

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE IN THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

by

Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Scottish Literature  
University of Glasgow.

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## SUMMARY

In this study I examine R.L. Stevenson as a writer of essays, poems, and books of travel as well as a writer of adventure fiction; taking the word "adventure" to include both outdoor and indoor adventure. Choosing to be remembered in his epitaph as the sailor and the hunter, Stevenson is regarded as the most interesting literary wanderer in Scottish literature and among the most intriguing in English literature. Dogged by ill-health, he travelled from "one of the vilest climates under heaven" to more congenial climates in England, the Continent, the States, and finally the South Seas where he died and was buried. Besides, Stevenson liked to escape, especially in his youth, from the respectabilities of Victorian Edinburgh and from family trouble, seeking people and places whose nature was congenial to his own Bohemian nature. However, he had Edinburgh in his mind and heart wherever he went; becoming the more appreciative of Scotland the more he was away from her. Indeed his travels intensified his feelings for Scottish scenery and Scottish character. It is striking to note that Stevenson, while travelling in foreign countries and interesting himself in their landscapes, traditions, and customs, was content to travel in imagination back home, recalling his Scottish past, identifying himself with the Covenanters, and writing fiction with typically Scottish themes and settings.

Chapter 1 is introductory. It deals with Stevenson's imaginative childhood and the early Scottish influences that helped to shape his character and affect his later writing-career.

In Chapters 2 and 3, there is a detailed examination of his early essays and books of travel that record his own experiences in England, France and the States. The two chapters deal with "Roads", "Walking Tours", "A Winter's Walk in Garrick and Galloway", "Ordered South", "Fontainebleau", An Inland Voyage, Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes, The Amateur Emigrant and The Silverado Squatters. Such writings serve as an interesting record of the

author's views on life and outdoor experiences.

Chapter 4 deals with the non-Scottish short fiction that was inspired by Stevenson's travels in France: "A Lodging for the Night", "The Sire de Maletroit's Door", and "Providence and the Guitar"; along with "Will o' the Mill" which allegorically sums up the author's commitment to adventurous life, and the fantastic stories of New Arabian Nights which concern the adventures of the romantic hero, Prince Florizel of Bohemia, in London and Paris. Prince Otto, which is in fact a long novel, is placed in this chapter because of its similarity to the theme of New Arabian Nights.

Chapter 5 marks Stevenson's start in his early thirties to tackle such Scottish themes as derived from his own experiences in boyhood and youth. It deals with horror and supernatural stories such as "The Merry Men", "Thrawn Janet", "The Body Snatcher"; all reveal the author's obsession with the Scottish macabre and the idea of the presence of the Devil. This chapter also deals with "Olalla", "Markheim", and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, all of which, though having non-Scottish settings, reflect Scottish themes (atavism, and man's tormented self in the struggle against evil) with which Stevenson had been preoccupied throughout his life. Termed "sophisticated adventure fiction", where characters go through something "horrible" beyond their normal experience, and where there are moral choices to be made and values to be declared, all these stories reflect Stevenson's interest in writing a kind of "romance" that professedly turns its back upon realism and seeks to describe reality in the heightened, transposed, and artificial conditions of symbol and day-dream. It is interesting to investigate the powerful role which horror, madness and cruelty play in such romances.

Chapter 6 deals with Treasure Island, one of the most famous adventure stories for boys. The author takes us on an exciting journey in a timeless, make-believe world in which bloody conflicts for hidden treasure are depicted. Belonging to the genre of "escapist" literature, the book established Stevenson's reputation as a distinguished novelist. This chapter also deals in passing with The Black Arrow; an adventure tale set in Medieval England during the time of the Wars of the Roses, which lacks the imaginative qualities of Treasure Island. Stevenson himself never liked the work, calling it "tushery".

Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 chronologically attempt a detailed critical discussion of the nature and value of the Scottish novels: Kidnapped, The Master of Ballantrae, Catriona, Weir of Hermiston, and St. Ives. Though they provide an escape from contemporary life into the romantic, adventurous Scottish past, they owe their inspiration to sights and sounds that had impressed Stevenson as a child and a young man. For example, the islet of Erraid, which he had visited as a student of marine constructions, figures in Kidnapped, where David Balfour is lost for days before he manages to join Alan Breck in the wild Highlands; while Stevenson's Edinburgh and the countryside around it figure in Catriona, Weir of Hermiston, and St. Ives. All these stories demonstrate how much Stevenson owed to his sense of topography, history and psychology as "catalyst" for his emotions in exile.

Chapter 11 deals with Stevenson's travels in the South Seas, as recorded in his interesting volume In the South Seas. It also sheds light on the nostalgic poems and letters sent to his friends in Scotland. In the last chapter, there is a discussion of the South Seas fiction such as The Wrecker, "The Beach of Falesa", and The Ebb-Tide. Reflecting the author's experiences in the Pacific

where he had seen crimes and exploitation of the natives by white traders, these stories show us a new Stevenson: a portrayer of contemporary subjects that deal with the realities of depravity and evil. Writing about morally ambiguous characters and situations, Stevenson came to the realization that life was a complex affair and that evil was an integral part of human nature.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

All references to Stevenson's works are to the Waverley Edition, 26 vols., London, 1924 - 25.

Unless otherwise mentioned, Stevenson's letters are from Sidney Colvin's edition of The Letters of R.L. Stevenson to his Family and Friends. 2 vols., London, 1901.

In the case of Stevenson's poetry, Janet Adam Smith's edition of R.L. Stevenson : Collected Poems (London, 1950) has been used throughout, unless otherwise stated.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background and Formative Years

It was on 13 November, 1850 that Edinburgh, the romantic "Athens of the North", saw the birth of Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson (later he dropped Balfour from his name and changed the spelling of Lewis to Louis). He came of a family of engineers who had a notable history in marine constructions around Scottish coasts. His father, Thomas Stevenson, a brilliant, respectable engineer, was President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His grandfather, Robert Stevenson, was known as the builder of the Bell Rock Lighthouse. His uncles, Alan and David Stevenson, were famous lighthouse engineers. It is interesting to note that, besides their contributions to Scottish lighthouses, "The three brothers were students of the English classics, and their books and scientific articles were written in a vigorous English style".<sup>1</sup> Stevenson's mother, Margaret Isabella, came of a family of doctors and Calvinist parsons. She was the youngest daughter of the Rev. Lewis Balfour, Minister of Colinton, Edinburgh. Stevenson was always proud of his family, as may be seen in such writings as Records of A Family of Engineers and "The Manse".

Stevenson's delight in travelling was inherited. His grandfather so loved his annual cruise around Scottish coasts that when told his death was fast approaching, he seemed to be more worried about the loss of the voyage than the coming of death. (Sir Walter Scott accompanied Robert Stevenson in 1814 in one of these cruises, of which The Pirate and The Lord of the Isles were a direct result.) The profession of Robert Stevenson combined romance and adventure, which may be seen in the following fragment written with fascination by his grandson:

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1. Lord Guthrie, R.L. Stevenson: some personal recollections (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 12.

The seas into which his labours carried [him] were still scarce charted, the coasts still dark; his way on shore was often far beyond the convenience of any road, the isles in which he must sojourn were still partly savage. He must toss much in boats; he must often adventure on horseback by the dubious bridle track through unfrequented wilderness; he must sometimes plant his lighthouse in the very camp of wreckers; and he was continually enforced to the vicissitudes of outdoor life. The joy of my grandfather in this career was strong as the love of woman.<sup>2</sup>

In Records of A Family of Engineers (written in his last years in the South Seas), Stevenson tells us about the great dangers his grandfather had to go through until he successfully built the Bell Rock. The nature of this risky task can be understood if one realises that

Lighthouse operations in Scotland differed essentially in character from those in England. The English coast is in comparison a habitable, homely place, well supplied with towns; the Scottish presents hundreds of miles<sub>3</sub> of savage islands and desolate moors.

Stevenson elsewhere speaks with great pride of other members of the Stevenson family:

We rose out of obscurity in a clap. My father and Uncle David made the third generation, one Smith and two Stevensons, of direct descendants who had been engineers to the Board of Northern Lights; there is scarce a deep sea light from the Isle of Man north about to Berwick, but one of my blood designed it,

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2. Quoted in Graham Balfour, The Life of R.L. Stevenson (twentieth ed., London 1922), p. 4.
  3. Records of A Family of Engineers, vol. XVII, p. 216.

and I have often thought that to find a family to compare with ours in the promise of immortal memory, we must go back to the Egyptian Pharaohs :- upon so many reefs and forelands that not every elegant name of Stevenson is engraved with a pen of iron upon granite. My name is as well known as that of the Duke of Argyle among the fishers, the skippers, the seamen and the masons of my native land. Whenever I smell salt water, I know I am not far 4 from one of the works of my ancestors.

The Balfours too had a remarkable history. Their name was the surname Stevenson later gave to his favourite hero, David, of Kidnapped and Catriona. It is interesting to note that

Balfour ancestors had been Covenanters; one indeed had fought at the Battle of Bothwell Brig for the cause. The family links up remotely with that of the Gordons, who produced Lord Byron, and less remotely with the Elliots, who connected themselves with the Scotts of whom Sir Walter Scott was the most distinguished member. Here, then, Stevenson could feel roots with the proud, passionate and hard-headed families of the Border. It is interesting to note that when he drew a Border family - as he does wonderfully in Weir of Hermiston - he called them Elliot. 5

Stevenson himself in his essay "The Manse" (1887), claims adventurous Border ancestry: " I have shaken a spear in the Debateable Land and shouted the slogan of the Elliots". 6 In the essay he recalls his happy days at Colinton Manse, admitting that his maternal grandfather still

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4. In Memoirs of Himself, included in Vol. XXV, p. 219.
  5. Paul Binding, R.L. Stevenson (London, 1974) pp.16-17.
  6. Included in Memories and Portraits, vol. XXV, p. 67.

moves in my blood, and whispers words to me,  
and sits efficient in the very knot and centre  
of my being. In his garden, as I played there,  
I learned the love of mills.... and a<sup>7</sup> kindness  
for the neighbourhood of graves.....

Stevenson's childhood was characterised by ill-health. He suffered from fevers and colds. The only child had to depend for entertainment on the power of imagination, which can be seen in one of the poems of A Child's Garden of Verses (1885):

When I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay,  
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so,  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets,  
All up and down among the sheets;  
Or brought my trees and houses out,  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still,  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain, <sup>8</sup>  
The pleasant land of counterpane.

"The Land of Counterpane" was all too familiar to Stevenson, and the imaginative qualities which this familiarity helped him to cultivate stood him in good stead throughout his childhood and boyhood. Travel, it can be noticed, is a repeated theme in A Child's Garden of Verses. The child's bed becomes a boat in which to sail away from home:

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7. Ibid., p. 66.

8. Stevenson: Collected Poems, ed. Janet A. Smith (London, 1950), p. 370.

My bed is like a little boat;  
Nurse helps me in when I embark;  
She girds me in my sailor's coat,  
And starts me in the dark.

At night I go on board and say,  
Goodnight to all my friends on shore;  
I shut my eyes and sail away,  
And see and hear no more.....

All night across the dark we steer,  
But when the day returns at last,  
Safe in my room, beside the pier,  
I find my vessel fast.<sup>9</sup>

And again,

From breakfast on through all the day,  
At home among my friends I stay;  
But every night I go abroad,<sup>10</sup>  
Afar into the Land of Nod.

The child had a sense of the width of the world. This is shown in "Rain" in which Stevenson impresses us with his sense of the world's diversity:

The rain is raining all around,  
It rains on field and tree,  
It rains on the umbrellas here,<sup>11</sup>  
And on the ships at sea.

It is a marvellous coupling of the umbrellas and the ships, in which we see the comfort and the adventure of the world brought together under the dark but homely roof of the clouds. The idea is also expressed in "The Sun's Travels":

While here at home, in shining day,  
We round the sunny garden play,  
Each little Indian sleepy-head,  
Is being kissed and put to bed.

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9. Collected Poems, p p 380 - 81.  
10. Ibid., p. 371.  
11. Ibid., p. 364.

And when at eve I rise from tea,  
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea,  
And all the children in the West,  
Are getting up and being dressed. 12

The theme of adventure is naturally closely related to that of travel, which is seen in "Pirate Story":

Where shall we adventure, today that  
we're afloat,  
Wary of the weather, and steering by  
star?  
Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the  
boat,  
To Providence, or Babylon, or off to  
Malabar? 13

And the child was so preoccupied with the thought of adventurous journeys that he would like to rise and go,

Where are forests, hot as fire,  
Wide as England, tall as a spire,  
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts,  
And the negro hunters' huts

Where the knotty crocodile  
lies and blinks in the Nile,  
And the red flamingo flies  
Hunting fish before his eyes;  
Where in jungles, near and far,  
Man-devouring tigers are  
Lying close and giving ear  
lest the hunt be drawing near,  
Or a comer-by be seen  
Swinging in a palanquin,  
Where among the desert sands  
Some deserted city stands,  
All its children, sweep and prince,  
Grown to manhood ages since,  
Not a foot in street or house,  
Not a stir of child or mouse,  
And when kindly falls the night, 14  
In all town no spark of light.

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12. Ibid, p. 379.

13. Ibid, p. 364.

14. Ibid, p. 367.

To return home after all the adventures were over is another significant theme in Stevenson's poems. The sickly boy, imagining escape and adventure from the security of his comfortable home, looked forward to returning to the familiar scenes of childhood. This theme can be traced in many of Stevenson's poetical and prose works. Edwin Morgan in this respect has remarked that

The two great opposing, unresolved, often interlocking themes of his poetry are the desire for travel and the desire for home, and although in the end home in the physical sense became Vailima, mentally it was Scotland more deeply than ever because of time and distance..... 15

In "Keepsake Mill", a poem reflecting his childhood activities at Colinton Manse, Stevenson expresses the idea:

Over the borders, a sin without pardon,  
Breaking the branches, and crawling below,  
Out through the breach in the wall of the garden,  
Down by the banks of the river we go....

Years may go by, and the wheel in the river,  
Wheel as it wheels for us, children, today,  
Wheel and keep roaring and foaming for ever,  
Long after all of the boys are away.

Home from the Indies and home from the ocean,  
Heroes and soldiers we all shall come home,  
Still we shall find the old mill wheel in motion,  
Turning and churning that river to foam.

You with the bean that I gave when we quarrelled,  
I with your marble of Saturday last,  
Honoured and old and all gaily apparelled,  
Here we shall meet and remember the past. 16

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15. Edwin Morgan, "The Poetry of R.L. Stevenson" in Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. I, No. 2, December 1974, p. 32.
16. Collected Poems, p p.376 - 77.

It is in "Here we shall meet and remember the past", that we find the key to understanding and appreciating Stevenson's works, as we shall see later, written while he was away from home. David Daiches has noticed "how strong the nostalgic theme was in Stevenson, the compulsive exile and lover of home."<sup>17</sup> Again, Stevenson's childhood reminiscences in the Child's Garden are a deliberate attempt to recapture the sights, sounds, and emotions of the past. They are told in a vivid manner, as if they happened only yesterday. In a letter to Henry James, Stevenson wrote: "I am one of the few people in the world who do not forget their own lives"<sup>18</sup>. As we read the account of his past childhood

we feel that his memories are alive. He still hears the sound and sees the sights just as he did then..... He seems to have had the power literally to be a child again, with all the child's detail and finality in its own experience, and all the stretch and wistfulness of the child's horizons..... To read the Child's Garden of Verses, or any other of the writings in which the early days are still alive, is to receive ourselves back again for a moment from the dead.<sup>19</sup>

Stevenson's love for exotic lands can be traced in his prose writings. One of the happiest times he ever had is recorded in Memoirs of Himself, when he was five years old and had an imaginative pastime with his cousin, Bob Stevenson:

We lived together in a purely visionary state. We had countries, his was Nosingtonia, mine Encyclopaedia; where we ruled and made wars and inventions, and of which we were perpetually drawing maps, His was shaped a little like Ireland; mine lay diagonally across the paper like a large tip-cat.<sup>20</sup>

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17. David Daiches, "Stevenson and Scotland", in Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder (Edinburgh, 1981), p.13.
18. Letters, Vol II, p. 107.
19. John Kelman, The Faith of R.L. Stevenson (Edinburgh and London, 1903), p. 56.
20. Memoirs of Himself, Vol.XXV, p. 227.

Many years later, out of an imaginary map which the mature Stevenson idly drew with his step-son, came his first published novel, Treasure Island, one of the most famous adventure stories for boys. Indeed maps, whether imaginary or real, had their spell over Stevenson throughout his life. In An Inland Voyage (an account of his French travels in his twenties) he says:

I have always been fond of maps, and can voyage in an atlas with the greatest enjoyment. The names of places are singularly inviting, the contour of coasts and rivers is enthralling to the eye; and to hit in a map upon some place you have heard of before makes history a new possession. <sup>21</sup>

Stevenson's imagination was ever at work while he was ill in bed. He told himself romances in which he played the hero, and these were "full of far journeys and Homeric battles". The long nights of suffering when the child was kept awake by fever and serious coughing were relieved, however, by the tenderness of his nurse Alison Cunningham (or Cummy) to whom the Child's Garden was dedicated:

She was more patient, than I can suppose of an angel; hours together she would help console me in my paroxysms; and I remember with particular distinctness how she would lift me out of bed, and take me, rolled in blankets, to the window, whence I might look forth into the blue night starred with street-lamps and see where the gas still burned behind the windows of other sickrooms.... Yet the sight of the outer world refreshed and cheered me; and the whole sorrow and burden of the night was at end with the arrival of the first of that long string of country carts, that in the dark hours of the morning, with the neighing of horses, the cracking of whips, the shouts of drivers and a hundred other wholesome noises, <sup>22</sup> creaked, rolled, and pounded past my window

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21 An Inland Voyage, Vol. XV, pp.100 -101.

22. Memoirs of Himself, pp.220 - 21.

All this shows how much Stevenson wanted to see the outside world despite his illness. He felt better if he could hear the noises of people, not so much because he liked them as that it was a challenge to him that he must struggle to take his place in the world, for, if not, how could he write adventure books and travel through many parts of the world?

Cummy, a product of strict religion received in rural Calvinist churches, meant a great deal to Stevenson in the sense that she had done so much both to preserve his life and awaken his love for poetry and tales. She considerably contributed to the stirring of the child's imagination by filling his mind with Scripture passages, tales of Bible heroes and of Bunyan's, stories of Scottish Covenanters, and legends, in prose and verse, of pirates and fairies. Here Stevenson's first biographer elaborates the child's Scottish upbringing:

But if Louis spent, as he tells us" a Covenanted childhood" it was to Cummy that this was due. Besides the Bible and the Shorter Catechism, which he had also from his mother, Cummy filled him with a love of her own favourite authors, McCheyne and others, Presbyterians of the strictest doctrine. It was she, in all probability who first introduced him to "The Cameronian Dream". That poem, he afterwards told Mr. Gosse, made the most indelible impression on his fancy, and was the earliest piece of literature which awakened in him the sentiment of romantic Scottish history.

From her too, he first heard some of the writings of the Covenanters, Wodrow, Peden, and others, who directly influenced his choice of subjects, and according to his own testimony..... had a great share in the formation of his style. A special favourite also was an old copy of A Cloud of Witnesses 23 which had belonged to his nurse's grandmother.

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23. Balfour, The Life of R.L. Stevenson, pp.35 - 36.

Indeed Cummy had a most significant influence on the little boy. She conveyed her Calvinist beliefs to him in vivid tales of the devil and hell. She condemned dramatically the works of the devil, amongst which were included the theatre and the novel. Stevenson had nightmares, owing to her tales, of the Black Man of country tales and he feared to go to sleep, lest he should awaken in hell. He became haunted by the thought of sin, which is best shown in "Stormy Nights":

Do I not know, how, nightly, on my bed  
The palpable close darkness shutting around me,  
How my small heart went forth to evil things,  
How all the possibility of sin  
That were yet present to my innocence  
Bound me too narrowly,  
And how my spirit beat,  
The cage of its compulsive purity,  
How - my eyes fixed,  
My shot lip tremulous between my fingers,  
I fashioned for myself new modes of crime,  
Created for myself with pain and labour  
The evil that the cobwebs of society,  
The comely secrecies of education, 24  
Had made an itching mystery to meward.

Sin, however, remained a chief preoccupation of Stevenson as he grew older. In a fragment written when he was thirty years old, he recalls this horrible side of his childhood, admitting its impact on him even in his manhood:

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

It is not a pleasant subject. 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 though to disarm fate by a show of submission, and some of this feeling 25 still remains upon me in my thirtieth year.

It may be said that Stevenson's childhood was a mixture of dark and bright experiences. The dark sides of his early life might be responsible for such horror stories as "Markheim", "The Body-Snatcher", Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (which came to him in a nightmare), and others. Jenni Calder has remarked that the "grimmer obsessions lingered in the adult mind along with the happier facets of childhood". She goes on to say:

Stevenson never lost his preoccupation with evil, particularly with the duality of human nature, sin and respectability existing side by side, something he was to explore over and over again. Here is the child not seeing evil but inventing it. His earliest view of the world was one in which both sin and suffering were very present. Out of the safety and warmth, out of the love and care, came these two vivid facts, the one experienced directly in his illnesses, the other issuing forth as a conviction out of the mouths he loved. 26

Stevenson's dramatic sense was fed, besides Cummy's Covenanting tales, by "Skelt's Juvenile Drama", scenes and characters for a toy theatre sold, together with the play-book, at a stationer's shop in Leith Walk. The boy pressed his nose to the window of the shop described in "A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured", greedily gazing at the toy theatre laid out inside, "with a 'forest set', a 'combat' and a few 'robbers carousing' in the slides; and below and about dearer tenfold to me! the plays themselves, those budgets of romance lay tumbled one upon another". 27 Here Stevenson shows his debt to Skelt's world;

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25. Memoirs of Himself, p. 225.

26. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson: A Life Study (London, 1980) pp.33 - 34.

27. "A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured", in Memories and Portraits, pp.122 - 23.

Out of the art I seem to have learned the very spirit of my life's equipment; met there the shadows of the characters I was to read about and love in a later future..... acquired a gallery of scenes and characters with which I might enact all novels and romances.<sup>28</sup>

It was a great opportunity for Louis to escape from the indoor life of suffering when his parents took him on journeys to the Continent, which must have haunted his imagination and stimulated his love of foreign travel. "The Rhone is the River of Angels", he wrote years later to W.H. Low, "I have adored it since I was twelve and first saw it from the train".<sup>29</sup> At home, he spent happy times at North Berwick where he learned to cope with sea and sand and became an adept at cruising. He was then adventurous, making friends with boys of his own age and playing with them romantic games of which he was the leader. One of these games, described in "The Lantern-Bearers", consisted in walking alone on a dark night with a bull's-eye lantern under his top-coat and saying "Have you got your Lantern?" to any of his companions whom he met.

Travelling in wild Scottish coasts suited Stevenson's love of adventure. His father took him in 1863 on a tour of the Fife lighthouses. Later he travelled on his own to inspect Scottish lighthouses at Anstruther, Wick and Erraid (which was part of his engineering training as he studied engineering at Edinburgh University). Thomas Stevenson had great expectations that his only son would carry on the family tradition and become a lighthouse engineer. But Stevenson wanted to be a man of letters. However, such tours were to bear fruit in "The Merry Men" and Kidnapped. It is interesting to note that Stevenson in his first visit to Fife took more interest in the historical associations of the place than in its harbours and lighthouses, which can be seen in "The Coast of Fife" (1888). Here he speaks of Magus Muir, the scene of Archbishop Sharp's murder:

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28. Ibid., p. 128.

29. Letters, Vol. II, p. 22.

I still see Magus Muir two hundred years ago; a desert place, quite unenclosed, in the midst, the primate's carriage fleeing at the gallop; the assassins loose-reined in pursuit, Burley Balfour, pistol in hand, among the first. No scene in history has ever written itself so deeply on my mind, not because Balfour, that questionable zealot, was an ancestral cousin of my own, not because of the pleadings of the victim and his daughter, not even because of the live bum-bee that flew out of Sharpe's 'bacco-box thus clearly indicating his complicity with Satan, nor merely because, as it was after all a crime of a fine religious flavour, it figured in Sunday books..... The figure that always fixed my attention is that of Hackston of Rathillet, sitting in the saddle with his cloak about his mouth, and through all that long, bungling, vociferous hurly-burly, revolving privately a case of conscience. He would take no hand in the deed, because he had a private spite against the victim, and "that action" must be sullied with no suggestion of a worldly motive, on the other hand, "that action" in itself was highly justified, he had cast in his lot with "the actors", and he must stay there, inactive but publicly sharing the responsibility.<sup>30</sup>

That Stevenson had strong relationship with the past may be traced in both his early and later travels. One critic suggests that Hackston, a persecuted Covenanter, "appealed not just because he was one of history's mysterious horsemen, but because of the twin forces of violence and conscience that were contained in him. He was a tantalising embodiment of what would become Stevenson's vision of the duality of human nature".<sup>31</sup> Again, Stevenson wanders with his mind back into the history of persecuted Covenanters in The Pentland Rising, written when he was sixteen and praised by his father. (It should be mentioned here that Stevenson loved to retreat to the Greyfriars Kirkyard, last resting-place of the Covenanters, and contemplate their lives and deaths).

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30. "The Coast of Fife", included in Vo. XXVI, pp.93 - 94.

31. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson: A Life Study, p. 48.

In this short study, privately printed in 1866, we have an account of the unsuccessful attempt of 1666 by an army of Covenanters to attack the Government forces that harassed them. Here Stevenson describes the Covenanter rebels in their encampment by the Rullion Burn, on the evening before their crushing defeat:

The sun, going down behind the Pentlands, cast golden lights and blue shadows on their snow-clad summits, slanted obliquely into the rich plain before them, bathing with rosy splendour the leafless, snow-sprinkled trees, and fading gradually into shadow in the distance. To the south, too, they beheld a deep-shaded amphitheatre of heather and bracken; the course of the Esk, near Penicuik, winding about at the foot of its gorge, the broad, brown expanse of Maw Moss; and fading into blue indistinctness in the south, the wild heath-clad Peeblesshire hills. In sooth, that scene was fair, and many a yearning glance was cast over that peaceful evening scene from the spot where the rebels awaited their defeat, and when the fight was over, many a noble fellow lifted his head from the blood-stained heather to strive with darkening eyeballs to behold that landscape, over which, as o'er his life and his cause, the shadows of night, and of gloom were falling and thickening.<sup>32</sup>

Stevenson had a sense of sympathy with the defeated, though realising the constricting, intolerable nature of their ideas. Indeed, he was fascinated by the Covenanters' intense devotion to their beliefs, their awareness of the glory and presence of God, and their willingness to die in defending their cause against a "wordly" Government. However, just as he was fascinated by the contradictions of Hackston's attitudes on Magus Muir, so he was struck by the character of Sir James Turner - one of the leaders of the persecutors - who "was remarkably fond of literary composition and wrote a large number of essays and short biographies".

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32. The Pentland Rising, included in Vol. XXIV, p p.111 - 12.

It is worth mentioning here that Stevenson's fascination with the history of the Scottish Covenanters remained with him until the last day of his life in exile. Identifying himself with them while in Samoa, as we shall see later in detail, he fully expressed his own Scottishness and admitted that "My style is from the Covenanting writers".

Edinburgh played one of the most important roles in stimulating Stevenson's imagination. In Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes (1879), we have a vivid account of the city's romantic scenes which fascinated our author in his boyhood and youth. Here he describes the romantic view from Calton Hill, a description which chiefly derives from his many wanderings there:

Of all places for a view, this Calton Hill is perhaps the best..... From the bottom of the valley, a gigantic chimney rises almost to the level of the eye, a taller and a shapelier edifice than Nelson's Monument. Look a little further, and there is Holyrood Palace, with its Gothic frontal and ruined abbey and the red sentry pacing smartly to and fro before the door like a mechanical figure in a panorama. By way of an outpost, you can single out the little peak-roofed lodge, over which Rizzio's murderers made their escape and where Queen Mary herself, according to gossip, bathed in white wine to entertain her loveliness. Behind and overhead, lie the Queen's Park, from Muschat's Cairn to Dumbiedykes, St. Margaret's Loch, and the long wall of Salisbury Crags; and thence, by knoll and rocky bulwark and precipitous slope, the eye rises to the top of Arthur's Seat, a hill for magnitude, a mountain in virtue of its bold design. This upon your left. Upon the right, the roofs and spires of the Old Town climb one above another to where the citadel prints its broad bulk and jagged crown of bastions on the western sky. Perhaps it is now one in the afternoon; and at the same instant of time, a ball rises to the summit of Nelson's flagstaff close at hand, and, far away, a puff of smoke followed by a report bursts from the half-moon battery at the Castle.

This is the time-gun by which people set their watches, as far as the sea coast or in hill farms upon the Pentlands. To complete this view, the eye enfildes Princes Street, black with traffic, and has a broad look over the valley between the Old Town and the New..... 33

Like Sir Walter Scott who called Edinburgh "mine own romantic town" in Marmion, Stevenson always delighted in the many historical associations of the City and the countryside around it, which provided the material for later works. Out of the Firth of Forth sailed David Balfour, kidnapped on board a wicked-crewed ship bound for the West Indies. On the Bass Rock, in Catriona, he is held prisoner, amid the dark tenements and wynds of the Old Town he seeks helpers, evades enemies and manages to meet his beloved Catriona. From the Castle St. Ives makes his daring escape and goes to see Flora at Swanston Cottage (Stevenson's favourite residence in summer holidays), while in the New Town lives one of Stevenson's heroes - John Nicholson in "The Misadventures of John Nicholson". In addition to all this, one cannot forget the touching scene when young Archie is banished from Edinburgh to Hermiston by his father, the "Hanging-Judge" in Weir of Hermiston.

Stevenson may be said to have possessed a "sixth sense" for associations with the past - a subject that can be traced in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. In this work he "gave the fullest account given by any Scottish man of letters of the appeal of the city and its environs to the literary imagination".<sup>34</sup> The following passage is one of the most interesting of the book:

Greyfriars is a place of many associations. There was one window in a house at the lower end, now demolished, which was pointed out to me by the grave-digger, as a spot of legendary interest. Burke,<sup>35</sup> the resurrection man, infamous for so many murders at five shillings a head, used to sit thereat, with pipe and nightcap, to watch burials going forward on the green. In a tomb higher up.....

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33. Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, Vol XXVI, pp.51-53.

34. David Daiches and John Flower, Literary Landscapes of the British Isles (New York and London, 1979), p. 210.

John Knox, according to the same informant, had taken refuge in a turmoil of the Reformation. Behind the church is the haunted mausoleum of Sir George MacKenzie: Bloody MacKenzie, Lord Advocate in the Covenanting troubles and author of some pleasing sentiments on toleration..... It was thought a high piece of prowess to knock at the Lord Advocate's mausoleum and challenge him to appear."Bluidy MacKenzie, come oot if ye daur!" sang the foolhardy urchins. But Sir George had other affairs on hand, and the author of an essay on tolerance continues to sleep peacefully among the many whom he so intolterantly helped to slay.<sup>36</sup>

Stevenson in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, however, demonstrates mixed feelings towards his native city; love and pride on the one hand, desperate desire to escape on the other. This may be seen in the following passage:

But Edinburgh pays cruelly for her high seat in one of the vilest climates under heaven. She is liable to be beaten upon by all the winds that blow, to be drenched with rain, to be buried in cold sea fogs out of the east, and powdered with the snow as it comes flying southward from the Highland hills. The weather is raw and boisterous in winter, shifty and ungenial in summer, and a downright meteorological purgatory in the spring. The delicate die early and I, as a survivor, among bleak winds and plumping rain, have been sometimes tempted to envy them their fate. For all who love shelter and the blessings of the sun, who hate dark weather and perpetual tilting against squalls, there could scarcely be found a more unhomely and harassing place of residence. Many such aspire angrily after that Somewhere - else of the imagination, where all troubles are supposed to end. They lean over the great bridge which joins the New Town with the Old - that windiest spot, or high altar, in this northern temple of the winds -

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35. Stevenson based "The Body-Snatcher" on Burke and Hare.  
36. Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, pp. 35 -36.

and watch the trains smoking out from under them and vanishing into the tunnel on a voyage to brighter skies. Happy the passengers who shake off the dust of Edinburgh, and have heard for the last time the cry of the east wind among her chimney-tops! And yet the place establishes an interest in people's hearts; go where they will they take a pride in their old home. 37

There were of course other important factors at work besides those that compelled Stevenson to travel away from home to "brighter skies". Stevenson disagreed with his father not only over the choice of a profession <sup>38</sup> (in the end a compromise was reached as he studied law at Edinburgh University and was called to the Bar in 1875, though he did not practise), but over religious questions. Thomas Stevenson was strongly attached to the proprieties and set forms of the society in which he lived. His habits of thought, as Stevenson tells us in a short essay, <sup>39</sup> did not allow him to accommodate himself to new views of life or new scales of proportion. He was, above all, a sincere believer in the Church of Scotland. As for our writer, he found a large gap between the teachings of the Church and the doings of most people who called themselves Christians. Besides, his romantic figure stood out against the conventionalities of Edinburgh. The father naturally disapproved of his son's rebellious spirit.

In his early twenties, Stevenson began to hammer out a philosophy of life for himself. He did what he liked to do, and not what others thought proper. Feeling contempt for evening dress as a uniform of respectability, he attended dinner parties in his old velvet coat and tweed trousers; the casual passer-by in the street stared with raised eyebrows, while friends of the family avoided acknowledging him, pitying his parents for being disgraced by such a son. Stevenson expressed his philosophy of Bohemianism in "Lay Morals":

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37. Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, pp.3-4.

38. In "The Education of an Engineer" he admits that he cannot follow the profession because "it shuts one in an office" - though he admires the perilous nature of the work as it takes a man to "wild islands" and gives him "a taste of the genial dangers of the sea". See Vol. XXVI, p. 107.

39. "Thomas Stevenson", included in Memories and Portraits, pp.80-82.

The true Bohemian..... lives wholly to himself, does what he wishes, and not what is thought proper, buys what he wants for himself and not what is thought proper, works at what he believes he can do well and not what will bring him in money or favour. <sup>40</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that Stevenson's Bohemian nature, as we shall see later, was obvious in his travels in France and America where he would identify himself with people and places whose nature was congenial to his own. But before he travelled there, he made excursions into Edinburgh slums, becoming "the companion of seamen, chimney-sweeps and thieves". He sowed his wild oats in the city's shadowy underworld by having relations with prostitutes. In doing so, he "was deliberately thumbing his nose at Edinburgh gentility". <sup>41</sup> These excursions show us that he was passionate, sensual and infinitely curious about different types of life and people. They too have some special significance:

The recollection of these excursions into Edinburgh slums, with their exciting antithesis to the respectability of the society to which he belonged and his knowledge of the impulse in a member of that society to escape occasionally from the atmosphere of respectability for a brief taste of its utmost contrast, recurred years later as a medium for illustrating the theme of dual personality in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. <sup>42</sup>

Stevenson was self-conscious about his Bohemian attitudes and adventures, and he wrote poems about them:

I walk the streets smoking my pipe  
And I love the dallying shop-girl,  
That leans with rounded stern to look  
at the fashions;  
And I hate the bustling citizen,  
The eager and hurrying man of affairs I hate,  
Because he bears his intolerance writ on his face,  
And every movement and word of him tells me how  
much he hates me.

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40. "Lay Morals", included in Vol. XXII, p. 206.  
41. David Daiches, Literature and Gentility in Scotland (Edinburgh 1982), p. 78.  
42. Malcolm Elwin, The strange Case of R.L. Stevenson (London 1950), p. 58.

I love night in the City,  
The lighted streets and the swinging gait  
of harlots,  
I love cool pale morning,  
In the empty bye-streets,  
With only here and there a female figure,  
A slavey with lifted dress and the key  
in her hands,  
A girl or two at play in a corner of waste-land  
Tumbling and showing their legs and crying out  
to me loosely. <sup>43</sup>

And again,

O fine, religious, decent folk,  
In Virtue's flaunting gold and scarlet,  
I sneer between two puffs of smoke <sup>44</sup>  
Give me the publican and harlot.

In his Bohemian days in Edinburgh, Stevenson sometimes half-identified himself with Robert Fergusson, the Edinburgh poet who had been born a century before him and lived only twenty-four years. (Fergusson had led a dissipated life which caused his early death). The elder poet showed contempt for the hypocrisy of "respectable" people, that may be seen in "Auld Reekie", one of the most famous of his poems. Stevenson must have relished the following lines:

On Sunday here, an alter'd scene  
O' men and manners meets our ein :  
Ane wad maist trow some people chose  
To change their faces wi' their clo'es,  
And fain wad gar ilk neighbour think  
They thirst for goodness, as for drink :  
But there's an unco dearth o' grace,  
That has nae mansion but the face,  
And never can obtain a part  
In benmost corner of the heart.  
Why should religion make us sad,  
If good frae virtue's to be had ?  
Na, rather gleefu' turn your face;  
Forsake hypocrisy, grimace;  
And never have it understood  
You fleg mankind frae being good. <sup>45</sup>

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43. Collected Poems, p. 82.

44. Omitted from Collected Poems. See New Poems by R.L. Stevenson (London, 1918), p. 35.

45. "Auld Reekie, a Poem", Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, ed. Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Edinburgh and London, 1974), p. 147.

The relationship between Stevenson and his father became much worse, when the father discovered his involvement in the L.J.R.; a secret organisation formed with such close friends as Bob Stevenson, Charles Baxter and James Walter Ferrier. The initials stood for Liberty, Justice and Reverence, and its constitution opened with the words: " Disregard everything our parents have taught us". Here we should consider Stevenson's other activities during these tense periods of his life. Leading an active, intellectual life at the University, he was elected to the Speculative Society in which he exchanged iconoclastic and rebellious ideas with his friends, and before which he read his essay "Two Questions on the Relations between Christ's Teaching and Modern Christianity". He believed that youth was wholly experimental. He set out to prepare himself to become a professional writer, playing the "sedulous ape"<sup>46</sup> to Hazlitt, Lamb, Wordsworth, Defoe, Montaigne and other great stylists. His writing apprenticeship, it may be added, was linked with his many wanderings in Scotland and England:

As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside, I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version - book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words.<sup>47</sup>

It was a great relief to Stevenson to escape from home trouble<sup>48</sup> for his summer holiday of 1873 to Cockfield Rectory, Suffolk, England where his cousin Mrs. Churchill Babington lived. There he met Mrs. Sitwell, an attractive, sociable lady who showed affection for creative youth. It was to her that he poured out all his troubles and aspirations. She gave him readily and generously the sympathy of which he was so much in need. Through her Stevenson was introduced to Sidney Colvin, Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge, critic and essayist, who, in his turn, introduced Stevenson to literary circles in London. Here it is interesting to see Colvin's first impression of young Stevenson:

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46. " A College Magazine", included in Memories and Portraits, p. 36.  
47. Ibid., p. 35.

..... he comprised within himself, and would flash on you in the course of a single afternoon, all the different ages and half the different characters of man, the unfaded freshness of a child, the ardent outlook and adventurous daydreams of a boy, the steadfast courage of manhood, the quick sympathetic tenderness of a woman, and already, as early as the mid-twenties of his life, an almost uncanny share of the ripe life-wisdom of old age. He was a fellow of infinite and unrestrained jest and yet of infinite earnest, the one very often a mask for the other; a poet, an artist, an adventurer, a man beset with flashly frailties, and despite his infirm health of strong appetites and unchecked curiosities; and yet a profoundly sincere moralist and preacher and son of the Covenanters after his fashion, deeply conscious of the war within his members, and deeply bent on acting up to the best he knew. 49

Though Stevenson took delight in the natural beauty of the English countryside, yet he felt like a fish out of water. Shortly after his arrival in Cockfield, he wrote to his mother:

I cannot get over my astonishment 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. Everything by the wayside, in the houses, or about the people, strikes me with an unexpected familiarity: I walk among surprises, for just where you think you have them, something wrong turns up.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed his travels in England, besides creating a very good opportunity for meeting influential people like Mrs. Sitwell and Sidney Colvin, helped him to be aware of his own Scottishness. One critic has remarked thus:

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48. In a letter to Charles Baxter Stevenson mentioned that he was then a "horrible atheist" in the eyes of his parents. See letters, Vol.I, p. 40.
49. Sidney Colvin, Memories and Notes of Persons and Places (London 1921), p.100.
50. Letters, Vol.I,p. 49.

His awareness of his own Scottishness, which increased with each extended stay he made outside his native country, was a tremendously important factor in his growth as a creative person. While his early essays take Scottish themes for treatment, they took some time to emerge in his fiction. Perhaps, a writer always needs to get away from his own environment, at least for a time, to be able to view it with the necessary objectivity. Stevenson certainly became the more appreciative of Scotland the more he could stand back from it. For the comparisons did not always by any means work against his own country. Scottish people were readier to talk about personal matters and serious subjects, he noted, than their English counterparts.... He thought the Suffolk country people sluggish and mentally lazy compared to the Bible-quoting articulate villagers of Swanston, steeped in local history and ancient lore. There was in fact an intensity about Scottish life which English life could never, and never did, provide him with.<sup>51</sup>

Stevenson's Scottishness is best shown in his essay "The Foreigner at Home" (1882). In this work he elaborates the differences in character and culture between Scotland and England. Here England is seen through a Scotch eye;

England and Scotland differ, indeed, in law, in history, in religion, in education, and in the very look of nature, and men's faces, not always widely, but always trenchantly..... A Scotsman may tramp the better part of Europe and the United States, and never again receive so vivid impression of foreign travel and strange lands and manners as on his first excursion into England. The change from a hilly to a level country strikes him with delighted wonder.....

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51. Paul Binding, R.L. Stevenson, p. 85.

One thing especially continues unfamiliar to the Scotsman's eye - the domestic architecture, the look of streets and buildings; the quaint, venerable age of many and the thin walls and warm colouring of all. We have in Scotland, far fewer ancient buildings, above all in country places, and those that we have are all of hewn or harled masonry. Wood has been sparingly used in their construction; the window-frames are sunken in the wall, not flat to the front, as in England; the roofs are steeper-pitched; even a hill farm will have a massy, square, cold and permanent appearance. English houses in comparison, have the look of cardboard toys, such as a puff might shatter. And to this the Scotsman never becomes used. His eye can never rest consciously on one of these brick houses..... but he is instantly reminded where he is, and instantly travels back in fancy to his home. "This is no' my ain house; I ken by the biggin' o't". An yet perhaps it is his own, bought with his own money, the key of it long polished in his pocket, but it has not yet, and never will be, thoroughly adopted by his imagination; nor does he cease to remember that, in the whole length and breadth of his native country, there was <sup>52</sup>no building even distantly resembling it.

Perhaps the most striking work revealing Stevenson to us in his early twenties is The Edifying Letters of the Rutherford Family ( a previously unpublished short story, but thanks to Roger G. Swearingen, it was first published in 1982 along with An Old Song, a newly discovered long story). The work is an account of what was going on in the Stevenson household. The "Rutherfords" are the Stevensons. Here, young William Rutherford describes his relations with his parents in a letter to a friend:

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52. "The Foreigner at Home", included in Memories and Portraits, pp.6 - 8.

I may come in when I please, they are up and broad awake, I apply my stealthy pass key in the small hours, and behold the dining room is lighted up like day and there is a domestic group about the fireplace, waiting in rosy respectability for the prodigal. This is a sort of anti-climax that my soul cannot abide. I may have been out all night climbing the heavens of invention, drinking deep, thinking high; go home, with my heart stirred to all its depths and my brain sparkling like wine and starlight; I open the door and the whole of this gaudy and light-hearted life must pass away in a moment, and give place to a few words of course and a pair of formal kisses. The sky-raker must give some account of his evening if you please, and the spirit which has just been reconstructing the universe and debating the attributes of God, must bring down its proud stomach, and screw up its somewhat lazy eyes, to read a chapter from the authorized version of the Bible! to be thus knocked off the apex of apotheosis, and sent to bed with a renewed sense of all one's troubles and sober after all, is as Butler [Baxter] would say, a sheer waste of drink.

Like his fictional persona Stevenson longed to travel away from home. Here William Rutherford describes an evening he spent with his friend Butler:

..... we pleased ourselves.... with elaborate pieces of childishness, making believe that we were going to start with all the trains, and looking forward to the pleasant waking in a new place with new air to breathe and a new accent in people's speech; making believe, by the slender aid of a marble table, that this refreshment bar was a Parisian Café, and we were free people with our pockets full of gold, making believe, in short, in all sorts of ways, that we had slipped the leash, and were gotten clear away out of our old life and out into the world as young men ought to be<sup>54</sup> among their rivals and their aspirations.

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53. An Old Song and Edifying letters of the Rutherford Family, ed. Roger G. Swearingen (Connecticut and Paisley, 1982), pp.85-86.  
54. Ibid., pp.86 - 87.

The desire was strong, not only to escape from the family house in Edinburgh, to "slip the leash", but to "see" the world around him and test himself in new situations and with new people.

True, Stevenson liked to travel away from home in pursuit of both health and congenial places and people. But he always had Scotland in mind wherever he went. We have already referred to his Bohemian days in Edinburgh; what should be mentioned here is that his revolt against Victorian Edinburgh was a "principled revolt", as David Daiches has put it.<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to notice that Stevenson

became a Bohemian on moral principle. The boy who delighted his mother by playing at being a Minister and acting out a church service, the youngster who dictated a "History of Moses" to a proud parent, the adolescent who wrote The Pentland Rising - and the father of his flock at Vailima who invented and offered up his own prayers before his assembled household, were all in many essentials the same character. His Calvinist forebears were always in his blood, as he very well knew. He was much concerned with morality and destiny. His objection to the Christianity he saw preached and practised around him in Victorian Edinburgh was a moral objection: he saw it as hypocritical, as not adequately involved with true morality. His cry "Give me the Publican and harlot" was not the cry of a libertine but the cry of a man outraged at what passed for conventional pieties: indeed, it is hardly too much to say that in some moods, in his student days, he saw himself almost as a Bohemian Jesus putting compassion and understanding above the letter of the law. This was not Calvinism, but it represented a moral pre-occupation of a kind stimulated by the moral-religious arguments that Calvinism had fostered in Scotland for generations.<sup>56</sup>

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55. David Daiches, "Stevenson and Scotland" in Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 23.

56. Ibid.

Stevenson had conflicting forces at work inside himself, and throughout his "vagabond" life he tried to reconcile them. It is wrong to regard him from one side only. He was a native Scotsman who identified himself with the history of his own country. He was also a Bohemian who found French ways of life most suited to his rebellious nature. W.E. Henley described him as

Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist,  
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,  
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,  
And something of the Shorter-Catechism, <sup>57</sup>

which shows the stern morality that lay far below the Bohemian surface. For the "Shorter-Catechism", referred to, is the summary of the belief of the Scottish Calvinists. It is interesting that the poet (Stevenson met Henley in Edinburgh in 1875 while the latter was seeking a cure for a tubercular foot, and admired his courage and adventurous spirit) could understand this quality in Stevenson so early in his career.

The period from 1870 onwards was chiefly passed in travel, which bore fruit in many essays, and Stevenson's first two books were devoted to accounts of Continental wayfaring. His biographer tells us that Stevenson in his early twenties

warned his mother that the rest of his life he would be often absent and affectionately reproached her with having had a tramp for a son. He kept his word: in 1886 he could list 210 towns of the United Kingdom and Europe in which he had slept one or more nights. <sup>58</sup>

During that time Stevenson was trying to assert his right to do what he liked, and to write what he felt and thought. He had, in a courageous and conscious manner, to tell the world that he was there, especially after giving up law for literature. And throughout his wandering life, which ended in his death in 1894 in Samoa, he travelled back in fancy to his "Auld Reekie" - a process that was part and parcel of his creative life.

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57. In "Apparition", see Poems by W.E. Henley, (London, 1898) p. 39.

58. J.C. Furnas, Voyage to Windward: The Life of R.L. Stevenson (London, 1952), p. 108.

CHAPTER TWO

Essays of Travel

Stevenson began his literary career as a writer of essays, going so far as to embark on experiences for the purpose of writing about them afterwards. In addition, he wrote essays whose themes were based upon his experiences in childhood and youth. His first contribution to periodical literature was "Roads", published in the Portfolio in 1873. The essay was planned while visiting Suffolk in England. In this work Stevenson presents us with his aesthetic principles which, when followed, will help the traveller not only to enjoy the road, but to associate himself with it. Combining aesthetic principles with sensual pleasures, he establishes his traveller as more pilgrim than pedestrian, who is in pursuit of a unity which only he can provide.

Stevenson describes, in a remarkably vivid way, the mental enjoyment of journeying here and there along country roadways:

Conspicuous among these sources of quiet pleasure [is] the character and variety of the road itself, along which he takes his way. Not only near at hand, in the lithe contortions with which it adapts itself to the interchanges of level and slope, but far away also, when he sees a few hundred feet of it upheaved against a hill and shining in the afternoon sun, he will find it an object so changeful and enlivening that he can always pleasurably busy his mind about it. He may leave the riverside, or fall out of the way of villages, but the road he has always with him; and, in the true humour of observation, will find in that sufficient company. From its subtle windings and changes of level there arises a keen and continuous interest, that keeps the attention ever alert and cheerful. Every sensitive adjustment to the contour of the ground, every little dip and swerve, seems instinct with life and an exquisite sense of balance and beauty.... The traveller is also aware of a sympathy of mood between himself and the road he travels.

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1. "Roads", included in Vol. XXV, p p.193 - 95.

This quotation may be considered as one of the most beautiful pieces of picturesque analysis in the language. It is interesting to note that Stevenson was ever aware of himself, and what he saw was not the crude fact of the object, but that fact as part of his own experience, explained by many private feelings and associations. He enjoyed so rare a perception of romantic landscape that the beauty of the tangible world was set in his heart in the beginning, and to the end he rejoiced in it.

Again, Stevenson makes the most of his keen sight to exult in the country roads. He "could steep himself undistractedly in details of topography and casual conversations like an impressionist Boy Scout qualifying for a merit badge in Observation".<sup>2</sup> In his critical study of Stevenson's works, Irving Saposnik suggests that "Roads" is "more than a simple piece of topographical description. It dwells upon the physical to describe what is essentially a spiritual experience". He goes on to say:

Stevenson's road becomes a path to other natural pleasures and a part of nature with its own beneficent inspiration. To travel that road is to journey beyond the horizon of possibility into a void of unlimited futurity. Although the end may be unrealized the pursuit itself is sufficient. As he concludes the essay, Stevenson illustrates the ideal; man is marching at the rear of a great army struggling through life, dreaming of his jubilant arrival within the gates of the City.

In "Walking Tours" (1876), Stevenson continues to journey along the countryside road, which is one of the pleasantest things in the world. Like Hazlitt (Stevenson refers to Hazlitt's "On Going a Journey"), he likes to walk alone, and he has his good reasons:

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2. J.C. Furnas, Voyage to Windward, p. 109.
  3. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson (Boston, 1974), p. 23.

To be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone. If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name; it is something else and more in the nature of a picnic. A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence, because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you, and because you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl. And then you must be open to all impressions and let your thoughts take colour from what you see. You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon. " I cannot see the wit, " says Hazlitt, " of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I wish to vegetate like the country", - which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter. <sup>4</sup>

Again, Stevenson shows us his aesthetic principles that make a traveller both delighted and associated with the landscape:

In the course of a day's walk, you see, there is much variance in the mood. From the exhilaration of the start, to the happy phlegm of the arrival, the change is certainly great. As the day goes on, the traveller moves from the one extreme towards the other. He becomes more and more incorporated with the material landscape, and the open-air drunkenness grows upon him with great strides, until he posts along the road, and sees everything about him, as in a cheerful dream. <sup>5</sup>

The essay presents us with some development in Stevenson's attitude towards going on a journey, which is his stay at a hotel for the night, smoking his pipe. To him these are hours of reflection, accompanied by drinking and sitting by the fire:

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4. "Walking Tours", included in Vol. XXII, p. 135.

5. Ibid, p. 138.

But it is at night, and after dinner, that the best hour comes. There are no such pipes to be smoked as those that follow a good day's march, the flavour of the tobacco is a thing to be remembered, it is so dry and aromatic, so full and so fine. If you wind up the evening with grog, you will own there was never such grog; at every sip a jocund tranquillity spreads about your limbs, and sits easily in your heart.....

If the evening be fine and warm, there is nothing better in life than to lounge before the indoor in the sunset, or lean over the parapet of the bridge, to watch the weeds and the quick fishes. It is then, if ever, that you taste joviality to the full significance of that audacious word. Your muscles are so agreeably slack, you feel so clean and so strong and so idle, that whether you move or sit still, whatever you do is done with pride and a kingly sort of pleasure.....

Or perhaps you are left to your own company for the night, and surely weather imprisons you by the fire..... To sit still and contemplate - to remember the faces of women without desire, to be pleased by the great deeds of men without envy, to be everything and everywhere in sympathy, and yet content to remain where and what you are - is not this to know both wisdom and virtue, and to dwell with happiness ?.... And whether it was wise or foolish, tomorrow's travel will carry you, body and mind, into some different parish of the infinite. (pp.140 - 42)

Thus Stevenson's Bohemian nature combines both smoking the pipe by the fireside and making physical movement. David Daiches in this respect has remarked:

A note which appears in many of Stevenson's early essays, a direct expression of an important side to his character which is unrelated to the emotional problems posed by his relation to his family, is what one might call the "open air-cum-tobacco" note which is most simply expressed in "Walking Tours".

This sense of the countryside, linked so strongly to a peculiarly male sense of human comfort, is of interest to the historian of ideas as being a sort of hedonistic counterpart of the Wordsworthian view of nature... it was a feeling which became more and more manifest as the century drew to a close, and which came to its somewhat decadent climax in the early years of the present century. It lingered on in many of the Georgian poets and essayists. But it was in Stevenson that this attitude achieved its most disciplined expression, both in his essays and in certain passages in the novels.<sup>6</sup>

In his three walking tours<sup>7</sup> ("Cockermouth and Keswick", "An Autumn Effect", "A Winter's Walk in Carrick and Galloway"), Stevenson takes delight in natural scenes and meeting people. He nevertheless expresses his sense of strangeness during his visit to Cockermouth, England, in 1871. Here he realises his own Scottishness:

I was lighting my pipe as I stepped out of the inn at Cockermouth, and did not raise my head until I was fairly in the street, when, I did so, it flashed upon me that I was in England; the evening sunlight lit up English houses, English faces, and English conformation of street - as it were, an English atmosphere blew against my face. There is nothing perhaps more puzzling.... than the great gulf that is set between England and Scotland - a gulf so easy in appearance, in reality so difficult to traverse. Here are two people almost identical in blood; pent up together on one small island, so that their intercourse (one would have thought) must be as close as that of the prisoners who shared one cell of the Bastille; the same in language and religion; and yet a few years of quarrelsome isolation - a mere forenoon's tiff, as one may call it, in comparison with the great historical cycles - have so separated their thoughts and ways that not unions, not mutual dangers, nor steamers, nor railways

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6. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson (Glasgow, 1947) p. 160.  
7. All included in Vol. XXVI.

nor all the King's horses and all  
the King's men, seem able to obliterate  
the broad distinction. (p142)

Stevenson goes on walking till "I came out on the high-road, and sat down to rest myself on a heap of stones at the top of a long hill, with Cockermouth lying snugly at the bottom". There he meets a beggar-woman who tells him a tragic story about her own sister, who has seduced her husband from her after many years of married life. This shows Stevenson's interest in encountering different kinds of people.

In "A Winter's Walk in Carrick and Galloway" (1876), Stevenson is more at home than in his travels in the Chiltern Hills in England described in "An Autumn Effect" (1875). Here he presents us with a delightful description of the Scottish Lowlands:

It had snowed overnight. The fields were all sheeted up; they were tucked in among the snow, and their shape was modelled through the pliant counterpane, like children tucked in by a fond mother. The wind had made ripples and folds upon the surface, like what the sea, in quiet weather, leaves upon the sand. There was a frosty stifle in the air. An effusion of coppery light on the summit of Brown Carrick showed where the sun was trying to look through, but along the horizon clouds of cold fog had settled down, so that there was no distinction of sky and sea. Over the white shoulders of the headlands, or in the opening of bays, there was nothing but a great vacancy and blackness, and the road as it drew near the edge of the cliff seemed to skirt the shores of creation and void space.  
(p. 174)

Not only does Stevenson like to travel in place, but in time as well. Here he travels back in fancy to the Scottish past as he comes to Dunure:

..... the masters of Dunure, it is to be noticed, were remarkable of old for inhumanity. One of these vaults where the snow had drifted was that "black voute" where "Mr Alane Stewart, Commendatour of Crossraguel", endured his fiery trials. On the 1st and 7 September, 1570 (ill dates for Mr Alane !), Gilbert, Earl of Cassilis, his chaplain, his baker, his cook, his pantryman and another servant, bound the poor Commendatour "betwix an iron chimlay and a fire", and there cruelly roasted him until he signed away his abbacy. It is one of the ugliest stories of an ugly period, but not, somehow without such a flavour of the ridiculous as makes it hard to sympathise quite seriously with the victim. And it is consoling to remember that he got away at last, and kept his abbacy, and, over and above, had a pension from the Earl until he died. (pp.177 - 78)

Both "Memoirs of an Islet" and "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places" (1874) are reminiscent essays,<sup>8</sup> in which Stevenson recalls his travels in Scottish coasts as part of his engineering training. It was in the islet of Earraid, providing the text for "Memoirs of an Islet", that Stevenson

delighted chiefly. The lighthouse settlement scarce encroached beyond its fences; over the top of the first brae the ground was all virgin, the world all shut out, the face of things unchanged by any of man's doings. Here was no living presence, save for the limpets on the rocks, for some old, grey, rain-beaten ram that I might rouse out of a ferny den betwixt two boulders, or for the haunting and piping of the gulls. It was older than man; it was found so by incoming Celts and seafaring Norsemen, and Columba's priests. The earthy savour of the bog plants, the rude disorder of the boulders, the inimitable seaside brightness of the air, the brine and the iodine, the lap of the billows among the weedy reefs, the sudden springing up of a great run of dashing surf along the sea-front of the isle, all that I saw and felt my predecessors must have seen and felt with scarce a difference. I steeped myself in open air and in past ages. (p. 74)

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8. Both are included in Vol. XXV.

Perhaps Stevenson's most vivid evocations of the Scottish coast are to be found in two works: "The Merry Men" and Kidnapped. In both instances he drew on the weeks he spent on the islet of Earraid. In "The Merry Men" he made it the home of the Lowland hero's mad uncle; in Kidnapped it is where David Balfour is lost for a few days, suffering from hunger and loneliness. Indeed the place was in Stevenson's mind until the last days of his life. Writing to James Payn from Samoa, he remembered how,

when the Franco-Prussian war began, and I was in Eilean Earraid, far enough from the sound of the loudest cannonade, I could hear the shots fired, and I felt the pang in my breast of a man struck. It was sometimes so distressing, so instant, that I lay in the heather on the top of the island with my face hid, kicking my heels for agony.<sup>9</sup>

In the essay itself Stevenson further describes these symptoms of imaginative sensibility:

In that year cannon were roaring for days together on French battlefields- and I would sit in my isle (I call it mine, after the use of lovers) and think upon the war, and the loudness of these far-away battles, and the pain of the men's wounds, and the weariness of their marching. And I would think too of that other war which is as old as mankind, and is indeed the life of man: the unsparing war, the grinding slavery of competition; the toil of seventy years, dear-bought bread, precarious honour, the perils and pitfalls, and the poor rewards. It was a long look forward; the future summoned me as with trumpet calls, it warmed me back as with a voice of weeping and beseeching; and I thrilled and trembled on the brink of life, like a childish bather on the beach. (p. 75)

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9. Letters, Vol.II,p. 351.

Wick in the Highlands was the "wild" and "inhospitable" place to which Stevenson refers in "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places".

Here Stevenson expresses his feelings towards it:

The country to which I refer was a level and treeless plateau, over which the winds cut like a whip. For miles on miles it was the same. A river, indeed, fell into the sea near the town where I resided, but the valley of the river was shallow and bald.. There were roads, certainly, but roads that had no beauty or interest.... It seemed to be always blowing on that coast. Indeed, this had passed into the speech of the inhabitants, and they saluted each other when they met with "Breezy, breezy" instead of the customary "Fine day" of farther south. (pp. 185 - 86).

In one of his early letters from Wick to his mother, Stevenson showed the same attitude:

Certainly Wick in itself possesses no beauty: bare, grey shores, grim grey houses, grim grey sea; not even the gleam of red tiles; not even the greenness of a tree..... In Wick I have never heard any one greet his neighbour with the usual "Fine day" or "Good morning". Both come shaking their heads, and both say, "Breezy, breezy !" And such is the atrocious quality of the climate, that the remark is almost invariably justified by the fact. The streets are full of the Highland fishers, lubberly, stupid,<sup>10</sup> inconceivably lazy and heavy to move.

However, Stevenson tries to overcome his sense of uneasiness about the place, fixing his eyes on what is beautiful and appealing:

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10. Letters, Vol. I, pp. 15-16.

For when we are put down in some unsightly neighbourhood, and especially if we have come to be more or less dependent on what we see, we must set ourselves to hunt out beautiful things with all the ardour and patience of a botanist after a rare plant. Day by day we perfect ourselves in the art of seeing nature more favourably. We learn to live with her, as people learn to live with fretful or violent spouses: to dwell lovingly on what is good, and shut our eyes against all that is bleak or inharmonious. We learn, also, to come to each place in the right spirit. The traveller, as Brantome quaintly tells us, "fait des discours en soi pour se soutenir en chemin" and into these discourses he weaves something out of all that he sees and suffers by the way..... ( p. 182)

Apart from this paradoxical work, it is worth mentioning here, Stevenson never touches the Highlands in his early essays; while in Kidnapped, which is the only long work with a Highland background, the description is made that of a Lowland young hero to whom the mountains are unfriendly wilderness. This still should not hide the fact that Stevenson himself became interested in his early thirties in the beauty and history of the Highlands as part of his own country.

So far the attempt has been made to throw light on Stevenson's travels in Britain, which were to his liking since they involved an escape from the family home in Edinburgh. One critic suggests that Stevenson "might better have used as his motto Wordsworth's ' A Traveller I am / Whose tale is only of himself', for this quotation aptly describes his topographical and reminiscent essays".<sup>11</sup> He goes on to say:

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11. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 29.

Stevenson attempts to make his adult travels a philosophical experience in which he appears as both subject and object. His plan is to deal with each of the topographical essays within the broader context of a sentimental journey (somewhat in the manner of Lawrence Sterne) in which the power of his personality will both lend and receive impressions necessary to a full and meaningful appreciation and exposition. <sup>12</sup>

We may add that Stevenson's realization on the spot of his own Scottishness becomes an integral part of this "philosophical experience".

In "Ordered South" (1874), the first recorded account of his French travels, Stevenson was ordered by Dr. Andrew Clark, one of London's distinguished physicians, to winter in the Riviera, especially after worsening development in both his health and his relations with his parents. The essay, together with his letters from there, reflects the discouraged spirit of the seeker after health. At that time, there was no proper medical treatment for patients suffering from tuberculosis or "weak chest". " 'Change of air' was prescribed almost as freely as aspirin is now; that is often for lack of anything more promising to suggest". <sup>13</sup> And Stevenson in Menton was one Scotsman among many health-seekers from other nationalities.

At the beginning of the work, however, Stevenson expresses some mood of exultation on his departure from England, which lasts through the railway journey:

And so too he [that is Stevenson himself] can enjoy the admirable brevity and simplicity of such little glimpses of country and country ways as flash upon him through the windows of the train; little glimpses that have a character all of their own; sights seen as a travelling swallow might see them from the wing, or Iris as she went abroad over the land on some Olympian errand.

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12. Ibid.

13. J.C. Furnas, "Stevenson and Exile" in Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 128.

..... The speed is so easy, and the train disturbs so little the scenes through which it takes us, that our heart becomes full of the placidity and stillness of the country  
.....  
14

This mood of exultation is noticeably changed as our traveller reaches his destination:

It is only after he is fairly arrived and settled down in his chosen corner, that the invalid begins to understand the change that has befallen him. Everything about him is as he had remembered, or as he had anticipated. Here, at his feet, under his eyes, are the olive gardens and the blue sea. Nothing can change the eternal magnificence of form of the naked Alps behind Menton ; nothing, not even the crude curves of the railway, can utterly deform the suavity of contour of one bay after another along the whole reach of the Riviera. And of all this, he has only a cold head-knowledge that is divorced from enjoyment. He recognises with his intelligence that this thing and that thing is beautiful, while in his heart of hearts he has to confess that it is not beautiful for him..... The world is disenchanted for him. He seems to himself to touch things with muffled hands, and to see them through a veil. (pp.74-75)

This essay may be regarded as the only one in which Stevenson demonstrates his invalidism. In almost all his other writings he compensates for his ill health either by following a physically outdoor activity, or suggesting a mouthpiece character devoid of any physical disabilities. (Characters such as Jim Hawkins and David Balfour, may, among others, testify to the fact). As has already been indicated, Stevenson's thoughts wander back home, wherever he is or under whatever mental condition he may be. Here he mingles descriptions of France and the Mediterranean with recollection of Edinburgh, and relates both to a meditative revelation of the ups and downs of the invalid's state of mind:

He is homesick for the hale rough weather; for the tracery of the frost upon his window-panes at morning, the reluctant descent of the first flakes, and the white roofs relieved against the sombre sky. And yet the stuff of which these yearnings are made, is of the flimsiest: if but the thermometer fall a little below its ordinary Mediterranean level, or a wind come down from the snow-clad Alps behind, the spirit of his fancies changes upon the instant, and many a doleful vignette of the grim wintry streets at home returns to him, and begins to haunt his memory. The hopeless, huddled attitude of tramps, in doorway, the flinching gait of barefoot children on the icy pavement, the sheen of the rainy streets towards afternoon; the meagre anatomy of the poor defined by the clinging of wet garments, the high canorous note of the North-easter on days when the very houses seem to stiffen with cold: these, and such as these, crowd back on him, and mockingly substitute themselves for the fanciful winter scenes with which he had pleased himself a while before. He cannot be glad enough that he is where he is. (pp.75 - 76)

Stevenson goes on to say that the invalid's "numbness of spirit" is similar to "a premature old age", for like an old man, with senses dulled by infirmity, the invalid can contemplate the possible approach of death as the inevitable ending of life with all its joys and sorrows:

It is not so much, indeed, death that approaches as life that withdraws and withers up from round about him. He has outlived his own usefulness, and almost his own enjoyment; if never again will he be young and strong and passionate, if the actual present shall be to him always like a thing read in a book or remembered out of the far away past; if, in fact, this be veritably nightfall, he will not wish greatly for the continuance of a twilight that only strains and disappoints the eyes, but steadfastly

await the perfect darkness. He will pray for Medea: when she comes, let her either rejuvenate or slay. (p.81)

It may be interesting if we make a comparison between this quotation and a letter from Menton to Mrs. Sitwell in whom Stevenson much confided:

If you knew how old I felt ! I am sure this is what age brings with it - this carelessness, this disenchantment, this continual bodily weariness. I am a man of seventy: O Medea, kill me, or make me young again !<sup>15</sup>

Both the essay and the many letters that Stevenson sent from Menton to Mrs. Sitwell in England are significant, since they shed light on his emotional and physical condition at a critical period of his creative development. Some years later, he described his dilemma at the time in " Lay Morals" in the person of " a friend of mine; a young man like others; generous, flighty, as variable as youth itself, but always with some high motives and on the search of higher thoughts of life". He goes on to say:

Some time after this, falling into ill-health he was sent at great expense to a more favourable climate; and then I think his perplexities were thickest. When he thought of all the other young men of singular promise, upright, good, the prop of families, who must remain at home to die, and with all their possibilities be lost to life and mankind; and how he, by one more unmerited favour, was chosen out from all these others to survive; he felt as if there were no life, no labour, no devotion of soul and body, that could repay and justify these partialities. A religious lady [Mrs. Sitwell] to whom he communicated these reflections, could see no force in them whatever..... Like many invalids, he supposed that he would die. Now should he die, he saw no means of repaying this huge loan which, by the hands

of his father, mankind had advanced him for his sickness. In that case it would be lost money. So he determined that the advance should be as small as possible, and, so long as he continued to doubt his recovery, lived in an upper room, and grudged himself all but necessities. But so soon as he began to perceive a change for the better, he felt justified in spending more freely, to speed and brighten his return to health, and trusted in the future to lend a help to mankind, as mankind, out of its treasury, had lent a help to him.<sup>16</sup>

Stevenson concludes his paradoxical "Ordered South " by expressing the idea that there are many valuable things in life which make him bound to it. He realizes that

the desire of love or of fame scarcely moved him, in his days of health, more strongly than these generous aspirations move him now; and so life is carried forward beyond life, and a vista kept open for the eyes of hope, even when his hands grope already on the face of the impassable. (p. 82).

Again, this is the only work in which Stevenson directly parades his ill-health. The tensions and dramas of his relations with his parents may at times have been depressing, but they also gave his life a substance and helped him to feel that he was fully involved in life. Such periods of his life were experimental, so far as his emotions and state of mind were concerned, out of which he came with new insights and a much stronger desire for active and adventurous life.

On his way back home from Menton, Stevenson went to stay some weeks in Paris with his cousin, Bob, who introduced him to the society of various Bohemian artists and students. He took delight in his new acquaintances; the concept of Bohemianism was very much in the air at that time, and for none did it have a more strong appeal than himself.

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16. "Lay Morals", included in Vol. XXII, p p. 171 - 72.

Stevenson associated himself with this congenial society, and all were under the spell of Scènes de la Vie de Bohème - a novel by Henri Murger describing the story of a group of poor but talented Parisians who considered love and art to be more important than material goods and respectability. Later in his writings, Stevenson was to make two of his heroes experience Bohemian life in Paris: Dick in "The Story of a Lie" and Loudon Dodd in The Wrecker. They both visit Paris at a time when relationships with their fathers are not good.

It was in the year 1875 that Stevenson began his visits to the artists' colonies in Fontainebleau, first introduced to him by Bob Stevenson. His two essays, <sup>17</sup> entitled "Forest Notes" (1876) and "Fontainebleau" (1884) give us an account of the interesting and joyful life that he led there. The French forests were so congenial to his Bohemian nature that he once said that for three years at least his true address was "care of the forest of Fontainebleau". In "Forest Notes", Stevenson exults in the natural scenes of the place, familiarizing himself with its villages - Franchard, Barbizon, Melun, Grez - and its historical stories. Here he mingles contemporary life with the past:

Here and there a few grey rocks creep  
out of the forest as if to sun themselves....  
The sun goes down, a swollen orange, as it  
were into the sea. A blue-clad peasant  
rides home, with a harrow smoking behind  
him among the dry clods. Another still  
works with his wife in their little strip....

These peasant farmers are well off  
nowadays, and not by any means overworked;  
but somehow you always see in them the  
historical representative of the serf of  
yore, and think not so much of present  
times, which may be prosperous enough, as  
of the cold days when the peasant was  
taxed beyond possibility of payment, and

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17. Both are included in Vol. XXVI.

lived, in Michelet's image, like a hare between two furrows.... These woods have rung to the horns of all the Kings of France, from Philip Augustus downwards. They have seen Saint Louis exercise the dogs he brought with him from Egypt; Francis I go a-hunting with ten thousand horses in his train; and Peter of Russia following his first stag. And so they are still haunted for the imagination by royal hunts and progresses, and peopled with the faces of memorable men of yore. And this distinction is not only in virtue of the pastime of dead monarchs. Great events, great revolutions, great cycles in the affairs of men, have here left their note, here taken shape in some significant and dramatic situation. It was hence that Guise and his leaguers led Charles the Ninth a prisoner to Paris. Here..... Napoleon met the Pope beside a woodland cross. (p p.208-12 )

After travelling back in fancy to the French past, Stevenson comes to elaborate the magic of the forest, which is stimulating to his body and purifying to his mind. Here it is interesting to make a comparison between his state of mind as he goes on exploring the forests and that already shown in "Ordered South":

But indeed, it is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of the air, that emanation from the old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit..... It is the great moral spa; this forest without a fountain is itself the great fountain of Juventus. It is the best place in the world to bring an old sorrow that has been a long while your friend and enemy..... With every hour you change. The air penetrates through your clothes, and nestles to your living body. You love exercise and slumber, long fasting and full meals. You forget all your scruples and live a while in peace and freedom, and for the moment only..... For the forest takes away from you all excuse to die. (p p.231 - 34)

Some period of every year from 1875 to 1879, Stevenson passed in this part of France, growing to know and to love the forest of Fontainebleau and the Valley of Loing. Not only did he feel the necessity to go on wandering, but he had the late 19th century artist's obligatory sense of commitment to France as symbolizing the true Bohemian atmosphere for the free pursuit of creative talents. Barbizon, Millet's native land, was a favourite place, and the Inn there, Siron's, frequented by artists from different parts of the world, had a special attraction for him. ( In a letter to his mother Stevenson expressed his exultation, <sup>18</sup> in his stay at Barbizon). In "Fontainebleau" he looks back on his days there:

I was for some time a consistent Barbizonian; et ego in Arcadia vixi, it was a pleasant season; and that noiseless hamlet lying close among the borders of the wood is for me, as for so many others, a great spot in memory. The great Millet was just dead, the green shutters of his modest house were closed; his daughters were in mourning. The date of my first visit was thus an epoch in the history of art: in a lesser way, it was an epoch in the history of the Latin Quarter.....

Siron's Inn, that excellent artists' barrack, was managed upon easy principles. At any hour of the night, when you returned from wandering in the forest, you went to the billiard-room and helped yourself to liquors, or descended to the cellar and returned laden with beer or wine. The Siron's were all locked in slumber, there was none to check your inroads; only at the week's end a computation was made, the gross sum was divided, and a varying share set down to every lodger's name under the rubric : estrats.....

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18. Letters, Vol. I. p. 104.

At any hour of the morning, again,  
you could get your coffee or cold  
milk, and set forth in the forest....  
And at noon, and again at six  
o'clock, a good meal awaited you on  
Siron's table. The whole of your  
accommodation, set aside that varying  
item of the estrats, cost you five  
francs a day; your bill was never  
offered you until you asked for it;  
and if you were out of luck's way  
you might depart for where you pleased  
and leave it pending. ( pp.195 - 99)

Stevenson delightedly associated himself with the forest artists who, though belonging to different cultures, had one thing in common: the love of art for its own sake. He did not of course paint as they did, but he was greatly impressed by their free and simple Bohemian ways of life that most suited his own. The place was a source of inspiration that would assist him in his literary life:

Our society..... was full of high spirits,  
of laughter, and of the initiative of  
youth. The few elder men who joined us  
were still young at heart, and took the  
key from their companions.... It was a  
good place and a good life for any  
naturally-minded youth; better yet for the  
student of painting, and perhaps best of all  
for the student of letters..... But, in such  
a place, it was hardly possible to write;  
he could not drug his conscience, like the  
painter, by the production of listless  
studies; he saw himself idle among many who  
apparently, and some who were really,  
employed; and what with the impulse of  
increasing health and the continual  
provocation of romantic scenes, he became  
tormented with the desire to work. He  
enjoyed a strenuous idleness full of  
visions, hearty meals, long, sweltering  
walks, mirth among companions; and still  
floating like music through his brain,  
foresights of great works that Shakespeare  
might be proud to have conceived, headless  
epics, glorious torsos of dramas, and words  
that were alive with import. ( pp.200 - 201)

Thus Stevenson's extended visits to Paris and Fontainebleau were a turning-point in his life since they revealed to him the culture that he felt had most to give him and that could both refresh and stimulate him. He admired in the French what is often called their douceur de vivre, their art of making life pleasant and aesthetically satisfying. Paris and the artists' settlements were for him areas of liberation, places where he could loosen the hold of the Calvinist stronghold of his upbringing. His Bohemian days in Edinburgh were always overlooked by the threatening images of religious conviction. Critics have stressed the importance of Stevenson's travels in France. One of them is Malcolm Elwin, who tends to deal with the subject after the manner of Jekyll and Hyde:

To become an artist, he must devote himself wholly to his art; he could not afford, as his father wished, to court it out of office hours as a tricky mistress, while maintaining at home a safe domestic spouse to supply his creature comforts. Throughout his University years he had led a double life: as Jekyll, he had studied, first engineering, then law, and further deferred to his parents' wishes by sharing their social engagements and allowing them to direct his holidays; as Hyde, he had studied to train himself as a writer, sought romance where he could find it, and resorted for pleasure to tap-room revelry. Agreement to practise law would condemn him forever to such a double life. The decision could not be delayed; he must choose now between a double life and undivided devotion to his art. Barbizon determined his decision because it showed him the difference between a full and a divided life.

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19. Malcolm Elwin, The Strange Case of R.L. Stevenson, p.103.

Indeed, Stevenson was at his best during his travels in France. He spoke French fluently, and he was well-read in French literature. His periods there stimulated an interest in fifteenth-century French history and literature, which bore fruit in his essays on Charles of Orleans and Francois Villon as well as his stories "A lodging for the Night" and "The Sire de Maletroit's Door". Besides, romantic scenes suggested incidents to him, and throughout his life inspiration for fiction was to come from places he saw. This is shown in his story "The Treasure of Franchard", which may be read as "a rather charming study of French provincial life at its most attractive...."<sup>20</sup>. It is interesting here to note that Stevenson, though absorbed in French Bohemian ways of life, was travelling in imagination back to his Scottish past which still meant a great deal to him. Here he is writing to Charles Baxter from France in 1877:

For making all allowance for little rules and hitches, the past looks very delightful to me: the past when you were not going to be married, and I was not trying to write a novel; the past when you went through to B of Allan to contemplate Mrs. Chawless in the house of God, and I went home trembling every day lest Heaven should open and the thunderbolt of parental anger light upon my head; the past where we have been drunk and sober, and sat outside of grocer's shops on fine dark nights, and wrangled in the Sepculative, and heard mysterious whistling in Waterloo Place, and met missionaries from Aberdeen; generally, the past.<sup>21</sup>

Stevenson, it is worth mentioning, was firmly setting his foot on the road towards professional literary life in his late twenties, contributing as many essays and short stories as he could write to such periodicals as The Portfolio, London, The Cornhill and others.

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20. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 13-

21. R.L. Stevenson, Stevenson's letters to Charles Baxter, ed. Delancey Ferguson and Marshall Waingrow (New Haven, 1956), p48.

He was travelling as much as writing. He saw himself as "a lifetime wanderer, a sort of literary tramp: this was his version of the artist as exile".<sup>22</sup> To conclude his essays of travel, a word should be said on "Davos in Winter" (1881), in which Stevenson depicts his life in the Swiss Alps with his wife and step-son (after his return from the States), in the winters of 1880-82, in pursuit of health. He did not like his surroundings, feeling that

a mountain valley, an Alpine winter, and an invalid's weakness make up among them a prison of the most effective kind. The roads, indeed, are cleared, and at least one footpath dodging up the hill; but to these the health seeker is rigidly confined. There are for him no cross cuts over the field, no following of streams, no unguided rambles in the wood. His walks are cut and dry..... Sounds, too, are absent; not a bird pipes, not a bough<sup>23</sup> waves, in the dead, windless atmosphere...

Stevenson expresses similar feelings towards the place in a letter to Sidney Colvin:

[ Davos ] tells on my old gipsy nature,  
like a violin hung up, I begin to lose<sup>24</sup>  
what music there was in me.....

Stevenson found solace in making friends with other health-seekers, among whom was John Addington Symonds, an art historian and critic. He also did find solace in recalling his Scottish past, a nostalgic theme which we have traced so far in much of his writing. In one of his letters from Davos to Baxter, Stevenson wrote:

Pray write to me something cheery.  
A little Edinburgh gossip, in Heaven's  
name. Ah ! what would I not give to  
steal this evening with you through

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22. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson and his World (London 1973) p. 36.  
23. "Davos in Winter", included in Vol. XXVI, pp.244 - 45.  
24. Letters, Vol. I, p. 197.

the big, echoing, college archway,  
and away south under the street lamps  
and away to dear Brash's, now defunct !  
[ Brash was a Lothian Road publican  
who sold gin ]. But the old time is  
dead also, never, never to revive. It  
was a sad time too, but so gay and so  
hopeful..... O for ten Edinburgh  
minutes - sixpence between us, and the  
ever-glorious Lothian Road, or dear  
mysterious Leith Walk ! But here, a  
sheer hulk, lies poor Tom Bowling;  
here in this strange place, whose very  
strangeness would have been heaven to  
him then; and aspires, yes, C.B., 25  
with tears, after the past.

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CHAPTER THREE

Books of Travel

Stevenson's French and American Travels

An Inland Voyage is Stevenson's first book of travel (1878). The voyage was begun in 1876 in the company of Sir Walter Simpson with whom Stevenson had already made several short cruises along the Scottish coasts. The book describes their trip down the Oise River in two canoes: the Cigarette (Sir Walter's) and the Arethusa (Stevenson's). Throughout the voyage, they encounter many adventures which show Stevenson at his best. As is ever the case with Stevenson, he identifies himself with people and places whose nature is congenial to his own. Here the life of a bargee sounds attractive to our Bohemian:

I am sure I would rather be a bargee  
than occupy any position under Heaven  
that required attendance at an office...  
The bargee is on shipboard; he is  
master in his own ship; he can land  
whenever he will; he can never be kept  
beating off a lee-shore a whole frosty  
night when the sheets are as hard as  
iron; and so far as I can make out, time  
stands as nearly still with him as is  
compatible with the return of bed-time  
or the dinner-hour. It is not easy to<sup>1</sup>  
see why a bargee should ever die.

Stevenson is so much fascinated by life on the river, and particularly by the barges making a slow and dignified passage through French and Belgian waterways (the following year he, Simpson and Bob thought about purchasing a vessel of their own, which they named the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne, but the plan did not materialise because of the lack of funds), that he cannot help accepting an invitation on board by a barge-living French family. He admires their simple life, and proceeds to express his true feelings for the French:

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1. An Inland Voyage, Vol. XV, p. 9.

What I like so much in France, is the clear, unflinching recognition by everybody of his own luck. They all know on which side their bread is buttered, and take a pleasure in showing it to others, which is surely the better part of religion. And they scorn to make a poor mouth over their poverty, which I take to be the better part of manliness. I have heard a woman, in quite a better position at home, with a good bit of money in hand, refer to her own child with a horrid whine as " a poor man's child". I would not say such a thing to the Duke of Westminster. And the French are full of this spirit of independence. Perhaps it is the result of republican institutions, as they call them. Much more likely it is because there are so few people really poor that the whiners are not enough to keep each other in countenance. (pp.50-51)

The two friends go on paddling. Stevenson gives us a very amusing account of their enthusiastic reception by the members of the Royal Sport Nautique in Brussels, who know some English boating terms:

We were English boating-men, and the Belgian boating-men fell upon our necks. I wonder if French Huguenots were as cordially greeted by English Protestants when they came across the Channel out of great tribulation. But, after all what religion knits people so closely as a common sport ? (p. 13)

Commenting on the remark of these ingenuous Belgian young people, "We are employed in commerce during the day; but in the evening, voyez-vous, nous sommes serieux", he writes:

These were the words. They were all employed over the frivolous mercantile concerns of Belgium during the day; but in the evening they found some hours for the serious concerns of life. I may have a wrong idea of wisdom, but I think that was a very wise remark. People connected with literature and philosophy are busy all their days in getting rid of second-hand notions and false standards. It is their profession, in the sweat of their brows, by dogged thinking, to recover their old fresh view of life, and distinguish what they really and originally like from what they have only learned to tolerate perforce. And these Royal Nautical Sportsmen had the distinction still quite legible in their hearts. They had still those clean perceptions of what is nice and nasty, what is interesting and what is dull, which envious old gentlemen refer to as illusions.... They still knew that the interest they took in their business was a trifling affair compared to their spontaneous, long suffering affection for nautical sports. To know what you prefer instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive. (pp.13-14)

At Maubeuge, Stevenson meets the driver of the hotel omnibus, who is dissatisfied with his life and looks forward to travelling around the world. Here Stevenson, it is natural, records the incident with great sympathy:

He had heard of our little journey, and came to me at once in envious sympathy. How he longed to travel! he told me how he longed to be somewhere else, and see the round world before he went into the grave ! "Here I am", said he. "I drive to the station. Well. And then I drive back again to the hotel. And so on every day and all the week round.

My God, is that life ?" I could not say I thought it was - for him. He pressed me to tell him where I had been, and where I hoped to go; and as he listened, I declare the fellow sighed. Might not this have been a brave African traveller, or gone to the Indies after Drake ? But it is an evil age for the gypsily inclined among men. He who can sit squarest on a three-legged stool, he it is who has the wealth and glory. (p. 20)

And he goes on to express his dislike for what is respectable:

Respectability is a very good thing in its way, but it does not rise superior to all considerations. I would not for a moment venture to hint that it was a matter of taste; but I think I will go as far as this: that if a position is admittedly unkind, uncomfortable, unnecessary, and superfluously useless, although it were as respectable as the Church of England, the sooner a man is out of it, the better for himself and all concerned. (pp.20 - 21)

Travelling, as Stevenson and his friend did, in unusual clothes, brings about much trouble. They are refused lodging by French inkeepers. They are thought to be pedlars wherever they go. All this gives an added charm and humour to the narrative. The spirit of Bohemianism shown years before on Edinburgh streets during Stevenson's student days is still there. Here he describes how they are maltreated, owing to their strange appearance, by a French landlady at La Fère :

"You will find beds in the suburb", she remarked. "We are too busy for the like of you".

If we could make an entrance, change our clothes, and order a bottle of wine, I felt sure we could put things right; so said I, "If we cannot sleep, we may at least dine" - and was for depositing my bag.

What a terrible convulsion of nature was that which followed in the landlady's face !

She made a run at us and stamped her foot. "Out with you - out of the door"! she screeched. "Sortez ! sortez! sortez par la porte !"

I do not know how it happened, but next moment we were out in the rain and darkness, and I was cursing before the carriage entry like a disappointed mendicant. Where were the boating men of Belgium ? ( pp.79-80)

As he did before in his British and French travels, Stevenson here tries to make the most of his senses to enjoy Nature in which he finds a good refuge from the restrictions of civilization. As he goes past woods, he gives us his impressions in one of the most beautiful passages of the book:

And surely of all smells in the world, the smell of many trees is the sweetest and most fortifying..... Again, the smell of the forests is infinitely changeful; it varies with the hour of the day, not in strength merely, but in character.... I wish our way had always lain among woods. Trees are the most civil society. An old oak that has been growing where he stands since before the Reformation, taller than many spires, more stately than the greater part of mountains, and yet a living thing, liable to sickness and death, like you and me: is not that in itself a speaking lesson in history? But acres on acres full of such patriarchs contiguously rooted, their green tops billowing in the wind, their stalwart younglings pushing up about their knees; a whole forest, healthy and beautiful, giving colour to the light, giving perfume to the air: what is this but the most imposing piece in nature's repertory ? Heine wished to be like Merlin under the oaks of Broceliande. ( pp.40 - 41)

One may regard the tree as an ordinary beautiful thing; but with Stevenson's romantic imagination, it is "a speaking lesson in history".

When Stevenson visits Noyon Cathedral, which stands about a mile from the river, he displays more interest in the aesthetic and historical associations of the place than in its religious practices, of which he is critical. It is interesting to see how his imagination is working on the spot:

I have seldom looked on the east end of a church with more complete sympathy. As it flanges out in three wide terraces, and settles down broadly on the earth, it looks like the poop of some great old battleship.... There is a roll in the ground, and the towers just appear above the pitch of the roof, as though the good ship were bowing lazily over an Atlantic swell. At any moment it might be a hundred feet away from you, climbing the next billow. At any moment a window might open, and some old admiral thrust forth a cocked hat and proceed to take an observation. The old admirals sail the sea no longer; the old ships of battle are all broken up, and live only in pictures; but this, that was a church before ever they were thought upon, is still a church and makes as brave an appearance by the Oise..... I find I never weary of great churches. It is my favourite kind of mountain scenery. Mankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral: a thing as single and spacious as a statue to the first glance, and yet, on examination, as lively and interesting as a forest in detail. (pp.86-87)

Then he proceeds to express his disregard for conventional religious practices:

I could never fathom how a man dares to lift up his voice to preach in a cathedral. What is to say that will not be an anticlimax? For though I have heard a considerable variety of sermons, I never yet heard one that was so expressive as a cathedral. 'Tis the best preacher itself and preaches day and night; not only telling you of man's art and aspirations in the past,

but convicting your own soul of ardent sympathies; or rather, like all good preachers, it sets you preaching to yourself - and every man is his own doctor of divinity in the last resort. (p. 87)

So Stevenson's trip reflects his rebellious spirit at the time. It is obvious he is proud of being a Bohemian in thought and practice. In his "Epilogue" to the book, he speaks of his experiences when, travelling then alone on foot, he is arrested as a suspicious vagrant by the gendarmerie of Chatillon-sur-Loire. Apart from being amusing, the account shows how much our Bohemian has to pay for his attitude. To be a Bohemian is to fall into much trouble:

For years he could not pass a frontier or visit a bank without suspicion; the police, everywhere but in his native city, looked askance upon him; and (although I am sure it will not be credited) he is actually denied admittance to the casino of Monte Carlo. If you will imagine him dressed as above, stooping under his knapsack, walking nearly five miles an hour with the folds of the ready-made trousers fluttering about his spindle shanks, and still looking eagerly around him as if in terror of pursuit - the figure, when realised, is far from reassuring. When Villon journeyed... to his exile at Roussilon, I wonder if he had not something of the same appearance. (pp. 123 - 24)

In the last two pages of the book, Stevenson expresses his wish to return to "the familiar places", where life itself

makes all the running, and we are carried to meet adventure without a stroke of the paddle. Now we were to return, like the voyager in the play, and see what re-arrangements fortune had perfected the while in our surroundings; .....

You may paddle all day long; but it is when you come back at nightfall, and look in at the familiar room, that you find Love or Death awaiting you beside the stove ; and the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek. ( p. 122)

These lines have a deeply personal note. In order to understand them, one has to refer to Stevenson's biographers. One of them wrote:

Many readers have enjoyed the singularly pleasant vein of humour with which Stevenson recounted the experiences, the delights and the discomforts of that journey: yet very few of them will have understood what he wrote into the last paragraph of all... Here is what happened. When the voyagers got back to Grez in the forest of Fontainebleau, they found the artist colony all agog about an intrusion. Hitherto this had been a place for men - and occasionally for models; now, an American lady with her two children had come down and established herself and her easel among the men. She was a Mrs. Osbourne, whose marriage had not prospered and who had come to seek a career in art. It is not recorded how she and Stevenson met, but after reading the essay " On Falling in Love", which appeared in the Cornhill in the following February, I have no doubt that meeting and falling in love went close together. This was the adventure which he had not gone to seek. <sup>2</sup>

Indeed, we should be grateful that Stevenson could find love, and not death, "awaiting him beside the stove"; for his meeting with Mrs. Osbourne, and later his marriage to her, was perhaps the most important single event of his creative life. Again, An Inland Voyage is an interesting book. One critic here is of the opinion that "though filled with much humour, the trip is more than a pleasant journey through the Continent".

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2. Stephen Gwynn, R.L. Stevenson (London, 1939), pp. 41-42.

He goes on to say:

Stevenson's quotation from Andrew Marvel's "Bermudes" (a song of Protestant martyrs fleeing from persecution) points to a seriousness which his preface reinforces. There he indicates that the purpose of An Inland Voyage is to serve as a record of positive relation between man and nature, a journey into the wilderness in which initial flight results in a celebration of God's Universe. The conclusion, however, suggests that the celebration may be possible only upon return, for "the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek."<sup>3</sup>

In Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes (1879), we find our writer again taking the road, this time without human company, so to speak, but equipped with a sleeping-sack and a small donkey bought for sixty-five francs and a "glass of brandy". Stevenson called her Modestine, and starting from Monastier they struggled together for twelve days across the French mountains. From the very beginning, he so much rejoices in the natural scenes of the country that he is reminded of home:

Many little rivers run from all sides in cliffy valleys; and one of them, a few miles from Monastier, bears the great name of Loire. The mean level of the country is a little more than three thousand feet above the sea, which makes the atmosphere proportionally brisk and wholesome..... Such a place is the course of the Gazeille, where it waters the common of Monastier, and thence downwards till it joins the Loire; a place to hear birds singing; a place for lovers to frequent. The name of the river was perhaps suggested by the sound of its passage over the stones; for it was a great warbler.... On the whole, this is a Scottish landscape, although not so noble as the best in Scotland;

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3. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 32.

and by an odd coincidence, the population is, in its way, as Scottish as the country. They have abrupt, uncouth, Fifeshire manners, and accost you, as if you were trespassing, with an "Où'st-ce que vous allez? ", only translatable into the Lowland "Whau'r ye gaun? ". They keep the Scottish Sabbath. There is no labour done on that day but to drive in and out the various pigs and sheep and cattle that make so pleasant a tinkling in the meadows.<sup>4</sup>

Though the peasants of Monastier warn Stevenson against wolves and thieves that he may encounter on the way, he is determined to go on walking, taking interest in places and different kinds of people. It happens to be a Sunday morning, and he reflects upon the vacant mountain-fields:

It was Sabbath; the mountain-fields all vacant in the sunshine; and as we came down through St. Martin de Frugères, the church was crowded to the door..... It gave me a home feeling on the spot; for I am a countryman of the Sabbath, so to speak, and all Sabbath observances, like a Scottish accent, strike in me mixed feelings, grateful and the reverse. It is only a traveller, hurrying by like a person from another planet, who can rightly enjoy the peace and beauty of the great ascetic feast. The sight of the resting country does his spirit good. There is something better than music in the wide unusual silence; and it disposes him to amiable thoughts, like the sound of a little river or the warmth of sunlight.  
(p. 167)

This points out the fact that Stevenson here is suffering from two opposite forces in his inner self; the Calvinist impact and his ever-growing commitment to the life of action.

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4. Travels with a Donkey, Vol. XV, pp. 148 - 49.

He is not, it is clear, against religion in itself, but against its conventional, strict observances which do not leave room at all for any questioning. Through travelling, he comes to be closer to God, and, above all, enjoy a state of peace amongst His creations. He lives by what vision of God and what glimpses of spiritual light he can have directly for himself.

Stevenson, ever curious about people and their nature, here presents us with two opposite pictures of French peasants. The one is about a delightful old man in the hamlet of Fouzilhic, who takes the trouble of putting him safely on the road for Cheylard. The other concerns an inquisitive French peasant who, talking from within his house, wouldn't help Stevenson when he asked the way. The man asks so many questions that Stevenson is getting bored and nervous. This peasant is from another hamlet, Fouzilhac, whose people are not willing to help strangers. It is indeed one of the disadvantages of travel:

All the other houses in the village  
were both dark and silent; and though  
I knocked at here and there a door,  
my knocking was unanswerable. It was  
a bad business; I gave up Fouzilhac  
with my curses. (p. 188)

The journey is full of much humour, which may be shown in Modestine's behaviour. She sometimes refuses to perform her expected duties, liking to stop on steep hillsides and refusing to be budged. Stevenson takes pains to put up with her stubbornness. Things become worse when

we encountered another donkey, ranging at will upon the roadside; and this other donkey chanced to be a gentleman. He and Modestine met nickering for joy, and I had to separate the pair and beat down their young romance with a renewed and feverish bastinado. If the other donkey had had the heart of a male under his hide, he would have fallen upon me tooth and hoof; and this was a kind of consolation—he was plainly unworth of Modestine's affect-

-ion. But the incident saddened me,  
as did everything that spoke of my  
donkey's sex. (pp.168-69)

But Stevenson's feeling and affection for animals was only just less than that he had for children, and this, combined with his heightened response to the world of the countryside, contributes to making the book of these experiences a delightful one. It is true some of the actual adventures may, at the time, have been more trying than amusing; still Stevenson's courage and curiosity carried him through what befell him. In her "Note" to the present volume, Mrs. Stevenson wrote:

The twelve days' tramp through the Cévennes, though in some ways more exhausting than the canoe voyage, was more to the traveller's taste, having elements of romance the former lacked. To the end of his life the author of Treasure Island and the Child's Garden remained at heart a boy. What could appeal more strongly to the imagination of a "lantern bearer" than the thought of sleeping alone under the stars in a fleecy blue bag, and breaking his fast on bits of chocolate? - to say nothing of the pistol, which I doubt would have proved a very efficient weapon in time of need, had such a chance occurred, it being of an antiquated pattern, uncertain in its mechanism and more likely to be a menace than a protection to its owners.  
(p. 141)

Throughout the journey, Stevenson takes delight not only in the beauties of Nature, but in her good company. Making the most of his keen senses of sight and hearing, he achieves his purpose. One of the most beautiful passages of the book is that showing how much he responds to the wind (which is of course different from the wind he knew in Edinburgh):

The wind among the trees was my lullaby....  
Night after night, in my own bedroom in the country, I have given ear to this perturbing concert of the wind among the woods; but whether it was a difference in the trees, or the lie of the ground,

or because I was myself outside and in the midst of it, the fact remains that the wind sang to a different tune among these woods of Gévaudan. ( p. 190)

Stevenson holds the belief that life in the open is the most delightful thing he can think of, "where God keeps an open house". He always likes to associate himself with Nature in which he explores solace and relief from what is conventional and restrictive in society:

We have a moment to look upon the stars, and there is a special pleasure for some minds in the reflections that we share the impulse with all outdoor creatures in our neighbourhood, that we have escaped out of the Bastille of civilization, and are become, for the time being, a mere kindly animal and a sheep of Nature's flock. ( p. 228)

Again, Stevenson's philosophy of outdoor life is shown through his love of Nature which, since Wordsworth, has been so great and beautiful an element in English literature. The interesting thing is that this love of Nature is for her own sake. At the same time, it is associated with his love of travel for its own sake:

For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to GO. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move; to feel the needs and hitches of our life more nearly; to come down off this feather-bed of civilization and find the globe granite underfoot and strewn with cutting flints. (p. 196)

As he proceeds with his journey, Stevenson comes to observe with great interest the strange society of the trappist Monks up at the monastery of Our Lady of the Snows. Here he describes their activities:

..... in a Trappist monastery each monk has an occupation of his own choice, apart from his religious duties and the general labour of the house. Each must sing in the choir, if he has a voice and ear, and join in the haymaking if he has a hand to stir;

but in his private hours, although he must be occupied, he may be occupied on what he likes. Thus I was told that one brother was engaged with literature; while Father Apollinaris busies himself in making roads, and the Abbot employs himself in binding books. ( p. 208)

Though Stevenson interests himself in the monks' indoor lives, he is critical of their order of silence. He realizes that such a way of life is neither for him nor consistent with the general philosophy of adventurous life he believes himself to possess:

But I was weary;..... the cold and the raving of the wind among the pines (for my room was on that side of the monastery which adjoins the woods) disposed me readily to slumber. I was awakened at black midnight..... by the first stroke upon the bell. All the brothers were then hurrying to chapel; the dead in life, at this untimely hour, were already beginning the uncomforted labours of their day. The dead in life - there was a chill reflection, and the words of a French song came back into my memory, telling of the best of our mixed existence:

"Que t'as de belles filles,  
Giroflé !  
Giroflé !  
Que t'as de belles filles,  
L'amour les comptera ! "

And I blessed God that I was free to wander,  
free to hope, and free to love. (pp.212-13)

Stevenson's attitude towards "the dead in life" may also be seen in his poem "Our Lady of the Snows" :

And ye, O brethren, what if God,  
When from Heav'n's top he spies abroad,  
And sees on this tormented stage  
The noble war of mankind rage:  
What if His vivifying eye,  
O monks, should pass your corner by ?  
For still the Lord is Lord of might;

In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight;  
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,  
The field, the founded city, marks,  
He marks the smiler of the streets,  
The singer upon garden seats;  
He sees the climber in the rocks:  
To him, the shepherd folds his flocks....

But ye? - O ye who linger still  
Here in your fortress on the hill,  
With placid face, with tranquil breath,  
The unsought volunteers of death,  
Our cheerful General on high  
With careless looks may pass you by. 5

One of the chief interests of the journey for Stevenson was to set eyes on the country of the Camisards, the French parallel to the Scottish Covenanters. Travelling back in fancy to the French past, he much praises their courage in the face of well-disciplined armies:

In that undecipherable labyrinth of hills,  
a war of bandits, a war of wild beasts,  
raged for two years between the Grand  
Monarch with all his troops and marshalls  
on the one hand, and a few thousand  
Protestant mountaineers upon the other.  
A hundred and eighty years ago, the  
Camisards held a station even on the Lozère,  
where I stood; they had an organisation,  
arsenals, a military and religious hierarchy;  
their affairs were "the discourse" of every  
coffee-house in London; England sent fleets  
in their support; their leaders prophesied  
and murdered; with colours and drums, and  
the singing of old French psalms, their  
bands sometimes affronted daylight, marched  
before walled cities, and dispersed the generals  
of the King; and sometimes at night, or in  
masquerade, possessed themselves of strong  
castles, and avenged treachery upon their allies  
and cruelty upon their foes..... There was  
Cavalier, a baker's apprentice with a genius  
for war, elected brigadier of Camisards at  
seventeen..... There again was Castanet,  
a partisan leader in a voluminous peruke and  
with a taste for controversial divinity.....

And there to follow these and other leaders, was the rank and file of prophets and disciples, bold, patient, indefatigable, hardy to run upon the mountains, cheering their rough life with psalms, eager to fight, eager to pray, listening devoutly to the oracles of brain-sick children, and mystically putting a grain of wheat among the pewter balls with which they charged their muskets. ( pp.236 - 37)

The emotion with which Stevenson here recounts the adventures of the Camisards may remind us of that emotion already shown in The Pentland Rising (which he wrote at the age of sixteen). Stevenson, who is ever at his best when he releases the Scottish side of his imagination and interests, must have had the Scottish Covenanters in mind while wandering in the country of the Camisards. He was inspired on the spot, it is interesting to note, and wrote a poem on John Cavalier (one of their great heroes) :

These are your hills, John Cavalier,  
Your father's kids you tended here,  
And grew, among these mountains wild,  
A humble and religious child.  
Fate turned the wheel; you grew and grew;  
Bold Marshalls doffed the hat to you;  
God whispered counsels in your ear  
To guide your sallies, Cavalier.....

All armies march the selfsame way  
Far from the cheerful eye of day;  
And you and yours marched down below  
About two hundred years ago.  
Over the hills, into the shade,  
Journeys each mortal cavalcade;  
Out of the sound, out of the sun,  
They go when their day's work is done;  
And all shall doff the bandoleer <sup>6</sup>  
To sleep with dead John Cavalier.

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6. Collected Poems, pp.98 - 99.

As he goes on walking, Stevenson admires the simple life of French peasants, which keeps one in close touch with God. He thinks that

outdoor rustic people have not many ideas, but such as they have are hardy plants and thrive flourishingly in persecution, One who has grown a long while in the sweat of laborious noons, and under the stars at night, a frequenter of hills and forests, an old honest countryman, has, in the end, a sense of communion with the powers of the Universe, and amicable relations towards his God. Like my Plymouth Brother, he knows the Lord. His religion does not repose upon a choice of logic; it is the poetry of the man's experience, the philosophy of the history of his life. God like a great power, like a great shining sun, has appeared to this simple fellow in the course of years, and become the ground and essence of his least reflections. ( p, 263)

Stevenson's reference to " my mountain Plymouth Brother" is interesting, since it reveals his love of preaching. He meets the mountaineer in the valley of Tarn, and the following conversation takes place:

"Connaissez-vous le Seigneur ?" he said at length. I asked him what Seigneur he meant; but he only repeated the question with more emphasis and a look in his eyes denoting hope and interest.

"Ah" ! said I, pointing upwards, "I understand you now. Yes, I know Him; He is the best of acquaintances".

The old man said he was delighted. "Hold", he added, striking his bosom; "it makes me happy here". There were a few who knew the Lord in these valleys, he went on to tell me; not many, but a few. "Many are called", he quoted, "and few chosen".

"My father", said I, "it is not easy to say who know the Lord; and it is none of our business.

Protestants and Catholics, and even those who worship stones, may know Him, for He has made all".

I did not know I was so good a preacher.  
(pp.252 - 53)

Stevenson was a born preacher. It is said that preaching is in the blood of the Scots, and that they go all over the world, and in whatsoever place they find themselves, they think of it as a pulpit and proceed to deliver a discourse. Here we should bear in mind the fact that Stevenson is the "grandson of the Manse". His love of preaching is manifest in "Lay Morals" where he gives forth the law to teachers and parents, and in Virginibus Puerisque to married people and those looking forward to married life, with a certain sermonizing air. No doubt the experience derived from "the conflict between romantic passion and family affection, with the latter winning after an unhappy struggle,"<sup>7</sup> qualify him for it. Sometimes his preaching has a funny tone. In Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, his Edinburgh readers are confronted with a picture of themselves which, in the old Scottish phrase, is very faithful dealing; and when Glasgow smiles complacently the preacher turns westward saying: "To the Glasgow people I would say only one word, but that is of gold: I have not written a book about Glasgow".<sup>8</sup>

Travels with a Donkey embraces pages which present Stevenson as a true lover. He cannot conceal his feelings for Fanny Osbourne (the American lady whom he met in France and who was to become his future wife). Here the lover describes a night out of doors:

..... while I was exulting in my solitude  
I became aware of a strange lack. I  
wished a companion to lie near me in the  
starlight, silent and not moving, but ever  
within touch. For there is a fellowship  
more quiet even than solitude and which,  
rightly understood, is solitude made perfect.  
And to live out of doors with the woman a  
man loves is of all lives the most complete  
and free. ( p. 229).

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7. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 158.  
8. Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, p. 8.

As they near the end of the journey, both Stevenson and Modestine reach a point of total exhaustion. Modestine is sold, and with some relief he makes the last leg of his journey in the diligence. The book is very interesting. It reveals Stevenson's multiple personality as well as his impressions of French peasants. The journey has caught the interest and imagination of many Stevensonians since it was begun in 1878. A century later Carolyn B. Patterson, an American lady possessed of the spirit of adventure, followed in Stevenson's footsteps in the Cévennes.<sup>9</sup> In order to "remain faithful" to him, she took twelve days for the walk with her donkey (which she called after Stevenson's donkey). The account of her journey, with beautiful illustrations of French mountain-places, is interesting, especially when she makes a comparison on the spot between Stevenson's experiences and her own.

Like An Inland Voyage, the journey described in Travels with a Donkey is a "light-hearted jeu d'esprit undertaken for the sake of the impressions and ideas that might result....."<sup>10</sup> The various experiences, it is obvious, provide Stevenson with the material for writing. David Daiches has remarked that

the trips he describes in An Inland Voyage and Travels with a Donkey were made simply in order to be written about when they were over..... This is not to say that they were not enjoyed for their own sake as well, for Stevenson naturally chose experiences which he would enjoy and about which he would, therefore, be able to write sympathetically. He was equally capable of writing of experiences which were undertaken not as literary adventures but as part of the necessary business of life. <sup>11</sup>

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9. The journey is recorded in National Geographic (Washington, D.C.), Vol. 154, No. 4, October 1978, pp. 535-61.  
10. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 153.  
11. Ibid., p. 17.

The Amateur Emigrant (1895) is Stevenson's account of his American travels of 1879-1880. Hearing of Mrs. Osbourne's intention to divorce her husband (on her return to America from France), together with very disquieting news of her health, Stevenson made up his mind to start for the States in August 1879 - without telling his parents. He travelled "emigrant class", on board the Devonia, for reasons of economy and of turning his experiences to literary account. Besides he had his frequent anti-bourgeois feeling that led him in this case to want to feel what travel in these hard conditions, gone through by emigrants for America, was like. Here Stevenson reflects on the miserable conditions of his fellow-passengers. He comes to realize things which he has not realized before:

labouring mankind had in the last years,  
and throughout Great Britain, sustained  
a prolonged and crushing series of defeats.  
I had heard vaguely of these reverses;  
of whole streets of houses standing  
deserted by the Tyne, the cellar-doors  
broken and removed for firewood; of  
homeless men loitering at the street-  
corners of Glasgow with their chests  
beside them; of closed factories, useless  
strikes, and starving girls. But I had  
never taken them home to me or represented  
these distresses livingly to my imagination. 12

It is clear that Stevenson "learned" something. He experienced in an immediate way the suffering of men and women, without work and without prospects, whose last hope lay in starting again in the new world. Here he identifies himself with his fellow-travellers belonging to different nationalities:

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12. The Amateur Emigrant, Vol. XVI, p. 14. All Stevenson's other accounts of the American trip are included in the same volume.

Thus it was only now, when I found myself involved in the rout, that I began to appreciate how sharp had been the battle. We were a company of the rejected; the drunken, the incompetent, the weak, the prodigal, all who had been unable to prevail against circumstances in the one land, were now fleeing pitifully to another..... Yet it must not be supposed that these people exhibited depression.... All were full of hope for the future, and showed an inclination to innocent gaiety. Some were heard to sing, and all began to scrape acquaintance with small jests and ready laughter. (p. 15).

In the first part of the book entitled "From the Clyde to Sandy Hook", Stevenson, in a self-conscious manner, gives an account of the voyage such as the bad food, the impossibility of keeping clean, the singing and dancing with which the passengers seek to pass their time, the sea-sickness and the characters of his fellow-travellers. He tries hard to cope with these new experiences. Travel, depressing and hard though it may be, is still beneficial to him:

Travel is of two kinds; and this voyage of mine across the ocean combined both. "Out of my Country and myself I go", sings the old poet; and I was not only travelling out of my country in latitude and longitude, but out of myself in diet, associates, and consideration. Part of the interest and a great deal of the amusement flowed, at least to me, from this novel situation in the world. (p. 65)

Stevenson was active on the voyage, in spite of the fact that he felt so ill. He managed to secure himself a cabin where there was a table on which he could write. Besides making copious notes of the experiences described in this book, he wrote "The Story of a Lie" -

- a short story dealing with the father-son relationship. This theme had absorbed so much of his own emotional energy. The sense of guilt over his secret departure from Scotland remained with Stevenson during his American travels. It is interesting here to quote some lines from "The Story of a Lie", as that would be most suitable to illustrate the general "atmosphere" in which Stevenson left home for the new world. (Owing to his disagreements with his father, young Dick escapes from his English home and experiences Bohemian days in Paris). Their relationship closely parallels the relationship between Stevenson and his father:

Old Mr Naseby had the sturdy, untutored nature of the upper middle class. The universe seemed plain to him. "The thing's right", he would say, or "the thing's wrong"; and there was an end of it. There was a contained, prophetic energy in his utterances, even on the slightest affairs; he saw the damned thing; if you did not, it must be from perversity of will, and this sent the blood to his head..... He had a hearty respect for Dick as a lad of parts. Dick had a respect for his father as the best of men tempered by the politic revolt of a youth who has to see to his own independence. Whenever the pair argued, they came to an open rupture; and arguments were frequent, for they were both positive, and both loved the work of the intelligence. It was a treat to hear Mr. Naseby defending the Church of England in a volley of oaths, or supporting ascetic morals with an enthusiasm not entirely innocent of port wine. Dick used to wax indignant..... On these occasions he would redouble in energy, and declare that black was white, and blue yellow with much conviction and heat of manner; but in the morning such a licence of debate weighed upon him like a crime.

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13. "The Story of a Lie", included in Tales and Fantasies (1905), Vol. XII, p. 264.

And all the time Stevenson was writing this impressive account of his own difficulties in dealing with his father, a ship was carrying him farther and farther away from him.

In the second part of The Amateur Emigrant (entitled "Across the Plains"), we have an account of Stevenson's experiences in the emigrant train across the continent. Travelling in a crowded train for some eleven days and nights was an exhausting journey even for people stronger than Stevenson. However, he tried to overcome the difficulties he met, just as he did during his crossing the Atlantic. From the beginning he expresses his relish for such American names as Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Dakota and the Carolinas, which he calls "poetical, humorous and picturesque". As he crosses the plains, he reflects on the hostility of the Black Hills of Wyoming:

Mile upon mile, and not a tree, a bird,  
or a river. Only down the long, sterile  
canons, the train shot hooting and awoke  
the resting echo. That train was the one  
piece of life in all the deadly land; it  
was the one actor, the one spectacle fit to  
be observed in this paralysis of man and  
nature. ( p. 121)

However, the reappearance of green land on the other side of the crest of the Sierra arouses his personal feelings:

I had one glimpse of a huge pine-  
forested ravine upon my left, a  
foaming river, and a sky already  
coloured with the fires of dawn. I am  
usually very calm over the displays of  
nature; but you will scarce believe how  
my heart leaped at this. It was like  
meeting one's wife. I had come home  
again - home from unsightly deserts to  
the green and habitable corners of the  
earth. Every spire of pine along the  
hill-top, every trouty pool along that  
mountain river, was more dear to me than  
a blood relation....

At every turn we could see farther  
into the land and our own happy futures.  
At every town the cocks were tossing  
their clear notes into the golden air,  
and crowing for the new day and the new  
country. ( p. 137)

On the same journey it is striking to see how the crowing of a  
cock awakens Stevenson's thoughts of home. The following verses  
demonstrate the conflict going on inside himself, as opposed to the  
sense of happiness in reaching the new world:

The cock's clear voice into the clearer air  
Where westward far I roam,  
Mounts with a thrill of hope,  
Falls with a sigh of home.

A rural sentry, he from farm and field  
The coming morn descries,  
And, mankind's bugler, wakes  
The camp of enterprise.

He sings the morn upon the westward hills  
Strange and remote and wild;  
He sings it in the land  
Where once I was a child.

He brings to me dear voices of the past,  
The old land and the years:  
My father calls for me,  
My weeping spirit hears.

Fife, fife, into the golden air, O bird,  
And sing the morning in;  
For the old days are past 14  
And new days begin.

Stevenson's state of mind as well as his physical condition may  
be traced in a letter which he wrote to Sidney Colvin, in the  
emigrant train from New York to San Francisco:

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14. Omitted from Collected Poems. The poem is included in  
New Poems and Variant Readings by R.L. Stevenson (London, 1918)  
pp. 58 - 59.

I am taking charge of a kid, whose mother is asleep, with one eye, while I write you this with the other..... I have already been about forty hours in the cars. It is impossible to lie down in them, which must end by being very wearying. I had no idea how easy it was to commit suicide. There seems nothing left of me; I died a while ago; I do not know who it is that is travelling.

Then he encloses the following poem:

Of where or how, I nothing know;  
And why, I do not care;  
Enough if, even so  
My travelling eyes, my travelling mind can go  
  
By flood and field and hill, by wood and meadow fair,  
Beside the Susquehanna and along the Delaware.  
  
I think, I hope, I dream no more  
The dreams of otherwhere,  
The cherished thoughts of yore;  
I have been changed from what I was before;  
And drunk too deep perchance the lotus of the air  
Beside the Susquehanna and along the Delaware.  
  
Unweary God me yet shall bring  
To lands of brighter air,  
Where I, now half a king,  
Shall with enfranchised spirit loudlier sing,  
And wear a bolder front than that which now I wear<sup>15</sup>  
Beside the Susquehanna and along the Delaware.

Again, Stevenson was aware of his isolation from the places and people he knew and loved. He had great expectations that America would bring the joy and happiness sought there. In the same letter, mentioned above, he concludes by expressing his determination to deal with his dilemma:

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15. Letters, Vol. I, p. 145. For the poem enclosed, see Collected Poems, pp. 100 - 101.

No man is any use until he has dared everything; I feel just now as if I had, and so might become a man..... Just now I have faith as big as a cigar-case; I will not say die, and do not fear man or fortune.

And in his present volume of travel, Stevenson tells us that "we are a race of gipsies, and love change and travel for themselves". In the emigrant train he sympathized with the Chinese emigrants who, in all Western America, were thought to be stupid, thieves, and belonging to "the most despised and dangerous class in the Celestial Empire". His reflection on this ill-conceived notion of the Chinese demonstrates some human aspect in his nature as well as full understanding of human history and culture:

For my own part, I could not look but with wonder and respect on the Chinese. Their forefathers watched the stars before mine had begun to keep pigs. Gun-powder and printing, which the other day we imitated, and a school of manners which we never had the delicacy so much as to desire to imitate, were theirs in a long-past antiquity. Whatever is thought within the circuit of the Great Wall; what the wry-eyed, spectacled schoolmaster teaches in the hamlets around Peking; religions so old that our language looks a halfling boy alongside; philosophy so wise that our best philosophers find things therein to wonder at; all this travelled alongside of me for thousands of miles over plain and mountain. (pp.131 - 32)

Stevenson's travels in Monterey and San Francisco are recorded in "The Old and New Pacific Capitals". Here he gives his first impression of Monterey, California:

The one common note of all this country is the haunting presence of the ocean. A great faint sound of breakers follows you high up into the inland canyons; the roar of water dwells in the clean, empty rooms of Monterey as in a shell upon the chimney; go where you will, you have but to pause and listen to hear the voice of the Pacific. You pass out of the town to the south-west, and mount the hill among the pine woods. Glade, thicket, and grove surround you. You follow winding sandy tracks that lead nowhither..... But the sound of the sea still follows you as you advance.....(pp. 142-43)

In Monterey, Stevenson found an alien pattern of life that he thrilled to observe. Essentially Mexican in character, he found it a picturesque town, full of adobe houses and horses. Spanish was more frequently heard in the streets than English, and at night singers would go about the streets singing love-songs underneath windows to the accompaniment of guitars. How romantic all this sounded to him ! There, to his great relief, Stevenson met Mrs. Osbourne; the lady for whom he had travelled some six thousand miles. The romance of their love affair was coupled with that of the city. Besides writing some articles for the local paper, the Monterey Californian, he wrote "The Pavilion on the links" - a short story in which he nostalgically evokes the Scottish east coast.

The romance and adventurous nature of San Francisco were not lost on Stevenson, and in his description of the city it is of this, not of his own misfortunes, that he tends to speak:

There are rough quarters where it is dangerous o'nights; cellars of public entertainment which the wary pleasure-seeker chooses to avoid. Concealed weapons are unlawful, but the law is continually broken. One editor was shot dead while I was there; another walked the streets accompanied by a bravo, his guardian angel.

I have been quietly eating a dish of oysters in a restaurant, where, not more than ten minutes after I had left, shots were exchanged and took effect; and one night about ten o'clock, I saw a man standing watchfully at a street corner with a long Smith-and-Wesson glittering in his hand behind his back. Somebody had done something he should not, and was being looked for with a vengeance. It is odd, too, that the seat of the last vigilance committee I know of..... was none other than the Palace Hotel, the world's greatest caravanserai, served by lifts and lit by electricity; where, in the great glazed court, a band nightly discourses music from a grove of palms. So do extremes meet in this city of contrasts: extremes of wealth and poverty, apathy and excitement, the conveniences of civilization and the red justice of Judge Lynch. (pp. 164-65)

Some years later Stevenson was to recall his experiences in San Francisco in the character of Loudon Dodd in The Wrecker.

After Mrs. Osbourne had been divorced from her husband, Stevenson could go ahead with marriage procedures. The coming of a telegram of paternal forgiveness and financial security, "Count on £250 annually", certainly helped him to get married to his American beloved on 19 May, 1880. In The Silverado Squatters (1883), we have an account of the honeymoon that Stevenson and his wife spent in a deserted mining-camp upon Mount Saint Helena in Napa Valley, California (indeed a romantic place to crown their marriage). In the Valley, Stevenson met many Scotsmen working successfully, who reminded him of home. In his early travels in Cockermonth and Suffolk, as we have already seen, he realized his own Scottishness by feeling alien to English land. Now in California, he came to realize other things so far as his Scottishness was concerned. There can be no fuller and stronger sentiment than that expressed when two Scotsmen meet abroad, in spite of all differences:

Two languages, many dialects, innumerable forms of piety, and countless patriotisms and prejudices, part us among ourselves more widely than the extreme east and west of that great continent of America. When I am at home, I feel a man from Glasgow to be something like a rival, a man from Barra to be more than half a foreigner. Yet let us meet in some far country, and, whether we hail from the braes of Mar, some ready-<sup>16</sup> made affections join us on the instant.

Then casting his mind back to Edinburgh, Stevenson expresses mixed feelings:

Of all the mysteries of the human heart, this is perhaps the most inscrutable. There is no special loveliness in that grey country, with its rainy, sea-beat archipelago; its fields of dark mountains, its unsightly places, black with coal; its treeless, sour, unfriendly looking cornlands; its quaint, grey, castled city, where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat. I do not even know if I desire to live there; but let me hear, in some far land, a kindred voice sing out, "O why left I my hame?" and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good can repay me for my absence from my country. And though I think I would rather die elsewhere, yet in my heart of hearts I long to be buried among good Scots clods. (pp. 192 - 93)

Stevenson took interest in the old history of Silverado. The place turned out to be good for both his health and spirits. Here he describes his romantic residence:

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16. The Silverado Squatters, p. 192.

The sense of privacy..... was complete. We could look over the dump on miles of forest and rough-hill top; our eyes commanded some of the Napa Valley, where the train ran, and the little country townships sat so close together along the line of the rail. But here there was no man to intrude..... So our days, as they were never interrupted, drew out to the greater length; hour melted insensibly into hour; the household duties, though they were many, and some of them laborious, dwindled into mere islets of business in a sea of sunny daytime; and it appears to me, looking back, as though the far greater part of our life at Silverado had been passed, propped upon an elbow, or seated on a plank, listening to the silence that there is among the hills. (pp. 259-60)

Stevenson's one year stay in America turned out to be of great importance to him. He got involved in a really human situation, endeavouring to get married to the woman for whom he was prepared to sacrifice everything. Actually his marriage to Mrs. Osbourne indicated that he was still true to his character as a Bohemian; asserting his right to live his own life in defiance of respectability's conventions (getting married to a divorcee was an "unacceptable" business in Victorian times). In America he enlarged his own experiences of life, knowing what close proximity to death and poverty was really like. Speaking of the significance of the American experience for Stevenson, Jenni Calder has remarked that

he had had a crucial experience in coming to terms with life's realities, which had fortified him. We can see it in his prose. The man emerging in the pages of The Amateur Emigrant and living in The Silverado Squatters has a substance, an acquaintance with sorrow, an engagement with life, that the companion of Cigarette and Modestine had not yet discovered. <sup>16</sup>

And in the atmosphere of love and security created by his wife, Stevenson's creative faculties could flourish more than ever.

CHAPTER FOUR

Stevenson's non-Scottish

Short Fiction : 1877-1885

"Will o' the Mill" (1878) is perhaps Stevenson's most striking short story that displays his everlasting commitment to a nomadic life. In this work Stevenson describes with marvellous insight the inner life of young Will, who ever hesitates upon the brink of action and who never steps forward either into travel or love. One critic, though admitting that the story has adventure as its theme and centre, wonders that

Stevenson's first story about far-off adventure was not, strictly speaking, an adventure story at all. Its hero does not go anywhere; he does not display unusual physical prowess or extraordinary moral courage; he does not risk his personal safety by attempting to perform difficult tasks or to reach out after distant objectives; and, in fact, he dies quietly of natural causes at an advanced age.<sup>1</sup>

True, the hero is hesitant throughout "Will o' the Mill". The story may be considered as allegorical. Through it Stevenson stresses his philosophy of action as set in contrast to Will's inaction.

Will as a young man has always dreamt of going down to the plains which he can see from his remote mountain home. How fair and tempting they look, how he longs to take the initiative and see them for himself. He becomes haunted by the thought of exploring the world down there:

Bit by bit, he pieced together broken notions of the world below;<sup>2</sup> of the river, ever moving and growing until it sailed forth into the majestic ocean; of the cities, full of brisk and beautiful people, playing fountains, bands of music and marble palaces, and lighted up at night from end to end with artificial stars of gold; of the great churches, wise universities, brave armies, and untold money lying stored in vaults;

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1. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1964), pp. 154-55.
  2. According to his biographer, the setting of the story was drawn in part from the Brenner Pass (on the Austrian-Italian Border) which Stevenson visited as a boy with his parents. See Balfour, Life, p. 61.

of the high-flying vice that moved in the sunshine, and the stealth and swiftness of midnight murder..... He was like some one lying in twilit, formless pre-existence, and stretching out his hands lovingly towards many-coloured, many-sounding life.<sup>3</sup>

Will tells one of the guests of the inn, run by his adopted parents, about the world of imagination he is ever travelling in. But the guest advises him to stay where he is and enjoy his dreams because the world below is not all he imagines; in fact, it is full of people who wish they were in the mountains.

Will follows the guest's advice so completely that he runs the inn by himself after the death of his parents, and is satisfied with his routine life. Added to this, he refuses to marry Marjory, whom he loves, on the grounds that "it's not worth while, and we had best stay friends". And so life slips by, and he never ventures beyond the narrow confines of his daily life. Eventually, death comes to him in his old age in the guise of a stranger who takes him in his carriage on the way to his first and last journey. Here the stranger addresses old Will:

A time comes for all men, Master Will  
..... when the helm is taken out of their  
hands. For you, because you were prudent  
and quiet, it has been long of coming, and  
you have had long to discipline yourself for  
its reception. You have seen what is to be  
seen about your mill; you have sat close all  
your days like a hare in its form; but now  
that is at an end; ... you must arise and  
come with me. (pp. 94-95)

Again, the story stresses Stevenson's philosophy of the necessity of adventurous life through his treatment of the quiet, unadventurous life led by Will.

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3. "Will o' the Mill", included in Vol. VII, p. 70.

In many of his essays, he preaches the necessity of human action. "Aes Triplex" (1878) may be given here as a good example to show the contrast between the author's attitude towards life and his hero's. Stevenson believes that the man

who has his heart on his sleeve, and a good whirling weathercock of a brain, who reckons his life as a thing to be dashingly used and cheerfully hazarded, makes a very different acquaintance of the world, keeps all his pulses going true and fast, and gathers impetus as he runs, until, if he be running towards anything better than wildfire, he may shoot up and become a constellation in the end. Lord look after his health, Lord have a care for his soul, says he; and he has at the key of the position, and swashes through incongruity and peril towards his aim.<sup>4</sup>

And if man is destined to die, Stevenson goes on to say, he must die in the midst of "full-blooded" activity, with a kind of athletic leap into the grave rather than a gradual and silent settling.

In the hot-fit of life, a tip-toe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on to the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets are hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most representative poem of Stevenson's commitment to an adventurous life in his twenties, as opposed to Will's silent life, is the one quoted in Balfour's Life (the poem is omitted from Collected Poems). Here is the beginning of the poem:

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4. "Aes Triplex", included in Vol. XXII, p. 92.
  5. Ibid., p. 94.

Since I am sworn to live my life  
And not to keep an easy heart,  
Some men may sit and drink apart,<sup>6</sup>  
I bear a banner in the strife.

In his three French stories,<sup>7</sup> "A Lodging for the Night" (1877), "The Sire de Maletroit's Door" (1878), and "Providence and the Guitar" (1878), Stevenson depicts different kinds of human adventure experienced in adverse circumstances. The stories mark Stevenson's complete departure from landscape sketches and literary reviews which had formed most of his previous writings. Stevenson wanted his initials to be as well known in the field of short-story writing as in that of essay-writing. While the first two reflect the writer's interest in the history of fifteenth-century "sombre" France, the other story charmingly reflects his Bohemian days in Paris and Fontainebleau. Highly romantic stories, both "A Lodging for the Night" and "The Sire de Maletroit's Door" represent a view of two extremes: the villainy of the poet Francois Villon, a "poor Master of Arts", and the virtue of a French soldier who is prepared, in most unusual circumstances, to sacrifice his life for the sake of the niece of the Sire de Maletroit.

To our great surprise, Villon was not only a poet, but a thief who befriended criminals. Stevenson presents him at the beginning of the story as a man "who carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation", and in whose face "the wolf and the pig struggled together". During a game of cards, one of the thieves is killed by another, and the victim's money is divided among the "faithful" members of the gang. Getting his share, Villon escapes the murder scene (a house by the cemetery of St. John) and wanders Paris' snow-covered streets in search of some shelter from the bitter cold. While wandering he becomes haunted by his crime:

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6. Graham Balfour, The Life of R.L. Stevenson, p. 110.  
7. All included in New Arabian Nights (1882), Vol. I.

..... wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and, choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow. Two things preoccupied him as he went: the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. (p. 258)

Villon comes to take shelter in the porch of a hotel, where he finds a dead woman with two coins in her stocking. Discovering that he has lost his purse (naturally lost before leaving the house of his fellow-thieves), he throws away the two coins and furiously decides to return there. But he is too scared to go in; and leaves the spot for where he has first thrown the money. To his great disappointment, he only finds one coin:

With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and though the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? (p. 261)

Not only does Villon struggle with harsh, unbearable weather, but also with human adversaries. He is refused shelter by his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoit, who believes that "young men require a lesson now and then".

Another refusal comes from one of his friends. Finally, the socially rejected man reaches a house whose "little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window". He is allowed in by the owner of the house, who turns out to be a nobleman living by himself. When his host goes upstairs to bring him food and drink, Villon

began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures..... of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory. "Seven pieces of plate", he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints !" (pp.266-67)

Villon's behaviour may recall the hero's (Jean Valjean) in Victor Hugo's Les Misérables. Both the host and the guest have a philosophical debate over the nature of theft; the nobleman thinks that Villon's behaviour with the dead woman is a most shameful act, while the other thinks that "it is a kind of theft much practised in the wars". Knowing more about the poet's criminal history, the French nobleman addresses him thus (here we may detect Stevenson's view of Villon) :

Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honour like darkness at morning.... I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the King, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule.....

You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honour, of faith to God, and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach..... you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring a toothache on the Judgement Day. (p. 273)

Before the nobleman dismisses the poet, he insists that "you look for the gallows; a rough swift death, without hope or honour". Indeed, we are not surprised at all as

The door closed behind him.....  
A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road. "A very dull old gentleman", he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth". (p.275)

Thus the poet is again forced out into the cold, and must continue his wanderings to find a shelter in a society that he detests and that rejects him. In order to better understand Stevenson's opinion of Villon, we should read his essay entitled "Villon: Student, Poet and Housebreaker" (1887). (Stevenson might have had in mind as he wrote about the adventures of Villon in "A Lodging for the Night", his own adventures in the underworld of Edinburgh, where, just to satisfy his curiosity about life and people whose background was different from his own, he knew thieves; but he never got involved in their immoral activities). In his essay on Villon, Stevenson makes clear his admiration for him as a poet, the only French poet of "a silent century", but also his dislike of the man's selfishness and immorality. He stresses most of all Villon's claims that the poor must have bread at all costs, then refutes the argument by proving that millions of fifteenth century Frenchmen must have been poor, but disdained to steal or murder for bread.

His attack on Villon as a man extends to his criticism of the Large Testament, in which Villon shows a gloomy view of the world and sees it with an eye "sealed with his own filth".<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning here that, owing to his criminal activities in Paris and other parts of France, Villon ended on the gallows.

The closed door which marks Villon's final dismissal in the story opens upon Denis de Beaulieu's adventure and drives him into a life-death challenge, which is the theme of "The Sire de Maletroit's Door". Trying to escape from a "party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches", Denis, a French soldier in the war between his country and the English, goes hiding himself on a terrible September night of 1429 in a house whose door is "mysteriously" shut after him. Here he meets the Sire de Maletroit and his niece Blanche. To his great astonishment, the Sire tells him " I have been expecting you all evening". The soldier gradually realizes that he has fallen into a trap originally intended for Blanche's lover. The Sire, giving Denis no chance to explain himself, threatens him that he will be hanged if he does not marry his niece. The thing becomes more complicated as the girl says: " I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man". However, the Sire insists on his attitude:

Neither my niece nor you, nor my own  
private feelings, move me at all in this  
matter. The honour of my house has been  
compromised; I believe you to be the  
guilty person; at least you are now in  
the secret; and you can hardly wonder if  
I request you to wipe out the stain. If  
you will not, your blood be on your own head!  
It will be no great satisfaction to me to  
have your interesting relics kicking their  
heels in the breeze below my windows; but  
half a loaf is better than no bread, and  
if I cannot cure the dishonour, I shall at  
least stop the scandal. (p. 295).

The French soldier reveals his real nobility as he speaks to the poor girl thus:

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8. "Villon : Student, Poet and Housebreaker," included in Familiar Studies of Men and Books, Vol. XXIII, p. 163.

I feel your position cruelly..... The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity to die in doing you a momentary service. ( pp. 298 - 99).

Still he suffers a harsh conflict inside himself. The girl admires his gallantry, and falls in "true" love with him. The story ends as the young hero tells his beloved that

You have seen whether I fear death.  
You must know well enough that I would  
as gladly leap out of the window into  
the empty air as lay a finger on you  
without your free and full consent.....  
for I love you better than the whole  
world; and though I will die for you  
blithely, it would be like all the joys  
of Paradise to live on and spend my life  
in your service. ( p. 303)

Again, the story is highly romantic. Belonging to the genre of "light" literature, it shows Stevenson's interest in reviving past ages of chivalry. Indeed, the French soldier's marriage to Blanche is "the most beautiful adventure he has not gone to seek".

"Providence and the Guitar" is a delightful story. It concerns M. Léon Berthilini and his wife, a pair of strolling artists who earn their living in a world full of hardships and misfortunes. It displays Stevenson's sympathetic attitude towards wandering actors.<sup>9</sup> Travelling through France, Léon and his wife find themselves, "with two boxes and a guitar in a fat case", at the station of the little town of Castelle-Gachis. Here they have their first trouble with the hotel landlord who, knowing that they are artists, maltreats them. Leon reflects on the reception:

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9. There is a close resemblance between Stevenson's account of a pair of strolling actors in Precy, described in An Inland Voyage, and the story of Berthelini's guitar. The story is a direct result of Stevenson's French travels. See An Inland Voyage, pp. 118-19.

A commercial traveller is received, he also upon a reduction - yet he is welcome, yet can he command the fatted calf; but an artist, had he the manners of an Alfviva, were he dressed like Solomon in all his glory, is received like a dog and served like a timid lady travelling alone. (p. 309)

Léon finds great difficulty in obtaining the required permission for his musical performances from the Commissary of Police of Castel-le-Gachis:

Six several times in the course of the day did M. Berthelini hurry thither in quest of the requisite permission for his evening's entertainment; six several times he found the official was abroad. Leon Berthelini began to grow quite a familiar figure in the streets of Castel-le-Gachis; he became a local celebrity, and was pointed out as "the man who was looking for the Commissary". Idle children attached themselves to his footsteps, and trotted after him back and forward between the hotel and the office. ( pp. 310 -11)

And when he finds him in for the seventh time, the Commissary orders him to go away, claiming that he is too busy to consider his application. Believing that he must struggle for survival in such a cruel world, Léon tries hard again and again with the official, until he is given an oral permission. It is interesting here to note that Stevenson expresses, through Léon, his contempt for official authorities. He himself had much trouble with the French police, described in An Inland Voyage, which ended in his detention for a few hours. Stevenson's sympathy with wandering actors is best shown in the words of his wife:

For street musicians and wandering performers-acrobats, jugglers, etc, - my husband showed an understanding and sympathy that always won their confidence. "We're in the same boat", he would say, " earning our bread by amusing the public". " I always divide with a brother artist", he would remark, as he emptied his

pockets into their hands. His acquaintance with such people, and his knowledge of the lives they led, gave him an almost morbid sense of the pitiless cruelty of modern civilisation. <sup>10</sup>

Though his play with the guitar is "as good as a whole romantic drama", and though her romantic songs are expressively sung, Léon and his wife receive neither encouragement nor francs from the audience. It must be a very harsh experience to the devoted artists, "it seemed as if they were singing to slugs; Apollo himself might have lost heart with such an audience". However, they continue to sing until they have to stop by the entering of the Commissary who denies his oral permission, and now insists that Leon must produce a permit with his signature on it. Another violation of human rights by official authority ! Later they have to spend the night in the open, like their author, because they are not allowed in any more by the hotel landlord who is looking down upon them. Léon still retains his Bohemian nature, despite all the difficulties:

Four hours till daylight. It is warm;  
it is starry; I have matches and  
tobacco. Do not let us exaggerate,  
Elvira, the experience is positively  
charming. I feel a glow within me; I  
am born again. This is the poetry  
of life. ( p. 324)

The man and his wife befriend Mr. Stubbs, a Cambridge undergraduate on a waking tour, who shares with them their open-air experience. The English student holds a very limited view of art; he thinks that to be an artist is to be a painter. Léon lectures him that painting is only one branch of all other branches of art, and urges him to "be a sculptor, be a dancer, be a poet or a novelist; follow your heart, in short, and do some thorough work before your die". (p. 327).

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10. In Mrs. Stevenson's "Notes" to Vol. XVI, p. XV.

The three travellers approach a lighted house, where they overhear a man and his wife shouting furiously at each other. Léon demonstrates his good-heartedness as well as his optimistic nature by suggesting that they should all sing in order to calm the tense situation between the man and his lady. In doing so, they are able to catch their attention, and are invited into the house which turns out to be a painter's. Léon is so charmed by the artistic atmosphere that he "walked up to the pictures and represented the part of a connoisseur before each in turn with his usual dramatic insight and force". The actor comes to know that the wife is not on good terms with her husband because he is refusing a clerkship offer worth £150.00 a year, only for the sake of art. Being a real artist, Léon understands the painter's situation and creates a "merry atmosphere" in the house, until finally, the wife is convinced that her husband should follow the path he likes. On leaving the house, the artist is convinced that his guitar has done miracles so far in such a complicated world. He continues his wandering life, like his author, with enthusiasm and optimism.

Besides the short stories discussed above, Stevenson's stay in France inspired the "fantastic" stories of New Arabian Nights (1882). Consisting of two parts: "The Suicide Club" and "The Rajah's Diamond", they are modelled on those fantastic tales of The Arabian Nights which by Stevenson's time had become a standard part of every Victorian library. In her "Note" to the volume, Mrs. Stevenson tells us about the adventures of Stevenson and his cousin Bob in Fontainebleau. Bob Stevenson, "a dreamer of dreams", used to describe to the artists of the colony

the advantages of a suicide train where persons weary of life might engage compartments. There would be no depressing preparations necessary; only the choice of a route either quick or slow, and the companions, if one cared for companions, suited to such an enterprise.

The subject thus begun, was taken up again by Robert Louis, resulting in the invention of "The Suicide Club", Robert Alan [Bob] figuring in the beginning as the young man with the cream tarts, while the Prince of Wales was taken as the model for Prince Florizel. A further talk between the cousins developed the plot of "The Hansom Cab", which was followed by "The Rajah's Diamond".... Whenever my husband wished to depict a romantic, erratic, engaging character, he delved into the rich mine of his cousin's personality. 11

Being tired of the high social life of London, Prince Florizel of Bohemia, the one constant figure in all the tales, disguises himself and his confidant Colonel Geraldine, and together they wander aimlessly in London streets in search of adventure. They have a very exciting experience with a young man whose disillusionment with life is symbolized in his reduction of all its challenges to the successive devouring of many cream tarts. This young man leads them to the Suicide Club, a "strange society" whose young members meet nightly in formal dress to drink champagne, discuss death, and play a game of cards to determine which member will be next to pass away and which his gentle executioner.

Stevenson's description of this strange society, in which Prince Florizel starts his first adventure, is full of irony:

There was little decency among the members of the club. Some boasted of the disgraceful actions, the consequence of which had reduced them to seek refuge in death; and the others listened without disapproval. There was a tacit understanding against moral judgements; and whoever passed the club doors enjoyed already some of the immunities of the tomb.

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11. In Mrs. Stevenson's "Notes" to New Arabian Nights, Vol. I pp. XXV<sub>1</sub>I - XXVIII.

They drank to each other's memories, and to those of notable suicides in the past. They compared and developed their different views of death- some declaring that it was no more than blackness and cessation; others full of a hope that that very night they should be scaling the stars and commercing with the mighty dead. "To the eternal memory of Baron Trenck, the type of suicides ! " cried one. "He went out of a small cell into a smaller, that he might come forth again to freedom".

"For my part", said a second, " I wish no more than a bandage for my eyes and cotton for my ears. Only they have no cotton thick enough in this world".

A third was for reading the mysteries of life in a future state; and a fourth professed that he would never have joined the club, if he had not been induced to believe in Mr. Darwin.

"I could not bear", said this remarkable suicide, "to be descended from an ape".

Altogether, the Prince was disappointed by the bearing and conversation of the members. ( pp.21-22).

Stevenson was ever against pessimism. He thought of life as an "affair of chivalry". To commit suicide and thus escape from the burdens of existence had no place in Stevenson's philosophy of life. In his essay "Reflexions and Remarks on Human Life", he tells us that we

are bound by the strongest obligations to busy ourselves amid the world of men, if it be only to crack jokes. The finest trait in the character of St. Paul was his readiness to be damned for the salvation of anybody else. And surely we should all endure a little weariness to make one face look bright or one hour go more pleasantly in this mixed world. <sup>12</sup>

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12. "Reflexions and Remarks on Human Life", included in Vol. XXII, p. 245.

In "The Suicide Club" Stevenson is satirical on the English pessimists of the time; the optimistic attitude he has shown and enjoyed in France, especially under the spell of the artists' colonies of Fontainebleau, stresses the contrast with the English codes. He describes the members of the Club as

people in the prime of youth, with every show of intelligence and sensibility in their appearance, but with little promise of strength or the quality that makes success. (p. 20)

Robert Kiely in this connection has remarked that the story

is not a fragment of foolishness for its own sake, but a rather broad and amusing "spoof" at the expense of the professional pessimists and aesthetes of the seventies and eighties: the exquisite and morbid young men portrayed and epitomized by Swinburne and Oscar Wilde, with whom Stevenson, in the most public of his various moods, had so little patience. 13

Prince Florizel's adventures are significant, since they show him as a romantic hero in an unromantic age. He himself tries the dangerous game, until "it was the ace of spades". Threatened by death, he is finally rescued by Geraldine, and the members of the Club are all taken prisoners at the Prince's palace. In his official clothes, the Prince receives them, after the manner of Haroun Al Raschid,<sup>14</sup> and addresses them thus (here we may hear the voice of Stevenson the moralist):

Foolish and wicked men..... as many of you as have been driven into this strait by the lack of fortune shall receive employment and remuneration from my officers.... I feel pity for all of you, deeper than you can imagine; to-morrow you shall tell me your stories; and as you answer more frankly, I shall be the more able to remedy your fortunes.  
(pp. 36-37)

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13. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure p. 115.
  14. Saposnik suggests that even without the Prince of Wales, whom we think Stevenson might have had in mind as a model

In the second episode, the brother of Geraldine is killed in Paris by the President of the Suicide Club. His body is transported in the "Saratoga trunk" back to London by Silas Q. Scuddamore, an American whose "curiosity" led him to get involved with villains. Prince Florizel, well aware of the duties of princelihood, is determined to take revenge himself on the murderer. In the third and final episode of "The Suicide Club", Lieutenant Brackenbury Rick, a military hero alone on leave in London, strolling the streets at night in search of adventure, is introduced to us. He is soon invited into a smart cab and mysteriously driven to a lighted villa, whereupon the driver announces that there is a party inside for which he "was hired to kidnap single gentlemen in evening dress". Gradually we come to know that a "sham" party (where guests are dismissed mysteriously), is given by Geraldine only to choose the Prince's seconds in a "duel after fashion" with the evil President. So two brave men of war are selected: Lieutenant Brackenbury and Major O'Rook. The three men then go to the house of the President, and, together with the Prince, await him. At last the mouse falls into the trap. The duel takes place in a garden remote from the house, the result of which shows that "God defend the right".

Stevenson intended in New Arabian Nights to present us with an ideal character who, through a series of adventures in London and Paris, is chiefly interested in putting things right in a wicked world. The Prince achieves his full moral stature when he throws into the River Seine the "accursed diamond", only to put an end to the corruption and greed of those who are after it. To him

this nugget of bright crystal is as  
loathsome as though it were crawling  
with the worms of death; it is as  
shocking as though it were compacted  
out of innocent blood. I see it here  
in my hand, and I know it is shining

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14. Continued... for Prince Florizel, Stevenson "had a given literary example in Haroun Al Raschid, the wayward monarch of the traditional tales to whom role-playing is a way of life". See Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 147.

with hell-fire..... God forgive me  
if I do wrong, but its empire ends  
to-night. (p.179)

And after having thrown the diamond into the river, he said,  
"I have slain a cockatrice ! " Stevenson in "The Rajah's Diamond",  
it may be seen, makes fun of such English characters as Hartley,  
the feminine man; Rolles, the materialistic clergyman; General  
Vandeleur, the incorrigible dictator; and Francis Scrymegeour, the  
well-meaning muddler. All worship materialism in their hunt for the  
valuable but destructive jewel of the East.

Prince Florizel is one of the most interesting characters  
Stevenson ever created. He is a Prince because

his being so holds the romantic world  
together more effectively; but because  
he is a Prince of Bohemia in nineteenth  
century Paris and London, he cannot be  
wholly a serious figure, nor can the  
romances in which he figures be entirely  
free from the note of irony. The Prince  
ends up, after a revolution in Bohemia,  
as a London tobacconist (preserving always  
his charm, dignity and knowledge of the  
world). <sup>15</sup>

And his ending up thus, stresses Stevenson's theme of physical adventure  
combined with imaginative adventure by the fireside. For the Bohemian  
Cigar Divan over which the Prince presides is a place where men can  
come to smoke and engage in reminiscence and speculation, after the  
adventures were over. Stevenson here is expressing the idea that  
romance may be found in outdoor adventure as well as in the pipe  
smoked comfortably over the fire; a theme that we have already seen  
in many of his early travels in Britain and France.

Though Prince Otto is a long novel, it is placed in this chapter  
because it has a similar theme to the stories of New Arabian Nights -

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15. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 6.

the idea of the restless Prince. Like Prince Florizel, Prince Otto likes to withdraw from all the duties expected of him in his principality and to go for hunting and adventure. But unlike Florizel who carries out heroic deeds and proves to be a romantic hero, Otto is more a man of thought than of action. Stevenson started Prince Otto, which has an imaginary German setting, while in America in 1879, and the work was completed and published in 1885.

From the very beginning, Otto is presented to us as a disguised traveller who wanders through the country to "collect" people's opinions of himself. He comes to meet a farmer who tells him that

the whole princely family and Court are  
rips and rascals, not one to mend another.  
They live, sir, in idleness and corruption.  
The Princess has a lover - a Baron.....  
and the Prince is so little of a man, sir,  
that he holds the candle. 16

When he is told by others of the chaos in State affairs resulting from the fact that the Prince leaves everything in the hands of his wife and her alleged lover Gondremark, Otto admits to himself, "true I am all they said of me - all that and worse". He goes on to assert his philosophy of life:

..... the great thing for the good of  
one's country is, first of all, to be  
a good man. All springs from there.  
For my part, although you are right  
in thinking that I have to do with  
politics, I am unfit by intellect and  
temper for a leading role. ( p. 125)

Though the Prince benefits from his journey by finding himself, hearing what others really think of him, he never tries to put things right once he is back in the principality of Grunewald. At this point, the story turns into one of manners and intrigues common in royal courts. Otto lectures the Princess on happiness and marriage,

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16. Prince Otto, Vol. IV, p. 109.

asking her to see Gondremark no more; but she pays no attention to what he says. On the other hand, Madame von Rosen, who is jealous of the Princess and who wants Gondremark for herself, tries to take advantage, getting closer to Otto. In the end an inevitable revolution takes place and the Republic is declared. Otto and his wife escape, are reconciled and live in peace in a farm house. Forgetting about his fallen kingdom, Otto finds the greatest satisfaction in writing poetry.

Again, the character of Otto is not so entrancing as that of Florizel who has committed himself to putting things right in a topsy-turvy world. But if we are to dislike Otto's weakness, we may see something admirable in his character. He likes to "follow his heart" (like his author who refused to join his father's engineering business), preferring an artistic, imaginative life to a life of royal responsibilities. In other words, Otto is true to himself. In her "Note" to the present volume, Mrs. Stevenson thought that Otto resembled her husband to a "degree", and she went on to stress the difference:

Otto, the gentle philosopher, preferred a life of peace, and comfortable domesticity. My husband, on the contrary, was of a bolder spirit, and looked upon peace and comfort as stumbling-blocks for the soul. <sup>17</sup>

The vein of romance admirably struck by Stevenson in the fantastic stories of New Arabian Nights is lacking in Prince Otto. There is so much realistic detail that one sometimes feels bored with the book as a whole. There is a lack of action and "thrilling" incidents, which are important elements in Stevenson's other adventure fiction. The author himself did not think highly of the work.

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17. Mrs. Stevenson's "Note" to Prince Otto, p. 89.

In a letter to W.E. Henley, he wrote:

Otto is..... not a thing to extend  
my public on. It is queer and a little,  
little bit free; and some of the parties  
are immoral; and the whole thing is not  
a romance, nor yet a comedy; nor yet a  
romantic comedy; but a kind of  
preparation of some of the elements  
of all three in a glass jar. <sup>18</sup>

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18. Letters, Vol. I, p. 270.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stevenson and Scotland :

Horror and Supernatural Stories

In the previous chapters, we have seen Stevenson as a Bohemian, a Frenchman, an emigrant, even a Californian; in both his writings and attitude he did not present himself to the world as the Scotsman he was. True, many a time he realized his own Scottishness in his travels; yet he felt blocks about exploring or coming to terms with his country, because of the strained relationship with his father and with the whole of Edinburgh middle-and-upper class society. As has been indicated, his one-year American journey had its magic effects on his mentality as well as his creativity. He knew peace of mind only in the presence of his wife, and in his reconciliation with his parents. Now the time had come that he should fully acknowledge his Scottish background and character to himself and to the outside world. And this could be achieved through his giving literary expression to such Scottish themes as derived from his own experiences in boyhood and youth.

Stevenson's reconciliation with his country is best shown in his response to the Highlands after his return from the States. His parents took him and his new family in 1881 to Blair Atholl and Strathpeffer, both of which are in the Eastern Highlands of Scotland. He also stayed for some weeks in Pitlochry and Braemar. In his early visits,<sup>1</sup> he expressed a distaste for Highland scenes which he regarded as stark and "inhospitable". But this time he came to change his view, taking interest in the beauty, culture, and heritage of that part of his country. Here he expresses his exultation in one of his many letters from there (the following letter was written to Mrs. Sitwell):

The country is delightful, more cannot be said; it is very beautiful, a perfect joy when we get a blink of sun to see it in. The Queen knows a thing or two, I perceive; she has picked out the finest habitable spot in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The subject is elaborated in his essay "On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places". See Chapter 2, pp. 10-11.
  2. Letters, Vol. I, p. 217.

In one of the poems of "Songs of Travel", Stevenson celebrates his true, sensuous delight in the Highlands. The place suggests an eternal, primeval peacefulness:

In the Highlands, in the country places,  
Where the old plain men have rosy faces,  
And the young fair maidens  
Quiet eyes;  
Where essential silence cheers and blesses,  
And for ever in the hill-recesses  
Her more lovely music  
Broods and dies.

O to mount again where erst I haunted;  
Where the old red hills are bird-enchanted,  
And the low green meadows  
Bright with sward;  
And when even dies, the million-tinted,  
And the night has come, and planets glinted,  
Lo, the valley hollow  
Lamp-bestarred !

O to dream, O to awake and wander  
There, and with delight to take and render,  
Through the trance of silence,  
Quiet breath;  
Lo ! for there among the flowers and grasses,  
Only the mightier movement sounds and passes,  
Only winds and rivers,  
Life and death.

In his R.L. Stevenson and the Scottish Highlanders, David Morris traces Stevenson's interest in the Highlands back to his early twenties. He mentions that through his wanderings in the valley between Bridge of Allan and Dunblane, Stevenson would learn from the shepherds and foresters "some of the old tales of the Stewarts and the Campbells, and the Macgregors, and the McLarens, who had played their part in the neighbourhood".<sup>4</sup> And from his stay in 1881 in the Highlands onwards, Stevenson became more interested in Scottish history and culture. His biographer tells us here of a significant incident in his life during that time. While staying at Pitlochry, Stevenson

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3. Collected Poems, p. 255...

4. David B. Morris, R.L. Stevenson and the Scottish Highlanders (Stirling, 1929), pp. 19-20.

heard of the resignation of the Professor of History and Constitutional Law at Edinburgh University and thought it worth applying for the Chair himself. Its duties involved only some lecturing in the summer session, and the election was in the hands of the Faculty of Advocates, of which Louis was of course a member. He collected supporters, and was stimulated to plan further work on Scottish history to prove his fitness. He was too late in his application, but the incident is significant in that it led him to an exploration of an area of Scottish history which was to bear fruit in Kidnapped.<sup>5</sup>

In a letter from Davos in the Swiss Alps to his father (Stevenson had to winter there for the sake of his health), he reveals his obsession with Highland history:

It occurred to me last night in bed that I could write

The Murder of Red Colin,  
A Story of the Forfeited Estates  
This I have all that is necessary for,  
with the following exceptions:

Trials of the Sons of Rob Roy  
with Anecdotes : Edinburgh,  
1818, and  
The second volume of Blackwood's  
Magazine.

You might also look in Arnot's Criminal Trials up in my room, and see what observations he has on the case (Trial of James Stewart in Appin for murder of Campbell of Glenure, 1752); if he has none, perhaps you could see - O yes; see if Burton has it in his two volumes of trial stories. I hope he hasn't: but care not; do it over again,  
6  
anyway.

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5. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson and his World, p. 55.  
6. Letters, vol. I, p. 224.

And though his plan did not materialise, yet Stevenson made good use of the material in Kidnapped and Catriona. One critic has remarked that Stevenson

was able to approach the past now with a more objective understanding; gone was the emotional partisanship that one finds in The Pentland Rising. The breadth of mind he had acquired during his Bohemian days and wander-years equipped him admirably to examine the complexities of feelings and attitudes of past people. Sooner or later he would be bound to give these developed insights literary expression.<sup>7</sup>

It can be said that Stevenson's visits to the Highlands were a turning point in his career as a writer on Scottish themes. The place was a rich source of inspiration for him. This may remind us of Sir Walter Scott's first travels in the Highlands in 1786 as a young boy with his father. Travelling on horses, the two Scotts went via Perthshire, and the scenes which were to have a major place in his Highland poems like The Lady of the Lake and novels like Waverley made a profound impression on young Scott:

I recollect pulling up the reins without meaning to do so, and gazing on the scene before me as if I had been afraid it would shift like those in a theatre, before I could distinctly observe its different parts, or convince myself that what I saw was real. Since that hour, and the period is now more than fifty years past, the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strongest influence over my mind, and retained its place as a memorable thing, when much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollection. 8

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7. Paul Binding, R.L. Stevenson, pp . 141 - 42.
  8. J.G. Lockhart, The Life of Sir Walter Scott (complete in one volume, Edinburgh 1842), pp.38 - 39.

Stevenson wrote a number of Scottish short stories, however, before Kidnapped (1886), which, with their various themes, show him as having a strong Scots accent of the mind, of the soul, as well as of the tongue. The attempt will be made in the following pages to deal with these stories which for long have not received much attention from critics. To start with, Stevenson's "The Merry Men" (1882), written in the Highlands, is based upon his own experiences as a student of marine constructions. The Merry Men are not human beings as the title first suggests; indeed they are some dreadful rocks against which any ship would be dashed to destruction. In a letter to Henley, he mentions that the story is "my favourite work. It is a fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks".<sup>9</sup>

The hero of the story is Charles Darnaway, who now travels to the islet of Aros (Erraid) with which he has been familiar on previous vacations from Edinburgh University. There are two specific intentions he wishes to achieve from his journey : to marry his cousin Mary (and thus unite his dying family), and to search for buried Spanish treasure in order to restore his family "to its long-forgotten dignity and wealth". Here the young hero describes his starting the journey of which he has great expectations:

The road that I followed was a cattle track..... it went over rough boulders so that a man had to leap from one to another, and through soft bottoms where the moss came nearly to the knee. There was no cultivation anywhere and not one house in the ten miles from Grisapol to Aros..... Any way the wind was, it was always sea-air, as salt as on a ship; the gulls were as free as moorfowl over all the Ross; and whenever the way rose a little, your eye would kindle with the brightness of the sea.

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9. Letters, Vol. I, p. 211.

From the very midst of the land....  
I have heard the Roost roaring like  
a battle where it runs by Aros and  
the great fearful voices of the  
breakers that we call the Merry Men....  
But when the tide begins to run again,  
and above all in heavy weather, there  
is no man could take a boat within half  
a mile of it, nor a ship afloat that  
could either steer or live in such a  
place. You can hear the roaring of it  
six miles away. At the seaward end  
there comes the strongest of the bubble;  
and it's here that these big breakers  
dance together - the dance of death, it  
may be called - that have got the name,  
in these parts, of the Merry Men.....  
The thought of all these dangers, in the  
place I knew so long, makes me particularly  
welcome the works, <sup>10</sup> now going on forward  
to set lights upon the headlands and buoys  
along the channels of our iron-bound,  
inhospitable islands. <sup>11</sup>

In Aros the young adventurer meets his uncle, a "rough, cold, and gloomy man", who tells about the wreck of the Christ-Anna found in Sandag Bay. Charles becomes curious about his uncle's tales of the "horrible" sea ( we may notice here that the man's speech in Scots gives authenticity to the situation):

I hae sailed wi'a lad - they ca'ad  
him Sandy Gabart; he saw ane, shure  
eneuch, an' shure eneuch it was the  
end of him. We were seeven days oot  
frae the Clyde..... I mind the nicht  
weel; a mune smoored wi' mist; a fine  
gaun breeze upon the water, but no'  
steedy; an' - what nane o' us likit to  
hear - anither wund gurlin' owerheid,  
amang thae fearsome, auld stane  
craigs o' the Cutchull'ns. Weel,  
Sandy was forrit wi' the jib sheet;  
we couldna seè him for the mains'l,  
that had just begude to draw, when a'  
at ance he gied, a skirl.

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10. It is obvious here that Stevenson imposes himself on the tale; he takes pride in the notable history of his family of engineers.
11. "The Merry Men", included in The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables (1887), Vol. VII, pp.4 - 7.

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. An',  
or the life was oot o' Sandy's body,  
we kent weel what the thing betokened,  
and why the wund gurl'd in the taps o'  
the Cutchull'ns; for doon it cam' - a  
wund do I ca' it ! it was the wund o'  
the Lord's anger - an' a' that nicht  
we fought like men dementit, and the  
neist that we kenned we were ashore in  
Loch Uskevagh, an' the cocks were  
crawing in Benbecula. ( pp.18 - 19)

The old man's experiences with the sea, together with his  
servant's superstitious tales of mermaids and sea-horses, of course  
create a very exciting, terrifying atmosphere for Charles - completely  
different from that quiet, domestic air of Edinburgh University.  
He starts by himself looking for the treasure of the sunken Espirito  
Santo, thought to be buried in the waters of Sandag Bay. Though he  
finds a grave by the wreck of the Christ-Anna, another victim of the  
Merry Men, the adventurer is determined to go ahead with his mission:

The bay at that time was utterly quiet,  
there was no sound but from a school of  
porpoises somewhere out of sight behind  
the point; yet a certain fear withheld  
me on the threshold of my venture. Sad  
sea-feelings, scrapes of my uncle's  
superstitions, thoughts of the dead, of  
the grave, of the old broken ships,  
drifted through my mind. But the strong  
sun upon my shoulders warmed me to the  
heart, and I stooped forward and  
plunged into the sea. (p.29)

Charles dives again and again, until, to his great disappointment and panic, he takes hold of human bones. He comes to the realization that the whole thing is extremely brutal and not worthwhile. His reflections may indicate the underlying moral of the story:

Mankind is a material creature, slow to think and dull to perceive connections. The grave, the wreck of the brig, and the rusty shoe-buckle were surely plain advertisements. A child might have read their dismal story, and yet it was not until I touched that actual piece of mankind that the full horror of the charnel ocean burst upon my spirit.  
( p. 32)

And in an attempt to atone for his sins,

I knelt down over against the ruins of the brig, and out of the fullness of my heart prayed long and passionately for all poor souls upon the sea. A generous prayer is never presented in vain; the petition may be refused, but the petitioner is always, I believe, rewarded by some gracious visitation. The horror, at least, was lifted from my mind; I could look with calm of spirit on that great bright creature, God's ocean, and as I set off homeward up the rough sides of Aros, nothing remained of my concern beyond a deep determination to meddle no more with the spoils of wrecked vessels or the treasures of the dead.  
(pp.32 - 33)

Charles also comes to realize that his uncle, Gordon Darnaway, is a murderer himself; the man lying buried at Sandag is the poor victim of the uncle's dangerous madness. How painful for him to know that the victim was killed after having come ashore alive. Indeed the character of Gordon is very complicated.

Though he is presented to us from the very beginning as religious, yet little by little we are puzzled by his attitude. Haunted by inescapable guilt, he seems to seek solace in the destructive force of the sea in which he sees a contrast to his own cowardice, and from which he "savours" the wreckage's stores thrown ashore. Charles asks his cousin Mary to accompany him and leave the "accursed" island, especially after his discovery that some strange adventurers are searching for the Spanish treasure. But he has to stay because the girl refuses to go away from her father. The violence of the gale adds to the atmosphere of terror that surrounds the island, and promises a tragic end for those who are after the treasure. Here Charles describes the angry Nature while wandering about the island:

Never before had I seen the Merry Men thus violent. The fury, height, and transiency of their spoutings was a thing to be seen and not recounted. High over our heads on the cliff rose their white columns in the darkness; and the same instant, like phantoms, they were gone... And yet the spectacle was rather maddening in its levity than impressive by its force.... and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry Men as it were a tune upon a jigging instrument. ( p.45)

The strangers have to pay for their greed and their defiance of Nature. Travel for them becomes destructive and tragic. Their ship is wrecked at the dance of death of the Merry Men:

The strong ship, with all her gear,  
and the lamp still burning in the  
cabin, the lives of so many men,  
precious surely to others, dear, at  
least, as heaven to themselves, had all,  
in that one moment, gone down into the  
surging waters. They were gone like a  
dream. And the wind still ran and  
shouted and the senseless waters in the  
Roost still leaped and tumbled as  
before. (pp. 47 - 48)

During that time, the "lunatic" uncle was watching from the top of a hill the ship struggling against the violent gale, before it went down into the sea. The appearance of a "black man", the only survivor of the wreck, makes him run away from the others. He believes that this survivor has come only to take revenge upon him. As for Charles, he is greatly terrified by his uncle's behaviour, and tries hard to "communicate with the unhappy madman". Finally, after a long chase, the end of those sinful men should come; both Gordon and the black man plunge into the "redeeming" waters. Thus, we are reminded, "if the crime had been monstrous, the punishment was in proportion".

Stevenson, it may be said, is successful in presenting us with "a story of wrecks, as they appear to the dweller on the coast. It's a view of the sea".<sup>12</sup> The story demonstrates to the full the destructive force of the sea. It is such force that determines the characters' actions and reactions. It is interesting to note here that Stevenson is most concerned with the union of setting and theme. To understand his Scottish predicament, full consideration should be given to "The Foreigner at Home". In this essay, Stevenson explains the influences singularly affecting the Scottish character from its early stages:

We [must not] omit the sense of the nature of his country and his country's history gradually growing in the child's mind from story and from observation. A Scottish child hears much of shipwreck, outlying iron skerries, pitiless breakers, and great sealights; much of heathery mountains, wild clans, and hunted Covenanters. ....<sup>13</sup>

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12. In a letter to Henley. See Letters, vol. I, p. 213.

13. "The Foreigner at Home", in Memories and Portraits, p. 12.

About "heathery mountains" and "wild clans," much will be said later in the discussion of Kidnapped. Here Stevenson celebrates his delight in such wildness of Scottish coasts in his poem "Storm":

Ei ! merry companions,  
Your madness infects me  
My whole soul rises and falls and leaps  
                  and tumbles with you !  
I should aloud and incite you, O white-  
                  headed merry companions.  
The sight of you alone is better than drinking  
The brazen band is loosened from off my  
                  forehead;  
My breast and my brain are moistened and cool;  
And still I yell in answer  
To your hoarse inarticulate voices,  
O big, strong, bullying, boisterous waves,  
That are of all things in nature the  
nearest thoughts to human,  
Because you are wicked and foolish,  
Mad and destructive. <sup>14</sup>

From Charles Darnaway's outdoor adventure on the island of Aros, we move to Mr. Soulis' indoor adventure to drive the Devil away from the parish of Balweary in "Thrawn Janet" (1881). This story, written in Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, is Stevenson's first real excursion into the culture of his country. It deals with man's struggle against the Devil; a consistent theme of Calvinism which for ages has formed a major part of Scottish thought and character. It is a horrible tale of a Scottish minister and his diabolically possessed house-keeper set in an appropriately bleak Scottish landscape, "the moorland parish of Balweary, in the vale of Dule". In her "Note" to The Merry Men, Mrs. Stevenson wrote that after her husband had finished reading the story out to the family

[The story] sent a "cauld grue" along  
my bones. By the time the tale was  
finished my husband had fairly fright-  
ened himself, and we crept down the stairs  
clinging hand in hand like two scared  
children. . . .

My father-in-law's unexpected praise  
of "Thrawn Janet" caused my husband 15  
to regard it with more favour.....

The Rev. M. Soulis' adventure with the Devil is told in the Scottish vernacular. To begin with, he employs Janet as his housekeeper. In doing so, he defies the people of the community he lives in, who regard her as a wicked witch. He asks her to "renounce the deil and his works", which she does before all. The minister continues to defy the people on her behalf, though unusual, horrible things begin to surround her:

There were mony grave folk lang ower  
their prayers that nicht, but when the  
morn cam' there was sic a fear fell  
upon a' Ba'weary that the bairns hid  
theirsels, an' even the men-folk stood  
an'keekit frae their doors. For there  
was Janet comin'doun the clachan - her  
or her likeness, nane could tell - with  
her neck thrawn, an' her heid on ae side,  
like a body that has been hangit, an'  
a girn on her face like an unstreakit  
corp. By an' by they got used wi'it  
an' even speered at her to ken what was  
wrang; but frae that day forth she could-  
na speak like a Christian woman, but  
slavered an' played click wi'her teeth  
like a pair o' shears; an' frae that day  
forth the name o' God cam' never on her  
lip s. Whiles she wad try to say it,  
but it michtna be..... But the minister  
was neither to haud nor to bind; he  
preached about naething but the folk's  
cruelty that had gi'en her a stroke of  
the palsy; he skelpit the bairns that  
meddled her; an' he had her up to the  
manse that same nicht, an' dwalled there  
a' his lane wi' her under the Hangin'  
Shaw. 16

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15. Mrs. Stevenson "Note" to the Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables, pp . Xii - Xiii.
16. "Thrawn Janet", included in The Merry Men, pp. 125-26.

Later Mr. Soulis sees a "black man".<sup>17</sup> sitting upon a grave, and "there was something unco about this black man that haunted him". The minister has to find out about this mysterious creature:

Het as he was, he took a kind o' cauld  
grue in the marrow o' his banes; but up  
he spake for a' that; an' says he:  
"My friend, are you a stranger in this  
place?". The black man answered never  
a word; he got upon his feet, an' begoud  
to hirsle to the wa' on the far side;  
but he aye lookit at the minister; an' the  
minister stood an'lookit back; till a' in  
a meenit the black man was ower the wa'  
an' rinnin' for the bield o' the trees.  
Mr. Soulis, he hardly kenned why, ran  
after him; but he was fair forjeskit  
wi' his walk an' the het, unhalosome  
weather; an' rin as he likit, he got nae  
mair than a glisk o' the black man amang  
the birks, till he won down to the foot  
o' the hillside, an' there he saw him  
ance mair, gaun, hap-step-an' lowp ower  
Dule water to the manse.. (p. 127)

In the manse Mr Soulis faces Janet and asks her if she has seen a black man. "A black man!" she says, "Save us a' ! Ye're no wise minister. There's nae black man in a' Ba'weary". However, the minister becomes haunted by the mysterious creature he has already seen:

Syne Mr. Soulis gaed into his study amang  
a' his books....that black man aye ran  
in his heid like the owercome of a sang.  
Aye the mair he thocht, the mair he thocht o' black man  
He tried the prayer, an' the words wouldna  
come to him; an' he tried, they say, to  
write at his book, but he couldna mak' nae  
mair o' that. There was whiles he thocht  
the black man was at his oxter, an' the  
swat stood upon him cauld as well-water;  
and there was ither whiles, when he cam'  
to himsel' like a christened bairn an'  
minded naething. (pp. 128-29)

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17. In his footnote (p. 127) Stevenson tells us that "It was a common belief in Scotland that the devil appeared as a black man. This appears in several witch trials and I think in Law's Memorials, that delightful storehouse of the quaint and grisly."

He begins to recall people's suspicions as to Janet's possession by the devil, associating her with the black man. He goes up checking her room where

there was Janet hangin' frae a nail beside the auld aik cabinet: her heid aye lay on her shouther, her e' en were steekit, the tongue projected frae her mouth, an' her heels were twa feet clear abune the floor. (p. 131)

Being "strong in the Lord", Mr Soulis locks the door behind him and goes downstairs. All of a sudden, he hears footsteps in the dead woman's room, and "it seemed to him as if the corp was lookin' ower the rail and doun upon him whaur he stood". He then goes out of the manse where

naething moved, but the Dule water seepin' and sabbin' doun the glen, an' yon unholy footstep that cam' ploddin' doun the stairs inside the manse. He kenned the foot ower weel, for it was Janet's; an' at ilka step that cam' a wee thing nearer, the cauld got deeper in his vitals. He commended his soul to Him that made an' keepit him; "and O Lord", said he, "give me strength this night to war against the powers of evil". (p. 132)

With a strong cry, " I charge you, by the power of God, begone - if you be dead to the grave - if you be damned, to hell", the minister's "war against the powers of evil" starts. And at that moment

the Lord's ain hand out o' the Heevens struck the Horror whaur it stood; the auld, deid, desecrated corp o' the witch-wife, sae lang keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by de'ils, lowed up like a brunstane spunk an' fell in ashes to the ground; the thunder followed, peal on dirlin' peal, the rairin' rain upon the back o' that; and Mr. Soulis lowped through the garden hedge, an' ran, wi' skelloch upon skelloch, for the clachan. (pp.132-33)

It is the Calvinist view, as it seems from "Thrawn Janet", that man must maintain a constant struggle with evil, that the slightest lapse in watchfulness will allow the Devil to triumph. But the price for victory is very high; Mr Soulis is fated to a lifetime of mental and physical disturbance. The minister's triumph over the Devil may remind us of Steenie Steenson's adventure in the supernatural world of evil forces in Sir Walter Scott's "Wandering Willie's Tale". Trying to clear himself before Sir John, Steenie has a very horrible experience in the world of the dead where he meets Sir Robert Redgauntlet whom he asks for the receipt for the rent he has already paid him shortly before his death. Sir Robert, now holding a party with other evil forces, asks him to drink and eat and play the pipes for them. But Steenie refuses to do so. Finally, he manages to get the receipt before leaving this horrible world; still with a hint from Sir Robert that he might return to them within a year.

Clearing himself before Sir John (Sir Robert's son), Steenie goes to clear himself before a minister. Here wandering Willie concludes the story of the triumphant Steenie, which serves as a good comparison to the theme of "Thrawn Janet":

My gudesire gaed down to the Manse,  
and the minister, when he had heard  
the story, said, it was his real  
opinion, that though my gudesire had  
gaen very far in tampering with  
dangerous matters, yet, as he had  
refused the devil's arles, (for such  
was the offer of meat and drink), and  
had refused to do homage by piping at  
his bidding, he hoped, that if he held  
a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan  
could take little advantage by what  
was come and gane. And, indeed, my  
gudesire, of his ain accord, lang  
forsoore baith the pipes and brandy -  
it was not even till the year was out,  
and the fatal day passed, that he would  
so much as take the fiddle, or drink  
usquebaugh or tippenny. <sup>18</sup>

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18. The Supernatural Short Stories of Sir Walter Scott, ed.  
Michael Hayes (London, 1977), p. 97.

It may be said that Stevenson in "Thrawn Janet" followed the Scots tradition in dealing with the supernatural, of which Sir Walter Scott was the most prominent figure. Praised by many critics, it is "the fine Scots study in the exercise of the powers of darkness".<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note here that Stevenson in his early thirties found the same "fearful pleasure" in the legends of bogies and witchcraft as when his nurse, Cummy, told him in his childhood these tales of her country. This susceptibility to the horrifying may be seen in other horror stories, such as "The Body-Snatcher" and "Markheim", which Stevenson called "crawlers". In a letter from Pitlochry to Sidney Colvin, Stevenson mentioned a series of horror tales planned with his wife, including The Black Man and Other Tales, and he went on to say that "The tales are all ghastly. 'Thrawn Janet' frightened me to death".<sup>20</sup>

"The Body-Snatcher" (1884), written in Pitlochry, reflects Stevenson's great interest in the criminal history of early 19th century Edinburgh. A macabre tale, it is based upon Burke and Hare, two grave robbers and murderers whose names, as Clifford Hanley tells us in The Scots, "are inseparable, like Hengist and Horsa, Fortnum and Mason, Sears and Roebuck, Laurel and Hardy. History is made by partnerships."<sup>21</sup> It is about revenge taken by the ghost of one of the victims on his murderers. The story concerns Fettes and Macfarlane, two Edinburgh medical students who are employed by the distinguished teacher of anatomy Mr. K — (Dr. Robert Knox in the real story). Being talented and competent, Fettes is in charge of bodies in the dissecting rooms. He has to deal with "unclean and desperate interlopers who supplied the table". At late hours of chilly nights, he

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19. Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature (London, 1977) p. 338.  
20. Letters, Vol. I, p. 205.  
21. Clifford Hanley, The Scots (London, 1982), p. 37.

would open the door to these men, since infamous throughout the land. He would help them with their tragic burthen, pay them their sordid price, and remain alone, when they were gone, with the unfriendly relics of humanity. <sup>22</sup>

The problem of the serious shortage of "subjects" sometimes upsets Fettes and his master, which sheds light on the fact that Edinburgh schools of medicine, always at the front of any scientific advance, needed endless supplies of corpses during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mr K - instructs his clever student to disregard the sources from which the bodies come. In order to please their master, Fettes and Macfarlane embark on horrible adventures:

..... when subjects were scarce the pair would drive far into the country in Macfarlane's gig, visit and desecrate some lonely graveyard, and return before dawn with their booty to the door of the dissecting-room. ( p. 241)

Later they extend their activities; Macfarlane kills the unfortunate Jane Galbraith whose body is duly dissected without being recognised by other students. Though feeling great panic, Fettes becomes an actual accomplice by keeping his mouth shut. To this point, evil surrounds them and, as time goes on, makes them its slaves. Macfarlane kills another victim called Grey, who wanted to blackmail him, and dissects his body. The values of the medical profession are challenged by human wickedness. Justifying his evil acts, the killer tells his companion that

there are two squads of us - the lions and the lambs. If you're a lamb, you'll come to lie upon these tables like Grey or Jane Galbraith; if you're a lion, you'll live and drive a horse like me, like K-, like all the world with any wit and courage. ( p. 246)

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22. "The Body Snatcher", included in Tales and Fantasies, Vol.XII, p. 238.

Stevenson creates an atmosphere of horror and excitement at the end of the story, when the two criminals, in one of their nightly adventures in the rustic graveyard of Glencorse, rob the grave of a farmer's wife and carry her naked body in Macfarlane's gig back to town. On the way they discover that the body is not a woman. To their astonishment and panic, it turns out to be Gray's body. It must be Grey's ghost coming to take revenge. He will haunt them as long as they live (a punishment perhaps more severe than hanging). The story ends thus:

A wild yell rang up into the night;  
each leaped from his own side into the  
roadway; the lamp fell, broke, and was  
extinguished; and the horse, terrified  
by the unusual commotion, bounded and  
went off toward Edinburgh at a gallop,  
bearing along with it, sole occupant of the  
gig, the body of the dead and long -  
dissected Gray. (p. 254)

So far the attempt has been made to throw light on Stevenson's horror and supernatural stories which have both Scottish settings and typically Scottish themes. He wrote other horror stories such as "Olalla", "Markheim" and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (which is in fact a short novel), all of which, though having non-Scottish settings, reflect some Scottish themes with which Stevenson had been pre-occupied throughout his life. One critic has remarked that all these stories "are distinguished by Stevenson's power of invention, deft handling of horror and the supernatural, and psychological insight".<sup>23</sup> The following three stories may be looked at as "sophisticated adventure fiction";<sup>24</sup> indeed it requires discerning readers and critics to understand their ambiguity.

To start with, "Olalla" (1885) concerns the adventure of a wounded Scottish soldier in the Continental wars, who is sent to Spain to recover and "renew his blood".

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23. "Introduction", The Supernatural Short Stories of R.L. Stevenson, ed. Michael Hayes (London, 1976).
24. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson: A Life Study, p. 221.

(Stevenson had never been to Spain, therefore his description of Spanish scenes in the story is wholly imaginary). In a mountain-residence the narrator-hero stays with a Spanish family of decaying nobility, which consists of the aging but beautiful Senora, her son Felipe and her daughter Olalla. As time goes on, the soldier realizes that he is living with "mysterious" people. He sees Felipe take great pleasure in catching a squirrel and crushing it to death. And one windy night while in his room,

I was suddenly startled by an outbreak of pitiable and hateful cries. I leaped from my bed, supposing I had dreamed; but the cries still continued to fill the house, cries of pain, I thought, but certainly of rage also, and so savage and discordant that they shocked the heart. It was no illusion; some living thing, some lunatic or some wild animal, was being foully tortured. The thought of Felipe and the squirrel flashed into my mind, and I ran to the door, but it had been locked from the outside; and I might shake it as I pleased, I was a fast prisoner. Still the cries continued.<sup>25</sup>

Of course we cannot expect the hero to recover well in such a horrible atmosphere. However, he forgets his fears for a while, when he meets Olalla, a beautiful, religious girl, and loves her at first sight. But Olalla, though loving the hero, begs him to go away from this cursed house. He discovers that her mother goes violently mad when the wind blows, and that she has an uncontrollable lust for blood. When he shows her his badly cut and bleeding hand, the wild animal in her nature flames out as she attacks him, savagely biting him to the bone. Realizing that the family for generations has suffered "savage and bestial strain", he begins to doubt whether or not Olalla can be truly human. The girl tells him that she despises herself because she sees the "horror of the living fact", and because she considers herself to be the embodiment of her entire evil race:

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25. "Olalla", included in The Merry Men, pp. 156,57.

..... not a gesture that I can frame,  
not a tone of my voice, not any look  
from my eyes, no, not even now when I  
speak to him I love, but has belonged to  
others. Others, ages dead, have wooed  
other men with my eyes; other men have  
heard the pleading of the same voice that  
now sounds in your ears. The hands of the  
dead are in my bosom; they move me, they  
pluck me, they guide me; I am a puppet  
at their command; and I but re-inform  
features and attributes that have long  
been laid aside from evil in the quiet  
of the grave. ( p. 177)

Atavism, it may be noticed, is the central theme of "Olalla".  
The story shows Stevenson's concern with "Probably Arboreal", a  
somewhat comic term which he gives to atavism in his Scottish essay  
"The Manse". In this essay he is amused to contemplate that his  
maternal grandfather, the very Reverend Dr. Balfour, is " a  
homunculus or part-man" <sup>26</sup> of his own who "no doubt, and even as I  
write the phrase....moves in my blood, and whispers words to me,  
and sits efficient in the very knot and centre of my being." <sup>27</sup>  
And he goes on to say:

And I know not which is the more strange,  
that I should carry about with me some  
fibres of my minister-grandfather; or  
that in him, as he sat in his cool study,  
grave, reverend, contented gentleman,  
there was an aboriginal frisking of the  
blood that was not his; tree-top memories  
like undeveloped negatives, lay dormant  
in his mind; tree-top instincts awoke and  
were trod down; and Probably Arboreal  
(scarce to be distinguished from a monkey)  
gambolled and chattered in the brain of  
the old divine. <sup>28</sup>

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26. "The Manse", in Memories and Portraits, p. 66.  
27. Ibid, p. 66. 28. Ibid, pp. 68-69.

Again, in his other Scottish essay entitled "Pastoral", Stevenson speaks of

a certain low-browed, hairy gentleman, at first a percher in the fork of trees, next (as they relate) a dweller in caves..... his name I never heard, but he is often described as Probably Arboreal, which may serve for recognition. <sup>29</sup>

Stevenson's treatment of atavism, however, is more serious and more complex in the story than in the essays. The love relation between Olalla and the soldier is unrealized because her soul, she believes, is inseparable from her evil race. In order not to fall in "sin", she vows never to marry or to have children. She tells the hero by the end of the story that

my vow has been given; the race shall cease from off the earth. At this hour my brother is making ready; his foot will soon be on the stair; and you will go with him and pass out of my sight for ever. (p.179)

In doing so, she resigns from life - an act that, of course, is contrary to Stevenson's philosophy of a life of "full-blooded activities". In the final scene we see her kneel down before the crucifix to pray, while the soldier is watching in silence. Then she addresses him thus:

We are all such as He was - the inheritors of sin; we must all bear and expiate a past which was not ours..... Like Him, we must endure for a little while, until morning returns bringing peace. Suffer me to pass on upon my way alone.....(p. 186)

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29. "Pastoral", in Memories and Portraits, p. 60.

Obviously the conclusion is ambiguous. For Christ's sacrifice need not be man's. One critic has said that Stevenson here "seemingly intends to contrast Christ's sacrifice and man's. Jesus gave of himself so that man may accept all of life, even with its contradictions".<sup>30</sup> Ambiguity still remains with the Scottish soldier as he delivers the final "seromon" before leaving Olalla for good: "It is best to suffer all things and do well". Here the soldier's adventure with the Spanish family ends:

I turned and went down the mountain  
in silence; and when I looked back for  
the last time before the wood closed  
about my path, I saw Olalla still leaning  
on the crucifix. ( p. 187)

It is worth mentioning that Stevenson was dissatisfied with the story. In a letter to Lady Taylor (to whom The Merry Men was dedicated), he wrote:

The trouble with "Olalla" is that it somehow sounds false.... What makes a story true?"Markheim" is true; "Olalla" is false; and I don't know why..... I admire the style of it more than is perhaps good for me; it is so solidly written. And that again brings back (almost with the voice of despair) my unanswerable: why is it false?<sup>31</sup>

One of his early critics, trying to answer this question, suggested that Stevenson "became too intent upon his rendering of the idea; his literary sense took command when his knowledge failed",<sup>32</sup> which may sound acceptable. But this should lead us to another important question: why the Spanish setting? Stevenson, we tend to believe, might have given more authenticity to his serious subject had he chosen for the story a "Scottish" setting familiar to him.

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30. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 75.

31. Quoted in R.L. Stevenson: The Critical Heritage, ed. Paul Maixner (London, 1981), p. 250.

32. Frank Swinnerton, R.L. Stevenson: A Critical Study (London, 1914) p. 126.

In "Markheim" (1885), Stevenson deals with man's tormented self in his encounter with the Devil, appearing here in person just as he has done before in "Thrawn Janet". Markheim, a man who, under the circumstance of poverty, has led a criminal life, now stabs to death a London shopkeeper on Christmas Day. His motive is the man's riches, for "to have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit would be too abhorrent a failure". After the murder, he becomes haunted by his criminal act:

..... brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin. <sup>33</sup>

While looking for his victim's money, Markheim is confronted by something quite out of his normal experience. A visitant makes his appearance, and asks Markheim if he has called him, but the criminal

stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself, and always like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God. (p. 111)

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33. "Markheim", included in The Merry Men, p. 104.

This "thing" is the Devil himself. With a smile, he tells Markheim that "you have long been a favourite of mine, and I have long observed and often sought to help you".

Starting his techniques of temptation, the Devil offers to tell him where to find the money, "I offer you the service for a Christmas gift". But Markheim

could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No", said he, "I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil". (p. 113)

The Devil warns him that the maid will return soon; a warning which adds to his temptations. Ironically enough, Markheim refuses to do anything to "commit myself to evil", though he is evil himself. He denies the Devil's role, claiming that he has been "acting" all his life according to his own will. The Devil, realizing well that the criminal has willingly allowed self-indulgence to become a way of life, tells him to

Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply..... (p. 114)

We come to realize Markheim's tormented conscience in his wish to be good; a desire which has never become true because of "the giants of circumstance". The Devil asks him to

content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down. (p. 117)

Then he proceeds to advise Markheim to kill the maid:

Once the girl is within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening - the whole night, if needful - to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up !" he cried: "up, friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up and act !" (pp. 117-18)

Deciding not to follow the words of his counsellor, Markheim goes on to address him thus (before his disappearance from the scene):

If I be condemned to evil acts....  
there is still one door of freedom  
open - I can cease from action.  
If my life be an ill thing, I can lay  
it down. Though I be, as you say  
truly, at the beck of every small  
temptation, I can yet, by one decisive  
gesture, place myself beyond the reach  
of all. My love of good is damned  
to barrenness.... But I have still my  
hatred of evil; and from that, to your  
galling disappointment, you shall see  
that I can draw both energy and  
courage. ( p. 118)

Confronting the maid, he asks her to go for the police. At this most critical moment, he decides to put an end to his evil acts. For he could have killed the maid and got away with the money, but he did not. He feels psychological relief in his act of surrender, though realizing well that he is going to be hanged.

"Markheim" shows Stevenson's obsession with the thought of sin and guilt. The story may be interpreted in terms of the Calvinist belief in predestination: that man is predestined either to be wholly good or wholly evil. In his indoor adventure, Markheim admits his sins from which he cannot escape. He is condemned to evil.

But at a certain decisive point he denies the Devil and chooses to give himself up to the police rather than commit another killing. In doing so, he asserts his "free will". As one critic has put it, it is "the only moral way out of his dilemma" :

He chooses to annihilate himself as a moral agent, thus removing the possibility of doing more evil. It is a morally admirable act, yet it is the only moral act open to him — self-destruction.<sup>34</sup>

Stevenson, it may be detected from the story, is against murder. He stresses in his essay "The Ethics of Crime" that to kill is the most horrible, unpardonable of all evil acts, and that "all sinful acts run to murder. Murder is a distinction without a difference".<sup>35</sup> At the same time, he admires Markheim's "free will" when he denies the Devil and thus challenges Calvinism in so far as the doctrine of predestination is concerned.

In Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Stevenson again deals with the question of evil and its self-destructive nature. Unable to cope with evil impulses, the hero, Dr. Jekyll, discovers a drug which can transform him into another person (Mr. Hyde) for periods of time, and decides to use this second body for the isolation of the worst parts of his nature. Unfortunately, the scheme goes wrong; he cannot escape from the evil body, the evil turns against itself, and Hyde consequently destroys himself. From the very beginning, however, one has the impression that it is going to be a detective story, with all the element of suspense and excitement, which is shown in Mr. Utterson's efforts to find out the identity of Hyde who is often seen coming and going by the Doctor's laboratory.

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34. "Introduction", Selected Short Stories of R.L. Stevenson, ed. Ian Campbell (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 14.
35. "The Ethics of Crime", included in Vol. XXII, p. 217.

As has been indicated,<sup>36</sup> Stevenson as a child would terrify himself with thoughts of the devil, and reprove himself for the possibility of sin. When he wrote Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, he had in mind the picture of hateful, victorious evil that took another shape from the evil he was acquainted with in his childhood and youth. Jenni Calder in this respect has remarked that

the evil that the Calvinism and the folk tales of his youth identified was a disguised evil, in the shape of devils and spirits. It is when it takes on human aspect that it becomes terrifying, when the devil removes his tail and horns, those easy aids to identification and puts on a dress suit, or the spirit enters into the body and soul of an apparently innocent human being. It is the process that Calvinism warns against so violently. The devil may not be as easy to recognise as we think: the potential for evil is within us all.<sup>37</sup>

As we go on reading the story, we come to realize that it is not merely a detective story, but a moral tale that shows man's tormented self as a result of the existence of both evil and good inside that self. Mr. Hyde is described by Utterson, Jekyll's lawyer friend, when he meets him in a London street, as "hardly human", and with "Satan's signature" upon his face. Apart from his trampling over a girl child's body and leaving her screaming on the ground, and his murder of Sir Danvers, we do not see much of Hyde's evil acts. As for Jekyll, he shuts himself up in his laboratory, refusing any contacts with his close friends. Hysterical cries are often heard from within the laboratory. However, the complete disappearance of Hyde from the public eye encourages Jekyll to resume his social activities:

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36. See Chapter 1, pp. 11-12.

37. "Introduction", Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp.10-11.

Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good . . . . . and for more than two months, the doctor was at peace. <sup>38</sup>

Jekyll's peace of mind is again and again disturbed by the reappearance of the evil Hyde. Jekyll cannot curb his need for secret pleasures, though he well realizes his respectable position in society. Jenni Calder is of the opinion that "it was hypocrisy that Louis was striking at". She goes on to say:

It is the bland but relentless outside of a hypocritical society that forces Jekyll first to hide his inclinations for what were probably relatively innocent pleasures, and then to free himself from his own sense of guilt by giving himself up to evil. In the form of Hyde he revels in violence for its own sake - Stevenson specifically makes the point that Hyde's evil is not to be seen in terms of excessive sexuality, although that is the way in which it has been frequently interpreted. As Jekyll, we presume though we are never explicitly told, he drinks and fornicates quietly out of the public eye, as Louis knew full well was Victorian custom. He had led a double life himself. The writing of Jekyll and Hyde may well have been a cathartic experience for its author. <sup>39</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the theme of the story first came to Stevenson, as he claimed, in a dream. "The Brownies" <sup>40</sup> provided him with a horrifying sequence of scenes reflecting his waking preoccupation with the divided self of man.

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38. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Vol. Iv, p. 35.  
39. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson; A Life Study, p. 223-

(Stevenson burned the first draft and had to re-write the whole thing, after his wife's criticism that the story sounded like a "crawler" and that he missed the "allegory"). Besides his "Brownies", Stevenson might have had in mind James Hogg's masterpiece, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824). The dualism between inner and outer reality leads Robert, the fanatically religious hero of the story, to conceive of himself as two people: he looks from outside and sees his "apparition". Was Stevenson acquainted with the following lines (in which Robert speaks of his dilemma) when he wrote Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? :

I was a being incomprehensible to myself.  
Either I had a second self, who transacted  
business in my likeness, or else my body  
was at time possessed by a spirit over  
which it had no control..... I began to  
have secret terrors that the great  
enemy of man's salvation was exercising  
powers over me.... And yet to shake him  
off was impossible - we were incorporated<sup>41</sup>  
together - identified with one another...

In Jekyll and Hyde, Stevenson seems to relive the conflicts between his better nature and his desire to experiment with what is forbidden, which caused him so much psychological trouble as a teenager. The story, though set in London, is redolent of the dark closes of Edinburgh's Old Town. Critics, especially G.K. Chesterton<sup>42</sup>, have indicated that the morality of Jekyll and Hyde is actually more "Scottish" than English and that the more appropriate setting for the narrative would have been Edinburgh. Unlike Chesterton, Saposnik argues that "only London could serve as the locus classicus of Victorian behaviour,"<sup>43</sup> He goes on to say that

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40. Of the Brownies Stevenson wrote, "God bless them ! [they] do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and.... do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself". See "A Chapter on Dreams", Vol. XXVI, p. 135.
41. The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, ed. John Carey (Oxford, 1969), pp. 182-83.
42. G.K. Chesterton, R.L. Stevenson (London, 1927) pp. 68-69.
43. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 89.

Victorian man was haunted constantly by an inescapable sense of division.... By 1886, the English could already be described as "Masquerades" ( as Henry Arthur Jones portrayed them eight years later), and it is to all aspects of this existential charade that Jekyll and Hyde addresses itself. With characteristic haste, it plunges immediately into the center of Victorian society to dredge up a creature ever present but submerged; not the evil opponent of a contentious good but the shadow self of a half man. <sup>44</sup>

It may be said that Stevenson in this work was expressing both his Scottishness and Victorian London. The most interesting thing about the story, however, is that its captivating power lies largely in the truth that it arose from the author's profound conviction of the dualism at the root of human nature, as that conviction arose, not merely from the observations of other people, but as it broke from his own soul, in dream, in thought, and in every episode of his happy and tormented life. Through Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson is suggesting that evil is potentially more powerful than good, and if we let it come into the open we are in effect giving it the chance to win. But in order to understand evil and to struggle against it, we must examine it. In a letter to J.A. Symonds, Stevenson shows his preoccupation with the thought of evil:

Jekyll is a dreadful thing, I own; but the only thing I feel dreadful about is that damned old business of the war in the members. <sup>45</sup>

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44. Ibid, pp.88-89.

45. Letters, Vol. II, p. 19.

In the last chapter entitled "Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case", we know more about the destructive nature of Dr. Jekyll's laboratory adventures. Like his author, he is preoccupied with "the perennial war among my members". In order to become "pure evil", he must "spring headlong into the sea of liberty". The striking point about Jekyll is that he is not a bad man, but that he has always been leading a double life. And he is leading a double life because he has high aspirations. He wants respect, honour and distinction, to be highly regarded in society, and thus feels strongly obliged to conceal any oddities in his life:

Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities<sup>46</sup> as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations, than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. (p.65)

It is interesting to note that the structure of Jekyll and Hyde is symbolic. One critic has noticed the "contrast between exterior and interior"<sup>47</sup>, in which the actions take place; each represents an intriguing paradox: in the exterior, social movement and foul crimes; in the interior, elegant drawing rooms and secret laboratory experiments.

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46. Stevenson is never explicit about these "irregularities", but knowing something of his own Bohemian adventures in the taverns and brothels of Edinburgh's underworld, we may guess what he had in mind.

47. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 96.

We come to know about Jekyll's-Hyde's adventures through the investigations of Utterson and through Dr. Lanyon's written accounts - besides Jekyll's own confession. The climax is the catastrophe which annihilates Hyde and Jekyll together: Hyde's swallowing poison on the forced entry of Poole (the servant) and Utterson into the mysterious laboratory. So the story is surrounded from the very beginning by a series of experiences of horror which end in the self-destruction of the hero.

Again, in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Stevenson examines the baser side of man's soul. We may say he "travels" deep into the inner self of man. In Deacon Brodie (1864, rewritten and revised with W.E. Henley, 1879), Stevenson dealt with the theme of the dual nature of man before he wrote Jekyll and Hyde. As one critic has said, "the subject was a natural for Louis, for it contained the core of his preoccupation".<sup>48</sup> It is a play about Deacon Brodie, a resident of eighteenth century Edinburgh, who was a respectable cabinet maker by day and a burglar by night. Stevenson might well have derived the theme of Jekyll and Hyde from the dual character of this legendary citizen of Edinburgh (in fact there was a cabinet made by Brodie himself in Stevenson's room in the family house in Edinburgh). Clifford Hanley in this respect has mentioned that

it must mean something that we gave the world the outstanding fictional studies of schizophrenia. We also nurtured the great exponent of the double life in reality.<sup>49</sup>

Jack Sullivan believes that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is the most famous dual-personality tale in English fiction. He thinks that both the responsible, moral Dr. Jekyll side and the evil Mr. Hyde side "represent self-destructive extremes, an inability to accept the messy ambiguities of reality".<sup>50</sup> He goes on to say:

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48. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson: A Life Study, p. 96.

49. Clifford Hanley, The Scots, p. 70.

50. Jack Sullivan "Psychological, Antiquarian, and Cosmic Horror", Horror literature, ed. M.B. Tymm (New York, 1981), p. 267.

Thus, the tale is not the simple allegory of the good and evil in each person, as it is often misconstrued, but a sophisticated psychological study of the consequences of reducing all behaviour to those simple labels. In terms of the history of literature, Jekyll and Hyde represents the breakdown of the stable ego in late Victorian fiction and a fascination with irrationality that prefigures the works of Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf.<sup>51</sup>

In Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as well as his other horror stories discussed above, Stevenson stresses the "monstrous" demands of art. Disagreeing with his friend Henry James over his statement in "The Art of Fiction" that art should "compete with life",<sup>52</sup> Stevenson goes on to hold the view that art should select from life. In his essay "A Humble Remonstrance" (1884), he argues with James that

Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing and emasculate. Life imposes by brute energy, like inarticulate thunder; art catches the ear, among the far louder noises of experience, like an air artificially made by a discreet musician.<sup>53</sup>

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51. Ibid.  
52. Henry James and R.L. Stevenson; A record of Friendship and Criticism, ed. J.A. Smith (London, 1948), p. 56.  
53. "A Humble Remonstrance", included in Vol. XXV, p. 160.

CHAPTER SIX

Treasure Island

and

The Black Arrow

Treasure Island (1883), serialized in Young Folks from October 1881 to January 1882, is Stevenson's first long adventure story. If Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) firmly established Stevenson's popularity as a writer in Britain and America, then Treasure Island initiated him as a great novelist. The book took its origin from a map of an imaginary, romantic island idly drawn by Stevenson and his stepson on a rainy day in "the late Miss Macgregor's cottage," Braemar, Scotland. In this work Stevenson takes us on an exciting journey to a timeless, make-believe world in which he depicts human conflicts for gold. It is the story of a quest for hidden treasure in a mysterious island. The theme of the quest is old in both actual and fictional life. Ulysses sought his home, Jason sought the Golden Fleece, King Arthur's knights sought the Holy Grail, Alladin sought the Enchanted Lamp, and there are other examples of many who went off in quest of something desirable.

Jim Hawkins, the young narrator-hero, is first presented to us as assisting his parents in running the "Admiral Benbow" Inn. Their peace is interrupted by the entering of two pirates: Billy Bones and Blind Pew. Billy Bones, expecting a "seafaring man with one leg", asks Jim to let him know the moment he appears in the inn. The boy becomes haunted by the image of this crippled man:

How that personage haunted my dreams, I  
need scarcely tell you. On stormy  
nights when the wind shook the four  
corners of the house, and the surf roared  
along the cove and up the cliffs, I  
would see him in a thousand forms, and<sup>1</sup>  
with a thousand diabolical expressions.

When Pew hands over the "Black Spot" to Bones, the latter responds by falling down dead. The pirate's death, together with that of Jim's father, creates a very difficult situation for the young boy.

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1. Treasure Island, Vol. II, p. 5.

After a short escape, the hero and his mother return to the inn and search the dead sailor's body. Finding the map which is to be the clue to the hidden treasure, Jim is chased by Pew and his men, until finally the blind man is killed. David Daiches has remarked that

the return to the inn and searching the dead sailor's body become..... acts of heroism or at least of courage, calculated to begin the transformation of Jim<sub>2</sub> from a passive to an active character.

In Bristol preparations are made for the voyage for the treasure shortly after Jim has handed over the map to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney; two respectable men representing the forces of good as set in opposition to a pirate gang led by Long John Silver - the "seafaring man with one leg" who has a parrot on his shoulder wherever he goes. The boy becomes very excited when he is told he will go with them as cabin-boy on board the Hispaniola. Here he becomes literally involved in the adventure. To add to the excitement and the hazard expected on the voyage, Captain Smollett warns his fellow-gentlemen that "the secret has been told to the parrot".

It is interesting to see the respectable men's reaction to the thought of buried treasure just before starting the voyage. Squire Trelawney finances the expedition, dreaming of "finding the spot, and money to eat-to roll in - to play duck and drake with ever after". As for Dr. Livesey, he is determined to give up his practice of medicine at once, "I'll go with you; and I'll go bail for it". Thus the values of respectability are challenged by the lure of gold. All this raises questions of social conduct and the moral concern of the story, that "must have escaped its original readers, but the modern reader finds them arresting".<sup>3</sup>

During the voyage, Jim goes through a most thrilling experience when, while in the apple barrel, he happens to overhear Silver's plans for mutiny.

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2. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 42.

3. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson and his World, pp.55-56.

He then realizes that "the lives of all the honest men abroad depended upon me alone". Silver's conversation with Israel Hands betrays, besides his intentions of treachery, the great expectations he has of the voyage. He wishes to give up piracy and enter into the world of respectable men in society, " I am fifty..... once back from this cruise, I set up gentleman in earnest". Money to him means a great deal, for he recognises its spell and is hopeful to invest it so that he may one day become a member of Parliament and ride through the streets in a coach.

John Silver plays a double role in the story. On board the Hispaniola, Jim is first attracted to the pirate, especially when the latter regards him with paternal affection - "come and have a yarn with John. Nobody more welcome than yourself, my boy". The boy notices how much Silver is respected and feared by the crew, whose tales of the one-legged man catch his imagination:

He's no common man..... he had good schooling in his young days, and can speak like a book when so minded ! and brave- a lion's nothing alongside of Long John; I seen him grapple four, and knock their heads together - him unarmed. (p. 64)

Later on the island, the young hero, while exploring the place on his own, comes to see Silver's brutality and overwhelming power. This is shown when he murders one of the crew who refuses his invitation to mutiny. Jim almost faints as he is watching this savage incident:

..... John seized the branch of a tree, whipped the crutch out of his armpit, and sent that uncouth missile hurtling through the air. It struck poor Tom, point foremost and with stunning violence, right between the shoulders in the middle of his back. His hands flew up, he gave a sort of gasp and fell.....

.... Silver, agile as a monkey, even without leg or crutch, was on the top of him next moment, and had twice buried his knife up to the hilt in that defenceless body. ( pp.90-91)

The boy goes on wandering about the island away from the eyes of Silver the "monster". He meets Ben Gunn who has been marooned on the island for three years. At first Jim is terrified by "this new apparition", but finally he befriends him. It is indeed a very exciting experience for the young hero. The maroon tells Jim about the place he has hidden a small boat, which the latter is to make use of to recapture the Hispaniola. Stressing the significance of the maroon who alone achieves the quest for Flint's treasure, one critic has mentioned that

Jim should achieve independence by entering Ben Gunn's dangerous coracle - by being, as it were, in the same boat with the solitary. This theme receives immediate development in Jim's brief, and very nearly disastrous, captancy of the ship of life Hispaniola.<sup>4</sup>

The lure of buried treasure becomes destructive for those who pursue it. Jim finds himself involved in a bloody conflict between the gentlemen and pirates, which results in many deaths. He does not take part in actual fighting to defend the stockade, but helps to load the pistols for Dr. Livesey and the others, until, eventually, the battle is over and victory is theirs. Later he dislikes the place of the battle, thinking of embarking on a real adventure on his own:

What I began to do was to envy the doctor, walking in the cool shadow of the woods, with birds around him, and the pleasant smell of the pines, while I sat grilling, with my clothes stuck to the hot resin, and so much

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4. Al<sup>a</sup>stair Fowler, "Parables of Adventure: The Debatable Novels of R.L. Stevenson", Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction: Critical Essays, ed. Ian Campbell (Manchester, 1979) p. 111.

blood about me, and so many dead  
bodies lying all around, that I took  
a disgust of the place that was  
almost as strong as fear.... till at  
last..... I took the first step towards  
my escapade. (pp. 138-39)

Dr. Livesey's wanderings about the island, however, turn out to be of great use in the hunt for the treasure; he meets Ben Gunn who tells him how he has removed the treasure from its original place to his safe cave. Accordingly, Dr. Livesey (who conducts this time a battle of deception) deserts the stockade, giving Silver the map which is now useless. During this time, Jim is away, carrying out his most heroic adventure to recapture the Hispaniola. The young hero's experience with Israel Hands shows to the full both his physical and moral achievement. Before having to shoot Hands, Jim acts as a preacher, telling him to go to prayers like a "christian man". But the Christian prayers do not seem to work well with the pirate's philosophy of life:

For thirty years..... I've sailed  
the seas, and seen good and bad, better  
and worse, fair weather and foul,  
provisions running out, knives going,  
and what not. Well, now I tell you,  
I never seen good come d' goodness yet.  
Him as strikes first is my fancy; dead  
men don't bite; them's my views - amen,  
so be it be. And now, we've had about  
enough of this foolery.

As we have seen so far, Jim Hawkins, a normal boy with nothing unusual in his background, becomes involved, first imaginatively and then physically, in a series of adventures in which he equips himself "manfully" in the midst of dangerous experiences. Stevenson takes pains to depict an ideal picture of Jim, and one feels bound to say that the writer sometimes exaggerates to achieve his purpose. For how can we expect a young boy to recapture the ship by himself, having killed the dangerous pirate on board ?

Still we may find some excuse for Stevenson, once we realize that boys' stories of this kind require such exaggerations. (Lloyd Osbourne must have identified himself with this "Superboy" of Treasure Island when his stepfather read the story enthusiastically to the whole family before it appeared to the public).

It is interesting to see the boy boast of his heroics when he falls in the hands of Silver and his raging men:

..... I've had the top of this business from the first; I no more fear you than I fear a fly. Kill me, if you please, or spare me. But one thing I'll say, and no more; if you spare me, bygones are bygones, and when you fellows are in court for piracy, I'll save you all I can. It is for you to choose. Kill another, and do yourselves no good, or spare me and keep a witness to save you from the gallows. (pp.180-81)

Silver's reaction is disappointing to the pirates, "I like that boy.... He's more a man than any pairs of rats of you". He warns them that he will kill any who may "lay a hand" on Jim. In the final hunt for the treasure he hands the boy a "double-barrelled pistol" for the expected trouble. So Jim and Silver face the wrath of pirates outnumbering them, and it seems they are fated to die. Rescue comes at last from Dr. Livesey and Ben Gunn. Two pirates are killed, and three others escape. The adventurers, including Silver, work hard to carry the treasure from Ben Gunn's cave to the ship.

John Silver is perhaps the most interesting character in the story. He is possessed of attractive vitality. Despite his physical disability, he has the power to control others. Critics have observed his ambivalence. He represents in his attitude throughout the story the best possible ways of survival in a complicated human jungle. He realizes that he must survive by his wit and his changing plans according to the situation he faces. As Stevenson conceived him, he represents Henley (who was one-legged) devoid of his finer qualities, a man relying on "his strength, his courage, his quickness, and his magnificent geniality".<sup>5</sup>

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5. " My First Book: Treasure Island", in the present volume, p. XXX.

As has been indicated, money is the ultimate goal of his life. When the treasure is not found in its original place, and all his men are bitterly disappointed, he gives off a very furious cry, " I'm here to get that stuff, and I'll not be beat by man nor devil" . The young hero, who has seen Silver's kindness and brutality, much benefits from the journey through realizing the complexities of human nature. It may be said the pirate helps the boy to form an identity; something Jim could not have reached had he stuck to the "Admiral Benbow".

Henry James, who first met Stevenson in 1885 in Bournemouth, England, and had established a personal and literary friendship with him, much admired Treasure Island and called Silver "one of the most picturesque.....villains in the whole literature of romance." <sup>6</sup> Evil as Silver's actions are, we do not quite hate him as we ought. As David Daiches has put it, what is admirable "is not always what is right". <sup>7</sup> While Silver is really the "villain hero", the boy narrator "is both a spoiled 'lucky Jim' and an enviably daring youngster" <sup>8</sup> . No wonder the pirate chief escapes in the end scot-free, with part of the treasure. He escapes to

a presumed life of comfort. While condemnation in the next world may well be his lot, his secular <sup>9</sup> achievement is hardly impaired.

It is interesting to note that the treasure, finally reached after a series of adventures, contains a diversity of world coinage -

English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Georges, and Louises, doubloons and double guineas and moidores and sequins, the pictures of all the kings of Europe for the last hundred years.... nearly every variety of money in the world

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6. Henry James and R.L. Stevenson: A record of Friendship and Criticism, ed. J.A. Smith, p. 154.
  7. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson and his World, p. 56.
  8. Ibid.
  9. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 109.

must, I think, have found a place  
in that collection; and for number,  
I am sure they were like autumn leaves,  
so that my back ached with stooping and  
my fingers with sorting them out.  
(p. 222)

which may coincide with Stevenson's universality in tackling the theme  
of the quest for gold motivated by instinctive human greed. More  
interesting to note is that the young hero becomes haunted by his  
island experiences after the adventures are over:

The bar silver and the arms still lie,  
for all that I know, where Flint buried  
them; and certainly they shall lie for  
me. Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring  
me back again to that accursed island;  
and the worst dreams that ever I have  
are when I hear the surf booming about  
its coasts, or start upright in bed,  
with the sharp voice of Captain Flint  
still ringing in my ears: " Pieces of  
eight ! pieces of eight !" (p. 227)

Indeed the conclusion has a strange sense of poetry. Jim's  
nightmares may recall his author's. David Daiches was the first  
to notice the significance of the story's last lines:

The book ends, as it begins, with a  
deliberate pushing of the whole story  
into the past: it is a retrospect,  
a thing finished and done with, something  
to be talked over by the fire on a winter's  
night..... Thus once again the two  
aspects of Stevenson's bohemian ideal are  
brought together: talk and reminiscence  
on the one hand, and actual adventure on  
the other.... The pattern is, in a large  
sense, the same as that of The New  
Arabian Nights where cigar-smoking bachelors  
narrate their adventures in the comfort of  
Mr. Godall's Bohemian Cigar Divan. 10

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10. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, pp.49-50.

Since its publication, Treasure Island has become a very distinguished classic among adventure tales for boys and adults. The book has had its magical effect on those who aspired to be writers. Speaking of his boyhood, a modern Scottish poet and critic has recalled himself being so "entranced" by the story's theme of "boy - beats - buccaneers" that

[ I ] set to work on my own dramatic version for school performance, but realising that the scenes aboard the good ship Hispaniola and the desert island would require stage sets far beyond juvenile resources, I confined myself to the chapters set in the "Admiral Benbow" Inn, recruited a cast from my classmates, and produced the play before all the upper classes in the school on the day the winter term ended. The applause was gratifying..... 11

Treasure Island belongs to the genre of "escapist" literature. Unlike Zola who insisted upon "the fall of imagination", Stevenson showed his preoccupation with a romance that would enable an escape from hum-drum everyday life. Stevenson called for a fiction that should stand against what George Saintsbury called "the domestic and usual novel".<sup>12</sup> Speaking of the significance of Treasure Island, Jenni Calder has remarked that the story

established Stevenson as a writer who was able to produce a kind of story for which there was a hungry readership, a hungry readership of adults who had seen the Victorian age eat away at fantasy, at dreams, at romance, at heroics, and longed for a legitimate adventure fiction. Stevenson was lucky; not lucky that his talent should be recognised, for it was manifest and accessible, but lucky that his talent should coincide so creatively with a need of the time.. 13

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11. Alexander Scott, "Growing Up with Granite", As I Remember, ed. Maurice Lindsay (London 1979), p. 94 . . . . .
  12. George Saintsbury, A History of 19th Century literature (eighth ed., London 1912), p. 358 .
  13. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson; A Life Study, p. 173.

In "A Gossip on Romance", Stevenson writes that his conception of romance was adventure - moving incidents, threatened hazards or hidden treasure. He thinks that

the great creative writer shows us the realisation and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His 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 day-dream. 14

In a letter written in his early thirties to a friend of the Savile Club, Stevenson reveals his preoccupation with "romantic" aspirations:

To confess plainly, I had intended to spend my life (or any leisure I might have from Piracy upon the high seas) as the leader of a great horde of irregular cavalry, devastating whole valleys. I can still, looking back, see myself in many favourite attitudes; signalling for a boat from my pirate ship with a pocket-handkerchief, I at the jetty end, and one or two of my bold blades keeping the crowd at bay; or else turning in the saddle to look back at my whole command (some five thousand strong) following me at the hand-gallop up the road out of the burning valley; this last by moonlight. 15

Although not published in book form until 1888, The Black Arrow appeared in the pages of Young Folks in 1883 as an adventure tale for boys. It is an historical story set in Medieval England at the time of the Wars of the Roses. The work did not win the success that Treasure Island won. It is an uninspired story that lacks the "imagination" of its author. The characters are puppets: the scenes, stage settings, and the talk, conventional. However, the

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14. "A Gossip on Romance", included in Vol. XXV, p. 140.

15. Letters, Vol. I, p. 311.

story has some exciting scenes in which the young hero, Richard Shelton, escapes from Sir Daniel Brackley in the dark forests where the outlaws of the Black Arrow form a kind of protection for him. Stevenson wrote The Black Arrow for the sake of money (he had by that time urgent financial family burdens). He never liked the work. He called it "tushery". In a letter of 1894 to his friend William Archer, Stevenson admitted: "I find few greater pleasures than reading my own works, but I never, O I never read The Black Arrow".<sup>16</sup> The story need not detain us any more. Our main concern will be devoted in the next Chapter to a much more significant adventure story, Kidnapped, that shows our author at his best.

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16. Letters, Vol. II p. 323.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kidnapped

Kidnapped (1886) is not only an adventure book for boys (in his attempt to show the similarities between Treasure Island and Kidnapped, W.W. Robson<sup>1</sup> has remarked their highly "imaginative" qualities, the appeal of their youthful heroes' adventures and the absence of a heroine), but an historically significant work dealing with the tragic atmosphere of the Scottish Highlands after the rebellion of 1745. This may be regarded as one of the main themes of the story, to be combined with David Balfour's personal history. David Balfour, an orphan youth who must gain his identity through personal experiences, sets off upon his journey from Essendean to Cramond where he is to meet his uncle at the house of Shaws. On the way, he meets many people who know the house but who speak ill of its laird. One of them is "a stout, dark, sour-looking woman", whose curses of the uncle foretell the great dangers the young hero is about to go through.

"That is the house of Shaws! " she cried.  
"Blood built it.....blood shall bring it  
down. See here ! " she cried again —  
"I spit upon the ground, and crack-my  
thumb at it! Black be its fall! If ye  
see the laird, tell him what ye hear...."<sup>2</sup>

Like Jim Hawkins and Richard Shelton, the Scottish lowlander is alone in a world filled with hardships and wicked people that he has to face to realize his identity. Only through personal achievement can he find a secure place in such a hostile world. David feels he is unwelcome at the house of Shaws. What is more, his uncle attempts to kill him by sending him in the dark up an unsafe staircase. The conventional, mean old man of nursery tales is quite prepared to do anything which will prevent David from getting access to his lawful inheritance. The young hero realizes the risky situation he is in:

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1. W.W. Robson, "On Kidnapped," Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder, pp. 88-89.
  2. Kidnapped, Vol. V. p.11.

There was now no doubt about my uncle's enmity; there was no doubt I carried my life in my hand. But I was young and spirited, and like most lads that have been country-bred, I had a great opinion of my shrewdness. I had come to this door no better than a beggar and little more than a child; he had met me with treachery and violence; it would be a fine consummation to take the upper hand, and drive him like a herd of sheep.  
(p. 32)

It is through the relationship between David and Uncle Ebenezer that Stevenson presents us with the first part of the young hero's adventures. The uncle entices David to accompany him to the Queen's Ferry, which has so much a fascination for the boy that "the spirit of all that I beheld put me in thoughts of far voyages and foreign places". The wicked uncle manages to have him kidnapped on the brig Covenant bound for the West Indies. Thus the old man's treachery is more powerful than the young man's "shrewdness". However, at the end of the story David, having gone through many hazardous situations, is able to gain possession of his inheritance.

David feels very exhausted. The thought that his uncle has planned the kidnapping with a wicked crew is so painful to him that he loses consciousness for some time. Here he tells us about his first experience on board the Covenant:

When I returned again to life, the same uproar, the same confused and violent movements, shook and deafened me; and presently to my other pains and distress, there was added the sickness of an unused landman on the sea. In that time of my adventurous youth, I suffered many hardships; but none that was so crushing to my mind and body, or lit by so few hopes, as these first hours aboard the brig. (p. 45)

While the Covenant is sailing around the north of Scotland, he decides to cope with present conditions. The adventure develops crucially as the brig runs down a boat in the fog and causes it to sink with all its crew but one. The only survivor turns out to be Alan Breck Stewart, a hunted Jacobite.

With the appearance of Alan Breck, the story begins to take an historical course. David Daiches in this respect suggests that the reader of Kidnapped "provide himself with sufficient background information to enable him to find some satisfaction in the historical and topographical elements in the novel".<sup>3</sup> This is good advice in itself, for Kidnapped is a complex story reflecting Stevenson's great interest in the history of his country at certain periods of its crucial and significant events. The aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 has never failed to prove appealing to Scottish novelists in search of material. It is six years after the bitter defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden that the events which Stevenson describes take place. The Scottish Highlands were under the control of the Hanoverian troops, who exacted a heavy penalty for the scare that the Government had received from the Jacobite adventure.

The estate of Stewart of Ardshiel, who had fled to France after Culloden, was one of those confiscated by the Government and was under the control of Colin Campbell of Glenure who had been appointed King's Factor for Appin. As such he was responsible for the collecting of rents. He met with great difficulty because the tenants were poor, they were sending money to Ardshiel in France, they were sympathetic to the Stuart pretender (Campbell had, of course, fought on the side of the Hanoverians), and there was a natural and historic antipathy between the Stewarts and the Campbells.

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3. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 72.

At the time David Balfour enters the story (1751), a number of tenants were being evicted and deported to the colonies. It was at this point that Colin Campbell, the "Red Fox", was shot from ambush by a man who was never brought to justice, though certainly his name was known to the whole countryside. Suspicion fell upon Alan Breck Stewart, a notorious agent of the Jacobites, who went and came between Scotland and France; but he was never taken. Ardshiel's half brother, James Stewart of the Glens, was tried and hanged for the murder which he did not commit. Stevenson based Kidnapped on this murder and these historical figures.

It is against this historical background that the relationship between David Balfour and Alan Breck, whether on board the Covenant or in their joint flight in the Highlands, is set. David is a Whig, a Lowlander, a loyal subject of King George, a lad with a peaceful upbringing, whereas Alan is a "wild Hielander", hates both the Whigs and King George, speaks Gaelic, and was reared as a fighter. To make them, in spite of all the differences, get along well with each other, is one of the most striking themes which Stevenson tackles in the story. David comes to hear Captain Hoseason's plot to kill the Highlander and take his money. He has already seen a cabin-boy killed by the first mate in a fit of drunken rage; he knows that Alan is one man against fifteen; but instantly he does his duty as an honest, noble man, warning him against the conspiracy and offering to give a hand in the expected fight. It is the circumstances that make both of them close friends as well as cunning fighters.

It is interesting to see Alan's reaction to the conspiracy, just before fighting actually takes place in the round-house, as he addresses Captain Hoseason:

"Do ye see me?" said Alan. "I am come of kings; I bear a king's name. My badge is the oak. Do you see my sword? It has slashed the heads off mair Whigamores than you have toes upon your feet. Call up your vermin to your back, sir, and fall on ! The sooner the clash begins, the sooner ye'll taste this steel throughout your vitals".  
(p. 70)

When the battle starts, David uses his pistols and Alan his sword, which is the most exciting scene of the book's early chapters:

Alan....ran upon the others like a bull, roaring as he went. They broke before him like water, turning, and running, and falling one against another in their haste. The sword in his hands flashed like quicksilver into the huddle of our fleeing enemies; and at every flash there came the scream of a man hurt. I was still thinking we were lost, when lo! they were all gone, and Alan was driving them along the deck as a sheep-dog chases sheep.  
(p. 74)

After the fighting is over, and victory is theirs, Alan

came up to me with open arms. "Come to my arms!" he cried, and embraced and kissed me hard upon both cheeks. "David", said he, " I love you like a brother. And O, man", he cried in a kind of ecstasy, "am I no' a bonny fighter ?" ( p. 75)

The Highlander celebrates their victory by singing a Gaelic song in which, to David's dissatisfaction, the Lowlander is not present, which shows Alan's egotism and self-display as set in contrast to David's rationalism:

.....I did my fair share both of the killing and the wounding, and might have claimed a place in Alan's verses. But poets have to think upon their rhymes; and in good prose talk, Alan always did me more than justice. (p. 76)

Though they have come out of the fight much closer friends than ever, both Alan and David still express their differences as far as Scottish politics are concerned. In the chapter entitled " I hear of the 'Red Fox' ", Alan furiously tells David about the suffering of poor Highlanders under the oppression of Colin Campbell and the Government forces, expressing his strong wish that the King's Factor must be got rid of by someone "putting a bullet in him". David comments on the story rationally:

"Let me have a word", said I. "Be sure, if they take less rents, be sure the Government has a finger in the pie. It's not this Campbell's fault - it's his orders. And if ye killed this Colin tomorrow, what better would ye be ? There would be another factor in his shoes, as fast as spur can drive".

"Ye're a good lad in a fight", said Alan; "but, man! ye have whig blood in ye! " (pp. 90-91)

It is interesting to note that in Kidnapped the historical background goes side by side with the topographical background. Some significant scenes of the book are based upon Stevenson's own experiences as a young student of lighthouse constructions (the Hawes Inn at South Queensferry, the islet of Erraid). Add to these, as we shall see later, the Appin country of Alan Breck as well as other places in the Highlands in which the two adventurers escape from the redcoats. Kurt Wittig remarked that the story "assumes a topographical interest that helps to explain the historical emotions and conflicts!"<sup>4</sup>

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4. Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in literature (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p. 261.

Throughout his life as a writer of adventure novels, Stevenson was much concerned with what he called in an essay "fitness in events and places". There is an apparent combination between his ideas and the various associations familiar to him. In his "A Gossip on Romance", Stevenson elaborates the subject:

The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it.... Some places speak distinctly.... The old Hawes Inn at the Queen's Ferry makes a similar call upon my fancy. There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland, half marine — in front the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guardship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. Americans seek it already for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of the Antiquary. But you need not tell me — that is not all; there is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete, which must express the meaning of that inn more fully. So it is with names and faces; so it is with incidents that are idle and inconclusive in themselves, and yet seem like the beginning of some quaint romance which the all-careless author leaves untold....

I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horse man, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip

upon the green shutters of the inn  
at Burford.<sup>5</sup>

When the Covenant strongly strikes some reefs and is destined to go down into the sea, David is separated from Alan and the others and manages to swim to shore. On the islet of Erraid, off Mull, he begins "the most unhappy part of my adventures". He is lost for four days, during which time he lives on limpets:

.....my strength had much abated, and my heart so turned against the horrid stuff I was condemned to eat, that the very sight of it came near to sicken me.....I wore myself down with continual and aimless goings and comings in the rain. (pp.105-106)

Being inland bred, David is ignorant of the environment of Erraid. Rescue comes when two fishermen sailing by indicate to him that all along it has been possible to walk to mainland.

One may admire,....the ingenious use which Stevenson made of his own familiarity with that outlying region, when he pictures the inland-bred boy marooned for several days on Erraid, starving and shelterless, because he does not know that every low tide leaves an easy crossing from the inland to the other shore. This passage again does not really help on the story except by showing how completely a stranger one breed of Scotsman might be in part of his own country.<sup>6</sup>

David's travels in the Highlands to rejoin Alan Breck are both risky and exhausting. As he wanders, he comes to meet many Highlanders who, being poor and starving, are prepared to do any illegal act just to survive. However, he is so much impressed by their suffering from the repressive laws imposed by the Government in the wake of the '45 that he compares their state with Lowlands traditions:

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5. "A Gossip on Romance", included in Vol . XXV, pp.142-44.  
6. Stephen Gwynn, R.L. Stevenson, p. 166.

True, I met plenty of people, grubbing in little miserable fields that would not keep a cat, or herding little kine about the bigness of asses. 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.....

They seemed in great poverty....and the roads....were infested with beggars. And here again I marked a difference from my own part of the country. For our Lowland beggars....had a louting, flattering way with them, and if you gave them a plack and asked change, would very civilly return you a bodle. But these Highland beggars stood on their dignity, asked alms only to buy snuff (by their account) and would give no change. (pp. 111-12)

It is well worth noting here that Stevenson was ignorant of Gaelic and of many essential aspects of Highland life, and he therefore

safeguarded himself against blunders by the dramatic device of presenting the Highlands through the eyes of a Lowlander who saw this part of Scotland for the first time.

David Balfour, with his Whig Presbyterian upbringing, is brought into intimate contact with Alan Breck Stewart, Catholic, Highland and Jacobite, and this juxtaposition is itself a lively symbol of eighteenth century Scotland. It also excuses Stevenson from giving that objective account of Gaelic Scotland which he was unable to give through lack of knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

And though Stevenson was not acquainted with Gaelic culture, he had read much about the 18th century Highlands, and, above all, he had a passionate personal feeling for Highland history.<sup>8</sup> It is the force of passion and emotion that counts here more than anything else. Like Sir Walter Scott in Waverley and Rob Roy (Scott had been fascinated since his boyhood by the Jacobite stories of Stewart of Invernahyle, so that he turned to treating Highland history as "a day-dream context for his military aspirations", claiming that he would have fought for Bonnie Prince Charlie even to "the bottom of the gallows"<sup>9</sup>), Stevenson in Kidnapped shows considerable sympathy for the human beings involved in the drama of history.

Another touching scene is that of an emigrant ship bound for the American colonies. On his ferryboat from Torosay to Kinloch-  
aline, David hears cries of mourning coming from the ship:

....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....We put the ferry-boat alongside, and the exiles leaned over the bulwarks, weeping and reaching

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7. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 53.
  8. For Stevenson's obsession with Highland history, see his letters of 1880 to his parents and Sidney Colvin, Letters, Vol. I, pp.193-94.
  9. Andrew Noble, "Highland History and Narrative Form in Scott and Stevenson," R.L. Stevenson, ed. Andrew Noble (London, 1983), pp.148-49.

out their hands to my fellow-passengers, among whom they counted some near friends. How long this might have gone on I do not know, for they seemed to have no sense of time: but at last the Captain of the ship.....in the midst of this crying and confusion, came to the side and begged us to depart.

Thereupon Neil [the boat's skipper] sheered off; and the chief singer in our boat struck into a melancholy air, which was presently taken up both by the emigrants and their friends upon the beach, so that it sounded from all sides like a lament for the dying. I saw the tears run down the cheeks of the men and women in the boat, even as they bent at the oars; and the circumstances and the music of the song (which is one called "Lochaber no more") were highly affecting even to myself.  
( pp. 119-120)

At Kinlochaline, David meets Mr.Henderland, a catechist from the south (another type of man different from the catechist of Mull who, to the young hero's astonishment, turned out to be a dangerous highwayman), who is committed to "evangelise the more savage places of the Highlands". David learns from him more about Highland affairs such as the Disarming Act. The catechist

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. (p.123)

David is warned in his wanderings against the "red-soldiers" and highwaymen, which sheds light on the state of tension and instability in the country at the time. Nothing but a letter written by a contemporary to one of his London friends, can better explain the dangers of Highland travelling:

The Highlands are but little known even to the inhabitants of the Low Country of Scotland, for they have ever dreaded the Difficulties and Dangers of Travelling among the Mountains; and when some extraordinary Occasion has obliged any of them to such a Progress, he had, generally speaking, made his Testament before he set out, as though he were entering upon a long and dangerous Sea Voyage, wherein it was very doubtful if he should ever return. 10

The turning point in David Balfour's adventures comes when, asking the way from one and another, he meets Colin Campbell of Glenure with his company of soldiers and falls in conversation with him when the sudden, fatal shot is fired. Seeing the murderer from a distance, David rushes to lead the pursuit, but finds that he himself is being hunted as an accomplice, and that shots are being fired at him. This is the moment when he runs into the arms of Alan Breck, who, Stevenson insists upon our believing, just happened to be there:

Just inside the shelter of the trees  
I found Alan Breck standing, with a  
fishing rod. He gave me no salutation;  
indeed it was no time for civilities;  
only "Come!" says he, and set off  
running along the side of the mountain  
towards Balachulish; and I, like a sheep,  
to follow him. (p. 133)

The joint escape of David and Alan depends largely on the Highlander's familiarity with the country roads as well as on his physical abilities called for by the wild environment (indeed Alan is a "fair heather-cat"). Henry James in this respect remarked thus:

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10. Edward Burt, Letters From The North of Scotland, Vol. I, Scottish Reprint Library (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 4-5; a reprint of the 1754 edition.

Mr. Stevenson has, in a high degree (and doubtless for good reasons of his own), what may be called the imagination of physical states, and this has enabled him to arrive at a wonderfully exact notation of the miseries of his panting Lowland hero, dragged for days and nights over hill and dale, through bog and thicket, without meat or drink or rest, at the tail of an Homeric Highlander. <sup>11</sup>

But as soon as they are safe, temporarily, from the pursuit of Colin Campbell's soldiers, a moral question displays itself as David broods over the murder, which significantly shows that the hero "is no longer simply a normal boy 'doing and suffering' in a pattern of action calculated to arouse interest and suspense in the reader". <sup>12</sup>

I had seen murder done, and a great, ruddy jovial gentleman struck out of life in a moment; the pity of that sight was still sore within me.... Here was murder done upon the man that Alan hated; here was Alan skulking in the trees and running from the troops; and whether his was the hand that fired or only the head that ordered, signified but little. By my way of it, my only friend in that wild country was blood-guilty in the first degree; I held him in horror; I could not look upon his face; I would have rather lain alone in the rain on my cold isle, than in that warm wood beside a murderer. (p. 135).

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11. Henry James and R.L. Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism, ed. J.A. Smith, pp.158-59.
  12. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 66.

And his decision is that

You and me must twine..... I liked  
you very well, Alan, but your ways  
are not mine, and they're not God's:  
and the short and the long of it is  
just that we must twine. (ibid)

But Alan, feeling insulted, draws his dirk and swears upon it that he had "neither art nor part, act nor thought" in the murder.

David suggests that he and Alan should give themselves up to the authorities and try hard to prove their innocence. But the thought is utterly rejected by the Highlander on the grounds that the trial will be held in "the Campbell's head place. .... And what would the clan think if there was a Campbell shot, and naebody hanged, and their own chief the Justice General?". The idea of surrender shows that the Lowlander is ignorant of the fact that in a tribal Highland society justice can hardly take its natural course. David now is more convinced that he has no other choice but to follow the outlaw's tactics in the flight from the Highlands to the Lowlands. Here the plot, it may be noticed, becomes "picaresque".

Stevenson sees the murder of Colin Campbell <sup>13</sup> (the Appin murder) as part of the context of Highland affairs of the period. The murder became a tragedy for the Appin tenants and for James Stewart of the Glens, who would afterwards be hanged. In the chapter entitled "The House of Fear", James Stewart provides the two adventurers with arms and food. He is too poor to give them enough money. On leaving the house, Alan remarks thus:

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13. One of the most fascinating mysteries in the annals of Scottish history, the murder of Colin Campbell is still unsolved. Most authorities agree that an innocent man was hanged for the crime, and many agree that Alan Breck was at most a confederate of the man who fired the shots. Many books have been written on the subject, the most recent of which are: MacArthur's The Appin murder and the Trial of James Stewart (London, 1960); F. Thompson's Murder and Mystery in the Highlands (London, 1977). There is an extensive discussion of the subject in L. Macintyre's Ph.D. thesis, Sir Walter Scott and the Highlands, 2 vols. (Glasgow University 1976)

The day comes unco soon in this month of July; and tomorrow there'll be a fine to doin Appin, a fine riding of dragoons and crying of "Cruachan!" and running of red-coats; and it behoves you and me to the sooner be gone. (p. 151).

With a price on their heads, Alan and David continue to flee like "hunted deer" from the redcoats. They come to stay at "Cluny's Cage", which is originally a hiding-place for the outlaw Cluny Macpherson. He gives them a warm welcome. He boasts of the hunted Prince Charlie's stay in the Cage. Though he is a dangerous highwayman, Cluny displays some values and principles characteristic of the Highland clans. His hospitality may recall the impressions of Thomas Pennant, a noted Highland traveller:

The great robbers were used to preserve hospitality to those that came to their houses and, like the wild Arabs, observed the strict honour towards their guests, or those that put implicit confidence in them. The Kennedies, two common thieves, took the Young Pretender under protection, and kept him with faith inviolate, notwithstanding they knew an immense reward was offered for his head. They often robbed for his support, and to supply him with linen they once surprised the baggage horses of one of our general officers.... At length a very considerable time after, one of these poor fellows, who had virtue to resist the temptation of thirty thousand pounds, was hanged for stealing a cow, value thirty shillings. <sup>14</sup>

Stevenson gives us further insights into the relationship between Alan and David, which is now worsening by a "dishonest act" done by Alan during their stay at "Cluny's Cage".

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14. Quoted in Francis Thompson, Murder and Mystery in the Highlands (London, 1977), pp-16-17.

Alan gambles away the Lowlander's money when David is on a sick bed, and though he asks pardon, David does not easily forgive. As a result they walk in silence. The relationship becomes more tense when Alan starts again mocking the Whigs and the Campbells. It soon reaches the point of sword-drawing on Rannoch Moor. Alan's reaction: "it's fair murder.....Na, na - I cannae, I cannae"; and David, who even in his extremity can see both sides of the question, puts pride away in an appeal for pity of his weakness, which brings complete and final reconciliation. David Daiches in this connection has remarked that

The historical situation is presented symbolically: a representative of the Covenanted tradition in Scots history is manoeuvred into close friendship with a representative of the opposing Jacobite tradition, and the strange friendship - which is at the same time a strong opposition - illuminates one of the central paradoxes of Scottish history. 15

The "paradoxical" relationship of David and Alan, which is both movingly and subtly drawn, may recall the relationship between Nicol Jarvie (a Lowlander from Glasgow) and the notorious Highlander Rob Roy in Scott's Rob Roy. Both Jarvie and Rob Roy become good friends despite the differences between them; their relationship symbolizes the relation between the Lowlands and the Highlands. Scott in this work gives his insight into the social, economic and political conflicts in Scotland of 1715. Stevenson likewise gives his insight into the aftermath of the '45 through his treatment of the relationship between David Balfour and Alan Breck in their joint flight in the wild Highlands. One critic has remarked here that Stevenson in his historical romance "added psychological perception to harsh, physical veracity". 16

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15. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 54.

16. Andrew Noble, "Highland History and Narrative Form in Scott and Stevenson", R.L.S., ed. A.Noble, p. 173.

Thus, as both the Highlander and the Lowlander endure physical hardship and personal antagonism, they grow in mutual understanding and dependence. David Balfour's travels in the Highlands and his encounter with such noted characters as James Stewart, Cluny Macpherson, Robin Oig (who had valiantly accompanied his father Rob Roy Macgregor on many exploits, and whose power now is reduced to playing the pipes in a challenge with Alan Breck), and others, help him to know about the people of this part of his country. As Saposnik has remarked, David's Highland travels convince him that "his provincial education has indeed been partial". The critic goes on to say:

Yet the purpose of Kidnapped is to provide more than a lesson in maturation. Rather than establish a division between the moral value of geographical areas as does Huck Finn, the novel attempts to reconcile differences by establishing the common humanity of a ravaged people. There are few more poignant cries than those David hears coming from an emigrant ship as he first makes his way to meet Alan, a ship that represents a reality which makes his uncle's attempt at kidnapping simply a child's nightmare. The enforced separation of families that was a daily occurrence to the Highlanders, the emasculation of former warriors, the uprooting of native peoples, the loss of all that is meant by homeland are lessons David must acquire and keep with him when called upon to aid his countrymen. Unlike Huck, David never considers "lighting out for the territory", for he realizes that his fate is allied with his native history. <sup>17</sup>

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17. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 115.

The story comes to an end as Alan and David reach the Forth, with the help of a fine lassie. Alan helps David to set up a "mouse-trap" for the wicked uncle, and the young hero is able to get access to his rightful inheritance. As for the Highlander, he is to escape to the Continent where he spends the remainder of his life in exile. The brave soldier's journey

is one into exile in which all he can do is leave behind some part of his legacy to David - an inheritance far more meaningful than the estate David eventually attains. <sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note that the story of the Appin Murder is interwoven with David's personal history; he has been cheated of his inheritance by his uncle, and at the end of his adventures comes to his own. This theme is as powerfully treated as the other. David Balfour, now a well-established laird, feels a strong moral commitment to proving the innocence of James Stewart of the Glens, which is the theme of Catriona - the sequel to Kidnapped. Stevenson wrote Catriona a few years later in 1893, and the work will be examined in Chapter nine in the context of the author's Scottishness displayed in his exile in Samoa. The next Chapter will be devoted to the discussion of The Master of Ballantrae (1889), Stevenson's long fiction that followed Kidnapped.

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18. Ibid.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Master of Ballantrae

The Master of Ballantrae (1889) is the most complex and most ambitious work of fiction that Stevenson has embarked on so far. It was inspired by Saranac Lake in the Adirondack Mountains (in upper New York State) where the Stevensons spent the winter of 1887-1888. As Stevenson tells us in "The Genesis of The Master of Ballantrae," he was, one intensely dark and cold winter's night, pacing the verandah of his house, gazing at the forest-land below him, and listening to the noises of the river, which was carrying ice and huge boulders along in its spate. Suddenly in this "icy American wilderness", there came to him the idea of the story of an evil genius to his friends and family, who would die here, but before his death he would have been buried alive for several days. But who were the family and the central character to be? Travelling back in fancy to Scotland, Stevenson remembered a situation and a group of characters that had come into his head years before while making a journey across the East Highlands towards Blair Atholl:

Here, thinking of quite other things, I had stumbled on the solution, or perhaps I should rather say (in stagewrite phrase) the Curtain or final Tableau of a story conceived long before on the moors between Pitlochry and Strathardle, conceived in the Highland rain, in the blend of the smell of heather and bogplants.....So long ago, so far away it was, that I had first evoked the faces and the mutual tragic situation of the men of Durrisdeer. <sup>1</sup>

In his well-known, often-quoted letter of 1888 to Henry James, Stevenson details the whole plan for the story <sup>2</sup> in which he has to consider and combine the different elements of history, adventure and psychology.

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1. "The Genesis of The Master of Ballantrae," Vol. IX, pp. XXVi - XXVii.
  2. Letters, Vol. II, pp. 98-99.

The beginning of The Master of Ballantrae, it is interesting to note, is totally Scottish. It opens in 1745 when news comes to the House of Durrisdeer that Prince Charlie has landed in the country. The family, consisting of the old Lord Durrisdeer, his two sons; James the elder (the Master of Ballantrae), and Henry the younger, and Miss Alison Graeme who is betrothed to James, has a discussion as to which of the two brothers is going to accompany the Prince in his adventure to claim his right to the British throne. In the words of Mr. Mackellar, the narrator and faithful steward to the family, the adventure "tempted" the Master and "caused split" in the house. It is decided, after tossing a coin, that James "goes forth to strike a blow for King James", while Henry stays at home "to keep in favour with King George".

Stevenson displays his own Scottishness in his choice of the territory of the 1745 Rebellion, for it is

one of the major eruptions of Scottish history that split families and encouraged the belief that "the war in the members" was both psychologically<sup>3</sup> and physically native to the Scots.

The Master is a mere interested adventurer, with no faith in the Prince's cause. His departure to join the Jacobite army entitles him to be "a hero" in the country (he is already very popular among the tenants). Later when it comes to the knowledge of the family that the Master has been killed at Culloden, his assumed death becomes a legend of heroic martyrdom in the country, while his brother's reputation (Henry now becomes lord of the estate and marries Alison Graeme) is permanently tainted. When James returns home alive and well, he has reason to call Henry "Jacob the usurper".

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3. . Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson :A Life Study, p. 234.

One critic holds the view that in The Master of Ballantrae "history and fiction correspond; character and event are joined so that event becomes the direct motivation for action".<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that

Domestic strife is made to mirror national strife, and brother is set against brother in much the same way as Jacobite opposes Whig. The entire movement of The Master is built upon a correspondence between the larger world at war with itself and its effect upon the dissolution of an ancient family.<sup>5</sup>

The Master's adventures after Culloden, told this time by his Irish fellow-adventurer, Chevalier Burke, reveal to us his diabolical actions. On board the pirate ship Sarah, sailing in the North Atlantic, the Master understands well the point of weakness of Captain Teach and his Crew: they are always drunk. Even when Teach, a dangerous pirate, becomes sober for a while, the Master is never afraid of him because he sees him as a coward, and his acts as a pretence. The pirate is reduced to a "frightened baby" by the Master's wrath, all happening before the crew:

Teach..... gave a barbarous howl, and swung his dirk to fling it, an art in which (like many seamen) he was very expert.

"Knock that out of his hand!" says Ballantrae, so sudden and sharp that my arm obeyed him before my mind had understood.

Teach stood like one stupid, never thinking on his pistols.

"Go down to your cabin", cries Ballantrae, "and come on deck again when you are sober. Do you think we are going to hang for you, you black-faced, half-witted, drunken brute and butcher? Go down!" And he stamped his foot at him with such a sudden smartness that Teach<sub>6</sub> fairly ran for it to the companion.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 120.

5. Ibid., pp.120-121.

6. The Master of Ballantrae, Vol. IX, p.43.

The Master imposes such a state of "discipline" on board the Sarah that "he was like a parent among a family of young children, or a school-master with his boys". This well shows the Master's extraordinary power of controlling those who are perhaps more savage than himself. Burke cannot hide his admiration for the Master, calling him "the most capable man I ever met with, and the one of the most natural genius". Later when they leave the ship, he is shocked and terrified as he sees the Master savagely kill Dutton, one of the crew, who has lost his usefulness as a guide:

"The Devil take you, Francis!" says he.  
"I believe you are a half-hearted fellow, after all. I have only done justice on a pirate. And here we are quite clear of the Sarah! Who shall now say that we have dipped our hands in any irregularities?"

I assured him he did me injustice, but my sense of humanity was so much affected by the horridness of the fact that I could scarce find breath to answer with. (p. 55)

In a recent critical essay on The Master, Carol Mills has remarked the role played by the Irish narrator. She writes that his story "is inset into the Durrisdeer narrative, in the tradition of romance, as a contrast to the main narrative". She goes on to say:

Its principal purpose is to give further evidence on James Durie's character; evidence which, coming from a third party, helps to corroborate the internal evidence so far assembled of his amorality, his lack of compassion, and, indeed, his lack of generosity.... The journey, the changing action, and the excitement provide a clear contrast with the static frustrating world of Durrisdeer.

The lives of the adventurers are filled with "brute incident"; but just as the trappings of Scots romance are used to illustrate the characters of Henry and the absent or dissembling James, so the "incident" is used to illustrate James in his own element.<sup>7</sup>

The Master's travels in the country of the Adirondack Indians are so perilous that "the labours of Hercules, so finely described by Homer, were a trifle to what we now underwent". As Burke has put it (here we may notice that the vivid descriptions derive from Stevenson's own familiarity with the American wilderness), the reader

must conceive for himself the dreadful wilderness which we had now to thread; its thickets, swamps, precipitous rocks, impetuous rivers, and amazing landfalls. Among these barbarous scenes we must toil all day, now paddling, now carrying our canoe upon our shoulders; and at night we slept about a fire, surrounded by the howling of wolves and other savage animals. (p. 61)

In the wilderness, the Master buries treasure in the hope that he may come back for it some day. In the midst of all dangers and suffering, he swears revenge on his brother:

He shall pay for all this....he sits in my place, he bears my name, he courts my wife; and I am here alone with a damned Irishman in this tooth-chattering desert! Oh, I have been a common gull! (p. 65)

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7. Carol Mills, "The Master of Ballantrae: An Experiment with Genre," R.L. Stevenson, ed. Andrew Noble, pp. 127-28.

Thus a psychological human situation (the hatred between the two brothers) is intensified by hard physical movements. In a letter of 1887 from Saranac Lake to Sidney Colvin, Stevenson speaks of his personal impression of the character of James:

The Master is all I know of the devil.  
I have known hints of him in the world  
but always cowards; he is as bold as a  
lion, but with the same deadly,  
causeless duplicity I have watched  
with so much surprise in my two  
cowards. 'Tis true, I saw a hint of  
the same nature in another man who was  
not a coward; but he had other things  
to attend to; the Master has nothing  
else but his devilry. <sup>8</sup>

In The Master of Ballantrae, Stevenson reveals his preoccupation with the question of evil and its destructive nature - a theme treated before in much of his writing. Evil here is not equated simply with the picturesque, as in the character of Long John Silver, but it is more psychologically complicated. The Master's return home, having already acted as a parasite upon his brother's money for years during his stay in Paris, marks the coming tragedy. Starting to despise and persecute his brother Henry on every occasion, he is a constant "incubus" to the quiet family. In the chapter entitled "Persecution", Mr. Mackellar tells of the Master's "diabolical acts" towards his brother who has to keep bitter patience throughout. In the course of time, the Master "takes possession" of Henry, turning him into a creature much like himself, but without surface charm. David Daiches in this respect has remarked that "Life in The Master of Ballantrae is a richer and sadder phenomenon than in any of [Stevenson's] earlier works". <sup>9</sup>

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8. Letters, Vol. II, p. 88.

9. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 75.

A tragic duel becomes inevitable. One night over a game of cards the Master insinuates his rightful claim to Henry's estate, wife, and the affection if not the paternity of his child:

For instance, with all those solid qualities which I delight to recognize in you, I never knew a woman who did not prefer me— nor I think, " he continued, with the most silken deliberation," I think — who did not continue to prefer me".  
(p. 108)

As a result, Henry, unable to keep patient any more, strikes the Master in the mouth. The Master's reaction is : " A blow! ", he cried. "I would not take a blow from God Almighty!..... I must have blood for this".

The scene in which the duel takes place by candle lights (held by Mackellar who is loyal to his master Henry, and who now curses the Master's wickedness) in the dark garden should stand as one of the most powerful and touching scenes in the annals of romance:

It seems that Mr. Henry took and kept the upper hand from the engagement, crowding in upon his foe with a contained and glowing fury. Nearer and nearer he crept upon the man, till of a sudden the Master leaped back with a little sobbing oath; and I believe the movement brought the light once more against his eyes. To it they went again, on the fresh ground; but now methought closer, Mr. Henry pressing more outrageously, the Master beyond doubt with shaken confidence. For it is beyond doubt he now recognised himself for lost, and had some taste of the cold agony of fear; or he had never attempted the foul stroke....it appears

he caught his brother's blade with his left hand, a practice not permitted. Certainly Mr. Henry only saved himself by leaping on one side; as certainly the Master, lunging in the air, stumbled on his knee and before he could move the sword was through his body.

I cried out with a stifled scream, and ran in; but the body was already fallen to the ground, where it writhed a moment like a trodden worm, and then lay motionless. (p. 111)

Thus the Master loses the fight by one of his "foul plays". He, of course, is not dead as the family supposes, but is carried away by free-traders and is nursed back to normal health. After the duel, Henry cannot escape the image of his brother, and looks like a "stunned child". Lord Durrissdeer dies of grief. Later when Mackellar tells Henry that his brother is still alive, he cries:

Nothing can kill that man. He is not mortal. He is bound upon my back to all eternity - to all God's eternity! (p. 138)

One critic in this regard mentioned that The Master of Ballantrae dramatizes

Stevenson's abiding preoccupation, one so thoroughly Scottish as to make him the born interpreter of the national character. This is his preoccupation with the doctrine of Predestination as it emphasizes the theory of divine election, with some souls damned as irretrievably as others are saved. Stevenson was haunted by the idea of damnation, of the soul condemned to evil. The Master of Ballantrae is such a soul; he is incarnate wickedness....it is the younger brother, at the beginning "neither very bad nor yet very able, but an honest, solid sort of lad", who is

perverted by the Master's persecution into miserliness, repining, and the lust for revenge, so that he becomes one of the most absorbing psychological studies of degradation in our fiction.<sup>10</sup>

The Master's second return home after years of travel in India, where he befriended Secundra Dass, highly intensifies the tragic situation. (Stevenson had never been to India; indeed his description of the Master's adventures there with that "preposterous puppet" Indian is unconvincing. Besides it complicates the structure of the novel). The Master is back again to "thrive" on his brother's riches. He haunts his brother Henry, becoming "the descendant of Hogg's Gilmartin, who haunts his brother as George Dalcastle was haunted in The Justified Sinner".<sup>11</sup> The Master still retains his charm and vitality (which of course are associated with his devilry). Here is Mackellar's commentary on his second return home:

The hand of time was very legible on all.....and what affected me still more, it was the wicked man that bore his years the handsomest. My lady was quite transfigured into the matron, a becoming woman for the head of a great tableful of children and dependants. My lord was grown slack in his limbs; he stooped; he walked with a running motion....; his face was drawn; it seemed a trifle longer than of old; and it bore at times a smile very singularly mingled, and which (in my eyes) appeared both bitter and pathetic. But the Master still bore himself erect, although perhaps with effort; his brow barred about the centre with imperious lines,

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10. Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), 282.  
11. Douglas Gifford, "Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of The Master of Ballantrae", Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 75.

his mouth set as for command. He had all the gravity and something of the splendour of Satan in the Paradise Lost. I could not help but see the man with admiration, and was only surprised that I saw him with so little fear. (p. 163)

Later Mackellar's admiration for the Master turns into bitter hatred, which is shown on board the Nonesuch sailing for New York. The Master, together with Secundra Dass, decides to follow his brother Henry who has already escaped with his family from the "enemy" in the House of Durrisdeer. During the voyage, Mackellar considers the consequences if the ship were to sink:

If the Nonesuch foundered, she would carry down with her into the deeps of that unsounded sea the creature whom we all so feared and hated; there would be no master of Ballantrae, the fish would sport among his ribs; his schemes all brought to nothing, his harmless enemies at peace.... The thought of the man's death, of his deletion from this world, which he embittered for so many, took possession of my mind. (p. 185)

Moreover, he makes an attempt, but without success, to push the Master overboard, and falls upon the ship's deck "overcome with terror and remorse and shame". The Master forgives him, on condition that he should not repeat it under any circumstances.

The last two chapters have a significance in the story. Henry becomes an adventurer himself (in his hiring to kill the Master such criminal men as Harris and Mountain, and in his travels in the American wilderness to make sure that the Master is dead). Thus as Henry frees himself from "the constraints of the Scots milieu, he rouses himself to murderous action " <sup>12</sup>

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12. Carol Mills, "The Master of Ballantrae: An Experiment with Genre," R.L. Stevenson, ed. Andrew Noble, p. 130.

by entering into the Master's world. In the hunt for the treasure, Stevenson creates an atmosphere of horror and suspense: who will win the battle, the Master (who has already discovered the conspiracy), or the professional murderers? In order to escape from them, the Master pretends to be seriously sick and then to die. With the help of Secundra Dass he is buried alive in the snow for days.

The conclusion of the story is unsatisfactory, however. The story of the live body (for that is how Henry finds the Master in his grave) and the growing beard is an intriguing one, suitable perhaps for a tale of horror by the fireside, but is not a fitting climax to the tense, psychological drama of a serious novel. The author himself admitted the flaw in the last chapter in which the two brothers die and share one grave, which may be seen in his letter to Henry James:

Five parts of [the story] are sound, human tragedy; the last one or two, I regret to say, not so soundly designed; I almost hesitate to write them; they are very picturesque, but they are fantastic; they shame, perhaps degrade, the beginning. I wish I knew; that was how the tale came to me. <sup>13</sup>

Despite the defects that impair the unity of the work, The Master of Ballantrae is "readable". It is Stevenson's most mature attempt so far at a serious presentation of moral and psychological problems through a character portrait. Besides, we are to praise Stevenson's ability to evoke the sombre landscape of the South-West of Scotland which illuminates and is illuminated (the note of the Border ballads) by the brooding sense of doom hanging over the human situation introduced; an evocation that must have meant a great deal to the author who realized in his first year's travels in the South Seas (where the story was finished) that he would never return home again.

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13. Letters, Vol. II, p. 98.

CHAPTER NINE

Catriona

In Catriona,<sup>1</sup> written in Samoa and published in 1893, Stevenson follows up the Appin Murder — a subject that he had already started in Kidnapped. The work falls clearly into two parts. The first is about David Balfour's unsuccessful attempts to give his evidence at the trial of the unfortunate James Stewart of the Glens, in the course of which he comes into close contact with Lord Advocate Grant of Prestongrange and his daughter (Miss Grant), and falls in love with Catriona (a Highland girl with "wonderful bright eyes like stars" whom he first meets in Edinburgh streets and lends sixpence). The second part is set mostly in Holland, after James's trial had tragically ended, and concerns the adventures of David and Catriona in their "unusual" relationship.

The young hero feels that he must do all he can to prove the innocence of James Stewart, for he considers the death of any innocent man as a "wound upon the whole community". From Edinburgh he starts his risky endeavour, seeking his cousin Balfour of Pilrig, who is to give him a letter of introduction to the Lord Advocate of Scotland:

My way lay over Mouter's Hill, and through an end of a clachan on the braeside among fields. There was a whir of looms in it went from house to house; bees burred in the gardens; the neighbours that I saw at the doorsteps talked in a strange tongue; and I found out later that this was Picardy, a village where the French weavers wrought for the Linen Company. Here I got a fresh direction for Pilrig, my destination; and a little beyond, on the wayside, came by a gibbet and two men hanged in chains. They were dipped in tar, as the manner is, the wind span them, the chains clattered, and the birds hung about the uncanny jumping-jacks and cried. The sight coming on me suddenly<sup>2</sup> like an illustration of my fears.....

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1. The book is known in America as David Balfour.
  2. Catriona, Vol. VI, p. 25.

David meets a "weird old wife" sitting nearby and asks her the reasons why these two men were hanged. She tells him they stole "twa shillin' Scots....frae a wean belanged to Broughton". The hero is greatly relieved as he walks away from this horrible scene, though "the shackles of the gibbet clattered in my head". Stevenson's introduction of the gibbet early in the novel is significant; it is the shadow of coming tragedy.

To David's great disappointment, he is told by Prestongrange that his testimony is quite useless. Here the Lord Advocate of Scotland elaborates the "political" dimensions of the case:

Now here is a Campbell foully murdered, and that in the King's service. The Duke and I are Highlanders. But we are Highlanders civilized, and it is not so with the great mass of our clans and families. They have still savage virtues and defects. They are still barbarians, like these Stewarts; only the Campbells were barbarians on the right side, and the Stewarts were barbarians on the wrong. Now be you the judge. The Campbells expect vengeance. If they do not get it — if this man James escape — there will be trouble with the Campbells. That means disturbance in the Highlands, which are uneasy and very far from being disarmed: the disarming is a farce.... To protect the life of this man Stewart — which is forfeit already on half a dozen different counts if not on this — do you propose to plunge your country in war, to jeopardise the faith of your fathers, and to expose the lives and fortunes of how many thousand innocent persons?  
(pp. 40-41)

Despite Prestongrange's most discouraging words, David is not willing at all to give up the noble task to which he has committed himself. In a quarrel scene with Catriona, whose convicted father, James More Macgregor, he has already met and

spoken ill to at Prestongrange's (James More had a very suspicious role to play in the Appin Murder trial; both hypocrisy and treachery were combined in his character), the young hero reveals the burden he shoulders. Here his self-pity may be seen:

It is my testimony which may save an innocent life...and they will not suffer me to bear it. What would you do yourself? You know what this is whose father lies in danger. Would you desert the poor soul? They have tried all ways with me. They have sought to bribe me; they offered me hills and valleys..... I am to be brought in a part to the murder; I am to have held Glenure in talk for money and old clothes; I am to be killed and shamed. If this is the way I am to fall, and me scarce a man - if this is the story to be told of me in all Scotland- if you are to believe it too, and my name is to be nothing but a by-word - Catriona, how can I go through with it? The thing's not possible; it 's more than a man has in his heart.  
(p. 68)

At this point the relationship between David and Catriona may be seen through an historical perspective. David now becomes more and more an undesirable person in the eyes of the Government. As a result, a Highland officer has orders to kill him; a conspiracy David is able to come out of safe and well, when he sees some noble virtues in the King's officer and tells him that he is no good at all at sword-fencing. Nevertheless the plotting against him continues, until he is kidnapped and held prisoner on the Bass Rock. Though while in captivity he expresses some relief at the thought that he, at least for some time, is safe from danger, yet he is haunted by the image of poor James Stewart:

No harm was to be offered me;  
a material impossibility, rock and the  
deep sea, prevented fresh attempts;  
I felt I had my life safe and my  
honour safe, and there were times  
when I allowed myself to gloat on  
them like stolen waters... I had  
scarce begun to be concerned about  
men's judgements of myself, than I  
was haunted with the remembrance  
of James Stewart in his dungeon and  
the lamentations of his wife. Then,  
indeed passion began to work in me,  
I could not forgive myself to sit  
there idle; it seemed....that I  
could fly or swim out of my place  
of safety. (pp. 132-33)

Robert Kiely is of the opinion that David Balfour is "an impotent hero...., one of the most inactive and inept heroes in the noncomic literature of adventure". He goes on to say:

While excitement and peril rage around him, he spends most of the novel not being able to do what he wants to. He cannot duel in the park with Duncansby [the Highland Officer]; he cannot join Alan in his flight across the channel; he is kidnapped and cannot attend the Appin Murder trial until the last day in session.....<sup>3</sup>

But we find this difficult to accept, because we can see David active from the start, and if he has not shown heroic deeds, he has at least shown heroic intentions. The critic fails to understand that David in this story is more human than a "Superman". He is alone facing invincible political authorities, and nevertheless he has his strong, free will. David Daiches in this respect sees David as an active hero, the "master of his own destiny rather than someone acted upon".<sup>4</sup>

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3. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p. 98.
  4. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 86.

Through the adventures of David Balfour, Stevenson sheds light on what was going on behind the scenes in Scottish politics at the time. For the Appin Murder is a complicated political case in the first place. Critics, especially Robert Kiely, have failed to realise Stevenson's predicament. Kiely thinks of the work thus:

Like Treasure Island and Kidnapped, its basic impulse is play. Its incidents are without serious moral implications, its characters without psyches, its politics without issue and its history without consequence.<sup>5</sup>

No doubt the critic has severely underrated the story. For how are we to pass over the historical significance of Catriona, at least in the first half of the book, without serious consideration of the implications expressed by Stevenson's hero over 180 pages? A more human character than the hero of Treasure Island, David's struggle, having already been with a wicked uncle, now becomes one with "evil Whiggery" (including the Duke of Argyll). When David manages to escape from his kidnappers, he rushes to see Prestongrange, presenting him with a memorial. But the hero's last hope of saving the life of James Stewart is dashed over Prestongrange's comment on the case:

..... there is no question of James Stewart for or against. James is a dead man; his life is given and taken - bought (if you like it better) and sold; no memorial can help - no defalcation of a faithful Mr. David hurt him. Blow high, blow low, there will be no pardon for James Stewart: and take that for said ! ( p.171)

Thus David Balfour's high principles are set in contrast to a gang of conspirators who have determined to get rid of a political foe by judicial murder. One of the most emotional and touching scenes of the book is that when David painfully hears the people sing:

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5. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p. 90.

"It fell on a day when Argyle was on the bench that they served him a Stewart for his denner".

It is interesting to note here that generation after generation, have never failed to be moved by the annals of the Appin Murder, which is shown in the verdict of one of the most prominent judges of the present century:

But when all is said and done and every allowance made for the imperfections of the law and the frailty of the human mind, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that in the trial of James Stewart of the Glens the scales of justice were deliberately tilted against him; that neither the Crown prosecutors nor the Bench can escape the stigma of complicity in this; and that an innocent man was condemned for a crime in which he had no hand upon evidence which, in certain vital particulars, was tainted with suspicion of exaggeration or even invention as a result of persistent use of improper influences and pressure. <sup>6</sup>

So far the attempt has been made to discuss the historical significance of the work, often ignored by many of Stevenson's critics. There is another important point to be stressed here. Stevenson wrote Catriona while settled in Samoa, and from there he was looking back on Scotland with its historical figures and associations. David Daiches has remarked here that

In describing David's adventures in Edinburgh Stevenson is finding " a local habitation and a name "for many of his youthful memories and ancestral traditions; setting memory, nostalgia and history into a framework of fiction. <sup>7</sup>

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6. Sir J. Cameron, "The Appin Murder - A Summing Up", The Scottish Historical Review, Vol. XXXIII, no. 116, October 1954, pp. 98-99.
  7. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 86.

Thus Stevenson gives the work a much stronger "personal" note than may be found in Kidnapped.

Stevenson's dedication of the book to his lifelong Edinburgh friend, Charles Baxter, is quite revealing. It is worth quoting in length:

There should be left in our native city some seed of the elect; some long-legged, hot-headed youth must repeat today our dreams and wanderings of so many years ago; he will relish the pleasure, which should have been ours, to follow among named streets and numbered houses the country walks of David Balfour, to identify Dean, and Silvermills, and Broughton, and Hope Park and Pilrig, and poor old Lochend - if it still be standing, and the Figgate Whins- if there be any of them left; or to push (on a long holiday) so far afield as Gillane or the Bass. So, perhaps, his eye shall be opened to behold the series of the generations, and he shall weigh with surprise his momentous and nugatory gift of life.

You are still - as when first I saw, as when I last addressed you - in the venerable city which I must always think of as my home. And I have come so far; and the sights and thoughts of my youth pursue me; and I see like a vision the youth of my father, and of his father, and the whole stream of lives flowing down there far in the north, with the sound of laughter and tears, to cast me out in the end, as by a sudden freshet, on these ultimate islands. And I admire and bow my head before the romance of destiny.

The second part of the book concerns the peculiar relationship between David and Catriona, after the young hero has made up his mind to give up politics for good. David's stay with Prestongrange's family (of whom Catriona is an acquaintance) marks a new change in his attitude; it is a change from the historical interest to what one critic calls "the pitiful banality of the commonplace".<sup>8</sup> Miss Grant, who is a more lively and vigorous character than Catriona, teaches him how to sing, to dance, and to observe social etiquette. David comments:

....no doubt I was a good deal improved to look at, and acquired a bit of a modish air that would have surprised the good folks at Essendean. (p. 195)

Later David embarks on a new adventure. He decides to accompany his beloved to Holland (the girl is totally dependent on him financially) where she is to meet her father, James More Macgregor. On the boat trip Catriona becomes angry and silent when David shows her a letter from Miss Grant in which she asks him to kiss her without permission. David's reaction to her cold fury is "like an angry boy's". Despite the "romantic atmosphere" available on deck, he is hesitant to act towards her like a true lover:

.....I would be sometimes tempted to take her hand in mine and hold it there. But I was too like a miser of what joys I had, and would venture nothing on a hazard. ( P. 213)

The solemn relationship between David and Catriona still remains when they are settled in Leyden. They live alone in a brother-and-sister relationship:

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8. Irving Saposnik, R.L. Stevenson, p. 116.

[ I ] set myself boorishly to my studies. It was a substantial, instructive book that I had bought by the late Dr. Heineccius, in which I was to do a great deal of reading these next days..... Methought she bit her lip at me a little, and that cut me. Indeed it left her wholly solitary, the more as she was very little of a reader, and had never a book. But what was I to do ? So the rest of the evening flowed by almost without speech. (p. 243)

Speaking of Stevenson's treatment of the love relationship between David and Catriona, Robert Kiely writes that there is "an almost bleak solemnity" in their love affair that appears "peculiarly Stevensonian and Victorian".<sup>9</sup> True, the Victorian age was greatly reserved as to the question of "open sex". Another critic has attributed Stevenson's depiction of unconvincing women to his failure in his love affair with "Claire", the Highland girl whom he knew in his Bohemian days in Edinburgh and from whom he had to be separated because of the intervention of his parents.<sup>10</sup> This old affair painfully haunted Stevenson whenever he remembered it or started writing about love relation in his fiction. But according to extensive research by Furnas, this "Claire" never existed as many critics believed she did. "Claire" was a "working title as well as central object of a literary project based on Louis's relation to Mrs. Sitwell".<sup>11</sup> The work never appeared, but the name was "the first of the series of emotion-charged pseudonyms that Louis applied to Mrs. Sitwell; later came Consuelo, Madona, Mother. "<sup>12</sup>

No doubt Stevenson knew many girls in his Bohemian days in Edinburgh, whose names he kept secret to himself. He of course did not realize a sound and full relation with any because the eyes

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9. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p.93.  
 10. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 89.  
 11. J.C. Furnas, Voyage to Windward, p. 397.  
 12. Ibid., p. 398.

of his Calvinist father were always fixed on him. Throughout his life Stevenson was aware of the impact of his strict religious upbringing. Shortly before his death he wrote to his cousin Bob:

If I had to begin again - I know not -  
si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait...  
I know not at all - I believe I should try  
to honour Sex more religiously. The  
worst of our education is that Christian-  
ity does not recognise and hallow Sex.  
It looks askance at it, over its  
shoulder, oppressed as it is by  
reminiscences of hermits and Asiatic  
self-tortures. <sup>13</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that Stevenson was able to create more convincing women in the characters of young and old Kirstie in Weir of Hermiston, his last work left unfinished by his sudden death in 1894.

The love relation between David and Catriona is dull and cold (she calls him a "friend", while he calls her a "wooden doll"). Indeed it is embarrassing to read. We do not see any striking scenes in the last chapters of the book - apart from the return of James More Macgregor. At first the Highlander looks "furious" as he finds his daughter living alone with young David. But in the course of time David discovers that the man cares for nothing but "his belly and his pocket". Realizing James More's intentions of blackmail, David begins to despise and hate him and so does Catriona (although she has shown very high clan loyalty to her father at the beginning of the story). Later the scene is shifted from Holland to France where Alan Breck reappears, and with his sword, teaches James More an unforgettable lesson. Finally, James More goes his own way, leaving David and Catriona free to get married and start a new life. It is a conventional happy ending

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13. Letters, Vol. II, p. 361.

that must crown the adventures of Stevenson's favourite hero. However, the conclusion has more significance than this. Considering that *Catriona* in the sequel is a "surrogate" for Alan Breck, it could be, then, that Stevenson intended

some symbolic significance in the marriage of David and *Catriona*, the union of Jacobite and Covenanter, the wild girl of Alban with the Westminster Confession. This might have a meaning in regard to sundered Scotland. 14

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14. W.W. Robson, "On Kidnapped", Stevenson and Victorian Scotland, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 106.

CHAPTER TEN

Weir of Hermiston

and

St. Ives

In the unfinished Weir of Hermiston, written in his last days in Samoa and published posthumously in 1896, Stevenson was looking back on Scotland. His imagination was working on memories of the Pentland Hills and the character of Lord Braxfield, a real figure from Scottish history known as the "Hanging- Judge".<sup>1</sup> The Pentlands and the Lammermuirs still meant a great deal to Stevenson, as is shown in his dedication of the book to his wife:

I saw rain falling and the rainbow  
drawn on Lammermuir. Harkening I  
heard again  
In my precipitous city beaten bells  
Winnow the keen sea wind. And here afar,  
Intent on my own race and place, I wrote.

In this dedication, Stevenson

seems to indicate that the book was to be, among other things, an attempt to convey to her something of those ideas and emotions that sprang from his life in Scotland before he had ever met her, a part of his life and mind in which she had no share.<sup>2</sup>

It is through Archie's forced exile in the family estate of Hermiston and his acquaintance with the epic tales of the Borders that we may trace the young hero's adventures in the countryside, away from the restrictions of his father and of Edinburgh. In Weir of Hermiston, Stevenson treats for the last time the subject of father-son relationship, a theme which had haunted him ever since his youthful conflict with his father, and found literary expression, though in a lighter vein, in such earlier works as "The story of a Lie" and The Wrecker.

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1. Stevenson had been haunted by Lord Braxfield, the original of Weir of Hermiston, since his youth. This is shown in his essay "Some Portraits by Raeburn" in Virginibus Puerisque, in which he gives us his personal impressions of the man drawn by one of the greatest Scottish painters. See Vol. XXII, pp. 116-19.
  2. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 105.

Before dealing with Archie's experiences at Hermiston, however, it is necessary that we look at his early experiences, since that may help to establish some sort of relationship with what will take place later in exile. To begin with, Archie was brought up by his religious mother to learn by heart such words as "mercy", "love" and "tenderness":

It was a common practice of hers...that she should carry the child to the Deil's Hags, sit with him on the Praying Weaver's Stone and talk of the Covenanters till their tears ran down. Her view of history was wholly artless, a design in snow and ink; upon the one side, tender innocents with psalms upon their lips; upon the other the persecutors, booted, bloody-minded, flushed with wine: a suffering Christ, a raging Beelzebub. Persecutor was a word that knocked upon the woman's heart; it was her highest thought of wickedness, and the mark of it was on her house. Her great-great-grandfather had drawn the sword against the Lord's anointed on the field of Rullion Green, and breathed his last (tradition said) in the arms of the detestable Dalyell. Nor could she blind herself to this, that had they lived in those old days, Hermiston himself would have been numbered alongside of Bloody Mackenzie and the politic Lauderdale and Rothes, in the band of God's immediate enemies. <sup>3</sup>

One critic in this respect remarked that "Stevenson's sense of national religious history gets the best expression it could through that presentment of the individual character..."<sup>4</sup>. When the child asks his mother the reason why people have called his father a "persecutor", she assures him that "your father is a great man". The mother dies, and Archie is left with mixed feelings towards his father.

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3. Weir of Hermiston, Vol, XIV, P. 11.

4. David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People: 1680 - 1830 (London 1961), p. 139.

As he grows up, Archie begins to question his father's "sins", feeling a gap between himself and the man. Stevenson depicts with great subtlety the character of Lord Hermiston. Grandeur and cruelty are combined together in his character, which is best seen in the trial of Duncan Jopp. Sensitive Archie attends the trial of the ill-fated Duncan:

.....my Lord Hermiston occupied the bench in the red robes of criminal jurisdiction, his face framed in the white wig. Honest all through, he did not affect the virtue of impartiality; this was no case for refinement; there was a man to be hanged, he would have said, and he was hanging him. Nor was it possible to see his lordship, and acquit him of gusto in the task.... He took his ease and jested, unbending in that solemn place with some of the freedom of the tavern, and the rag of man with the flannel round his neck was hunted gallowsward with jeers.

Duncan had a mistress... who came, whimpering and curtseying, to add the weight of her betrayal. My lord gave her the oath in his most roaring voice, and added an intolerant warning.

"Mind what ye say now, Janet", said he.  
"I have an e'e upon ye; I'm ill to jest with".  
(pp. 27-28)

And after the death-sentence was scornfully passed, Archie

passed by his friends in the High Street with incoherent words and gestures. He saw Holyrood in a dream, remembrance of its romance awoke in him and faded; he had a vision of the old radiant stories of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie, of the hooded stag, of the splendour and crime, the velvet and bright iron of the past; and dismissed them in a cry of pain. He lay and moaned in the Hunter's Bog, and the heavens were dark above him and the grass of the field an offence. "This is my father", he said. "I draw my life from him; the flesh upon my bones is his, the bread I am fed with is the wages of horrors". He recalled his mother, and ground

his forehead in the earth. He thought of flight, and where was he to flee to? of other lives, but was there any life worth living in this den of savage and jeering animals. (p. 29)

The Lord Justice-Clerk himself is the most impressive character in the story. He is a "Titanic" figure. He is described as "merciless", "an aboriginal antique", an "adamantine Adam", and a "usurping devil....horned and hoofed". We are told in the first paragraph of the book that "the Lord-Justice Clerk was a stranger in that part of the country", and reminded ever after that he seems to derive his preternatural strength from some other time or place. Even when Archie seems to hate him, he admits that "he struck me as something very big". The serious crisis happens when the son bitterly criticizes his father in public while attending the hanging of Duncan Jopp:

"I denounce this God-defying murder", he shouted; and his father, if he must have disclaimed the sentiment, might have owned the stentorian voice with which it was uttered. (p. 30)

It may be said that Archie has "adventure" in dealing with his father, in the sense that he runs the risk of trying to enter and criticize his father's harsh world. For Lord Hermiston is not an ordinary father; he is, it should be remembered, the "Hanging-Judge". Indeed the price the young hero has to pay for his adventure is very high: he is compelled to give up his law studies at Edinburgh University and banished to the family estate of Hermiston. The critical encounter between them stresses the conflict between two generations. The father's use of Scots gives authenticity to his character, while Archie's English seems "artificial" and "effeminate" by comparison. <sup>5</sup>

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5. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 121.

The interview between Archie and Lord Hermiston is subtly drawn. One of the finest pieces of dialogue ever written by Stevenson, it shows the difference in character and attitude between them:

For a moment Hermiston warmed his hands at the fire, presenting his back to Archie; then suddenly disclosed on him the terrors of the Hanging Face.

"What's this I hear of ye? ", he said.

There was no answer possible to Archie.

"I'll have to tell ye, then, " pursued Hermiston. "It seems ye've been skirling against the father that begot ye, and one of His Majesty's Judges in this land; and that in the public street, and while an order of the Court was being executit. Forbye which, it would appear that ye've been airing your opeenions in a Coallege Debatin' Society;" he paused a moment: and then, with extraordinary bitterness, added:"Ye damned eediot".

"I had meant to tell you," stammered Archie. "I see you are well informed".

"Muckle obleeged to ye," said his Lordship, and took his usual seat. "And so you disapprove of Caapital Punishment?" he added. (pp.37-38)

As the dialogue goes on, Hermiston's speech becomes more and more Scots, while Archie's remains standard English.

Away from urban, legal Edinburgh, Archie escapes to the quiet countryside. The description of Hermiston and its environment marks a new "atmosphere" in the novel:

The road to Hermiston runs for a great part of the way up the valley of a stream, a favourite with anglers and with midges, full of falls and pools, and shaded by willows and natural woods of birch.

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Here and there, but at great distances, a byway branches off, and a gaunt farmhouse may be descried above in a fold of the hill; but the more part of the time, the road would be quite empty of passage and the hills of habitation . . . . Hermiston parish is one of the least populous in Scotland; and, by the time you came that length, you would scarce be surprised at the inimitable smallness of the kirk, a dwarfish, ancient place seated for fifty, and standing in a green by the burnside among two-score gravestones... A mile beyond the kirk the road leaves the valley by a precipitous ascent, and brings you a little after to the place of Hermiston, where it comes to an end in the backyard before the coach-house. All beyond and about is the great field of the hills; the plover, the curlew, and the lark cry there; the wind blows as it blows in a ship's rigging, hard and cold and pure; and the hill-tops huddle one behind another like a herd of cattle into the sunset. (p. 53)

Beautiful and vivid as this description of Hermiston is, it is of great significance as far as Stevenson's Scottishness is concerned. David Daiches has remarked that

This is the Scotland of his memories, the hills and moorlands where the martyrs lay buried. As the story develops this background emerges more and more clearly as a dominant influence if not on the actual course of the action at least on its mood and meaning.<sup>6</sup>

At Hermiston Archie becomes acquainted with Kirstie Elliot's heroic tales of her Border family. Like one "inspired", old Kirstie tells him of the Four Black Brothers of Cauldstaneslap's bloody revenge on their father's murderers in 1804. She boasts of her "continuing" family, knowing its legend and "counting kinship with some illustrious dead". Here this sense of inescapable history is stressed:

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6. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 126.

For that is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. No more characteristic instance could be found than in the family of Kirstie Elliott....the Elliotts of Cauldstaneslap had one boast which must appear legitimate: the males were gallows-birds, born outlaws, petty thieves, and deadly brawlers; but ..... the females were all chaste and faithful. (pp. 60-61)

One critic remarked that there is "high adventure removed not in place but in time" in Kirstie's tales of the heroics of the four brothers, and that "the basic theme of the novel is that the crude energies of the heroic past continually inform and affect contemporary life".<sup>7</sup> As soon as they saw their father dying before them, the four brothers (who are now scattered in Scotland, leading a "peaceful" life till, as we shall see later, they are called into action) rushed to Broken Dykes to take revenge on the murderers, and accomplished the task savagely with "nae mair weepens than their sticks into their hands":

Their savage haste, the skill with which David had found and followed the trail, the barbarity to the wounded Dickieson (which was like an open secret in the country) and the doom which it was currently supposed they had intended for the others, struck and stirred popular imagination. Some century earlier the last of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight and chase;

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7. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p. 233. It is surprising that the critic, though remarking the work's Border nature, refers to Archie's experiences in "the isolation of the Highlands" (p.253). Thus he confuses between two different cultures.

but the spirit was dead, or had been reincarnated already in Mr. Sheriff Scott, and the degenerate moorsmen must be content to tell the tale in prose and to make of the "Four Black Brothers" a unit after the fashion of the "Twelve Apostles" or the "Three Musketeers". (p. 67)

Archie comes to fall in love with Christina (the Four Black Brothers' sister), which is in itself the greatest adventure he first experiences in exile. He meets her at the Praying Weaver's Stone, and he "was reminded that he now dealt in serious matters of life and death". Their relation is seen through a familiar perspective, as Archie says to her:

We are here for so short a time; and  
all the old people before us -  
Rutherfords of Hermiston, Elliotts of  
Cauldstaneslap - that were here but a  
while since, riding about and keeping  
up a great noise in this quiet corner  
- making love too, and marrying, why,  
where are they now? It's deadly  
commonplace, but after all, the common-  
places are the great poetic truths.  
(pp. 99-100)

The girl quickly responds to her lover's emotions, expressing her willingness to "sooth" to him the song her brother Dand made about the old Border families:

"O they rade in the rain, in the days  
that are gane,  
In the rain and the wind and the lave,  
They shoutit in the ha' and they routit  
on the hill,  
But they're a' quaitit noo in the grave.  
Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour,  
bauld Elliotts of auld ! " (p. 101)

The love story between Archie and Christina is linked with the plaintive sense of history which is an important emotion in the work. Again, the theme stressed here is that the present is a continuation of the past. Kurt Wittig in this connection remarked that

In his analysis of the complex of forces - historical, hereditary, and psychological - which determine human relations and reactions, Stevenson weaves thread after thread into his rich tissue of crime and passion, history and heredity till the life of the Borders (and Edinburgh) becomes a continuous pattern which stretches from the time of the ballads almost to the present day. The main action is laid in or about 1814, but on to the social background against which it takes place Stevenson deliberately projects the manners of a generation or so earlier, thus enhancing the continuity of Border tradition, and striking its essential keynote -  
namely the tragic fatalism of the ballads.<sup>8</sup>

The coming of Frank Innes to stay for some time with his friend Archie marks the "tragic fatalism of the ballads". Though he "was the very picture of good looks, good-humour, and manly youth", he is disliked by the people of Hermiston. In the chapter entitled "Enter Mephistopheles"; we know about Frank's repeated interference with Archie's personal affairs, an attitude over which Archie argues with him. Archie is so much upset that "he had become completely Weir, and the hanging face gloomed on his young shoulders". This well shows the fact that the young hero, though he has already escaped from the "Hanging-Judge", still remains his "father's son" :

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8. Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh and London, 1958), pp. 262-63.

Bursting with anger, but incapable of speech, Innes shouldered his rod, made a gesture of farewell, and strode off down the burn-side. Archie watched him go without moving. He was sorry but quite unashamed. He hated to be inhospitable, but in one thing he was his father's son. He had a strong sense that his house was his own and no man else's; and to lie at a guest's mercy was what he refused. (p. 116)

Archie believes in his inner self that Frank's remarks about his relation with Christina (he takes pleasure in warning Archie "as a friend" of the dangers involved in the game he is playing) have some substance. Old Kirstie too discovers the secret love and is very worried about her niece's future, but Archie swears to do his beloved "no wrong". The hero meets his girl as usual at the Praying Weaver Stone, and the result of this meeting is the last great crisis of the book as Stevenson left it. The passionate girl is offended by the sudden change in her lover's attitude:

The revulsion of feeling in Christina's heart was violent. To have longed and waited..... rehearsing her endearments - to have seen him at last come - to have been ready there, breathless, wholly passive, his to do what he would with - and suddenly to have found herself confronted with a grey-faced, harsh schoolmaster - it was too rude a shock. (p. 131)

Archie lectures her on the necessity of caution - "We've seen much of each other.....People have begun to talk".

It is interesting to note that the character of Christina suggests that Stevenson's disposition towards women has become warm and normal. He is no longer frozen by what he has often called the "ambiguity" of female nature. Christina is the beginning of a real woman, passionate and unabashed by her sexual instincts.

Both she and old Kirstie (who suffers torments of "jealousy" and "loneliness" when Archie spends most of the time with Christina, and whose love for the young hero is rendered impossible by age and morality) are truer to life than, say, the character of Catriona. The story concludes, as Stevenson left it, when Archie embraces the girl he has just offended:

Archie ran to her. He took the poor child in his arms, and she nestled to his breast as to a mother's and clasped him in hands that were strong like vices. He felt her whole body shaken by the throes of distress, and had pity upon her beyond speech. Pity, and at the same time a bewildered fear of this explosive engine in his arms, whose works he did not understand, and yet had been tampering with. There arose before him the curtains of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. In vain he looked back over the interview; he saw not where he had offended. It seemed unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of brute nature..... (pp. 136-37)

In his "Editorial Note" to the present volume, Sidney Colvin argues that the story might have developed thus:

Archie persists in his good resolution of avoiding further conduct compromising to young Kirstie's good name. Taking advantage of the situation thus created, and of the girl's unhappiness and wounded vanity, Frank Innes pursues his purpose of seduction; and Christina, though still caring for Archie in her heart, allows herself to become Frank's victim. Old Kirstie is the first to perceive something amiss with her, and believing Archie to be the culprit, accuses him, thus making him aware for the first time that mischief has happened. He does not at once deny the charge, but seeks out

and questions young Christina, who confesses the truth to him; and he, still loving her, promises to protect and defend her in her trouble. He then has an interview with Frank Innes on the moor, which ends in a quarrel and in Archie killing Frank beside the Weaver's Stone. Meanwhile the Four Black Brothers, having become aware of their sister's betrayal, are bent on vengeance against Archie as her supposed seducer. They are about to close in upon him with this purpose, when he is arrested by the officers of the law for the murder of Frank. He is tried before his own father, the Lord Justice-Clerk, found guilty and condemned to death. Meanwhile the elder Kirstie, having discovered from the girl how matters really stand, informs her nephews of the truth: and they, in a great revulsion of feeling in Archie's favour, determine an action after the ancient manner of their house.<sup>9</sup> They gather a following, and after a great fight break the prison where Archie lies confined, and rescue him. He and young Christina thereafter escape to America. But the ordeal of taking part in the trial of his own son has been too much for the Lord Justice-Clerk, who dies of the shock. "I do not know", adds the amanuensis [Mrs. Strong, Stevenson's step-daughter], "what becomes of Old Kirstie, but that character grew and strengthened so in the writing that I am sure he had some dramatic destiny for her". (pp. 139-40)

Sidney Colvin's "story" seems very probable, because we feel from the very beginning that a tragic destiny is "foreshadowed" for all concerned, and is inherent in the very conditions of the work. Besides, in a letter of 1892 to Baxter Stevenson tells of his intended design for the plot :

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9. Thus we are reminded, as Stevenson tells us early in the story, that "some Barbarossa, some old Adam of our ancestors, sleeps in all of us till the fit circumstance shall call it into action". (p. 68)

.....I have a novel on the stocks to be called The Justice-Clerk. It is pretty Scotch, the Grand Premier is taken from Braxfield.....the heroine is seduced by one man, and finally disappears with the other man who shot him.... Mind you, I expect the Justice-Clerk to be my masterpiece. <sup>10</sup>

The journey into exile is significant for young Archie, for it provides him with a process of "education" through which he knows and comes closer to himself. He well realizes that it is impossible for him to put behind the conflicting strains of paternal and maternal inheritance, which are linked with the tragic forces of the Elliotts. Incidents of the past repeat themselves before him, and all he has to do, like his author, is to "bow his head before the romance of destiny". <sup>11</sup>

Critics of different tastes have agreed that Weir of Hermiston is full of insights. David Daiches calls it "one of the great fragments of English literature". <sup>12</sup> In his "Editorial Note", Colvin praises Stevenson's "vital poetry of vision and magic of presentment" - though he is critical of the story's date, set in 1814 (fourteen years after Braxfield's death). By that time the manners of Scottish judges and of Scots folk in general had changed considerably. The bloody adventures of the Four Black Brothers (including their release of Archie from jail) suggest "the ways of an earlier generation." But this anachronism may be excused if we consider the author's "emotions" in exile. As Daiches has put it, Stevenson wishes to find "a context in space and time which linked the Scotland familiar to him in boyhood with the romantic Border associations that led back to an earlier period of history". <sup>13</sup>

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10. Letters, Vol. II, p. 273.
  11. There is further discussion of this point in the next chapter.
  12. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 140.
  13. Ibid., p. 104.

By altering his chronology a little, the critic goes on to say, Stevenson "puts his sense of Scottish history at the service of his sense of autobiography".<sup>14</sup>

St. Ives is another novel which Stevenson left unfinished, to be published posthumously in 1897. It is a picaresque adventure story which seems at first sight to belong to an earlier phase of his career. Though it has neither the subtlety of The Master of Ballantrae nor the insights of Kidnapped, it is significant in the sense that it shows Stevenson's nostalgia in recalling, through the adventures of an English-speaking French prisoner in Edinburgh, his early days in the romantic city. In a letter to his cousin Bob in 1894, Stevenson mentions the nature of the work:

..... the present book, Saint Ives, is nothing; it is in no style in particular, a tissue of adventures, the central character not very well done, no philosophic pith under the yarn; and in short, if people will read it, that's all I ask; and if they don't, damn them! 15

St. Ives, a French prisoner of war during the Napoleonic wars, is presented to us as an active and brilliant character throughout the story. He escapes from the Castle, an exciting scene in which the hero proves his skill in descending the rocks, and goes to Swanston Cottage where he can see Flora (an Edinburgh girl whom he first met in the Castle market and fell in love with). Here Stevenson describes with vividness the hero's wanderings in Edinburgh:

..... I went on again up a gradual hill, descended on the other side through the houses of a country village, and came at last to the bottom of the main ascent leading to the Pentlands and my destination. I was some way up when the fog began to lighten; a little farther, and I stepped by degrees into a clear

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14. Ibid.

15. Letters, Vol. II, p. 334.

starry night, and saw in front of me, and quite distinct, the summits of the Pentlands, and behind the valley, the valley of the Forth and the city of my late captivity buried under a lake of vapour. <sup>16</sup>

The French prisoner is "wanted" throughout the country. After a series of escapades in Scotland and England, he manages to escape from Edinburgh in a balloon (a romantic flight indeed! ), flying over Scotland and then the English Channel. After the end of the war, St. Ives leaves France for Scotland to "claim his Flora", a conventional happy ending that should most please the French hero. It is worth mentioning here that Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch completed St. Ives "along plot lines that Louis had already laid out, involving the fantastic balloon escape....." <sup>17</sup> Again, the book has no philosophical insights. It is filled with exciting adventures, and Stevenson wanted us to regard it that way. David Daiches has remarked that Stevenson is the "hero" of the story, who remembers his "younger self" through the adventures of St. Ives:

Stevenson is looking back to Scotland from Vailima: St. Ives, the Frenchman, the prisoner looking out on Edinburgh from the Castle, is a symbol of Stevenson looking back on the city from the South Seas. <sup>18</sup>

And before his death, Stevenson still had warm feelings towards his "Auld Reekie".

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16. St. Ives, Vol. XIII, p. 68.
  17. J.C. Furnas, Voyage to Windward, p. 457.
  18. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 96.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Stevenson in exile :

In the South Seas

After the death of his father, Stevenson lost any link with Europe. From San Francisco the Stevensons sailed in 1888 to the South Seas on board the Casco. On board ship Stevenson was always happy and in good health; and he made more than one cruise, in different ships, among the Gilbert, Paumotuian, and Marquesan groups of islands, staying in them for periods of varying lengths. In a letter written in Honolulu to his friend James Payn, Stevenson expresses his delight in the Pacific Islands:

This climate; these voyagings; these  
landfalls at dawn; new islands  
peaking from the morning bank; new  
forested harbours; new passing alarms  
of squalls and surf; new interests of  
gentle natives, - the whole tale of  
my life is better to me than any poem. <sup>1</sup>

In the volume called In The South Seas (1896), we have a detailed, exciting account of Stevenson's travels among these tropical islands that had fascinated him since 1875, when a New Zealand official visited the Stevensons in Edinburgh and told them, as is mentioned in Stevenson's letter to Mrs. Sitwell, "all about the South Sea islands till I was sick with desire to go there...." <sup>2</sup>

Stevenson's travels in the South Seas, originally in pursuit of health, have other practical reasons, as he tells us early in In The South Seas:

..... I was now escaped out of the shadow of the Roman empire, under whose toppling monuments we were all cradled, whose laws and letters are on every hand of us, constraining and preventing. I was now to see what men might be whose fathers had never studied Virgil, had never been conquered by Caesar and never been ruled by the wisdom of Gaius or Papinian.

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1. Letters, Vol. II, p. 16.
  2. Letters, Vol. I, p. 95.

By the same step I had journeyed forth out of that comfortable zone of kindred languages, where the curse of Babel is so easy to be remedied; and my new fellow-creatures sat before me dumb like images. <sup>3</sup>

His escape from "the shadow of the Roman Empire" stresses the fact that he was as much in need of "fresh" experiences as health. Besides it was through this escape that Stevenson was able to play a cultural role in conveying to others in Europe the lives of the South Sea islanders.

Stevenson became so much impressed by the lives of the natives that he tended to make comparisons between the Marquesans and the Scottish Highlanders, which reveal his Scottishness as well as his deep understanding of human nature:

.....I had enjoyed in my youth some knowledge of our Scots folk of the Highlands and the Islands. Not much beyond a century has passed since these were in the same convulsive and transitional state as the Marquesans of today. In both cases an alien authority enforced, the clans disarmed, the chiefs deposed, new customs introduced, and chiefly that fashion of regarding money as the means and object of existence. The commercial age, in each, succeeding at a bound to an age of war abroad and patriarchal communism at home. In one the cherished practice of tattooing, in the other a cherished costume, proscribed. In each a main luxury cut off: beef, driven under cloud of night from Lowland pastures, denied to the meat-loving Highlander; long-pig, pirated from the next village, to the man-eating Kanaka. <sup>4</sup>

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3. In The South Seas, Vol. XVIII, p. 9.

4. Used to denote any native of the South Sea islands.

The grumbling, the secret ferment, the fears and resentments, the alarms and sudden councils of Marquesan chiefs, remind me continually of the days of Lovat and Struan. Hospitality, tact, natural fine manners, and a touchy punctilio, are common to both races: common to both tongues the trick of dropping medial consonants. (p. 12)

Again, Stevenson's sense of history, combined with his power of seeing things in a new light and the refusal to accept commonplaces without examination, is obvious here:

When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism: Michael Scott, Lord Derwentwater's head, the second-sight, the Water Kelpie - each of these I have found to be a killing bait; the black bull's head of Stirling procured me the legend of Rahero; and what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the Tevas of Tahiti. The native was no longer ashamed, his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened. It is the sense of kinship that the traveller must rouse and share; or he had better content himself with travels from the blue bed to the brown. (pp. 13-14)

Stevenson tells us in his travel book about strange beliefs and customs held by the natives. He finds the Marquesans ever preoccupied with the thought of death. This is because of the fatal diseases surrounding them (such as smallpox and tubercular consumption):

The Marquesan beholds with dismay the approaching extinction of his race. The thought of death sits down with him to meat, and rises with him from his bed; he lives and breathes under a shadow of mortality awful to support; and he is so inured to the apprehension that he greets the reality with relief. He does not even seek to support a disappointment; at an affront, at a breach of one of his fleeting and communistic love-affairs, he seeks an instant refuge in the grave. Hanging is now the fashion..Far more suitable to Marquesan sentiment is the old form of poisoning with the fruit of the eva, which offers to the native suicide a cruel but deliberate death, and gives time for those decencies of the last hour, to which he attaches such remarkable importance. The coffin can thus be at hand, the pigs killed, the cry of the mourners sounding already through the house.....The coffin, though of late introduction, strangely engages their attention. It is to the mature Marquesan what a watch is to the European schoolboy. (pp. 30-31)

To his great interest, Stevenson was told many superstitions about the dead who "came and danced by night around the paepae of their former family", while the family held feasts to celebrate the occasion.

Through his travels in the South Sea islands, Stevenson was able to get first-hand experience of the destructive aspects of Western colonization. He was aware that many deadly and contagious diseases had been introduced to the islands by colonials, free-traders, and missionaries. He was also aware of the exploitation of the natives by the whites ( a theme to which he gives literary expression in "The Beach of Falesa" and The Ebb-Tide). On the other hand, Stevenson was equally aware of and horrified by the miseries and ugliness of native life. The fact that he did not romanticize the islanders should be considered here. In the Marquesas he feels

disgusted by the sight of a cannibal festival, and the thought of the chiefs coming away from it "heavy with their beastly food":

There are certain sentiments which we call emphatically human - denying the honour of that name to those who lack them. In such feasts - particularly where the victim had been slain at home, and men banqueted on the poor clay of a comrade with whom they had played in infancy, or a woman whose favours they had shared - the whole body of these sentiments is outraged. To consider it too closely is to understand if not to excuse, those fervours of self-righteous old ship-captains, who would man their guns, and open fire in passing, on a cannibal island. (p. 97)

In spite of his disillusionment, Stevenson had real sympathy with and understanding of native life. He ran the risk of visiting the lepers of Molokai and of Kona, where he painfully realized the horrible suffering of such people. He came to admire any who took the risk of working with lepers. He took great interest in the story of Father Damien, a Catholic missionary who had dedicated his life to the care of Molokai's lepers and died of leprosy. Father Damien was allegedly accused by outsider Protestants (who were sensitive about the fact that service to the lepers had been led by Catholics) of being ignorant, dirty, coarse, and having illicit relations with the leprous women of the settlement. This provoked Stevenson to "white-hot fury" and he produced his "Open letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu",<sup>5</sup> both a defence of Father Damien and an attack on Dr. Hyde for his hypocritical attitude and total lack of Christian charity and love.

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5. Included in Vailima Papers, Vol. XIX, pp. 21-37.

In the Paumotus Stevenson was fascinated by the native stories of the supernatural which played a powerful role in Polynesian life. Superstitions were deep-rooted in the people of Fakarva. In his present volume of travel Stevenson tells us about a native storyteller accompanying him :

.....it is scarce possible to exaggerate the extent and empire of his superstitions; they mould his life, they colour his thinking; and when he does not speak to me of ghosts, and gods, and devils, he is playing the dissembler and talking only with his lips. (p. 178)

Stevenson goes on to tell stories of native superstitions:

One of my workmen was sent the other day to the banana patch, there to dig; this is a hollow of the mountain, buried in woods, out of all sight and cry of mankind; and long before dusk Lafaele was back again beside the cook-house with embarrassed looks; he dared not longer stay alone, he was afraid of "spilits in the bush". It seems these are the souls of the unburied dead, haunting where they fell, and wearing woodland shapes of pig, or bird, or insect.....they seem to eat nothing, slay solitary wanderers apparently in spite, and at times, in human form go down to villages and consort with the inhabitants undetected. (ibid)

Stevenson was interested in establishing good relations with native kings. Travelling among the Gilbert Islands on board the Equator, a trading ship carrying copra, he came to know King Tembinok' of Apemama who, after reluctance, gave the Stevensons permission to stay in Apemama for a time. King Tembinok' was a tyrant greatly feared by his people. Besides he was an extraordinary man, a strong and complex character of many talents who had admitted missionaries to his island only to learn English from them and had then dismissed them. Stevenson's description of this king is interesting:

There is one great personage in the Gilberts: Tembinok' of Apemama: solely conspicuous, the hero of song, the butt of gossip. Through the rest of the group the kings are slain or fallen in tutelage: Tembinok' alone remains, the last tyrant, the last erect vestige of a dead society... Tembinok' figures in the patriotic war-songs of the Gilberts like Napoleon in those of our grandfathers. (p. 298)

The Stevensons established affectionate relations, as time went on, with the "Napoleon" of this part of the world. When the time came for their departure, he felt grief - "I very sorry you go".

Thus Stevenson's keen interest in making an honest and enquiring record of places and people and the facts shaping them may be traced throughout In The South Seas. It is striking to note here that Stevenson, in the midst of his absorption in native lives, experienced bitter homesickness. His imagination was haunted by visions and memories of his Scottish past. In a letter to Charles Baxter from Tautira, he encloses a very touching poem, "my attempt at words to 'Wandering Willie' ":

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?  
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.  
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather;  
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.  
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree,  
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door—  
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,  
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,  
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child  
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;  
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.  
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,  
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.  
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,  
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the  
place of old.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Letters, Vol. II, p. 123. The poem is included in Collected Poems, p. 256.

In her comment on this poem, Jenni Calder has noticed the tension between Stevenson's nostalgia and his commitment to new experiences in the Pacific:

It is a muddled poem, really, the curiosity lying in that he should have written it at a time when he was comfortably settled in a delightful South Sea village, in a house open to the sunlight, thatched with palm leaves, coconut palms shading the green lawns. But the contrary pulls could never relax. The joy of the sea, the adventure of it, the heavy depression of illness clutching yet again; the fiction imbedded in Scotland and his own past that came from his pen; the dangers of their last voyage; the sudden lump in the throat of sheer irrepressible nostalgia. Whatever Louis had escaped from, the world he was living in now was more complex, more layered with different levels of reality, more peopled with ghosts, than anything he had ever before experienced. <sup>7</sup>

The theme of nostalgia is expressed in another letter to Baxter, after Stevenson had decided to settle down in Samoa in 1890. In this letter Stevenson encloses "To my Old Familiars", a poem recalling his Edinburgh days. Here is the beginning of the poem :

Do you remember - can we e'er forget? -  
How, in the coiled perplexities of youth,  
In our wild climate, in our scowling town,  
We gloomed and shivered, sorrowed, sobbed  
and feared ?  
The belching winter wind, the missile rain,  
The rare and welcome silence of the snows,  
The laggard morn, the laggard day, the night,  
The grimy spell of the nocturnal town, <sup>8</sup>  
Do you remember ? - Ah, could one forget!

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7. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson : A Life Study, pp. 268-69.  
8. Letters, Vol. II, p. 177. For the whole poem, see Collected Poems, pp. 268-69.

Stevenson was aware of the fact that he would be buried in the new world he had come to, whose customs and legends he recorded, with interest, in two ballads: "The Feast of Famine" and "The Song of Rahero". He was content, while going on travelling among the South Sea islands, to let his imagination travel back home.

In Samoa Stevenson was able to lead a very active life. He bought property and built a large house which he called Vailima (the meeting of Five Waters). His stay there gave him a new sense of life, a new confidence in himself. In a letter to George Meredith, he describes life at Vailima:

My health is vastly restored, and I am now living patriarchally in this place six hundred feet above the sea on the shoulder of a mountain of 1500. Behind me, the unbroken bush slopes up to the backbone of the island.....without a house, with no inhabitants save a few runaway black boys, wild pigs and cattle, and wild doves and flying foxes, and many parti-coloured birds, and many black, and many white: a very eerie, dim, strange place and hard to travel. I am the head of a household of five whites, and of twelve Samoans, to all of whom I am the chief and the father: my cook comes to me and asks leave to marry - and his mother, a fine old chief woman, who has never lived here, does the same. You may be sure I grant the petition. It is a life of great interest, complicated by the Tower of Babel, that old enemy. My house is a great place; we have a hall fifty feet long...where we dine in state - myself usually dressed in a singlet and a pair of trousers - and attended on by servants in a single garment, a kind of kilt - also flowers and leaves - and their hair often powdered with lime.

The European who came upon it suddenly would think it was a dream. We have prayers on a Sunday night.....<sup>9</sup>

Commenting on Stevenson's life in Samoa, David Daiches wrote:

As Suenga (Chief) of Vailima he had now achieved, though in a different culture, the same position that Sir Walter Scott achieved as Laird of Abbotsford. It was, as with Scott, in a sense an acting out of an ancestral role, and, again as with Scott, it was bound up with a deep surge of imaginative feeling about the past of his own country. But in Stevenson's case it was an exile's feeling. 10

Stevenson was greatly liked and respected by the natives. He liked them too. He held generous feasts for Samoan chiefs and retainers. He was "Le Ona", the rich proprietor, and those Samoans who considered themselves under his protection called themselves "Tama Ona", which Stevenson rendered for Colvin as "the MacRichies". He thought of their relationship to him as that of faithful members of a Highland clan to their chief. It was the Samoans who made him the "Road of the Loving Heart". Even in Britain he was becoming something of a legend, for the thought of the Scottish writer in exile caught the public's interest and imagination. "Since Byron was in Greece", wrote Edmund Gosse in a letter to Stevenson, "nothing has appealed to the ordinary literary man as so picturesque as that you should be in the South Seas".<sup>11</sup>

Stevenson got himself so involved in Samoa's complicated politics that he was sometimes an undesirable person in the eyes of white officials. He saw the evils arising from the fact that Samoa had

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9. Letters, Vol. II, pp. 302-303.  
 10. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson and his World, p. 91.  
 11. Evan Charteris, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (London, 1931), p. 233.

become the scene of political intrigue and rivalry carried on by three great world powers against each other, with no regard to the wishes and welfare of the native population. The three great powers' policies (Germany, Great Britain and the United States) led to the creation of rival "puppet kings". Stevenson supported Mataafa, an honest and able chief, in his war against Malietoa who was backed by the Germans, and this ended with Mataafa's exile to the Marshall Islands. Stevenson showed real sympathy with the imprisoned supporters of Mataafa, when he and his family visited them with gifts in Apia gaol. The prisoners, to honour and welcome the Stevensons, gave a feast in the prison courtyard. In his A Footnote to History and his letters to The Times (included in Vailima Papers), Stevenson voiced his protest against white exploitation of the natives.

Stevenson's exile in Samoa did much to intensify his feeling for the romance of Scottish scenery and character. He wrote Catriona, St. Ives, and his "unfinished masterpiece" Weir of Hermiston; all should be looked at, as we have already attempted in the chapters dealing with them, in the context of the author's Scottishness revealed at Vailima. One critic in this connection has remarked the significance of Stevenson's exile and its relation to his treatment of Scottish subjects:

The most significant effect of this contact with and absorption in Pacific ways was the ability it gave him to see his own Scottish culture in a more universal context, and therefore to see it in depth. Catriona and Weir of Hermiston are, among other things, studied and detailed surveys of the many facets of Scottish civilization at a particular time. And with this opened-up vision of his society, Stevenson was able to view himself and the problems that had been his in a more objective light than ever before in his life. <sup>12</sup>

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12. Paul Binding, R.L. Stevenson, p. 188.

Stevenson's letters from Vailima are full of nostalgia. In a letter to his Scottish friend S.R. Crockett (novelist, and minister of Glencorse in the Pentlands), he wrote:

I shall never take that walk by the  
Fisher's Tryst and Glencorse. I  
shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall  
never set my foot again upon the  
heather. Here I am until I die, and  
here will be I buried. The word is  
out and the doom written. <sup>13</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that Crockett dedicated his The Stickit Minister to Stevenson in the following terms :

To Robert Louis Stevenson of Scotland  
and Samoa I dedicate these stories of  
that Grey Galloway land where About the  
Graves of the Martyrs The Whaups are  
crying - his heart remembers how.

Perhaps the most moving of all Stevenson's poems of nostalgia is the one addressed to Crockett, after Stevenson had received his Dedication at Vailima :

Blows the wind today, and the sun and the rain  
are flying,

Blows the wind on the moors today and now,  
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups  
are crying,

My heart remembers how !

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,  
Standing-stones on the vacant wine-red moor,  
Hills of sheep, and the howes of the silent  
vanished races,

And winds, austere and pure.

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,  
Hills of home ! and to hear again the call;  
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees  
crying,

And hear no more at all. <sup>14</sup>

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13. Letters, Vol. II, p. 287-88.  
14. Collected Poems, pp. 283-84.

In his comment on this poem, Edwin Morgan has remarked its "historical" significance :

The longing that is expressed here is of course not only a longing for a place but for a place with its history, even for a place as history. It wouldn't be a poem without the wind and the moors and the sheep and the whaups crying, but a steady look at it convinces you that its centre is not these things, its centre is blood, as its subject is death, the poet's own nineteenth-century death merging into the blood of the martyrs of Scotland's hideous religious history and even that merging in turn into the far more distant blood of the sacrifices at the standing-stones. It's Lewis Grassie Gibbon in twelve lines. And having said that, one is surely reminded of George Macbeth's point about the love of clandestine violence? <sup>15</sup>

The Covenanters never ceased to haunt Stevenson's imagination. A year before his death, he admitted to James Barrie:

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 but Wodrow, Walker, Shields, etc.... My style is from the Covenanting writers. <sup>16</sup>

In fact in the same year Stevenson started "Heathercat", a tale with Covenanting background and history, which he never finished.

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15. Edwin Morgan, "The Poetry of R.L. Stevenson," Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 1, no. 2, December 1974, p. 32; reprinted in Essays by Edwin Morgan (Cheshire, 1974) p. 138.
  16. Letters, Vol. II, p. 312.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The South Seas Fiction

The Wrecker (1892) is Stevenson's first South Sea Novel, in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne. Though the work was directly inspired while travelling among the Pacific Islands on board the Equator, Stevenson devotes its early chapters to recalling his own experiences as a young man in France and America. The narrator-hero, Loudon Dodd, is presented to us from the beginning as a young man whose chief concern in life is to become an artist. But his American father wants him to be a successful businessman like himself. Disagreeing with his father, Loudon escapes to France where he finds the life he loves most. Here he tells of his experiences in Paris:

Every man has his own romance; mine clustered exclusively about the practice of the arts, the life of Latin Quarter students, and the world of Paris as depicted by that grimy wizard, the author of the Comédie Humaine..... now I was a Latin Quarter student, Murger's successor, living in flesh and blood the life of one of those romances I had loved to read, to re-read, and to dream over, among the woods of Muskegon....and for my own part, I had to content myself by pretending very arduously to be poor, by wearing a smoking-cap on the streets, and by pursuing through a series of misadventures, <sup>1</sup> that extinct mammal, the grisette.

It must have meant a great deal to the author to recall his Bohemian days. We also have a vivid description of San Francisco where Dodd goes after his failure to own a studio in Paris. He calls it

the most interesting city in the Union, and the hugest smelting-pot of races and the precious metals.

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1. The Wrecker, vol. XI, pp. 31-32.

She keeps, besides, the doors of the Pacific, and is the port of entry to another world and an earlier epoch in man's history.  
(p. 126)

In San Francisco he meets and befriends Jim Pinkerton, an American businessman who cares for nothing in this world but dollars. Pinkerton, in the hope that he may become a millionaire, buys the Flying Scud, a British ship wrecked in the South Seas, which is believed to carry opium among other goods. He asks Dodd, who is now his partner, to travel to Midway Island for the "invaluable wreckage".

From San Francisco Dodd sails for the South Seas. The voyage is so exciting that he feels that he has caught a glimpse of something permanent, a kind of immortality: "the eternal life of man, spent under sun and rain and in rude physical effort.... scarce changed since the beginning". He is so enthusiastic about the romance of the new world that

I would I could have carried along with me to Midway Island all the writers and 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: the scene, the nature of my employment; the rugged speech and faith of my fellow-toilers, the glare of the day on deck, the stinking twilight in the bilge, the shrill myriads of the ocean-fowl: above all, the sense of our immitigable isolation from the world and from the current epoch; — keeping another time, some eras old; the new day heralded by no daily paper, only by the rising sun; and the State, the churches, the peopled empires, war, and the rumours of war, and the voices of the arts, all gone silent

as in the days ere they were  
yet invented. Such were the conditions  
of my new experience in life, of which  
(if I had been able) I would have had  
all my confreres and contemporaries to  
partake: forgetting, for that while,  
the orthodoxies of the moment, and  
devoted to a single and material purpose  
under the eye of heaven. (p. 238)

To his disappointment, Dodd finds no opium. Instead he finds provisions. It is painful to him to realize the fact that he and his partner have paid fifty thousand dollars for a "dead horse". What he really finds in the wreck is evidence leading to the discovery of a horrible slaughter of the crew of the Flying Scud by the crew of the Currency Lass, another ship sailing in the Pacific. Among the murderers are Wick, Mac and Carthew, now scattered under assumed names in the Pacific and in America. Dodd comes to the realization that the "Picturesque" world he has sought is actually a world of mystery and murder. Like his author, he becomes aware of the fact that the new world is just part of the whole material world from which he has escaped. This is what gives The Wrecker its "realistic" significance.

The last chapters of The Wrecker are devoted to describing Dodd's attempts to trace the criminals; a process during which the sensitive artist becomes involved with smugglers and outlaws. Ironically enough, at the end of his adventures, he is comfortable for life with someone else's money; becoming the financial agent of Carthew. He becomes involved in the endless game of money. His role is to represent his patron and he loses his identity in that role: "He runs me now. It's all his money". Jenni Calder rightly called The Wrecker a "powerfully sinister story" – though she is critical of the fact that Stevenson "explains too much", something that he dispenses with in "The Beach of Falesa" and The Ebb-Tide, to these two stories' advantage.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Jenni Calder, R.L. Stevenson: A Life Study, p. 279.

Stevenson himself in his "Epilogue" calls the work

a tale of, a caste so modern; - full  
of details of our barbaric manners  
and unstable morals; full of the need  
and the lust of money, so that there  
is scarce a page in which the dollars  
do not jingle.....<sup>3</sup>

The realistic approach which Stevenson started in the treatment of The Wrecker was to continue in his other two important South Sea stories: "The Beach of Falesa" and The Ebb-Tide (the latter in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne). These will be dealt with in detail later in this chapter. The attempt now will be made to throw light on some other aspects of Stevenson's literary interests in the Pacific. Stevenson was known among the people of Samoa as "Tusitala," the teller of tales, and both "The Bottle Imp" and "The Isle of Voices" reflect his interest in native superstitions. Stevenson wished to entertain the simple people who loved him and for whom he showed deep affection. The first story is about Keawe of Hawaii, who possesses a magical bottle in which lives an imp capable of granting any wish. But this bottle is a mixed-blessing; for it must be sold, Keawe was told by the old man who sold the bottle to him, for less than it was bought for, or the last buyer goes to Hell.

Keawe is humble enough, asking the imp to provide him only with a beautiful house on the Kona Coast. His wish is granted quickly, and his Bright House becomes the talk of the island. Haunted by the flames of Hell, he decides to put an end to his adventure with the imp, selling the bottle to a friend. Later, he is badly in need of the bottle so that he can recover from leprosy and thus get married to Kokua, a daughter of Kiano. On Board the Hall he goes to Honolulu in quest of the bottle. Starting the voyage,

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3. In Stevenson's "Epilogue" to The Wrecker, p. 434.

Keawe sat apart from all in his sorrows, and watched for the house of Kiano. There it sat low upon the shore in the black rocks, and shaded by the cocoa-palms, and there by the door was a red holoku, no greater than a fly, and going to and fro with a fly's busyness. "Ah queen of my heart," he cried, "I'll venture my dear soul to win you".<sup>4</sup>

After a series of wanderings in Honolulu, Keawe manages to buy the bottle again for one cent, returns to Hawaii, and gets married to his beloved Kokua. However, he can find no buyer for the bottle. Here a moral element manifests itself, as the faithful wife is willing to buy the bottle herself, thus sacrificing herself for the sake of her husband. But Keawe finds the thought that his wife must go to Hell impossible to bear. It is this human dilemma that gives the story its significance. Ian Campbell in this respect calls "The Bottle Imp" a "moral fable simplified for the understanding of primitive peoples". He goes on to say:

It is a vivid study of conflicting passions, particularly the age-old problem of risking damnation for the sake of the love of a woman. For love, each will risk Hell; yet neither forgets Hell even when marriage is achieved, and love consummated. The marriage-bed is poisoned by remorse and fear of the flames of damnation.<sup>5</sup>

To their great relief and happiness, both Keawe and Kokua are eventually rescued from Hell by a drunken boatswain who, believing himself to be already consigned to Hell, buys the bottle. The story ends:

So off he went down the avenue towards town, and there goes the bottle out of the story.

But Keawe ran to Kokua light as the wind; and great was their joy that night; and great, since then, has been the peace of all their days in the Bright House.  
(p.124)

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4. "The Bottle Imp", included in Island Nights' Entertainment (1893), Vol. XII, p. 106
  5. "Introduction", Selected Short Stories of R.L. Stevenson, ed, Ian Campbell, p. 17.

"The Isle of Voices" is another supernatural story of the South Seas. It is about the terror and the greed of young Keola of Hawaii who, discovering that his father-in-law is a wizard whose wealth comes from periodic trips on a magic mat to the Isle of Voices, decides to embark on a risky adventure on his own in this place where the shells on the beach turn into silver dollars. After a series of horrible adventures, he manages to escape from invisible devils and from cannibals, while his father-in-law disappears from the island. The story, though interesting, lacks the human problem involved in "The Bottle Imp". But neither story has serious implications like, say, "Thrawn Janet" or "Markheim". Again both were written against the South Seas background for the sake of entertainment. In her "Note" to the present volume, Mrs Stevenson tells us about the effect of "The Bottle Imp" upon the superstitious Samoans when it was translated into their native language.

We wondered why so many of our native visitors demanded a view of the large safe in Vailima, and were puzzled by the expression of disappointment that crossed their faces when they were shown its interior and saw that it contained nothing more than papers and a little money. We afterwards discovered there was a popular belief that Tusitala still possessed the magic bottle, and the great iron safe had been placed in Vailima solely for its protection. <sup>6</sup>

"The Beach of Falesa" (1892) is the most important short story in Island Nights' Entertainment. It reflects Stevenson's own experiences with the customs and traditions of the natives, and their exploitation by white traders. The story can be regarded as the "essence" of the author's South Seas adventure. In a letter to Sidney Colvin, Stevenson mentions that "The Beach of Falesa"

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6. Mrs. Stevenson's "Note" to the present volume, p. XViii.

is the first realistic South Sea story; I mean with real South Sea character and details of life. Everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance and ended in a kind of sugar candy sham epic, and the whole effect was lost - there was no etching, no human grin, consequently no conviction. Now I have got the smell and look of the thing a good deal. You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale than if you had read a library. <sup>7</sup>

The island of Falesa to which Wiltshire comes as a new white trader is described as a world "all new painted". From the very beginning, we can see that Wiltshire is after new companions and fresh experiences. He feels his blood "renewed" on first seeing his new home, but is soon warned that his predecessor died of a mysterious "sickness". The English trader has great expectations of his Falesa adventure:

.....I felt as if I was in the right place to make a fortune, and go home again and start a public-house. There was I, sitting in that verandah in as handsome a piece of scenery as you could find, a splendid sun, and a fine, fresh, healthy trade that stirred up a man's blood like sea-bathing; and the whole thing was clean gone from me, and I was dreaming England.....and dreaming the looks of my public, by a cant of a broad high-road like an avenue and with the sign on a green tree. <sup>8</sup>

Wiltshire comes to meet Case, the only other trader on the island, who at first seems friendly towards him. Case helps the newcomer to choose a native wife for himself. The girl's name is Uma (the original title of the story), who fascinates Wiltshire by her beauty:

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7. Quoted in R.L. Stevenson: The Critical Heritage, ed. Paul Maixner, p. 410.

8. "The Beach of Falesa", pp. 20-21.

she was dressed and scented;  
her kilt was of fine Tapa, looking  
ricer in the fold 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  
ears and in her hair she had the  
scarlet flowers of the hibiscus.  
She showed the best bearing for a  
bride conceivable.....(p. 12)

Marriage soon takes place. The marriage document, written and  
signed by Case, goes as follows:

This is to certify that Uma,  
daughter of Fa'avao of Falesa,  
Island of — is illegally married<sup>9</sup>  
to Mr. John Wiltshire for one week,  
and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty  
to send her to hell when he pleases.  
(p.13)

Wiltshire feels some shame of this "illegal marriage", however.  
Here he reflects thus:

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. (ibid)

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9. Originally "for one night" as Stevenson wrote it; but the editor of the Illustrated London News (where the story was first published) insisted, for public taste, on modifying the marriage certificate. Thus subsequent editions in Britain have retained the modified "one week" instead of "one night". Jenni Calder who first edited the story in 1979 in its unexpurgated form, mentioned that Stevenson was "furious" because he always "felt cautious about tackling 'realistic' subjects.... The story was undermined, for the fact that Wiltshire comes to love and respect the woman he was prepared callously to exploit is central". See "Introduction", Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 16.

Later the English trader comes to love and respect Uma, which is significantly shown in his insistence on a legal marriage. In the chapter entitled "The Missionary", he is able to achieve his "Christian end" with the help of Mr. Tarleton who is in fact a good missionary. As time goes on, he finds himself tabooed: no native comes to his store. The taboo is the natives' only defence against the white man. This is because of his marriage to Uma, about whom Case has spread unpleasant rumours, since she is now looked down upon by her people, especially after she has refused to marry one of the island chiefs some months before Wiltshire's coming. Case, of course, wishes to be the only successful trader on the island; he has already killed one competitor and forced another to leave. Wiltshire now comes to realize Case's wickedness and is determined to stand by his wife and keep her whatever happens, though she asks him to leave her if he wants to get copra:

..... I would rather have you than all the copra in the South Seas..... She threw her arms about me, sprang close up, and pressed her face to mine, in the island way of kissing, so that I was all wetted with her tears, and my heart went out to her wholly. I never had anything so near me as this little brown bit of a girl. (pp. 35-36)

In "The Beach of Falesa", Stevenson deals with the question of the complex relationship between whites and natives. The white man is there for copra and money. He believes that he is superior to a people who are gullible, and therefore there should be no place for "fair dealing". This relationship is accompanied by exploitation, suspicion and fear. When Wiltshire discovers that he is tabooed he declares that

I'm a white man, and a British subject, and no end of a big chief at home; and I've come here to do them good, and bring them civilization. (p. 29)

As Jenni Calder has remarked, the relationship between white men and natives "is very much on a level of totems and symbols"<sup>10</sup>. But in the case of Case, he discovers that instead of counting upon the symbols of white civilization to establish a relationship, he can dominate the natives thoroughly by using their own totems; making them believe that he has power over the devils and evil spirits.

Wiltshire well realizes that his presence on the island is greatly threatened by Case. He decides to accept the challenge and expose him before the islanders. He goes exploring the remote place where Case is believed to make contact with the devils. There he discovers

a line of queer figures, idols or scarecrows, or what not. They have carved and painted faces ugly to view, their eyes and teeth were of shell, their hair and their bright clothes blew in the wind, and some of them worked with the tugging.....And the singular thing was that all these bogies were as fresh as toys out of a shop. (p. 65)

Case's power, as Jenni Calder has put it, "is the result of white technology and native superstition".<sup>11</sup> The whole thing is reduced to the level of child's play, as is shown in Wiltshire's reflections:

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. And then it came in my mind how the master flogged that boy, and the surprise we were all in to see the sorcerer catch it and hum like anybody else.....I must find some way of fixing it so for Master Case. (pp. 66-67)

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10. "Introduction", Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 17.
11. Ibid.

Wiltshire blows up Case's "temple" by using dynamite. A face to face confrontation becomes inevitable; the one who is going to survive must be the fittest. One critic in this respect has mentioned that the conflict that dominates the story is mainly between two white traders, and not between natives and whites, as is the case in Melville's view of the perilous relationship between traders and natives in Typee. Holding the view that Stevenson has "sentimentalized" the natives, he goes on to say:

If the climax of the story is to be a fight between two white men, the natives must be represented as interested spectators, dreading the outcome, praying for the other, but themselves too unintelligent, too mild, to play a decisive part in what happens to their island. <sup>12</sup>

Wiltshire's decision is to do away with Case whom he holds responsible for the ills on the island. He risks his life for the sake of the welfare of the islanders (and for personal reasons, if we consider that Case has insulted his wife) - though the guarantee, when he becomes the only trader on the island, that Wiltshire is not going to "exploit" the natives is questionable. The scene in which he kills Case is the most horrible scene of the story. Here Wiltshire draws his knife in an attempt to end the fight with his enemy:

"Now", said I, "I've got you; and you're gone up, and a good job too! Do you feel the point of that? That's for Underhill! And that's for Adams! And now here's for Uma, and that's going to knock your blooming soul right out of you!"

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12. Peter Gilmour, "R.L. Stevenson: Forms of Evasion", R.L. Stevenson, ed. Andrew Noble, pp. 192-93.

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. (p.82)

To add to the savagery of the revenge, Wiltshire gives him the knife again "a half a dozen times up to the handle. I believe he was dead already, but it did him no harm and did me good".

Wiltshire is one of the most "human" characters Stevenson ever created in his South Seas fiction. It is he who gives "The Beach of Falesa" its importance. He is a mixed character; both good and evil exist inside him. He first took part in the disgraceful act of illegal marriage to Uma, but as time went on, and when his conscience awakened, he insisted on a legal marriage, devoting his body and soul to the girl whom he loved most. It is interesting to see Wiltshire reach moral status without essentially changing. After killing Case he refuses to promise Tarleton the missionary to deal fairly with the natives, and is happy when his firm moves him to another station where he will be able to handle things his own way. In other words, he continues to cooperate in exploitation. The experiences he has gone through helps him to be committed to living out his life with Uma and their children, in spite of his dreams of returning home and running a pub. In the last sentences of the story Stevenson sums up the ambiguity in Wiltshire's character:

My public-house? Not a bit of it,  
nor ever likely. I'm stuck here, I  
fancy. I don't like to leave the kids,  
you see: and - there's no use talking -  
they're better here than what they would  
be in a white man's country, though Ben  
took the eldest up to Auckland, where he's  
being schooled with the best. But what  
bothers me is the girls. They're only  
half-castes, of course; I know that as  
well as you do, and there's nobody thinks  
less of half-castes than I do; but they're  
mine, and about all I have got. I can't

reconcile my mind to their taking up  
with Kanakas, and I'd like to know  
where I'm to find the whites, (p.86)

"The Beach of Falesa" marks a new, arresting development in Stevenson's literary career. In the South Seas Stevenson had seen exploitation, degradation and corruption. He could then write freely of human problems, away from the Calvinist inhibitions. Dr. Jekyll, he realized, did not need to transform himself into Mr. Hyde in order to demonstrate the capacity for evil within human nature. In the Pacific that capacity was emerging "naturally" and "readily", with a minimum of external prompting. Besides, Stevenson saw that in the Pacific situation it was not always evil that emerged and triumphed. He created situations in which characters devoid of moral restraint (such as Wiltshire in this story, and Herrick in The Ebb-Tide) could release the best in them. In other words, Stevenson was more able than ever to create mixed characters.

In The Ebb-Tide (1894) Stevenson presents us with a view of the lives of white derelicts in the South Seas. He is concerned with depicting a world devoid of moral restraints and responsibilities, and the devastating results that follow. The story deals with three white outcasts who are first presented to us as penniless and hungry on the beach of Papeete. The trio is composed of John Davis, a drunken American sea captain; Robert Herrick, an Oxford graduate who carries his tattered Virgil in his pocket to remind him of what he once was; and Huish, a Cockney clerk who is "vulgar and bad-hearted". Each has been a failure in life, and has come to the South Seas to try to escape from the responsibilities of the past. It is "common calamity" that makes them close associates. Now they are literally "on the beach", as the expressive local term has it. Their miserable conditions are set against the romantic background of the South Seas:

From up the coast, a long procession of canoes headed round the point and towards the market, bright as a scarf with the many-coloured clothing of the natives and the piles of fruit. But not even the beauty and the welcome warmth of the morning, not even these naval movements..... could engage the attention of the outcasts. They were still cold at heart, their mouths sour from the want of sleep, their steps rambling from the lack of food; and they strung like lame geese along the beach.....<sup>13</sup>

Destiny knocks at their door, when they are offered the opportunity to take a cargo ship loaded with champagne to Sidney, after its captain and first mate had died of smallpox. Once out at sea, the three outcasts decide to hijack the ship (it should be mentioned here that Herrick first refuses Davis's plan of stealing the cargo because he regards it to be an illegal act leading to jail, but finally he agrees to cooperate), take it to Peru, sell it complete with cargo, and keep the profits for themselves. During the voyage, both Davis and Huish take to drinking from the champagne, completely neglecting their expected duties and leaving the inexperienced Herrick alone at the wheel. Herrick realizes the dangerous situation everyone on board the Farallone is in, remembering that Captain Davis's drunkenness has caused the loss of his former ship and sailing papers.

It is interesting to notice that Herrick retains some degree of moral sensibility, though he is dominated by self-preservation. He is furious with his comrades' attitude on board, and here he reviews the situation:

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13. The Ebb-Tide, vol. X, p. 216.

He sickened at the thought of his two comrades drinking away their reason upon stolen wine, quarrelling and hiccupping and waking up, while the doors of a prison yawned for them in the near future. "Shall I have sold my honour for nothing?" he thought; and a heat of rage and resolution glowed in his bosom - rage against his comrades - resolution to carry through this business if it might be carried; pluck profit out of shame, since the shame at least was now inevitable; and come home, home from South America.....(p. 251)

Herrick is hopeful that he will return home a wealthy man, and marry the girl whom he loves very much:

He had been always true to his love, but not always sedulous to recall her. In the growing calamity of his life, she had swum more distant, like the moon in mist. The letter of farewell, the dishonourable hope that had surprised and corrupted him in his distress, the changed scene, the sea, the night and the music - all stirred him to the roots of manhood. "I will win her", he thought, and ground his teeth. "Fair or foul, what matters if I win her?" (pp. 251-52)

Captain Davis too hopes to return home with a fortune so that he can "secure" the future of his children. He is, therefore, quite prepared to do anything immoral in his South Seas' adventure to achieve the purpose. As for Huish, he cares for nobody; he lives for and by himself. He is "really dull.... having no resources of his own". Davis and Huish go on drinking. Herrick feels more disgusted, and finds in the native crew better company than his irresponsible friends. One of them is an old man called Uncle Ned who "told him his simple and hardy story of exile, suffering, and injustice among cruel whites". Here Herrick makes a sorrowful comparison between the native and whites on board:

They were kindly, cheery, childish souls. Upon the Sunday each brought forth his separate Bible - for they were men of alien speech even to each other... 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.....so faithful to what they knew of good. (p. 257)

Stevenson makes use of the ship as an emblem of an isolated society where the characters' behaviour and inter-relations are revealed. The open-air adventure, described in the first part of the story, turns out to be very hazardous, especially after the Farallone has floundered off course and run short of supplies. The voyage becomes one into the unknown. To their great disappointment, the three adventurers discover that most of the bottles are filled with water, and that their piratical act fell in beautifully with the shipowners' plan to lose a worthless ship and thus lay their hands on the insurance. A new failure to crown their previous ones !

Finally they come to a small island, another emblem of an isolated society. The place to them represents hope and refuge. The island <sup>14</sup> first appears as an exotic paradise (Stevenson's description of the island is one of the most beautiful passages he ever wrote about the romantic islands of the South Seas):

The isle - the undiscovered, the scarce-believed in - now lay before them and close aboard; and Herrick thought that never in his dreams had he beheld anything more strange and delicate. The beach was excellently white, the continuous barrier of trees inimitably green; the land perhaps ten feet high, the trees thirty more.... the isle continued to unfold itself in joints, and to run out in indeterminate capes, and still there was neither house nor man, nor the smoke of fire.

Here a multitude of sea-birds  
soared and twinkled, and fished in the  
blue waters; and there and for miles  
together, the fringe of cocoa-palm and  
pandanus extended desolate... The airs  
were very light, their speed was small;  
the heat intense. The decks were scorching  
underfoot, the sun flamed overhead, brazen  
out of a brazen sky; the pitch bubbled in  
the seams and the brains in the brainpan.  
And all the while the excitement of the  
three adventurers glowed about their bones  
like a fever. (pp. 279-80)

Herrick seems to be most affected by the romantic island :

Herrick stood transported. In the  
gratified lust of his eye he forgot the  
past and the present; forgot that he  
was menaced by a prison on the one hand  
and starvation on the other; forgot that  
he was come to that island, desperately  
foraging, clutching at expedients. A  
drove of fishes, painted like the rainbow  
and billed like parrots, hovered up in  
the shadow of the schooner, and passed  
clear of it, and glinted in the submarine  
sun. They were beautiful like birds, and  
their silent passage impressed him like a  
strain of song. (p. 281)

It is against this background that the three outcasts start a new  
adventure, which is described in the second part of the book  
entitled "The Quartette". They come to meet Attwater, the only  
white man living on the island, who is Cambridge educated,  
strictly religious, and possesses a ten year accumulation of  
priceless pearls. Attwater, above all, is the ruler of this small  
community. At first he seems to them the perfect English gentleman,  
but as time goes on, he tends to be friendly towards Herrick and rude  
towards Davis and Huish whom he calls "the two wolves".

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14. In her essay on "Stevenson's Heavenly Island", Scottish Literary Journal, Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1976, pp. 44-46, Marijane Osbourn argues that the island of Fakarva must have been "the source for Attwater's island". She finds great similarity between Stevenson's description of Fakarva in In the South Seas and that of the small island in The Ebb-Tide.

While Herrick is both "attracted and repelled" by Attwater's character, Huish and Davis take the greatest interest in the man's pearls. Attwater's character is at once complex and interesting. He is a man of strict principles, a Protestant Christian, a "dark apostle". He is a businessman as well as a missionary, one who equates hard work and ambition with the heavenly virtues, and regards worldly success as a sign of God's blessing. Since his coming to the island, he tells Herrick, he has had

a business, and a colony, and a mission of my own. I was a man of the world before I was a Christian; I'm a man of the world still, and I made my mission pay. No good ever came of coddling. A man has to stand up in God's sight and work up to his weight avoir-dupois; then I'll talk to him, but not before. I gave these beggars what they wanted: a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge; I was making a new people here; and behold, the angel of the Lord smote them and they were not! (pp. 298-99)

Attwater may be regarded as a Calvinistic character. He has a real motive for life, combining hard work with religious fanaticism. Calvinism, it should be remembered, calls for "work", "order" and "duty" as the keys to social prosperity and stability. This aspect in itself is quite positive. But we have to consider the other side of the coin. For the society Attwater was making is devoid of mercy and understanding of human nature. In other words, he dismisses conventional Christianity and sets himself up as "a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge". The natives of the island regard him as their god, and he treats them as if he were their creator - "I was making a new people here". Even Herrick sometimes confuses Attwater with God. He says to Davis and Huish when he knows about their plan to kill Attwater and make off with his pearls:

O, it's no use, I tell you!  
He knows all, he sees through us all;  
we only make him laugh with our  
pretences - he looks at us and laughs  
like God !..... he's a fatalist....  
it's a fellow that believes a lot of  
things.....believes that his bullets go  
true; believes that all falls out as God  
chooses, do as you like to prevent it; and  
all that. (pp. 320-21)

Attwater's ways of implementing justice on the island are relentless and go beyond all considerations of compassion for human weakness. He tells the three adventurers, while at dinner given at his palace, a story of two servants, one of whom was blamed for breaking "the regulations of the place" and banished from the household. He is found the next day hanging from a tree, having committed suicide out of shame. Attwater discovers too late that the second native was in fact responsible for all the breach. Here he describes his punishment of the true offender, referring to himself throughout as "one":

One told him to go up the tree [where the first native was still hanging]. He stared a bit, looked at one with a trouble in his eye, and had a rather sickly smile, but went. He was obedient to the last; he had all the pretty virtues, but the truth was not in him. So soon as he was up, he looked down, and there was the rifle covering him; and at that he gave a whimper like a dog.... He was obedient to the last, recited his crime, recommended his soul to God. And then - .... "And then?" said the breathless Captain. "Shot", said Attwater. "They came to ground together". ( p.316)

Herrick, being more sensitive than his other two friends, responds furiously to the story:

"It was a murder", he screamed. "A cold-hearted, bloody minded-murder! You monstrous being! Murderer and hypocrite - murderer and hypocrite - murderer and hypocrite -" he repeated, and his tongue stumbled among the words. (ibid)

It may be said that Stevenson has created in Attwater a personification of everything he most feared and disliked in the religion of his father. One critic has noticed the theme of "father-figure" in Herrick's relation with Attwater, finding similarity between this relationship and Archie Weir's attitude towards his father known as the "Hanging-Judge". He sees that "the same respect, hatred, and fear" exist in both cases. He goes on to say:

But Archie and Herrick are most alike in their reactions to the savage justice which their father or father-figure dispenses. Archie's public denunciation of the execution of Duncan Jopp, whom his father had condemned, is clearly previewed in The Ebb-Tide. When Attwater amuses his guests with an account of one of his administration of justice, Herrick, like Archie, cannot restrain himself. Archie shouts, "I denounce this God-defying murder". Herrick is less eloquent, though equally moved.<sup>15</sup> "It was a murder", he screamed.....

The situation on the island becomes more complicated. Herrick is left with a morally difficult choice which he has to make: either to warn Attwater of his friends' wicked intentions and thus save the life of the man whom he hates, or shut his mouth and thus become the accomplice of murderers. It is a decision which ultimately involves Herrick in a division of loyalty between the desperate outlaws (to whom he already belongs) and the strong,

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15. Edwin M. Eigner, R.L. Stevenson and Romantic Tradition (Princeton, 1966), p. 217.

civilized, cruel man who is the embodiment of a social and moral order. Jenni Calder in this respect holds the view that in Herrick

Stevenson has produced something much more complicated than a straightforward duality. The contrary impulses, the longing to abandon restraint and the clinging to vestiges of morality, are intricately meshed. <sup>16</sup>

Herrick harbours suicidal thoughts. But he is unable to take his own life because

To any man there may come at times a consciousness that there blows, through all the articulations of his body, the wind of a spirit, not wholly his; that his mind rebels; that another girds him and carries him whether he would not. It came now to Herrick, with the authority of a revelation. There was no escape possible....He must go back into the world and amongst men without illusion. He must stagger on to the end with the pack of his responsibility and his disgrace, until a cold, a blow, a merciful chance ball, or the more merciful hangman should dismiss him from his infamy. There were men who could commit suicide; there were men who could not; and he was one who could not. (p. 328)

Finally he manages to swim ashore in the night and warn Attwater that his life is at stake. Attwater, it should be remembered, has "intrigued, puzzled, dazzled, enchanted, and revolted him" since the beginning. Here Herrick throws himself before Attwater:

Here I am. I am broken crockery; I am a burst drum; the whole of my life is gone to water; I have nothing left that I believe in, except my living horror of myself. Why do I come to you? I don't know; you are cold, cruel, hateful

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16. "Introduction", The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 21.

and I hate you, or I think I hate you. But you are an honest man, an honest gentleman. I put myself helpless in your hands. What must I do? If I can't do anything, be merciful and put a bullet through me; it's only a puppy with a broken leg! (p.330)

It is Huish in the end of the story whom Attwater "puts a bullet through", as the totally evil man attempts to throw vitriol at his face. It is an attempt which is presented as a "rebellion against God", and for which he must pay his life.

As for Davis, he "makes his peace with God", undergoing a religious conversion and choosing to stay on the island as Attwater's "pet penitent". Moreover, he tries to persuade Herrick to "come to Jesus". The situation becomes more ambiguous as Herrick looks forward to sailing away from the island whose owner remains undefeated and unchanged. He feels he cannot stay anymore at this gloomy place. For when he has yielded himself to Attwater, the act is "hardly cheerful", as Robert Kiely puts it. The surrender

does have an intensity and an inevitability which give it a suggestive power beyond that merely of the weak character yielding to the strong. If Herrick abdicates his will to Attwater, without really accepting his evangelical doctrines, he does so because he has lost his faith in everything else. He had been lured to the Pacific originally in the hope that there the air would blow cleaner, that he might change his name (which he does), and eradicate his past, his conscience, and his weakness (which he does not). When he comes dripping from the sea and a close encounter with suicide, his false dreams have been washed away. His baptism is incomplete, however, It may have succeeded in removing old illusions, but Herrick is left barren rather than purified for a new faith.

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17. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p. 190.

Ambiguity permeates The Ebb-Tide, especially its conclusion. Attwater, though the strongest and most influential character on the island, becomes at times an object of disdain and fails to gain our sympathy. He is cruel, fanatical and obsessed with the power to dominate others. On the other hand, we tend to respect and admire, and so does Herrick, his success and his established order as compared to the state of the three desperadoes. Thanks to Attwater, Davis turns to Christianity, which is a positive act in itself. Yet at the same time it is considered to be a withdrawal from life's challenge and responsibilities. Jenni Calder thinks that Davis in fact survives, but

his spirit is annihilated, and it is the survival of the spirit that Stevenson cares about most deeply. In choosing to remain with Attwater, Davis has rediscovered a structure, but it implies a morality that is destructive of the individual. It demands his complete subservience, it takes him out of the world of choice and conflict and challenge, the real world, and it involves the renunciation of his wife and children. "I found peace here, peace in believing", he says. He trades life for belief. 18 Herrick, it is suggested, chooses life.

The same critic has attempted to establish some sort of relationship between Stevenson's life and career in the South Seas and the complexity of The Ebb-Tide. She writes thus:

In terms of Stevenson's own life and career the reverberations of The Ebb-Tide are profoundly significant. He had been accused of escaping from the real world by setting up house in Samoa. He knew that this was true and untrue. He had escaped certain pressure, certain conflicts; he had through this escape gained a perspective on both his own background and the literary scene in London.

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18. "Introduction", The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 22.

But he was living in an environment that was both personally and politically challenging. Far from choosing the easy option, Stevenson was, more than was good for his health or his state of mind, leading an involved and committed life. Vailima was no tropical ivory tower, 19

The Ebb-Tide, it can be said, demonstrates as gloomy a view of human existence as Stevenson mentions in his letters written in Samoa, where he was turning his questing eye on the more immediate areas of his own experience. In a significant letter to Henry James, Stevenson writes:

The grimness of that story is not to be depicted in words. There are only four characters, to be sure, but they are such a troop of swine! And their behaviour is really so deeply beneath any possible standard, that on a retrospect I wonder I have been able to endure them myself until the yarn was finished. Well, there is always one thing; it will serve as a touchstone. If the admirers of Zola admire him for his pertinent ugliness and pessimism, I think they should admire this; but if, as I have long suspected, they neither admire nor understand the man's art.....then they will certainly be disappointed in The Ebb-Tide.<sup>20</sup>

As the letter indicates, Stevenson was most concerned with "pertinence" in his South Seas experience, an attitude which

seemed to require the loss of the buoyant optimism that had charmed so many and which many admirers of Stevenson still hold to be his chief quality. The signs are that he was willing to let it go. 21

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19. Ibid.

20. Letters, Vol. II, p. 296.

21. "Introduction", The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories, ed. Jenni Calder, p. 23.

Again, Stevenson was only able to write directly of contemporary experience when he was away from conventional inhibitions. His friends in London, especially Sidney Colvin, found it difficult to accept the new situation in which he got himself involved. They thought that it was "nice" for the Scottish writer to live in the South Seas, but "unhealthy" to write there about subjects that demonstrated the least palatable features of human nature. Speaking of the significance of Stevenson's Pacific experience, Robert Kiely mentioned that the "grimness" and "pessimism" of The Ebb-Tide reflect some change in his attitude towards human evil. Stevenson came to personify evil

not as a grotesque aberration, as in Mr. Hyde, nor as a temporary failure of vision, as in Deacon Brodie, nor a glamorous vice, as in the Master of Ballantrae, but an integral part of the human organism. 22

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22. Robert Kiely, R.L. Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure, p. 189.

## CONCLUSION

This study, it is hoped, has discussed a great variety of Stevenson's works that deal with travel and adventure, in the latter's outdoor and indoor sense of the meaning. Travel was a matter of necessity for Stevenson's health as well as his emotional and literary development. In his travels he found the material for his essays, books, poems, short stories, and novels. Stevenson attempted to make his early writings of travel a philosophical experience in which he appeared as subject and object. Travelling both in place and time, he explored areas that most suited his Bohemian and adventurous nature. He identified himself with the Bohemian artists of Fontainebleau, who belonged to different nationalities and led their own lives the way they liked—away from the restrictions of society. In France too he travelled in imagination back home, while wandering in the country of the Camisards, and was reminded of the Scottish Covenanters who haunted him throughout his life. Besides, Stevenson was ever aware of his being a Scotsman, who realized, and stressed, the cultural differences between England and his own country.

Stevenson was able to explore, with depth and insights, phases of Scottish history at its most important and critical periods, the more he was away from home. From his first Scottish novel, Kidnapped, to the last one written in exile, Weir of Hermiston, Stevenson was tremendously influenced by the history and topography of his country. As his best critic has remarked, this process is a remarkable "episode in the history of Scottish literature" :

Like Joyce writing of Dublin from his exile in France, Stevenson learned to know his native country best and to make most effective use of it in literature only after he had left it never to return.

And just as Joyce is essentially Irish and cannot be fully understood except with reference to Ireland, so Stevenson is essentially Scots and cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of his Scottish background. His greatest achievement was to use nostalgia dramatically, to suppress all personal emotion while utilizing that emotion in serious (sometimes tragic) fiction.<sup>1</sup>

Stevenson was a literary wanderer. Plagued by ill-health and aware that he would sooner or later die of tuberculosis (accompanied by coughing and blood-spitting), he travelled from Edinburgh (with which he had only a "spiritual link") to more congenial climates in the Continent, the States, and finally the South Seas. He found in travelling a challenge to his delicate health. He thought of life as "an affair of cavalry", a "thing to be dashingly used and cheerfully hazarded". In his allegorical "Will o' the Mill", perhaps the best short story written in his late twenties, Stevenson depicts the quiet, inactive life of the hero who reaches old age without going through any thrilling experiences; a life inconsistent with his own philosophy of life. In the end death comes to Will in the guise of a stranger, and takes him in his carriage on his first and last journey. Again, Stevenson in his other fiction expresses life in terms of action: sailors struggling with angry waves (as in "The Merry Men"), men travelling in wild environments and facing many dangers (as in Kidnapped and The Master of Ballantrae), adventurers - involving gentlemen, pirates and a young hero - who travel to a mysterious island for hidden treasure and fight with each other in a bloody conflict (as in Treasure Island), bloody duels (as in the adventures of Prince Florizel in New Arabian Nights, and the famous duel-scene between the Master of Ballantrae and his brother), and many other examples that may be traced in his works.

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1. David Daiches, R.L. Stevenson, p. 187.

In Stevenson's writings man does not only struggle with violent Nature, with another man, or with established authorities, but also with evil and supernatural powers. Conflict is as much a part of Stevenson's literature as his life. Stevenson's sense of evil owed much to the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, which made people conscious of the evil stalking through the world beside them. In "Thrawn Janet", a short masterpiece written in the Scottish vernacular, he depicts Mr. Soullis' adventure in driving the Devil away from the parish of Balweary; a struggle that, though ending in triumph over the Devil, causes him considerable mental and physical disturbance. Markheim also encounters the Devil, but he refuses to listen to his counsel and gives himself up to the police, thus expressing his "free-will" and putting an end to his criminal life. In such supernatural stories, Stevenson expresses his Scottishness by dealing with a subject that is deep-rooted in the culture of his country. On the other hand, in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which has a "Scottish" morality despite its English setting, as we have attempted to explain, evil destroys good when it is set loose without any control.

It is surprising to realize that the author of A Child's Garden of Verses is also the author of Jekyll and Hyde, "Markheim", "Olalla", and "The Body Snatcher". Equally surprising is it to realize that James Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd" who wrote pleasant poetry about nature and the country life, is the author of The Confessions of a Justified Sinner. Stevenson chose his poem "Requiem" as his epitaph so that future generations would believe that its words summed up his life : " Glad did I live and gladly die". But life is too complicated and too subtle to be taken from one side only -

the happy, optimistic side. Indeed, Stevenson was aware of the presence of internal and external forces that challenged man's being. He himself found "the war in the members" so much a part of his being that he considered it a universal law.

In his romances Stevenson does not only send his characters to exotic lands where they reach a state of self-knowledge through having new, harsh experiences, or make them go through an indoor adventure beyond their normal experience, but he also adds a moral and psychological perception to their adventures. There is always a moment of realization that the hero should come to. Prince Florizel, one of the most romantic heroes Stevenson created in his early career, prefers to preside over a London Cigar Divan rather than to attend to his expected duties in Bohemia, after a series of exciting adventures in London and Paris. He realizes that he should be happy in this new world, seeking romance and adventure by the fireside. Charles Darnaway in "The Merry Men" realizes that it is brutal and inhuman to meddle with the treasures of the dead, giving up for ever the hunt for the Spanish treasure buried in Sandag Bay and deciding to leave the accursed island. Dr. Jekyll is aware that he cannot go on living with his other evil self, and consequently commits suicide, believing that this is the only way out of his dilemma. Similarly, Markheim chooses self-destruction rather than follow the Devil's advice.

In addition to this, Henry Durie, when totally persecuted by his evil brother the Master of Ballantrae, escapes from Scotland to New York; but soon realizes that he cannot escape from the final tragic doom that hangs over their relationship. In Kidnapped and its sequel, David Balfour realizes, after his dangerous travels with Alan Breck in the Highlands, where Stevenson depicts the paradoxical relationship between them (a relationship that reflects the tension between the Highlands and Lowlands in Scottish history),

that his personal history is linked with the tragic history of the Highlands. Feeling a strong "moral" commitment to saving the life of innocent James Stewart ( a typically Scottish sense of guilt), he embarks on many adventures after the end of which he is aware that he cannot stand alone against established authorities. He decides to give up politics for ever, and finds solace in falling in love with and finally marrying Catriona. In Stevenson's "unfinished masterpiece", Weir of Hermiston, young Archie, who is sent in exile in Hermiston, cannot escape from his fated doom (the note of the Border ballads), realizing that he cannot put behind the conflicting strains of paternal and maternal inheritance which are linked with the tragic history of the Elliotts.

Stevenson's final journey to the South Seas exemplifies all the romantic adventure which his readers expected of him. However, as time went on, he realized that the world he had come to was not all picturesque. He saw fatal diseases, crimes, barbarism, wars, and exploitation. He came to see humanwretchedness in a universal context. Evil, he realized, was an integral part of human nature. In his early career, Stevenson believed that one should half close one's eyes against the dazzle of reality (which is a major theme of his essay "A Humble Remonstrance"), that contemporary life needed diversion, entertainment, and reminders that there was more to life than everyday realities. Now in the South Seas he could not retreat from writing about realistic subjects that caught the "smell" and the "look" of his contemporary experiences. In the meantime, he could not retreat from the demands of his mind and imagination, writing about the Scottish past.

Indeed it is a measure of Stevenson's achievement that he could simultaneously write about the past and the present. Coming to terms with the realities of life, the mature Stevenson discovered a "language" of reality. This may be seen in his depiction of the two Kirsties in Weir of Hermiston (where the two women are passionate and unabashed by their sexual instincts, though old Kirstie's love for

the young hero is made impossible by age and morality); of Wiltshire in "The Beach of Falesa", who combines in his character both good and evil, and who, though committed to his life in the South Seas, is unable to reconcile his mind at the end of the story to the fact that his daughters would be brought up away from England; of Herrick who retains some moral restraint in his character while encountering, and living himself in an evil world, and of Attwater in The Ebb-Tide, who wins our admiration for his strict sense of work and duty, and at the same time our hatred for his cruelty, his lack of Christian mercy and love.

For long Stevenson has been neglected on the grounds that he is a writer of children's books. But this is both unfair and untrue. As this study has shown, he wrote many works that cannot be regarded as childish. In his adventure fiction there are always moral implications, and sometimes sophisticated ones. An explorer, probing both the past and present and discovering the far reaches of the human soul, his writings have range. As one of his recent critics has put it, the point is not

merely that Stevenson's writing had range. It is that it could achieve intensity over a range wider than one man might be thought readily able to compass in the limitations of time and health allowed to Stevenson. <sup>2</sup>

Stevenson's works are both interesting and entertaining. He has a place of his own in our literature. He is, and will be, remembered as a traveller with a donkey in the wild French mountains; a traveller in the emigrant train across the American continent; a traveller in the inner self of man; a traveller in the romantic Scottish past, and a traveller in the South Seas. The fact remains that wherever he went, he had a strong Scots accent of the mind, of the soul, as well as of the tongue.

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2. Ian Campbell, "Introduction", Selected Short Stories of R.L. Stevenson, p. 10.

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