Robert Louis Stevenson: Identity and Ideology in the late Victorian British Empire

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Abstract

This thesis examines Robert Louis Stevenson's engagement with issues of cultural identity across a wide range of his writings, published as well as unpublished: romance narratives, historical novels, essays, letters, memoirs, neo-Gothic short stories, and Pacific travel writing and fiction. Beginning with a close examination of Stevenson's representation and interrogation of Scottish identities in domestic and British imperial contexts it expands outwards to show how Stevenson engaged with issues of identity within the late Victorian British Empire. This study challenges the compartmentalisation of Stevensonian criticism, and offers a detailed and holistic reading of his body of work, contextualising it within the social and ideological climate of the late Victorian era. It explores issues of cross-cultural contact and processes of negotiation and hybridisation, drawing upon colonial discourse and postcolonial theory. In addition it examines how Stevenson's own literary identity was formed, how Stevenson, coming from a position outside the prevailing stylistic 'schools' of Victorian literature, created, bulwarked, and argued his literary position, and how in so doing established a theoretical basis for the revival of Romance fiction. Further to that it explores the consistency of and changes to that identity over the course of his literary career and how Stevenson revisited, unsettled, and interrogated the themes and tropes of his own writing.

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The road that has brought me to this point has been a long and circuitous one, and I must take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many people who have helped and inspired me along the way. There were many people at the University of Ulster who aided and encouraged me to enter literary academia. In particular I thank Tony Bareham, whose initial encouragement gave me the impetus to pursue research; Jan Jedrzejewski, who has been a constant help; Dennis Smith; Andrew Keanie; and Paul Davies. In the period between the Universities of Ulster and Kent I was helped and inspired by my good friends Andrea Bingham, Derek Coffyn, Matt Foster, Jen Kelley, Alison Laverty, Allister Martin, Tani Norihiro, and Stuart Westhead.

This is a thesis about Robert Louis Stevenson and the mental image of Stevenson with his family, old and new, in Samoa has always struck me as a particularly moving and inspiring one. With that familial thought in mind I dedicate this thesis to my own family: to my parents, Eric and Margaret Stevenson, who have supported and inspired me throughout my life; to my brother Simon Stevenson; and to my wife and daughter Liz and Ymelia Stevenson, who have encouraged and enriched everything I have done and achieved.

Introduction.

> With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens.[1]

There are few figures in English literature more anomalous than Robert Louis Stevenson, and even fewer whose critical reputation has vacillated between such profound extremes as Stevenson's has in the century following his death. As a popular author Stevenson's survival in the public consciousness is a fractured one; indeed, it's tempting to read that survival as not singular but plural, and to interpret the popular perception of Stevenson as -- to quote his Dr Jekyll -- "not truly one...[but rather] a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens." There are multiple Stevensons in the popular imagination; we have the Stevenson of *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), the author of Scottish historical romance, heir to Scott, the plotter of the Highland Line and the bifurcation of Scottish culture along the fault between the Jacobite, Catholic Highlands and the Whiggish, Covenanting Lowlands. Coexistent with that, like Hyde to Jekyll, is a very different Stevenson, the author of the perennially favourite gothic shocker *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), a tale that in itself has grown beyond the boundaries of the original text and taken on multifarious, independent existences across a variety of genres. Elsewhere yet another Stevenson survives; the Stevenson of *Treasure Island* (1882), the exemplar of children's adventure fiction, and the father of the pirate tropes in contemporary

popular culture.

For much of the twentieth-century, popular writing was looked upon with suspicion by literary academia and Stevenson's critical standing suffered accordingly. Where Stevenson was praised it came from writers largely outside the academy: G.K. Chesterton, Edwin Muir, Jorge Luis Borges, Alasdair Gray.[2] What is perhaps surprising for the contemporary reader is the stylistic breadth of Stevenson's writing and the critical esteem in which he was held in his own lifetime. Stevenson turned his hand to a dizzying number of forms, including historical novels, neo-Gothic short stories, romance narratives, poetry, drama, essays, histories, travel writing, and memoirs; at the time of his death in 1894 Stevenson was judged to be the most gifted and brilliant writer of his generation. This was the judgement of contemporaries such as Oscar Wilde, and his close friend Henry James who professed "The intensest throb of my literary life, as that of many others, has been *The Master of Ballantrae* -- a pure hard crystal, my boy, a work of ineffable and exquisite art."[3] It was also the judgement of younger writers such as John Galsworthy and Rudyard Kipling who intently studied Stevenson's style in order to learn how to write.

What was the literary climate at the time Stevenson came to prominence? William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Anthony Trollope were all dead. Those of Stevenson's peers whose careers were on the ascendant, writers such as Hardy and Gissing, were writing with very different preoccupations to those of Stevenson. Politically Britain had entered the era of high-imperialism, and yet English literature was overwhelmingly literature about England, reflecting upon the English centre of the world's largest empire and ignoring the Celtic -- much less the imperial -- fringes. The very notion itself that England is the centre of Britain invokes a presumptive hierarchy in what it meant to be British, a question of identity that was not lost on Stevenson. As a Scot at the heart of literary London, Stevenson was always cognisant that British identity was a variform thing, and that disparate and sometimes contradictory elements went together to form the patchwork of what it meant to be British. Stevenson self-identified as a Scot, a Briton, and a Unionist; he could write of the gulf he perceived between Scottish and English culture:

> I cannot get over my astonishment -- indeed, it increases every day -- at the hopeless gulf that there is between England and Scotland, and English and Scotch. Nothing is the same; and I feel as strange and outlandish here as I do in France or Germany.[4]

At other times he would casually admit himself an Englishman, the very nationality that he held to be at such a profound remove from his Scottish identity:

> I am half-way through volume three [of Bancroft's *History of the United States*], and shall count myself unworthy of the name of an Englishman if I do not see the back of volume six. The countryman of Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Drake, Cook, etc.![5]

There are a number of interesting cultural statements taking place here; Stevenson -- who claimed a profound gulf between England and Scotland -- is not only willing to claim an English identity, he is willing to subsume his fellow Scot Dr. David Livingstone within the same identity. 'English' thus becomes synonymous with British, the identity which over-arches the other component nationalities of the British Isles.[6] Further to that his exemplars of 'Englishness', those whom he would hope to emulate, are the most famous explorers in British history, turning what is a literary endeavour -- the act of reading -- into a feat of exploration, endurance, and of penetrating the foreign. It's a light comment on Stevenson's part and one that might be dismissed as baldly escapist but within it we can see his preoccupations and personal philosophies casually expressed in microcosm, and an admiration for identities that would resurface within his own work: the pirate, the sea captain, the Pacific explorer, the partners who make a tortuous journey through uncharted regions and who suffer a breakdown in their relationship, the European who submerges himself in the language and culture of a non-Western society.

As Robert Louis Stevenson was recognised as the most gifted and brilliant writer of his day it is pertinent for scholars of the late Victorian period to examine just how he represented that era in his writing, and that has been the purpose of this study. The scholarly rehabilitation of Stevenson's writing has been under way for some time now and his reputation has recovered considerably from the period when F.R. Leavis could dismiss him as the facile technician of a "bad tradition":

> Out of Scott a bad tradition came. It spoiled Fenimore Cooper, who had new and first-hand interests and the makings of a distinguished novelist. And with Stevenson it took on "literary" sophistication and fine writing.[7]

Nevertheless, the newfound critical interest in Stevenson's has -- perhaps inevitably when examining a writer who experimented so widely with style and genre -- led to a selective focus on certain topics and texts to the exclusion of an holistic appraisal of the

full range and complexity of his work. One might say that contemporary Stevenson criticism finds itself a polity of independent denizens, with critics privileging certain aspects of his *oeuvre* and history. There are the critics of the 'Scottish Stevenson', writers such as Christopher Hardie and Andrew Noble who have interpreted his historical fiction as essentially escapist and sentimental, a backward looking attempt to compensate for his difficulty in acknowledging the political and social tribulations of the contemporary Scotland he left behind.[8] Elsewhere Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has provided fruitful ground for a substantial body of 'Queer Theory' criticism from such writers as Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick and Elaine Showalter who have identified Stevenson as the exemplary chronicler of the suppressed psychosexual anxieties of the late Victorian-era.[9] In more recent years Stevenson's Pacific writings have received increasingly positive attention and have been the subject of studies by Ann Colley, Rod Edmond, Robert Hillier, Roslyn Jolly, Barry Menikoff and Vanessa Smith. This increased focus on what had previously been a neglected region of Stevenson's writing has identified in Stevenson a prescient and cogent anticipation of many of the cultural, critical, and political concerns that dominate postcolonial theory and discourse,[10] by which I mean the interrogation of colonial and imperial relationships, the challenging of inherent assumptions regarding national, racial, and ethnic identity, and the exploration of the connections between the fringe and the heart of empire. Rather than Stevenson being dismissed as the author of children's literature and escapist adventure he has instead increasingly been re-evaluated as a nascent postcolonialist, as well as a writer whose final work broke the ground for the grim psychological realism that would later be associated with Joseph Conrad.

It can be suggested at this point that with certain critics evaluating Stevenson's Scottish historical writing as sentimental and backward looking while others interpret other areas of his work as progressively -- and even transgressively -- avant-garde there is a need to examine Stevenson's body of work as a whole, and to situate the writer in his contemporary context and explore what he had to say about that era for which he was the literary lodestone.[11] As a late Victorian writer Robert Louis Stevenson's work straddled a variety of stylistic genres with his own places of domicile ranging from the heart of empire to the very fringes of British colonisation. Given this I wish to avoid the partition of literature that can occur between Victorian and postcolonial literary criticism. Stevenson once told a friend that in the South Seas exclusiveness was impossible; it was necessary to embrace multiplicity. [12] This thesis is my attempt to

embrace the multiplicity in Stevenson's writing, and his literary examination of the interfaces, boundaries, and fault-lines of cultural identity within the late Victorian British Empire. My discussion of how Stevenson represents identity goes beyond that of the ethnic and the national; over the course of this work I will also engage with how Stevenson's own literary identity was formed, how Stevenson, coming from a position outside of the prevailing stylistic 'schools' of Victorian literature, created, bulwarked, and argued his literary position, and how in so doing established a theoretical basis for the revival of Romance fiction. Further to that I will examine how that same identity changed over time and how Stevenson revisited, unsettled, and interrogated the themes and tropes of his own writing.

It should be stated at this point that my thesis is first and foremost an examination of Stevenson's writing, not a treatise on Victorianism. Discussions of such quintessentially Victorian topics as Liberalism, women's suffrage, and Tractarianism are largely absent from this work. My purpose has not been to chart each of the multifarious attributes that together might be said to form the 'ideology of the late Victorian British Empire' and to identify each of them as they might occur in Stevenson's work. Rather, my intent has been to explore issues of identity in Stevenson's writing, to consider how those issues might be informed by ideologies of the period, and to examine how Stevenson portrays and questions personal and cultural identity in the contexts of the British Isles and the wider British Empire.

In choosing my texts for examination I have attempted to strike a balance between Stevenson's most popular and critically acclaimed texts, and his lesser known work. However, the very breadth of forms of writing that Stevenson engaged with over the course of his life makes a truly comprehensive scrutiny of his *oeuvre* a difficult one within the size constraints of this thesis. Stevenson's verse and drama, for example, are very worthy of critical scrutiny -- indeed one might say they are overdue it -- but I have chosen to concentrate primarily upon Stevenson's fiction and essays. More surprising perhaps is the lack of a dedicated chapter upon *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, especially considering that novella's prominent place within current nineteenth-century and Queer Theory scholarship. It is precisely the recent critical attention upon *Jekyll and Hyde* that has obviated my writing upon it at any length; Julia Reid's recent *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle*[13] in particular has explored issues of late nineteenth-century identity within *Jekyll and Hyde* at a depth greater than I could hope to achieve in a single chapter of this thesis. Instead I have chosen to give that space

over to examining Stevenson texts that have received less critical attention, works such as 'The Merry Men' (1882), *The Dynamiter* (1885), and *The Wrecker* (1892). These three texts are of specific importance in consolidating disparate elements within Stevenson's fiction, as all three are - - or contain within them – Stevensonian island tales. In 'The Merry Men' we find a marriage of the Scottish historical and gothic Stevensons, and at the same time many of the themes that Stevenson will utilise in his later Pacific island writing. *The Dynamiter* is of significance in that it explores processes of sympathy for non-white imperial subjects while at the same time castigating Irish republican agitation; furthermore it is a collaborative text and Stevenson the collaborative writer is an area of study in which much research still remains to be done. *The Wrecker* I locate within a Stevensonian paradigm that I call the Maritime Quest Narrative where it holds a vital place alongside the more popular *Treasure Island* and the more critically acclaimed *The Ebb-Tide* (1894).

Chapter 1 investigates Highland identity in Victorian culture, exploring Stevenson's utilisation of the binarised Highland Jacobite and Lowland Calvinist archetypes in his engagement with Scottish history and culture. There has been something of a tendency within recent Stevenson scholarship to interpret Stevenson's Scottish historical fiction as an escapist retreat from the challenging complexities of late Victorian Scottish identity. I do not believe this to be the case, and argue that Stevenson's presentation of eighteenth-century Highland identity in *Kidnapped* is apposite and topical, illustrating the repositioning of a formerly 'foreign' identity securely within the late Victorian ideological concept of 'Britishness'. In doing so I examine historic representations of Highland landscape and the Highland character, the role of the Highlander in 'Martial Race Theory', the transmission and translation of cultural capital in David Balfour's Scotland, and the iconography of the Highlander in Victorian culture.

With Chapter 2 I expand upon Stevenson's presentation of Scottish and British identity in his historical fiction by examining the imperial dimension of his "story of many years and countries" *The Master of Ballantrae*.[14] *The Master of Ballantrae*. is set during an era in which the Union had been consolidated by the defeat of the Jacobite Rebellion, and the British Empire was expanding eastwards and westwards with the North American colonies and the first footholds in India. With this foremost in mind the chapter examines the imperial significance of that period, and the analogies to be drawn with the imperialism of Stevenson's own era. Stevenson's fiction is rarely associated with literary representations of the British Empire in India, but in this chapter

I will examine how *The Master of Ballantrae* engages with the Scottish contribution to empire-building, as well as the 1857 Rebellion and its impact on the Victorian psyche. Building upon the research of the previous chapter I explore the comparative cultural significance of the 1845 Jacobite and 1857 Indian rebellions as they relate to Stevenson's work, and 'Martial Race Theory' as applied to India. Further to this I research Stevenson's own personal interactions with Indians and the influence of those relationships upon Stevenson's portrayal of Secundra Dass.

While Chapter 2 explored the significance of the 1745 and 1857 rebellions in Stevenson's work, Chapter 3 turns to Stevenson's engagement with issues of political unrest in his own era, with special reference to the Irish Question and nihilist and Irish republican terrorist actions. Drawing on contemporary news sources from both sides of the Atlantic, I contextualise Stevenson's representation of political violence in his collaborative novel (with Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson) *The Dynamiter*, and explore the tensions and ambiguities in Stevenson's personal reaction to the Irish Question with particular reference to his unpublished 'Confessions of a Unionist'.

Chapter 4 continues my examination of *The Dynamiter* with the focus here upon issues of hybridity within that text and Stevenson's 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892). I examine the authors' representations of hybrid identity and cross-cultural relationships within Caribbean and Pacific island cultures, and thematically position the texts within a wider discussion of cultural identity in the Stevenson canon. Among the themes of the chapter are the contrasting attitudes to race and biraciality within late Victorian British and American societies; the influence of racialist (pseudo-) science upon official policies; the negotiation of cultural and racial identity, and the limits to those negotiations. As well as closely examining hybridity in theme and character within *The Dynamiter* and "The Beach of Falesá" I look at *The Dynamiter*'s own hybrid status as a collaborative text, and examine how meaning is mitigated, deferred and subverted by the process of joint authorship.

As I've mentioned, much of the critical interest in Stevenson in recent years has centred upon his Pacific writing and engagement with Polynesian culture, with the critics in question approaching these subjects from a postcolonial perspective. In Chapter 5 I look at Stevenson's utilisation of and engagement with the spoken voice, language and dialect, with particular reference to how identity and world-view are inscribed through spoken codes, and how the cultural primacy of the written word impacts on oral cultures. Rather than examine Stevenson's late Pacific period, however,

this chapter concentrates upon Stevenson's 'The Merry Men', and I argue that the suggestion Stevenson had to travel to the Pacific to appreciate and formalise his position as regards 'islandness' and the relationship between oral and hegemonically written cultures is an erroneous one, that rather his viewpoint can be found fully realised in this earlier Hebridean example of island literature. In examining this engagement with the oral tradition I also investigate Stevenson's self-perception of storyteller and question his theoretical espousal of the primacy of the oral tradition as expressed in 'A Gossip on Romance'(1882) and 'A Humble Remonstrance'(1884).

The final chapter is one that examines the consistency of Stevenson's thematic concerns from his first major success -- *Treasure Island* -- through to his final completed novel, *The Ebb-Tide*, demonstrating that Stevenson revisited his tropes of the Maritime Quest Romance in an evolutionary way, re-examining and reconfiguring them to serve his deepening engagement with non-Western cultures. This chapter aims to demonstrate the simultaneous continuity and subversion of the tropes and themes established in *Treasure Island*, and thus to reconcile the 'boy's adventure' and 'Polynesian' Stevensons.

In writing this thesis I have wherever possible used the best, most up-to-date editions of texts, but the very absence of recent, scholarly editions of such works as *The Dynamiter* and *The Wrecker* illustrates the lack of academic attention given to the lesser known works in the Stevenson canon. This in itself added impetus to my choosing them for inclusion, and opportunity yet remains for analysing other lesser known texts such as *Prince Otto* (1885) and *The Black Arrow* (1888) within the cultural context of the late Victorian British Empire. No doubt, to quote Henry Jekyll, "others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines". (53)

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1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp.52-53

2 See G.K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G.K.Chesterton: Robert Louis Stevenson, Chaucer, Leo Tolstoy and Thomas Carlyle*, (London: Ignatius Press, 1991); 'Robert Louis Stevenson', *Edwin Muir: Uncollected Scottish Criticism,* Andrew Noble (ed.), (London and Totowa, NJ.: Barnes &

Noble,1982); Jorge Luis Borges, 'Prefazione :Robert Louis Stevenson', *L'isola delle voci* (Parma: Ricci, 1979); 'Interview with Alastair Gray', *Books and Bookmen*, April, 1984.

3 Letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, 21st March, 1890, Janet Adam Smith (ed.), *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1948) p.185

4 Letter to Mrs. Thomas Stevenson, July 28th 1873, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (ed.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) Vol.1 p.283

5 Letter to Edmund Gosse, December 8th 1879. ibid. Vol.3 p.32

6 Stevenson's complex and often contradictory views on the divides and interfaces between Scottish and English identity are recurring ones in his writing and personal correspondence. Stevenson would define the English thus:

> 'ENGLISH, THE: - a dull people, incapable of comprehending the Scottish tongue. Their history is so intimately connected with that of Scotland, that we must refer our readers to that heading. Their literature is principally the work of venal Scots.' - Stevenson's HANDY CYCLOPAEDIA. Glescow: Blaikie & Bannock.
> Letter to Edmund Gosse, July 24th 1879. ibid. Vol.2 p.328

On separate occasions, however, he would willingly describe himself as English:

> ... YESTERDAY I walked to Eckenheim, a village a little way out of Frankfurt, and turned into the alehouse. In the room, which was just such as it would have been in Scotland, were the landlady, two neighbours, and an old peasant eating raw sausage at the far end. I soon got into conversation; and was astonished when the landlady, having asked whether I were an Englishman, and received an answer in the affirmative, proceeded to inquire further whether I were not also a Scotchman.
> Letter to Mrs. Thomas Stevenson, 1st August 1872. ibid. Vol.1 p.237

7 F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950) p.6. Ironically, the charges that Stevenson was merely a craftsman with a gift for replicating the styles of others a little too well and that his fiction was not to be taken seriously can be traced in some part to self-deprecating remarks of Stevenson's own. In his essay 'The Sedulous Ape' (1887) Stevenson tells how writers imitate admired authors while trying to evolve their own styles: "I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Baudelaire and to Obermann." Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Sedulous Ape', *Memories and Portraits*, (Rockville, MD: Serenity Publishers, 2009) p.32 Elsewhere Stevenson maintained that *Treasure Island* was an "elementary novel of adventure" intended for an audience of boys, 'A Humble Remonstrance', *The Lantern Bearers and Other Essays*, Jeremy Treglown (ed.), (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988) p.196, and that *Kidnapped* was "no furniture for the scholar's library"; *Kidnapped,* (London & New York: Penguin, 1994) *Dedication.*

8 Christopher Hardie, 'The Politics of Stevenson', in Jennie Calder (ed.) *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) p.107-125; Andrew Noble, 'Highland History and Narrative Form in Scott and Stevenson', in Andrew Noble (ed.) *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Vision Press, 1983) p.134-187.

9 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: *English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1992)

10 My use of the term 'postcolonial' here should not be taken as referring to the time after which colonialism has ceased, or the time after which a country has broken away from imperial rule by another sovereign state. References to 'postcolonialism' should be read in the context of being "an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies". Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1996) p.2

11 The critical conceit of Stevenson as literary lodestone has been a recurring one. The earliest use of it that I have found comes in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's comment that "surely another age will wonder over this curiosity of letters – that for five years the needle of literary endeavour in Great Britain has quivered towards a little island in the South Pacific as to its magnetic pole." Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Adventures in Criticism*, (London: Cassell & Company, 1896) p.184

12 Letter to Charles Baxter, 20th March 1890, *Letters*. op.cit. Vol.6 p.381.

13 Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

14 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Note to *The Master of Ballantrae*' (1893-1894), in *The Master of Ballantrae*, Adrian Poole (ed.),(London: Penguin, 1996), p.222

Chapter 1

"The Foreigner at Home": Highland Identity and Victorian Culture.

> God grant that Marshall Wade,
> May by thy mighty aid,
> Victory bring,
> May he sedition hush,
> And like a torrent rush,
> Rebellious Scots to Crush,
> God save the King.[1]

> In all the Sovereign's wide realms could be found no such chivalrous, true-hearted, brave-souled men [as Highlanders]; nor could they be equalled in those physical qualities which were so much demanded in the harassing system under which war was at the time conducted...It was in these qualities of limb that the Highlanders excelled. They were strong and muscular, accustomed to violent exercises and fatiguing marches. Their country, with its darksome passes and rugged heights, its treacherous moors and plunging torrents, was to a stranger wild and forbidding. But to them it was a rough training-ground, calculated to bring forth all that was robust and manly[2]

For the modern reader, as for the contemporary audience of Robert Louis Stevenson's era, *Kidnapped* (1886)[3] exerts an appeal that places it at the forefront of cultural representations of the doughty Jacobite Highlander and his now seemingly entrenched position in the fiction and the psyche of the British peoples. That I should choose to begin my chapter with two such disparate and contrasting representations of the Highland Scots is because, like the setting of Stevenson's

novel and the time of its writing, those quotations are divided by a period of approximately one hundred and forty years. The fourth verse of 'God Save The Queen' that enjoyed brief popularity in the period in which *Kidnapped* is set -- and which continues to rankle with certain Scottish sentiment -- called for swift and awful retaliation against a people branded seditious rebels; yet the popular conception of the Highlander of Stevenson's era was one very different, as encapsulated by the description proffered by James Cromb. The recalcitrant Highlander of Alan Breck's era -- his clan broken, his dress proscribed -- had, by Stevenson's lifetime, become the faithful Royal companion and the kilted soldier at the vanguard of imperial expansionism. In examining Stevenson's 'David Balfour novels' (*Kidnapped* and *Catriona* [1893]) I will plot Victorian responses to the transition that occurred in those years between the two quotations, and Stevenson's own contribution to and acknowledgment of that process: a change that saw a recalcitrant irritant toward the Hanoverian succession ideologically encysted within the body of the imperial project, and transformed into the pearl of Victorian martial masculinity.

From the first, critics of *Kidnapped* have recognised in the novel the story of Scotland as two cultures in harness, a country separated, if not physically and constitutionally, then in soul and culture between the Lowland, Calvinist, Covenanting tradition and the Roman Catholic, Jacobite, clan-based society beyond the Highland Line.[4] As a product of such a culturally divided nation one might identify in Robert Louis Stevenson's work a recurring preoccupation with dualities and binaries of manifest variety and the problems such fundamental dichotomies pose for his protagonists and the societies in which they move. Stevenson's heroes (whether Jim Hawkins, Archie Weir, or Loudon Dodds) are so often young males on the cusp of manhood, stepping out upon quests that are as much about interior development as monetary gain. It is so with the "whiggish, canting" (165) David Balfour, a young man whose odyssey circumnavigating the profoundly divided Scotland of his epoch marks in microcosm a certain binding and reconciliation of the

two w*eltanschauung* that co-occupy his nation.

Kidnapped opens with an adolescent of some sixteen years closing the door on his childhood and setting out upon a journey to find his place in the world: "I will begin the story of my adventures with a certain morning early in the month of June, the year of grace 1751, when I took the key for the last time out of the door of my father's house" (1). That the story should begin with him stepping away from the locked door of his "father's house" is a point of some significance, for David Balfour is stepping out of the walled policy of his upbringing: the staunchly bulwarked and guarded traditions of Christ's Covenant, Calvinist ethics, and Whiggish adherence to the Hanoverian line. These first steps into the wider world receive the valediction of the clergyman who has served as David's guardian, Mr. Campbell, whose role is both erstwhile father and cipher for the Lowland Scots tradition to which David belongs. Possessed of the Campbell surname, a patronymic that embodies Scottish hegemony in the post-Rebellion period, this relative of "well-kenned gentlemen" is the gatekeeper of Lowland traditions, simultaneously informing the lad that "It's pleasure to obey a laird" while dispensing warning "against the dangers of the world" and those "considerable number of heresies" anathema to their faith. That his final plea to David should be "dinnae shame us, Davie, dinnae shame us!" (3) marks the fear shared by both traditions in Scotland and lays open a question of cultural parity that still remains in contemporary investigations of race and ethnicity: can one move between cultures without compromising one's personal morality yet at the same time refrain from offending the sensibilities of the culture in which one is immersed? It is a question that we find implicitly repeated within all of David's interactions and one that will later prove indicative of Stevenson's personal beliefs concerning cross-cultural contact.

It is of some note that the first and second chapters of *Kidnapped* bear the premature headings "I set off upon my journey" and "I come to my journey's end" for their very titles express the uninformed naivety of David's conception of a world whose extent is measured out by his simple journey to the House of Shaws. The

sights along the way mark the signifiers of his Lowland Whig identity; the "manse" and "Kirkyard" of his faith are juxtaposed and find complement in "the city of Edinburgh smoking like a kiln" with "a flag upon the castle, and ships moving or lying anchored in the firth", the Calvinist Doctrine of the Elect finding reflection in that Loyal capital of industrious toil and mercantile trade (6). Perhaps most interestingly David is a sixteen year old youth who has left his home for the first time and his sojourn through the heartland of his culture allows him what will be the first of many views of one of the traditional opportunities for young men of his culture:

> To my great pleasure and wonder, I beheld a regiment marching to the fifes, every foot in time; an old red-faced general on a grey horse at the one end, and at the other the company of Grenadiers, with their Pope's-hats. The pride of life seemed to mount into my brain at the sight of the red-coats and the hearing of that merry music. (6)

What is of interest here is the "pride" and "pleasure" David takes from this scene of military exercise. It captures in a single moment his initial unthinking loyalty to the hegemonic order of the Scotland of his period, a loyalty that while never diminished will nevertheless be pressure-tested and interrogated over the course of the novel.

If David is the Lowlander of integrity then his uncle Ebenezer marks everything negative about that tradition: the lonely, individual striver of Calvinism is here rendered in an almost perverse starkness. The sensibility of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)'s Utterson that led him to drink gin in order to "mortify his taste for fine wine"[5] finds its ultimate expression in Ebenezer Balfour and his utter conscientiousness toward miserly self-denial. Ebenezer dines three times a day on porridge, eschews candles in his house, and yet will still conform to his own interpretation of Christian hospitality: too stingy to draw a separate cup of small beer for David, on being challenged he stuns the boy by answering "I'll deny you nothing in reason" and then pours him "an accurate" half from his own cup. "There was a kind of nobleness in this that took my breath away; if my uncle was certainly a miser, he was one of that thorough breed that goes near to make the vice

respectable". (15)

If one were to pick from that quotation the words most indicative of Stevenson's depiction of the Lowland character then "thorough" and "in reason" stand out bold. There is an almost legalistic adherence to their sanctimonious codes of social behaviour; the Lowlander is not a 'Satan' as is the Master of Ballantrae, he is bereft of the possession of a positive evil and his wrong-doing is that of an ungenerosity of goodness for even in his lies Ebenezer cannot bear to break from his ingrained stinginess, as reported with some humour by David:

> "Davie," he said, at length, "I've been thinking;" then he paused, and said it again. "There's a wee bit siller that I half promised ye before ye were born," he continued; "promised it to your father. O, naething legal, ye understand; just gentlemen daffing at their wine. Well, I keepit that bit money separate -- it was a great expense, but a promise is a promise -- and it has grown by now to be a matter of just precisely -- just exactly" -- and here he paused and stumbled -- "of just exactly forty pounds!" This last he rapped out with a sidelong glance over his shoulder; and the next moment added, almost with a scream, "Scots!" (20)

Even in the throes of a brazen lie something rebels inside the Lowlander at the very thought of parting with wealth (be it however imaginary), and his sudden, shrill ejaculation at the end of the story reduces the sum considerably, the pound Scots being equal to one English shilling. Within the frigid environs of his own morality forty pound Scots is "in reason" and forty pounds sterling is not. The parsimonious Ebenezer who cannot bear the loss of imaginary silver and who speaks of putting a stop to enlarging his house because it was a "sinful" waste can, in the next instant, plot the death of his only living relative in the rubble of that decrepit building, all the while remaining "thorough" and committed to the single guiding point of his life. (15)

Rather than finding his journey at an end David finds it beginning, but what does come to an end is his ready complacency regarding the mores and ethics of the Lowland Scottish character. Nowhere does Stevenson bring this more overtly to

home than in Queensferry (its very name a metaphor for Unionist sentiment) and the person of Captain Hoseason. Hoseason is a self-proclaimed "true-blue Protestant", and his ship is named *The Covenant*[6]. Stevenson returns again and again in his work to the bipartite morality of the Lowlander, and if ever there was an overt personification of this it resides in Captain Hoseason. Hoseason promises David all the material enticements of the imperial enterprise:

> "...what can I bring ye from the Carolinas? Any friend of Mr. Balfour's can command. A roll of tobacco? Indian feather-work? a skin of a wild beast? a stone pipe? the mocking-bird that mews for all the world like a cat? the cardinal bird that is as red as blood? -- take your pick and say your pleasure."(35)

all the while manoeuvring to have the lad bludgeoned and kidnapped. It is this ability to separate personal morality from business that will most clearly demarcate the Lowlander from the Highlander; committed to Christ's Crown and Covenant the loyal son Hoseason sounds his guns to assuage the fears of his land-bound mother, yet at the same time is complicit to cruelty, drunkenness, and trepanning as long as it is profitable to his enterprise. Hamlet's outburst that Claudius should "smile, and smile, and be a villain" (Act I, Scene V) might equally apply to Captain Hoseason if he would but shed his Scots dourness and smile.

What casts David's belief system in true disarray is the arrival of the first example of an individual from outside his own paradigm, the Highlander Alan Breck Stewart. It's of interest that the chapter should carry the title "The man with the belt of gold" for that is the immediate point of interest to Captain Hoseason, and David, by diminished cultural extension, has not yet learned to recognise the worth of a Highlander as anything divorced from the mercantilism of his Lowland upbringing. David, in the guise of cabin boy, marks the gold in the belt of the "wild Hielandman" and delivers his introduction as being "David Balfour of Shaws". It is not the lowly costume that makes its impression on Breck but the mention of landed estate (for as David notes "the Highlander is used to see great Gentlefolk in great poverty") and

his answer bristles with the pride of the exiled Jacobite:

> "My name is Stewart," he said, drawing himself up. "Alan Breck, they call me. A king's name is good enough for me, though I bear it plain and have the name of no farm-midden to clap to the hind-end of it."
>
> And having administered this rebuke, as though it were something of a chief importance, he turned to examine our defences.(55)

This interaction is the first true challenge to David's worldview for, unlike Ebenezer Balfour and Captain Hoseason, Breck's character is from outside his paradigm. David is the responsible youth with a precocious maturity, a natural bourgeois scion of an utterly respectable tradition. Alan Breck is in contrast the battle-hardened veteran with a savage, childlike consciousness, proud of his culture and untroubled of conscience when it comes to killing in his own defense or in righting a supposed injustice against his clan.

While both characters belong to the Christian faith there is a gulf between their interpretation of the moral duties of their religion that goes far beyond the doctrinal differences of the Roman Catholic and the Presbyterian. When David rebukes Alan for wishing vengeance upon The "Red Fox" (Colin Campbell), his Lowland sensibilities run up against the red-handed harsh justice of the Highland clan-system which sees no sin in violently avenging perceived wrongs:

> "Opinion here or opinion there," said I, "it's a kent thing that Christianity forbids revenge."
>
> "Ay" said he, "it's well seen it was a Campbell taught ye! It would be a convenient world for them and their sort, if there was no such a thing as a lad and a gun behind a heather bush! (74-75)

Faced with the prospect of joining the crew of the *Covenant* to betray Breck, David shows that his morality can run to sympathy for the plight of the fugitive Highlander, that despite their differences he is (in Alan's words) "a Whig [and] a gentleman" (72). David's bravery throughout the novel is continually delineated by

the fact that unlike Alan Breck he is not a warrior by nature, yet time-and-again he will step into the breach in very difficult situations to do what is right; nowhere more obviously than in the "Siege of the Round-house". Stevenson is ever the master of set-piece violence and the psychological repercussions on his protagonists (as evidenced by *Treasure Island* [1882], *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *The Wrecker* [1892]) in the aftermath weighs heavy on the young David, as his reaction demonstrates: "the thought of the two men I had shot sat upon me like a nightmare" (63). How different for the Highlander, Alan Breck Stewart who

> turned to the four enemies, passed his sword clean through each of them, and tumbled them out of doors one after the other. As he did so, he kept humming and singing and whistling to himself, like a man trying to recall an air; only what HE was trying was to make one. All the while, the flush was in his face, and his eyes were as bright as a five-year-old child's with a new toy…(62)

This is the Scot who is exiled from his home, the Highlander proscribed his weapons and regarded as a traitor to the Crown; and yet while the Lowland Scot will prove an architect and beneficiary of empire (as late as 1934 Orwell's John Flory is decrying the British Empire as "simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English—or rather to gangs of …Scotchmen"[7]) it is not David Balfour but rather Alan Breck's type that will become the guardian of the frontier and the epitome of martial masculinity. How did this happen?

At this point one should note that even before the '45 Rebellion Highlanders had been viewed with suspicion and disgust by the rest of the British population as quarrelling, atavistic savages content to live by rapine and cattle-theft, and unthinkingly beholden to their feudal clan-based system. As one commentator remarked in 1744:

> Considering they are trained up from their infancy in principles destructive to Society and are early taught by their parents a slavish dependence on their Chiefs, and that Robbery and theft are no ways criminal it's no wonder to see them making depredations on others and blindly following their Chiefs into

every Rebellion.[8]

Here we find the concept of the Highlander as "wild Hieland man...a rank foe to King George"(*K*, p.54), as expressed in the warning delivered to David by the "true-blue Protestant" Captain Hoseason. By existing outside the pale of Lowland culture and religion the Highlander may be excluded from the same courtesies and rights extended to his Lowland cousin. Hoseason's easy willingness to view his oath to Alan as non-binding does not run counter to his personal morality for the Highlander is presumed to be a heretic in faith, a traitor in politics, and a savage in culture; indeed the desire to claim the Jacobite's belt of gold as a personal reward is a reasonable and sensible one in the eyes of the treacherous Captain.

For those on the losing side of the Jacobite Rebellion of '45 cultural prejudices and seizures of property like those plotted by the Lowlander Hoseason were inflicted upon them by the British Government. Once Bonnie Prince Charlie's attempt to regain the throne was decisively thwarted, the Government set about a concerted policy of destroying Jacobite culture by attacking Gaelic social structures, culture, and laws. Those rebel landowners who had risen to the Jacobite call found their estates confiscated and redistributed, and their traditional legal rights revoked by Acts of Parliament.[9] Further Acts proscribed the owning of weapons, the consequences of which David notes in his meeting with the murderous blind catechist: "I saw the steel butt of a pistol sticking from under the flap of his coat-pocket. To carry such a thing meant a fine of fifteen pounds sterling upon a first offence, and transportation to the colonies upon a second." (99-96) The population (in the main) disarmed, the government then went even further to suppress Gaelic culture: in a move familiar to the postcolonial student of nineteenth century Western interaction with newly absorbed subject peoples the British government barred the Highlanders from the wearing of their traditional dress, the tartan. And yet, despite the censure dealt to them by the Forces of the Crown, the Highlanders strove to subvert the diktat imposed upon them:

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> ...the Highland dress being forbidden by law since the rebellion, and the people condemned to the Lowland habit, which they much disliked, it was strange to see the variety of their array. Some went bare, only for a hanging cloak or great-coat, and carried their trousers on their backs like a useless burthen: some had made an imitation of the tartan with little parti-coloured stripes patched together like an old wife's quilt; others, again, still wore the Highland philabeg, but by putting a few stitches between the legs transformed it into a pair of trousers like a Dutchman's. All those makeshifts were condemned and punished, for the law was harshly applied, in hopes to break up the clan spirit (92-93)

Despite the draconian military occupation of the Highlands it did not take long for the tradition of Highlander service in the Crown Forces to reassert itself. The native "pacified", the British government turned its attention to large-scale and widespread efforts to recruit the people of the region to fill those manpower shortages that arose during the Seven Years War (1756-63). Heather Streets notes particular success on the part of the Highland soldiers in that conflict and that they "fought as well for the British State as they did for their own clan chiefs". [10] The same clans who had been despised as rebels were now being recognised as providing fierce and brave soldiers whose "ferocity natural to savages"[11] could be harnessed for the good of the Crown. The distinguished performance of Highland regiments in the field encouraged even greater recruitment efforts by the British Army, and the Highlanders did not disappoint them. The demand for fresh recruits was high throughout the latter part of the eighteenth-century and by 1800 the British Army had no fewer than twenty active Highland regiments. [12]

Coterminous with this change of military policy was another change that marked a watershed in cultural sensibility, the nascent stirrings of the Romantic Movement. The taste for folkloric motifs and artefacts of an ancient past found full expression in the Caledonian warriors of James MacPherson's 'Ossian' cycle (1761-65). McPherson's purported 'translations' of ancient Gaelic poems allowed the Scots an historic gravitas more commonly associated with Classical literature; instead of the ancient Gael being perceived as the rude barbarian awaiting the arrival of Anglo-Saxon civilisation the classical scholar MacPherson was able to locate him within a

cultural framework that claimed a certain parity with Greek tragedy and the Homeric epic. In doing so MacPherson bridged the gap between the Neo-Classical focus of the Augustan era and the renascent desire for the folkloric felt by the Romantics. Just as MacPherson reconfigured the raw material of the Scots Gaelic oral tradition in order to suit the mores of his contemporary audience, so Fingal's eighteenth-century martial descendants and their homeland were being reevaluated to suit the aesthetic sensibilities of the period.

Prior to this, the conception of the Highlands themselves was of an environment rude, harsh, untamed and ugly; Johnson, in describing Lochaber, condemned the landscape as "incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care and disinherited of her favours, left in its original elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation".[13] Such an interpretation could be found to extend from John Cleveland's 'The Rebell Scot' (1646) which saw both the Scot and his landscape feeding off that same "sullen power": "Nature herself doth Scotch-men beasts confesse,/ Making their Countrey such a wilderness."[14] The Lowlander David Balfour shares some of this sentiment when cast up upon the Isle of Earraid, and this first experience of the Highlands is as much one marked by his own Lowland cultural response to the environment as it is to the practicalities of survival on the shore. Contrasting himself with Defoe's Crusoe, David laments:

> In all the books I have read of people cast away, they had either their pockets full of tools, or a chest of things would be thrown upon the beach with them, as if on purpose. My case was very different...and being inland bred, I was as much short of knowledge as of means (84)

David is pitifully unprepared for survival in what is his own country, yet this lack of preparation is not simply the result of a paucity of tools and equipment, it is a fundamental lack of perception on the part of a boy whose journey is but beginning. Alan Sandison describes David's fear and loneliness on the islet as "existential"[15], and the lad's frequently repeated descriptions of the Highland scenery as "desert" serve to capture much of that mid-eighteenth century response to the topography of

the Highlands as previously epitomised by Johnson. David says:

> There was no sound of man or cattle; not a cock crew, though it was about the hour of their first waking; only the surf broke outside in the distance...To walk by the sea at that hour of the morning and in a place so desert-like and lonesome, struck me with a kind of fear. (82)

It is a supreme irony that David looks across to the mainland from his islet, unaware that all that separates him is a high tide. The landscape on the other side of the narrow creek is redolent of the symbols of hearth and faith, promising an end to his hunger, discomfort, and existential horror:

> ...from a little up the hillside over the bay, I could catch a sight of the great, ancient church and the roofs of the people's houses in Iona. And on the other hand, over the low country of the Ross, I saw smoke go up, from morning to evening, as if from a homestead in a hollow of the land.
>
> I used to watch this smoke, when I was wet and cold, and had my head half turned with loneliness; and think of the fireside and the company, till my heart burned. (85-86)

David is a Lowlander, yet the homes of the Highland crofters of Ross offer the universal hope of warmth and human affection, just as the ancient Celtic Christianity of the isle of Iona resonates with a spiritual intensity not alien to this son of Christ's Crown and Covenant. The divide is not so very great, either in the human heart or in the channel of water which prevents his crossing. When David sees a passing fishing boat though we are reminded of how rancour can so easily fester between cultures because of simple misunderstandings:

> ...all of a sudden, a coble with a brown sail and a pair of fishers aboard of it, came flying round that corner of the isle, bound for Iona. I shouted out, and then fell on my knees on the rock and reached up my hands and prayed to them. They were near enough to hear -- I could even see the colour of their hair; and there was no doubt but they observed me, for they cried out in the Gaelic tongue, and laughed. But the boat never turned aside, and flew on, right before my eyes, for Iona.
>
> I could not believe such wickedness, and ran along the shore from rock to

> rock, crying on them piteously...when these fishers turned a deaf ear to my cries...I wept and roared like a wicked child...If a wish would kill men, those two fishers would never have seen morning, and I should likely have died upon my island. (88)

The fishermen are unaware of David's plight just as David is unaware that he can leave the islet at low tide: it is not Nature which has rendered these "Scotch-men beasts" in David's eyes but his inability to communicate with his countrymen. Of such misunderstandings will many situations arise throughout the British Empire where Christian men like the young Balfour *do* have the means to kill those who they believe have caused them offence, but thankfully David's ill-feeling is confined to wishes alone. On reaching the safe haven of the Ross of Mull David finds a welcome of almost diametrical opposition to the parsimonious platitudes of Ebeneezer Balfour in the rude home of similarly elderly Highlanders, and it is with an implicit criticism of his uncle and a growing revision to his national consciousness that David remarks "If these are the wild Highlanders, I could wish my own folk wilder". (92)

This shift of perception finds Lowland support when Alan comes across the missionary Henderland, sent forth by the "Edinburgh Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to evangelise the more savage places of the Highlands" (101). Such a mission, as Menikoff has noted[16], was as much a political as religious endeavour: opposed to what was believed to be the fractious and troublesome Roman Catholicism entrenched in the Highlands, the Society sought to convert the Highlanders to the Protestant faith and at the same time displace their lingering support for the Stuart Succession and the Jacobite cause. Paramount in achieving this end was to be the weaning of the Highlanders from the Gaelic tongue, its 'foreignness' as a language reinforced by it being labelled 'Irish'. The aims of the Society were set out as to have the Highlanders "instructed in the Principles of Religion, according to Holy Scriptures, and taught to read *English*"[17]. The success of these Lowland catechists' immersion in this 'foreign' culture is that they learned to converse and teach in the very language they sought to replace, to the extent that

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Henderland used a "number of hymns and pious books" (101-102) translated into the Gaelic, indicating that the missionary was making compromises with that language in what was the primary goal of his mission. Henderland represents a link to David's home culture, he is a fellow Lowlander and an admirer of the Reverend Campbell, but like David he also represents the Lowlander who has experienced a realigning of his worldview in light of his experiences beyond the line. Henderland suggests as much when he asks "Ye'll perhaps think I've been too long in the Highlands?" (112), a question which conjures the familiar trope of the colonialist 'gone native'. One might suggest that Henderland serves as something of an ancestor for Stevenson's Mr. Tarleton in 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892), but more than that both men represent something sympathetic that Stevenson himself admired and which in no small way he sought to emulate in his own actions.[18]

Henderland is a popular and well-known figure in his area, "well liked in the countryside" in David's words, and his sympathy for the Highlanders extends out beyond his own interactions to encompass the strictures and prohibitions placed upon them by the Government:

> [Henderland] told me much of his work and the people he worked among, the hiding priests and Jacobites, the Disarming Act, the dress, and many other curiosities of the time and place. He seemed moderate; blaming Parliament in several points, and especially because they had framed the Act more severely against those who wore the dress than against those who carried weapons. (102)

Here is the model of the conscientious and fair-minded Lowlander, but the change of perception effected in Henderland and under effect in David is also a change that will eventually occur in the metropolis, and indeed continue to reverberate as a result of Stevenson's text. The Lowlander and Highlander need not twine, instead the Calvinist might identify something "fine...no perhaps Christian, but humanly fine" in the mores of his Highland counterpart "and take a lesson by them" while still remaining committed to his "covenanted Zion" (104). Magnanimous in his simple poverty Henderland resides as the counterpart for good to the parsimonious

Ebenezer Balfour and a witness to the privations and humanity of the Highland people.

The Highlands had been viewed as "bad nature" but the coming of Romanticism allowed them the dignity of the Sublime; the feeling of an "agreeable kind of horror"[19] provoked by the Alps found its domestic parallel in the rugged landscape of the Highlands, and the awe those environs evoked spread to include the inhabitants of that same landscape. Captivated by the wild and primitive Highlands, the Romantic traveller came to understand it as the natural breeding ground for fierce, indomitable warriors. Peter Womack refers to this account from the *Scots Magazine* of nascent Martial Race theory, offering as it does the concept that Highland soldiers "are caught in the mountains when young; and still run with a surprising degree of swiftness. As they are strangers to fear, they make very good soldiers when disciplined"[20]

Stevenson allows this portrayal of the Highlander as a 'natural' warrior to come out through the person of Alan Breck, who in a telling statement equates the acquirement of martial prowess as equal to literacy in the education of the Highland youth: "The children and the hope of Appin…must be learned their letters and how to hold a sword" (72). This skill and mastery of weapons is one that particularly distinguishes Alan from the Lowland David Balfour, and an especial scandal in the eyes of the Highlander is David's ignorance of sword-play. Despite Alan's greater age David often refers to Breck in terms that stress his supposed maturity over the older man, yet part of David's learning process over the course of the novel comes when Alan attempts to rectify what he sees as the gaps in David's education:

> In any by-time Alan must teach me to use my sword, for my ignorance had much distressed him; and I think besides, as I had sometimes the upper-hand of him in the fishing, he was not sorry to turn to an exercise where he had so much the upper-hand of me. He made it somewhat more of a pain than need have been, for he stormed at me all through the lessons in a very violent manner of scolding, and would push me so close that I made sure he must run me through the body. I was often tempted to turn tail, but held my ground for all that, and got some profit of my lessons (135)

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Despite the shortcomings in his weapons-craft the lesson learned by David is an important one: "to stand on guard with an assured countenance...is often all that is required. So, though I could never in the least please my master, I was not altogether displeased with myself."(135) Over the course of this chapter we will see how this lesson is paramount in the transmission of Highland cultural attributes within the British Army.

As has been mentioned, The Highlanders were renowned as unflinching and skilled warriors and their scorn for the Whig or Lowlander lies in a matrix of attributes that were perceived to be anathema to the clan-based codes of the Highlander. The Calvinist, proto-capitalist ways of the Whig were not their ways and, as Menikoff has noted, Stevenson drew upon a contemporary account[21] when constructing Alan's tale of his father's display of military swordsmanship before the audience of the "rank usurper", King George:

> ...my poor father, Duncan Stewart...was the prettiest man of his kindred; and the best swordsman in the Hielands, David, and that is the same as to say, in all the world, I should ken, for it was him that taught me. He was in the Black Watch, when first it was mustered; and, like other gentlemen privates, had a gillie at his back to carry his firelock for him on the march. Well, the King, it appears, was wishful to see Hieland swordsmanship; and my father and three more were chosen out and sent to London town, to let him see it at the best. So they were had into the palace and showed the whole art of the sword for two hours at a stretch, before King George and Queen Carline, and the Butcher Cumberland, and many more of whom I havenae mind. And when they were through, the King (for all he was a rank usurper) spoke them fair and gave each man three guineas in his hand. Now, as they were going out of the palace, they had a porter's lodge to go, by; and it came in on my father, as he was perhaps the first private Hieland gentleman that had ever gone by that door, it was right he should give the poor porter a proper notion of their quality. So he gives the King's three guineas into the man's hand, as if it was his common custom; the three others that came behind him did the same; and there they were on the street, never a penny the better for their pains. Some say it was one, that was the first to fee the King's porter; and some say it was another; but the truth of it is, that it was Duncan Stewart, as I am willing to prove with either sword or pistol. And that was the father that I had, God rest

him!"(70-71)

The story Stevenson crafts here serves to introduce both David and the reader to an ethos diametrically opposite to that of the exemplar of Lowland negativity, Ebenezer Balfour. Breck sets up the signifiers of natural nobility well in his tale; those soldiers of the Black Watch are "gentleman privates" each with "a gillie at his back", automatically stressing that despite deigning to display their skills to the Crown they are no servants within their own native culture. Their sense of their own social status allows them to answer the King's request in the manner of Highland hospitality to a favour asked, rather than the duty of subjects, and despite their interpretation of the legitimacy of the Hanoverian Succession and the presence of the "Butcher Cumberland" they reveal the "whole art" of their swordsmanship. The interaction is here portrayed almost in terms of rival clans making parley, and King George II (the great-grandfather of Stevenson's own monarch) gets considerably kinder representation from Alan than those Highland clans who supported him in the Jacobite Rebellion. Alan remarks of the King: "(for all he was a rank usurper) [he] spoke them fair and gave each man three guineas in his hand." (70). Here we find the gulf between the "Hieland gentleman" and the Lowland Ebenezer at its widest; the parsimonious bent of the Lowlander is no virtue in the eyes of Breck or his forebears, instead their interpretation of virtue comes from freely transmitting culture – their martial skills --when it is asked as a boon, and both confirming their status as "gentlemen" and furthering the reputation of their society by giving away their reward to the King's porters. The King has servants, but *they* are not servants, and they can reward a servant with the same easy *largesse* as the Hanoverian.

The interaction between David and Alan Breck is ever one of droll cross-cultural comment and it is with characteristically bathetic humour that David's observation at the heels of the tale is that Alan's father was not a man to leave his son rich. And yet Duncan Stewart *did* leave his son an inheritance; what he left his son was a name ("My name is Stewart…a king's name is good enough for me", (55), and -- in the language of Pierre Bourdieu -- cultural capital rendered in the form of his mastery of

swordsmanship and his skill and knowledge of the craft of war, all attributes that contributed to his status within Highlander culture and transferable to his new life as a Chevalier of the King of France.[22]

The patronymic within the Highland clan system is of key importance, for it serves to root the holder within that complicated and convoluted social order. Even in the aftermath of the '45 and the concerted attempt to 'break' the clans the earlier system co-existed beneath the enforced and privileged new order in the Highlands. Alan explains that "the tenants of Appin have to pay a rent to King George; but what with love and a bit of pressure, and maybe a threat or two, the poor folk scrape up a second rent for Ardshiel". (72) This is not just a secondary feudal mindset that exists, it shows an overlaying of alternate economies, and an alternate system of allegiances that bypasses the Hanoverian order to the extent that it also provides recruits for the King of France. All this is utterly at odds with the Lowland world of Calvinism and proto-capitalist commerce. It is not the social web represented by *name* that is important to David Balfour, but property: he is Balfour of Shaws, yet he did not know of his uncle's existence prior to the beginning of his journey. His ignorance of this cultural capital is illustrated in his meeting with Robin Oig; Oig, the son of the infamous Rob Roy MacGregor, is a wanted outlaw yet he can move in perfect safety within the territories allied to his clan, even demanding succour from those from whom he has drawn blood because they are utterly locked into a strict code of behaviour and order:

> He was sought upon all sides...yet he stepped about Balquidder like a gentleman in his own walled policy. It was he who had shot James Maclaren at the plough stilts, a quarrel never satisfied; yet he walked into the house of his blood enemies as a rider might into a public inn. (168)

As Rob Roy's son Robin Oig serves as a symbol for Stevenson's engagement with and subversion of the Walter Scott narrative of Highland society; the Clan Macgregor are "that old, proscribed, nameless, red-handed clan", and in that single sentence, Barry Menikoff writes, Stevenson

> incorporates all the salient features of the Macgregors that a knowledgeable eighteenth-century person would have been aware of and a nineteenth-century person ought to know -- that they traced their ancestry back to Alpin, King of the Scots; that the laws against the clan forbade them to use their name or baptise male children with the name Macgregor; and that they were known equally for their red hair…and by their bloody violence.[23]

The Macgregors are a broken clan whose very patronymic has been outlawed, yet they still exist and command respect within their own social paradigm. Stevenson however will not bow the knee to Scott's Romance and instead allows his own avatar of the Jacobite Highlander to subvert Scott through his comments to the outlaw Macgregor. The conversation fairly crackles as they jockey for status using the signifiers of the Highland Clan system:

> "Mr. Stewart, I am thinking," says Robin.
> "Troth, Mr. Macgregor, it's not a name to be ashamed of," answered Alan.
> "I did not know ye were in my country, sir," says Robin.
> "It sticks in my mind that I am in the country of my friends the Maclarens," says Alan. (169)

With the verbal equivalent of that fencing skill handed down from his father, Alan Breck Stewart pointedly contrasts his own "King's name" with that of the proscribed Macgregor patronymic, before establishing his equal right under the clan system to free movement within Maclaren country. Oig calls on Breck's ability with the sword, yet Alan drives home a different type of thrust to the Highland myth of Rob Roy Macgregor by questioning both his skill as a warrior and his status within Jacobitism:

> "That's a kittle point," returned the other. "There may be two words to say to that. But I think I will have heard that you are a man of your sword?"
> "Unless ye were born deaf, Mr. Macgregor, ye will have heard a good deal more than that," says Alan. "I am not the only man that can draw steel in Appin; and when my kinsman and captain, Ardshiel, had a talk with a gentleman of your name, not so many years back, I could never hear that the

> Macgregor had the best of it."
> "Do ye mean my father, sir?" says Robin.
> "Well, I wouldnae wonder," said Alan. "The gentleman I have in my mind had the ill-taste to clap Campbell to his name." (169-170)

It is at this point that Stevenson has Duncan Dhu intervene to separate the two bristling Highlanders and suggest a piping contest. It is a piece of Romantic invention that Stevenson fashions out of whole cloth, Menikoff calling it: "mock heroic without the comedy. Two warriors…reduced to musicians, each admiring the other's skill"[24], but what it serves as is Stevenson's own addition to the cult of the Highlander in Victorian Britain, skill with the cold steel and ability with those most Scottish of pipes reinforcing one another in a mythology for the Highland martial tradition.[25]

The elaborate jockeying and jostling that occurs between the two Highlanders can only occur because despite the glowering animosity both still conform to the proprieties of their culture, but when Oig attempts to engage David Balfour the gulf between the Lowland and Highland traditions again becomes clear. The encounter is problematised by their respective codes running up against each other, the issue of a name is not only a mark of one's lineage, it is "in the deepest sense one's whole being".[26] Robin Oig's response when learning David's surname is to try and position it within Highlander *Weltanschauung*, to recognise where it lies and to offer to reaffirm ties that might bind this world under threat from the new Scottish order:

> "In the year '45, my brother raised a part of the 'Gregara' and marched six companies to strike a stroke for the good side; and the surgeon that marched with our clan and cured my brother's leg when it was broken in the brush at Preston Pans, was a gentleman of the same name precisely as yourself. He was brother to Balfour of Baith; and if you are in any reasonable degree of nearness one of that gentleman's kin, I have come to put myself and my people at your command." (169)

David's status as Laird of Shaws is of no worth here, and his "bitter disgrace" comes from admitting he "knew no more about [his] descent than any cadger's dog",

reducing him in the outlaw Macgregor Oig's eyes to "some kinless loon that did not know his own father" (169). It is an humiliation not to know one's own parentage, but like the swordsmanship of Alan Breck's father the codes of Highland behaviour can be transmitted and learned, and in the later *Catriona* Stevenson will allow the canny David to adroitly handle another Macgregor who assumes he is a kinsman of that same Balfour of Baith:

> "And now that I call to mind, there was a young gentleman, your namesake, that marched surgeon in the year '45 with my battalion."
>
> "I believe that would be a brother to Balfour of Baith," said I, for I was ready for the surgeon now.
>
> "The same, sir," said James More. "And since I have been fellow-soldier with your kinsman, you must suffer me to grasp your hand."
>
> He shook hands with me long and tenderly, beaming on me the while as though he had found a brother.
>
> "Ah!" says he, "these are changed days since your cousin and I heard the balls whistle in our lugs."
>
> "I think he was a very far-away cousin," said I, drily, "and I ought to tell you that I never clapped eyes upon the man."[27]

Stevenson's wit here is almost palpable, and like the author David Balfour is able to subvert the codified conventions of the Highland order, smoothly playing upon concepts taken very seriously by the Macgregors while simultaneously disengaging from the commitments required on his own part. David has satisfied the requirements of the Jacobite social order but he is not beholden to that same order as are the Macgregors or Alan Breck, for he knows that at its very zenith Charles Stuart the Young Pretender has a King's name too yet it serves him in no stead in the world in which the young Balfour will make his future. Alan might share the Pretender's name, but like the Jacobite claimant he will have to live out his days in France at the mercy of King Louis and the 'Auld Alliance'.

With the hegemony of the Hanoverian line over the Jacobite succession Alan Breck's "king's name" is no longer viable cultural capital within the new Scottish order, but the martial skills and the *concept* of the Highland soldier as demonstrated

to George II by Breck's father retain their value and potency. It is this transmission of culture that will mark the true worth of the Highlander to the British imperial enterprise for it marks a change in perception of the Highlander from that of an essentialised warrior to that of an identity that may be learned; a sort of elite soldierly mindset that those recruits from below the Highland Line might aspire toward and achieve with the correct training. By the late nineteenth-century it was well known that the kilted Highland regiments of the British Army were no longer constituted from "wild Hielandmen" as they were in the years following the Jacobite Rebellion of '45; in fact a substantial number of recruits were Irish and English, a fact that did not go unmissed by wags commenting on the paucity of Highlanders in their own regiments. Heather Streets points to one anecdote recorded by an officer of the British Indian Army:

> "Well my man", said an officer to a strapping Highlander the other day, rigged out in plaid and kilt etc. "Well, my man, this is rather a hot country, you'd like to see Bonnie Scotland again? "Och, your honour, and shure I'd rather see ould Ireland any day".[28]

Such tales (of which there are many)[29] are quick to deny the homogeneity of the Highland regiments with, it must be added, some truth: the Gordon Highlanders being a particular example of one regiment constituted after the reforms of 1881 and largely comprised of English recruits re-outfitted in kilt and plaid where previously they had had no Highland ties. The prohibition of the traditional dress after the '45 was meant to 'break' the Highland spirit, but when bestowed upon a recruit of the Highland regiments it was meant to imbue that same recruit with the abilities and martial attributes of the Highlander.

For those recruits who *were* Scottish the likelihood was that they had come, not from the sparsely populated Highlands and Islands, but from the Lowland industrial cities where poverty and overcrowding drove many young men to the recruiting

sergeant.[30] Alan Breck himself, prior to his joining the Young Pretender's cause, served with a British Army Highland regiment at the battle of Preston Pans, but by Stevenson's era his martial descendants were more likely to have come from the Covenanting tradition familiar to David Balfour. One might recall David's "pride of life [that] seemed to mount into [his] brain at the sight of the red-coats" of British soldiers on the march (6). The 1880s would have found many another Lowland lad taking a similar pride of life at kilt-clad soldiers marching, not to Carlisle to strike a blow for the 'Good Cause', but off to foreign wars as loyal subjects of Queen Victoria.

And yet for all that the civilian and military commentators of Stevenson's era might have been aware of the lack of Highland ancestry within those regiments, the mystique of the Highland soldier's prowess remained, not as an essentialised innate ability or from the hard schooling of the mountains and glens, but from techniques and traditions handed down to new recruits just as Alan's father demonstrated Highland swordsmanship to George II and the "Butcher Cumberland". James Cromb in 1886 gave this comment on the mettle of "cockney recruits" in the Highland regiments:

> There is a mighty strength-giving power in the traditions of a crack regiment, and in the associations which cluster around the old flag, which must never be dishonoured. Sentiment will not alone gain victories; but sentiment will sometimes sustain the faltering heart, and give vigour to the nerveless frame. On every recruit who joins a Highland Regiment is thrown the honour of the corps -- a charge so precious that none but the veriest poltroon could prove unfaithful to the duty. As yet no sign of the Highlanders losing their prestige or proving unworthy of their traditions has been exhibited. In their most recent engagements they have behaved with that valour for which they have ever been distinguished.[31]

Here is the recognition that Highland identity (or that facet of it which applies to martial masculinity) can be learned; that it is perpetuated and assigned through the *esprit de corps* of a regiment; that it is the memes that are important more than the ancestry of the recruit. In this way the Lowland Scot or cockneys 'rise' into the

identity, the training bringing out and emphasising their own abilities, just as Alan was able to do with David: "let's make a bit of a soldier of ye" (57) said the Jacobite in preparing the boy for the Siege of the Roundhouse, and on another level the entirety of David's flight through the Highlands in Breck's company served as an induction into Highland identity and the skills of those doughty warriors. David may not have gained the mastery of steel commanded by Alan, but he learned that he was able to bear arms and kill when need be, and he became that erstwhile Highland lad who would *not* be "caught in the mountains".

From quarrelling, rapine savages and rank foes to the Hanoverian succession, the Highlander of Stevenson's era had been not only rehabilitated but reevaluated as the exemplar of the Imperial soldier. Stevenson himself scoured his family tree for a Highland connection without finding fruit. In his novel *Kidnapped* he went some way to reinterpreting what it means to be a Highlander, to put forth the idea that an ancestral connection is not required, we might all become Highlanders. Such a notion was entirely at odds with what until shortly before had been the dominant Victorian-era (pseudo) scientific discourse on the racial and cultural make-up of the British people. Robert Knox, in *The Races of Men* (1850) had categorically stated the opinion that "no minds are more diverse than the Saxon and the Celtic", decrying any suggestion so bold as that "the Celtic and Saxon races were so united in Great Britain and Ireland that they now form but one *united race!*"[32] Such a theory positioned the Celt as less than human -- Kingsley decried the inhabitants of Sligo as "white chimpanzees"[33] -- and the continued references to the Scots Gaelic language as "Irish" served to reinforce the perception of the Highlander and his culture as being foreign to the privileged, hegemonic Anglo-Saxon order. In a perverse display of Pan-Celtic inclusionism Knox -- himself a Scot -- conflates and condemns all the cultures of the Celtic Fringe:

> The source of all evil lies in *the race*, the Celtic race of Ireland. Look at Wales, look at Caledonia; it is ever the same. The race must be forced from the soil; by fair means if possible; still they must leave.[34]

There is an intimated cognisance of that sentiment in Stevenson's description of the Highlanders displaced to the New World, a foreshadowing of what was to come in the Highland Clearances:

> In the mouth of Loch Aline we found a great sea-going ship at anchor; and this I supposed at first to be one of the King's cruisers which were kept along that coast, both summer and winter, to prevent communication with the French. As we got a little nearer, it became plain she was a ship of merchandise; and what still more puzzled me, not only her decks, but the sea-beach also, were quite black with people, and skiffs were continually plying to and fro between them. Yet nearer, and there began to come to our ears a great sound of mourning, the people on board and those on the shore crying and lamenting one to another so as to pierce the heart.
>
> Then I understood this was an emigrant ship bound for the American colonies (99)

By the time of writing however Knox's scientific racialism had been challenged by both ethnographic and Romantic reappraisals of the Celtic contribution to British identity. Grant Allen's essay 'Are We Englishmen?' (1880) put forth the argument that not only did the Celtic population survive and thrive in areas hitherto believed to have been Anglo-Saxon, but that those same Celts were the driving force of British industrialisation and imperialism;

> Students of early English history...always over-estimate the importance of the Teutonic element...they forget that, while Teutonic Britain has been sinking to the position of a simple agricultural country, Keltic [sic] Britain has been rising to that of a great manufacturing region...It is common to speak of the "Anglo-Saxons" as the great colonising race, but...such pretensions will not for a moment hold water. It is the Kelt who colonises. [35]

Towards the end of his life Stevenson espoused similar sentiments, increasingly asserting the importance of the Celtic in British culture: "I have changed my mind progressively...practically the whole of Scotland is Celtic, and the western half of England, and all Ireland".[36] It's a notion that would lead to his belief that

suggestions of cultural differences between Highland and Lowland being fixed on the dichotomy of Celt and Anglo-Saxon were inherently erroneous, "the Anglo-Saxon heresy"[37] as he called it, and that far from being a transplanted Anglo-Saxon the Lowlander was as much a Celt as his Highland cousin, and their especial geniuses contrasting traits of their racial type.

It's tempting to view *Kidnapped*'s conclusion, with David Balfour poised to enter through the doors of the British Linen Company, as a symbolic representation of the lad turning his back upon his Jacobite sojourn. The British Linen Company was quintessentially Scottish, but without a trace of the Jacobite about it, but does this mark the victory of Whiggish trade and commerce over the Romanticism of the Jacobite cause? Charles Stuart may have been unsuccessful, but Stevenson's own "Young Pretender" -- David Balfour -- was not, and with the aid of the rebel Alan Breck he regained his birthright. By Stevenson's own era that Scottish identity shared by Alan Breck Stewart and David Balfour of Shaws had come into its own inheritance, and in *Kidnapped* we might find a record of the Highlander's cultural transition from the Rebel beyond the Line to the martial heart of Empire.

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1 'Historical Notice of the National Anthem *God Save The Queen,* III, Attempts to improve or modify the Version of the National Anthem', in *The Saturday Magazine,* August 20 1842. p.71

2 James Cromb, *The Highland Brigade: Its Battles and Its Heroes*, (London: Simkin, Marshall & Co., 1886) p.9

3 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, (London, New York, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994). All subsequent references are to this edition and indicated parenthetically in the text.

4 R.H. Hutton in *The Spectator* claimed *Kidnapped*'s power derived from "the contrast...between the frank vanity of the Highland character and the rooted self-sufficiency of the Lowland character". R.H. Hutton, unsigned review, *The Spectator*, 24th July 1886, xliv, p.5

5 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* Roger Luckhurst (ed.), (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2006) p.6

6 The history of the Scottish Covenanters held an abiding interest for Stevenson, at the age of thirteen he wrote historical romances about the Covenanters in the vein of Scott (see J.C. Furnas, *Voyages to Windward,* London: Faber & Faber, 1952, p.41), and in the last year of his life admitted:
I have lately been returning to my wallowing in the mire. When I was a child, and indeed until I was nearly a man, I consistently read Covenanting books. Now that I am a grey-beard - or would be, if I could raise the beard - I have returned, and for weeks back have read little else.
Letter to J.M. Barrie, September 7th, 1893. *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (ed.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Vol. 8, p.205

For discussion regarding the significance of the 'National Covenant' (1581) and the 'Solemn League and Covenant ' (1643) in Scottish culture see E.J. Cowan, 'The Solemn League and Covenant', in *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, R. A. Mason (ed.), (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987) pp. 182 - 203

7 George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (Fairfield, IA: 1st World Library, 2004) p.50

8 Anonymous, 'Observation about the improvements and reformation of the West Highlands made in 1754: remarks on the improvement of the land &C' (1754], National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, MSS 17504, fos. 57-58

9 For discussion of the impact of the Heritable Jurisdictions (Scotland) Act (1746), and the Act of Proscription (1747) upon Scottish culture see David McCrone *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1998)

10 Ibid. p.58

11 Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995) p. 155

12 Diana Henderson, *Highland Soldier: A Social Study of the Highland Regiments* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989) p.5

13 Samuel Johnson.,*Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*,R.W. Chapman (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford Standard Authors, 1930) p.34

14 John Cleveland, "The Rebell Scot", *Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) p.29

15 Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1996) p. 197

16 Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005) pp.66-67

17 *State of the Society in Scotland, for Propagating Christian Knowledge; Giving a Brief Account of the Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland [etc]* (Edinburgh: R. Fleming, 1741) p.3

18 "In the missionary work that is being done among the Samoans, Mr. Stevenson was especially interested. He was an observant, shrewd, yet ever generous critic of all our religious and educational organisations. His knowledge of native character and life enabled him to understand missionary difficulties, while his genial contact with all sorts and conditions of men made him keen to detect deficiencies in men and methods, and apt in useful suggestion". Rev. W.E. Clarke of the London Missionary Society, in Robert Louis Stevenson, *Vailima Letters: Being Correspondence Addressed by Robert Louis Stevenson to Sydney Colvin, November 1890 – October 1894,* Sydney Colvin (ed.), (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1912) p.2 (n.)

19 Joseph Addison, 'Remarks on Italy', *The Works of Joseph Addison*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1864) p.374

20 Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, (London: Macmillan, 1989) p.30

21 Barry Menikoff notes that Stevenson lifted his account from David Stewart's *Sketches of the Character, Manners, and the Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland* 3rd. Ed. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co. 1825) 1:258.n. See Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland* , op cit. P.58

22 For Bourdieu's theory of Cultural Capital see Pierre Bourdieu, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in *Knowledge, Education and Social Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education,* R. Brown (ed.), (Tavistock: Tavistock Publications) pp. 71-112

23 Barry Menikoff, op.cit. p.93

24 Ibid. p.99

25 For discussion of the Victorian 'Cult of the Highlander' see Robin Nicholson, *Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Making of a Myth: A Study in Portraiture, 1720 – 1892*, (London: Associated U.P., 2002); Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Heather Streets, *Martial Races* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004);

26 Barry Menikoff, op.cit. p.96

27 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Catriona*, Emma Letley (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.250
28 Heather Streets, op.cit. p. 176
29 Heather Streets makes reference to a number of contemporary accounts from commentators casting doubt on the "Scottish" nature of Highland regiments. Ibid. pp.175-176
30 Henderson, op cit. p.43
31 James Cromb, op.cit. p.9
32 Robert Knox, *The Races of Men : A Philosophical Inquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destiny of Nations*, 2nd Edition, (London: Renshaw, 1862) p.378, 341
33 An 1860 visit to Sligo provoked a troubled Charles Kingsley to write: I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe ...that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.
Charles Kingsley, His Letters, and Memories of His Life, Volume 2, (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press LLC, 2007) p.125. See also Luke Gibbons, "Race Against Time," *The Oxford Literary Review* 13 (1991) p. 95
34 Robert Knox, op cit. p.379
35 Grant Allen 'Are We Englishmen?', in M. Biddiss (ed.) *Images of Race*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979) p.24, 252
36 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to William Low, January 1894, *Letters,* op.cit. Vol.8 p.235
37 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to R.A.M. Stevenson, September 1894, *Letters,* Ibid. Vol.8 ,p.363

Chapter 2

"A Tale of Many Lands": Identity and Imperial Representation in *The Master of Ballantrae.*

Within contemporary Stevenson scholarship *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) occupies an unusual position, residing in the largely unexplored interspace between the competing critical theories that have staked out their territories within Stevenson's *oeuvre*. While Stevenson's "gothic gnome"[1] *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) has found its peculiar anatomy scrutinised through the respective lenses of Gothic, Victorian, and Queer theoreticians, Stevenson's Pacific island fiction has enjoyed something of a postcolonial critical re-evaluation from such commentators as Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith.[2] *The Master of Ballantrae* however most commonly finds itself cast as overshadowed fellow-traveller to the Scottish David Balfour novels *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1893), a categorisation that curtails both the theoretical and geographical scope of a work Stevenson designed to be "a tale of many lands"[3], encompassing the extents of the British Empire in the eighteenth-century from the Highland Line, to India to the New World. As such the novel anticipates another problematic text within Stevenson's canon, *The Wrecker* (1892); shifting as it does between Historical Romance and psychological realism, the domestic and the imperial; mixing mode

and style accordingly and subverting both.

As with so many of Stevenson's works *The Master of Ballantrae* presents us with layers of dichotomy. The familial grouping from which all the events of the novel expand is a household that embodies the schisms within Scotland, both at the time of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion and in Stevenson's own era. In "that memorable year 1745, when the foundations of this tragedy were laid" the "house of Durrisdeer" consisted of four people: the old Lord, "suffering prematurely from the disabilities of age", the Master, his younger brother Henry, and their orphaned cousin Alison Graeme, whose betrothal to the master and inherited wealth are essential for both the pecuniary and hereditary continuation of the declined house (2). [4] Notably absent from the *mise en scene* is the narrator Ephraim McKellar, whose service to the household begins three years later. As such the veracity of the narration is at once called into question, refracted as it is not only through McKellar's own sensibilities but also garnered after the fact and tinted by hindsight. That this task should fall to the Lowland Scot McKellar, Covenanter and scholar of Edinburgh University, is of importance for such were the chroniclers of the period, even as was Stevenson himself.[5] Like McKellar Stevenson must piece together the events of the '45 to furnish his story, and like McKellar his text is informed and coloured by the recollections of those who experienced the Rebellion at first hand and their own relationship to the events of that period.

In casting the House of Durrisdeer one might read Stevenson's actions to be that of rendering the Scotland of the '45 Rebellion in microcosm. The historic Scotland prior to the Act of Union is the old Lord in the chimney corner; declined in vigour, dwelling upon his history books, and abdicating responsibility to his offspring. The Stevenson of the preface declares "I believe there is nothing so noble as baldness" replied I, "and I am sure that there is nothing so interesting. I would have all literature bald" (8). That the first-born of the house of Durrisdeer should be named James would appear to be in accordance with that desire, for the blatant Jacobite connotations of the name not only foreshadows his service on the part of the Young

Pretender Charles Edward Stuart, it also serves to baldly identify the Master as a signifier of the continued Romantic attachment to the Jacobite cause within Scottish culture. Like Charles Stuart the young Master is a "bonnie lad" (17), "popular and wild" who "sat late at wine, later at cards" (10) and who exercises an attraction to his community for which his brother Henry can offer no competition. As befits the binary trope so central within Stevenson's work, younger Henry is cast in stark contrast to the Jacobite Master; the avatar of stolid Scots dependability, Henry is "neither very bad nor yet very able, but an honest, solid sort of lad like many of his neighbours" (11). That contrast is key: the Master offers the common Scot an idealised projection of identity; the bonny lad of natural nobility, "an unco man for the lasses", first in the front of broils and "invariably the best to come out"(10). Henry is none of these things, he is instead *like* his neighbours and it is that recognition of their own all too familiar natures that elicits their contempt.

That the Master James Durie should ride out in support of the Young Pretender seems an obvious plot device for Stevenson's romance, yet the predicament facing the Scottish people with regard to the Jacobite Rebellion finds its equally overt expression in the hedging of bets by the House of Durrisdeer: one son should support the rebellion and one remain loyal to the Hanoverian succession so that loyalty might be claimed regardless of outcome. And yet it is the cadet Henry who argues the case that he should go, rationalising that James' failure would mark the forfeiture of the title of Ballantrae, an argument for which the Manichean counterpoint is the matching of chance against reason: the Master proposes to decide the matter on the spin of a coin. This recurring trope is symptomatic of the novel, serving as the symbolic identifier of impulse and anti-rationalism; a counter current running against The Age Of Enlightenment, to be forced underground from whence it might be said it will later erupt during the Romantic Revival.

Like the Duries the people of Scotland cast their relative lots upon the success of the Jacobite Restoration and were rewarded accordingly. The Jacobite flight to France finds itself reproduced in miniature in James Durie's movement, just as

Alison Graeme and Jessy Broun's pining for that exile serve as a cipher of lingering Jacobite sentimentalism for the 'King o'er the Water'. And yet this part of the narrative, the "summary of events", is patched together by one who was not present to observe those same events unfold, the retainer Ephram McKellar whose own entry into the story allows him to take up the history as it "befell under my own observation, like a witness in court" (19). It is well to note that Stevenson the writer might as easily have been Stevenson the lawyer if he had stuck to his original career path, and there is ever a cognisance in his work that history and public record have the flavour of story-telling about them, that they are tales as told by the winning side.[6] In *Kidnapped*'s legalistic sister-novel *Catriona* Stevenson allowed the aftermath of the '45 and the reordering of Scottish society to be carried out and consolidated not through final force of arms but through the courts, grievance and grudge set to reckoning by the new hegemony. David Balfour's role as a young scion of enlightened, Covenanting, Lowland Scotland thrust into one of the most infamous cases of the day allows us an insight into the criminal process, but perhaps most importantly it also reveals the partiality of those in positions of power and their control over the process of inscribing the history of what has just occurred, and their own roles in it. There is a marvellous irony in the judgement speech rendered upon James More by the Campbell Justice-General:

> If you had been successful in that rebellion, you might have been giving the law where you are have now received the judgement of it; we who are this day your judges, might have been tried before one of your mock courts of judicature; and then you might have been satiated with the blood of any name or clan to which you had an aversion[7]

Such a speech allows a parity between the opposing sides' parties, intimating that the power vested in the Justice-General is not the result of his commitment to a more just ideology but merely the reward for picking the winning side. David Balfour, the loyal subject of King George who learned how to assume the role of erstwhile Highlander, is again granted an insight into the fluvial nature of Scottish identity; the Hanoverian may have defeated the Jacobite Pretender but the players on each side

are not the cut-and-dried epitomes of the competing Scottish ideologies. The Campbell giving judgement is a Highlander too and atavistic clan loyalties are allowed credence, stripping the decision down to one of revenge which in Stevenson's hands neatly mirrors the McAlpine Case of *Kidnapped:* "James was as fairly murdered as though the Duke had got a fowling piece and stalked him." (*Catriona*, 358) Alan Breck Stewart remarked to David in *Kidnapped* that:

> "It's well seen it was a Campbell taught ye! It would be a convenient world for them and their sort, if there was no such a thing as a lad and a gun behind a heather bush!"[8] (*Kidnapped*, 74-75)

The Campbell Duke of Argyll has however learned a more effective method of revenge than skulking in bushes and the serving of that vengeance upon his Stewart foeman shows how wide still the gulf is between the Highlanders and the Lowland Covenanting tradition that purports "it's a kent thing that Christianity forbids revenge."(*Kidnapped,* 74)

To be sure, *The Master of Ballantrae*'s Ephram McKellar is no feuding Highlander safely ensconced in the fabric of the winning party like his grace the Duke of Argyll, rather he is a product of the Lowland, Covenanting, Whig hegemony and an epitome of dour Edinburgh sobriety. Nevertheless, we must be aware his legalistic testimony is not without partiality and prejudice: they are the products of his culture and sentimental attachment to Lord Durrisdeer.

Ostensibly the Master plays the Romantic part of the Jacobite well, yet from the outset Stevenson has admitted to us the knowledge that his brother Henry might have as easily ridden out for the Stuart cause. Jacobitism in *Kidnapped* is synonymous with the defense of the clan-system and the traditional way of life beyond the Highland line; in *The Master of Ballantrae* Stevenson broadens focus to show us Jacobitism beyond that stress-fracture in Scottish identity that divided Highland from Lowland.

That Stevenson should choose to examine the broad scope of Jacobitism seems ostensibly to be a topic of little consideration when examining questions of identity and ideology in the late Victorian British Empire. A little digging will however

show that what was perceived in the eighteenth-century as an invidious underground ideology anathema to the throne had, by the end of the nineteenth, become a Romantic curio, an antiquarian revenant to be extolled alongside the Celtic and Medieval Revivalisms. This enthusiasm for the Stuarts found its most outward expression with the centenary of the "Bonnie Prince" Charles Stuart's death in 1888 and the London Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart the following year. Patronised by Queen Victoria, this display of over a thousand artefacts of that shadow monarchy in exile affected to list the Queen and the preceding post-Stuart monarchs' titles in parentheses, implying a lack of legitimacy to the Hanoverian succession. That the organisers were free to titillate the exhibition-goers in such a manner marks, in the words of Robin Nicholson, the "utter emasculation of Jacobitism as a valid system of beliefs or a culture"[9] within Victorian society: only a truly powerless 'challenge' would have been entertained in such a manner.

Peter Womack has remarked that the Hanoverians "saw the advantages of a whimsical toleration as soon as the real opposition was crushed"[10], and the first such indulgence can be noted in 1819 when George IV was petitioned to award a pension to the 105 year old Peter Grant, the last living Jacobite veteran of Culloden. Impressed that the old Jacobite signed the paper "Your Majesty's oldest enemy" the King decided to award Grant a pension of one guinea per week.[11] This *largesse* can be posited as proof that the Jacobite cause had been totally overcome. From that point Jacobitism could only ever have been a Romantic fantasy, and, perhaps because of the very safety of that vicarious rebellion, by Stevenson's era a sentimentalist neo-Jacobitism had sprung up among artists and writers who saw in the Stuart mythology an ideological point of sanctuary away from Victorian industry and the relentlessness of the Saxon work ethic. Murray G. H. Pittock points to Victorian neo-Jacobite journals such as *The Royalist* and *The Fiery Cross* as particular disseminators of "impossibilist Stuart Nostalgia",[12] while later in 1896 A.C. Macdonnel would dedicate her *Lays of the Heather* to the Stuart heir Prince Rupert of Bavaria.[13] In the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries "the names of

King James II and his heirs were officially anathematized. To proclaim their right to the throne verbally was to run the risk of punishment by imprisonment, fines, the pillory or a whipping"[14], by the end of the nineteenth those same names provided an easy *frisson* for writers "addicted to the opium of reactionary nostalgia"[15].

When Queen Victoria herself could proclaim to be "a Jacobite at heart"[16] the indication is that the Stuart myth has been safely ensconced in the national hegemony, but it also hints at a certain wistful longing in the heart of the late Victorian empire. At a time of profound imperial expansion what does it mean to hark back to an era of flux in Britain's first empire, and who were the real historic Jacobites when stripped of the metaphorical Stuart Tartan of nostalgia? *The Master of Ballantrae* can be read as Stevenson's attempt to illuminate the reality of those who pledged -- or purported to pledge -- fealty to the Pretenders to the throne, and to draw parallels between the first and second empires.

Firstly, the Jacobites of *The Master of Ballantrae* are resolutely *not* Highlanders. Indeed references to the Highlands in the text exist only in the subjective testimony of characters who are already utilising the tropes of the mythology of '45 and the Bonnie Prince. Shorn of the imposing cultural cipher of the bonneted Highlander what is left of the Jacobite of the '45? Indeed one might ask 'what actually defined a Jacobite in that era?' Paul Kleber Monod has said that "most historians have taken it for granted that they can recognise 'real Jacobitism', or that they could if it existed, but they have not made much of an attempt to explain their methods to others"[17]. Presumably an historian may be justified in labelling an individual a 'Jacobite' when it can be proved that they favoured an exiled Stuart king to the ruling monarch, yet within that category may be found a panoply of different degrees of loyalty. Not all Jacobites were lifelong devotees to the Stuart cause, willing to lay down their lives or forfeit their estates for the Pretender; some loved their banished monarch only briefly in the heady days of the '15 or the '45'; others, like the House of Durrisdeer, sided with him for reasons of expediency; some would vacillate between love for the Stuart Pretender and hatred for his leading them astray; while some of the seemingly

most committed Jacobites like the Master and *Catriona*'s James More would turn against him in order to feather their own nests. In addition there were many who would do no more than drink his health and wish him well, yet simply by doing so they too were Jacobites of a fashion. In Monod's words:

> Jacobites may be identified by what they said and did, and by what others said about them. Unfortunately most of the surviving evidence falls into the latter category -- it consists of accusations, allegations and scraps of information from which inferences may be drawn. [18]

Not only can inferences be drawn from those scraps of information, a mythology can be constructed. It is such a mythic telling of Jacobite history that appealed to those of Stevenson's era who affected a Neo-Jacobite sympathy. In *The Master of Ballantrae* Stevenson allows us to see the genesis of such mythologies by providing two competing narratives of the '45.

There is already a tension between the two competing accounts of the '45 as those whom Mackellar describes as "rebels" become in the testimony of Tam Macmorland "the puir bonnie Master, and the puir kind lads that rade wi' him" (16). One might note that as a *written* account Mackellar's version of events supports the orthodoxy both in content and in medium, as befits the beneficiary of a education typical of the Scottish Enlightenment. Yet there is a subterranean counter-text running beneath the hegemonic reportage that Mackellar seems powerless to counter. This opposing oral history is one of bonnie masters and devoted, true servants, an atavistic feudal hierarchy that dispenses with the middle classes of the Enlightenment and flourishes in the collective consciousness of those who find in it an idealised picture of themselves. Peter Womack points to one such history in the ballad 'Donald McDonald':

> What though we befriendit young Charlie?-
> To tell it I dinna feel shame;
> Poor lad, he came to us but barely,
> An' reckon'd our mountains his hame.
> 'twas true that our reason forbade us,

Chapter 2: "A Tale of Many Lands"

> But tenderness carried the day; -
> Had Geordie come friendless among us,
> Wi' him we had a' gan away.[19]

Such a partial account of the '45 purports to a surfeit of hospitality and warm will amongst the followers of Jacobitism, a naïve notion that posits and lionises irrational loyalty above that most eighteenth-century of intellectual abstracts: Reason. Rationality is a hard, demanding, dry taskmaster, not unlike Mr. Henry Durie himself:

> I [Ephram Mackellar] found him an exacting master, keeping all his kindness for those hours when we were unemployed, and in the steward's office not only loading me with work but viewing me with a shrewd supervision. (20)

How better to put one's faith in sentimentalism for a 'King without friends', turning that very friendlessness (which some might call an informal plebiscite against the validity of his reign) into a virtue and a reason in itself to support his claim. In such an anti-rationalist worldview the Liberal arguments against Divine Right find a novel nemesis: Charles Stuart deserves to reign *because* he is the Pretender and not recognised by the hegemony of the day. His subsequent defeat does not weaken his legend for he is the apotheosis of the Romantic loser, and sympathy for such a lost cause allows the supporter to wallow in the loss. In Stevenson's hands maudlin Jacobitism is encapsulated and reduced to Jessy Broun's well practised melodramatic lament: "Ah, if the bonnie lad were back again, it would be changed days. But he's deid - he's lyin' deid among the Hieland hills - the bonnie lad, the bonnie lad!" (24). It is telling that that "Bonnie lad" who serves as avatar for the '45 and the Jacobite myth is James Durie, the Master; for he is not dead. His reality falls short of the myth, and as such it lays doubt upon all the myths of the Rising.

If the Jacobites who rode out in support of Bonnie Prince Charlie were "puir, kind lads" possessed of nothing worse than overwhelming sentimental hospitality to underdogs then the world of economic realities and the prevailing order embodied by Mr. Henry represent an enemy that cannot be ridden out against. What we find

instead is a resistance to his authority, that also marks a tension between codes of cultural transmission. Ephram Mackellar's narrative is orthodox in so far that it is both indicative of the hegemonic position and as an inscribed narrative, communicated via the medium of writing. The counter-text promulgated by the common people is an oral folk narrative that circumvents Mackellar's studied defence of Mr. Henry:

> Mr Henry...had betrayed the lads of Durrisdeer; he had promised to follow with more men and instead of that had ridden to King George... [a] view of Mr. Henry's behaviour crept about the country by little and little: it was talked upon by people who knew the contrary, but were short of topics; and it was heard and believed and given out for gospel by the ignorant and the ill-willing. Mr. Henry began to be shunned. (16-17)

It is significant that such an account was talked about by people "who knew the contrary, but were short on topics" for in such Stevenson presents the malicious counterpoint to the sentimentalist belief in "puir, brave lads" aiding a "friendless" king: many of those who shun Mr. Henry do *not* do so out of sincere error but rather from a wilful anti-rationalist engagement with a mythology that they themselves are fashioning to describe their position in the world. They know that Henry Durie did not actively participate in defence of the Hanoverian succession, yet his historic absence from the fray finds a mythic reimagining that better fits the role demanded of him in the folk consciousness. At the beginning of the novel Mackellar relates "a rhyme still current in the countryside...[that] bears the mark of antiquity":

> "Kittle folk are the Durrisdeers,
> They ride wi' ower mony spears"(9)

The rhyme is still current, and so are the expectations; if Mr. Henry did not rise with "ower many spears" to serve the Pretender then the expectations demanded of him insist, against reasonable evidence to the contrary, that he did so for King George. That is the part he must play, for that is the part expected of a feudal lord in a culture that is only starting to experience the transition to modern capitalism. The battle Mr. Henry is fighting is a cultural rather than a military one; his Scottish Enlightenment

values mark his position in the social salient, but he has advanced too far beyond the 'line' of his tenants and finds himself cut off and alienated from the mores, expectations, and beliefs that value the scapegrace characteristics of his brother the Master over his own:

> The Master was cried up for a saint. It was remembered how he had never any hand in pressing the tenants; as, indeed, no more he had, except to spend the money. He was a little wild perhaps, the folk said; but how much better was a natural wild lad that would soon have settled down, than a skinflint and a sneckdraw, sitting with his nose in an account book, to persecute poor tenants! (17)

It is telling that the Master is lionised as a "*natural* wild lad", that his various understood improprieties --"ever in the front of broils", fathering children out of wedlock, terrorising elderly men (10) -- are lesser offences than his brother's contrasting *un*natural adherence to the account book. The account book is symbolic of the written medium and Rationalism; it represents a cut-and-dried, legalistic interpretation of reality with no room for negotiation, and the power to manipulate and set down this version of "truth" rests with a privileged, literate class. The strength of the Master's position lies in the fluvial nature of his identity, and the flexibility of the oral tradition. Capable of constant amendment, unhindered by purported objectivity, the tales told about the Master allow the community to negotiate their own myth and in part create the feudal lord they desire. By way of contrast Ephram Mackellar asserts "Let any one speak long enough he will get believers"(16), yet the irony is that he cannot persuade the tenants of his own 'truth' regarding Mr. Henry because he is unequipped to speak to them with the facility required to convince them. Mackellar's training has equipped him for the scribal rather than the oral medium, at a time and place where the two codes still enjoyed a certain parity. Ultimately it will be the written tradition that will succeed, but Stevenson was as much a story-*teller* as he was author, and there is a cognisance of the subjectivity of both traditions in his work. Julia Reid notes that "this conflict encapsulates the perceived opposition between written culture and morality,

enlightened and primitive thought...Mackellar...pitted against James Durie, the Master, who embodies the forces of rumour and superstition"[20]. Faced with the ever-shifting, virally self-amending nature of the Master's magnetic persona the scribal tradition becomes the net in which to trap and pin down James Durie, and thus to hold him accountable. Ephram Makellar pledges to relate "the history of events as they befell under my own observation, like a witness in a court" (19) and to a very real extent the text he relates is not only a history of events, but an account of his efforts in securing documentary evidence to support his case against the Master, James Durie.

The strength of James Durie lies in his quick, glib facility able to switch between the "cutting English accent...[and] the kindly Scots tongue (p.76), mastering the rote of convention while simultaneously able to convince the romantically inclined with accounts of Irish sentinels' songs to their loves in faraway lands:

> o, I will dye my petticoat red
> With my dear boy I'll beg my bread,
> Though all my friends should wish me dead,
> For Willie among the rushes, O! (83)

Yet as the exemplar of orality the Master's accounts lack canonicity and must always be reinforced if they are to have a lasting effect.[21] The admission from the Chevalier Burke that the Master has "the largest pension on the Scots Fund of any refugee in Paris" (64) is enough to cast a pall over James Durie's myth of the suffering Jacobite exile, but the later written assertion by the Chevalier adds a legalistic veracity that is absent from the Master's own methods (p.69-70). In this, Stevenson gives us a wry, understated example of doubling that dispels Jacobite affectation: the purple tale of "wild Irish sentinels" and "Willie among the rushes" is negated by a *real* Irishman and his written rebuttal of any suffering on the Master's part.

From that point Mackellar's role becomes one of scribal adversary to James Durie. The Master ranges across the world like Satan "going to and fro in the earth, and...walking up and down in it"(Job 1:7) and his exploits are liberally coloured and sprinkled with disinformation as befits a Romantic avatar of the Father of Lies.[22]

Like Satan, Durie can quote scripture with facility and convincing emotion:

> I would retort upon him [the Master] with passages out of the Bible, which was all my library -- and very fresh to me, my religious duties (I grieve to say it) being always and even to this day extremely neglected. He tasted the merits of the work like the connoisseur he was; and would sometimes take it from my hand, turn the leaves over like a man that knew his way and give me, with a fine declamation, a Roland for my Oliver. But it was singular how little he applied his reading to himself. (156)

Mackellar is too much a product of the Enlightenment to match James Durie's Bible knowledge, but he is still a man of the Book: the *account* book rather than the Good Book, and his very narrative is a 'holding to account'. The Master's lingering place in the Lady Alison's affections is challenged first when Mackellar is able to prove James Durie had been draining the estate dry of money:

> Do you not know where [Henry Durie's] money goes to? His- and yours- and the money for the very wine he does not drink at table?" I went on. "To Paris- to that man! Eight thousand pounds has he had of us in seven years, and my patron fool enough to keep it secret!"
> "Eight thousand pounds!" she repeated. "It is impossible; the estate is not sufficient." (67)

It is however with the revelation that the Master was a turncoat under government employ that Mackellar categorically casts the Master from his symbolic place as the exemplar of the Romantic Jacobite exile. Mackellar deduces the truth but it is the written confirmation that will allow Mr. Henry to press home against his foe:

> He sat without another word and wrote to a gentleman of his acquaintance - I will name no unnecessary names, but he was one in a high place. This letter I dispatched by the only hand I could depend upon in such a case -- Macconochie's; and the old man rode hard, for he was back with the reply before even my eagerness had ventured to expect him. Again, as he read it, Mr. Henry had the same grim smile.
>
> This is the best you have done for me yet, Mackellar", says he. "With this in my hand I will give him a shog." (87)

Even then the Master's smooth and facile gift of the tongue almost saves him, "and so it seemed he had swum out of this danger unharmed" (p.88), but the perceived

rigid inflexibility of the scribal tradition allows him no room for maneoeuvre:

> "You say the matter is still fresh," says Mr. Henry.
> "It is recent," says the Master, with a fair show of stoutness and yet not without a quaver.
> "Is it so recent as that?" asks Mr. Henry, like a man a little puzzled, and spreading the letter forth again.
> In all the letter there was no word of as to the date; but how was the Master to know that?
> "It seemed to come late enough for me," says he, with a laugh...which rang false like a cracked bell...
> "No," said Mr. Henry, still glancing on his letter, "but I remember your expression. You said it was very fresh"
> And here we had a proof of our victory. (88-89)

This is the metaphorical sword thrust that hurts James Durie more than the duel in the frosty moonlight, and just as Mackellar and Mr. Henry deliver a palpable hit to the "discredited hero of romance"(p.89) so too does Stevenson use the pen to attack those elements of the Jacobite mythology which Julie Reid has described as a "cancer at the heart of Scottish culture"[23].

"The East and the West...I see a thousand openings".

> Chief, thy wild tails, romantic Caledon,
> Wake Keen Remembrance in each hardy son.
> Whether on India's burning coasts he toil,
> Or till Acadia's winter-fetter'd soil,
> He hear with throbbing heart...[24]

In his *The Expansion of England* (1883) Sir John Robert Seeley made a statement upon the British Empire as arguably attractive as it was disingenuous: that Britain "conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind."[25] The reason I

am quoting this is that Seeley's *The Expansion of England* was perceived at the time to be making one of the most persuasive possible arguments in favour of British imperialism and colonialism. The abiding power of Seeley's statement rests, one might argue, in its simplistic reassurance to the British people that imperial expansion did not come in the pursuit of Mammon, but rather a succession of imperial possessions fortuitously fell into the hands of Britain, leaving her free of the moral stain of anything so ignoble as avarice. It is telling that Seeley chose to title his treatise upon the growth of the Empire *The Expansion of England* rather than the Expansion of *Britain*, for such a title at once insists the hegemony of the English people over the Celtic fringes of the home islands, positing Scotland, Wales, and Ireland as the first conquests of this peculiarly unwitting expansion across the globe. And yet, for a people that Seeley's title might suggest were junior partners in empire, the Scottish presence in the imperial project was of such significance that John Buchan could later write:

> We [the British] call ourselves insular, but the truth is that we are the only race on earth that can produce men capable of getting inside the skin of remote people. *Perhaps the Scots are better than the English*, but we're all a thousand per cent better than anybody else.[26] [emphasis added]

Written at a point in history when Britain's Empire was larger than any the world had known before, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae,* like his *Kidnapped* before it, looks back to that era that serves in his *oeuvre* as the watershed in the development of modern Scottish identity: the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 and its aftermath. Whereas *Kidnapped* identifies the Highlander as the "foreigner at home" *The Master of Ballantrae* involves the "hardy son…[of]… Romantic Caledon" in a "tale of many lands", with the titular Master James Durie travelling through the extent of Britain's Empire from the Coromandel to the North American wilderness. In such a way one might suggest Stevenson seeks to fill in the absences in Seeley's evolution of empire by showing the Master's deeds on both "India's burning coasts" and the "winter-fetter'd soil" of the New York colony, but one

should add there is a greater "Keen Remembrance" at work here: Stevenson not only shows the role of the Scot in building Britain's first Empire, he offers intriguing glimpses into the forgotten history of Scottish participation against Britain's overseas interests.

The Master of Ballantrae is alone within Stevenson's novels in that it features India, that jewel in the crown of the British Empire, as a setting. Like the overwhelming majority of his fellow Britons Stevenson had no personal experience of life in that vast, multitudinous country, a condition that necessitated a certain caution on his part when describing it: "I should have to get into India and out of it again on a foot of fairy lightness".[27] Without personal experience to fall back upon Stevenson's India then becomes a useful nexus point for the conflation of sentiment, prejudices, imperial mythology, and second-hand information that served to define India in the late Victorian British psyche.

Stevenson's entry point for portraying India is the chaos of the Seven Years' War and the ill-fated expedition of the Comte de Lally.[28] The Seven Years' War, a conflict Churchill would later refer to as "The first World War"[29], is significant in that it marked the first large-scale experimentation with British military recruiting in the Highlands and the genesis of the Highlander's metamorphosis from feudal and atavistic "foreigner at home" to the exemplar of British martial prowess. Highland soldiers, many of them veterans of the Jacobite Uprising, "fought as well for the British state as they did for their clan chiefs" [30] with one pamphleteer writing:

> They were ofte [sic] tried and proved, and were always found to be firm, and resolute, and trusty troops. Our commanders in different parts of the world, reposed the highest confidence in them, upon the most hazardous and hardy services, and never were they disappointed by them.[31]

The Indian theatre of this worldwide conflict would then seem an opportune point for Stevenson to illustrate to his late Victorian reader the role of the former Jacobites in the service of Britain, but instead Stevenson allows us an insight into the counter-history of those other Jacobites who gambled and lost. The Chevalier Burke, like his

commander Thomas Arthur the Comte de Lally, is an Irish Jacobite in French service and their cause is that of *an empire that might have been.* The familiar imperial trope of the sepoy in British service is reversed, the Chevalier's account shows Indians in faithful service not only to the French Crown, but by extension the Scottish Jacobites: "The cipaye [sepoy] was a very honest man: he had served many years with the French colours, and would have let himself be cut to pieces for any of the brave countrymen of [James Durie]" (129). These are the men up against whom the architects of Britain's first empire were pitted, and through the sepoy's willingness to give his life in combat against the British forces, Stevenson offers a counterblast to Seeley's assertion that Britain's empire in India was gained in a mere fit of absent mindedness. The edge of empire thus serves as an existential space for men to gamble on their potential greatness, the Robert Clives are remembered, the unlucky Thomas Arthurs go to the wall. And yet when the Chevalier finds himself once more in the company of his former comrade James Durie it is telling that The Master has chosen to remain apart from the conflict, untroubled by either residual loyalty to his national origins, or to the adoptive country who granted him sanctuary and livelihood in his exile. Durie's loyalty lies only to himself, and it is with his sojourn in India that Stevenson introduces another paradigm of imperial experience, one that runs counter to the colonial ideal in both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

For a British gentleman to venture in foreign lands would be of little surprise for a nineteenth-century reader, indeed travelling to the periphery of empire would have seemed to many a product of the natural and superior vitality of the European genius. Sir Richard Burton's travels amongst foreign peoples would have been familiar, and there is something of Burton in the tableau the Chevalier encounters when coming upon the Master in his Indian garden:

> The cipaye led me forward accordingly to a place from which I had a clear view upon the house. It was surrounded with a wide verandah; a lamp, very well trimmed, stood upon the floor of it, and on either side of the lamp there sat a man, cross-legged, after the Oriental manner. Both, besides, were bundled up in muslin like two natives; and yet one of them was not only a

> white man, but a man very well known to me and the reader, being indeed that very Master of Ballantrae of whose gallantry and genius I have had to speak so often. (130)

The signifiers here are not merely of the order of physical disguise --"bundled up in muslin like…[a] native"-- but of cultural mannerism. James Durie sits cross-legged after the "oriental manner", an affectation that seems innocuous, but where the Master goes beyond the pale is in his deliberate transgression of the cultural boundaries that separate the European from the native and his denial of his own British identity. The Chevalier's surprise at finding his erstwhile friend in India suddenly turns to incredulity at The Master's refusal to speak in any but the "barbarous native dialect" (130). The interlocution is left to The Master's servant Secundra Dass, and the message he relays "The Sahib… understands no English language"(130) is an affront not only to the former friendship of the Chevalier but to the imperial hierarchy of Stevenson's own era. L. Cornell refers thus to the horror of the Briton 'going native':

> For the English, we must recall, never considered themselves colonists. To adapt to Indian conditions was to conform to an inferior standard. It was better to be alien and incompatible than to incur any suspicion of becoming like the natives of the country. [32]

Homi Babha has stressed that racist discourse is marked by the affirmation and production of difference: by stressing essentialist sets of traits that are said to be the properties of the racial or cultural group in question the colonised are rendered as a "fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable".[33] The Master's actions show a deliberate effort to penetrate the liminality of this 'otherness' and take on its attributes, and in a way wryly presents an unexpected extreme of the sentiment later voiced by Buchan that perhaps the Scots are the best "race on earth…[at] produc[ing] men capable of getting inside the skin of remote people".

If James Durie presents an example of one violation of the cultural signifiers of the imperialist divide then no such transgression is shown to us in the introduction of the Indian character who will prove to be of pivotal importance, his servant and

companion Secundra Dass. Indeed, the initial impression made upon the Chevalier does little to dispel the pronouncement by R.N. Cust that the "average Hindu...was a born gentleman, albeit manufactured from ages of etiquette, his chief characteristics...reserve and docility".[34] What is soon clear however are the unsounded depths within the Indian and the vital importance Dass plays both to the Master, and to Stevenson's own narrative. Stevenson remarks:

> I saw that Marryat, not less than Homer, Milton, and Virgil, profited by the choice of a familiar and legendary subject...and this set me cudgelling my brains, if by any chance I could hit upon some similar belief to be the centre-piece of my own meditated fiction. In the course of this vain search there cropped up in my memory a singular case of a buried and resuscitated fakir.[35]

> My story was now world-wide enough: Scotland, India, and America being all obligatory scenes. But of these India was strange to me except in books; *I had never known any living Indian save a Parsee, a member of my club in London,* equally civilised, and (to all seeing) equally occidental with myself. (emphasis added)[36]

It is of paramount significance that Stevenson's personal acquaintance with the people of India was so limited. One might suggest practical happenstance resulting from a want of personal experience dictated the very mystery of Secundra Dass's character, allowing him to become a nexus for all the perceptions, stereotypes, and tropes of 'the Indian' in the late Victorian British psyche. In charting the shifting, conflicting, and cross-pollinating readings of India projected onto Secundra Dass it is easy to forget that Stevenson's experience of the Indian people did not solely come at a remove: Stevenson did have first hand contact with the Parsee member of his London club. The implication in Stevenson's explanation of the genesis of *The Master Of Ballantrae* is that the Parsee gentleman was an insufficient model for Secundra Dass, however one should bear in mind that Stevenson's ostensibly candid forewords and author's notes were often harnessed in Romantic service of the texts themselves. The dedication to Charles Baxter in *Kidnapped* famously reduces the historic dimension of the tale by declaring "it is more honest to confess at once how little I am touched by the desire of accuracy. This is no furniture for the scholar's

library, but a book for the winter evening school-room when the tasks are over and the hour for bed draws near"(*Kidnapped*, dedication 'To Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley', 3),' a claim that belies the extensive research Stevenson made into the legal history of the Appin Murder. Barry Menikoff goes so far as to suggest this statement of intent on Stevenson's part has been fundamental in shaping the reader's engagement with the text:

> It would be hard to overstate the hold this...has had on the popular and critical understanding of *Kidnapped*. It sets up an opposition between serious work and play; it identifies the book's audience; and it insinuates an idea as to the nature or genre of the test itself. The problem is that these assertions may not be true -- or they may be, at best, only half-true.[37]

With such a ready example of faux-candour one might ask what half-truths lie in *The Master of Ballantrae*: if it was truly the case that Stevenson excluded the characteristics of his Parsee fellow clubman in his portrayal of Secundra Dass, then why? Just who was this Parsee member of the Savile Club who impressed Stevenson so notably with his "civilised" and "occidental" character? Stevenson refrains from naming him but it is very likely that the gentleman in question was Dadabhai Naoroji, later to be elected to Westminster as Britain's first Indian MP. The publisher George Haven Putnam recalls making the acquaintance of "a scholarly Indian, I believe a Parsee" through the Savile Club, remarking that "my friend had won a seat as a Liberal in one of the Holborn districts of London, but in a second contest had been unsuccessful".[38] While Putnam's recollection of Naoroji's constituency was slightly in error -- Naoroji was the Liberal Member of Parliament for Finsbury Central, though he had previously rin for Holborn in 1886 but failed -- Naoroji's holding of the Finsbury Central position for a single term was indeed correct, confirming that his Parsee friend at the Savile Club was indeed Dadabhai Naoroji. Working on the likely premise that the Parsee friend ostensibly disregarded by Stevenson as an unsuitable source for the characterisation of the Indian natives was Dadabhai Naoroji raises a series of questions concerning Stevenson's engagement with and portrayal of India. What characteristics of Naoroji impinged

upon Stevenson his "civilised" and "occidental" nature? What qualities expected in an Indian did Stevenson find absent in the future MP? And furthermore: to what extent has Stevenson belied the actual influence of Naoroji's character in *The Master of Ballantrae*?

To answer these questions it is necessary to look at Naoroji in some further detail. Born in Bombay in 1825, the only child in a poor Parsee priest's family, the academically gifted Dadabhai would go on to become the first Indian to be awarded the Professorship of Mathematics and Natural History at Elphinstone College in Bombay. Alongside his academic career Naoroji championed a wide range of political and social causes: campaigning for educational and social reforms -- in particular female education, founding cultural and literary societies, and contributing articles to newspapers and political journals.[39]

Moving to England in 1855, where he would set up his own cotton company, Naoroji's business career was, according to Rozina Visram, "secondary to his life's main mission to voice the political and economic grievances of the millions of Indians suffering under British rule and to try to change that relationship".[40] The relocation of Naoroji the educated colonial subject from India to the imperial centre allows us a distinctive variation from the tropes of the Indian ayah or manservant accompanying his or her master to the 'home island', a trope to which Dass provides an eighteenth-century example. Naoroji differs in that he possesses an agency missing from the servant class, an agency that one can argue was of a greater degree than that of the dilettante ex-patriate Rajahs whose domicile in London had some of the characteristics of life in a gilded cage. A speaker of English, Hindustani, Gujarati, Persian and French (a panoply of languages that serve as signifiers for the cultural and political landscape of India) Naoroji was the native who *could* speak, and, like Secundra Dass, his facility for languages was of paramount importance with regards to his capacity for effecting change: Secundra Dass's power comes from his facility with the language of hegemony and his ability to make himself privy to information that will potentially impact on the Master. Whereas the

Durrisdeer party assume Secundra Dass to be a monoglot, Naoroji faced criticism for the very qualities that allowed him to communicate with the Imperial centre. Sir Lepel Griffith, Chairman of the East India Association, hit out at Naoroji with the jibe that the only talent Naoroji brought to his political career was "a gift of fluency common to all Orientals".[41] Furthermore, his very status as a Parsee was used to argue his unfitness to accurately speak for the peoples of India. Griffith accused Naoroji of being:

> An alien in race, in custom, in religion; destitute of local sympathy or local knowledge, no more unsuitable representative could be imagined or suggested. As to the people of India, Mr. Naoroji no more represents them than a Polish Jew settled in Whitechapel represents the people of England. He is a Parsee, a member of a small foreign colony, probably semitic in origin, settled in the west of India...they are quite as much aliens to the people of India as the English rulers can possibly be.[42]

Certainly it is reaching to single out Naoroji's status as a Parsee as having precluded him in Stevenson's eyes from being a suitable model for James Durie's Indian manservant. Nevertheless one wonders if, while judging Naoroji as "civilised" and "occidental", Stevenson didn't see something more of himself in the future MP, in the commonalities of those who express themselves via the written and the spoken word? It may have been that connection -- the facility to communicate – that dispelled the requisite quality of 'otherness' Stevenson required for his imperial romance. Perhaps the feeling of common ground with the Parsee came not from Naoroji's own personal characteristics but rather from some shared sense of position in the British Empire relative to their identities as Scot and Indian. Visram reports that Liberal friends of Naoroji urged him to "try a Scottish seat as the Scots had the reputation of being 'more Liberal than English Liberals'".[43] Would Stevenson have subscribed to that view? Was Stevenson one of those anonymous Liberal friends who recommended that option? For all this conjecture it is tempting to think that some part of Naoroji found its way into Secundra Dass, a character whose enigmatic motivations and loyalty to his foreign Master might be explained by something Naoroji told Putnam "partly in joke, but with a good deal of earnestness":

> Mr. Putnam [he said], the history of my country goes back, as you know, some thousands of years. During that period, we have made a number of experiments in the management of our government. We have, so to speak, employed first one set of governors and then another. Some of the rulers thus called in have been exceedingly brutal, many have been unduly extravagant and have largely exhausted the resources of the people, and most of them have done their work in a very stupid and unsatisfactory fashion. After an experience covering thousands of years, we patriotic Indians are prepared to say that on the whole we prefer to utilise as governors Englishmen to any other rulers with whom we have experimented. They also have often been stupid and there have been times in the past when they have been both brutal, unjust, and extravagant, but as compared with their predecessors, the stupidity, and the injustice, and the brutality are but small matters. They do understand the rough work of governing and they do this work more intelligently than any rulers we have ever been able to secure, or than we could at this time possibly secure. The opinion, therefore of the men of my group is strongly in favour of English rule. The Englishman does not know how to think, but he can and will maintain order, administer justice, carry on the service of the state with a moderate burden of taxation, and keep India at peace. We are ready to pay the cost of the service and to say "thank you" besides. He can leave to the Indian the work of thinking, for which the Englishman is constitutionally unfitted. [44]

In the capacity of manservant Dass accompanies The Master on his return to Durrisdeer, and by bringing the imperial subject to the home islands Stevenson allows us a rare example of the native subject of empire translated to a region of the British Isles that had itself been recently subjected to the imposition of a central authority culturally divorced from the local populace. As retainer and confidante to the Master, Dass is the Indian counterpart to Lord Henry's steward Mackellar, and the Scot's nose seems put out of joint by this new arrival at Durrisdeer. His jibe upon the Master's ill-fortune is redolent of the casual racism of the era:

> I could see that he was an alien, of a darker hue than any man of Europe, very frailly built, with a singular large forehead, and a secret eye…
>
> "Ha!" said I, "is this you?"-- and I was pleased with the unconcern of my own voice.
>
> "It is even myself, worthy Mackellar," says the Master.
>
> "This time you have brought the black dog visibly upon your back," I continued.
>
> "Referring to Secundra Dass?" asked the Master. "He is a native gentleman of India."

> "Hum!" said I. "I am no great lover of either you or your friends Mr Bally"
> ...
> Here the Master addressed himself to Secundra Dass in Hindustanee, from which I gathered (I freely confess with a high degree of pleasure) that my remarks annoyed him. (134-135)[45]

While the grating of Ephraim Mackellar's nerves by the presence of Secundra Dass in Durrrisdeer belongs to the realm of fiction, it is tempting to ponder for a moment upon how closely this fictional scenario mirrored events in the highest halls of the nation, for at the time of writing Queen Victoria had taken a new companion in the place of her much missed John Brown, the Munshi Abdul Karim. The epitome of the loyal Scot had been replaced by an Indian and "in the golden haze of the Jubilee, Abdul Karim stirred once more that same royal imagination which had magnified the virtues of John Brown".[46] The Munshi's presence provides us with a fascinating glimpse into Indo-Caledonian relations in the rarefied milieu of the Palace, allowing us also to surmise that the themes Stevenson wrote about in *The Master of Ballantrae* also applied at the very symbolic heart of the British Empire: "The court, who were at first delighted to see Indians putting the noses of Highlanders out of joint, now realised that King Stork had supplanted King Log"[47]. Certainly Mackellar's references to the "black dog" would have been unwelcome in the presence of the the Empress of India: "Opposition only increased the Queen's fervour [for the Munshi]. It was strictly forbidden at Court to call Indians "black men" and Lord Salisbury once had to apologise for using the term."[48] In a telling comment upon racial and anti-colonial tensions in India Adul Karim praised the Queen's own commitment to learning Hindustani: "she was soon able to greet Maharanees in their native tongue and hear in return that if English ladies would only do likewise there would be no more massacres."[49]

It is that precise fear of massacre at the hands of one's ostensible servant that formed the counter-current to the Victorian assumption that the Indian subject was content under British governance. The traditional stereotype of the Indian imperial subject as popularly admitted prior to 1857 was one of mild obedience, a servant

people given to natural submission before the vigorous European. H.B. Paul, writing in 1855, presented the obeisance of the Indian in no uncertain terms:

> The Indian is docile, harmless, and industrious; and, when he has the opportunity...under the guidance and protection of a European, whom he reveres, he will do almost anything; and even in the lower castes, there is a degree of refinement about them which is surprising.[50]

The watershed in Victorian attitudes to the native peoples of the Indian sub-continent occurred with the Indian Uprising of 1857. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to chronicle the events of the 1857 Uprising, suffice it to say the rebellion of the show-piece Bengal Army was a particular blow to the established orthodoxy of the British Empire; this high-caste force should have been, within the racialist ideology of mid-nineteenth century imperial thought, a bulwark of loyal martial service. In the face of such rebellion hitherto accepted certitudes suffered an almost hysterical *volte-face.* Dr. John Cumming, writing in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising, asserted:

> It used to be said of the Hindoos that they were such a mild, amiable, and gentle race...But what is the disclosure? That greater liars do not exist in the world than the Hindoos; that you cannot always trust them out of sight; that they are deceptive; and we have seen by recent events such outbursts of fanaticism, cruelty, bloodshed, and crime, that we wonder how any that knew them thirty years ago could given them such and so splendid a character.[51]

This newly assertive interpretation of Indian identity did however draw upon and take validation from an earlier paradigm of Indian deviancy, the British representations of the Thuggee cult of murder that had captured the public imagination in the earlier part of the nineteenth-century.

In the 1830s the British reader was captured by accounts of a secret cult of highwaymen-robbers who, in supposed devotion to the Hindu Goddess Kali, robbed and murdered thousands of wayfarers each year. The British counter-offensive of 1828-1837 under the leadership of William Henry Sleeman led to over three thousand Thugs being hanged, transported, or imprisoned, and a new word being added to the English language.[52] Philip Meadows Taylor's novel *Confessions of a*

Thug (1839) would illuminate the particular circumstances and motivations of these murderers, but, perhaps most distressingly to a society that favoured the anthropological characterisation of ethnic groups according to essentialist attributes, Thuggee mocked simple certitudes with its crossing of the Islamic/Hindu divide. The quasi religious fraternity of Thuggee drew its adherents from all regions, religions, classes, and castes, united by their devotion to Kali and the sacralised act of strangulation. To the British imperial psyche the events of 1857 would seem a validation of Philip Meadows Taylor's novel, the trope of the monstrous thug lurking behind the smiling and facile visage of the seemingly loyal Sepoy serving both to reduce the grievances of the native peoples to the folly of irrational and barbaric religions, and to justify the draconian measures used in quelling the Uprising. And yet the relatively easy rehabilitation of the Thugs in fact and fiction allows an unsettling variation upon Naoroji's assertion that Indians "prefer to utilise as governors Englishmen to any other rulers with whom we have experimented", with the supposedly re-educated strangler of Meadow's novel asserting: "I am a Thug, my father and grandfather were Thugs, and I have thugged with many. Let the government employ me and I will do its work."[53]

Such a statement finds resonance with Stevenson's representation of Secundra Dass' adeptness at murder. In this Dass joins a long list of Stevenson characters skilled at killing with subterfuge. One is reminded of Meadows' assertion that:

> Ameer Ali [the central character of *Confessions of a Thug*] *is* a murderer, one before whom every murderer in the known world, in times past or present - except perhaps some of his own profession, the free bands of Germany, the Lanzknechts, the Banditti, the Condottieri of Italy, the Buccaneers and Pirates, and in our own time the fraternity of Burke and Hares (a degenerate system of Thuggee, by the by, at which Ameer Ali, when I told him of them, laughed heartily, and said they were sad bunglers) - must be counted men of small account.

The choice of members by Philip Meadows for his historic parade of villainy is an interesting one for the Stevenson reader as it is notable that many of these murderers figure prominently in Stevenson's work, whether it is the "Buccaneers and Pirates"

of *Treasure Island* (1882) and their shabby degraded cousins of *The Master of Ballantrae*, or Burke and Hare, those quintessential murderers of Stevenson's native Edinburgh who figure prominently in his 'The Bodysnatcher' (1884). Meadows Taylor's statement that the Banditti, Condottieri, Buccaneers etc. are equalled in the practice of murder by the adherents of Thuggee is an explicit expression of the idea that those Indians share commonality with the villains of Europe. Europeans are not exempt from murderous impulses and ignoble outrages, indeed their history is filled with deeds that are starkly red of hand, and if the Thug has been more recently successful in his career of infamy (itself a questionable claim) it is not due to any essential barbarity attributable to his race or culture.

Stevenson too subverts 'the Thug in our midst' paradigm throughout *The Master of Ballantrae,* with the memoirs of the Chevalier de Burke recounting the Master's betrayal of his pirate confrères, and his murder of the sailor Dutton when he becomes mired in quicksand:

> "Lend a hand," said he [Dutton], "I am in a bad place."
> ...
> "For the Lord's sake," says he, "look sharp."
> Ballintrae was now got close up. "Keep still," says he and seemed to consider; and then, "Reach out both your hands!"
> Dutton laid down his pistol , and so watery was the top surface that it went clear out of sight; with an oath he stooped to snatch it; and as he did so, Ballintrae leaned forth and and stabbed him between the shoulders. Up went his hands over his head -- I know not whether with the pain or to ward himself; and in the next moment he doubled forward in the mud. (49-50)

This murder of a defenceless man who was himself a seasoned pirate diminishes all caught in the tableau: the victim, the Master, and Burke himself who confesses "my sense of humanity was so affected by the horridness of the fact that I could scarce find breath to answer with."(70) The Chevalier serves as a ready avatar for the naivety of the Romance impulse, and Stevenson, by placing him in such situations, calls into question the moral basis on which the novel of violent action rests. The Chevalier has literary ambitions, yet his narrative allows Stevenson to

subvert the very tropes of those novels with which he himself made his name, novels such as *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island.* When the Chevalier Burke finds himself caught among pirates -- the character archetype synonymous with Stevenson's popular reputation -- they are led by an impostor of Edward Teach who explicitly illuminates the theatricality and dangerous braggadocio at the heart of pirate identity:

> Presently he comes on deck, a perfect figure of fun, his face blacked, his hair and whiskers curled, his belt stuck full of pistols; chewing bits of glass so that the blood ran down his chin and brandishing a dirk...The first that came near him was the fellow who had sent the rum overboard the day before; him he stabbed to the heart, damning him for a mutineer; and then capered about the body, raving and swearing and daring us to come on. It was the silliest exhibition; and yet dangerous too, for the cowardly fellow was plainly working up to another murder. (40)

Burke's complicity in piracy fills him with revulsion: "there was something in the smallness of the numbers engaged, and the bleak dangerous sea-surroundings, that made these acts of piracy far the most revolting" (42), yet in his service of this ludicrous, vainglorious, and dangerous impostor we might see a parallel that escapes the Chevalier; that of his own avowed monarch, the tartan-clad Young Pretender Charles Stuart who himself derived so much of his identity from the Highland dress-up box. This episode does not stop at the deconstruction of *Treasure Island*; *Kidnapped*'s flight in the heather at the side of a noble Jacobite possessing an intimate knowledge of the land is replaced by the appalling journey through the shifting morass of the American swampland, with Burke at the side of a villain whose sympathies and capricious cruelties are as unpredictable as the quicksand itself. The strength that David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart are able to draw on in their flight is that of old sureties that survive the tumults of the '45 and the dissolution of the Highland clan system. For all the draconian measures of the Hanoverians -- the disarming of the populace, the proscribing of the national dress -- there is yet a bedrock of feeling that can be turned to in the Highland inhabitants: "the tenants of Appin have to pay a rent to King George, but their hearts are staunch,

they are true to their chief; and what with love and a bit of pressure, and maybe a threat or two, the poor folk scrape up a second rent for Ardshiel" (72). None such sentiment exists in the American wilderness. The Albanian trader who offers them help is somewhat moved by their tale that they are Jacobite fugitives, yet in his vulgar wink and his "I guess that you and your Prince Charlie got more than you cared about" (p.53), it is clear that the events of the '45 lie on the far side of a gulf as much psychic as oceanic: they may be in Britain's North American empire but already there is a degree of separation that presages the coming estrangement of the Revolutionary War. Theirs is a mindset that already looks forward to 1776, rather than back to 1745. Writing at a later time when Britain's empire was at her height, Stevenson shows us the speck within the fruit of the first Empire, and the parallels are there to be drawn between the expanding empire of the eighteenth-century and the crisis that was to strike, and the feelings of uncertainty that formed an undercurrent within the empire of Stevenson's day.

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1 In a letter to W.H. Low, Stevenson referred to *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a "gothic gnome": "I send you herewith a Gothic gnome, interesting I think, and he came out of a deep mine, where he guards the fountain of tears." letter to W.H. Low, January 2nd, 1886, *Letters* op.cit. Vol. 6, p.163

2 See Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

3 R.L. Stevenson, 'Note to *The Master of Ballantrae*' (1893-4), in *The Master of Ballantrae,* Adrian Poole (ed.) (London: Penguin, 1996) p.222

4 R.L. Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae,* ibid. All further references are from this edition and are indicated parenthetically in the text.

5 cf. Stevenson's Charles Darnaway, the narrator of 'The Merry Men', in *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2002)

6 Stevenson, a member of the Scottish Bar, was a profound student of law and history. Barry Menikoff has written at length about the influence of the influence of Stevenson's legal training upon the author's work, and Stevenson's wide knowledge of Scottish criminal history. See *Narrating Scotland*, op.cit.

7 R.L. Stevenson, *Catriona*, op.cit. p.357

8 R.L. Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, op.cit, all subsequent references will be entered parenthetically within the text.

9 Robin Nicholson *Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Making of a Myth: A Study in Portraiture,* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002) p. 111

10 Peter Womack *Improvement and Romance*, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989) p. 52

11 *Caledonia: a monthly magazine of literature, antiquity, & tradition, chiefly northern*, W. Jolly & Sons, 1895, Volume 1

12 Murray G. H. Pittock *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University

Press, 1999) p.73

13 A.C. Macdonnel, *Lays of the Heather* (1896), (Charleston, South Carolina: BiblioBazaat, 2010)

14 Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.6

15 Ibid p.1

16 Richard Finlay, 'Scotland and the Monarchy in the Twentieth Century', W.L. Miller (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1900 to Devolution and Beyond*, (Oxford: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.17-34

17 Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism* op. cit.p.4

18 Ibid. p.5

19 Peter Womack, op. cit. p.53

20 Julia Reid, op.cit. p. 133

21 The Master's facility in languages is a key dramatic device within the text. When in Scotland James Durie readily switches from standard English -- the language of hegemony -- to Lallans (Scots) as the need requires, the broad Scots being the more persuasive code when communicating with the common folk of his district. While this may be read as indicating a parochiality within the local populace or a resistance to what they perceive to be 'foreign' or 'Whiggish' characteristics in standard English one might also suggest that Stevenson attributes superior persuasive, emotive, and communicative properties to the Scots tongue.

In his essay 'Some Aspects of Robert Burns' Stevenson, comparing the English with the Scots, writes of reading a description by William Shenstone where the poet describes "a gentleman engaged in sliding or walking on thin ice", explaining his inability to remember the exact details as being a fault of the 'Englishness' of the poet's style, and comparing it unfavourably to Robert Burns' poetry in the Scots:

> You see my memory fails me, and I positively cannot recollect whether his hero was sliding or walking; as though a writer should describe a skirmish, and the reader, at the end, be still uncertain whether it were a charge of cavalry or a slow and stubborn advance of foot. There could be no such ambiguity in Burns; his work is at the opposite pole from such indefinite and stammering performances...Yet Burns, like most great artists, proceeded from a school and continued a tradition; only the school and the tradition were Scotch, and not English. While the English language was becoming daily more pedantic and inflexible, and English letters more colourful and slack, there was another dialect in the sister country, and a different school of poetry tracing its descent, through King James from Chaucer. The dialect alone accounts for much; for it was then written colloquially, which kept it fresh and supple; and, although not shaped for heroic flights, it was a direct and vivid medium for all that had to do with social life.

Stevenson's characterising of standard English as "inflexible and slack" is redolent of the strict, legalistic McKellor, while the"fresh and supple" Scots calls to mind the quicksilver oratory of the Master, his use of the colloquial proving the more direct and vivid medium for appealing to the common people of Ballantrae. See 'Some Aspects of Robert Burns' in R.L. Stevenson, *The Lantern-Bearers and Other Essays*, Jeremy Treglown (ed.), op.cit. p. 121

22 The character of Stevenson's James Durie can easily be described as 'Byronic', but if we look for similar descriptions of character within Stevenson's *oeuvre* we find Stevenson describing Robert Burns in a manner very similar to that in which he describes the Master:

The battle of his life was lost; in forlorn efforts to do well, in desperate submissions to evil, the last years flew by. His temper is dark and explosive, launching epigrams, quarrelling with his friends, jealous of young puppy officers...sick, sad, and jaded, he can refuse...no opportunity to shine; and he who had once refused the invitations of lords and ladies is now whistled to the inn by any curious stranger. His death...in his thirty-seventh year was indeed a kindly dispensation...He had trifled with life, and must pay the penalty. He had chosen to be Don Juan, he had grasped at temporary pleasures, and substantial happiness and solid industry

had passed him by. He died of being Robert Burns, and there is no levity in such statement of the case; for shall we not, one and all, deserve a similar epitaph? op.cit. pp. 120-121.

23 Julia Reid, op. cit. p. 132

24 Sir Walter Scott "The Family Legend", *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, (A. Constable, 1821) p.482

25 Sir John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Course of Lectures*, (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005). p.8

26 John Buchan, *Greenmantle*, (London: Penguin, 2008) p.23

27 R.L. Stevenson, 'Note to *The Master of Ballantrae'*, op.cit. p.223

28 For biographical details on the French-Irish soldier Thomas Arthur, the Comte de Lally, and his ill-fated military mission in India see John Keegan and Andrew Wheatcroft, *Who's Who in Military History: from 1453 to the present day,* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002) p.162

29 Winston Churchill, Cited in H.V. Bowen, *War and British Society 1688-1815.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.7

30 Heather Streets, op.cit. p.58

31 Ibid. p.58

32 L. Cornell, *Kipling in India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966) p.5

33 Homi Babha 'The Other Question', *Screen* 24, November-December, 1983 p. 23

34 R.N. Cust, *Pictures of Indian Life Sketch* [sic] *With the Pen From 1852 to 1881*, (London: 1881) pp.255-256

35 R.L. Stevenson, 'Note to *The Master of Ballantrae',* op. cit. p.223

36 Ibid. p.223

37 Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland,* op.cit. p.6

38 George Haven Putnam, *Memories of a Publisher 1865 - 1915* (New York: Minerva Group Inc. 2001) p.284

39 Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars, and Princes: The story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London, Sydney, Dover New Hampshire: Pluto Press Limited, 1986) p.79

40 Ibid p.79

41 Ibid. p.85

42 Ibid. p.85

43 Ibid. p.85

44 George Haven Putnam, op. cit. pp.285-286.

45 cf. Gordon Darnaway's reaction to the the "black man" in Stevenson's 'The Merry Men' (1882), *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2002).

46 Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria R.I.* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987) p. 502

47 Ibid. p.509

48 Ibid. p.509

49 Ibid. p.509

50 H.B. Evans, *Our West Indian Colonies: Jamaica, a Source of National Wealth and Honour*, (London: Effingham Wilson, 1855) p.34

51 Dr. Cumming, *Aborigines' Friend*, I, No.1 (1858) p.346

52 Nick Mirsky, preface to Philip Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. vii

53 James Sleeman, *Thug, Or a Million Murders* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1920)

Chapter 3

"The Mere Kingdom of the Devil": Robert Louis Stevenson and Irish agitation in late Victorian Britain.

The first two chapters of this thesis have examined the interplay and negotiation of cultural identities in the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite Rising, with an emphasis upon how that eighteenth-century trauma served to shape and define Scottish identities in the greater British and imperial contexts right through to Stevenson's own era. In this chapter I turn to how Stevenson engaged with what was very much a raw wound in late Victorian British culture, the Irish Question.

For the last two decades of the nineteenth-century, British politics was dominated by the Irish Question. Irish unrest and the movement for Home Rule informed not only the domestic politics of the home nations, but also the discourse around the British imperial project in general. Desire on the behalf of the Irish people for independence cut at the very sinews that bound the Empire in unity. How could a global empire of myriad peoples be sustained if the imperial centre could not even maintain effective control over a constituent part of the United Kingdom? Such arguments linger in part today, and the thorny question of whether the Irish were

partners in empire or colonial subjects remains the problematic subject of a debate thankfully beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I shall explore how Robert Louis Stevenson engaged with the Irish Question and Irish agitation and how the events and discourse around those issues informed both his writing and his personal life.

The only major fictional work in the Stevenson canon with an explicitly Irish dimension is *The Dynamiter* (1885), written in collaboration with his wife Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson.[1] The origins of the novel can be traced back to the winter of 1883 when the couple were domiciled in Hyères, France. It was there that the already ailing Stevenson was afflicted by contagious Egyptian ophthalmia, an attack which rendered him temporarily blind. Occurring at a time when Stevenson's health was already badly compromised the resulting surfeit of disabilities are described by Fanny thus:

> Condemned to lie helpless on his bed on account of the sciatica, his right arm bound to his side to lest an inadvertent movement might bring on a recurrence of the haemorrhage, speech denied him for the same reason, and now a bandage over his eyes that precluded any attempt to use them![2] (xi)

Confined to a darkened room where Fanny could not read to him, and thus stripped of almost all means of occupation or distraction, Stevenson hit upon the novelty that his wife should become his story teller. In her words:

> I was to go out for an hour's walk every afternoon, if it were only back and forth in front of our door, and invent a story to repeat when I came in - a sort of Arabian Nights Entertainment where I was to take the part of Scheherazade and he the Sultan. There had been several dynamite outrages in London about this time, the most of them turning out fiascos. It occurred to me to take an impotent dynamite intrigue as the thread to string my stories on. (xi-xii)

The stories might have remained solely a private entertainment and a footnote for Stevenson's biographers had the Stevensons not fallen into some financial hardship the following year. Finding themselves very short of money the stories were quickly committed to writing with a framing tale involving Prince Florizel that brought them firmly into the ambit of Stevenson's previous *New Arabian Nights* (1882). Even

thus the volume was slim, and Stevenson added to it the new 'Zero's Tale of the Explosive Bomb', a story that extended the Fenian dynamiter theme in its farcical portrayal of a man trying desperately to plant a time bomb rigged to explode within the hour and unhappily having it returned into his own hands on each occasion by an unwitting public.[3] It's a simple tale characterised by its black humour; Stevenson asserted that it was "a waste of ink" to portray the dynamite outrages in *The Dynamiter* "with a serious spirit", as to do so would be to play into the hands of those who wished to inspire terror.[4]

Certainly the desire on the part of the Stevensons to ameliorate the climate of fear in London at that time was, as Barbara Melchiori has noted, an admirable one. Melchiori interprets the intent of the authors as "to counteract the scaremongering of the press after the early London explosions by showing the terrorists to be hopelessly inefficient and dangerous to no one but themselves."[5] To understand that intention, however, it is necessary to cast an eye upon the events of that period.

The invention of dynamite by Alfred Nobel in 1866 brought a new power into the hands of civil engineers. Cheap and easy both to manufacture and use, dynamite facilitated the clearing and blasting required for the great construction projects of the period; but that very ease of manufacture put it within reach of those who would misuse it for the purposes of insurrection and terror. That possibility came to pass in Britain with the bombing campaign of the 1880s; secreting his dynamite within the ubiquitous Gladstone bag of the period, the Victorian political assassin or terrorist had the means to conduct disproportionate warfare upon the population centres of a nation wholly unused to attacks on home soil. Viewed from the perspective of the twenty-first century it is difficult to imagine the shock and horror felt by a nation that had never seen explosives used against the civilian public. The concept was alien and the language coined to describe it was as morally charged as it is now archaic: a bomb was an 'infernal machine', or a 'peccant engine'; when used the result was a 'dynamite outrage'. In the words of Melchiori:

> The Victorians were deeply shocked by the dynamite outrages...the dynamite explosions directed against their most cherished institutions seemed to give the

whole of the existing structure of society a premonitory shake"[6]

Who were these dynamite terrorists? Almost without exception those active in the dynamite attacks were Irishmen and women of the Fenian Movement, fighting for the political independence of Ireland. The history and culture of Irish Nationalism was (and still is) arguably a mythic cosmology in itself; encompassing piety and nationalist feeling, memories -- folk and actual, cataclysmic psychic scars such as the Great Famine, and a hierarchy of saints and martyrs religious and secular. The very name *Fenian*, taken from the *Fianna* or Gaelic brotherhood of warriors in the saga of Finn MacCumhail, posits those who sought to commit violence in the cause of Irish independence within a mythological continuum.

Though Ireland may be a small country the Fenians had the support (albeit tacit) of a very large one: The United States. While the Irish peasant class might have been under-represented in the British Houses of Parliament, this was not the case in the body politic of the United States. Irish-Americans were one of the most powerful political groups in the US and the depth of feeling did not pass unnoticed in Britain. The late Victorian British-Canadian historian Goldwin Smith laced his respect for the familial responsibility of the Irish with condemnation of Irish-American subversion:

> Family affection within the Irish is beautifully strong, and the members of a family who had gone before sent home their earnings to pay for the passage of those they had left behind. It has been reckoned that the Irish have expended twenty millions sterling in that way. With a passionate love of Ireland the American Irish combined a still more passionate hatred of England as Ireland's tyrant and oppressor. Invasion and destruction of England were their dream.[7]

Such hatred cut across class boundaries in the new nation, for the prospect of an independent Ireland on the doorstep of the US's main trade rival was for many Americans an attractive one, a factor that has been suggested retarded official government proscription of the fund-raising and recruiting going on in the Irish-American community. The two main militant US organisations of Irish subversion were *Clan na Gael* and the Skirmishers, the latter led by the figurehead of Fenian

terrorism, O'Donovan Rossa. The British press were not slow in capitalising upon the sensational aspects of Americans wholly committed to violence against the British people, with particular emphasis on such "piquant" entreaties as this letter of subscription to O'Donovan Rossa's "Skirmishing Fund":

> **Irish American Views of the Dynamite Plots**
> ...
> W.P Hanley of Brunean Valley sends "2 dols. For your paper and 1 dol. for dynamite" to help to tear "London or Dublin Castle to pieces." The writer hopes Rossa will "not forget Red Jim and Coleman, the Mayo fiend." Mr Hanley concludes thus: "You can rely on me: I will back you both up as long as I can command a dollar. All I am afraid of is that I will be too old to take a hand in the blood-spilling. It may be wrong from me to say it, but I delight to look at my enemy's claret flowing. I can look at it with a mind as placid as when I look on water running in a brook." [8]

As long as the violent desires of those such as Mr. Hanley remained in the realm of mere wish Fenianism might have remained a distasteful novelty to the British public, but the "Skirmishing Fund" led to actual bomb attacks on the British mainland. At first the injuries were minor. Three people were injured in a bomb blast in Salford in January of 1881, in March an unexploded bomb was found in the Mansion House, the residence of the Lord Mayor of London, with a second unsuccessful attempt on the same target in the May of the following year. As the campaign escalated it became more audacious and more dangerous. 1883 saw bombs exploding in Glasgow, and in London with infernal machines exploding in Whitehall and the office of *The Times*; the dynamite campaign was metamorphosing from one of bungling "fiascos" (to use Fanny Stevenson's description) into something altogether more deadly. This was the point at which Mrs Stevenson began her Scheherazadean task, and *The Dynamiter* has a uneasy mixture of tones indicative of both the Stevensons' and the British media's changing perceptions of the extent of the threat posed by the dynamite faction.

The tales within *The Dynamiter* are very much successors to those in Stevenson's earlier curio *New Arabian Nights* (1882), a text memorably, but not I think inaccurately, labelled by Stevenson's biographer J.C. Furnas as a "spring-heeled

freak".[9] The curious nature of the book is compounded by the shared authorship, with Fanny wholly writing 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' and 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' and Stevenson responsible for the remainder. Mrs Stevenson's tales strike a very different note to those of her husband, and evidence what has been described as a 'romantic, almost mystical sensibility".[10] 'The Story of the Destroying Angel' in particular is marked by a sense of overwhelming dread quite at odds with the humour of Robert Louis Stevenson's contributions to the volume. The heroine of the piece, raised among Mormons and unhappily condemned against her will to polygamous marriage, would seem to be a prototype for Lucy Ferrier in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Study in Scarlet* (1887), and her witness to the detonation of an infernal device by 'The Doctor' -- the malign genius of the tale -- shows a very real awe of the terrible potential harnessed within Nobel's invention:

> ...suddenly, without one premonitory rustle, there burst forth a report of such bigness that it shook the earth and set the echoes of the mountains thundering from cliff to cliff. A pillar of amber flame leaped from the chimney-top and fell in multitudes of sparks; and at the same time the lights in the windows turned for one instant ruby red and then expired. (25-26)

With its "ruby red" flaming light Mrs. Stevenson's florid imagining of the explosion well stresses the diabolic connotations of the Victorian "infernal machines", and her description of the writhing victim of that chemical diablerie shows that she had given specific thought to the suffering of those injured in the recent dynamite bombings:

> There broke from the now darkened interior a series of yells -- whether a man or woman it was impossible to guess -- the door flew open, and there ran into the moonlight, at the top of the long slope, a figure clad in white, which began to leap and throw itself down, and roll as if in agony before the house. (26)

As already noted there is a marked, some might say problematic, contrast between the awesome and Romantic tone of Fanny's tales and the capricious and arch humour of her husband's portion of *The Dynamiter*. There is nothing of the fiasco in 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', but not so the tales that follow it. It is

Chapter 3: "The Mere Kingdom of the Devil"

Stevenson's contribution to the set of interlocking stories that link the text to the preceding *New Arabian Nights* through the presence of that book's enigmatic protagonist Prince Florizel. Florizel's name and status as Prince of Bohemia are obviously taken from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and the similarities with that dramatist's *oeuvre* do not end there; *The Dynamiter* belongs to an unusual space within the Stevenson canon, one that to continue the Shakespearean conceit might be described as Stevenson's 'Problem Novels'. *The Dynamiter,* like its companion text *New Arabian Nights,* evidences an artificiality and dislocation of dramatic tone that only problematises rather than elucidates the moral lessons that might be contained within the stylised construction of the arabesque tales. Further, the Shakespearian 'Problem' nature of the text extends beyond technique and tone to also encompass parallels of character between that of Stevenson's Prince Florizel and Shakespeare's Duke Vincentio of *Measure For Measure*. Both characters are noble rulers, both represented as supposedly wise, virtuous, good, and kind-hearted, yet both choose to absent themselves from their duties in order to conduct occult and byzantine machinations that are ostensibly for the good, and yet which arguably cause as much turmoil as they pacify. Duke Vincentio's alter-ego is the friar Ludowick, and there is also something of a religious theme hinted at in the name of Prince Florizel's other identity: Theophilis Godall. The name Theophilis, taken from the Greek 'Theophilos', has a Biblical provenance: in the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* it is used as an honorific meaning 'friend of God' or '(be)loved by God' or 'loving God'. Taken in conjunction with the surname 'Godall' (God All) Florizel's role within *New Arabian Nights* and *The Dynamiter* begins to assume a religious dimension that obliquely hints at the role of the Christian God in Stevenson's world. While his people may have turned their backs on him, the Bohemian Prince remains a deceptively active force in the world, his quiet actions continuing even if they are unrecognised. The framing tale 'The Prologue of the Cigar Divan' shows Godall subtly encouraging the protagonists, while in 'Zero's Tale of the Explosive Bomb' the former Florizel serves as a faint *deus ex machina* by appearing at the opportune moment to help the bomber M'Guire.

Chapter 3: "The Mere Kingdom of the Devil"

The plot of 'Zero's Tale of the Explosive Bomb' is a simple one, but in it Stevenson experiments with tropes drawn from contemporary events, and the themes and devices anticipate those Joseph Conrad will use twenty-two years later in *The Secret Agent* (1907).[11] Like *The Secret Agent* ,'Zero's Tale of the Explosive Bomb' presents us with unhappy terrorists charged with the task of committing a dynamite outrage against a target significant for its symbolic value and the possibility of civilian casualties. The target in Conrad's novel is Greenwich Observatory, site of the Prime Meridian and thus symbolic of science itself harnessed by the taskmaster of British imperialist intent. Interestingly, the Prime Meridian marks the zero point from which time zones are determined and the malefactor behind the bombing campaign within *The Dynamiter* is also referred to solely by the codename 'Zero'. Zero is a foreigner of unspecified European origin -- he pronounces bomb as "boom" -- and a chemist committed to the perfecting of infernal machines. As such he is the literary prototype for Conrad's nihilist bomb maker "The Professor", but it seems likely that both dynamiters find their ancestor in the real-life chemist to the Skirmishers, one Professor Mezzeroff:

> The Paris correspondent of the *Times* gives some particulars from "one well acquainted with the subject of which he writes" of the doings of the Irish conspirators in that city…
>
> The dynamiters are generally scientific men, and versed in chemistry. Some of them are pupils of Professor Mezzeroff, a Russian Nihilist in Brooklyn, who is paid to teach chemistry to the Dynamiters. All, or nearly all, have been soldiers in the Papal army which fought against Garibaldi, or have seen service during the recent civil war of the United States.[12]

Where the target in *The Secret Agent* is symbolically scientific the similarly quintessential target within *The Dynamiter* is artistic: the statue of Shakespeare in Leicester Square. For a text with such Shakespearean intertextuality the target is of a particularly piquant flavour. The misanthropic Zero expresses his intentions in no uncertain terms, a satiric evocation on Stevenson's part of those who would set themselves as wreckers of British civilisation:

> Our objective was the effigy of Shakespeare in Leicester Square: a spot, I think, admirably chosen; not only for the sake of the dramatist, still very foolishly claimed as a glory by the English race, in spite of his disgusting political opinions; but from the fact that the seats in the immediate neighbourhood are often thronged by children, errand–boys, unfortunate young ladies of the poorer class and infirm old men — all classes making a direct appeal to public pity, and therefore suitable with our designs. (121-122)

The satire is thickly laid here, both in the faux-commentary upon Shakespeare's "disgusting political opinions" as an English nationalist figure, and the obvious desire to attack the very grassroots of British society: "children, errand–boys, unfortunate young ladies of the poorer class and infirm old men". By stressing the working class nature of the potential victims Stevenson exposes the hypocrisy of terrorists purportedly motivated in some degree by class concerns, if specifically those of the Irish peasant versus the absentee landlord. Yet for all of Stevenson's satire the exaggeration is borne out by the malicious professions of faith from those who contributed to O'Donovan Rossa's "Skirmishing Fund", such as Messrs. Joseph O'Doherty and John Campbell of Washington who sent O'Donovan Rossa "7s. 9d for dynamite or coal oil to blast or burn the old pirate of the world."[13]

The metaphor of piracy is particularly interesting because it is such a potent trope within Stevenson's *oeuvre*, going hand-in-hand with his other favouite, the Jacobite. Stevenson liked his sedition to be of an entirely different flavour to that of raw Fenianism, a characteristic in no way unique in Victorian society. We can look to Queen Victoria's attitudes to sedition for an example of how the people of the British mainland interpreted the Fenian struggle; the Hanoverian monarch who had proclaimed herself "at heart a Jacobite" found little taste for rebellion when it threatened her own person.[14] The Jacobite cause offered the very mildest of threats to her position as monarch, but it did not threaten the institution of monarchy or the claims of British sovereignty over the island of Ireland. Perhaps Jacobite nostalgia allowed a respite from the weighty seriousness of her position, a re-imagining of herself as viewed through the romantic lens of the picturesque aspects of the Scotland she so loved. How very different the cause of the Fenians, who, she referred to as "horrid people".[15] The Queen had faced Irish sedition at first hand in

1872 when Arthur O'Connor had threatened her with an (unloaded) gun in an attempt to secure the release of Fenian prisoners. Unlike the Jacobite rebellions, Irish political violence was not something to enjoy in a retrospective exhibition; over a century on from the '45 Rising the dead and dying at Culloden could hold no immediate horror for the sovereign, but not so the 1882 murders of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Henry Burke. The newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland and his Under Secretary were strolling out in Dublin's Phoenix Park when they were ambushed by a murder gang -- the Irish National Invincibles -- and hacked to death with 12-inch surgical knives. The grisly details led the Queen to fear that the murder would haunt her dreams, and complain that Gladstone's plans for Home Rule were an example of his "always excusing the Irish".[16]

If that was the sentiment at the apex of British society then in contrast how did the working classes, many of whom were Irish, actually feel as regards the Fenian cause and the Irish Question? In some quarters at least there was sympathy for those suffering in Ireland. The decidedly liberal *Pall Mall Gazette,* for which Stevenson himself wrote, published an account in 1885 by one Arnold White entitled 'A Day's Works at the Docks. By One Who Has Done It.' White's article is somewhat dismissive in tone, nevertheless we still get a sense of the nascent, if inchoate, class solidarity felt by the London poor toward the Irish peasantry:

> One young gentleman, who had seen better days in the costermonger's line, avowed himself an ardent admirer of O' Donovan Rossa. As far as I could gather, he was of the opinion that Mr. Rossa's political achievements were likely to lead to the Government doing something for the unemployed in London.[17]

It would seem that some sections of the English proletariat felt the quarrel was not between the populaces of the two islands, but rather between those who held the reins of power and those who had none.

Though it would appear that the Fenians' support from the Irish diaspora was not confined to those on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean, no such sympathy was forthcoming from Stevenson. *The Dynamiter*'s M'Guire is the Skirmisher at large on

the British mainland, the American dimension hinted at by his "chin beard of considerable length" in the "American fashion"(58), and he is an inveterate coward, wound up to a high pitch by his role in the dynamite campaign. When first encountered he is preparing to commit a dynamite outrage in the city of Glasgow, a task which has stricken him with "the extreme passion of terror" (57). The goal of the terrorist is to foment terror in the enemy and it's a pleasing twist on Stevenson's part that the only characters overcome with dread in his sections of *The Dynamiter* are the terrorists themselves. It is also notable that M'Guire's first aborted attack is centred upon Glasgow: the city had suffered the Fenian bombing of the Tradeston Gasworks in 1883, an explosion which was felt several miles away. Stevenson is cognisant that for all O'Donovan Rossa's statements that "England is at war with Ireland. Ireland is justified in taking the war into England, into the very heart of London"[18], the ire of the dynamiters was not solely being directed upon the English: these were attacks upon the United Kingdom as a whole and against all of her nationalities.

The dismal M'Guire's failure in Glasgow is followed by the mission that forms the plot of 'Zero's Tale of the Explosive Bomb', the dynamite outrage centred upon the statue of Shakespeare in Leicester Square. The peccant engine in question is an experimental time bomb of the chemist Zero's design and Stevenson loses no time in stressing the ignoble cowardice of the dynamiter and the innocence of the potential victims:

> As M'Guire drew near, his heart was enflamed by the most noble sentiment of triumph. Never had he seen the garden so crowded; children still stumbling in the impotence of youth, ran to and fro, shouting and playing round the pedestal; an old sick pensioner sat upon the nearest bench, a medal on his breast, a stick with which he walked (for he was disabled by wounds) reclining on his knee. Guilty England would thus be stabbed in the most delicate quarters (22)

Stevenson is laying it on thick here; the victims are the most vulnerable of British society, and the contrast between the craven M'Guire and the infirm wounded pensioner is a particularly heavy handed one. The Fenians were well-known to

couch their bomb attacks in the parlance of military operations and to identify themselves in military terms[19], the very name Fenian having been taken from the ancient band of Celtic warriors. Here is Stevenson weighing their actions against the lifetime of faithful service given by a decorated pensioner of the British armed forces and the Fenians are inevitably found wanting. The pusillanimous M'Guire is willing to deposit his infernal machine and escape but the prospect of coming into potential open conflict with those he would kill causes the dynamiter to faint:

> ...should he venture to deposit the machine, it was almost certain that he would be observed and arrested,; a cry would arise; and there was just a fear that the police might not be present in sufficient force to protect him from the savagery of the mob (123)

Unable to plant the bomb in view of the public, M'Guire is forced to turn to other options to dispose of it, and here Stevenson spares no expense in illustrating the bankrupted morality of his character by having him turn his desperate sights upon an infant. The episode is sketched with all the cloying detail of a chocolate box:

> He now observed a little girl of about six drawing near to him and, as she came, kicking in front of her as children will, a piece of wood. She sang too; and something in her accent, recalling him to the past, produced a sudden clearness in his mind. Here was a God-sent opportunity!
>
> "My dear," said he, "would you like a present of a pretty bag?"(124)

The paragraph is densely packed with the tropes of Victorian melodrama: the young child oblivious in her happiness to the gaze of the villain (whose moral compass is so adrift that he looks upon the opportunity of child murder as given by the Divine), the innocent detail of the piece of wood, and the *pièce de résistance* -- a song sung with an accent that calls up in M'Guire's mind a memory from his own past. The point of the accent is elucidated in the next paragraph with the child's mother calling "Come here, colleen...and don't be plaguing the poor old gentleman!" (124) The child herself is Irish (colleen is the Gaelic for girl), and one who supposedly commits his outrages in the hope of ameliorating the condition of the Irish people is with a clear head willing to kill the very weakest of his own

nationality in order to save himself from being caught in the same explosion. With such an irredeemably negative character it is of little wonder that Stevenson goes the full shilling in stamping his Fenian's craven evil upon his physiognomy.[20] The young girl's (a "true child") momentary movement to take the "pretty bag" is arrested as soon as she catches a glimpse of M'Guire's face:

> The child cried aloud with joy and put out her hands to take [the bag]. She had looked first at the bag, like a true child; but most unfortunately, before she had yet received the fatal gift, her eyes fell directly on M'Guire; and no sooner had she seen the poor gentleman's face than she screamed out and leaped backwards, as though she had seen the devil. (124)

It's a scene that is emblematic of the 'Problem' nature of *The Dynamiter*, managing to be simultaneously arch, emotionally indulgent, and yet bristling with an underlying anger. For all their infernal machines the shabby, fainting, bungling dynamiters have not the gravitas of a real Satan, and perhaps the most surprising aspect of the tale is how closely it was drawn from a real attempt on the 30th May 1884 to destroy Nelson's Column. As The *Pall Mall Gazette* reported:

> While all this excitement was going on, some boys, while passing near to the Nelson monument in Trafalgar-square [sic], noticed a carpet bag reclining against the base of the pedestal, and a crowd collected. The bag with its contents, were immediately removed to Scotland-yard...in the bag were found seventeen and a half cakes of what is believed to be dynamite, and a double fuse, having attached to it another cake of the same deadly explosive.[21]

At least the Nelson's Column dynamiter managed to deliver his deadly cargo to the target, not so Stevenson's fictional counterpart whose desperate perambulation around the vicinity of Leicester Square in search of a member of the public credulous enough to accept the dubious gift of the peccant engine is punctuated by repeated swooning. There's an artificiality to the scene quite in keeping with the *New Arabian Nights* and Stevenson turns M'Guire's hectic scramble into something of a 'Dynamiter's Progress' with each character he encounters serving baldly as ciphers for various aspects of British society. The colleen, the helpful police constable concerned for M'Guire's visibly tormented mental state, the mother M'Guire beseeches to take the bomb to her death with anguished and blasphemous

exhortations in the name of Christian salvation, her children, and of his very mother:

> O Compassionate woman, as you hope to be saved, as you are a mother, in the name of your babies that wait to welcome you at home, oh, take this bag to Portman Square! I have a mother, too," he added with a broken voice. (125)

It's all brought to a suitably black comic climax when the bumbling M'Guire, saddled with a ticking time bomb inside his Gladstone bag, finds himself impeded from finally disposing of the infernal device by his inability to pay his cab-driver. The timely arrival of Godall serves to break the impasse:

> It was at this extreme hour of his distress that M'Guire spied the stout figure of one Godall, a tobacconist of Rupert Street, drawing near along the Embankment. The man was not unknown to him; he had bought of his wares, and heard him quoted for the soul of liberality; and such was now the nearness of his peril that even at such a straw of hope he clutched with gratitude (129)

Godall's quality of "liberality" is of telling significance, reinforcing as it does the Prince's role as noble benefactor and contrasting with the thickly caricatured cravenness of the Irish revolutionary. "'Thank God!' he cried. 'Here comes a friend of mine. I'll borrow.' And he dashed to meet the tradesman." (p.129) The exhortation to God is most apt here as it is the hidden deity of the text Godall that will save him, and there is much of the atheist sinner crying to the divine in M'Guire's plea:

> "Sir," said he, "Mr Godall, I have dealt with you -- you doubtless know my face -- calamities for which I cannot blame myself have overwhelmed me. Oh sir, for the love of innocence, for the sake of the bonds of humanity, and as you hope for mercy at the throne of grace, lend me two-and-six!" (129)

It's a summation that encapsulates all of M'Guire's hypocrisies, for while he might hope that Prince Florizel, that occulted deity of the *New Arabian Nights* universe, loves innocence and feels a bond of humanity, his own actions have marked him as incapable of those feelings. Now psychically recumbent at the metaphorical 'throne of grace' of the novel he is rescued by one whose royal birth he abhors. M'Guire dashes to the Thames, flings the bag into the water, and falls headlong in after it,

requiring the intervention of Godall to save him from drowning. It might be suggested that in the seemingly mechanistic universe of the *New Arabian Nights* books Man may choose to do without a Prince or a King of Kings but their role continues.

Stevenson's portrayal of the Fenian dynamite campaign in 'Zero's Tale of the Exploding Bomb' is a humorous one and Stevenson obviously intended it to meet with public approval, attempting as it does to ameliorate the fears of the time while condemning the bombers in the same breath. Such a potential response was however called into question before the book was published by what proved to be the great day of the dynamite faction: Saturday the 24th of January 1885, "a day which spread panic through London, through England and to a lesser degree through Europe".[22] On that day the Fenian desire to wage a war of terror upon the very heart of the British Empire came to fruition with three almost simultaneous explosions in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Hall, and at the Tower of London. There were civilian casualties, but also the first public heroes of the era of dynamite terror, police constables Cole and Cox, whose quick actions helped to minimise civilian casualties at the expense of injury to themselves. The *Glasgow Herald* described the events at Westminster Hall:

> Amongst the visitors to the Houses of Parliament yesterday were Mr Edwin Green, a civil engineer, residing at 58 Caversham Road, Camden Town, London, Mrs Green, and her sister Miss Davies, Cork, on a visit to her relatives. This party having been the round of the building, ultimately came to the crypt in Westminster Hall, and were in the act of descending the staircase, Mrs Green first, Mr Green next, and Miss Davis last. When they had got six or eight steps down the staircase Miss Davies noticed on one of the steps what appeared to be a roll of cloth; but perceiving a strange smell coming from it, she called her brother-in-law's attention to the matter. Mr Green at once detected the nature of the material and called out, "That is dynamite! Get up stairs [sic] as quickly as you can!" A policeman named Coles [sic], who was at the bottom of the crypt staircase, and who had his attention directed to the parcel by the exclamations of Mr Green, jumped up the stair, picked up the parcel, and carried it outside the iron gate at the top landing. The parcel is described as smoking, and was apparently very hot. However that may be Coles dropped it just outside the landing and a tremendous explosion followed, digging two great holes in the floor, filling the whole hall with a dense cloud

of dust and smoke, shattering the windows to atoms, and seriously injuring Coles and another policeman named Cox. [23]

January 24th 1885 marked an unprecedented escalation in Fenian dynamite violence, and in the face of it the Stevensons' little book of farcically drawn revolutionaries was in danger of being interpreted as belittling the very real threat that hung over the nation. The Stevensons had committed to publishing the book and in any case urgently needed the money[24], yet here they were seemingly expecting people to laugh at the dynamite outrages. Their hastily written answer to the sticky situation came in the form of a dedication to the "Messrs. Cole and Cox, police officers", the two injured heroes of the hour. The preface -- with its mention of "the child", the "breeding woman", Parnell, and even General Gordon -- deserves quoting in full in order to best appreciate just how fully Stevenson loaded it with all the emotive touchstones of the time:

TO MESSRS. COLE AND COX, POLICE OFFICERS

Gentlemen,-- In the volume now in your hands, the authors have touched upon that ugly devil of crime, with which it is your glory to have contended. It were a waste of ink to do so in a serious spirit. Let us dedicate our horror to acts of a more mingled strain, where crime preserves some features of nobility, and where reason and humanity can still relish the temptation. Horror, in this case, is due to Mr. Parnell: he sits before posterity silent, Mr. Forster's appeal echoing down the ages. Horror is due to ourselves, in that we have so long coquetted with political crime; not seriously weighing, not acutely following it from cause to consequence; but with a generous, unfounded heat of sentiment, like the schoolboy with the penny tale, applauding what was specious. When it touched ourselves (truly in a vile shape), we proved false to the imaginations; discovered, in a clap, that crime was no less cruel and no less ugly under sounding names; and recoiled from our false deities.

But seriousness comes most in place when we are to speak of our defenders. Whoever be in the right in this great and confused war of politics; whatever elements of greed, whatever traits of the bully, dishonour both parties in this inhuman contest;-- your side, your part, is at least pure of doubt. Yours is the side of the child, of the breeding woman, of individual pity and public trust. If our society were the mere kingdom of the devil (as indeed it wears some of his colours) it yet embraces many precious elements and many innocent persons whom it is a glory to defend. Courage and devotion, so common in the ranks of the police, so little recognised, so meagrely rewarded, have at length found

> their commemoration in an historical act. History, which will represent Mr. Parnell sitting silent under the appeal of Mr. Forster, and Gordon setting forth upon his tragic enterprise, will not forget Mr. Cole carrying the dynamite in his defenceless hands, nor Mr. Cox coming coolly to his aid. (xiii-xiv)

There's a temptation to interpret Stevenson's dedication to "Messrs Cole and Cox, Police Officers" in the spirit of one caught flat-footed by an escalation of the very violence he treats with humour in the sequence of stories; a piece of desperate manoeuvring to avoid any potential charge that he is making light of these contemporary dynamite outrages. Certainly the tone of Robert Louis Stevenson's stories within *The Dynamiter is* marked by an arabesque whimsy quite at odds with the heavy-handed solemnity of the dedication. It is easy to suggest that the appeal to Cole and Cox smacks of sophistry in the face of practical happenstance: that having written a series of stories that diminish the threat of terrorist bombing to one of farce Stevenson must now clearly acknowledge the seriousness of the threat and the bravery of those who have faced it if he is not to have his own text criticised for belittling what appeared to be escalating violence. Furthermore, there appears to be a strangely emotional leap of association at work in the dedication, the two heroes of the hour "Mr Cole carrying the dynamite in his defenceless hands…Mr Cox coming coolly to his aid" are compared to "Gordon setting off on his tragic expedition", a conflation that reveals as much about Stevenson's emotional preoccupations at the time as it does the selfless professionalism of the London policeman.

The reader might feel inclined to interpret Stevenson's remarks as disingenuous, but a perusal of his personal correspondence of the time bears out his emotional connection to the comments in the dedication. The reference to General Gordon might at first seem to the twenty-first century reader disconnected in any but the loosest sense, but the General's travails and fate almost constantly preoccupied the newspapers of the time along with the dynamite threat. The Fall of Khartoum occurred on the 26th of January 1885, a mere two days after the explosions in London, and the two events fed into each other, presenting the British public and Stevenson himself with a depressingly holistic vision of cracks spreading through

the imperial edifice. With land agitation in Ireland, the death of an imperial hero on the frontier of the Empire, and infernal machines in the heart of the home island, Stevenson was left in his own words "badly seared".[25] The failure to relieve the besieged Gordon was widely considered a matter of national disgrace[26], and Queen Victoria's own journals record her so filled with mourning over Gordon's death that she failed to mention the outrages in her own capital.[27] Stevenson's own emotional reaction is recorded in his letter to J.A. Symonds where he states:

> What a picture is this of a nation! No man that I can see, on any side or party, seems to have the least sense of our ineffable shame: the desertion of the garrisons...We believe in nothing, Symonds: you don't, and I don't, and there are two reasons out of a handful of millions, why England stands before the world dripping with blood and daubed with dishonour...Police officer Cole is the only man that I see to admire. I dedicate my *New Arabs* to him and Cox, in default of other great public characters.[28]

In a very real sense General Gordon represented to the British imperial project a martyr of almost religious proportions. Previously the hero of the Boxer Rebellion, Gordon was described by W.T. Stead as "one of God's doughtiest champions"[29]; he carried a cane into battle calling it his "wand of victory"[30] and arrived in Khartoum to announce "I come without soldiers but with God on my side, to redress the evils of the Sudan. I will not fight with any weapons but justice".[31] Gordon's death gave the Empire a distinctly Muscular Christian martyr, one to whose appeal Stevenson was in no way immune. Almost as shocking as the killing itself was the news that the adherents of a rival ideology equipped with its own saints and martyrs -- Irish nationalism -- were defiling the General's memory by pledging support to the very ones who had killed the British general. By the 23rd of February a meeting of dynamiters supplemented their statement of intent to cause "explosions not only in London, but in all the towns and villages in England" with a novel idea to provide the Mahdi (Britain's enemy in the Sudan) with "a contingent of military experts on dynamite".[32] This was adding insult to injury and the press were not slow in adding their own censure to a discourse that had now taken on an Empire-wide sense of scale:

> The contrast in this hour of trial between the "Cheers for the Mahdi" at Irish meetings and the outburst of enthusiastic loyalty from our distant colonies is very striking. But it is still more impressive when it is borne in mind that Ireland has been petted and spoiled, pampered and indulged by a succession of Liberal Ministers, whilst the present Government has treated the colonies with neglect amounting to contempt. [33]

Taking these events into consideration the charge of disingenuousness on Stevenson's part in regards to the preface to *The Dynamiter* appears an unfair one. There can be no doubt the admiration for Cole and Cox was heartfelt. In addition, that the perpetrators of the Fenian bombings would be compared to Parnell is of little surprise. The Irishman's refusal to condemn the outrage -- "Mr. Parnell sitting silent under the appeal of Mr. Forster" -- positions Parnell within an imperial paradigm beyond the mere scope of Irish Home Rule and encompassing the British Empire as a whole. Fenianism, the Mahdi, dynamite, and the policeman become the tropes of a new ideological war being waged within the British Empire; one evident even to the representatives of other empires, as a newspaper report from Austria illustrates:

> An Austrian view of Mr. Gladstone's position: Over England the whip of the Irish and Egyptian questions is being swung with vigour. Mr. Gladstone cannot solve the Egyptian difficulty whatever he may do, because the Mahommedans regard him already as their deadly enemy...The Egyptian's even welcome the Mahdi's conquest because it is disagreeable to Mr. Gladstone...In the English Government Parnell and Gladstone resemble a clever thief and a sharp constable playing hide and seek.[34]

Sharp constables were what were needed, in Stevenson's opinion, for a war that had come to the heart of the Empire, and *The Dynamiter* features a speech from the protagonist Somerset that manages to extend the paramilitary metaphor while also verging on recruitment propaganda for the Metropolitan Police. As a policeman one would be expected:

> [to] defend society...stake one's life for others...deracinate occult and powerful evil...the policeman, as he is called upon continually to face greater odds, and that worse equipped and for a better cause, is in form and essence a more noble hero than the soldier (6)

Here is Stevenson's ideological replacement for the martyred Gordon:

> Do you, by any chance, deceive yourself into supposing that a general would either ask or expect from the best army ever marshalled and on the most momentous battlefield, the conduct of a common constable at Peckham Rye. (6)

Oddly enough, *The Dynamiter* does provide a lightly-sketched example of social order overthrown, in that the framing tale finds Prince Florizel, the Bohemian monarch of Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*, now deposed and divorced from his native country. In keeping with a text where the dramatic is ever in danger of dissolving in the spume of caprice and artifice, Prince Florizel -- now Theophilus Godall -- seems little affected by the social upheaval that must have accompanied his deposal. Indeed, his philosophising upon social station can be intimated as a comment upon his own change of status:

> "Fall to be a working man?" echoed Mr. Godall. "Suppose a rural dean to be unfrocked, does he fall to be a major? suppose a captain were cashiered, would he fall to be a puisine judge? The ignorance of your middle class surprises me. Outside itself, it thinks the world to lie quite ignorant and equal, sunk in a common degradation; but to the eye of the observer, all ranks are seen to stand in ordered hierarchies, and each adorned with its particular aptitudes and knowledge. (3)

That such a speech should occur in the opening pages of a book inspired by contemporaneous Irish unrest illustrates the gulf between the imperial metropolitan centre and the rural Irish provinces. Godall can wax on the essential equality of all social stations and the possibility of 'starting over' when dispossessed of one's livelihood, but a question remains unspoken in the face of Godall's musing: whether the evicted Irish peasant should "fall" to become an itinerant, for that was the stark reality of many in that era of land agitation. Godall's egalitarian sentiments belie the truth of his situation; according to his own statement "when I was myself unexpectedly thrust upon the world, it was my fortune to possess an art: I knew a good cigar" (3). One might suggest his start up capital in his new life extended somewhat beyond a mere specialist tobacconist knowledge, and were that not the

case his prior status, education, and contacts leaven his future prospects far beyond one unacquainted with the taste of a fine cigar and whose only "art" was to wring a crop out of a poor parcel of tenant land. The *sotto voce* comments delivered upon Godall's speech by Challoner and Somerset might be ironic given the context of the characters but they are nevertheless an apposite response:

"This is a very pompous fellow," said Challoner in the ear of his companion.

"He is immense," said Somerset. (4)

Radical overthrowing of the social order is of course always more palatable when it is happening to someone else's society, and one of the most interesting aspects of *The Dynamiter* is the extent to which later authors drew upon the tropes established by Stevenson yet declined to engage with the question of Fenianism. James' *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), all bear the familial mark of Stevenson's subversives, yet none of them probe the fresh wound of the The Irish Question. Perhaps allowing one's dynamiters the ideological trappings of nihilism was less problematic to prospective publishers and readers than if they were laden down with the overwhelming cultural burden of Irish Nationalism, a densely packed load heavy enough to bring any potential character to his knees. Certainly Stevenson himself would struggle ideologically and emotionally with the Irish Question in the years that followed the publication of *The Dynamiter,* at no time more so than in 1887 during the period of agitation in Ireland that came to be known as the 'Land War'.

The 'Land War' was a concerted campaign of Michael Davitt's Land League to rebel against the Anglo-Irish landlords who owned the lion's share of Irish land. Heavily subsidized from America, the Land League ruthlessly demanded cooperation and solidarity from the peasantry in order to affect its campaign, with dire consequences for those who would not conform. Under the codename of 'Captain Midnight', the Land League subjected those peasants who failed to live up to their "patriotic" duty to a catalogue of intimidation: cattle were maimed, houses and barns torched, graves were dug beside houses, all at night by 'Captain Moonlight'.[35] Anyone taking a farm from which a tenant had been evicted was to be

"isolated from his kind as if he were a leper of old".[36]

One man to do so inadvertently added a word to the English language: boycott. Captain Boycott, a farmer who took a property in Co. Mayo from which the tenants had been expelled, was besieged by the angry populace and denied trade or intercourse.[37] The cause of Irish nationalism had again taken the path of mobbing those of unpopular religion, social class, or opinion, and in the midst of this campaign an incident occurred that set Stevenson to planning the oddest scheme of his singular life:

On 13 November 1885 a gang of "Moonlighters" attacked the farm of the Protestant Curtin family in County Kerry and demanded arms.[38] John Curtin, the male of the household, was mortally wounded in the battle but succeeded in shooting and killing one of the mob, thus bringing upon his surviving family, mostly women, the wrath of the Land League who quickly placed them under a boycott. With the bereaved family held effective prisoners by a social, economic, and physical blockade their plight found immense sympathy in the British press; and from there we come to Stevenson's reaction to the persecution. Ever sympathetic towards the individual trampled to make way for a supposedly greater cause Stevenson naturally sided with the Curtin family. If Irish 'liberty' required the terrorising of bereaved women then liberty plucked justice by the nose and Stevenson would not stand for it. He announced his intention to relocate his family to Ireland and move in with the Curtins thereby exposing the immorality of the boycott to the full glare of world opinion. His letter to Anne Jenkins sets forth his Tolstoyian scheme in language reminiscent of his lamentations upon the death of General Gordon:

> The Curtin women are still miserable prisoners, no one dare buy their farm of them, all the manhood of England stands aghast before a threat of murder...my work can be done anywhere; hence I can take up without loss a back-going Irish farm...*Nobody else is taking up this obvious and crying duty.*[39]

One recalls his valorising of the common police constable and his mission to "deracinate occult and powerful evil" (6); now Stevenson is couching his own role in similar terms, right down to the use of the policeman's trademark bulls-eye lantern:

> If I should be killed there are a good many who would feel it; writers are so much in the public eye, that a writer being murdered would attract attention, throw a bulls-eye light upon this cowardly business…I am not unknown in the States, from which come the funds that pay for these brutalities[40]

It was a bizarre notion and that he knew he was being a fool was clear. It's also clear that he would have carried it out despite that; Fanny was game, and there was something of a suicidal impulse in the face of his ailing health:

> I have a crazy health and may die at any moment, my life is of no purchase in an insurance office, it is the less account to husband it, and the business of husbanding a life is dreary and demoralising[41]

Here instead is "a fair cause; a just cause; no knight ever set lance in rest for a juster".[42]

No matter, Stevenson the knight never progressed beyond tilting at Land League windmills: the death of his father gave him very immediate alternative priorities, and the Curtin family proved capable of enduring on their own.[43] The episode stayed with him however, and despite his professed support for Home Rule (he claimed to have been an advocate of Home Rule before both Gladstone and W.T. Stead[44]) his morality was still too prickled by the mob-handed bullying of the Land League and the clandestine murders of the Skirmishers, Fenians, and Invincibles to ever full accept Irish Nationalism.

In 1888 Stevenson again revisited the theme of the Irish Question in an article for *Scribner's Magazine* entitled 'Confessions of a Unionist'. American support for Fenian violence still galled him badly, and while living in the US he was struck by the thought that:

> according to the Irish news published in this country, I began to reflect that the position of the present majority of British subjects was unthinkable. No grounds were given on which a man could possibly be what we call a Unionist.[45]

The article for *Scribner's* was Stevenson's attempt to address that deficiency he perceived in the US press, that characteristic he described as a supposed right "to be entirely on one side in any dispute" (237). Stevenson makes his case fervently,

praising the many positive qualities he identifies in American culture and admitting historic inadequacies in British rule. He again claims to predate Gladstone in his support for Home Rule:

> many of us have been in favour of home rule for Ireland ten or a dozen years before Mr. Gladstone; we have no Irish land, we know no Irish landlords; and yet we are here today in the camp of Union. (238)

but we might question the strength of that conviction, certainly he never expressed his Home Rule sentiment in his essays. If his provenance as a Home Ruler seems dubious not so his commitment to the camp of Union, which appears very real. British rule on the island of Ireland has been, Stevenson ingeniously argues, neither uniformly bad nor uniformly good, but, rather, *bad precisely because it has not been uniform*. The Irish appear to have been children under the charge of an inconsistent parent, and it is the parent's fault that a "backward" nation such as Ireland is neither fit to look after itself nor compliant in its own subordinate status:

> This backwardness is the fault of English indifference, English sentimentality, and the wavering of English party government. To and fro has the majority rolled, and now repressed and now relaxed; and now made a transitory show of sternness, and anon stuffed our naughty child with flattery and indulgence; until if the Irish people had been angels, they must still have been corrupted. (238)

The conceit of Ireland as naughty, indulged child is a decidedly colonialist one, but more unusual conceits are to come.[46] In one of the queerest admissions within Stevenson's entire body of work he compares Ireland to a wicked billygoat he once set about tormenting and breaking:

> I once knew a superlatively wicked billygoat whom, in indignation at a score of treacheries, I determined to punish. The plan adopted was to feed, cajole, pet, abuse, kick, feed and cajole him, for a long summer's day in an unbroken series. By about four in the afternoon, the billygoat (as you say) 'left hold'. He would no longer eat, he would no longer butt; he gave up life as quite insoluble, and went and lay down in a ditch, whence nothing could dislodge him. Well, the treatment of the billygoat is very like the treatment Ireland has received. (238)

Quite apart from the peculiarities of Stevenson's treatment of the animal, is the conceit an accurate one? Supposing Ireland had been put through the bewildering ordeal of the goat, it was evidently clear Erin had not given up on life and retired to a ditch, the very actions of the Land League and the dynamiters gave proof of that.

'Confessions of a Unionist' is a problematic text; it was never printed by *Scribner's* and indeed remained unpublished anywhere until 1988. The crux of Stevenson's argument in it is, again, that injustice committed in the name of liberty is wrong, that the actions of Jacobins cannot be condoned, and that this had brought the Irish Question to a place where the British government cannot grant Home Rule for fear of appearing to reward terrorism:

> Here in one word, is the heart of the Unionist position. We will not, at this moment, so much as discuss the question of home rule. With all the lessons of history at out back, we will grant nothing that shall even appear to be extorted by brutality and murder. We shall see the law paramount, before we talk of its reform. (238)

Ultimately Stevenson is stymied by the Irish Question. Stevenson's views on the relationships of Britain and Empire are fundamentally of an inclusive and conciliatory nature. If we look at David Balfour and Alan Breck, Wiltshire and Uma, even James Durie and Secundra Dass, Stevenson's sympathies are for those who can overcome cultural differences and "bear and forebear" (*Kidnapped,* p.179), violent cultural separatism appalls him. For all his theoretical approval of Home Rule, dynamite outrages and Captain Moonlight quite stripped Ireland of any sentimental feeling he might have had for the island, and in a telling moment of candour he admitted to Anne Jenkin: "Ireland as a place in the map, as a spot to go to, has always been with me the object of an unreasoning repulsion, like what one feels about touching toads."[47] Years later at Vailima Stevenson would write "you cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without what is practically soul-murder"[48] and it is worth remembering that both Stevenson and the Fenians were possessed of feelings almost too deep for rationalising. The Irish Republican John Mitchel wrote:

Chapter 3: "The Mere Kingdom of the Devil"

> The subjection of Ireland is now probably assured until some external shock shall break up the monstrous commercial firm, the British Empire; which, indeed, is a bankrupt firm and trading on false credit, and embezzling the goods of others, or robbing on the highway, from Pole to Pole; but its doors are not yet shut; its cup of abomination is not yet running over. If any American has read this narrative, however, he will never wonder hereafter when he hears an Irishman in America fervently curse the British Empire. So long as this hatred and horror shall last - so long as our island refuses to become, like Scotland, a contented province of our enemy, Ireland is not finally subdued. [49]

Stevenson was in a very real sense the son of a contented province and without committing a suicide of the soul he was ever to remain a Unionist.

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1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Dynamiter*, (London: William Heinemann Ltd.1924). All subsequent references are to this edition with page numbers indicated parenthetically in the text.

2 Mrs. Stevenson explains the genesis of *The Dynamiter* in her prefatory note to the text. Ibid. p. xi

3 The theme of the character desperately trying rid himself of an object and having it returned to him is revisited in 'The Bottle Imp'. See 'the Bottle Imp' in Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, Roslyn Jolly (ed.), (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1996)

4 R.L. Stevenson, Dedication 'TO MESSRS. COLE AND COX, POLICE OFFICERS', *The Dynamiter*, op.cit. p.xiii

5 Barbara Arnett Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel,* (London, Sydney, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1985) p. 60

6 Ibid. Pp 9

7 Goldwin Smith, *Irish History and the Irish Question* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1905) p.194

8 *Manchester Times* (Manchester, England), Saturday, June 7, 1884; Issue 1378.

9 J.C. Furnas *Voyage to Windward*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1952) p. 104

10 Barbara Arnett Melchiori, op. cit. p. 61

11 Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*, London: Penguin, 2007

12 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Saturday, April 12, 1884; Issue 5959.

13 *Manchester Times* (Manchester, England), Saturday, June 7, 1884; Issue 1378.

14 Richard Finlay 'Scotland and the Monarchy in the Twentieth Century', W.L. Miller (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1900 to Devolution and Beyond*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.17-34

15 Elizabeth Longford, op.cit. p.374

16 Ibid. p.446

17 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), 17 February, 1885

18 *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (London, England), Saturday, March 24, 1883 ; Issue 1134.

19 The paramilitary trappings of the Fenian movement are well exemplified by the case of one Milne, who in the best tradition of secret societies operated under the sobriquet "No. 1". *The Leeds Mercury* (Leeds, England), Tuesday, February 20, 1883; Issue 13999.reports:

> The identity of the mysterious "No. 1" is now pretty well known. He was an American-Irish Fenian of the name of Milne, and served some time in the American army. He is well known to most of the Irish Members, and was last year frequently in the lobby of the House of

Commons. He assumed various *aliases,* and during the operation of the Assassination Society he lived in the Shelbourne Hotel under the name of General McAdras.

20 The trope of a frightening physical appearance reflecting the morality of the individual in question is a recurring one in Stevenson's work. cf. *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* op.cit.

21 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Saturday, May 31, 1884; Issue 6000

22 Barbara Arnett Melchiori, op.cit. p. 21

23 *Glasgow Herald* (Glasgow, Scotland), Monday, January 26, 1885; Issue 22

24 Fanny describes the motivation for publishing *The Dynamiter* as coming from a "lean purse" and "severely depleted funds" in her prefatory note to the text. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Dynamiter*, op. cit. xii

25 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to J.A. Symonds, 30th February, 1885, op.cit. Vol.5, p.80

26 There was a great public outcry against Gladstone's government and the failure to relieve Gordon. Votes of censure were moved in both Houses of Parliament.

27 As far as may be ascertained from the surviving letters available to the public, see George Earle (ed.) *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journa l between the Years 1862 and 1885; In Three Volumes* (London: John Murray, 1928)

28 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to J.A. Symonds, 30th February, 1885 *Letters,* op.cit. Vol.5 .80-81

29 A.N. Wilson *The Victorians,* (London:Hutchinson, 2002) p.469

30 Elizabeth Longford, op.cit. p.467

31 W. T. Stead, *The Century: A Popular Quarterly*, Vol. 28, Issue 4, August, 1884

32 Barbara Arnett Melchiori, op. cit. p.48

33 *The Newcastle Weekly Courant* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England), Friday, March 6, 1885; Issue 10964.

34 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Wednesday, January 9, 1884; Issue 5879.

35 For further information on intimidation during the Land War see Donald Jordan, 'The Irish National League and the 'Unwritten Law': Rural Protest and Nation-Building in Ireland 1882-1890' *Past & Present*, No. 158 (Feb., 1998), pp. 146-171

36 Charles Stewart Parnell gave dramatic public support for the process of social ostracism in an 1880 speech in Ennis, Co. Clare:

> When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted you must shun him on the roadside when you meet him, you must shun him in the streets of the town, you must shun him in the shop, you must shun him in the fairgreen and in the marketplace, and even in the place of worship, by leaving him alone, by putting him in a moral Coventry, by isolating him from the rest of his country as if he were the leper of old, you must show your detestation of the crime he has committed.
>
> Jordan, ibid. p. 165

37 For further reading on boycotting see H. A. Taatgen, 'The Boycott in the Irish Civilizing Process', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Oct., 1992), pp. 163-176

38 The *Pall Mall Gazette* reported the crime thus:

> ...last night the house of a farmer on the Kenmare estate was visited by Moonlighters. The farmer, a man named Curtin, was shot at and killed, but the assailants were fired at in return by Curtin's son, and one...was shot...eight arrests have up to the present been made in connection with the brutal murder by Moonlighters at Molahiffe. The house in which Mr. Curtin lived was named Castlefarm, and on the house being attacked Mr. Curtin and his two sons, with a servant named Sullivan, defended the premises for some time against a gang unusually strong in numbers, Mr. Curtin was shot, as already described, and died in a few moments afterwards. The servant was also hit. The Moonlighters decamped before the constabulary came up, but in their flight they left two breechloaders behind them.
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> *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Saturday, November 14, 1885; Issue 6449.

39 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to Ann Jenkins, April 15th or 16th ("the hour not being known"), 1886, *Letters,* op.cit. Vo.5, pp.389-390

40 Ibid. p.390

41 Ibid. p.390

42 Ibid. p.391

43 Jeremy Treglown makes the point that Stevenson would have better served the Curtins by using his literary talents:

> It is a pity that [Stevenson] did not tell the [Curtin's] story, using the narrative and polemical skills and the righteous vituperativeness he displays at their best at close quarters in 'Father Damien', with its exultantly (and in some factual respects unfair) attack on a detractor of the priest and of his activities at the leper colony.
>
> Jeremy Treglown, op.cit. p.xix

44 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to Messrs Charles Scribner's Sons, August 1887, *Letters,* op.cit. Vol. 5, p.440

45 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Confessions of a Unionist' in *The Lantern Bearers* op.cit. p. 237. All further references are to this edition and are indicated parentetically in the text.

46 cf. Case's statement about Pacific islanders in 'The Beach of Falesá', "It's easy to find out what Kanakas think. Just go back to yourself any way round from ten to fifteen years old, and there's your average Kanaka." Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesá', in *South Sea Tales*, op.cit. p.55

47 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to Ann Jenkin, late April 1887, *Letters,* Vol. 5 op.cit. p.397

48 J.C. Furnas, op.cit. p. 335

49 John Mitchel, *Last Conquest of Ireland, (perhaps)* (1860) from: Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997) p. 250

Chapter 4

"*They're only half-castes, of course*": Hybridity in the work of Robert Louis and Fanny Vandegrift Stevenson.

In the previous chapters I have shown how Stevenson was engaged with issues of national and cultural identity in both his fiction and essays, exploring processes of transition between the culture one is born into and the cultures of which one may learn to be a part. In so many of Stevenson's texts his characters cross boundaries that are geographical, psychological, and cultural: the Highland Line that David Balfour navigates in *Kidnapped* (1886) is not merely a physical location, it is a demarcation of *Weltanschaung* between the Lowland and Highland cultures of Scotland, and in crossing it Stevenson affords the reader a 'split-screen' vantage of the contrasting worldviews of the Lowland, Whig David Balfour and the Highland, Jacobite Alan Breck. More importantly, in *Kidnapped* and its sequel *Catriona* (1893), Stevenson suggests that the complicated nexus of traits that make up cultural identity are not essentialist in nature, but rather, may be communicated, assimilated and negotiated, just as the English army recruit of Stevenson's own era might be taught to be a "Highlander". Similarly, *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) plots James Durie's transitions of cultural and social identity in a variety of milieu that span Britain's first empire. All three of those texts evidence characters whose identities

become hybridised through an intra-generational process of acculturation. In this chapter however I shall explore how Stevenson engaged with and explored attitudes to inter-generational hybridity in his work, with particular emphasis upon his attitudes to and portrayal of racial admixture in *The Dynamiter* and 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892).

The Dynamiter (1885) occupies a singular position within the Stevenson canon in being the only one of his novels to be written in conjunction with his wife Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson.[1] In being the product of two authors -- one British, the other American -- *The Dynamiter* is itself a hybrid creation, and the novel is notable for the number of characters who assume and slough off identities. Theophilus Godall, the instigator of the adventures, is the former Prince Florizel of Bohemia in the new guise of a tobacconist; Somerset, Desberough, and Challoner, the three protagonists of the stories are impecunious gentlemen persuaded by Godall to turn detective; while the heiress Clara Luxmore passes through the novel taking on and discarding a dizzying number of identities that include Mormon runaway and Fenian terrorist.

While the majority of the portrayals of shifting identity within *The Dynamiter* are limited to social class and nationality, 'Desberough's Adventure: The Tale of the Brown Box' differs in that therein the Stevensons grapple with issues of racial identity and the consequences of procreation between the coloniser and the colonised subject. It's a tale that through its very construction challenges the reader, for it contains within it a first-person narrative testimony 'The Tale of The Fair Cuban' solely penned by Fanny, with the tale around it -- the 'Brown Box' section -- the work of her husband. Taken in isolation Fanny's tale presents a melodramatic portrayal of a tragic mulattaroon utilising certain conventions familiar to the reader of nineteenth-century slavery-themed novels, but Stevenson''s framing tale subverts and problematises the characterisation and tropes employed by contextualising the entire tale as a lie. What was in itself an often idiosyncratic account of racial attitudes in the Caribbean becomes challenged and destabilised by Robert Louis Stevenson's additions, making the task of trying conclusively to identify the

Chapter 4: "They're only half-castes, of course"

Stevensons' attitudes to race and hybridity within and without the British Empire a particularly slippery one. All, to paraphrase the narrator of the 'The Tale of the Fair Cuban', is not what it seems.

As has been noted in the previous chapter the genesis of *The Dynamiter* lies in the tales invented by Fanny Stevenson to entertain and divert her invalid husband, and there is much of the hurried Scheherazade about 'Teresa', the female narrator and duplicitous supposed namesake of 'The Story of the Fair Cuban'. The story follows the pattern established at the beginning of the collection: a young woman of purportedly foreign origin, and seemingly in some distress, throws herself upon the chivalry of a callow young man. In each instance the young woman wins the man round by relating a (different) tale of her origins and the imminent danger she faces, manipulating the young man in turn to act as an unwitting go-between in advancing the dynamite intrigues of the novel. The tales are melodramatic, the dramatic details thickly laid on and not without contradiction, yet despite (or just as arguably because) of that they allow the reader a valuable twofold insight: firstly into the characters and plot devices that Fanny thought would most divert and entertain Louis, and secondly into the appeals most likely to win the sympathy of the young men of the text. These melodramatic concerns are not restricted to the domestic or even national sphere, rather they utilise and are informed by questions of gender, race, culture, and national vigour, allowing the 'Fair Cuban' to function as a nexus of late Victorian imperial and sexual sentiments, as refracted through the specifically American lens of the author.

'The Tale of the Brown Box' begins with the supposed 'Fair Cuban' of Fanny's portion of the story explaining her way out of a difficult situation; having confessed herself a Cuban and a native speaker of the Spanish language she is put on the spot by a gift of a novel in that tongue, a novel which she is wholly unable to read. Her desperate manoeuvring to explain away what is an unlikely inability to read Spanish sees her playing on sentiments both topical and specific to the Stevensons' work. The original audience was of course Robert Louis Stevenson himself, and Fanny's Fair Cuban is almost a composite caricature of the Stevensonian protagonist, a

distant child of Scotland transplanted to a Caribbean island, she announces her lineage thus: "I am not what I seem. My father drew his descent, on the one hand, from grandees of Spain, and on the other, through the maternal line, from the patriot Bruce."[2] Robert Louis Stevenson's texts are peppered with males who seek out their fortunes on tropical islands, and if the Imperial Romance genre is one of masculine expansion then here is the product of that masculine enterprise: the progeny of the coloniser and the island wife.

> There is little surprise in that my mother too was the descendant of a line of kings; but, alas! These kings were African. She was as fair as the day: fairer than I, for I inherited a darker strain of blood from the veins of my European father. (147)

The Fair Cuban's argument is a racially egalitarian one, with Fanny establishing a parity of nobility between the medieval monarchy of Scotland and those of African peoples, a parity that is arbitrarily denied by the injustice of slavery in the Caribbean. It's an argument that one might say is tailored as much for Robert Louis Stevenson himself as Harry Desborough, the young Englishman of the tale. The inequities faced by the African who is both slave and scion of kings are implicitly compared to the plight of Robert the Bruce in the face of English aggression from Edward I, providing a medieval antecedent to the colonialism of Stevenson's day; an argument perhaps more emotive to a writer of Scottish historical novels than a young dilettante like Desborough. The comparisons between the African and the Scot do not end there, and Fanny interestingly subverts the argument of skin colour as the pre-eminent signifier of race by drawing upon then current racial anthropological discourse regarding the 'blackness' of the Pict and Celt.[3] This argument regarding a strain of 'blackness' within the Scottish people is one that will concern Stevenson right up until the end of his life; one of his final letters to R.A.M. Stevenson contesting his cousin's notion that the Picts were dark skinned while at the same time admitting the contemporary existence of the "BLACK Scotch":

> DEAR BOB, -- you are in error about the Picts. They were a Gaelic race, spoke a Celtic tongue, and we have no evidence that I know of that they were

> blacker than other Celts...Where the BLACK Scotch come from nobody knows[4]

Subversively, it is this strain of distinctly Scottish colour that supposedly accounts for the Fair Cuban's complexion, rather than her African ancestry, but if Fanny's equating of the Scot with the African evidences a sympathetic sentiment then the Fair Cuban's statement that her African mother was "fair as the day: fairer than I" (147) brings us back into the problematic racialism of the period. The idea that the Fair Cuban's ancestors were of a nobility equivalent to that of European royalty is reliant upon and meliorated by the fairness of their skin. To be close to white Europeans in terms of grace, intellect, and accomplishment they must also be close in skin tone, and David H. Hume's assertion that "there never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white"[5] still held so much sway in the late-Victorian period that the archaeologist James Theodore Bent was able to insist the African stone structures of Great Zimbabwe must have been the work of Phoenicians or Arabs, as it was beyond the capability of sub-Saharan Africans to have constructed them.[6]

At this point we might remind ourselves that it was not a respect for their potential architectural skills that led plantation owners into intercourse with their female slaves, but if Fanny's Fair Cuban is to elicit sympathy from Desberough -- and by extension the Victorian reader -- then the relationship between her mother and father must be rendered more in terms of common-law wife than sexual chattel. By emphasising her mother's grace and deportment, the Fair Cuban is able to stress the closeness of her parent's relationship to that of a 'normal' marriage, and escape the unstated but obvious charge of her being the simple mulattaroon bastard of a sexually exploitative slave-owner:

> [My mother's] mind was noble, her manners queenly and accomplished; and seeing her more than the equal of her neighbours and surrounded by the most considerate affection and respect, I grew up to adore her, and when the time came, received her last sigh upon my lips, still ignorant that she was a slave and alas! my father's mistress. (148)

The important elements here are threefold: that the Fair Cuban's mother was respected within colonial society; that the power differential of slave master and slave was so diminished within the Fair Cuban's family group that she was wholly unaware of it; and -- the most contentious of the three and justifiably unspoken -- that the attraction between the Teresa's father and mother was not of the fetishised and illicit sort so often alluded to by nineteenth-century commentators when discussing the sexual behaviour of white men with black women.

One problem inherent within nineteenth-century racialist science when attempting to explain the continuing existence of mixed-race offspring is that if, as Louis Agassiz professor of Zoology at Harvard had asserted, "the idea of amalgamation is repugnant" and "as much a sin against nature, as incest in a civilised community is a sin against purity of character...a perversion of every sentiment [and] abhorrent to our better nature"[7], then why did white men choose to indulge in sexual intercourse with black partners at all? Agassiz's explanation was that the initial attraction felt by young white men to the white qualities of mixed-race serving girls tempered the disgust felt towards their African ancestry, while the essentialist black qualities of the girls themselves made them uninhibited and licentious sexual partners. It is the corrupting nature of black sexuality that leads the white man on a search for more fully African-blooded women: "this blunts his better instincts in that direction and leads him gradually to seek more spicy partners, as I have heard the full blacks called by fast young men"[8]

If there is an implicit belief that the white man who consorts with black partners is a corrupted adventurer on a sexual downwards spiral then the Fair Cuban's testimonial description of her parent's relationship goes some way towards repugning it, allowing the late Victorian reader a sympathy for the Fair Cuban's family circumstances that might not otherwise be felt.

This aspect of the story and its ramifications for the wider plot of *The Dynamiter* are dependent upon the profound difference between the British and American attitudes to hybridity. In the United States a rigidified policy of hypodescent -- the "One Drop Rule" -- made African ancestry the unchangeable factor within society.

Chapter 4: "They're only half-castes, of course"

Biracial offspring were defined solely by the African side of their ancestry, and belonged solely to the category 'black' no matter how many white ancestors they may also have had. Werner Sollors writes:

> In the United States...the racial principle of descent -- since it often excludes a biracial category and other intermediate identities --was that a 'white parent' (male or female) might generate a 'black' or a 'white' child, but that a 'black parent' (male or female) could usually only generate "black" -- and under only very few circumstances 'white' -- descendants. [9]

Biracial Americans might be defined according to the fraction of African "blood" within their veins -- mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon being semantic distinctions referring to ½, ¼, and 1/8 African ancestry respectively -- but the truly significant differentiation rests in the Manichaean dichotomy of 'white' and 'black'. In this the realities of attitudes to biracialism within colonial Cuba are moot: Fanny Stevenson is not really writing about Cuba, the theories and social norms that inform her tale and which the Fair Cuban herself invokes are predicated upon the racialism of Fanny's native United States. African ancestry carries a symbolic weight that outclasses even that of Scottish kings, and despite the Fair Cuban's light complexion she falls into the same category as Mark Twain's Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*:

> To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but the one sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro.[10]

The initial dramatic and racial tension in 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' is engendered by the eponymous heroine's account of an encounter with a Senora Mendizabal:

> a woman richly and tastefully attired; of elegant carriage, and a musical speech; not so much old in years, as worn and marred by self-indulgence: her face, which was still attractive, stamped with the greed of evil. (148)

Supposedly, the Fair Cuban's father is facing financial ruin and Senora Mendizabal pays a visit to his plantation where she immediately grasps what the young woman

herself does not know: that Teresa might believe herself the daughter of the owner but legally she is a slave and part of the material wealth of the estate. The Fair Cuban's assumed position of authority falters in the presence of Mendizabal: "forcing my way through the slaves, who fell back before me in embarrassment, as though in the presence of rival mistresses, I asked, in imperious tones: "Who is this person?" (148)

The authority which the Fair Cuban commands however has no legal basis, and the reaction from the Senora Mendizabal brings a moment of revelation for Teresa as to her own status as property, with her hitherto understood life as plantation owner's child falling apart:

> "Young woman," said she at last, "I have had a great experience in refractory servants, and take a pride in breaking them. You really tempt me; and if I had other affairs, and these of more importance, on my hand, I should certainly buy you at your father's sale"
> "Madam----" I began, but my voice failed me.
> "Is it possible that you do not know your position?" she returned with a hateful laugh. "How comical. Positively I must buy her." (149)

The moment when the mulattaroon finds herself reduced to chattel and helpless despite her accomplishments is a typical one in fictionalised accounts of slavery[11], with the instigator usually a white male slave owner personifying the forces of racialism and patriarchy. Unusually, within Fanny Stevenson's "The Fair Cuban" these conventions are subverted, the white male is replaced with Madame Mendizabal, a black female who exploits and dominates other black people by utilising both the overt codes of colonial society and the occulted spiritual beliefs of the African slave population. As a rich woman she can use her wealth to possess other human beings according to the laws of her society, but she possesses another sort of capital as well; she is a priestess of a religion that has survived the Middle Passage: "exercising among her ancient mates, the slaves of Cuba, an influence as unbounded as its reason is mysterious. Horrible rites, it is supposed, cement her empire: the rites of Hoodoo". (151)

It's a problematic and provocative portrayal of slavery: rather than assign blame

to white, male structures for the inequities threatening the Fair Cuban, the specific guilt is foisted onto a black woman. Is Madame Mendizabal an example of an African who has achieved agency within a racist, patriarchal society, a woman who has risen from slave to a position of power? Or is she a conflation of stereotypes, the evil witch and debauched African, diverting criticism away from the white patriarchy that is truly at fault? Certainly she evidences all the faults of the white, male slave master, her dialogue even carrying the same distinct undertone of violent sexual domination that permeates the male slave owner/female slave dialectic:

> "She would do very well for my place of business in Havana," said the Senora Mendizabal, once more studying me through her glasses; "and I should take a pleasure," she pursued, more directly addressing myself, "in bringing you acquainted with a whip." And she smiled at me with a savoury lust of cruelty upon her face. (149)

It's a remarkable manipulation on the part of a female author via a female narrator that the customary power relation of slavery should be so subverted that the chief example of the white slave owner in the text -- Teresa's father -- is portrayed in an almost wholly positive light, whereas the manumitted former slave Mendizabal is rendered as "prematurely old, disgraced by the practice of every vice and every nefarious industry, but free, rich, married, they say to some reputable man". (151) And yet for all her depravities she has secured her freedom and a reputable husband, while the Fair Cuban's "noble, queenly, and accomplished" mother died as the chattel of a man who would neither grant her manumission nor make her his lawful wife.

Of course, a very real reason for Teresa's mother to have remained in slavery is one of plot necessity on the part of the Fair Cuban and her author, in that the tale requires Teresa to be in danger of being sold as a slave if her story is to fully elicit sympathy from both Desberough and the reader. Teresa's father pleads his insolvency as the reason he failed to emancipate his wife and daughter, and in his entreaties to his daughter for forgiveness Fanny Stevenson render the slave owners of Cuba as simultaneously bestial and legalistic:

> "Slave as you are, young -- alas! Scarce more than a child! -- accomplished, beautiful with the most touching beauty, innocent as an angel -- all these qualities that should disarm the very wolves and crocodiles are in the eyes of those to whom I stand indebted, commodities to buy and sell. You are a chattel; a marketable thing; and worth...money. Do you begin to see? If I were to give you freedom, I should defraud my creditors. (152)

Certainly, the harrowing intimation that an innocent angel is in danger of falling into the clutches of "wolves" and "crocodiles" is a damning indictment of Cuban slavery, yet it is a system of which the Fair Cuban's father has also fully availed himself, even to the extent of taking another similarly "accomplished [and] beautiful" young woman to his bed. If we were to take the tale at face value one might wonder to what extent the power differential influenced the relationship between Teresa's father and mother, for as commodity and chattel the Fair Cuban's mother would have been in no position to refuse sexual advances from her master. The hypocrisy of this position is not lost on Fanny Stevenson, and she has the father admit "too long, I saw, had I accepted and profited by this great crime of slavery" (152), leaving one wondering if keeping a slave mistress who must submit to his commands was not itself one of the aspects of slavery from which he profited? He goes further in listing his material wealth and the danger he faces due to his precarious finances, but the association of his own daughter with his land and jewels leaves hanging a question which destabilises the fictitious narrative: 'if he was in possession of land, jewels, and other slaves, was he not wealthy enough at some point to have manumitted his mistress and child?':

> "a heavy debt fell...which I could not meet; I should be declared a bankrupt, and my goods, my lands, my jewels that I so loved, my slaves who I have spoiled and rendered happy, and oh! ten-fold worse, you my beloved daughter, would be sold and pass into the hands of ignorant and greedy traffickers" (152)

This trope of the light-skinned, accomplished female mulattaroon slave under threat of sale to a cruel slave owner is a common one within nineteenth-century American literature, the most prominent example being that of Eliza Harris in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). This novel had impressed

Robert Louis Stevenson as a child [12] and it's thus very probable that Eliza Harris was the first literary example of a mixed race character to which Stevenson was exposed, raising the question whether Fanny had deliberately looked to Beecher Stowe's Eliza in order to entertain Louis with her own Fair Cuban. Like Teresa, almost all physical signifiers of African descent were absented from Beecher Stowe's description of Eliza, other than that nebulous and almost preternatural beauty assigned to the biracial female in such literature[13] and attributed to the African blood in their racial admixture. It is useful to compare the extent to which Teresa and her mother conform to description of the earlier Eliza, as it locates Fanny's portrayal of the biracial female within a paradigm that was already well established: Teresa's mother is described as "fair as the day...her mind was noble, her manners queenly and accomplished"; her daughter is "accomplished, beautiful with the most touching beauty, innocent as an angel...unsullied". One can notice the same signifiers -- beauty, grace, natural nobility -- utilised within Harriet Beecher Stowe's lengthy description of Eliza in chapter two of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* where she is described as possessing:

> a peculiar air of refinement, which seems in many cases to be the particular gift to the quadroon and mulatto woman. These natural graces in the quadroon are often united with beauty of the most dazzling kind, and in almost every case with a personal appearance prepossessing and agreeable.[14]

For those female mulattaroons of nineteenth-century American literature the escape routes from slavery lay in death, or flight to the northern 'free' states of America or to British soil (Canada or the United Kingdom, which gave refuge to many slaves after the passing of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act). The same plot device functions in Fanny Stevenson's narrative as might be expected, for not only is she herself recycling the tropes of earlier fictions, but she is allowing her duplicitous narrator to utilise what would have the most identifiably familiar devices and stereotypes of abolitionist fiction. As has been previously noted the tale is not concerned with the veracity of its portrayal of Cuban life, rather it is a fiction that through its internal inconsistencies and reliance upon stock devices calls attention to

its own artifice. The Fair Cuban's testimony is one of overt melodramatic sentimentality designed to tug the heartstrings of Harry Desberough, while allowing the reader glimpses of its own unreliability. However, like the protagonist/narrator, the tale itself is a cultural hybrid, in that its American ancestry is miscegenated with elements more specific to British reactions to biracialism in literature and wider society.

In 'The Fair Cuban' Britain is represented in terms familiar to the reader of American slavery fiction and abolitionist writing as a land where the fugitive might find refuge and liberty. However, through the intentions of Teresa's father Fanny offers a modified outcome unusual within American slavery literature:

> Your mother was a slave; it was my design, so soon as I had saved a competence, to sail to the free land of Britain, where the law would suffer me to marry her: a design too long procrastinated; for death, at the last moment, intervened. (151)

The divergence from the stereotypical American narrative comes in the slave owner being pressured into marrying the manumitted slave. The American one-drop rule prohibits the possible redemption of the mulattaroon via marriage to a white American, with Jennifer DeVere Brody noting that

> When the mulattaroon resurfaced after the Civil War as a stock character in African American fiction, she often performed as a ruined figure who could only be redeemed by a middle-class black gentleman, but more likely than not, was cast(e) aside and read as a traitor to the race.[15]

This is in sharp contrast to the potential available within British fiction, where even the darker-skinned mulattaroon was permitted access to society -- even to the social elite -- providing her entry was facilitated by wealth and capital. Because England never had anti-miscegenation laws marriage to the mulattatroon was never impossible, although as DeVeres Brody has noted it was viewed as impolitic and impolite.[16]

The most overt example of the socially accepted mulattatroon within nineteenth-century English literature is undoubtedly Rhoda Swartz in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). While the sympathetic rendering of an heiress woman of mixed

race might have been a rarity in the eighteen-forties, the passage of years between *Vanity Fair*'s publication and the writing of *The Dynamiter* had allowed the tropes utilised in Thackeray's novel to become conventions in their own right. Like Teresa from *The Dynamiter,* Rhoda Swartz is the daughter of a Caribbean slave owner, but whereas the Fair Cuban's ostensible role as daughter is subsumed within her legalistic status of slave, Rhoda Swartz is acknowledged and accepted without question as the legal heir of her father's fortune, if socially marginalised to some extent by her biracial status. What most clearly delineates the difference between American and English treatments of racial mixing however is that those African characteristics of Rhoda's physical appearance that initially draw detrimental comment are later cancelled out by her material wealth. Rhoda is almost invariably described as "the wooly-haired mulatto heiress from St. Kitts"[17] -- her very name a Germanic synonym for "black" -- with a temperament susceptible to excessive sentimentality and emotion, as in the passage where Amelia Sedley leaves the finishing school: "On the day that Amelia went away [Rhoda] was in such a passion of tears that [Miss Pinkerton, the head of school] was obliged to send for Dr. Floss to half tipsify her with sal volatile" (10). Furthermore her complexion is explicitly referred to by prospective suitors as akin to a "chimney sweep" (236), undercutting her material wealth and aligning her with the working class. It is not only the colour of her skin that posits her among the lower classes but her African descent, a heritage more usually associated with servants in Victorian London. George Osbourne answers the suggestion that she might make a suitable partner with a dismissive rejoinder that forces Swartz into the binary of either servant or ethnological specimen: "marry that mulatto woman? ...I don't like her colour, sir. Ask the black that sweeps opposite Fleet Market, sir. *I'm* not going to marry a Hottentot Venus" (240). [18]

Yet despite the initial racial prejudices, Rhoda's material wealth serves as a way into society to the extent that suitors are clamouring for this young, mixed race woman rumoured to possess "diamonds as big as pigeon's eggs" (227). Unlike in Fanny's native United States financial capital *could* purchase cultural capital in

Victorian England[19], and Rhoda Swartz becomes a sought-after partner in the high-stakes marriage mart that is Vanity Fair. The admixture of European and African blood that would cause such profound difficulties for the mulattaroon females of nineteenth-century American literature is viewed with more tolerance in most English representations, with DeVere Brody noting "even the 'darker-skinned' mulattaroon was permitted to become a 'proper' (and perhaps a propertied) *lady* provided that providence procured for her proximity to a white gentleman".[20] It's also notable that Rhoda Swartz's eventual husband is described as being a "young sprig of Scotch nobility" (493), with a Scottish noble provenance acting as another socially acceptable alternative to a purely English identity.

As has been noted, the contrasting options for the mulattatroon within American fiction preclude the possibility of acknowledgement by or marriage into white society, even for the most accomplished and refined of them. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Eliza's life journey is very different from that of Rhoda Swartz's, with her only hope of escape from a life of slavery being a desperate flight across the frozen Ohio river. Her torturous journey is not only a physical one; it may also be read as a symbolic attempt to manoeuvre between the Manichaean absolutes of American racialism. In the set-piece tableau of attempting to cross the river "swollen with great cakes of floating ice swinging heavily to and fro in the turbid waters",[21] Eliza is suspended not only between the cold white of the ice and the black depths of the water, but also the cold realities of a white supremacist society and the black oblivion of death by drowning. Her hybrid identity is as unstable as the shifting ice she is attempting to cross and will provide no solid footing, nor will it offer her any standing should she survive the crossing.

The journey that Fanny's Fair Cuban takes to escape from slavery is, like Eliza's, as much metaphorical as it is physical, but rather than find herself caught in the crushing ontological binary of American slavery Teresa navigates adroitly between the cultural roles of white and black utilising the cultural capital of each in order to effect her escape.

The sudden death of her father sees Teresa making an oath to avoid molestation at

the hands of her oppressors, even if that involves her committing crimes. In a marked deviation from the archetype of Eliza Harris, who would instead have sought refuge from disgrace in her own self-extinction, Teresa passionately pledges her willingness to criminally resist those slave owners who would abuse her, and the system that would permit such behaviour:

> "Father," I said, "It was your last thought, even in the pangs of dissolution, that your daughter should escape disgrace. Here at your side, I swear to you that purpose shall be carried out; by what means. I know not; by crime, if need be; and heaven forgive both you and me and our oppressors; and Heaven help my helplessness!" (157)

It is a spirited display of indignant defiance on the part of the duplicitous narrator, and the irony is not lost on the reader that Teresa's own father impregnated a slave. Fanny's choice of the word "dissolution" also serves to subvert the melodramatic conventions she is employing on behalf of her unreliable narrator. Teresa's cry might be read as:

> "Father…It was your last thought, [even at the moment of your passing], that your daughter should escape disgrace."

yet it can also be read as:

> "Father…It was your last thought, [troubled as you were by your own debauchery], that your daughter should escape disgrace."

By interpreting it in this fashion we find another instance of problematising in what is already a destabilised and subverted narrative from the Fair Cuban: the reader is aware that the tale is a lie and constructed to prey on the sympathies of Desberough, yet the very tropes of abolitionist fiction that she is utilising are themselves called into question by their mutability of meaning. Even those elements of her story most likely to elicit sympathy shift and change when put under scrutiny.

Teresa's oath to fight back against those who might make her a sexual chattel is tested when she comes into contact with the creditor who now owns her. Having previously promoted Britain as that "free land", Fanny then inverts that British love

of liberty in the person of Caulder, a "corpulent...sensual, vulgar" slaveowner (157). The distinction from the Spanish colonial population is made explicit: Caulder professes himself "a plain man, none of your damned Spaniards, but a true blue, hard-working, honest Englishman"(157). One might interpret Fanny's characterisation of Caulder -- who has no difficulty reconciling his ownership of slaves with his own belief in himself as an exemplar of Englishness -- as a comment on Britain's own slaving past, for what was anathema in the eighteen-eighties had been tolerated in British colonies little more than half a century earlier.

Caulder's subsequent inspection of Teresa sees her being examined like an animal:

> "I like your looks...Is your hair all your own? He then inquired with a certain sharpness, and coming up to me as though I were a horse, he grossly satisfied his doubts. I was all one flame from head to foot, but I contained my righteous anger and submitted. (158)

Here Fanny Stevenson re-invokes the abolitionist-era trope of the female slave purchased in order to be used as a sexual chattel. It's a trope that had previously evoked ambiguous and conflicting reactions from specifically English audiences: the successful dissemination of American slave narratives in Victorian Britain was often problematised by the inclusion of material dealing with the sexual exploitation of slaves. Audrey Fisch has noted that the British abolitionist campaigner J.B. Estlin, while welcoming the authenticity of Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), was discomfited by the inclusion of the following account of a female slave used as a "breeder":

> [Mr. Covey] may be said to have been guilty of compelling his woman slave to commit the sin of adultery. The facts in this case are these: Mr. Covey was a poor man; and he was just commencing in life; he was only able to buy one slave; and shocking as is the fact, he bought her, as he said for a *breeder* [Douglass' original emphasis]. This woman was named Caroline. Mr. Covey bought her from Mr. Thomas Lowe, about six miles from St. Michael's. She was a large and able-bodied woman , about twenty years old. She had already given birth to one child, which proved her to be just what he wanted. After

> buying her, he hired a married man of Mr. Samuel Harrison, to live with him for one year; and him he used to fasten up with her every night! The result was, that, at the end of the year, the miserable woman gave birth to twins. At this result Mr. Covey seemed to be highly pleased, both with the man and the wretched woman.[22]

While Estlin as a committed abolitionist expressed joy at the opportunity Douglass' narrative provided for further advancing British opposition to American slavery, the very veracity of the accounts of slavery life runs counter to Estlin's concepts of what subjects are suitable for young and female readers:

> You will understand my feelings (perhaps you may call it fastidiousness) when I say, that being most desirous to communicate extensively a correct knowledge of American Slavery in this city, and rejoicing in having such an excellent opportunity of doing so as Douglass' Narrative furnished me with, I could not circulate it among my friends and especially among ladies (young ones particularly) until I had erased all the paragraphs after the statement that Covey intended the woman be bought for a "*breeder*". The minutia [sic] following, that he...shut him up with the woman every night for a year, and that the result was twins, **a**re unnecessary and disgusting...[such sections would offend] English taste and impede the sale of the book.[23]

It has been suggested that Estlin's reaction was far from unusual, and was in fact symptomatic of the British reception towards American slave-narratives.[24] If so this creates a particular crisis of 'balancing' for the specifically English abolitionist cause; the necessity to spread the truth of what was occurring in the slave states must be tempered to fit *English* sensibilities, suggesting that the veracity of the accounts is in some way subordinate to taste. Running counter to this however was the unmistakeable fact that sensationalism was becoming more and more prevalent in Victorian writing, with the result that a slave narrative's prospects need not be damaged by the inclusion of accounts of sexual slavery; rather, there might be an audience who take an active interest in the more prurient aspects of the slave narratives. Fisch notes: "The growing desire for titillation in their books and papers, in distinction from Estlin's evocation of English 'good' taste, could and often did in fact impel sales of a book".[25]

In this manner Fanny Stevenson's 'Tale of the Fair Cuban' serves as an anachronistic pastiche of the American slave narrative, inclusive of the sensationalist aspects that would have so discomforted the abolitionists of Estlin's generation, but rather than merely reproducing the stereotypes of the traditional narrative the text upsets and challenges English sensibilities while simultaneously providing the sensationalism that impelled popular success. The duplicitous 'Teresa' (Clara Luxmore) appeals for Desberough's help in a manner that plays to his higher moral sentiments, but which also titillates with hints of sexual anecdotes. Furthermore, rather than place the heroine under sexual threat from an American slave-owner, the American author challenges any self-satisfactory late Victorian perceptions of the moral high ground being marked by a Union Jack by making the potential sexual exploiter a self-professed "true blue Englishman".

By representing Britain -- specifically England -- in this manner the perception of a mythic English unanimity of consensus on slavery is challenged. The English national character is not essentially immune from the offences of the slave-owner, for to believe so is to deny the historic reality of Britain's role in the slave trade, and while Britons might have perceived themselves as abolitionist by nature, freed from the moral constraints of Victorian society might not many men become Caulders, just as many 'Dr. Jekylls' might have a 'Hyde' within themselves?

In Robert Louis Stevenson's work the wilderness is where identity becomes destabilised and fluvial, an existential space where the rules and norms of society cease to bind, and where unknown or hidden aspects of personality may come monstrously rushing to the surface. Certitudes of the self and of one's companions are toppled: the Whig David Balfour might find himself an erstwhile Jacobite while in the wilderness, but also his trust in Alan Breck is shaken by the thought that he may be in the company of the Appin murderer; the *Treasure Island* (1882) forest is where 'Barbeque' the sea-cook becomes the mutinous Long John Silver attempting to win around the last honest seamen; and the swamps of Colonial America in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) are where the Chevalier Burke comes to realise himself to be the accomplice of a callous villain.

Chapter 4: "They're only half-castes, of course"

In 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' the destabilising jungle -- and by extension the tropics -- is not only a space where Teresa's sense of self is challenged, it also serves as a primal environment that is essentially antipathetic to the European on a physiological level. As such the jungle is rendered as an anti-Eden for the coloniser, an anthropomorphic, sentient, anti-imperialist space that seeks to repel the invasive penetration of the European:

> The path on which we now entered was cut, like a tunnel, through the *living jungle* [emphasis added]. On either hand and over-head, the mass of foliage was continuously joined; the day sparingly filtered through the depth of superimpending wood; and the air was hot like steam, and heady with vegetable odours, and lay like a load upon the lungs and brain. Under foot, a great depth of mould received our silent footprints; on each side mimosas, as tall as a man, shrank from my passing skirts with a continuous hissing rustle; and, but for these sentient vegetables, all in that den of pestilence was motionless and noiseless. (160)

The *corpus* of the jungle is less a realistic environment than a macrocosmic embodiment of the colonialist slave-society paradigm: the sexual threat to Teresa from Caulder is acted out in the penetration of the vaginal spaced "tunnel" into the living jungle, yet the shrinking of the "hissing" vegetation from Teresa serves also as an inarticulate condemnation of her status as hybridised slave owner's daughter and ersatz 'white lady'. As such it foreshadows the vehement hatred later poured upon her in the hoodoo ceremony.

The jungle is also a "den of pestilence" that poisons the "lungs and brain"; embodying the very real worry of the colonialist that the European is physiologically unsuited to tropical climes. Such a belief was widespread over the course of the nineteenth-century; mid-century Robert Knox suggested that Europeans could only really prosper in Europe, that equatorial climates were lethal to the coloniser, and that "the tropical regions of the earth seem peculiarly to belong to [the Negro]...aided by the sun, he repels the white invader".[26] By the eighteen-nineties little had changed, with Benjamin Kidd stating that: "in the tropics a white man lives and works only as a diver lives and works underwater".[27] The conjecture that the

white man must 'naturally' succeed in a 'war of races' in colonial possessions is thus challenged by the counter-theory that nature itself rebels against European colonisation of the tropics, that "the almost exterminated savage will be amply revenged by a slow, gradual degeneracy, and perhaps final extinction, of their...conquerors"[28].

Rendered in such terms the colonial enterprise becomes an ephemeral aberration against nature, an adventure propelled by will, greed, and hubris, and ultimately doomed to failure. Caulder's death -- poisoned by the miasma of the pestilential swamp -- might thus be read as emblematic of the eventual decline of the imperial project in the tropics, his desire for the fruit of imperialism (be it riches or sexual chattel) being his own undoing:

> "...Girl," he cried suddenly, with the same screaming tone of voice that I had once before observed, "what is wrong? Is this swamp accursed?"
>
> "It is a grave," I answered. "You will not go out alive; and as for me, my life is in God's hands."
>
> He fell upon the ground like a man struck by a blow, but whether from the effect of my words, or from sudden seizure of the malady, I cannot tell. Pretty soon, he raised his head. "You have brought me here to die," he said; "at the risk of your own days, you have condemned me. Why?"
>
> "To save my honour," I replied. "Bear me out that I have warned you. Greed of these pebbles, and not I, has been your undoer."(164)

Teresa has taken advantage of Caulder's greed to expedite his death, but it is made clear that the slave master's own desires are the ultimate cause of his demise. As such, Teresa becomes a model of resistance that falls short of outright rebellion, but rather overcomes and survives the coloniser through a sort of asymmetrical biological warfare to which she herself is immune by dint of her African ancestry. She entered the jungle as ersatz European daughter, but in that existential space she endured physical violence at the hands of Caulder, as well as the implied threat of sexual molestation, a condensed experience of the power differential of slavery. That she survives the environmental hazards is due to essentialist biological characteristics: "my negro blood has carried me unhurt across that reeking and pestiferous morass". (166)

Chapter 4: "They're only half-castes, of course"

If Teresa's travails in the swamp represent her achieving a degree of agency in tandem with her acceptance of her African ancestry then the events that immediately follow starkly delineate the boundaries of her morality with an example of a wholly malevolent, Africanised resistance to colonial society. The Hoodoo ceremony that the Fair Cuban observes is a truly *Black* Mass, a colonialist's nightmare of an irrational, superstitious, murderous, and specifically African cult whose clandestine presence resides beneath the established social order. The signifiers here come thick and fast -- naked worshippers, serpents, curses, human sacrifice -- but it is through Teresa's observation of a slave personally known to her that Fanny Stevenson provides us an example of the residing fear of colonial societies, that supposedly loyal servant might wish death upon their masters:

> From different parts of the ring, one after another, man or woman, ran forth into the midst; ducked, with that same gesture of the thrown-up hand. Before the priestess and her snakes; and, with various adjurations, uttered aloud the blackest wishes of the heart. Death and disease were the favours usually invoked: the death or the disease of enemies or rivals; some calling down these plagues upon the nearest of their own blood, and one, to whom I swear I had never been less than kind, invoking them upon myself. (167)

Regardless of the realities of life on a West Indian sugar plantation such a disloyalty on the part of a presumed faithful servant tapped into the general sense of imperial unease in Victorian society that was born in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and renewed by the Jamaican Rebellion of 1865. In appealing to Desberough's sympathies Teresa steps back from the totality of African identity and again clothes herself in the garb of planter's daughter, this time threatened by the very slaves whose legal status she supposedly shares. Again, Fanny is not really speaking of her contemporary Cuba, for Teresa's appeal is one that preys upon the Victorian fear of the white female beset upon by the black Other, conflating tropes of the Indian Mutiny with the old prejudice that the black inhabitants of the West Indies live a life of relative indolence. *The Times'* discussion of the Jamaican Rebellion succinctly sets out the racialist fantasy of the ungrateful black West Indian:

> Though a fleabite compared with the Indian mutiny, [the Jamaican Rebellion] touches our pride more and is more in the nature of a

> disappointment...Jamaica is our pet institution, and its inhabitants are our spoilt children...It seemed to be proved in Jamaica that the negro could become fit for self-government...Alas for great triumphs of humanity, and the improvements or races, and the removal of primeval curses, and the expenditure of twenty millions sterling, Jamaica herself gainsays the fact and belies herself, as we see to-day. It is that which vexes us more than even the Sepoy revolt.[29]

Having previously set out a case whereby the natural nobility of the African is stated -- noble, queenly, accomplished -- Fanny's Teresa suddenly engages in a remarkable example of ideological manoeuvring, preying upon the same prejudices that -- the African is irrational, ungrateful, and essentially savage -- that informed the discourse surrounding the Jamaican Rebellion :

> It seems...impossible to eradicate the original savageness of the African blood. As long as the black man has a strong white Government and a numerous white population to control him he is capable of living as a respectable member of society. He can be made quiet and even industrious by the fear of the supreme power, and by the example of those to whom he necessarily looks up. But wherever he attains to a certain degree of independence there is the fear that he will resume the barbarous life and fierce habits of his African ancestors.[30]

The dilemma for the Fair Cuban is that as a hybridised figure she is physiologically suited to her tropical environment, but legalistically excluded from colonial society. Alternative status exists within the hidden African counter-society of the Hoodoo cult, in the case of Madame Mendizabal the cultural capital can even be converted into status within planter society, but to engage with the Hoodoo cult is to embrace an irrationalist savagery that is no more moral than the inhumanity of the slave-master. Faced with such a choice the only option is escape to the British Empire, which is portrayed as unhindered by the 'One-Drop' rule of the competing United States. This characteristic of British society is played upon in the Robert Louis Stevenson authored framing tales that bookend 'The Fair Cuban', with appeals to "free England -- oh glorious liberty!" (142)

Teresa's journey though the novel is punctuated by a surprising fluctuation through cultural and racial identities. The Robert Louis Stevenson-penned initial

interactions with Desberough are marked by her thickly laying on the differences between Cuban and English culture; she draws attention to her tobacco smoking and peppers her conversation with wistful reminiscences about her supposed homeland, anything that might differentiate her in Desberough's eyes from a "simple English maiden"(142). As they become further acquainted she asserts that she is becoming more "British":

> "Do you know," said she "I am emboldened to believe that I have already caught something of your English aplomb?" Do you not perceive a change, Senor? Slight perhaps, but still a change? Is my deportment not more open, more free, more like that of the dear 'British Miss', than when you saw me first?" (144)

Certainly, she had previously identified herself as having Scottish blood, but her change in demeanour is not attributed to essentialist qualities inherent in British ancestry, rather her process of transformation into "British Miss" suggests the converse of David Balfour's transformation in *Kidnapped*; for just as the young Lowland Scotsman was able to learn how to be a Highlander, so the ostensible Cuban may adopt the characteristics of Englishwoman. It is a transformation unavailable within American society of the same period due to the 'One-Drop Rule', and indeed Fanny's United States compares badly even to the Cuba of the text. The ex-slave Madame Mendizabal's marriage to a respectable, wealthy white man demonstrates a degree of social and inter-racial mobility that would have been unachievable in 23 of the then 38 states of the Union due to anti-miscegenation laws forbidding marriage between blacks and whites. Of course, built on a falsehood told by an inveterate liar and assumer of fake identities it is not surprising that Fanny should allow her character "Teresa" to similarly change aspects of her identity, but in doing so it again challenges the legally sanctioned essentialism of the American 'One-Drop' rule, by showing the British Empire as possessing an alternative paradigm for biracial subjects.

'The Tale of the Brown Box' is a hybrid text that rescribes and subverts the American nineteenth-century slavery and post-slavery narrative. Taken in isolation, Fanny's 'Story of the Fair Cuban' utilises tropes of the American racial melodrama

with its mulattaroon protagonist, but rather than portray her pathway to freedom as dependent upon the transitional ordeal of the mixed race female "passing" for white her journey -- metaphorically and physically -- is dependent upon traits both essentialist and fluvial. In the existential space of the pestilential jungle her (supposed) essentialist African heritage provides resistance to the miasmic climate that kills the "true-blue Englishman" Caulder, and with neither father nor master to define the limits of her identity she is at that moment free from a multiple bondage that is patriarchal, legalistic, and racialist. Her subsequent journey through the jungle sees her identity in a state of play with her deliverance dependent on her passing, not as white, but as the corrupt Madame Mendizabal, whose command over the Hoodoo worshipping slaves and uneasy marriage to the gentleman-pirate Sir George presents a shadowy alternative model of hybridity in the text.

'The Story of the Fair Cuban' is at turns stereotypical and subversive in its presentation of race; it utilises stereotypes of the abolitionist slavery narrative -- the natural nobility of the slave in the persons of Teresa and her late mother -- then sets against them racialist tropes of the treacherous servant. We witness the slaves of the Hoodoo ceremony wishing death upon Teresa, yet her own emancipation is dependent upon her similar role in luring the slave-owner Caulder to his death. In doing so, Fanny sets a provocative example for the colonial subject in how to achieve agency that is quite at odds with the more passive route to freedom established by earlier writers like Beecher Stowe. Teresa's escape from Cuba ultimately lies in her utilising cultural attributes and modes of behaviour closer to those of Madame Mendizabal than Eliza Harris. Rather than passing for white, the mixed race Teresa's freedom is dependent upon her passing for black by assuming the identity of the corrupt yet free Mendizabal. The racialist signifiers of 'white' and 'black' retain a certain degree of Manichaean moral dichotomy, but the duplicity and veiled hostility of the slave to the master associated with black identity in the text becomes a proactive path to agency.

Taken in isolation 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' might be read as a diverting minor late Victorian conceit on the American slavery narrative, but through the

mechanism of the framing tale the entirety of the story is subverted and problematised. As a model for hybridity Teresa would seem to embody moral and physical characteristics ideal for settling the tropical regions of the British Empire, while remaining equally engaging to young men at the metropolitan heart of the Empire. It is Robert Louis Stevenson however and not Fanny that problematises Teresa; by revealing her as the duplicitous Englishwoman Clara Luxmore, by setting up the plot device of her supposed illiteracy -- at no point alluded to in Fanny's own 'The Story of the Fair Cuban'-- in order that Teresa might contradict it from her own mouth, Stevenson renders the entirety of the interior tale's meditation upon race and hybridity unstable. Why might he have done so?

Perhaps the answer lies in that same dedicatory preface to the novel that sought to disarm any potential criticism regarding portrayal of Fenian violence:

> In the volume now in your hands, the authors have touched upon the ugly devil of crime, with which it is your glory to have contended. It were a waste of ink to do so in a serious spirit. (xiii)

It may be suggested that to utilise historic tropes and devices to discuss contemporary issues of hybridity was similarly a waste of ink, and that the melodramatic literary conventions of the mulattaroon were in no way capable of adequately expressing the issues that surrounded racial hybridity in the late Victorian British Empire. Instead Robert Louis Stevenson destabilises Fanny's narrative, renders the literary conventions of race-themed writing as inadequate to the task, and defers comment upon hybridity until his later South Seas writing.[31]

Postcolonial criticism is one of the younger fields in the discipline of literature in English, yet already one might suggest there is a tendency towards the formation of a canon, with that canon concentrated upon the literary products and Western representations of the Indian sub-continent, Africa, and the (predominantly anglophone) Caribbean. Showing imperial experience at the Pacific periphery of empire, Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892) is of particular significance in the study of nineteenth-century literature as it offers a counterbalance to the more common Indian, African, and Caribbean accounts of colonial experience.

Chapter 4: "They're only half-castes, of course"

With the notable exception of the white settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand, colonialism in the South Pacific was a somewhat haphazard and unenthusiastic affair, motivated less by imperial ambition than by, as in the case of the annexation of Fiji, the lobbying of the White Australian and New Zealand colonies, or in the instance of Samoa what amounted on a political scale to a feeling that perhaps an island really should be occupied, if only to keep a rival colonial power from taking it. A noticeable aspect here of what makes 'The Beach of Falesa' interesting is that it is wholly without the influence of centralized authority: there are no consuls, military officers, or district-commissioners. The immense apparatus of colonizing institutions so evident in, for example, Kipling's depiction of British India is entirely absent. Instead the interactions of colonialism occur at a grass-roots level between traders, natives, and missionaries.

At the opening of 'The Beach of Falesá' the trader-protagonist Wiltshire arrives at the island of the title after "years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among natives". Viewed through the sailor's spyglass the geography of the island, natural and man-made, seems to physically embody the colonial relationship while foreshadowing the coming machinations of the tale's villain, Case. "Brown roofs...peep among the trees"[32] like architectural personifications of the Polynesian encounter narrative, while Wiltshire's new station might be read as a metaphor for his role as isolated white trader within the island community:

> "Do you catch a bit of white there to the east-ard?" the captain continued. "That's your house. Coral built, stands high, verandah you could walk on three abreast; best station in the South Pacific." (3)

Like his house, Wiltshire will be "a bit of white" in the island society, with the implicit question in colonial terms being whether that "bit of white" will be an ephemeral flash within the historic continuity of Pacific island life. Wiltshire's "station" serves double duty in etymological terms by representing both his trading post and his social standing on the island. Built from coral -- the once living marine organism that serves as a symbolic trope for Polynesia -- his "station" "stands high" above the "brown" and "black" native dwellings, yet is metaphorically built upon

their patronage and cooperation. The captain promises Wiltshire the "best station in the South Pacific", yet the "tangle of the woods"(3), the site of Case's manipulation of the Islanders' superstitions and religious beliefs, will cast him as social pariah and jeopardise his future on the island.

The new life for the European in Polynesia ostensibly offers much, yet there is a grim precedent hinted at in Stevenson's naming of Wiltshire's predecessor, John Adams:

> "When old Adams saw [the station], he took and shook me by the hand. "I've dropped into a soft thing here," says he -- "So you have," says I, "and time too!" Poor Johnny! I never saw him again but the once, and then he had changed his tune -- couldn't get on with the natives, or the whites, or something; and the next time we came round there he was dead and buried" (3-4)

The name "John Adams" has a very specific historic provenance: John Adams was the *HMAV Bounty* mutineer who later became patriarch of Pitcairn Island, and his story has profound and often distressing implications when viewed in the Falesá context of European-native interactions and hybridity in the South Pacific islands. As one of the nine *Bounty* mutineers who, together with six Polynesian men and twelve abducted Polynesian women, colonised the uninhabited Pitcairn Island, John Adams's story is an example of just how badly a nascent European-Polynesian hybrid society can turn out. Just as with Wiltshire's marriage to Uma, the relationships on Pitcairn were built on a falsehood: the twelve Tahitian women were abducted under the pretence of accompanying the crew on a short journey to another part of Tahiti and divided up among the males, one for each of the nine British sailors, with the remaining three shared between the six Polynesian men. Built upon a foundation of racial inequality and forced concubinage it is of scant surprise that the subsequent history of the Pitcairn community was one of prolonged and wretched internecine quarrel: factions formed and reformed -- often along shifting racial and gender fault-lines -- and within eleven years all but two of the original founding males had been murdered or had committed suicide.[33] Like Stevenson's Johnny Adams, the *Bounty* mutineers "couldn't get on with the natives, or the

whites, or something", and the naming of Stevenson's predecessor serves as a faint but grim intimation of the terrible influence a British presence might bring to Pacific island society. If Wiltshire's new island home appears an initial paradise, it is a paradise where the previous [John] Adam[s] suffered his own specifically Pacific Fall.

Describing his own first landfall on a Pacific island Stevenson had written: "The first experience can never be repeated. The first love, the first sunrise, the first South Sea island, are memories apart, and touched a virginity of sense",[34] yet Stevenson's sense of virgin wonder never left him, and his letters show that each island subsequently visited was as a new and unknown world, with all the possibilities that might entail. Such a panoply of opportunities appears to open out in front of Wiltshire, but he is enough of an old-hand to know that each island is in its own way a complete system with its own social norms and hierarchies. It is precisely this unfamiliarity with the specifics of life on Falesá, most keenly symbolized by his lack of facility with the language, which will open Wiltshire up to those manipulations that drive the plot.

Wiltshire's nemesis upon the island is the established trader Case, a figure who, through his manipulation of language, effects, and technology, offers an alternative to the bluff, plain-talking protagonist. Wiltshire is not a monoglot, but his skills and experiences acquired through years in the Pacific are culturally specific to the island where he has previously resided, "a low island near the line", suggesting Melanesian rather than Polynesian culture (1). In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, Wiltshire possesses "cultural capital", but not in the currency required for Falesá. Case is an interlocutor between the cultures and through his facility with both the language of the islands and of empire, is able to manipulate both the natives and the culturally disadvantaged Wiltshire.

At its heart 'The Beach of Falesá' is built around the armature of Wiltshire's marriage to the Polynesian Uma. The spurious marriage certificate which certifies that Uma "is illegally married to *Mr. John Wiltshire* for one night, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell the next morning" is written upon "a leaf out

of the ledger"(11), effectively reducing the native woman to another commodity of trade. But more than that, the marriage opens up wider issues of the orature/literature dichotomy inherent in the relationship between native societies and colonialist powers. Uma is manipulated into an illegitimate marriage not because of any deficiency of intelligence but rather, due to a lack of facility with the written language of empire. The illegitimate marriage contract might thus be read as emblematic of both European trader-native unions and Western mercantile ingress into Pacific island cultures in general, with the power-differential explicitly arranged in the favour of the draftee:

> This is to certify that Uma daughter of Fa'avao of Falesá island of _____, is illegally married to Mr. John Wiltshire for one night, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next morning.
>
> John Blackamoor
> Chaplain to the Hulks
>
> Extracted from the register
> By William T. Randall
> Master Mariner (11)

On a political level we may see the history of imperial treaty-making and annexation represented in microcosm; however, in this chapter the personal and social ramifications of the trader-native marriage union are of more particular relevance.

Interestingly, Wiltshire voices a sentiment that Uma's very desire for a marriage contract is a cultural imposition upon the part of the coloniser via the proselytising of Christian missionaries. Wiltshire's grievance seems predicated upon the popularly imagined belief that Pacific island societies were synonymous with 'free love', a place where sexually uninhibited and promiscuous females eagerly engaged in congress with European partners.

Such views were widespread in Western society, and long-established by the time Stevenson wrote 'The Beach of Falesá'. James Cook had advanced the liberal observation that "Incontinency in the unmarried people can hardly be call'd a Vice since neither the state or Individuals are the least injured by it"[35], and literary

accounts of Cook's voyages repeatedly asserted that in Tahiti "Love is the Chief Occupation",[36] and that the natives publicly performed "the rites of Venus...without the least sense of it being indecent or improper, but, as appeared, in perfect conformity to the custom of the place."[37]

By way of contrast, the desire on the part of the native female to engage in a legally binding and religiously sanctioned contract disrupts the fantasy of the ever available and sexually compliant nubile Polynesian Other, by reducing the cultural distance between the European and the native subject. By stressing an (ostensibly) shared Christianity, and by insistence upon being legally acknowledged as the European's spouse, the Polynesian female's status is brought within the ideological ambit of conventional wife, and the moral implications of how the coloniser treats the female native are problematised. The progression of John Wiltshire's marriage to Uma might therefore be interpreted as the overcoming of the trader's initial objectifying view of Polynesian women. Stevenson adroitly presents the moral turmoil of the trader during the marriage ceremony in a passage that shows Wiltshire's conflicting disgust at himself, his duplicitous trader accomplices to the deception, and the missionaries who have given the Polynesian female the expectation of being treated on an equal footing. Interestingly only Uma survives the trader's criticism:

> [Uma] was dressed and scented; her kilt was of fine tapa, looking richer in the folds than any silk; her bust, which was of the colour of dark honey, she wore bare only for some half a dozen necklaces of seeds and flowers; and behind her hair she had the scarlet flowers of the hibiscus. She showed the best bearing for a bride conceivable, serious and still; and I thought shame to stand up with her in that mean house and before that grinning negro...My conscience smote me when we joined hands; and when she got the certificate I was tempted to throw up the bargain and confess...A nice paper to put in a girl's hand and see her hide away like gold. A man might easily feel cheap for less. But it was the practice in these parts, and (as I told myself) not the least

> the fault of us white men, but of the missionaries. If they had let the natives be, I had never needed this deception, but taken all the wives I wished, and left them when I pleased, with a clear conscience. (10-12)

In 1929 George Hardy, one of the principal architects of French colonial educational policy, warned a group of newly inducted colonial administrators that "a man remains a man as long as he stays under the gaze of a woman of his race".[38] Tellingly Wiltshire's desire to be morally upright, to "remain a man" in Hardy's words, is not dependent upon the gaze of a European female, but is instead inspired and girded by the example of his Polynesian wife. Wiltshire's observation of his bride's "serious and still" demeanour throws the conduct of the deceitful Western traders -- and by extension his own sense of self -- into a very bad light. In the persons of Case, Black Jack, and the dissipated Captain Randall, Wiltshire witnesses man without the supposedly morally meliorating influence of the Western female gaze. The point might be made however that it is the very absence of a Western female presence that allows Wiltshire to more equitably engage with the native culture and avoid falling into the worst aspects of the island's trader culture.

If we contrast this with representations of official policy in the late-nineteenth century British Raj, we come up against the suggestion that "the biggest mistake the British made in India was to bring their women out, thus making it impossible to meet Indians as friends".[39] This argument, familiar to readers of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924)[40], posits the idea that the Whitehall-sanctioned presence of British wives in the Raj led to a self-contained society for white men, rather than to a more moral outlook on the part of the colonial administration. It's a common portrayal of the dynamics of prejudice within British Indian society and a fairly misogynistic one, assigning ultimate blame for the catalogue of inequities associated with British rule in India to women. The imperial cultural historian Ronald Hyam indulges this argument fairly freely with his stereotypical memsahib -- "moping and sickly, narrowly intolerant, vindictive to the locals, despotic and abusive to the servants...cruelly insensitive to Indian women"[41] -- guilty of inculcating new

standards of racial prejudice within colonial Indian society.

Marriage between the British male and the Indian female was not always impolitic in British India. It is estimated that in the mid-eighteenth century ninety percent of British marriages in India were to Indian or Anglo-Indian spouses[42], but the cosmopolitan society in which "reciprocal entertainments between Indians and the British were common"[43] suffered an abrupt *volte face* in the 1790s with a purging of Anglo-Indians from the administration and British military service. The hybridised community that might have served as a future model for the British cultural presence in the sub-continent instead became a stabilised endogamous social grouping.

While British Indian family life in Stevenson's era was Europeanised and segregated, the portrayal of European-Polynesian relationships in 'The Beach of Falesá' allows us an intriguing insight into Stevenson's perception of the mercantile micro-colonial societies of the South Pacific. Without the gaze of "a woman of his race" Wiltshire does not lose his moral bearing but instead undergoes a process of cultural détente and education with his native wife, realising their common humanity and "[feeling] for all the world as though she were some girl at home in the Old Country" (12). Racialist proscriptions against miscegenation are entirely absent, and Wiltshire's horror instead lies in the realisation of his shared characteristics with the other traders, whose moral degeneracy is most vividly captured by the dissipated and debauched Captain Randall:

> In the back room was old Captain Randall, squatting on the floor native fashion, fat and pale, naked to the waist, grey as a badger, and his eyes set with drink. His body was covered with grey hair and crawled over by flies; one was in the corner of his eye -- he never heeded; and the mosquitoes hummed about the man like bees. Any clean-minded man would have had the creature out at once and buried him; and to see him and think he was seventy, and remember he had once commanded a ship, and come ashore in his smart togs, and talked big in bars and consulates, and sat in club verandahs, turned me

sick and sober. (8)

It's tempting to view Randall as the European who has 'gone native'. 'Going native' was one of the most troubling and distressing bugbears of colonial society, especially so in the latter-part of the nineteenth-century where the process appeared to be a refutation of essentialist notions of European racial superiority. Official encounters with those who had 'gone native' often proved a deeply perplexed and troubling experience as to turn 'native' was to also turn hegemonic hierarchies on their head. Accounts of dark-tanned, tattooed, and nativised Europeans approaching ships from the island shore are common in Pacific encounter narratives, and illustrated to the European a distressing blurring of the racial boundaries and an example of the capacity for degeneration amongst supposedly civilised individuals. Emblematic of this is the case of Peter Heywood, midshipman and mutineer of the *Bounty*, whose ready assimilation into Polynesian life seemed a disturbing relinquishing of civilisation on his part. Greg Dening captures the mood well in his description of the initial moment of contact between Heywood and the crew of the search vessel *HMS Pandora*:

> When the *Pandora* arrived at Matavai...Heywood...went out in a double canoe paddled by a dozen of [his Tahitian] friends. He was so innocent that he could not see how offensive his figure was to the naval officers of the *Pandora.* He stood on the canoe, wrapped in a barkcloth *maro,* tanned and tattooed, 'gone native' and virtually indistinguishable from them, deviant to system and rule. It must have been a cruel realisation to stand in Edwards' great cabin and, under his knowing gaze, explain that his midshipman's logs, his eighty-odd drawings, his description of Tahitian life and all the trappings of his official life were in a chest in the house of his *taio*. 'Tayo'! We can almost see Edwards' savage look.[44]

It is wrong however to interpret Captain Randall's position within the text as a cipher for the European 'gone native'. Captain Randall's process of alcoholic deterioration from smart-togged ship's commander "talk[ing] big in bars and consulates" to the semi-naked, drunken figure with a fly crawling in his eye is a loosening of civilisation on his part, a decolonisation of self, but *not* a process of acculturation into native society, and Wiltshire's disgust for him is free from any

belief that Randall has 'gone native'. David Balfour's crossing of 'the Line' in *Kidnapped* involved his assuming certain characteristics and sentiments of Highland society, but the line that Randall has crossed is not a simple cultural one that divides Westerner from Pacific islander. Randall has ceased being Western, but he has not become Polynesian. He has gone 'savage', not 'native'.

Ironically the Stevenson's unknowingly found themselves cast into similar ignominy in the comments of their visitor at Vailima, Henry Adams. Adams, the great-grandson of the US president and Founding Father John Adams, observed in the Stevenson's new station in Samoa characteristics that affronted his sentiments. His struggles to adequately describe Fanny combine elements of Randall with a racialist fear of miscegenation translated directly from the United States to the south Pacific: "[Fanny] wore the usual missionary nightgown which was no cleaner than her husband's shirt and drawers, but she omitted the stockings. Her complexion and eyes were dark and strong, like a half-breed Mexican"...Apache Squaw...a wild Apache"[45].

Here Adam's own particular prejudices shine through and we find the Bostonian trying to make sense of the Stevensons' social standing by viewing it through the lens of a specifically American racialism. It's a world-view that is explicitly class-based, and which conflates social intercourse between the classes and races as culturally contaminating:

> All through him the education shows. His early associates were all second-rate; he never seems by any chance to have come in contact with first-rate people, either men, women or [sic]. He does not know the difference between people and mixes them up in a fashion as grotesque as if they were characters in his New Arabian Nights. [46]

Liminality is a prevalent and powerful trope within Stevenson's work and his writing abounds with lines to be skirted and crossed, be they geographic, mental, moral, or cultural. The lines that "Teresa" supposedly crosses in 'The Story of the Fair Cuban' are ones of race and legal status; Dr. Jekyll crosses the line from self- into non-self; and the Highland Line that David Balfour negotiates is as much one of

identity and worldview as it is a a physical boundary. Crucially Wiltshire remarks in the opening paragraph of the text that "I had been for years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among natives" (3). The line in question is ostensibly the equator, but there are other lines to be crossed within the text, and others to be skirted. By living solitary among natives he presumably had been "near the line" of 'going native', a line he has kept from crossing by his own bluff prejudices against "kanakas". More threatening however would seem to be crossing the line into savagery and debauchery, as in the case of Randall. It is with that in mind and in harness with a new sense of moral duty to his wife that Wiltshire rids himself of the temptation of that most English of spirits, gin:

> I lighted on...a case of gin, the only one that I had brought; and, partly for the girl's sake, and partly for horror of the recollections of old Randall, took a sudden resolve. I prized the lid off. One by one I drew the bottles with a pocket corkscrew, and sent Uma out to pour the stuff from the verandah. (13)

Divorced from the gaze of a female of his own race, Wiltshire nevertheless chooses not to cross the line into dissipation. His moral compass does not point to his homeland, but rather his new wife. His previous rules of behaviour and interaction with the native people -- to "never let on to weakness with a native" (13), to remain "opposed to any nonsense about native women" (12) -- (emblematic of the top-down structures of colonialist policy) are mitigated by the realities of having to share a close relationship with a native woman, and by extension he is allowed a more nuanced interaction with native society in general.

To be sure, the relationship between the Western male and the Polynesian female as represented in literature was nothing new, but where Stevenson deviates from the stereotype is in the resolution of both the married parties to make their relationship a lasting one. Wiltshire's initial reluctance to the blasphemous marriage gives way to a deep commitment; Uma is no Melvillean Fayaway to be left pining on the beach.[47] Both Uma and Wiltshire came to the marriage under misunderstandings -- Uma was unaware of the written details of the contract, Wiltshire the cultural tabu that accompanied his wife -- and both were exploitable precisely because of their lack of

shared culture. Nevertheless, Wiltshire and Uma endeavor to work together, to compensate for each other's deficiencies, and in this one might suggest that Stevenson is putting forth a model of creolisation for a future Polynesia. An obvious stepping-stone to the hybridisation required if the European has a future in the South Seas comes from the necessary empathy with the indigenous peoples and their way of life. At first Wiltshire says of the native Polynesians:

> They haven't any real government or any real law, that's what you've got to knock into their heads; and even if they had it would be a good joke if it was to apply to a white man. It would be a strange thing if we came all this way and couldn't do what we pleased.[48] (24)

The irony comes with Wiltshire reduced to drying his own coconut meat as none of the islanders will trade with him; for a European to travel all the way to the South Pacific and then have to make his own copra something must have gone seriously wrong. And yet by working shoulder-to-shoulder with Uma and her mother, Wiltshire comes to empathise with the natives, their labours, and in an example of characteristic dry humour, their cheating of the Western traders:

> ...the two women and I turned to and made copra with our own hands. It was copra to make your mouth water when it was done -- I never realized how much the natives cheated me till I had made that four hundred pounds of my own hand -- and it felt so light I felt inclined to take and water it myself. (44)

While his forced exclusion from his trader role brings Wiltshire a new degree of empathy for the native populace his insight into island society does not end there; Wiltshire also gains the objective distance necessary to reevaluate the role of the missionary in Polynesia. When Wiltshire first meets the white missionary Tarleton he declares that he does not like "...[missionaries], no trader does; they look down on us and make no concealment, and besides they're partly kanakaised, and suck up with natives instead of other white men like them" (34). Nevertheless, through Tarleton's help to Wiltshire and his (although grudgingly admitted by the tabooed trader) pastoral concern for Uma, Stevenson allows us an insight into Wiltshire's change of position that might perhaps serve for a change that occurred within

Stevenson himself.

Stevenson, the son of strict Covenanters, had a somewhat critical view of the faith of his fathers, yet his early childhood lionization of missionaries was reaffirmed by many of the men whom he came to know in the South Pacific. Stevenson stated that his early prejudices against missionary influence in the Pacific were "reduced, and then annihilated"[49] the longer he lived in the South Seas, and in his letters he praised them as "the best and most useful whites in the Pacific".[50] Part of the attraction for Stevenson was a writer's fascination for acts of individual heroism. Two men he briefly came to know who filled these criteria were the Reverends George Brown and James Chalmers, and Stevenson thrilled to their accounts of confrontations with cannibals.[51]

It was however in the domestic sphere that Stevenson most replicated the actions of the South Pacific missionaries. The indomitable John Williams of the London Missionary Society promulgated a Christianity that went hand-in-hand with dressing with English propriety, sitting on sofas, and drinking tea. Indeed, Gavan Daws credits him a maxim paraphrased as "get a Polynesian into the habit of taking tea and he would go on to crave all the good things the West had to offer".[52] It is notable that one of Stevenson's own contributions to Pacific hybridity came with his founding of the Half-Caste Club where "Stevenson, his mother, Fanny and Belle held weekly gatherings at which the half-castes were supposed to learn European manners and customs".[53] An essential element of these meetings was that the women "dress as neatly as they could"[54], and it's tempting to think that Fanny's desire to inculcate propriety of dress was motivated by the belief that "a half-white's very blood is supposed to mark her as the natural prey for the libertine".[55] Nevertheless, in the formation of the club we find another of Stevenson's grass-roots interactions that suggest a belief that the future success of a creolised Samoa must occur on a micro- rather than macro- level and extend outward from the familial group.

If the Half-Caste Club represents one model for creolised identity in the South Seas, then the trader Case evidences a very different example of hybrid cultural

identity. 'The Beach of Falesá' offers early examples of syncretic religious practices at work, and it is precisely in the intersection of the traditional Polynesian and Christian religions that Case finds a position from which to manipulate the islanders. The mélange of belief systems and totems -- the adoption of the sign of the cross, the simultaneous belief in Christianity and *aitu*, Uma's discussion of the hierarchy of devils -- has many parallels with other syncretic religions of the colonized world such as Voodoo (Vodun), Obeah, Santeria, Pocomania, and -- most relevant within the Stevenson canon -- the Hoodoo of *The Dynamiter.* Whereas *The Dynamiter* 's Madame Mendizabal occupies a position of manipulative, clandestine, counter-authority within Fanny Stevenson's Cuban slave society, the irony in 'The Beach of Falesa' is that the priest of Tiapolo is a not a native but a westerner utilizing this nascent syncretism for his own material gain.

If Wiltshire and Uma are to overcome this enemy it must come from their combined efforts: Wiltshire has the technology that will destroy the Tiapolo idol but it is Uma's 'bush-telegraph' information and her willingness to communicate that intelligence to her husband that prevents Case from ambushing Wiltshire. When Uma's concern for Wiltshire's injuries leads to her taking a bullet from Case her husband reaffirms his commitment to the Polynesian woman in the strongest possible terms:

> He had knocked over my girl, I had to fix him for it; and I lay there and gritted my teeth, and footed up the chances. My leg was broke, my gun was gone. Case still had ten shots in his Winchester. It looked a kind of hopeless business. But I never despaired nor thought upon despairing: that man had got to go. (66)

The violence of the final struggle between Wiltshire and Case is blood-curdling, yet even in its savagery one is struck by the domestic images that find their way into the melee; it is almost as if John Williams' furniture-making and afternoon teas were in Stevenson's mind as he wrote the scene. The combined result of such juxtapositions is to reinforce the urgency of the battle as one on which the survival of family, hearth, and home are dependent:

> With that I gave him the cold steel for all I was worth. His body kicked under me like a spring sofa; he gave a dreadful kind of a long moan, and lay still. "I wonder if you're dead? I hope so!" I thought, for my head was swimming. But I wasn't going to take chances. I had his own example too close before me for that; and I tried to draw the knife out to give it him again. The blood came over my hands, I remember, hot as tea; and with that I fainted clean away. (67-68)

The family, hearth, and home that Wiltshire is protecting are not the British Isles half a world away, the "free England"[56] appealed to by Teresa of 'The Fair Cuban' (*The Dynamiter*, (142), but the new home Wiltshire has made on the island. Wiltshire's narrative concludes with a new social dynamic that, if not utopian, certainly carries about it a healthy hybrid vigour. The trader-missionary schism has been eased and the bluff protagonist expresses his gratitude with the praise "he was the best missionary I ever struck" (71), even if it is accompanied with characteristic grumbling over his promise to Tarleton to trade fairly.

It is in the descriptions of Uma and their offspring that Stevenson most explicitly refutes the myth of the 'Dying Polynesia'; Uma has "turned a powerful big woman now, and could throw a London bobby over her shoulder." (70). Polynesia (in the form of Falesá) is in a process of change, but the new, hybrid-society as personified by Wiltshire, Uma and their offspring is healthy and vigorous, if not entirely free from the prejudices of the past: "There's nobody thinks less of half-castes than I do; but they're mine and about all I've got". (71)

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1 While *The Dynamiter* is a collection of short stories, the stories link together to form a single narrative; for that reason *The Dynamiter* has been classified as a novel. See David Glover, 'Masters of Male Romance', *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 4: The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Elizabeth

Carolyn Miller, *Framed: The New Woman Criminal in British Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008)

2 Robert Louis and Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, *The Dynamiter*, op.cit., p.147. All further references are to this edition and are indicated parentetically within the text.

3 Peter Fryer reminds us that there were Africans in Britain before there were English, a notable example being Roman soldiers of Africa origin. See Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain,* (London: Pluto Press,1984)

4 Stevenson to R.A.M. Stevenson, September 1894, *Letters,*op.cit., Vol. 8: pp.361-362

5 David Hume, 'Of National Character' (1777), in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, T.H. Green and T.H. Grosse (ed.), (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882) Vol.3, p.252n. Interesting in the context of this chapter is Hume's dismissal of a learned West Indian black:

> I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none ever discovered the symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly.

6 Theodore, J. Bent, *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland*, (Whitefish, Massachusetts: Kessinger Publishing, 2009)

7 Louis Agassiz to Samuel Howe, 9th August 1863, cited from manuscript by Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp.48-49

8 Ibid.

9 Werner Sollors, *Neither Black Nor White*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) p.43

10 Mark Twain, *Puddn'Head Wilson*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1980) pp.8-9

11 Sollors identifies the trope of "slave descent on the maternal line [meaning] literally that through some vagaries of fortune one may be put up for sale" as occurring within the fiction of Child, Castelli, Boucicault, and William Wells Brown, among others. See *Neither Black Nor White,* op.cit. p.239

12 J.C. Furnas, op.cit., p.121

13 Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998). DeVere Brody examines both the espousal of the attractiveness of the mulattaroon to the white observer and the eroticising of the black woman's body in 19th century literature, stating " "Far from being seen as undesirable, the mulattaroon is portrayed over and over again in sentimental, melodramatic narratives as being the most desirable woman imaginable". p.22

14 Harriet Beecher Stowe *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 2002) p.12

15 DeVere Brody, op cit, p.17

16 Ibid. p. 18

17 William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001) p.10. All further references are to this edition and indicated parenthetically within the text.

18 Sarah "Saartjie" Baartman (1789 – 29th December 1815) was the most famous of at least two Khoikhoi women who were exhibited as freak show attractions in nineteenth century Europe under the name Hottentot Venus: "Hottentot" as the then-current name for the Khoi people (now considered a pejorative term), and "Venus" in reference to the Roman goddess of love. For recent

research into her life and her significance in racial and gender discourse see Clifton Crais & Pamela Scully, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus:A Ghost Story and a Biography,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011)

19 Ann Phoenix and Barbara Tizard in their *Black, White, or Mixed Race? Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage, (*London: Routledge, 1993) comment upon the common movement of the mixed-race offspring of wealthy white Western Indian planters and black women from the West Indies to the Metropolitan centre: "[they] were distinguished by wealth rather than achievement...[and] sent to England to be educated and finished." p.30

20 DeVere Brody, op.cit. p. 17

21 Harriet Beecher Stowe, op. cit. p.49

22 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*, (New York: Penguin, 1982) pp.104-105

23 JB. Estlin. to J. Bristol Otis, 1845, cited from Audrey Fisch *American Slaves in Victorian England,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2000. p.1

24 Ibid. p.2

25 Ibid. p.3

26 Robert Knox *Races of Man: A Fragment*, (London, 1862) p.306

27 Benjamin Kidd, *The Control of the Tropics*, (New York & London: Macmillan, 1893) p.3

28 James Hunt, *Anthropological Review* Vol. VIII (1870) p. 137

29 *The Times*, 18th November 1865

30 *The Times*, 13th November 1865

31 *The Dynamiter* would not be the last time Fanny explored the theme of hybrid identity. Her short story 'The Half-White' *Scribner's Magazine* Volume 9 Issue 3 (March, 1891) is an exoticising melodrama without any of the subversive amendments of her husband. The potential risk to the 'half-white' of the title from white men is described breathlessly: "In any part of the world a motherless, penniless young girl stands in imminent danger. How much more so in this city of refuge for the vicious of every country, where a half-white's very blood is supposed to mark her as the natural prey for the libertine". (p.288). Most ironic, given Robert Louis Stevenson's defence of Father Damien of Molokai from the accusation of improprieties with female lepers ,is the plot device of a leprous priest who "love[s] this girl, not as her spiritual father, but with the carnal love of man for woman". (p.288)

32 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesá', in *South Sea Tales,* Roslyn Jolly (ed.), (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.3 All further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text

33 Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power, and Theatre on the Bounty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

34 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, Neil Rennie (ed.), (London: Penguin, 1998) p.2

35 J.C. Beaglehole, (ed.) *The Journals of Captain Cook 1772 – 1775,(* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) P.236

36 Joseph Banks, Cook's botanist, lacked the inhibitions of his captain and enthusiastically engaged in sexual intercourse with Tahitian women, claiming "Love is the Chief Occupation", and that "both the bodies and souls of the women are modeled into the utmost perfection". Joseph Banks, *Endeavour Journal 1769 -1770,* J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962), Vol.1 p.254

37 John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell. 1773) Vol.1 p. 261

38 George Hardy, cited from Stoler, Ann Laura, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002) p.1

39 Hyam, Ronald, *Empire and Sexuality,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). p.118-119

40 E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, (London: Penguin, 2000)

41 Hyam, Ronald, op.cit. p.119
42 Ibid. p.116
43 Ibid. p.116
44 Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language*, op.cit. p.258.
45 Henry Adams, letter to Elizabeth Cameron 2-23 October, 1890, *Letters of Henry Adams*, Worthington Chauncey Ford (ed.), (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938) Vol.1, p.425
46 Ibid. p.452.
47 Rod Edmond makes the argument that 'The Beach of Falesa' rejects the trope of the 'Dying Polynesia': "The present is squalid, and the future a matter of concern, but Polynesian culture will not disappear to satisfy the rage, guilt or elagaic melancholy of western romantics." *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1997) p.176
48 For recent discussion of Stevenson 's own sophisticated understanding of Polynesian legal systems, see Roslyn Jolly *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession*, (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009)
49 Stevenson made this remark in a public speech in Sydney, 1893. Cited from Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson,* (New York: Scribner's, 1904) p.229
50 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, op.cit. p.64
51 Stevenson did not live to see Chalmers fall victim to cannibals, in 1901 the Scottish missionary was killed and eaten by the inhabitants of Goaribari Island. John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publishing, 1985)
52 Gavan Daws, *A Dream of Islands*, (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980) p.44
53 Ann. C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*, (Aldershot: Ashgtat, 2004) p.60
54 H.J. Moors, *With Stevenson in Samoa*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911) p.103
55 Fanny Stevenson, 'The Half-White', op.cit. p.288
56 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Dynamiter*, op.cit. P.142

Chapter 5

Telling Tales: Orality, Folklore, and the Formation of Identity in 'The Merry Men'.

> Literature, above all in its most typical mood, the mood of narrative, similarly flees the direct challenge and pursues instead an independent and creative aim. So far as it imitates at all, it imitates not life but speech: not the facts of human destiny, but the emphasis and the suppressions with which the human actor tells of them. The real art that dealt with life directly was that of the first men who told their stories around the savage camp-fire
>
> Robert Louis Stevenson 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884)[1]

Robert Louis Stevenson was a writer who engaged early with the theoretical aspects of his chosen profession, discussing the purpose of literature and the technical means by which to successfully bring that purpose to fruition. For an artist whose chosen medium was that of the printed word his published and private writing concerning the theoretical basis for that art places a peculiar emphasis on the influence of the spoken word upon literature. Stevenson suggests in the quotation from 'A Humble Remonstrance' above that literature is subordinate to speech, and we might add that the expression of narrative through the spoken word is not only of concern in his writing, it is also intrinsic to his perception of himself; Stevenson's title in Samoan society was *Tusitala,* most commonly translated into English as 'The Teller of Tales', and Stevenson's Pacific identity is thus bound up with the vocalised elements of narrative. It's not clear to what extent the title 'Tusitala' was an English or Samoan creation, but what is clear is the pleasure Stevenson took in that identity. As a matter of course Stevenson signed his

name as Tusitala not only when writing to Samoans but also in his correspondence with British friends and acquaintances.[2] Central to the concept of Stevenson as 'Tusitala' is the translation of the title as 'Teller of Tales', an interpretation that locates Stevenson in the oral storytelling rather than literary tradition. One might suspect the specifics of this title are merely dependent upon the naming conventions of the Samoan language, but that is not the case: in a letter to Ann Jenkins in 1892 Stevenson literally translates his self-designation as "Tusitala (Write-tale -- really perhaps Write-information -- my native name)"[3]. Stevenson as 'Tusitala' thus has a Samoan reality where the honorific locates him as writer, but it also has a separate existence as a Romantic self-creation[4]. It's not unreasonable to think that for all Stevenson's devotion to the craft of writing he took pleasure in being recognised as the *Teller* of Tales, not the *Writer* of Tales, given that the choice of 'teller' rather than 'writer' was deliberate on his part. This self-designation thus becomes a deliberate engagement and privileging of the oral tradition in opposition to the written word and, we might say, an attempt to gain admittance to that circle of first men who told their stories around the savage camp-fire.

In this chapter I shall investigate how Stevenson engaged with what he referred to as the "real art" of story-telling, and how Stevenson's theories of literature reconcile the oral tradition -- of which he was not a notable practitioner -- with the nineteenth-century British literary cultures to which he belonged. In doing so I will examine how Stevenson appropriated and simulated oral and folkloric conventions in his short story 'The Merry Men' (1882), and how those same oral and folkloric conventions transposed into the written medium served to forward the positions set out in his theories of literature.

In 'A Humble Remonstrance', Stevenson's rejoinder to Henry James' 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) and its espousal of Literary Realism, Stevenson stresses the art of storytelling -- an art in which he claims the written apes the spoken -- as being both imitative and *suppressive*. Rather than attempting to render in detail the minutiae of observable 'reality', it suppresses and shapes the detritus of fact, and emphasises an imaginative engagement with possible events and positions. Such a suppression is an ordering process, and yet it works to counter the tendency in Realism to organise and

contain narrative within clearly delineated rationalist boundaries.[5] By positioning Romance against Realism there is an implicit suggestion that the former lacks the verisimilitude of the latter, but as we know Realism is not Reality; reality rarely falls into cleanly constructed narratives with clear denouements, the clutter of detail in our lives does not always function to illustrate our characters or advance our progress, and "Chekhov's gun" for most of us remains unfired[6]. Stevenson instead makes the point that *no* art is true, that "none can compete with life", and that "Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality" (194-195). Art therefore cannot hope to reproduce reality exactly, but then the purpose of fiction in Stevenson's philosophy of writing is to affect the reader's emotions, not to present a simulacrum of the real. Stevenson renders the task of reproducing reality as fundamentally futile, the labour of "Hercules in a dress coat, armed with a pen and dictionary [attempting] to depict the passions" (194), and even were it achievable it would not be the end goal of fiction: "stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the daydream".[7] Notably, it is to the ineffable and indescribable to which Stevenson's art aspires, something impressionistic which by its nature evades the concrete boundaries of the written form, "a capacity for sympathetic pleasure" which is "the highest and the hardest thing to do in words". ('A Gossip on Romance', P.175)

At this point we might note that Stevenson's conceptual end-goal of story-telling is to satisfy longings and desires that by his own admission evade accurate description. It's fitting that to do so he should look to the oral traditions, traditions that have themselves proven resistant to description.

There is a tendency to speak of the oral as being something self-evident, but the oral is difficult to pin down and interrogate, often serving as a sort of amorphous, undefined other against which literature is positioned. Narratives are regularly said to carry the flavour of 'oral storytelling', characters are said to speak with the rhythms and vocabulary of an 'oral culture', with an assumption that the characteristics in question are readily understandable to the reader and of a sufficient universality that those

idiosyncrasies are applicable to orature as a whole. Penny Fielding points to the paradox that orality supposedly belongs in the communal repository of cultural knowledge and that it is thus something everyone in a culture is meant to know, and yet on the other hand "the oral cannot really be known at all because of its habit of vanishing without record into the past."[8]

In examining Stevenson's engagement with orality and folklore I will be concentrating upon his short story 'The Merry Men' (1882), a tale that marries elements of Stevenson's Calvinist gothic with his Scottish historical fiction, but which is also in its Hebridean setting unequivocally an island text, containing many of the same themes that run though other of his island works such as *Treasure Island* (1882), 'The Beach of Falesa' (1893), and *The Ebb-Tide (1894).* Recent studies from such commentators as Ann Colley, Rod Edmond, Roslyn Jolly, Julia Reid, and Vanessa Smith have identified Stevenson as a nascent postcolonialist "prophetically tackling [in his Pacific writing] many issues now facing a postcolonial world"[9], with Edmond and Smith making the case that Stevenson's ideas regarding oral cultures and island identity were progressively formed through experiences gained on his travels and living in the Pacific. My argument is that the formation of Stevenson's positions regarding oral and island cultures were not reliant upon travel in the Pacific islands, but rather the same concerns and preoccupations regarding the cultural interactions between hegemonic Western cultures and oral, island communities that inform his later writing can be found fully realised within 'The Merry Men'.

The Pacific historian Greg Dening has been instrumental in formulating the concept of the island as metaphorical construct rather than simple geographical location. Dening's concept of the island is social rather than psychogeographical -- uninhabited islands do not figure prominently in his discourse -- and is centred upon a cultural state of islandness.[10] In *Islands and beaches* (1980) and *Beach Crossings* (2004) [11] Dening puts across the idea of islands as distinct cultural entities, "cultural worlds"[12] , bordered by "the beach"; the point of interface between the contained cultural entity and that which is outside it. Following Dening's concept of islandness, the island is not a closed system, rather the beach serves as a sort of semi-permeable membrane around these

cultural worlds through which experience and culture is filtered. For Dening the beach is not only a filter, it is a performance space in which the dramas of cultural contact are acted out, or upon which those aspects of one's culture that one is willing to share may be projected. The beach is the face one turns toward the other culture, perhaps at times it is a caricatured mask, but it is not the locus for a profound sharing of the totality of the interfacing cultures. Something must be held back. At this point one might add that the beach really does have a human face in the person of the beachcomber, the westerner whose first-hand experience of island life and close interaction with the island community allows him to serve as intermediary between the native culture and the western visitors to the island. The beachcomber represents a sort of 'third state' of existence in what is a heavily binarised model.[13]

While such a model has profound implications for Stevenson's Pacific fiction we might ask how islandness is represented in Stevenson's wider body of work. The island as Stevensonian trope within *The Dynamiter* (1885) has been discussed in the previous chapter, but 'The Merry Men' offers a very different version of the Stevensonian island, located as it is in the eighteenth-century Highland culture with which Stevenson is so popularly associated in the public consciousness. Among the best of Stevenson's short stories, 'The Merry Men' is a work that marries many of the author's preoccupations into one finely crafted whole. A Hawthornesque tale of a fanatical Lowland Covenanter gleefully embracing evil in the Hebrides, 'The Merry Men' explores religious fanaticism and a Jekyll and Hyde-like disintegration of personality in an environment that is both Stevensonian island and Stevensonian historic Scotland, with the tale drawing upon the oral tradition in both theme and inspiration to convey breakdowns in the psychological and moral well-being of the characters, and a breakdown of the distinguishing naming power of language itself.

Andrew Lang said of folklore that it represented "survivals of the savage fancy"[14], and in 'The Merry Men' we find multiple survivals at work. On the one hand we have the harsh Protestantism of the Covenanter tradition turned inwards and -- barely -- keeping in check sympathies and urges that are archaic and atavistic; on the other we have the traditional Gaelic culture of the Hebrides, a region where cultural knowledge

may be said to exist not as on the broad horizontal plane of Western thought dominated by scientific materialism, but as a consciousness propagated longitudinally through the generations via the personal oral narrative. J.L. Campbell notes the inherent difficulty commonly felt in adequately expressing the ancestral connection promoted by the oral tradition of the Hebrides, and at the same time notes the supposed acknowledgment of the uncanny and the supernatural in Hebridean culture:

> It is always extraordinarily difficult to convey the feeling and atmosphere of a community where oral tradition and the religious sense are still very much alive to people who have only known the atmosphere of the modern ephemeral, rapidly changing world of industrial civilisation. On the one hand there is a community of independent personalities whose memories of men and events are often amazingly long (in the Gaelic-speaking Outer Hebrides they go back to Viking times a thousand years ago), and where there is an ever-present sense of the reality and existence of the other world of spiritual and psychic experience; on the other hand there is a standardised world...where memories are so short that men do no know the names of their grandparents, and where the only real world seems to be the everyday material one.[15]

For many writers the Hebrides thus becomes a sort of 'ultra-Highlands', a nature preserve for a Gaelic culture deemed as having a worldview and a way of life that exist separate from the rationalist, empirical mainstream of British culture.[16] It's an essentialising interpretation of Gaelic Scottish culture that draws most obviously from Matthew Arnold's description of the Celtic genius:

> *Sentiment* is, however, the word which marks where the Celtic races really touch and are one; sentimental, if the Celtic nature is to be characterised by a single term, is the best term to take. An organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow...it may be seen in wistful regret, it may be seen in passionate penetrating melancholy; but its essence is to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay.[17]

If we are to follow Stevenson's theories of Romance as put forward in 'A Gossip on Romance' and 'A Humble Remonstrance', we might note that the sentimental Arnoldian Celt -- quick to feel impressions, feeling them very strongly, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow -- is the ideal audience for Stevenson's work. The propensity to *feel* strongly,

to respond to impression and brute incident, to instinctively perceive the "threads of a story [that] come from time to time together and make a picture in the web" ('A Gossip on Romance', 175) belong to Arnold's essentialised Celt and rather than being an unwelcome survival of a primitive and irrational past provide a natural advantage when engaging with Romance literature. The traditional dichotomised reading of Scottish culture locates the Celtic genius firmly within Highland culture, with the Lowland Scots character deemed closer to and more influenced by the Anglo-Saxon. As I've discussed in previous chapters this was not a reading that Stevenson subscribed to, instead believing all of Scotland to be fundamentally Celtic.[18] In Stevenson's estimation the tropes of the Gaelic-speaking clannish Highlander and the Whiggish Covenanting Lowlander both belong equally to the Celtic genius, and in 'The Merry Men' Stevenson presents three distinct Scottish character types -- Gaelic islander, Lowland Covenanter, and a representative of the Scottish Enlightenment -- through which we can gain an insight into his preoccupations with the nature of both his own identity and Scottish identity as a whole. Campbell's assertion regarding the amazingly long oral histories of the Hebridean islands going back to Viking times is one that would have given obvious pleasure to Stevenson, who claimed:

> I wish to trace my ancestors a thousand years, if I trace them by gallowses. It is not love, not pride, not admiration; it is an expansion of the identity, intimately pleasing, and wholly uncritical; I can expend myself in the person of an inglorious ancestor with perfect comfort; or a disgraced, if I could find one.[19]

In 'The Merry Men' Stevenson gives us an environment where ancestral memory and atavistic urge collide; the Hebridean island of Aros Jay. There's a deep irony when the island's name is translated into English; Aros Jay is *The House of God*, and in a way it is the house of the tale's own God, the creator Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson had previously written in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) that the personality of man is not one, but many[20], and if Aros Jay is the house of Stevenson it is one in which, to use the biblical metaphor, there are many mansions. 'The Merry Men' is thus a tale marked by ancient memory and ancient suppressions, a story about how oral communities record and makes sense of the world, and about how they choose to suppress and forget that which is "inglorious" and "disgraced".

Chapter 5: Telling Tales

'The Merry Men' opens with the narrator Charles Darnaway visiting his Uncle Gordon and Cousin Mary on the island of Aros Jay, an isolated Hebridean island in a very dangerous area for shipping. Charles has been a regular visitor to Aros, routinely spending his vacations there, and now that he has finished his university education he hopes to takes Mary as his wife. Charles is interested in shipwrecks off the island and hopes to find the wreck of the *Espirito Santo*, a ship of the Spanish Armada that he believes sank upon the "Merry Men" of the title, the great granite rocks that surround the island. While on the island Charles discovers the remnants of a much more recent ship, the *Christ-Anna* (or *Christiana,* or *Christiania*), sunk the previous February, and witnesses the wreck of a third ship that may be that of Spanish treasure-hunters. Over the course of the tale he also discovers that his uncle Gordon, who salvages goods from the wrecks, is prone to fits of drunkenness and madness, and grows to suspect him of the murder of a survivor of the *Christ-Anna.* The appearance of a mysterious black man, presumed to be a survivor of the most recent shipwreck, pushes the unstable Gordon into insanity, whereafter he is pursued into the sea by the black man, and both drown.

Charles begins the tale as very much a product of the Scottish Enlightenment; as an academic he had been tasked by the "principal of Edinburgh College, the famous writer, Dr. Robinson" to "work on some papers of an ancient date to rearrange and sift of what was worthless",[21] in the process finding hints towards the location of the *Espirito Santo.* Already Charles' identity is closely bound up with the ordering, judging, and categorising of events; indeed we might say, paraphrasing Bersani's words on Realism, that his work is the structuring of historic narrative in such a way as to contain and repress the disorder of reality in significantly constructed stories about itself.[22] Having been commissioned by Dr Robertson -- himself a cipher for the hegemonic authority of the written tradition – Charles' position within the text is as a representative of institutional rationality, but from the outset the authority of the written word and historiography is challenged. Dr. Robertson has been asked to gather his papers together for someone claiming to be a Spanish historian, but Charles soon hears of a visit to Aros Jay by a foreign-looking person and comes to the conclusion that "the

pretended historical inquiry had been but a cloak for treasure-seeking" (363). The ostensibly objective Charles is offended that the Spaniard should be seeking the shipwreck, with the inference that his looking for "treasure" makes him an imposter rather than a historian, but the irony is that Charles himself hopes to make his fortune from the Spanish shipwreck, and yet never thinks to question his own objectivity as an historian. Thus from the outset of the tale the impartiality of the process of historiography, and by extension the written tradition, is put into question.

Objectivity is not the only aspect of written history called into question in 'The Merry Men'; the written record of Aros Jay contains gaps and uncertainties, lacunae that can only be filled in by the oral tradition of the island. The bookish Charles is able to engage with the oral storytelling culture of Aros Jay through the person of his uncle's manservant, Rorie, telling us that: "The country people had many a story about Aros, as I used to hear from my uncle's man, Rorie"(328). Aros' history may be largely unknown to the written record, but it has a much more significant presence in the oral culture of the islands: "Many a story" might be told about Aros, but the oral discourse resists the rationalist questioning put to it by Charles, and the information that he wishes for must be gleaned from narratives that mix ancestral occurrence with folkloric accounts of the supernatural. The stories told by Rorie stress a world where man is in close contact with the uncanny and the mythological, and where the communicative power of language itself carries danger and madness:

> A mermaid had once met a piper on Sandag beach, and there sang to him a long, bright midsummer's night so that in the morning he was found stricken crazy, and from thence forward, till the day he died, said only one form of words; what they were in the original Gaelic I cannot tell, but they were thus translated: "Ah, the sweet singing out of the sea"(328-329)

The nature of reality as expressed through the oral culture of the islands is a mutable one that defies the categorising powers of Charles' academic learning; sounds from the sea drive men mad, animals speak with the voices of man: "Seals that haunted on that coast have been known to speak to man in his own tongue, presaging great disasters" (329). Charles makes it clear however that amongst these accounts of the weird and the supernatural there exists the kernel of truths that have evaded the written record of

Scottish history:

> Among these old wives' stories there was one which I was inclined to hear with more credulity. As I was told, in that tempest which scattered the ships of the Invincible Armada over all the north and west of Scotland, one great vessel came ashore on Aros, and before the eyes of some solitary people on a hilltop, went down in a moment with all hands, her colours flying even as she sank...but in what particular spot, the wild tribes of that place and period would give no information to the king's inquiries. (329)

The implication here is that the 'truth' of this oral culture exists outside that of the written world, and that the process of translation and communication between the two is imprecise and lacking, whether due to the inherent difficulties of reconciling different worldviews, or by deliberate obfuscation. Even a regular visitor like Charles finds difficulty in truly interacting with the oral culture; something is lost in translation, as with the piper's words in Gaelic. Malcolm Chapman has stated that "Scottish folklore is located, *par excellence*, within the Gaelic language"[23], and Stevenson's own comments regarding Scots Gaelic carry the implication that it is a language more suited to ruminating upon the past than engaging with the present: "The most philosophical language is the Gaelic, which has NO PRESENT TENSE - and the most useless".[24] What Stevenson is also doing here however is providing us with a culture whose interpretation of the world is expressed through a symbolic vocabulary: Charles is more inclined to treat with credulity those tales that closely conform to his rationalist interpretation of reality, but there might be other truths expressed in a symbolic form that Charles is unable to read. It can be suggested that within Rorie's accounts of "an unlucky creature...that dwelt and did business in some fearful manner of his own among the boiling breakers of the Roost" (328), Stevenson has planted an oblique inference to Gordon Darnaway's actions on the island, and that the piper stricken mad by a figure from the sea foreshadows Gordon's mental breakdown to come.

The study of folklore and of the oral tradition is, as Malcolm Chapman has noted, predicated upon a wish to "save something of a former way of life"[25], and the side-effect of this is that often the folklorist feels a rather more subjective desire to prevent and arrest change in a culture. Stevenson is conscious of that in 'The Merry Men', and

provides us with examples of emotional reactions to change within the traditional island culture on Aros Jay. When Charles enters his uncle's house at Aros he is greeted with cultural artifacts that defy his concept of how the Hebridean home should look:

> there were chairs in the kitchen covered with strange brocade; curtains of brocade hung from the window; a clock stood silent on the dresser; a lamp of brass was swinging from the roof; the table was set for dinner with the finest of linen and silver; and all these new riches were displayed in the plain old kitchen that I knew so well (331)

In Charles' negative reaction to the objects his uncle has salvaged from the wreck of the *Christ-Anna* we see the emotional response of the metropolitan elite to changes that culturally 'contaminate' a perceived folk 'purity'. Hebridean culture should be "plain" and "old", the "new riches" jar with Charles' mental image of how the home should look, with its "patchwork rugs that were of yore its sole adornment – poor man's patchwork, the like of it unknown in cities, woven with homespun, and Sunday black, and sea cloth polished on the bench of rowing" (331-332). This mental image of an ossified and idealised folkist Hebridean home is a telling one, marked as it is with a perfected symbolic encapsulation of the island's culture as interpreted by the urbanised Charles: the cultural products of the Hebrides should be "poor man's" work, their worth not judged by monetary value, but by a perceived folkist uniqueness. These cultural texts should be aboriginal, a testament to hard work -- "sea cloth polished on the bench of rowing" -- and "Sunday black". The tropes here are of an unchanging Hebridean culture marked by subsistence industry, the connection to the sea, and a stark religious faith. There is also a sort of metropolitan snobbery at work here; the clock, salvaged from the shipwreck, is silent, obviously from being immersed in the sea, and yet the Hebridean Darnaways take worth from it as an ornament, which Charles finds vulgar. Charles implicitly believes that his uncle's home, and by extension Aros Jay, should be unchanging; an irrational wish given that he hopes to find the wreck of the *Espirito Santo* in order to win a fortune that will help his prospective marriage to his cousin Mary. Presumably it is acceptable that Mary should be able to avail herself of the fortune that accompanies the finding of the *Espirito Santo* as long as that engagement with the bounty of the ship is mediated through Charles himself; but for her to engage

with the salvage with any degree of personal agency is not befitting of her status as an indigenous Hebridean. Stevenson acknowledges the implicit hypocrisy of Charles' position through Charles' admission that:

> The room, like the house, had been a sort of wonder in that countryside, it was so neat and habitable; and to see it now, shamed by these incongruous additions, filled me with indignation and a kind of anger. In view of the errand I had come upon to Aros, the feeling was baseless and unjust. (332)

Charles' admission is one of his own inconsistency, but through it we also see Stevenson making the point that the concept of an unchanging, folkish purity in Highland culture is a chimerical one.

One might note that some of the most significant tropes of Highland identity have relatively recent pedigree: the current system of clan tartans is largely an invention of Sir Walter's Scott's preparations for the royal visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822.[26] In a similar vein the tradition of crofting, by Stevenson's era synonymous with the Highlands, can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century and the reform of earlier clan-based systems of agriculture in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rising of 1745.[27] The adoption of the new clan tartans might be interpreted as illustrating a native restructuring of cultural identity that exoticises itself in order to maximise the attractiveness of one's culture to a hegemonic British ascendancy; whereas the post-'45 crofting culture of the Highlands and Islands can be read as an imposed reordering that came to be somehow misinterpreted as consistent with a timeless Highland identity.[28] Such changes within the Highland and Islands culture are to a degree imposed from without, but Stevenson makes it clear that cultural change on Aros has also occurred as a result of intentional engagement on the part of the islanders. Culture is always in a state of flux, it is always engaging in negotiation, compromise and bricolage; as shown by Rorie's utilising of the remnants of the *Christ-Anna*:

> The coble had been repaired, with two new thwarts and several patches of some rare and beautiful foreign wood, the name of it unknown to me.
>
> "Why, Rorie," said I, as we began the return voyage, "this is fine wood. How came you by that?"
>
> "It will be hard to cheesel," Rorie opined reluctantly; and just then, dropping

> the oars, he made another of those dives into the stern which I had remarked as he came to fetch me, and, leaning his hand on my shoulder, stared with an awful look into the waters of the bay.
>
> "What is wrong? I asked, a good deal startled.
>
> "It will be a great feesh," said the old man, returning to his oars; and nothing more could I get out of him, but strange glances and an ominous nodding of the head (331)

The passage here shows a readiness on the part of the islander to engage with products that are, be it metaphorical or literal, the flotsam and jetsam of foreign cultures, and the surprise on the part of the metropolitan authority Charles Darnaway that the islander should have access to the will to utilise the products of a culture different from his own insular society. The tradition of using that which the sea washes up is obviously a long-standing one, but in Rorie's reaction to Charles' questioning we find a degree of reticence that hints at guilt for the act of bricolage. Rorie's feelings of uneasiness are projected into a fear of a "great feesh", but one might interpret this "feesh" as a cipher for his unease at the circumstances that led to the wreck of the *Christ-Anna*, and its salvage. As such, Rorie's explanation harks at a projection of self-doubt and guilt in a manner that conforms to the oral culture to which he belongs, calling into question the events that might have served as the catalyst for other oral narratives. The "great feesh" lurks in Rorie's troubled psyche as much as it does beneath the surface of the water, like a symbolic revenant of the crimes that have taken place on the island:

> In spite of myself, I was infected with a measure of uneasiness; I turned also, and studied the wake. The water was still and transparent, but, out here in the middle of the bay, exceeding deep. For some time I could see naught; but at last it did seem to me as if something dark--a great fish, or perhaps only a shadow--followed studiously in the track of the moving coble. And then I remembered one of Rorie's superstitions: how in a ferry in Morven, in some great, exterminating feud among the clans, a fish, the like of it unknown in all our waters, followed for some years the passage of the ferry-boat, until no man dared to make the crossing.
>
> "He will be waiting for the right man," said Rorie. (331)

Vanessa Smith has written at length about the Pacific beachcomber as Levi-Straussian *bricoleur*, a role that she positions against that of the engineer who she identifies as epitomising the conceptual basis of Western thought.[29]

Chapter 5: Telling Tales

The Pacific beachcomber's skillset is a model of flexibility, he is able to turn his hand to most things as a matter of necessity, but whereas the engineer's genius is conceptual and his creations transcend the mere sum of the parts, the beachcomber's creations are limited by the contextual nature of the parts he cobbles together. In the case of the Pacific beachcomber this bricolage extends beyond simple physical products: the beachcomber also manufactures narratives, and these narratives extend in two directions, towards the Western culture from which the beachcomber originates, and towards the native cultures with which the beachcomber must interact.

The beachcomber is an interstitial figure translating Pacific experience for Western consumption, but also parlaying his Western cultural capital in such a way as to help his subsistence within Pacific island culture. The beachcomber manufactures a narrative, but in a way the beachcomber is himself a narrative of his own creation, an intermediary whose identity serves to legitimise the cultural products and fragments he tries to 'sell' between cultures. The beachcomber is a recurring figure within Stevenson's Pacific island writing, but interestingly the characteristics we identify with the Stevensonian beachcomber -- the act of bricolage, the "crossing of the beach", the role of intermediary between cultures, the translation of oral narrative into a form suitable for reporting back to the metropolitan centre -- were all evidenced within 'The Merry Men' and thus predate Stevenson's travels in the Pacific. In previous chapters I have discussed the Highlands and Islands of Scotland as forming a 'foreign country at home' within eighteenth century British culture, foreign even to Lowland Scotland. George Darnaway's cultural origins are not Hebridean, the Lowland Covenanter and former sailor is a transplant into the island society of Aros Jay, and as such we can identify him as being another of Stevenson's maritime characters eking out an existence in an island culture.

Darnaway's personal circumstances also foreshadow concerns that will preoccupy Stevenson's later Pacific writing. Stevenson engages with the myth of the "Dying Polynesia" in *In the South Seas,* writing:

> the Marquesan, never industrious, begins now to cease altogether from production. The exports of the group decline out of all proportion even with the death-rate of the islanders. 'The coral waxes, the palm grows, and man departs,'

says the Marquesan; and he folds his hands.[30]

It's an all too familiar trope within western accounts of Pacific island society: the islander as enervated lotus eater, rendered listless and sybaritic by paradise, ultimately doomed to extinction, and resigned to his own demise. As a trope it is as monolithic as it is romantic, and Stevenson readily subverted it in his fiction with the resourceful islander protagonists of 'The Bottle Imp' (1891) and 'The Isle of Voices '(1893), and the thriving hybrid vigour of Uma and Wiltshire's offspring in 'The Beach of Falesá'. The characters who demonstrate lack of industry and personal decline in Stevenson's Pacific fiction are resoundingly of Western origin, as Stevenson himself pointed out in a letter to Sydney Colvin: "Will you please to observe almost all that is ugly is in the whites?"[31] It's tempting to read this as primarily a proto-postcolonial sentiment specifically informed by his firsthand experiences in the South Seas, but Marah Gubar points out this skepticism of notions of western superiority predates Stevenson's Pacific travels and that Stevenson might just as easily have been describing the ugly whites of *Treasure Island*.[32] I suggest that we can take it further and identify a similar challenging of specifically Scottish notions of civilisation and barbarism in 'The Merry Men'. Charles Darnaway, the narrator of the story, is a university-educated, Lowland Scot and in the hands of a less capable writer we might expect him to serve as a mere cipher for the superiority of the Scottish Enlightenment, yet his sense of precarious self-hood already presages some of the pessimism of later Stevensonian characters such as *The Ebb-Tide*'s Robert Herrick and *The Wrecker's* (1892) Norris Carthew. Darnaway describes himself as "springing...from an unmixed lowland stock", adding "our family was dying out in the lowlands; there is little luck for any of that race", (325) and his movement from Edinburgh to the island of Aros is something of a Dying Polynesia in reverse. One might say that as an academic he has 'ceased production' in the industrial sense, and his family line has a death-rate to rival that of the supposed Marquesan.

Gordon Darnaway too fits a pattern that will become clear in Stevenson's later fiction: that of the sailor or maritime traveller who finds himself the outsider upon an island. Gordon Darnaway is described as having been a "poor, rough youth" who "after...some years at sea, had married a young wife in the islands" (325). Such a

description might double for 'The Beach of Falesá''s John Wiltshire, while the details that "he was a man whom ill-fortune had pursued...biting his nails at destiny" (325) again call to mind Robert Herrick and Norris Carthew.

If Charles Darnaway is an agent of rationalism and historiography and Rorie a representative of the oral tradition and Gaelic Hebridean culture, then Gordon Darnaway occupies a third ideological space within the text; that of a fundamentalist, Calvinist worldview that subordinates all other systems of knowledge -- be they written or oral -- to the strict authority of the Bible. The Bible is intrinsically connected in the most fundamental way to the written tradition in Western culture, but for Gordon Darnaway the Bible is not just the Good Book, it is *the* Book, the ultimate authoritative statement as regards the nature of the world and man's place in it. Central to the Calvinist interpretation of Christianity is the rejection of intermediaries between man and God, and the doctrine of Sola Scriptura, that is, the belief that the Bible contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness, and that all other authorities are subordinate to, and are to be corrected by, the written word of God.[33] In Stevenson's tale Aros Ros, 'The House of God', is an island, but Stevenson has also presented us with a symbolic island in the person of Gordon Darnaway. Subscribing to the belief that there is no higher written authority than the Bible and that his own interpretation of it is wholly valid because of the personal nature of the relationship between the Christian and his God, Gordon Darnaway's interactions with the world around him are justified by his own strict and idiosyncratic interpretation of the Scriptures. Gordon Darnaway's religious conviction is insular, obsessive, and morbid; Julia Reid remarks that "with his 'black fits' and his fixation with hell, he is the true son of the Cameronians, the Scottish Covenanters among whom he was raised".[34] This is the dark aspect of the Scottish Calvinism Stevenson was indoctrinated in by his nurse Alison Cunningham, an interpretation of Christianity with its own specifically Scottish myth and lore that would both fascinate and repel Stevenson all his life.[35] Stevenson detected within the particularly Scottish form of Calvinism an unwholesome negativity, remarking of the Covenanter 'martyrs' that "[t]hose who took to the hills for conscience' sake in Scotland had all gloomy and bedevilled thoughts; for once that they received God's comfort they

would be twice engaged with Satan".[36]

"Gloomy and bedevilled thoughts" are an apt description for Gordon Darnaway's mental processes, with his inner turmoil manifesting itself in his fear that something follows him in the sea, a devil that serves as a symbolic representation of his own sense of guilt, but which his strict Calvinist view prevents him from adequately describing. Whereas Rorie's Gaelic, folkist worldview allows belief in supernatural entities outside of the Christian paradigm, Gordon's previous interactions with the uncanny and the *outre* are marked by his inability to communicate the experience due to his powers of description being curtailed by the philosophical limits of the Calvinist belief system.

> "You will not ever have seen a teevil of the sea ?" he asked.
> "No clearly," replied the other. "I misdoobt if a mere man could see ane clearly and conteenue in the body. I hae sailed wi' a lad--they ca'd him Sandy Gabart; he saw ane, shüre eneuch, an' shüre eneuch it was the end of him...I mind the nicht weel...Sandy was forrit wi' the jib sheet; we couldna see him for the mains'l, that had just begude to draw, when a' at ance he gied a skirl. I luffed for my life, for I thocht we were ower near Soa; but na, it wasna that, it was puir Sandy Gabart's deid skreigh, or near hand, for he was deid in half an hour. A't he could tell was that a sea deil, or sea bogle, or sea spenster, or sic-like, had clum up by the bowsprit, an' gi'en him ae cauld, uncanny look." (336-337)

Like the ships caught in the turbulence around the Merry Men -- unable to escape to sea, unable to land on the shore -- Gordon Darnaway finds himself caught in a semiological maelstrom incapable of utilising either the written or oral traditions to describe and rationalise his encounter with the uncanny. Writing of the relationship between language and understanding Hans-Georg Gadamer said:

> Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature in the world. But, this world is verbal in nature...Not only is the world world only insofar as it comes to language within it, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. Thus, that language is originally human means at the same time that man's being-in-the-world is primarily linguistic.[37]

Gordon Darnaway cannot adequately describe what he saw because his worldview does not encompass it, and Rorie's attempt to explain and ground the account within the folkloric traditions of the region gets short shrift from the Covenanter:

> "It will have been a merman," Rorie said.
> A merman!" screamed my uncle, with immeasurable scorn, "Auld wives' clavers!
> There's nae sic thing as mermen."(337)

To Gordon Darnaway there's no such thing as mermen, but not because their existence defies rational empiricism. Darnaway vocally expresses a fervent belief in devils of the sea, but the difference is his "sea deils" can be reconciled with his reliance upon the Bible, whereas he can "find nae word o' mermen in the Scriptures" (337).

Thus the existence of mermen can be rationalised as implausible and unscriptural, and the folkloric tradition to which they belong is dismissed as unreliable, but also feminine; the preserve of "auld wives", in opposition to the masculinised discourse of Calvinism. If it is Rorie who tries to locate Gordon Darnaway's account within a folkloric, oral worldview then the Edinburgh scholar Charles tries a different tack, attempting to get Gordon to describe what it was he saw: "But what was the creature like?" (337). Penny Fielding notes that this is exactly what Gordon *cannot* explain: "In the oral storytelling mode, words resist metaphorical status, they cannot say what things are 'like'".[38] There seems to be an implication in Fielding's words that the oral tradition is metaphorically deficient in elucidating the true nature of things, that folklore relies upon motifs and ciphers that take the place of what is truly 'real'. Yet Gordon Darnaway's strict reliance upon a Biblical-centred Christianity also precludes the understanding and definition of what he experienced, indeed his euphemistic "Gude forbid that we suld ken what like it was!" might be taken literally: in his personal belief system God forbids that we should know what it was he saw. As such the written tradition for Darnaway becomes fixed upon and confined to the Bible, the Bible marking the stylistic, religious, and philosophic limits of describing the world through the written word. The written word is thus not a tool to be put to work for the purpose of elucidation, but a moral stricture upon what can be understood and what can be described. Therefore if we are to agree with Hans-George Gadamer's statement then Gordon Darnaway efforts to describe his experience of the uncanny will be wrecked upon the rock of his own absolutist faith because it is beyond the semiological

vocabulary of the Bible to describe exactly what he saw. Language may have its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it, but personal experience of that world in both the oral and literary traditions is reliant on the fact that it can be presented in language. The creature that Gordon Darnaway saw in the water defies both his understanding and his narrative tools and he can only express his experience through inchoate and nightmarish imagery that ultimately falters at description: "It had a kind of heid on it – man could say nae mair" (204). It's not man who can say no more here, rather it is Gordon Darnaway, and the tension between the Hebridean oral tradition and the Covenanter absolutism is given voice in Rorie's reaction to George's limited description:

> Then Rorie, smarting under the affront, told several tales of mermen, mermaids, and sea-horses that had come ashore upon these islands and attacked the crews of boats upon the sea; and my uncle, in spite of his incredulity, listened with uneasy interest.
>
> "Aweel, aweel," he said, it may be sae; I may be wrang; but I find nae word o' mermen in the scriptures."
>
> "And you will find nae word of Aros Roost, maybe," objected Rorie, and his argument appeared to carry weight. (337)

Rorie's point here is a palpable hit; there may be things that fall outside the descriptive boundaries of the written word, things that resist the imposed constraints of the scribal tradition, just as Aros Roost finds no mention within scripture. Indeed, the oral tradition of Aros is proof enough that reality can slip the control of the written word, the King James Bible is the rock upon which George Galloway grounds his interpretation of reality, yet when that same King James sought intelligence regarding the shipwreck of the *Espirito Santo* "the wild tribes of that place and period would give no information to the king's inquiries" (330). There were things that occurred on Aros that were never reported to King James, and equally there may be things there now that are beyond the accommodation of the written tradition.

It's notable that Gordon Darnaway listens with uneasy interest to the tales that Rorie relates: like the merfolk of Rorie's stories he kills sailors too. He proclaims himself a Christian, yet murders the survivor of the *Christ-Anna,* he disparages Rorie's oral tales yet listens to them intently, and his own shrill accounts of the sea illustrate a shift into a strange mythopoeic oceanography of his own construction. We might say that Gordon

Darnaway is a hypocrite, but we know that he believes in what he says. It's more accurate to say that through Darnaway Stevenson shows us the failing of faith in conceptual binaries. Doubles are a recurring theme in Stevenson's work, but the doubling in 'The Merry Men' is not a black/white binary, everything on Aros exists on a continuum with a gradual shifting transition from one state to another that often comes about in such a way as to catch out and surprise those involved or observing. Charles describes just such a gradual shift in his early description of the coast:

> On all this part of the coast, and especially near Aros, these great granite rocks that I have spoken of go down together in troops into the sea, like cattle on a summer's day. There they stand, for all the world like their neighbours ashore; only the salt water sobbing between them instead of the quiet earth, and clots of sea pink blooming on their sides instead of heather; and the great sea conger to wreath about the base of them instead of the poisonous viper of the land. (327)

It's an extrordinarily anthropomorphised description that challenges the physical qualities of the islandness concept: the divide between land and sea is rendered as vague and mutable, the rocks on shore moving of their own volition down and into the sea like cattle to mirror their counterparts ashore. The inanimate becomes animate, animal and mineral change places, and Darnaway's pathetic fallacy foreshadows themes of death and religious fanaticism that will become apparent in the tale: the sea is described as the "saltwater", a euphemism for tears, and it "sobs" between the rocks, whereas the rocks on land are surrounded by the "quiet earth", a euphemism for the grave. Heather, that most obvious symbol of the Scottish Highlands, finds its marine substitute in the sea pink that forms "clots" on the side of the Merry Men; it's as if extrusions from Charles Darnaway's subconscious break the surface of his narrative just as the Merry Men break the surface of the sea, illustrating another shift along a continuum. The Merry Men have been the death of many sailors and the knowledge of this finds unconscious expression in the description of the seaweed as blood clots; the sea has been death to sailors, but so has the land, and the "quiet earth" of Aros Roost is the final resting place of the shipwrecked sailor murdered by Gordon Darnaway. This funereal theme is extended in the conger eel that "wreaths" the base of the Merry Men, but it is the rocks on land that find the "poisonous viper" coiling at their base, and the metaphor

here is twofold: the viper is the biblical serpent tempting Gordon Darnaway to evil, but also Darnaway is himself the poisonous viper that kills the unwary sailor.

This religious metaphor is another example of mutability within the text; Darnaway believes himself a Christian, and his devotion to the strict Lowland faith such that he will allow no prayers for the dead:

"And were they all lost?" I cried. "God help them!"
"Wheesht!" he said sternly. "Nane shall pray for the deid on my hearth-stane."
I disclaimed a Popish sense for my ejaculation (334)

Gordon Darnaway has been a lifelong follower of the Reformed Faith yet he has undergone a transformation into a sailor who kills sailors. It's a worrisome shifting border that challenges the strict demarcations of Calvinism and it can be suggested that Gordon Darnaway's Covenanter faith is itself suffering a sea-change into something every bit as rich and strange as the Hoodoo of *The Dynamiter* and the syncretic diabolism of 'The Beach of Falesá'. We're reminded that written learning is of no use to Gordon Darnaway, his engagement with literary tradition is self-limited to the Bible, and that which exists outside of Scripture, be it philosophy or natural history, will not be acknowledged. Neither will the oral traditions of the islands, and yet he has constructed his own mythopoeic ontology that expands the anthropomorphic conceit of Charles Darnaway in metaphysical directions:

> 'And ye come frae the College!' sneered Uncle Gordon.
> 'Gude kens what they learn folk there; it's no muckle service onyway. Do ye think, man, that there's naething in a' yon saut wilderness o' a world oot wast there, wi' the sea grasses growin', an' the sea beasts fechtin', an' the sun glintin' down into it, day by day? Na; the sea's like the land, but fearsomer. If there's folk ashore, there's folk in the sea - deid they may be, but they're folk whatever; and as for deils, there's nane that's like the sea deils. There's no sae muckle harm in the land deils, when a's said and done. Lang syne, when I was a callant in the south country, I mind there was an auld, bald bogle in the Peewie Moss. I got a glisk o' him mysel', sittin' on his hunkers in a hag, as gray's a tombstane. An', troth, he was a fearsome-like taed. But he steered naebody. Nae doobt, if ane that was a reprobate, ane the Lord hated, had gane by there wi' his sin still upon his stamach, nae doobt the creature would hae lowped upo' the likes o' him. But there's deils in the deep sea would yoke on a communicant! Eh, sirs, if ye had gane doon wi' the puir lads in the CHRIST-ANNA, ye would ken by now the mercy o' the seas. If ye

> had sailed it for as lang as me, ye would hate the thocht of it as I do. If ye had but used the een God gave ye, ye would hae learned the wickedness o' that fause, saut, cauld, bullering creature, and of a' that's in it by the Lord's permission: labsters an' partans, an' sic like, howking in the deid; muckle, gutsy, blawing whales; an' fish - the hale clan o' them - cauld-wamed, blind-eed uncanny ferlies. O, sirs,' he cried, 'the horror - the horror o' the sea!' (335-336)

Rather than Dening's concept of the island as a closed system of meaning surrounded by the cultural boundary of the beach, Stevenson gives us a world where the borders are indistinct and mutable. The sea in 'The Merry Men' is a world very similar to, but not quite the same as, the land, and the beach, the membrane between these worlds, hardly a border at all. In a triumphal display of anti-intellectualism Gordon Darnaway disparages academic learning -- and by extension the values of the Scottish Enlightenment -- as "no muckle service" to anyone and instead sets out a mythic interpretation of reality that broadly parallels life on land, but which also has specific analogues to aspects of his own life. In a sort of sub-aquatic Calvinist gothic variation upon the hermetic, 'As Above, So Below', Gordon describes the undersea world as a continuation of the world above, with one notable difference: "the sea's like the land, but fearsomer." (336) Land and sea are thus not rendered as distinct dichotomous environments, but rather worlds that transition into one another. Not only does this subtle border mark a shifting interface between the land and the water, it also serves as supernatural crossing point between the worlds of the living and the dead. Those who go into the sea die, but more terrifying to Gordon than their watery death is the thought of their continued existence: "If there's folk ashore, there's folk in the sea - deid they may be, but they're folk whatever". For a man whose prosperity is closely bound up in the wreck of ships and the death of sailors upon the rock of the Merry Men, Gordon Darnaway's "folk in the sea" suggest that he cannot put those drowned men easily out of mind. To forget them would be a psychological boon, but they exist in a strange continued half-life, a horror existence where "labsters an' partans, an' sic like, howk... in the deid" (336).

There is an understated Covenanter dimension to the hideous image of the "labsters an' partans howking in the deid", calling to mind the execution of the 'Wigtownshire

Martyrs', Margaret MacLachlane and Margaret Wilson, during the 'Killing Times'. As a child Stevenson found himself the audience for tales of a specifically Lowland, Presbyterian oral tradition through Alison Cunningham's accounts of the deprivations suffered by the Covenanters at the hands of the forces of James II and the 'Highland Horde', an era when "dragoons hunted Covenanters in the heather and made martyrs whose histories are saved from smugness only by a self-righteousness of appalling dignity."[39] The execution of Margaret Wilson, tied to a stake to drown in the incoming tide, later entered Victorian iconography through the art of John Everett Millais (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2), but it is the Lowland oral tradition's apocryphal accounts of dragoons gleefully telling the maid to "clep wi' the partans" that provides an element of

ancestral horror to Darnaway's account of crustaceans "howking in the deid" [40]

Figure 5.1 John Everett Millais' illustration of Margaret Wilson's martyrdom, published in *Once A Week*, July 1862

Figure 5.2 John Everett Millais *The Martyr of Solway* (1871), Walker Gallery, Liverpool

It can be suggested that to Gordon Darnaway the submerged world is an unconscious representation of those facets of his moral character that he cannot bear to acknowledge, but which trouble him from the murky depths of his subconscious. Intriguingly, Darnaway's own singular demonology involves personal contact with devils:

> Lang syne, when I was a callant in the south country, I mind there was an auld, bald bogle in the Peewie Moss. I got a glisk o' him mysel', sittin' on his hunkers in a hag, as gray's a tombstane. An', troth, he was a fearsome-like taed. But he steered naebody. (336)

Like the shifting, nebulous borders between the land and the sea and the living and the dead, Darnaway's ontology is one where the uncanny and the rational 'real' melt into each other. For all his disparaging of Rorie's merfolk he himself has slipped over into an interpretation of reality that is equally supernatural. In what reads as a strange

folkloric reduction of the Calvinist doctrine of the Elect, the land devils are apparently of not much danger to the committed Christian, but those whom "the Lord hated" fall prey to the "fearsome taed": "Nae doobt, if ane that was a reprobate, ane the Lord hated, had gane by there wi' his sin still upon his stamach, nae doobt the creature would hae lowped upo' the likes o' him." (336) There is something profoundly personal working itself out here, rather than a God who loves all his creation, the personal deity of Gordon's faith is the wrathful God of the Old Testament who "hate[s] all workers of iniquity" (Psalms 5:4). The supernatural creature Gordon calls the bald bogle is a devil, but in a peculiar reconciliation of the demonic and the sacred it is also an instrument of God's wrath, "lowping" upon the reprobates whom God hates. For Gordon Darnaway there's a self-justification of his belief in his elect status at stake here; the bogle attacks those whom God despises, he himself was not attacked, therefore God does not despise him, and thus it is proved that he is saved. Conversely, those who do fall victim to the bogle's attacks are not to be pitied, they were reprobates whom God hated, otherwise the bogle would have been unwilling or unable to attack them. Thus a worrying precedent is created and justified through Gordon's own religious conviction; the reprobate is fair quarry for those who serve God, and being able to carry out an attack upon him proves God sanctions the action, as God would not allow it to happen if the victim was a true Christian. Gordon Darnaway may have disparaged the mermen of Rorie's oral narrative, but his own sublimated emotions find supernatural expression in this singular oral narrative of his own creation, with the obvious implication that the sour...bilious...rough, cold gloomy man...with a long face and very dark eyes" (p.332) is the land devil of his own personal mythology, a "fearsome taed" that "lowped" upon the survivor of the *Christ-Anna* and murdered him, justifying the deed to himself through the belief that God would not have allowed him to kill one he loved.

The island of Aros Jay exists upon a continuum with the sea however, and if Gordon Darnaway has reconciled what happens on land, the uncanny parallel world that exists beneath the waves is a different matter, mirroring the psychic turmoil in Darnaway's subconscious. Here we find Darnaway's guilt extruding forth from his unconscious like the Merry Men breaking the surface of the water. The devils of the sea are the revenants

of those sailors whose deaths Darnaway took such delight in, and his religious belief that he is a justified sinner will not protect him if he ventures into their environment. Darnaway "hate[s] the thocht" of the sea", and his outcry against the "wickedness o' that fause, saut, cauld, bullering creature...the horror – the horror of the sea!" (336) can be read as the sense of guilt over his own deeds, and the horror that they will be punished.

It's not only Gordon Darnaway for whom the sea represents a psychic mirror world with degraded borders; the sea also serves to reflect Charles Darnaway's emotional state. The "sea runes" -- "strange, undecipherable marks" (338) that appear on the surface of the water in Aros Bay seem to take the form of letters which the male Darnaways are compulsively driven to interpret as signifying words. We might point out that the Darnaways are trying to bind the irrationalities of the world around them and the turmoil of their own psychological states within the clear confines of the written tradition, but the words that spring to their minds are free-floating signifiers with no stability. Like the surface of the water itself, the words that suggest themselves are in a state of flux, and Charles Darnaway's wishful attempts to stabilise the uncertainties of his own condition are disrupted by troubling extrusions from his unconscious mind. At first Charles sees an 'M' in the water, which he interprets as standing for Mary, his cousin whom he wishes to marry, but the meaning gives way to a shifting, reflexive chain of potential signifiers each hinting at aspects of his life and of his experiences on the island. It's a chain that brings him to what is really troubling him, the suspicion that his uncle has murdered a survivor of the wrecked *Christ-Anna*: "as I mentally ran over the different words which might be represented by the letter M –misery, mercy, marriage, money, and the like – I was arrested with a sort of start by the word murder" (339).

Charles' mission upon the island is partly in search of the wealth of the sunken *Espirito Santo*, the ship whose non-presence forms a lacuna within the written history of the islands. The fate of the ship is absent from the historic literature of the "famous writer Dr. Robertson"(329) (the representative of the written tradition), and it is through first-hand acquaintance with the oral tradition of the island that Charles is able to speculate on its final resting place. The oral tradition can only take him so far however,

the narrative has gaps, and it will only be by plunging directly into the sea that Charles will truly become cognisant of the silenced narrative of the *Espirito Santo.* The journey undertaken here is one that strips away and erodes writing's cultural power of naming and categorisation; the written letters Charles sifts through give way to oral accounts that "Gude forbid that we should ken what like it was", giving way in turn to the "uneasy... long sighs" (341) of the sea, each stage marking a progressive inarticulacy in representing the truth of the *Espirito Santo.*

In 'A Gossip on Romance' Stevenson, writing of reading, says "the words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story, if it be a story, repeat itself in a thousand coloured pictures to the eye" (172). It is notable here that Stevenson renders the power of the Romance from literary into aural terms: the words should "run...in our ears" not through our minds, and the "noise" should register upon us like the sound of those "breakers" that crash upon the Merry Men. The result is that "eloquence and thought, character and conversation", qualities synonymous with the genre of Realism, are to be brushed aside in the pursuit of "brute incident", for that is what will ignite the busy "kaleidoscopic dance of images" in our heads, leaving us "incapable of sleep or continuous thought" (172). The power of incident as represented in Stevenson's theory of Romance is that without reliance upon the minutiae of Realist representation it is able to induce a sudden, powerful, epiphanic emotional response at a remove from the actual first-hand experience of the incident in question. The description of "the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to windward, and a scowling fellow of Herculean proportions striding along the beach", in 'A Gossip on Romance', might rapture us "clean out of ourselves" (172) to use Stevenson's argument, while in 'The Merry Men' Charles Darnaway's transitional journey from the written historical to the oral to the pure sensation of the sea shows his power to represent empirical and historical 'truth' replaced with an overpowering "kaleidoscopic dance of images" of incident. Sensation becomes more intense, but at the same time, as Penny Fielding notes:

> Charles finds...it is as difficult to say what things are called as it is to say what they are like. In fact, the two difficulties are really the same, as to name something is an attempt at representing it in language, and, as things emerge from

> the sea, Charles finds it increasingly problematic to represent them in his narrative.[41]

As Charles enters the water the psychological division between the 'real' and the Romantic, and the ability to discern between the two, breaks down: "In this complexity of forms, all swaying together in the current, things were hard to be distinguished; and I was still uncertain whether my feet were pressed upon the natural rock or upon the timbers of the Armada treasure ship" (345). Charles' progress in the tale has been from the inadequacies of the written tradition towards an experience of brute incidence that swaps the exact but limited scope of the written record for the destabilising pure sensation evoked by the sea. For Charles "things [are] hard to distinguish", he is unable to tell "natural" rock from the "timbers of the Armada treasure ship"(345), but the gap in the written record regarding the fate of the *Espirito Santo* is filled in by a "kaleidoscopic dance of images" which conform entirely to Stevenson's "thousand coloured pictures" of Romance:

> Was the great treasure ship indeed below there, with her guns and chain and treasure, as she had sailed from Spain; her decks a garden for the seaweed, her cabin a breeding place for fish, soundless but for the dredging water, motionless but for the waving of the tangle upon her battlements -- that old, populous, sea-riding castle, now a reef in Sandag Bay? (345)

The mental images evoked by Charle's communion with brute incident are rich with symbolism that marries the domestic with the Romantic, and which again draw attention to the destabilised boundaries of the island, and of the written and the oral. The treasure ship is the Stevensonian Romantic trope *par excellence*, but it is also difficult to say exactly what it is or what it is like. She is described as a "sea-riding castle", another emblematic trope of Romanticism indicative of the sense of wonder that the wreck evokes, yet is simultaneously a "reef in Sandag Bag", and as we know by now those reefs are the cause of many men's deaths. The description of the *Espirito Santo's* deck as "a garden" is a sudden intrusion of domestic metaphor into the dance of images, calling to mind Stevenson's assertion in 'A Gossip on Romance' that "the sight of a pleasant arbour puts it in our mind to sit there" (173); but the enticement of the

"thousand coloured pictures" conjured by Romance is a dangerous one for Darnaway. In attempting to elucidate the mystery of the Spanish wreck Darnaway leaps into the sea for a second time and in doing so feels the existential "horror of the sea" with its "labsters an' partans, an sic like, howking in the deid" (336) that Gordon Darnaway warned of:

> my uncle's words, "the dead are down there," echoed in my ears...I secured myself as at first, and groped among the waving tangle. All that met my touch was cold and soft and gluey. The thicket was alive with crabs and lobsters, trundling to and fro lopsidedly, and I had to harden my heart against the horror of their carrion neighbourhood. On all sides I could feel the grain and the clefts of hard, living stone; no planks, no iron, not a sign of any wreck; the *Espirito Santo* was not there. (346)

Here is the chimera of Romance rudely dispelled: we might say that the fantasy of sunken treasure Charles built up in his mind was as wondrous as his metaphorical sea-castle, but in searching for it he has instead run himself upon the symbolic reef. There is no treasure ship there, only "hard living stone" on all sides, and the horror of the carrion deep. The irony here is that Charles has ventured into the sea on a mission that while couched in Romance, is not so different from the crabs and lobsters; he too has come to "howk in the deid", not just metaphorically but literally:

> just at the last moment there came a sudden flush of current, dredging through the tangles like a wave. I lost one hold...and instinctively grasping for a fresh support, my fingers closed on something hard and cold. I think I knew at that moment what it was. At least I instantly left hold of the tangle, leaped for the surface, and clambered out next moment on the friendly rocks with the bone of a man's leg in my grasp. (346)

This is the moment of epiphany for Darnaway, the endpoint of that journey along the continuum of modes of reading that has taken him from the historiographical written records of academic Edinburgh to the pure, epiphanic, wordless sensation of the sea. In that period of immersion the question that brought him to the island -- what happened to the *Espirito Santo*? -- is answered in a sort of anti-literary moment of clarity, a clarity that paradoxically his training in sifting over written texts had blunted. Penny Fielding

identifies Romance as "the kind of writing that aspires to be most unlike writing in writing's compulsion to represent and differentiate"[42], and if Stevenson has stressed the distinction between writing and speech with the latter being the "real art that deals with life directly" ("A Humble Remonstrance', 195), then here is the endpoint of that continuum: experiencing life directly. In almost drowning, Darnaway engages with a mode of reading that is entirely non-verbal, and through it reads a message that negates all further desire to represent and differentiate the particulars of the *Espirito Santo*'s fate:

> Mankind is a material creature, slow to think and dull to perceive connections. The grave, the wreck of the brig, and the rusty shoe-buckle were surely plain advertisements. A child might have read their dismal story, and yet it was not until I touched that actual piece of mankind that the full horror of the charnel ocean burst upon my spirit. I laid the bone beside the buckle, picked up my clothes, and ran as I was along the rocks towards the human shore. I could not be far enough from the spot; no fortune was vast enough to tempt me back again. The bones of the drowned dead should henceforth roll undisturbed by me, whether on tangle or minted gold. (346)

If Stevenson destabilises and subverts the hegemonic scribal discourse through a written narrative that questions the power of that same written tradition to truly name and categorise human experience, then he also questions the capacity of the Calvinist tradition to explain and repress the disorder of human existence through Gordon Darnaway's response to the ship foundering in the storm. Julia Reid makes the point that "it is human fear of savagery -- rather than savagery itself -- which causes degeneration"[43], and the strict Calvinism of the pleasure-hating, self-mortifying Gordon Darnaway is not so much a system for making sense of man's place in the universe as a psychic pressure valve that represses aspects of human nature until they explode in aberrant and atavistic displays and actions. The harsh, gloomy Covenanter -- "much given to read[ing] long at the Bible" (332) -- gives way to the drunken, demoniacal figure dancing madly on the clifftop as sailors die below, a 'Merry Man' whose furious glee mirrors the anthropomorphous, animistic interpretation of the rocks in the water.[44] Gordon's Christian faith should have been a metaphorical rock, but rocks in this tale bring about the death of men. Like the sailors killed upon the Merry Men, George Darnaway has fallen upon rock -- the rock of his strict, punitive Calvinism -- and is

badly broken; not physically, but in the moral and psychological sense. George's chief joy in life is the destruction of ships and the loss of human life upon the Merry Men. The unyielding rock of faith is both the only thing Darnaway has to cling to in the churning maelstrom of existential dread, and yet it is also a hostile religiosity upon which to draw and wreck others, just as the wrecker might hope to lure ships onto the rocks. The implication here is that Christ -- the Light of the World -- is not a beacon within Darnaway's worldview, but rather is like the 'false light' of maritime lore, utilised by him to bring about shipwreck.[45] Earlier the categorising power of language was lost in the face of Charles' epiphanic engagement with the wreck of the *Espirito Santo*; now the moral regulatory capacity of the Word gives way to a terrible disintegration of language and reason that erodes the boundary that distinguishes man as separate and distinct from the world. Gadamer's assertion that "[the fact that] language is originally human means at the same time that man's being-in-the-world is primarily linguistic" is broken down through Stevenson's portrayal of man and nature mirroring each other in wordless, inarticulate madness:

> [the noise of the Merry Men] seemed even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and discarding speech, bawl together in their madness by the hour; so to my ear these deadly breakers shouted by Aros in the night. (355)

Ultimately, both Charles and Gordon Darnaway's modes of interpreting and making sense of the world are compromised by their experiences on the Hebridean island, foreshadowing the degeneration and fall of Western characters in Stevenson's later island writing. In what is an early inversion of the trope of 'crossing the beach' in Stevenson's work, we are provided with an example of islander-outsider contact where the Britons take on the role of native. The survivor of the shipwreck is a black man whose incomprehensible language again stymies and frustrates the attempts by Charles to describe and categorise events; but for Gordon the propensity within Calvinism to see Satan's hand at work everywhere leads directly to the Lowlander's own death. The oral traditions of the island allow numerous tropes to contain and contextualise contact with the unexplained, but the folk beliefs of the Lowland Covenanting tradition cast all such contacts within a stark, gloomy, bedevilled binary. Like the Black Man of 'Thrawn

Janet' and the superstitious reactions to Secundra Dass in *The Master of Ballantrae,* Gordon interprets this moment of contact with the representative of another culture as coming face to face with the Devil,[46] a contact that tips the elder Darnaway -- hagridden by his own feelings of sin and guilt -- into insanity. His subsequent flight into the sea to his death can be read as the silencing of the Calvinist narrative in the face of events with which it cannot cope, the ultimate and final act of suppression.

If 'The Merry Men' is a statement on the interactions between Enlightenment Scotland, the Lowland Covenanter tradition, and the traditional oral culture of the Hebrides then those cultures closest to Stevenson's own background come off most poorly. The purported objectivity of Charles as an historian is compromised over the course of the tale and his mission to objectively represent the truth of the fate of the *Espirito Santo* is rendered as a futile endeavour, another labour of "Hercules in a dress coat, armed with a pen and dictionary [attempting] to depict the passions" ('A Humble Remonstrance' p.194) Stevenson's commentary upon Scottish identity in 'The Merry Men' is similarly bleak; degeneration and death in the text come not from the survival of the 'primitive' beliefs of an oral culture, but from their repudiation through a punitive religious fanaticism, the germ of which also infects Charles Darnaway. Watching his uncle being chased into the sea by the stranger, Charles sees his death as "decrees of God that came to pass before our eyes" (368). As a meditation upon primitive survivals in Scottish culture it is a particularly ambiguous one.

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1 Robert Louis Stevenson 'A Humble Remonstrance', in *The Lantern Bearers and other Essays*, Jeremy Treglown (ed.) op.cit. All subsequent references to 'A Humble Remonstrance' are indicated parenthetically in the text.

2 Correspondents to whom Stevenson signed himself 'Tusitala' include J.M.Barrie and Arthur Conan Doyle. *Letters*, op.cit., Vol. 8, p.44 and p.155

3 Letter to Ann Jenkins, May 1892. Ibid. Vol.7. p.295

4 Roslyn Jolly identifies the identity of 'Tusitala' as for Stevenson's western audience as:

...the name by which the Pacific Stevenson was made unthreatening to readers and could be accepted as 'theirs'. It became the name for a foreignness that could not be otherwise managed or understood, the means of reducing this strange, unpredictable author, with his unfashionable political and intellectual enthusiasms, to a set of familiar terms that could be easily comprehended and controlled.

Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific: Travel, Empire, and the Author's Profession*, (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009). p.159

5 Leo Bersani writes that "Realist fiction serves the nineteenth century by providing it with strategies for containing (and repressing) its disorder...within significantly constructed stories about itself." Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*, (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company. 1976). p.63

6 In 1889, twenty-four-year old Ilia Gurliand noted these words down from Anton Chekhov's conversation: "If in Act I you have a pistol hanging on the wall, then it must fire in the last act". "Chekhov's Gun" has come to be used as the title for the literary technique whereby an element is introduced early in a story but it's significance does not become clear until later, and the complementary rule that a narrative should not have extraneous elements that do not further the plot. Donald Rayfield, *Anton Chekhov: A Life*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), p. 203.

7 Robert Louis Stevenson 'A Gossip on Romance' (1882), in *The Lantern Bearers and other Essays*, op.cit. P.175 All subsequent references to 'A Gossip on Romance' are indicated parenthetically in the text.

8 Penny Fielding, W*riting and Orality*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). p.4

9 Julia Reid,op. cit,. p. 5

10 Dening's concept of "the beach" in Pacific island identity does not take into consideration the fact that many Pacific islands, including Pitcairn on which he has written at length, do not have beaches.

11 Greg Dening, *Islands and beaches: Discourse on a silent land: Marquesas 1774-1880* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), and *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self* ((Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

12 Greg Dening, *Islands and beaches*, ibid. p.20

13 In the Pacific model where the island culture is a cultural world in itself the opposing side of the dichotomy is almost inevitably a masculine, western presence, usually of an exploratory naval or mercantile nature. In this simplistic form the binary model excludes common ongoing contact with other culturally related island communities, raising the question as to how distinct a particular island's "islandness" might be.

14 Andrew Lang 'Introduction', *The Folk Lore Record* Vol.II, (1879) p.vi

15 J.L. Campbell (ed.) *Tales of Barra told by the Coddy*, (Edinburgh: Johnston and Bacon, 1960). p.24

16 Malcolm Chapman has argued that Scottish Gaelic culture, and Hebridean culture in particular, have been deliberately positioned as non-rational, spiritual, parochial, and folkloric. Chapman observes: The 'Scottish' interests, and more particularly the 'Celtic' interests, that are represented on the shelves of bookshops throughout Scotland are predominantly antiquarian and 'folk'. Modern short stories rub shoulders with tales of fairies, clan histories, folksongs and dictionaries of Hebridean flora. The bookshop where I do most of my shopping shelves Celtic books within prehistory, two floors away from modern languages, so that Ian Crichton Smith's contemporary Gaelic prose, realist, sexually explicit, and iconoclastic as it is, stands only inches away from stone circles, druids and speculations on the exact location of Atlantis.

Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*, (London: Croom Helm, 1978). p.131

17 Matthew Arnold, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, (London: Smith, Elder, 1891). p.84

18 In a letter to his cousin R.A.M. Stevenson (Bob) RLS states

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. The Scandinavians did much more to Scotland than the Angles. The Saxons didn't come.

Letter to R.A.M. Stevenson, September 1894. *Letters* op.cit. Vol.8. pp.363

19 Robert Louis Stevenson, letter To R.A.M. Stevenson, June 1894, ibid, p.303

20 In 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case' Jekyll states:

> ...man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Barry Menikoff ed.) op.cit. p.307

21 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Merry Men', from *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ibid. p.329. All subsequent references to 'The Merry Men' are from this edition and will be indicated parenthetically in the text.

22 Leo Bersani, op.cit. p.63

23 Malcolm Chapman, op. cit. p.131

24 Stevenson's assertion that the Gaelic language has no present tense is not actually true, and is a romanticised view of that language on his part. Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to R.A.M. Stevenson, September 1894 op.cit. pp.363

25 Ibid. p. 123

26 Magnus Magnusson notes that "'the tartan craze' of the early nineteenth century can be traced to Sir Walter Scott's request that Scots should attend festivities "all plaided and plumed in their tartan array", a request that led to many clans inventing tartans. One contemporary writer sarcastically described the pomp that surrounded the celebrations as "Sir Walter's Celtified Pagentry" [sic]. Magnus Magnusson, *Scotland: The Story of a Nation,* (New York: Grove Press, 2003). pp.653-654

27 The association of crofting as an trope of Highland culture is a particularly ironic one when brought to bear in defense of an idealised Scottish cultural purity. In the wake of the Highland Clearances the former clan members were reformed into crofting communities with a significant result being that the region as a whole was drawn into international networks of trade and communication. Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire argue that "ironically at the very point when improving discourses were at their most powerful and hegemonic in the Highlands and islands, a disapproving romanticism began to resist what was seen as the breakdown of "natural" relations between people and the land that sustained them".

Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire, *Order and partialities: theory, pedagogy, and the "postcolonial"*, (New York: SUNY Press, 1995). p. 36.

28 Peter Womack argues that the period from the failure of the 1845 Rebellion to the publication of Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* saw a mythologising of the Highlands and islands within British culture as a repository of a stable, folkist culture set against a constantly changing capitalist society. For most of the century and a half after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden the inhabitants of the West Highlands and islands, social groupings in whom the Gaelic language and the old systems of clan loyalty found strongest survival, were represented by travellers as an exoticised, foreign population within the British Isles, and possessed of a prelapsarian social unity. Peter Womack, I*mprovement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands*, (London: Macmillan, 1989).

29 Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). p. 22

30 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* (Bibliolife, 2008). p.31.

Rod Edmond traces the provenance of this phrase to Harriet Martineau's *Dawn Island* (1845). See *Representing the South Pacific: colonial discourse from Cook to Gauguin*, op.cit,. p.164

31 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Letters*, op,cit. Vol. 4, p.182

32 Marah Gubah, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). p. 78

33 The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)in the Calvinist theological tradition states:

> VII. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

The People's Edition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, (BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2009). p. 3-4

34 Julia Reid, op.cit. p. 78

35 Stevenson's relationship with Alison Cunningham ("Cummy") and her formative influence on his religious convictions are a key subject for Stevenson biographers. Stevenson admitted that Cunningham's instruction fostered a highstrung religiosity in him as a youth and a fixation upon the fate of his soul should he die:

> I would not only lie awake to weep for Jesus...but I would fear to trust myself to slumber lest I was not accepted and should slip, ere I awoke, into eternal ruin. I remember repeatedly awaking from a dream of Hell, clinging to the horizontal bar of my bed, with my knees and chin together, my soul shaken, my body convulsed with agony...I piped and snivelled over the Bible, with an earnestness that had been talked into me. I would say nothing without adding "if I am spared", as if to disarm fate with a show of submission, and some of this feeling still remains upon me in my thirtieth year...Had I died in those years, I fancy I might have figured in a tract.
>
> Robert Louis Stevenson, "Memoirs of Himself", *Memories and Portraits, Memoirs of Himself and Selections from His Notebook*, (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2003). P.154

Despite his later agnosticism Stevenson remained fascinated with the history of the Covenanters in the 'Killing Times', in the last years of his life expressing to J.M. Barrie that:

> I have lately been returning to my wallowing in the mire. When I was a child, and indeed until I was nearly a man, I consistently read Covenanting books. Now that I am a grey-beard - or would be, if I could raise the beard - I have returned, and for weeks back have read little else.
>
> Letter to J.M. Barrie, September 7th, 1893. *Letters,* op.cit. Vol. 8, p.205

36 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes and Selected Travel Writings, (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). p.209

37 Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald. G. Marshall, (New York: Crossroad, 1992). p.443

38 Penny Fielding, op. cit. p.204

39 J.C. Furnas, op.cit., p. 29

40 Robert Wodrow *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution* Volume 4 Chapter IX, p.247

41 Penny Fielding, op cit. p.205

42 Penny Fielding, ibid. p.199

43 Julia Reid, op.cit. p.82

44 Gordon Darnaway's drunken, deranged dancing on the cliff edge presages the similar demoniacal capering of the warlock Tod Lapraik in Stevenson's *Catriona*:

> A' the time we lay there it lowped and flang and capered and span like a teetotum, and whiles we could hear it skelloch as it span...Say what ye like, I maun say what I believe. It was joy was in the creature's heart, the joy o' hell, I daursay: joy whatever. Mony a time I have askit mysel' why witches and warlocks should sell their sauls (whilk are their maist dear possessions) and be auld, duddy, wrunkl't wives or auld, feckless, doddered men; and then I mind upon Tod Lapraik dancing a' the hours by his lane in the black glory of his heart. Nae doubt they burn for it muckle in hell, but they have a grand time here of it, whatever! - and the Lord forgie us!"
>
> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Catriona,* op.cit., pp.334-335

45 The legal Act 26, Geo II 1753 states

> If any person or persons shall plunder, steal away, or destroy any goods or merchandise, or other effects, from or belonging to any ship or vessel...which shall be in distress or which shall be wrecked, lost, stranded, or cast on shore on any part of his Majestie's dominions (whether any living creature should be on board such vessel or not)...or shall beat or wound with intent to kill or destroy, or shall otherwise wilfully obstruct the escape of any person endeavouring to save his or her life from such ship or vessel, or the wreck thereof; or if any person or persons shall put out any false light or lights with intent to bring any such ship or vessel into danger, then such person or persons so offending shall be guilty of felony; and on being lawfully convicted thereof shall suffer death as in cases of felony,

without benefit of clergy.

The use of "false lights" to facilitate shipwreck while recognised in law and a common trope of maritime lore has been disputed by some historians who point to a lack of prosecutions for the offense. This converse argument is that periodic updating of laws dating back to the 12th century proscribing the act is the strongest support for the fact that the crime did take place. See Bella Bathhurst, *The Wreckers: A Story of Killing Seas and Plundered Wrecks*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005). p.15

46 The recurring trope of the supernatural 'Black Man' within Stevenson's writing has been attributed to the childhood influence of Alison Cunningham. J.C. Furnas notes:

> Worst of all, even beyond the devout fears implicit in most Christian creeds, Cummy retained lively rural superstitions. Like many a child's nurse before or since, she provided overrich material for night fears. Her Devil was personal, immediate, often got up as the Black Man of country tales – the glimpse in 'Thrawn Janet' shows what Lou's imagination did with him; thirty-five years later his mother...would recall her son's terror of the "b'acky man"...To the child the Black Man could not be seriocomic. He fathered a pattern of nightmares and delirious hallucinations...that soaked the child in the sweat of terror.

J.C. Furnas, op.cit. p.50

Chapter 6

"Anither Course I Now Begin": Robert Louis Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narratives.

In the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh there is a mosaic frieze depicting what one might with some justification call the 'Great Men of Scotland', a body which includes such nineteenth-century figures as Carlyle, Sir James Young Simpson, and William Thomson, Lord Kelvin. Duly represented amongst these luminaries is Robert Stevenson, the brilliant engineer who defied the forces of wind and sea to build the Bell Rock Lighthouse and who gave his name to a grandson of very different talents: the writer Robert Louis Stevenson.

To be a builder of lighthouses might be seen as the epitome of evangelical Protestant employment: the wise man perpetually building his house upon the rock; providing a housing for the Light of the World to guide to safety those tossed upon a tempestuous sea -- be it temporal or moral. The moral self-assurance of the Covenanter makes for poor adventure though, and to be forever on the rock is to be one looking out upon those other souls living a life of danger; indeed, for one of a romantic temperament, a lighthouse might eventually become a prison. Therefore, when at the age of twenty-one Stevenson confided

in his father that he did not wish to become an engineer, he was turning his back on a family tradition which went hand-in-glove with travel on the seas, for a lighthouse owes its very existence to maritime travel. When two years later Louis admitted his agnosticism to the horrified, "morbidly" orthodox[2] Thomas Stevenson it was as one metaphorically running away to sea, swapping the cold certitude of the Calvinist rock on the edge of the North Atlantic for islands of the imagination that touch a "virginity of sense"[3].

Robert Louis Stevenson had his first major success with the novel *Treasure Island* (1883), a tale built around the armature of a maritime quest in search of a buried treasure that (while never spelled out as such) one might implicitly assume to have been the fruit of imperial exploitation by Europe's seagoing nations. Stevenson however rewrote and rewrote again his maritime quest narrative as *The Wrecker* (1892) (with its rush for a presumed cargo of opium, the destabilising tool of British imperialism in China) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1893) (with its empty cargoes and murder plots over pearls in the South Seas), each text growing more bleakly existential as Romance was excoriated from the form. The question might be asked at this point 'what was Stevenson the artist questing for in his own work by revisiting and deconstructing his first literary success?'

The dead or estranged father is a recurring trope in Stevenson's fiction; be it *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Wrecker,* or *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), and it is a trope that was established right from the outset with Stevenson's first novel *Treasure Island.* Robert Kiely has called it a "universal truth that boyish adventures, especially games involving danger, are possible only when the limiting authority symbolised by the male parent are absent"[4] and it is of some interest that the father of *Treasure Island*'s Jim Hawkins is an almost non-existent presence within the novel. *Treasure Island* is written as the memoir of a mature Jim Hawkins, an adult who assures us that he recalls past events as though they were yesterday, therefore it is significant that his recollections begin, not with his father's death, but with what is instead a quite different formative event of that same time-frame: the arrival at the Admiral Benbow Inn of the pirate Billy

Bones. Compared to his father, who appears merely as a cipher for the running of the inn, Billy Bones is drawn in broad, vivid strokes:

> ...a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man; his tarry pig-tail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. (1)[5]

Conforming to the physical stereotypes of an 'old salt' Bones is emblematic of Stevenson's remark in 'A Humble Remonstrance' that "[for a child] a pirate is a beard, a pair of wide trousers, and a liberal complement of pistols"[6], but what is most telling in that remark is that by reading identity via the use of physical signifiers it leaves the option open to assume identity through costume and the alteration of appearance. Part of what makes Billy Bones a pirate is that he *looks* like one. The concept of fluidity of identity -- the possibility that one's role may be put on and taken off like a suit of clothes -- is intrinsic within all of Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narratives and Jim Hawkins' adventure is in large part dependent upon his changes of identity, changes that begin with his admittance into Billy Bones' confidences; an initiation that acts as a partial initiation and an indicator that his father's role has been subsumed by the pirate. Jim is a "sharer in [Billy Bone's] alarms", his confidante and look-out:

> He had taken me aside one day and promised me a silver fourpenny on the first day of every month if I would only keep my `weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg'...Often enough, when the first of the month came round, and I applied to him for my wage, he would only blow through his nose at me, and stare me down; but before the week was out he was sure to think better of it, bring me my fourpenny piece, and repeat his orders to look out for `the seafaring man with one leg'. (3)

This point marks the ascendancy of the son over the father who "never plucked up the heart" (7) to ask Bones for the money due him, and the first of the transitions in identity that mark Jim Hawkins' progress through the novel. While his father quails in the presence of the belligerent pirate, Hawkins is able to both empathise and identify with Bones, being "far less afraid of the captain himself than anyone else who knew him" (4). Through Hawkins Stevenson identifies the revitalising force of Romance within the shabby dissipated person of Billy

Bones, an aspect that his staid father is blind to comprehend, and which in itself brings a certain reinvigoration to the stultified community. Bones "by his own account...must have lived his life among some of the wickedest men that God ever allowed upon the sea" (4), but his very ability to offer an oral account of his deeds and experiences, a narrative very different from those available to that rural community, is presented in glowing terms:

> I really believe his presence did us good. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it; it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life; and there was even a party of the young men who pretended to admire him, calling him a 'true sea-dog' and a 'real old-salt', the sort of man that made England terrible at sea. (4-5)

At this early point in Stevenson's fiction one might identify the first example of a counter-ideology to Calvinism; Romance as a restorative and revitalising power that serves to counterbalance the strictures of the Protestant work ethic. In this manner the Calvinist doctrine of success in the next world guaranteed through abnegation and dour toil is off-set by the prospect of success in this world through daring, chance, and a seizing of the day.

Like the child for whom a pirate is a beard and wide-trousers, the sense of courage within Hawkins' neighbours does not extend beyond admiring a sabre scar on nut-brown skin and the thrill of a grizzly tale. Resembling nothing so much as the kanakas of 'The Beach of Falesá' who "are easy scared and rather like to be so"[7] Hawkins' neighbours enjoy the vicarious thrill of Bones' tales, but they are loath to intervene when a real threat surfaces in the form of Blind Pew.

An obvious reading of *Treasure Island* is to view the quest as Jim Hawkins' negotiated journey into manhood. The curiously glossed-over death of his father provided the fortunate break to allow his escape from his environs, and it is of especial note that his sympathy lies not with the man who sired him, but with the aged pirate who carried "five or six curious West Indian shells with him in his wandering, guilty, and hunted life" (25). There is a very real sense of alignment with the pirate on a fundamental, emotional level; but more than that it allows a

faint yet awesome intimation of the person who exists beneath the "beard and wide-trousers", an intimation of which Hawkins seems entirely cognisant.

Hawkins might feel sympathy for the outsider, but to embark on his quest requires a more socially sanctioned patronage: that of Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey. Jim's first visit to Trelawney's Hall is heavily redolent with the hierarchical signifiers of the British class system:

> The servant led us down a matted passage, and showed us at the end into a great library, all lined with bookcases and busts upon the top of them, where the Squire and Dr Livesey sat, pipe in hand, on either side of a bright fire. (35)

The totality of accepted wisdom as evidenced in the gentleman's library, the busts of those who even in death are raised above the general populace, all these lead to the pairing of the squire and the magistrate; a pairing that explicitly illustrates the close and familiar connection between the gentry and that purported arbiter of justice within British society. Both would -- on the surface -- appear to be ready, erstwhile father-figures to Jim Hawkins, yet it is their inability to negotiate a fluid movement between identities that stymies any fixed attachment by the boy.

Upon viewing Bones' treasure map, Squire Trelawney, with the assuredness of his hegemonic place within his feudalised society, immediately styles himself "admiral":

> "Tomorrow I start for Bristol. In three weeks time – three weeks! – two weeks – ten days – we'll have the best ship, sir, and the choicest crew in England. Hawkins shall come as cabin-boy. You'll make a famous cabin-boy, Hawkins. You, Livesey, are ship's doctor; I am admiral. We'll take Redruth, Joyce, and Hunter". (40)

At this point one might muse on the historic connection between military commission and gentle birth; certainly Trelawney's insistence on the company of his familial retainers upon the quest indicates an extension of the feudal into the maritime domain. Despite what might ostensibly be viewed as a transformation of Trelawney and Livesey's identities, the two representatives have actually merely translated their societal roles into their maritime equivalents. It is

precisely this inability to flow between identities that will hinder their actions within the novel. Trelawney and Livesey may style themselves leaders of men, but their fundamental inability to achieve a meaningful communication with the subalterns of the text will ultimately lead to their impotence and marginalisation. As a representative of the judiciary, Livesey's communication with the lowly born does not extend far beyond his threat to Billy Bones: "I promise, upon my honour, you shall hang at next assizes" (7). Trelawney believes himself a judge of character, yet the majority of the men he hand-picks for his crew are Silver's pirates, indeed, Silver himself occupies the highest position in his estimations. It is precisely Silver's own ability to flow between his many roles -- "an old sailor [who] has lost a leg...in his country's service" (44), publican, ship's cook, and buccaneer -- that allows his control of the balance of power over the ostensible shipborne authorities that will identify him as the true role-model for Jim Hawkins upon the Quest.

For a novel set within the New World the non-European voice in *Treasure Island* is curiously absent, yet Stevenson does provide us with a witness who gives occulted testimony to the excesses and abuses of the early colonial period: Silver's parrot, Captain Flint. The Golden Age of Piracy -- of which Silver's band are revenants -- was literally that, an age of gold, and through the parrot's perpetual squawk of "Pieces of eight!" we find the currency of empire reduced to its most cherished commodity. Silver plots the course of Europe's overseas empires through the lifespan of the avian witness and it is not without moral judgement: "Now that bird...is, may be, two hundred years old, Hawkins – they live forever mostly; and if anybody's seen more wickedness, it must be the devil himself". (63)

The historians James Stuart Olson and Robert Shadle have called pirates "the shock troops of European imperialism"[8], and here Stevenson openly reveals the extent of both empire and piracy within the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Silver's account serves almost as a conflation of the two, rendering British

imperial history as a bloody succession of pirates preying upon non-European societies, and each other:

> "She's sailed with England, the great Cap'n England, the pirate. She's been at Madagascar, and at Malabar, the Surinam, and Providence, and Portobello. She was at the fishing up of the wrecked Plate ships. It's there she learned "Pieces of Eight!" and little wonder; three hundred and fifty thousand of 'em, Hawkins! She was at the boarding of the Viceroy of the Indies out at Goa, she was; and to look at her you would think she was a babby. But you smelt powder – didn't you, cap'n?" (63)

Malabar and Surinam, Goa and Madagascar; the "pirate round" was intrinsically dependent upon Europe's imperial exploitation and force. In *In an Antique Land* Amitav Ghosh has pointed to the prosperous, trade-based societies of India's Malabar Coast and their fate following European incursion:

> Having long been accustomed to the tradesman's rules of bargaining and compromise they tried time and time again to reach an understanding with the Europeans -- only to discover, as one historian has put it, that the choice was "between resistance and submission; cooperation was not offered." Unable to compete in the Indian Ocean trade by purely commercial means, the Europeans were bent on taking control of it by aggression, pure and distilled, by unleashing violence on a scale unprecedented on these shores.[9]

It was this that marked the background to Silver's tale of the pirate era. J. Marx provides a more specific instance of piracy in the Indian Ocean with an account of the infamous Captain Avery's brutalities:

> Just north of Madagascar they captured a ship...which belonged to the wealthiest merchant of Surat, an important seaport on the northwest coast of India...The ship, with eighty guns and four hundred soldiers, was transporting high ranking Moslems home from the pilgrimage to Mecca and was laden with £500,000 worth of dazzling treasures. The pirates behaved abominably toward the passengers. The East India Company confirmed Indian reports of torture, rape and pillage.[10]

Dead men may not bite, but their traces can be harder to eliminate than at first thought. The barbarities, both of piracy and of colonialism, were very real and

through the projected testimony of the parrot Stevenson allows us an understated renunciation of the idea that a pirate is simply "a beard, a pair of wide trousers, and a liberal complement of pistols". When Silver describes the events the parrot has witnessed he is in truth recounting his own life as a pirate.

Part of what makes Long John Silver such an attractive character to the reader is that he not only disrupts the binaries of the text, he moves with facility between roles: trustworthy sea-cook to infamous pirate; cripple to dexterous killer; bitter adversary to smooth peace-broker. Multiplicity of character and the observation of identity in sudden transition is a recurring trope within Stevenson's work, most obviously in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and one might again look to Stevenson's Calvinist upbringing for an insight into his fascination with characters in flux. By his own admission Stevenson was brought up to believe that:

> ...there were but two camps in the world; one of the perfectly pious and respectable, one of the perfectly profane, mundane, and vicious; one mostly on its knees and singing hymns, the other on the highroad to the gallows and the bottomless pit[11]

Throughout his oeuvre Stevenson explores characters who either move between these two camps or who dwell in the interstices. His play *Deacon Brodie, or the Double Life* (1878) presented a protagonist whose ostensible public respectability and piety belied his private belief that the essential nature of man is evil and that any benign or honest action is a disguise. While Brodie, with his cry of 'Every man for himself, and the devil for all'[12] is a clear Satan masquerading as one of the Calvinist Elect, Silver is possessed of a complex ambiguity of identity. In the early chapters Jim attaches himself to Silver much as he had to Billy Bones, and the one-legged sea cook evidences all the attributes of a bluff and paternal oral historian of maritime adventure: "'Come away, Hawkins" [Silver] would say; "come and have a yarn with John. Nobody more welcome than yourself, my son'" (62).

It is this Silver that manages with such adroitness to impress both the shipborne authorities in the person of Doctor Livesy "Trelawney...I believe you

have managed to get two honest men on board...[Captain Smollett] and John Silver" (58), and such honest sailors as Tom Morgan: "Silver," says he, "you're old, and you're honest, or has the name for it; and you've money, too, which lots of poor sailors hasn't; and you're brave, or I'm mistook" (.87). Silver seems all things to all men; an honest seaman who lost a leg in service of his nation and the sailor who made good, yet he also combines the attributes of a malign cripple with almost superhuman strength (as was previously personified by Blind Pew); a maimed villain whose perceived physical impairment belies his dexterous abilities. Nowhere is this more evident than in Silver's murder of Tom Morgan: "Silver, agile as a monkey, even without leg or crutch, was on the top of [Tom] next moment, and had twice buried his knife up to the hilt in that defenceless body" (88).

It is Jim Hawkins' growing cognisance that man does not belong to one of two camps that marks perhaps his most profound personal growth within the novel. Hawkins learns of the duplicity of human nature, yet most importantly the action is advanced through *his own* duplicity and quick transitions between the dichotomies of insider/outsider and defender/mutineer. When Jim Hawkins jumps ship he is metaphorically entering into an environment free from socially imposed morals and strictures. Skeleton Island (like those islands of *Robinson Crusoe* [1719] and *The Coral Island* [1857]) is a veritable *tabula rasa* for adventure in that it is a large, habitable environment with an abundance of natural resources. One might say that it is a child's ideal of the island venue, with its log fort, caves, and forests, and that it encompasses all the hopes and wide-open prospects of youthful fantasy. Skeleton Island is a perfect isle for exploration, but the most interesting explorations Jim Hawkins engages in are of a moral and psychological nature. Jim's actions in running away from the stockade, that small bastion of British social order under siege, is an act of desertion anathema to Dr. Livesey yet it is tactically decisive in routing the pirate attack. It is only through removing himself from the translated hierarchical confines of the stockade that Jim is able to perform the task that marks his most

crucial of the many rites of passage within the novel: taking control of the *Hispaniola* and killing Israel Hands.

The ship drifting without a helmsman at the wheel is an obvious symbol in Stevenson maritime narratives, but with Stevenson's first novel the abiding influence of the romance form was still influential enough to allow Jim Hawkins to tread the well-worn path of taking command of a ship drifting in the metaphorical currents of moral and existential uncertainty. By doing so however Jim has to face the most overt of the novel's blackguards, Israel Hands. Named after the real buccaneer and crewmate of Edward Teach, Hands embodies all the negative qualities of Silver with none of the redeeming aspects. Jim had previously overheard Hands plotting murder with Silver; now on re-boarding the *Hispaniola* he is able to observe the wounded Hands as he lies bleeding at the scene of one of his killings. Hawkins' childish fascinations are here laid bare; this is the reality of murder at sea, the terrible truth that lurks behind the patina of romance displayed by Billy Bones and Long John Silver. Hawkins however is no longer an eavesdropper or voyeur and is able to put into effect the lessons he has learned: he knows with what facility a seemingly crippled man can suddenly switch into a dexterous murderer and second-guesses Hands' intent. Hawkins' own playful translation between identities that began with his apprenticeship to Billy Bones has allowed him a cognisance of Israel Hands' nature unavailable to Dr. Livesey or Captain Smollett and is here put to grimly ironic use with his warning delivered at pistol point: " 'One more step, Mr. Hands,' said I, 'and I'll blow your brains out! Dead men don't bite, you know,' I added, with a chuckle." (165) Dead men may not bite, yet here Stevenson allows us a first, brief glimpse into the guilt that accompanies homicide in his Maritime Quest Narratives. Jim kills Hands, yet even in the disposal of the corpse still feels himself under silent censure from this corrupted father-figure. The "quivering" of the water above Israel Hands' body makes him appear "as if he were trying to rise" despite the fact that he has been "both shot and drowned", and Jim's last view of the body

"wavering with the tremulous movement of the water" (167-168) has all the subconscious symbolic intensity of a haunted dream.

While it might appear easy to identify the vestigial traces of Stevenson's Calvinist upbringing in the demise of Israel Hands, Long John Silver's fate presents us with a much more ambiguous insight into Stevenson's treatments of human nature. Silver's consistent treachery and duplicity are his very strength and, paradoxically, mark his capacity for carrying through with any suggestion he might make: he is prepared to sacrifice everything at any given moment. Almost as soon as he puts the offer to Jim to join his band --"you can't go back to your own lot for they won't have you; and without you start a whole ship's company all by yourself, which might be lonely, you'll have to jine with Cap'n Silver"(176) --[13] we learn that he is planning to betray his own men to secure his safe passage from the island:

> "Understand me, Jim...I've a head on my shoulders, I have. I'm on squire's side now. I know that you've got that ship safe somewheres...I know when a game's up, I do; and I know a lad that's staunch. Ah, you that's so young – you and me might have done a power of good together!" (181)

This offer and abrupt about-face mark the limits and ossification of Hawkins' progress. Hawkins has shifted through a variety of identities, many of which were contrary to the established social order of his society, and in doing so has saved the loyal crew of the *Hispaniola*, yet he must stop short of the terrible existential plight of being "a whole ship's company all by [himself]". Hawkins' fluidity can only take him so far and even then he does not escape the distrust of the established representatives of English hierarchy such as Captain Smollett: "you're a good boy in your line, Jim; but I don't think you and me'll go to sea again" (217). Long John Silver is himself, alone, a crew of one; and it is fitting that the sea cook makes his sea escape alone with a quantity of the treasure for all his maritime travails have been of a fundamentally selfish nature. Not so Jim Hawkins, who despite his growth and successes has learnt the limits and shortfalls of his identity, and it is a foreshadowing of Stevenson's work to come

that Hawkins admits that "the worst dreams that ever I have" are those of his experiences on "that accursed island" (224).

The catalyst for *The Wrecker*'s maritime quest comes not from the influence of an aged pirate upon an impressionable boy but rather the sudden gamble of a young man somewhat adrift in life. A curious chimera of *Bildungsroman* and maritime mystery, *The Wrecker* allows us a protagonist caught between the staid pressures of familial obligation and the go-getting thrust of new business. One of nature's dilettantes, *The Wrecker*'s Loudon Dodds tells us "I never cared a cent for anything but art, and never shall. My idea of man's chief end was to enrich the world with things of beauty and have a fairly good time myself while doing so".[14] That Dodds has not the talent to match his ambition is a cruel irony on the part of Stevenson, but one must also see within it a self-criticism and residual fear on the part of that other man who like Dodds went to Paris to indulge his artistic ambitions without fruition.

Dodds is a mediocre artist, unable to make a living at his art, and like Jim Hawkins curiously understated in the mourning of his father's death. With some candour he places his grief in relation to his unhappiness about the loss of his family's fortune, and his filial response is found wanting:

> The news of his death was scarcely a surprise and scarce a grief to me. I could not conceive my father a poor man. He had led too long a life of thoughtless and generous profusion to endure the change; and though I grieved for myself, I was able to rejoice that my father had been taken from the battle. I grieved, I say, for myself...I had lost my father; I had lost the allowance. (58)

Jim Hawkins' slight display of grief is here rewritten with no pretence; Dodds is older in years and smaller in spirit; the wide-open vistas of childish imagination are already closing in upon him, and the paths left to him are becoming fewer. The death of Hawkins' father is an understated example of that *locus classicus* that allows the young man the freedom to set out upon adventure. This rite of passage into adulthood is one that (marked in his case by his experience at the Commercial College) Loudon Dodds has failed; in the aftermath he has

withdrawn from the field of masculine endeavour into a rarefied sanctuary of Parisian aestheticism that is dependent on his father's patronage. The death of Dodds senior is the rude awakening that will force Loudon Dodds to re-enter the fray.

It has been remarked by J.R. Hammond that the introductory chapters of *The Wrecker* are "in essence irrelevant to the subsequent development of the story"[15], a comment that echoes the common perception of the novel as a portmanteau work. While the subsequent 'maritime mystery' portion of the text might seem quite uninformed by those early accounts of Dodds' down at heel travails in Paris and Edinburgh, nevertheless tropes are explored that are intrinsic not only to the character development of Dodds, but to the Stevensonian maritime protagonist archetype.

The archetypal Stevensonian protagonist of the Maritime Quest Narrative is the son of a staid, middle-class father who spurns that father's example. What is portrayed as a running toward adventure in *Treasure Island* is degraded in *The Wrecker* into a more morally ambiguous desire to seek after mystery, until by the time of *The Ebb-Tide* the quest is as much a running from responsibility as a headlong rush into the void.

Loudon Dodds, like Stevenson himself, declines his father's wishes as to his career in order to pursue the life of an artist. Unable to succeed through pure aestheticism his eventual success comes through the marriage of invention with craft. There is something of an abiding sense of loss in this, a revenant emotion of having been unable to function in a world of art-for-art's-sake, but it is buried in a vindication of the masonry of literary fancy polished and cemented by a writer's skill.

This questioning of the value of aesthetic pursuits is something of a constant in Stevenson's writing, be it his published work or private correspondence. Perhaps he felt something of Dodds in himself, reliant upon the financial support of his engineer father, perhaps he felt that art must have the tightly constructed strength of a lighthouse if it was to be valid. Whatever the case Stevenson

praises the attributes of craft again and again: "To work grossly at the trade, to forget sentiment, to think of his material and nothing else, is, for a while at least, the King's highway to progress".[16]

This concern with the exercise of technique in the writing process and the worth of writing as labour was not confined to Stevenson; Vanessa Smith has pointed to a number of writers who have espoused the utilitarianism of Victorian writing, one such example being Anthony Trollope.[17] Trollope referred to the novel as requiring the mechanical skills of a cobbler, and Stevenson was not loath to promote the art of writing as one of mastering technical processes:

> Bow your head over technique. Think of technique when you rise and when you go to bed. Forget purposes in the meanwhile; get to love technical processes, to glory in technical successes; get to see the world entirely through technical spectacles, to see it entirely in terms of what you can do[18]

It is thus with no small amount of pleasure that Stevenson presents us with the character of Dodds' grandfather, Alexander Loudon. A canny old Lowland Scot, his every act is a cheerful and crafty deflation of the pretensions of Dodd's "self-made" uncle, and his chief pleasures in life come from admiring the economies of his own handiwork, itself a ready and humorous metaphor for the practical happenstances met by a commercial author. "There's an idee of mine's: it's cheap and tasty, and had a grand run" (29). Yet it is Alexander Loudon who made the family fortune and is able to provide Loudon with an endowment. In a telling comment on the craft of writing, Alexander Loudon passes on to his grandson the books of his trade with the message:

> "Mr Loudon bids me add," continued the lawyer, consulting the little sheet of notes, that although these volumes are very valuable to the practical builder, you must be careful not to lose originality. He tells you also not to be `hadden down' -- his own expression -- by the theory of strains, and that Portland cement, properly sanded, will go a long way. (83)

Any perusal of Stevenson's correspondence quickly turns up his own rank self-criticisms of his craft; perhaps in them one might read the admission that he too

has been sanding his Portland cement to make it go a long way; if so one should note the "cheap and tasty" *Treasure Island* is still enjoying a grand run.

Juxtaposed with Dodds and his particular mixture of caution, naivety, and artistic sensibility is his friend and partner James Pinkerton. Based upon Stevenson's own American literary agent S.S. McClure[19], their relationship is one of "a fundamental difference of taste and training accepted and condoned"(50). Pinkerton embodies everything Stevenson admired in the American *genius*:

> He had more fire in his little toe than I in my whole carcase; he was stuffed to bursting with the manly virtues; thrift and courage glowed in him...who could predict what might be accomplished by a creature so full-blooded and so inspired with animal and intellectual energy? (43)

Pinkerton is not only the embodiment of the rude vitality of America, he provides a model for exertion and effort, of vigour and ingenuity over aestheticism, a conflict symbolised in hot blood by his nickname of "Broken-Stool Pinkerton". The source of this curious title is the debacle resulting from the practice of hazing in Parisian studios:

> In a crowded studio, while some filthy brutalities were being practiced on a trembling debutant, a tall, pale fellow sprang from his stool and (without the smallest preface or explanation) sang out, "All English and Americans to clear the shop!" Our race is brutal, but not filthy; and the summons was nobly responded to. Every Anglo-Saxon student seized his stool; in a moment the studio was full of bloody coxcombs, the French fleeing in disorder for the door, the victim liberated and amazed. (38)

If the valorisation of the writer as craftsman has been self-deprecatingly illustrated through the person of Alexander Loudon, then here is James Pinkerton routing aestheticism; the French artists are Huysmann-esque sybarites, miniature Marquises de Sade very capable of perversity but powerless when forced into manly combat. The conflict is heavy with the Anglo-Saxon sentiment against decadence so prevalent in criticisms of *fin de siècle* art. What is an interesting modifier however is the sense of shared Anglo-Saxon solidarity expressed by the American and English students, a bond that is implicitly anti-art

in that the hero of the hour is the artistically talentless Pinkerton. The battle is the validation of ingenuity and drive over artistic decadence: the triumph of the Connecticut Yankee in the salon of Baudelaire.

It is with no small sense of glee on Stevenson's part that Dodds, who "never cared a cent for anything but art, and never shall", is railroaded into a constant succession of his benefactor Pinkerton's schemes and enterprises. Dodds is wholly unable to succeed on his own terms as an artist and instead with rough equality is made to pull his weight by the constantly planning entrepreneur. Dodds find himself the host of uproarious weekend picnic outings, the artist forced into the role of showman and entertainer and finding himself more accepted and successful than he had been while labouring under the identity of "artist".

The Wrecker's maritime quest begins with what initially seems yet another of Pinkerton's many ventures: the purchase of the mysterious wreck of the *Flying Scud*, a commercial ship that has run aground on the Pacific island of Midway. Initially presuming it to be a bargain buy at auction, Pinkerton and Dodds instead find themselves in a protracted bidding war that sees them risking everything they own to secure the prize. There are shades of Stevenson's own fears that S.S. McClure would endanger his finances in Pinkerton's desire to go 'all-in' on the purchase, at *The Wrecker*'s time of publication Stevenson had admitted: "I fear the solvency of the Great McClure must be a-totter. This will leave me in a dreadful hole, for I have no idea my money will have been kept separate as he proposed; the being is too Pinkertonish for that".[20]

If the partners are to recoup their investment Dodds must become wrecker and recover what they suspect lies on the *Flying Scud*, a hidden cargo of opium. The title of *The Wrecker* refers to Dodd's new role, but it also an indication of Stevenson's own role as author: from this point onwards in the novel Stevenson is "wrecking" and deconstructing his own *Treasure Island*, his archetype for his Maritime Quest Narratives. *Treasure Island*'s venture is funded by that representative of English social hegemony Squire Trelawney, the landed

gentleman who can outfit a ship and fancy himself admiral. By the end of the nineteenth-century the endeavour will instead be funded by American venture capitalism, the partnership of commercial men and self-made money. And what of the treasure?

The treasure from which Stevenson's first novel takes its name is the doubly ill-gotten spoils of early European imperialism: stolen gold, stolen again. In *The Wrecker --Treasure Island's* American deconstruction -- we find the treasure to be a cargo of opium. The prohibition of opium in San Francisco began in 1870; therefore to pursue such a prize for financial gain after that date is to be in no doubt that one is contravening the law. There is none of the unequivocal romance of *Treasure Island*'s quest in that of Dodds the wrecker; Pinkerton and Dodds both know they will be breaking the law if he returns to the United States with a cargo of opium, therefore they hope to sell the drug in Honolulu. The moral ambivalence of such a quest does not rest solely with the legal status of opium: the drug was then -- and continues to be -- a nexus of problematic signifiers on the political, social, and artistic planes.

For British and Americans alike of Stevenson's era their concept of China was intrinsically tied up with opium. Dodds makes mention that "scarce a ship came in from any Chinese port but she carried somewhere, behind a bulkhead, or in some cunning hollow of the beams, a nest of the valuable poison."(137) Yet, as Jack Beeching has noted:

> The linkage that comes at once to mind between the word *Chinese* and the word *opium* might make one suppose that the Chinese had been drugging themselves with the stuff for thousands of years. In fact the Chinese took to opium a long while after Europeans first started drinking coffee or smoking tobacco.[21]

The proliferation of opium smoking in China was a result of British imperialism, the vice largely introduced and encouraged by the East India Company in order to create a demand for a product that they would supply. The Chinese Emperor Ch'ien Lung had formally made the statement to George III that "we [the Chinese people] possess all things. I set no value on strange objects

and ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures". [22] The British needed to find some article that the Chinese would crave to buy if they were to restore a balance of trade disrupted by having to pay in silver and gold for China's tea. Opium created that craving that would eventually lead to the Opium Wars and define British imperialism in China.

One of the ironies of *The Wrecker* is that its symbolic 'treasure', the opium believed to be secreted about the wreck of the *Flying Scud,* is not a trope for the pernicious influence of Orientalism upon the American but rather the product of Anglo-American imperialism reflected back upon itself; the same breed of venture capitalists that flooded Canton with the opiate are now staking their fortune upon an adventure to peddle the same drug in Honolulu. Jim Hawkins has grown up and become an opium smuggler, but the deconstruction of Stevenson's first maritime protagonist does not end there. As has been previously shown it is possible to read *Treasure Island* as a quest for Romance, a sea borne voyage to determine whether

> ...the old romance, retold
> Exactly in the ancient way,
> Can please, as me they pleased of old,
> The wiser youngsters of today (*Treasure Island*, Preface)

Jim Hawkins retrieves some of that metaphorical fortune, but it is not told in the "ancient way" of Kingston, Ballantyne, and Cooper, for something has changed and he ends that tale as a "wiser youngster", a useful metaphor for Stevenson the artisan who in seeking to construct his romance from an old pattern instead had to modify and alter the blueprint. With *The Wrecker* Stevenson excoriates romance from the form; but what is the role of the writer now?

Loudon Dodds has been shown as traversing the spectrum between art and craft, yet, despite his practical successes in partnership with Pinkerton, he has remained by his own admission devoted to the cause of art: "I never cared a cent for anything but art, and never shall". For the *fin de siécle* artist however the romances of Ballantyne and Cooper would have been decidedly passé; yet there

does remain an element of romance that can pique the interest of those decadent aesthetes as personified in the early chapters of *The Wrecker.* That element is opium, long perceived as a conduit to the romantic imagination.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the manifest representations of opium in European and American Romanticism, suffice to say that the mythology of opium is intrinsically and symbiotically intertwined with the work of Crabbe, De Quincey, Coleridge, Poe, Baudelaire, and Francis Thompson. The hypnagogic opium reveries as experienced by the aforementioned writers have been long-represented in popular culture as a double-edged sword, a short cut to communion with the romantic imagination at the price of not only terrible addiction but terrible insights. Opium was a symbol for a poetic state of mind, its effects could be useful when relating certain mental and emotional states in art, but could it create the poetic state in the user? Certainly many artists known and now forgotten alike took De Quincey, Coleridge et al. as their prophets of opium and sought inspiration from the drug. Their resulting predicament was immortalised by Baudelaire himself:

> He who makes use of a poison in order to think may soon not be able to think without the poison. Think of the frightful state of a man whose paralysed imagination can no longer work without the help of hashish or opium.[23]

The treasure that Dodds therefore desires, and so assiduously pursues, is a *perceived* means of communion with the artistic imagination. Possessed of only mediocre artistic talent his quest is for a means to overcome this paucity. This is the chimera Stevenson presents, the aesthete's desperate addiction to pure art. Dodds will have to travel as far as Midway -- the symbolic middle of nowhere for his maritime protagonist -- to find out that which he pursued is not worth the effort. The verdant and expansive island of Stevenson's first novel which served as such a *tabula rasa* for romance and adventure has been rewritten as inhospitable and fly-blown:

> Two low, bush-covered, rolling strips of sand, each with glittering beaches, each perhaps a mile or a mile and a half in length, running east and west,

> and divided by a narrow channel. Over these, innumerable as maggots, there hovered, chattered, screamed, and clanged, millions of twinkling sea-birds. (194)

One may recall "Broken-Stool Pinkerton's" anti-aesthetic wrecking of the Parisian salon, here now his partner Dodds has to engage in the manly labours of wrecker upon his new possession.

The wreck of the *Flying Scud* contains only a tiny quantity of opium, certainly not enough to save his jeopardised fortune, but along the way he has learned something else; that just as Stevenson who by "bowing his head" and working "grossly at technique" has been able to deconstruct his maritime archetype and rebuild it for a new purpose, so Dodds, in eschewing the sedentary and emasculated world of the aesthete, has rid himself of those associated sentiments and gained a new vitality:

> In my early days I was a man, the most wedded to his idols of my generation. I was a dweller under roofs: the gull of that which we call civilisation; a superstitious votary of the plastic arts...If things had gone smooth with me, I should now be swollen like a prize-ox in body...the dull man is made, not by the nature, but by the degree of his immersion in a single business. And all the more if that be sedentary, uneventful, and ingloriously safe...I wish I could have carried along to Midway Island with me all the writers and the prating artists of my time. Day after day of hope deferred, of heat, of unremitting toil; night after night of aching limbs, bruised hands, and a mind obscured with the grateful vacancy of physical fatigue. (220-221)

Certainly there is something of Stevenson's own wish-fulfilment at work here: one need only look to his letters from Samoa to find the mythologising of his own new identity as the chief of Vailima. The sedentary life of the convalescent he lived in Bournemouth has been self-consciously jettisoned in favour of a new role as the evangelist of physical labour. In a letter to Sidney Colvin he remarked:

> to come down covered with mud and drenched with sweat and rain after some hours in the bush, change, rub down, and take a chair in the

> verandah, is to taste a quiet conscience. And the strange thing that I remark is this: If I go and make sixpence, bossing my labourers and plying the cutlass or the spade, idiot conscience applauds me; if I sit in the house and make twenty pounds idiot conscience wails over my neglect and the day wasted. [24]

And yet it would seem Dodd's labour *has* been wasted: his is only a temporary sojourn upon Midway, there is no possibility of him making a Vailima upon the guano-blighted rock; if he is to be a Tusitala he must do so elsewhere. In 'wrecking' the *Flying Scud* Dodd has turned up only a paltry amount of opium, a fitting metaphorical reward for the mediocrity of his own artistic talents. The 'wrecking' indulged in by Stevenson -- the deconstruction of literary forms -- does not solely rest with his own Maritime Quest trope, for the treasure that Dodd finds on Midway is a story. Dodds did not find a pirate's treasure or a conduit to the Primary Imagination, and the Chinese aspect of the treasure is not opium but rather what Stevenson coined "the redeeming element of mystery" (151); a Chinese-box enigma of the kind fashioned by another famous opium-addicted artist, Wilkie Collins. Stevenson, with his facility for technical processes, has taken the trope of a novel like Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) and inverted it: instead of a mystery in which opium is both the metaphorical centre and the metafictional catalyst we find a quest in which opium is a red herring, with the true treasure the Chinese-box tale of what really happened to the *Flying Scud.*

One of the most prevalent comments made about *The Wrecker* is that it is a novel of two very distinct, some might even say opposite, halves. Certainly, Stevenson remarked upon this himself, calling the first portion a "novel of manners" and the second "a violent, dark yarn with interesting, plain turns of human nature".[25] I have made the suggestion that Stevenson consistently rewrites the Quest Narrative engendered within *Treasure Island*; what makes *The Wrecker* of such particular interest is that Stevenson rewrites that Quest Narrative twice over within the novel. The "violent, dark yarn" of *The Wrecker* is acted out by a completely different set of characters, but like Mr. Hyde to

Pinkerton and Dodds' Dr. Jekyll the principals of the adventure yarn are a darkened mirror to the heroes of the novel of manners.

The Pinkerton and Dodds of the adventure are Tommy Haddon and Norris Carthew, another partnership based upon the contrasting attributes and "a fundamental difference of taste and training accepted and condoned" (50). Carthew and Dodds have mirrored each other throughout their careers; the tension between pleasing his father and pursuing an aestheticised artistic life for which his talents are sadly inadequate eventually brings Carthew to Australia as a shilling a day remittance man, just as Dodds' artistic ambitions reduced him to begging in Paris. For both men rescue from the gutter comes through the person of a spirited entrepreneur, and both men find themselves revitalised and relieved from the enervating and emasculating world of sedentary pursuits through hard physical labour. In Carthew's case this comes from "Homeric labour in Homeric circumstance", as a railway navvy he finds himself:

> ...sick with sleeplessness and coffee; his hands softened by the wet, were cut to ribbons; yet he enjoyed a peace of mind and health of body hitherto unknown. Plenty of open air, plenty of physical exertion, a continual instancy of toil, here was what had been hitherto lacking in that misdirected life, and the true cure of vital scepticism. (326)

The maritime journey that Carthew sets out on however is one of trade, a lucrative capitalist venture among the Pacific islands which sees an abrupt change of luck when his schooner *The Currency Lass* loses its mast mid-ocean, forcing the crew to seek refuge on Midway. Here Stevenson presents us one of the intrinsic perversities of his Maritime Quest deconstructions: the shipwrecked crew find themselves upon a desert island with a considerable fortune, but like Ben Gunn before them the treasure is of no use.

The maroon's classic quandary of whether one would swap riches to ensure safe passage from one's island is presented to the party with the arrival of *The Flying Scud*, captained by the wizened former banker-cum-pawnbroker Trent. With a clear antecedent in that other Stevensonian captain who sought to betray

Alan Breck in *Kidnapped*'s (1886) 'The Siege of the Round-House', Trent demands that the group hand over their fortune in return for safe passage to San Francisco. The ensuing bloodshed is one of the most harrowing in Stevenson's *oeuvre* and is dense with foreshadowed and intertextual tropes. The initial explosion of violence occurs with horrid inevitability when Mac, one of Stevenson's many proud and volatile Celts, suddenly kills the venal Trent. The Ulsterman Mac, who had often related with some degree of pride that "I'm rather a violent man" (352), is the expected catalyst for mayhem, but what happens next is both surprising and yet deeply indicative of the tightly plotted concern for technical process we associate with Stevenson.

We might recall "Broken-Stool" Pinkerton as the Anglo-Saxon student who brandished his stool against the Parisian decadents; here he finds his double in Trent's mate Goddedaal, a blond giant of "elemental innocence" (367). Goddedaal -- the lover of Nilsson and Shakespeare -- suddenly springs to frenzied action upon the murder of his captain. "Bloody coxcombs"(38) and hurt Parisian pride are not the result here; Goddedall incapacitates Mac and smashes the skull of Hemstead:

> Goddedaal...leaped to his feet, caught up the stool on which he had been sitting, and swung it high in the air, a man transfigured, roaring (as he stood) so that men's ears were stunned with it. There was no thought of battle in the Currency Lasses; none drew his weapon; all huddled helplessly from before the face of the baresark Scandinavian. His first blow sent Mac to ground with a broken arm. His second dashed out the brains of Hemstead. He turned from one to another, menacing and trumpeting like a wounded elephant, exulting in his rage. But there was no council, no light of reason, in that ecstasy of battle; and he shied from the pursuit of victory to hail fresh blows upon the supine Hemstead, so that the stool was shattered... (374)

The way in which identity fluxes and the consequences and repercussions of it is a consistent trope in Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narratives. The "strong, sober, industrious, musical, and sentimental" Goddedaal (367) becomes, in the moment of crisis, a Viking bearsark; Jim Hawkins faced down the choice of living out his

romantic dalliances and becoming one of the pirate band; and Carthew, Dodd's Byronic doppelganger, finds his own initiation into the life of instinct in that moment of crisis. Carthew shoots and kills Goddedaal and suddenly the remittance man has crossed some great psychic boundary from which he will be unable to return. The Currency Lasses are now Silver's gang, deconstructed. Now that murder has been done the slaying of the *Flying Scud*'s crew must be carried through to its brutal conclusion. The initial impulse came from a desire to protect one's spoils from a usurious authority; the question that hovers unspoken is 'did Silver and the survivors of Flint's crew not feel the same sense of possession over their treasure?'

One might argue that in relation to the *Treasure Island* mutineers that it was 'their treasure' that was going to be taken by Trelawney; was this how the crew of the *Hispaniola* would have been murdered had Silver's plan been successful? Lorded over by a representative of the English gentry, working their passage for the possibility of regaining gold they had killed and bled for, the rudely democratised pirates onboard the *Hispaniola* are the ancestors of the Currency Lasses, recreated in *The Wrecker* to fit the pattern of "a long, tough yarn with some pictures of the manners of today in the greater world – not the shoddy, sham world of cities, clubs and colleges, but the world where men still live a man's life".[26] Venture capitalism replaces pirate articles, bankers replace the gentry, and the romance of mutiny is stripped away so that the pirates are given a voice; we are shown the terrible reality of murder at sea and the dreadful consequences of living with that upon one's conscience.

The terrible business of slaughter upon the *Flying Scud*'s crew is one of the most distasteful exercises engaged in within Stevenson's fiction. The romance of battle upon Treasure Island is here reduced to a brutal toil and labour that must be carried out to its bitter, inexorable conclusion:

> A fierce composure settled upon Wicks and Carhew...the poor devils aloft bleated aloud for mercy. But the hour of any mercy was gone by; the cup was full and must be drunken to the dregs, since so many had fallen, all

> must fall...the screaming wretches were swift to flatten themselves against the masts and yards or find a momentary refuge in the hanging sails. The fell business took long, but it was done at last. (375)

By rewriting the thwarted mutiny on the *Hispaniola* Stevenson presents with a horrific representation of the mutineer ascendant; but it is not a simple inversion of the *Treasure Island* archetype. Stevenson extends the 'doubling' conceit within *The Wrecker* further, and in so doing marks what is perhaps the most important breakthrough to that point in his Maritime Quest Narrative. Carthew is the 'double' of Dodds, both of them are older, sadder representations of Jim Hawkins, and the revolt of the Currency Lasses shows how the mutinous murders of the Maritime Quest Narrative are not dependent upon the machinations of a Long John Silver but can spring from events which in themselves are merely mundane, mendacious, and mediocre. But, perhaps most interestingly, Stevenson gives us a binocular perspective on those murders; we are able to witness Jim Hawkins as murderer, the Jim Hawkins who might have accepted Silver's invitation to join him, *and*, at the same time witness the various brutal fates that other young, loyal Jim Hawkins might have been dealt. This multiplicity of character shows us Hawkins' struggle against Israel Hands rewritten in such a manner that Carthew is Israel Hands killing the same Jim Hawkins that scrambled for safety on the mainmast. The Jim of *Treasure Island* underwent a grim rite of passage during his confrontation with Hands that saw him mimicking the speech of Billy Bones, the pirate who served as catalyst for Hawkins' fluidity of identity: "One more step, Mr. Hands," said I, "and I'll blow your brains out! Dead men don't bite, you know," I added, with a chuckle. (165)

Hawkins killed Hands from the mainmast, but with Carthew assuming the role of the pirate there will be no room for the heroic manoeuvres so inherent within the Romance genre:

> Hardy the Londoner was shot on the fore-royal yard, and hung horribly suspended in the brails. Wallen, the other, had his jaw broken on the

> maintop-gallant cross-trees, and exposed himself, shrieking till a second shot dropped him on the deck. (375)

The most disturbing aspect of Stevenson's multi-viewed set-piece however occurs with the murder of the *Flying Scud*'s young crewman Brown. The saddest and most obvious refiguring of that Jim Hawkins who was cabin-boy of the *Hispaniola*, Brown is the worst-case scenario retelling of Hawkins' quest. Hawkins had been offered the opportunity to join with Silver, what if that been -- as suspected -- a mere ploy to lure the cabin-boy to his death? Stevenson shows us the mutiny carried out to its bitter end on the *Hispaniola* through the fate of Brown:

> Tommy, with a sudden clamour of weeping, begged for his life. "One man can't hurt us," he sobbed. "We can't go on with this. I spoke to him at dinner. He's an awful decent little cad. It can't be done. Nobody can go into that place and murder him. It's too damned wicked." (375)

Here is the reality of Billy Bone's axiom "dead men don't bite" and that truth is self-evident to the Currency Lasses: "One left and we all hang," said Wicks "Brown must go the same road."(375)

The inexorable forward movement towards Brown's murder is redolent of *Treasure Island*'s Captain Smollett of the *Hispaniola* offering Abraham Gray the opportunity to redeem himself and leave the band of mutineers. The appeal is couched in the language of maritime hierarchy and charges Gray with the responsibility not to inconvenience "gentlemen":

> "It's to you, Abraham Gray – it's to you I am speaking"...

> "Gray," resumed Mr Smollett, a little louder, "I am leaving this ship and I order you to follow your captain. I know you are a good man at bottom, and I daresay not one of the lot of you's as bad as he makes out. I have my watch here in my hand; I give you thirty seconds to join me in."
> There was a pause
> "Come my fine fellow," continued the captain, "don't hang so long in stays, "I'm risking my life, and the lives of these good gentlemen, every second".(102-103)

Chapter 6: "Anither Course I Now Begin"

Gray's response to the call of duty sees the "good man" return to his socially sanctioned role like a dog to heel:

> There was a sudden scuffle, a sound of blows, and out burst Abraham Gray with a knife-cut on the side of his cheek, and came running to the captain, like a dog to the whistle.
> "I'm with you, sir" said he. (103)

Stevenson's tropes of fluvial identity in conjunction with the clichés of the masculine adventure narrative have here allowed Gray the possibility of redemption. What is of particular note however is Smollett's statement that "I daresay not one of the lot of you's as bad as he makes out", for this would seem to be intrinsic to Stevenson's inversion of the *Hispaniola* mutiny through the murders on the *Flying Scud.* None of the Currency Lasses, even Mac the "violent man", is possessed of a villainous malignity, yet all are guilty of dreadful acts. The climax occurs with the murder of Brown and in it we can see the tightly entwined references to the cabin boy Hawkins and the dutiful sailor Gray:

> "Brown!" cried Carthew, "Brown, where are you?"
> ...
> "Here, sir," answered a shaking voice; and the poor invisible caitiff called on him by name, and poured forth out of the darkness an endless, garrulous appeal for mercy. A sense of danger, of daring, had alone nerved Carthew to enter the forecastle; and here was the enemy crying and pleading like a frightened child. His obsequious "Here, sir," his horrid fluency of obtestation, made the murder tenfold more revolting. (376)

It is this scene that provides the central metaphor for Stevenson as deconstructionist. The older Stevenson is 'killing' his younger self; *Treasure Island,* the novel which secured his fame; and the very Romance genre to which it belongs. He is 'killing' them, yet at the same time showing us the psychological turmoil associated with that very process of literary and metafictional deconstruction. It is a bravely autobiographical activity and puts paid to the charge often levelled against *The Wrecker* of it being a failed

experiment lacking in artistic unity. Stevenson has instead given us a bifurcated exploration of the Maritime Quest's protagonist that sees the doubled hero in each version travel to the middle of nowhere, jettisoning the ballast of Romance along the way. He has 'wrecked' his own *Treasure Island* in order to explore the interactions of temperament and sensibility and to question the moral ramifications of human actions, but in doing so has suffered the sense of guilt of one who has killed Jim Hawkins. The result is a tremendous sense of loss, and the ambiguities of how an artist should progress after 'wrecking' his own art are implicit in Dodds fate; the Maritime Quest protagonist cannot fully return from whence he came, nor can he make a life upon Midway, that symbol of an absolute remove from his previous existence. Instead Dodds' fate is to be an eternal wanderer, a maritime traveller surrounded by *objets d'art*: those traces of European culture which he can never jettison from his own artistic makeup. His is an ambivalent fate and it is with a certain amount of metafictional candour that Stevenson allows us an evaluation of both Loudon Dodds' and *The Wrecker*'s success:

> "well, then," suggested some one, "did you ever smuggle opium?"
> "Yes, I did," said Loudon...
> "And perhaps you bought a wreck?" asked another.
> "Yes, sir," said Loudon.
> "How did that pan out?" pursued the questioner.
> "*Well, mine was a peculiar kind of wreck*," replied Loudon. *"I don't know, on the whole, that I can recommend that branch of industry*."(emphasis added, 12)

Certainly Stevenson never pursued another novel in the style of *The Wrecker*, yet his exploration of the Maritime Quest Narrative did not end there. Having deconstructed his own romance the question that is implicit at the end of *The Wrecker* is 'where can one go from here'? *The Ebb-Tide* may be read as Stevenson's attempt to answer that question.

Described by such critics as Alan Sandison as Stevenson's most "serious" work[27], *The Ebb-Tide* is also among Stevenson's most critical representations of

colonialism in the South Pacific, inverting many of the conventions and tropes of Western representations of the 'South Seas' to allow us a picture of Polynesia as almost wholly corrupted by white influence. Possessed of a grimly ironic maturity the novella begins with what must be one of Stevenson's most striking opening gambits:

> THROUGHOUT the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease.[28]

Dense with meaning, this single sentence is perhaps the most intense possible distillation of Stevenson's Pacific colonial discourse. Stevenson simultaneously calls to mind a plethora of Pacific tropes and themes: the scattered, fragmentary nature of Western imperialism in the South Seas as a colonisation by individuals rather than administrations[29]; the dichotomy between the perceived indolence of the Polynesian peoples and the supposed means of their salvation (conversion to that most Victorian of gods 'Activity', a Janus-like figure that encompasses both the Christianity of the missionary and the Mammon of the trader); not to mention the European's most consistent gift to the Pacific, disease. It is with this grim indictment that Stevenson lays bare the myth of the Dying Polynesia, for the idealised South Seas of Loti or Melville's Fayaway was not some pagan Eden waning in the face of The Protestant work ethic, but rather a universe of islands infected by the same contagions that had prompted the Contagious Diseases Acts of the eighteen-sixties.[30] Indeed, for a British readership wholly cognisant of the moral and social ramifications of those Acts, Stevenson's words would have been an unsettling report of the 'gifts' bestowed by the men on the fringes of the Empire. That these words should have been written by a man over whom the suspicion of tuberculosis hung added what must have been a deliberate caustic irony to Stevenson's writing.

As the novella begins the island of Tahiti is gripped by a raging influenza epidemic, but it might just has well have been smallpox, tuberculosis or syphilis,

and the disease has turned back upon those westerners who have disseminated it. The high-minded ideologues of Europe's "civilising' mission in the South Seas have failed to prove the superiority of western, Christian culture and ironically it is not Polynesia that is ultimately threatened with extinction, but the beachcomber lifestyle of Stevenson's protagonists Herrick, Davies, and Huish.

It is notable at this stage that *The Ebb-Tide* can be read as sounding a death knell on two separate levels, marking as it does both the end of the beachcomber lifestyle and the demise of the beachcomber narrative that was such a fixture of European literary representations of the South Pacific. Stevenson had previously deconstructed his Maritime Quest Narrative in *The Wrecker,* now by layering meaning Stevenson is simultaneously documenting the final moments of a way of life in the Pacific and engendering a novella that pronounces its own self-extinction. It is tempting to think that it was the engineering genius of his lighthouse-building forefathers that informed the tight plotting of Stevenson's art, for it is with a certain sense of completion that he takes us back to one of the definitive environments of the South Seas tale: the Calaboose on Tahiti, Queen Pomare's one-time prison that had held Herman Melville as inmate. It is here that Stevenson introduces his protagonists, who between them evidence a surfeit of inadequacies.

At this stage Stevenson, by introducing us to three very different men in the persons of Herrick, Davies and Huish, offers us what can seem a subverted democratisation of the utopian dream: Tahiti can be the rock bottom for men from very different social strata. But there is a deeper intertextuality at work here; Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* had been a childhood favorite of Stevenson, indeed Stevenson had inscribed a verse dedication to the author within *Treasure Island*, and through the protagonists of *The Ebb-Tide* we find a deconstruction of Ballantyne's novel.

As in *The Ebb-Tide, The Coral Island* makes use of three protagonists. Rod Edmond has pointed to the authority structure on Coral Island as closely linked to the social background of the boys: Peterkin Gay, the youngest, is the japing,

chirpy cockney, Ralph Rover the serious-minded scion to a long line of sea captains, while the natural leader Jack Martin serves as the representative of the English ruling class.[31] One feels that Ballantyne's choice of the Pacific as the setting for his book had been motivated less by any affinity for the region than by a certain practical happenstance in trying to find a *tabula rasa* for adventure to take place, and as such the South Pacific is once again the site of Western projection. In *The Ebb-Tide* Stevenson deconstructs Ballantyne's fantasy; the open possibilities of the South Seas have been shut down by the incursion of Western authority and the Oxfordian Herrick, Davies the "master mariner in some disgrace", and the "wholly vile"(127) cockney clerk Huish -- older, seedier simulacrums of Ballantyne's heroes all -- are dismal failures, unable even to prosper in an environment famed for bounty without toil. Their plight is a damning inversion of the breezy racial supremacy advanced by Ballantyne's boy heroes:

> "We've got an island all to ourselves. We'll take possession in the name of the King; we'll go and enter the service of its black inhabitants. Of course we'll rise, naturally, to the top of affairs. White men always do in savage countries."[32]

The silent question of 'how can one have an island to one's self if there are already native inhabitants?' is a fundamental one in postcolonial discourse and one that did not escape Stevenson as it did Ballantyne. Certainly, *The Ebb-Tide*'s trio of "white men" in a "savage country" are an overt refutation of the pseudo-scientific doctrines of racial superiority alluded to in Ballantyne's novel; the grim truth of Jim Hawkins' most declined descendant -- *The Ebb-Tide's* Robert Herrick -- is that his life has been one of constant descent, absent of even the successes of Dodds and Carthew.

Here again Stevenson layers intertextual reference upon reference: The choice of the name Robert Herrick of course refers to the seventeenth-century poet and author of *Hesperides.* The name is a telling one and Stevenson's Herrick might be read as the final incarnation of the aesthetic type explored in *The Wrecker;* evidencing all the characteristics of an effete poet *sans* actual literary ability,

educated at Oxford, he carries a tattered copy of *The Aeneid* and seems to have a profound ineptitude for prolonged and concerted labour. Byron's Fletcher Christian "in hell"[33] is a notable example of the Romantic hero circumnavigated to the South Pacific, but at least Christian had a genuine reason for his mental turmoil, whereas Herrick evidences an overwhelming and generic Romantic malaise that is both psychically crippling and disconcertingly vague in causation. The recipient of a private education and an Oxford scholarship, Herrick was "deficient in consistency and intellectual manhood", a drifter from country to country bearing the mark of a "character of one thoroughly incompetent", a "Skulker from life's battle and his own immediate duty." (125-126) In Byron's age such a character might have been a young Manfred or Endymion but by the *fin de siècle* Victorian science had provided other diagnoses for Herrick's mental state.

Willam Acton, that paragon of Victorian medicine and one of the proponents of the Contagious Diseases Acts offered up this description of certain young men, observed in an asylum for the insane, afflicted with what he believed to be aberrant sexual drives:

> Engaged in no social diversion, the patients of this group live alone in the midst of many. In their exercise they choose the quietest and most unfrequented parts of the airing-grounds. They join in no social conversation, nor enter with others into any amusement. They walk alone or they sit alone. If engaged in reading they talk not to others of what they may have read; their desire apparently is, in the midst of numbers, to be in solitude. [34]

Certainly there is something "wrong" with Herrick, and Stevenson tantalises us with scraps of clues as to Herrick's pathologies during the curious impromptu 'tale-telling' sequence. In a subversion of Stevenson's own Samoan identity as Tusitala, or storyteller, Herrick proceeds upon an improvised story that is redolent of a *New Arabian Nights* (1882) as told by the talentless. Herrick takes a magic carpet ride to London where his brief foray into the phantasmagoric runs down abruptly when confronted by the reality he has run away from:

> Then I spotted for a hansom with a spanking horse. "A shilling for yourself, if you're there in twenty minutes!" said I to the jarvey. He went a good pace, though of course it was a trifle to the carpet; and in nineteen minutes and a half I was at the door.'
> 'What door?' asked the captain.
> 'Oh, a house I know of,' returned Herrick.
> 'Bet it was a public-house!' cried the clerk – only these were not his words.
> 'And w'y didn't you take the carpet there instead of trundling in a growler?'
> 'I didn't want to startle a quiet street,' said the narrator.
> 'Bad form. And besides, it was a hansom.'
> 'Well, and what did you do next?' inquired the captain.
> 'Oh, I went in,' said Herrick.
> 'The old folks?' asked the captain.
> 'That's about it,' said the other, chewing a grass. (131-132)

Just when we might have learned what it was Herrick was running from the story ends and we are no closer to unraveling the enigma.

Having followed Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narrative from *Treasure Island* to *The Wrecker* to *The Ebb-Tide* we find that he has been engaged in a process of excoriating Romance from the form, each text's protagonist becoming more and more dysfunctional and his plight incrementally existential. In *Treasure Island* Jim Hawkins finds his own independence upon Skeleton Island, in *The Wrecker* both Dodds and his doppelganger Carthew learn that they cannot go it alone and must depend upon their partners Pinkerton and Hadden to compensate for their defects and paucities. In *The Ebb-Tide* salvation is proffered only to disappoint. When destiny knocks at the door in the form of a commission for Davies, Fate seems to be smiling on the three protagonists. Herrick, Davies and Huish are locked into a symbiosis on which the success of their voyage is reliant, yet the germ of mutual self-destruction is there within their relationship. Like their deceased predecessors, the ironically named Wiseman and Wishart, *The Ebb-Tide* trio embark on a voyage that is both morally and geographically adrift. Drunkenness and dissipation are followed by the empty revelation that their cargo is mainly water. In *The Wrecker* another gamble was made in the face of ruin and, like Dodd's futile race for the hidden opium in the *Flying Scud,* our trio also find their dreams of avarice dissolving like a mirage.

Chapter 6: "Anither Course I Now Begin"

The drifting ship as a trope of Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narrative was established with the *Hispaniola* of *Treasure Island,* but unlike Jim Hawkins the three white officers of the *Farallone* are unable to plot a true course through the moral sea of their lives. In the face of this symbiotic descent into oblivion the only positive influence upon Herrick is the *Farallone*'s Polynesian crew, and here Stevenson provides both an evolution within the Maritime Quest Narrative and the novella's sole instance of genuine benign kinship. One might remember that *The Wrecker*'s Loudon Dodds had been left a solitary wanderer upon the seas surrounded by the detritus of Western culture; with *The Ebb-Tide* we find that solitude alleviated; the native crew of the *Farallone* are steadfast in their duties, and through their good-natured fellowship Herrick finds some capacity to redeem himself. Once again Stevenson inverts racialist assumptions of the superiority of the white man; indeed it is the Kanaka's Burden that Uncle Ned -- the victim of "exile, suffering, and injustice among cruel whites" (167) -- and Sally Day, child of cannibals, should bring catharsis to the psychically wounded Herrick.

It is significant that only through communication and fellowship with the natives can the white man find any hope for the future, echoing as it does the more positive view of hybridity and compromise put forward in 'The Beach of Falesá'. What is also significant is that Stevenson evidences a certain reconciliation with the Calvinism of his forebears by showing us the disparate peoples of the Pacific united through the work of missionaries and displaying a Christian example sorely missing from the novella's protagonists:

> They were kindly, cheery, childish souls. Upon the Sunday each brought forth his separate Bible -- for they were all men of alien speech even to each other, and Sally Day communicated with his mates in English only, each read or made believe to read his chapter, Uncle Ned with spectacles on his nose; and they would all join together in the singing of missionary hymns. It was thus a cutting reproof to compare the islanders and the whites aboard the Farallone. Shame ran in Herrick's blood to remember what employment he was on, and to see these poor souls -- and even Sally

> Day, the child of cannibals, in all likelihood a cannibal himself -- so faithful to what they knew of good. (168)

That Stevenson should set up another such a dichotomy is almost clue enough of an upcoming abrupt reversal of symbolism, for on the horizon is both an island and another portrayal of the missionary in the Pacific.

Attwater's Pearl island Zacynthos promises hope for the trio, but from the outset seems to foil any attempt on Herrick's part to negotiate an understanding:

> He tortured himself to find analogies. The isle was like the rim of a great vessel sunken in the waters; it was like the embankment of an annular railway grown upon with wood: so slender it seemed amidst the outrageous breakers, so frail and pretty, he would scarce have wondered to see it sink and disappear without a sound, and the waves close smoothly over its descent. (168)

The beach is the classic interstice for the meeting of cultures in the Pacific, but here the physical narrowness of this particular environment mirrors the psychological dominance of the island's master and leaves little room for manoeuvre. The moment of first contact is a key one in South Seas narratives but ironically Stevenson presents us not with a Polynesian Tembinok[35] but a self-appointed English tyrant who will forever change the dynamic of the relationship between Herrick, Davies, and Huish.

At this point one might ask why Stevenson chose an Englishman as Zacynthos'dictator? This choice is indeed a significant one when tracing the development of Stevenson's Maritime Quest Narrative. One recalls the metafictional quandary faced in *The Wrecker*: where can the artist go having deconstructed his own Quest? Having traveled to the Midway of his art the artist-as-wrecker must find a landfall, and Herrick's landfall is a Pacific island that with its twin-signifiers of church and flagpole also doubles, to some degree, as that other island of his birth. By torturing himself with analogies to wooded railway embankments Herrick is also proclaiming his psychological and cultural indebtedness to Great Britain, an island where one might suggest his free movement was restricted on the social and emotional planes.

By making the ruler of Zacynthos English, Stevenson is presenting his Maritime Quest protagonist with a multiplicity of codified authorities conflated into one single entity. A giant of a man clad in white-drill and armed with a Winchester rifle, Attwater is the squire Trelawney and the magistrate Lively; the morbidly Calvinist father and the devil Deacon Brodie; the demagogue Silver; and the island's Prospero, a magician who transforms his subjects into diving-suited Calibans to fish the pearls that lie full-fathom five in the island's lagoon. That this last task is accomplished not by magic but through the ingenuities of British engineering allows another oblique suggestion that the isle might well be equated with Britain. Attwater immediately sees through the trio's pretenses -- "they had no plan, no story prepared" (191) -- and severs their symbiotic reliance with a few immediate observations. Cambridge to Herrick's Oxford, his immediate offer of a lifeline to Herrick is based on shared social and educational experience and is an immediate temptation; but temptations run both ways and perhaps Attwater recognizes something else in Herrick, something that makes him insist Herrick meet him on the island alone.

Linda Dowling has stated that by the 1890s Oxbridge Hellenism had become sneeringly derided in many quarters as synonymous with homosexuality.[36] By naming Atwater's isle "Zacynthos" one might identify on Stevenson's part a clear intention to not merely add another classical allusion to the social and educational ties that bind Herrick and Attwater, but to place them within the milieu of Oxbridge Hellenism, with all the insinuations and suspicions that accompanied such a position at the time.

Suddenly a possible cause of the ennui that drove Herrick to the far side of the globe begins to become clearer. Herrick, who could have found "women enough who would have supported a far worse and a far uglier man" (126), wrote to his deserted sweetheart what now appears a tortured admission of a sexuality in turmoil:

> I am quite broken down and disgraced. I pass under a false name; you will have to tell my father that with all your kindness it is my own fault. I know,

> had I chosen, that I might have done well; *and yet I swear to you I tried to choose. I could not bear that you should think I did not try.* (emphasis added, 140)

Such a desperate flight found its real parallel at Oxford. J.A. Symonds, who found a namesake in Attwater's absent partner,[37] recorded this account of a youth 'misled into paederasty":

> He went up from us [Clifton College] to Balliol, and before he had been long at Oxford he declared himself a paederast, and went so far as to publish an "*Apologia peri paederastias*"-- which contained a defense of the habit...I do not think that he for a moment contemplated any such cohabitations as the Greeks permitted themselves under certain conditions – it was all up in the clouds as the love of the beautiful. This youth was sent down from Balliol, and sent on a voyage around the world, such as one sends an invalid round the world to get rid of a disease. This boy was "hurt".[38]

Herrick too is "hurt", and Attwater plays upon that in a seduction scene that is heavy with tension. Delivering one of his emblematic speeches on the theme of rule and consent, Attwater chillingly extols his own role as "a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge" (204) before pivoting smoothly and bringing his silken menace to bear in a proposition that conflates his dictatorship with sexual domination and submission.

> "Don't think me a philanthropist. I dislike men, and hate women...Here was one I liked though," and he set his foot upon a mound. "He was a fine savage fellow; he had a dark soul; yes, I liked this one. I am fanciful," he added, looking hard at Herrick, "and I take fads. I like you."(205)

Attwater's hard look is both an invitation and a threat; it is very possible "the fine savage fellow" died at Attwater's hands, will Herrick now submit to his fancy? This is not a kinship or bonding strategy, but rather the symbolic 'masculine coloniser/ feminine colonised' dichotomy played out in a homosexual variation. Here is the moment of crisis where Herrick is faced with the reality that Symonds called "such cohabitations as the Greeks permitted themselves under certain conditions", and his stalling is redolent of both angst-ridden Romantic hero and coerced virgin:

> Herrick turned swiftly and looked far away to where the clouds were beginning to troop together and amass themselves round the obsequies of day. 'No one can like me,' he said.
>
> 'You are wrong there,' said the other, 'as a man usually is about himself. You are attractive, very attractive.' (205).

The spell is broken when Herrick declines to capitulate, and the satanic seducer suddenly reverts to upper-class imperiousness ("the dark apostle had disappeared: and in his place there stood an easy, sneering gentleman, who took off his hat and bowed") (207), but the seeds have been sown in Herrick's mind. Attwater has seen through both the trio's clumsy machinations and Herrick's vulnerable, disguised sexuality: "He knows all, he sees through all; we only make him laugh with our pretences--he looks at us and laughs like God!" (222)

By presenting Herrick with the choice of siding with Attwater or complicity in his murder Stevenson also allows us a symbolic playing out of a dilemma faced by the gentleman beachcomber when faced with the sudden re-imposition of the English class-system. When confronted by colonial authority the upper-class mutineers of the Bounty enjoyed a clemency that was not extended to their lower-class shipmates. Herrick also has the option to 'return' to his privileged position, albeit under the sexual and personal domination of Attwater, or to maintain a role in the semi-democratized society of the beachcomber.

It is however Huish who has most to lose in the plot, for he is worthless to Attwater and doubly despicable. The five foot one Huish with his "frail bones... scarce more considerable than a fowl's"(232) is both the devolved British proletarian male and the emaciated proto-Bolshevik peasant at the gates. *Treasure Island*'s Blind Pew had once said of Jim Hawkins "I wish I had put his eyes out!" (*Treasure Island,* 30); now we find his translated simulacrum Huish delighting in the prospect of blinding and maiming the upper-class Attwater, and it is notable that Huish's "wholly vile"(127) nature is not a consequence of his experiences in the South Seas; rather he is the homegrown savage. Those two great identifiers of native savagery in the traditional imperial adventure narrative

-- native language as nonsensical gibberish and cruel violence -- are subverted by Stevenson, and instead of locating them within the tale's Polynesian characters we instead find them in the vitriol-throwing "Whitechapel carrion" (224), Huish:

> "Hikey, pikey, crikey, fikey, chillinga-wallaba dory"(199)
> This'll burn to the bone...one drop upon his bloomin' heyesight and I'll trouble you for Attwater". (237)

In Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*-sequel *The Gorilla Hunters* (1861) Peterkin Gay had grown to be a violent aggressor on foreign soils "fighting with the Caffirs and the Chinamen...[and] punishing the rascally sepoys in India".[39] Now in *The Ebb-Tide* his Stevensonian alter-ego has the opportunity to turn his combative powers back upon the symbolic representative of a class-ridden hegemony that sends the British proletariat to war on the fringes of Empire. The younger Peterkin Gay had refused to leave the Coral Island "until I see these fellows burn their gods!"[40], Now Huish has his chance to burn Zacynthos' self-appointed deity with a bottle of sulphuric acid and the stage is set. God may be all-seeing but Attwater, despite his almost preternatural abilities, is not. His perverted morality fable of "the obsequious and the sullen"(217-219) had shown this, but this Urizen of the tropics is secure in his own righteousness. There will be no violent liberation movement in this colonial society, not yet. Attwater may not possess an all-seeing eye but his bullets never miss, and in this we can see a useful metaphor for imperialism being better equipped to dispense punishment than justice.

With Huish dead and Davies reduced to a babbling penitent, Attwater's island dominion is secured. Perhaps in the island's new hierarchical dynamic we can identify the preferred ideal of the Victorian ruling class; the devolved proletariat is quashed, the middle-class is tolerated as long as they are strait-jacketed by religion, and the upper-classes? Well, different rules apply. One suspects that Herrick, this final evolution of Jim Hawkins, will occupy a favoured place on the

island; and as the only means of exit rests with Attwater's own ship it is likely that his Maritime Quest will end here. The choice that Attwater put to Herrick has been made for him and it is perhaps the blackest humour on Stevenson's part that Herrick who would have "preferred starvation" to being reliant upon those "women enough who would have supported a far worse and a far uglier man"(126) should be left to the attentions of the island's mad ruler.

For Stevenson the future of white men in the South Seas rests with compromise and hybridisation with the native population. Left to their own devices the intrinsic capacity for degeneration within the European leads to his downfall, therefore only through union with the native can the European prosper. Davies, Herrick, and Huish all evidence the germ of European decline, and whereas the germ is arrested in the person of Attwater, his is a sterile prosperity. Attwater's success is as a terrible singularity: society is destroyed or subsumed within his presence and he will bequeath no descendants to continue his rule. Like Shelley's Rameses the Great, Attwater's temporal dominion will die out with him -- indeed most of his subjects already have -- and "Look on my works ye mighty and despair"[41] might well be a fitting epitaph should some future mariners come across this deserted fragment of an England lost in the coral of the South Seas.

What does this say of Stevenson's final evolution of the Maritime Quest Narrative? Certainly each of the three texts (*Treasure Island, The Wrecker,* and *The Ebb-Tide*) evidence mutiny against authority and erstwhile authority figures, and the moral predicament faced by the protagonist in how to align himself with regards to those mutinies. The set-piece attack on the stockade is one of Stevenson's most memorable portrayals of violent action and thus it is of little surprise that both *The Wrecker* and *The Ebb-Tide* should rework this confrontation in their own problematised violent tableaux. A key aspect in each text is the sense of committal in flux: Jim Hawkins is able to move back and forward between the inside/outside of the defender/pirate and English class-system/revolutionary mutineer binaries. Jim is able to 'play' at different identities

as his (adult) role in society has not yet become fixed. This freedom is a strength within the context of that text, and it is also by the fluid identity and sudden about-turn changes evidenced by Long John Silver, whose acuity and eye for the main chance see him flowing through a number of roles and positions and ultimately leads to his successful escape with a quantity of the gold. Stevenson, having dallied with various career choices, also had the early flush of authorial excitement about him when he wrote *Treasure Island.* Like Silver he earned a substantial sum of money from his endeavours, yet he could not keep to Jim Hawkins' promise to never again visit those "accursed" islands.

Treasure Island's Jim Hawkins has the clear horizon of youthful opportunity in front of him, but with *The Wrecker* and the *Ebb-Tide* we find older protagonists and characters whose youthful lack of fixity might now be regarded as (at best) questionable, if not a flaw of character. Both Dodds and his doppelganger Carthew are dilettante would-be artists whose ambitions are portrayed as unrealistic indulgences. The adventure longed for by Jim Hawkins is replaced in Dodds and Carthew's cases by a succession of failed artistic enterprises, with the implicit comment that their 'artistic' temperaments are the root cause of their own failures. Both find greater material success when they commit to a routine of pragmatic applied labour. The dichotomy between 'manly pursuits' and the rarefied life of the aesthete is spelled out by Stevenson's description of the novel as: "a long, tough yarn with some pictures of the manners of today in the greater world – not the shoddy, sham world of cities, clubs and colleges, but the world where men still live a man's life."[42]

In these words one might detect a certain degree of wish-fulfilment, married to a desire to justify his life's work to the invisible lighthouse-builders of his own conscience. However, by eschewing aestheticism in favour of craft, Stevenson runs up against the charge of a selfish money-grubbing impulse that both runs contrary to yet also complements aspects of the Protestant work ethic so familiar to his Calvinist forefathers. Certainly, the ingenuity and sudden changes of Silver find a certain benign parallel within Dodds' partner Pinkerton and his

versatility and go-getting ambition, but Carthew is not fortunate enough to have such a companion on the *Flying Scud* and the whole crew descend into the barbarities of an Israel Hands. The choice faced by Jim Hawkins to join with the pirates or remain with the defenders of the stockade is played out in a much more ambivalent fashion and the grimly violent murder of the other ship's crew raises the question: 'was this how a mutiny on the *Hispaniola* would have played out?' What one might justifiably say here is that Stevenson has moved far beyond his bluff remarks about "tough yarn[s]" and "a man's life" and has dismantled from the inside his earliest success in order to question the validity of his own art.

Robert Herrick of *The Ebb-Tide* is the final evolution of the Stevensonian declined-dilettante; a "skulker" from life's battles, his membership of the egalitarian familial group of the beachcomber places him as simultaneously within the fellowship of the Bounty's mutineers and Long John Silver's pirate band. It is however, a pirate band in which the charismatic figure of Silver is entirely absent. The British class system would suggest that Herrick's privileged background would justify and necessitate his 'right' to command his group, but this is not the case for the hollow and troubled Herrick. By this time Stevenson's own Maritime Quest had ended with his settling on Samoa; and in the brief yet satisfying communion between Herrick and the Polynesian crew of the *Farallone* one might understand the release Stevenson sought from the stresses of his life and his art. Stevenson's final days were resolutely *not* given over to the colonial excesses and abuses of an Attwater, rather he found in the Samoans something of that same peace that Herrick knew briefly amongst kanakas, and while his life was cut short it is somehow fitting that his epitaph provides a positive closure to his own Maritime Quest:

"Here he lies where he long'd to be; Home is the sailor, home from sea".[43]

Chapter 6: "Anither Course I Now Begin"

1 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'To the Commissioners of Northern Lights, with a Paper', *Collected Poems* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1950) p.101-10

2 Robert Louis Stevenson, cited from Robert Kiely *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.72

3 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, Neil Rennie (ed.), op.cit. p.2

4 Robert Kiely op cit. P.68

5 R.L. Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (London, Victoria and Auckland: Penguin, 1994) p.1 All further references are to this edition and will be indicated parenthetically within the text.

6 R.L. Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance', op.cit. p.1997

7 R.L. Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesa', op.cit., p.55

> It's easy to find out what Kanakas think. Just go back to yourself any way round from ten to fifteen years old, and there's an average Kanaka. There are some pious, just as there are pious boys; and the most of them, like the boys again, are middling honest and yet think it rather larks to steal, and are easy scared and rather like to be so. I remember a boy I was at school with at home who played the Case business. He didn't know anything, that boy; he couldn't do anything; he had no luminous paint and no Tyrolean harps; he just boldly said he was a sorcerer, and frightened us out of our boots, and we loved it.

8 James Stuart Olson and Robert Shadle, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire, Volume 2*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996) p.889

9 Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*, (London: Granta Books, 1994). pp.287-288

10 J. Marx. *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean* (Malabar, Florida: Kriger Publishing Company, 1992) p.211

11 R.L. Stevenson, *Works*, XXV, op cit. p. 317

12 See E.M. Eigner *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966) p.123

13 Ibid. P.176

14 R.L. Stevenson, *The Wrecker* (London: Heinemann Ltd. 1928) p.10. All subsequent references are to this edition and are indicated parenthetically within the text.

15 J.R. Hammond *A Robert Louis Stevenson Companion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.)

p.169

16 R.L. Stevenson, *Across the Plains,* (BiblioLife, 2008) P.58

17 Vanessa Smith , *Literary Culture and the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.151

18 R.L. Stevenson, Letter to A. Trevor Haddon, 5 July 1883, *Letters,* op.cit., Vol.4, pp.40-44

19 See Stevenson's letters to Charles Baxter, 17th February, and William Dean Howells, 8th July 1893. *Letters.* Ibid. Vol.8, p.29, pp129-130

20 Letter to Charles Baxter, 30th March1892, *Letters,* Ibid. Vol.7 p.149

21 Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (London, Melbourne, Sydney: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd. 1975) p.23

22 Ibid. p.17

23 Charles Baudelaire, cited from Alethea Hayter *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) p. 161

24 Letter to Sidney Colvin, November 1890, *Letters*, op.cit. Vol.7, p.258

25 Letter to Sydney Colvin, 25th December 1891, *Letters, Ibid.* Vol.7 p.277

26 Ibid.

27 Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1996) p.210

28 Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Ebb-Tide*, in *South Sea Tales,* op.cit. All further references are to this edition and indicated parenthetically within the text.

29 cf. Seeley's statement that Britain "conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." Sir John Robert Seeley, op.cit. p.8

30 Contagious Diseases Act 1864 [27 & 28. Victoria c.85]; Contagious Diseases Act 1866 [29 & 230. Victoria c.34 & 35]; Contagious Diseases Act 1869 [32 & 33. Victoria c.96]. For recent research on the impact of the Contagious Diseases Acts on Victorian society and the wider late Victorian empire see Phillipa Levine, *Prostitution, race, and politics: policing venereal disease in the British Empire* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003)

31 Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, op.cit., p.150

32 R.M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* (London: Puffin, 1994) p.16

33 Lord Byron, 'The Island' in *The Works of Lord Byron*, vol. 5, Ernest Hartley Coleridge (ed.) (London: Murray, 1904)p.594

34 Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1966) p.20

35 Tembinok or Tem Binoka (reigned 1878 – 1891) was the ruler of Abemama, Aranuka and Kuria, in the Gilbert Islands. He granted Stevenson the right to live temporarily on Abemama, on the condition that Stevenson did not give or sell liquor or money to his subjects. Stevenson immortalised Tembinok in his *In The South Seas*, op.cit.

36 Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994)

37 John Addington Symonds, poet, essayist, literary critic, and friend of Stevenson, was one of the late Victorian-era's most vocal proponents of male-male sexual love. His *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883) is one of the first essays in defense of homosexuality in the English language.

38 Cited from Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, op cit. P.114

39 R.M. Ballantyne, *The Gorilla Hunters*, (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008) p.12

40 R.M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island,* op.cit. p. 293

41 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias'(1818), in Duncan Wu. (ed.) *Romanticism: An Anthology*, (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994) p. 849

42 R.L. Stevenson, letter to Sydney Colvin, October 1891, *Letters*, op.cit. Vol. 7. p.181

43 R.L. Stevenson 'Requiem', *Collected Poems (*London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1950) p.130

Conclusion.

In my introduction to this thesis I drew attention to the competing readings that have made of Stevenson something of a literary 'Jekyll and Hyde'; interpretations that have led to the perceived existence of different 'Stevensons' associated with separate spheres of writing, each with their own distinct critical reputations. My intention throughout has been to engage with Stevenson's work in an holistic sense, and in so doing chart the thematic unity of his work, and how his writing can be contextualised as both a product of and a comment upon the late Victorian British Empire.

I chose to begin my attempt to reintegrate and reconcile the various 'Stevensons' by examining the most popular of his historical romances, *Kidnapped* (1886). Recent criticism of Stevenson's Scottish writing has cast him as a backwards-looking nostalgic, unwilling or unable to engage with the social and political realities facing his contemporary Scotland and instead dwelling upon a period of Scottish history that he was able to contain and romanticise within the web of his fiction. Such a reading makes of Stevenson an antiquarian and an apologist, cherry-picking the aspects of Scottish history and identity that interest him, and deferring comment upon the Scotland of his own era. My exploration of his Scottish writing refutes that. Stevenson's Scottish fiction does not exist as a separate preserve, a kailyard of sentimentalism, divorced from his concerns regarding contemporary British and imperial identity. I have demonstrated that Stevenson's choice of eighteenth-century Scotland as a setting for his fiction was not a retreat into the past, but rather an attempt to engage with the totality of Scottish identity and Scotland's place in the late nineteenth-century United Kingdom and

Empire. By starting from the great crisis point that was the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, Stevenson shows the cultural jockeying and negotiation that would lead to the formation of late Victorian Scottish identity; the processes by which Scottish -- and in particular the Highland -- identity was accepted and consolidated within a wider British context; and the influence and significance of the Scottish role in the British imperial project. By going backwards Stevenson was able to go forward, and his Scottish writing, far from being nostalgic and parochial, offers contextualising comments on the present and future of his British Empire.

A recurring theme within my research has been the fluidity of cultural identity and the negotiation that goes on in the spaces and moments of interface. I have endeavoured to show not only how Stevenson engaged with the various positionings of identity within his era, but also how his writings challenge and destabilise hierarchical and hegemonic assumptions. I might point to the undermining of notions of racial superiority and the evolution in sympathy for Pacific islanders that John Wiltshire experiences over the course of the 'The Beach of Falesá' (1892); but I might equally draw attention to the challenging of literary assumptions that occur in Stevenson's critical essays 'A Gossip on Romance' (1882) and 'A Humble Remonstrance'(1884), where Stevenson declared the artistic worth and cultural independence of the Romance, and in so doing secured the enduring friendship of Henry James. His friendship with James is a useful one for analysing Stevenson's work, since over the course of their relationship the two were engaged in a creative dialogue, one which can be interpreted as a collective endeavour to understand the art of writing. Stevenson's ability to participate in this debate owed much to his acceptance of difference, but perhaps more importantly, his belief in commonality. Stevenson's writing attests to 'sameness', those aspects that humanity hold in common. Despite their acknowledged differences, David Balfour and Alan Breck recognise characteristics in one another that they instinctively respect:

> "Now, the tenants of Appin have to pay a rent to King George; but their hearts are staunch, they are true to their chief...the poor folk scrape up a second rent for Ardshiel"
> ...

Conclusion

"So they pay both? Cried I.
"Ay, David, both," says he.
...
"I call it noble," I cried. "I'm a Whig, or little better; but I call it noble."
"Ay," said he, "ye're a Whig, but ye're a gentleman; and that's what does it."[1]

It is this hope for understanding and an appreciation of the capacity for 'nobility' in a culture different from one's own that most characterises Stevenson's position on cultural interaction. David Balfour pledging to "bear and forebear"[2] with Alan Breck despite their differences seems to me the most useful example of Stevenson's ameliorative model for cross-cultural understanding. In stressing the holism of Stevenson's work however there can be a danger of my making 'everything sound the same'. Are Stevenson's views so consistent across the body of his work? Doesn't his capacity for acceptance of cultural positions different from his own falter when he turns his face to the Irish Question? My chapter on Stevenson's engagement with Irish agitation shows that he found the issues and events personally distressing and ideologically problematic. First and foremost the cause of Ireland was diminished in Stevenson's eyes by the actual deeds of those who sought Irish independence through violent means. I sense that Stevenson wishes he could look on the Irish cause and cry "I call it noble, I'm a Unionist, or little better but I call it noble", but there was no nobility for him in the harassment of the Curtin family, no nobility in the bombing of Westminster Hall. But on a more fundamental level the cause of Irish independence was one of cultural separation, of stressing difference and creating distance, and that it itself seems alien to the Stevensonian desire to "bear and forebear".

Stevenson's fiction is marked by tropes of cultural transition and growth, shifts and changes, but tellingly these changes are marked in terms of gain, not loss. David Balfour's adventure as erstwhile Highlander is a personally enriching one, leading to a greater understanding of the totality of Scottish identity, and his intrinsic Lowland character is undiminished by the experience. It seems to me this is a useful metaphor for the progression of Stevenson's own art. In my chapter on Stevenson's progressive development and the revision of his Maritime Quest Narrative, I explore how Stevenson was able to reutilise his own tropes in an evolutionary fashion, while still maintaining a

thematic and moral consistency with the original text. In *Treasure Island* (1882), just as in its final descendant *The Ebb-Tide* 1893), "almost all that is ugly is in the whites".[3]

The implicitly critical treatment of empire within *Treasure Island* raises the question as to whether Stevenson's nuanced sympathy with non-Western peoples was a product of his travels. Stevenson's respect for the native cultures of the Pacific islands in his later writing has served to identify him as a nascent postcolonialist, but in this study I have endeavoured to show that his respectful engagement with island identity and oral cultures was fully formed in his treatment of the Hebrideans in the earliest of his texts I have discussed: 'The Merry Men' (1880). The striking characteristic of his position is not that Stevenson should find the Polynesians of his final fiction as equal to Westerners, but the consistency in how he had treated his Hebrideans with such similar sympathy. To reconcile the various aspects of Stevenson is an exercise in commonality, and we might suggest that at the centre of Stevenson's treatment of identity is a fundamental acceptance and respect for the qualities humanity shares in common.

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1 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, (London: Penguin, 1994) p. 78
2 Ibid, p.179
3 Robert Louis Stevenson,, letter to Sydney Colvin, 17th May 1892, *Letters*, op.cit., Vol.7 p.282

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