key to the processes of signification was scholarly as well as literary, and ran throughout his adult life. In the very early essay 'The Philosophy of Nomenclature', published in *Edinburgh University Magazine* in 1871, he explores, through mocking discussion of the determining effect of a name, the idea that (in crude critical parlance) the signifier can carry an excess of gratification not served by the signified.<sup>3</sup> Even in this early and rather laboured piece, as he notes how pleased he was as a boy to be able to hail 'Robin Hood, Robert Bruce and Robert le Diable as my name-fellows' (p. 159), his engagement with the ways in which names function to catch the imagination is evident. In his letters too, names are discussed as a particularly powerful example of linguistic pleasure: indeed one letter to Henley begins with a name and ends with a plot, as his imagination is ignited by the name of the highwayman Jerry Abershaw:

Jerry Abershaw – O what a title! [. . .] it's a poem. The two most lovely words in English: and what a sentiment. Hark you, how the hoofs ring! Is this a blacksmith's. No, it's a wayside inn. Jerry Abershaw.

'It was a clear frosty evening, not 100 miles from Putney etc.'

Jerry Abershaw. [. . .]

Jerry Abershaw. Jerry Abershaw. Jerry Abershaw.<sup>4</sup>

But place names are the most resonant of all: in 'The Ideal House' (1884), he suggests the library should contain a 'map table, groaning under a collection of large-scale maps and charts', not only because 'Of all books these are the least wearisome to read and the richest in matter' but also because 'the bead-roll of names, make them of all printed matter the most fit to stimulate and satisfy the fancy' (*Works*, XXV, pp. 193-4). In 'A Gossip on Romance' he famously describes the Inn at Burford Bridge





and the Hawes Inn at Queensferry as places which call upon his fancy, places which 'speak distinctly', a speaking quality which, as the repetition suggests, extends beyond the places themselves to their designated names, culminating with: 'The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford' (*Works*, XXIX, p. 122). Again the names of places, producing plot, are key to the poetic imagination and origin of narrative.

Stevenson's interest in the sound of names, the evocative effects of a roll-call of places, forms part of his lifelong project to examine the appeal of words to the senses. This fascination was particularly stimulated by his reading of Whitman, whom he had praised in 'The Gospel According to Walt Whitman' (1878) for his exuberant use of language in general and nomenclature in particular.<sup>5</sup> In *Across the Plains* (1883) he asserts that 'none can care for literature in itself who does not take a special pleasure in the sound of names' and notes that 'there is no part of the world where nomenclature is so rich, poetical, humorous or picturesque as the United States of America' (*Works*, XVIII, p. 86). Stevenson proves this by a Whitman-inspired litany which gives full rein to the geographical imagination:

The names of the States and Territories themselves form a chorus of sweet and most romantic vocables: Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming, Minnesota, and the Carolinas; there are few poems with a nobler music for the ear: a songful, tuneful land; and if the new Homer shall arise from the Western continent, his verse will be enriched, his pages sing spontaneously, with the names of states and cities that would strike the fancy in a business circular. (pp. 86-7.)





In 'singing spontaneously', the names as Stevenson suggests, speak volumes beyond their topographical allusion. As the writer roams verbally across the United States, any intrinsic link between place and name or an engagement with place disappears: words are deployed for their aural and poetic effect, disconnected from the places they represent.

What the reviewer of *Catriona* suggests, however, and what this article explores, is a particularly Scottish dimension to Stevenson's deployment of place names: the relationship between a perceived national characteristic – the love of specific sound effects – and the idea of belonging: 'an ingrained territorial instinct'. 'Pastoral', as its title suggests, provides a powerful exploration of both literary and geographical dwelling but also a crucial instance of the personal and philosophical implications of naming. Written in 1886 when Stevenson was living at Skerryvore, it contains two competing engagements with nomenclature: the authorial voice indulges in lists of names, making explicit the admiration for highly specific locale descriptors and demonstrating a delight in using them but the essay focuses on the vocal abilities of another figure, the lowland shepherd John Todd, who possesses a particular power in the naming of places. Todd, a figure from Stevenson's youthful days at Swanston, is a man with a felicity for language – 'He touched on nothing at least, but he adorned it; when he narrated the scene was before you' – but he also has a formidable talent for naming:

And in the midst [of a narrative] he would suddenly straighten his bowed back, the stick would fly abroad in demonstration, and the sharp thunder of his voice roll out a long itinerary for the dogs, so that you saw at last the use of that great wealth of names for every knowe and howe upon the hillside. (*Works*, XXIX, p. 47.)

Aligned with his great powers of narration, and a voice that again





links naming and singing, Todd possesses an intrinsic bond with the landscape, through detailed knowledge which allows him to identify, catalogue and name every aspect of it.

The essay also, however, carries an equally powerful torrent of names: that flowing from the pen of the author. Stevenson begins 'Pastoral' by plunging into a eulogy on Scotland's streams:

But the streams of Scotland are incomparable in themselves – or am I only the more Scottish to suppose so [. . .] How often and willingly do I not look again in fancy on Tummel or Manor, or the talking Airdle, or Dee swirling in its Lynn; on the bright burn of Kinnaird, or the golden burn that pours and sulks in the den behind Kingussie! I think shame to leave out one of these enchantresses, but the list would grow too long if I remembered all (p. 44).

He is, nevertheless, unable to stop: 'only I may not forget Allan Water, nor birch-wetting Rogie, nor yet Almond; nor, for all its pollutions, that Water of Leith of the many and well-named mills'. This precipitates yet another list:

Bell's Mills, and Canon Mills, and Silver Mills; nor Redford Burn of pleasant memories; nor yet, for all its smallness, that nameless trickle that springs in the green bosom of Allermuir, and is fed from Halkerside with a perennial teacupful and threads the moss under the Shearer's Knowe, and makes one pool three, overhung by a rock where I loved to sit and make bad verses (p. 45).

This extreme particularity of description serves to test the signification processes: 'Shearer's Knowe and Halkerside are but names of adjacent cantons on a single shoulder of a hill, as names are squandered (it would seem to the inexpert, in superfluity) upon these upland sheepwalks' (p. 45). As in *Across the Plains*,





Stevenson's performance of 'name calling' offers an extreme example of the 'excesses' of signification, of the ways in which a particular word can resonate far beyond its apparent meaning, an aspect of language that preoccupied him in essays and letters and a fascination he shared with Whitman. The profligacy of this aspect of the naming process contrasts with the tight bond of title and referent acquired through the claiming of particular knowledge, an opposition represented in the contrast between the pen of Stevenson and the voice of John Todd with their different forms of 'squandering'.

Todd's trade is one 'that touches on nature, one that lies at the foundations of life, in which we have all had ancestors employed, so that on a hint of it ancestral memories revive' (p. 49). As Julia Reid has suggested, 'Pastoral' can be read as an engagement with ideas of organic and primitive memory, of the collective unconscious which makes particular literary forms appeal, and as such is part of Stevenson's ongoing exploration of the power of language to evoke strong sensation.<sup>6</sup> Yet although Todd represents an organic, authentic relationship with the Scottish countryside it is the particularity of this relationship that gives him the cultural authority to name: the fact that he is not 'inexpert'. The naming process is based upon recognition of the distinctive qualities of the terrain around him and his detailed knowledge of it: he is of, and in command of, his country.

John Todd's cultural authority is emphasised on a number of levels. His form of naming is opposed to the author's by being oral rather than written; Stevenson usually associates orality with the natural, the physical and the power of the voice to 'liberate men and women from modernity's deadening daily grind'.<sup>7</sup> Todd also carries specifically national resonances in the literary association with the shepherds and drovers of Sir Walter Scott and with James Hogg (the 'Ettrick Shepherd'). He is an image of physical force: a man of a 'propensity to wrath', who initially terrifies the youthful Stevenson: 'For my own part, he was at first





my enemy, and I, in my character of a rambling boy, his natural abhorrence' (p. 46). He also possesses aesthetic influence: 'I think I owe my taste for that hillside business rather to the art and interest of John Todd. He it was that made it live for me' (p. 50). Yet the shepherd's knowledge of landscape, while based on his close relationship with the area, into which he educates Stevenson, does not in itself create an intrinsic link between signifier and signified. Although the land is fixed and known – Todd can name every part of the hillside for his dogs – these names are also highly contingent: ways of dividing up what others see as continuous spaces. His list of names presents one configuration that is meaningful to him (and his dogs), a tool of mapping and navigation, but unavailable to the majority of the 'inexpert' who can only see 'superfluity' in the process. The implication that naming can exclude is reflected in the essay itself: Stevenson describes Todd's performance but does not detail the names. Since these are not given, the roll-call that is supplied – by the authorial Stevenson – makes the sound, the poetic effect, more important than the referent, which is the land itself. In that sense names are indeed 'squandered' and this time the loss of referent is not the point of entry into poetic liberation, a mellifluous appeal to the senses, so much as a symbol of cultural exclusion, a recognition of an individualistic and detailed knowledge of the land and its history that the literary figure cannot fully share. Stevenson the author squanders names for poetic effect; Todd also squanders his naming but in the fact that no-one else can fully share the particularity of his nomenclature.

These contrasting forms of 'squandering' suggest various possibilities in 'the interlock of landscape and language'.<sup>8</sup> The figures of writer and shepherd might be located within different models of (linguistic) belonging identified by Seamus Heaney who, in *Preoccupations*, represents Irish poets Patrick Kavanagh and John Montague as offering very different paradigms of geographic nomenclature:





Kavanagh's place names are there to stake out a personal landscape, they declare one man's experience, they are denuded of tribal or etymological implications. [. . .] Kavanagh's place names are used [. . .] as posts to fence out a personal landscape. But Montague's are rather sounding lines, rods to plumb the depths of a shared and diminished culture. They are redolent not just of his personal life but of the history of his people disinherited and dispossessed. What are most resonant and cherished in the names of Montague's places are their tribal etymological implications.

[. . .] When he [Montague] walks the mountains and farms of his neighbours, he can think of himself as a survivor, a repository, a bearer and keeper of what had been almost lost. On the other hand, when Kavanagh walks through other's farms, he will think of himself as a trespasser rather than a survivor.<sup>9</sup>

Heaney points to an important tension between an individualistic and contingent policy of naming, which carries purely personal inflections, and another other which situates names within a communal past, locks us into our roots and is predicated on knowledge. The roles of Stevenson and John Todd operate within a rather different polarity. Todd's naming, as constructed in 'Pastoral', represents a symbiotic relationship between the individual and a shared geography, functioning to represent a communal history – and appear, in that sense, to offer 'sounding lines' – but the very specificity of knowledge which authenticates him renders his naming limited, with only his dogs and a half-comprehending Stevenson to hear. Authorial 'Stevenson' produces a list of names, but from a position of epistemological exclusion; his description of Todd conveys a longing for access to a collective identity and shared landscape that he also recognises as impossible.







This conflict might be understood on a personal level: Stevenson, writing from Bournemouth, realising he is unlikely to roam these hills again, desires to be a 'survivor' but occupies much more the position of 'trespasser'. Writing to his nurse, Cummy, he asks if she has read 'Pastoral', suggesting she 'Some day climb as high as Halkerside for me (I am never likely to do it for myself)' *Letters*, V, p. 393. The landscape he describes is one from which he is already estranged. Indeed, it is his preoccupation with naming that marks him as outsider:

The people who know places best, who are most rooted in them, tend not to be those who give them names. [. . .] They are not likely to articulate, to make a meal of, their bond with the place. They do not chant the names – Grasmere, Helvellyn, Glaramara – as if they have a kind of magic. Still less do they record specificities of time and place, of their personal encounters with nature. [. . .] The Lakeland shepherd knows the place so well that he does not consciously perceive himself in relation to it; but the poet is always aware of himself in relation to the landscape, is conscious of his own act of naming.<sup>10</sup>

Stevenson, in Bournemouth, is an outsider to the world of John Todd and the relationship with place he represents. It is Stevenson who chants the names even as he constructs John Todd doing so. While attributing the chanting of names to Todd, it is Stevenson's desire to be part of the 'bonding' process that impels him into both the description of Todd and his own litanies of names. As a result the essay becomes both heart-felt and knowing: articulating through naming the desire to belong, it also acknowledges that in an aesthetic context the key significance of place names may only be their non-referential appeal to the senses.

The dynamic in 'Pastoral' might also be understood in terms





of the distinction identified by Lefebvre between representations of space and representational spaces: the former indicates conceptualised space, the dominant space in any society or mode of production, the space of those 'who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.'<sup>11</sup> This is the space of public authority, the space of mappers, planners. What Todd figures, however, is representational space: 'space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe' (p. 39).<sup>12</sup> Todd's toponymy is shaped by use, he lives the landscape: 'Representational spaces [. . .] need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people' (Lefebvre, p. 41). Stevenson embodies in the singing voice of John Todd the central feature of 'representational space' identified by Lefebvre: that 'it is alive: it speaks. It has an effective kernel or centre' (p. 42). Yet Lefebvre warns that 'social space can in no way be compared to a blank page'; spaces are, if anything, 'over-inscribed' (p. 142). In the production of space categories of necessity overlap, in a dialectical relationship between the perceived, the conceived and the lived (p. 39): the dynamic played out in 'Pastoral' is likewise produced by more than personal circumstances. The combination of personal and cultural concerns in the essay has implications for the inscription of names in Stevenson's later fiction and can be located within the intellectual projects of the time, including wider debates around Scottish cultural identity.

Stevenson's interest in naming led him, in his later years, into enthusiastic correspondence with and perusal of the work of Sir Herbert Maxwell.<sup>13</sup> The year after *Catriona's* publication he had requested Maxwell's study of *Scottish Land-Names*, based on his 1893 Rhind Lectures, to be sent out to Samoa (*Letters*, VIII, p.





308). He later corresponded with Maxwell about the origins of the name Stevenson (*Letters*, XVIII, p. 367; p. 396). In his study Maxwell also stresses the cultural authority of names as a link between past and present, noting that:

There is one sure source of encouragement towards the solution of place-names, in that every such name has a real meaning, however darkly it may have been obscured by linguistic change or phonetic expression in the lips of people speaking another language. No man every attempted successfully to invent an arbitrary combination of sounds signs to designate a locality; every place name, in whatever language, is a business like definition derived from some peculiarity or leading feature, as we might say The Green Hill; the White House; the Oak Wood; or from some incident, as The Battle Field; the Murder Stone; the Forge Hill; or of possession, as in John's Town, William's Field, the Priest's Land.<sup>14</sup>

Maxwell forcefully concludes: 'Now the lesson of this example is that poetical and metaphorical interpretations of place-names should generally be looked on with great suspicion; the true origin is commonly matter of fact' (p. 4). In emphasizing etymological roots, demonstrating names as possessing meanings fixed by their relationship to a shared heritage, Maxwell echoes the ideas of Isaac Taylor who in *Words and Places* (1864) theorised 'Local names – whether they belong to provinces, cities, and villages, or are the designation of rivers and mountains – are never mere arbitrary sounds, devoid of meaning. They may also be regarded as records of the past, inviting and rewarding a careful historical interpretation.'<sup>15</sup>

Taylor and Maxwell see place names as offering a point of entrance into an older, more authentic, collective memory, a theorisation of names as a link to the past which, earlier in the





century had significant political implications. The act of communal naming becomes for Scottish writers an important question of national identity. This issue was at its most acute in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, when George Chalmers in particular sought to 'write the history of Great Britain with Celtic languages providing both an originary and a common point of reference.'<sup>16</sup> As Fielding and Kidd have demonstrated through analysis of debates around the Celtic or Teutonic origins of Scots, 'What for Wordsworth, constructing his acts of communal naming in the autonomous, organic space of Grasmere, is a footnote becomes, by contrast, a question of important national identity for Scottish writers for whom the difference between Roman and a Runic inscription could mean a great deal.'<sup>17</sup>

Later in the century Stevenson acknowledges these debates, and appears to align himself with Maxwell's insistence that in Scotland 'the majority of names are Celtic' (p. 13). While reading Maxwell he explores the relationship between Celtic and Pictish identities in a letter to his cousin – 'it was not the Celtic trick I understand, to call places after people' – continuing: 'Get the Anglo-Saxon heresy out of your head; they superimposed their language, they scarce modified the race; only in Berwickshire and Roxburgh, have they very largely affected the place names (*Letters*, VIII, pp. 363-4). The espousal of Celtic, which he mocks in the next sentence as 'sham antiquarianism', has however only limited significance for late nineteenth-century cultural identity; the language debate in Scotland lacked the impact it had in an Irish context. Differences between the two countries, as acknowledged by Maxwell – 'There is no key provided to the analysis of Scottish place-names as there is in Ireland by a plentiful early literature' (p. 25) – prevented a project of Celtic revivalism in Scotland as inspired by the work of P. W. Joyce in Ireland.<sup>18</sup> Indeed Kidd argues that 'throughout much of the nineteenth-century Gaelicism encouraged the emergence of a sentimental vision of Scottish culture rather than any coherent national-





ism'.<sup>19</sup> Debates around ethnic identity produced 'a fragmented culture', with 'an exaggerated sense of their ethnic mixture'.<sup>20</sup> Yet if Maxwell's research on place names has relatively limited significance in the development of a national consciousness its impact on Stevenson's understanding of belonging and linguistic influence on his late fiction should not be underestimated.

Reading Maxwell would also have drawn Stevenson – a man fascinated by maps – into a rather different debate on nomenclature. While Maxwell is interested in the intrinsic link between place and name, questions over who possessed the power to name had a more pragmatic application in nineteenth-century Scotland in the politics of the Ordnance Survey.<sup>21</sup> The policy adopted for assessing accurate names, in particular Gaelic places, provoked debate around the 'authority' of the naming body and the idea of the 'explorer-translator' who could move between the 'native' and the mapper or 'outsider'. By 1873 the Survey noted:

The greatest care is taken to obtain the correct orthography of the names to appear upon the Ordnance Plans, and that no names of importance are omitted. The detailed examiner obtaining the names with the residential authorities, these are further verified by the superintendent of the party or other competent person who finally examines the whole of the work and compares the names locally collected with those on the estate and other maps to which he has gained access.<sup>22</sup>

Yet while the belief that local usage 'should be recorded and preserved remained inviolate' the status of that source was less clear.<sup>23</sup> It was suggested that 'small farmers and cottagers are not to be depended upon, even for the names of the places they occupy'.<sup>24</sup> In some areas, however, there were very few inhabitants of a higher class who could provide the information; as a result, 'There is a sense [. . .] in which the survey's chosen place-names





and resultant maps were authoritative documents, yet might not have been seen or used as such by the inhabitants of the places, thus “fixed” for who the land, however inscribed, continued to be understood in relation to use – past events and present custom – rather than in terms of agreed names.’<sup>25</sup> Maxwell alludes to the fact that Scottish Gaelic ‘has never, until recently, been subject to that check which writing and printing set upon the tendency of speech to alter in meaning and pronunciation with every succeeding generation’ (p. 2) and in his Introduction he criticises the ‘exasperating ingenuity of English Ordnance surveyors in polishing up Scottish place-names to suit English lips and ears, whereby such good Saxon names as Brighton and Langton appear figged out as Bridgeton and Longtown has its parallel in the unprincipled invention of popular legends to explain names which convey no meaning to persons speaking a different language’ (pp. 19-20). He also refers in passing to a Survey confusion between the Gaelic word for a stream ‘allt’ and Broad Scots ‘auld’ (p.17), speculating: ‘apparently those who advised the English surveyor thought it more genteel to write ‘old’, and the real significance is completely hidden by a forced interpretation.’<sup>26</sup> Although it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Stevenson was fully aware of debates around the Ordnance Survey, Maxwell’s study would have conveyed some sense of the issues at stake.

While Taylor insists that ‘local names are never mere arbitrary sounds, devoid of meaning’ and Maxwell endorses this by stressing an inherent identity with a shared past, ‘Pastoral’, written before Stevenson had encountered Maxwell, explores through John Todd the relationship between naming and a lived landscape, articulating a desire to be part of that communal identity but presenting a sophisticated recognition that the dynamic between speaker and place does not in itself ensure or create a fixed body of meaning or identity. ‘Pastoral’ implicitly acknowledges the problems of cultural authority and avoids any easy resolution of the relationship between names and a shared past.





By the time Stevenson read Maxwell the ambivalences of naming were even more evident through life in Vailima. Stevenson was in the position of colonial perceiver and conceiver, naming the landscape around him – for example, ‘The Road of the Loving Heart’ or using names designated by other colonialists ‘Pineapple Cottage’ – but also living in spaces shared by users whose own naming he respects as evidently different.<sup>27</sup> Yet if the colonial dynamics and ambiguities of place names are more obvious in the South Seas context, so too is Stevenson’s sense of distance from and desire for the places about which he is writing. As a result he embraces the connectedness described by Maxwell: his late fiction, more heavily inflected by that sense of distance and desire evident in ‘Pastoral’ and expressed in the letter to Cummy, demonstrates a more overt, more insistent, and in some texts, less nuanced deployment of the naming process.

*Catriona*, whose ‘cacophony’ the reviewer complained about, is not however the most obvious example. As much of the novel takes place in Edinburgh and in Holland, with very little movement, few Gaelic place names are mentioned and in the text overall place names are used with far greater discrimination than in ‘Pastoral’ or in *Across the Plains*. Unsurprisingly they are most often introduced in the passages describing Alan Breck’s final journey and escape, where topography is important to the plot:

our road came in the end to lie very near due north; the old Kirk of Aberlady for a landmark on the left; on the right, the top of the Berwick Law; and it was thus we struck the shore again not far from Dirleton. From North Berwick west to Gillane Ness there runs a string of four small islets, Craigleith, the Lamb, Fidra, and Eyebrough, notable by their diversity of size and shape. (*Works*, XVI, pp. 108-9.)

Toponymy here is indicative of the complexity of escape routes in the novel’s final scenes. Likewise, shorter lists of place names





occur in passages describing Andie's assistance of David's escape from the Bass, again indicating stages of a journey. There is a greater tendency to identify characters by naming physical locations when David refers to Catriona or to her father: 'poor James of the Glens was duly hanged at Lettermore by Ballachulish' (p. 187). In such references the users of space are linked to the land in terms that emphasise their status as counter-authority figures. What 'Pastoral' and *Catriona* do share is a greater deployment of names when the focus is on Scotland or Scottishness. This may seem predictable, given the plethora of Scottish names in 'Pastoral', but the same could not be said of the earlier essay, 'On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places' (1874), in which, when talking of Scotland, Stevenson generally refers to 'the North', and the most specific place name given anywhere is that of the Trossachs (*Works*, XXV, pp. 175-82). *Kidnapped* likewise offers a point of contrast with *Catriona*: while the 1886 novel is full of place names many are in Gaelic and, as Menikoff has argued, David shares the position of the reader in being at times a stranger to both topography and the nomenclature.<sup>28</sup> In *Kidnapped*, therefore, there is a clear distinction between those who are 'users' of that landscape and its nomenclature and those like David who traverse it but are excluded from its speaking. With *Catriona*, the more obvious oscillation between scenes which depend upon the Scottish landscape or evoke the Scottishness of characters and those with a different location and discourse, creates a switching of modes – reflective of the uncomfortable dynamics of belonging in that novel – which makes the occasional roll-call of place names all the more noticeable to the *Bookman* reviewer.

Neither *Kidnapped* nor *Catriona*, however, are as excessive in their 'cacophonies' as the very late Scottish fictions: the opening of *Weir of Hermiston* draws our attention in the very first page to the way in which the spaces of the landscape are inscribed with names that connote their history:







It was here that Claverhouse shot with his own hand the Praying Weaver of Balweary, and the chisel of Old Mortality has clinked on that lonely gravestone. Public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills. [. . .] The Deil's Hags was the old name. But the place is now called Francie's Cairn. (*Works*, XVI, p. 1.)

The palimpsestal landscape is constructed by a narrator who has equal access to all layers of meaning, and is articulate observer rather than user. This figure can also draw upon the language of users, bound in dynamic with place and history: 'Pride glowed in their bosoms to publish their relationship to "Andrew Ellwald of the Laverockstances, called 'Unchancy Dand', who was justified wi' seeven mair of the same name at Jeddart in the days of King James the Sax'" (p. 54). Here the roll-call of names highlights communal identity while adding texture to the language: "For the body of the saxt", pursued Kirstie, "wi' his head smashed like a hazel-nit, had been a' that nicht in the chairge o' Hermiston Water, and it dunting it on the stanes, and grunding it on the shallows, and flinging the deid thing heels-ower-hurdie at the Fa's o' Spango; and in the first o' the day Tweed had got a hold o' him'" (p. 59). Although another reviewer complained of *Weir* – 'We can have scarcely half the book before us, yet already the glossary, which is eminently necessary, deals with over a couple of hundred words [. . .] in short, the book is not for the southron' – such deployment of names serves to include the reader in a cultural community bound within time and place.<sup>29</sup>

The striving to establish the history of a culture through the naming of places is made even more insistent in the opening of *Heathercat*:

Strange green raths are to be seen commonly in the country, above all by the kirkyards; barrows of the dead, standing stones; beside these, the faint, durable footprints





and handmarks of the Roman; and an antiquity older perhaps than any, and still living and active – a complete Celtic nomenclature and a scarce-mingled Celtic population. These rugged and grey hills were once included in the boundaries of the Caledonian forest. Merlin sat here below his apple tree and lamented Gwendolen; here spoke with Kentigern [. . .]

The Traquairs of Montroymont [. . .] had long held their seat about the head waters of the Dule and in the back parts of the moorland parish of Balweary. (*Works*, XVI, p. 143.)

Here, even more obviously than in *Weir*, Stevenson follows Maxwell in stressing the innate connection between history and place, the Celtic origins of the language, and the possibilities offered for a collective identity. Both texts explicitly trace the community history that shapes the mapping and naming of places, both manifest what his letter to Bob mocks as a ‘sham antiquarianism’, as Stevenson asserts through naming both his own and his country’s links with the past. Neither *Weir* nor *Heathercat* demonstrates the knowing play with the complexities of signification evident in ‘Pastoral’: although names are used profusely, the interrogative notion of ‘squandering’, with its implications of excess and emptiness, remains unacknowledged.

There has been a shift in recent year away from a critical perspective that sees Stevenson’s later Scottish novels in terms of ‘the exile yearning for his native homeland’.<sup>30</sup> In an attempt to redeem Stevenson from accusations of political nostalgia as levelled by Christopher Harvie,<sup>31</sup> the two main areas of literary endeavour in the author’s last years – the apparent ‘romantic antiquarianism’ of the Scottish novels and a ‘postcolonial *avant la lettre* in his Pacific writing’, have been fruitfully read in conjunction.<sup>32</sup> Effective as this argument – that Stevenson used his understanding of Scottish history to explore Polynesian





politics and vice versa – is in revitalizing understanding of his late politics and fiction, it does not entirely obviate the degree of ‘nostalgia’ evident in the explicit and insistent linking name and history in the Scottish fictions, if ‘nostalgia’ is understood as desire for a geographical belonging from which he was excluded and, perhaps more importantly, attraction to a collective cultural identity which he recognised as impossible.

Increasingly estranged, or at least distant from the Scottish landscape which filled his imagination, writing of ‘home’ that is forever fixed as ‘away’, Stevenson strove ever more fervently to secure it through naming, seeking to occupy the position, that particular interlock between landscape and language, embodied in the figure of John Todd and constructed when residence at Skerryvore had already taken him away from the territory he used to traverse. In ‘Pastoral’ there is a bifurcation of the naming process: the authorial voice deploys names for their poetic effect, directing them towards sound and resonance, while John Todd epitomises another possibility, that of a meaningful link between sound and signified, between language and knowledge. But by describing Todd’s performance of naming, rather than re-enacting it, the essay reinforces recognition that this bond is one from which the writer – and his audience – are excluded. In the late fiction naming is used with far less theoretical sophistication, as (linguistically at least) Stevenson seeks, ever more insistently to embody a link with a vanishing place, and with his past. In that sense the *Bookman*’s reviewer is correct to identify ‘an ingrained territorial instinct’ in the politics of naming. As Stevenson acknowledges in his letter to Cummy, even by the 1880s he knows he won’t go back to Halkerside: that fixity of identity he creates through the figure of John Todd is a desirable but impossible ‘interlock of landscape and language’, one that is always lost, and one that increasingly impels him towards acts of linguistic retrieval. Ann C. Colley observes that ‘rather than being interested in collecting curios from his travels in Polynesia, he





went to extraordinary lengths to fill his house in Samoa with the material culture belonging to his life in Scotland and England.<sup>33</sup> In similar fashion, in the drive to make himself ‘survivor’ rather than ‘trespasser’, he fills his late fiction with place names from home yet in so doing distances himself further from the ‘users’ of a landscape who don’t need to recite names and histories but inhabit them.

John Todd, inspiration for the nuances of ‘Pastoral’, is not, however, entirely forgotten. While Stevenson worked on *Weir* and *Heathercat*, deploying an increasingly potent register to stress a collective and possibly Celtic history, he was also writing *St Ives*, a novel which features both Scott and John Todd and returns, if only fleetingly, to issues around naming. Todd, as he appears in chapter ten of *St Ives*, has an instinctive affinity for the landscape but is also a figure of enormous taciturnity. As such, he doesn’t participate in the act of naming. Moreover, the novel’s narrator, *St Ives*, is so confused by the terrain of Scotland that he also refuses to deliver: ‘My itinerary is by no means clear to me; the names and distances I never clearly knew, and have now wholly forgotten’ (*Works*, XV, p. 85). The only figure who does indulge in naming is Sir Walter Scott: in his brief appearance he makes much of his knowledge of the countryside and his ability to narrate it: “The pleasure of this country is much in the legends, which grow as plentiful as blackberries.” And directing my attention to a little fragment of a broken wall no greater than a tombstone, he told me for an example a story of its earlier inhabitants’ (p. 86). The literary figure acquires a cultural authority that neither the silent native nor the confused traveller possesses. *St Ives* maintains – if briefly – Stevenson’s knowing play with signification, suppressed in *Weir of Hermiston* by the pressures of homewardness.





## NOTES

- 1 'New Books: *Catriona*', *The Bookman*, October 1893, 18-19, p. 19.
- 2 This article is based on a shorter paper given at 'European Stevenson: the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Stevenson Conference', Bergamo, Italy, 2008. I am grateful to conference participants and, in particular, Ann C. Colley for their helpful comments.
- 3 'The Philosophy of Nomenclature', 'College Papers V; *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Essays in Belles Lettres*, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* Tusitala edition, (London: William Heinemann, 1923-4), vol XXV, pp. 159-62. Further references to page numbers and volumes of the *Works* are henceforth given after quotations in the text.
- 4 Letter to Henley, ? September 1881, *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by B. A. Booth and E. Mehew (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994-5), vol III, p. 231. All subsequent references to *Letters* are to this edition.
- 5 See W. R. Katz, 'Whitman and Thoreau as Literary Stowaways in Stevenson's American Writings' in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, ed. by R. Ambrosini and R. Dury (Madison, USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 327-37, p. 334.
- 6 Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (London: Palgrave 2006; 2009), p. 13.
- 7 Reid, p. 22; Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture and Nineteenth-century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 135.
- 8 Tim Robinson, *Stones of Aran* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1986), p. 155.
- 9 Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations* (London: Faber, 1980), pp. 140-42.
- 10 Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 87-8.
- 11 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 38. All subsequent page references are in the text.
- 12 For an illuminating discussion of this in relation to *Rob Roy*, see Penny Fielding, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography: North Britain 1760-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 99.
- 13 As Conservative member for Wigtownshire, a novelist, antiquarian





- and author of books on natural, local and national history, Sir Herbert Maxwell was 'the most prominent of scholarly country gentlemen in Scotland' (DNB online).
- 14 Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Scottish Land-Names: Their Origin and Meaning. Rhind Lectures in Archaeology* (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1894) p. 2. All subsequent page references are given in the text.
  - 15 Isaac Taylor, *Words and Places or, Etymological Illustrations of History, Ethnology, Geography* (1864; London: Macmillan, 1873), p. 1.
  - 16 George Chalmers, *Caledonia; or an Account, historical and topographic, of North Britain: From the Most Ancient to the Present Times*, 3 vols (London: T. Cadell and W Davies, 1807-24); Fielding, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography*, p. 103.
  - 17 Fielding, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography*, p. 105; Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
  - 18 P. W. Joyce, the antiquarian and intellectual inspiration for W. B. Yeats, published *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* (1869-1913). See DNB online and R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, vol I (Oxford: OUP, 1997).
  - 19 Colin Kidd, 'Teutonist Ethnology and Scottish Nationalist Inhibition, 1780-1880', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 74: 197, Part 1 (1995), 45-68, p. 47.
  - 20 Kidd, 'Teutonist Ethnology', p. 67. Kidd does, however, suggest that in the 1880s 'the first stirrings of pan-Celticism in the Highlands and Ireland [. . .] would eventually find a foothold in Scotland's interwar nationalist movement.' See 'Race, Empire and the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Nationhood', *The Historical Journal* 46:4 (2003), 873-92, pp. 891-2.
  - 21 In a letter to David A. Stevenson discussing in detail the map for *Kidnapped*, he notes: 'I send a piece of the Ordnance with so much of the itinerary rudely shown.' *Letters V*, p. 230.
  - 22 Charles W. J. Withers, 'Authorizing landscape: 'authority', naming and the Ordnance Survey's mapping of the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography* 26:4 (2000) 532-54, quoting Major-General Sir Henry James, *Account of the*





*Field Surveying and the Preparation of the Manuscript Plans of the Ordnance Survey* Southampton 1873 np, p. 536.

- 23 Withers, p. 536.
- 24 Withers, p. 536, taken from W. A. Seymour, *A History of the Ordnance Survey* (London: Folkestone Dawson, 1980), p. 176.
- 25 Withers, p. 544.
- 26 A footnote adopts a more measured tone: 'It is only fair to observe that the Ordnance surveyors are not mainly responsible for blunders of this kind. In every case the name has been received from the proprietor, and checked by consultation with other local authorities' (p. 18).
- 27 For discussion of the combination of 'self-conscious cultural imperialism' and 'marginal subjectivity' see Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 109.
- 28 'He places David Balfour in the same position to the exotic Highlands as the English reader is to the text.' *Kidnapped*, ed. by Barry Menikoff (San Marino: Huntington Library Press), p. liii.
- 29 Joseph Jacobs (anonymous review): *Athenaeum*, no 3578 (23 May 1896), p. 673.
- 30 Reid, p. 135.
- 31 'I believe that we must see *Weir of Hermiston*, which has been claimed as Stevenson's masterpiece, in this context: as a conservative parable of law and duty, as well as a conscious shift into that historically dominated environment redolent of Scott.' Christopher Harvie, 'The Politics of Stevenson' in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. by J. Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 122.
- 32 Reid, p. 139. See also Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel, Narrative and the Colonial Body* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007); Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire and the Author's Profession* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
- 33 Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). At 'Locating Stevenson: 6th Biennial Stevenson Conference', Stirling 2010, Colley presented a revised reading of Stevenson in Vailima, stressing the extent to which Samoa had become a liberating and validating 'home'.









## Uncollected Stevenson (1)

This new occasional section of the *Journal* will feature previously uncollected notes, articles and fragments from Stevenson's output, some of which will be taken on board the New Edinburgh Edition of his work. Each piece will be put into context by its contributor, as below, and Stevenson students, scholars and researchers everywhere are encouraged to submit similar material that they may have come across during their researches.

### 'On the Art of Literature' (1880) – a reading text

*Roger G. Swearingen*

Robert Louis Stevenson's only known reference to the work that he titled in the manuscript 'On the Art of Literature' is a passing reference to 'Thoughts on Literature as an Art' among a number of coming projects in a letter to William Ernest Henley written in late January 1880 in San Francisco (Letter 684). It was not his first effort to develop a theory of literary art, although it is the first of any length, nor would it be his last. Much in 'On the Art of Literature' anticipates views that Stevenson would shortly be expressing in print in essays such as 'A Gossip on Romance' (*Longman's Magazine*, November 1882), 'A Note on Realism' (*Magazine of Art*, November 1883), and 'A Humble Remonstrance' (*Longman's Magazine*, December 1884).

Although there is no way to assign a definite date to the piece, RLS probably began work on it not long after he mentioned it to Henley, possibly in connection with a group of literary 'Studies' that he had in mind and was writing at the same time. He may have been influenced or even inspired by his new friendships among writers and painters in San Francisco, notably the landscape painter Virgil Williams, the first director of the California School of Design; the portrait painter and magazine illustrator





Joseph D. Strong, Jr., who had married Fanny Stevenson's daughter Belle the previous summer in Monterey; and the writer Charles Warren Stoddard, author of *South Sea Idyls* (1873) based on his own travels in the South Seas, and whose loans of *Typee* and *Omoo* first acquainted RLS with Melville's work.

The manuscript, fifteen pages of text and two pages of numbered notes headed 'Preliminary Ideas', is written throughout in pencil at the beginning of a brown-covered notebook 6<sup>3/4</sup> in wide by 8<sup>3/8</sup> in high. RLS's outline of 'Preliminary Ideas' is on the back of the first and second pages in the notebook, a placement that suggests that he had written at least the first two pages of the first chapter (possibly even the whole text as it stands) before he decided to begin the work instead with this section. In the present transcription, this two-page outline is placed at the very beginning, before Chapter I and the beginning of actual text, even though the first four actual pages in the notebook alternate between outline and text.

After the first four pages, the text is written on one side of the page only except for short notes facing pages 8 and 11. The text breaks off in mid-sentence after 61/2 lines on page 17, and the rest of the notebook is blank. Two outlines are written inside the front cover. The first, not keyed to page numbers or the extant text, is in pencil and was written by RLS. It gives what would appear to be the titles planned for the second through fifth chapters. This outline is given at the end of the present text. The second outline is keyed to the page numbers and titles in the notebook. It is in ink and was written by Graham Balfour for his own reference. Like many of RLS's notebooks, this one has two paper labels on the cover, both put there by Balfour: 'RLS | J' and 'On the Art of Literature'.

This is a reading edition of the text, by which is meant that changes such as insertions, deletions, substitutions, and rearrangements that Stevenson made in the course of writing out the manuscript, or afterwards, have been assimilated without





comment. Only the final version is given, as if the manuscript were being set in type for publication. Also made without comment are corrections of spelling errors and of inconsistencies or omissions in details such as capitalization, leading and trailing punctuation, spelling, the use of italics, and the hyphenation of compound words. A few notes of clarification appear in square brackets, and Stevenson's own manuscript page numbers have been kept. These appear, also in square brackets, after the last word of text that appears on the manuscript page so numbered. Doing so keeps alive the idea that this edition presents a manuscript draft that Stevenson never prepared for publication and permits clear citation of the text no matter what the actual page and line number (if any) these may have or acquire in printed or electronic presentations of the text in the future.

RLS's notebook was sold originally as Lot 309 in Part I of the three-part sale at the Anderson Galleries, New York, 1914–1916, of material consigned by RLS's stepdaughter Isobel Field. It is now in the Robert Louis Stevenson Silverado Museum, St. Helena, California, and I am grateful to the Silverado Museum for access to the manuscript and for other courtesies and much help over many years. It is also a pleasure to record the help given me in transcribing the manuscript originally by my wife Sarah and by Professor David Skilton, now at Cardiff School of English, Communication, and Philosophy, Cardiff University, and to later readers of my transcript against the manuscript, Professors Michael Millgate, University of Toronto, and Richard Dury, University of Bergamo.

## *On the Art of Literature*

### Preliminary Ideas

1. An art is any representation of any thing in the life of man, whether the race or the individual, which is made for interest, that is for the sake of the representation itself, and not for profit, that is for any secondary or





indirect consideration.

2. An artist is any one who takes that pleasure in the representation, that others take in the practise, of life.
3. There is no pure artist, and no pure work of art, for both are implicated in human life.
4. The justification of any art is that it shall be true.
5. Truth in art is of necessity partial; that is true in art which bears a constant relation to some part in life.
6. Exaggeration in art, is any inequality of this relation, and is usually the result not of any part being too high, but of some parts being too low for the rest. Blank verse.
7. A lie in art is whatever is done for profit in the [2] representation, or for profit to morality, as in cheap poetic justice, as when Mr Hugo makes a boat go down without staggering that he may strike the imagination with the figure of one man upright and buried up to the shoulders in the whole expanse of the sea; yet there would be no falsity in these perversions, where the relation to life of the whole story was equally fanciful and distant.

Turner's old Temeraire. No such falsity in music, since no question of realism. *[added later, foot of the page]*

Mlle Merquem. *[added later, between paragraphs]*

8. Art is not necessarily fictitious; history, in literature, portraiture, in painting, are both art. It need not even deal with anything *[the last three words are deleted, with no replacement]*.
9. Again it is not necessarily occupied with men, in the concrete, or with what we very narrowly call nature. It may deal entirely with feelings, thoughts or abstract relations; as in the Ninth Symphony or Pope's *Essay on Man*. [4]

## *Chapter I. Legitimate forms*

### *I. Narrative literature*

The province of literature is threefold. Its first and natural business is to narrate. When one man began to tell to another what he had seen or





suffered, how far his sheep had strayed, or where and how he had slain a deer, the art of literature begun to be practised. History, Biography, the Epic, and the novel, are thus all of them legitimate forms. Language had been shaped directly to this purpose; nor is there any other art which can compete with literature in such a task. It has at command the name of every action, of every object and of every passion; literature and life both advance in a succession and by the temporal order; sentence following sentence as event follows event; the speech of persons engaged in any passion or bargain has not even to be translated into literature, for it is literature already; lastly the relation of effect and cause, the metaphysical emotions, all the affections of the mind, can be expressed in literature, as in their own native dialect. Hence reasoned narrative is the most complete expression of the various powers which are in literature; as it is besides the most complete possible artistic representation of man's position and business in this world. Take one of the great exemplary works, of which [1] we reckon so many in this vein; take Homer, the Book of Kings, the Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, or Michelet's description of Jeanne d'Arc; and compare it with what could be done in any other branch of art. You will find in it a comprehensiveness, a particularity, a depth of allusion and a poly-dextrous capacity to deal with all the sides of life and appeal to all the feelings of the mind. It is not like painting shut in to a moment of time and a point of the compass, nor confined to material aspects; the men of the narrative grow old, they travel a thousand miles, they utter speech, they deal blows, perform in a word the functions of human life, instead of standing as they must do in the picture struck into an attitude and dumb. The painter can but indicate one moment of a tale and imply the rest, by one significant grouping; the musician, though his art is so influential on the feelings, can neither state a fact nor follow an argument, but dwells in a world of purely abstract emotion. They are both shut into their own sphere, which is not life, but merely one of its aspects, while the literary artist can overtake in the same thin but practically effective manner, all the forms, aspects and emotions of life, even those which are the special province of the painter or the musician; and he [3] has besides the unique and invaluable privilege, of moulding all of





them together in a temporal succession, which is the form of our experience, and indicating the conclusions of the philosophical mind.

## II. Dramatic literature

Reasoned narrative is therefore the typical form of literature; but two special aptitudes in language have led to two particular developments of literature, equally legitimate with the first, and each in its own way, perhaps more expressive and unique.

And first it is plain that out of the many things that literature can do after a fashion, there stands out one which it can do perfectly. Follow for a while the fortunes of some hero of romance; say that he crosses an Alp or difficult forest, say that he encounters a storm upon the sea, or meets the rising sun upon an eminence; the picture is, after a fashion, given; but in the slightest way; a painter would have made the scene more characteristic in but a few strokes of the brush; a musician, in a small piece, would have given a more poignant expression to the perplexity or exultation of the hero's soul. But let him now overtake and fall in talk with a companion; this is no longer a representation – it is the thing itself. This is not what he talked about, it is what he said. Hence the liveliness of such pages in a narrative; and hence [5] idle readers love novels full of conversation, and will even skip what lies between. This, even in a novel, is the drama. The art of the stage, which is a middle art, is but a completion of that; the dramatic quality can exist without actors; it began, from a comparatively old date, to invade the domain of pure narrative; for whenever there is a word said, which, instead of being necessary to the development of the fable, is put down rather to exhibit character and amuse us by repartee and the commerce of two human minds, acting one upon the other, there you say, pure narrative interest is laid aside, and the pure dramatic interest has succeeded. The representation of human life, by the differing fortunes of this or the other individual or of a race or city: that is narrative. The representation of different human minds by their differing feelings and dialects: that is the drama. It will be seen, apart from what is written for and performed upon the stage, that the dramatic element has of late years largely prevailed





over the narrative; such works as *Clarissa Harlowe*, all in letters, or as Mr Browning's *Ring and the Book*, which is all in monologues, are in essence as well as in form, dramatic and not narrative. The change is one of intellectual view. Grave antiquity loved to deal with the facts of life and the consequences of men's actions, as though they were absolute and unquestionable. That, [6] when it fails, is to be stupid, since it only expresses, as if it were absolute, the appreciations of a single very limited and very unsympathetic human mind, and so we behold it in the goody, commonplace, religious novel; that, on the other hand, where it succeeds, is what we call high art, for there the artist has seized upon a juncture in human affairs, so simple, central and expressive, and has treated it in a manner so clean from whim and littleness, that no moral doubt is left upon the mind of the reader, but all are, in an instant, at one with that of the artist. There may, of course, be high art in the drama; we actually find most of it there; Ajax and Lear, Deianeira and Macbeth and Alceste, these are the very types of that which we call high in art. But it is yet true that the dramatic form belongs less to believing than to sceptical ages. It is when men have begun to perceive rather the diversity of human opinions, than the diversity of human fortunes, that they turn their interest from events upon character; and this interest once confirmed leads the artist to seek the various in character, instead of seeking the noble only, and thus strikes a death-blow to that moral and sublime simplicity of that which we call high in art. [7]

### III. Philosophic literature

But there is another point in which language stands supreme as a tool for the artist. It is not only the dialect of affection, it is the only dialect of what we call, par excellence, thought. It is only in language that we study causes, draw conclusions and forecast results. Hence, as conversation becomes gradually disengaged from the original narrative form, because it could be so aptly treated that it could stand alone; so the consideration of causes and consequences or of undramatic that is personal emotions, and generally all criticism and judgement whether moral, physical or political, as they gradually grew up from being merely implied in the





narrative, to be dwelt upon and illustrated at some length, developed a substantive interest of their own. Certain minds followed them to the exclusion of the others, and we have from thence the third great and legitimate sort of literary art, illustrated by such names as Plato, Buffon, Montaigne, Horace, Pope, and Wordsworth.

IV. The lyrical (arabesque) [*heading only, without text, on verso of page 7*]

To these three forms, or to any combination of them, all that is legitimate in literature is confined. What is illegitimate in any art, is only something attempted unnecessarily with one tool, which could more properly be done with another. As in verbal description [8] of scenery for its own sake (Gautier), which is to compete at a crushing disadvantage with painting; as in those poems, as in some of Blake's, where competition with music is attempted at a disadvantage still more huge. [9]

*Chapter II. Matter and Style*

Given a story, it may be told with different purposes. Thus, the hunter may relate his adventure, either to display his own prowess, or the agility of the hunted animal, or the nature of the country; or again he might tell it so as to induce other men to hunt, or dissuade them from it; or lastly, he might tell it to vaunt some new piece of hunting tactic. It is this intention with which any fable is told, and not the natural facts of the fable, that decides what I am going to call the matter of the performance. Compare the description of identically the same occurrences by two historical writers; and you will perceive how, from the same common stock of facts, each has made a selection of his own; how from the same common stock of epithets by which each fact or character might be designated, each has chosen, supposing him to be a skillful artist, his epithets in one particular key. Selection lies at the base of literature, as of all arts, but perhaps most specially of literature. Thus one writer must insist that the man "*leaped* from the window"; another that he "*fell* into the street"; it may be all important to the purpose of the one, that the man was killed; it may be







so indifferent to the purpose of the other, that he shall pass on without mentioning the fact. The first may be altogether occupied with the effect of the incident on public feeling; the second may be following the man for his own sake. But this matter is more clearly illustrated in fiction, where the facts themselves are invented; [10] and are thus more directly a part of the literary matter. We may see an idea not at all dissimilar worked out by two men so different as Hugo and Defoe, in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* and *Robinson Crusoe*. We may compare Boccaccio's novels with the many plays that have been built upon them. Or again we can see what a villainous farrago was contrived by our Wycherley, upon the basis of the famous, clean, wise plays of Moliere. Or we have an illustration of how differently the same tale of a husband arriving home to find his wife remarried, is worked upon by minds so opposite as Alfred Tennyson and Balzac.

[facing page:] Lear & Faust

It is therefore not the facts for the historian, nor yet the fable for the poet, that decides the kind or degree of the effect he will produce. In each it is the conceptive power of the imagination that first begets and then controls. It is the first sight by the artist of his subject; it is the light by which he proposes to display it to the reader. Mr Browning's *Ring and the Book* is full of lessons upon this subject, and was written throughout in a full and luminous consciousness of the point in hand. The story of Guido and Pompeii is given in one presentment after another; each being in itself a vigorous artistic view of the facts; each therefore being, although dealing with the same occurrences, *materially* a different work of art from any and all of the others. And the whole book, so remarkable from many considerations, as of style, sagacity, ingenuity and force, is yet most remarkable [11] in matter: the author having narrated his facts to an end which seems almost apart from them; having not been interested by one artistic view of them, or, as I say, by one material treatment, but by the contrast and coincidence of many. Thus he has made one selection after another, given one presentment after another; and meantime his one final presentment, the matter of his work, the ultimate artistic outlook he regarded, was the play and relation of all of them. Take his





own passage, Part I, line 447 to 468 inclusive. Any one of his parts is a work of art; the whole is but another, far more massive and memorable, far more modern and sophisticated.

This point of view, which dictates and controls the material invention or selection, may be of many different sorts. It may be moral, picturesque, humourous, romantic or philosophical. *Twelfth Night* is beautifully conceived from a humourous point of view. *The Lady of the Lake* is an admirable example of the romantically picturesque; the reader being led on from one scene to another, each of a winning and romantic beauty, from the moment when the author leaps into his poem – “The stag at eve had drunk his fill” – striking, with the first words, the note of sylvan beauty – till we hear the imprisoned hunter sing his langour from high seated Stirling Castle. But the bottom conception of all great works is either moral or philosophical. Art for art: the picturesque or the beautiful for [12] their own sake, no one can object to such professions of delight and interest; they are worthy, they are legitimate, they are beneficial; they stand in an immediate and true relation to the world and to life, and they make both more delightful. But it is none the less true, that the stronger mind cannot survey life from any point of view but what his eye will seize those deeper features which belong to morals or philosophy. A great man may be immoral, and his philosophy may be wrong; but he cannot simply pass morals and philosophy by. His grasp is so strong, that these burrs will stick to him. He is no sooner moved by his own narration, than he begins to perceive, not only the engaging features of the situation, but the moral dilemma and the inexplicable course of fate. Thus you will perceive, whenever Scott rises from his level, and becomes, as he does every now and again, for a moment, a great and noble artist, it is when he has been stirred out of his indifferency to a moral heat. So the scene with the Presbyterian minister stands out of *Woodstock*. So the Shakespearian death scene of Elspeth Mucklebackit, stands, not only above the rest of the admirable *Antiquary*, but, to my taste, above all that he has written. Or, to take another example, which shows this matter from another side, Alfred de Musset’s was an immoral and, I fear, rather an unpleasing [13] nature, yet he was not averse from moral considerations; and considered





life from a large, equal and truly literary point of view. Thus, when his own ugly personality was set aside by a pure, overweening artistic interest, as in the Comedies, you have at once a creation of worth as well as beauty. Even the cynical *Chandelier*, has elements of morality and is not unlovely taken all for all. The brilliant improvisations of the elder, and so vastly the greater Dumas, are not devoid of moral beauty or they would not be so entrancing to read; and the friendship of the four fighting comrades carries us with approval through all the somewhat dingy adventures of the *Trois Mousquetaires*, *Vingt Ans Apres* and the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*. It is noteworthy, too, how this series improves in tone, and toward the end becomes, in its light, idle style, truly and humanly affecting. Even the flimsiest works must thus repose on the deeper issues of literature. It is the defect of this deep human current, that leaves so much of Scott, for instance, or all of Gautier, low, cheap, and perishable below what might have been expected from the powers of those that wrote them.

This is the place however to clear away all ambiguity from the use of the word moral. The word human would perhaps be clearer to my purpose. A work of literary [14] art may be didactic; many that are admirable, are so avowedly; yet that is not the most genuine, literary instinct. Something of the chronicler, must cling to the literary man. He is a re-presenter first of all. He incarnates in his material inventions or selections, some conception, some suffering, some view of life or nature. If this be just, large in issue and seriously felt by the artist, it must contain many elements, some moral, some picturesque, some humorous, which is the moral picturesque. But I conceive it indifferent to the truth of his work or to its good effect upon the world, whether his view be moral or immoral, so long as he is not unconscious of the moral side of life, or whether his philosophy be true or demonstrably false, so long as his view of life embraces some notion of the inscrutable workings of our destiny. *Zadig*, which is optimistic and deistic, *Candide*, which is pessimistic and atheistic, are, I conceive, books about equally useful, though very unequal in amenity. Each is a view of life, somewhat overforced; both had better be known, and cannot elsewhere be learned more agreeably. I knew a man who was driven to a passion of prayer, and that at a time when he [15]





regarded all prayer in the light of an unworthy superstition, by a book, *Madame Bovary*, which was prosecuted in the not too scrupulous courts of France on a charge of obscenity and immorality. There is no canon on this question. Literature, conceived as a moral agent, is but condensed experience; it acts indirectly through the communication of innocent pleasure or noble sorrow. Like the actual experience of life, its influence depends altogether on the sanity of the patient. The best and truest book can be degraded to the most piggish purposes; the worst, if yet they be true and come straight out of the author's mind, are still experience, and affect for good those that have in them the horror of what is base and the desire of what is righteous. The author's business is to make his material out of what he truly loves, or desires or hates, so that his heart may be engaged in the work. So then there is no fear but he will plough deep enough and turn up new soil, and see wide enough to take note of some eternal landmark in this world's affairs. But he who trifles forever on the surface, with a few phrases; who never goes to the root of the work or lifts his eyes to the horizon, is but an impotent being; he will not make a [16] heart beat; he may quit. (American language.)

Many a man deceives himself entirely as to his purpose in a work; and this self-deception is usually moral. Defoe began *Robinson Crusoe* under the idea he was about to inculcate filial obedience; Fielding had a notion by *Joseph Andrews*, he should only laugh at Richardson; but it is a man shipwrecked on an island that is given us in the first; and [17]

[*Outlines Inside Front Cover - by RLS: four chapter titles in pencil, the group enclosed in square brackets, and the additional words at the end written at an angle below and to the left of these*]

II. Style + Matter

III. Real + Ideal

IV. Praise and poetry

V. Consideration of different forms

style and etching





## Uncollected Stevenson (2)

### Stevenson and Economic Scandal: ‘Our City Men No. 1 – A Salt-water Financier’

*Caroline A. Howitt*

Pairing literary ambition with a responsiveness to the economic scandals then preoccupying his society, 1877 saw 26-year-old Robert Louis Stevenson pen the following article – remarkable here in 2010 for the familiarly large scale of financial malpractice it addresses, as well as its absence from previous considerations of Stevenson’s work. ‘Our City Men No. I – A Salt-water Financier’, along with several other pieces by RLS, has never been republished since its initial appearance in the now rare, short-lived 1870s journal *London*. Subtitled ‘The Conservative Weekly Journal of Politics, Finance, Society and the Arts’, founded by R. Glasgow Brown and later edited by Stevenson’s close friend, W. E. Henley, *London* published eleven known items by Stevenson during its three-year run, as well as the principal stories that went on to form 1882’s *New Arabian Nights*.

‘A Salt-water Financier’ comprises a striking encounter between two themes recurrent elsewhere in the author’s work: the romance of the seaman – revisited for the *Cornhill Magazine* a year later in ‘The English Admirals’, and again in 1882 for *Young Folks* with ‘Treasure Island; or the Mutiny of the Hispaniola’ – and (less frequently linked with Stevenson), the world of finance. Many of Stevenson’s 1877 *London* articles, in keeping with the journal’s ethos, touch upon matters economic; ‘The Paris Bourse’, for example, is a strikingly censorious portrayal of the French stock market as ‘some disreputable part of the Inferno. Any quiet-minded person would refuse quite a hatful of money before he adventured his frail limbs in such a ferment [. . .] this sanguinary burlesque of the “Devil among the





Brokers’”. 1877 is a time, reports Stevenson, when ‘the bald and peak-faced banker, sitting humped up in a brougham and two, is, for most practical purposes, stronger and more beautiful than Hercules or Apollo’ (‘In the Latin Quarter. No. II. – A Studio of Ladies’), a time in which writers do well to cultivate ‘that solid sense of edification which can only be attained, in the present century, from the perusal of works with a more or less decidedly economical import’ (‘The Book of the Week. Wallace’s Russia’).

In February 1877 Stevenson took for his subject the distinguished Naval officer Captain Bedford Pim, a man at one time ‘greatly esteemed in London for his activity, understanding, and previous conduct’, who had become involved in the (mis) management of a series of loans commissioned to fund the construction of an inter-oceanic railway across Honduras. A prolonged combination of misfortune and corruption had allowed one unscrupulous participant, Charles Lefevre, to retreat ‘safely abroad with a million pounds in his pocket’ in 1872, whilst the innocent Pim found himself under arrest in Paris. The Honduras Loans scandal, and the ‘unworthy speculators without conscience’ implicated within it, became a likely source for Trollope’s 1875 *The Way We Live Now*. Commenting upon this text in an 1878 letter to his father, Stevenson evoked ‘the dead level of meanness and cowardliness’ Trollope portrays, adding ‘you require to be a little spoiled and cynical before you can enjoy it’. Cynicism is certainly evident in Stevenson’s own treatment of the related material; the tonality of satire over sympathy he employs in illustrating Pim’s predicament provides a valuable counterpoint to the idealism and earnestness more typical of his journalism – hitherto relatively neglected as part of his oeuvre, an oversight that the currently developing New Edinburgh edition of Stevenson’s works has the potential to redress.

Along with idiomatic resonances to *Treasure Island* (‘old sea-dog’, ‘shiver his timbers!’ – Admiral Benbow is also mentioned), the topic of murky investment schemes connects ‘A Salt-water





Financier' with 1889's *The Wrong Box*, in which Stevenson wryly depicts the nineteenth-century tontine insurance system – a venture also susceptible to 'institutional and personal corruption on a shocking scale' (in this case, historically, at the instigation of a man named Henry Hyde – apt coincidence?). The style of the article owes something to the work of Lamb and Dickens; indeed, the text is alive with allusion, highlighting the range of Stevenson's reading as well as his attention to fiction as a source for the generic or everyday reference point. In citing Smollett's *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (Commodore Trunnion), Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and *Peter Simple*, Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (Sir Giles Overreach), Balzac's *Cousin Pons* (Fraisier) and Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot* (Long Tom Coffin), Stevenson also demonstrates an embedded concern with the crafting of strong characterisation, which he then proves able to achieve and to subvert simultaneously throughout the course of the sketch itself.

### *OUR CITY MEN.*

#### *NO. I. – A SALT WATER FINANCIER.*

*CAPTAIN BEDFORD CLAPPERTON TREVELYAN  
PIM, R.N., F.R.G.S., Assoc. Inst C.E., M.P., Late  
Special Commissioner for Honduras.*

The character of the British seaman, his courage, tenderness, and childlike simplicity, are among those things which make us most proud of our native land. The heart of the playgoer has often swelled within him as he saw Mr. T. P. Cooke point his toe in a hornpipe, or triumph in broad-sword combat over many dark men in petticoats. The novel-reader cherishes the memory of Commodore Trunnion, Midshipman Easy, and Peter Simple; and there is nothing we value higher in all our annals than the exploits of Drake, Raleigh, Benbow, or Nelson. In fact, we are proud of our Navy as it was and our sailors as they were, and could have been





content to let them remain unchanged unto the end of time. But the Navy and the naval character, like all sublunary things, are subject to the action of Great Natural Laws; and in these later days the action of Great Natural Laws has introduced some curious and unprofitable innovations – such, for instance, as Tea-kettle Ships and Salt-water Financiers. It is the particular distinction of Captain Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim to represent Salt-water Finance.

The gallant Captain has seen service in his day. He is an old Arctic hero, and has searched for Sir John Franklin. He wears a Crimean medal. He received three wounds in China. He has written books, pamphlets, and reports. And nowadays he is a member of the Inner Temple, and rolls his quid in Parliament upon the Government benches.

So far so good. To complete the portrait it must be borne in mind that he is simply the Ideal Seaman. It might be thought that he was a man of some capacity, not without a dose of what worldly people would call shrewdness; but this is to take up the Captain by the wrong end. A man of warm feelings, if you will, rugged, hasty; using strong language when he meets with unsailorlike conduct from the landsharks among whom his lot is cast; but tender and true at heart, referring with tears in his sympathetic voice to the poor people who “embarked their little all, the savings of years of toil and industry,” in the Honduras Loans, and not ashamed to confess his weaknesses, his untutored parts, and his body stiff with old age and scarred with honourable wounds. And he is specially modest as to his intellectual endowments. When he writes a book he must remind his readers that he has spent “fewer years at school than among the icebergs of the Arctic regions or under the scorching rays of tropical suns.” And when he is pressed before the Committee as to his relations with Messrs. Bischoffsheim and Lefevre, he owns at once, with a hitch and a frank smile, that he does not think these clever people cared to speak about finance with the likes of him. Altogether, a simple, hearty, hale old salt as you would wish to see.

Only, why did he trail his pig-tail through all the narrows and shoals of Foreign Loan Finance? What an incongruity, what an anachronism was there! And how are we to know our way any longer through the laby-







rinth of the world, if Paladins, and Patriots, and Pims, and all we think most highly of, are to keep getting into the strangest of false positions, flaunting arm in arm with Sir Giles Overreach, or sitting cheek by jowl with Fraiser in his Cabinet? What on earth, we ask again, what on earth took the gallant and distinguished officer on board the galley where he was captured by Sir Henry James? And we are glad to have a thoroughly satisfactory answer. It appears that he has given a good part of his life to the question of Pacific and Atlantic intercommunication. And so, whenever he heard the Honduras Railway was in a pickle, although he had no interest in the concern but that unselfish interest common to generous and far-seeing spirits, the Captain consented to accept the position of Special Commissioner, and a salary of fifteen hundred a-year. He seems to have made no inquiries before he plunged into the transaction. It was enough for him to learn there was a ship in distress. It is one of the most chivalrous instances we have met with of that spasmodic philanthropy common to all who sail the troubled waters of Finance.

This was how the ancient mariner got in. We do not propose to inquire too closely how he got out – whether in triumph by the captain's barge, or at midnight, perilously clambering over the ship's hinder parts. We have no desire to criticise the Captain's conduct in detail, or offer him our aid in determining the precise amount he received for his services, or the precise nature of the services themselves. We shall simply point out a few details in his behaviour, for the guidance of bondholders and the elucidation of Salt-water Finance.

And first, here is a little circumstance that cannot fail to gratify all who love him, as it shows there is life in the old dog yet, and his heart is green though his body be somewhat declined into the vale of years. About a month after his appointment as Commissioner it fell to him to address and lead a meeting of Honduras Bondholders. Some of us might have liked to satisfy our own minds, before we proceeded to satisfy the minds of others, particularly when these others stood to lose "the savings of years of toil and industry," and we ourselves risked precisely nothing on the event. But that was not the way with Captain Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim. His warm heart beat too fast for such calculating ways.





He had promised to reassure the bondholders; and, shiver his timbers! as he almost told Sir Henry James, there was no information grave enough, no disclosure sufficiently scandalous and shabby, to make him go back from his word. He would say what he had to say. He was a man of honour.

But – and this is what specially tickles us – on the day before the meeting, as he sat in the office with Don Carlos Gutierrez, a waggish thought came into the Captain's head. He didn't wish for information – no, not he; or, of course, he might have asked for it; but it struck him it would be funny to play at being a real business man writing real business letters. And so the light-headed sailor scratched off a little note, in which, after some thoughtful oratorical prelusions, he requested a fact or two as to the financial prospects of the loan. And then he handed it over the table to the Don, with his tongue in his cheek and a wink of his merry blue eye. It was so fresh and spontaneous that even the grave half-breed could not find it in his heart to blame his companion's levity; nay, he even entered so far into the joke as to write an answer with the funniest affectation Spanish seriousness, and hand it back again to Pim. We wonder if the bondholders who listened next day to Captain Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim had heard the story of this little playful correspondence, and instead of the Captain's sprightly consolations, had been sent away each one with a copy of Don Carlos's answer in his pocket – we wonder, and we can't help wondering, whether they would have gone home from the London Tavern in equally good spirits.

The second and last episode in the Captain's Special Commissionery on which we shall touch, was referred to by Mr. Digby Seymour, in impassioned nonsense, as "the attempt in the sacred name of law which was suffered in the name of Captain Bedford Pim." In July, 1872 – that is to say, at the date of the meeting at the London Tavern; previous loans to Honduras had already been expended in paying their own interest, rigging the market, and building some portion of the first third of the proposed railway – things were in a sorry plight. But, courage! Long Tom Coffin has still his harpoon under his arm! Ten times he visited the Continent; and finally a new loan of two millions sterling.

This statement contained a trifling mis-statement, which the Captain's





knowledge of French did not permit him, it appears, to rectify. What did he know about their d—d lingo, the old sea-dog? Just at the moment when all looked so well, there occurred a difference between the Captain and MM. Herran and Lepelletier, the Honduras representatives in France, about — we regret to say — about a bribe. Such conduct, the Captain says, we will easily understand, “was a sort of thing that English sailors are not accustomed to.” There was a quarrel; and Captain Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim, as near as we understand his innuendo, seems to have taken God’s name in vain: a circumstance which, with the natural piety of sailors, he subsequently regretted.

And now for the fifth act of the melodrama. The wicked attorneys denounced the honest tar to the French Government: and the tar “was summarily arrested at his hotel, lodged in the cells like a common felon, dragged before the judge *twice* with a chain round his wrist, and incarcerated for forty-six hours under circumstances which he disdains to excite our feeling by narrating.”

That is an extract from his own eloquent speech to the second meeting of Honduras Bondholders, over which he presided. The picture is moving and not uninteresting, perhaps not displeasing. Where there is such a prodigious lot of naval bounce and bluntness there should be something like circumspection in a man’s walk and converse.







Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession*  
(Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009) 193 pp., £50.00. ISBN  
978-0-7546-6195-5

Roslyn Jolly's *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession* is an interesting and well-informed study of the shift in Robert Louis Stevenson's consciousness and in his authorial identity once he travelled to the Pacific in 1888 and eventually took up residence on the island of Upola in Samoa. Jolly generally gives an excellent sense of the context in which Stevenson was working and living. She supports her commentary with refreshing evidence, and, in particular, offers a valuable and well-documented discussion of the various ways in which Stevenson's Pacific writing was received by reviewers, friends, and the public. The study is a must for those who are intrigued by Stevenson's South Seas fiction, prose and poetry, as well as fascinated, perhaps even puzzled, by the way his writing altered or developed once he left his Western surroundings and embraced the landscape, the politics, the lore, and the history of a culture alien to the world he had left behind as well as to those who had valued his earlier work.

The review that follows is a conversation with the book – a conversation that I have already had, in part, with its author, and one that has helped me in my work and opened my eyes to perspectives that I might not have otherwise considered.

To open her discussions of the shift in Stevenson's authorial identity while in the South Seas, Roslyn Jolly talks about the 'Turning Point' in Stevenson's career by concentrating upon his relationship with his father, Thomas Stevenson, who, until his death, essentially subsidized Stevenson's writing career and, according to Jolly, did so in order to 'exercise power over it' (p. 7). There is much truth in Jolly's supposition, for we know that his father did, for instance, discourage the publishing of *The*





*Amateur Emigrant* for fear it would damage his son's reputation. Indeed, Thomas Stevenson insisted on paying for the book's withdrawal from the publisher. I am, however, not entirely comfortable with simply assigning Thomas Stevenson the role of a censor who suppresses that which might be experimental or politically provocative, for I cannot forget those moments when the father had gleefully participated in his son's adventure stories and even relished the fact that his son was actually doing what he himself had not been able to pursue. (Thomas had once tried his hand at writing.) I believe some nod towards the father's wild and inventive imagination needs to be given. He was not just the stern patriarchal patron.

Jolly, however, does convincingly argue that once Thomas died on 8 May 1887, Stevenson was freer to move away from 'Skerryvore' as well as from the pressures of belonging to a family of engineers. Thankfully, when discussing the death of the father, she resists the temptation of falling into Freudian lingo and the drivel that could follow from such an ideology. Jolly asserts that the 'generational struggle that had helped Stevenson, oppositionally, to define himself as a writer, lost force after the death of his father' (p. 23). She maintains that after the father's death, when Stevenson set sail for America once more and eventually cruised in the Pacific, he was at liberty to seek 'diversity of enterprise' (p. 21), 'strike new territory as an author' (p. 29) and pursue interests that he had not been able to follow in his previous writing. He was 'now escaped out of the shadow of the Roman empire'<sup>1</sup> – an oft-repeated phrase that Jolly does a most subtle job of explaining. In this seemingly alien context, she argues, Stevenson was able to develop his interest in Scottish lore by becoming an ethnographer of the South Seas, and he was able to continue his interest in legal ideas by thinking about comparative jurisprudence in a new setting.

In her second chapter, 'The Travel-Writer as Anthropologist: *In the South Seas*,' Jolly maintains that rather than following the





analysis of culture propagated by E. B. Tylor in the second half of the nineteenth century, Stevenson aligned his non-fictional studies of the South Seas with the thought of Sir Henry Maine, a jurist interested in legal anthropology. Maine maintained that a society was best understood through its 'jural conceptions' and through a 'jural model of social structure' (Jolly, p. 41). Although Jolly admits that Maine's influence on Stevenson 'is impossible to settle' (p. 43), she uses Maine's ideas to explore the ways in which Stevenson's approach to what he was seeing and learning was influenced by his own legal knowledge. Stevenson, of course, had received his law degree from the University of Edinburgh and had been called to the bar. Jolly demonstrates just how his legal ideas helped him understand the nature of 'tapu' and the social obligations involved in gift giving – practices that anthropologists or ethnologists, such as Tylor, often concentrated upon. This discussion of comparative jurisprudence is refreshing and illuminating. It adds another dimension to Barry Menikoff's *Narrating Scotland* as well as to Julia Reid's discussions of Stevenson's anthropological interests in her *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle*.

Having written on Stevenson's thought while in the South Seas, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*, I would like to add that as an ethnographer or anthropologist in the Pacific, Stevenson did not just rely on authorities who were based in the Western world he had left behind. He also had, if you like, on-the-spot training from various missionaries who frequently took time away from their religious duties to do field work and to take elaborate notes on indigenous beliefs and practices. (I hasten to add that these missionaries did not simply study these customs for the sake of converting the islanders.) Since these 'anthropologists' were among Stevenson's closest friends in the region, and since he read their field notes (now available in the London Missionary Society archives at SOAS) to help him write his study, it would be good also to take these into account.





Chapter 3, 'Our Man in Samoa: *A Footnote to History*,' dwells upon Stevenson's early interest in history, the development of that interest when he was in Samoa, as well as his desire 'to bring certain facts clearly together and lay them before the public'<sup>2</sup> (p. 68). Jolly does a beautiful job of explaining to her readers the context of his historical work, especially the writing of *A Footnote to History*, and the methods he used in bringing all this material together. It is fascinating to read about his pressing wish to serve his adopted country, his understanding of the profession of history – the thought of Henry Thomas Buckle is significant here – the way he conducted interviews in order to fill in the gaps within the official documents concerning Samoa's previous six years, and the means by which he, as an outsider, attempted to get the inside story of the nation. In the course of her discussion of Stevenson's historiography, Jolly makes a most suggestive observation: 'After language, the most important indirect evidence used by Stevenson was the physical evidence of landscape and the built environment. In *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson insists that the history of Samoa is inscribed upon the land' (p. 86). So evocative is this fleeting comment that I wish Jolly had taken more time to dwell upon it.

Jolly's discussion of *A Footnote to History* shows that the centre of the book was to mark 'the frustration of imperial ambition and the erosion of European prestige' (p. 97), and that the work 'stands ironically detached from the belief in progress that in the late nineteenth century seemed so "scientific"' (p. 97). In a sense Jolly presents Stevenson as a modern historian.

Chapter 4, 'The Novelist as Lawyer: The *Times* Letters and *Catriona*,' is another illuminating study of Stevenson's writing in the South Seas. This time Jolly meticulously demonstrates exactly how the 1893 sequel to *Kidnapped* is linked thematically and structurally to the *Times* letters Stevenson wrote endeavouring to bring international attention to the various rebellions and colonial interventions in Samoa. Most critics tend, rather, to focus on







his *A Footnote to History*. Jolly, however, believes that the legal issues that are fully explored in the *Times* are central to the clash between a 'traditional and modern society in *Catriona*' (p. 121). As she explains: 'a broader thematic similarity between *Catriona* and the *Times* letters is their common concern with the repair, and the transformation, of a society in the aftermath of rebellion and war. Both texts explore the principles underlying, and the costs attending, the establishment of post-war institutions' (p. 119). As are other critics, Jolly is convinced that '*Catriona* is saturated with ideas and emotions that stemmed from Stevenson's exposure to Pacific life and colonialist politics in the period 1888-1892' (p. 120). One interesting part of this chapter is Jolly's discussion of the ways in which David Balfour's reaction to political pressures in *Catriona* differs from Stevenson's more daring and even courageous reactions to institutionalized power in Samoa. Jolly closes this discussion by speaking of Stevenson's commitment to 'advocating the rights of independent Samoa in an imperial world' (p. 176).

I would like to suggest that there was always to be a degree of ambiguity in Stevenson's radicalism. Indeed, he did advocate for indigenous rights and often found fault with the imperial powers, but he was also intermittently comfortable in assuming the traditional role of imperialist. He maintained a delicate balance between dressing as a person who had been born in Samoa and donning his red silk sash that spoke of authority and represented his role in his 'old colonial home,' Vailima.<sup>3</sup> I suggest that there needs to be more subtlety in speaking of him as an unqualified radical or thinking of him as someone who was, as George Forbes reported after Stevenson's death, 'far more influenced by a desire to save the native race from injustice than by literary ambition' (as quoted in Jolly p. 176). From my point of view, Stevenson seems indeed to have wanted to correct misunderstandings about the indigenous people, to support their efforts at self-representation as well as to challenge the power of the various consuls and colo-





nial justices in Samoa, but, it needs to be more fully recognized that Stevenson also took some degree of pleasure or satisfaction in maintaining a degree of authority that accompanied being a colonial in Samoa.

Throughout the book, usually toward the end of each chapter, Jolly does a beautiful job of letting the reader understand more clearly than ever that Stevenson's Pacific writing was continuously subject to an audience who held certain assumptions about what Stevenson's work should be. Jolly carefully quotes reviews and responses that chart the tension between their expectations and the so-called 'new' Stevenson who devoted many pages to Samoan history and ethnography. She demonstrates how his Pacific writing alienated his readers and provoked criticism as well as interest. She speaks of the 'immense gap' and 'contradictions between the manufactured reputation and Stevenson's actual literary work in the Pacific' (p. 158). Nostalgic and often confused (as well as prejudiced), his public, perhaps with the exception of his American readership, wanted the old Stevenson back. They did not welcome *In the South Seas*, *A Footnote to History*, or the letters to the *Times*. However, cut free from the restrictions of his past, Stevenson continued to increase the range and complexity of his writing. Desiring to enlarge upon his previous interests, such as anthropology, law, and history, Stevenson wanted to keep developing as a writer in the context of Samoa. His ambitions clashed with his audience's expectations.

At the same time, Jolly rightly suggests that yet another dilemma plagued Stevenson and his desire to be recognized as a writer who had increased his range to include history, law, and anthropology. Stevenson also became the subject of the Tusitala myth, a fiction promoted by his family after his death and one that made him into a romance figure 'more wonderful than any of his creations' (Jolly, p. 159). The legend almost obscured the new directions of his work. Close to the end of her book, Jolly observes:





Tusitala [‘the teller of tales’, a title given him in Samoa] effectively functioned as a screen to block out most of this writing work Stevenson did in the Pacific. It removed what was most unsettling to Stevenson’s British readers about his Pacific years – not his distance from home (which could be recuperated through a myth of ‘exile’), nor his involvement with a radically different culture (which could be processed through categories of the ‘exotic’ and the ‘primitive’), but his shape-shifting as an author. In place of these confusing and unwelcome changes, the legend of Tusitala substituted the simple transformation of the writer of romances into a figure of romance. (pp. 172–173.)

Roslyn Jolly has given us a book that helps put the complexities of Stevenson’s work in a better perspective. She allows us to understand the shift in Stevenson’s sense of his own authorial identity. I strongly suggest reading this work.

*Ann C. Colley*

#### NOTES

- 1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas* [1896] ed. by Neil Rennie (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 9.
- 2 *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by B. A. Booth and E. Mehew (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994–5), vol 7, p. 258.
- 3 See Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 49–72.





Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Complete Works*, introduced by Barry Menikoff (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), paperback, 35 vols. £349.99. \$529.99. ISBN 978-1-4438-0351-9

The new edition of *The Complete Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing 'makes available all of Stevenson's works in an affordable and accessible format.' The edition appears as thirty-five slim paperback volumes illustrated with a bust portrait of Stevenson from a black and white film copy negative of a wood engraving from a photograph by W. I. Hawker. An image from a poster for a stage production of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1901) starring Joseph Haworth and adapted as a play by his brother William, appears on the back covers of the volumes. These attractive and compact volumes are a reprint of the 1923 Tusitala Edition in reset typography. The original Tusitala edition was published by William Heinemann in association with Chatto & Windus, W. Heinemann and Longmans, Green and was printed by Cassell. The edition was edited by Lloyd Osbourne (who determined the content and order of Stevenson's body of work) and Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, as well as having editorial support from Sidney Colvin (who edited the letters), W.E. Henley and Arthur Quiller-Couch. Although the Tusitala edition included prefaces written by Fanny for the Biographical edition of Stevenson's works (1905-12) and introductions by Lloyd, these are omitted in the CSP edition.

Indeed, the CSP edition differs from the Tusitala in several significant ways. Not only does it include an informative introduction by Barry Menikoff, but volume 13 also contains both the version of 'The Beach of Falesá' that was published in the Tusitala and the unexpurgated version edited by Menikoff from Stanford University Press (1987). In particular academics interested in the different versions and editions of Stevenson's texts will appreciate the opportunity to read the manuscript version and to com-





pare it with the changes that were made when it went to print, changes that Menikoff suggests in his *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': A Study in Victorian Publishing with the Original Text*, were both radical and telling about Victorian publishing practices:

Falesá never appeared in print as Stevenson wrote it. Of all his texts, this was the most mutilated and corrupted. Punctuation was systematically altered; language was revised, distorted, or deleted; entire passages were garbled or bowdlerized. [This is the story] of what happens to a work of art when it is converted into a commodity to satisfy the taste and prejudices of the period – a story of stylistic abuse by printers and proofreaders, of literary abuse by publishers, editors, and friends, and finally of the abuse of art by Stevenson himself in sanctioning the publication of a corrupt text.<sup>2</sup>

As well as the two versions of 'Falesá', the CSP edition also differs from the Tusitala in that volume 21 includes 'An Object of Pity' from the 1900 New York, Dodd, Mead edition. According to Stevenson, the inspiration for this humorous and satirical piece came from a visit he and Lady Jersey paid to the exiled Chief Mataafa of Samoa in August 1892: 'we had great fun, and wrote a Ouida novel on our life here, in which every author [Stevenson co-wrote the piece with his wife and daughter-in-law, as well as Captain Leigh, Lady Jersey, and Graham Balfour] had to describe himself in the Ouida glamour.'<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of this little-known work gives readers an insight into Stevenson's sense of mischief and adventure, but also draws attention to the strained political situation in Samoa at the time. According to Ann C. Colley, the plan to visit Mataafa 'was obviously not smart, for news of the visit to Malie (the headquarters of Mataafa's supporters) of a member of the British landed gentry might disturb the piece





between the warring Samoan factions.<sup>24</sup>

While the addition of Menikoff's 'Falesá' and 'An Object of Pity' add to the scholarly value and thoroughness of *The Complete Works*, it is unfortunate that no information about their history or the significance of their inclusion appears in the introduction, particularly because the political background (in terms of Victorian publishing politics in the case of 'Falesá' and the tension in Samoan politics in the case of 'An Object of Pity') is so rich. There is also no explanation for why the editors chose to use the Tusitala edition in particular. Certainly the Tusitala is a strong uniform edition, but for readers with little or no knowledge about the different editions, or about decisions about inclusions or exclusions of texts within *The Works* and their significance, it would have been helpful if more historical and literary background of the Tusitala edition were provided. Indeed, Menikoff's introduction seems to address readers who are already very familiar with Stevenson's life and works and is not aimed at those coming to Stevenson for the first time. Nevertheless, Menikoff's introduction is a valuable overview of Stevenson's literary career, focusing predominantly on Stevenson's writing (rather than discussing his life in detail), in particular on his style, the themes with which he was preoccupied, and his lasting popularity. Menikoff also usefully gives close readings of lesser-known works, such as 'The Sire de Malétoit's Door', 'A Lodging for the Night', and poetry like *Prayers*, a decision which shows that these more marginal works are as valuable and well-written as the most popular texts, *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Jekyll and Hyde*.

The introduction begins by asking 'what was it about Stevenson that made him so compelling?'<sup>25</sup> Menikoff suggests that the fascination lay not only in Stevenson's ability 'to speak to readers of different ages' (p. ix), but also in the 'unpredictability and diversity of the guises he put his signature to that mystified and astonished his audiences, for these were as various as his





writings' (p. vii). Menikoff also touches on recurring themes in Stevenson's writing such as memory, the past, the loss of early childhood and dreams. Nature is also an important theme, particularly in Stevenson's travel writing: 'we see the paradoxical aspect of the writer and the man, one part romantic, revelling in nature and its ability to retrieve the hidden self, and the other part modern, cognizant of nature as nothing more nor less than life itself' (p. xi). Indeed, the notion of Stevenson as doubled, and the theme of the 'divided self, with its attendant dissection of conscience, is a major chord in Stevenson's work' (p. xvi) and is something Menikoff highlights, pointing not only to *Jekyll and Hyde*, but also to characters like Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*. The introduction also discusses Stevenson's travel writing in depth, suggesting that 'The travel book, with all its careful posing, enabled Stevenson to entertain sociality while testing his mettle under tough physical conditions' (p. xv).

Significantly, Menikoff focuses on the ways in which Stevenson was a truly modern writer. He was 'the first modern writer to collapse [different genres] into entities that had no clear-cut classification' (p. xv). He was also the author to write 'the first postmodern stories [in *New Arabian Nights*] before the word was even invented' (p. xvii). In his South Seas fiction, 'The Beach of Falesá', *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Wrecker*, Stevenson 'pushed that fiction over the line into the territory of modernism' (p. xx). Menikoff concludes that both Stevenson's life and his writing 'gives a kind of dignity, perhaps even nobility, to the simple act of going forward' (p. xxi).

Although the affordability and appearance of the Cambridge Scholars Publishing edition make Stevenson's works accessible to a wide audience, this edition ultimately seems most suited to academics and enthusiasts who already know and appreciate Stevenson's works. Senior school and university students may find the edition helpful because it is cost-effective, but equally they may be attracted to editions that contain explanatory foot-





notes about the texts, their placement, and their significance along with more biographical information about the author. While the CSP edition does not provide enough contextual information, it does allow Stevenson's writing to speak for itself. As Menikoff suggests 'One of the salutary benefits of a collected edition like this is that the mere facts of the uniform volumes highlights the body of the work, and minimizes the tendency to marginalize individual texts' (p. xii). The CSP edition presents all of Stevenson's work in a clear, portable and appealing format, and is therefore a welcome addition to Stevenson studies.

### *Hilary Grimes*

#### NOTES

- 1 Back cover, *The Complete Works* by Robert Louis Stevenson, intro. by Barry Menikoff (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).
- 2 Barry Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and "The Beach of Falesá": A Study in Victorian Publishing with the Original Text* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 5.
- 3 *Letters*, vol iv, *The Complete Works*, vol 34, p. 151. Ouida (1839-1908) was a popular Victorian novelist who wrote sensational and historical romance novels.
- 4 Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 149.
- 5 Barry Menikoff, 'Introduction', *The Complete Works*, vol 1, pp. vii-xxi, p. vii. Subsequent quotations will be noted within the body of the review.







## Contributors

**David Annwn** is the author of *Marion Evans Magic Picture Show, Middlemarch and Diorama* (2001), 'Returning to Fear, New Discoveries in Etienne Gaspard Robertson's Phantasmagoria' (2008) and 'Dazzling Ghostland: Sheridan Le Fanu's Phantasmagoria' (2009). He has worked for Leeds University and the Open University in Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow and is a member of the International Gothic Society and the Magic Lantern Society. Amongst his studies of Celtic and Scottish literature are *Inhabited Voices, Seamus Heaney, Geoffrey Hill and George Mackay Brown* (1984) and "The Binding Breath": Island and Community in the Poetry of George Mackay Brown' (1995).

**Dana Fore** is a California native who received his Ph.D. in English from the University of California at Davis in 2005. His interests include Victorian literature, disability studies, and fantasy films. His previous work on disability and literature has appeared in the *Hemingway Review*; his previous work on disability and film has appeared in the online journals *Disability Studies Quarterly* and *Golem: A Journal of Religion and Monsters*.

**Hilary Grimes'** most recent project was at Napier University where she did invaluable work as a researcher and writer for the RLS website.

**Caroline A. Howitt** received her MA in English at the University of Glasgow before completing a Master's on Literature 1780-1900 under the Snell Scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. Her areas of interest include late nineteenth-century literature, myth and fantasy, morphologies of genre, rhetorical manipulation, fictional and critical sensationalism, hauntology, and integrations between creative and academic modes of writing. She contributes regular reviews to the *Times Literary Supplement*, and is currently at work on a thesis entitled 'Aspects of Romance





in the Prose of Robert Louis Stevenson' at the University of St Andrews.

**Jeremy Lim** is studying towards a PhD at the University of Toronto, researching the ways in which Calvinism influenced Scottish writers, namely Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Stevenson. He studied at the National University of Singapore and Concordia University in Montreal, where he completed his thesis: *Robert Louis Stevenson and Scottish Calvinism* (2008).

**Glenda Norquay** is Professor of Scottish Literary Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. She teaches 19th century literature, early twentieth century women's writing and Scottish and Irish fiction and has published on Scottish fiction and women's suffrage writing. She is author of *R. L. Stevenson and Theories of Reading* and is currently editing *St Ives* for the New Edinburgh Edition.

**Roger G. Swearingen** is best known for his authoritative guide to the writing and publication of Stevenson's many prose works, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (1980). But he is also the author of *Robert Louis Stevenson's Edinburgh: A Concise Guide for Visitors and Residents* (2001) and the two-part review of research, 'Recent Studies in Robert Louis Stevenson . . . 1970–2005', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 37, 38 (2006–2007). Now retired from his day job as the website architect for a major electronics firm in Santa Rosa, California, he is at work on a full-length biography of RLS for Faber and Faber Publishers, London, titled *Robert Louis Stevenson: Spirit of Adventure*.

**Jean Taylor** was born and brought up in Central Scotland and has lived in Edinburgh all her adult life. After a career in industrial journalism and Human Resources Management, she decided to explore creative writing through the Open University and began writing poetry just over three years ago. She has had work published in *Poetry Scotland* and *Words on Canvas* and recently won a Special Merit Award in the Inspired Get Writing





Competition.

**Sara Wasson** is a Lecturer in Literature and Culture at Edinburgh Napier University. She acquired her doctorate from Cornell University in New York. Her monograph *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (Palgrave, 2010) examines how writing in the Gothic mode subverts the dominant national narrative of the British home front. She is currently co-editing a collection for Liverpool University press entitled *Gothic Science Fiction, 1980-2010*, and in 2011 *The Journal of Popular Culture* is publishing an article by her on community formation in late twentieth-century vampire fiction.





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

*General Editors: Stephen Arata, Richard Dury,  
Penny Fielding and Anthony Mandal (electronic  
editor)*

After the publication of five volumes of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Edinburgh University Press decided that the time was right for a parallel print and electronic edition and that the most satisfactory solution would be to abandon the *Centenary Edition* and to start anew with the *New Edinburgh Edition*.

One important difference with the *Centenary Edition* is the decision to use as base-text the most authoritative early edition – from the period, that is, when the author worked with greatest concentration and effort and was still involved in the process of creation. In contrast, the *Centenary Edition's* policy statement had opted for 'final intentions'. The important variations between early and later versions will still be presented in a clear way so that readers will get a good idea of the evolution of the text over time. In addition, policy in the choice of copy-text will be flexible and will to some extent be influenced by what is discovered from the collation of variants and of course by what is known about the transmission of the text from author to publisher and printer. This important decision will be made after consultations between the volume editor, general editors and the editorial board.

The new edition is planned extend to 38 volumes and associated electronic resources. The texts will be prepared by scanning of the potentially interesting lifetime editions, double-conversion to readable text (using two different conversion programs), sight-proofing of the copy-text and then collating them all using an electronic collation program. It is hoped that the scanning can be undertaken partly in collaboration with institutions such as





the National Library of Scotland and the University of Virginia Library.

The physical centre of the Edition is the University of Edinburgh, where it is planned to have an office with dedicated computer and to employ a research assistant, but the University of Virginia could well have a satellite centre in the future too.

Electronic publication will be in two parts: an Archive of the plain text transcriptions to be deposited in a national Scottish institution (and this archive will be the source of all the texts used in collation), and Electronic Resources based on a site at EUP or the University of Edinburgh. The Electronic Resources for each volume will be divided into Basic and Additional Resources. The former (to be published contemporaneously with the respective printed volume) will include (i) the full collation of variant readings, (ii) diplomatic manuscript transcriptions, (iii) additional notes and corrections. The Additional Resources will include (i) elaboration of text presentation (hypertext presentation to show the development of the text, for example), (ii) images and illustrations, (iii) auxiliary texts (e.g. reviews) that have been acquired by the volume editor. As the Additional Resources are a complicated project on their own they will be concentrated on the texts that will most benefit for this additional presentation. Anthony Mandal will be starting with a series of small pilot projects in the next year or two before moving on to a major work.

With the full collation available in the Basic Resources of the electronic publishing, this will not be included in the print edition, which will contain only the list of emendations. Any manuscript transcriptions in the volumes will also probably 'reading versions' with interesting cancellations in the notes, since the diplomatic transcription will be available on-line.

Introductions and Textual essays will provide a useful source of information concerning the composition, production and early reception of the texts in each volume and the Explanatory Notes will identify quotations, explain obscure vocabulary and





historical and cultural phenomena, indicate mistakes and inconsistencies in the text etc.

Appendices could include transcriptions of manuscripts, lists of editions and translations and illustrations planned or included in early volumes plus samples from other illustrations. If the copy text was illustrated, then the illustrations will be placed in the text.

While the basic edition will be scholarly and documentary, the Additional Resources and spinoff paperback volumes should provide stimulating and attractive reading and visual materials for a wide range of users.





## Stevenson: Notes and Queries

With the launch of the *New Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* invites brief essays, bibliographical information, and/or Notes and Queries, relating to any of the following:

- The whereabouts of uncatalogued material
- Unpublished biographical information
- Supplementary material and emendations to Swearingen's *The Prose Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*
- Information on Stevenson's collaborations
- Details of Stevenson's relations with publishers, both financial and personal
- Distribution and sale of Stevenson's work in Britain and the USA
- Archive collections and printed guides relating to the magazines in which Stevenson published
- Information and opinions on different editions published during Stevenson's lifetime
- The production of illustrations
- Early reception of individual works (reviews not collected in Maixner's *Critical Heritage*)
- Mentions of Stevenson's works in letters or diaries of contemporaries, etc.

Alternatively, information not intended for publication may be sent directly to any of the General Editors, who would be grateful for any such material:

Stephen Arata: [sda2e@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:sda2e@cms.mail.virginia.edu)

Richard Dury: [richard.dury@t-r.it](mailto:richard.dury@t-r.it)

Penny Fielding: [penny.fielding@ed.ac.uk](mailto:penny.fielding@ed.ac.uk)





# RLS

## WEBSITE

**[www.robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://www.robert-louis-stevenson.org)**

Funded by a grant from the Carnegie Trust,  
this new website will be launched in November 2009.

Dedicated to the life and works of Robert Louis Stevenson, making texts and information about his life and works freely available worldwide, [www.robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://www.robert-louis-stevenson.org) will be the primary online resource for students, scholars and enthusiasts alike. Galleries of images of places and people associated with Stevenson, and of RLS, himself are a particular feature of the website. It also situates Stevenson firmly in Edinburgh, focusing on the city's, and on Scotland's influence on his writing. At the same time it will recognise the international dimension to his work and readership.

Listing past and current scholarly work on RLS, as well as the full texts and a significant proportion of all the available photographs and images, this site will reach a world-wide audience, many of whom could not travel to the places where such items are located. Back numbers of the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* will also be posted on this site in full-text format.

The site is established at the Centre for Literature and Writing (CLAW) at Edinburgh Napier University with support from Edinburgh and Stirling Universities, literary trusts like the Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature, the Writers' Museum of Edinburgh, and Stevenson enthusiasts, museum curators and academics around the globe. It will make a significant contribution to the growing reputation of RLS as an important literary figure and personality of the late nineteenth century.



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## Contribute and Subscribe to The Journal of Stevenson Studies

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Email: [r.b.watson@stir.ac.uk](mailto:r.b.watson@stir.ac.uk)

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**Volume 1** in 2004, contained 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 2** in 2005, with essays by Hilary J. Beattie, Sara Clayson, Richard Dury, Liz Farr, William Gray, Gordon Hirsch, Jürgen Kramer.

**Volume 3** in 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.

**Volume 4** in 2007 contained essays from the Saranac conference by R. L. Abrahamson, Richard Ambrosini, Hilary J. Beattie, Jenni Calder, Dennis Denisoff, Cinzia Giglioni, Gordon Hirsch, Mary B. Hotaling, William B. Jones Jr, Wendy R. Katz, Jürgen Kramer, Ilaria B. Sborgi, Marilyn Simon, Robert Benjamin Stevenson III, Roderick Watson.

**Volume 5** in 2008 was the special 'Stevenson and the Writers' edition with reflections, memoirs and creative contributions from Ron Butlin, Alan Grant, Diana Hendry, David Kinloch, Patrick McGrath, Donal McLaughlin, Barry Menikoff, Cees Nooteboom, James Robertson, Suhayl Saadi, Louise Welsh, Hamish Whyte.

**Volume 6** in 2009 contained essays from the Bergamo conference by Hilary Beattie, Nicoletta Brazzelli, Nancy Bunge, Gordon Hirsch, Nathalie Jaëck, Matthew Kaiser, Sylvie Largeaud-Ortega, Rosella Mallardi, Burkhard Niederhoff, Laavanyan Ratnapalan, Sara Rizzo, Andrew De Young, Tania Zulli.





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